



# Design Review Guidelines for The Marlborough Village District

Referenced in the Marlborough Zoning Ordinance (MZO)

Section 650-33 Special Provisions Applicable to the Marlborough Village District (MV)



Main Street, Marlborough, Massachusetts. City Hall is at the right.

These Design Guidelines supplement MZO Section 650-33 \_\_\_ Design Standards

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## Introduction

The City of Marlborough completed a planning and rezoning process for the Downtown in 2014. Residents, business owners, the City Council, Planning Board and the Economic Development Corporation reviewed recommendations for uses, dimensions, parking requirements and project review with the goal of revitalizing the Downtown. It was acknowledged that the existing Downtown has many attributes, including an attractive streetscape and ample parking. However, existing regulations would preclude mixed use development and there were no guidelines to ensure that new construction would be compatible with the existing historic fabric. The solution included new zoning regulations Section 650-33, Special Provisions Applicable to the Marlborough Village district (MV), augmented by these Design Guidelines.

[NOTE: All of the zoning revisions for the Downtown are in Appendix B, and include updates to the Table of Use Regulations, Table of Lot Area, Yards and Height Table, Parking Requirements, etc.]

## Purpose of the Design Guidelines

Architecture and site design have enormous potential to enhance the quality of life in a community. Well-designed buildings in well-planned commercial centers achieve a distinct “sense of place” bringing people together to shop, work, live and play. Alternatively, bad architecture in a poorly planned place can depress economic vitality. Section 650-33\_\_\_ “Design Standards for the Village District” of the Zoning Ordinance requires building and site design to “enhance the visual character of Marlborough’s historic downtown and respect and reflect traditional 19th century heritage of the area.” The goal of these guidelines is to maintain the design quality of Marlborough’s historic city center, helping to attract customers to the area and encourage economic revitalization.

These Guidelines do not describe the rules, such as the building setbacks and heights that are specified in the Marlborough Zoning Ordinance. Rather, they suggest the elements of site and building design that developers and business owners should consider for compatible design of new buildings and extensive alterations in the Downtown. The Guidelines include illustrations of these elements and photos.

## Purposes of the Village District Zoning

- ❖ Preserve and enhance the character of Marlborough’s Downtown.
- ❖ Promote attractive development of the Downtown.
- ❖ Streamline the approval process for development.
- ❖ Relate commercial and mixed use properties both visually and physically to surrounding land uses.
- ❖ Facilitate a more walkable and healthier Downtown that integrates the needs of pedestrians with those of drivers.
- ❖ Protect property values by enhancing the Downtown’s appearance.

## Results of the Design Preference Survey

Design Preference Survey is a research and visioning technique to gauge residents' and business owners' impressions of the present community image and build consensus for its future character. As part of the April 3, 2014 Community Forum, the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) conducted a Design Preference Survey. A summary of the results is below, and was used to develop the key elements for the Design Guidelines.

### Marlborough Residents and Business Owners Prefer:

**Building bulk & height:** Moderate-scale structures, maximum five stories. For larger scale buildings, articulated facades to lessen impression of massing.

New buildings on Main Street may be different from those on Grainger Boulevard. Grainger Boulevard may have larger and more architecturally varied buildings, while still "fitting in" with Downtown Marlborough.

**Design features** that add visual interest and reduce appearance of bulk and mass.

**Roof form:** Flat roofs.

**Building style:** City-block style. Details such as corbelled brick.

**Exterior materials:** Brick; or stone, adequate first floor windows to enable visibility of shop spaces.

**Parking** at rear of building, if not off-site.

**Pedestrian amenities:** Sidewalks/pathways, outdoor seating, and appropriate landscaping. Structures located in such a way as to maximize ease of pedestrian access.

