

CHARACTER GUIDELINES FOR PALISADE STREET





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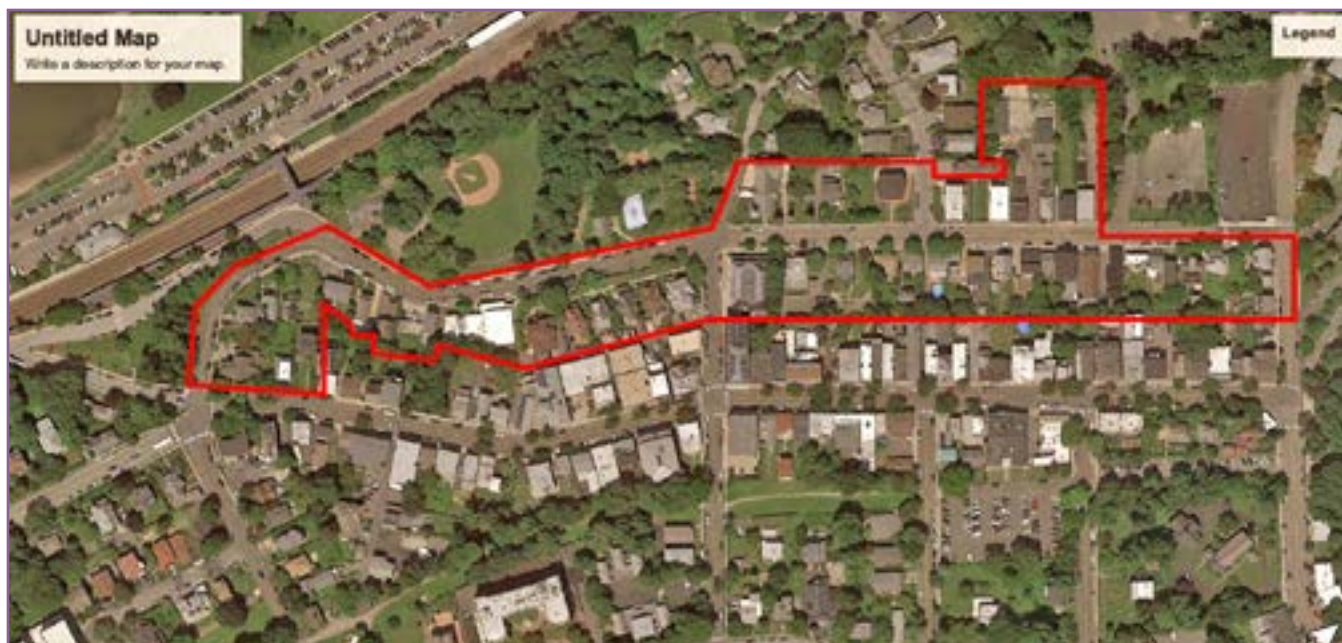
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Aerial view looking east of Palisade Street between Cedar Street and Chestnut Street. The red line represents the boundary of MDR-2 District. This is the focus area for these character guidelines.



Current aerial photo of downtown Dobbs Ferry. The red line represents the boundary of the MDR-2 district.



Palisade Street

Palisade Street Character Guidelines

Palisade Street is part of Dobbs Ferry's historic downtown. A comparison below of the 1889 historic map and a current aerial photo shows that most of the buildings on the street today were extant in 1889. Of particular note is Hudson Terrace at the south end of the zone. This beautiful row of single-family houses sitting on a bluff overlooking the Hudson River is completely intact. Although it is an important part of the overall character of Palisade Avenue, it is not the focus of these design guidelines because any new development there would need to conform closely to what is already a very strong context of scale and architectural language. Here, the project review process is more directly informed by the convention that new construction "shall not be excessively similar or dissimilar" to the existing context, which is very strong in this location. The pending Downtown Historic District Guidelines are also a resource for applications in this part of the Downtown.

The context is not as strong along the rest of Palisade Avenue between Chestnut Street and Cedar Street. While, as noted above, most of the houses here are of similar age and character, there are many disparate conditions.

