Most structures in Area 1 contribute to a strong “building wall” along the street because they align at the front lot line and are usually built the full width of the lot or parcel. This site plan characteristic of building to the property edges should be maintained.

1.4.A Zero Lot Setback

Maintain the alignment of buildings at the sidewalk edge. Locate the front building wall at the sidewalk line.

1.4.B Front Lot line Coverage

Buildings should occupy the entire width of the lot for properties facing the Courthouse.

1.4.C Corner Buildings Side Lot Line

Corner Buildings should strive to occupy the entire lot depth along the side street. For corner buildings unable to utilize the entire depth of the property, a street wall shall be built to continue the street wall along the property edge abutting the side street. The wall should be a minimum of 6 feet in height, and 20% transparent to screen a parking or service area. The wall may be shorter and more transparent if the use of the space is a dining area or pocket park.

1.4.D Primary Orientation

Orient the primary entrance of a building toward the street. A building should have a clearly defined primary entrance. For most commercial buildings, this should be a recessed entrance. Corner buildings may have their primary entrance at a 45 degree angle to the primary street.
1.4.E Parking Lots and Structures

Public parking lots and garages were not a part of Georgetown’s early history. However, cars are a fact of life in the Downtown today, and the visual impacts associated with their storage should be carefully planned. Surface parking should be minimized in Area 1.

E.1 Location of Parking
Parking should be located at the rear of the building, accessed through an alley or side street.

E.2 Where a parking lot exists that is presently not screened or landscaped, consider a landscaping program or an infill building that relates to the surrounding historic context. See the City of Georgetown’s Unified Development Code for more guidance on parking lot landscaping and screening requirements.

E.3 A building should not be demolished to create a parking lot in Area 1.
1.4.F Drive Thru Facilities

Drive thru facilities are not appropriate in Area 1. Drive thru facilities are associated with suburban, car centric neighborhoods. The Downtown Overlay District was not designed around the car and the historic character is a pedestrian-friendly urban core.

1.4.G Service Areas

Trash, recycling, storage and loading areas are necessities of commercial districts. The placement of these utility areas are of concern because they can greatly affect the character of a district. These areas and equipment should be screened from public view.

G.1 Minimize the visual impacts of trash storage and service areas.

a. Locate service areas away from major pedestrian routes. Place them at the rear of a building when feasible.

b. Dumpsters should be screened from view.

c. Service areas are not to be used for storage of shipping containers, pallets, extra store fixtures, etc.
1.5. NEW CONSTRUCTION (INFILL DESIGN)

This section presents Design Guidelines for the modifications to existing buildings and construction of new buildings within Area 1 of the Downtown Overlay District. Within each category, individual policies and Design Guidelines are presented, which the City will use in determining the appropriateness of the work proposed.

1.5.A A building should be visually compatible with traditional commercial buildings.

A.1 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 design tradition should also be expressed in new construction.

A.2 New interpretations of historic building styles are encouraged. While it is important that buildings be compatible with the surrounding historic context, it is not necessary that they imitate older building styles.

a. 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.
b. Buildings that are similar in scale and overall character to those seen historically are strongly encouraged.

c. 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.

A.3 Maintain the distinction between the street level and the upper floor.

a. The first floor of the primary façade should be predominantly transparent glass.

b. Upper floors should be perceived as being more opaque than the lower floor.

c. Highly reflective or darkly tinted glass is inappropriate.

d. Express the traditional distinction in floor heights between street level and upper levels through detailing, materials, and windows. The presence of a horizontal band is an important feature in this relationship.
1.5.B Mass, Form and Scale

One of the most prominent unifying elements of the Downtown Overlay District is the similarity in building mass, form and scale. Patterns are created along the street by the repetition of similarly-sized buildings and building elements. For example, uniform façade widths evenly spaced create a rhythm that contributes to the visual continuity of the area.

B.1. Mass
A building should appear similar in mass to traditional commercial buildings.

a. The mass should be solid and heavy, predominantly masonry.

b. Light steel and glass buildings are inappropriate.