### Marlborough Village District Key Elements

- ❖ Buildings in scale with their surroundings.
- ❖ An orientation toward the street, with maximum frontage on the street.
- ❖ Close proximity to the street.
- ❖ Parking behind the buildings.
- ❖ A place for pedestrian amenities such as plazas and benches.
- ❖ Big windows on the ground floor, with no blank walls.
- ❖ Use of brick or stone.
- ❖ Camouflaged storage spots, and mechanical equipment.

# Design Guidelines

## Overview

Most buildings in the Downtown can help to create a livelier, more engaging experience for visitors, shoppers and residents. The new zoning regulations encourage a mix of uses, which is defined as a combination of residential/business uses on the same lot. Also allowed are more types of retail stores and services and restaurants. Flexible building setbacks and reduced parking requirements incentivize development and redevelopment in the Downtown. In exchange for streamlined project review (most uses are now allowed As of Right, without a Special Permit), the Design Standards in the Marlborough Village District (MZO Section 650-33\_\_\_\_) must be met as part of Site Plan Review. The Design Standards are intended to promote quality development emphasizing the city's sense of history and desire for contextual, pedestrian-scaled projects. These Design Guidelines are intended to provide more detailed information on how a project can meet the Design Standards.

Marlborough Village Zoning  Design Standards  Design Guidelines

## Existing Buildings

The focus on existing buildings should be retaining the original façade elements, including the original **size** of the windows if these are candidates for replacement. Additions should be “sympathetic” to the original style of construction. The goal is compatibility, not a “carbon copy”.

If the original façade has been obscured, the focus should be on removing inappropriate materials and other façade elements, such as signage, and restoring the original architectural character. Old photographs from the Marlborough Historical Society can provide guidance to inform and inspire these improvements.

## New Buildings

Many new buildings will mix retail uses with housing or offices or other uses above. These mixed use buildings will enliven the Downtown. Every new building can help make the center more pedestrian-friendly by incorporating handsome storefronts and signage, offering views of ground-floor activity, display windows, flower boxes to create an interesting experience for pedestrians.

## Organization of the Guidelines

The Design Standards, and these accompanying Guidelines, address the following topics:

- Building Scale;
- Roof Form,
- External Materials and Appearance, including Acceptable Masonry Construction;
- Landscaping and Sidewalk Amenities;
- Service Areas, Utilities and Equipment;
- Vehicle and Pedestrian Features;
- Parking and Bicycle Parking;
- Sustainable Building Design;
- Historic District and Other Historic or Landmark Structures.

Each Downtown project will be required to address these topics, as applicable, as part of the Site Plan Review detailed in MZO Section 270-2 and MZO Section 650-33\_\_ Site Plan Review. The Site Plan Review process is principally an administrative review conducted by various department heads and officials, further streamlining project review. The City under MGL 53G may utilize the services of an urban designer or architect in order to assist with the review of the Design Standards during Site Plan Review. [Note that the City Council will conduct Site Plan Review for proposed hotel uses in the Downtown.]

These Guidelines are organized by the same topic area. For each topic, the exact language from the Zoning Ordinance is provided in the shaded, outlined box. This is the Design Standard. Then, more details (“guidance”) is provided on that topic, followed by a picture or illustration.

Marlborough has designated the Building Commissioner as the contact person for initial questions about the zoning ordinance and these Guidelines. The Commissioner’s contact information is \_\_\_\_\_

### **Compatible, Contextual, Appropriate: What do we mean?**

These Guidelines are intended to assist property owners, developers, architects, reviewers and members of the public. These individuals will have different levels of knowledge about architectural terms. There is a **glossary of terms** at the end of these Guidelines. Throughout the zoning and the guidelines, however, the terms “compatible”, “contextual” and “appropriate” are referenced. All readers/users will benefit from a common definition of these terms:

**Compatible:** New construction or rehabilitation/addition that is sensitive to the character of the historic surroundings. This is not a “carbon copy” of a historic building, but an acknowledgement of the existing pattern of development. For example, a stucco structure would not be compatible with the historic Main Street environment.

