



Sterling Town Center Design Guidelines



Town of
Sterling Massachusetts



Massachusetts Downtown Initiative



ia
Innes Associates Ltd.

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Introduction

Process

The Town of Sterling received a grant from the Massachusetts Downtown Initiative, sponsored by the Department of Housing and Community Development, to create a set of design guidelines for the Town Center. In the opinion of residents, Sterling's Town Center is rundown in comparison with other similar towns. Recommendations from past planning studies and associated community engagement include design guidelines to reinforce the village character. Specific concerns include the treatment of front yard setbacks, the lack of cohesiveness of architectural styles and massing, and dissimilar signage and landscape strategies.

Harriman was selected as the consultant to work with the Town. The process consisted of a site walk on September 22, 2020 to evaluate existing conditions of both buildings and site, an online community survey, and an online public meeting on April 6, 2021 to discuss the results of the survey and options for the design guidelines.

The Town of Sterling does not have a current set of design guidelines. While the Town Center is part of a historic district listed on the National Register of Historic Places, it is not a local historic district, which would provide a different set of design and development controls.¹ In addition, the Town's current zoning regulations have minimal design controls, mostly focused on the landscaping of parking areas.

These design guidelines only address those properties in the Town Center as shown in Figure 1: Area of Applicability. The guidelines do not apply to the public streetscape, nor do they apply to the Town Common or Memorial Park. Finally, as discussed below, the guidelines are advisory and not mandatory.

¹ "In a local historic district, before any exterior architectural feature that is visible from a public way is altered, the plans to carry out that alteration must first be approved by a local historic district commission." Massachusetts Historical Commission, *Establishing Local Historic Districts*, 2007, p. 1.

Relationship to Zoning

One of the purposes of design guidelines for a downtown or town center is to promote an environment attractive to pedestrians to encourage them to walk, shop, eat, and support local businesses. A key to the pedestrian-friendly nature of downtowns is to have storefronts or other activities, such as outdoor eating, next to the sidewalk to create interest and make it easier for pedestrians to enter the businesses. Many of the existing buildings are already on or near the sidewalk. Until recently, the Town's Protective By-laws (Zoning By-laws) discouraged new development from following this traditional pattern. All zoning districts within the Town have minimum front yard setbacks of forty feet; the usual front yard setback for a walkable downtown is 0 to fifteen feet, if public amenities, such as outdoor eating or a public plaza, are provided in the deeper setback. The result of this required setback was to concentrate parking in the front yard, which is a deterrent to pedestrians and detracts from the quality of the built environment.

At the 2021 Annual Town Meeting, Sterling adopted several zoning changes for the Town Center zoning district only. These changes are as follows:

- For new buildings with one or more non-residential uses, the maximum front yard setback is now five feet.
- For new mixed-use buildings (a combination of non-residential and residential uses), the maximum front yard setback is also five feet.
- For new residential-only buildings, the maximum front yard setback is fifteen feet. The Zoning Board of Appeals may grant a Special Permit to allow a deeper setback.
- The side and rear yard setbacks are now 5 feet from the respective lot lines.

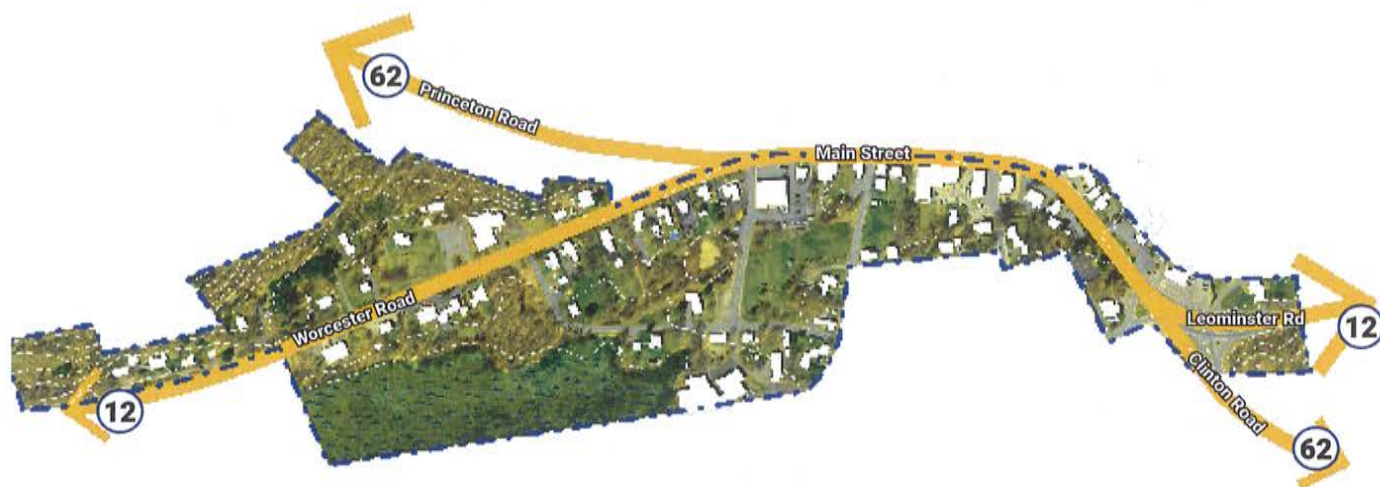


Figure 1: Area of Applicability



Figure 2: Town Center District (approximate)

- Mixed Use Building with Residential Dwelling Unit(s) is a new definition that allows residential units at the rear, on the side, or on the upper floors of business and commercial buildings. Egress from the residential units must be separate from the commercial uses. This use is now allowed by right in the Town Center district and by Special Permit in the Commercial district.
- Free standing Uninhabited Buildings within the Town Center district must now be a minimum of five feet from the side and rear lot lines. These buildings are now prohibited from the front yard setback in the area between the principal building and the front lot line.

These changes will allow, over time, a development pattern that is more consistent with a traditional New England town center. In particular, these changes will work well with the proposed design guidelines to achieve the following design objectives:

- The changes to the front yard setback will achieve a more consistent street wall. In other words, the principal façades of adjacent buildings will act as a wall that defines the streetscape.
- These changes will also encourage parking to the side and rear of the lot, which will contribute to a safer and more attractive pedestrian environment.
- Historic buildings with deeper front yard setbacks will be reinforced in importance by the position of the newer buildings closer to the street.
- The new side yard setbacks allow for more flexibility in building placement on the lot but also retain enough width for appropriate landscaping between lots or between lot and street.

- The restriction on the placement of Free standing Uninhabited Buildings within the front yard setback will reinforce the importance of the principal façade of the main building and highlight its connection to the street.
- Allowing Mixed Use Building with Residential Dwelling Unit(s) is a zoning best practice that, over time, will increase activity in the Town Center and provide critical support for local businesses.

The Town's Protective By-laws govern future use changes and development throughout the Town, including the Town Center District which is shown in Figure 2 on page 5. These guidelines should supplement the review processes for site plans and special permits, but they do not replace existing regulatory standards for the buildings, sites, off-street parking, signage, and lighting. The guidelines in this document focus on general principles of good design and are not prescriptive standards.

Content of this Document

This document consists of the design guidelines and supporting illustrations. It is accompanied by two appendices: the full results of the online public survey and the April 6, 2021 public presentation.

Photos in these guidelines are used to illustrate the principles and examples. These photos have been drawn from communities throughout Massachusetts to specifically illustrate examples or best practices not present in Sterling's Town Center.

Precedents

Communities in Massachusetts with design guidelines use them for a variety of purposes. In some communities, the guidelines serve as an advisory document for land use board as the members evaluate applications for site plan review and/or special permits. For other communities, the design guidelines become more quantifiable standards and are explicitly tied to the municipality's zoning bylaws or ordinance, to controls governed by a local historic district, or to another regulatory authority.

The guidelines in this document are tailored specifically to the Town of Sterling's current needs; over time, the Town may wish to move towards more formal design standards incorporated into the Town's Protective By-laws.

The following towns served as precedents for Sterling's design guidelines:

GUIDELINES | NOT MANDATORY | GENERAL SPECIFICITY

Town of Ayer: Design Guidelines for Ayer Center (2004)

- Advisory.
- Also developed as part of study sponsored by the Massachusetts Downtown Initiative.
- Originally developed as a first step in a façade improvement program.
- This is an older set of guidelines that is more prescriptive and less illustrative than the guidelines proposed for Sterling.

STANDARDS | PART OF ZONING BYLAW | HIGH SPECIFICITY

City of Newburyport Zoning Ordinance (current)

- Development/design standards are included within the City's zoning ordinance.
- In general, standards are more specific than design guidelines and require less discretion.
- The screenshot for the Downtown Overlay District is an example of how the City incorporated standards and images.
- The extract below is from the "Procedure, requirements and criteria for review of proposed new construction and alterations."
- Most of the requirements are text-based with some strategic illustrations.

The screenshot displays the City of Newburyport, MA website. The header includes the city logo, name, and navigation links for notifications, sign in, help, and language selection. The main content area is titled "Newburyport, Massachusetts - Code of Ordinances" and shows the "APPENDIX A - ZONING ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF NEWBURYPORT". The "SECTION XXVII - DOWNTOWN OVERLAY DISTRICT (DOD)" is selected, and the "XXVII-H - Protection of unoccupied historic buildings and structures" subsection is highlighted. The text of this subsection includes requirements for dormers, such as: "No dormer shall extend above the ridge line of the roof from which it projects," "The roof of any dormer shall not lack slope or otherwise be constructed flat," and "The roof pitch of a shed dormer may vary according to the pitch of the roof from which it projects, but the roof pitch of a gabled dormer shall match the pitch of the roof from which it projects, except in the case of gambrel or mansard roof." Two photographs of historic buildings with dormers are shown, with the caption "Gabled dormers in the DOD that project from mansard and gambrel roofs." Below the photos is a diagram of a shed dormer with matching gabled dormers at either end, with the caption "Shed dormer with matching gabled dormers at either end." The text continues with requirements for windows, roof decks, and porches.

https://library.municode.com/ma/newburyport/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=APXAZOORNE_SXXVIIIDOOVDIDO_XXVII-HPRUNHIBUST

1 BUILDING SETBACKS

ENCOURAGE

- An appropriate relationship to the street based on the street size and sidewalk width
- Plazas and open spaces with landscaping and street furniture
- Upper-level step-backs to diminish effect of tall building height

DISCOURAGE

- The "canyon effect" with large buildings in close proximity to the street
- Surface parking in setback zones
- Large setbacks that disconnect the building from the sidewalk and public realm

ELEMENTS

FRONT STEP-BACK

Reduces the visual appearance of height

FRONT SETBACK

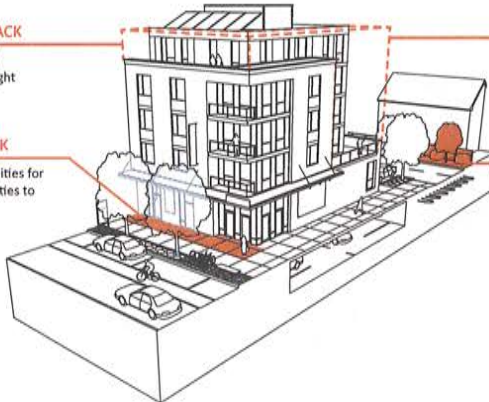
Provides opportunities for ground floor activities to extend outside

SIDE STEP-BACK

Helps to mitigate the mass of the building

REAR SETBACK

Works to address relationships to existing residential areas



EXAMPLES



Active plaza uses



Tapered building height



Rooftop terrace

Town of Arlington: Design Standards for the Town of Arlington (2015)

- Intended to become part of the zoning bylaws as they are updated.
- Applies to specific commercial and industrial corridors.
- Highly graphic.