B.2 Form
A building should appear similar in form to historic commercial buildings in Area 1. One of the most prominent unifying elements of Downtown is the similarity in building form.

a. The form should be simple, rectangular and deeper than wide. Corner buildings may have a focal point such as a tower, or change of material at the corner.

b. Rectangular forms shall be dominant on commercial façades.

c. Rectangular forms should be vertically oriented.

d. Use flat roof with parapets. Parapets should be sufficiently tall to screen rooftop mechanical equipment.

e. Gable roofs may also be considered if they are obscured by a parapet similar to those seen historically.
B.3 Scale
A building should appear similar in scale to traditional commercial buildings.

a. The dominant scale of two to three stories should be maintained. An additional story may be added if it is set back from the street façade. See the section on additions for existing and historic buildings.

b. A larger building should be broken into “modules” that are similar in scale to the width of buildings along the street. The smaller modules should be expressed three-dimensionally throughout the entire building façade.

c. Use design elements to reduce the scale of the building and to align with elements found on adjacent historic buildings.

1.5.C Base, Middle, Cap
A new building should incorporate a base, a middle, and a cap. Traditionally buildings were composed of these three basic elements. Interpreting this tradition in new buildings will help reinforce the visual continuity of the area.

C.1 A multi-story building shall have 3 clearly defined and distinct parts that articulate a base, a middle and a cap. These should be clearly distinguished from each other by horizontal banding and major and minor cornices.

C.2 A single story building should have a storefront (kickplate, display window and transom and entry) and a cornice.
There is a strong sense of similarity in the building heights in Area 1. This is in part because the first two stories of most buildings are similar in height. Most buildings have features at the lower levels that are similar in scale. First floors, for example, are similar in height. Lower floors are also defined by moldings that align along the block, which contributes to a perceived uniformity in height to pedestrians. A variety in building heights in new construction is appropriate as long as the block-length similarities are maintained.

D.1 Building Height.
Maintain the traditional range of building heights seen in the Downtown Historic Overlay. As discussed in scale, the general heights are 2 - 3 stories. Set back portions of a third or fourth floor to emphasize the lower scale of one and two story portions of a building.

D.2 Floor-to-Floor Height
Floor-to-floor heights should appear to be similar to those seen historically. This is especially true of the ground floor.

a. Traditional floor heights should be expressed with horizontal moldings, alignment of windows and other architectural details.

b. In particular, the windows in a building should appear similar in height to those seen traditionally.
Base, Middle, and Cap Illustration
D.3 Building Width

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

a. Traditionally, building fronts were built in 20- to 30-foot increments. Building fronts should reflect this pattern.

b. On corner lots, the secondary side wall is traditionally longer in its "module", therefore side walls of corner buildings can be longer than the primary elevation width.

1.5.E Align Horizontal Elements

A building shall maintain the alignment of horizontal elements along the block face. Horizontal elements provide scale and continuity to a block face. Storefronts, window sills, moldings, belt courses and cornices are among those elements that may be seen to align, therefore new construction should contain horizontal elements.

E.1 A new building should maintain the alignment of horizontal elements along the block face.

E.2 Historic buildings were built separately over time. There is a variation in location of horizontal elements. The new building should place horizontal elements to align with one of the adjacent buildings or locate the new horizontal element between the respective elements on the two adjacent buildings.

Examples of consistent building widths with aligned horizontal elements.
1.5.F Exterior Building Materials

Historic buildings in the Downtown were built by hand. That meant that a building material would have to be small enough to be lifted by a person or two. That restraint determined the size and scale of materials. Today it is what gives the Downtown its scale and texture. Building materials of new structures should contribute to this visual continuity. They should appear similar to those seen traditionally.

F.1 Building materials should be visually compatible with the predominant materials of Area1.

F.2 Traditionally, a limited palette of building materials was used in the area—primarily brick and stone, occasionally stucco. This same selection of materials should continue to be predominant.

