

**Urban Village Overlay Zone Design Guidelines**

**Rochester Downtown Alliance (RDA)  
RDA Development Committee & RDA Board**

**Rochester, Minnesota**

**July 2009**



**Overlay Zoning Work Group**

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(approved May 9, 2008)

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## **Introduction**

This set of design guidelines and supporting information was developed by the Rochester Downtown Alliance (RDA) Development Committee. Research and development was done by the Overlay Zoning Work Group of the Development Committee between February 2008 and July 2009. Individual sections were reviewed/revised/approved by the RDA Development Committee during that time period. The full set of Urban Village Overlay Zone Design Guidelines were endorsed by the full RDA Board in July 2009.

The intention to establish an Urban Village as a portion of downtown Rochester was born as the result of the Rochester Minnesota Market-Based Downtown Plan in July 2004. The Urban Village is to be a destination location within downtown Rochester where the community, downtown workers, and Mayo patients could come to live, work or play. The location was to be in the area south of the central business and medical districts from 2<sup>nd</sup> Street SW to Soldiers Field, extending eastward to the river.

In a typical urban village, it is common to see buildings with shops on the ground floor and a mix of offices and housing on upper floors. Hence it would be possible to walk from your home to your office, which is just a few minutes down the street. Along the way you would pass stores from which you can easily make purchases, without travelling across multiple suburbs.

Since 2004, plans for downtown Rochester have evolved to accommodate not only the Rochester community and its visitors, but the new University of Minnesota Rochester. Just as representation of the University has been added to the RDA Board and Development Committees, these design guidelines have been developed to envision a place where people come to live, work, play and learn. While master planning efforts for the University may alter the boundaries of the Downtown Rochester Urban Village, the Design Guidelines will remain in tact. Urban villages are typical of communities which surround urban colleges and universities.

### **Purpose of Design Guidelines**

(approved December 19, 2008)

The purpose of the urban village design guidelines are to: (1) provide input to the creation of the overlay zoning district and its associated ordinances, and (2) provide guidance to the Rochester Downtown Alliance (RDA) project review process. Proposals and projects are expected to adhere to these guidelines when RDA or City assistance is sought for letters of support, grant requests, TIF, incentive developments, land purchases, and other activities as determined by the RDA or City. Applicants for such assistance should carefully consider each applicable guideline and demonstrate recognition of the guideline's intent to the review authority, whose objective is to ensure that the intent and spirit of the guidelines are followed.

### **Purpose of Overlay Zoning District**

(approved July 25, 2008)

The purpose of the urban village overlay district is to:

1. Promote development of a compact pedestrian-oriented urban village providing opportunities to live, work, shop, learn, and play in a unique, attractive, and memorable environment at densities and intensities that support transit usage.



Drafting and adoption of an ordinance involves a major commitment of time and energy. The City Council will need to initiate the process. Planning Department, Administration and Legal Department staff, with the participation of the Development Committee, will need to draft ordinance language. Public hearings before the Plan Commission and Council will need to be held, with all impacted property owners notified. Before we start down this road we recommend that the full RDA Board formally voice its support for an urban village overlay zone as outlined above or as modified by the committee.

**Cities whose Design Guidelines were consulted**

Hopkins, MN	Des Moines, IA	Sauk City, WI
Austin, TX	Charlotte, NC	Ann Arbor, MI
Berwyn, IL	Boulder, CO	Greenville, SC
Normal, IL	Wheaton, IL	San Francisco, CA
Pasadena, CA	Madison, WI	Hopkins, MN
Fort Collins, CO	St. Paul, MN	

## Design Guidelines Sections

### 1. Permitted & Deleted Uses

(approved May 9, 2008)

- Multi-family residential
- Manufactured home park (permitted as conditional use)
- Semi-transient accommodations – rooming houses, sorority/fraternity houses, medical hospitality houses (*define in ordinance*)
- Congregate housing
- Transient accommodations (permitted as conditional use)
- Offices
- Business services
- Personal services
- Repair services (as an accessory use of a retail establishment) (*excludes automotive*)
- Educational services
- Membership organizations
- Daycare facilities
- Medical facilities
- Nursing and personal care
- Veterinary services (permitted as conditional use)
- Fast food restaurants (*no drive-thrus*)
- Standard restaurants (*no drive-thrus*)
- Transportation services (permitted as conditional use)
- Retail trade
- Communications
- Emergency services (permitted as conditional use)
- Parking facilities (*see design standards*)
- Research and testing
- Indoor athletic facility
- Indoor recreation
- Drinking and entertainment
- Adult establishment (*750 ft away from residential zoning, church school, etc.*)
- Area accessory use (*churches, schools, fire stations, etc.*)
- Local transit (permitted as conditional use)

#### Deleted uses

- Auto repair and maintenance
- Car washes
- Drive-thrus (*does not effect existing drive-thrus, grandfathered in*)
- Sales and storage lots
- Convenience retail (*filling stations*)
- Wholesaling
- Motor freight/warehousing
- Trade shops

Advertising signs (*billboard*)

## **2. Building Massing & Floor/Area Ratios**

(approved 03-27-09)

Note: See Building Setbacks, approved June 25, 2008.

### **Guiding Principles:**

The Urban Village is intended to be a compact, walkable, pedestrian-scale area where people can live, work, learn, and play. It is created through the development of continuous building frontages along the street which engage the pedestrian with a mix of active uses and rich architectural detail. Encouraging the construction of buildings with four stories at the street property line establishes the desired pedestrian scale and density. Additional stories may be permitted, provided they step back from the street.