- there are very small houses on small lots
- there are 3-story apartment buildings
- there are former industrial buildings

The east side is more uniform and consistent in terms of the relationship of the buildings to the sidewalk. The west side has major discontinuities in the frontage conditions with some large setbacks and oversized buildings as well as large undeveloped sites at the north end.

Never the less, the street as a whole does have a distinctive character - an overall sense of enclosure, scale and texture – that is worth protecting.



1889. map of downtown Dobbs Ferry. The red line represents the boundary of the MDR-2 district.



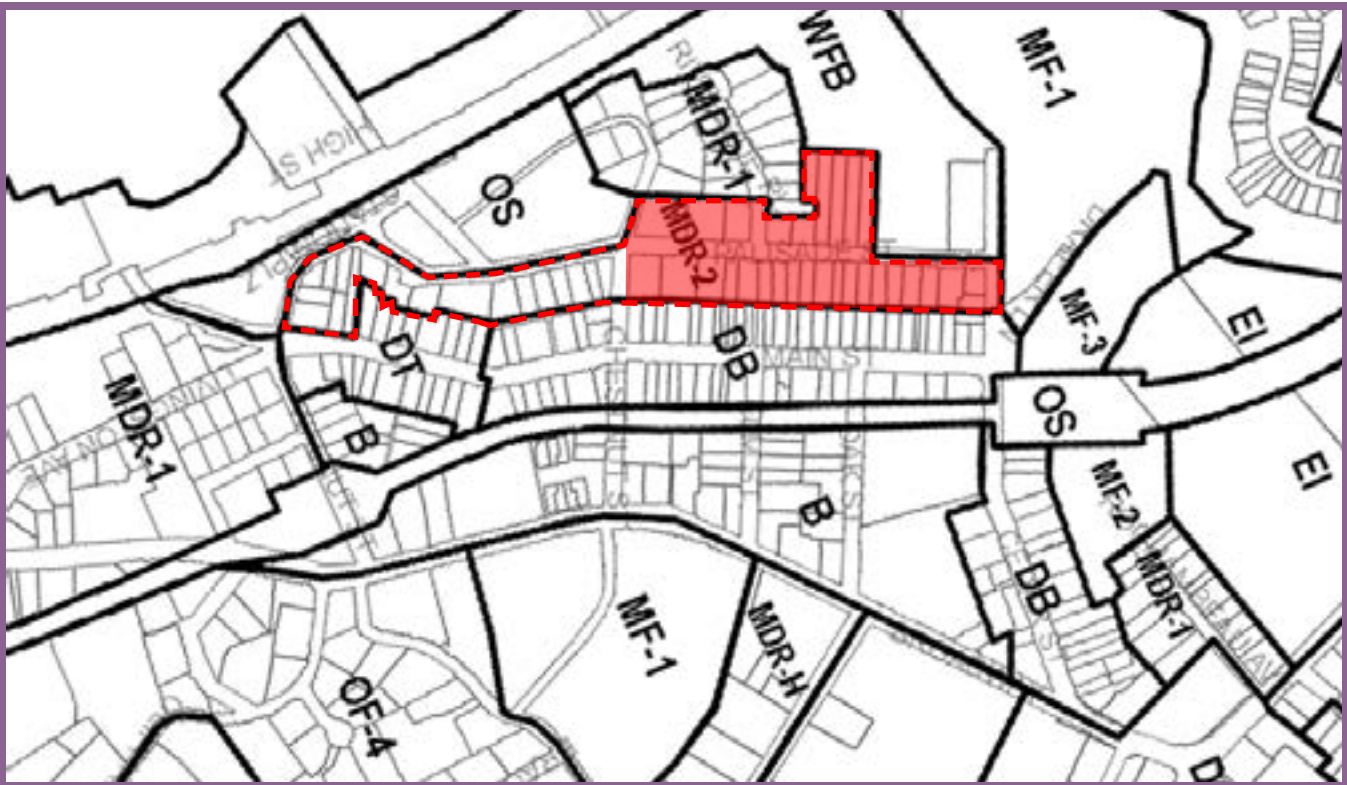
Varied conditions along Palisade Street

These guidelines are meant to capture the character of Palisade Street and to explain it in ways that can inform the development approvals process, both for the applicant and the reviewing boards. These guidelines also support the revised quantitative requirements in Section 300 and accompanying Appendices of the Code.

