

19.30 Citywide Urban Design Objectives [SUMMARIZED]

Objective	Indicators
New projects should be responsive to the existing or anticipated pattern of development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transition to lower-scale neighborhoods • Consistency with established streetscape • Compatibility with adjacent uses • Consideration of nearby historic buildings
Development should be pedestrian and bicycle-friendly, with a positive relationship to its surroundings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inhabited ground floor spaces • Discouraged ground-floor parking • Windows on ground floor • Orienting entries to pedestrian pathways • Safe and convenient bicycle and pedestrian access
The building and site design should mitigate adverse environmental impacts of a development upon its neighbors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location/impact of mechanical equipment • Location/impact of loading and trash handling • Stormwater management • Shadow impacts • Retaining walls, if provided • Building scale and wall treatment • Outdoor lighting • Tree protection (requires plan approved by City Arborist)
Projects should not overburden the City infrastructure services, including neighborhood roads, city water supply system, and sewer system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water-conserving plumbing, stormwater management • Capacity/condition of water and wastewater service • Efficient design (LEED standards)
New construction should reinforce and enhance the complex urban aspects of Cambridge as it has developed historically.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional use focused on existing campuses • Mixed-use development (including retail) encouraged where allowed • Preservation of historic structures and environment • Provision of space for start-up companies, manufacturing activities
Expansion of the inventory of housing in the city is encouraged.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing as a component of large, multi-building development • Affordable units exceeding zoning requirements, targeting units for middle-income families
Enhancement and expansion of open space amenities in the city should be incorporated into new development in the city.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publicly beneficial open space provided in large-parcel commercial development • Enhance/expand existing open space, complement existing pedestrian/bicycle networks • Provide wider range of activities

Summary of the objectives of the Harvard Square Development Guidelines

Primary Goal
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Guide change and encourage diversity in order to protect the distinctive characteristics of the District’s buildings and public spaces, and to enhance livability and vitality• Preserve and enhance the unique functional environment and visual form of the District; preserve its architecturally and historically significant structures and their settings, and encourage compatible design; mitigate any adverse impact of new development on adjacent properties and areas; and discourage homogeneity by maintaining the diversity of development and open space patterns and building scales and ages.
Relevant Secondary Goals (intended to provide general guidance)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support creative, contemporary design for new construction that complements and contributes to its immediate neighbors and the character of the District.• Build on and sustain the diversity of existing building form, scale and material.• Expand the high quality public environment with attractive and compatible materials, lighting, and street furniture.• Encourage new residential projects in the District, especially in mixed-use buildings, and support existing residential uses.• Encourage creative solutions to the District’s parking and transportation issues, including the problem of on-street deliveries.

Harvard Square Overlay District: Building height up to 80 feet (Section 20.54.2)

20.54.2 Building Height Limitations. The maximum height of buildings in the Harvard Square Overlay District shall be governed by the requirements of this Section 20.54.2; however, at locations where the base zoning district establishes a more restrictive height limitation, the more restrictive shall apply.

1. As of Right Height Limitations. The maximum height of any building shall be sixty (60) feet.
2. Special Permit for Additional Height. The maximum allowable height in the Harvard Square Overlay District may be increased up to eighty (80) feet upon issuance of a Special Permit by the Planning Board. If a Special Permit is issued portions of the building may extend to eighty (80) feet in height provided that those portions in excess of sixty (60) feet are set back from the street line at least ten (10) feet, and that those portions are also set back from one or more forty-five (45) degree sky exposure planes, unless otherwise permitted by the Planning Board. A forty-five (45) degree sky exposure plane shall be an imaginary inclined plane beginning fifty-five (55) feet above any streetline in the districts and rising over one or more lots at a forty-five (45) degree angle.

Allowed Special Permit exceptions to upper floor setbacks must successfully reduce the overall negative effect of multiple floor setbacks and enhance both the proposed building silhouette and townscape of the block. Such architectural elements as pergolas, and occupiable corner pavilions, occupiable pavilion directly above the main building entry, and special features that animate the public domain experience. All such exceptions are to be limited in scope and work cohesively.

All approved facade setbacks are to provide accessible, useable balconies for tenants.

Harvard Square Overlay District: Waiver of parking and loading requirement (Section 20.54.4)

20.54.4 Parking and Loading Requirements. Uses in the Harvard Square Overlay District which meet the following requirements shall be exempt from the parking and loading requirements as specified in Section 6.36 - Schedule of Parking and Loading Requirements.