### **Recommendations:**

- At the front lot line, except as provided below, no setback is permitted for the ground through fourth floor facades of a principal building.
- If a principal building is located on a corner lot, the ground floor through fourth floor facades shall be located on the lot lines.
- The following exceptions to the no setback provision along front and side street lot lines shall apply:
  - a. A portion of the building façade may be set back from the lot line in order to provide an articulated façade or to accommodate a building entrance, provided that the total area of the space created does not exceed one square foot for every linear foot of building frontage.
  - b. In order to accommodate an outdoor dining or seating area, up to 50% of the building façade may be set back no more than 20 feet from the lot line.
- The minimum height of a principal building shall be two (2) occupied building floors or stories.
- The maximum height of a principal building shall be six (6) occupied building floors or stories.
- The façade of any floor above the fourth floor shall be set back from the right of way line of any public or private street a distance of at least one foot for every one foot of building floor height.
- Any floor or story above the fourth floor shall be used for permanent residences or accessory uses for the sole use of the permanent residents of the building.
- No minimum rear setback is required.
- Ground and second floor facades of a principal building shall be located on the interior side lot lines. An exception is an arcade. Arcades connecting the primary street with the alley (where occurs) are permitted for pedestrian access to the alley. Maximum width of an arcade is 18 feet.
- Interior courtyards opened to the ground level are permitted as the building code allows.

### **Background:**

Analyses of successful urban streets has shown that where the building wall meets the sidewalk, it creates a comfortable level of enclosure ( like an out-door room), a sense of safety which enhances the use of the street by pedestrians. The measure of the level of enclosure is related to the ratio of building height to overall street width from face to face of buildings. Design studies have determined that a comfortable, human-scale space is found where the ratio of building height to street width is between 1:2 and 1:3. Typically urban right of way widths result in appropriate building heights of three to four stories.

First Avenue, the main street of the Urban Village, has a right of way width of 95 feet which suggests that a building height of approximately 47.5 feet or four stories would not overwhelm the street and still provide an acceptable level of enclosure (See Illustrations).

As many of the building floors as possible should be built to the street property line to maximize the use of the allowable building footprint. Four story buildings will promote development of a compact pedestrian oriented urban village. Any additional stories above the fourth floor should step back from the front façade to preserve the pedestrian scale of the urban village streets.

In developing these recommendations we reviewed setback guidelines in other city downtown districts.

This topic is relevant to the **RDA Downtown Development Project Discussion Guide** topics as indicated by *italics*

Reviews downtown development projects to assess whether they meet the Vision and objectives for downtown Rochester:

**(1) Vision: “Downtown Rochester will be a unique, vibrant urban experience – a central gathering place for the community that is attractive, inviting, fun and livable.”**

**(2) Objectives, Elements of Market-Based Downtown Plan:**

**(a) Street appeal and overall sense of place**

**(b) Provide a stimulating and pedestrian-oriented, urban lifestyle**

**(c) Encouraging street level activity**

**(d) Residential, business, or mixed-use**

(e) Parking impact, sensitivities, requirements

**(f) Visual connections and architecture**

(g) Connections to natural assets, such as Zumbro River and Civic Center green spaces

(h) Longevity of products, material durability

**(3) Assess whether proposed projects enhance other downtown projects or the entire downtown.**

In summary: A large proportion of our review guidelines support these building massing and floor/area ratios.

### **Illustrations:**





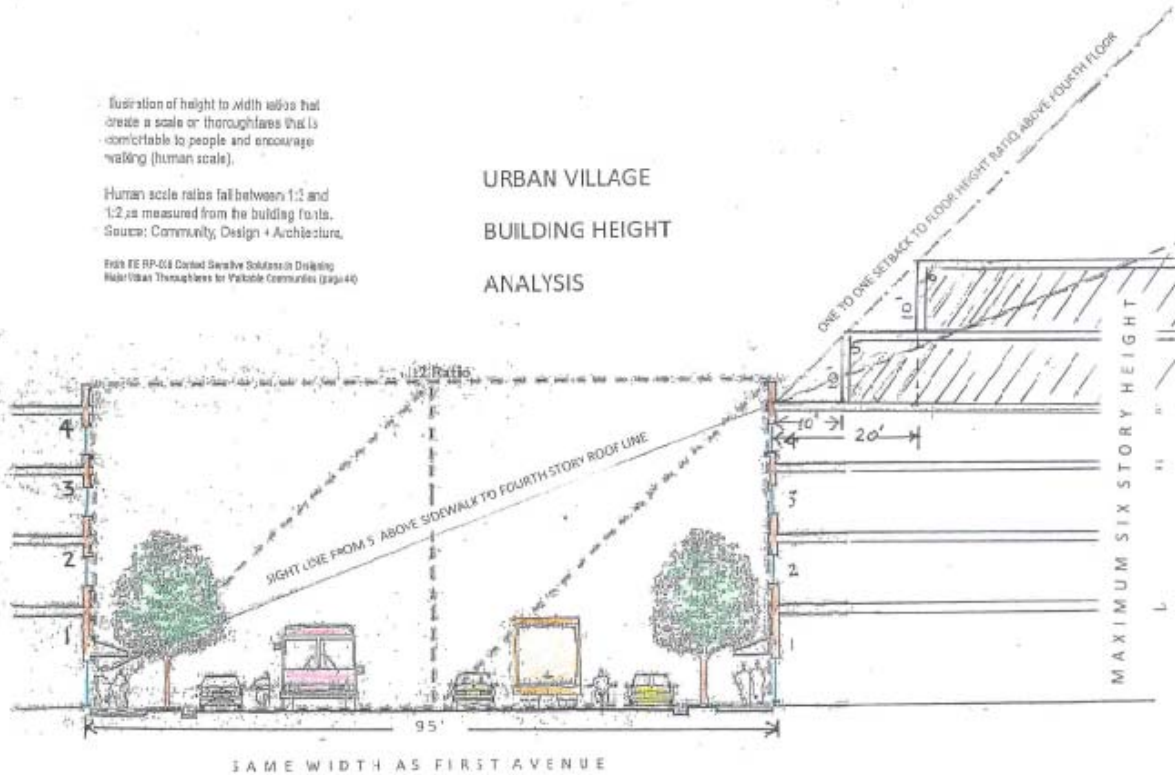


Illustration of height to width ratios that create a scale or thoroughfare that is comfortable to people and encourage walking (human scale).