The guidelines are organized around these five major aspects of Palisade Street character:

1. There is a transition zone between the public space of the sidewalk and the private space of the entrances.
2. Most of the buildings are small-scale two-story buildings with narrow frontages
3. Elements in the building frontages align horizontally
4. “Punched window” openings predominate
5. Most of the buildings have a similar scale

Part of the motivation for this effort is the need to reexamine the dimensional standards in the MDR-2 Zone (Mixed Density Residential 2). This zone takes in all of Palisade Street with the exception of the two large properties at the north end of the street which are part of the WF-B Zone (Waterfront District B). Several of the provisions in the MDR-2 Zone, especially those regarding coverage, height and the way height is measured, are reexamined. In parallel with the development of these guidelines, revised standards are suggested. Applicants are referred to Section 300 and Appendix B of the Code for these revised dimensional standards.



Zoning map of downtown Dobbs Ferry. The red line represents the boundary of the MDR-2 district. The shaded area is the full study area including the Palisade street edge of the WFB district.

Transition Zone: Elements and Conditions



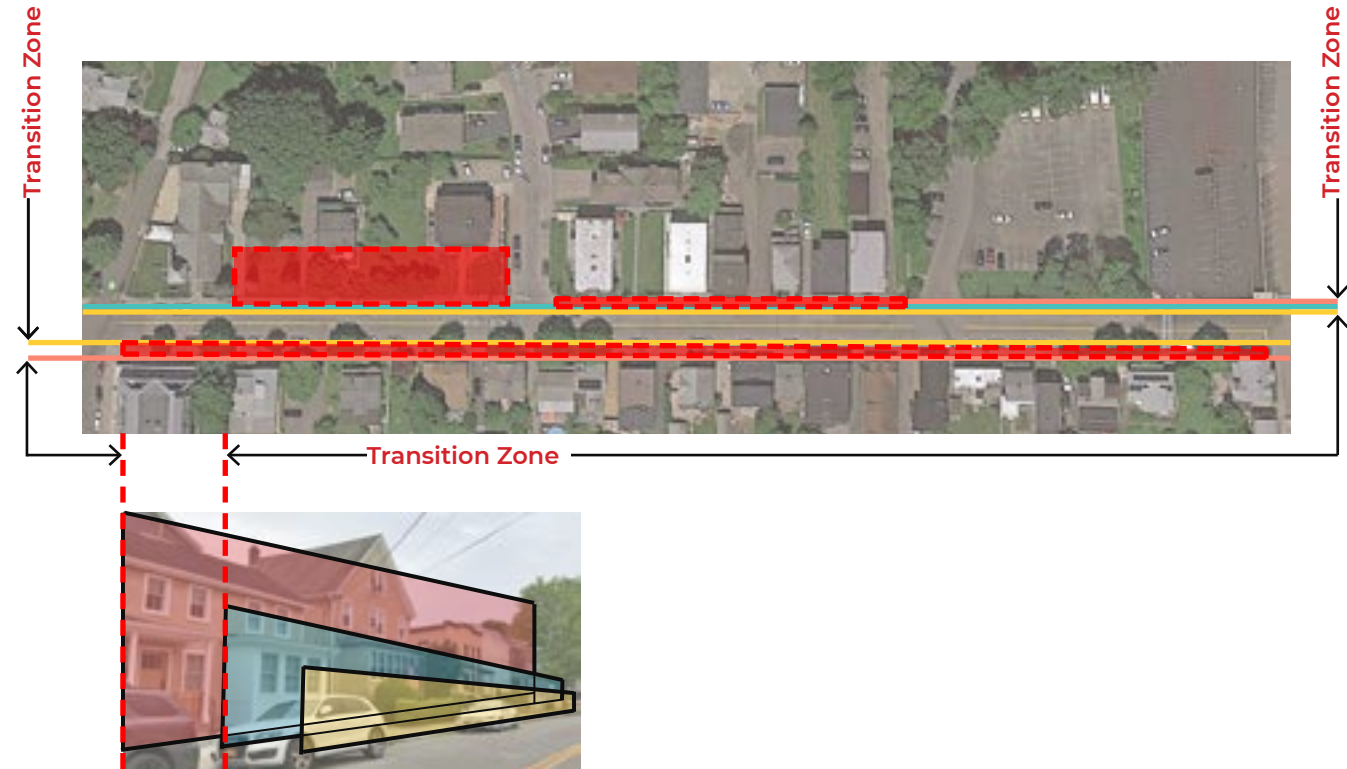
