Note: These Design Review Guidelines are a supplement to the Zoning Bylaw Section I “B-1 District (Town Center)”
Introduction

Norfolk Town Center is a quintessential New England Town Common featuring an open common lawn, gazebo, historic church, and civic buildings and amenities. The Town Center brings people together through its uses, activities, and design. It is a place of communal gathering and community pride. The Norfolk Town Center Design Review Guidelines are intended to improve the design quality of future investments in the Town Center to enhance the visual character of the district and reflect its traditional New England heritage. The Guidelines do not dictate rules, such as building height and lot coverage found in the Zoning Bylaws. Instead, the Guidelines outline elements that guide the design to fit with the heritage of the Town Center and positively contribute to its future with the goal of contributing buildings of appropriate pedestrian scale and attractive architectural style that resonate with the context of neighboring properties in material, rhythm, proportion, color, and other design characteristics.

Applicability and Administration

The Norfolk Town Center Design Review Guidelines apply to any development, redevelopment, or external improvement located on a parcel within the B-1 Zoning District of the Town of Norfolk.

The Design Review Guidelines are intended to align each new investment in the district with the community vision that has been expressed and articulated by residents of Norfolk for at least the last ten years. Development investments in the Town Center offer a once-in-a-generation opportunity to bring the conditions of the Town Center closer to that vision. The Design Review Guidelines have been created to define and clarify that vision and to clearly communicate the expectations for how new investments will contribute to this vision and strengthen
a cohesive district that is bigger than any one property or project. The Design Review Guidelines are complementary to the contents of Section I. B-1 District (Town Center). The Design Review Guidelines do not provide a comprehensive view of the regulatory requirements for a project and do not exempt projects from any other applicable requirements, such as requirements related to accessibility, safety, stormwater management, or building code.

The Design Review Guidelines are intended to guide projects in a number of ways. First, a project proponent is encouraged to read this document during the early stages of project planning to guide the concept and design for the project in a manner that is consistent with the community vision and guidance. Second, the Design Review Guidelines will be used by the Planning Board, Design Review Board, and other Town Boards, Committee, and Departmental Staff during the review of a project application and approval process for a project located within the B-1 District.

**Community Vision**

*The Town of Norfolk Master Plan states:*

**Norfolk’s citizens would like its Town Center developed into a traditional, pedestrian oriented, New England village with retail, commercial services and mixed uses, including housing, that provides for social and cultural interaction for all age groups.**
Norfolk Town Center Primary Design Principles:

Design Principles provide overarching guidance and frame the content of the more detailed design guidelines that follow.

1 **Building height is modest and well-proportioned.** Many existing three-story buildings in Norfolk Center integrate the top floor into the roof form of the building. Each floor is well-proportioned adding to a sense of balance and rhythm for the building facade. Additional features on the roof and at building entries contribute to a sense of modest scale.

2 **Building scale is modest with design elements compatible with the surrounding historic context of Norfolk Town Center.** The building is broken into smaller bays that reinforce the modest scale and that feature an orientation to the primary street frontage and design elements such as prominent gable ends, dormers, a large cupola, or covered entry.

3 **Sloped roof pitches create visual interest and complementary building forms.** Sloped roofs are an important aspect of the character of Norfolk Town Center. All buildings in the district, including an existing flat roof buildings, are designed with sloped roofs that face the primary street edges. Gable ends are used to interrupt large roof forms and face the street.

4 **Generous landscape defines street frontages, sidewalks, pedestrian paths, setbacks and buffers to strengthen the village character and create comfort for outdoor pedestrian features and seating.** Mature street trees, hearty shrubs, and generous landscape beds, gardens and plazas are cared for throughout the district and reinforce the village character and scale.

5 **Convenient parking is located behind buildings and concealed with no new building set behind a front parking lot.** Buildings should be the prominent features on primary streets in the district with parking set behind buildings. Where parking may be visible it should be screened from street frontage through landscape, walls, fences, or other means.

