

# Harvard Square Conservation District Study Committee

January 17, 2018

## **Harvard Square: Statement of Goals and Standards and Guidelines for Review**

The goal of the District as a whole and of this order is to guide change and encourage diversity in order to protect the distinctive characteristics of the District's buildings and public spaces, and to enhance the livability and vitality of the District for its residents and all Cambridge residents, students, visitors, and business people. The Historical Commission should seek to 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 design compatible therewith; mitigate any adverse impact of new development on adjacent properties and areas; and discourage homogeneity by maintaining the present diversity of development and open space patterns and building scales and ages. The District must remain a pedestrian-friendly, accessible, human-scale, mixed-use environment that complements nearby neighborhoods and maintains the history and traditions of its location.

The following secondary goals for the District are intended to provide general guidance to the Historical Commission in a wide variety of situations, and are not intended to be applied to every project that will come before it. They are statements of policy, not prescriptive measures that must be applied equally in each situation.

1. Preserve historically or architecturally significant buildings and structures as well as those that contribute to the distinctive visual character or historical significance of the District.
2. Sustain the vitality of the commercial environment by preserving architecturally-significant or original building fabric where it currently exists. When this is not possible, support creative, contemporary design for storefront alterations and additions.
3. Support creative, contemporary design for new construction that complements and contributes to its immediate neighbors and the character of the District. Recognize and respect creativity of design during the review process and mitigate the functional impacts of development on adjacent areas.

4. Build on and sustain the diversity of existing building form, scale and material. Preserve and encourage flowers, green yards and courtyards and small, free-standing and wood-frame buildings where that character prevails. Encourage streetwall buildings where that character has been set. Encourage ground-level, small-scale storefronts to preserve the vitality and character of the streets.
5. Expand the high quality public environment established in the heart of the District with attractive and compatible materials, lighting, and street furniture.
6. Expand the network of pedestrian walkways and paths wherever they can conveniently provide alternate routes through the District. Increase public access to alleys and interior spaces where appropriate, and upgrade paving and landscaping of such pathways and spaces. Enhance accessibility and safety for pedestrians throughout the District.

7. Encourage new residential projects in the District, especially in mixed-use buildings, and support existing residential uses.
8. Encourage projects that will maintain a wide diversity of uses serving the needs of surrounding neighborhoods, students, and visitors from around the world.
9. Encourage creative solutions to the District's parking and transportation issues, including the problem of on-street deliveries. Discourage loading docks, which do not generally contribute to the historic character of the street.

## Exclusions from Review

As permitted by Ch. 2.78.190.B, the authority of the Historical Commission shall not extend to the following categories of structures or exterior architectural features and such structures or features may be constructed or altered without review by the Historical Commission.

- Storm doors and storm windows.
- Signs that conform to Section 7.000, “Signs and Illumination” of the Zoning Ordinance of the City of Cambridge, as the same may be amended with respect to Section 11.50, “Harvard Square Overlay District.”

## Certificates of Nonapplicability

The following categories of alterations shall be issued a Certificate of Nonapplicability provided they conform to the applicable standards and guidelines of the District:

- Roof repairs and HVAC equipment not visible from a public way.
- Replacement windows pursuant to regulations that after public hearing the Historical Commission may adopt for this purpose.

## Certificates of Nonapplicability – 2

- Alterations that the Executive Director of the Historical Commission determines do not alter, enclose, or extend further than the decorative or structural framework of the building or retail space originally intended to surround a storefront. The framework consists of such elements as piers, columns, cornerboards, quoins, cornices, and similar structural or decorative features.
- Storefront alterations that the Executive Director of the Historical Commission determines do not obscure, remove, relocate, or replace historic or original exterior architectural features. Exterior architectural features include, but are not limited to, such features as brackets, window and door casings, fascia, hoods, bays, and window sash.

## Guidelines for Demolition, Construction, and Alterations

### Demolition

The Cambridge Historical Commission will issue a Certificate of Appropriateness to an applicant seeking to demolish a structure in the Conservation District if the project, including both the demolished and the replacement buildings, is determined to be "appropriate for or compatible with the preservation or protection of the . . . district." Approval of demolition will be dependent on a finding by the Cambridge Historical Commission that a) the demolition of the structure will not adversely impact the district, subdistrict, or abutting properties in the sense described in secondary goal #1, and b) the replacement project meets the purposes of the Conservation District with respect to secondary goals #3 through #9, where these are applicable.

## Guidelines for Demolition, Construction, and Alterations -2

### New Construction

In reviewing new construction or additions to existing buildings, the Commission "shall consider the appropriateness of the size and shape of the structure both in relation to the land area upon which the structure is situated and to structures in the vicinity." Review of new buildings will be guided by considerations such as the appropriateness of the structure's height, scale, mass, proportions, orientation, and lot coverage; the vertical and horizontal emphasis, rhythm of openings, transparency, texture, and materials of the publicly-visible facades; sunlight and shadow effects; relationship to public open space; and landscaping.

