



**Design Guidelines**  
**for the**  
**Downers Grove**  
**Downtown Business District**

**January 20, 2009**

# SECTION 1 – INTRODUCTION

The Village has developed the following design guidelines for the downtown business district. The guidelines have been developed using the August 2008 Downers Grove Downtown Pattern Book prepared by Houseal Lavigne Associates & Topografis and a visual preference survey held in October 2008 with Village staff, Downtown Management and other interested downtown parties.

# SECTION 2 – HOW TO USE THE DESIGN GUIDELINES

The design guidelines have been developed to assist in creating a vibrant and diverse downtown and should serve as a guide for downtown development. The guidelines are divided into five separate sections, site design, building design, building base, building middle, and building top. Each section describes elements which support good design and provide visual references which identify both encouraged and discouraged elements of each guideline. The Village encourages that all development in the downtown incorporate items from each section.



- 1. Building Base
- 2. Building Middle
- 3. Building Top

Fig. 1: Building areas

## SECTION 3 - SITE DESIGN

The overall building design is important to create a sense of place, enclosure and activity. The following guidelines are offered:

- ✓ Building massing, height and lot coverage should be proportionate to adjacent buildings. Appropriate massing will assist in creating a sense of enclosure.

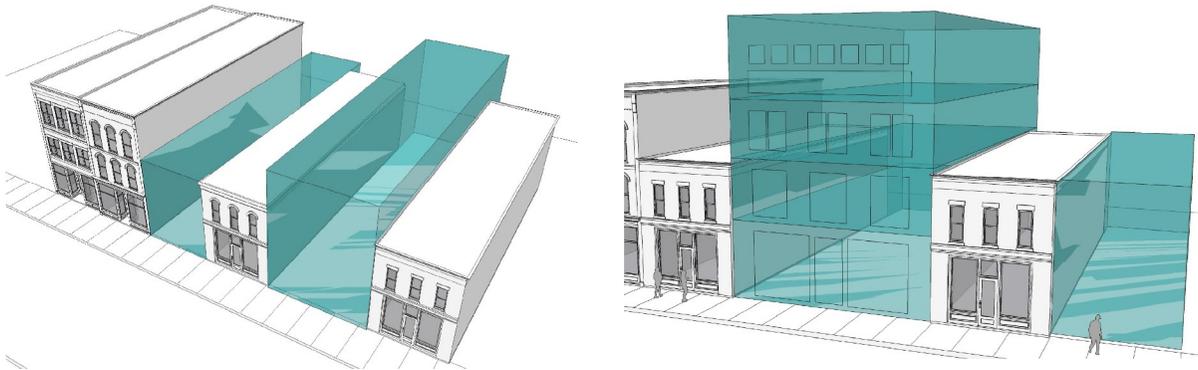


Fig. 1: Appropriate Building Massing

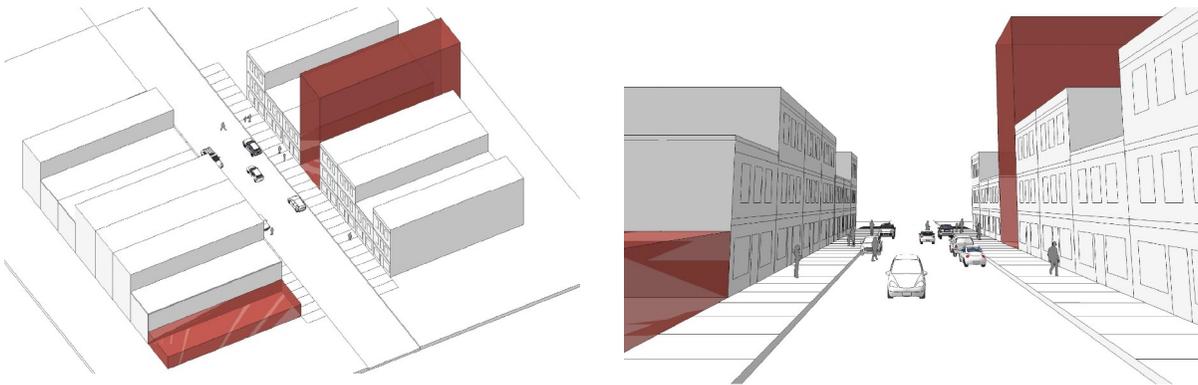


Fig. 2: Inappropriate Building Massing

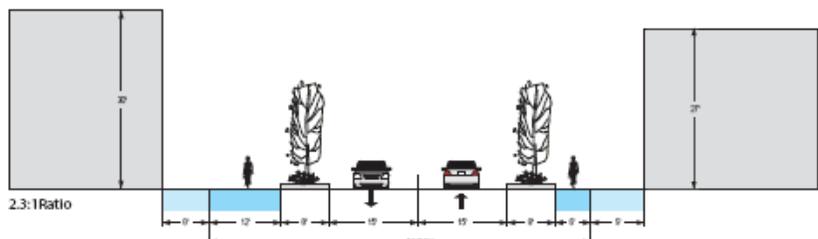


Fig. 3: Sense of enclosure

- ✓ Primary facades should be located near the property line. The urban quality of the street and the pedestrian experience are enhanced by buildings located at the street edge.
- ✓ Buildings should extend and establish a continual street wall.
- ✓ Parking lots are discouraged as they eliminate the street wall. Plazas and outdoor cafes are encouraged as they continue street walls.



Fig. 4: Example of strong street wall

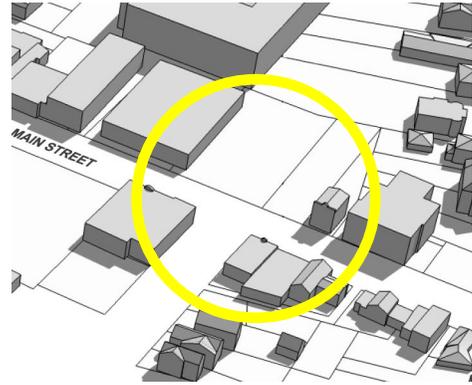


Fig. 5: Major gap in street wall should be avoided.

## SECTION 4 - BUILDING DESIGN – GENERAL

In general, individual buildings should have a distinctive and aesthetically pleasing architecture. Although the Village does not have a distinct style in the Downtown, individual buildings should have a single architectural style.