Human scale ratios fall between 1:1 and 1:2 as measured from the building fronts.  
 Source: Community, Design + Architecture.

From TE RP-018 Corridor Specific Solutions in Developing Multiple Urban Thoroughfares for Walkable Communities (page 46)

URBAN VILLAGE  
 BUILDING HEIGHT  
 ANALYSIS



1/16"=1'

### **3. Public Right-of-way “Complete Streets”**

(approved 07-10-09)

#### **Guiding Principles:**

The public right-of-way is the term used to describe the publicly owned area between property lines. It can include a variety of elements, such as lanes for vehicle travel, parking, bicycling, walking areas, street furniture, bus stops, utility poles, planting strips, with landscaping and trees, and signs.

Downtown streets must balance the needs of pedestrians, bicycles, transit and the automobile in creating an attractive and viable urban core. Downtown streets are for people first, commercial activity second, parking third, and through-traffic fourth. They should be “Complete Streets.” which respect the pedestrian, bicycle, transit, automobile hierarchy.

Urban Streets are the stages on which the public life of the community is acted out. Downtown streets are the most important and pervasive public space and common ground, when it comes to making downtown Rochester a destination. Likewise, visible caring and upkeep are critical to the vitality of urban street life.

#### **Recommendations:**

**Sidewalks-** The most profound way to change our streets is to change the balance between people and cars by seeking the widest possible sidewalks and calming traffic.

**Crosswalks-** Crosswalks should favor pedestrian movement at all downtown intersections.

**Bike Lanes-** Where bike lanes are desired, it should be at the expense of a car lane or a parking strip rather than at the expense of sidewalk width. Ideally, most streets in the urban village should be "calm" enough to allow bike traffic in car lanes rather than in a separate bike lane.

**Generous Street Level Windows-** Windows engage pedestrians and create a feeling of trust and openness in a city. They enhance feelings of security, implying that users could be assisted if in danger (see Facades section).

**Street Furniture-** Street furniture should be located at special places created at intersections, and represent opportunities to use the work of local artists and crafts people.

**Lighting-** Lighting exists at two levels – Street lighting and sidewalk lighting. Street lighting provides a base level of illumination. Sidewalk lighting provides lighting for pedestrians. Both should meet dark sky guidelines and define the street space. Sidewalk lighting should define the pedestrian space and be of pedestrian scale.

**Street Trees-** Trees should be consistently used to define the street space, provide shade in the summer, and create great environments for sidewalk cafes.

**Public Art-** Great streets should accommodate and celebrate public art in all of its forms (see Public Art section).

**Transit Stops-** Transit stops should be provided with amenities, public services and proper signage to increase the use of public transportation.

**Background:**

In developing these recommendations we reviewed setback guidelines in other city downtown districts.

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(a) *Street appeal and overall sense of place*

(b) *Provide a stimulating and pedestrian-oriented, urban lifestyle*

(c) *Encouraging street level activity*

(d) Residential, business, or mixed-use

(e) Parking impact, sensitivities, requirements

(f) Visual connections and architecture

(g) Connections to natural assets, such as Zumbro River and Civic Center green spaces

(h) Longevity of products, material durability

(3) Assess whether proposed projects enhance other downtown projects or the entire downtown.

In summary: A large proportion of our review guidelines support these building massing and floor/area ratios.

**Illustrations:**



#### **4. Parking**

(approved May 15, 2009)

##### **Guiding Principles:**

The Urban Village is designated for active, human-oriented streetscapes, which are pedestrian in scale and accommodate multiple transit modes. Residents, employees, students and visitors, of all ages and abilities, will be able to live, work, learn and play, with little need for automobiles. People coming to the Urban Village may come on foot, bike, transit, and other modes. For those who drive, these guidelines promote an environment of “park once and walk,” as opposed to parking multiple times.

As a busy urban area we cannot build our way out of auto congestion. We must provide transportation choices that include transit, walking and biking to more daily destinations. Downtown economic health is much stronger when compact walkability is established and healthy transit depends on compact walkability.

Existing downtown parking requirements:

- Support and encourage the use of single-occupant automobiles over other transit choices.
- Require the dedication of excessive land and financial resources to parking automobiles.
- Reduce the land available for compact scale Urban Village housing and mixed-uses.
- Make downtown housing less affordable – one parking space per unit increases costs by about 18% and decreases density by about 30%.
- Create an unnecessary cost burden that can stifle infill development and the reuse of existing buildings.

Stated another way, suburban parking standards, used elsewhere in the city, should not be applied to the Urban Village.

These guidelines are intended to help create a safe and comfortable environment for pedestrians, vehicles and multiple transit modes. They presume that Urban Village mixed use development efforts have achieved a successful critical mass. Therefore they are designed to be applicable to the future desired conditions of mixed use, density, and street-level activities. Until that future condition is in place, some exceptions to these guidelines may be approved for projects developed early in the evolution of the Urban Village.

