

Downtown **Design Guidelines**

Downtown Racine Corporation
City of Racine

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How to Use this Document

Racine's Guidelines consist of Fundamental Guidelines, Project Guidelines, and an accompanying Design Review Checklist.

Fundamental and Project Design Guidelines

These guidelines apply to all projects located in the districts identified below. The Fundamental Guidelines refer to Racine's character and pedestrian emphasis while the Project Guidelines refer to design and architectural details.

Guideline Organization

Each specific guideline contains a descriptive statement and examples of appropriate and inappropriate applications. Examples are described using both text and photographs.

Use of Visual Examples

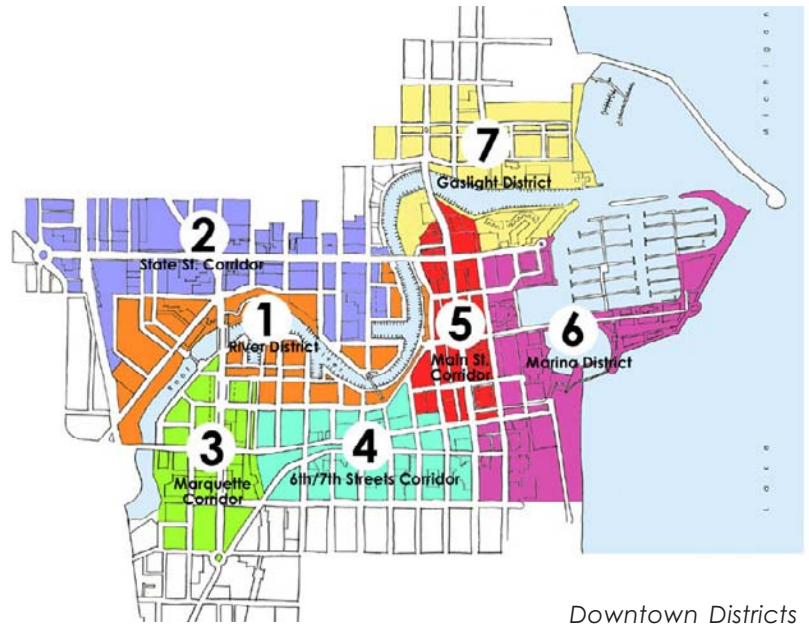
The visual examples included in each guideline element are models for design and review purposes only. They are not intended to be precisely replicated. Instead, they are intended to provide designers, developers and the Design Commission a means to effectively judge a building relative to appropriate and inappropriate design criteria.

The Checklist

The Design Guidelines Checklist is to be used for Design Review. Categories that do not apply should not be addressed.

Design Review Process

The Racine process for Design Review ensures that quality projects get built downtown.



Downtown Districts

Role of Design Guidelines

Downtown Racine has experienced continued investment of time, money and energy over many generations. Guidelines help protect and enhance this investment.

Guidelines give developers an understanding of the City's expectations and provide the City a framework for reviewing proposed projects. They ensure a degree of order, harmony and quality by promoting the design of individually attractive buildings and projects that contribute to a unified and distinct downtown.

The guidelines do not prescribe specific design solutions; nor are they rigid requirements without flexibility. They are discretionary review tools that aid in the design of buildings and sites with the intent to foster quality and innovation.

Strengthening the Fabric

There will always be many ways of meeting a particular guideline. The guidelines provide a descriptive template for maintaining and improving the urban character of downtown without dictating or prescribing a specific style or theme.

They recognize and support Downtown Racine's "urban fabric" where buildings are built edge-to-edge and engage the streets. The urban character of downtown Racine is maintained and strengthened by the guidelines.

Moreover, the guidelines reinforce the nature and quality of downtown Racine by calling for new development and rehabilitation to complement and respect the character of Racine's existing historic buildings. Older buildings are not treated as leftovers and unattached fragments of the past.

A Tool for Quality and Innovation

The guidelines also provide opportunities for new and innovative designs. Creativity and flexibility are encouraged within the parameters of the guidelines and standards, which reflect the community's vision for Racine.



Downtown Racine 2025

The Downtown Plan

Racine's guidelines support and complement the Racine Downtown Plan, helping to bring to life the fundamental concepts, and public realm and land use frameworks that are the foundations of the plan. These essential ideas are described in detail in the Racine Downtown Plan document, and summarized below.

Fundamental Concept

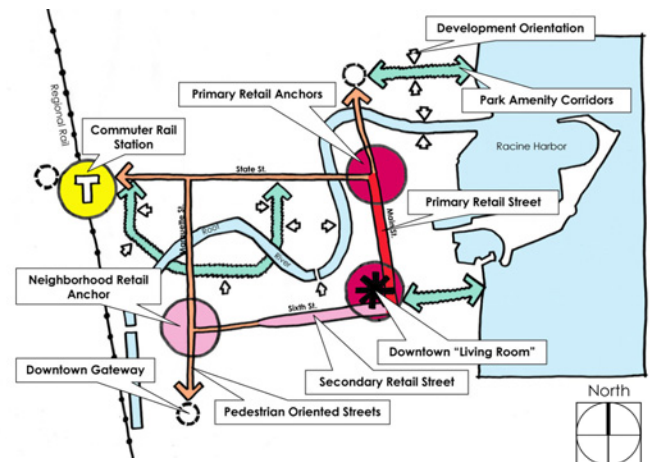
- Maintains Retail Revitalization.
- Strengthens the Public Realm.
- Establishes a Sense of Place.
- Provides for Transit and Bicycles.

Public Realm Framework

- Makes the pedestrian the priority.
- Identifies key public circulation and amenity infrastructure improvements that link districts and provide a focus for pedestrian-oriented development.

Land Use Framework

- Specifies locations for a range of uses, including retail, open space, housing, civic/cultural, employment and parking.
- Suggests a mix of uses both vertically and horizontally.
- Establishes development that is transit- and pedestrian-oriented.



Fundamental Concepts Diagram



Public Realm Framework



Land Use Framework

Regulatory Documents

Racine's regulatory documents provide the legal authority to ensure that minimum development standards are met. These documents are summarized as follows:

Zoning Ordinance

Section 312 of the Racine Zoning Ordinance (Zoning Ordinance Revisions September 19, 2000), provides the primary regulatory framework for implementing the Downtown Land Use Framework Plan. The ordinance includes 1) specific development standards, 2) public area requirements, and 3) design standards adopted for the Downtown Zones to ensure an active, attractive and accessible environment for shoppers, employees and residents.

Downtown Zones

The Downtown Zones described in Section 312 establish complementary yet distinctive subareas of downtown Racine. The Land Use Framework Plan includes eleven Downtown Zones:

- Limited General Residence District (R3)
- General Residence District (R4)
- General Residence District (R5)
- General Residence District (R6)
- Restricted Office District (O)
- Office/Institutional District (O-I)
- Neighborhood Convenience District (B1)
- Community Shopping District (B2)
- General Commercial District (B3)
- Central Business District (B4)
- Central Service District (B5)

Public Area Requirements

Public Area Requirements prescribe specific details and design criteria for improvements within the public right-of-way and establish a common urban design thread that links the different land uses and architectural styles of the Downtown Zones.

Character

The Character Guidelines address the qualities that give Racine its uniqueness and personality. They consider what makes downtown a special collection of buildings and spaces forming a distinct “place,” not simply a group of individual projects.