Photographs from Norfolk Town Center that illustrate the Design Principles.
6 **Exterior materials and colors are compatible with historic buildings and the surrounding context.** Natural-feel wood siding and trim define details of the facade highlighting doors, windows, and building and roof forms. These details visually connect buildings in the district with cornice lines, corner trim, window and door surrounds that are typically white in color.

7 **Ground level activity is vibrant, visible, and accessible.** It is important for each primary building facade to contribute to the activity and vitality of the district that is visible from the street frontage. Active ground floor uses should be designed to be visible, provide generous and transparent windows, and create connections between interior and exterior.

8 **Functional services, mechanical, and utility equipment are screened from view.** Many Town Center properties are visible from all sides highlighting the importance of proper integration and screening of all equipment. Integrate mechanical equipment into sloped roof forms, conceal equipment with louvers, screen utility boxes with landscape and art.

9 **Building and street lighting and street furnishings are attractive and integrated into the district.** The streetscape of the district is anchored by consistent street lights with a historic-style appearance that is coordinated with the bench and trash receptacle designs. Locate all furnishings for convenience and use and select all furnishings for district consistency.

10 **Signage is integrated into the design of the site and building.** The building, site, and business signage is integrated into the design with the building design providing an appropriate location for building signage that is scaled and designed to fit and complement the building. Site signage is integrated with furnishings and landscape and reinforce a cohesive whole.
Norfolk Town Center Primary Design Principle:
Design Principles provide overarching guidance and frame the content of the more detailed design guidelines that follow.

1 Building height is modest and well-proportioned.
Many existing three-story buildings in Norfolk Center integrate the top floor into the roof form of the building. Each floor is well-proportioned adding to a sense of balance and rhythm for the building facade. Additional features on the roof and at building entries contribute to a sense of modest scale.

Design Guidelines:
Design guidelines illustrate the intention of the design principle and offer more detailed guidance.

A Each floor is well-proportioned with a ground floor which should be taller than the upper floors of the building.

B Additional roof and facade features should be used to reduce the sense of height including porch roofs, covered entries, roof dormers, or other features.

C New buildings which are taller than surrounding buildings should respect neighboring properties by stepping down a portion of the building near property lines or providing a stepback at the upper level to reduce the visual impact of a taller building.

D The facade design should emulate the historic Norfolk Center buildings designed with a facade that is divided vertically into a base, middle, and top. The base of the building provides a visual anchor for the structure while displaying ground floor activity. The middle portion reflects the different use of upper floors, often with smaller, regularly spaced windows and may include different facade materials. The top of the building is typically designed as a transition to the roof or integrated with the roof.
Norfolk Town Center Primary Design Principle:

*Design Principles provide overarching guidance and frame the content of the more detailed design guidelines that follow.*

2 Building scale is modest with design elements compatible with the surrounding historic context of Norfolk Town Center. The building is broken into smaller bays that reinforce the modest scale and that feature an orientation to the primary street frontage and design elements such as prominent gable ends, dormers, a large cupola, or covered entry.

Design Guidelines:

*Design guidelines illustrate the intention of the design principle and offer more detailed guidance.*

A Typically, the width of historic buildings was no more than about 40 feet. This should be reflected in new building massing to be sensitive to the modest scale of the district. While a building may be larger, the plan and shape of the building should be designed to reduce larger lengths into building bays no wider than 40 feet. These bays should be oriented to face the street frontage.

B Details and different materials should also be used to break down large scale facades by dividing them into smaller bays. Use other design elements, gable ends, dormers, cupola, or covered entry, to reduce overall sense of scale.

C Reinforce district architectural patterns characterized by understated and simple facade details that are constructed of durable high quality materials and finishes. The focus of facade details should draw attention to door surrounds, window surrounds, ground floor levels, porches, entry roofs, awnings, sign bands, cornice lines, corner trim, and eaves. These details are typically white in color.
Norfolk Town Center Primary Design Principle:
Design Principles provide overarching guidance and frame the content of the more detailed design guidelines that follow.

