

East Urbana Design Guidelines



City of Urbana, Illinois
Community Development Services
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I. Introduction

Purpose & Intent

The *East Urbana Design Guidelines* are intended to assist property owners and designers as they plan changes to all buildings other than single-family residences, such as multi-family residential, duplexes, commercial, and institutional buildings, in the East Urbana Design Review District and to provide the Design Review Board with a framework for making consistent decisions in its review of projects. The guidelines have been developed to recognize and preserve the unique character of the Historic East Urbana Neighborhood. The design review district will act as a transition between the Central Business District (downtown) and the residential neighborhood abutting it.



In cases where the overall design goals can be achieved by alternative means, circumstances may allow for projects to deviate from the guidelines.

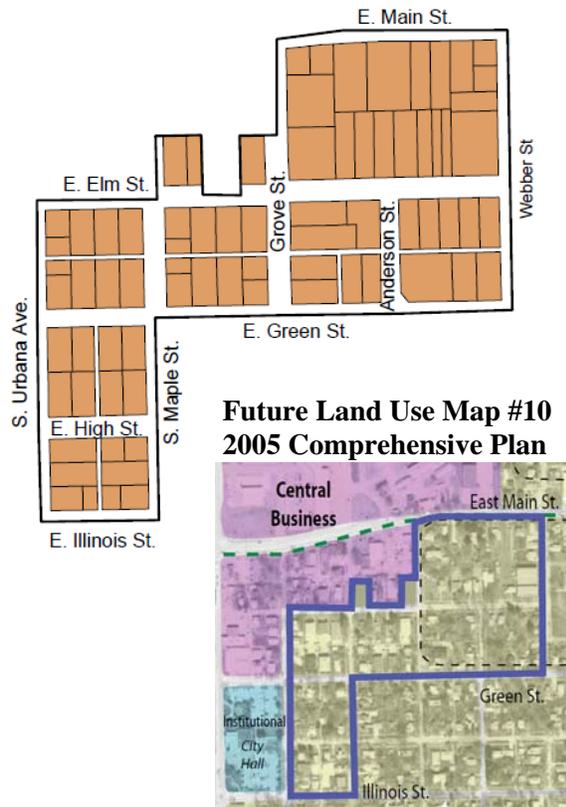
The overall intent of the design guidelines is to ensure that future construction in the district is compatible with desirable traditional design aspects identified for the neighborhood.

District Boundaries

The district is generally bounded by South Urbana Avenue, East Elm Street, Grove Street, East Main Street, South Webber Street, East Green Street, South Maple Street, and East Illinois Street.

The East Urbana Design Review District, shown in the map to the right, generally follows the boundaries of the northwest corner of the Historic East Urbana Neighborhood as defined in the 2005 Comprehensive Plan. The three properties on the north side of Elm Street between Maple and Grove Streets are included in the district due to a rezoning and an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan.

East Urbana Design Review District



II. Definitions

Definitions

Balcony A platform projecting from the wall of an upper story, enclosed by a railing or balustrade, with an entrance from the building and supported by brackets, columns, or cantilevered.

Compatible Visual balance between adjacent and nearby buildings and the immediate streetscape, in terms of materials, building elements, building mass, and other constructed elements of the urban environment, such that abrupt or severe differences are avoided.

Courtyard An open area that is partially or fully surrounded by one or more buildings, walls, and/or fences that is intended for use by more than one dwelling.

Divided Light Glass in a window or glazed door that is divided into smaller panes by secondary framing members (muntins).

Façade The façade is the front or principal face of a building. Façades typically face a street or other open space.

Façade Zone The façade zone includes the façade plus that portion of the lot separating the façade from a street or public open space. A corner lot has two façade zones.

Massing The three-dimensional bulk of a structure: height, width, and depth.

New Construction New structures, building additions visible from a public street, and exterior remodels on the front façade that will significantly alter the appearance of the façade.

Orientation The placement of a structure on its lot with regard to other structures on the block face and the direction the structure is “facing”.

Patio A level surfaced area directly adjacent to a principal building at or within two feet of the finished grade, intended as an

outdoor living area for the use of one dwelling, and not covered by a permanent roof.

Porch A roofed, open area, which may be screened, attached to or part of a building, and with direct access to or from a street or sidewalk.

