



**WOONSOCKET MAIN STREET**

**Design Guidelines**

Prepared for **The City of Woonsocket**  
by **The Cecil Group**  
Approved by the Woonsocket Planning Board **October 2015**



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# 1 INTRODUCTION

These Design Guidelines have been assembled to serve as a resource for renovation projects and new development in the Main Street Area of Woonsocket. The guidelines focus on the aspects of architecture, site improvements, and signage that are critical to preserving and building upon Woonsocket's unique sense of place.

## A Purpose

These Design Guidelines are intended to assist everyone engaged in projects to restore and improve Woonsocket's Main Street Area through reinvestment in the exterior of buildings, in new signage and in site improvements. The Guidelines provide a framework of desirable design characteristics that will enhance the attractiveness and value of the entire district, as well as the individual building and sites that compose the downtown. Specific purposes for the Design Guidelines include:

- **Design resource** – Assisting owners, designers, and builders by providing a resource of ideas, principles, and references to appropriate methods to enhance the appearance of their improvement projects.
- **Review criteria** – Providing criteria for review, recommendations, and decisions in the administration of the Design Review Overlay District.
- **Guidance for City projects** – Providing guidance in the design of improvements for City-owned projects, or projects that include municipal funding, financing or other direct City participation.
- **Enhanced economic value** – The design guidelines are intended to support a consistent quality and enhance the character of the buildings and sites, with particular emphasis on the pedestrian environment and the visual quality of the district as a whole. This interest is directly linked to the economic value for the entire community, as well as for the businesses and property owners. A more consistently appealing downtown that respects the distinctive historic buildings and heritage of the community will create a more desirable place to shop, live, work, and visit.
- **Historic preservation and adaptive reuse** – Woonsocket's historic buildings and structures are cultural and historic resources that should be preserved and enhanced to provide for contemporary use wherever it is practical. These Guidelines indicate how the value of the existing historic buildings can be respected, restored, or enhanced through thoughtful design.
- **Flexibility** – As guidelines, the purpose of this document is to provide shared, consistent bases for advancing and reviewing a wide range of projects. However, they are not intended as invariable formulas, because the circumstances of individual buildings and sites vary considerably and innovative solutions are often needed. The guidelines are intended to

provide reasonable flexibility, so that innovative methods can be applied where they may best solve individual project needs. Alternative design approaches should be considered and used if they serve the same underlying principles and ideas expressed within these guidelines so that the resulting design reinforces the overall quality and coherence of the Main Street Area as an historic and valuable district.

## B Applicability

The Design Guidelines have been assembled to support several specific applications, as well as being a useful general resource.

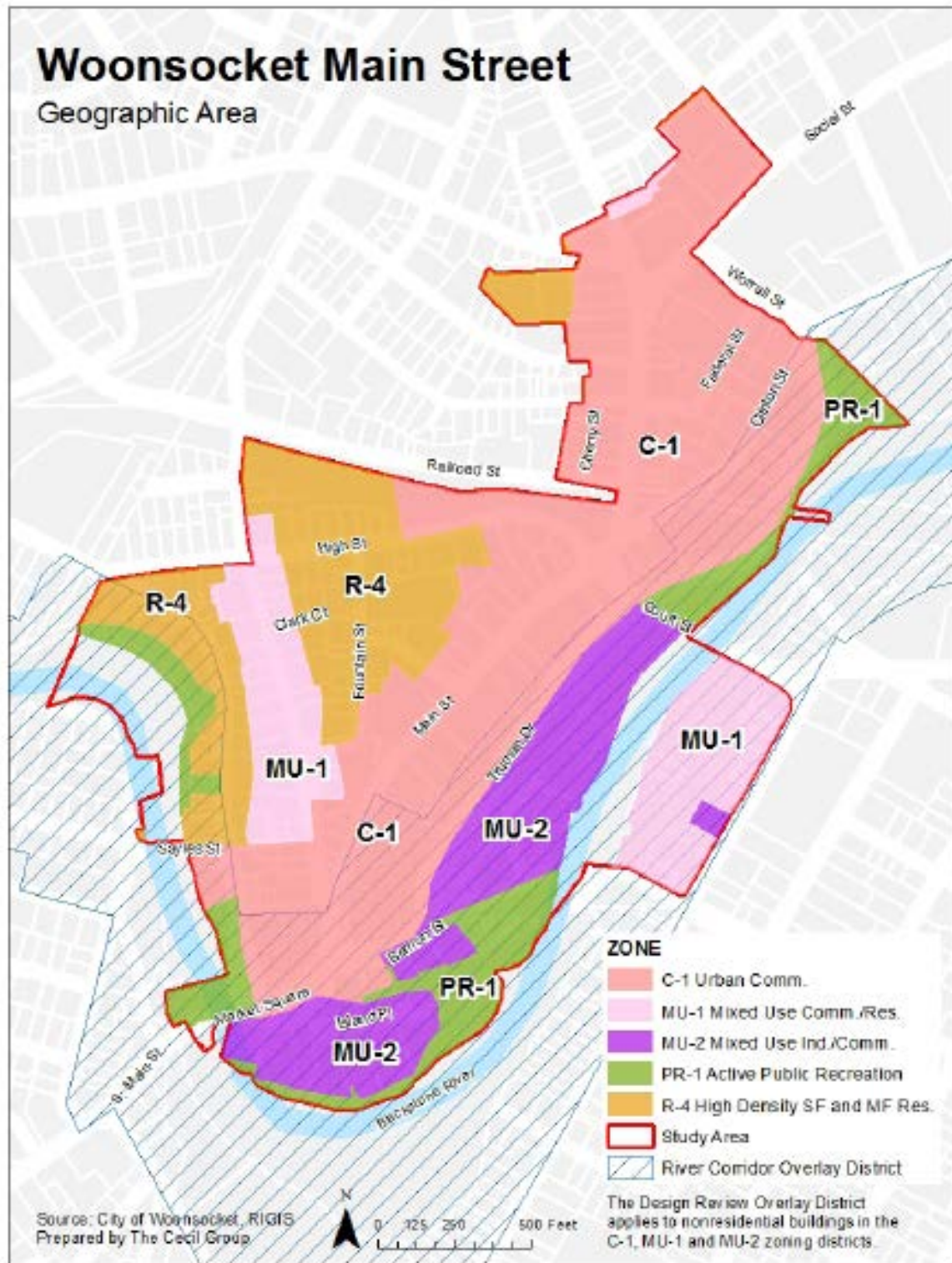
- **Geographic area** – The Guidelines are intended to be used in the Woonsocket Main Street Area. This area includes zoning districts C-1, C-2, MU-1, and MU-2. The geographic boundaries may be revised, depending upon the types of programs and initiatives that Woonsocket undertakes over time.
- **Project type** – The Guidelines apply to improvements to existing nonresidential buildings, all new construction, site improvements, and signage.
- **Grant or loan programs** – These Guidelines can be used to support the activities and decisions in the administration of grant improvement programs within the City. In particular, they may be used to implement funding and grants obtained through Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) sources, but are equally applicable to any type of similar program and funding sources that the City administers.
- **Other programs and initiatives** – The guidelines may also apply to other programs or approval processes that the City advances in the future, if it is determined that they are useful for those purposes.

## C Relationship to Other Codes and Regulations

Renovation and construction projects are subject to a wide range of codes, regulations, and legal standards that address many essential topics that are not the subject of these Design Guidelines. The owners, designers, and builders of a project must comply with all of the applicable requirements. In the event that there is a conflict between the directions provided in this document, established code or regulatory standards must be respected.

It is important to underline the importance of complying with the City ordinances including zoning. For example, Section 6.1 of The City of Woonsocket's *Zoning Ordinances* puts forth specific sign regulations for different districts within the City. In addition, other relevant sections of the Zoning ordinances may include Section 5, Parking and Loading Regulations and Section 6.2 Screening and Fencing, or other sections.





**FIGURE 1.** Woonsocket Main Street Geographic Area

## D Design Context

The Main Street Area has several historic storefronts, former mills and wealthy owners' homes dating from the American Industrial Revolution that are culturally significant resources for the community and the region. Much of the City's architecture has remained remarkably intact, but since the decline of the manufacturing industry in the 1930's, many of these buildings have become vacant or underutilized. Demolished structures have been replaced with large paved parking areas or left undeveloped. While vacancies and empty land pose issues, they are also an opportunity for adaptive reuse and new development.



FIGURE 2. Historic Stadium Building and Theater



FIGURE 3. Museum of Work and Culture

# 2 ARCHITECTURE

## A Architectural Style

The Woonsocket Main Street Area is comprised of a mix of 19th and 20th century architecture styles. New buildings and additions or alterations to existing buildings should be consistent with the original architectural style and the principles of composition that are typically associated with that style as evidenced in precedents and relevant examples.

