



The Architectural District Guidelines

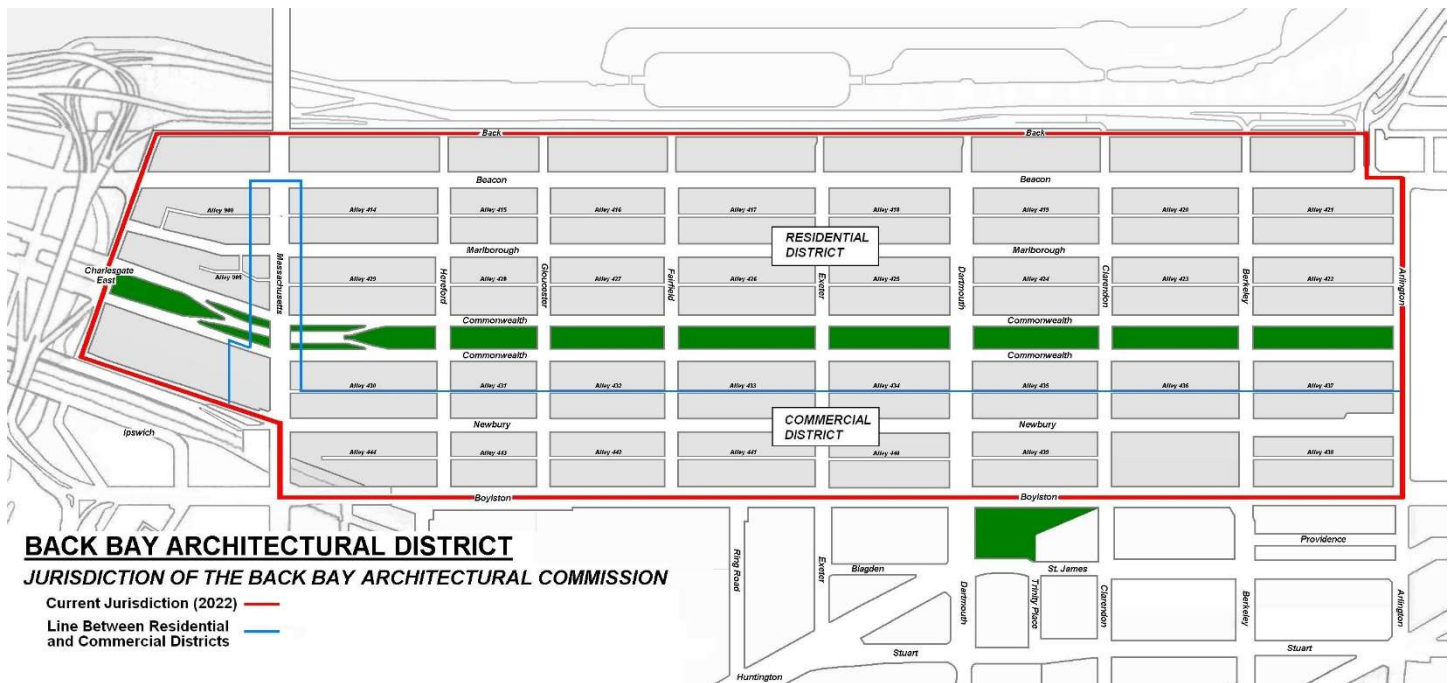
The Back Bay Architectural Commission follows two sets of guidelines:

- The [Residential Guidelines](#) for the residential district, adopted in 1990
- The [Commercial Guidelines](#) for the commercial district, adopted in 2010

The guidelines deal with all aspects of building exteriors — penthouses and roof mechanicals, changes to windows, masonry repair, painting, rear yard additions, parking areas, tree removal, and landscaping. They do not deal with use, or with impacts such as traffic and noise.



The Back Bay Architectural District runs from Arlington Street to Charlesgate East, and from the midline of Boylston Street to Back Street. The district has two parts, residential and commercial; the rules for each are different.



Map of the Back Bay Architectural District

In the Residential District, which runs from Back Street to the midline of the alley between Newbury Street and Commonwealth Avenue, the emphasis is on preservation. The first paragraph of the District’s [Enabling Legislation](#) was amended in 1981 to define the purpose of the Commission as follows:

“(a) to promote the economic, cultural, educational and general welfare of the public through high standards of design throughout the Back Bay and through the preservation of 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..."

The Commercial District extends from the alley between Commonwealth and Newbury to the midline of Boylston Street and on both sides of Massachusetts Avenue. The [Enabling Legislation amendment of 1981](#) is explicit on the difference between the commercial and residential districts:

"It is [...] the intent of this act that the commission construe more liberally proposals respecting structures within those sections of the Back Bay Architectural District which may be zoned for local or general business uses than with those proposals within those sections of the district which may be zoned for residential uses, to the end that conversions of structures to business uses will not be unreasonably prevented."

In addition, in 1973, the [Back Bay was added to the National Register of Historic Places](#), providing additional recognition of the historic and architectural importance of the neighborhood.