PART 1 Public-Private Transition

Public to Private Realm

The transition from the public realm of the sidewalk to the private realm of the building entrance is characteristic of Palisade Street. Typically, the principle mass of the building is set back from the sidewalk anywhere from 10 to 15 feet. This space is occupied by smaller-scale elements that mediate between the larger scale of the primary building mass and the pedestrian-scale experience of the sidewalk. The elements in this zone are of different kinds. They include among others:

- open porches
- enclosed porches
- stoops
- planting areas

This condition is not universal: There are some buildings where the principal mass of the building and its entry come right up to the front property line at the sidewalk. But these are the exceptions and the abrupt juxtaposition of the entry and sidewalk is an inferior condition.



Guideline

A 10' to 15' transition zone shall be created between the sidewalk and the primary building mass. The transition zone is not just a front setback – it shall contain smaller scale elements such as single-story porches or planting beds with low walls.



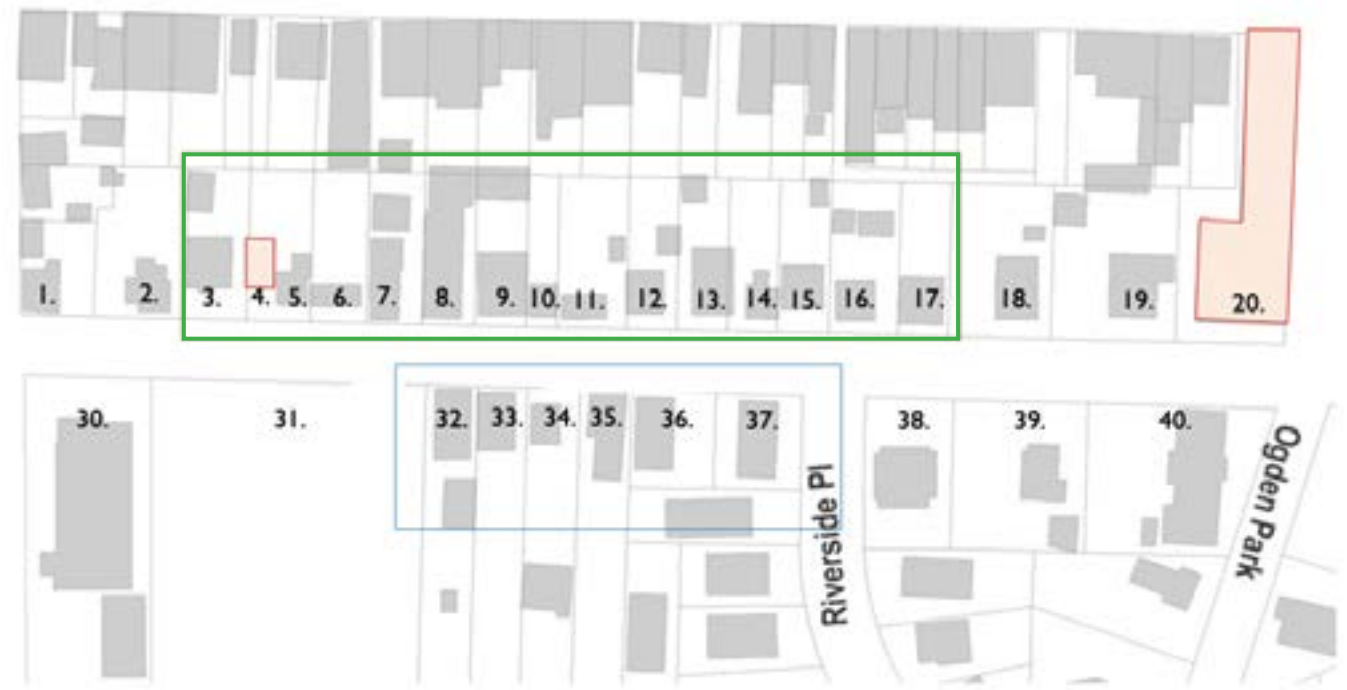
Along Palisade Street, most lots are narrow with small buildings occupying most of the frontage, creating the compact scale of the village downtown.

