



# BELMONT, MA DESIGN GUIDELINES

DRAFT FEBRUARY 2025

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## APPENDIX A DESIGN GUIDELINES

### 1.0 GENERAL GUIDELINES

#### A. PURPOSE AND INTENT

Building design in the Leonard Street Area shall help reinforce the goal of creating a pedestrian oriented and active commercial district. Buildings shall be context sensitive and respond to the vernacular architecture in the region. Each building shall be designed relative to the specific features of its site.

#### B. ALL SITES

##### 1. MIXED USE STRUCTURES

Most new structures in the Leonard Street Area which make use of the Overlay option are expected to be mixed-use buildings with a combination of commercial, retail, office, and residential.

A. RESTAURANT

B. RETAIL

C. OFFICE

D. RESIDENTIAL

E. ARCHITECTURAL ELEMENT

##### 2. FRANCHISE STYLES

While franchise businesses are allowed in the Leonard Street Area, franchise-specific design is not encouraged. Franchise business' buildings shall adhere to the design standards outlined in this document.

##### 3. FREESTANDING ACCESSORY STRUCTURES

Non habitable structures accessory to primary buildings shall be considered architectural elements and shall be held to the same design standards as the site's primary buildings. The following list contains examples of these freestanding accessory structures:

- Freestanding ATMS
- Canopies over gas pumps
- Garages
- Storage units
- Recycling sheds
- Cart corrals
- Large signs
- Seasonal sales elements
- Utility buildings



Large, mixed use buildings enclose public spaces and form outdoor rooms. The ideal new building will have commercial on the first floor, commercial or office on the second, and office or residential on additional floors.



Architectural consistency is the key to an area's identity, serving as a visual representation of the district's history and values. National chains that adopt a contextual architecture contribute to a high quality of place.

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## 1.1 MATERIALS

### A. PURPOSE AND INTENT

The goal of this document is to encourage cohesive building design throughout the Leonard Street Area. This building design shall bolster the identity of the Leonard Street Area and create a sense of cohesion through the use of common,complementary, materials.

### B. ALL SITES

#### 1. FACADE MATERIALS

Brick, clapboard, and shingles shall be used on the Leonard Street Area buildings as primary materials. Other more contemporary materials, like fiber cement or vinyl siding, are acceptable as well if the overall aesthetic aligns with the rest of the Leonard Street Area. Large blank facades and highly reflective plastic or unfinished metal materials are not acceptable.

#### 2. MATERIAL COLORS

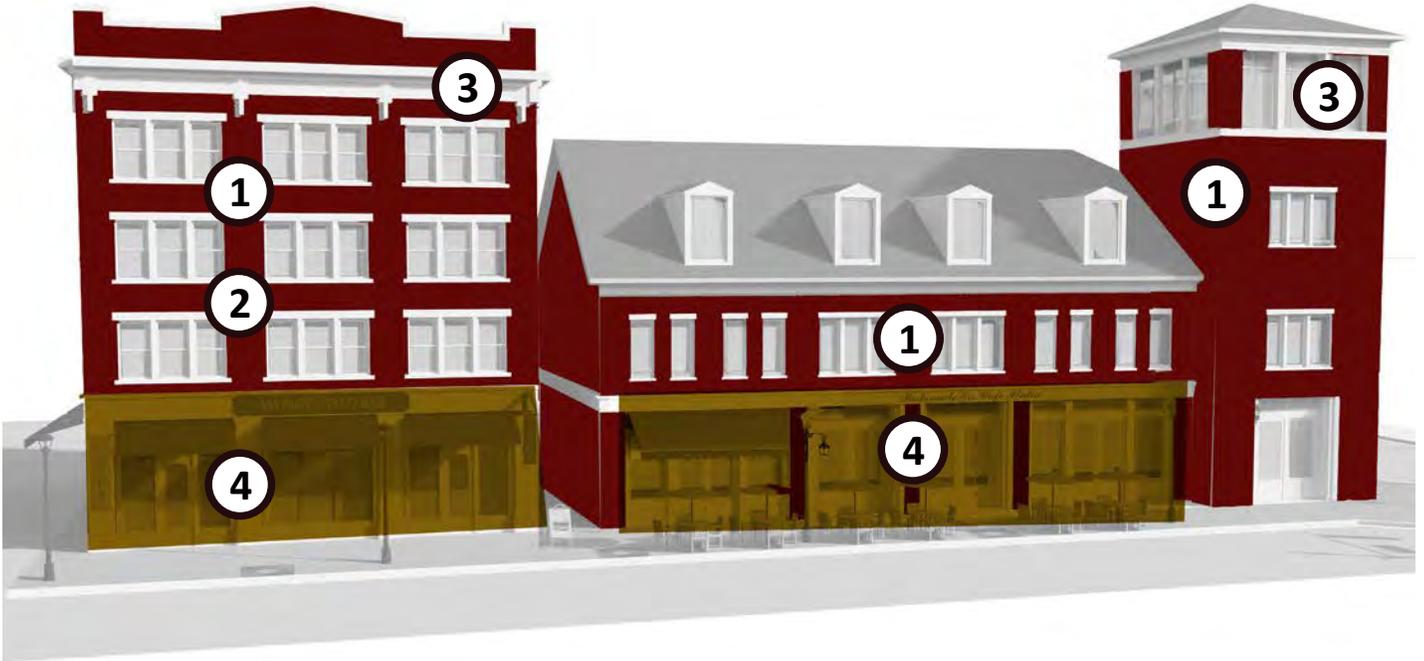
Facade colors shall be subdued and relate to the local vernacular. Colorful facades are appropriate at low saturation and low intensity. High gloss, or reflective chrome, metallic, and fluorescent colors should not be used at the Leonard Street Area.