### 1 New Buildings

- a) **Context Sensitivity** – The façade, or primary building elevation, of new construction shall be compatible with the façade design of neighboring buildings so as to create continuity across projects and the street edge. Primary building façades with frontage along the street shall be sensitive to the existing context of building façades along that street.
- b) **Design Elements** – At least two of the following design elements should be repeated in adjacent buildings, excluding parking structures: design treatment at the ground level, relative location and size of doors, window style and proportions, location of signs, dominant façade material, dominant color, bay window style, and roof form. There shall be a direct vertical correspondence between the design of the façade of the upper floors and the ground level retail façades. New construction and substantial rehabilitation of properties adjacent to public open spaces shall be oriented to define the edges of those open spaces and provide a transparent ground floor to activate the public space.
- c) **Multiple Storefronts** – In the case of buildings that have multiple tenancies and storefronts, an overall architectural framework should be apparent that helps link the component parts, but different architectural styles may be expressed for the different tenancies and storefronts.

### 2 Additions & Alterations to Existing Buildings

- a) **Compatibility and Integration** – Additions and alterations to existing buildings should be integrated into the existing building composition and façade organization. In some cases, replacement of elements or new elements may be needed. However, replacement or new elements should restore the original expression of the façade and be consistent with the underlying style – although contemporary materials and components may be appropriate if they are visually compatible with the historic components.

- b) **Design Principles when Restoration is not Viable** – In other cases, the underlying style may be damaged beyond pragmatic restoration, or the building’s style is incompatible with the other purposes of these Guidelines. In those cases, the project design should adopt an appropriate and coherent design vocabulary drawn from recognized styles, which may include contemporary practices and trends as well as historic inspirations.

### 3 Historic Buildings

- a) **Preservation** – Historic buildings within Woonsocket’s Main Street Area should be preserved and rehabilitated consistent with the *Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*.
- b) **Expansion** – Massing and form for any expansion of historic buildings should enhance the historic and architectural elements of the existing building and reinforce the preservation of the historic portion of the building through context-sensitive design.

## B Building Massing

The building massing within the Woonsocket Main Street Area should be varied to create a range of building sizes, configurations and roof forms. Highly-repetitive and overly-simplified building forms should be avoided. Building massing should respect the scale, configuration and form of adjacent properties and harmonize with their context. Buildings should be oriented to address the primary street frontage of the site and respond to distinguishing site features, such as primary intersections or views.

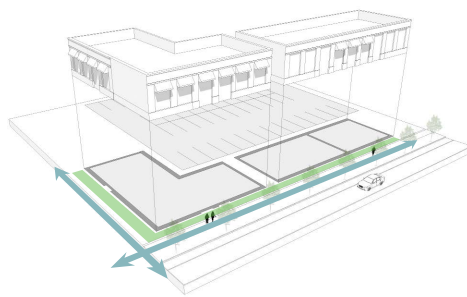
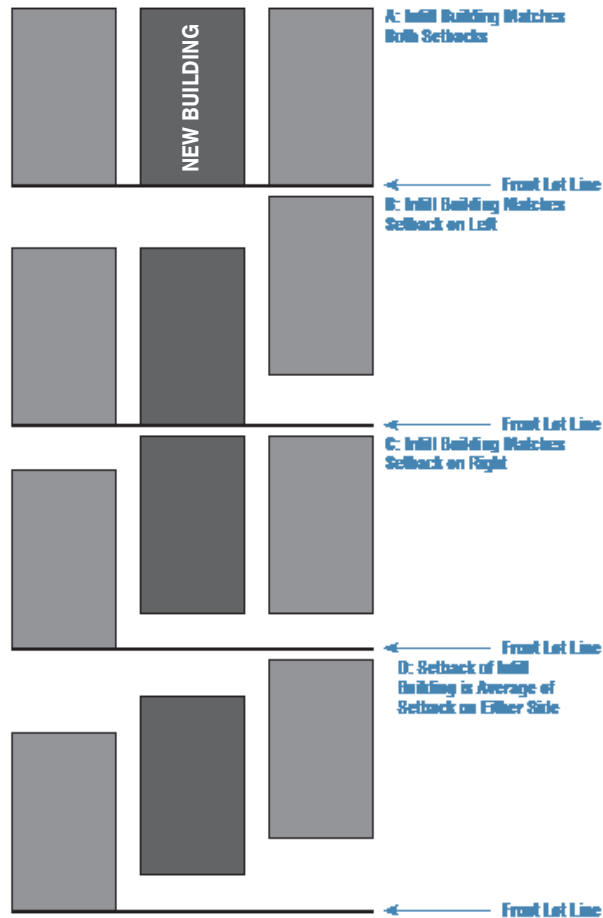
### 1 Forms

- a) **Legibility** – Building massing should be designed to provide a consistent and legible organization of forms that reflects the use of the building, articulates multiple building stories, responds to the context and site conditions, and treats the organization of the building consistently.
- b) **Emphasis** – Building form should be designed to place emphasis on important contextual features, such as a prominent street corner or intersection. When such a contextual feature exists, the building form should directly address that feature. For example, at a prominent street corner or intersection, the building form should address both street frontages of the intersection and place a vertical emphasis in the building form at the corner. Even within a one-story building, a two-story entry space at the corner may emphasize an important site feature.

- c) **Scale** – The scale of proposed new or substantially rehabilitated buildings shall be compatible with the surrounding architecture and landscape context. Elements that may help to relate building massing proportionally shall include the following: articulated building bases through a change in material or color; placement of windows in a regular pattern; articulation of building entries with canopies, porches, or awnings; and façade and roof projections (such as bay windows or dormers).
- d) **Proportion** – The proportions of building elements shall be generally compatible with existing structures and the features and components of the façade.
- e) **Height** – Infill buildings shall continue the patterns of height of adjacent existing properties. Where the discrepancy between the proposed height and existing height patterns is greater than ten feet, the Design Review Committee shall evaluate design proposals with the applicant for context sensitivity based upon the following: articulation of façade; building mass, scale, bulk and proportion; or other building massing considerations.

## 2 Placement and Orientation

- a) **Building Placement** – Buildings shall be placed on the site to define the edges of streets and public spaces. Building placement shall respect existing patterns of building placement for the street on which they are located. The individuality of the building shall be subordinated to the overall continuity of the streets and public spaces. Buildings shall be placed to conceal parking at the interior or rear of building lots.
- b) **Building Orientation** – Buildings shall be oriented with the primary building façade(s) facing the primary street frontage(s) of the site. Building massing and façades shall be designed to frame streets and public spaces to provide a sense of spatial enclosure and to define street edges. Building entrances, storefronts and windows shall be oriented to the primary streets with transparency to streets and public spaces.
- c) **Building Setbacks** – Building setbacks shall be in accordance with the City of Woonsocket Zoning Ordinance. Infill buildings shall continue patterns of setbacks and street edge treatments of adjacent existing properties and maintain the continuity of existing patterns of use. If the setbacks do not match, the infill building may match one or the other, or may be an average of the two setbacks, as shown in the following example:



**FIGURE 4.** Acknowledge corner sites and multiple frontages

**d) Design Treatment of Edges** – Buildings that are not physically adjoined to abutters shall treat side yards and the spaces between buildings in a manner consistent with existing patterns of use, in terms of setbacks and use. Landscaping shall be used to define street edges and to buffer and screen edges that may have a negative visual impact, such as parking or loading areas. Access driveways and curb cuts using side yards may be combined between adjoining properties to access parking for multiple buildings at the interior of the block.

### 3 Corner Buildings

**a) Location** – Corner buildings within the Main Street Area are of particular importance as they have the ability to define two street edges and an intersection. Building massing at street corners shall acknowledge and address the street corner by defining both street edges. Architectural definition of the street corner shall be a recognizable component of the building design.

**b) Definition** – The corner may be defined positively by placing the building with built edges at the corner or negatively by framing an open space at the corner with built edges setback from the

corner and the provision of a landscaped plaza or other appropriate surfacing.

## 4 Roofs

- a) **Roof Forms** – Large, unbroken expanses of roof shall be articulated at least every one hundred feet, or at a shorter length compatible with adjacent or facing buildings, by interrupting the cornice or roofline, providing variation in roof form, or by architectural components (see c) for examples).
- b) **Roof Materials** – Roofing materials visible from public sidewalks or streets shall be of high quality and durable, including, but not limited to: slate, copper, ceramic slate tile, clay tile, concrete tile, or ribbed metal or architectural asphalt shingle. Flat horizontal roofs are exempted from this standard. Roofing materials shall not call undue attention to the roof itself with bright or contrasting colors, unless historically documented.
- c) **Roof Features** – Roof features that may be used to reduce the scale of large expanses of open roof areas include dormers, cupolas, parapets, cornice lines, skylights, atriums, chimneys or mechanical penthouses.