PART 2 Frontage Scale

Frontage Scale: Street Presence

The scale of the frontages that the buildings present to the street are quite uniform along Palisade Street even though there is quite a bit of variation in the frontage width of the lots. There are a few outliers: some lots at the far south end of the study area are quite wide – approximately 80 to 100 feet – as are the lots at the far north end – approximately 60 to 75 feet respectively.

The most typical conditions are found in the central part of the block, in the area outlined in green. Because the lots are narrow, the buildings occupy about 60% to 80% of the lot width. Of the 18 buildings in this most typical area, 12 buildings have frontages of between 25' to 35' and another 6 buildings have frontages of between 35' to 40'. The average frontage is approximately 33'. Because there is a sliding scale that will moderate the size of buildings on the larger lots, 40' is recommended as the maximum frontage for the primary mass of the building.



Guideline

The Primary Volume of the building shall be a maximum of 40' in width.

Horizontal Expression Lines

As varied as they are, the buildings along Palisade Street share architectural features that align horizontally, tying the streetscape together. One horizontal expression line, at approximately the heights of the 2nd floors, is created by the tops of the open porches, enclosed porches, bay windows and some other smaller façade elements such as lintels over the first floor windows. A second horizontal expression line corresponds to the top parapets of the buildings with flat roofs or the eave line of the buildings with pitched roofs. New buildings should respond to these expression lines at the 2nd floor and 3rd floor elevations. (see also the massing guide-lines below).



Panorama of east side of Palisade Street. (horizontal expression lines shown in dashed red lines).



Panorama of west side of Palisade Street. (horizontal expression lines shown in dashed red lines).



Guideline

Buildings shall create a horizontal expression line at the 2nd floor elevation (approximately 25' as measured from the middle of the Palisade Street frontage). Buildings shall create a horizontal expression line at the 3rd floor elevation which can be either the eave of the pitched roof or a setback between the 2nd and 3rd floors of a flat-roofed building (approximately 37' as measured from the middle of the Palisade Street frontage).

Typical Facade: Punched Windows



Typical punched window facades

PART 4 Facade Composition

Punched Windows

Most of the facades along Palisade Street have so-called “punched windows”: the facades have more solid surface area than open, giving the impression that the windows have been “punched” out of a solid wall. The windows are taller than wide, often double hung with divided lites. New facades should have compatible proportions and rhythm. (See also the Downtown Historic District guidelines for other parameters and guidelines related to fenestration).



image courtesy of Hart Howerton Architects

Guideline

Building window openings shall be “punched openings” with a scale and pattern similar to the other buildings on Palisade Street. The total area of window openings shall not exceed 50% of the total wall area of the primary volume of the building.

Massing and Scale

While there are some outliers, the majority of the buildings along Palisade Street are similar in terms of overall massing and scale.

In terms of coverage, an analysis was done of the coverages of the existing buildings in the most typical, core study area. There is variation even within the study area. Rather than simply finding the average, a coverage guideline of 40% insures that three quarters of the existing properties conform with the new zoning standard. As elsewhere, the contextual zoning provides a sliding scale that calibrates the base coverage for sites of different sizes. (See Section 300 and Appendix B of the Code).

