



**City of Racine**  
**Legislative Report**  
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**Sponsor**  
Alderman Engel

**UPTOWN CORRIDOR DISTRICT DESIGN GUIDELINES**

WHEREAS, the City has established the Uptown Improvement Plan; and

WHEREAS, the Plan Commission has approved the Uptown Corridor District Design Guidelines.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Common Council of the City of Racine hereby adopts the Uptown Corridor District Design Guidelines as follows:

With the goals of enhancing Uptown's attraction to residents, tourists and visitors, improving the visual and aesthetic character, providing a tool to local property owners to restore their buildings properly, safeguard historic and cultural heritage, and stabilize and improve property values, the Uptown Corridor District Design Guidelines are established under the authority Wis. Stat. §§62.23 and 66.1001, and by the City of Racine Common Council through adoption on May 3, 2005 of An Ordinance To Amend The City's Comprehensive Plan And Adopt The Uptown Improvement Plan.

Two distinct areas are discernible in the Uptown Corridor District (the "District"). One area is referred to as the "Junction" and extends along Washington Avenue from S. Memorial Drive to Thirteenth Street. The Junction contains a development pattern that is pedestrian orientated and contains significant historic architectural fabric that warrants restoration and preservation of its distinct character. The remaining areas, referred to as "Transitional Areas", extend out from the Junction to Phillips Avenue/Valley Drive to the west, and to Tenth Street to the northeast. These areas contain a more eclectic collection of development periods, land uses and architectural styles which require particular diligence in ensuring that each property is developed, maintained, remodeled, or restored in a manner that is sensitive to its surroundings and does not detract the overall character of the District. The applicable design guidelines for both areas of the District are established through the preceding text.

**I. BUILDING FORM:**

**A. Character:**

1. With an eye towards varied architectural styles through scale, setback, height and material use, the goal is to create a richness and depth in character that appeals not only to the senses but also to the viability of future building development.

**B. Building Height:**

1. For new construction and additions, the height of adjacent existing buildings should be used as a guide.
2. One-story buildings shall appear two-stories in height from the street level. Two stories is the maximum street facade height.

3. Buildings taller than two stories shall have all floors above the second level set back a minimum of 25 feet from the street facade.

C. Roofs:

1. The rooflines of adjacent buildings shall be taken into consideration when selecting a roof style.
2. Alterations shall not compromise or conceal evident historic roofing forms or details.
3. Cornice details along the parapets shall be determined by the precedents of the architectural style of the building.
4. In the Junction, flat or slightly sloping roofs shall be utilized and concealed with parapets having cornices, each displaying varying degrees of appropriate decorative detail and ornamentation.
5. In the Transitional Areas, where appropriate and in context with adjacent development, flat or slightly sloping roofs having appropriate parapets, or end gabled roofs may be utilized.

D. Scale:

1. Multi-story buildings in long rows shall be avoided by the utilization of awnings, dormers, landscaping, windows and doors, utilized with the intent of breaking up the building facades into smaller parts.

E. Tripartite Composition:

1. The three facade sections of base, middle and top shall be differentiated by materials, colors and window size.
  - a. The base section shall contain the largest window openings or decorative brick work or spandrel glass that gives the appearance of window openings or recesses.
  - b. The middle section shall have similar treatment as the base but such details are typically smaller than those at the base and are visually broken down further with muntins/mullions.
  - c. The top section shall contain decorative features in parapet and cornice, or gable end.

F. Windows:

1. All windows shall be sized, aligned, and spaced according to the precedents of the architectural style of the building.
2. New construction shall express the window articulation evident on adjacent historic buildings. Second floor windows shall be divided into two units.
3. In the Junction, at least 75% of the base of the building shall be comprised of storefront windows for new, remodeled or restored storefronts.
4. In the Transitional Areas, new, remodeled, or restored storefronts should also meet this standard but in no case shall storefront windows in comprise less than 40% of the base of the buildings storefront.

**II. STOREFRONT GUIDELINES:**

A. General:

1. New, remodeled or restored storefronts should evoke the use of the building, and may implement modern materials, while acknowledging the historic precedents evident in the community.
2. New construction between two buildings with storefronts and party wall construction shall complement features evident on adjacent buildings.
3. Closing off or decreasing existing window openings in size is strongly discouraged, while the reopening of blocked windows to their original dimensions is highly encouraged.
4. Re-facing a storefront to "update" it in a manner that is detrimental to the historical context of the building's original design or architectural details, or that of adjacent

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properties, is not permitted.

