

DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR INFILL CONSTRUCTION IN AREA 1 - TOWN SQUARE HISTORIC DISTRICT

This chapter presents design guidelines for the construction of new buildings within the boundaries of the Town Square Historic District (Area 1). The design guidelines are organized into a series of relevant design topics. Within each category, individual policies and design guidelines are presented, which the City will use in determining the appropriateness of the work proposed.

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Summary of Key Characteristics

Key design characteristics of this area include the following:

- Buildings aligned with adjacent historic buildings at the sidewalk edge
- One- to three-story, traditional commercial buildings (some buildings reach greater heights, however)
- Masonry construction dominates
- Transparent ground floor with smaller windows “punched” into predominantly solid upper floors
- Flat-roof buildings
- Sidewalk uses and activities

Design Goals

The Town Square Historic District should continue to develop in a coordinated manner so that an overall sense of visual continuity is achieved. The dominant character of this area should be that of a retail-oriented, commercial environment, with an active street edge that is pedestrian friendly.

The design goals for Area 1 are:

- To rehabilitate existing historic commercial buildings.
- To continue the use of traditional building materials found in the area.

- To maintain the traditional mass, size, and form of buildings seen along the street (i.e., a building should be a rectangular mass that is one- to three-stories in height).
- To design commercial buildings with storefront elements similar to those seen traditionally (i.e., a commercial building should include: recessed entries, display windows, kickplates, transom windows, midbelt cornices, cornices, or parapets, and vertically-oriented upper-story windows).
- To design a project that reinforces the retail-oriented function of the street and enhances its pedestrian character.
- To promote friendly, walkable streets (i.e., projects that support pedestrian activity and contribute to the quality of life are encouraged).
- To provide site amenities—such as benches, lights, waste receptacles, landscaping, etc.—to enhance the pedestrian experience.
- To accurately convey the history of the area by avoiding styles that are not accurate to Georgetown’s history.

See the Downtown Master Plan for specific design information related to infill development in the downtown.

Building Setbacks

In a residential context, buildings are typically set back a uniform distance from the sidewalk. By contrast, buildings in commercial areas often are aligned immediately at the inside edge of the sidewalk. This contributes to a sense of visual continuity.

A typical building in the Town Square Historic District also has its primary entrance oriented to the street. This helps establish a “pedestrian-friendly” quality. In most cases, similar entryways are evenly spaced along a block, creating a rhythm that also contributes to the sense of visual continuity. These entrances are also typically recessed from the sidewalk edge.

Mass and Scale

Patterns are created along the street by the repetition of similarly-sized building elements. For example, uniform facade widths evenly spaced in downtown create a rhythm that contributes to the visual continuity of the area.

Building Form

One of the most prominent unifying elements of the Town Square Historic District is the similarity in building form. Commercial buildings are simple rectangular solids, deeper than they are wide. This characteristic is important and should be continued. Also, commercial roof forms appear flat, although there is typically a slight pitch to it for water to drain. This characteristic is important and should be preserved.

Materials

Building materials of new structures should contribute to the visual continuity of the area. They should appear similar to those seen traditionally to establish a sense of visual continuity. Brick and stone are the dominant materials and their use in new construction is preferred.

Architectural Character

The street level floors of traditional commercial buildings are clearly distinguishable from the upper floors. First floors are predominantly fixed plate glass with a small percentage of opaque materials. Upper floors are the reverse: opaque materials dominate, and windows appear as smaller, vertically oriented openings puncturing the solid walls. The floor-to-floor height on the street level is also generally taller than the upper floors. This feature should also be expressed in new construction.

Policy: Maintain the line of building fronts in the block.

Structures in the Town Square Historic District should contribute to a strong “building wall” along the street. A new building should align at the front lot line and be built out to the full width of the parcel (i.e., to the side lot lines). Although small gaps can occur between some structures, these are exceptions.