<https://www.arlingtonma.gov/home/showpublished-document?id=45347>

Town of Arlington: Residential Design Guidelines (2020)

Principle C-1 (continued)

Building elements such as entrances, roofs, dormers, and windows should be used in a way to help the house to feel welcoming and active.

Dormers and other Roof Elements



Definition

A **dormer** is a roofed structure that projects vertically beyond the plane of a pitched roof. It usually has a window or multiple windows and is used to increase usable space in the attic or roof space. Two common types of dormers are **gable** and **shed**. Other roof elements include chimneys and other defining features of certain styles, such as turrets.

Encourage

- Well-proportioned dormer: Dormers should be a detail on the roof rather than the dominant feature.

- Consistent dormer types: Use similar dormer types and level of detailing to dormers on surrounding houses, if applicable. Match dormer type to roof type and pitch.
- Setback from the roof: To reduce their appearance, dormers, especially larger shed dormers, should be set back. Existing eave line to remain continuous. Small wall dormers are acceptable to be flush with the front wall.
- Dormer alignment: Line up dormers and windows with existing elements on the wall below.



Dormers are set back from roof and are barely visible from street. Source: Google Streetview.



While the height is not excessive, the dormer is too large relative to the house. Source: Google Streetview.

Discourage

- Large dormers: Inconsistent dormers can disrupt the streetscape pattern. Dormers should not occupy more than half the width of the roof.
- Inconsistent dormer types: Multiple, conflicting styles of dormers.
- Undersized windows: Small windows and lack of detailing on dormers can create too much blank space. Windows should extend from the top to bottom of the dormer.

- Advisory.
- Focus of the design guidelines is providing guidance for additions and new development in residential districts of the town.
- Guidelines focus on neighborhood context.
- The guide is intended to support both homeowners seeking to renovate or put additions on their homes and developers seeking to develop on infill lots.
- Highly graphic.

<https://www.arlingtonma.gov/home/showpublished-document?id=54518>

B. REHABILITATION/RESTORATION

GUIDELINES

I. REHABILITATION APPROACHES

I.1 Repair and Maintenance

- Deteriorated historic features should be repaired rather than replaced.
- Repairs and alterations must not damage or destroy materials, features or finishes that are important in defining the building's historic character.
- Original window patterns and openings should be preserved or restored, including conservation and repair to preserve historical details, in the redevelopment of existing structures.



Figure 9. Historic renovation preserving window patterns in Newburyport, Mass (source: Creative Commons).

TOWN CENTER MIXED USE DISTRICT DESIGN GUIDELINES

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Town of Spencer: Town Center Mixed Use District Design Guidelines (2019)

- Advisory.
- Also developed as part of study sponsored by the Massachusetts Downtown Initiative.
- Focus of the guidelines is on infill development, rehabilitation/restoration, storefront design, front yard and landscaping, and lighting and signage.
- Closest in size and scale to Sterling's Town Center.

Town of Spencer
Town Center Design Guidelines
MDI/Harriman

Design Guidelines

Purpose

The purpose of these design guidelines is to provide a set of recommendations for development or significant redevelopment of properties in the Town Center and Commercial Districts under the Town of Sterling's Protective By-laws. The recommendations provided guidance about community values for buildings and sites in the Town Center and may be expanded or translated to more specific standards if the Town finds them useful to the review process.

The Planning Board and the Zoning Board of Appeals should refer to these guidelines during the approval process for any applications within these two districts and the guidelines will become the basis for discussion among board, applicant, and other interested parties.

The guidelines are chosen to reflect the historic nature of the Town Center and reinforce the existing patterns of development and variety of historic buildings by guiding new development to be sympathetic to this existing context.

Applicability

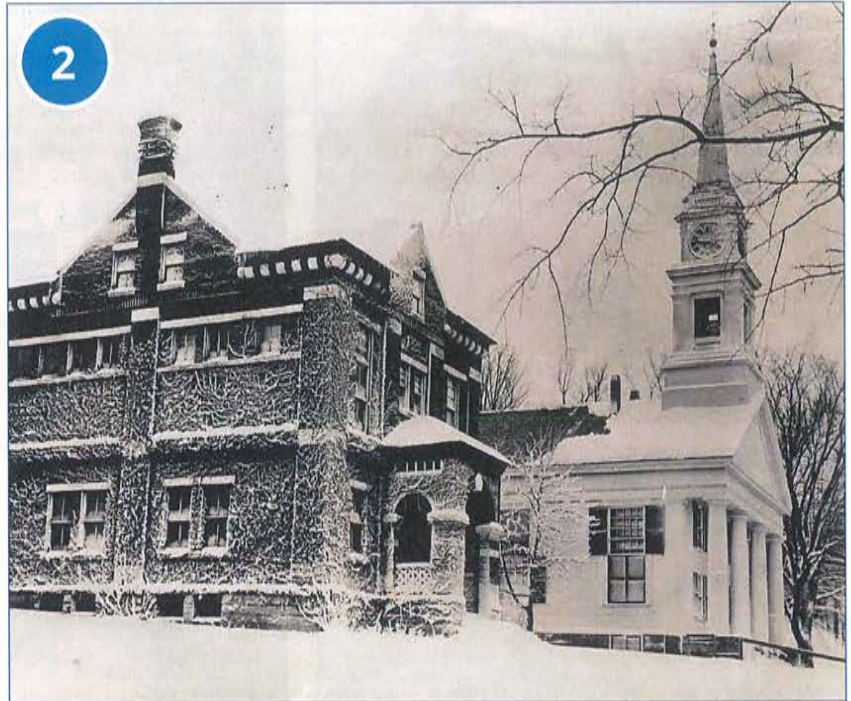
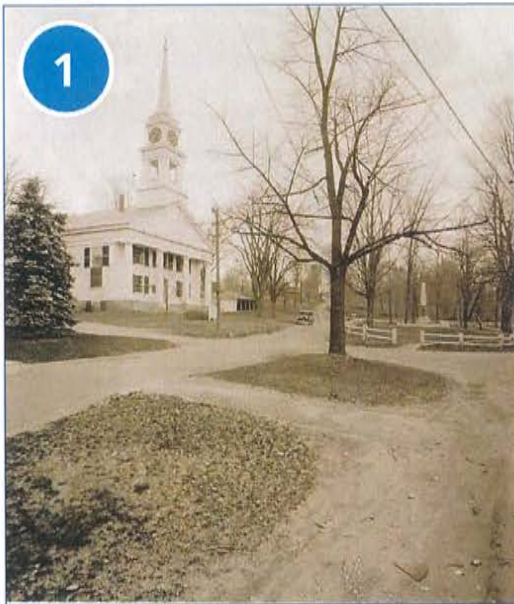
These design guidelines are applicable to any project submitted to either the Planning Board or the Zoning Board of Appeals for a property located within the Town Center Zoning District.

These guidelines are not mandatory. They do not change or replace the Town of Sterling's Protective By-laws for the Town Center District. Instead, the recommendations in this document provide guidance to Planning Board members, member of the Zoning Board of Appeals, applicants, and the public about design of sites, buildings, and storefronts within the area indicated on Figures 1 and 2.

Members of the Planning Board and the Zoning Board of Appeals may use this document to guide their discussion of applications requiring site plan review or special permit. Applicants may also use these guidelines prior to submittal to guide the initial design and layout of new and renovated buildings, additions to buildings, or rehabilitation of storefronts.

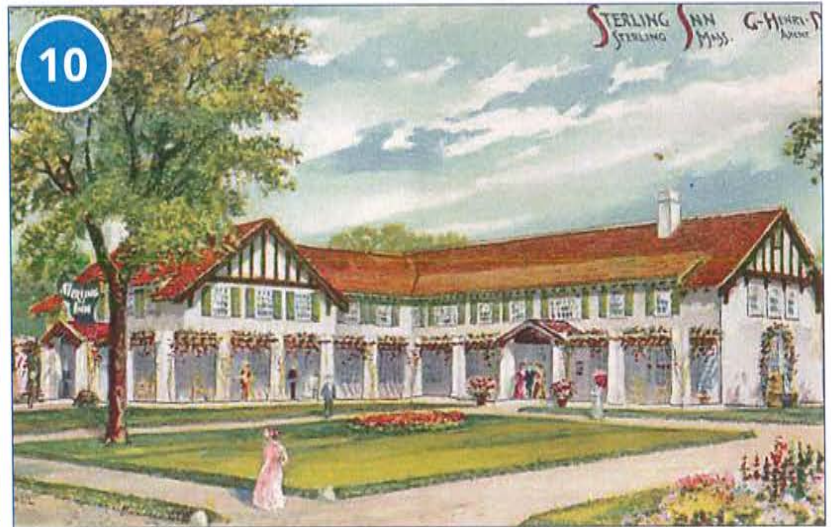
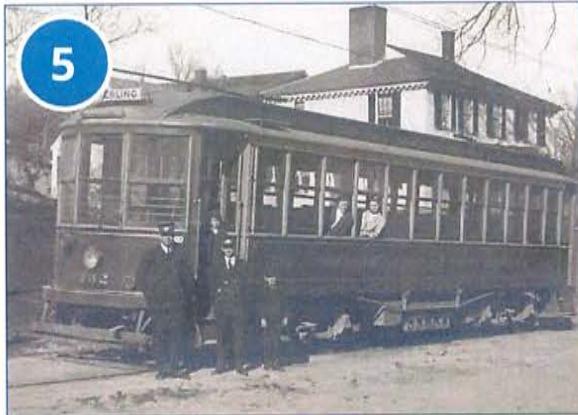


Selected building styles in the Town Center



- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 First Church in Sterling | 6 11 Main Street |
| 2 Conant Free Public Library and First Church in Sterling | 7 Mitchell-Sawyer store (photo dated 1911) |
| 3 50 Main Street: 1883 Sterling High School; now Sterling Light Dept. | 8 14 Main Street: Mitchell house |
| 4 33 Main Street, Sterling Town Hall, Mitchell Store, lost building | 9 27 Main Street: Helen Fitch house (razed 1953) |
| 5 Trolley on Main Street | 10 240 Worcester Road: Sterling Inn |

All images courtesy of David Gibbs and the Sterling Historical Society.



STOREFRONT refers to the front of a store facing a street. A storefront generally includes three components: a base; the windows and door; and a top that may be an awning, a sign band, or other architectural feature that differentiates the storefront from the upper story. Columns, piers, or other vertical elements may connect the three sections. The door is often recessed and the windows are prominent to allow for easy display of goods. Transparency of the windows is critical to successful storefronts.

The definition of **PUBLIC REALM** varies slightly by context. In general, it refers to space that is shared by the public and is often defined as publicly owned streets, pathways, parks and open spaces accessible to the public. For design guidelines, the term is often expanded to include buildings, structures, and landscape that can be seen from a public right-of-way.

Context

As shown in Figure 2 on page 5, Sterling's Town Center is a corridor built around the intersection of two roads: Princeton Road (Route 62) and Worcester Road (Route 12) to the southwest combining to create Main Street (Routes 62 and 12), the heart of the Town Center.

Main Street forks, with the left fork becoming Meetinghouse Hill Road and the right fork curving east. This fork forms a small triangular common; the third side is Park Street, which connects both Meetinghouse Hill Road and Main Street.

After Main Street curves east, Route 62 and Route 12 split into Clinton Road (Route 62) and Leominster Road (Route 12).

Main Street has a variety of building forms and styles, including the 1835 Town Hall, the new Town Hall and a variety of residential and retail buildings. The Conant Free Public Library, at the intersection of Meetinghouse Hill Road and Main Street, and First Church in Sterling, on Meetinghouse Hill Road, are contributing structures to the history and the built form, but are not bound by these design guidelines because they are not in the Town Center zoning district.

The images on pages 13-15 provide information about the existing and historical context to property owners and developers before they begin their design process for rehabilitation or new buildings. Key elements in the built form include the following:

- Placement of the buildings on the lot.
- Relationship of the principal façade to the street.
- Relationship of the front and side yards to the building and the street.
- Storefront design and consistency with the overall building.
- Activities within the front and side yards that contribute to an active public realm.