1. The use is contained within a structure or portion of a structure in existence on or before June 1, 1940 or if constructed later is identified as a National Register or contributing building; or
2. The use is contained in a new structure or new addition to a structure identified in (1.) above, after the issuance of a special permit by the Planning Board provided:
 - a. The subject lot is sufficiently small in size as to contribute to a development pattern of diverse, small scale, new structures and the retention of existing structures (for lots exceeding 10,000 square feet a specific finding shall be made that this objective has been met).
 - b. The Planning Board shall specifically find that an exemption from parking and loading requirements will result in a building design that is more appropriate to its location and the fabric of its neighborhood and that it is in conformance with the objectives and criteria contained in Harvard Square Development Guidelines.
 - c. No National Register or contributing building is demolished or so altered as to terminate or preclude its designation as a National Register or contributing building; and
 - d. No National Register or contributing building has been demolished or altered so as to terminate or preclude its designation within the five (5) years preceding the application.

Harvard Square Overlay District: Exemption of yard requirement (Section 20.54.5)

20.54.5 Building Setbacks. Maintenance of the Harvard Square Overlay District's positive diversity of building form and scale and its variety of open spaces, yards and courtyards is encouraged throughout the District. It is therefore desirable to permit design flexibility to allow any physical change in the District to reflect the character of the area within which it is located. To this end any building in the Harvard Square Overlay District shall be exempt from the yard requirements as specified in Section 5.30, (except where such yard abuts a lot, but not a public way, outside the Overlay District) if the following conditions are met:

1. The building existed as of December 15, 1985 or a building permit had been issued by that date, or
2. For any new building in any Business, Office or Residence C-3 base-zoning district, for which a building permit is issued after December 15, 1985, the Planning Board issues a Special Permit exempting the building from yard requirements provided:
 - a. The design of the new structure shall be in conformance with the objectives and criteria contained in Harvard Square Development Guidelines.
 - b. No National Register or contributing building is demolished or so altered as to terminate or preclude its designation as a National Register or contributing building; and
 - c. No National Register or contributing building previously existed on the site in the preceding five (5) years and which has been so altered as to terminate or preclude its designation or demolished prior to the application.
3. For any new building in a Business B district seeking a Special Permit a rear yard setback of twenty (20) feet shall be provided with upper floor ten (10) foot setbacks beginning at forty-five (45) feet above grade. The resulting yard shall create a landscaped open space.

General Criteria for Issuance of a Special Permit

10.43 *Criteria.* Special permits will normally be granted where specific provisions of this Ordinance are met, except when particulars of the location or use, not generally true of the district or of the uses permitted in it, would cause granting of such permit to be to the detriment of the public interest because:

- (a) It appears that requirements of this Ordinance cannot or will not be met, or
- (b) traffic generated or patterns of access or egress would cause congestion, hazard, or substantial change in established neighborhood character, or
- (c) the continued operation of or the development of adjacent uses as permitted in the Zoning Ordinance would be adversely affected by the nature of the proposed use, or
- (d) nuisance or hazard would be created to the detriment of the health, safety and/or welfare of the occupant of the proposed use or the citizens of the City, or
- (e) for other reasons, the proposed use would impair the integrity of the district or adjoining district, or otherwise derogate from the intent and purpose of this Ordinance, and
- (f) the new use or building construction is inconsistent with the Urban Design Objectives set forth in Section 19.30.

Harvard Square Overlay District: Criteria for Issuance of Special Permits (Section 20.53.2)

20.53.2 *Criteria for Development Consultation Review and Review of Applications for Special Permits and Variances.* In reviewing applications for variances, special permits or development consultation reviews the permit or special permit granting authority or the Harvard Square Advisory Committee shall be guided by the objectives and criteria contained in the publication [Harvard Square Development Guidelines](#) [Document compiled from the Guidelines for Development and Historic Preservation as contained in the Final Report of the Harvard Square Neighborhood Conservation District Study Committee, dated November 29, 2000 and the Harvard Square Development Guidelines, 1986], in addition to the requirements of Sections 10.30 (Variances) and 10.40 (Special Permits) and this Section 20.50. These guidelines are also intended to assist in shaping any contemplated physical change within the Harvard Square Overlay District.