**Contextual:**

**Appropriate:**

Each property is different. Whether the project is an addition to an existing structure, or a new building, what might be appropriate at one property may not necessarily be appropriate at another, so no specific design solution is mandated.

## Building Scale

**Zoning Text, Section 650-33\_\_** : New Buildings and/or substantial alterations shall be pedestrian-oriented and shall reflect the community preference for moderate-scale structures that are in harmony with the existing historic brick structures. Building design shall incorporate features to add visual interest while reducing the appearance of bulk or mass. Such features include varied facades, rooflines, roof heights, materials, and architectural details.

Buildings shall relate to the pedestrian scale by:

- Including appropriate architectural details to add visual interest along the ground floor of all facades that face streets, squares, pedestrian pathways, parking lots, or other significant pedestrian spaces.
- Articulating the base, middle, and top of the facade by cornices, string cornices, step-backs or other similar features.
- Continuous lengths of flat, blank walls adjacent to streets, pedestrian pathways, or open spaces are discouraged. Continuous blank walls in excess of 50% of the wall frontage are not allowed. If windows cannot be installed, the façade should include different materials or a design element to vary the frontage.

“A moderate scale structure” in Marlborough is 3 to 5 stories, of approximately 40ft – 55 ft.

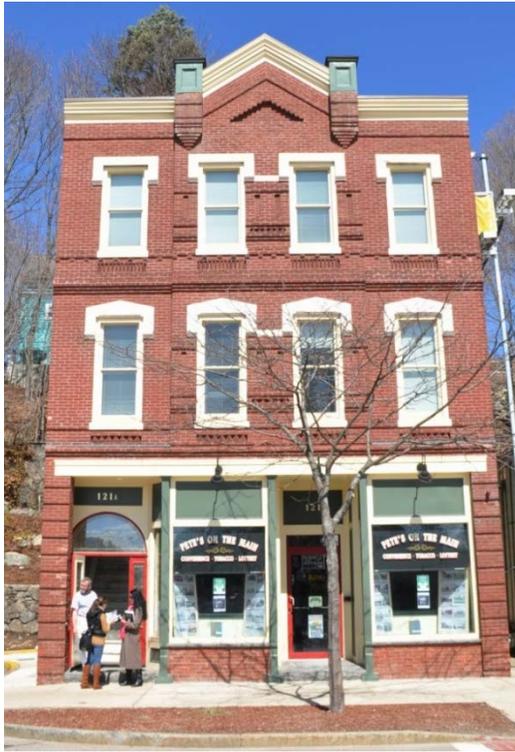
Buildings should avoid long, monotonous, uninterrupted walls or roofs on their visible facades. They also should avoid long expanses of repetitive architectural elements. Whether symmetrical or asymmetrical, the buildings’ facades should be balanced in their composition.

The massing of commercial buildings should be deemphasized by the use of projecting and recessed sections to reduce their apparent overall bulk.

Reduce the apparent scale of the building by introducing small-scaled architectural features like openings, sills, pilasters, columns, and other features to establish a human scale at the street level.



The building is nicely articulated to reduce the massing



Two examples of moderate scale structures in Marlborough



This example could be appropriate for Grainger St. Note the first floor commercial frontage, with different materials above to provide horizontal breaks in the massing.

**Zoning Text, Section 650-33\_\_\_:** Mechanical equipment located on roofs shall be screened, organized and designed as a component of the roof design, and not appear to be a leftover or add-on element.



## Entrances

**Zoning Text, Section 650-33**\_\_\_ For visibility and accessibility, all primary commercial building entrances shall be visible from the right-of-way and the sidewalk, and shall have an entrance directly accessible from the sidewalk.

Doors shall not extend beyond the exterior facade into pedestrian pathways.

Where parking is located to the rear of a building, any rear entrance is to be visible and accessible from the parking lot. Directional signage to the building entrance(s) shall be installed. All entrances are to have sufficient illumination at night time.