Roof Pitch The degree of slope or inclination of a roof.

Wall to roof ratio The ratio of the front wall surface to the perceived height of the roof as viewed from a public way. This ratio can be measured from a photograph taken of a building, by measuring the front wall from grade to the roof and from the lowest part of the roof to the highest.

Scale The relationship of the perceived size, height, and bulk of a building to that of neighboring buildings as it appears from the public way.

Setback The distance between the building and any lot line.

Solid-to-Void Ratio The recurrent alternation of structure to open space and/or the percentage of wall area composed of window and door openings.

III. Character of the District

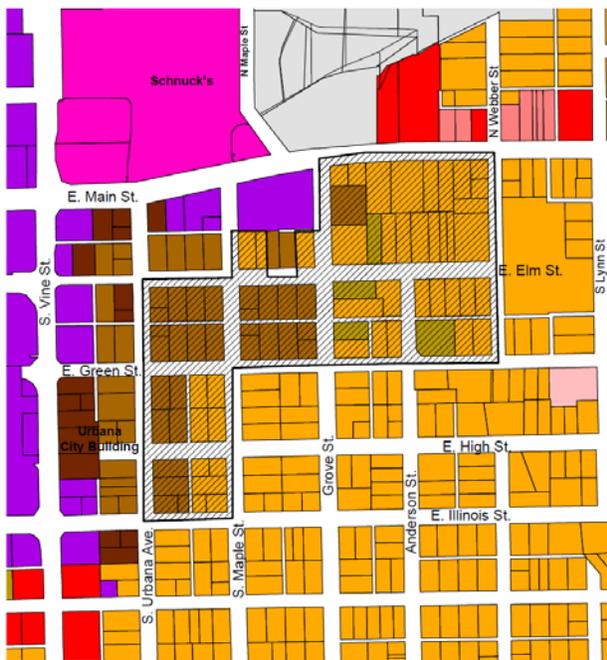
Current Zoning

The purpose of this section is to identify the existing character of the East Urbana Design Review District and define what design values are at stake in future development.

Although the Historic East Urbana Neighborhood is mostly zoned R-3, Single- and Two-Family Residential, the design review district is zoned medium- and medium high-density multi-family residential.

As the chart below shows, 55 percent of the parcels in the district are zoned for single- and two-family residential and 44 percent are zoned for medium- and medium-high density multi-family. This is significant as properties zoned for greater residential densities allow infill development which could change the existing single-family residential character of the neighborhood.

Zoning Map



Current Zoning in East Urbana Design Review District

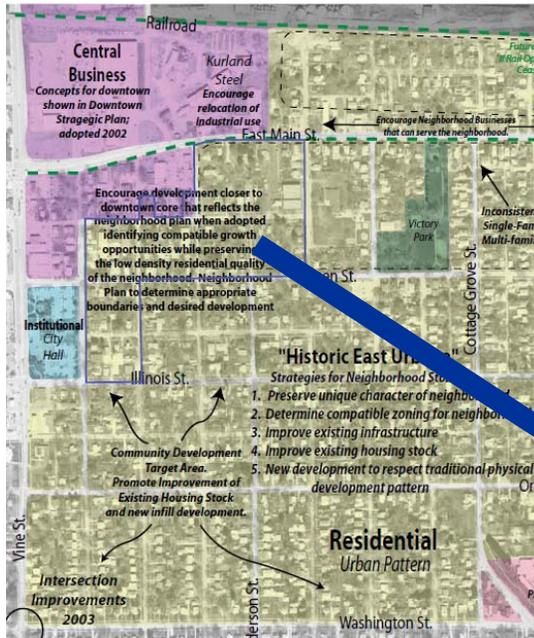
Zoning Category Description	Parcels	% of Total
R3 Single & Two Family Residential	42	55%
R4 Med. Density Multi-Family Res.	4	5%
R5 Med. High Density Multi-Family Res.	30	40%

- B3, General Business
- B4, Central Business
- B4E, Central Bus Expansion
- R3, Single & 2-Family Res
- R4, Med Density MF Res
- R5, Med-High Density MF Res
- R6, High Density MR Res
- Design Review District

Source: Official 2009 Zoning Map

City of Urbana 2005 Comprehensive Plan

Future Land Use Map #10



Source: 2005 Comprehensive Plan

The City of Urbana 2005 Comprehensive Plan: “Historic East Urbana” Strategies for Neighborhood Stability

1. Preserve unique character of neighborhood
2. Determine compatible zoning for neighborhood
3. Improve existing infrastructure
4. Improve existing housing stock
5. New development to respect traditional physical development pattern



The 2005 Comprehensive Plan includes two goals for Urbana’s established neighborhoods that support design review in the East Urbana Design Review District. The first is to preserve residential character and the second is to ensure that new development is compatible with the traditional design aspects of the neighborhood.

