

Marion Design Review Board Guidelines

Purpose:

In addition to using the Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, when evaluating applications for Certificate of Appropriateness, the Design Review Board has adopted the following general design guidelines. The purpose of these policies is to help business and property owners, and design professionals undertaking construction, demolition and rehabilitation projects in the Design Review District by identifying guidelines intended to preserve the architectural integrity of the district by promoting sensitive renovation and compatible new construction.

1. Site Development/Setback:

On blocks where no front yard set back is present, development will be required at the property line. Maintaining the historic facade lines of the streetscape will be achieved by locating the front walls of new buildings in the same place as the existing buildings. Storefronts should be contiguous to produce non-stop impulses for the pedestrian to keep moving. Putting buildings in front or behind the existing setback or at odd angles to the street should be avoided.

2. Directional Expression:

Buildings should be oriented or have a facade character similar to the pre-dominant directional expression of other buildings on the block and in the near vicinity. Special attention should be given to corner lots, which face more than one street. Corner buildings should announce the block by being larger or having a dominant building element that sets them off from the rest of the street, such as a corner entrance, corner tower, canopy or cupola. All facades that are visible to the public, including approaches from parking areas, shall be treated in a sensitive manner. Side and rear walls may remain plainer, but should relate to the main elevation by color, material and detail as much as possible.

3. Parking Lots:

Parking lots should not be in front of the building. Zero setback from the street is preferred in areas where it is common, such as on Center Street. Instead parking should be to the rear of the building or the side of the building wherever possible. Side parking shall incorporate pedestrian scale fencing or landscaping to screen the parking area. Thus the open lot will be less likely to create an uncharacteristic gap or void along the streetscape. Parking areas shall be treated with decorative elements, building wall expansions, plantings, berms, or other innovative means to screen parking areas from public ways. Signage should clearly and neatly identify whether or not the lot is open to the public or for a specific use.

- 4. Height:**
Buildings should relate the overall height of new construction to the average height of existing adjacent buildings. Downtown Marion has many two- and three- story buildings. It is preferred that new structures are comparable in height to maintain the character of the district.
- 5. Scale:**
Size and proportion of new structures shall be related to the scale of the adjacent buildings. Height, width, and or massing create the rhythm of the streetscape. New construction should compliment the existing rhythm.
- 6. Massing:**
Variety of form and massing are important elements in establishing the character of an historic streetscape. For example, it is common on N. Main Street to have a 2 or 3 story building which is taller than it is wide, and has a flat roof line. A one story, horizontally oriented building with a gabled roof would be an example of a different, inappropriate massing.
- 7. Sense of Entry:**
Entries in downtown Marion typically face the street and are flanked by storefront windows. The Italianate buildings common along Center Street have their entrances at grade level. For example, in typical Italianate commercial buildings, it is common to have a recessed entrance which allows enough space for the slight incline between the sidewalk and the higher main floor level. Meanwhile, some buildings found on South Main Street were originally residential in nature, and may have raised porches with entries a few steps above grade. Consideration should be given to which type of entry is most appropriate.
- 8. Projections into the required yards:**
Section 1151.065 of the zoning code eaves, cornices, window sills and belt courses may project into any yard a distance not to exceed three feet. If a proposed building or renovation will project into the street or alley right-of-way, it may be necessary to obtain an easement from the City before proceeding with said project.

Section 1161.025 states that no part of any accessory sign may project beyond the property line except in the C-3 district, where signs may project into the street right-of-way as follows:

- A. Projecting signs may extend into the street right-of-way no more than three feet and the bottom thereof shall be no less than ten feet above the grade of the sidewalk beneath it.
- B. Awnings, canopies or marquees extending beyond the property line may have signs upon them, which shall be affixed flat to the surface thereof, unless extending vertically beneath such awning, canopy, or marquee, complying with height limits

of Section 1161.026.(E).

C. Wall signs may project into a street right-of-way no more than twelve (12) inches.

9. Roof Shapes:

Applicants should relate the roof form of new buildings to those found in the area. Using similar shapes, pitches and materials on roofs new construction and rehabilitation projects makes the buildings more compatible to the overall district.

Similarly, the presence of cornices and friezes are common decorative features at the top of many downtown buildings. These decorative elements are an important crowning feature, and should be maintained whenever possible. Removing these features results in a unfinished look to the building. Maintaining and repairing is preferred to removing them. If possible, new construction should be designed to incorporate a comparable feature at the top of the proposed building, at a minimum a decorative corbelled brick pattern or a series of crown molding should be used to allude to a cornice.

10. Rhythm of Openings:

The alternation of wall areas with door and window elements as well as width-to height ratio of bays in the facade create the rhythm of a building. When this rhythm is found in series of adjacent buildings, it creates a rhythm to the streetscape. For example, it is common in downtown Marion for first floor storefronts to consist of large store front windows on the first floor and a series of narrow, tall, rectangular, double- hung windows on upper stories. The facades are often symmetrical in nature. Buildings with large expanses of windowless walls, or bricking in existing windows disrupt the rhythm of the openings, and should be avoided.