#### 3. TRIM

Trim colors shall always complement the primary facade color. Intensely colored or metallic trims are appropriate as accents only. Highly reflective or chrome trims are not permitted. Simple and minimalistic approaches are encouraged.

#### 4. TRIPARTITE FACADE ARTICULATION

Buildings of three stories or more shall use changes in material to delineate the base, middle, or top of the building. These material changes help create a pedestrian scale and reduce the building's mass. Natural materials should be used at the base level, close to pedestrian spaces, to create a more tactile experience.



*A consistent trim color in an area with architectural variety adds a visual unity to a commercial district.*



*New buildings that use a brick facade to fit the local context can distinguish new additions with more modern materials like glass, steel, and iron.*

## 1.2 ROOF FORM

### A. PURPOSE AND INTENT

Building roof forms shall be designed with practicality and functionality in mind with careful consideration for Massachusetts's unique climate and winter weather patterns, including snow loading and shedding. Secondly, roof pitch and orientation shall seek to take advantage of solar gain and opportunities for roof-mounted solar where possible.

Tertiary consideration should be given to orientation of ridge and gable ends as they present to the street or public space. Building roof lines modify the form of buildings, create visual interest, break up building mass, emphasize primary facades and entrances, and provide respite for people. Simple and pragmatic approaches are highly encouraged over unnecessarily complicated designs.

### B. ALL SITES

#### 1. PITCHED ROOFS

The use of pitched roofs at the Leonard Street Area is highly encouraged. The aesthetic is part of the greater design vernacular of Massachusetts. With regard to practicality, pitched roofs are encouraged because they create shadow patterns for interest and shade, and allow for snow to easily shed off of the roof.

#### 2. PARAPETS

Parapets are encouraged to be used at the Leonard Street Area. They can and should be used to help conceal rooftop mechanical units and other equipment.

#### 3. PREFERRED MATERIALS AND COLORS

Pitched roofs shall be made with composite asphalt shingles, treated cedar shingles and shakes, or standing seam, non-glare metal. Roofing shall be a solid complementary color or black, gray, white, or earth tone. Colorful patterns are not acceptable. All roof materials shall be matte finish. Reflective and high gloss materials are prohibited.

#### 4. ROOF MOUNTED ELEMENTS

Equipment mounted on top of roofs shall be screened from view from the ground or from other buildings, or located behind buildings with other utility equipment, where it would also need to be screened. Rooftop screening shall be cohesive with other building design elements so that it blends in to the rest of the architecture.

#### 5. DORMERS

Dormers shall be used as additional roof forms that help break up building mass. Dormers shall not occupy more than half of the width or depth of the roof.

## 1.3 AWNINGS AND CANOPIES

### A. PURPOSE AND INTENT

Awnings can help highlight primary entrances, provide shelter and shade for people, and produce shadow patterns that create visual interest. Awnings and canopies shall complement their building's design by using complementary materials and colors. They shall not be used as exclusively advertising features. Awnings can also be included for environmental reasons. They can provide shade for passive cooling in the summer and also serve as mounts for solar panels.