URBANA’S ESTABLISHED NEIGHBORHOODS

- Goal 1.0 Preserve and enhance the character of Urbana’s established residential neighborhoods.
- Goal 2.0 New development in an established neighborhood will be compatible with the overall urban design and fabric of that neighborhood.

Objectives

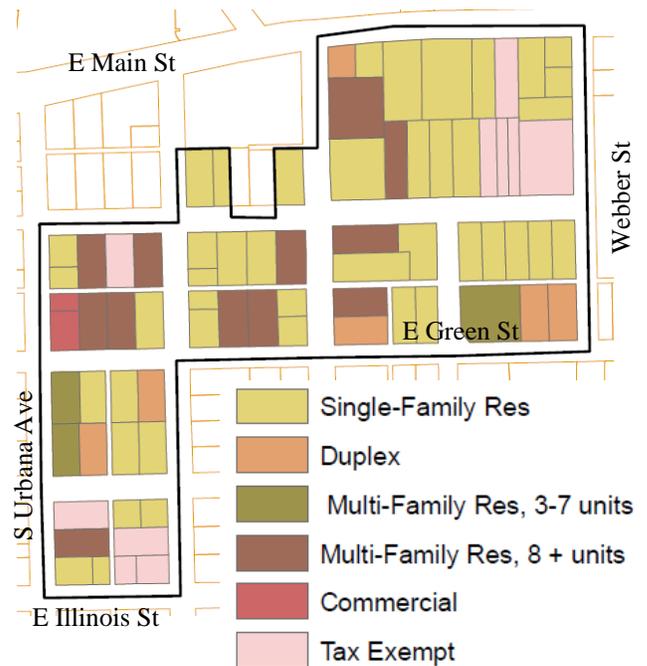
- Ensure that the site design for new development in established neighborhoods is compatible with the built fabric of that neighborhood.
- Encourage the use of landscape materials and ornamentation to improve the appearance and functionality of new developments.
- Use development and planning controls to minimize environmental and property damage from flooding and erosion.
- Promote development that residents and visitors recognize as being of high quality and aesthetically pleasing.

Ownership / Existing Land Use Patterns

According to the Cunningham Township Assessor's Office, the predominant land use in the East Urbana Design Review District is single-family residential, with 57% of total parcels. The second most common land use in the district is multi-family residential, with 20%. Duplexes make up 8% of the district. Commercial uses account for 3%. Ten parcels or 13% are tax exempt properties which include religious institutions, non-profit organizations, and governmental entities.. The map to the right and the chart below have further details on existing land use.

There are 33 owner-occupied single-family residences and one owner-occupied duplex in the district, which account for 45% of total parcels. There are ten rental single-family residences and five rental duplexes. Additionally, the 15 multi-family residences are rental properties. The rental properties account for 28% of total parcels.

Existing Land Use Map



Source: Cunningham Township Assessor's Office
Created February 10, 2010

Parcel Ownership

	Parcels	% of total Parcels
Owner-occupied		45%
Single-family	33	
Duplex	1	
Rental		28%
Single-family	10	
Duplex	5	
Multi-Family, 3-7 units	3	
Multi-Family, 8+ units	12	
Non-Residential/Tax Exempt	12	27%

Existing Land Use

	Parcels	% of total Parcels
Single-family	43	57%
Duplex	6	8%
Multi-family, 3-7 units	3	4%
Multi-family, 8 + units	12	16%
Commercial	2	2%
Tax Exempt	10	13%

Existing Building Types

Among the 76 parcels that comprise the East Urbana Design Review District, there are a variety of building types: houses, duplexes, apartment buildings and religious institutions. Most of the neighborhood was built during the first half of the twentieth century, but the subdivision of larger lots and infill development have broadened the predominant development era of the district.