5. Exterior security gates shall not be permitted.

**B. Storefront Characteristics:**

1. Storefronts should include a lower window panel or bulkhead, clear glass display windows, pilasters or columns, a recessed stoop or entry with clear glass entry doors, transom with windows or prism glass, an awning or canopy, and a sign board or panel.

**C. Guidance on Recreating Storefronts:**

1. Search for historic photographs of the building to determine original architectural elements.
2. Look to other buildings constructed during the same period for clues on composition and design of architectural details.
3. Take cues from intact details on the building that may have been repeated on the storefront.
4. Conduct investigative demolition in an effort to reveal historic details or markings often left behind or hidden by more modern materials.

**III. NEW CONSTRUCTION:**

**A. Main Principles:**

1. Complement and/or contribute to the setting, not detract or unsettle it.
2. Add to the rich depth of the extant architectural fabric and not replace it.

**B. General Guidelines:**

1. The predominant historic setback of adjacent buildings shall be observed and maintained.
2. Stylistic and decorative elements shall fit the surroundings but not create a false sense of history.
3. Designs shall strike a balance between historically accurate proportions and new materials.
4. The building should look new while remaining sympathetic to area scale and materials.

**C. Adjacent Buildings:**

1. Streetscape continuity and design elements in adjacent buildings, such as height, materials, setback, character and roofline edge, shall be considered in the design of infill building.

**D. Demolition:**

1. All efforts shall be made to retain all extant buildings that contribute to the character and history of the District, with special emphasis on structures predating 1960, as these buildings already meet the goals critical to the Guideline's success.

**E. Materials:**

1. Brick is the predominant building material throughout the District. New buildings should be designed with the consideration of the use of brick as the prevailing exterior material.
2. Modern materials may be introduced; however, sizing, color, texture and transitions shall be implemented in a manner that complements such features on adjacent historic buildings.

**F. Scale and Roofline Articulation:**

1. Facade lengths greater than those of adjacent buildings shall result in a building scale and/or articulation that "fits in" with neighboring buildings yet allows a continuous floor plate.
2. Where appropriate, roofline shall be stepped to mimic adjacent building roofline rhythms.

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#### **IV. ADDITIONS:**

##### **A. Main Principles:**

1. Additions shall be evident as such and not create a false sense of history, while still maintaining the overall visual appearance of continuity.

##### **B. General Addition Guidelines:**

1. Additions shall complement the existing structure in material use, architectural details, and color. Rhythmic elements such as window openings, spandrel lines and pilasters shall be carried over into the addition.
2. Building proportions, scale and setbacks shall be maintained. On buildings with ample side yards, it may be advisable to step the addition from the facade, resulting in a defined building transition.

##### **C. Facade:**

1. Setbacks should match the most evident setbacks of adjacent buildings. Intrusions into the public right-of-way are not permitted, except by special agreement with the City.

##### **D. Rear:**

1. Rear elevation additions may be taller than the existing structure if they are not viewable by the pedestrian from the street.
2. Fire escapes and loading docks shall not detract from the overall aesthetics of the building. No prominent extant elements may be removed to accommodate such modifications.
3. Rear elevations facing a street or area highly visible to the public, such as parking areas, shall be treated as a primary facade and include additions such as patios, decks and fire escapes.

##### **E. Rooftop:**

1. Rooftop additions should not be visible from the street.
2. Finish materials shall blend completely with their surroundings, yet be evident as an addition.
3. Dormers shall have a minimal impact on the visual appearance of the building from the street.

##### **F. Sideyard:**

1. Additions to existing buildings located on commercial streets having uniform setback and either party walls or close adjacent construction shall be designed in keeping with the following existing elements: detail, height, massing, materials, and setback.
2. Additions to free standing buildings with open land on all sides shall be composed of smaller massing and height than the existing building, utilize materials similar to that of the existing building, employ details consistent with the existing building yet not be an exact copy, and be set back from the facade of the existing building.

#### **V. MECHANICAL EQUIPMENT, UTILITIES & TRASH RECEPTACLES:**

##### **A. Main Principles:**

1. Mechanical equipment, conduits, raceways, cables, duct work, receiver/transmitter installations and trash receptacles shall be located so as to minimize their visual or physical impact on a structure or site.
2. No key architectural elements or details should be removed, obstructed or destroyed in their placement.

##### **B. Placement:**

1. Mechanical equipment and duct work on roofs shall not be visible from streets.
2. Utility meters, conduits, raceways and exhaust vents shall be located on the side or rear of the building whenever possible.
3. Trash collection areas and receptacles shall be located to the side or rear of the

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building and be properly screened.