11. Windows:

The Italianate style became popular in the 1860's. It emphasized vertical proportions. The tall, narrow, double-hung window were used in upper stories. The exceptions are store front display windows. Storefront windows should contain clear glass to allow visual access of the interior space. Smoked and mirror glass should be avoided. Repair of original windows is preferable to replacing them with windows of different size or material. Unused windows should not be closed or covered by bricks, metal or wooden boards.

12. Material:

Care should be given especially when altering first floor storefronts, not to use modern, incompatible materials such as vinyl and aluminum siding, mirrored or tinted glass, wood-shake shingles, artificial stone and brick veneer. Materials shall be selected for suitability to the type of buildings and the design in which they are used. Buildings shall have the same materials or materials that will be architecturally harmonious, for all walls and other exterior components wholly or partly visible from public ways. Materials shall be of durable material.

13. Storefront Signage:

Preserve and maintain historic signage on the building. Historically, commercial signage was pedestrian oriented. A sign band was often found between the lintel between the first floor and the second story. Locating wall-mounted fascia signs or projecting signs in this space or placing signage in the storefront windows is preferred. Ensure that size and placement of signage compliments the building's architectural style. Place signage where it cannot obscure significant architectural detail or block the view of buildings beyond either side. For new signage, use external illumination as opposed to internal.

While content is not regulated, signs that are small, easily read with simple messages are preferred to large signs that are visually cluttered with multiple messages. Duplication of message should be avoided. Signs that are most effective focus the primary sign on identifying the building name or business name. Secondary information such as tenant lists, services or brand names of products offered should be smaller and located in a less prominent location. Restraint in the number of colors and letter styles used on signage is urged. Buildings with multiple tenants or storefronts should develop an overall sign plan for the entire building to create a neat, balanced, complimentary appearance and prevent information overload and visual disorder.

Do not install large scale wall signs on massive buildings. Instead, add a small plaque-style wall or small projecting sign scaled to the size of the entrance. The top and bottom of an awning may also be used to provide signage. It is not uncommon to see a business name or address printed on the front panel or lower flap of a canvas awning.

Use a detached sign whenever signage was not an integral part of the structures original use. For example, in residential area with a front yard setback, consider using a low ground sign or a pole sign in the front yard. Portable, trailer-mounted temporary signs and large scale billboards are not desired within the district. Existing billboards may remain, but new ones will not be permitted in the district. The City permits small sandwich boards signs to be placed on the sidewalks provided they do not impede pedestrian movement and are taken indoors every evening. It is suggested that they take up no more than one quarter of the width of the sidewalk.

In order to create a signage system for visitors that is user friendly, uniform appearance of directional and parking signs throughout the district is desired. Parking signs should clearly indicate whether the spaces are open to the public or are reserved for private use.

Patriotic flags are not regulated under the zoning code. However, decorative and seasonal flags as well as flags used as signs with business names and/or graphics are not permitted within the district.

14. Lighting:

Exterior lighting, where permitted, can enhance the building design, signage and landscape. Lighting shall be restrained in design and excessive brightness shall be avoided.

15. Building Site:

The relationship between a building and its site features help define the historic character and should be considered an important part of the design of a rehabilitation or new construction project within the design district. Site features can include, but are not limited to driveways, walkways, streetscape features, lighting, fencing, benches, landscaping, planters, fountains, terraces and the visible presence of mechanical units, loading docks and dumpsters. Attention to detail, especially scale and material, should be given when removing, adding or drastically changing such site features. For example, chain-link or tall, wooden privacy fences shall be discouraged, while smaller iron or brick fences may be more appropriate.

16. Awnings:

Awnings were commonly used in the downtown. They act as a transition between the building, the sidewalk and the street. They also shelter pedestrians and reduce glare. Fixed aluminum canopies, awnings made of plastic or wood shingles or those simulating mansard roofs are generally incompatible with older commercial buildings. Awnings should look traditional and be made of soft canvass or vinyl. Install awnings with a fixed or retractable pipe frame construction having a canvas cover in an opaque muted color. The color should compliment the building and not clash with properties in the near vicinity. Awnings should be installed in a way that does not damage the building or obscure important architectural features. Place a low level light above, rather than underneath it. Do not try to use an awning to replace a porch that has been removed from a residential building. Awnings should be mounted high enough to provide adequate clearance beneath them and to minimize potential vandalism.

17. Street furniture:

Generally, street furniture should be simple in style. Placement should not hinder pedestrian movement or visually conceal important architectural features.

18. Patios and decks:

Decks are a feature of suburban development and not appropriate in an historic commercial district. Porches and patios are more acceptable in residential section of the district. When appropriate, brick pavers are the preferred materials for patios.