

Post Office Square Design Guidelines

A Guide for Architectural Design & Site Planning
in Sharon's Business District A & C

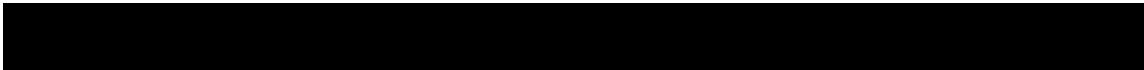


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Prepared for the Town of Sharon, Massachusetts by

Larry Koff, Planner, AICP, LK Associates
Sandra Swaile, Urban Designer, Registered Architect
Philip Kopel, Planning Board, Town of Sharon

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Post Office Square is the central business area of Sharon, originally established by the building of the community's first meeting house in 1737. It is adjacent to the Town's historical district. The beautiful white churches surrounding the Square follow the Greek Revival architectural style, a style that can be found throughout New England.

The majority of the present significant structures in Post Office Square were built during the period just prior to 1900 and through the early 1920's. These are remnants of once thriving buildings that pre-date World War II.

Many of the buildings that have been erected since World War II are seen as having been destructive due to lacking aesthetic quality and being contrary to the look of a New England town center.

Over the years, the Square has lost its traditional New England character and is presently a mixture of architectural styles that does not reflect the richness of the Town's character nor its natural beauty. In order to protect this asset and enrich it for future generations, it is necessary to insure that buildings are properly related to their sites, and to neighboring structures, and that proper attention be given to the exterior appearances of buildings.

The objective of the Design Guidelines is to encourage developers to design and erect structures that promote the New England town theme and will bring back the richness of the small New England town center that Sharon once enjoyed.

The basis for the design control guidelines is the Zoning Bylaw amendment 6330 - 6337, approved by Town Meeting in May, 1996.

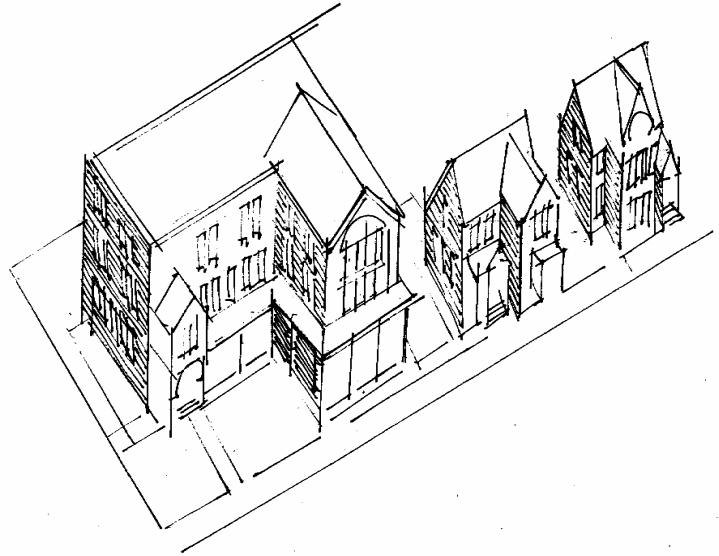
BUILDING & FACADE DESIGN

SCALE & MASSING

Buildings should relate in scale, massing, height, roof type and wall lines, proportion of openings, materials and color so as to promote a pedestrian scale and architecture which is sympathetic to a traditional New England Village downtown business district.

PRESERVATION OF HISTORIC DETAILS

In older retail buildings, it is important to maintain the 19th century characteristics of exposed piers, decorative cornices, large display windows, transom windows and recessed entrances.



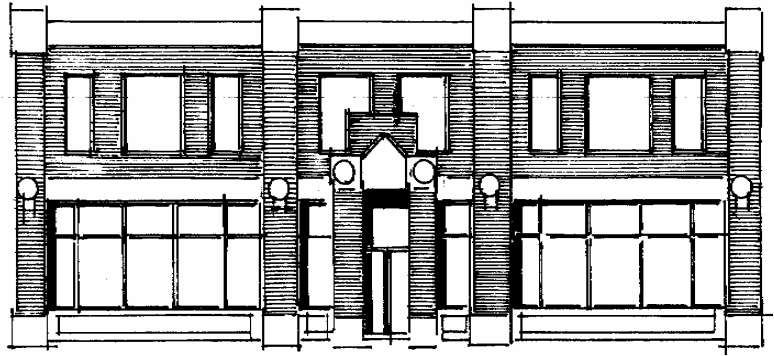
FACADES OF MIXED USE BUILDINGS

In a mixed use building, the difference between the ground floor commercial uses and entrances for upper level commercial or apartment uses should be distinguished by differences in facade treatment.