Character guidelines are divided into the following elements:

- Reinforce Racine’s Sense of Place
- Integrate the Environment
- Promote Linkages to Racine’s Heritage
- Establish or Strengthen Gateways
- Consider View Opportunities
- Promote Architectural Compatibility
- Preserve Historic Buildings
- Use Architectural Contrast Wisely
- Integrate Art

Visual examples are included as models for design and review purposes only. They are intended to provide designers and Design Commissioners a means to identify appropriate and inappropriate character elements. They are not intended to be specific examples that should be replicated.



Reinforce Racine's Sense of Place

Guideline

Strengthen the qualities and characteristics that make downtown Racine unique.

Description

Historically, downtown has been the heart of Racine – a unique setting with its Main Street, waterfront, places for community gatherings and celebrations, and a destination for all who live in the area.

Life in Racine has always been oriented toward its natural resources. French explorers arrived at the mouth of the Root River in 1699; and the city was founded in 1848. “Racine” is the French word for “root.”

Early city life was founded on manufacturing and industry. In 1842, Jerome Increase Case built the first steam-powered thresher. His new company grew into an international manufacturer of farm and construction machinery.

Development that authentically reflects Racine's history of innovation and reconnects to its geographical features – Lake Michigan and the Root River – will reinforce its unique qualities.

Appropriate

- Waterfront, historic or marine design references.
- Special features at the street level that enhance the pedestrian experience.
- Human scale that fits the historic block structure of downtown.

Inappropriate

- Historic “theme-park” development not specific to downtown Racine's heritage.
- Development that is universal or generic and could be built anywhere – Racine, an airport terminal or a shopping mall.



Appropriate



Inappropriate

Integrate the Environment

Guideline

Orient buildings and projects toward Racine's abundant outdoor water and landscape features, including different scales of natural and man-made amenities.

Description

Building designs should capitalize on Racine's unique natural assets – Lake Michigan and the Root River – as well as man-made parks, marinas, squares or courtyards. Designs should encourage a sense of the natural environment from both a larger, citywide scale and a smaller, building scale. Materials, colors and forms should be used that harmonize with the natural setting and provide a smooth transition between the natural and built environments.

Appropriate

- Active and passive gathering places and walkways oriented toward the river, lake and other natural elements.
- Safe and convenient public access to the riverfront and lakeside by foot and boat.
- Elements engaging the water's edge, where the sight, sound and feel of the water can be directly experienced.
- Walkways that are paved with high-quality materials harmonious with the natural surroundings.

Inappropriate

- Elements that may adversely affect water quality, wildlife habitat, natural waterways or vegetation.
- Brightly-colored materials that clash with the natural colors of the surroundings.



Appropriate



Inappropriate

Promote Linkages to Racine's Heritage

Guideline

Encourage development that reveals and highlights Racine's history of industrial innovation and quality design.

Description

Racine's distinct character was carved by innovative entrepreneurs and creative corporations that developed well-designed machines, products and technologies. The design of new buildings and open spaces in downtown should reinforce this high-quality tradition and celebrate Racine's spirit of innovation. For example, new building systems and "sustainable" technologies are encouraged if and when they benefit the character and quality of downtown Racine.

Appropriate

- Building design that refers to Racine's historical culture of industrial innovation.
- Preservation and rehabilitation of buildings and sites significant to Racine's industrial heritage.
- Downtown location for cultural facilities celebrating Racine's history.

Inappropriate

- Pastiche or kitschy application of industrial "themes" to which the building or site bear no relation.
- Theme-park-styled use of industrial or other historical forms in theatrical fashion.



Appropriate



Inappropriate

Establish and Strengthen Gateways

Guideline

Use architectural and landscape elements to gracefully mark transitions and entrances.

Description

Entrances into downtown Racine should be celebrated at many levels.

Pedestrians, commuters and visitors should experience a sense of “entering” the downtown area or a specific district.

A traffic roundabout in the appropriate location can create an auto-scaled gateway; pedestrian-scaled gateways may be spatially defined by using traditional building elements such as arches, arcades, pylons, columns, fountains and bridges. Landscape, sculptural and artistic elements can also be used to identify a gateway.



Appropriate

Appropriate

- Roundabout traffic configuration at designated gateway locations on major auto routes into downtown.
- New buildings designed to work with existing buildings to create gateways.
- Historic markers in sidewalk paving to strengthen sense of entry into a particular district.
- Gated internal courtyards.
- Gateways to indicate changes in land use (i.e., from retail mixed use to residential).
- Gateways to indicate change or separation in transportation modes (i.e., from auto to pedestrian areas).
- Ornamental or decorative elements combined with lighting or signs.

Inappropriate

- Gated private compounds.
- Utilitarian gateway materials such as chain link.

Consider View Opportunities

Guideline

Design buildings and spaces to contribute to views of both natural and built features, including streetscapes and open spaces.

Description

Both near and distant views to places of activity and interest should be enhanced, including public open spaces, natural landscape features and building lobbies or other active interiors. Reciprocal views should be created where possible – providing an architectural element and visual focus at each end of a view corridor or streetscape.

New buildings provide new view opportunities. View corridors between buildings as well as views into and out of windows should bring the adjacent environment into focus and engage and connect indoor and outdoor activities.

Appropriate

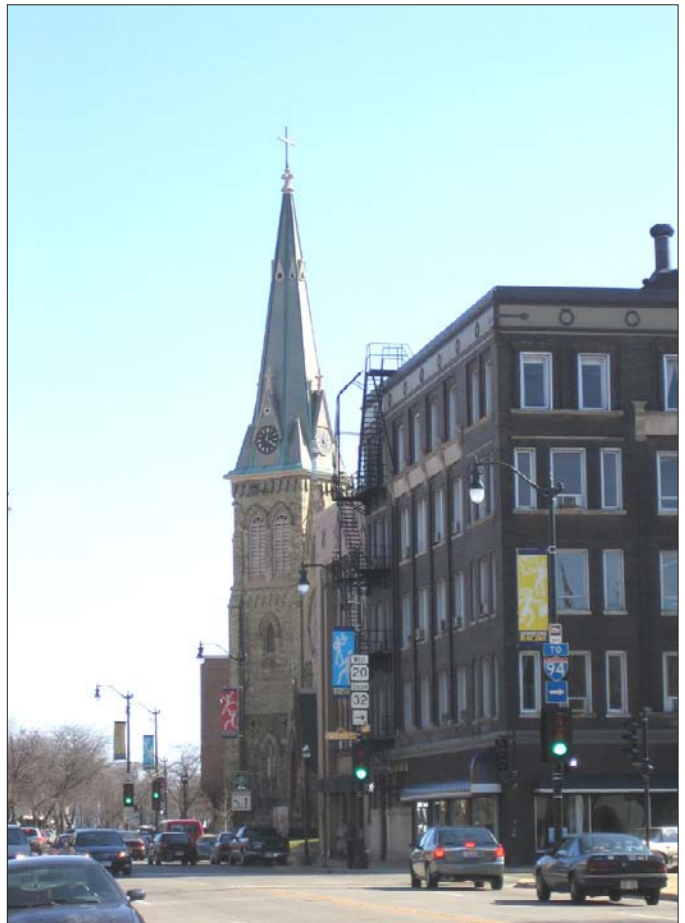
- Views of parks and squares such as Monument Square or the Park Blocks.
- Views of natural features such as Lake Michigan, the Root River, specimen landscape planting, streams or ponds.
- Views of streets and interior courtyards.
- Architectural elements such as windows, terraces, and balconies placed strategically to provide special views.