##### **Recommendations:**

General

- The off-street parking requirements contained in the City’s existing zoning ordinances should be reduced in the Urban Village to reflect its proximity to the City’s major employment center, existing public parking, and mass transit.
- Zoning code requirements for parking should identify the maximum parking allowed.
- Additional reductions in off-street parking requirements will be considered when options such as sheltered bicycle parking, participation in car share programs, and other programs, reduce the need for private automobiles.
- Where uses have different peak parking demands, shared parking agreements should be facilitated.
- Consideration should be given to exempting small retail establishments from parking requirements.

- Enclosed parking is encouraged. Parking lots are discouraged, but permitted when they adhere to design guidelines.
- Parking costs should be unbundled from residence purchase costs, rental rates, and employee benefits.
- Payments “in lieu” of providing required parking should be considered, as well as “land banking” to satisfy potential future needs.
- Central off-street parking may be needed in selected locations within the Urban Village.

#### On-Street Parking

- On-street parking may be considered when calculating parking requirements.
- Meter limits should be set to encourage turnover adjacent to retail establishments.
- Use angled parking wherever possible to maximize number of spaces.

#### Lots (surface parking)

- Parking lots are not permitted to front on pedestrian oriented streets (such as 1<sup>st</sup> Ave. SW).
- Parking shall be located at the rear of the principal building with access from the alley, if possible.
- Parking otherwise visible from the street should be screened with a wall compatible with the building design.

#### Structures (ramps)

- Structured parking preserves land, minimizes environmental impacts, and maintains and contributes to the integrity and safety of the pedestrian streetscape. It can be particularly effective in allowing increased densities.
- All parking structures shall contain street level active uses (retail, for example) on the major right of way (such as 1<sup>st</sup> Ave. SW).
- Structured parking facades should contain architectural elements with appropriate proportions and materials to harmonize with the streetscape and nearby buildings.

#### Valet parking

- Valet parking services may be operated by local businesses as approved by the city. Such operations are to be located mid-block, as designated by signage installed by the City.

#### Loading Zones

- Building provisions for loading shall occur off alleys, where they exist.

#### **Background:**

Existing parking has been documented, see Illustrations. The gross area within the boundary of the Urban Village, as presently defined, is 45.5 acres. The net building area (less ROW, railroads and water) is 28.3 acres, or 62.2% of the gross area. Of the net building area in the Urban Village, 10.4 acres, 36.7%, is used for surface parking. When public structured parking, is included, 40.8%, 11.5 acres, of the building area is presently used solely for parking purposes. These 11.5 acres of parking are in addition to on-street parking.

In developing these recommendations other cities’ practices, lessons, and successes have been researched. Two notable studies, Maryland’s “Driving Urban Environments: Smart Growth Parking Best Practices,” and “Parking Management: Strategies, Evaluation and Planning,” from the Victoria Transport Policy Institute, have been studied.

Tested methods to promote the creation of a safe and comfortable environment for pedestrians, vehicles and multiple transit modes in the Urban Village, and complimentary parking design/management/financing strategies include:

- Increase on-street parking wherever possible, while limiting the overall parking supply.
- Set parking maximums and area-wide parking caps.
- Provide necessary parking without large expanses of pavement or land.
- Increase capacity of existing parking facilities.
- Value price on-street parking.
- Plan for overflow parking.

Concurrently:

- Control parking demand by transit investments, transit-oriented development, complete streets, and traditional neighborhood design.
- Provide bicycle parking and changing facilities.
- Unbundle parking
- Establish a Land –Value Tax (LVT).

Assessment “in lieu” of parking:

- Assessment “in lieu” of parking provides funding or reimbursement for new or existing City-owned parking facilities within the Urban Village. Unlike a parking assessment district, “in lieu” charges are not a local tax levied upon all business owners within the Urban Village. Rather they are levied on new development in exchange for waiving requirements for on-site parking.
- Funds generated by “in lieu” assessments would assist the City in property acquisition, capital funding, and operations of parking lots and structures (ramps). Ideally, these parking facilities will be constructed concurrently with new development, or be operational before new businesses begin construction or remodeling. The existing 3<sup>rd</sup> Street ramp is strategically located within the urban village and can serve as the central parking location. Leased parking spaces serving the Medical District can be reduced over time.

Additional notes pulled from research include:

- Households near transit spend 9% of household budget on transportation. Households in auto-dependent neighborhoods spend 25%.
- There is commonly an overabundance of parking downtown – but there is too little parking within a few feet of the front door of the building a person is going to.
- Underpriced curb parking encourages cruising to look for a spot right at the door, causing congestion and pollution.
- A car needs 300 square feet, including parking space and area to maneuver.
- High parking requirements are a form of growth control – they restrain density and economic growth without policy debate.
- The more attractive, safe, healthy and exciting a downtown is, the more costly and scarce the downtown parking becomes.
- The rule of thumb for proper amount of downtown parking says: beyond 200 parking spaces per 1,000 jobs, a city becomes noticeably polluted, auto dependent and energy intensive.
- Good, efficient public transit and scarce, costly parking is the key to being a successful city – Toronto Mayor.
- 95% of the life of a car is spent stationary.



- Subsidizing free and non-market-priced parking costs more annually than the U.S. government devotes to Medicare – Donald Shoup,
- It is suspected that the number of parking spots per car in North America is three or four to one, maybe more – Donald Shoup.

A detailed parking study, guided by Least Cost Transportation Planning (optimize all available transportation options and coordinate them), is the next step towards providing appropriate parking supplies, and determining revenue streams necessary to pay for incurred costs.