4. Satellite dishes or other receiver/transmitter installations, mechanical systems, and utility boxes and pedestals shall not be obtrusive to the view of the building from the street. Such equipment shall not be mounted on the street facade of a building.
5. Equipment facing the rear parking areas or prominent public spaces shall be obscured in a manner compatible with the building's facade.

**C. Screening:**

1. Screening may be in the form of fencing, walls, or landscape plantings consisting of materials, plantings, and colors similar in nature to the building.
2. Rooftop equipment screening may simply be the placement of equipment so as not to be visible from across the street at pedestrian level. If placement alone does not provide adequate screening, then an appropriately designed parapet wall or an equipment enclosure shall be added.

**VI. MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS:**

**A. Main Principles:**

1. Visually heavier, larger sized units such as cast stone concrete panels are appropriate to use at the building's base to provide a visual grounding.
2. Lighter, thinner materials are more appropriate as trim in the case of materials such as wood, aluminum or copper, or upper floor facade claddings such as Exterior Insulated Finish System ("EIFS") or stucco.

**B. Acceptable Materials (Roof Coverings):**

1. Flat roofs being built-up, rubber membrane, or fiber glass membrane, and having a low pitch, or those concealed by a parapet.
2. Pitched roofs sheathed with asphalt shingles, clay tile, cement tile, slate, standing seam metal, or sheet metal shingles. Use of these roofing materials on vertical surfaces is not permitted.

**C. Acceptable Materials:**

1. Aluminum or vinyl siding, but only on non-primary facades not visible from the street.
2. Brick and oversized or large brick as either an accent or predominant material. The use of brick for decorative banding and color or texture transitions is encouraged.
3. Clapboard siding, which shall not be replaced with a different material such as vinyl siding. The general use of clapboard siding is encouraged, but lap heights should be limited to a range from 3" to 6".
4. Concrete masonry units ("CMUs"), limited to 20% of the overall surface of primary surfaces. Smooth CMUs are prohibited.
5. EIFS, stucco and Dryvit used no lower than 8" above the curb line, but shall not be used to cover trim, molding or decorative detail.
6. Half-timbering, simulated or structural, in-filled with either brick or stucco.
7. Metals for structural applications such as steel or cast iron, and those metals which are unfinished, exposed, anodized, oxidized or powder coated. Galvanized metal may be used for canopies.
8. Ornamental metals such as copper, galvanized steel, and aluminum used for railings, trim, grills, panels, flashing, etc.
9. Pre-cast concrete and cast stone, on a case by case basis, consistent with the principles of the Guidelines.
10. Skylights, placed so as not to be visible from the street and in an appropriate location after consideration of the building's architectural style and time period.
11. Stone, in all its varieties and appropriately employed, is encouraged as an exterior surface.
12. Stucco with smooth, textured or scored finishes used no lower than 8" above the curb line, excluding "cake-icing" finishes.

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- 13 Wood shingle siding, which shall be replaced in-kind and can also be used as an accent in dormers and gables, and as a wall finish.
  14. Terrazzo surfaces for entryways and stoops are encouraged.
  15. Terra cotta for trim and ornamental work and, where existing, shall be maintained to the extent possible.

## **VII. ARCHITECTURAL ENHANCEMENTS**

### **A. Main Principles:**

1. Used to provide additional visual interest, or to accent the overall architectural design of a building or site.
2. Shall be appropriate to the period and character of the building or site.
3. Existing key architectural elements or details should not be removed, obstructed or destroyed.
4. Enhancements can be functional or decorative.

### **B. Windows and Window Openings:**

1. Window replacement shall be consistent with the most prominent and historically accurate architectural style of the building.
2. Existing historically accurate windows shall be maintained or repaired in their current form, or a historically accurate replacement shall be installed.
3. Double-hung windows on the upper floors are the minimum standard where historically and architecturally appropriate. Such windows shall have a fixed or movable top sash.
4. Filling a window opening, or any portion thereof, on a primary building facade is not permitted.
5. Replacement windows, when permissible, shall duplicate the sash, frame width, configuration, and muntin (mullion) divisions of original windows and materials.
6. Existing prism glass should be retained wherever possible.

### **C. Door and Door Openings:**

1. Aluminum and vinyl replacement doors may not be acceptable alternatives to wood or metal.
2. Closing off an existing door opening on a facade is not permitted.
3. Glass inserts or transoms are acceptable.
4. Main entries shall be visible from the street or face the street. Main entry doors and frames shall be prominently articulated features on the facade. Secondary entrances may be located towards a rear or side yard parking lot.

### **D. Awnings:**

1. Retractable awnings are encouraged, but fixed awnings are permitted.
2. Awnings shall be made of cloth or soft vinyl and awning material shall not be placed over a structural frame resulting in a "hard" appearance. Awning colors shall complement the building.
3. Text on awnings is permitted in compliance with the zoning code.