## Guidelines for Demolition, Construction, and Alterations - 3

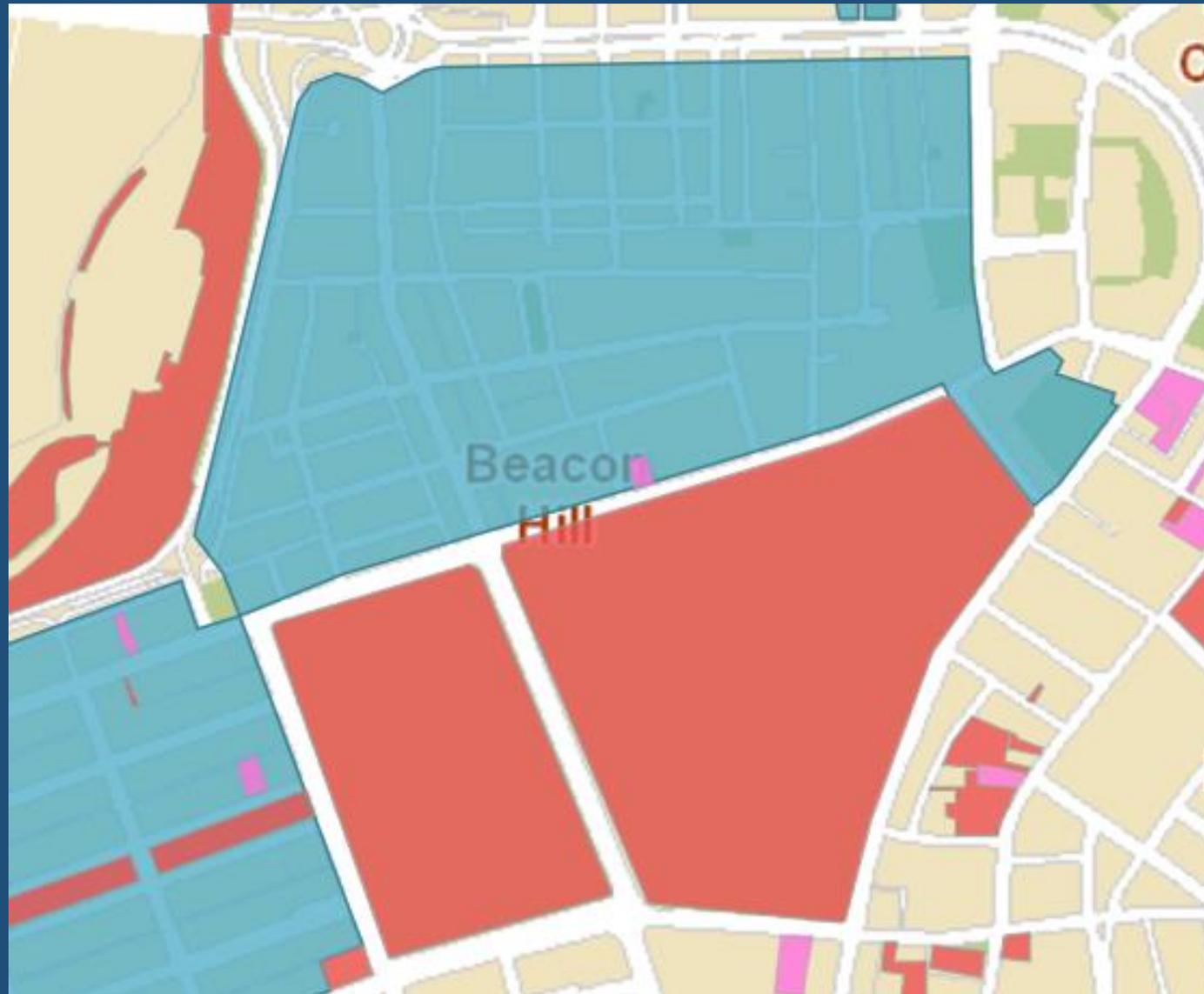
### Alterations

Alterations to exterior architectural features visible from a public way will be subject to binding review by the Cambridge Historical Commission, guided by secondary goals #1, #2, and #4. Storefronts will be treated more flexibly than building facades or upper stories. The goals of the district favor retention and repair, rather than replacement, of original or significant exterior fabric.

- a. Interior Work and Alterations Not Visible From a Public Way
- b. Storefronts
- c. Windows
- d. Masonry
- e. Signs

## Historic Beacon Hill District

SECTION 2. *Purpose.* — The purpose of this act is to promote the educational, cultural, economic and general welfare of the public through the preservation of the historic Beacon Hill district, and to maintain said district as a landmark in the history of architecture and as a tangible reminder of old Boston as it existed in the early days of the commonwealth.





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## Back Bay Architectural District

SECTION 1. *Purposes.* — The purposes of this act are as follows: (a) to promote the economic, cultural, educational and general welfare of the public through the encouragement of high design standards for the residential portion of the Back Bay area in the city of Boston; (b) to safeguard the heritage of the city of Boston by preventing the despoliation of a district in that city which reflects important elements of its cultural, social, economic and political history; (c) to stabilize and strengthen residential property values in such area; (d) to foster civic beauty and (e) to strengthen the economy of the commonwealth and the city of Boston.