Although the Village is not seeking to exclude materials, buildings should be constructed of high-quality materials. A maximum of three materials is strongly encouraged. A variety of finishes within the same material is acceptable.



Fig. 6: Examples of appropriate use of materials.

## SECTION 5 - BUILDING BASE

Attractive storefronts can draw the attention of window shoppers, boost economic activities, enhance the image of the business and assist in marketing the goods and services of the business. To create attractive storefronts, certain design features can be used to create good storefronts:

### Windows

- ✓ Windows should be designed to encourage retail uses. Generally, a majority of the first floor should be windows because they enliven streets and provide interest and activity at the street.
- ✓ Knee walls are encouraged to provide a strong base. Knee walls should be between 12 and 30 inches tall.
- ✓ Windows should be transparent, not opaque.



Fig. 7: Encouraged: knee walls and windows which make up a majority of the storefront



Fig. 8: Encouraged: knee walls and windows which make up a majority of the storefront



Fig. 9: Storefronts without a knee wall or base should be avoided.



Fig. 10: Opaque windows and windows which do not make up the majority of the storefront are discouraged and should be avoided.

## Entry Features

- ✓ Entries should be prominent features of the base. Entries should be different from the standard building bay through articulation, elaboration and materials.



Fig. 11: Encouraged: articulated entry through corner piers and signage



Fig. 12: Encouraged: articulated design and material details



Fig. 13: Entries should be prominent features. Entries with lack of detail and elements that are out of proportion with the building should be avoided.



Fig. 14: Entries without detail and definition are unattractive and do not invite customers into the establishment. If entries are setback, extra care should be given to the detailing as in Figure 11.

## Building Materials

- ✓ Base materials should be consistent and new materials should compliment existing materials.
- ✓ Repair and restoration of original features and materials such as brick and stucco, etc., is encouraged. Covering original features and materials is discouraged.