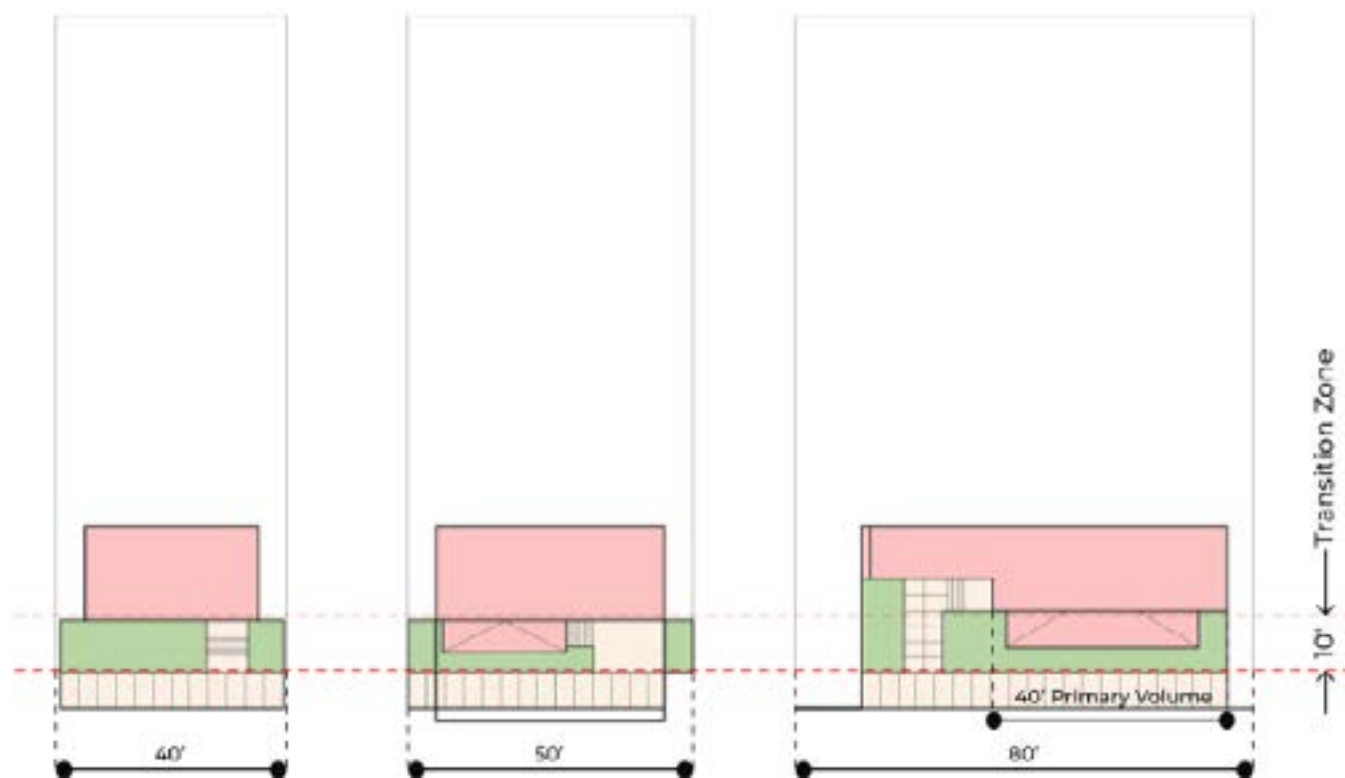
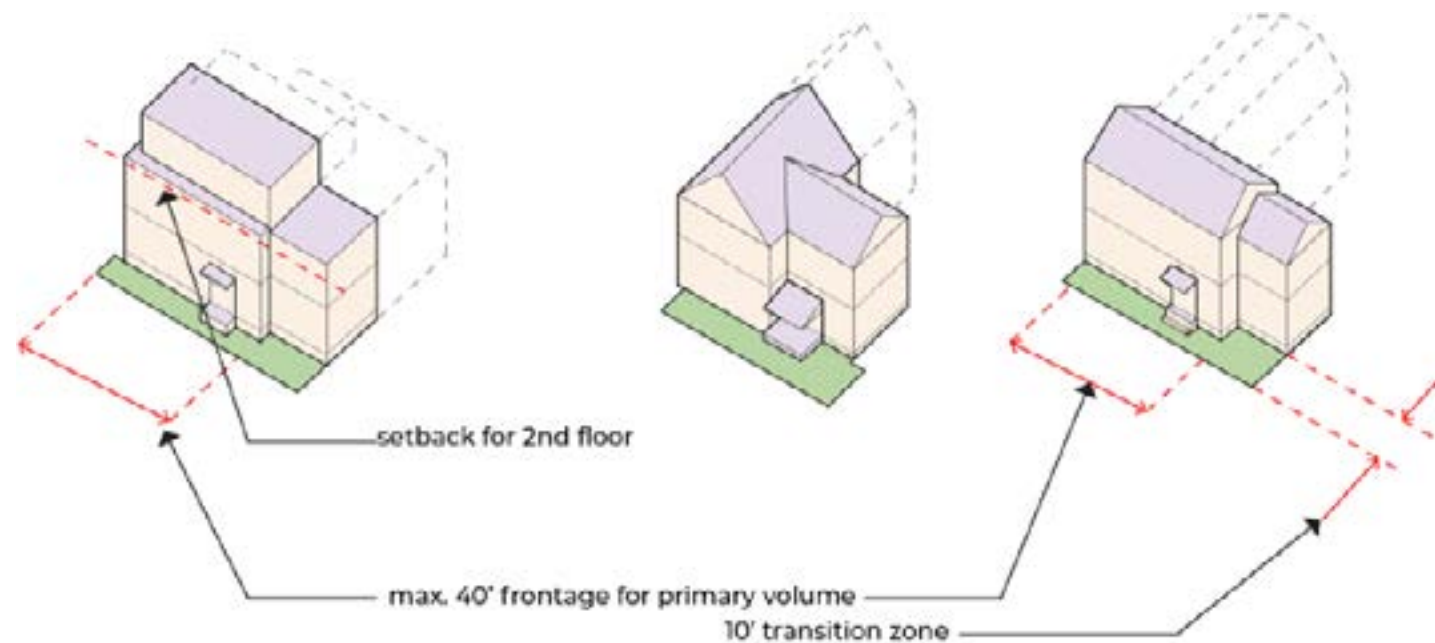
In terms of massing, the scale of the street is created by buildings that consist typically of a single, primary volume which is generally two stories high. Typically, there is a pitched roof facing the street or parallel to the street although there are several flat-roofed buildings as well. As is typical for buildings of this vintage, there are often additions and extensions that have been added over time. But these additions are always clearly secondary to the principal volume of the building.