The last two bullet points are particularly important for a Town Center because they contribute both to economic development and a sense of community. Well-designed storefronts allow passersby to understand what the business offers and encourages customers to enter. Activities in the front and side setback that are oriented to pedestrians provide vibrancy to an area by allowing people to gather and/or eat, creating a changing landscape, or providing visual attraction, such as public art or appropriate landscape elements.

Building Placement

The Town Center has three main patterns for the placement of buildings, all of which are traditional to New England.

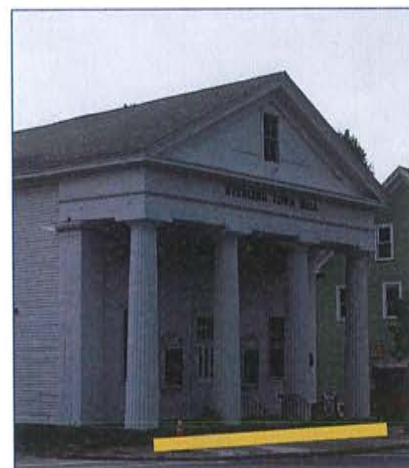
- Short side facing the street
- Long side facing the street
- L-shaped building with short side closet to the street

The first example is the most prevalent within the Town Center, and this pattern is mostly dictated by the shape and size of the lot.

The third example can be the most problematic as the layout invites parking in front of the part of the L set back from the street. This building type would be more effective with appropriate landscaping or an active use in the space defined by the two sides of the L, as shown below. For a commercial or mixed-use building, this layout could create an outdoor eating or gathering area to support the businesses within the building and parking could be tucked behind the building.

The following guidelines apply to the placement of new buildings or significant additions:

- Building placement should respect existing patterns of building placement for the street in which it is located.
- Buildings should be placed close to the street to facilitate public pedestrian access and conceal parking at the interior or rear of the lot.
- Buildings should be oriented with the primary building façade facing the primary street frontage of the site.
- Entrances, storefronts, and windows should be oriented to the primary street frontage and address the street with an active and welcoming entry composition that is integrated into the overall massing and configuration of the building.



Short side facing street



Long side facing street



L-Shape facing street



Examples of activating front setback: shallow (top) and deep (bottom)



Setbacks

The Town's zoning changes include a maximum front setback of five feet for commercial buildings or mixed-use buildings and fifteen feet for residential buildings. Side and rear yard setbacks are now five feet. However, some existing buildings have deeper setbacks. These guidelines should be flexible enough to apply to existing buildings being rehabilitated, new additions, or new buildings. This flexibility extends to the need to balance the location of the building(s), pedestrian and vehicular access, parking, septic fields, and landscaping on the individual sites.

The following guidelines apply to the front and side yard setbacks:

- Front yard design may include provisions for outdoor eating, landscaping, public art, and other amenities that attract pedestrians.
- Parking in front of the principal façade is strongly discouraged.
- If parking is located within the front yard setback, the site should have a clear differentiation between the parking area, the public sidewalk, and the street.
- Curb cuts should be clearly defined so that vehicles are limited to defined entrances and exits from the site. Curb cuts should be minimized and combined whenever possible into one main access point per property.
- 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; stone walls should not be more than three (3) feet in height. (See picture on page 22.)
- In the absence of other activities, the front yard setback should be landscaped with a mix of shrubs and low plantings to support privacy of residential areas.
- The design of rain gardens and bioswales as contributing landscape elements of the site drainage and stormwater management systems is encouraged.
- Plantings should be provide visual interest throughout all four seasons in New England. Shade trees and plant species that are native or adapted to this climate are strongly encouraged.

Building Scale and Massing

Building height is governed by the Town's zoning and is limited to 36 feet throughout the entire Town. Some of the historical buildings in the Town Center have a height of more than 36 feet, and the Town might consider a height increase at a future date to allow for mixed-use development to further support businesses in the Town Center.

- Building massing, scale, and proportions should be complementary to, and respectful of, the patterns of existing buildings in the immediate vicinity. This includes prominent buildings (including the 1835 Town Hall, 33 Main Street, the Sterling Inn) and the smaller residential-style buildings that contribute to the character of the Town Center.
- Infill buildings should continue the patterns of height of adjacent existing properties, where consistent with the Town's zoning.
- Where the discrepancy between the proposed height and existing height patterns is greater than ten feet, the Planning Board should review 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.
- New structures should employ simple roof forms compatible with the roof styles of existing neighboring buildings.
- Additions should be set back from the principal façade of the existing building

Façade Composition

In a commercial center, the façade of a building should be a guide to the uses in the building and how to access them. Such legibility requires clearly defined entrances and transparent ground floor windows for retail, restaurant, services, or professional offices. Upper floor windows should differ from ground floor windows but contribute to the overall composition of the building façade.

Buildings should reinforce a scale comfortable for pedestrians. In Sterling, the more prominent buildings have porticos, and the smaller ones have porches. Both can have a positive impact on the impression a pedestrian has of the scale of the building and the area, but they should be appropriately scaled for the building.



Example of complementary height, massing, and form for buildings constructed at different times



Example of portico (above) and porch (below) in Sterling





Example of differentiation of uses on façade

Overall Façade Composition and Materials

- The building façade should clearly define commercial ground-floor spaces, where they exist, and differentiate the ground floor from residential or office spaces on the stories above through articulation of the façade. Residential-style buildings (which could be either residential or professional offices) should incorporate massing and façade design elements such as front porches, front-gable roofs, cross-gables, or hipped roofs with dormers that help relate their building massing to that of adjacent buildings.
- In mixed-use buildings, there should be a direct vertical correspondence between the design of the façade of the upper floors and the ground level retail façades.
- Materials for all components of a building (roof, walls, foundation) should be of high quality and durable, appropriate for the New England climate, and compatible with local building materials, including, but not limited to clapboard or brick for walls and shingles (slate or architectural asphalt) for roofs. Standing seam metal roofs are also present in the Town Center. However, non-durable materials, such as vinyl or aluminum siding or trim, should be strongly discouraged.
- Architectural elements, such as shutters, should be proportionate to the relevant portions of the building. For example, a set of shutters should be proportionate to its window; trim should be proportionate to the overall façade composition; columns should be appropriately sized to the roof they support. Architectural elements should be appropriate to the period and style of the building.

Entries



Example of coordination of multi-tenant ground floor entries

- Building entries may add distinctive design components to the building façade such as porches, canopies, glazed areas (windows and fixed panes of glass), and stoops.
- 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.
- Doors to upper-story uses may have a simpler design than doors to ground-floor spaces.

Windows

- New construction should acknowledge and respond to existing adjacent window patterns in proportion, scale, rhythm, and number of openings (see page 23 for another example).
- Upper-floor windows are typically smaller and more frequent than ground-floor windows.
- An individual, “punched” window rather than continuous horizontal or vertical “strip” windows is encouraged whenever possible and appropriate to the building style. (See images to right.)



Vertical strip windows (above); punched windows (below)



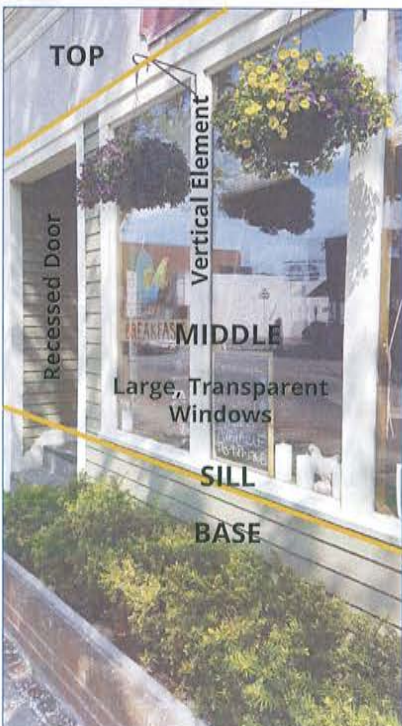
Example of successful renovation/ rehabilitation (building is 1854)

Rehabilitation of Buildings

The Town Center has many buildings that contribute to its unique physical character. Rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of these structures over time should remain a priority. Significant additions or new development on the same lot or on an adjacent lot should be sympathetic to the existing presence of these buildings and, as noted above, seek to enhance their qualities. The Secretary of the Interior's *Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* (<https://www.nps.gov/tps/standards.htm>) is the best guide for appropriate repairs and renovations for historic buildings. Existing materials and architectural elements should be restored if possible; replacement materials should be consistent in quality and durability to the original materials and colors. Similarly, architectural elements, including windows and doors, should be appropriate to the original building in style and period.

Renovation

- Deteriorated historic features should be repaired not replaced.
- Repairs and alterations should not damage or destroy materials, features or finishes that define the building's historic character.
- Original window patterns and openings should be preserved or restored.
- Historic details should be conserved and repaired when the existing structures are rehabilitated.
- Inappropriate materials used for repairs should be removed; this may include plywood plastic or other non-durable components. Replacements should be of a durable material as close to the quality of the original as possible.



Storefront: Base, Middle, Top

Rehabilitation

- Changes to a building façade 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.
- Contemporary materials and components may be appropriate if they are visually compatible with the historic components.
- Additions should be distinguishable from the original building, although roof forms should be compatible with the original building.
- Building cornice lines should be maintained, preserved, or recreated to define building façades and create façade components consistent with historic parapet or cornice lines, as originally designed and built in the Town Center (see page 25 for definitions).

Storefront Composition

Storefronts should clearly indicate to passersby the function of the business, whether retail, restaurant, or service. Windows should be large and not blocked by signs or shades at eye level. Both windows and entry should have appropriate lighting. Elements that tie the street to the building, such as awnings, window boxes, and projecting signs, are strongly encouraged.

- Materials should be selected to be compatible with or complementary to the Town Center. Storefronts should fit within the building frame as formed by columns, piers, and cornices.
- Where it is appropriate for the existing or proposed architectural style, a base panel and sill course should be provided; the base panels and sill course should continue across the entire width of the storefront bay and terminate at doors or the vertical elements framing the bay.
- Storefronts with recessed entryways to ground-floor commercial spaces **should be preserved** or restored to their original format; the recess should remain open for the full height of the ground floor story; signs, panels, or other features should not shorten the height of the recess.
- Storefront windows and doors should be transparent. They should not be mirrored, use tinted glass, or be obstructed by curtains or shades.

Awnings

Awnings may be used to provide a human-scaled element to the ground floor of building façades, shelter building entries from rain, and reduce glare and heat from summer sun to building interiors.

- Awnings may not obscure important architectural details by crossing over pilasters or covering windows.
- 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 as they may obscure too much of the building architecture.
- On multi-tenant buildings, multiple awnings may vary in content (e.g., different lettering or logos), but should be of consistent design, material, fabrication type, size, and profile. Awning colors for multi-tenanted buildings should be coordinated, but they do not have to be identical.

Sign Placement and Lighting

Signs are also regulated by the Town's Protective Bylaw. These guidelines supplement those regulations.

- Signs are typically placed in a sign band or designated area that extends in a consistent zone across the storefront above the windows and door.
- Window signs should not obscure more than 30% of the window in which they are posted.
- Projecting signs should convey information in a unique and artistic way, using images that convey the goods or services provided at the premises. Such signs should be at least 8 feet above the average grade and its upper edge no more than fourteen (14) feet above the average grade.
- During evening business hours, display windows may be lit from within to advertise the business and add light to the sidewalk.
- Entrances may be lit with sconces on one or both sides of a door, or in the case of recessed entries, with overhead lights.
- Sandwich signs should not block the sidewalk, should be appropriately secured so as not to tip or blow away, and should be made of durable materials (e.g. wood and chalkboard).
- Wind-driven and inflated signs are strongly discouraged.