Inappropriate

- Views of large expanses of parking.
- Views of service bays, loading docks and storage areas.
- Views of adjacent residential interiors.
- Buildings that block significant public view corridors.



Appropriate



Appropriate

Promote Architectural Compatibility

Guideline

New buildings should be “good neighbors” and contribute to the quality and character of their architectural context.

Description

Buildings should “fit” with their architectural surroundings – relating to nearby buildings rather than calling attention to themselves through disruptive design excesses or novel variations. Materials, color, texture, scale, form, silhouette, height, rhythm and proportion all influence a structure’s compatibility with its surroundings. Architectural elements should enhance not detract from the area’s overall character.

Appropriate

- Traditional architectural elements (for example, classical cornice) used at a scale and level of detailing proportionate to the size of the building.
- Forms, proportions, rhythms, materials, colors and architectural motifs that are suggested by and complement adjacent buildings.

Inappropriate

- Out of scale, cartoon-like cornices or other traditional architectural elements applied without regard to size or use of the element.
- Building elements that do not respect the scale, materials or proportions of adjacent historic or significantly high-quality buildings.



Appropriate



Inappropriate

Preserve Historic Buildings

Guideline

Renovation, restoration and addition to historic buildings in Racine should respect the original structure.

Description

Architectural elements of individual historic buildings add to the atmosphere and uniqueness of the downtown as a whole. Older buildings should be preserved in their entirety when beneficial. If preservation is not possible, a sensitive and viable compromise in rehabilitation and reuse should be made that retains the building's historic character.

Financial incentives at local, state and federal levels recognize the merits of historic reuse and can add to the financial viability of preservation and renovation.

Appropriate

- Retain significant original characteristics of scale, massing and building materials of historic buildings, particularly along their street facades.
- Additions to buildings should neither deform nor detract from the composition of the facade or be out of scale with the building.
- Distinctive stylistic features or examples of skilled craftsmanship should be treated with sensitivity. All buildings should be respected as products of their time.

Inappropriate

- Incompatible additions or building alterations using contemporary materials, forms or colors on building facades.



Appropriate



Inappropriate



Inappropriate

Use Architectural Contrast Wisely

Guideline

Contrast is essential to creating an interesting urban environment. Used sparingly on significant buildings, contrast can provide focus and drama, announce a socially important public use and help define and organize individual districts and downtown as a whole.

Description

The use of contrast should not create a building in conflict with its surroundings. Even a building that shows clear differences from its context should be a comfortable part of its setting.

A downtown in which many buildings look very different from each other can produce visual chaos. A limited amount of contrast in small-scale projects can create delight and interest in the overall building composition and be an integral part of a building's design. However, contrast employed at a large scale should be reserved exclusively for civic buildings.

Public buildings that contrast with their neighbors may be most successful if green space, plazas or other elements provide a visual separation between the special civic building and its surroundings.

Appropriate

- Building contrast created by a unique site.
- Civic building contrast on a large scale.
- Selective, highlighted elements that create interest in the downtown.

Inappropriate

- Building projects that differ radically from their neighbors in material use, form, color or massing.



Appropriate



Inappropriate

Integrate Art

Guideline

Public art should be used in keeping with the character of a site, district or downtown as a whole. When used, public art should be integrated into the design of the building or public open space.

Description

Large scale public art pieces bring focus to an outdoor space while small scale pieces can bring detail and delight to the ground floor of a building or low wall. At any scale, art should not overwhelm outdoor spaces or render buildings mere backdrops. Three dimensional sculpture, murals or other art forms are appropriate only when well designed.

If well executed, surface art work painted or attached to a large blank wall can add interest, whimsy and spice. Sometimes murals created as community art projects can be poorly executed, easily damaged and compete with buildings and the streetscape. To be deemed appropriate, art work should be permanent and designed to age well.

Appropriate

- Artwork designed specifically for and integrated into the building or site.
- Professionally designed.
- Durable, low maintenance materials that are vandal-resistant.
- Retain historic painted wall signs.

Inappropriate

- Amateur art projects.
- Artwork used as advertising (except historic signs).
- Subjects and themes that may offend, incite or embarrass the community or individuals of Racine.



Appropriate



Appropriate

Pedestrian Emphasis

The intent of the Pedestrian Emphasis Guidelines is to promote an environment where the pedestrian is the priority. Simply stated, downtown must maintain a clear and comfortable separation between pedestrian and vehicle areas.

Where unavoidable intersections occur, pedestrian comfort, safety and interest must not be compromised. The pedestrian should be safe and comfortable in all seasons and hours of the day, and in all areas of downtown.

The Pedestrian Emphasis Guidelines fall into the following topics:

- Reinforce and Enhance the Pedestrian System
- Respect Racine's Historic Block Structure
- Define the Pedestrian Environment
- Protect the Pedestrian from the Elements
- Provide Places for Stopping and Viewing
- Create Successful Outdoor Spaces
- Integrate Barrier-free Design

Visual examples are included as models for design and review purposes only. They are intended to provide designers and Design Commissioners a means to identify recommended and not recommended pedestrian emphasis elements. They are not intended to be specific examples that should be replicated.



Reinforce and Enhance Pedestrian System

Guideline

Maintain the pedestrian as the priority in downtown, eliminating pedestrian barriers and ensuring that walking routes are safe, direct and pleasant.

Description

Pedestrian routes should be attractive, easy to use and encourage walking and activity downtown. Sidewalks should be continuous, avoiding interruptions such as vehicle curbcuts or changes in direction or grade. Walkways should be free of barriers such as utility poles, newspaper boxes or other obstructions and clutter.

Separate and protect pedestrians from visual and other nuisances. For instance, mitigate noise and odors by screening or enclosing loading docks, mechanical equipment, garbage dumpsters and other unsightly items. These components should be located away from areas where pedestrians congregate and, instead, be located in service areas or alleys whenever possible.

Appropriate

- Maintain pedestrian access where rights-of-way have historically been located.
- Mid-block landscaped pedestrian walkways within “superblocks.”
- Parking lot walkways.
- Enclosures around trash dumpsters.
- Utility/substation enclosures.

Inappropriate

- Indirect or circuitous pedestrian routes.
- Permanent pedestrian route obstructions.



Appropriate



Inappropriate



Inappropriate

Respect Racine's Historic Block Structure

Guideline

New development should be organized within Racine's historic street grid.

Description

Racine's existing downtown block system provides a natural human scale that should be followed for new and redevelopment projects in downtown. Racine's historic downtown grid offers more open space, light, air and direct pedestrian travel than is typically offered in suburban street patterns.

Appropriate

- Maintain historically public rights-of-way.
- Continue the historic ratio of open space to buildings found in downtown.
- Provide mid-block landscaped pedestrian walkways within any "superblock" sites.

Inappropriate

- Anchor or other sites unbroken by small-scale pedestrian or auto routes.



Appropriate



Innapropriate

Define the Pedestrian Environment

Guideline

A building should provide a continuous human scale of variety and visual richness for a positive pedestrian experience along its ground floor street front.

Description

The most important part of a building is its ground floor – the lowest 15 feet of the facade that a person experiences walking past or entering the building. This “pedestrian experience zone” should extend horizontally across the sidewalk and provide an enclosed, continuous and comfortable street edge for the pedestrian. Building transparency at ground floor should foster interaction between the public and private realms.