NEW BUILDINGS

New retail buildings should include a large percentage of window on the ground floor and highly visible and articulated entrances.

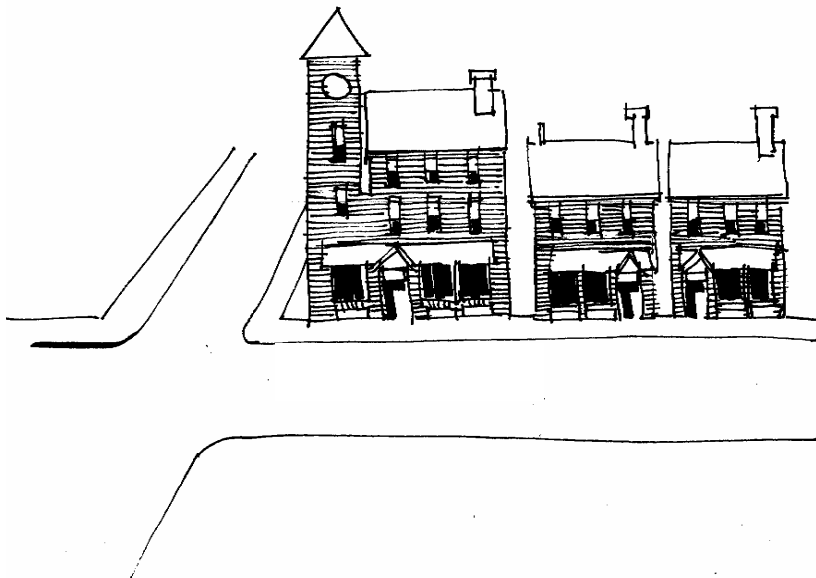
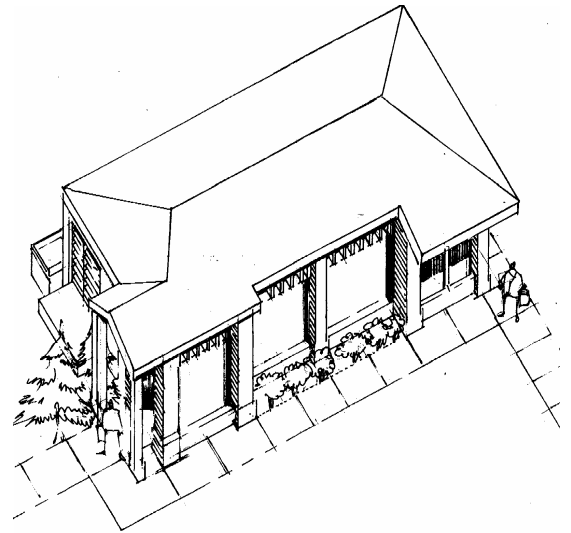


FACADES

All sides of the building should be articulated and attractive. Clapboard and/or brick are preferred siding materials. When parking is located to the rear of a building, particular emphasis should be placed on providing additional windows, lighting, and possibly an entry. Blank windowless walls should be avoided.

GATEWAY BUILDINGS

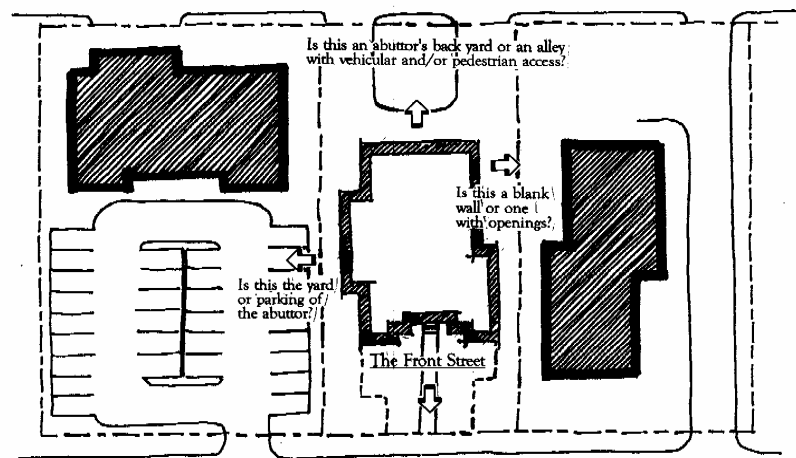
Buildings at corners and/or entryways to the area should be emphasized with additional bulk, height, proximity to street edge, and unique features such as turrets and cupolas.