This topic is relevant to the **RDA Downtown Development Project Discussion Guide** topics as indicated by *italics*

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(2) Objectives, Elements of Market-Based Downtown Plan:

*(a) Street appeal and overall sense of place*

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*(d) Residential, business, or mixed-use*

*(e) Parking impact, sensitivities, requirements*

*(f) Visual connections and architecture*

(g) Connections to natural assets, such as Zumbro River and Civic Center green spaces

(h) Longevity of products, material durability

*(3) Assess whether proposed projects enhance other downtown projects or the entire downtown.*

In summary: A large proportion of our review guidelines support these Parking Guidelines.

**Illustrations:**



← yes

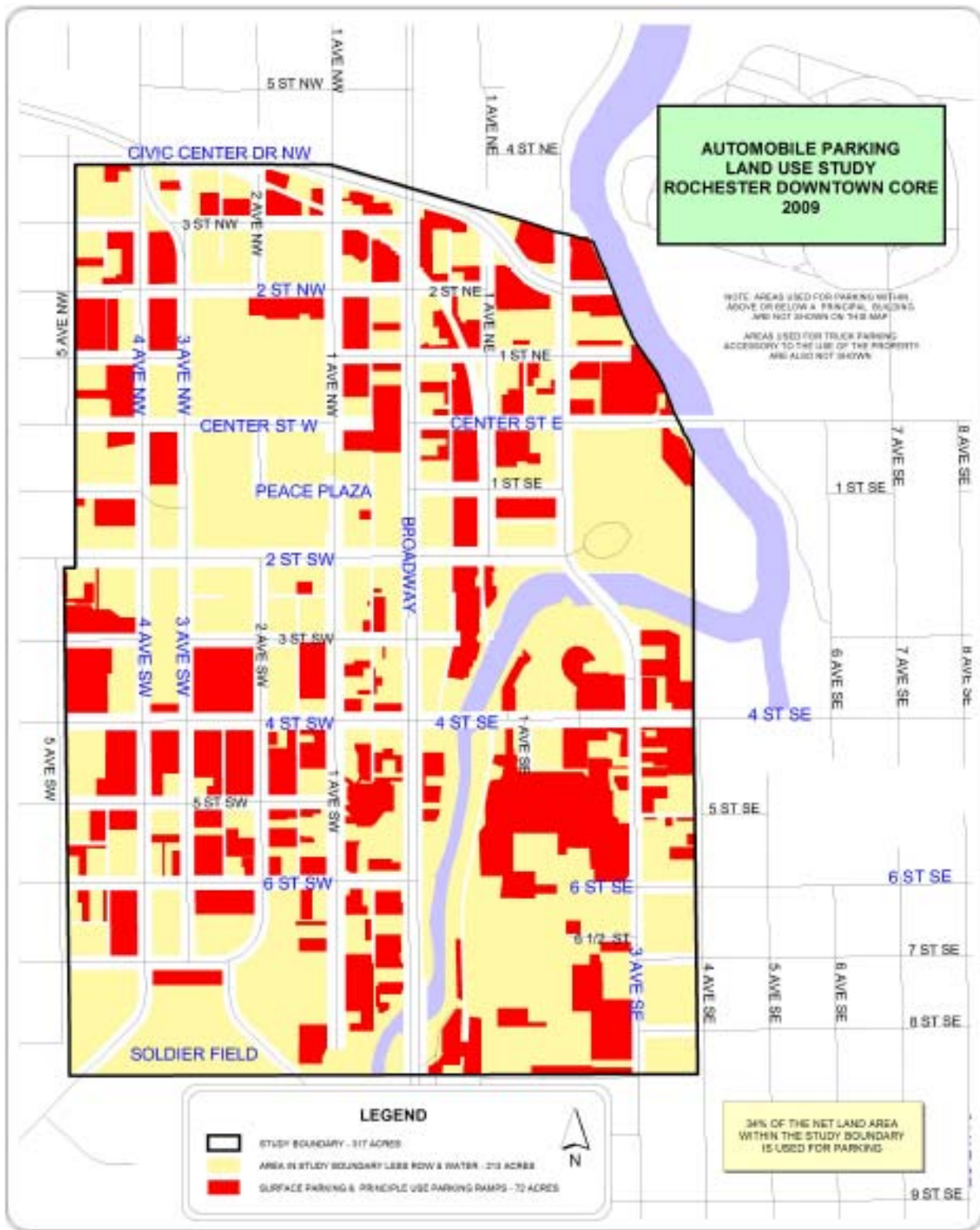


no →



← yes





## 5. Retaining Existing Contributing Buildings

(approved 07-10-09)

### **Guiding Principles:**

The Urban Village is intended to be a destination that attracts the community, visitors, workers and residents with these characteristics: unique, healthy, environmentally friendly and memorable. Retaining existing contributing buildings supports each of these characteristics.

Older buildings, adaptively reused, enhance the uniqueness of the built environment and pedestrian scale; attract unique uses with architectural detail and small bay sizes; and conserve energy and natural resources (the Greenest building is the one already built). Additionally, many people choose to visit and live in places that recognize the importance of saving the places that memorably tell their story in brick and stone and wood.

### **Recommendations:**

- Recognize existing contributing (character/cultural heritage) buildings as an economic development asset in the Urban Village.
- Develop means to revitalize and retain existing contributing (character/cultural heritage) buildings in the Urban Village.
- Use adaptive reuse of existing buildings to further RDA goals: create vibrant gathering places, attractive housing options, and celebrate the downtown experience.