Architectural detail should be incorporated into the ground-floor façade to create an easily identifiable and welcoming entrance. As one of the most important parts of the facade, the main entrance should be easily identifiable. Doors and entryways should follow a traditional storefront design (usually recessed) and should be compatible with the architectural style of the structure. The entrances should also address the primary street or pedestrian pathway.

When rear parking is provided, the provision of secondary *rear entrances* and pleasing rear facades is strongly encouraged. The design of the rear entrances and facades should be appropriately detailed to provide an attractive appearance, but should not be overly embellished to compete with the main storefront.

Where a new building is to be located on a *corner*, each side visible from a street should be considered a primary storefront façade and incorporate these fenestration patterns, unless doing so would unduly obtrude into a primarily residential street



Note the varied, but compatible storefronts. The façade heights and proportions are similar to each other, allowing for individual expression but creating a harmonious streetscape. The windows and doors share similar proportions, sizes, locations and general number



While too tall to meet the Marlborough height limits, this shows a very successful addition on top of an existing structure. The articulated front helps to break the massing of the apartments above the first floor retail. Compatible materials are used.

## External Materials and Appearance

**Zoning Text, Section 650.33\_\_\_:** Predominant wall materials shall be red brick, stone, or pre-cast concrete panels; Wood siding may be used where the structures are adjacent to residential districts where the intent is to blend the structure more into the existing neighborhood. If painted, or coated, a non-metallic finish is to be used. Cladding materials should be consistent on all facades with the exception of special design elements such as turrets. Materials designed to “imitate” brick are not permitted.

### Acceptable Masonry Construction

Acceptable masonry construction will be of standard fired clay brick units bonded together with mortar. Acceptable applications include building components such as walls, stairs, columns, arches, planter beds etc.

Utilize bricks which are sound, hard, well burnt with uniform color shape and size.

The bricks should be compact, homogeneous, and free from holes, cracks, flaws, air-bubbles, spawls and stone lumps.

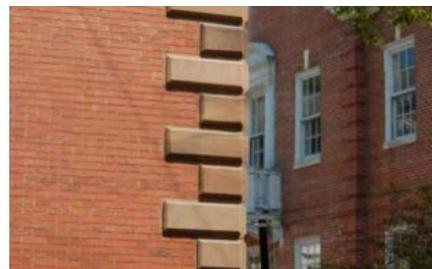
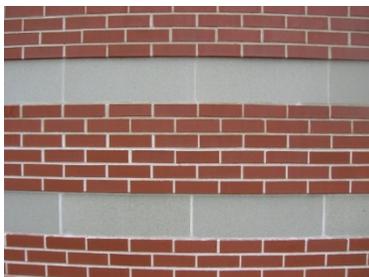
Frogged bricks shall be laid with the frogs pointing upwards.

Mortar specifications shall comply with relative ASTM standards.

The properties of masonry units should comply with the requirements of relevant ASTM Standards. Masonry units are classified into the following types: solid, hollow unit, cellular, perforated and frogged.

Except for minor trim, the building shall avoid the appearance of reflective materials such as porcelain enamel or sheet metal. Window panes shall be non-reflective.

Ground floor commercial building facades facing streets, squares, or other significant pedestrian spaces shall contain transparent windows encompassing a minimum of 35% of the facade surface.



Marlborough strongly prefers authentic natural materials such as brick and stone for the exterior of structures and landscape features. Construct windows, storefronts and public doorways of wood where possible. Synthetic materials should be as close in appearance and detail to the natural material it simulates.

Vinyl siding is discouraged as it is environmentally damaging during its manufacturing and disposal stages, and is not prevalent in the Downtown.

All sides of the building should use materials consistent with those on the front if visible from public streets or neighboring properties, and should be carefully designed with similar detailing, comparable quality, and compatible materials.

## Awnings

**Zoning Text, Section 650-33\_\_\_:** Awnings and canopies shall be compatible with the architectural style of the building. Colors and patterns used for awnings and canopies shall be subdued and compatible with existing awnings on adjacent buildings, if any.