F.3 New materials appropriate for the district should have the characteristics of historic materials and be scaled to replicate the size that could be lifted by one or two persons. Monolithic slabs are not appropriate.

F.4 Stone

a. Types of stone should be limited to native Texas stones, as those traditionally available in Georgetown. This will help preserve the unique character of Downtown. Limestone, sandstone, and granite can all be sourced at Texas quarries.

b. Stone should be laid in a traditional size, pattern and texture found on other historic buildings in Downtown Area1. Rough face, rusticated stone in an ashlar pattern is preferred.
c. Polished stone should be avoided as a primary material.

**F.5 Brick**

a. Brick should be a traditional dimension of approximately 8 inches long, 3 ½ inches deep and 2 ½ inches tall. Mortar joints should be no larger than ½ inch.

b. Brick should be natural in color. Glazed brick, shiny, or colored brick should not be used.

c. Traditional brick coursing patterns should be used. Stacked bricks are not appropriate.

**F.6 Stucco**

a. Plaster stucco is an appropriate material. Exterior insulation and finish system (EIFS) is not an appropriate material.

b. A smooth or slightly textured surface is preferred.

c. Careful attention should be given to the location of expansion joints so they align with horizontal features and do not give the impression of an overlarge panel.
F.7 Alternate Materials

a. If alternate materials are selected they should be comparable to traditional materials, including in texture and color.

b. Acceptable alternate materials include:
   • Cast stone
   • Terracotta
   • Wood - as trim or siding (ship lap, tear drop or board and batten)
   • Cementitious board with historic profiles such as lapped siding, shingles, or board and batten.

c. Alternate materials that are not appropriate for primary or secondary façades in the Downtown Historic Overlay Area 1:
   • Metal panels
   • Corrugated metal
   • Chromed metal
   • Concrete block
   • Decorative concrete block
   • Steel and glass façades
   • Mirrored glass
   • Tilt-wall with exposed aggregate, or painted surface.
   • Vinyl siding
   • Plywood panels
   • Cementitious siding in large flat sheets

These materials can be used on rear-facing if they are not visible from the street.

d. A simple matte or non-reflective finish is preferred.
1.5.G Upper Story Windows

Windows give scale to buildings and provide visual interest. Distinct window designs help define many historic building styles. Historic windows are set deep into a wall, and have substantial casings and sash components. This creates shadows that contribute to the character of the historic style.

G.1 Windows in Area 1 should be vertical in design and of similar size to other windows on the block. A typical, upper-story window is twice as tall as it is wide. These proportions are within a limited range. Upper-story windows in new construction should relate to the window proportions seen historically.

G.2 The pattern of window placement in the primary façade of a building should reflect other patterns of nearby buildings. Too many or too few windows can seem out of place in the established rhythm of the block face. Upper floors should appear more solid than first floors.

G.3 Windows should align with others in a block. Windows, lintels and their trim elements should align with those on adjacent historic buildings. When the alignment differs between adjacent buildings, the new construction can select one or the other, or create a compromise between the two.

G.4 Window configurations should be similar to those used traditionally in Area 1. Many windows are “one-over-one,” in that a single pane of glass is in both the upper and lower sashes. Other pane configurations may be used such as “two-over-one,” with two panes (or lights) in the upper sash and one in the lower sash. Windows in Area 1 need to appear as a minimum of one-over-one windows on the upper floors, although they do not need to be operable. Single lite windows are not appropriate for Area 1 on the upper floors.
G.4 Windows should have a minimum 1 ½ inch sash dimensions plus a brick mould. These can be wood or in the case of metal clad windows- painted metal. Clear, anodized aluminum is not appropriate. This trim should have dimension and shadow lines similar to those used historically.

G.5 Windows should be set a minimum of two inches behind the plane of the façade.

G.6 Glass should be clear and non-reflective.

