



# Design Guidelines for the Residential 3 (R3), Retail Business 2 (BR2), and Light Industrial/Office 2 (LI2) Districts

*Adopted on June 20, 2005  
Section 34-216(c) of Chapter 34 (Zoning) of the Code of Ordinances,  
City of Chelsea, Massachusetts*

These design guidelines are developed to ensure that new development is compatible with, and complements, the existing historic and contemporary building stock within the district. The guidelines are developed to be applicable district-wide. Because the character of each district differs somewhat from block to block or street to street, the guidelines are general in nature. More site specific guidance will be provided during the design review process.

The residential buildings in this area are characterized by the detailed articulation of the buildings, including bay windows, dormers, peaked corner turrets, and covered front entries supported by ornately carved brackets. Many of the buildings have peaked roofs; those with flat roofs usually have detailed cornices. Building materials are generally wood clapboard painted in a light color. Interspersed are larger masonry buildings, usually schools or industrial buildings - some of which have been or are in the process of being converted to residential use, or larger apartment buildings. Windows are punched rather than band. Buildings within a particular block have uniform setbacks, typically around ten feet although sometimes less.

Commercial buildings (primarily along Broadway) are mostly one-story masonry buildings, or two to three story buildings with residential uses on the upper floors. Buildings are typically built to the back edge of the sidewalk, with recessed entryways. Many buildings have awnings over the entryways, typically printed with the name of the business, and these awnings sometimes extend across the length of the buildings. Individual businesses within a building have separate front entries. Business names are printed on awnings or in a sign band above the front windows. Store fronts are characterized by large windows. Upper residential floors are frequently clapboard, with the same type of articulation described above.

Industrial buildings (primarily along Crescent Avenue) are typically one or two story buildings with flat façades and few windows. Setbacks from the street are irregular and lots frequently have several curbcuts (or one long, continuous curbcut) and sometimes no sidewalk. The parcels have minimal landscaping screening parking, service and storage areas, and frequently create a hostile pedestrian environment. A few parcels have recently added perimeter landscaping.

## **Residential 3 (R3) District**

### *Site Design and Building Orientation*

- Buildings and landscape elements should be sited to reinforce the street edge by aligning building faces and taller vertical landscape elements along the minimum setback line required by zoning; the setback should match the typical setback of other buildings on the block buildings where those buildings differ from the zoning requirement.
- Required open space should be sited such that it is visually accessible from the street, thereby creating a visual amenity for the community.
- Parking areas should be sited behind buildings. Driveways should be located on side streets where possible, and garage entries should be located behind buildings or on side streets where possible. Garage entries facing streets should have doors designed to be compatible with a pedestrian scale and aesthetic, characterized by windows, panels, or other articulations.

### *Building Character and Design*

- Buildings should have the primary entrance oriented to the street on which the building fronts.
- To reflect the pedestrian scale of the district, and the pattern and character of surrounding buildings, buildings should include articulations, such as bay windows, dormers, peaked corner turrets, and covered front entries supported by ornately carved brackets, or other vertical articulations that add interest and dimension to the building facades. Larger articulations can be used to create visually accessible open spaces that can be used to satisfy the open space requirements (for example, a U-shaped building with the open part of the U landscaped and facing the street).
- Windows should be individual openings in the façade, with well-defined lintels and sills, rather than band windows.
- Building material should be clapboard, painted in light colors. Larger buildings may be masonry, to fit in with older industrial buildings such as Spencer Lofts.
- Building tops should be shaped with attention to their view against the sky and to adjacent structures. Buildings with flat roofs should have a cornice. Mechanical penthouses and other projections or roof elements that are visible from the street should be architecturally integrated with the overall building design.
- Attention should be paid to the design of front doors, with covered front entries or other details to provide interest.

### *Landscape and Screening Elements*

- Sidewalks should be ten feet from curb to back of sidewalk, with street trees planted in a continuous four foot tree lawn or individual four foot tree pits. Sidewalk width should match adjacent parcels, or for full-block parcels, adjacent blocks, but never less than a minimum width of eight feet with three foot tree pits.
- Street trees should be installed along sidewalks wherever space allows. Tree spacing may vary by species but should achieve a continuous canopy when mature (25-30 foot spacing).
- In order to visually screen surface parking from the street without reducing visual access and security:
  - Except to allow egress to the property at driveways and walkways, surface parking areas must be screened from the street by continuous planting strips a minimum of 5 feet deep and planted at a density sufficient to create a continuous screen, with plantings at least 18 inches, but no more than 4 feet tall.
  - In addition to planted screens, continuous fencing should be installed on the street side of the planting strip. Fencing should have black metal pickets at least 18 inches but no more than 4 feet tall, aligning with architectural elements of the adjacent building facade.
  - Trees may be planted within planting strips provided they do not disrupt the continuity of the required screening, and that limbs are removed below a height of 12 feet.

