

**Mixed-Office Residential** *Design Guidelines:*  
**A DESIGN GUIDE FOR DEVELOPERS,  
PROPERTY OWNERS, & CITIZENS**



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Intent of the Mixed-Office Residential Zoning District:

*“The M.O.R., Mixed-Office Residential Zoning District is intended to encourage a mixture of residential, office and small-scale business land uses that are limited in scale and intensity and designed and constructed to be compatible with existing structures in the district. The district is intended to encourage the adaptive re-use of existing older structures through incentives that will extend the useful life of such structures. New construction shall be designed and constructed in a manner that is consistent with the character of the district. The land uses permitted and the development regulations required in the M.O.R. District are intended to protect nearby residential uses by limiting the scale and intensity of the uses and buildings that may locate in this district. The M.O.R. District is appropriate for mixed uses on small sites which need a careful evaluation of use-to-use compatibility so that the stability and value of surrounding properties are best protected”.*

--Urbana Zoning Ordinance, Article IV, Section 2. I.



City of Urbana  
Community Development Services Department  
Adopted on September 7, 2004  
Ordinance No. 2004-08-105

# Mixed-Office Residential *Design Guidelines*

## CITY OF URBANA

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# I. Introduction

## Purpose

The purpose of this guide is to provide design criteria for new business and residential development within the Mixed-Office Residential (MOR) Zoning District. The design guidelines and suggestions illustrated in this document will be used primarily by the Development Review Board and City Staff to review proposals within the MOR District.

This guidebook has been written in this format to allow property owners to understand how compatible design can be achieved within the MOR District. It is written in a format that includes a range of design considerations that are generally equal in importance but are suggestively ranked using language such as: (strongly encouraged, encouraged, discouraged, and strongly discouraged) to allow property owners to understand that some design guidelines may be considered more important than others in terms of promoting compatible design. The guidelines are not intended to restrict innovation, imagination or variety of design. They are intended to promote design compatibility of new structures, building additions, and remodels with the existing buildings found in the district. The guidelines address the quality of development recognizing that architectural design is ultimately formed by countless individual creative decisions.

## Where Design Guidelines Apply

These guidelines are to be used to review the design of proposed projects located in the Mixed-Office Residential Zoning District. The guidelines consist of design considerations intended to promote the goals defined by the intent of the zoning district. Project design approvals are based on both the site plan review and the design guidelines illustrated in this document.

## Building Code and Zoning Ordinances

The requirements of the Urbana Building Safety Code and the Zoning Ordinance must be met in addition to the MOR Design Guidelines. For more information about these development regulations please contact the Community Development Services Department at 384-2440 or see our Website at [www.city.urbana.il.us](http://www.city.urbana.il.us) to view the complete Urbana Zoning Ordinance.

## Locally Designated Historic Structures

Local Historic Landmarks and properties within Local Historic Districts shall continue to comply with Article XII: The Historic Preservation Ordinance of the Urbana Zoning Ordinance.

## **II. (MOR) Mixed-Office Residential Background**

### **(MOR) Mixed-Office Residential Background**

The Mixed-Office Residential Zoning District was created as a result of the recommendations of the 1990 Downtown to Campus Plan. The Downtown to Campus Plan consisted of an area-wide zoning study for much of the West Urbana and campus neighborhoods. It was concluded in the plan that a special office/residential zoning district was needed for much of the Green Street and Elm Street corridors. The purpose of the new district would be to allow a variety of residential, office, and commercial uses in the district but to encourage the adaptive re-use of the existing structures. The plan stressed that as an incentive to adaptively re-use existing structures, a wider variety of uses should be permitted. It was envisioned that Green Street and Elm Street could contain single-family and small-scale multi-family residential development along with small-scale boutique shops and offices intermixed and where buildings were designed with a residential character.