G.7 Window film can be applied if it is non-reflective and does not darken the windows.
1.5.H Storefronts

H.1 If a storefront is altered, restoring it to the original design is preferred.

a. If evidence of the original design is missing and no evidence of its character exists, a new design that uses traditional elements may be considered. Use a simplified interpretation of similar storefronts. The storefront should be designed to provide interest to pedestrians.

b. In some cases, an original storefront may have been altered early in the history of the building, and may itself have taken on significance. Such alterations should be preserved. See also Preservation Briefs #11: Rehabilitating Historic Storefronts, published by the National Park Service.

H.2 Storefronts in new buildings shall be visually open to provide interest on the street level.

a. The ratio of solid-to-void surface area should be similar to that seen traditionally on commercial buildings in Area 1.

b. First floors should be more transparent than upper floors.

c. Avoid a blank wall appearance that does not provide interest to pedestrians.

H.3 New storefronts can be constructed of wood, steel, anodized aluminum, or other alternative materials with long-lasting characteristics. Storefronts should have trim with profile dimensions and shadow lines similar to those used historically or be
trimmed with wood to create a profile with a more compatible appearance.

H.4 A new storefront should have the parts listed below. A rehabilitation project shall preserve these character-defining elements:

a. Display windows: The main portion of glass on the storefront, where goods and services are displayed. This will help maintain the interest of pedestrians by providing views to goods and activities inside first floor windows.

b. Transom: The upper portion of the display window, separated by a frame and usually located above the canopy.

c. Kick plate: Found beneath the display window. Sometimes called a bulk-head panel. These were usually tile, stone, decorative wood or metal.

d. Entry: Usually set back from the sidewalk in a protected recess.

H.5 Display windows

a. A contemporary interpretation of a traditional display window, which is similar in scale and overall character to those seen historically, may be considered if the historic display windows are missing or have been altered in a manner inconsistent with the style of the building.

b. Display windows in Area 1 shall be large windows with no dividers. Moduled windows with square or rectangular mullions are not in keeping with the existing character.

c. Display windows should use clear glass and be transparent.
d. Display windows should be trimmed with wood, dimensioned steel or copper to emulate historic storefronts.

H.6 Transom Windows  

a. Transoms, the upper glass band of traditional storefronts, introduced light into the depths of the building, saving on lighting costs. Transoms should not be removed or enclosed.

b. Retain the original shape of the transom glass in historic storefronts.

c. The shape of the transom is important to the proportion of the storefront, and it should be preserved in its historic configuration.

d. If the original glass is missing, install new glass.

e. If the transom must be blocked out, retain the original opening proportions. One option is to use the transom area as a sign panel or decorative band. Another option is to paint the back of the glass black to conceal mechanical equipment.
H.7 Kick Plates

a. The kick plate, located below the display window, adds interesting detail to the street scape and should be preserved.

b. If the original kick plate is covered with another material, consider exposing the original design.

c. If the original kick plate is missing, develop a compatible design.

d. Wood is an appropriate material for kick plates on most styles. However, ceramic tile and masonry may also be considered when appropriately used with the building style.

e. Kick plates should align with historic kick plates on the block face. They should generally be no higher than 30 inches, a 24 inch height is preferred.

H.8 Entrances and Doors

a. Building entrances should appear similar to those used historically in the block. They should either be centered with windows on either side or located to one side with storefront windows taking up the rest of the façade. Entrances should be clearly defined, and obvious to pedestrians.

b. Building entrances should be recessed. Repetition of recessed entries provides a rhythm of shadows along the street, which helps establish a sense of scale. Recessed entries were designed to provide protection from the weather and the repeated rhythm of these shaded areas along the street helps to identify business entrances.
c. Recessed entries should be set back between three and five feet.

d. A contemporary interpretation of a traditional building entry, which is similar in scale and overall character to those seen historically, may be considered if the historic storefront is missing or has been altered in a manner inconsistent with the style of the building.

e. Restore the historic recessed entry if it has been altered. Avoid doors that are flush with the sidewalk, especially those that swing outward.

f. Secondary public entrances to the upper floors can be a part of the storefront configuration.