## **Business Retail 2 (BR2) District**

### *Site Design and Building Orientation*

- Buildings should be aligned with the back of sidewalk line to form strong street edges
- Parking areas should be sited behind buildings. Driveways should be located on side streets where possible, and garage entries should be located behind buildings or on side streets where possible.
- Entrances to parking and service areas should be coordinated with adjacent development. Curbcuts should have a maximum width of 25 feet unless the need for a wider curbcut to accommodate truck access can be demonstrated.

### *Building Character and Design*

- Buildings should have the primary public entrance oriented to the street on which the building fronts.
- Individual retail spaces should have individual entrances on the street
- Mixed use buildings should have separate street entries for residential and commercial uses.
- Windows should be individual openings in the façade, with well-defined lintels and sills.
- Building tops should be shaped with attention to their view against the sky and to adjacent structures. Mechanical penthouses and other projections or roof elements that are visible from the street should be architecturally integrated with the overall building design
- The first-floor façade facing a street should maximize the amount of windows in retail, lobby and other publicly accessible spaces to increase visibility and transparency from the sidewalk. At least 50% of the area of the first floor façade should be transparent.
- Active ground floor uses that animate the sidewalk and enliven the pedestrian experience are strongly encouraged.

### *Landscape and Screening Elements*

- Sidewalks should be ten feet from curb to back of sidewalk, with street trees planted in a continuous four foot tree lawn or individual four foot tree pits. Sidewalk width should match adjacent parcels, or for full-block parcels, adjacent blocks, but never less than a minimum width of eight feet with three foot tree pits.
- Street trees should be installed along sidewalks wherever space allows. Tree spacing may vary by species but should achieve a continuous canopy when mature (25-30 foot spacing).
- In order to visually screen surface parking from the street without reducing visual access and security:
  - Except to allow egress to the property at driveways and walkways, surface parking areas must be screened from the street by continuous planting strips a minimum of 5 feet deep and planted at a density sufficient to create a continuous screen, with plantings at least 18 inches, but no more than 4 feet tall.
  - In addition to planted screens, continuous fencing should be installed on the street side of the planting strip. Fencing should have black metal pickets at least 18 inches but no more than 4 feet tall, aligning with architectural elements of the adjacent building façade.
  - Trees may be planted within planting strips provided they do not disrupt the continuity of the required screening, and that limbs are removed below a height of 12 feet.

### *Signs and Illumination*

- Free standing signs are not permitted. Signs identifying individual tenants in a building should be located in a sign band above the first floor windows.
- Secondary signs, to indicate entrances to parking, service or delivery areas, should not exceed an area of two square feet and should be designed to enhance the overall character of the building and perimeter fencing.
- Carefully designed architectural lighting to accent building or landscape features, and to provide additional lighting to the sidewalk area, is encouraged as a means of expressing the vitality of the area at night.

## **Light Industrial 2 (LI2) District**

### *Site Design and Building Orientation*

- Buildings and landscape elements should be sited to reinforce the street edge by aligning building faces and taller vertical landscape elements along the minimum setback line required by zoning.
- Buildings should be placed on the site to maximize the frontage along the street edge.
- Entrances to parking and service areas should be coordinated with adjacent development. Curbcuts should have a maximum width of 25 feet unless the need for a wider curbcut to accommodate truck access can be demonstrated.

### *Building Character and Design*

- Buildings should have the primary public entrance oriented to the street. Individual tenant spaces should have individual entrances on the street
- Buildings and landscape elements should be sited to reinforce the street edge by aligning building faces and taller vertical landscape elements along the minimum setback line required by zoning.
- The first-floor façade facing a street should maximize the amount of windows in retail, lobby and other publicly accessible spaces to increase visibility and transparency from the sidewalk.
- Active ground floor uses that animate the sidewalk and enliven the pedestrian experience are strongly encouraged.

### *Landscape and Screening Elements*

- Sidewalks should be ten feet from curb to back of sidewalk, with street trees planted in a continuous four foot tree lawn or individual four foot tree pits. Sidewalk width should match adjacent parcels, or for full-block parcels, adjacent blocks, but never less than a minimum width of eight feet with three foot tree pits.
- Street trees should be installed along sidewalks wherever space allows. Tree spacing may vary by species but should achieve a continuous canopy when mature (25-30 foot spacing).
- In order to visually screen surface parking from the street without reducing visual access and security:
  - Except to allow egress to the property at driveways and walkways, surface parking areas must be screened from the street by continuous planting strips a minimum of 5 feet deep and planted at a density sufficient to create a continuous screen, with plantings at least 18 inches, but no more than 4 feet tall.
  - In addition to planted screens, continuous fencing should be installed on the street side of the planting strip. Fencing should have black metal pickets at least 18 inches but no more than 4 feet tall, aligning with architectural elements of the adjacent building facade.
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