SITE DESIGN & ITS RELATION TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD

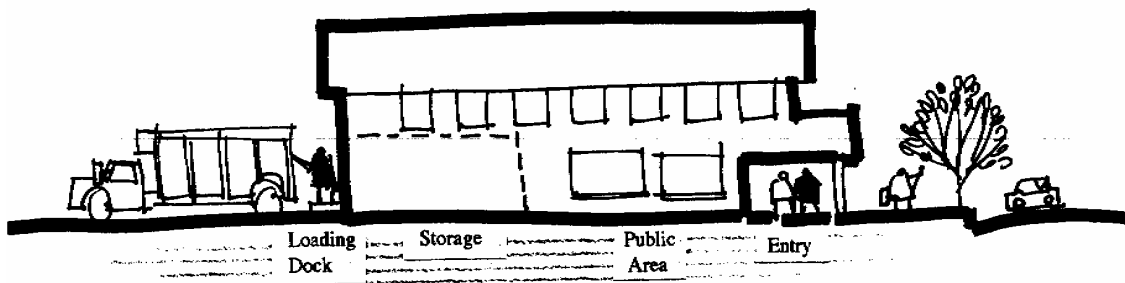
RELATIONSHIP TO ADJACENT STRUCTURES

Buildings should be located in relationship to edge conditions of adjacent parcels to ensure that drives, parking areas, walks, service areas and septic uses have a functional, safe, and harmonious interrelationship. Buildings should be situated to co-exist with existing site features, landscaping, and adjacent buildings, and should include the establishment or effective use of common public areas for circulation and seating.



PARCEL & SERVICE AREAS

Public entrances and active areas should be located at the front of the site while loading docks, service, and storage areas should be located to the rear.



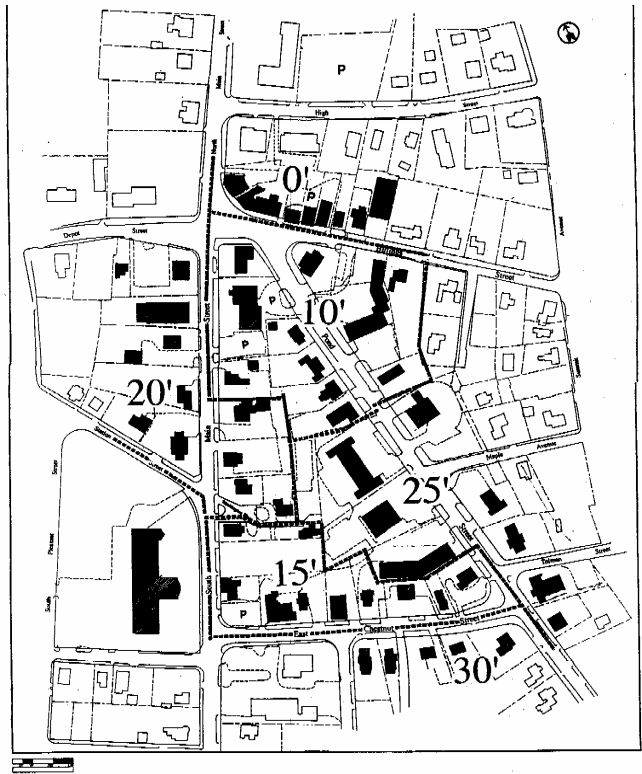
PARCEL & BUILDING ORGANIZATION

New buildings should retain the size and proportion of neighborhood parcels.

Larger floor plate buildings should seek to break up their mass and proportion to give a pedestrian scale.

SETBACK LINE

Buildings should be located to establish a uniform streetscape line which in general includes a landscaped front yard, a building site and a rear service area.

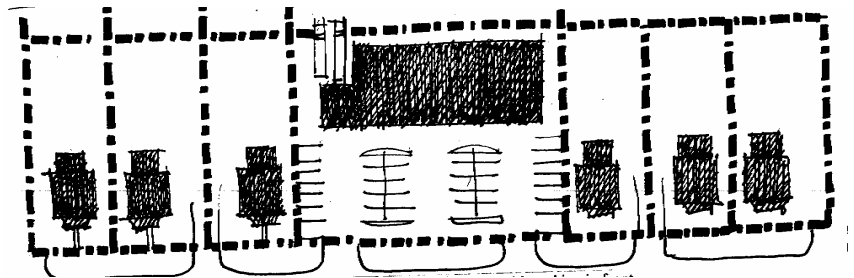


POST OFFICE SQUARE Sharon, MA.