### **E. Bays:**

1. The use of bays to articulate building elevations is encouraged. Existing bays shall be maintained whenever possible.

### **F. Canopies:**

1. Canopies shall be constructed of permanent materials and shall include details that are reminiscent of the predominant building details.

### **G. Color Palette:**

1. Exterior color schemes shall be selected by the project applicant from the 1,082 tones found in the approved Sherwin Williams "COLOR" palette, or its industry equivalent. The approved palette may be reviewed at the office of the Department of City Development (the "Department"). Approved paint treatments from the Sherwin

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Williams "COLOR" palate are as follows:

- a. Body, trim, window, door and accent colors shall be selected from the 280 tones described as "Fundamentally Neutral" and the 560 tones described as "Color Options", or their industry equivalent.
- b. Trim and accent colors only may also be selected from the 94 tones described as "Essentials" and 148 tones described as "Energetic Brights", or their industry equivalent.

H. Color Selection Guidance:

1. In all cases, paint shall be applied in a professional, complete and workmanlike manner.
2. Paint colors shall be viewed as a reversible finish. Building owners are encouraged to select colors appropriate to the style and period of the building construction. Monotonous color schemes, lacking in contrast, are discouraged and transitions of color are encouraged.
3. Related color schemes such as monochromatic (different values of a single color), neutral (gray, taupe, tan or gray-beige), or analogous (colors close to one another on the color wheel such as blue and blue-violet) are appropriate.
4. Contrasting color schemes such as opposites (colors opposite each other on the color wheel), split complement palettes (colors adjacent to true colors such as yellow and yellow-orange), or triad palettes (three colors spaced in fairly equal increments on the color wheel) are appropriate.

I. Fencing:

1. Chain link fences shall be permitted only in rear yard areas not visible from the street.

J. Glazing (Glass):

1. Historic glass shall remain intact wherever possible.
2. Highly reflective glazing types shall not be permitted.
3. Tinted glazing types are acceptable if found to be a material originally used in the specific building or characteristic of its architectural style.

K. Landscape Features:

1. Live groundcover is recommended and may include parking lot buffers.
2. Vines along blank walls or fenced areas are encouraged.
3. Permanent or portable plantings may be used to define side entrances of buildings.
4. While shrubs may be used to screen refuse containers, shrubs along the sidewalk should not exceed 42" in height.
5. Landscape features shall not obstruct vision triangles.

L. Lighting:

1. Canopy and accent lighting located on street-facing or primary facades shall at a minimum consist of fixtures located above entrances.
2. Accent lighting to highlight features, forms, and landscaping is encouraged.
3. Floodlights shall be limited to 150-watt maximum and shall not be directed towards side yards or the street.

M. Sidewalk Cafes:

1. Sidewalk cafes are encouraged subject to applicable ordinances, standards and permits.

**VIII. SIGNS:**

A. Main Principles:

1. Signs shall comply with the Zoning Code and be of a design that is consistent with the architectural character of the building.
2. Proposed permanent signage shall be submitted to the Access Corridor Development Review Committee for prior review and approval.

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3. Wall mounted, ground exterior or roofline lighting is an acceptable means to accent signage or architectural detail.
  4. Flashing, scrolling, moving or backlit signs shall not be permitted.
  5. Signs shall not be internally illuminated unless such a sign is historically accurate to the style of the building.
  6. External illumination sources shall be shielded from view.
  7. Support structures shall also be considered as part of the overall design of the sign.
  8. Signs shall be constructed and installed in a professional, complete and workmanlike manner.

B. Sign Content:

1. To avoid visual clutter and enhance sign readability, signs shall include only the name and/or nature of the business, and the address.
2. Individual tenants of a professional office building may be listed.
3. Advertising an individual brand name shall not be permitted, unless it is also the name of the dominant or host establishment.

C. Window signage:

1. Window signage shall not exceed 20% of the display space, shall be directly applied to the glass, and signage for a site shall be uniform in appearance.
2. Handwritten or grease marker signs are discouraged.

D. Projecting Signs:

1. Projecting signs are encouraged in accordance with the standards contained herein.

E. Billboards (advertising signs):

1. Billboards shall be wall mounted, have a sign area not exceeding 8' feet high by 10' wide, and shall be bordered by a frame of painted wood or powder coated metal.
2. Lighting shall consist of decorative exterior, gooseneck, cut-off, wall wash fixtures. Painted or decal wall mural type signage is prohibited.

FISCAL NOTE: N/A