3 Sloped roof pitches create visual interest and complementary building forms. Sloped roofs are an important aspect of the character of Norfolk Town Center. All buildings in the district, including an existing flat roof buildings, are designed with sloped roofs that face the primary street edges. Gable ends are used to interrupt large roof forms and face the street.

Existing Town Center example

Design Guidelines:
Design guidelines illustrate the intention of the design principle and offer more detailed guidance.

A Sloped roofs should be used to reduce the overall perceived height of taller buildings by integrating the upper most floor within the slope of the roof. Any portion of flat roof should be concealed with a sloped roof oriented to the street frontage.

B Roof features, dormers, and gable ends should be used to add interest to the roof. Roof expressions such as a cupola should be used to draw attention to building features or entries.

C Incremental improvements and strategic additions should be used to better align existing buildings with the Norfolk Town Center vision and design guidelines. Modifications to existing structures should be used to better align the quality and character of the structure through new roof features, dormers, window bays, cupolas, storefronts, awnings, porches, or other strategic modifications and additions that will strengthen the existing structure and respect the context of the district.

Examples beyond Town Center
Norfolk Town Center Primary Design Principle:
Design Principles provide overarching guidance and frame the content of the more detailed design guidelines that follow.

4 Generous landscape defines street frontages, sidewalks, pedestrian paths, setbacks and buffers to strengthen the village character and create comfort for outdoor pedestrian features and seating. Mature street trees, hearty shrubs, and generous landscape beds, gardens and plazas are cared for throughout the district and reinforce the village character and scale.

Design Guidelines:
Design guidelines illustrate the intention of the design principle and offer more detailed guidance.

A Contribute to the Town Center pattern of modest outdoor plazas that integrate art, monuments, and seating to strengthen a sense of community and sense of place. These small areas should be integrated with the site plan and visible and accessible from the street frontage. The plazas may be part of a building entry or combined with other outdoor spaces.

B Anchor site features with plantings that will integrate the features with the overall site and landscape design. Landscape should be designed and selected as to support, but not obscure site feature including art, seating, play structures, or others.

C Integrate landscape components thoughtfully into the site with focus on the location of plantings, selection of plantings, and integration with other amenities such as outdoor seating, outdoor furnishings and lighting. Select materials for quality, durability and climate. Match or complement adjacent materials and coordinate between public and private investments to reinforce continuity of the community character.
Norfolk Town Center Primary Design Principle:
Design Principles provide overarching guidance and frame the content of the more detailed design guidelines that follow.

5 Convenient parking is located behind buildings and concealed with no new building set behind a front parking lot. Buildings should be the prominent features on primary streets in the district with parking set behind buildings. Where parking may be visible it should be screened from street frontage through landscape, walls, fences, or other means.

Design Guidelines:
Design guidelines illustrate the intention of the design principle and offer more detailed guidance.

A Landscape the edges of parking areas. Where parking may be visible from a public way, the landscape should be more generous to offer more substantial screening of the vehicles. Integrate landscape into the parking area with at least 1 landscape bed per 10 parking spaces with a landscape bed the size of a parking space that includes shrubs and trees.

B Place priority on the continuity of sidewalks and crosswalks to enhance the pedestrian safety with visible and well-marked street and driveway crossings. Reduce the frequency and width of curb cuts that interrupt the sidewalk for vehicular circulation. Add curb extensions to enhance the pedestrian safety.

C Provide street trees at a spacing of no more than 35 feet per tree. Provide private investments in bike rack, trash receptacles, benches, lights, or other site amenities to coordinate with existing furnishings in the town center.

D Provide safe and efficient connections between abutting properties with connecting drives, walkways, staircases, ramps, or other means.
Norfolk Town Center Primary Design Principle:
Design Principles provide overarching guidance and frame the content of the more detailed design guidelines that follow.

6 Exterior materials and colors are compatible with historic buildings and the surrounding context. Natural-feel wood siding and trim define details of the facade highlighting doors, windows, and building and roof forms. These details visually connect buildings in the district with cornice lines, corner trim, window and door surrounds that are typically white in color.