### **Background:**

The Greenest building is the one already built, according to Carl Elefante, FAIA. Historic buildings are inherently sustainable. Preservation maximizes the use of existing materials and infrastructure, reduces waste, and preserves the historic character of older towns and cities. The energy embedded in an existing building can be 30% of the embedded energy of maintenance and operations for the entire life of the building. Sustainability begins with preservation. Historic buildings were traditionally designed with many sustainable features that responded to climate and site. When effectively restored and reused, these features can bring about substantial energy savings. Taking into account historic buildings' original climatic adaptations, today's sustainable technology can supplement inherent sustainable features without compromising unique historic character.

Resources for adaptive reuse of existing buildings, in coordination with appropriate new uses are: The National Trust Main Street Center, Minnesota's State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), Minnesota's Preservation Alliance, Rochester's Heritage Preservation Commission, the Red Wing, MN, Action Plan, 0609, and RAEDI.

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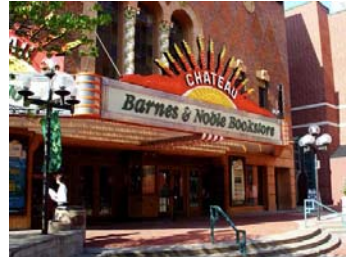
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  - (g) *Connections to natural assets, such as Zumbro River and Civic Center green spaces*
  - (h) *Longevity of products, material durability*
- (3) *Assess whether proposed projects enhance other downtown projects or the entire downtown.*

In summary: A large proportion of our review guidelines support retaining existing contributing buildings.

**Illustrations:**



## **6. Facades** (approved 12-19-08)

### **Guiding Principles:**

A building's form and materials contribute to the image and use of a district. The highest level of craftsmanship, durability, and building longevity is expected, reflecting the long term investment in Rochester's downtown. Progressive designs, scale and detail will communicate an area identity and will create a unique eclecticism within the village.

This applies to new building and substantial rehab of existing buildings.

### **Recommendations:**

#### Massing & Materials

- Buildings should be “vertically proportioned” with a distinct base, a middle and a top, created by variations of detailing, color and/or materials. Verticality is emphasized using structural bays, variations in materials, and variations in building plane. Verticality reflecting the twenty two feet historic bay width in Rochester is recommended.
  - Buildings should meet the ground with a solid base treatment that creates a visual transition from sidewalk to building wall.
  - Buildings should express the traditional distinction in floor heights between street levels and upper levels through detailing, materials and fenestration. The presence of a belt course is an important feature in this relationship.
  - New buildings must provide a horizontal sign frieze in order to define a strong boundary between the ground level and upper façade.

#### Entrances, Openings and Passages

- At least 50% of the first floor of the primary façade should be articulated with building entrances, display windows, and windows affording views into retail, office, or lobby spaces. This requirement shall apply to all public street frontages.
- For upper floors, floor to floor heights and window openings should appear to be similar to those seen traditionally.
- All street facades should have architecturally articulated entrances. A building located on a corner lot may provide a single primary entrance at the corner.
- Building entrances shall be recessed into the face of the building to a depth that permits the entry door to open and close without projecting into the public right-of-way.
- Occasional pedestrian passages are encouraged to break down the scale of a block, and to connect streets, alleys and interior courtyards. This is especially important in conjunction with larger developments.

#### Quality & Details

- Buildings should be constructed of high quality materials such as brick, stone, or cast stone.
- Buildings should engage the public. The presence of window displays and human-scale design elements will add interest to street-level facades.
- Highly reflective or darkly tinted glass should not be used.

- Projections over the sidewalk are allowed (subject to municipal approval) including balconies and bay windows. Projections shall not extend more than 36 inches beyond the boundary of a right-of-way.
- Buildings should explore opportunities to create “second storefronts” along arcades, alleys and walkways. The architectural features, materials, and the articulation of a façade of a building shall be continued on all sides visible from a public street.

#### Roofs & Projections

- Roof lines should be expressed in a visually interesting manner that complements the composition of the building and the surrounding area. Use a strong, attractively detailed cornice or parapet in conjunction with a “flat” roof. Sculpted roof forms are permissible if they employ high quality roofing materials.

#### **Background:**

In developing these recommendations we reviewed awning guidelines in other city downtown districts.

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***(f) Visual connections and architecture***

***(g) Connections to natural assets, such as Zumbro River and Civic Center green spaces***

***(h) Longevity of products, material durability***

***(3) Assess whether proposed projects enhance other downtown projects or the entire downtown.***

In summary: A large proportion of our review guidelines support these awning design guidelines.

#### **Illustrations:**



## 7. Alleys, Arcades, Riverwalks & Integrated Walkways

(approved 12-19-08)

### **Guiding Principles:**

The Urban Village is intended to be an area of high pedestrian activity; include structures of pedestrian scale, rich architectural details, and historic significance; and, is close to many natural assets. Urban Village living will be enhanced by increasing walkability, uses and density.

As many building facades as possible should open onto alleys, arcades, riverwalks, and other open spaces, interconnecting all uses with the public sidewalk system. An interconnection of active, safe, and pleasurable walkways supports mixed usages.

### **Recommendations:**

- Identify connections through alleys, arcades, intra-block areas, courtyards, riverwalks and traditional sidewalks that help to create a pedestrian network linking all downtown zones and assets.
- Provide creative design solutions for vibrant alleys/walkways that are active, safe, engaging and help stimulate business activity.
- Integrate the operational needs of downtown alleys, including service, trash and vehicular access, with pedestrian activities.