The MOR Zoning District was adopted in 1991 and approximately 90 properties were rezoned to the new district. The Urbana Zoning Ordinance was amended to include provisions for the new district including a listing of uses allowed in the district as well as development regulations. A Development Review Board was established to review development proposals in the district. The membership of the Board consisted of city staff and contained criteria for reviewing proposals. The Development Review Board was specifically

prohibited from considering the architectural design and character of proposals, and was to focus on issues related to building scale and orientation and the overall site design. From 1991 to 2002 there was relatively little development activity in the M.O.R. district. Approvals were granted for three new apartment buildings and a handful of remodels including the Lindley House Bed and Breakfast and Timothy John's Studio. From 1997 to 2002 there was no activity in the district until three separate requests were made to review new apartment developments in 2003. Structures were demolished at 508 and 510 West Green Street for construction of a church parking lot, and 605, 611, 701 West Green were also demolished for new apartment buildings. The demolitions of homes for new multi-family structures and parking lots generated concern from nearby residents and called into question the effectiveness of the intent of the district which was to foster adaptive re-use and encourage a mix of small scale uses. A structure at 302 West Green Street has been demolished in 2004 and the lot currently lies vacant.

In 2003 the City Council directed staff to study changes to the district. In particular, it was requested that there be procedural changes to the Development Review Board and that architectural design be permitted to be considered when evaluating proposals. In November 2003 provisions were made to change the membership of the Development Review Board to consist of appointed individuals rather than city staff. The number of members on the Board was also increased from five to seven. Also, provisions for design guidelines were adopted for the Development Review Board to use when reviewing proposals.

One of the overriding concerns with the three multi-family development proposals in 2003 was that the district does not seem to be attracting development other than multi-family residential. Along with the amendments to the regulations for the district, consideration of alternative incentive programs was encouraged. These could be implemented in order to create a better market for small-scale business development to meet the goals and intent of the district.

It is clear that since the MOR district was initially created there have been relatively few projects that have incorporated the adaptive re-use of the existing structures. As a component of the revised procedures and requirements in the district, a streamlined review process has been created for projects incorporating adaptive re-use.

Proposals for a change of use, building addition, or exterior remodeling that incorporate the adaptive re-use of an existing structure within the district shall not require review by the DRB. Adaptive re-use proposals shall comply with the requirements of the Urbana Zoning Ordinance although the Zoning Administrator may authorize adjustments to existing codes and regulations as specified in Section V-8.D. Adaptive re-use proposals shall demonstrate general consistency with the Design Guidelines as determined by the Zoning Administrator. In cases where proposed additions and/or remodeling efforts are so extensive as to result in substantial change to the appearance and/or scale of an existing building, the Zoning Administrator shall make this determination and shall then request Development Review Board review and approval of the project.

### **III. (DRB) Development Review Board Procedure**

#### **The (DRB) Development Review Board**

The (DRB) Development Review Board is a mayor-appointed board that holds public hearings and reviews applications for development within the MOR, Mixed-Office Residential Zoning District. The DRB may require applicants to submit plans, drawings, specifications and other information as may be necessary to make decisions in addition to the application requirements specified in XI-12.G. of the Zoning Ordinance.

#### **Site Plan Review Criteria**

Site plans for new construction that do not incorporate the adaptive re-use of existing structures must demonstrate conformance with the land use and development standards of the Urbana Zoning Ordinance. In addition, site plans (including elevations and floor plans) shall be reviewed and considered by the Development Review Board according to the criteria listed below:

##### **Compatibility with Surrounding Neighborhood**

Proposals shall demonstrate consistency with the intent of the MOR, Mixed-Office Residential Zoning District as stated in Section IV-2-I. In reviewing proposals the Development Review Board shall consider the effects of the proposed structure(s) and uses on adjacent properties and the surrounding

neighborhood. The Board shall consider building location, orientation, setbacks, scale, bulk, massing, and architectural design.

**Parking and Access**

Proposals shall demonstrate that required parking areas are provided in accordance with Article VIII of the Urbana Subdivision Ordinance and that parking areas and access drives are designed to move traffic conveniently and safely in a manner that minimizes traffic conflicts, noise and visual impacts, while minimizing the area of asphalt or concrete. Proposals shall demonstrate the safe and convenient movement of handicapped persons and that the location and design of handicapped parking is in conformance with the requirements of the State of Illinois. Parking areas shall be screened from adjacent residential uses.