Appropriate

- Windows - transparent or with displays at street level.
- Walls that create visual interest by providing a variety of forms, colors and compatible cladding materials.
- Facades providing a rhythm by using bays, columns, pilasters or other articulation at street level.
- Signs and lighting at ground level that contribute to the human scale.

Inappropriate

- Blank, flat, nondescript walls at street level.



Appropriate



Inappropriate

Protect the Pedestrian From the Elements

Guideline

Provide pedestrians with protection from wind, sun, rain, sleet and snow.

Description

Awnings and canopies are encouraged along the ground floor of buildings to protect pedestrians from rain and snow during inclement weather and provide shade in summer.

The design of awnings and canopies should be an integral component of the building facade. Awnings should be well proportioned with the building and sidewalks. Awnings should not be so large as to impact street trees, light fixtures or other street furniture.

Appropriate

- Canvas fixed or retractable awnings.
- Horizontal metal frames with a transparent infill, especially if transom or clerestory windows are above storefront glazing.

Inappropriate

- Vinyl or other synthetic fabrics.
- Backlit awnings.
- Oversized advertising or tenant signs on awnings.
- Oddly-shaped forms.



Appropriate



Inappropriate

Provide Places for Stopping and Viewing

Guideline

Provide safe, comfortable places where people can stop to sit, rest and visit.

Description

People will use seating, bringing humanity to the urban environment, only if they feel safe and comfortable. People like to sit and relax in open and populated areas rather than in secluded spots.

People-watching, socializing and eating are restful and pleasurable activities for the pedestrian. Stopping places increase both a sense of security and actual security. Seating tends to be used more frequently as rest areas between major destination points. Seating is also desirable outside of food and drink establishments and near food vendors. While benches are the simplest way to provide seating, wide steps, the edges of landscaped planters and low walls can also be appropriate.

Appropriate

- Formal or informal seating areas near active retail establishments.
- Places for stopping and viewing adjacent to parks, squares, plazas and courtyards.
- Durable, well-designed seating.

Inappropriate

- Seating areas adjacent to loading, service bays and storage areas, or oriented towards auto lanes or parking.
- Seating areas that are hidden, secluded, dark or unsecured, or behind or to the side of buildings.
- Chairs and benches that deteriorate when exposed to the weather.



Appropriate



Innapropriate

Create Successful Outdoor Spaces

Guideline

Spaces should be designed for a variety of activities during all hours and seasons.

Description

Outdoor spaces should be inviting and maximize opportunities for use. These spaces should be spatially well defined, friendly, accommodating and secure. All areas should work well for pedestrians and accommodate special events as well as passive activities.

- Areas intended for public gathering should avoid separation from the street by visual barriers or change of grade.
- Outdoor spaces should be human-scaled, easy to maintain, and “alive” – intimate and quiet or active and boisterous spaces alike.
- Trees, shrubs, and plants should help define walkways, create appropriate transitions from the park to the street and provide visual interest.
- Structures, pavilions and sitting areas should be easily accessible. They should be secure and feel safe during day and evening hours.
- Buildings surrounding green spaces should give the space visual definition and surround it with active ground-floor uses.
- Rooftops should be considered for garden terraces.



Appropriate



Innapropriate

Appropriate

- Courtyards, squares, forecourts and plazas with active adjacent ground-floor uses.
- Greenways or pedestrian walkways in residential area. If used, front doors should engage these spaces.

Innapropriate

- Pocket parks without active enclosing uses.
- Permanent pedestrian route obstructions.
- Outdoor spaces that feel unsafe, unprotected or isolated.

Integrate Barrier-free Design

Guideline

Accommodate handicap access in a manner that is integral to the design of the building and public right-of-way.

Description

Ramps, lifts and elevators should be a graceful and natural part of a project, rather than simply a means of meeting the requirements in an awkward or minimal manner.

Appropriate

- Ramps that provide direct access but are screened and/or integrated into the stairway design.
- Ramps constructed of similar or compatible materials as the building, stairs and walkways.

Inappropriate

- Ramps that obstruct or limit pedestrian access from stairs or walkways.
- Ramps that do not provide safe and convenient access to building entries.



Appropriate



Inappropriate

The intent of the Sustainability Guidelines is to encourage environmentally-friendly yet economically-viable development in downtown.

Green Architecture

Guideline

Use sustainable design practices whenever possible as long as they do not detract from the pedestrian activity and economic viability of downtown.

Description

Address the health of downtown in a holistic manner, considering environmental quality and long-term benefits to downtown activity and vitality. Guidelines and direction from official environmental certification programs such as LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) may be helpful in determining sustainable practices.

Appropriate

- Consider how all of a building's systems work with each other and with the building envelope to maximize efficiency.
- Use local materials of high durability and longevity.
- Follow a maintenance strategy to run building systems at maximum efficiency over the long term.

Inappropriate

- "Green" practices that detract from high-quality design.
- Application of "green" design for marketing hype alone.



Appropriate

Architecture

Architecture Guidelines reinforce the urban character of downtown Racine by supporting high quality building design. New buildings should foster innovation and be compatible with existing buildings while reinforcing the distinct character of each downtown district.

The Architecture Guidelines include the following topics:

- Residential Doors
- Residential Windows
- Residential Bay Windows
- Balconies
- Retail and Commercial Doors
- Retail Corner Doors
- Retail Windows
- Building Massing
- Security/Privacy
- Roofs
- Wall Materials
- Wall Structure

Visual examples are included as models for design and review purposes only. They are intended to provide designers and Design Commissioners a means to identify appropriate and inappropriate architectural elements. They are not intended to be specific examples that should be replicated.



Residential Doors

Guideline

Residential front doors should provide a friendly transition between the public and private realms.

Description

Doors should be substantial enough to suggest privacy yet welcoming to those who approach and enter. The design of a door should respond to its setting. If a door faces an active street, it is appropriate to separate the door from the street with a comfortable change of grade – perhaps two or three feet. For less active areas, transitional porches might be used.

Appropriate

- Multi-panel painted doors.
- Doors combined with transom windows or side lites.
- Durable, high-quality metal door hardware.
- Wood solid core doors.
- Doors accessed from transitional areas such as porches, terraces, stoops or canopy-covered entries.
- Moderate, human-scaled change of grade from sidewalk level to townhouse door – up approximately three feet or waist level; not above eye level.
- Lobby entries to multi-family buildings providing double or multiple doors.

Inappropriate

- Sliding glass doors.
- Unarticulated, flush doors.
- Doors raised more than three feet above sidewalk level for townhome/rowhouse type housing.
- Doors accessed directly from parking lots.
- Door glazing with simulated divided lites.
- Doors not directly accessed from the street or courtyard.



Appropriate



Inappropriate

Residential Windows

Guideline

Windows should create an open and inviting atmosphere that enhances the experience of the building both inside and out.

Description

The windows of a residential building should be pleasing and coherent. Their size and detailing can add a human scale and visual interest to the building.

Appropriate

- Multiple lites or divisions.
- Operable windows.
- Trim around framed openings.
- Regular spacing and rhythm of similarly shaped windows.
- “Punched” windows recessed from building facade, not flush.

Inappropriate

- Simulated divided lites.
- “Strip” windows with more horizontal than vertical emphasis.
- Windows flush with building facade.