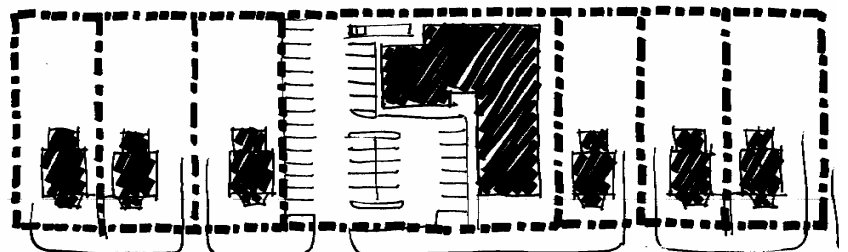
LOCATION OF BUILDINGS & PARKING AREAS

Building mass should be organized where necessary, to facilitate side and rear yard rather than front yard parking.

Unacceptable Design

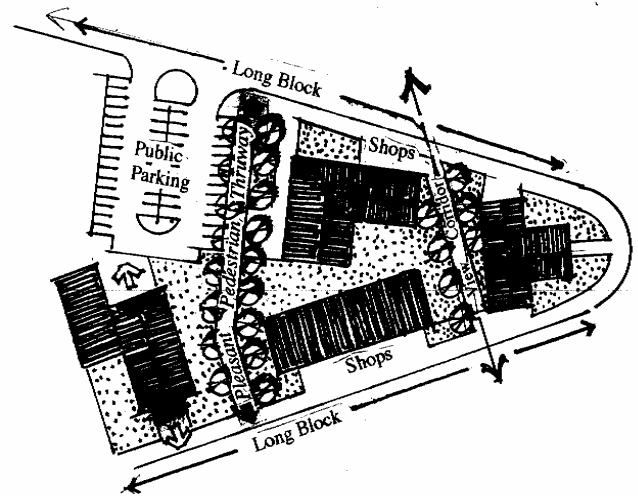


Acceptable Design



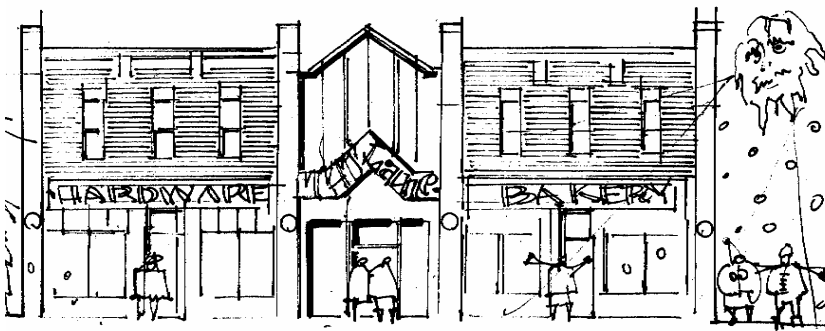
PEDESTRIAN CIRCULATION

Buildings should accommodate public pedestrian design lines through the site and connect to the existing public sidewalks at the street edge.



MERGING THE INDOOR & THE OUTDOOR AREAS

Where possible, allow inside retail activities to overflow to outside booths, carts, and/or outdoor cafés and to permit the public access through the building via arcades, atria, and along common passageways.



PARKING, LOADING & AUTO SERVICE USES

LOCATION

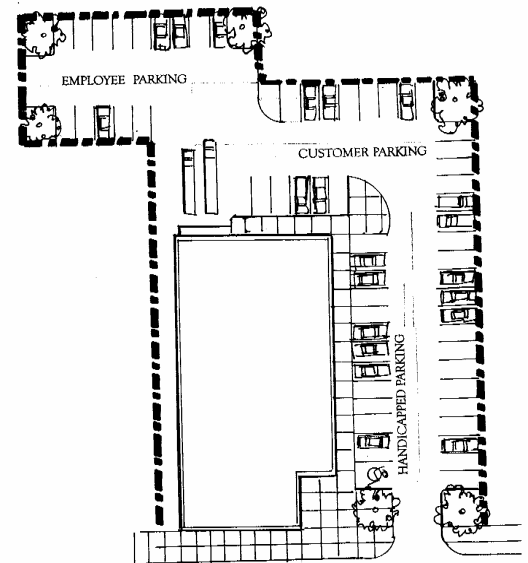
Parking, wherever possible, should be sited in relationship to the circulation and access of adjacent parking area to maximize the convenience and safety of vehicular and pedestrian movement within the site to encourage shared parking and pedestrian circulation.

PROVISION OF PARKING FOR VARIOUS USERS

Employees should be encouraged to park in more remote spaces. Customers should have convenient and safe parking with some provision for short term, handicapped, and long term spaces.

SHARED PARKING

Arrangements for shared parking for both customers and employees should be pursued on public and private lots.