## C Façades

The composition and components of building façades within Woonsocket Main Street Area should be consistent with the architectural styles within the district, and should be consistently applied based upon several important underlying design concepts. Façades should be varied from building to building and potentially could vary within the same building to respond to orientation and site context. However, each façade should be composed with its own stylistic integrity and design logic. The chosen style should be suited to the building type and scale. In the case of an existing historic structure, the integrity of its architectural style should be preserved and enhanced. In the case of large, multi-building developments, styles or expressions within a style should vary among the constituent buildings.

# 1 Façade Composition

- a) **Articulation and Scale** – Building scale should be moderated by articulation of the façade. Larger scale development or building façades should be reduced in overall impact by variation in building massing and façade articulation. Façades should be articulated to differentiate between the base, middle and top. The configuration of architectural components should be composed to relate to the pedestrian environment and reinforce the human scale of the building. Façade treatments and articulation should wrap the corners of the primary façade to be part of the design of secondary façades. Buildings located at a corner site should be designed with two primary façades. Ground-level façades in non-commercial buildings should be articulated in such a way that they are visually compatible with adjacent commercial storefronts and maintain an active and inviting street level façade.
- b) **Pattern of Doors and Windows** – The pattern of doors and windows in a façade helps create human scale and provide a high level of visibility and transparency that creates an interesting experience for pedestrians, and in the case of retail spaces, draws them into the interior spaces.

Door and window patterns and openings from the original architectural style should be preserved or restored, including conservation and repair to preserve historical details. Storefronts should fit within the building frame as formed by columns, piers and cornices. The reference point for a building that has been heavily altered may be a similar building in downtown. Windows that have been closed off or reduced in size from inappropriate prior renovations should be opened up to restore the original façade transparency. Common inappropriate changes that should be reversed are arched window openings that have been replaced with inappropriate rectangular windows, multi-paned windows where some of the glass panes have been replaced with solid metal or wood panes, and multi-paned windows where a single-paned or double-paned window is more appropriate.

The most prominent door should be the one leading to ground-level space. For buildings with multiple ground-floor occupants, entries should be integrated into a coordinated ground-floor façade composition, with similar materials, signage, and ornamentation.

- c) **Transparency** – Building façades facing the primary frontage should have at least 25 percent of the overall façade area devoted to transparent windows and at least 40 percent of the ground floor façade area devoted to transparent windows. In a multiple story, mixed-use building, ground level articulation should clearly differentiate the ground floor from other upper floor uses with a



difference in the scale and type of window openings and a more transparent treatment of the ground floor.



**FIGURE 5.** Building façades should have high transparency at the street-facing ground floor, in order to create a connection to sidewalks.

## 2 Façade Components

- a) **Entries and Doors** – Doors to ground-floor spaces should be largely transparent: at least fifty percent (50%) of the door area should be clear glazing. All-glass doors are traditional and appropriate for many buildings in Woonsocket. Doors to upper-story uses may have a simpler design than doors to ground-floor spaces. Fully-opaque doors, or doors with small lites, are appropriate for entries to upper-level residential spaces or basements and mechanical rooms. However, doors that lead to upper-story commercial spaces should be at least fifty percent (50%) transparent, to make those spaces more inviting for clients or customers.
- b) **Materials** – Building materials should be selected to be compatible with or complementary to the surrounding context. Materials should be of a high quality; materials with known maintenance or deterioration issues should be avoided. Traditional and natural building materials that typically are composed of a human-scaled module reinforce a pedestrian scale in the building. Materials such as masonry, wood, and stone consistently perform well if properly installed. Contemporary glass and glazing products are also reliable and attractive. Exposed concrete or exterior composite materials should be employed with caution to avoid unarticulated and overly simplified buildings.

- c) **Windows** – Ground-floor windows should remain largely transparent so as to visually connect pedestrians to the businesses within. Ground-level window openings should occupy at least forty (40) percent of the ground-floor façade area in buildings with ground-floor commercial or retail space. Items should not be placed in storefront windows that block views to internal activity, such as the backs of display cases, unless they are part of a display to the outside sidewalk or street.

On ground-floor windows, reflective, mirrored, tinted, and smoked glass are all prohibited. For very limited portions of a façade with mechanical or storage areas behind glass, acceptable screening materials include translucent, etched, or spandrel glass.

**FIGURE 6.** Large, clear ground-floor retail windows visually draw pedestrians inside. Transom windows further increase the light into the building.

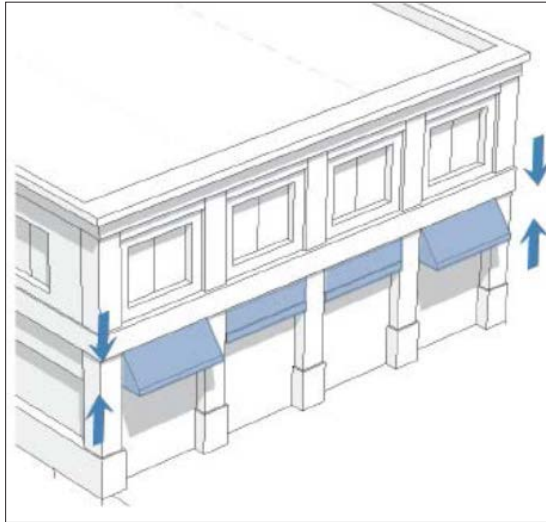


Blinds and curtains should be prohibited on ground-floor façades, so that the transparency that makes downtown streets interesting for pedestrians is maintained. If a ground-floor non-retail business, such as a doctor's office, desires privacy, it should reconfigure its interior space to place lobbies, corridors, meeting rooms, and other common spaces adjacent to street-facing windows, and move private offices to the rear.

On the other hand, perforated "solar shade" style blinds that reduce direct sunlight and glare and UV rays are permitted provided that they are rated for at least 10 percent openness and are fully retractable.

Upper-floor windows should occupy at least twenty-five percent (25%) of each upper-floor façade area.

Upper-floor windows for residential space should use roller blinds or curtains for privacy, rather than plastic slatted vertical blinds which create a commercial or institutional appearance.



**FIGURE 7.** Awning placement should relate to the rhythm of windows and doors.

**d) Awnings** – An awning is a fabric structure mounted upon a metal framework used to provide shelter from sun and rain. The following guidelines apply.

- **Placement** – The placement of awnings should relate to the structural bays of the building that are established by the rhythm of the ground-floor windows and entryways. Awnings should not obscure important building elements such as pilasters or columns, but rather should be placed between these framing elements. In the case of buildings with clerestory windows, awnings may be placed above or below these smaller windows, depending on factors such as the slope of the awning, the necessary vertical clearance, and the building's architectural character. Awnings are discouraged on upper-story windows. Multiple awnings on a single building should be located at the same height on the façade and mounted with the same placement relative to façade and structural elements.
- **Mounting** – Awning mounting hardware and frames should be hidden from front and side view by the fabric.
- **Size and Shape** – Awnings should not extend over the public sidewalk to a depth of more than four (4) feet. Valances and side panels are optional. The rigid framework of awnings should be at least eight (8) feet above the sidewalk, and suspended fabric valances should be at least seven (7) feet above the sidewalk. Fluted, curving, bullnose, or rounded awnings are discouraged.



**FIGURE 8.** Example of a canopy added to a traditional building to provide shelter and help define dining space.

as they look dated and often obscure too much of the building architecture. Awning valances, if used, should have flat edges, not fluted. On multi-tenant buildings, multiple awnings may vary in content (e.g., different lettering or logos), but should be of consistent color, design, material, fabrication type, size, and profile.