Looking only at the built form without considering use or zoning, the most common building type in the corridor is the house. The East Urbana Design Review District consists of houses, apartment buildings, religious buildings, vacant lots, and parking lots.

Existing Building Types

	Parcels	% of total Parcels
House	56	73%
Apartment Building	13	17%
Religious Building	2	3%
Vacant	3	4%
Parking Lot	2	3%

Houses



Apartment Buildings



Religious Buildings



Existing Neighborhood Patterns

Grid Street Layout

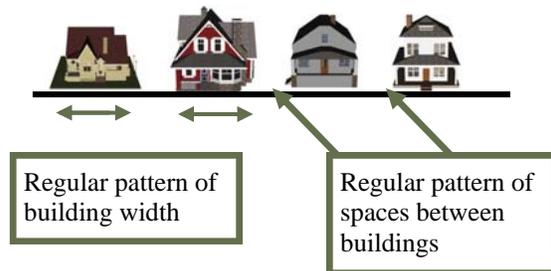
The existing grid street layout and lot platting in the Historic East Urbana Neighborhood imposes a pattern of building development which provides design principals for future development.

- Buildings are aligned to the street, often with front porches.
- Homes are generally placed in the middle of the lot, often with garages behind the house.
- Parking areas are generally located at the rear of the lot.
- Houses are generally similar in width. The spaces between the houses are generally similar in width. This creates a regular pattern of building and empty space on a block.

Aerial View Example



Streetscape View Example





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IV. Review Process

What is Subject to Review?

For all properties other than single-family residential, anyone applying to construct a new principal building, alter the exterior of any existing principal structure, or install a parking lot must submit a design review application to the Urbana Zoning Administrator for review and possible submittal to the Design Review Board for approval.

Under the enacting Ordinance for these guidelines, projects involving single-family residences within the East Urbana Design Review District are exempt from review.

What is the Process for Review?

Design Review Board

The Design Review Board is a Mayor-appointed body of citizens created for the purpose of reviewing projects in specified areas with adopted design guidelines. Section XI-15 of the Urbana Zoning Ordinance outlines the membership requirements for the Board, review procedures, and application review criteria.

Design Review Board Review

According to Section XI-15.G.4 of the Urbana Zoning Ordinance, the Design Review Board reviews all applications involving:

1. Construction of a new principal structure;
2. Increase in the building footprint of an existing principal structure greater than 15%;
3. Increase in the floor area ratio of an existing principal structure by more than 15%;
4. Installation or enlargement of a parking lot;

or

5. Substantial change in the appearance and/or scale of an existing building, as determined by the Zoning Administrator in consultation with the chair of the Design Review Board.

Administrative Review

The Zoning Administrator may administratively review applications for projects that are not to be reviewed by the Design Review Board and are not exempt, per Section XI-15.G.4.a of the Urbana Zoning Ordinance. The Zoning Administrator uses the applicable design guidelines to review applications.

Exempt Projects

Within the East Urbana Design Review District, the following projects shall be exempt from design review:

1. Projects involving single-family residences;
2. Projects requiring no building permit;
3. Projects involving no exterior construction or alteration; or
4. Projects involving existing and proposed local Historic Landmarks and properties within existing and proposed local Historic Districts.

Review Context

Project proposals will be reviewed in the context of the surrounding properties.

Building Safety Code and Zoning Ordinance

In addition to these guidelines, projects must comply with the development regulations of the Urbana Building Code, the Zoning Ordinance, and Subdivision and Land Development Code.

The Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision and Land Development Code can be referenced on the City of Urbana's website at www.city.urbana.il.us.

Locally Designated Historic Landmarks and Districts

Existing and proposed local Historic Landmarks and properties within local Historic Districts are not subject to these guidelines. Instead, projects for these properties must comply with the Historic Preservation Ordinance of the Urbana Zoning Ordinance (Article XII of the Urbana Zoning Ordinance).

For More Information

Please contact:

City of Urbana
Community Development Services
400 S. Vine Street
Urbana, IL 61801
Tel: 217-384-2440
www.city.urbana.il.us

Application Review Criteria

Proposals must be consistent with the intent of the applicable design guidelines. In reviewing proposals, the Design Review Board will consider the effects of the proposal on the surrounding properties. To determine compatibility, the Design Review Board will consider the following elements for proposals in the East Urbana Design Review District:

- **Façade Zone**
- **Massing & Scale**
- **Building Orientation**
- **Windows & Door Openings**
- **Landscaping**
- **Parking Areas**
- **Sustainability**

These guidelines are described on the following pages.