### B. ALL SITES

#### 1. LOCATION

Where awnings are used they shall be integrated into the building's architecture and facade. The use of retractable awnings is not encouraged. Awnings shall be located directly over windows or doors to provide protection from the elements for pedestrians.

#### 2. MATERIALS AND GRAPHICS

Where awnings are used they shall be integrated into the building's architecture and facade. The use of retractable awnings is not encouraged. Awnings shall be located directly over windows or doors to provide protection from the elements for pedestrians.



*Cloth awnings are aesthetically preferable to vinyl or other synthetic materials. Cloth is also more versatile in terms of style, offering a wide variety of colors, patterns, and textures that can complement any architectural design.*



*Dormers enhance the exterior appearance of a structure, adding character and visual interest.*

## 1.4 FACADE

### A. PURPOSE AND INTENT

One of the goals of the Leonard Street Area is to focus on pedestrian orientation. New and redeveloped buildings shall reinforce this goal and the goal of quality architecture. All building facades shall be attractive and consistent in design across all facades to the street, internal driveways, parking areas, and surrounding neighborhoods. Special attention shall be given to facades with entrances to ensure ease of pedestrian access from the street on which the facade fronts.

### B. ALL SITES

#### 1. SITE ELEMENTS

All site elements, including furnishing, lighting, signage, and planting, in addition to other exterior elements, shall complement building facades and highlight pedestrian spaces. Complementary materials and colors shall be used in site elements to match building facades. In addition, all exterior elements shall be coordinated with building and site plans to avoid functional conflicts, maintain visibility, and avoid safety hazards.

#### 2. PRIMARY FACADES

Primary facades are building facades that face a street or public space and include a main entrance to the building. There can be more than one main building entrance, and consequently there can be more than one primary facade. Building entrances on primary facades shall be visible from the street on which the primary facade is oriented, and provide unobstructed spaces adjacent to entrances for pedestrians. Highly visible customer entrances on primary facades shall include three or more of the following design components:

- Canopies or porticoes
- Overhanging roof lines that can provide shelter for people
- Recesses or projections
- Raised corniced parapets over the door
- Peaked roof forms
- Outdoor seating or dining areas
- Display windows that are visible from the street

- Architectural details that are integrated into the design of the building
- Planted beds and/or raised planters
- Sense of rhythm and scale

#### 3. SECONDARY FACADES

Secondary facades are any building facades that do not face a public space or street and do not include a main building entrance. Secondary facade design does not need to match primary facade design, but should be complementary to the primary facade. Building utilities not located on roofs shall be located along secondary facades and screened accordingly from public view. Private entrances, such as maintenance or secondary residential tenant entrances, shall be located along the secondary facade.

#### 4. ENTRANCES

Main building entrances shall be located along primary facades. If a common building entrance is needed for more than one building tenant, that entrance should also be located along a building's primary facade. Additional private entrances at secondary facades are permitted. The Planning Board may waive these requirements if the building is part of a common development scheme approved by the Planning Board in which the building relates to the overall development and public and private streets in a manner that is consistent with these standards.

#### 5. DETAILING

Increased detail at the pedestrian level shall provide a sense of human scale. Detailing may include elements such as change in materials, trim, and accessory elements such as awnings, lighting fixtures, benches, or signage.

#### 6. WALL TREATMENTS

Increased detail at the pedestrian level shall provide a sense of human scale. Detailing may include elements such as change in materials, trim, and accessory elements such as awnings, lighting fixtures, benches, or signage.



*Building entrances on primary facades should be visible from the street to promote accessibility, enhance safety, and create a welcoming atmosphere. Visibility ensures that visitors or residents can easily locate the entrance, making the building more inviting and functional.*



*Display windows that are visible from the street create an engaging and dynamic connection between a building's interior and the outside world. These windows attract passersby and spark curiosity, which can drive foot traffic to retail stores, galleries, or restaurants.*

## 1. UTILITIES

All utility equipment, such as vents, downspouts, flashing, electrical conduits, meters, HVAC equipment, vending machines, and service connections, shall be treated as integral elements of the building's architecture, starting in the conceptual building phase. Exterior utility equipment, like meters and HVAC equipment shall be located to the rear of the building and screened appropriately as stated in other standards. When functional elements need to be part of the building facade they shall be incorporated into the building's architecture accordingly, with matching colors, materials, and detailing. Building elevations presented for Planning Board review shall show the location and treatment of all functional elements, including vending machines.