g. Designs may need to comply with other regulations, including door width, direction of swing, and construction. In some cases, entries must comply with accessibility requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Note, however, that some flexibility in the application of these regulations is provided for historic properties. See also Preservation Briefs #32: Making Historic Properties Accessible, published by the National Park Service.
H.9 Cornices

Most historic commercial buildings have cornices to cap their façades. Their repetition along the street contributes to the visual continuity on the block.

a. Preserve the character of the cornice line.

b. An original cornice moulding should be preserved.

c. Many cornices are made of sheet metal. Areas that have rusted through should be patched with pieces of new metal.

d. Reconstruct a missing cornice when historic evidence is available. Use historic photographs to determine design details of the original cornice.

e. Replacement elements should match the original in every detail, especially in overall size and profile. Keep sheet metal ornamentation well painted.

f. The substitution of another old cornice for the original may be considered, provided that the substitute is similar to the original.

g. A simplified interpretation is also appropriate for a replacement cornice if evidence of the original is missing. Appropriate materials include stone, brick, stamped metal and fiberglass.
H.10 Parapet Walls

a. A parapet wall should not be altered, especially those on primary elevations or highly visible façades.

b. When a parapet wall becomes deteriorated, there is sometimes a temptation to lower or remove it. Avoid doing this because the flashing for the roof is often tied into the parapet, and disturbing it will cause moisture problems.

c. Inspect parapets on a regular basis. Watch for deterioration such as missing mortar or excessive moisture retention.

d. Avoid water-proofing treatments on historic masonry parapets, which can interfere with the parapet’s ability to dry out quickly when wet.
1.5.I Maintain views to the Courthouse.

I.1 Views to the Courthouse must be taken into consideration when designing a new building.

I.2 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.

1.5.J Additions

J.1 Two distinct types of additions are appropriate: ground-level or roof-top.

a. A ground-level addition that involves expanding the footprint of a structure may be considered. Such an addition should be to the rear or side of a building. This will have the least impact on the character of a building.

b. An addition to the roof may be designed that is simple in character and set back substantially from the street façade of a building. The materials, window sizes and alignment of trim elements on the addition should be compatible with those of the existing structure, but also visually subordinate in character so as to avoid calling attention to the addition.

J.2 An addition shall be compatible in scale, materials, and character with the main building.

a. An addition shall relate to the building in mass, scale, and form. It should be designed to remain subordinate to the main structure.
b. An addition to the front of a building is inappropriate. However, where a building in the Downtown Overlay is set back from the front property line and the structure does not have historic significance, the first consideration for the placement of an addition should be to fill the gap between the existing building and sidewalk. This will maintain the consistent “street wall” desired in the Downtown.

J.3 An addition shall not damage or obscure architecturally important features. Loss or alteration of a cornice line should be avoided.

J.4 An addition may be made to the roof of a building if it does all of the the following:

a. An addition should be set back a minimum of 25 feet from the front façade and not visible from the street curb directly across the street from the primary, character-defining façade, to preserve the perception of the historic scale of the building.

b. The addition’s design should be modest in character, so it will not detract attention from the historic façade.

c. The addition should be distinguishable as new, albeit in a subtle way.

d. The roofs of additions should not interfere with the original roof form by changing its basic shape and should have a roof form compatible with the original building.
1.5.K Mechanical and Utilities

Utility service boxes, telecommunication devices, solar devices, cables, and conduits are among the types of equipment that can affect the character of the area. While solar energy devices might not always be considered mechanical or service equipment, for the purposes of these Design Guidelines they shall be.

K.1 Minimize the visual impact of mechanical equipment as seen from street.

a. Do not locate window air conditioning units on the building’s primary façade.

b. Use low-profile mechanical units and elevator shafts on rooftops that are not visible from the public view. If this is not possible, set back or appropriately screen rooftop equipment from view.

c. Locate a satellite dish out of public view, to the extent feasible, and in compliance with other regulations.

d. Paint mechanical equipment attached to the building the same color as the background to which it is attached in order to blend into the building. This includes conduit, piping, and meters, etc.