**Screening and Landscaping**

Proposals shall demonstrate the preservation of existing natural features where practical. The Development Review Board shall consider the effects that the proposal may have on the vegetative characteristics of the area and may require landscaping measures to mitigate any potential loss of character. Proposals shall also demonstrate compliance with all landscape and screening requirements identified in the Urbana Zoning Ordinance. The Development Review Board shall consider landscape and screening plans and their ability to effectively screen adjacent properties from possible negative influences that may be created by the proposed use. Retention of street trees along the Green and Elm Street corridors shall be encouraged.

## **IV. Design Guidelines**

### **Design & Site Review**

Proposals shall address the provisions for site details including exterior trash dumpsters, storage areas, loading areas, exterior lighting and signs. The Development Review Board shall determine if the site details will not negatively impact adjacent properties and the character of the neighborhood. An important component of this review is the consideration of the architectural appearance relating to: Building Orientation, Openings, Outdoor Living Space, Building Materials, Parking areas, Landscaping, and Commercial Site Design as outlined in this Design Guide. Proposals shall demonstrate conformance with the design guidelines and with the goals for the MOR, Mixed-Office Residential Zoning District as specified in the City of Urbana Zoning Ordinance.

The Urbana Zoning Ordinance includes additional design criteria that are mandatory and required as specified in Section XI-12.J. These requirements include that the front entrance must face the street, building walls facing the street must contain window openings, and that parking areas shall be located behind the principal structure. Finally, the Urbana Zoning Ordinance prohibits parking underneath any principal structure within the M.O.R., Mixed-Office Residential Zoning District.

# THE "FACADE ZONE"

The **Facade Zone** is important to the character of a site and includes not only the vertical wall of the building with its architectural qualities but also includes other elements of a site within the areas that the wall faces that are **visible from the public street** such as outbuildings, windows, doors, street walls, signage and various other site details. It is important that site details in the facade zone are compatible with other buildings on the block face as well as with those buildings located directly across the street. The guidelines offer design criteria to be considered for facade zones.

The district is composed of a grid system of streets creating two types of lots: corner lots and interior lots. Corner lots are located at the intersection of streets and have two street facing facade zones. The majority of lots are Interior lots that have one facade zone facing the street.

## FACADE ZONE - Design Guidelines

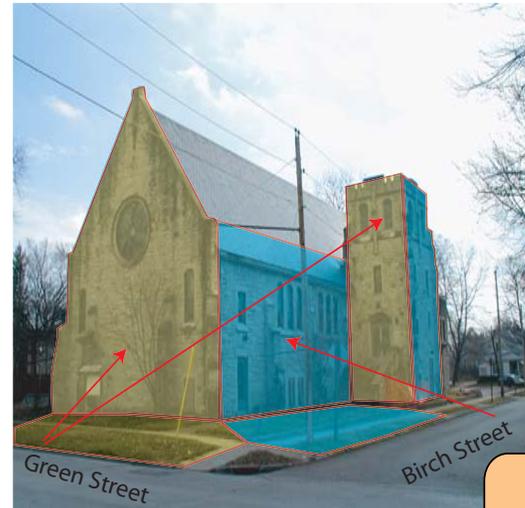
### **Strongly Encouraged**

- New building additions that complement the architectural style of the main structure.

### **Strongly Discouraged**

- The location of mechanical equipment (such as air compressors, mechanical pumps water softeners, utility meters and the like) in the facade zone.

**Note: The Urbana Zoning Ordinance requires that facades with street frontage contain window openings and not be blank. It is also required that parking be located behind the principal structure and not in the facade zone. For further details on these requirements please consult Section XI-12.J of the Urbana Zoning Ordinance.**



## Corner Lot Example

Facade Zone 1  
Facing from Green Street

Facade Zone 2  
Facing from Birch Street

The design guidelines concentrate primarily on the facade zones because they are views from the public space, namely the sidewalk and streets.