## 2. FENESTRATION

Windows shall generally be vertical in orientation across all facades. A minimum of approximately 35% of the primary facade of the first level of commercial retail establishments shall have transparent fenestration. All other commercial primary facades shall have a minimum of approximately 30% transparent fenestration. A minimum of approximately 15% of secondary facades shall have transparent fenestration. Fenestration shall create a sense of rhythm and cadence, and a sense of scale and continuity, as well as activate buildings on the street level. Blank walls are not permitted on any facades.

## 1.5 ADDITIONS AND SECONDARY VOLUMES

### A. PURPOSE AND INTENT

Any work done to existing buildings and sites in the Leonard Street Area will be held to the same standards as new buildings and sites. This includes building rehabilitation and additions, which can provide opportunities to update buildings and add a feeling of cohesion to the built environment at in the Leonard Street Area.

### B. ALL SITES

#### 1. VOLUME AND MASSING

Any work completed on existing structures in the Leonard Street Area shall be consistent with the architectural standards outlined for the Leonard Street Area in this document.

#### 2. MATERIALS

Materials used in alterations or additions shall complement the materials used on the original structure and consistent with these design standards.

#### 3. PRESERVATION

When building rehabilitation is required, every effort shall be made to preserve any distinct architectural features or examples of skilled craftsmanship present on existing buildings.

#### 4. PEDESTRIAN SCALE

New additions and building alterations create the opportunity to add pedestrian scale features and fenestration like entryways, windows, lighting, etc. to buildings that emphasize the pedestrian centric goals in the Leonard Street Area.



Minimum fenestration standards on main street buildings are beneficial because they promote vibrant, active, and visually appealing streetscapes. By requiring a certain amount of windows or glass openings, these standards ensure that buildings maintain a sense of openness and connection between the interior and exterior.



Shopfront windows provide a direct line of sight into the store, allowing businesses to showcase their products, services, and displays, which can attract potential customers from the street.

## 1.6 BUILDING MOUNTED SIGNAGE

### A. PURPOSE AND INTENT

Properties in the Leonard Street Area shall be identified with signs that are legible, attractive, and simple. Signage shall also adhere to Belmont's sign standards found in the Town's Zoning Ordinance. Awnings shall not extend into public Right of Way unless specially permitted by the Planning Board.

### B. ALL SITES

#### 1. DESIGN

Building signage shall complement the architectural features of the building on which they are attached through shape and material choices. These signs shall only contain essential information to keep the design clutter free and legible.

#### 2. MOUNTING

Signs mounted on facades shall be fully integrated into the architecture and not added to the fascia as an afterthought, or mounted as an arbitrary architectural detail. Signs shall be mounted on vertical surfaces, like the building facade, and not project above the facade or trim.

#### 3. HARDWARE

Signs shall be mounted in such a way that their hardware is hidden from view, unless that hardware is part of the sign aesthetic or an integral part of the sign system. Sign mounting hardware shall be stainless or galvanized steel, and painted with rust inhibiting paint, to prevent streaking or discoloration of the building facade.

#### 4. SIGNAGE WITHIN FENESTRATION

Advertisements within windows are discouraged and shall only occupy no greater than 25% window glazing.

#### 5. SIGNAGE WITHIN FENESTRATION

Advertisements within windows are discouraged and shall only occupy no greater than 25% window glazing.

## 1.7 LIGHTING

### A. PURPOSE AND INTENT

Outdoor lighting is an important aspect of building design in that it creates safe pedestrian spaces. It can also be used to emphasize entrances, facade features, and signage. Lighting fixtures shall be integrated with the building design in terms of materials and colors.

### B. ALL SITES

#### 1. DESIGN AND UTILITY

Where projecting light fixtures are used, they shall be simple, unobtrusive, and utilize materials consistent with the building's design. All electrical boxes, conduits, and other necessary utilities shall be concealed.

#### 2. ENTRANCES

Lighting entrances and other pedestrian spaces at night is important for safety. All building entrances shall be well lit for easy identification at night.

#### 3. SIGNAGE

In most cases lighting will be needed to illuminate signs, whether the sign itself is illuminated internally or projecting lighting is used. Internally lit individual letters or logos are preferred over entire panels that are internally lit.