- **Materials** – Opaque canvas fabric is preferred. Vinyl or plastic or similar shiny material is discouraged. Transparent or translucent awnings are also discouraged.
  - **Lettering and Graphics** – See the Signage section for more information.
- e) **Canopies** – A canopy is a flat structure (horizontal or sloping), traditionally made of metal, which cantilevers outwards from a façade above the ground floor and projects over all or part of the sidewalk. Canopies are sometimes supported from the top by cables attached to the façade. Canopies provide an opportunity for complementing the architecture, provide a place for lighting and signage, and cover the sidewalk from rain and snow. The following guidelines apply:
- **Placement** – The placement of canopies should relate to the structural bays of the building that are established by the rhythm of the ground-floor windows and entryways. If used, canopies should at a minimum shelter the principal ground-floor entryway, and optionally may also extend to shelter windows and the entire façade. The placement should not conceal or require removal of architectural ornaments or features that are an attractive and appropriate part of the façade, but should be placed above, below, or between them.
  - **Mounting** – Canopies should be structurally cantilevered from the building. If necessary for function or appearance, cable wires providing addition support from the top are acceptable, but poles and columns should not be used to support the canopy from underneath.
  - **Size and Shape** – Canopies should project no more than four (4) feet from the building façade. They should have straight or gently rounded corners. The canopy should be at least eight (8) feet above the sidewalk at all points.
  - **Materials** – Metal framework (often visible) with metal, glass, or wood sheathing should be fabricated with materials that are coordinated with the colors and character of the canopy and façade, and should be of durable materials which are vandal resistant because of their mounding height and sturdiness.
  - **Lettering and Graphics** – See the Signage section for more information



**FIGURE 9.** A typical theater marquee including venue name and changeable copy.

**f) Marquees** – Marquees are bold projecting elements that include graphic signs, often with dimensional lettering and/or logos. They traditionally were common for theaters. The following guidelines apply:

- **Purpose** – Marquees are not a common feature of downtown buildings, and should be used sparingly. They may be used if a signature, iconic façade is desired.
- **Mounting** – Vertical marquees should be installed only at the corners of buildings, corners of projecting bays, or above the center of the principal ground-floor entryway. Horizontal marquees should be located above the center of the principal ground-floor entryway, and may extend to cover all or a portion of the façade, in a manner similar to a canopy.
- **Size and Shape** – Marquee proportion may be horizontal (as is common for movie theater marquees that display the current films playing) or vertical (as is common to spell out the name of the theater or venue).
- **Materials** – Marquees should have a metal structure.
- **Lighting** – Marquees should be internally lit, or externally lit from concealed lighting sources.
- **Lettering and Graphics** – See the Signage section for more information.

**g) Ornamentation** – Building façades should be most richly ornamented at the ground level, in order to establish a human scale to the building and enliven the sidewalk experience for pedestrians. Architectural and structural elements of the building should have raised detailing. Flat façade areas may also be embellished with texture and detailing. Restoration should be compatible with the

character and architectural style of the building and reinforce the human-scaled aspects of the building design.

- **Architectural Elements** – Suggested detailing around architectural and structural elements includes, but is not limited to, the following: wood, stone, or metal framing around doors and windows and stone or masonry accents on columns, pilasters, and at corners and the base of the buildings.
- **Flat Elements** – Flat areas of façades should have traditional or the appearance of traditional materials such as wood paneling, brickwork, masonry, or plaster. Discrete, framed areas (such as the base of the building, the area inside recessed entries, or sign panels) may be further enriched with ornamentation such as tilework, decorative brick banding, and inlays. Above windows, cornice lines and belt courses are sometimes appropriate depending on the building architecture.

#### h) Materials

- **Appropriate Materials** – Building façade materials should be harmonious with original building materials and the traditional styles of downtown Woonsocket. Appropriate façade materials include brick, stone (particularly for detailing on columns), masonry, fiber cement siding, cast iron, steel, tilework (particularly at the base of façades), decorative stone or plaster medallions (placed symmetrically on the façade), and glass. No more than three different materials should be used as primary façade materials; additional materials may be used sparingly for accent.
- **Application at Corners and Reveals** – Applied façade materials should be extended around building corners and extensions, or used only in recessed bays, in order to avoid a “pasted-on” appearance. Any panelized façade covering mimicking brick should be applied in a manner that blends together and disguises any visible seams between panels.

- i) **Color** – The palette of colors should draw from the traditional, older buildings in downtown Woonsocket. Brick and brownstone red, greys, muted yellow and buff tones, and muted greens and blues are most appropriate. No more than two or three colors should be used in a building’s façade.

Gold and silver are appropriate accent colors. Bright colors should be limited to accent areas such as trim, details, and small areas of lettering or logos.

- j) **Lighting** – The Lighting should render building colors correctly. Lighting should be in the white spectrum, and sodium and

fluorescent light sources should be avoided. Lighting should not cast glare onto streets, public ways, or onto adjacent properties.

- **Façade Lighting** – Façade lighting is encouraged as a method to subtly highlight and accent interesting features in a building’s structural and architectural form as seen from principal vantage points. The source for façade lighting should have limited or no visual impact on the façade. Lighting should be from concealed lighting fixtures; luminaires should not be directly visible from view of the sidewalk or street.
- **Entrance Lighting** – Entrances may be lit with sconces on one or both sides of a door, or in the case of recessed entries, with overhead lights.
- **Display Lighting** – At night, display windows should be lit from within to make the merchandise display a form of store advertising and add light and interest to the sidewalk.
- **Holiday Lighting** – Holiday lighting is encouraged within storefront window displays, on doorways, and on exterior façades. Holiday lighting should rely on electrical sockets and support brackets that are permanently installed in the façade. Electrical extension cords and temporary, low-quality supports such as tape and wires should be avoided because they create a disorganized appearance and are potential source of pedestrian trips and falls.

#### k) Mechanical Equipment

- **Location and Size** – Through-the-wall air conditioners should be installed flush with the façade, rather than projecting.

Roof-mounted mechanical equipment such as air conditioning, heating units, exhaust fans and the like should be concealed from street-level public vantage points within architectural components consistent with the style of the associated building.

- **Screening** – Wall-mounted mechanical equipment should be screened with louvered covers in the same color as the adjoining façade. Logos and brand names for air conditioners are discouraged, and should not exceed one inch in height.

#### l) Façade-Mounted Plantings

- **Hanging Plants** – Façades should be enlivened with potted hanging plants placed between window and door openings. Such hanging plants should not project more than eighteen inches (18”) from the façade, and should not interfere with pedestrian movements.

- **Window Boxes** – Window box planters are recommended to bring additional greenery to façades. The planters should not extend beyond the sides of the window openings.

**FIGURE 10.** Window box planters can enliven a window.





# 3 SIGNAGE

## A Relationship to Existing Regulations

The City of Woonsocket's *Zoning Ordinance*, Section 6.1, Sign Regulations, provides detailed standards for allowable and prohibited signage types. These ordinances include information about the amount and type of signs permitted in each zoning district including the R-4, C-1, MU-1, and MU-2 districts that make up the Main Street Area. This section provides additional guidelines for the City's permitted signs to supplement the Zoning or ordinances.

### 1 Signage Types in Zoning Ordinance

- a) **Signs Permitted in all Districts** – Directional Signs, For Sale, Lease or Rent Signs, Government Agency Signs, Political Signs, and Temporary Construction Signs.
- b) **Signs Prohibited in all Districts** – Billboards, roof signs, two wheel portable signs with a marquee and/or with or without an arrow, strobe lights, light bulb strings, streamers, spinners and devices similar in nature, and all moving, flashing, rotating or blinking signs shall be prohibited in all zoning districts, except that signs indicating time and temperature, and traditional barber poles shall be permitted in conformance with all other regulations of this ordinance, and temporary holiday decorations shall be permitted in all districts for a period of up to sixty (60) days per year. The use of fencing for advertising purposes shall be prohibited in all districts.
- c) **Signs Permitted in R-1, R-2, R-3 and R-4 Districts** – Banners, Freestanding Signs, Pennant Strings, Subdivision or Housing Complex Signs, and Wall Signs.
- d) **Signs Permitted in MU-1 Districts** – A-Frame Signs, Awning or Canopy Signs, Banners, Credit Card Signs, Directory Signs, Free-standing Signs, Information Flags, Pennant Strings, Projecting Signs, and Wall Signs.
- e) **Signs Permitted in C-1, C-2, MU-2, I-1 and I-2 Districts** – A-Frame Signs, Awning or Canopy Signs, Banners, Credit Card Signs, Directory Signs, Free-Standing Signs, Information Flags, Menu Boards, Pennant Strings, Projecting Signs, Under Canopy Signs, and Wall Signs.

## 2 Intent of Design Guidelines for Signage

- a) **Supplemental Role** – The intent of the following signage guidelines is to provide additional assistance in shaping the appearance and character of signs in order to foster a high-quality, downtown environment in Woonsocket. These guidelines supplement the zoning requirements, and are not intended to conflict with any aspect of the zoning.