### **Background:**

This topic is relevant to the RDA Downtown Development Project Discussion Guide topics as indicated by *italics*

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***(1) Vision: “Downtown Rochester will be a unique, vibrant urban experience – a central gathering place for the community that is attractive, inviting, fun and livable.”***

***(2) Objectives, Elements of Market-Based Downtown Plan:***

***(a) Street appeal and overall sense of place***

***(b) Provide a stimulating and pedestrian-oriented, urban lifestyle***

***(c) Encouraging street level activity***

***(d) Residential, business, or mixed-use***

***(e) Parking impact, sensitivities, requirements***

***(f) Visual connections and architecture***

***(g) Connections to natural assets, such as Zumbro River and Civic Center green spaces***

***(h) Longevity of products, material durability***

***(3) Assess whether proposed projects enhance other downtown projects or the entire downtown.***

In summary: A large proportion of our review guidelines support these walkways design guidelines.

### **Illustrations**









## 8. Curb Cuts (vehicle driveways)

(approved May 15, 2009)

### **Guiding Principles:**

A curb cut is defined as a break or opening in the curb for the purpose of allowing vehicular access to a public street from private property. A safe walkable and enjoyable environment will be enhanced through the elimination of curb cuts wherever possible

A curb cut turns a sidewalk into a driveway. Driveways are negative because they:

- Increase the likelihood of pedestrian and bicycle accidents with automobiles
- Interrupt the on-street continuity-frontage of buildings
- Decrease the ability to provide on-street parking

### **Recommendations**

The Urban Village is well served by existing alleys, enhancing the opportunity to minimize curb cuts which damage walkability and potential building density. See illustration below.

Access to private property should be via an alley as opposed to a private curb cut. As areas are being redeveloped, curb cuts should be eliminated.

Alleys should be re-established in the Urban Village, where not present.

### **Background**

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(e) *Parking impact, sensitivities, requirements*

(f) *Visual connections and architecture*

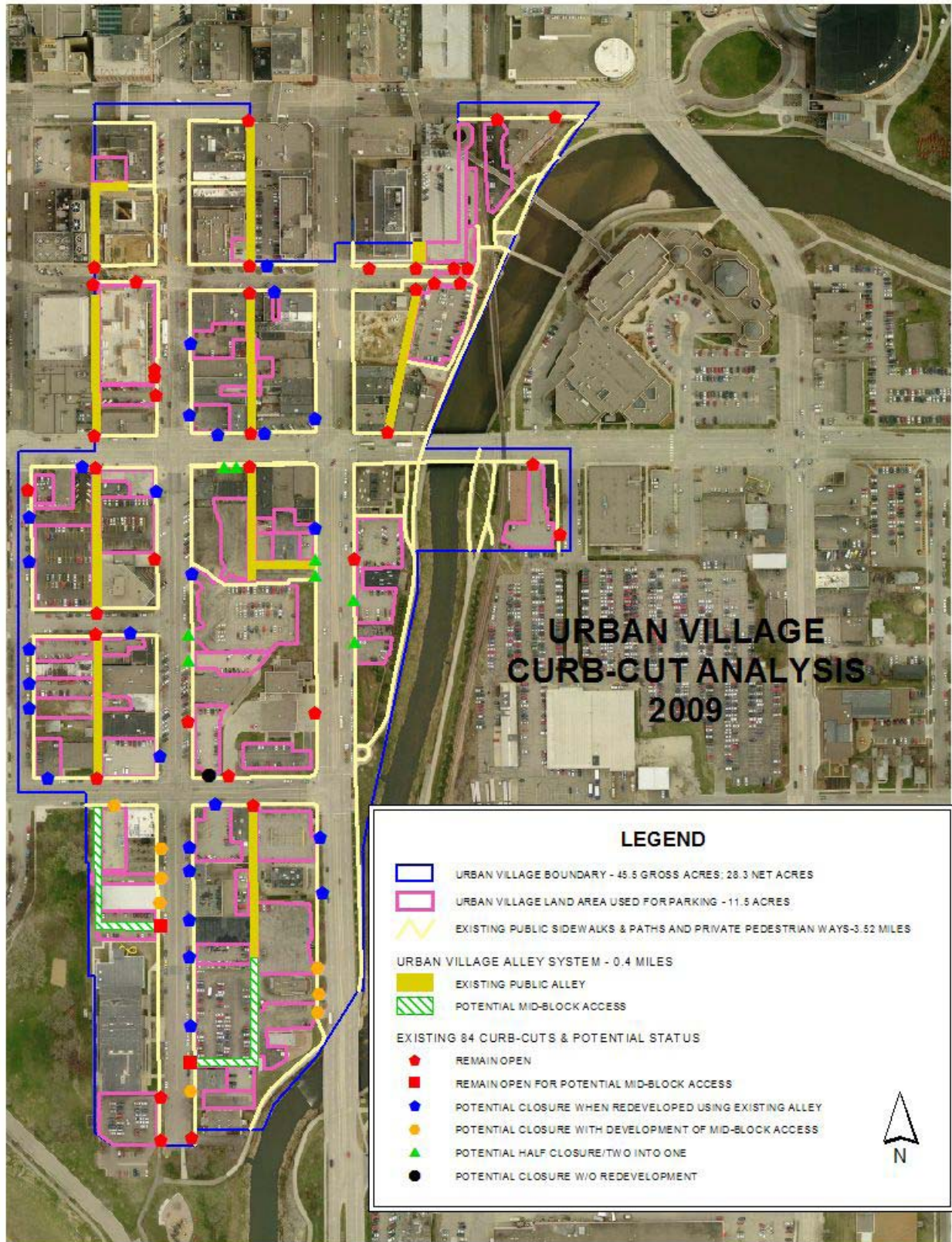
(g) Connections to natural assets, such as Zumbro River and Civic Center green spaces

(h) Longevity of products, material durability

(3) Assess whether proposed projects enhance other downtown projects or the entire downtown.