- ✓ A horizontal expression should establish the ground level of the building from the rest of the building. The expression should compliment adjacent buildings and reinforce the street as a pedestrian friendly space.
- ✓ Building materials such as brick, stone, manufactured stone, terra cotta accents, metal accents and wood are encouraged as they provide visual interest and assist in creating a pedestrian friendly corridor.
- ✓ Building materials such as utility brick, concrete masonry units, and Exterior Insulating Finishing Systems (EIFS) are discouraged as they are perceived as cold and uninviting while do not create a pedestrian friendly scale.
- ✓ Materials should be used to differentiate between the importance of building features, and provide visual separations between material functions.



Fig. 15: Encouraged: brick and stone with horizontal expression of first floor



Fig. 16: Encouraged: brick, stone, and textured stone, quoins, projecting lights



Fig. 17: Materials such as EIFS can be used effectively as an accent. However, it is discouraged as a primary material

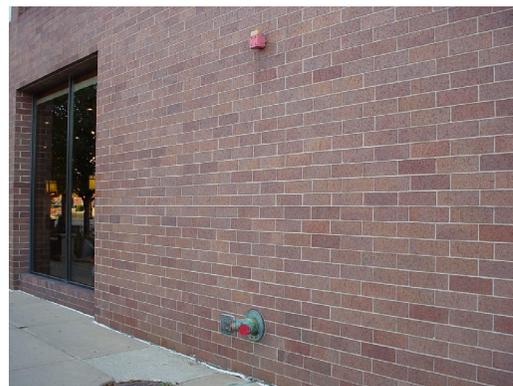


Fig. 18: Avoid blank facades with little detail and inappropriate materials such as utility brick

## Façade Elements

Features which extend out from the building façade can contribute to the character, scale and visual interest of the street. These elements add value and are encouraged:

- ✓ Awnings create visual interest, shield pedestrians from weather and should be compatible in material and style with adjacent properties. Awning can be used to advertise goods or provide visual cues to the location of an entrance.



Fig. 19: Encouraged: awnings

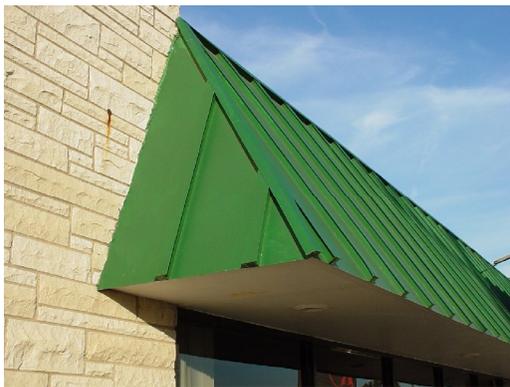


Fig. 20: Avoid using materials that do not compliment the building and surrounding buildings. Awnings should be in scale with the other façade elements and with neighboring buildings.

- ✓ Outdoor cafes can create active streets. Cafes should be clearly defined and provide adequate space for the existing sidewalk to function.
- ✓ Protruding light fixtures also add visual interest while highlighting building details.
- ✓ Landscaping can create pedestrian friendly sidewalks by separating vehicles from pedestrians.
- ✓ Benches adjacent to landscape areas assist in creating pedestrian friendly areas.

- ✓ Balconies within the middle section of the building assist in providing the desired solid and void which are important to the middle sections of buildings. Additionally, balconies add visual interest to the street wall.
- ✓ Projecting signs create visual interest and can assist businesses in advertising.

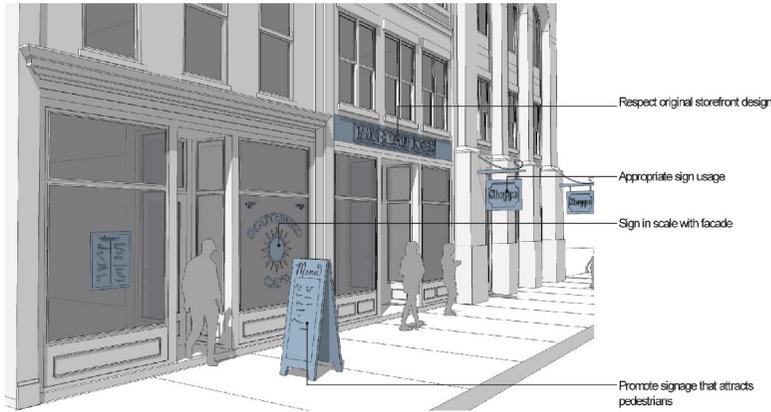


Fig. 21: Encouraged: appropriately scaled and located signage



Fig. 22: Encouraged: awnings and flower box



Fig. 23: Encouraged: outdoor cafe



Fig. 24: Encouraged: landscaping and benches



Fig. 25: Encouraged: projecting light

## SECTION 6 - BUILDING MIDDLE

The middle section of a building should be designed to tie the building base to the roof while creating visual interest. The middle of a building should be a series of solid and voids. Design features which compliment the base and roof are listed below:

### Windows

- ✓ Windows should be in rhythm with the base level.
- ✓ Visual interest should be created through sills, lintels, divided lights and style. Double-hung windows provide more visual interest than casement windows.
- ✓ Replacement windows should fill the entire historic window opening. If historic window openings require closing, the opening should be a different material or texture to maintain the rhythm of the wall.



Fig. 26: Encouraged: double-hung windows, divided lights, lintels and sills



Fig. 27: Encouraged: replacement windows that fill the entire window opening



Fig. 28 Windows should be in scale with the other façade elements. Avoid windows which do not maintain rhythm of the wall as in this example



Fig. 29 Replacement windows should fill the entire historic opening. Avoid replacing windows where the window opening is not filled

## Building Facade

- ✓ Facades should reflect proportionate shapes and patterns. Unarticulated walls create poor visual appearance, do not relate to the base nor the roof and are not allowed.
- ✓ Facades should be visually appealing through detailing, openings and materials.
- ✓ Corner buildings are exposed on two streets. As such, corners of these building should be articulated and elaborated to reflect this importance.



Fig. 30: Encouraged: detailing, window openings and material changes



Fig. 31: Encouraged: corner articulation



Fig. 32: Blank façades with no variation, windows or detailing should be avoided



Fig. 33: Façades with no detailing, as in this example, should be avoided

## Building Materials

- ✓ New materials should be complimentary.
- ✓ Building materials such as brick, stone, manufactured stone, terra cotta accents, metal accents, stucco and wood are encouraged as they provide visual interest.



Fig. 34: Encouraged: brick and stone materials



Fig. 35: Encouraged: complimentary materials



Fig. 36: Vinyl and aluminum siding are discouraged materials and should not be used to cover historic building materials

## SECTION 7 - BUILDING TOP

The building top should be an expression of form, ornament and detail as it meets the sky. The roof should give distinction to the entire building. To create an attractive roof, certain design features can be used to create good storefronts:

### Roofs

- ✓ Distinctive corners and cornices can create visual interest.
- ✓ Per the Downers Grove Zoning Ordinance, mechanical equipment must be screened from street level view.



Fig. 37: Encouraged: cornice detailing



Fig. 38: Encouraged: stone cornice detailing



Fig. 39: Cornices should have detailing and should be in scale with the rest of the building. New cornices should not cover original features.



Fig. 40: It is important to provide details at the top of buildings. In this example, the parapet does not have any detail or cornice. Buildings without detail at the top should be avoided

## Section 8 – Definitions

Concrete masonry unit (cmu) – A precast masonry unit, typically measuring 8” D x 8” H x 16” L, made mainly of portland cement, gravel, sand and water molded into various shapes.

Cornice – A continuous projection that crowns a wall or other construction, or divides it horizontally for compositional purposes.

Divided lights – A window with a number of smaller panes of glass separated and held in place by muntins or a single pane of glass with muntins placed on the surface of the glass to give the appearance of many smaller panes of glass.

Exterior Insulating Finishing Systems (EIFS) – A multi-layered exterior finish system that provide exterior walls with an insulated finish surface and waterproofing in an integrated composite material system.

Knee wall – A short wall upon which a window may sit.

Lintel – A horizontal member above a window opening

Massing –The three-dimensional bulk of a building: height, width and depth.

Pattern Book – The Village of Downers Grove Pattern Book is a document that contains the different patterns and components that create the fabric and context of Downtown Downers Grove and identifies the elements necessary for retaining and enhancing its character as new development, improvements, and changes are considered.

Sill – A horizontal member beneath a window opening.

Streetwall – A continuous built form of buildings at or near the front property line, with no or very small side yards.

Utility Brick – A brick which is larger in size than a standard brick. A standard brick measures 3 5/8” D x 2 1/2” H x 8” L.