Example of awnings between architectural elements



Example of creative projecting sign (above) and sandwich sign (below)





Example of landscaped buffer with fence between sidewalk and parking area



Example of landscaped buffer between sidewalk and building in front setback

Landscaping and Parking

Parking should be strongly discouraged in the front yard setback. For new buildings, the Town's recent zoning change will preclude parking in the front setback, but for older buildings that already have deeper setbacks, parking should be moved, when possible, to the side or rear when site plan review or a special permit is triggered. If it is not possible to move parking entirely from the front yard, then parking should not be allowed between the principal façade and the street.

In all cases, parking spaces should be separated from the sidewalk or lot line by a landscaped buffer sufficiently wide to accommodate shade trees and/or shrubs and short fences. Curb cuts should be reduced to the minimum required for safe circulation; where possible, adjacent properties may discuss sharing curb cuts for access across parking lots. The entrance to the building should be clearly connected to the public sidewalk.

- Parking lots that adjoin public streets should have buffer plantings or structures to soften the views of cars.
- Low masonry walls or picket fences provide year-round screening.
- Buffer plantings should include some evergreen plants and/ or plantings that retain a woody structure throughout the winter.
- Parking lots should also include shade tree plantings around the perimeter and if possible within the interior of the parking lot at regular intervals.
- Curb cuts should be minimized and combined whenever possible into one main access point per property.
- Sidewalks should be continuous and uninterrupted at driveways and curb cuts to provide safety for pedestrians.
- Brick or unit pavers may be used to enhance the character of sidewalks, pathways, and outdoor sitting areas.
- When employed, brick and unit pavers should be selected and set in a manner that limits uneven surfaces or joints that would reduce accessibility for those who are less mobile.

Components of a Façade

The image below illustrates some of the terms and principles discussed above in relation to the elements of the principal façade. In particular, note the relationship of the upper floor windows to the ground floor windows and the relationship of both to the proportion of the façade itself.

The sign is placed on the sign band and lit by downward-directed lighting; the windows are lit by sconces attached to the vertical elements separating the windows. The colors and materials are mostly traditional with some contemporary elements and the use of color is also contemporary. Window boxes, planters, and seating reinforce the pedestrian scale and friendliness of this building in relation to the street.



Next Steps

The Town should consider the following next steps for these design guidelines:

- Review and approve the guidelines. This should be done by the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals. The Select Board may also wish to review and endorse these guidelines.
- Integrate the design guidelines into the Town's review process for projects within the Town Center District submitted to either the Planning Board or the Zoning Board of Appeals.
- Consider introducing guidelines for the treatment of public ways within the Town Center as defined by the maps on page 5. These guidelines are described below.

Initial Adoption

Because these guidelines are not mandatory, they do not require Town Meeting approval. The Planning Board and the Zoning Board of Appeals may choose to adopt them as part of their review process for site plan review and/or special permit. The guidelines would be used to discuss and evaluate applications for rehabilitation, additions, or new buildings and provide a framework for discussions between the boards and the applicants and a basis for comments by abutters and members of the public.

Future Expansion

The scope of this project was to develop advisory guidelines only. However, as the Town boards and residents become more familiar with the use of design guidelines, they may find it appropriate to make some or all of these a mandatory component of the review process. These guidelines could be upgraded to development standards and added directly to the Town's Protective By-laws or kept as a separate document and referred to by reference in the Protective By-laws. Mandatory standards will need to be more explicit about the requirements applicants must meet. More precise language will make it clearer as to when an applicant has met the standard.

The guidelines could be expanded to other zoning districts, including the Commercial District. The boundary shown on page 5 could also be extended to incorporate contributing buildings such as the Conant Free Public Library, First Church in Sterling, and the Mitchell House.

Public Rights-of-Way

Although the focus of these design guidelines are on private properties that come before the Planning Board and the Zoning Board of Appeals for review, the Town of Sterling could – and should – also take action to reinforce the historic character and pedestrian friendliness of the Town Center. The Town has already begun improvements to the sidewalks to address accessibility. The Town is working with MassDOT and the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission on a Complete Streets Program. The Town should leverage future Chapter 90 funds and grant programs to consider a policy that addresses the full right-of-way and includes the following:

- Consistent and coordinated street furniture, including historic lighting and coordinated benches, trash and recycling receptacles, tree grates, and other physical components of the streetscape. Such consistency would reinforce the identity of the Town Center.
- Consistent sidewalk materials, including a main surface, such as concrete, with a contrasting trim and granite edging. If trim is used, the sidewalk should be wide enough to accommodate pedestrians with stroller or wheelchair users without use of the trim as a travel surface. Adding contrasting trim, such as brick, stone, or concrete pavers, may require that the sidewalks be widened.
- Street trees to shade the pavement, reduce the heat island effect, and provide better air quality. Street trees should be installed with a grate to protect the tree and an appropriate depth and width for the tree to flourish. Again, the sidewalk may need to be widened to accommodate multiple users and the infrastructure for the tree to survive.
- Continue to install crosswalks with connecting ramps. Crosswalks should always have a ramp to allow safe transition from the level of the sidewalk to the level of the street for users of all ages and abilities. The surface of the ramp should differ from the surface of both the sidewalk and the street. Crosswalks should be placed with appropriate regularity to that people can safely cross the street to access activity on both sides. A differentiation of color and/or material within the crosswalk will provide better visibility for both pedestrians and drivers.
- Consider burying the utility lines the next time the road is reconstructed. In addition to improving the look of the Town Center, buried power lines are more appropriate for a region with significant power losses due to winter storms.



Example of crosswalk with ramp; color and material differentiation for both



Same image; note historic lighting with cross arms for future banner



Sidewalk with contrasting trim and granite curb.

Survey Results

The purpose of this survey was to gather public input about the existing architectural and site components of the Town Center and to understand community preferences that might have an impact on the preparation of the design guidelines.

The design guidelines will apply to private property within Sterling's Town Center, and will guide future rehabilitation, renovation, or new construction.

Some of the comments gathered from the survey indicate concerns about publicly-owned property, including parking, streetlights, and utilities, or privately-owned open space, such as the Common. The design guidelines proposed by this planning process will not apply to public streets/sidewalks or to lots with no buildings, such as the Common.

The use of the design guidelines by the Town will be as an advisory document during Planning Board and/or the Zoning Board of Appeals in response to an application for site plan review or a special permit.

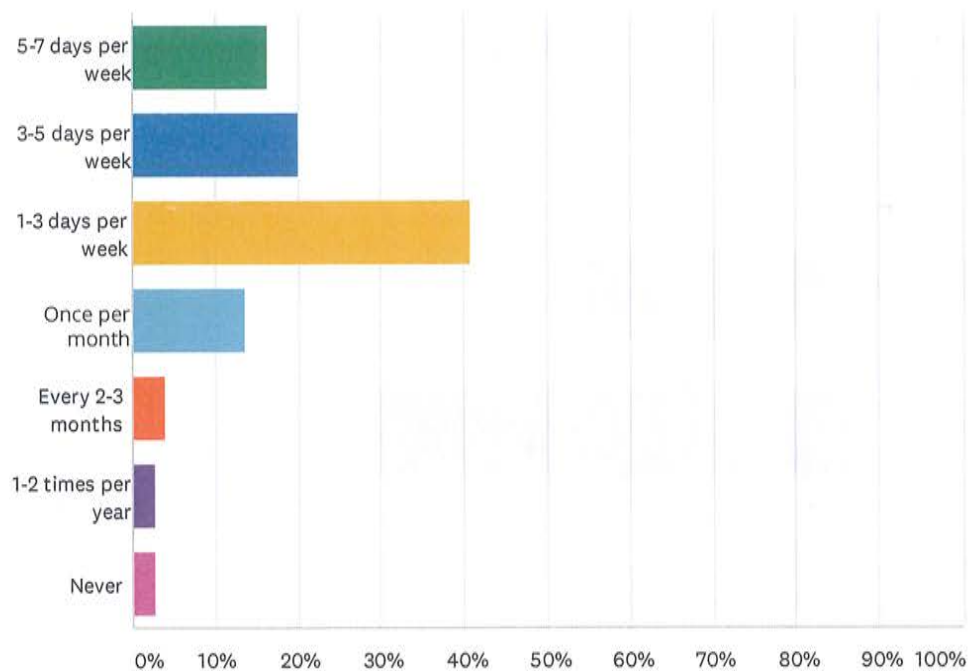
In general, respondents value the historic character of the Town Center but do not appear to want a set of design guidelines that is overly regulatory. Traditional building forms, roof lines, and materials received the higher scores. Respondents preferred to be flexible on setbacks (front and side yards) but regulate fences more closely.

Traditional storefronts and plantings, especially ones that are attractive through all four seasons, received high scores.

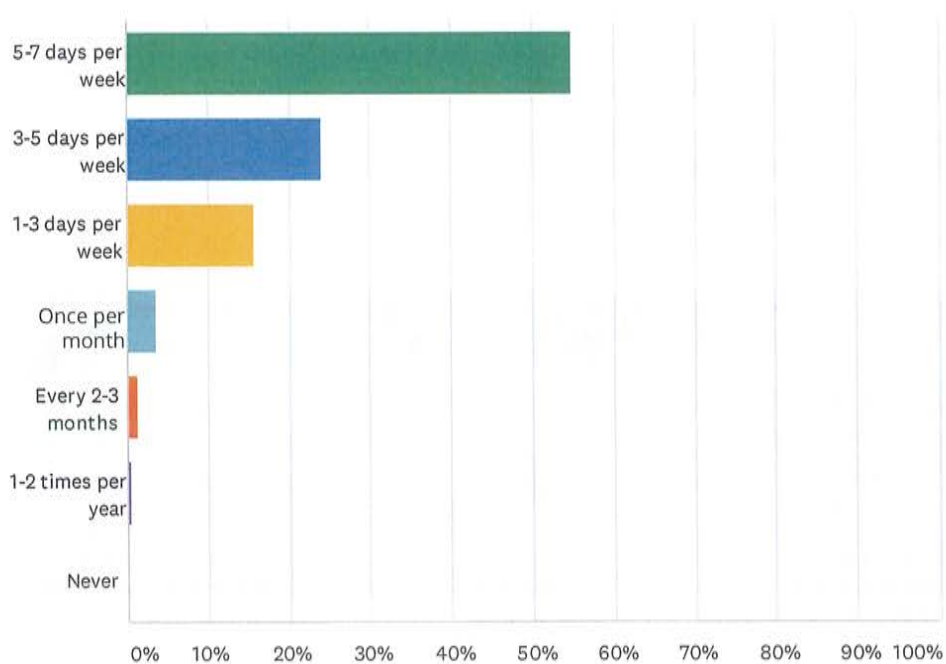
The Town also used the survey to ask questions about programming in Memorial Park and respondents had broad support for many of the options mentioned.

230 people responded to the survey. Information about who responded is at the end of this summary.

How often do you go to the Town Center as a destination?



How often do you drive through the Town Center on your way to somewhere else?



CONTEXT

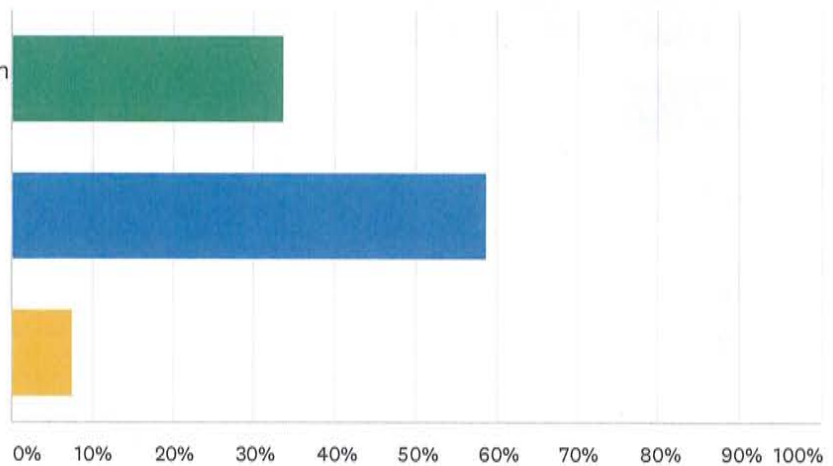
Historic Preservation

The Town Center has a wide range of buildings representing different architectural styles and periods. How important is historic preservation to you?

