

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

### **Summary of the objectives of the Harvard Square Development Guidelines**

<b>Primary Goal</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 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</li><li>• 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.</li></ul>
<b>Relevant Secondary Goals (intended to provide general guidance)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Support creative, contemporary design for new construction that complements and contributes to its immediate neighbors and the character of the District.</li><li>• Build on and sustain the diversity of existing building form, scale and material.</li><li>• Expand the high quality public environment with attractive and compatible materials, lighting, and street furniture.</li><li>• Encourage creative solutions to the District’s parking and transportation issues, including the problem of on-street deliveries.</li></ul>

## Special Permit for Exemption of Basement Area in the Calculation of Gross Floor Area

### 2.000 DEFINITIONS:

*Floor Area Gross*

*Gross Floor Area shall not include:*

- (15) Any basement or cellar living space in any single-family or two-family home.
- (16) Any basement or cellar living space in any other type of structure with the issuance of a special permit. In granting such a special permit, the permit granting authority may approved the exemption of any portion of Gross Floor Area (GFA) located in a basement or cellar from the calculation of GFA, provided the permit granting authority finds that the uses occupying such exempted GFA support the character of the neighborhood or district in which the applicable lot is located.

## Building and Site Plan Requirements (Section 19.50)

A project that does not comply with the requirements of this [Section 19.50](#) shall not receive a building permit until a Special Permit is granted by the Planning Board. The Planning Board shall grant such special permit only upon finding that the project is consistent with the Urban Design Objectives set forth in [Section 19.30](#). Nothing in this [Section 19.50](#) shall prevent an applicant, not wishing to conform to the requirements of this [Section 19.50](#), from directly seeking a special permit from the Planning Board subject to consistency with [Section 19.30](#).

Any application for a Building Permit for development subject to this [Section 19.50](#) shall be accompanied by a Tree Study, certified complete by the City Arborist, as required by the Tree Protection Ordinance of the City of Cambridge, Chapter 8.66.

### 19.53 *Location of Uses.*

1. In mixed-use developments containing a residential component (Section 4.31 - Residential uses, excluding Hotel and Motel use), the housing shall be located on the lot adjacent to existing residential uses located on abutting lots or across a street or shall be located adjacent to an existing abutting residential zoning district, including a district located across a street.
2. In mixed-use developments containing a retail component (Section 4.35 - Retail Business and Consumer Service Establishments), at least fifty (50) percent of the area devoted to retail uses shall be located fronting onto at least one of the public streets abutting the development. However, in multiple building developments where internal private streets open to the general public are created, retail uses may located on those private streets shall be deemed to meet the requirements of this Paragraph (2).

**19.56 *Pedestrian Environment.*** The portion of the ground floor of a building (defined as the first floor of a building located either at mean grade or no more than four feet above the mean grade of the building) and the floors above that face and are within one hundred (100) feet of a public street or directly abuts and is within one hundred (100) feet of a public park shall consist of space routinely occupied by people throughout normal business hours engaged in those activities for which the building is principally intended to accommodate, including, but not limited to, retail stores sales areas; consumer service businesses; general, professional and agency offices; institutional offices, classrooms and dormitories; building lobbies, residential units, manufacturing and research and development activities, etc. (but excluding specifically parking and loading facilities), subject to the following requirements.

1. The actively used area shall have a depth of at least 20 feet, or the depth of the building if less.
2. The facades shall consist of a minimum twenty-five (25) percent clear glass in total for the façade and at the ground floor subject to the following further provisions.
  - a. At the ground floor; the minimum amount of clear glass shall be increased to fifty (50) percent of the area of the façade of the ground floor where retail and office uses are established (Section 4.34 - Office and Laboratory Uses, Paragraphs a-e, and Section 4.35 - Retail Business and Consumer Service Establishments). For purposes of this Section 19.56, the area of the façade of any given floor shall be measured vertically from the finished interior floor to the underside of the structural joists of the floor above.

- b. Where residential and dormitory uses are established, the minimum area of clear glass shall be reduced to twenty (20) percent of the entire façade, with no minimum requirement on the first floor.
  - c. No minimum requirement shall be imposed for Theaters (Section 4.35 h), Place of worship [Section 4.56 a (1)], College or university athletic facility, auditorium, and theater facility [Section 4.56 c (4)], Fire and police stations [Section 4.56 g (2)], Municipal service facility [4.56 g (4)], Museum [4.56 g (3)], and Transformer station, substation [Section 4.32 g (2)].
3. Where retail uses are established, each separately leased space shall have an individual public entrance onto the abutting street where any portion of the space fronts towards the street;
  4. At least one building entrance shall front on a street where the building abuts a street.