PARKING IN FRONT & SIDE

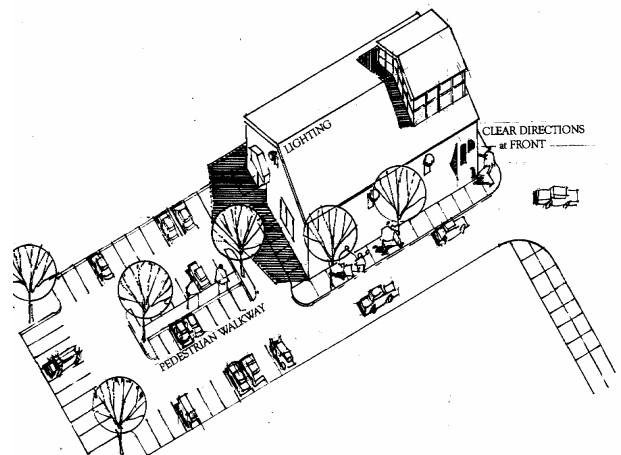
Every effort should be made to minimize the visual impact of parking by arrangement of the building and landscaping. Pedestrian movement from the sidewalk or the cars to the building entrance should be pleasant and safe on clearly defined pathways and crosswalks. The edge at the sidewalk should contain a very strong architectural and/or landscaped expression.

CORNER LOTS

Parking in front yards should be avoided on corner lots.

PARKING IN THE REAR

Parking, whenever possible, should be located to the rear of the building. The lots should be landscaped, lit, easily accessible for vehicles and pedestrians.

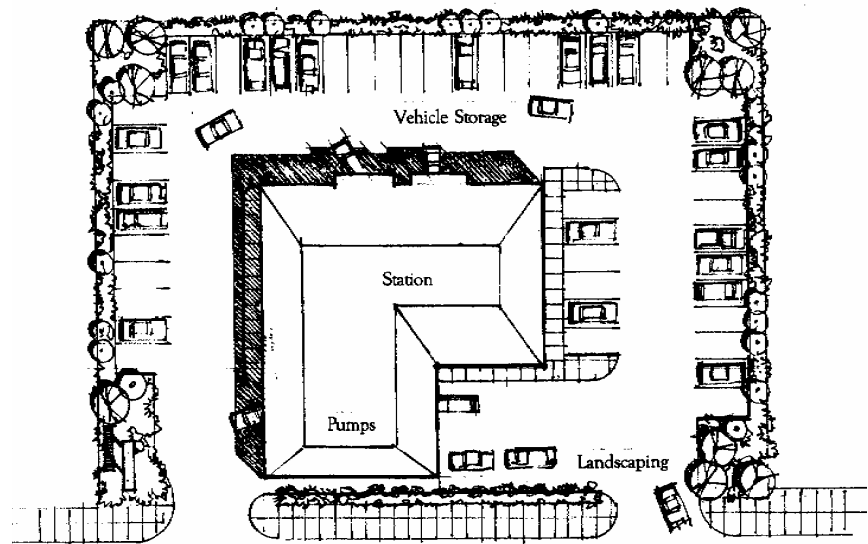


PEDESTRIAN CIRCULATION

It is very important to provide a convenient and pleasant path for the shopper to get from the car to the stores via a common walkway, alley, rear entrance, or interior public arcade.

AUTO SERVICE USES

Auto service uses should provide a street setback to prevent parking near the sidewalk and should store vehicles behind the building when possible.



LANDSCAPING, BUFFERS, FENCING, PAVING, LIGHTING

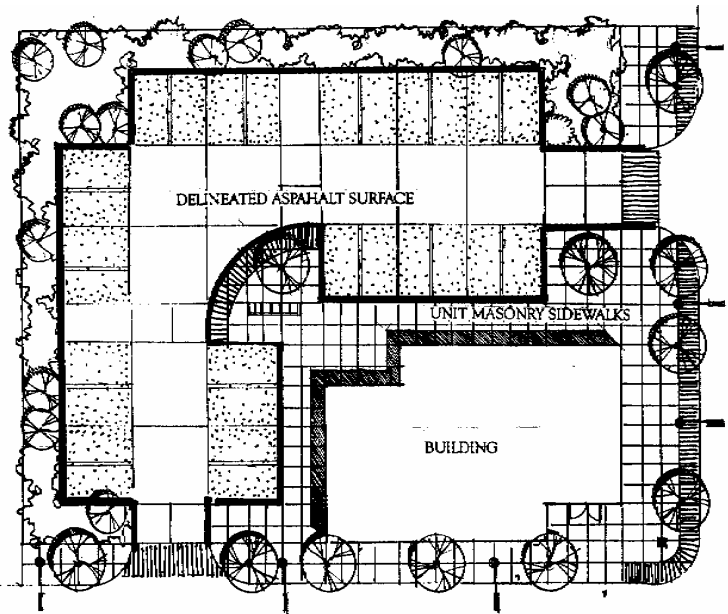
LANDSCAPING

The plan shall identify landscaping which is complementary to the scale and location of the building and its relationship to the street and adjacent structures, the build-to line, and system of pedestrian circulation.