Very important; buildings should be maintained and restored to their original condition to the greatest extent possible.

Somewhat important, but buildings have to be able to change and adapt over time.

Not very important; buildings should be updated to reflect modern materials and methods.



Building Orientation

Buildings in the Town Centers vary in how the principal façade relates to the street. Please rank your preference toward the different building orientations.

The score for each image was the average of all response received. 5 indicates the most highly preferred and 1 the least highly preferred. The white number in the blue circle indicates the rank of the image relative to the others: 1 is highest.

BUILDING ORIENTATION



A | Short Façade Faces Street



B | Long Façade Faces Street



C | Angled Building



D | L-Shaped building

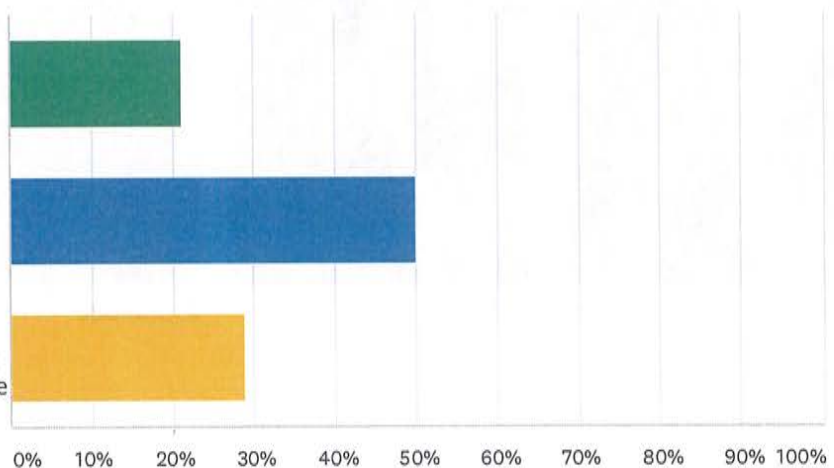
Height, Scale, and Proportion

The buildings in the Town Center range from 1 to 3 stories (although the Cider Mill Building has a 5-story tower). Overall heights vary dramatically because of different floor-to-floor heights. Current zoning requires buildings to be limited to less than 36 feet in height, which may restrict retail and restaurant given current practices on buildouts for those uses. Given the wide range of building types, sizes, and uses in the Town Center, how do you feel that the height of any new buildings should be regulated?

New buildings should be limited in height to no more than the average size of existing buildings in the Town Center. (Highly limited)

New buildings should be limited in height to no more than the largest existing building in the center. (Limited)

New buildings should be allowed to be a half story to a story taller than the largest existing building in the Town center, depending on the use. (Somewhat limited)



The images below were provided as a reference for heights in the Town Center so that participants in the survey could respond to the question above. These images did not receive specific preference ratings.

BUILDING HEIGHT



A | 1 to 2 Stories



B | 1.5 Stories



C | 2.5 to 3 Stories



D | 3 Stories

Local Architectural Features

Porticos, porches, vestibules, and dormers are common architectural features throughout the Town Center. These elements can affect people's perception of building massing and scale. How appropriate do you think these elements would be for new or rehabilitated buildings in the Town Center?

The score for each image was the average of all response received. 5 indicates the most highly preferred and 1 the least highly preferred. The white number in the blue circle indicates the rank of the image relative to the others: 1 is highest.

LOCAL ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES



A | Portico



B | Porch



C | Vestibule

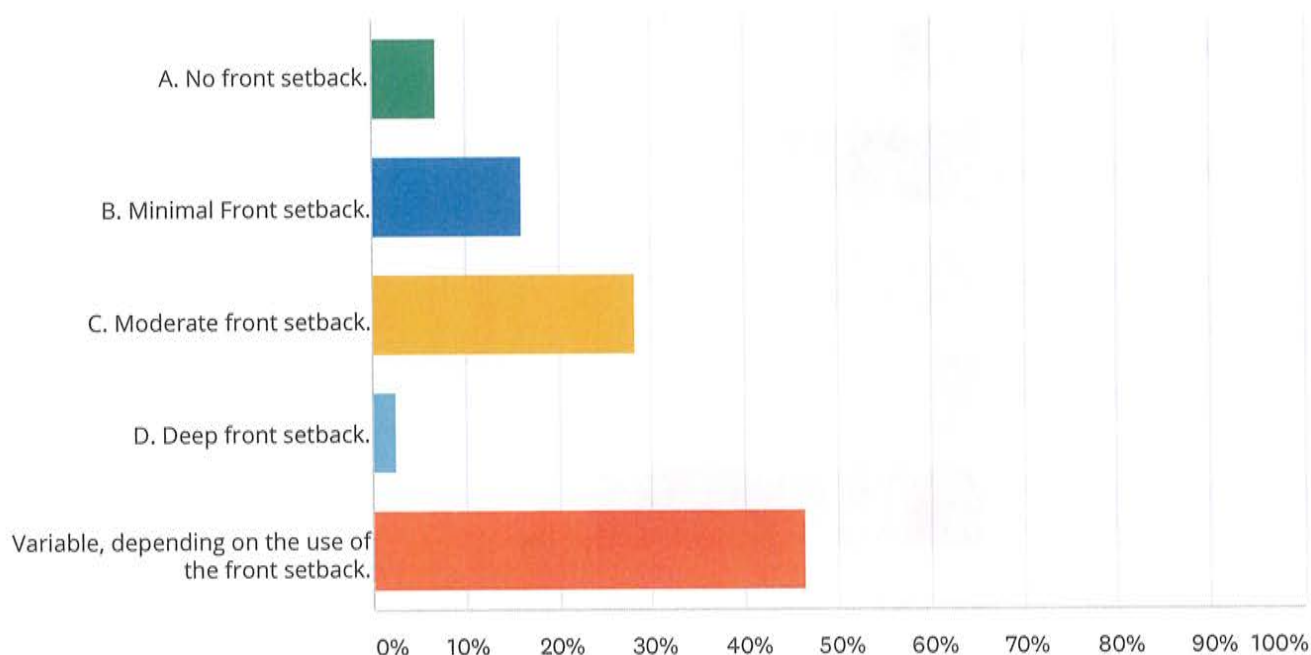


D | Dormers

SITE

Front Setback

A minimal front setback, which is typical for New England villages, brings window displays, business signage, and business entrances closer to the sidewalk. A moderate to large front setback opens up opportunities for enhanced plantings, seating for dining or just resting, and other amenities. Both can be components of a safer and more vibrant pedestrian realm. How far do you think buildings should be set back (roughly)?



The images below were provided as a reference for heights in the Town Center so that participants in the survey could respond to the question above. These images did not receive specific preference ratings.

FRONT SETBACKS



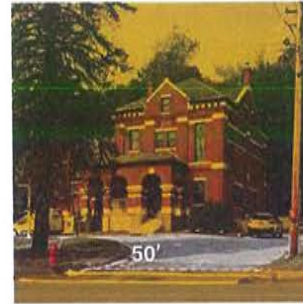
A | No Front Setback



B | Minimal Front Setback



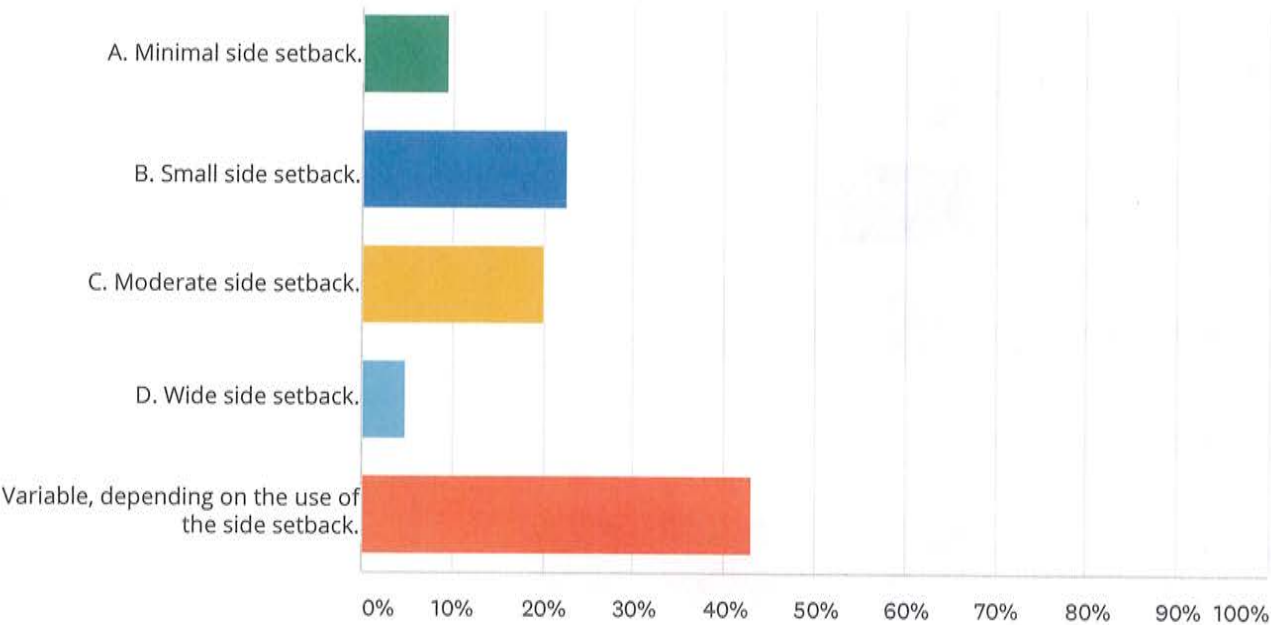
C | Moderate Front Setback



D | Deep Front Setback

Side Setback

A small side setback, also more typical of villages, can promote walkability and accessibility between destinations in the Town Center, while a larger side setback can open up opportunities for plantings, seating, viewsheds, and amenities. In general, do you prefer a smaller side setback, or a larger one?

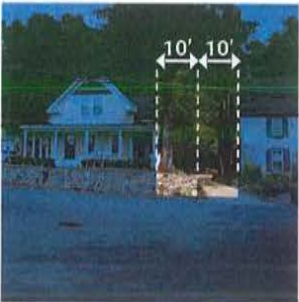


The images below were provided as a reference for heights in the Town Center so that participants in the survey could respond to the question above. These images did not receive specific preference ratings.