## B General Guidelines for all Signage Types

In general, well-designed signs increase the visual quality and character of the business being served as well as the image of the Woonsocket as a whole. Because they are viewed publicly, signs can either add or detract from the downtown image. Additionally, well-designed signage helps to unify the street-front or building façade by creating an organized pattern of information. Signage design can activate a building’s façade by introducing color and texture.

### 1 Role of Signs

- a) **Identification** – The primary function of a sign is to identify a property or business and to direct customers clearly and easily to the desired location.
- b) **Harmony** – Signage design should reflect the architectural qualities of the buildings and the Woonsocket Main Street Area. Within a Business Center or block, signs should be compatible with the



**FIGURE 11.** Wall signs and other sign types should be integrated into building façades to create a harmonious appearance.

buildings they serve in terms of type, size, color, and material. In a multiple storefront building, the signage should be of a size, location, material, and color that harmoniously relates storefront bays.

- c) **Restraint** – While the City’s ordinances may allow a business to erect more than one sign, the overall number of signs should be limited to that necessary to clearly and visibly convey the name of the establishment, institution, or use and the character of the goods or services being offered. Too many signs not only compete with each other and create repetitive advertising, but also detract from the appearance of buildings and the overall character of the downtown.

## 2 Location and Placement

- a) **Integration with Site** – At the site scale, signage should be integrated into the overall site design and be complementary in colors and materials with the buildings and landscape.
- b) **Integration with Buildings** – At the building scale, signs should not obscure architectural features of the buildings such as columns, windows, or recessed entries, but rather should be placed in a logical portion of the façade. Wall Signs typically should be placed in the sign band or entablature that extends in a consistent zone across the façade above the windows and doors. Wall Signs for buildings with multiple tenants should use a consistent height and line for the sign band.
- c) **Signage above the Second Story** – For buildings over one story in height, signage above the sills of second story windows should be confined to painted letters on window glass, and should only advertise the organizations therein.

## 3 Legibility

- a) **Hierarchy** – Where a building or business includes more than one sign, the sizes, placement, and design of signs should create a logical hierarchy of information from large, easy to read content for drivers to finer-grain, more detailed designs for pedestrians on adjacent walkways.
- b) **Appropriate Size** – The size of lettering on signs should be appropriate to the intended audience, whether drivers or pedestrians. For example, lettering on Directional Signs, such as those indicating the locations of parking lots, should be very clear and simple so as to be legible to drivers on the far side of the adjacent street, and easy to read amidst other distractions while driving. Lettering on Wall Signs on a building façade near a street should



**FIGURE 12.** Hanging signs and temporary chalkboard signs are appropriate for pedestrian-scaled signage.

be legible to pedestrians on the opposite sidewalk. Lettering on Hanging Signs and Window Signs, on the other hand, should be smaller because the text only needs to be legible from an adjacent sidewalk or plaza

- c) **Reflectivity** – Matte, flat materials should be used for opaque sign backgrounds to reduce reflective glare and enhance legibility.
- d) **Lighting** – Signs with opaque backgrounds should be lit from the exterior by wall-mounted, focused, directional lights such as goose neck lights or sconces. The lighting source should be shielded and the bulb exposure limited to that sufficient to illuminate the sign content.

Internally-lit signs should have a dark and opaque background; the lighted areas are only used for the lettering and/or logos.

Signage on doors and windows does not need additional lighting, because the interior business lighting will provide sufficient back lighting to render the text legible.

Per *Zoning Ordinance Section 6.1-4*, Exterior signs, if illuminated, shall be so arranged as to reflect light away from adjoining properties and/or streets, and shall not be located within twenty-five (25) feet of any residential district boundary line.

## 4 Materials and Design

- a) **Durability** – All permanent signs should be of durable materials compatible with the materials of the building served. Their weight and form should convey a sense of substance and permanence.
- b) **Dimensionality** – To encourage visual interest in Wall Signs, dimensional signs that create shadow lines (such as carved relief signs or Individual Letter Signs) are encouraged.
- c) **Openness** – For the best quality appearance, Window Signs and signs in glazed entry doors should be screened or painted directly onto the glass. Such signs should be “airy,” with letters and graphics generously spaced so as to preserve the view into the ground-floor space.
- d) **Compatibility** – Typefaces used in signage should be compatible with the building architectural style, and with any other signs used in the same building or Business Center.
- e) **Colors** – Colors for signage should be tasteful and muted, compatible with the traditional historic downtown character. No more than two or three colors should be used. Classic, historic, and muted colors are ideal – black, brown, white, gold and silver,

dark blue, red. The use of bright colors – such as yellow or pink – should be reserved for accent color only. Neon is prohibited except on marquees.

## C Guidelines for Specific Signage Types

The following guidelines put forth recommendations for specific signage types. These guidelines are intended to supplement signage types that are in the current zoning and to additionally give recommendations for signage types that are not currently addressed in the zoning ordinances.

### 1 Building Signs

#### a) Building Identification Signs

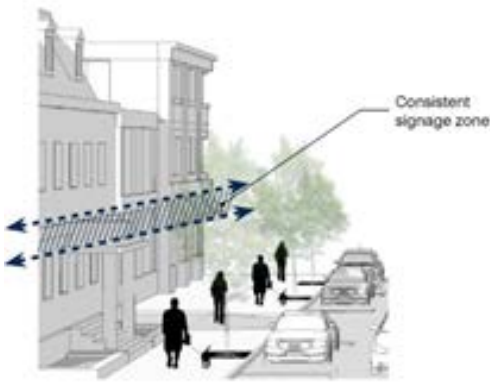
- **Purpose** – Building identification signs may list any or all of the following: the building address, building name, and the building owner or property manager.
- **Location** – Building Identification signs should be located on the front façade, within the ground floor level, next to an entrance to the building.
- **Mounting Type** – Mounting hardware should be concealed.
- **Size** – Only one building identification sign is permitted per building, not to exceed one square foot in size.
- **Materials** – Building identification signs should be made of a durable material such as metal, wood, or composite. The weight and form should convey a sense of substance and permanence.

#### b) Street Address Number Signs

- **Purpose** – Street address numbers should be provided on all buildings, or at all storefront entrances having different address numbers, in order to aid in navigation.
- **Location** – Address numbers should be painted upon the glazed portion of a door, applied or affixed to solid doors, or mounted on the façade near the primary entrance.
- **Mounting Type** – Painted, screw-mounted, or screened.
- **Size** – Numbers should be legible from the far side of the street. The suggested height is four to six inches high.
- **Materials** – Against an opaque background, numbers should be individual metal figures pin-mounted to the façade or punched from a metal panel that is mounted to the façade. Interior-lit plastic numbers are permitted as well. When used on a glazed background, address numbers should be painted or screened.



**FIGURE 13.** Example of an attractive wall-mounted street address sign



**FIGURE 14.** Adjacent wall signs should be placed in a consistent sign band on the façade

### c) Building Plaque Signs

- **Purpose** – To indicate the building’s architectural provenance, namely the year of construction, the architect or builder, and original purpose or occupants.
- **Location** – On front or side façade, within the ground level of the building.
- **Mounting Type** – Flush mounted to façade.
- **Size** – Not to exceed one square foot.
- **Materials** – For durability, building plaques must be made of metal. Suggested materials are bronze, stainless steel, cast iron, or other metal.
- **Colors** – In addition to the general color guidelines above, no more than two colors, including the background materials and the lettering, should be used. Colors should be subdued and discreet, for example black-rubbed letters on a brass plaque.

### d) Façade/Wall Signs

- **Purpose** – To identify the name of the occupant of the building, typically a retail or other commercial tenant, in a flat area on the façade designed to be legible to pedestrians on the far sidewalk of the street, as well as drivers.
- **Location** – Façade signs should be affixed flat to the building façade. Typically, they are placed in the sign band or entablature that extends in a consistent zone across the façade above the windows and doors. Buildings having such signage areas should place the most prominent signage here. Signs should not obscure architectural features of the buildings such as columns, windows, or recessed entries. Signs for buildings with multiple tenants should use a consistent height and line for the sign band. Signage should not be placed on the upper façade of multi-story buildings.
- **Mounting Type** – Individual pin-mounted letters, or letters painted on or affixed to a signage board. Dimensional signs (such as carved relief or individually-pin-mounted lettering) are encouraged.
- **Size** – Façade signs area should not exceed the size limits set forth for Wall Signs in Section 6.1 of the Zoning Ordinances.
- **Materials** – Sign materials should be compatible with the materials of the façade. They should be easily-maintainable and capable of withstanding climate variations. Painted wood or



**FIGURE 15.** Wall Signs with individually-cut and mounted letters add dimension to the signage. Exterior gooseneck lighting provides appropriate downlighting of the signage

metal is the preferred background, and letters may be painted, carved into wood, or individually mounted.