## Interior Lot Example

Facade Zone 1  
Facing from Green Street

Interior Lots generally have one primary Facade Zone as depicted above.

# BUILDING ORIENTATION & Patterns

Each block in the district displays predominant patterns. These patterns include lot sizes, setbacks, and building orientation. Projects within the district should be compatible with the patterns of building placement found on the block. Relative to building orientation, the Urbana Zoning Ordinance (Section XI-12.J) requires the front entrance of a building to be facing the street and if on a corner, the more major street frontage.

Observation of a block through both aerial and streetscape views is important when identifying patterns on a block. The placement of a building should not drastically change or cause a visual disruption along the block.

## BUILDING ORIENTATION & Patterns - Design Guidelines

### **Strongly Encouraged**

- Building placement and general orientation on a site that is compatible with other structures on the block.

### **Encouraged**

- New construction projects, including additions, that incorporate common patterns and architectural characteristics found throughout in the district. (e.g. porches, roof type, openings, etc.)
- Use of architectural detailing and landscaping to help new construction "blend in" with the block.

## Aerial View Example

Buildings are aligned to the street with front porches

Homes are generally placed in the middle of the lot, with garages in the rear

Parking areas are located at the rear



## Streetscape View Example



### Examples of Relevant Patterns

- |                      |                      |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| Building Orientation | Outdoor Living Space |
| Massing              | Materials            |
| Openings             | Landscaping          |

# MASSING & SCALE

**Massing** is the three dimensional bulk of a structure: height, width, and depth. **Scale** is the perceived relative height and bulk of a building relative to that of neighboring buildings. Proper scale, proportion and details are essential when blending any building into the MOR District. When a new development or building addition is larger in height or volume than the surrounding structures, the building mass should be varied through changes in the wall plane, building height, or roofline to reduce the perception of bulk and encourage compatibility. The architectural design should be such that it does not cause a visual disruption along the entire block.

## MASSING & SCALE- Design Guidelines

### Strongly Encouraged

- The "height to width ratio" of a structure is compatible with that of other structures on the block face. For example, if existing structures on a block face have a height to width ratios of 2 : 1, then a height to width ratio of 1:3 for new construction may not be appropriate.

### Encouraged

- Use of various decorative details and exterior materials to add interest, scale, and dimension to a building.
- Height and rooflines on new construction that are compatible with other buildings found on the block face.
- A combination of roof lines with varying roof heights and pitches used to break up the mass of a structure.
- Roof pitch and shape on new construction compatible with other forms found in the district.

Combination roof lines with varying roof heights and roof pitches, add interest and break up mass

The forward and back progressions break up the mass

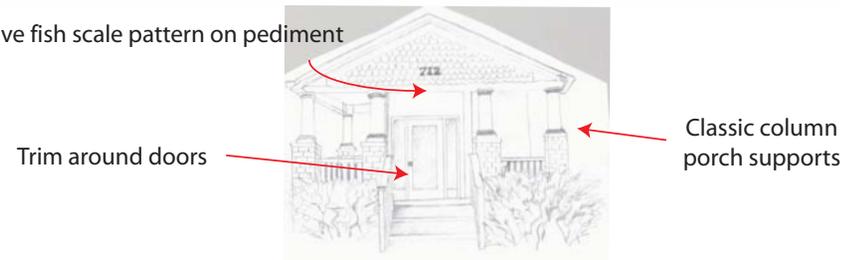
Bay windows and other architectural features break up large wall masses



Exterior Trim Details  
Add interest, scale, and dimension:

Covered Porches and balconies add interest, scale and outdoor living space on the primary facade

Decorative fish scale pattern on pediment



# OPENINGS

Openings refer to the windows and doors on a structure. Openings and their arrangement are important to a structure's visual aesthetic. Materials, construction, and detailing of the openings is also important to the style of a building. Proposals within the district should be cognizant of the rhythm and patterns of openings on the facade. Height to width ratios for windows should encourage compatibility with the building architecture style as well as with the other styles found throughout the district. The Urbana Zoning Ordinance requires window openings on facades facing the street (see Section XI-12.J of the Urbana Zoning Ordinance). The following design criteria further address openings in the M.O.R. district:

## OPENINGS - Design Guidelines

### **Strongly Encouraged**

- An adequate amount of openings on a facade.
- Large wall expanses on a facade that are interrupted by windows.
- Openings that reflect the building's architectural style.