Appropriate



Inappropriate

Residential Bay Windows

Guideline

Use bay windows to add variety and visual interest to the facade and views of outdoor spaces from the interior.

Description

Bay windows provide variation and relief along a building's facade; their sculptural form can add interest to walls.

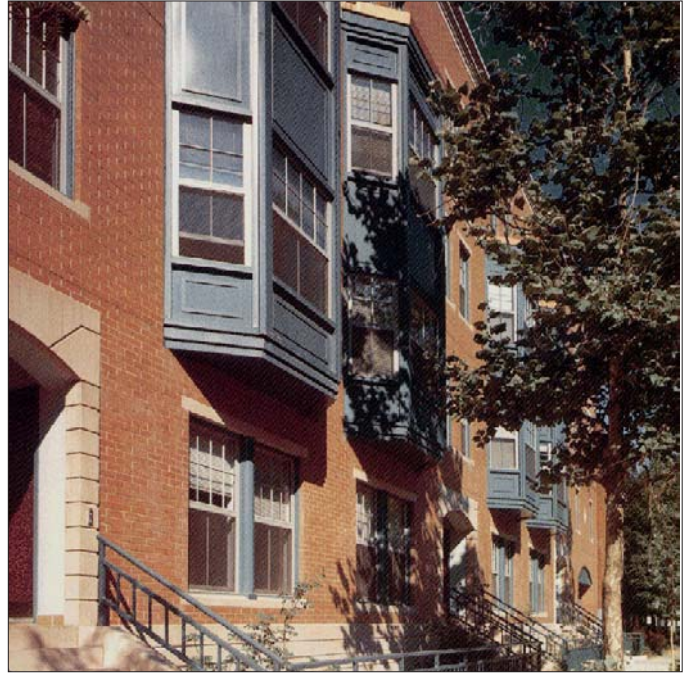
Contrasting color and materials are encouraged. Exuberant visual ornamentation may be added as further accent to window lintels or panels.

Appropriate

- Bays on second story or higher floor levels.
- Contrasting but compatible wall cladding materials and colors.

Inappropriate

- Cladding materials such as corrugated metal panels or spandrel glass.
- Poorly detailed panels or those without detailing.
- Projecting wall-mounted mechanical units.



Appropriate



Inappropriate

Balconies

Guideline

Use balconies on housing units as an extension of the living space and to provide more “eyes on the street.”

Description

Balconies provide useable outdoor space and add to the perceived activity and safety of the street.

Appropriate

- Balconies with a solid floor material and internal drain.
- Balconies with transparent enclosures.

Inappropriate

- Balconies that are not integrated into or that appear to be applied onto the building facade.
- Balconies with solid enclosures all around.
- Balconies with wood enclosures.



Appropriate



Appropriate



Inappropriate

Retail and Commercial Doors

Guideline

Doors should create an open and inviting atmosphere.

Description

Primary business entry doors for retail and commercial establishments should be transparent, allowing passersby to see the activity within the building and bringing life and vitality to the street. Doors with extra-large openings that blend the street activity with the building's interior are appropriate for restaurants and cafes.

Appropriate

- Large cafe or restaurant doors that open the street to the interior by pivoting, sliding or rolling up overhead.
- Doors with a minimum of 50% window area.
- Building lighting emphasizing entrances.
- Transom, side lites or other window combinations.
- Doors combined with special architectural detailing.
- Double or multiple door entries.
- Well-detailed or ornate door hardware.

Inappropriate

- Solid metal or wood doors with small or no windows.
- Primary entry doors raised more than three feet above sidewalk level.
- Doors flush with building facade.
- Clear anodized aluminum frames.
- Glazing with simulated divisions.
- Reflective, opaque or tinted glazing.



Appropriate



Inappropriate

Retail Corner Doors

Guideline

Locate entry doors on corners of retail buildings wherever possible.

Description

Corner entries reinforce intersections as important places for pedestrian interaction and activity. Transparent doors and windows are strongly encouraged. Entries at 45 degree angles and free of visual obstructions are also encouraged.

Appropriate

- Doors with large glass areas.
- Primary building entrance at corners.
- Doors combined with roof or facade architectural elements such as bays or towers.
- Building wall lighting emphasizing entrance.

Inappropriate

- Blank walls at corners of public streets.
- Visual and physical obstructions such as large columns.
- Primary entry doors made of unpainted aluminum, wood or metal.
- Residential style doors.
- Primary entry doors that are solid and windowless.
- Utility boxes, meters or mechanical units near the entrance door.
- Glass areas with simulated divisions (internal or applied synthetic materials).
- Reflective, opaque or tinted glazing in the door.



Appropriate



Inappropriate



Inappropriate

Retail Windows

Guideline

Use windows that create an open and inviting atmosphere.

Description

Retail and commercial uses should use windows that add activity and variety at the street level, inviting pedestrians in and providing views both in and out.

Transparency beckons people inside – whether a shop, gallery, restaurant or office. Restaurants and cafes benefit from windows that open allowing passersby to see, hear and smell the activity within. Views into stores should not be blocked.

Appropriate

- Windows that open by pivoting, sliding or shuttering.
- Painted wood panels or tile clad panels below windows.

Inappropriate

- Residential-styled bays, multi-paned divided lites, half-round or other similar forms.
- Clear anodized aluminum windows.



Appropriate



Appropriate



Inappropriate

Building Massing

Guideline

From street level, buildings should appear neither too long nor too tall relative to their neighbors and the pedestrian.

Description

The length and breadth of a building should be friendly in scale and inviting to the pedestrian. Portions of a large building mass should be broken into smaller, appropriately scaled modules, with changes in plane indicated by bold projections and indentations. This allows an overly large building to appear as smaller, side-by-side buildings.

Appropriate

- Break down long expanses of building frontage both horizontally and vertically.
- Building massing oriented vertically.

Inappropriate

- Horizontal, unbroken facade orientation and volume.



Appropriate



Inappropriate

Security/Privacy

Guideline

Buildings should provide a safe entry and environment for all users during all hours of the day.

Description

Downtown should be a place where people of all ages feel safe throughout the year during all hours of the day. However, downtown buildings should not become “fortress-like” and separated from public areas.

New development should create “eyes on the street” with active uses bringing people together and deterring crime naturally. People who inhabit buildings see their surroundings and are seen by others thereby inhibiting criminal activity. When security measures such as gates, screens or fencing are used, they should be designed as integral components of the building or site.