Where a freestanding parking garage is established, the requirements of this Section 19.55 shall apply only to the ground floor of the structure. Exempt from this requirement shall be one two-way access drive to accessory parking located elsewhere on the lot and the area necessary to meet the minimum zoning required for loading facilities provided that no more than twenty-five (25) percent of the total length of any one façade is occupied by all such facilities.

**19.58 Mechanical Equipment, Refuse Storage, and Loading Areas.** All mechanical equipment, refuse storage, or loading areas serving the building or its occupants that are (1) carried above the roof, (2) located at the exterior building wall or (3) located outside the building, shall meet the requirements listed below. Mechanical equipment includes, but is not limited to, ventilation equipment including exhaust fans and ducts, air conditioning equipment, elevator bulkheads, heat exchangers, transformers and any other equipment that, when in operation, potentially creates a noise detectable off the lot. The equipment and other facilities:

1. Shall not be located within any required setback. Where no setback is required, it shall not be located closer than 10 feet to any property line or it shall be entirely contained within the building. This Paragraph (1) shall not apply to electrical equipment whose location is mandated by a recognized public utility.
2. When on the ground, shall be permanently screened from view from adjacent public streets that are within 100 feet of the building, or from the view from abutting property in separate ownership at the property line. The screening shall consist of densely planted shrubs or trees equal or greater in height at the time of installation than the equipment or facilities to be screened, or a fence of equal or greater height that is comparable in quality to the materials used on the principal facades of the building, with no more than twenty-five (25) percent of the face of the fence open. When carried above the roof, shall be permanently screened from view, from the ground, from adjacent public streets and any abutting residentially used lot or lots in a residential zoning district. The screening shall be at least 50% opaque, uniformly distributed across the screening surface.
3. Shall be designed to meet all city, state and federal noise regulations, as applicable, as certified by a professional acoustical engineer if the Department of Inspectional Services deems such certification necessary.

4. That handle trash and other waste, shall be contained within the building or screened as required in this Section 19.58 until properly disposed of.

**19.59** *Open Space*. At least 15% of the lot shall consist of any combination of Green Area or Permeable Open Space as defined in [Article 2.000](#). This requirement may be met on a lot held in the same ownership, provided the Open Space is located within 300 feet of the development lot and does not serve to meet the requirement of this Section 19.59 for any other development.

## **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: Unlimited FAR (Section 20.54.7)**

**20.54.7 Additional FAR.** Upon the issuance of a special permit, the special permit granting authority (Planning Board) may increase the allowable FAR on any lot or portion of a lot in the Business B district located within the Harvard Square Overlay District for any residential use in section 4.31 (a-h) or any commercial use in section 4.34 or 4.35 provided the Planning Board finds that the use and design complies with the goals and design guidelines set forth in the Harvard Square Conservation District and provides additional public benefits commensurate with the additional development, such as the following:

1. Ground floors that are devoted to retail and similar uses that activate the square and serve the needs of the surrounding community and visitors;
2. Commitments to recruit and retain small, local, and independent businesses, in part through maintaining 50 percent of first floor public frontage as commercial rental space of approximately 1,500 sq. ft.in size;
3. Creation of mixed-income housing;
4. Commitments to sustainable design that minimize greenhouse gas emissions and increases vegetation, and;
5. Investments into creating or improving public space.

## Special Permit for Green Roof Reduction

**22.35.3 Exemption.** The Planning Board may grant a special permit to reduce the required Green Roof Area, Biosolar Green Roof Area, or Solar Energy System below the area required by Section 22.35.2, provided that each square foot so reduced be compensated by a unit price contribution to the Cambridge Affordable Housing Trust. This unit price shall be determined based on the average costs to design, install, and maintain green roofs and rooftop solar energy systems in Cambridge using actual cost figures to the extent possible, shall be subject to annual adjustment based on standard construction cost indices, and shall be calculated, and recalculated approximately every three years, by the Cambridge Community Development Department. All such funds contributed to the Trust shall be dedicated to the design and incorporation of Green Roof Area, Biosolar Green Roof Area, or Solar Energy Systems into new or existing affordable housing developments.

## 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.