### **Encouraged**

- Openings that are in proportion to others on the facade and are similar in size and scale.
- A consistent rhythm of openings on the facade.
- True divided-lite windows.

### **Discouraged**

- Sliding patio doors in the facade zones.

### Recommended

Multiple openings on facade

Openings are to scale and proportion with each other and display a consistent pattern and rhythm



Main entry in the facade zone

### Not Recommended



No openings on facade facing the street (prohibited in Urbana Zoning Ordinance Section XI-12.J)

Facade consists of a singular flat plane

Facade incompatible with other neighboring properties

# OUTDOOR LIVING SPACE: Balconies, Porches, & Patios

**Porches** are outdoor spaces that are elevated or located above grade and usually are partially or fully covered by a roof. Front porches help provide a transition between the public street and the private use of a building. **Balconies** are outdoor living spaces located above the first floor of a structure. **Patios** are defined outdoor living space located at grade level and do not have a roof.

Porches, balconies, patios, and similar structures that are visible from the street (in the facade zone) should be designed with consideration to their overall compatibility with the design of the building, their "usability," and with their general compatibility with other properties on the block.

## OUTDOOR LIVING SPACE - Design Guidelines

### **Strongly Encouraged**

- Front porches and balconies with rooflines that are compatible with the main roof of the structure.
- Outdoor living spaces that use a variety of styles and materials in order to complement the overall composition of the building.

### **Encouraged**

- Buildings on corner lots with porches and/or stoops located on both facades.
- Porches on new residential construction. Flat porch roofs that serve as covered balconies for the second floor.
- Balconies on multi-family residences located above the first floor only.

### **Discouraged**

- Terrace-like patios located in the facade zone (for residential uses).

### **Strongly Discouraged**

- Balconies directly abutting single-family residences.



**Not Recommended**  
Patios on first level  
are often  
inappropriate

Mechanical equipment  
limits usable space

Sliding patio doors  
are discouraged



**Recommended**  
Roof lines and pitch  
correspond to main roof



**Recommended**  
Porch design should  
be functional and should  
relate to the overall  
structure

# MATERIALS

Properties in the MOR district have been built with many types of exterior materials depending on the building date of each structure. The result is a district containing a diversity of architectural styles and building materials. Over time various exterior materials have stood the test of time, while others that may have been used as less expensive substitutes have proven to be less durable than previously anticipated. In some cases, synthetic siding installed incorrectly over original siding accelerated the deterioration of the original structure. Ultimately, the choice of exterior material should be made based on both durability and aesthetics.

## MATERIALS - Design Guidelines

### **Strongly Encouraged**

- Long-lasting and durable exterior materials such as brick and wood clapboard.
- Exterior treatment or siding that protects the integrity of the structure and provides an enhanced visual aesthetic to the block.
- Recognition of the diversity of materials used throughout the district and the importance of material quality.

### **Encouraged**

- Roof materials that are compatible with those found within the district. In the case of new additions, roof materials that complement those found on the main structure.

## Examples of exterior siding materials used in the MOR



Stucco



Fieldstone



Brick Veneer



Quarry Faced Stone



Wood Lap Siding



Wood Sawn Siding



Flagstone Veneer



Painted Brick

## Examples of roofing materials



Asphalt Shingles



Slate



Shake Shingles



Clay tile

# PARKING AREAS

The MOR district retains the scale and patterns of a traditional neighborhood in terms of the grid-street layout and public alleys. Vehicular access onto properties must be appropriately incorporated into the site design. Although parking areas are integral to a site, softening their visual impact to adjacent properties and from the public street is particularly important in the MOR.

## PARKING AREAS - Design Guidelines

### Strongly Encouraged

- Utilization of existing alleyways for the purpose of access to parking areas.
- Fencing and other screening elements that are architecturally compatible with the principal building in terms of material quality and detail.