Appropriate

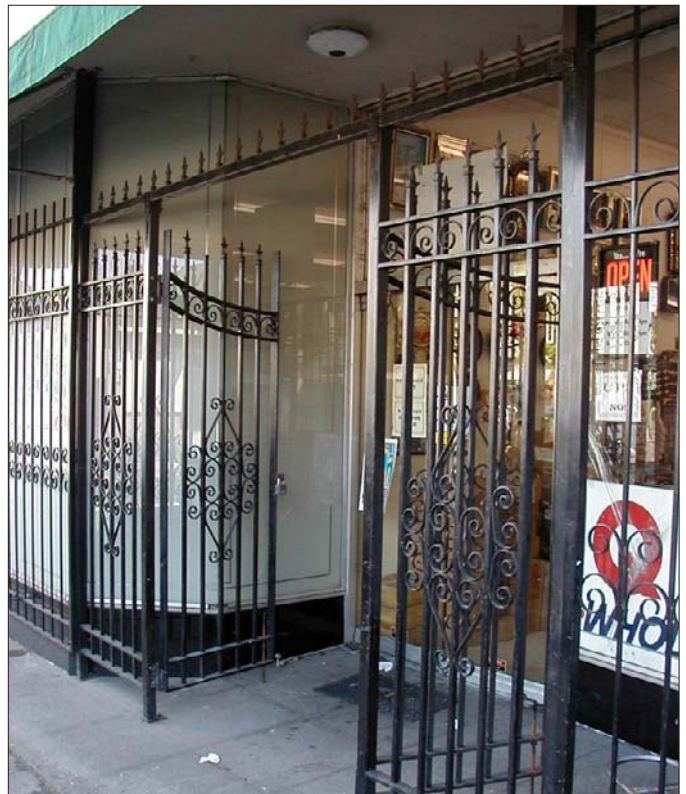
- Interior or exterior roll-up or sliding security gates that are not visible from the public right-of-way.
- Secured loading bays or service areas.
- Gated private courtyards or plazas.
- Security cameras or surveillance devices screened from view or integrated into the building design.

Inappropriate

- Fixed exterior security gates on building edges that are visible from the public right-of-way.
- Fixed exterior security screened windows along public streets or gathering areas.
- Gated residential development.



Appropriate



Inappropriate

Roofs

Guideline

Create interesting and detailed rooflines and silhouettes.

Description

Building rooflines should enliven the pedestrian experience and provide visual interest with details that create forms and shadows. A building's silhouette should be compatible with those of other buildings along the existing streetscape.

In some cases, it may be appropriate to mark an entryway with a distinct form, such as a tower, to emphasize the significance of the building entry.

For residential buildings, roof massing should be simple yet detailed and articulated. For example, flat roofs may be appropriate if they have a cornice designed with depth and detail expressing the top of the building wall. Dormers set into sloped roofs may be appropriate. These forms provide visual interest and bring additional living space, light and ventilation to upper floor and attic spaces.

Appropriate

- Dormer windows.
- Towers or similar vertical architectural expressions of important building functions such as entries.
- Varied roofline heights.
- If cornices are used they should be well detailed. They should have significant proportions (height and depth) that create visual interest and shadow lines.

Inappropriate

- Unarticulated rooflines.
- Poorly detailed decorative roof forms.



Appropriate



Inappropriate

Wall Materials

Guideline

Use materials that create a sense of permanence.

Description

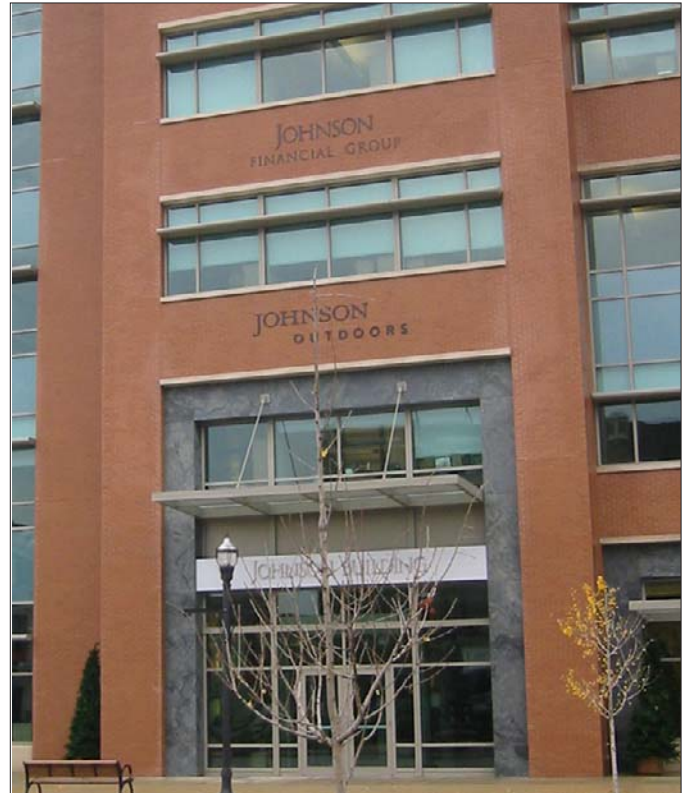
Quality wall materials can provide a sense of permanence and bring life and warmth to downtown. Articulation of wall materials should be bold, using materials that show depth. It should be apparent that the materials have substance and mass, and are not artificial, thin “stage sets” applied only to the building’s surface.

Appropriate

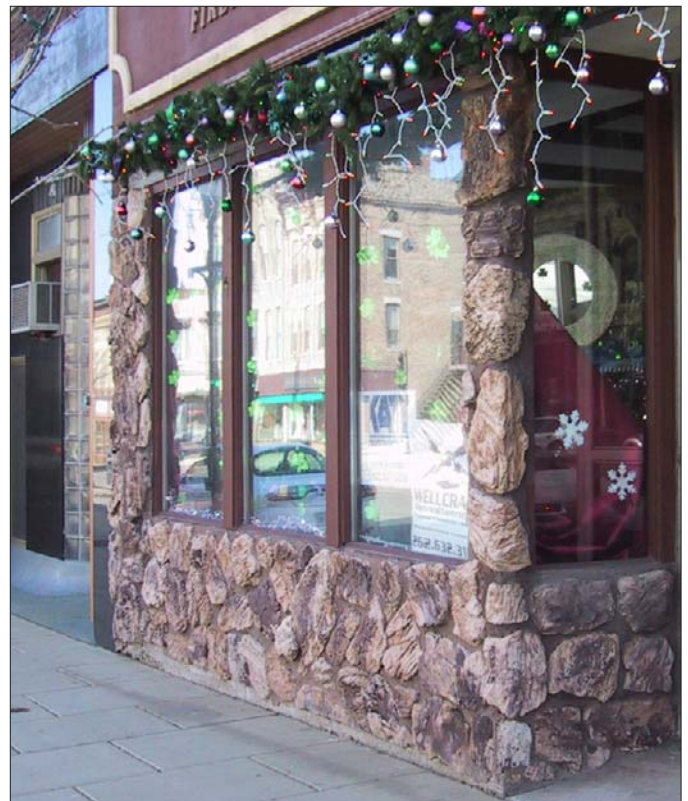
- Boldly articulated window and storefront trim.
- Natural or subdued building colors.
- Limited use of bright accent trim colors.
- Varied yet compatible cladding materials.
- Belt courses and medallions.

Inappropriate

- Bright or primary wall colors for the entire wall surface.
- Flagstone, simulated river rock or other similar veneer cladding.
- Painted brick.



Appropriate



Inappropriate

Wall Structure

Guideline

Use scale-defining devices to break up the longitudinal dimensions of buildings, creating a comfortable sense of enclosure by establishing an uninterrupted street edge.