Design Guidelines:
Design guidelines illustrate the intention of the design principle and offer more detailed guidance.

A Facade showcases high quality materials and authentic natural materials such as wood, brick and stone. Construct wall siding, windows, storefronts and doorways of natural wood where possible. Any synthetic materials should be as close in appearance and detail to the natural material it simulates.

B Select and design sign details and materials for durability, ease of maintenance, and consistency with the character of the building on which it is placed and the character of the district overall.

C Prioritize local character over national franchise brands including colors, logos, or other standardized design features that should be adapted to reflect the local context. Research and interpret the significance of buildings, sites, past events and historic contributions of individuals or organizations through building design, interpretive signage, commemorative plaques, or public art. Partnerships with local artists are encouraged.
Norfolk Town Center Primary Design Principle:

Design Principles provide overarching guidance and frame the content of the more detailed design guidelines that follow.

7 Ground level activity is vibrant, visible, and accessible. It is important for each primary building facade to contribute to the activity and vitality of the district that is visible from the street frontage. Active ground floor uses should be designed to be visible, provide generous and transparent windows, and create connections between interior and exterior.

Design Guidelines:

Design guidelines illustrate the intention of the design principle and offer more detailed guidance.

A All aspects of the building design should reinforce an orientation to the primary street(s) on which it is located, including: primary facade, building entries, placement of the building on the property, location of signage, and location of storefront windows.

B Preserving flexibility for the use of ground floor space would allow buildings in the district to adapt to changing needs or changes in the real estate market. This flexibility should be pursued through the design of the ground floor to be flexible to accommodate a variety of uses in the future, regardless of the original intended use.

C The ground floor of buildings should include a higher percentage of transparent windows, typically at least 60% of the ground floor facade area.

D The most active uses should be oriented to the primary street(s) on the ground floor with a storefront window. Showcasing interesting and active uses should be used to create connections between the interior and exterior.

E No building facade visible from a public way should include blank walls greater than 20 feet which are devoid of windows, doors, or other features. Any blank portion of a facade should be considered for the installation of public art or murals that contribute to the district character.
Norfolk Town Center Primary Design Principle:
Design Principles provide overarching guidance and frame the content of the more detailed design guidelines that follow.

8 **Functional services, mechanical, and utility equipment are screened from view.** Many Town Center properties are visible from all sides highlighting the importance of proper integration and screening of all equipment. Integrate mechanical equipment into sloped roof forms, conceal equipment with louvers, screen utility boxes with landscape and art.

Design Guidelines:
Design guidelines illustrate the intention of the design principle and offer more detailed guidance.

A **Design the site layout to minimize impact, visibility, and public view of parking areas, drive-thru’s, functional services, service areas, loading docks, dumpsters, utilities, equipment, mechanicals, or other utilitarian functions of the property.** The site layout should place these components to the rear (preferred) or side of the building and buffer them with site landscaping, fences, or other screening. Chain link fencing is not acceptable for screening purposes.

B **Buildings and sites that are energy efficient, low emission, water efficient, energy producing, and resilient enhance the ability of Town Center to remain viable well into the future.** Pursuing a sustainability certification is encouraged to support a comprehensive approach to building and site sustainability. Sustainability features should also be integrated with the design and screened.

C **Planting features should be integrated as part of the building design for purposes of screening on building facades or as part of the site design through the use of window boxes, entry or seating area trellises or gazebos, vertical gardens and green walls on blank facades, and foundation plantings to anchor buildings to the site.**
Norfolk Town Center Primary Design Principle:

Design Principles provide overarching guidance and frame the content of the more detailed design guidelines that follow.

**9 Building and street lighting and street furnishings are attractive and integrated into the district.** The streetscape of the district is anchored by consistent street lights with a historic-style appearance that is coordinated with the bench and trash receptacle designs. Locate all furnishings for convenience and use and select all furnishings for district consistency.