V. Design Guidelines

Intent

The overall intent of the design guidelines is to ensure that future construction in the district is compatible with the positive aspects of traditional design in the neighborhood.

The guidelines are intended to be used as design principles rather than a checklist of items for compliance. The design guidelines are also intended to facilitate both the application and approval of proposed projects subject to design review by:

1. Providing the owners of properties subject to design review some assistance in making decisions about the design of proposed projects, and
2. Providing the Design Review Board with a framework for evaluation of proposed projects.

Mandatory

New buildings are required to “face” the street. The design guidelines require new buildings, other than single-family residences, (1) be oriented toward the street, (2) have a front entry facing the street, and (3) have at least two windows on every level of the front façade. These requirements are further described on the following pages.



Although this is the front façade, this apartment building appears to be “facing sideways” as there are no windows or door facing the public street. In terms of design, this primary façade is treated like a side or rear elevation.



This duplex is “facing” the street, with the front door and large windows facing the public street. The door hood also helps orient the house towards the street.

Appropriate & Inappropriate

The remainder of the design guidelines are grouped together under *Appropriate* and *Inappropriate*. For each project proposal in the East Urbana Design Review District, satisfying the design guidelines will require the new development to “face” the street (as described above and on the Façade Zone, Building Orientation, and Window and Door Openings pages), but beyond that requirement, meeting the design guidelines will involve application of the overall guidelines for every project.

1. The Façade Zone

As with the “face” of a building, the façade zone is an area of heightened design consideration. The greatest emphasis for design review should be on the façade zone, as other elevations are secondary.

A *façade* is the exterior wall or face of a building parallel to a public street. The *façade zone* includes the vertical wall of the building with its architectural qualities and any other elements of the site that are located in front of the wall face and are visible from the public street. These elements can include windows, doors, signage, fences, garden sheds, landscaping, and various other site details.

The East Urbana Design Review District is part of a larger grid system of streets creating two types of lots: interior lots and corner lots. Corner lots are located at the intersection of streets and have two façade zones. Corner lots in the East Urbana Design Review District can choose one of their two street-facing facades to be the primary façade. The secondary street-facing façade should meet the design guidelines to the best extent possible.

Mandatory

- For interior lots, the front façade must contain a front entry and windows. For corner lots, one of the front facades must contain a front entry and windows, and the other façade does not need a front entry but must not be a “blank wall.”

Appropriate

- Facades with a focal point, interesting details and quality materials are appropriate.

Inappropriate

- The location of mechanical equipment (such as air conditioning units and mechanical pumps) in the façade zone.
- Parking should be located behind the principal structure and not in the façade zone.
- Blank façades are not appropriate as they are visible from a public right-of-way.

Interior Lot



The Façade Zone is the part of the building facing a public street. Interior lots typically have one façade zone.

Corner Lot



A corner lot typically has two façade zones, one for each public street.

Appropriate



The doors, windows, and trim are interesting details.

The projecting gable roofs add visual interest.

Inappropriate



This apartment building is sided with wood, a quality material, but faces sideways instead of facing front. The façade of the building is blank, which can have a negative impact on the neighborhood.

2. Massing & Scale

Massing is the three-dimensional bulk of a structure, including height, width, and depth. **Scale** is the perceived height and bulk of a building relative to that of neighboring buildings. Proper massing, scaling, and detailing are essential when blending any building into the district. The building mass should be broken up, using changes in wall planes, building height and rooflines, and by stepping back sections when new construction or a building addition is larger in height or volume than surrounding structures. The architectural design of a project should encourage compatibility and not cause a visual disruption along a block.

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

Changes in the wall plane break up the mass of the building.



This new apartment building (outside of the district) makes use of changes in the wall plane, building height, and roofline to fit in with the smaller single-family residences nearby.

Appropriate

- The scale of a structure should be compatible with other structures on the block face. If existing structures are smaller than the proposed new development, the use of changes in wall plane, building height, and roof line should be used to help the new structure fit in.
- Use of various decorative details and exterior materials to add interest, scale, and dimension to a building.