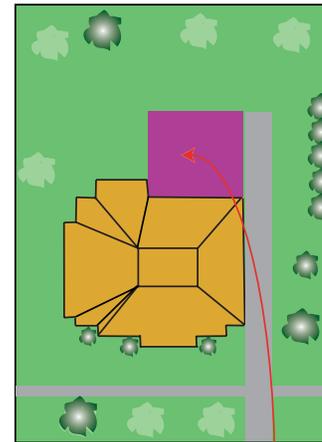
### Encouraged

- Screening to reduce visual impact from adjacent properties.
- Use of hedges, wood fences or masonry walls used to screen parking areas from adjacent properties.

### Note:

*The Urbana Zoning Ordinance prohibits parking below a principal structure within the M.O.R., Mixed-Office Residential Zoning District. The Urbana Zoning Ordinance also requires parking to be located behind the principal structure and not in the facade zone. Consult Section XI-12.J of the Urbana Zoning Ordinance for further details.*

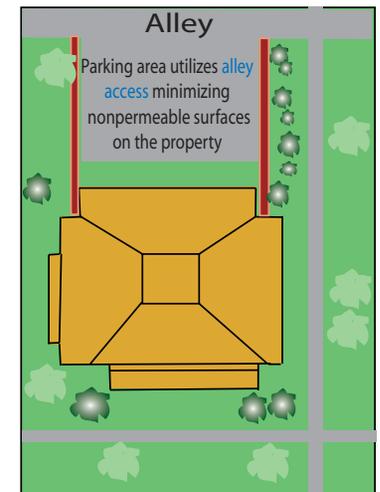
## Recommended Parking Configuration Examples



Parking **not visible** in the facade zone



Utilize **rear loaded garages** to reduce bulk at street and visibility from the facade zone



# LANDSCAPING

Landscaping is an important design element when blending any building or parking area into the neighborhood. Landscaping can soften the mass of a building as well as accent its features. Preservation of mature trees, adding visual interest to individual properties, and providing effective methods of landscaping screening are important goals within the district. It is important that the City Arborist be used as an informational resource to analyze existing trees and to determine the appropriate size and species of future tree plantings.

## LANDSCAPING - Design Guidelines

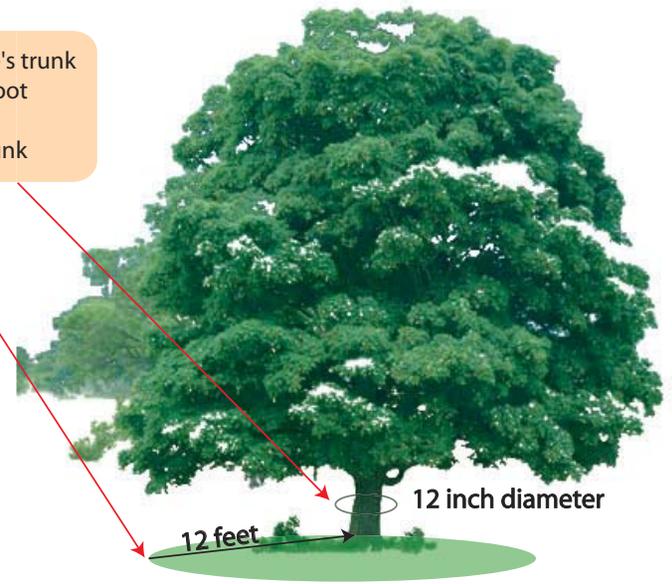
### **Strongly Encouraged**

- Retention of mature trees on private property and within the parkways and other City right-of-way areas. (Green and Elm Street corridors are particularly important)

### **Encouraged**

- New tree plantings on private and public property to replenish the urban canopy.
- Protect mature trees from root damage during construction, both on the subject property and on any adjacent properties. (see illustration)
- Use of evergreens, dense deciduous shrubs, masonry walls and berms for screening.
- Design landscaping to ensure safe pedestrian and automobile traffic circulation on and off private property.