Define the street edge with trees located in a front yard planting strip 20' on center.

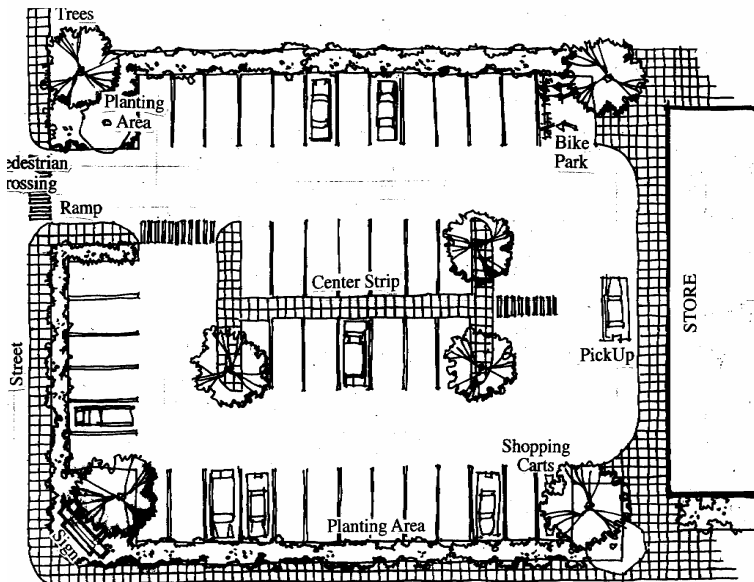
Front yard landscaping should consist of a mix of ornamental shrubs and trees.

Locate buildings and parking areas so as to retain mature trees.



BUFFERS

Parking lots should be screened at the street edge and at edges abutting residential uses. At the street



edge there should be a 5' wide planting strip with 3' high hedges, trees 20' on center and a 3' high transparent fence. When the lot abuts a residence, the fence should be a 6' opaque one with dense evergreen plantings. In lots with over 10 cars, there should be at least 5% of the area devoted to interior landscaping.

FENCING

All loading docks, service areas, and trash dumpsters should be screened with a 6' opaque fence and/or dense planting. Auto service uses should try to

incorporate a 30" high fence and planting at the front when driver visibility permits.

LIGHTING & PAVING

Lighting, screening and paving materials should reinforce a New England Village theme.

Screening

Styles, height and transparency of fencing should relate to the diverse needs of screening offensive uses and service area, creating a pedestrian and/or vehicular barrier, and defining and separating different uses and pathways.

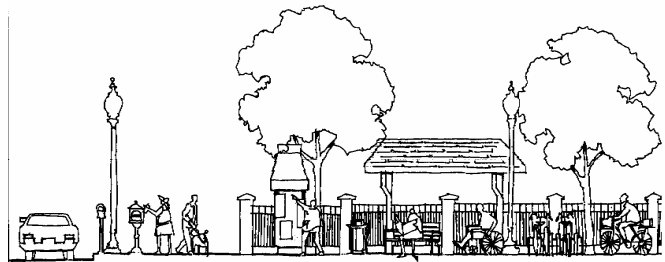
Pedestrian Paths

Pedestrian paths should utilize materials with appropriate scale and texture. Large expanses of concrete or asphalt should be expressed with modular grids, texture or aggregate, and articulated expansion joints, drainage swales, and defined vehicular and pedestrian pathways.

Bicycles should be accommodated and encouraged with sufficient racks.

Lighting

Lighting should be of an appropriate style, scale, intensity, and color.



SIGN GUIDELINES FOR POST OFFICE SQUARE

GUIDANCE FOR DESIGNING PERMANENT SIGNAGE FOR PROPERTY OWNERS WITHIN BUSINESS DISTRICTS A & C

INTRODUCTION

Scope

This section is intended to establish guidelines to be applied in the design of signs to be used within The Town of Sharon's designated Business Districts A & C, commonly known as Post Office Square. It is also intended to be used by Town Officials in the enforcement of Sharon Zoning by-law section 6335 paragraph 5.

Purpose

The Town Center, with its small neighborly shops and pedestrian scale is increasingly becoming lost as regional and national retail chains locate in suburban shopping plazas and along U.S. highways. It has become increasingly difficult for small town centers to survive amid national TV and print advertising campaigns by these large retailers.