**Awnings** that are functional for shade and shelter are encouraged. These awnings should be made of canvas or a canvas-like material, should fit the shape and scale of the window or door they are sheltering, and should be designed to be compatible with and complimentary to building signage and design. Awnings should break at the vertical divisions of the structure (i.e., the break between the display windows and the entrance).

The color and pattern of awnings affect the entire building and therefore should be carefully chosen. A facade with minimal architectural detailing can be enhanced with bright colors and patterns, while a more decorated facade may be complemented with a plain, subtle shade. The shape of awnings should be designed to fit the building's architecture and relate to other awnings that exist along the street.



## Landscaping and Sidewalk Amenities

**Zoning Text Section 650.30**\_\_\_: To the maximum extent possible projects shall provide pedestrian-friendly amenities, such as outdoor seating, patios, porches or courtyards. Window boxes are encouraged. Large windows that open up to provide the experience of “open air dining” are encouraged. Site landscaping shall be maximized. Links/sidewalks designed to connect Granger Street parking areas with adjacent developments are encouraged to further the goal of providing safe pedestrian access to businesses within downtown Marlborough.

Thoughtfully designed landscaping appropriate to the context of the building and the surrounding streetscape is highly desirable. These features can define spaces and make for pleasant pedestrian experiences.



*Who wouldn't enjoy walking down this landscaped passageway, or next to a window box and sidewalk planter with lovely flowers?*

## Service Areas, Utilities and Equipment

**Zoning Text Section 650.30**\_\_: Service and loading areas and mechanical equipment and utilities shall be unobtrusive or sufficiently screened so that they are not visible from streets or primary public open spaces and shall incorporate effective techniques for noise buffering from adjacent uses.



This photo shows a site that would not meet the Marlborough Design Review Standards relative to mechanical screening, or screening of a service area (dumpster).

**Zoning Text Section 650.30**\_\_: Vehicle, pedestrian and bicycle features shall be designed to promote connectivity. Curb cuts shall be minimized.



*A landscaped passageway with signage for bicycle rentals*

## Parking

**Zoning Text:** To maintain a pedestrian-friendly environment, motor vehicle parking spaces shall be located behind or beside buildings wherever possible. Parking located directly between the building and the street alignment shall be discouraged.

## Bicycle Parking

**Zoning Text:** Bicycle parking shall be provided for all new development, and shall be located as close as possible to the building entrance(s). Any property required to have bicycle parking may establish a shared bicycle parking facility with any other property owner within the same block.

## Signage (Not included in Design Guidelines, but in the MV)

In buildings with multiple storefronts, a coordinated approach to signage throughout the building is particularly important. Use signs of similar size, proportion, and materials on each store. Varying the color of individual signs can add variety.

Signage should be appropriately scaled to the building or surface onto which it is placed, should not obscure important architectural features, and should be readable by both pedestrians and drivers approaching the site. Marlborough has signage regulations (see \_\_\_\_\_ “Sign By-law “), which provide further detailed requirements.



Examples of projecting or “blade” signs





While inexpensive, and allowing for variable messages, the sign board on the left does not enhance the streetscape, and may not be approved. Is the one on the right more appropriate? Why?



Perhaps a touch of whimsy is what makes these signs attractive.

**Signs from** Photos from the Report: Norwood Downtown Sign Initiative, prepared for the Town of Norwood and Downtown Initiative Program of Massachusetts by The Cecil Group.