**e) Door Signs**

- **Purpose** – Door signs provide the name of the business(es) using that door at pedestrian eye-height.
- **Location** – At eye-height for each door to a retail business.
- **Mounting Type** – Door signs may be on a hanging sign mounted on the inside of the door, or painted, screened, or etched upon the glazing.
- **Size** – Door signs should not exceed one square foot in area.
- **Materials** – Screened or painted onto glass

**f) Window Signs**

- **Purpose** – Window signs present the name of the ground-floor business, typically a retail store, and sometimes the logo or graphic associated with the business name. For example, a café might have its name as well as a stylized coffee cup.
- **Location** – Window signs should be painted or screened on the inside of retail or storefront-style windows.
- **Mounting Type** – Decals or painted lettering and graphics that permit views into the interior space.
- **Size** – No more than one sign for each window. The sign should be “airy,” with letters and graphics generously spaced so as to preserve the view into the ground-floor space even through a large sign. Alternately, a compact, largely opaque window sign should not occupy more than 10 percent (10%) of the glass area.
- **Materials** – Screened or painted onto glass.

- g) Building Mounted Menu Signs** – The size of Menu Boards should not exceed the size limits set forth for “Menu Boards” in Section 6.1 of the *Zoning Ordinances*. Menu boards should be sized appropriately for pedestrian use and be used to display menus, bulletins or photographs. Menu boards should be attached to an exterior building wall near the main entrance and be positioned to avoid obscuring or damaging architectural detail.

**h) Signs for Upper-story Uses**

- **Purpose** – Signage for upper-story commercial occupants identifies the business to pedestrians on the sidewalk. It is not intended to be legible from across the street or by a driver in a car.
- **Location** – Signage may be located on the door to the upper story, and should meet the guidelines for Door Signs, above. The



**FIGURE 16.** Example of a door sign that properly shows the business name painted upon the glass



**FIGURE 17.** Example of a menu board sized appropriately and well lit for pedestrian use



**FIGURE 18.** Example of a Hanging Sign that is symbolic and informational



**FIGURE 19.** Example of a Projecting Sign

names of any upper-story occupant(s) may also be included in one tenant sign per building, to be placed on the ground level façade, and meeting the guidelines for Building Identification Signs, above.

- **Size** – See the Section on Door Signs or the section on Building Identification Signs, as appropriate.
- **Materials** – See the Section on Door Signs or the section on Building Identification Signs, as appropriate.

## 2 Projecting and Hanging Signs

### a) Projecting Signs

- **Purpose** – Projecting signs, both lettered and symbolic, were common historically. Projecting Signs are generally two sided signs, suspended from an iron bracket or building element, mounted perpendicular to the face of the building.
- **Location** – Projecting signs should follow location requirements in Section 6.1 of the Zoning Ordinances. Additionally, they should not be located below any awning or canopy, and above or close to business entries. Alternately, hanging signs are permitted inside the window or door of a business.
- **Mounting type** – Projecting signs are immovable, fixed to the façade with brackets attached on one side. Hanging signs are secured to the façade, window, or door with chains or pins attached the top.
- **Size** – Projecting signs area should not exceed the size limits set forth for “Projecting Signs” in Section 6.1 of the Zoning Ordinances.
- **Materials** – It is recommended that the exposed surfaces of projecting signs may be constructed of metal or solid wood. The sign materials should be compatible with the face of the building and should be colorfast and resistant to corrosion. Interior-lit styles are discouraged.

### b) Awning Signs

- **Purpose** – Awning sign content should be limited to business names and/or logos identifying a permitted use. Other information should not be included on awnings.
- **Location** – Awning Signs may be provided on, along or extending from the front wall of a building where a flat façade sign is not possible above the ground-floor windows. Lettering and a logo may be located on the top awning panel. Lettering may also be located on the front valance, if it exists.
- **Size** – Awning signs area should not exceed the size limits set forth for “Awning or Canopy Signs” in Section 6.1 of the



Zoning Ordinances. Lettering on awning valances should leave “breathing room” space at top and bottom. Lettering should be spaced out across the valance rather than crowded together. Lettering on the top portion of an awning should be no more than 75 percent (75%) of the height and 50 percent (50%) of the width of the top plane.

- **Materials** – Awning signs should be painted or screened directly onto the fabric.
- **Color** – Lettering and logos on awnings should be provided in one color only, selected to enhance contrast and readability against the fabric background. White lettering should be used against dark awning colors, and black or a dark, muted color against a lighter-color awning.

### c) Canopy Signs

- **Purpose** – Canopy signs should be limited to the name of the building or business or the numerical building address. Logos and other graphics should not be included on canopies.
- **Location** – Canopy sign lettering should be mounted at on the top of the canopy, at the front edge.
- **Size** – Canopy signs area should not exceed the size limits set forth for “Awning or Canopy Signs” in Section 6.1 of the Zoning Ordinances. Lettering for canopy signs should not exceed two (2) feet in height. Width may vary with the information presented.
- **Materials** – Lettering should be in the form of individual, channel-cut characters of metal, wood, or composite. Internally-lit, translucent lettering is acceptable. Visible structural brackets or pins are encouraged, in keeping with the canopy character.
- **Colors** – Canopy sign lettering should use only one or two colors.

### d) Marquee Signs

- **Purpose** – Marquee sign painted on or attached to a marquee are intended to provide the venue or facility’s name as well as changeable copy related to current and future attractions.
- **Location** – Marquee signs should be located on marquees. No more than one marquee sign should appear upon a marquee, provided that the building does not also have a Façade Sign on the same façade.
- **Size** – If changeable copy is provided on the venue, the venue or facility name should not occupy more than roughly a third of the total marquee sign area. The changeable copy may occupy up to two-thirds of the total marquee sign area. If no changeable



**FIGURE 20.** Example of an Awning Sign with goose neck down lighting.



**FIGURE 21.** Example of Marquee Sign



**FIGURE 22.** Example of a Freestanding Sign

copy is provided on the marquee, the venue or facility name may occupy up to 75 percent (75%) of the sign area.

- **Materials** – Changeable copy should use moveable black lettering. Venue name may be rendered in neon tube or individually-shaped letters that are either internally-lit or lit from concealed external sources.
- **Colors** – Bright colors that draw from traditional neon colors are common for the venue/facility name on marquees. Changeable copy should be simple black lettering against a white background.

### 3 Site Signs

- Signage to Parking Areas** – Signage to rear parking areas should be visible from the middle of the street. The content of the sign should be easy to read amidst all the other distractions from a car driving down the street. A simple and iconic symbol such as a large blue “P” is often the most effective.
- Freestanding Signs** – Freestanding Signs should generally be limited to buildings that have a significant setback or are otherwise not visible from the street or sidewalk, or where other signage is not appropriate to the architecture. Freestanding signs should not obscure views of the building’s principal entry and should not be placed in a manner that obstructs pedestrian walkways. Signs should be set within a landscaped area when possible. Freestanding signs shall follow the size requirements set forth in Section 6.1 of the *Zoning Ordinances*.



**FIGURE 23.** Example of a temporary A-Frame Sign that identifies the business and hours open.

### 4 Temporary Signs

- A-Frame Signs** – A-Frame signs area should not exceed the size limits set forth for “A-Frame Signs” in Section 6.1 of the *Zoning Ordinances*. A-Frame signs should be unique to downtown Woonsocket, rather than generic, and should focus on identifying businesses, advertising merchandise or services within, providing direction and information, and adding liveliness to the streetscape. The signs should be located as to not obscure entrances or architectural features.
- Other Temporary Signs**
  - **Purpose** – Other Temporary Signs, such as pole signs, banners and construction signs should follow the regulations set forth in Section 6.1 of the *Zoning Ordinances*. The following additional guidelines are suggested below for these sign types.

- **Location** – Temporary signs can be hung inside ground-floor windows and doors to advertise temporary events, sales, and promotions. Temporary signs should not be hung on other areas of the façade.
- **Size** – Signs shall adhere to the size requirements put forth in Section 6.1 of the Zoning Ordinances. Temporary signs hung inside ground-floor windows should not exceed two feet in height, and should be placed below eye-height within the window or door. The total area of all such signs for each business at any one time should not exceed twenty percent (20%) of the business' glazed window and door area, or twenty (20) square feet, whichever is smaller.
- **Materials** – Signs may be printed on paper, vinyl, or other solid material, or screened directly on windows and doors. To maintain views into ground floor spaces, signs that consist only of lettering applied directly to the glazing are encouraged.
- **Duration** – Temporary Signs should not be posted for a period longer than one month.