If the diameter of the tree's trunk is 12 inches, protect the root zone for at least a 12 foot radius around the tree trunk



Landscaping and tree plantings beautify properties and are strongly encouraged

New tree plantings on private and public property will continue to replenish the urban canopy in the neighborhood



# Commercial Site Design

The design of commercial uses should consider all of the previous Design Guideline sections of this handbook. This section is tailored to address specific design issues related to commercial development. The goal of commercial site design is to encourage small-scale businesses that are compatible with the residential character of the district. Compatibility can be achieved through careful design of facades, building scale, and by designing commercial sites to be pedestrian-oriented. A mix of uses is encouraged in order to create vitality and character.

## COMMERCIAL - Design Guidelines

### Strongly Encouraged

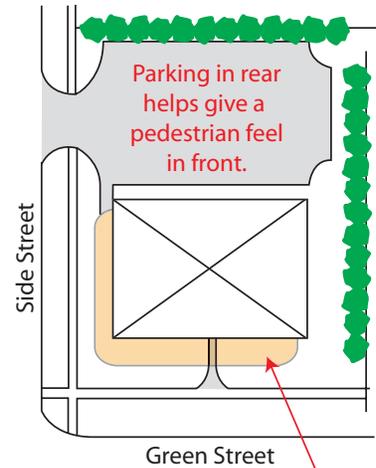
- Adaptive reuse or renovation of existing buildings.
- New mixed-use commercial developments with upper-story residential.
- New structures with a residential design.
- Business signs that are pedestrian oriented and visible to traffic. Signs that complement the design of the main structure and do not obscure important features.

### Encouraged

- Service delivery, and trash located at the rear of a building.
- Utilize shared access and parking areas.
- Front porches and landscaped terraces that serve as important commercial amenities.

### Discouraged

- Multiple curb cuts and vehicular entrances.



Porches can provide outdoor gathering space for a business

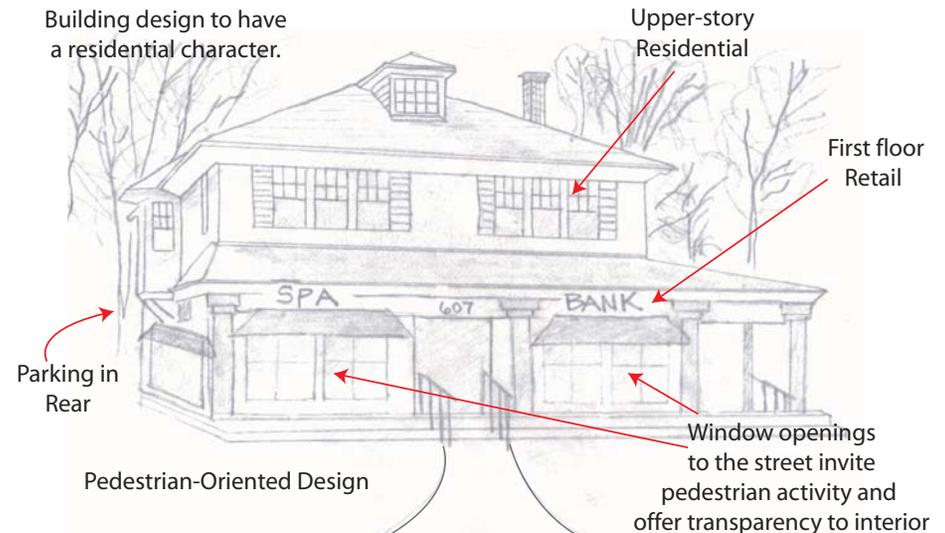


Business signs should complement the main structure and add to the character of the neighborhood



Thoughtful design and use of fencing can help a commercial business define its outdoor space and separate it from other uses