## Glossary of Terms

- Arcade:** A range of arches supported on piers or columns attached to or detached from the wall.
- Awning:** A roof-like cover extending over or in front of a storefront (as over the deck or in front of a door and/or window) as a shelter.
- Bay:** A main division of a structure. A regularly repeated unit on a building elevation defined by columns, pilasters, or other vertical elements, or defined by a given number of windows or openings.
- Bay window:** A window or series of windows forming a bay in a room and projecting outward from the wall.
- Blank Wall:** An exterior building wall with no openings and generally constructed of a single material, uniform texture, and on a single plane.
- Brackets:** Ornamental pieces placed under eaves, cornices, window sills, etc., which appear to provide structural support.
- Bulkhead:** A vertical partition separating compartments.
- Canopy:** An ornamental projection, over a door, window, niche, etc.
- Clerestory:** An outside wall of a room or building that rises above an adjoining roof and contains windows.
- Column:** A supporting post-often round in shape-found on storefronts, porches, and balconies; may be fluted or smooth.
- Corner block:** A square, relatively flat block of wood, often decoratively carved, placed at the upper corners on each side of the wood framing around a door.
- Cornice:** The projecting uppermost portion of a wall, sometimes treated in a decorative manner with brackets.
- Cupola:** A small roof tower, usually rising from the roof ridge.
- Dormer:** A window set vertically in a structure projecting from a sloping roof.
- Eave:** The part of the roof which extends beyond the side wall.
- Façade:** The face of a building, especially the principal face.
- Fascia:** Any relatively broad, flat, horizontal surface, as the outer edge of a cornice, a string-course, etc.
- Fenestration:** The arrangement of windows and other openings in a wall.
- Frieze:** The portion of the facade found just below the point where the wall surface meets the building's cornice or roof overhang.
- Front Lot-Line:** On a regular lot, the front lot line is the shared line between the lot and a sidewalk/public right-of-way.
- Gambrel:** A roof having two slopes on each side of the peak, the lower slope usually steeper than the upper one.
- Gable:** The vertical triangular wall between the sloping ends of gable roof.
- Gable Roof:** A roof that consists of two sloping planes that meet at the ridge or peak. The planes are supported at their ends by triangular, upward extensions of walls known as gables.
- Hipped Roof:** A roof with four sloped sides.
- Mansard Roof:** A roof that has two slopes on all four sides.
- Massing of the Building(s):** The combined effect of the arrangement, volume and shape of a building or group of buildings. Also called bulk.
- Muntin (or Window Bar) -** A short bar used to separate glass in a sash into multiple lights. Also called a windowpane divider or a grille ("true divided light")
- Parapet:** The portion of an exterior wall that rises entirely above the roof, usually in the form of a low retaining wall; the parapet may be shaped or stepped.
- Pediment:** A low triangular gable above a cornice, topped by raking cornices and ornamented.
- Pilaster:** A column partially embedded in a wall, usually non-structural and often decorated to resemble a classical column.
- Public Right-of-Way:** Includes the street, curb and sidewalk area in front of private property at the front lot line.
- Quoin:** Corner treatment for exterior walls, either in masonry or frame buildings.
- Roof:** Flat or Pitched. Pitched roofs can be: Hip, Mansard, Gambrel, Gable, and more.
- Sash:** (Window Sash) Framework of stiles and rails in which the lights of a window are set.
- Scale:** to design or build according to a particular proportion with regard to the surrounding architecture.

**Setback:** An architectural expedient in which the upper stories of a tall building are stepped back from the lower stories; designed to permit more light to reach the street.

**Shingles:** Thin pieces of wood or other material set in overlapping rows to form a roof or wall cladding.

**Side light:** A framed area of fixed glass alongside a door or window opening.

**Storefront:** The front side of a store or store building facing a street

**Texture:** The visual or tactile surface characteristics and appearance of a building

**Transom:** A small-hinged window above a door or another window.

**Transparent Glass:** Degree of Tinting: Capable of transmitting light so that objects may be easily seen on the other side.

**Turrets:** A small tower that projects from the wall of a building, such as a medieval castle or baronial house. A building may have both towers and turrets; turrets might be smaller or higher but the difference is

generally considered to be that a turret projects from the edge of the building, rather than continuing to the ground.

**Valance:** A short drapery, decorative board, or metal strip mounted across the bottom of an awning.

## Illustration of an Infill Commercial Building



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