# 4 SITE IMPROVEMENTS

## A Pedestrian Areas and Sidewalks

Downtown Woonsocket was built originally at a pedestrian scale and should continue to focus on maintaining and enhancing this walkable environment. Pedestrian connections, plazas, and seating areas are encouraged whenever feasible.



**FIGURE 24.** A pedestrian area with seating offers a refuge from the city.

### 1 Pedestrian Areas

- a) **Location** – Pedestrian areas and plazas should be located in the front, side or corner of a building and should be accessible, well lit, and provide opportunities for seating.
- b) **Materials** – The materials for pedestrian areas should be harmonious with the original traditional paving used in Woonsocket. These areas should be constructed of stone pavers, brick, concrete, or a combination of these.
- c) **Composition and Pattern** – Paving patterns should be of a traditional pattern and relate to the building façade and entries. Paving patterns such as running bond, basketweave, and herringbone are appropriate patterns for the downtown context.
- d) **Lighting** – Pedestrian areas should be adequately lit with pedestrian-scaled lighting, such as street lamps, bollard lights, or recessed lighting. See Site Lighting Section for more detail.



**FIGURE 25.** Example of a brick paved sidewalk that maintains good balance

## 2 Sidewalks

- a) **Size** – A sidewalk should be provided along the lot’s frontage on a street or streets. The sidewalk should be a minimum of eight (8) feet wide. Along Main Street, the sidewalk should remain at its current width of approximately fourteen (14) feet. This width provides a good balance between the pedestrian and retail functions of the streetscape.
- b) **Pedestrian Connections** – Where the sidewalk does not abut a building, pedestrian walkways of five (5) feet minimum should establish connections between the sidewalk and primary building entrances and between parking areas and secondary entrances. Accessible walkways should be encouraged between adjacent facilities and parcels wherever practical.
- c) **Crosswalks** – In areas where walkways cross vehicular areas, safe crossings should be provided that include designated painted or decorative crosswalks at a minimum.
- d) **Hierarchy** – The site design should create identifiable and practical hierarchies among site elements. The traveled ways and walkway designs should distinguish among those intended for principal public access and use, and those that provide for internal circulation or service requirements.
- e) **Materials** – Pedestrian surfaces should be comprised of brick, concrete, or a combination of both.

## B Site Amenities

Amenities provide convenience for pedestrians and create a settings for resting, sitting, eating, and social encounters with others. Site amenities such as public seating, bike racks, and other site furniture should be properly integrated into the site design. The amenities should be of traditional style and be located in spaces that relate to the desired patterns of uses, such as near building entries.

### 1 Furnishings

- a) **Bicycle Facilities** – Bicycle facilities are encouraged to be placed in appropriate locations in close proximity to building entrances and parking areas. Treated steel or black powder coated round loop and post type bike racks are recommended.

- b) **Benches** – The Benches should have a back and be six (6) or eight (8) feet in length. Benches should be of a traditional style, metal, and painted black.
- c) **Trash and Recycling Receptacles** – Trash receptacles should be approximately thirty-six (36) gallons and constructed from black powder coated steel.

## 2 Bollards

- a) **Placement** – Bollards should be placed sparingly and used when it is necessary to protect pedestrian areas or site elements from vehicles.
- b) **Style** – Bollards should be constructed from 3.5 diameter black powder coated tubular steel and not exceed four (4) feet in height from the ground surface.

## C Site Landscaping

Site landscaping is critical for making a site comfortable and at human-scale. Additionally, it can help frame building entries and demarcate important site circulation relationships.



**FIGURE 27.** Example of an appropriate bench style

**FIGURE 26.** Example of how species selection and placement can transform a streetscape

## 1 Site Vegetation

### a) Landscape Character and Disposition

- **Species Selection** – The plantings should be composed of species that thrive naturally without irrigation and are not invasive species listed by the federal and state environmental agencies. Vegetation should be chosen to withstand weathering

and public use, with particular attention to durability and ability to withstand salted runoff from winter roads.

- **Placement** – Tree pits, raised planters, and potted plants are acceptable to accommodate tight spaces in pedestrian ways. Plantings and landscape treatments adjacent to private buildings at the edge of any open space should be designed to soften but not hide the buildings and encourage public access up to the edge of the public space. Landscaping that has year round interest and complements the architecture is encouraged in areas where the development faces the roadway.
- **Hierarchy** – The site landscaping should utilize tree species and landscaping patterns to strengthen hierarchies among site circulation and elements. Primary pedestrian and vehicular access ways should be demarcated with landscaping that differentiates them from the rest of the site. A mix of species is encouraged throughout the site. However, trees of a similar form, character, and with consistent spacing are encouraged along primary access ways.

#### b) Landscape Preservation

- **Maintain Existing Vegetation** – Site development should be designed to incorporate, and limit disturbance and removal of existing trees.
- **Existing Tree Replacement** – Where preservation of existing vegetation is not possible and would compromise the development of the site, substitution of replacement landscaping is acceptable. For each healthy tree greater than sixteen (16) inches in caliper DBH (Diameter at Breast Height) that is removed from the site, two native replacement trees should be planted. For each healthy tree between ten (10) inches and sixteen (16) inches in caliper DBH that is removed from the site, one native replacement tree should be planted.



**FIGURE 28.** Example of planters located within the front setback

## 2 Sidewalk Vegetation

- Planters** – Businesses are encouraged to improve the street frontage with planters located within the front setback or at the sidewalk curb. However, planters should not interfere with the ability of pedestrians to open doors and access the passenger side of cars.
- Street Trees** – Street trees are encouraged in the Main Street Area and should be placed in tree grates or curbed planters. Placement should consider all other streetscape elements, such as street lighting, parallel parking, underground utilities, benches, etc. Street trees should be spaced at between thirty (30) and fifty (50) feet apart depending on the specific location and tree species



selected. Tree species selection should consider hardiness, form, and seasonal interest.

### 3 Buffer Vegetation

- a) **Species Selection** – Where screening and buffering is intended, a minimum strip of land at least four (4) feet wide should be planted with a mix of evergreen and deciduous shrubs, perennials, and/or trees suitable to visually screen the development. Screening may include architectural walls, fences or other visual barriers. Low masonry walls or picket fences are ideal screening devices because they serve their purpose year-round. Screening plantings should follow the requirements set forth in Section 5.1 and 12.1-6 of the *Zoning Ordinances*.
- b) **Buffer Types and Location** – Landscape buffers should be used to screen parking, loading, and service areas that may be visible from public streets or open spaces. Parking lots that adjoin public streets should have buffer plantings or structures to soften the views of cars. See Parking and Loading Section for additional screening and buffering recommendations.
- c) **Perimeter Buffers** – Perimeter Buffers shall follow the requirements set forth in Section 5.1 and 12.1-6 of the *Zoning Ordinances*.



**FIGURE 29.** A planted buffer can soften the street-facing edge of a parking lot and create a more inviting sidewalk

## D Walls and Fencing

Walls and fencing are critical vertical landscape elements that may be needed for retaining grade or serving as buffering unwanted views.

### 1 Walls

- a) **Materials** – Wall construction should be composed of building materials and design that are traditional and characteristic of the historic downtown context, such as stone and brick.
- b) **Height** – Walls greater than five (5) in height are not encouraged. Where a large amount of grade must be retained, terraced walls are recommended.

### 2 Fencing

- a) **Locations** – The location of fencing shall follow the requirements set forth in Section 6.2 of the *Zoning Ordinances*.



**FIGURE 30.** Example of a stone retaining wall

- b) **Materials** – Fencing should be of a material and style that relates to the site architecture. Slatted chain link fence should not be permitted in the Main Street Area.
- c) **Height** – Fences erected between the building setback line and the sidewalk should not be more than four (4) feet in height and should not be more than one-half (1/2) solid. Fencing height shall follow the height requirements in Section 6.2 of the *Zoning Ordinance*.

## E Parking and Loading

Adequate and convenient parking is a necessity for downtown businesses. While an appropriate amount of parking must be provided, parking areas should be located to the side or rear of developments and integrated into the overall layout of the site. Expansive parking areas without landscaping should be avoided.

### 1 Layout and Organization

- a) **Location** – Vehicular driveways and parking lots are encouraged to be located to the side and rear of buildings.
- b) **Layout** – The layout and organization of the parking areas should follow the requirements set forth in section 5.1 of the Zoning Ordinances.
- c) **Shared Access Drives and Parking** – Shared access drives and parking are encouraged where appropriate.