## New Commercial Development



# Photo Map of Properties in the MOR District as of July 2004



714 W. Green



712 W. Green



710 W. Green



708 W. Green



706 W. Green



704 W. Green



702 W. Green



612 W. Green



608 W. Green



604 W. Green



602 W. Green



601 W. Green



603 W. Green



605 W. Green



609 W. Green



611 W. Green



701 W. Green



703 W. Green



705 W. Green



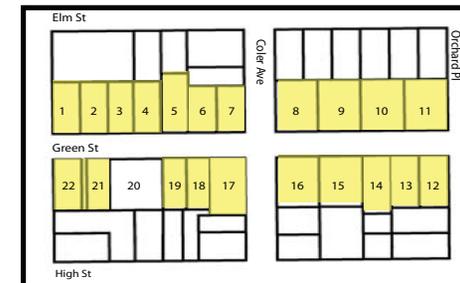
707/709 W. Green



711 W. Green



713 W. Green



Outlined Area



Entire MOR District

# Photo Map of Properties in the MOR District as of July 2004



612 W. Elm



610 W. Elm



608 W. Elm



606 W. Elm



604 W. Elm



1 Buena Vista Court



8 Buena Vista Court



510 W. Elm



508 W. Elm



506 W. Elm



504 W. Elm



502 W. Elm



507 W. Elm



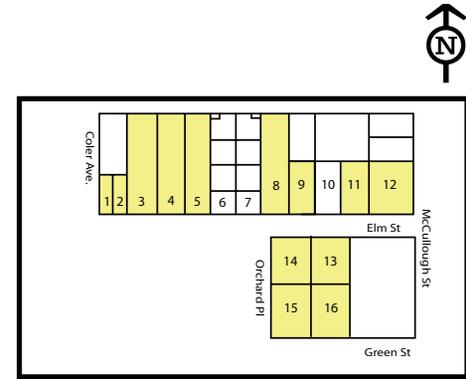
511 W. Elm



510 W. Green



508 W. Green



Outlined Area



Entire MOR District

# Photo Map of Properties in the MOR District as of July 2004



401 W. Green



403 W. Green



405 W. Green



407 W. Green



409 W. Green



501 W. Green



503 W. Green



505 W. Green



507 W. Green



509 W. Green



511 W. Green



412 W. Green



410 W. Green



408 W. Green



406 W. Green



404 W. Green



201/203 S. Birch



403 W. Elm



405 W. Elm



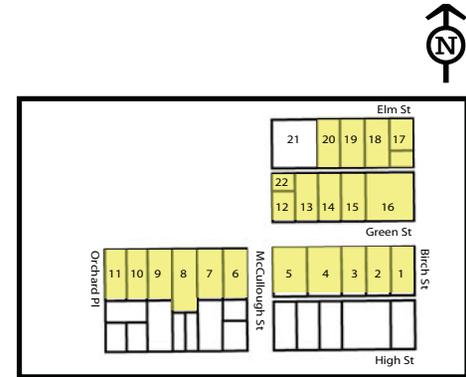
407 W. Elm



409 W. Elm



206 S. McCullough



Outlined Area



Entire MOR District

# Photo Map of Properties in the MOR District as of July 2004



412 W. Elm



410 W. Elm



408 W. Elm



406 W. Elm



404 W. Elm



402 W. Elm



107 S. Birch



312 W. Elm



310 W. Elm



308 W. Elm



306 W. Elm



304 W. Elm



302 W. Elm



203 S. Cedar



303 W. Elm



305 W. Elm



307 W. Elm



309 W. Elm



311 W. Elm



312 W. Green



310 W. Green



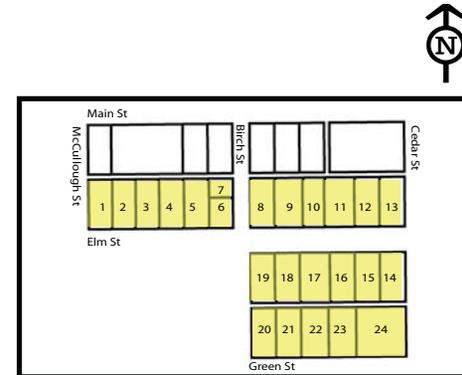
308 W. Green



306 W. Green



302 W. Green



Outlined Area



Entire MOR District

Photo Map of Properties in the MOR District as of July 2004

