

Synthesized Harvard Square Conservation District
and Overlay District Goals Statement

III. 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 [physical and experiential](#) characteristics of the District's buildings and public spaces, and to enhance the livability and vitality of the District for all people. The Historical Commission should seek to preserve and enhance the unique [functional-physical](#) 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 character-diminishing](#) impacts of new development on adjacent properties and areas; and discourage homogeneity by [maintaining the present](#) encouraging 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 [supports local business](#), complements nearby neighborhoods and [maintains respects](#) 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 at street level and above. Encourage the restoration of missing features where these have been documented. Except for protected storefronts, allow for contemporary commercial design inside the restored framework of storefront openings.
3. Support creative, contemporary design for new construction that complements the context of abutting buildings and enhances the character of the Sub-District. Recognize and respect well-reasoned contemporary design during the review process. Support innovative approaches to enhancing the character of Harvard Square while mitigating the detrimental impacts of development on proximate areas.
4. Build on and sustain the diversity of existing building form, scale and material. Preserve and encourage appropriate greenspaces, scale-appropriate open spaces, and new buildings that support the prevailing character of the Sub-District. Preserve the remaining free-standing wood frame buildings in the District. Maintain a consistent setback or streetwall condition where that character has been set. Support small-scale storefronts to preserve the vitality and character of the streetscape. Encourage lower-level commercial spaces where appropriate.
5. Create a high quality public environment in the District with compatible materials, lighting, signage, and street furniture such as bollards, benches, moveable seating, and the like. Provide adequate facilities for trash and recycling and ensure that surfaces can be cleaned and maintained. Encourage planted greenspaces and accommodate trees where possible.

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 the paving and landscaping of such spaces. Enhance accessibility and safety for pedestrians throughout the District. Provide adequate bicycle parking throughout the District.
7. Enhance the neighborhood quality of Harvard Square by conserving existing residential units and encouraging additional residential units in mixed-use buildings.
8. Encourage compatible design that supports a wide diversity of uses serving the needs of surrounding neighborhoods, students, workers and visitors from around the world.
9. Encourage creative solutions to the District's transportation issues, including parking, passenger drop-off, deliveries and cycling facilities. Features that challenge pedestrian access and experience such as loading docks, curb cuts, and trash areas must be designed to have the least impact on the pedestrian experience. Encourage the replacement of surface parking lots with compatible new structures.
10. Encourage environmentally sustainable development that takes into consideration the inherent energy of the existing built environment, material life cycles, passive design, and LEED standards.

The foregoing goals also recite the standards for preservation and change within the District. In addition to the factors specified in Section 2.78.220, and subject to any specific provisions of this Order, in exercising its authority with respect to the District and in considering applications for certificates of appropriateness, hardship, or nonapplicability, the Historical Commission shall be guided by the preceding general goal for the District as a whole and by such of the preceding secondary goals as it determines to be applicable to the project or situation before it. The Historical Commission shall also be guided by the standards and guidelines described in the "Final Report of the Harvard Square Neighborhood Conservation District Study Committee," dated November 29, 2000, which after public hearing the Historical Commission may adopt as regulations and thereafter amend from time to time. In particular, the Historical Commission and project proponents should be guided by the goals and recommendations specific to each of the six subdistricts that make up the Harvard Square Conservation District. The subdistrict goals and recommendations^[HG1]—included in Chapter VII of the November 29, 2000 report—describe the physical and historical development of each area over time, identify some of the more notable buildings and spaces, and set forth some of the preservation priorities and recommendations for each sub-area.

As permitted by Chapter 2.78.190.B, the Historical Commission may determine from time to time after public hearing that certain categories of exterior architectural features, structures, or signs may be altered without review by the Commission; provided, however, that every such alteration shall be determined by the Executive Director of the Historical Commission to conform to the regulations adopted by the Commission for the administration of the District.

Cambridge Historical Commission
March 20, 2018