### 2 Interior Landscape

- a) **Minimum** – In the Main Street Area, per Section 12.1-6.1 of the *Zoning Ordinance*, a minimum of five (5) percent of landscaping shall be applied within parking and vehicular circulation areas in the form of landscaped strips or islands that divide parking areas and limit cross-traffic, and shall be evenly dispersed throughout said parking areas to the greatest extent possible.
- b) **Dimensions** – The minimum width of each said area should be six (6) feet, and the minimum area should be fifty-four (54) square feet. The required landscaped area need not be contiguous, but it is recommended that no parking space be located more than ninety (90) feet from a landscaped area.



**FIGURE 31.** Parking lots should be landscaped at the perimeter and within the lots.

### 3 Screening and Buffering

- a) **Parking Areas** – Parking areas should be screened with landscaping buffers from views from public streets and adjacent buildings if the parking area does not serve that building.
- b) **Loading Areas** – All commercial loading areas should be screened with combinations of architectural and landscape elements. The combination must appear to be an integrated part of the building architecture and not an adjunct or add-on to the building. Where a loading space is located on a lot which adjoins one (1) or more lots which are residentially zoned or have a residential use, Section 5.2.6 of the Zoning Ordinance shall be followed.

## F Site Lighting

Lighting should be provided to supply the minimum illumination needed for safety and security for vehicles and pedestrians. Parking areas, pedestrian connections, and plazas should be lit to an acceptable level without excessive dim or bright zones.

### 1 Pedestrian Lights

- a) **Location** – Pedestrian lights should be placed along primary walkways and near parking areas. The location of the light poles should be integrated with other site furniture elements and trees. Lighting should be located or shielded to prevent light from intruding upon adjacent residential uses.
- b) **Style** – Pedestrian lights should be of a traditional style and be of appropriate scale with a pedestrian environment. Pedestrian lights should not exceed a maximum of sixteen (16) feet in height.



**FIGURE 32.** Example of a pedestrian scaled light pole with banners

- c) **Fixtures** – Lighting fixtures should minimize light pollution and be dark sky friendly. Lighting fixtures that are compliant with the requirements of or have the Fixture Seal of Approval from the International Dark-Sky Association are preferred. Additionally, direct light emitted by an outdoor light fixture should not emit directly by a lamp, off a reflector or through a refractor above a horizontal plane through the fixture’s lowest light-emitting part. The lighting color temperature for light fixtures should not be greater than 4000 Kelvin.
- d) **Accessories** – Pedestrian lights could be specified to have optional banners or electrical outlets for holiday lighting.

## 2 Light Bollards

- a) **Location** – Light bollards should be placed along secondary walkways and in close proximity to building entries and plaza areas.
- b) **Style** – Light bollards should be of a traditional style and with a full or semi cutoff fixture.

# 5 GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Many traditional terms are used to describe portions of buildings and storefronts. This Glossary has been prepared to explain such terms that are used in these Guidelines. Where noted, certain terms are taken directly from the *Woonsocket Zoning Ordinances*. For definitions of signage-related terms, refer to the *Zoning Ordinance*, Section 6.1.

- **Awning** – [from Zoning Ordinance] A sheltering or covered frame, often of fabric, either stationary or on a retractable system attached to a structure. The awning does not receive stanchion support as in a canopy.
- **Buffer Zone** – Land which is maintained in either a natural or landscaped state, and is used to screen and/or mitigate the impacts of development on surrounding areas, properties or rights-of-way.
- **Building Height** – [from Zoning Ordinance] The vertical distance from grade, as defined herein, to the top of the highest point of the roof or structure.
- **Canopy** – [from Zoning Ordinance] A sheltering or covered frame, often of fabric, which is attached to a structure at the inner end and receiving stanchion support at the outer end.
- **Dormer** – A roof-covered projection from a sloped roof.
- **Entablature** – The upper panel of moldings and bands which lie horizontally above columns. Entablatures are important elements of classical architecture. They are a common area to provide the most prominent signage for a building.
- **Façade** – Any side of a building which faces a street or open space.
- **Fence** – [from Zoning Ordinance] Any artificially constructed barrier of any material or combination of materials used as a boundary, or erected to prevent intrusion, or to enclose or screen areas of land.
- **Gable** – The vertical surface that connects two or more sloped roofs.
- **Ground Floor** – That floor which is substantially level with the exterior grade of the lot at the main entrance to a structure.
- **Landscaped Area** – The part or parts of a lot developed and permanently maintained in grass and other plant materials, in which the space is open to the sky and is free of all vehicular traffic, parking, loading, and outdoor storage.
- **Lot** – [from Zoning Ordinance] The basic development unit for determination of lot area, depth, and other dimensional regulations.

- **Lot Frontage** – [from Zoning Ordinance] That portion of a lot abutting a street.
- **Mansard** – [from Zoning Ordinance] A roof having a double slope on all four (4) sides, the lower slope being much steeper. A partial mansard façade consists of the lower slope on one (1) or more sides, with no direct relationship to the upper roof.
- **Marquee** – Marquees are bold projecting elements that include graphic signs, often with dimensional lettering and/or logos. They traditionally were common for theaters. They typically are internally-lit, or use neon signage.
- **Massing** – The overall form of a building.
- **Pedestrian-oriented** – Describes an attitude or accommodation in which the pedestrian is the primary consideration.
- **Pier** – An upright support for a superstructure, such as an arch or bridge. Specific to façades, it often refers to a raised column-like element used to frame windows or bays.
- **Setback** – The minimum horizontal distance between the street or way line and the line of the building.
- **Sign** – [from Zoning Ordinance] A graphic arrangement or physical structure which is designed or intended to convey information in written or pictorial form.

**Awning or Canopy Sign** – [from Zoning Ordinance] A sign painted, stamped, perforated, stitched, or otherwise applied on an awning, canopy or marquee, including backlit signs.

**Banner** – [from Zoning Ordinance] A sign made of non-rigid material hanging from or otherwise attached to a building or structure.

**Billboard** – [from Zoning Ordinance] Any notice or advertisement, pictorial or otherwise, used as an outdoor display not related to the use of the lot upon which the billboard is located.

**Credit Card Sign** – [from Zoning Ordinance] A sign identifying by name or symbol, one (1) or more credit cards which are accepted by an establishment.

**Direction Sign** – [from Zoning Ordinance] A sign identifying on-premises traffic, parking or other functional activity, which bears no language or symbols for business identification or advertising.

**Directory Sign** – [from Zoning Ordinance] A sign identifying two (2) or more persons or establishments occupying a structure.

**Free-standing Sign** – [from Zoning Ordinance] A sign supported by one (1) or more poles, columns, or braces placed in or on the ground and not attached to any building.

**Menu board** – [from Zoning Ordinance] A sign mounted on a structure erected for that purpose, not attached to any building, which is used for the listing of available menu items at an establishment with a drive-thru window.

**Portable Sign** – [from Zoning Ordinance] Any sign not permanently affixed to the ground or to a building, including any sign attached to or displayed on a vehicle that is used for the expressed purpose of advertising a business establishment, product, service, or entertainment, when that vehicle is so parked as to attract the attention of the motoring or pedestrian traffic.

**Projecting Sign** – [from Zoning Ordinance] A sign attached to a building wall which extends more than fifteen (15) inches from the face of the wall.

**Roof Sign** – [from Zoning Ordinance] A sign which is constructed and maintained on the roof of a building or on the building wall in such a way that it extends beyond the roof line.

**Under Canopy Sign** – [from Zoning Ordinance] A sign attached to or hung from a canopy or other covered structure projecting from and supported by the principal building.

**Wall Sign** – [from Zoning Ordinance] A sign painted on or attached directly to the building wall which extends less than fifteen (15) inches from the face of the wall and which does not extend beyond the roof line.

**Sign area** – [from Zoning Ordinance] The entire surface within a continuous perimeter, enclosing the extreme limits of sign display, including any frame or border. The copy of signs composed of individual letters, numerals, and/or symbols shall be the sum of the area of the smallest rectangle encompassing each of said letters, numerals, and/or symbols.

- **Valance** – A valance is the front “skirt” panel of a fabric awning, typically between five (5) and ten (10) inches in height, used to hide the structural panels of the awning. Valances are often used as a surface for simple lettering displaying the name of the associated retail business.
- **Yard** – [from Zoning Ordinance] Any open space on the same lot with a principal building, unoccupied, and unobstructed from the ground to the sky, except for accessory buildings or structures, or such projections as are expressly permitted in these regulations.
- **Zoning District** – [from Zoning Ordinance] The basic unit in zoning to which a uniform set of regulations applies, or a uniform set of regulations for a specific use.

# 6 REFERENCES AND RESOURCES FOR FURTHER READING

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