

To: Urban Design Commission
Plan Commission

From: Peter Ostlind

Date: November 19, 2012

Re: Downtown Urban Design Guidelines

I have reviewed the draft of the design guidelines and offer these thoughts for your consideration.

A (1) (e) Buildings at intersections of streets should have a strong corner element, and that element should extend to the property line along both streets.

First I'm assuming that the property lines in question are the side property lines of the parcel. Not that the corner element should necessarily be set outward to the front property line on each street. I agree with the intent that a corner element should not look pasted on but should connect into the larger building. (unlike recent examples at the corner of Park & Regent or Glenway & Monroe - Parmen Place) With larger buildings especially ones which extend laterally a corner element that extends to a side property line would lose its sense of being a 'corner' element. Corner elements need to be strong architectural features of a scale appropriate to the building and must integrate into the balance of the design.

A (2) (a) parking facilities – first floors

This guideline should be broadened to discourage structured parking on the at grade level, especially along street property lines. Grade level parking will lead to long blank walls along sidewalks. The current proposal for renovations and an addition to the Anchor Bank building on the square is an example. The proposal for grade level parking is resulting in long masonry walls along Carroll and Doty streets. Simply having an open plaza above, which is also screened, does nothing to activate the sidewalk area.

The guidelines should also work to limit the width of openings for parking structures, one lane in each direction at most. Provisions should be made within the structure for stacking vehicles. Setting the entry control point further within the structure will allow for this, while also being able to provide additional lanes for ticketing or payment.

B (1) (b) Larger Buildings should have their mass broken up to avoid being out of scale with their surroundings and to provide a more pedestrian friendly quality. Articulation of buildings in both plan and profile can help break up the mass of larger buildings and should be incorporated. ...

To be effective the articulations needs to be significant in dimension not simply a minimal gesture. In combination with a change in materials this can be quite effective. The Depot Apartments, 2 S. Bedford, extends for a full block yet reads as three separate buildings. Small gestures like that found at the recent building at 1915 Monroe St. do not accomplish this goal. The offset is minimal and the balance of the structure is uniform through the offset. The result is a building that looks larger than its surroundings and does not begin to look like two separate structures of the scale of its neighbors. Stronger wording to emphasize that truly significant articulation is required should be incorporated into this guideline.

B (5) (b) All sides of a structure should exhibit design continuity and be finished with quality materials. Materials should be those typically found in urban settings.

Currently in the downtown just about every possible building material can be found so the 'typically found' criterion seems meaningless. The new zoning code has a specific section speaking to high quality building materials. Dropping the second sentence and inserting "high quality" in reference to the materials in the first sentence is recommended.