Design Guidelines:

Design guidelines illustrate the intention of the design principle and offer more detailed guidance.

**A Use attractive lighting of landscape, site, and building features to enhance the overall evening and night appearance of the district and to highlight district features.** Lighting should be energy efficient, pedestrian-scaled, and dark-sky compliant (full cut-off lighting) that focuses illumination downward or directly onto the highlighted feature. LED light fixtures are preferred. Ornamental street light fixtures should be selected to match existing Norfolk Town Center light fixtures.

**B Contribute to generous and multi-functional sidewalks that are safe, accessible, and visually engaging.** Three distinct zones should provide adequate space for circulation, utilities, streetscape, amenities, and activity in front of the building. Additional area may be required to provide for outdoor seating or amenities.

**C Contribute and integrate public art (murals, sculptures, banners, lighting, etc.) with streetscape and utility structures or components that are part of the nearby public realm, utilitarian in nature, and absent of decorative features.**
Norfolk Town Center Primary Design Principle:

Design Principles provide overarching guidance and frame the content of the more detailed design guidelines that follow.

10 **Signage is integrated into the design of the site and building.** The building, site, and business signage is integrated into the design with the building design providing an appropriate location for building signage that is scaled and designed to fit and complement the building. Site signage is integrated with furnishings and landscape and reinforce a cohesive whole.

**Design Guidelines:**

Design guidelines illustrate the intention of the design principle and offer more detailed guidance.

**A** Design the building with a consistent location for signage, particularly for buildings with multiple tenants to provide a consistent sign location. All sign elements and sign details, such as address numbers and awnings, should be consistent, coordinated, and integrated with the approach to the overall design and other signs on the property.

**B** Select sign types, design and locate signs to reinforce a pedestrian scale and walkability in the district. Signs should be designed and sized for pedestrians walking in the district. Free-standing and auto-oriented signs should be minimized in size.

**C** Integrate sign placement with other features that are a part of the facade, such as awnings or canopies. All combinations of signs should be coordinated and integrated to support a single design theme and approach. If both a sign band and awning are used, vary the branding featured on each, for example the business name for the sign and business logo for the awnings. Site signage should integrate with furnishings and landscape features.
References and resources

Town of Norfolk Regulatory Documents

Town of Norfolk Planning Documents

Town of Norfolk Master Plan
Available on the Town of Norfolk Massachusetts website:
https://norfolk.ma.us/departments/land-use/

Zoning Bylaw
Available on the Town of Norfolk Massachusetts website:
https://norfolk.ma.us/departments/town-clerk/bylaws-regulations.htm

Unofficial Zoning Map Diagram
A diagram of the B-1 Zoning Boundary is shown below depicting the three-dimensional massing of current or recently proposed buildings in the Town Center district.
Town of Norfolk Relevant Boards, Departments, and Contacts

Land Use - The Town of Norfolk Land Use Department is comprised of (4) four boards or commissions including the Planning Board, Board of Health, Conservation Commission, and Zoning Board of Appeals. Important contacts in the Land Use Department are listed below.

**Richard McCarthy**  
Town Planner  
rmccarthy@norfolk.ma.us  
(508) 440-2807  
Town Hall  
One Liberty Lane  
Norfolk, MA 02056

**Planning Board**  
**Betsy Fijol**  
Administrative Assistant  
bfijol@norfolk.ma.us  
(508) 528-2961  
Town Hall  
One Liberty Lane  
Norfolk, MA 02056

**Zoning Board of Appeals**  
**Amy Brady**  
Administrative Assistant  
(508) 541-8455  
Town Hall Rm 105C  
One Liberty Lane  
Norfolk, MA 02056

**Norfolk Design Review Board**

The Norfolk Design Review Board (DRB) consists of five town residents responsible for the review of design characteristics of proposed project components that are visible from a public way. In the review of proposed project components located in the B-1 District of Norfolk Town Center, the *Norfolk Town Center Design Review Guidelines* shall be used as the basis for this review.