Description

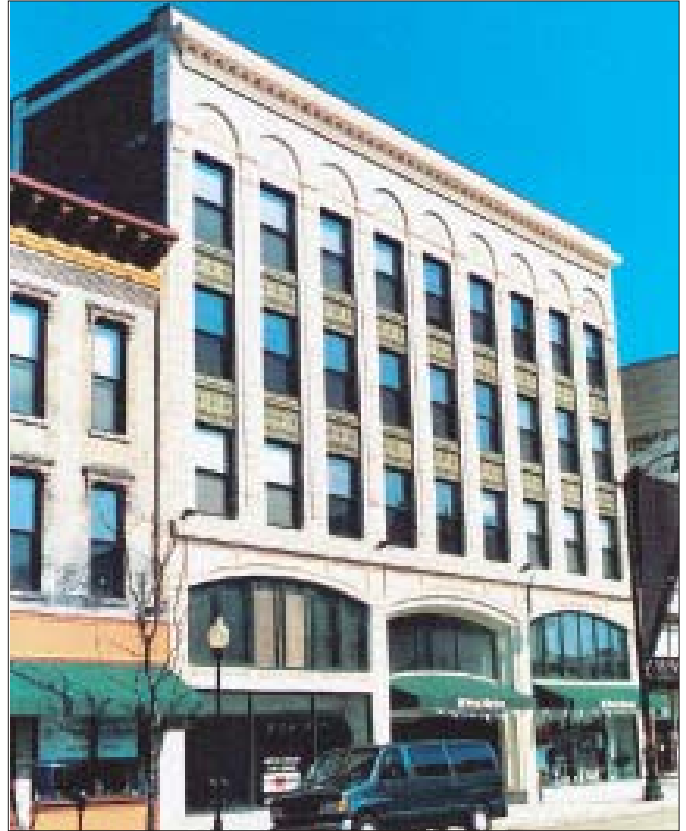
Building walls should provide a sense of continuity and enclosure along the street by creating a “street wall.” They should also include vertical and horizontal divisions to create a human scale. Vertical and horizontal elements should form a coherent pattern and provide visual interest that tends to make large buildings more inviting.

Appropriate

- Tripartite facade division – base, middle and top for taller buildings (over three stories).
- Vertical articulation of windows, columns and bays.

Inappropriate

- Smooth, undifferentiated facade.
- Suburban-styled horizontal orientation of building elements – walls, doors and windows.



Appropriate



Inappropriate

Parking

The Parking Guidelines ensure that parking will not only meet downtown's utilitarian needs, but it will also maintain or enhance the character of downtown.

The Parking Guidelines address the following topics:

- Parking Structures
- Internal Courtyard Parking
- Garages

Visual examples are included as models for design and review purposes only. They are intended to provide designers and Design Commissioners a means to identify appropriate and inappropriate parking elements. They are not intended to be specific examples that should be replicated.



Parking Structures

Guideline

Parking structures should be designed so that they appear like most other buildings in the district.

Description

Parking garages play an important role in the success of any downtown. However, too often they are incompatible with nearby buildings because they look like vertically-stacked parking lots. This frequently occurs when dominant horizontal architectural features are created by the alternation of large openings and each level's structure.

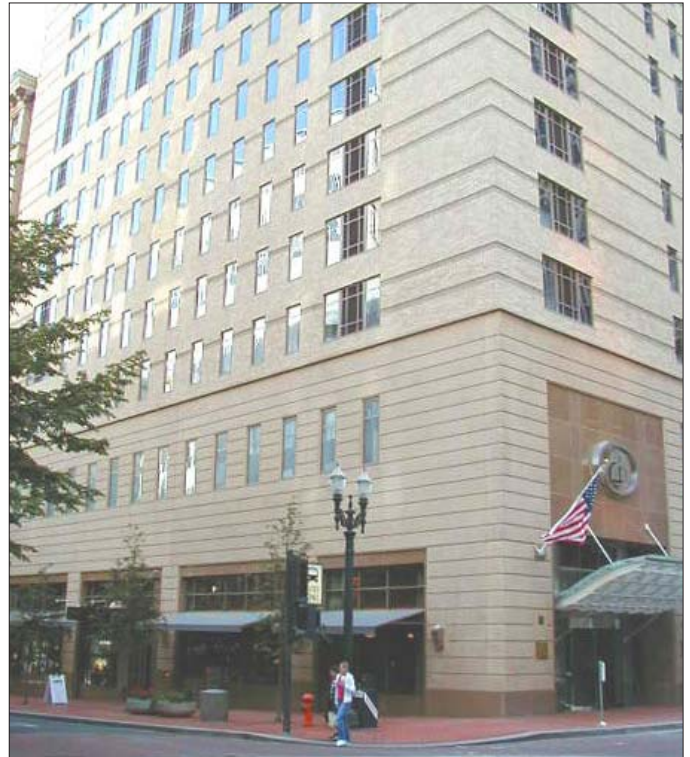
Instead, parking garages should be designed to appear more like other occupied buildings in the downtown. To achieve this, their horizontal features must be minimized. For example, parking structures could be designed with more wall surface area and reduced openings. Adequate ventilation could be provided through a series of punched openings rather than the long horizontal gaps between floors. Detailing at cornices or on window trims could also be used. Active retail uses on the ground floor help garages fit in with the rest of downtown.

Appropriate

- Ground-floor retail or other active uses.
- Small openings that are glazed to function as windows.
- Stairways, elevators and parking entrances and exits that occur at mid-block.

Inappropriate

- Parapets at each parking level forming long, dark horizontal ribbons.
- Parked cars on the ground-floor that are visible from adjacent sidewalks.
- Exposed sloped floors visible from the street.
- Stairways, elevators and parking entrances and exits at the building's corners where retail is a more appropriate use.



Appropriate



Inappropriate

Internal Courtyard Parking

Guideline

Parking in internal courtyards of residential buildings should be screened from passersby and residential view.

Description

Well-screened and designed surface parking may be a part of central interior courtyards of multi-family buildings. Green active spaces should be mixed with the areas devoted to parking.

Appropriate

- Special paving on areas devoted to parking.
- Turf or other permeable, green surface on non-parking areas.
- Landscape screening of parking areas from sidewalk, open spaces and residential interiors.
- Trellises or other architectural structures that are compatible with the building design and enclose and screen parked cars.
- Private access to residential parking areas.

Inappropriate

- Parking areas visible from sidewalks, open spaces or residential interiors.



Appropriate

Garages

Guideline

Free-standing parking garages may provide auto access from alleyways and safe direct pedestrian access to medium-density residential units.

Description

Parking garages may be provided for medium density townhouse residential uses. The design of these outbuildings should be in keeping with the architecture of the adjacent townhouses they serve.

Appropriate

- Private access to garages.
- Attached or detached garages.
- Auto access and garage doors visible from alleyway behind building lot.
- Architectural design compatible with adjacent residential building.
- Other uses above parking level of garages (for example, “granny flats”).
- Location at edge or “backyard”/ service side.

Inappropriate

- Auto access from street.
- Garage doors visible from street.
- Architectural design discordant with adjacent residential building.



Inappropriate

Lighting

The lighting of buildings and open spaces should not only provide security, but also contribute to the overall sense that the downtown is active and vital all hours of the day.

Lighting should be designed not simply to be utilitarian but to create a pleasant, welcoming atmosphere. Use of glaring, offensively colored lights should be discouraged.

Lighting Guidelines address the following topics:

- Building Lighting
- Landscape Lighting
- Parking Lot Lighting

Visual examples are included as models for design and review purposes only. They are intended to provide designers and Design Commissioners a means to identify appropriate and inappropriate lighting schemes. They are not intended to be specific examples that should be replicated.



Building Lighting

Guideline

Exterior lighting of buildings should be an integral component of the facade composition.

Description

Architectural lighting may be used to articulate the particular building design. Lighting of cornices, uplighting and other effects may be used.