#### 4. PEDESTRIAN SPACES

Pedestrian spaces adjacent to buildings shall also be well lit, whether through the use of projecting lighting mounted to the building facade or through the use of stand alone bollards or street lamps. Lighting shall aid in pedestrian safety.

#### 5. DARK SKY COMPLIANCE

All lighting shall be compliant with Dark Sky standards. Lighting shall be down-directed, shielded, and a color temperature maximum of 3000 Kelvin. Lighting shall be directed away from glass and reflective surfaces to minimize glare.



*Signs mounted on facades along the expression line between the first and second floors are clearly visible to both pedestrians and vehicles without overpowering the architectural scheme of a building.*



*Good main street lighting is essential for creating a safe, inviting, and vibrant atmosphere for pedestrians, shoppers, and drivers alike. It should be bright enough to ensure visibility and security without being overly harsh or intrusive.*

## 2.0 ARCHITECTURAL STYLES: COLONIAL REVIVAL

### A. COLONIAL REVIVAL

Belmont contains the entire spectrum of American architectural styles but two styles are the most pertinent when designing new mixed use structures: Colonial Revival and Tudor Revival.

The Colonial Revival style encompasses a number of architectural traditions, such as English, Dutch, and Spanish colonial influences that were combined during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-centuries to create buildings that celebrated Colonial America. The Philadelphia Centennial celebrations of 1876 inspired patriotism that helped spark a revival of interest in Colonial American architecture that continues today.

The Colonial Revival style is probably the most widely-used architectural style in Belmont and is visible in many varied forms from residential homes to the commercial structures on Leonard Street.

### B. ALL SITES

#### 1. SIMPLE MASSING AND ORGANIZATION

The building is made up of simple rectangular masses with a symmetrical façade with orderly relationship between windows, doors and building mass. Belmont's version of Colonial Revival often uses red brick.

#### 2. CLASSICAL DETAILING

Use classical details on doors, windows, roofline and corners. Include a prominent front entry. Sometimes this includes a door with decorative pediment supported by pilasters or portico supported by classical columns. Use shutters and multi-pane windows.

#### 3. DORMER WINDOWS

Dormers are commonly used to add both aesthetic charm and functional space to the upper levels of a building. These small, roofed structures protrude from the main roofline, typically featuring windows that allow natural light to brighten the attic or upper rooms.

Dormers in Colonial Revival homes are often characterized by their symmetrical design and classical details, such as gable or hipped roofs,

sometimes adorned with shutters or decorative moldings. They help break up the roof's mass, enhancing the overall balance and proportion of the building's exterior.

#### 4. SIDE-GABLED ROOF

A side-gabled roof is a type of roof design where the two sloping sides meet at a ridge in the middle, and the ridge line runs parallel to the length of the building. This creates a triangular shape on each side of the roof.

The "side" part comes from the fact that the ridge of the roof runs parallel to the side walls of the house (rather than the front or back). It's one of the most common and simple roof styles and is often seen in traditional homes. It offers good drainage and is efficient for shedding water or snow, making it durable in many climates.

Gambrel roofs, hipped roofs, and centered gable roofs are also often used.

#### 5. CUPOLAS

Cupolas were often incorporated as decorative and functional elements, drawing inspiration from the classical and colonial styles of earlier periods. These small, domed structures are typically placed on the roofline, serving both as a focal point and a source of natural light and ventilation for upper levels of buildings. The use of cupolas in Colonial Revival design evokes the charm and elegance of early American architecture, where they were often seen in rural and civic buildings like barns, town halls, and churches.

#### 6. CORNICES

Cornices are prominent decorative elements that frame the top of buildings, often providing a distinguished and classical appearance. Typically made from wood, plaster, or stone, cornices in this style are characterized by their crisp, clean lines and often feature intricate moldings, such as dentils, friezes, and egg-and-dart patterns, which draw from classical Greek and Roman influences.



Colonial Revival architecture is often used to evoke a sense of tradition, heritage, and Americana, blending historical elements with modern functionality. Retail spaces designed in this style typically feature key architectural details such as brick facades, gable roofs, dormers, and quoins. These buildings are often recessed from the street slightly to create “democratic” public spaces in front of them.



