Preserving Historic Districts: Brookline Village and 3A Compliance

Jacob Collins, Preservation Planner

Town of Brookline
Harvard Street
Harvard Street

- North/South Corridor in Brookline, Massachusetts originally constructed. c.1661 to connect Boston to Cambridge

- Now links three urban corridors:
  - Route 9 (to the south)
  - Commonwealth Avenue (to the north)
  - Beacon Street (at the center)

- Intersects with 3 Green Line stops

- The Brookline Preservation Commission published design guidelines for areas north of Beacon Street in 2017 (never realized)
Brookline Village Commercial District
Brookline Village

Harvard Street Study Areas

Update when Jed Provides Maps
Brookline Village- Significance

• Listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1979 under Criterion A

• Significant as being the center of Brookline's nineteenth century development from a rural village to a bustling commercial and residential suburb and for its concentration of fine late-nineteenth and early-twentieth Century Brick Architecture

• Although some twentieth century alterations have occurred, the district offers a unified vista of a late nineteenth-century commercial area that remains in active use.
Brookline Village - Historic Views
Brookline Village - Current Views
Brookline Village - Building Types

207-213 Washington Street, 1875

206-218 Washington Street, 1917
Brookline Village- Building Types (Cont.)

14-16 Davis Street, C.1886

11 Holden Street, 1857
Brookline Village- Planning Perspective

- Developed in the 1870s as a mixed-use commercial center

- Presently acts a “Main Street”, providing vital retail for local residents while also attracting visitors from other areas of Brookline and beyond

- Provides a blueprint for the compact, sustainable walkable communities we aspire to create

... A development pattern that is not possible under the Town of Brookline’s current restrictive zoning
Brookline Village - Planning Perspective

PHOTO PALETTE | Area 1: Station Street at Washington to Kent Street at Harvard

267 Washington Street (east side)
217 Washington (east side)
231 - 263 Washington (east side)
249 Washington (east side)
279 Harvard (west side)
6 Harvard Square (east side of Harvard)

Summary of Existing Conditions:
Walkable environment with tree-lined mixed-use streetscapes, mostly ground floor commercial, provides retail, services, restaurants, and housing.

Characteristics:
- Walkable urban context
- Attached buildings; little to no parking on site
- Small lots and building footprints
- Small to 0 front setback (extension of sidewalk)
- Small to 0 side-setback
- Primary 4 stories with 1- and 3-story
- Shopfront frontages (flush with sidewalk)
- Recessed entrances; occasional stairs (residential)

Brookline Village Commercial Historic District:
Commercial buildings with housing built in the 1870s and 1880s in the late Victorian style (Gothic, Italianate, Mannerist); superb artisanal; sensitive renovations due to community pressure; no documented design standards.
Features include paneled brick, arched windows on upper floors, bulkheads (at sidewalk), corbelled cornices. Materials include brick, cast iron columns.

Source: https://www.mass.gov/doc/1815/detail?docid=8812E

Standards (0-2.0):

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Demolition Delay By-Law
Demolition Delay By-Law

• 18 month demolition delay on National Register-listed properties*

• Demolition may be triggered for “The systematic removal, effacement, or destruction of the exterior architectural elements which define or contribute to the historic character of the Building” (Article 5.3)

• 10 Business Day Initial Review → 30 Business Days Until A Determination of Significance Must Be Made → 30 Days (+/-) Until a Request for a Lift of Stay Will Be Reviewed → 0-6 Months Until a Lift of Stay is Granted

* In Fall 2022, The Town of Brookline voted to temporarily extend the demolition delay period on buildings found significant for up to two years

Covering or Demolishing 25% of the Wall Area
Demolition Delay By-Law - Partial Demolition

Example

Building Within the Margins

Greatly Altering the Roofline
Form-Based Code
A form-based code is a land development regulation that fosters predictable built results and a high-quality public realm by using physical form (rather than separation of uses) as the organizing principle for the code. A form-based code is a regulation, not a mere guideline, adopted into city, town, or county law. A form-based code offers a powerful alternative to conventional zoning regulation. –Form-Based Codes Institute
Form-Based Code-Design Standards

✓ Streamlines Review Processes

✓ Makes Zoning Understandable to Everyone

✓ Design Review Process Occurs Before Application is Submitted

✓ Allows for Predictable As-Of-Right Development

✓ Legally Enforceable

✓ Gives the Community More Control Over Design
Character Defining Features in Brookline Village:

- Cornices
- Doors and Entryways
- Height
- Materials
- Pedestrian Scaled Spaces
- Roofs
- Storefronts
- Trim and Architectural Details
- Windows
Form-Based Code - Proposed Design Standard Areas

Architectural Standards - Existing Buildings Focused

- Additions
- Demolition
- Doors and Doorways
- Porches
- Roofs
- Lighting
- Steps, Stairs and Railings
- Trim and Ornamentation
- Walls and Siding
- Mechanical and Electrical Equipment
- Windows

Architectural Standards - Infill Buildings Focused

- Site Planning and Design
- Height and Scale
- Proportion and Rhythm
- Massing and Volume
- Details and Materials
- Mechanical and Electrical Equipment
- Lighting