SIDE SETBACKS



A | Minimal Side Setback



B | Small Side Setback



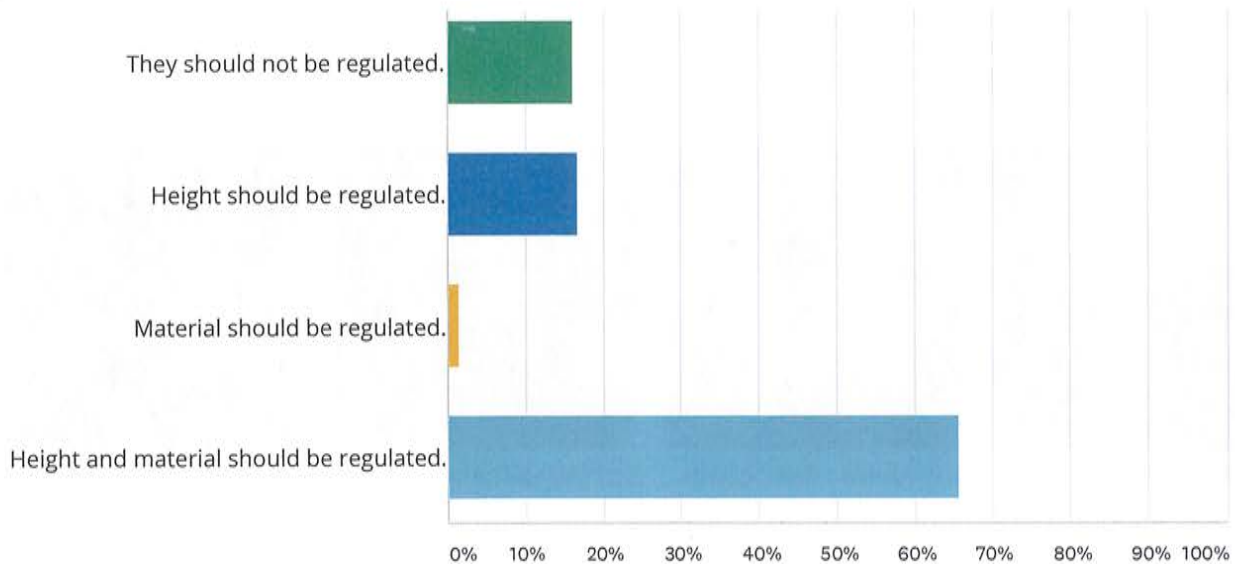
C | Moderate Side Setback



D | Wide Side Setback

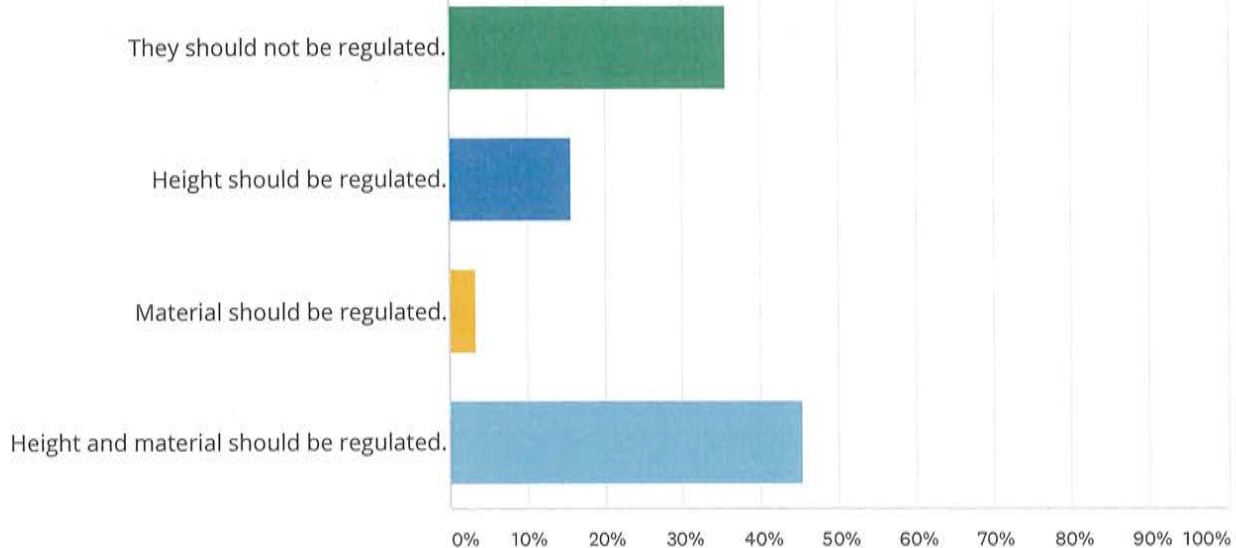
Walls And Fences - Front

Walls and fences provide privacy and define property lines, but they can also create unsafe conditions by blocking lines of sight. How do you think front yard walls and fences should be regulated in the new Guidelines?



Walls And Fences - Side

How do you think side yard walls and fences should be regulated in the new Guidelines?



Activities In Setbacks

Activities in the setbacks (dining/seating, signage, plantings, and storefronts that showcase goods and services) can provide a sense of excitement within a downtown. Which features are most appropriate to attract foot traffic to the Town Center?

The score for each image was the average of all response received. 5 indicates the most highly preferred and 1 the least highly preferred. The white number in the blue circle indicates the rank of the image relative to the others: 1 is highest.

ACTIVITIES IN SETBACKS



A | Outdoor Dining



B | Pedestrian-Scale Signage



C | Plantings/Trees



D | Traditional Storefronts

Vegetation

The new Town Center Design Guidelines could make recommendations for plantings. Please rank which types of plantings you think are appropriate for front and side setbacks in the Town Center. (5 is most preferred.)

Option	Score
Plantings that are attractive (flowers, fruit, foliage) throughout all four New England Seasons.	4.43
Shade-giving trees.	4.25
Native and adapted plant species.	4.22
Pollinator habitat.	3.90
Bio-filtration / Rain Gardens.	3.83
Permaculture/food production.	3.14

BUILDING

Building Form

Buildings can be simple in form or more complex, with smaller additions, variations in height and roofline, and architectural components such as porches or vestibules. In general, do you feel that simple building forms or complex building forms are better suited to the Town Center?

The score for each image was the average of all response received. 5 indicates the most highly preferred and 1 the least highly preferred. The white number in the blue circle indicates the rank of the image relative to the others: 1 is highest.

BUILDING FORMS



A | Simple Form



B | Semi Simple Form



C | Semi Complex Form



D | Complex Form

Roof Forms

Of these local roof forms, which do you feel are most suitable for the Town Center?

The score for each image was the average of all response received. 5 indicates the most highly preferred and 1 the least highly preferred. The white number in the blue circle indicates the rank of the image relative to the others: 1 is highest.

ROOF FORMS



A | Flat Roof



B | Hipped Roof



C | Gambrel Roof



D | 2-Pitch Roof

Local Materials

Which of these local materials do you feel are appropriate in the Town Center?

The score for each image was the average of all response received. 5 indicates the most highly preferred and 1 the least highly preferred. The white number in the blue circle indicates the rank of the image relative to the others: 1 is highest.

LOCAL MATERIALS



A | Vertical Siding



B | Horizontal Siding



C | Shingles



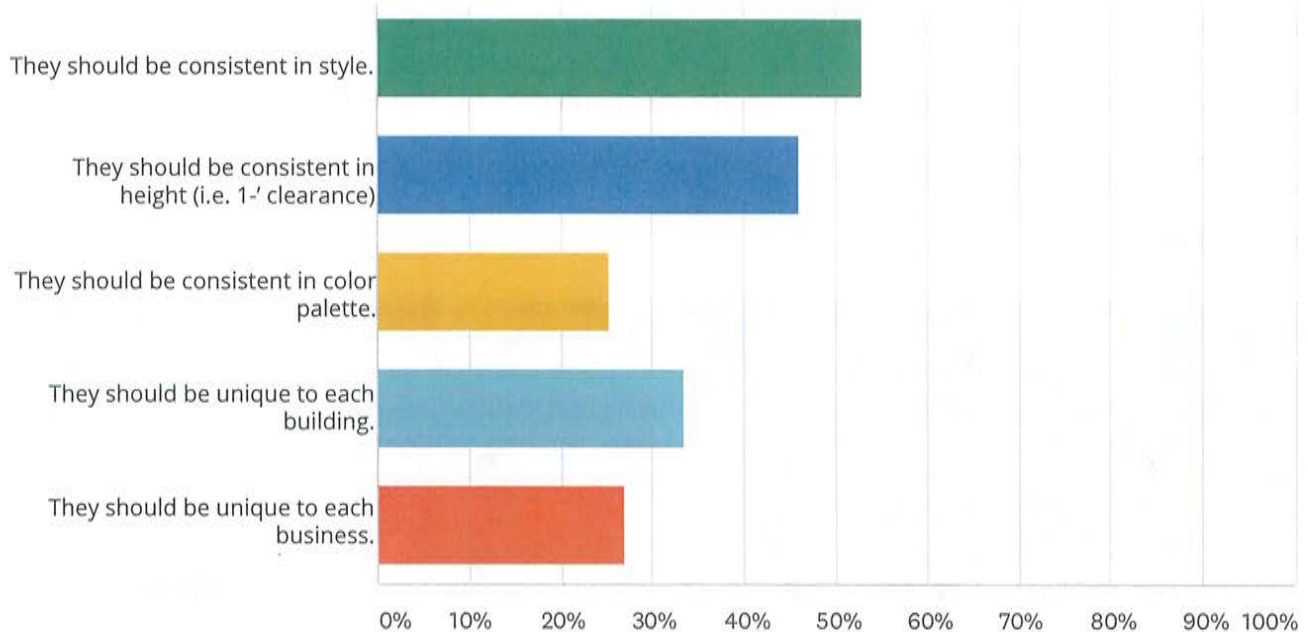
D | Brick

E. Mix of any material shown.

4 Score 3.44

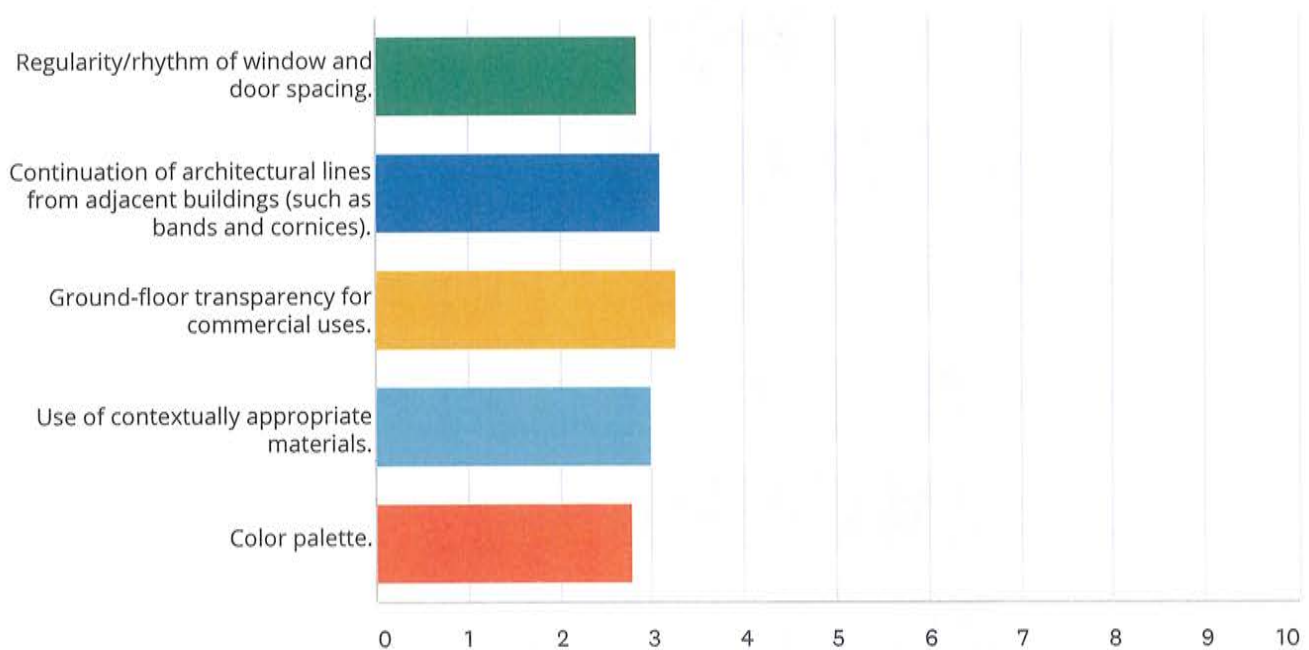
Awnings

How should awnings be regulated? Check all that apply.



Façade Composition

Please rank your priorities for façade composition of new buildings in the Town Center.