12.1 Maintain or enhance the alignment of buildings at the sidewalk edge.

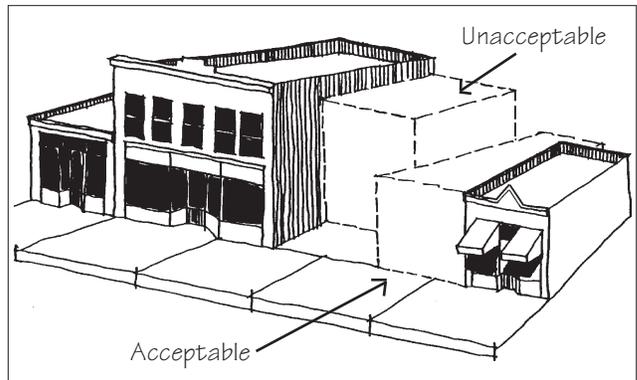
- Locate the front building wall at the sidewalk line when feasible.
- Where a building must be set back from the sidewalk, use landscape elements to define the sidewalk edge

12.2 Orient the primary entrance of a building toward the street.

- A building shall have a clearly-defined primary entrance. For most commercial buildings, this should be a recessed entry-way.
- Secondary public entrances to commercial spaces are also encouraged on a larger building.



A building shall have a clearly-defined primary entrance. For most commercial buildings, this should be a recessed entry-way.



Align the building front at the sidewalk edge.



Before: New buildings should be compatible with the commercial buildings seen traditionally. Creative new design is especially encouraged that is compatible with the design goals of the district. Here, a parking lot awaits compatible infill. (See below.)



After: Simplified interpretations of traditional building elements, including a transparent first floor with display windows and an ornamental cornice, help this new building fit into its context.

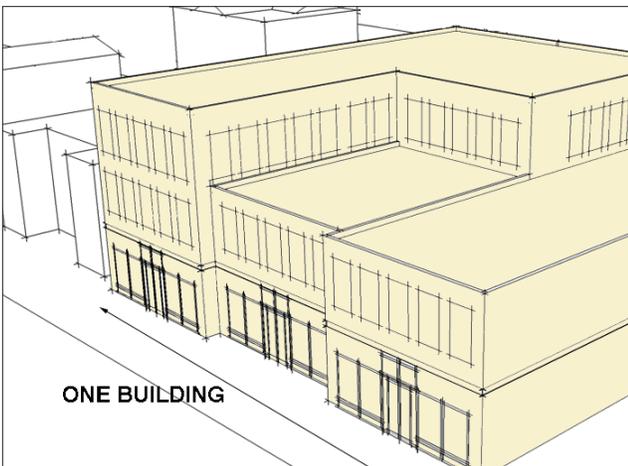
Policy: A building should appear similar in scale to traditional commercial buildings.



Maintain the established building scale of one to three stories in height.



A building shall maintain the alignment of horizontal elements along the block.



Height varied between one and two stories, in the center of a three-lot building.

Building heights vary in the Town Square Historic District and yet there is a strong sense of similarity in scale. This is in part because most buildings are one to two stories in height.

12.3 Maintain the traditional range of building heights seen in the historic core.

- Traditional floor heights should be expressed with horizontal moldings, alignment of windows and other architectural details.
- Set back portions of a third floor to emphasize the lower scale of one and two story portions of a building.

12.4 Buildings shall appear similar in width to those seen historically in the block.

- Traditionally, building fronts were built in 20- to 30-foot increments. Buildings fronts should reflect this pattern.
- On corner lots, the secondary side wall is traditionally longer in its “module”, and this may be appropriate for new secondary elevations.

12.5 Consider dividing a larger building into “modules” that are similar in scale to buildings seen traditionally.

- If a larger building is divided into “modules,” they should be expressed three-dimensionally throughout the entire building facade.

12.6 Floor-to-floor heights shall appear to be similar to those seen traditionally.

- In particular, the windows in a building should appear similar in height to those seen traditionally.

12.7 A building shall maintain the alignment of horizontal elements along the block.

- This alignment occurs because many of the buildings are similar in height.
- Window sills, moldings, and cornices are among those elements that may be seen to align.

12.8 Maintain views to the courthouse.

- In certain circumstances views to the courthouse should be taken into consideration when designing a new building.
- A new building should not be so tall as to block views of the courthouse.

Note: See UDC Section 4.12 Courthouse View Protection Overlay District.

Policy: The form of a building should be similar to those seen traditionally.

One of the most prominent unifying elements of downtown is the similarity in building form. Commercial buildings were simple rectangular solids, deeper than they were wide. This characteristic is important and should be continued.