In order for small town centers like Sharon's Post Office Square to become revitalized and prosper, they need to draw on their unique strengths that the power strip shopping plazas and malls cannot supply. Sharon's Post Office Square is centrally located as a community focal point to service residents of the Town. It is rich in historical character and offers a quaint pedestrian scale. The Town of Sharon is in the process of improving the infrastructure of Post Office Square. Enhancements such as brick sidewalks, pedestrian street lighting, street furniture, tree plantings and landscaping will enrich the look and usability of the Square. Post Office Square will build on its unique qualities by reinforcing an historic village marketplace theme. As a result, it is expected that residents will recognize and take advantage of this asset, merchant demand to be in the Square will increase, and landowners will reap the rewards of their investment.

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance to both Property Owners and Town Officials in designing permanent signs for use in Business Districts A & C of the Town of Sharon.

These guidelines are not intended to be interpreted as absolute regulations. Rather, they should be used as a general guide, which can be flexibly applied to meet the needs of the individual property and sign owners, while at the same time allowing the Town to retain and support the area's unique historic character.

Sign guidelines

General

As a Town, Sharon has a very long, varied and colorful history over some two hundred thirty years, covering the 18th and 19th Centuries. As the Town experienced the Colonial, Industrial and Information Revolutions, styles, materials, processes and industries changed. These changes were reflected in all aspects of the Town's daily life, including the signs used to advertise the various businesses and professions. It would be absolutely impossible to create, after the fact, a stringent set of rules on what Historic Signs were – they quite naturally varied by time period, type of business or profession, and personal taste of the owner.

Rather than consider strict and unrealistic rules, the Sharon Planning Board has created this set of guidelines, which attempt to capture the spirit, rather than the detail of Historic Signs. This results in a rather flexible and general set of guidelines which individuals can apply, along with their creativity, to create signs, which, although not necessarily reproductions of any specific Historic Sign, nevertheless maintain the historic spirit and character of an area.

Type of Signs covered by these Guidelines

These guidelines are intended to apply only to permanent, commercial signs, as defined by the Zoning by-laws. They do not apply to temporary signs. Temporary signs include such signs as real estate 'For Sale' signs.

Content of Signs

Naturally, businesses today hardly represent those of years past. The blacksmith has been replaced by the auto repair shop; new businesses, such as computer stores, cannot even draw a parallel with the businesses of twenty years ago, let alone more than two hundred years ago. These by-laws recognize such changes by establishing two general guidelines for the content of signs in Historic Districts:

1. For most properties, signs being used should relate to the on-going or proposed business currently being performed within the property. In the event of signs not associated with any building, the sign should be associated with some on-going activity within the District or its environs.
2. Certain properties, because of their unique historical background, might choose to associate the contents of their sign with an historical use of the property. A 'Jacob Fischer House' sign or 'Fire-House Pub' sign would be an example of this type.

Time period represented Signs

Because these guidelines cover a broad period of history, they cannot be specific about what is or is not appropriate for a particular property. One general guideline, however, can be stated: A sign should be appropriate for the period that a property represents. The stronger the association of the property with a particular period, the closer the sign should

match the period of the property. A classic Victorian office, for example, should not have a sign that appears to represent the Colonial period.

Design and Style of Historic Signs

In general, Historic Signs would contain either lettering, or graphic images, or both. Hanging signs from buildings were often shaped as a figure related to the business (a gunsmith, for instance, having a sign shaped as a gun) with additional information (business name, etc) lettered on. Common square, rectangular and oval signs were also popular, both with and without paintings of figures related to the business. Public service related signs (for railroad stations, trolley stops, etc) were generally plainer and simpler than signs for businesses. See Appendix A for additional ideas related to possible sign designs.

Size of Signs

Sizes of signs are covered in the zoning by-laws, and those regulations are not contradicted by these guidelines. There is little historic basis for any limitations on size except as related to the materials from which they were made – signs made from more expensive materials such as cast iron tended to be smaller than signs made from cheaper materials such as wood.

Acceptable Materials

Historic sign makers were limited in the materials they had to work with. Virtually all signs of the earlier colonial period would have been made from painted or engraved wood. As the Industrial Revolution made metalworking somewhat simpler, some signs were made from cast metals as well – mostly iron, although brass and other metals were also occasionally used. Wood was still, however, the primary material. Very rarely, one would see signs made from ‘worked’ sheet metal, principally polished brass and copper. These ‘worked’ metal signs would have their designs and lettering stamped or embossed in raised, rounded letters. Such signs tended to be very expensive and difficult to maintain, and were used by only the wealthiest merchants on highly visible shops. For Sharon, signs made from any of the above materials, or high quality reproductions of those materials (such as cast iron sign reproductions in fiberglass) would be acceptable. Again, wood is the simplest and safest, however, the Planning Board would be pleased to work with anyone interested in exploring other acceptable materials.