The images below were provided as a reference for heights in the Town Center so that participants in the survey could respond to the question above. These images did not receive specific preference ratings.

FAÇADE COMPOSITION



A | Rhythm of Openings



B | Horizontal Lines



C | Transparency



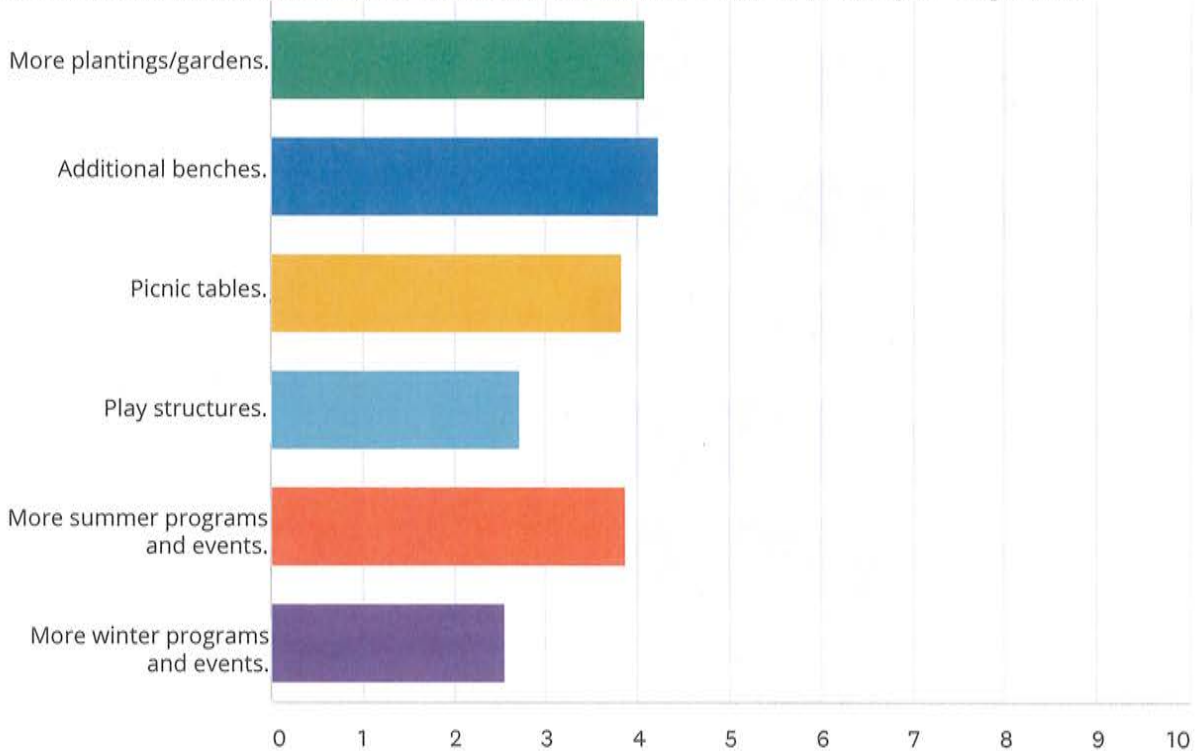
D | Materials/Colors

MEMORIAL PARK

Although this question is not related to design guidelines, we are interested in your thoughts on activities in Memorial Park.

Memorial Park offers 1.5 acres of open space which are used for ceremonies and various recreational functions. The L-shaped park features an iconic white gazebo.

Which features and programs do you think should be the highest priority (1=highest)?

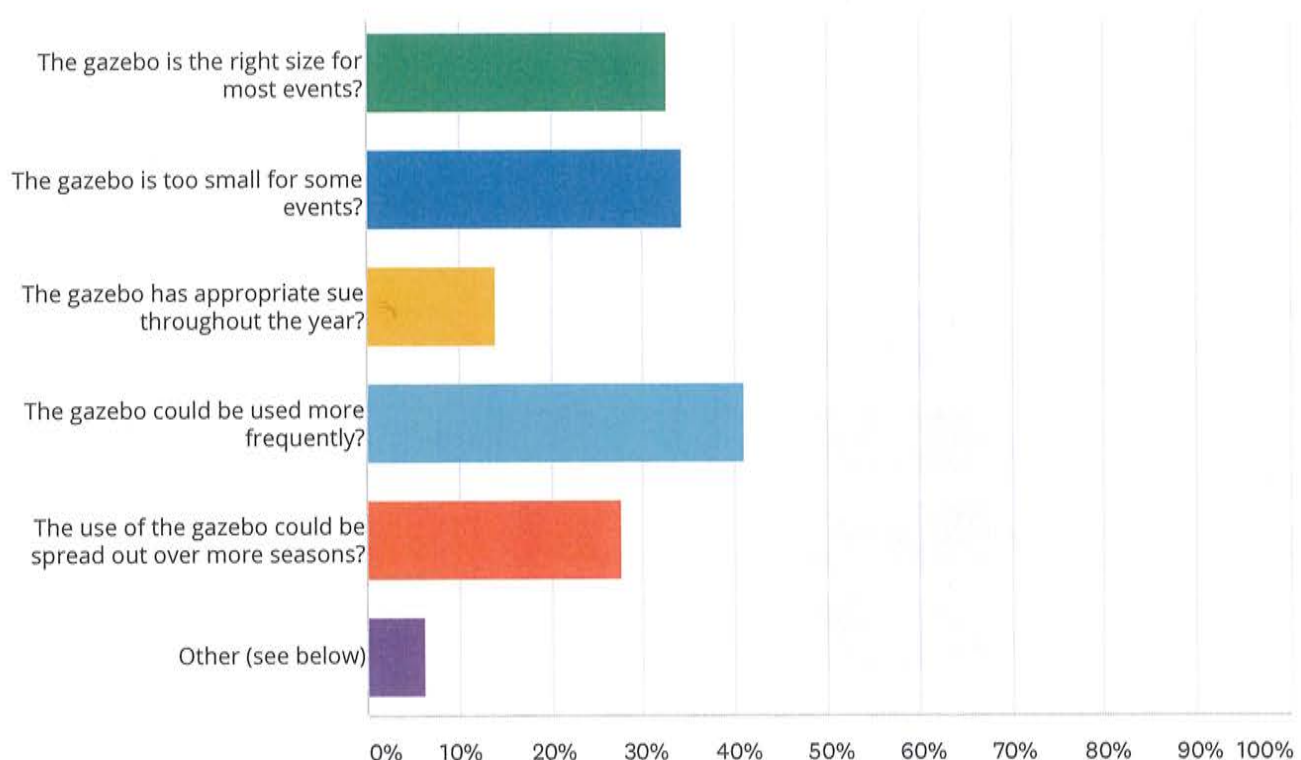


The images below were provided as a reference for heights in the Town Center so that participants in the survey could respond to the question above. These images did not receive specific preference ratings.

MEMORIAL PARK



We are interested in how the gazebo is used. Do you think:

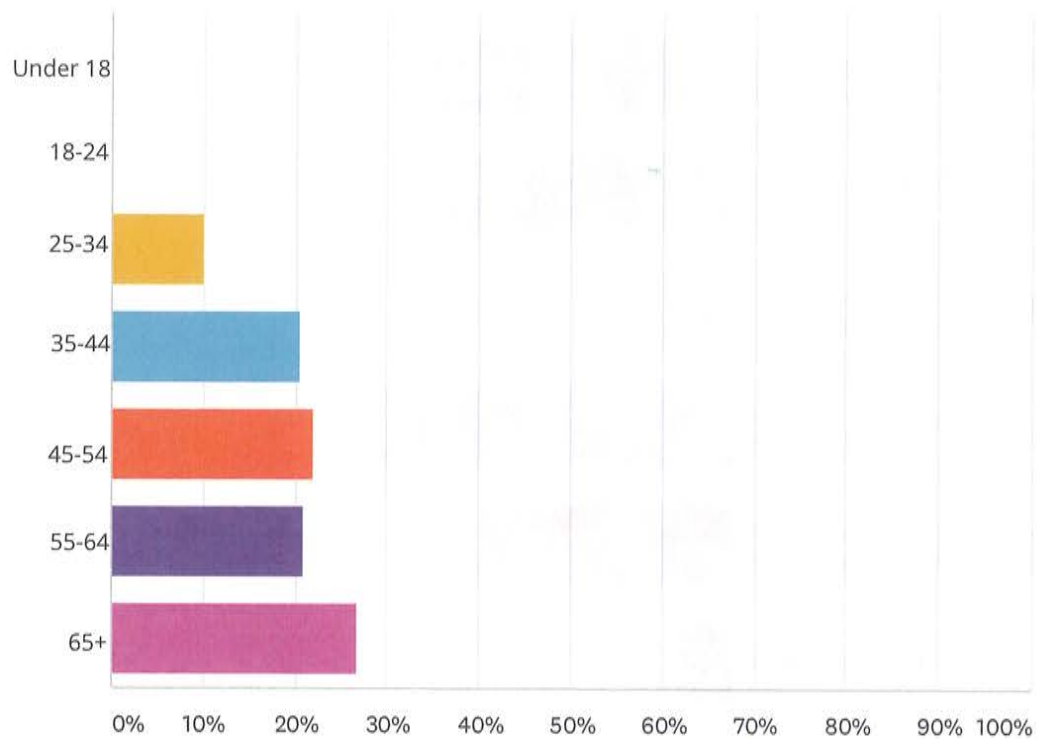


Other:

- Accessibility.
- Hard to maintain - a lot of vandalism.
- I don't see the gazebo being used for many events - not maintained well enough to use.
- If it were larger it could be used for more event throughout the year.
- I've never been so I can't comment on size.
- Love the concerts in the summer.
- No opinion,
- Not tall enough for mixed use and sound quality. Should be off to one side, not as placed.
- Relocate near the rear of the lot w/crabapple trees behind.
- Tear down and start over,
- The park and gazebo are appropriate for the uses at this point in time.

DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE SURVEY

What is your age group?



Do you own property in the Town Center district?

YES

15%

NO

85%

Are you a resident of Sterling?

YES

97%

NO

3%

How long have you lived in Sterling?

**1-5
years**

16%

**5-10
years**

12%

**10-20
years**

17%

**20+
years**

55%

Do you own a business in the Town Center district?

YES 1% NO 99%

How long has your business been in the Town Center?

1-5 years 50% 5-10 years 0%
10-20 years 0% 20+ years 50%

Do you own a business elsewhere in Sterling?

YES 11% NO 89%

How long has your business been in Sterling?

1-5 years 25% 5-10 years 20%
10-20 years 10% 20+ years 45%

Are you an employee of a business in the Town Center district?

YES 7.4% NO 92.6%

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

After taking this survey, do you have any other questions or comments for the planning team about the Town Center Design Guidelines?