12.9 Rectangular forms shall be dominant on commercial facades.

- Rectangular forms should be vertically oriented.



Rectangular forms shall be dominant on commercial facades.

12.10 Use flat rooflines as the dominant roof form.

- Parapets on side facades should step down towards the rear of the building.
- Gable roof forms may also be considered if they are obscured by a “false front” storefront similar to those seen historically.

Policy: Building materials should be visually compatible with the predominate materials of this area.

Traditionally, a limited palette of building materials was used in the area—primarily brick and stone. This same selection of materials should continue to be predominant. New materials also may be appropriate when they relate to the scale, durability, color, and texture of the predominate materials of this area.

12.11 Materials shall appear to be similar to those used traditionally.

- Brick and stone were the traditional materials and are preferred.
- If alternative materials are selected they should be comparable to traditional materials, including in texture and color.



Materials shall appear to be similar to those used traditionally.

12.12 A simple material finish is encouraged for a large expanse of wall plane.

- A matte, or non-reflective, finish is preferred.
- Polished stone should be avoided as a primary material and mirrored glass is inappropriate.

Policy: A building should be visually compatible with traditional commercial buildings.



Contemporary interpretations of traditional building elements are encouraged. In this case, shed form awnings are stretched across rigid frames. Transom windows are expressed with a metal grill design.



Maintain the distinction between the street level and the upper floor.

While it is important that buildings be compatible with the surrounding traditional commercial context, it is not necessary that they imitate older building styles.

12.13 New interpretations of traditional building styles are encouraged.

- A new design that draws upon the fundamental similarities among older buildings in the area without copying them is preferred. This will allow the building to be seen as a product of its own time and yet be compatible with its historic neighbors.
- Buildings that are similar in scale and overall character to those seen historically are strongly encouraged.
- In essence, infill should be a balance of new and old in design.
- This applies to architectural details as well as the overall design of a building.

12.14 Maintain the distinction between the street level and the upper floor.

- The first floor of the primary facade should be predominantly transparent glass.
- Upper floors should be perceived as being more opaque than the lower floor.
- Highly reflective or darkly tinted glass is inappropriate.
- Express the traditional distinction in floor heights between street level and upper levels through detailing, materials, and fenestration. The presence of a belt course is an important feature in this relationship.

12.15 Upper-story windows with vertical emphasis are encouraged.

- A typical, upper-story window is twice as tall as it is wide. These proportions are within a limited range; therefore, upper-story windows in new construction should relate to the window proportions seen historically.
- Windows should align with others in a block. Windows, lintels and their trim elements should align with those on adjacent historic buildings.

12.16 Windows should be trimmed with wood, painted metal, or anodized aluminum.

- This trim should have dimension and shadow lines similar to those used historically.

12.17 Window dimensions that are similar to those used traditionally are encouraged.

- Many windows are “one-over-one,” in that a single pane of glass is in both the upper and lower sashes. Other pane configuration also may be present, such as “two-over-one,” with two panes (or lights) in the upper sash and one is in the lower sash. These arrangements are preferred.

12.18 The ratio of solid-to-void surface area shall be similar to that seen traditionally on commercial storefront buildings in the district.

- First floors should be more transparent than upper floors.
- Upper floors should appear more solid than first floors.
- Avoid a blank wall appearance that does not provide interest to pedestrians



A new commercial storefront building should incorporate display windows, a transom window, a kickplate, and recessed entry.



First floors should be more transparent than upper floors. (Aspen, CO)



A contemporary interpretation of a traditional building entry, which is similar in scale and overall character to those seen historically, is encouraged.

12.19 Building entrances should appear similar to those used historically in the block.

- Clearly define the primary entrance with an awning, canopy, or other architectural or landscape feature.
- A contemporary interpretation of a traditional building entry, which is similar in scale and overall character to those seen historically, may be considered.
- Building entrances should be recessed.
- Clearly define primary entrances.
- Secondary public entrances are also encouraged on a larger building or along an alley if there is parking in the rear of the site.

12.20 Doors should be trimmed with wood, painted metal, or anodized aluminum.

- This trim should have dimension and shadow lines similar to those used historically.



Secondary public entrances are also encouraged on a larger building or along an alley.