Inappropriate

- Buildings with blank wall faces unbroken by changes in wall plane, building height, etc.
- Abrupt changes in scale.
- Extreme changes in height and/or roofline.

3. Building Orientation

Building orientation refers to the manner in which a building relates to the street, to other structures on the site and to adjacent properties. The entrance to the building plays a major role in the orientation of a building. The Historic East Urbana Neighborhood follows a traditional neighborhood layout. The streets are on a grid, and the buildings are oriented towards the street. New construction should respect this traditional layout.

Mandatory

- Orient the primary entrance to the building toward the street. The primary entrance on a corner lot may be oriented towards either street.

Appropriate

- Buildings should have a clearly defined entrance on the front façade. The primary entrance should be emphasized, using such architectural details such as a door surround, door hood, pediment, front stoop or porch, or transom or fanlights.
- Buildings on corner lots are appropriate (but not required) to have entrances on both façades.

Inappropriate

- Buildings that are not oriented towards the street.
- Buildings that create “blank walls” on the front façade(s).
- Buildings without a defined primary entrance.
- A faux entry on the front façade is not appropriate, but may be appropriate in certain circumstances.

Appropriate



The primary entrance of this apartment building is oriented toward the street. The door hood and sidewalk focus attention on the entrance.

Inappropriate



This apartment building has a blank wall facing the street and is not allowed in the design review district.

Inappropriate



This building façade, while not presenting a blank wall, is not oriented toward the street and is mostly blank. This building is on a corner lot, so a primary entrance is not necessary, but this near blank wall is inappropriate.

4. Window & Door 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 are also important to the style of a building. Proposals within the district should be cognizant of the rhythm and patterns of openings on the façade. Height-to-width ratios for windows should encourage compatibility with the architectural style of the building as well as with the other styles found throughout the neighborhood.

Mandatory

- The front façade must contain a minimum of a front entry door opening and at least two window openings per story. For corner lots, the secondary street-facing façade must contain at least two window opening per story.

Appropriate

- The proportion of window and door openings to solid surfaces in the façade zone should be compatible with that of the traditional Historic East Urbana residential neighborhood.
- An ideal ratio of openings to solids is approximately 1:3 for the front façade.
- Large wall expanses in the façade zone should be visually interrupted by windows in a balanced rhythmic pattern, unless the architectural style calls for an irregular pattern.
- A consistent rhythm of openings on the façade.

Inappropriate

- Large wall expanses without openings.
- Irregular patterns of windows and doors.
- Openings that are too small in proportion to the wall expanse.



This apartment demonstrates an ideal pattern of window and door openings. These guidelines are striving to achieve this ideal pattern.

Appropriate



The ratio of openings to solids here is visually appealing, as is the consistent rhythm of openings. The architectural details and vertical orientation of the windows add further appeal.

Inappropriate



The ratio of openings (i.e., windows and doors) to solids in this building is inappropriate.

5. 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 accentuate its features. Preservation of mature trees, adding visual interest to individual properties, and providing effective methods of landscaping are important. The City Arbor Division should be used as a resource for existing trees and to determine the appropriate size and species of future tree plantings.

Appropriate

- Retain mature trees within the parkway and other public rights-of-way.
- Retain mature trees on private property where feasible.
- Plant new trees on private and public property to replenish the urban canopy.
- Protect mature trees from root damage during construction, both on the site and on adjacent properties.
- Use evergreens, dense deciduous shrubs, masonry walls, and/or berms to screen mechanical equipment such as utility meters, air conditioners, etc.
- Design landscaping to ensure safe pedestrian and automobile traffic circulation on and off private property.
- Diversify tree species.
- Mix annuals and perennials to encourage all-season landscape color accents.

Inappropriate

- Invasive species.
- Astro turf.
- Avoid extensive use of paving materials instead of landscaping.
- Avoid monotonous expanses of turf without accent plantings.
- Loss of or damage to healthy mature trees.
- Unscreened mechanical equipment.



The mature tree and evergreen bushes in front of this apartment building help break up the monotony of the front façade.



Historic East Urbana is home to a thriving urban forest whose canopies shade the streets with rich green hues and excite the neighborhood with spring pastels and fall brilliance.