To maintain the sense of scale of the street, it should always be possible to read a primary volume that is no wider than 40'. Additions and extensions shall be clearly set back from the 40' frontage of the primary volume.

This still enables larger buildings because, within the coverage constraints, it is possible to add to the sides of the primary volume; or, because these properties are so much deeper than they are wide, to add onto the back of the primary volume.

Buildings shall be a maximum of three stories in height. To create the characteristic horizontal expression lines discussed above, flat roofed buildings shall have a setback between the second and third floors. Pitched roof buildings, where the third floor living space is created by dormers, shall have an eave between the second and third floors.

(see Section 300 and Appendix B for dimensional standards)



Massing guidelines- typical frontage conditions

Guideline

- There shall be a clearly articulated Primary Volume. Other massing shall be secondary in scale.
- Maximum Frontage for the Primary Volume shall be 40'.
- A setback shall be created between the 2nd and 3rd floors.
- Smaller massing elements at the first floor level shall help articulate the transition from the sidewalk to the Primary Volume.



PALISADE STREET: CHARACTER GUIDELINES

This document was created for the Village of Dobbs Ferry by Robert Lane and Steve Brosanhan of the Planning Board and Lair Rosenkranz of the Architectural and Historic Review Board with the advice and support of other members of the Planning Board, Village Board Liaison Donna Cassell and Village Planner Dwight Douglas.

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