567 Concord Avenue



48 Oakley Road



12 Goden Street



256 Slade Street



Colonial Revival architecture is a popular choice for stores, shopping centers, and chain outlets seeking to establish a connection with the community. The incorporation of Colonial Revival elements in retail architecture also helps create a visually distinct and memorable brand identity that can stand out in a competitive market.



Colonial Revival architecture along Leonard Street is reminiscent of the re-creation of Colonial Williamsburg in Virginia in the early 1930s which further popularized the style. We see a broken pediment, parapeted gable, Palladian windows, and a tall cupola.

## 2.1 ARCHITECTURAL STYLES: TUDOR REVIVAL

### A. TUDOR REVIVAL

Vying for popularity with the Colonial Revival in the early 20th century were a number of eclectic styles based loosely on English prototypes and designed for a more picturesque effect. The buildings lack the symmetry of the Colonial and typically display steeply-pitched gables with decorated vergeboards, half-timbering, and diamond-paned windows. Most of the houses of this style in Belmont were architect-designed and are more prevalent in stylish subdivisions such as Clark Hill and Walnut Hill.

A slightly later expression of the English Revival, the Tudor Revival is a bit more modern in its appearance and often displays a stuccoed exterior. Doorways are often elaborated with stonework ranging from simple quoins to elaborate Renaissance-inspired surrounds that often incorporate Tudor arches. Large, elaborated chimneys are seen on grand manor-like homes. Best known for his Cape Cod designs, architect Royal Barry Wills also designed several English Revival homes on Belmont Hill including 43 Village Hill Road.

### B. ALL SITES

#### 1. FRONT-FACING GABLE

The building's facade is often dominated by one or more prominent front-facing gable with exposed woodwork and a steep pitch.

#### 2. DECORATIVE HALF-TIMBERING

Decorative (i.e., false) half-timbering, mimicking Medieval Fachwerk, provides a wood layer of two to three inches with a light stucco infilling between the timbers. The half-timbering gives the building a rustic, old-world charm reminiscent of medieval English homes, making it the signature characteristic of the Tudor Revival style.

#### 3. STEEPLY PITCHED GABLE DORMERS

Steeply pitched gable dormers are a defining feature of Tudor Revival style architecture, contributing to the characteristic medieval look of these buildings. These dormers, typically placed on the roof's upper levels, have a sharply angled, triangular shape that mimics the traditional gable



*The Tudor Revival style was once more prominent in Belmont. It is unclear why this massive civic structure located at 2 Leonard Street on the site of the current M&T Bank was torn down.*

roofs of historic English cottages. The steep pitch not only adds visual interest and dramatic flair but also helps maximize attic space and light. Often adorned with decorative woodwork or small windows, these dormers enhance the home's asymmetrical design, which is common in Tudor Revival architecture. The addition of steeply pitched gable dormers also lends a sense of verticality and grandeur to the structure, making them an essential element in achieving the style's picturesque, storybook-like quality.

#### 4. MASONRY WALL CLADDING

The English precedents for this style were almost always stone, brick, or stucco, and masonry is therefore the preferred cladding. The use of rough-hewn stone or traditional brickwork on the lower portions of the walls contrasts with the more intricate half-timbering on the upper levels, adding a grounded, earthy feel to the design. The masonry often features patterns or details that evoke medieval craftsmanship, such as large, rugged stonework around windows and doors or decorative brickwork along the foundation. The masonry wall cladding in Tudor Revival buildings plays a key role in creating the style's timeless, fortress-like appearance while still maintaining warmth and character.



Building multi-story modern retail and commercial structures with a Tudor Revival architectural aesthetic involves blending traditional design elements with contemporary construction techniques. Start by incorporating key Tudor features such as steep, gable roofs, half-timbering on upper stories, and intricate brick or stone detailing on the exterior. The building's ground floor could feature retail storefronts with traditional detailing, such as wooden doors and decorative awnings, while upper levels may have larger windows or balconies.



225 Prospect Street



8 Fieldmont Road



25 Lincoln Road



27 Common Street



Tudor Revival is characterized by several distinctive elements that evoke the charm of medieval English cottages and manor houses. These buildings typically feature steeply pitched, gable roofs, often with intricate half-timbering on the upper levels, where exposed wooden beams are paired with stucco or brick infill.



The Belmont Lion's Club Building incorporates natural materials such as stone and wood, blending rustic charm with a sense of permanence. These elements create a picturesque, storybook-like quality that remains popular in suburban neighborhoods today.