The evergreen shrubs and mature trees planted in front of this apartment building complement the architecture of the building and add visual interest to the block.

6. Parking Areas

The district retains the scale and patterns of a traditional neighborhood in terms of the grid street layout. Vehicular access onto properties must meet engineering and safety standards and be appropriately incorporated into the site design. While parking areas are integral to many uses, softening their visual impact to adjacent properties and from the public street is essential.

Appropriate

- To the extent possible, locate parking behind the main structure or below ground.
- Parking at grade should be screened.
- Locate single-family garages behind or recessed from the façade of the main structure.
- Use screening of parking areas to reduce visual impact from adjacent properties.
- Use hedges, wood fences or masonry walls to screen parking areas from adjacent properties.
- Consider use of permeable pavements.

Inappropriate

- Elevated buildings that allow visible parking at grade.
- Avoid parking in the façade zone.
- Avoid extensive parking areas.
- Avoid excessive paved areas.

Note: Parking must also meet Article VIII of the Urbana Zoning Ordinance.

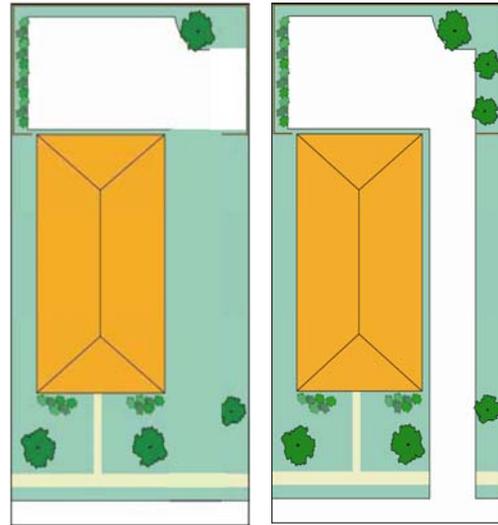


Parking on ground floor should be screened and not in the façade zone



Parking is on ground floor, but is screened and not visible in the façade zone

Recommended Parking Configuration



Multi-Family on a corner lot

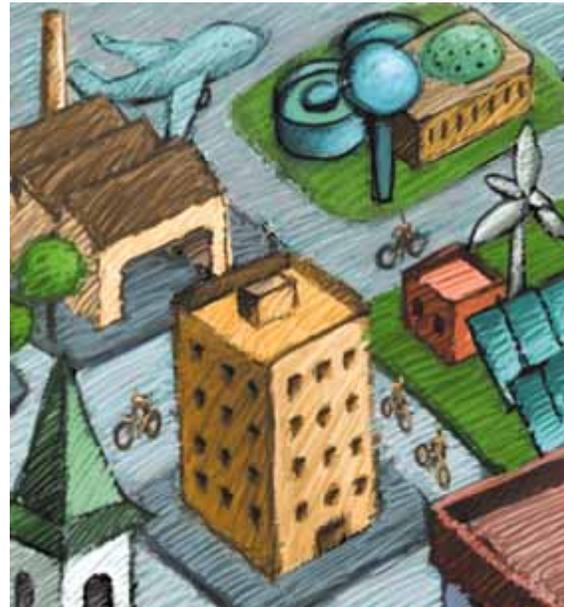
Multi-Family on an interior lot

7. Sustainability

The City of Urbana is committed to reducing Urbana's environmental footprint. Including a sustainability component in the East Urbana Design Guidelines works towards that goal. As this document is concerned with design and not building techniques, this section should be considered advisory best practices rather than being considered integral to the evaluation of the design of a project.



Sustainable Urbana A Place to Work, Live and Grow



Source: Sustainable Cities, Environmentally Sustainable Urban Development.

Appropriate

The use of best practices in green building techniques, including but not limited to:

- Re-use of buildings and building materials
- Permeable surfaces for drainage
- Cisterns for irrigation
- Use of solar panels
- Use of renewable energy
- Use of low-level and full cut-off lighting
- Attainment of LEED standards
- Use of green roofs
- Installation of geothermal, passive solar building design, or straw bale construction
- Landscaping to lower heating/cooling costs
- Native or drought-resistant landscaping
- Provide bicycle facilities

Inappropriate

- Wastefulness in building practices
- Excessive paved areas
- Intensive or wasteful lighting
- No provision for pedestrian and/or bicycle transit