- Business signage should have common theme/guidelines for size and color.
- Can you please stop trying to change our town.
- Clean up buildings. Make the owners maintain. Set historic guidelines and enforce them with fines.
- Concord, MA is an ideal town for inspiration.
- Traffic is a menace in town, espec, in the center. A truck work-around is badly needed. Limiting by weight (no more 22 and 44 ton gravel trucks or 18 wheelers) is a start. Limiting use to ONLY Rte 12 (access to I-190 & 140) w/a town center work-around would make downtown far safer, promote walking, allow uniform policing of truck loads and speeds, and provide densely developed neighborhoods on Rte 62 (Princeton and Clinton Road) the safety they now lack.
- First Church in Sterling owns the town common so any changes to the common must be approved by the church.
- Hello first, thank you for putting this together. In years past there was discussion about moving the utilities, for instance, the power lines, telephones and cable lines underground. Is that part of the plan as well? Also the addition of period style street lighting. As for questions, there was no question regarding the lighting of the pedestrian signage or the display itself. For instance the the undesired neon signs, plastic lit signs, LED lighting around windows and vinyl lettering on windows that cover the entire window. I would like to see some serious regulation on the type of materials, lighting and height displays of signage. As an example Freeport, Maine.
- Historic small town centers are immensely important to the cultural context of New England, it is critical that they are improved but protected from terrible design.
- How do you plan to handle waste water from apts. and businesses?
- I am concerned that this type of survey encourages regulating design. Practical regulations that encourages actual changes should be encouraged. Otherwise the solicited information and compiled report likely will have limited usefulness.
- I feel the sidewalks on Worcester rd could use a lot of work.
- I think the survey instructions could be clearer. Some questions are vague in that it is uncertain whether ranking is needed for all choices, or not.
- I wish we attract more businesses such as coffee shop/bakery, restaurants, and small shops. Also, more flowers and plants would add to overall impact.
- I would love to have more restaurants in the downtown area. Or outside events that my whole family can enjoy on nice days in the summer. More parking would also be great.
- I would love to see a vibrant pedestrian downtown with shops and restaurants, that might make Sterling center more of a destination. We would need additional parking and more consumer driven businesses, rather than the local tv station or numerous real estate offices. Sterling severely lacks in any type of food markets, making having to leave town for that pretty inconvenient. Additional dining options for all meal types would be awesome, food choices are really limited. This would again help drive the downtown as a destination, leading to more revenue for the town. The downtown is unsightly at best, we can do better.

- I would love to see more restaurants downtown!
- If there are rules about electrical signs or sandwich board signs, then rules should be applied to every business. If a business wants to have a sign to advertise, then perhaps they can hang it from the wall (like Appletown or CM Pizza or lean it against their building. I remember an ice rink in the Memorial Park by the road, but at times, it sat empty of water. If this was to return, it should be filled so that people can use it. Since the lake has signs that say no skating, we should have a safe spot for families to use. A lot of people were asking for recommendations on ponds or places to skate this winter on the Sterling Community Facebook page.
- In general, I think we need clear architectural guidelines that tie the look/feel together more than it is today. I like consistency with architectural style more than blanket consistency. Encouraging walking would be good too...maybe parking in the back of businesses that are right up on the street. Attracting some more restaurants and shops would be nice too.
- Incorporate bike trail into planning. Connect to rail trail.
- Increased parking should be a high priority.
- Is it possible to attract and retain some more sought after businesses to make the center of Sterling a recreational destination like downtown Hudson is? Restaurants, breweries, wine tasting room, hotels, an entertainment venue (comedy club, music, shows) to help attract consumers. What services does the town of Sterling need to provide to get a recreational use situation--tax exemptions, sewer, gas, easy parking, transportation, maybe a marketing campaign pitched to interested businesses? The town is ripe for expansion of businesses with easy highway access and a very high income level in all surrounding towns.
- It would be nice to have a more attractive downtown, less artificial facades. A coffeeshop and places to gather would be great.
- It would love to see more appealing colors, a variety of attractive materials and in general a 'sprucing up' of downtown. Would love more consistent sidewalk materials - it's very patchwork now, but thankfully we FINALLY have accessible transition points! Nice lighting with possible banners holders would also be great! I think Sterling's downtown has a lot of potential and welcome the ability to provide more input.
- It's great to see planning taking place. So many factors, I am sure it's quite a task, but please make it so that small businesses will want to be here and can afford to and are not so prohibited by rules upon rules that they'd rather be somewhere else. The town has so much potential and a good population it would be great to see some revitalization in downtown. Very exciting! Good luck!
- It's hard to picture the design standards as presented. Might be helpful to show towns that are practicing certain styles and have a vote that way.
- No.
- No awnings in town if you want to keep the look and signage should be flat nothing hanging out or neon.
- Please do something about the Sterling Inn. It's hideous as are all the variety of signage and the horrible siding on Apple Town market.
- Please use green & recycled building materials.
- Re horizontal siding: an option to discourage vinyl/aluminum siding would be appreciated. Also: more detailed queries re appropriate historic preservation might be addressed (given the historic district designation). Thank you!
- Restaurant needed. Parking needed. Playground needed
- Store fronts don't match the character one gets from the common and the churches and town buildings. They don't invite one in to

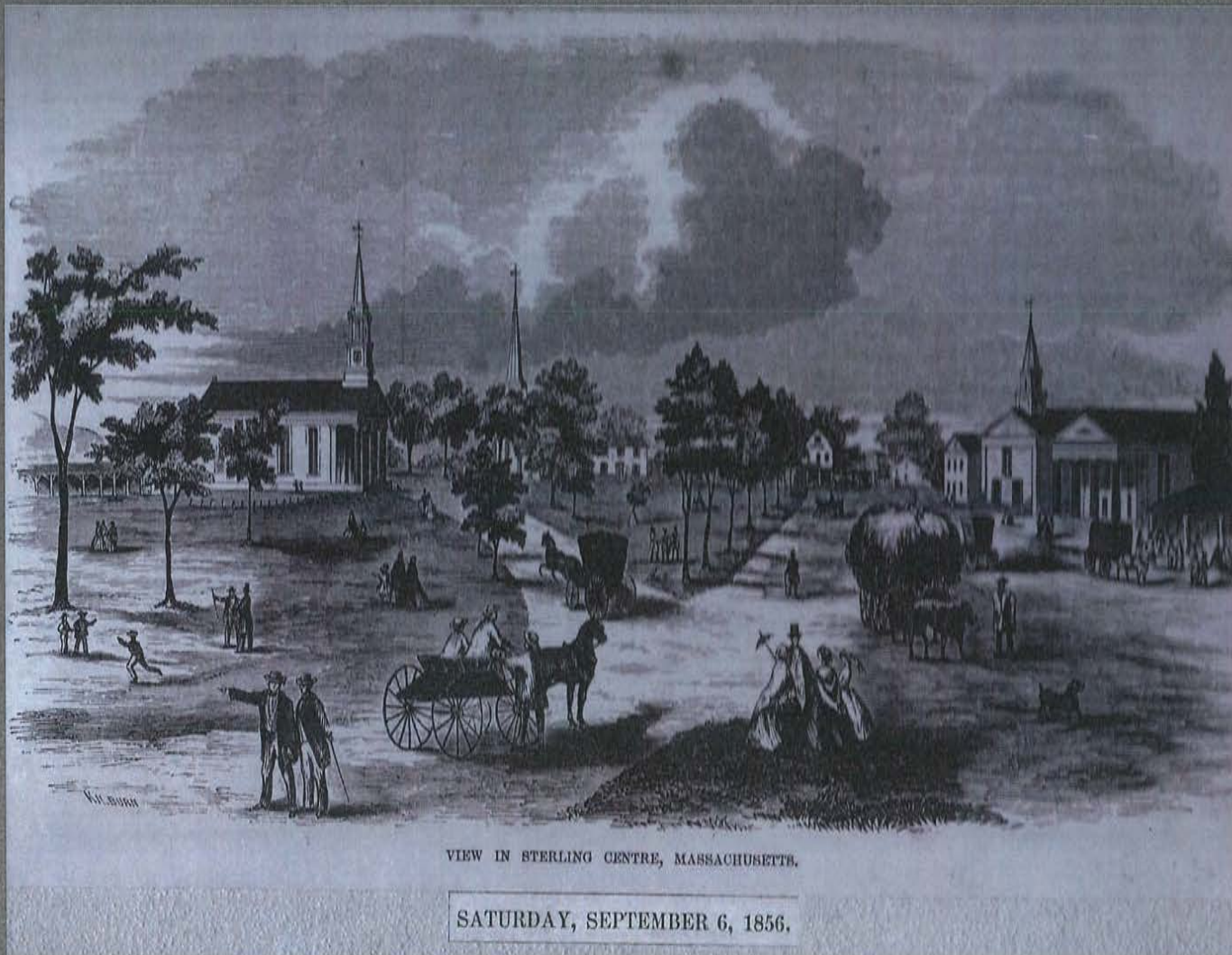
park and shop.

- Thank you for everyone working on this project! Hopefully we can see some positive changes soon that will only add to the perfect/quaint town that we live it. Focusing on fixing or changing the Sterling Inn should also be a priority as well.
- Thank you. Looking forward to development in the town center. I would love to have more reason to go there and keep my money in town.
- The additional of side walks that would connect the muddy pond park/schools and senior center to the town center is important. This is a connection that should be noted as important - as the middle school kids should be able to safely walk from school to the pizza shop and library after school.
- The downtown area is very much in need of updating. There was a photo of someone shoveling in front of C&M and it looked like sterling was a poor dilapidated town. I found it embarrassing.
- The Historic Preservation section of the survey provides for limited response. I would have preferred to say that I would like to see some properties maintain their historic originality, while others could be updated but moderately preserved.
- The sidewalks in center of town are cracked, weeds coming out of them. Sholand Realty siding is not appealing to look at, along with the shingles on the buildings on the main strip. We could really use a cafe or coffee shop/bakery instead of more realty offices and banks. We really only have the Brick (which is amazing) for downtown restaurants- which would also benefit from a larger space and more room for outdoor dining. The apartments over those spaces seem to not be well maintained and it effects the look of our downtown (same as the Appletown/C&M building). I think the addition of No Town Goods and the look of that building has added

some appeal.

- The town needs more parking.
- The town should enhance it's cozy local feeling and have more reason to attract residents downtown.
- There isn't much space for any new buildings. If down town is to be used, there needs to be parking! Don't replace parking with outside dining. Don't mess with the common.
- There should be a requirement that main street buildings and those on route 12 entering/exiting the downtown area should be kept in a well maintained state and now be allowed to deteriorate through neglect!
- This is very exciting! The town needs more amenities. We are looking forward to this progress. Thank you for all you are doing. Cant wait to see what comes about!
- Traffic speed control need to be implemented. It is unsafe to walk, run, bike along Rt 12 and 62. Trucks in particular speed through town, and tailgate drivers turning into D Donuts plaza, or onto side roads.
- We have the most viable town center in the area. There are multiple possibilities to enhance the architectural and historical aspects of Sterling to connect us to our past while looking to the future as we enjoy the present. We have the amazing potential to create a true town center that is accommodating to our residents and visitors. In the center we can walk to many town buildings (Town Hall, Library, Fire Station), bank, eating and shopping. Following the walkability of our town we can continue to a picnic or program or just a rest at Memorial Park, mosey over to browse the Cider Mill, and then walk or bike the Rail Trail to take in the natural beauty of Sterling including two of our lakes! What has taken so long for our town to recognize the importance and usability of this truly multifunctional town center for all of our residents, visitors and passers by to enjoy?!?!

- What is going to be done with the Sterling Inn? Is there any thought being given to making the center of town more walkable?
- Why did we not have questions regarding sign light or street lighting? Moving utilities underground?
- Why no questions regarding parking/traffic patterns?
- Would like to see the historical district restored beautified and preserved back to its colonial roots and condition as much as possible, more pedestrian friendly, The look, identification and maintenance of cross walks is atrocious, some sidewalks within the district have totally disappeared due to neglect , School Street, and along Worcester road past school street headed south. The town bylaw of property owners responsibility to clear sidewalks of snow and ice has never been enforced. And please get rid of the ugly yellow bike lane that destroyed the character of the Waushacum Avenue Historical District!
- Would love a more attractive town center
- Would love to see the Appletown Market and pizza shop building remodeled. I know it is private property, but it is an eyesore right now.
- Yes, the long building on 62 with many stores (across from library) needs to be painted a shade of white (brick and second story). Then all awnings should be hunter green with writing and logos in white. Window boxes with flowers could be added. Changing this one area would make a big difference in the town's appearance. I would examine cosmetic changes before you make structural changes.
- Yes... new lighting gaslight reproductions and new side walks and curbs.. some cobblestone features.
- Would be nice to have family owned lunch/ dinner restaurant. No.



Town of
Sterling Massachusetts



Massachusetts Downtown Initiative



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