Lighting should not cast glare into residential units or onto adjacent lots or streets in any way that decreases the safety of pedestrians and vehicles. Lights may, however, be used to create effects of shadow, relief and outline that add visual interest and highlight aspects of the building.

Appropriate

- Metal halide lights.
- Wall-washing lighting fixtures.
- Decorative wall sconce and similar architectural lighting fixtures.
- Screened uplight fixtures on buildings or integrated with landscape.

Inappropriate

- Neon silhouette accent lighting.
- Bulb or flashing lighting.
- Fluorescent tube lighting.
- Security spotlight.



Appropriate



Appropriate

Landscape Lighting

Guideline

Lighting should be used to highlight sidewalks, street trees and other landscape features.

Description

Lights may be used to highlight trees and similar features within public and private plazas, courtyards, walkways and other similar outdoor areas at night to create and inviting and safe ambiance.

Appropriate

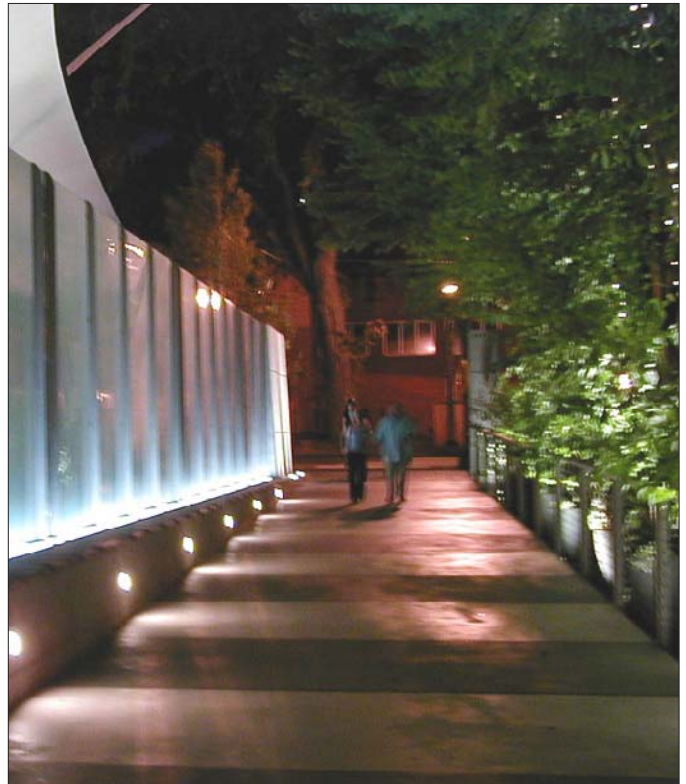
- Footlighting that illuminates walkways and stairs.
- Fixtures concealed and integrated into the design of buildings or landscape walls and stairways.
- Bollard lighting that is directed downward toward walking surfaces.
- Seasonal string lights on buildings and trees.

Inappropriate

- Flashing or colored lights.
- Exposed cords, outlets or other electrical devices that may provide safety hazards and are unsightly.
- Contemporary fixtures or over scaled, utilitarian fixtures such as “cobra-head” lights.



Appropriate



Appropriate

Parking Lot Lighting

Guideline

Ornamental street lights should be compatible with downtown streetlight standards identified in the Racine Public Area Requirements.

Description

Parking lot lighting should be provided for retail, office and residential uses. Driveways, parking bays and parking lot pedestrian circulation routes should be lighted.

Appropriate

- Historic street lights in a parking lot setting.
- Pole standards should be black or dark green in color.
- Standards may accommodate banners and hanging flower pots. Automatic drip irrigation for the pots should be considered.
- Light standards should be located in landscaped areas wherever possible to protect fixtures from automobile damage.

Inappropriate

- Concrete light fixture bases taller than eight inches.
- Parking lot lighting unnecessarily illuminating residential areas.
- Ornamental or contemporary light fixtures that are incompatible with downtown street light fixtures.



Appropriate



Inappropriate

Signs

Signs may provide an address, identify a place of business, locate residential buildings or generally provide directions and information. Regardless of their function, signs should be architecturally compatible and contribute to the character of the downtown. Signs should be good neighbors – they should not compete with each other or dominate the setting due to inconsistent height, size, shape, number, color, lighting or movement.

The Sign Guidelines consider two of the most common types of signs:

- Wall Signs
- Hanging Signs

Visual examples are included as models for design and review purposes only. They are intended to provide designers and Design Commissioners a means to identify appropriate and inappropriate signage. They are not intended to be specific examples that should be replicated.



Wall Signs

Guideline

Signs should be sized and placed so that they are compatible with the building's architectural design.

Description

Signs should not overwhelm the building or its special architectural features. Signs should not render the building a mere backdrop for advertising or building identification.

Appropriate

- Wall signs should be located along the top, middle or pedestrian level of buildings.
- Signs should be incorporated into the building architecture as embossing, low relief casting or application to wall surfaces.
- Signs may be painted or made with applied metal lettering and graphics.
- Signs should be durable and long lasting.
- Signs may incorporate lighting as part of their design.
- Signs should be located as panels above storefronts, on columns or on walls flanking doorways.

Inappropriate

- The material, size and shape of signs that overwhelm, contrast greatly or adversely impact the architectural quality of the building.
- Roof-mounted signs.
- Backlit signs.



Appropriate



Inappropriate

Hanging Signs

Guideline

Hanging signs should be oriented to the pedestrian and highly visible from the sidewalk.

Description

Signs should not overwhelm the streetscape. They should be compatible with and complement the building's architecture, including its awnings, canopies, lighting and street furniture.

Appropriate

- Required sign lighting should be integrated into the facade of the building. (See lighting guidelines.)
- Signs should be graphic and constructed of high-quality materials and finishes.
- Signs should be attached to the building in a durable fashion.

Inappropriate

- Signs interfering with sight lines, creating a safety hazard or obstructing views.
- Roof-mounted signs.



Appropriate

Racine Downtown Design Guidelines
DESIGN GUIDELINES CHECKLIST

Project and Applicant Name: _____

Zoning: _____

Building Use: _____

Other : _____

Submission Date: _____

DESIGN GUIDELINES

	Applies		Complies	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
1). Racine Character				
• Reinforce Racine's Sense of Place	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Integrate the Environment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Promote Linkages to Racine's Heritage	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Establish and Strengthen Gateways	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Promote Architectural Compatibility	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Preserve Historic Buildings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Use Architectural Contrast Wisely	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Integrate Art	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2). Pedestrian Emphasis				
• Reinforce and Enhance the Pedestrian System	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Respect Racine's Historic Block Structure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Define the Pedestrian Environment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Protect the Pedestrian from the Elements	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Provide Places for Stopping and Viewing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Create Successful Outdoor Spaces	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Integrate Barrier-free Design	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3). Sustainability				
• Green Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4). Architecture				
• Residential Doors	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Residential Windows	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Residential Bay Windows	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Balconies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Retail and Commercial Doors	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Retail Corner Doors	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Retail Windows	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Building Massing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Security/Privacy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Roofs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Wall Materials	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Wall Structure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5). Lighting				
• Building Lighting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Landscape Lighting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Parking Lot Lighting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6). Signs				
• Wall Signs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Hanging Signs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Credits



Project Sponsorship & Management

Downtown Racine Corporation

Downtown Redevelopment Task Force

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(Committee Chair)

City of Racine

Gary Becker

Rick Jones

Donnie Snow

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