Colors

One often thinks of antique and historic signs as being dull and drab in color. In part, this impression comes from the fact that most antique signs remaining today have been subjected to many years of weathering and fading from the sun, as well as being covered by layers of dirt and grime. In reality, although our ancestors were somewhat limited in the colors of paint pigments they had available (they did not have, for example, the synthetic pigments one would need for intense, bright color such as ‘Hot Pink’), they had remarkable range of color and brightness options available to them. Of greater concern however was cost. Whereas the simpler ‘earth tone’ colors were relatively inexpensive, brighter and more intense colors such as true reds, blues and greens required greater amounts of chemical pigments which cost more. In small amounts, however, such colors could easily be used on signs. In a similar fashion, signs could have been edged in gold leaf, or ‘gilt’, a very expensive process used only by the wealthiest merchants in their best shops.

The simplest way to be assured of an acceptable color for a modern sign is to use one of the available 'historic house colors', which most paint manufacturers produce, for the basic sign background and lettering. These paints are made with modern materials, can be obtained in both oil-based and latex versions, cost about the same as and are used just like any other paint, and provide an acceptable degree of authenticity. Benjamin Moore Paints, for example, produces their Historical Color Collection, which contains some twelve colors, each with appropriate accent shades. California Paints also has a pallet of historical colors from which to choose.

Lettering Styles

Styles of lettering on historic signs varied as widely as did materials and colors. In general, to be most historically correct, lettering should be a fairly simple style. Many of the original signs were hand lettered by less experienced craftsmen, and consequently, they might seem 'primitive' or amateuristic by today's standards.

Again, as owners could afford more costly signs, they would employ higher quality craftsmen to create more elaborate lettering styles, similar to today's 'Calligraphy' styles. In most cases, however, the lettering could be characterized as one of two styles – either script or block letters. Seldom were the two mixed on a single sign. For Sharon, the most important characteristic of lettering is that it not be so mechanical and precisely structured that it appears stenciled or machine done, nor so elaborate as to appear impossible to have been done by a skilled craftsman.

Lighting

Since electric lights are a relatively new invention, lighting is one area in which historic accuracy must give way to modern practicality. The Planning Board prefers that, where possible, the following priority be used in determining methods of lighting:

1. External lighting from appropriate period sources, such as electrified 'coach type' lanterns.
2. External lighting provided by small, inconspicuous floodlight fixtures placed in front of and either above or below the sign.
3. External lighting provided by a concealed 'light wash' type fixture.

additional enhancements

Historically, the small town marketplace was colorful and had a pedestrian scale. As such, the Planning Board encourages amenities that enhance the pedestrian character of PO Square.

For example, awnings provide a welcome mat to the pedestrian. The awning should preferably be a solid color or at least designed to enhance the look of the streetscape. Signage is not permitted on the awning.

Street furniture, planters, etc. are also welcome additions.

Typical Signs

Appendix A to these guidelines has been provided to indicate what some typical signs might be like. This Appendix is not all-inclusive; the maximum number of sign designs possible is limited only by the creativity of the individual making the sign.

APPENDIX

APPROPRIATE SIGNAGE IN SHARON'S POST OFFICE SQUARE BUSINESS DISTRICT A & C

EXAMPLES

SIGNS ON BUILDINGS



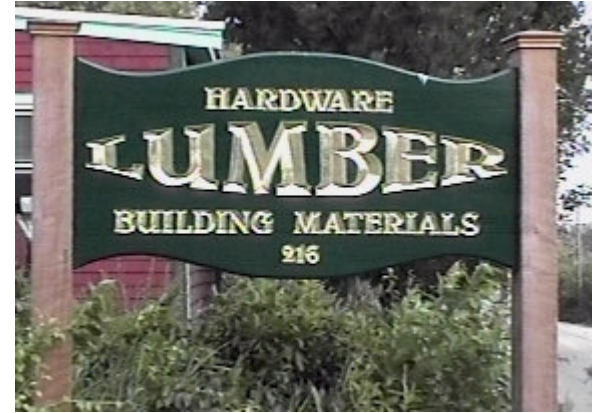
SIGNS ON PLAZA DESIGN A THEME



PROFESSIONAL SERVICES



SPECIALTY RETAILERS



MATCH SIGN TO THE ARCHITECTURAL ELEMENTS



THEME FOR TOWN OFFICES AND SERVICES