In summary: A large proportion of our review guidelines support these design guidelines.

**Illustration**



## **9. Visual Connections**

(approved July 25, 2008)

### **Guiding Principles:**

Downtown offers a number of high-quality views and vistas. These views distinguish Rochester from other cities, and orient residents and visitors. A strong downtown identity depends upon the preservation and enhancement of these special views and view corridors.

View corridors are vistas at pedestrian eye-level from sidewalks, or street level from vehicles on a public right of way, that include sight lines to landmark buildings or natural features

### **Recommendations:**

- Prohibit buildings from locating over or across a public street
- Assess the impact of skyways which potentially block significant views.
- Where skyways are constructed, make them as transparent as possible.
- Look for opportunities to preserve existing views and view corridors, and open new views of landmark buildings and features where possible.

Significant views include views of:

- Plummer Building
- Gonda Building
- Broadway Plaza
- River and adjacent walkways
- Government Center
- Civic Center
- Peace Plaza
- Soldiers Field
- Central Park
- Historic 3<sup>rd</sup> Street

Significant view corridors include:

- Second Street from 6th Avenue to the Civic Center
- Alley between the Broadway and 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue South from the Peace Plaza to 6<sup>th</sup> Street South
- Peace Plaza from the Gonda Building to University Square
- 2nd Avenue West from Fourth Street South to Methodist Hospital
- 3rd Street South from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Street Ramp to the River (view of Govt. Center)
- Center Street from the Center Street Ramp to Gonda skyways
- Views on River Walk where River bisects Government Center and Downtown
- 1<sup>st</sup> Street from Galleria to Civic Center

### **Background:**

In developing these recommendations, the subcommittee was guided by comments made by the RDA's Wayfinding consultant and by the RDA Project Review Discussion Guide.

### **The Douglas Group, Downtown's Wayfinding Consultant**

- You have a very small downtown, with a subway and skyway system already. Street level should be clearly navigable by views and landmarks.



- Cutting off views and orientation creates mazes (pedestrian and vehicular).
- Locations where buildings cross over streets create dark pockets that are less inviting to pedestrians.
- Basic human behavior is that people will not go where they cannot see. If people cannot see beyond, they do not wish to walk there.
- Preconceptions of our visitors, from all around the world, is that crossing under buildings is scary – not a safe, public way to go, no matter how you light or treat it. Wells Fargo, over 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue, and the Center Street Ramp over Center Street, are scary and do not welcome residents or visitors.

In summary: We are making a substantial investment in wayfinding. Making the complimentary investment in maintaining and improving intuitive street level navigation is logical.

This topic is relevant to the RDA Downtown Development Project Discussion Guide topics as indicated by *italics*

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(e) Parking impact, sensitivities, requirements

*(f) Visual connections and architecture*

*(g) Connections to natural assets, such as Zumbro River and Civic Center green spaces*

(h) Longevity of products, material durability

*(3) Assess whether proposed projects enhance other downtown projects or the entire downtown.*

In summary: A large proportion of our review guidelines support visual connection preservation and creation.

### **Illustrations**

Second Street from 6th Avenue to the Civic Center



Alley between the Broadway and 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue South from the Peace Plaza to 6<sup>th</sup> Street South



Peace Plaza from the Gonda Building to University Square



2nd Avenue West from Fourth Street South to Methodist Hospital



3rd Street South from the 3rd Street Ramp to the River (view of Govt. Center)



Center Street from the Center Street Ramp to Gonda skyways



Views on River Walk where River bisects Government Center and Downtown



1<sup>st</sup> Street from University Square to Civic Center





## 10. Building Signage

(approved 12-19-08)

### **Guiding Principles:**

The Urban Village is an area of high pedestrian activity and includes structures of pedestrian scale, rich architectural details, and historic significance. It is important to recognize these factors in the use of signs, banners, flags and pennants for identification & decoration and to set their design, size, location, orientation and illumination to enhance pedestrian activity, buildings and natural assets.

Commercial signs function to identify and locate businesses, promote merchandise or service within, attract customers, provide direction and information, and in some cases create visual delight and architectural interest.

### **Recommendations:**

- Signs should be oriented to the pedestrian. Projecting signs, banners, awnings, and wall and window graphics are effective means to communicate with passers by. Lettering styles should be proportioned, simple, and easy to read.
- Signage should not project above the cornice line or be mounted on the roof of any building.
- Signs should not cover windows, architectural elements or architectural details and should fit the building facade as an architectural element.
- Signs should take into consideration adjacent storefronts and signage and make a positive contribution to the general appearance of the street and commercial area.
- Businesses located in alleys, courtyards, arcades, river walks & intra-block areas should be identified from the street.
- Existing historic building signs should be returned to their original design when appropriate.
- Signs should be durable, well-designed and act as unique expressions of the business.
- Street numbers should be prominently displayed at the main entrance to every business, and be clearly visible from the street or alley.
- Window signage should be limited to one-third of the window surface area.
- Wall signs should be positioned within architectural features such as the panels above storefronts, on the transom, or flanking doorways.
- Projecting signs should be positioned along the first floor level of the facade. Projecting signs may take on their own special shape, or create their own symbol within the overall facade design.
- The light level should not overpower the facade or other signs on the street. The light source should be shielded from pedestrian view.

### **Background:**

This topic is relevant to the RDA Downtown Development Project Discussion Guide topics as indicated by *italics*

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  - (c) Encouraging street level activity*
  - (d) Residential, business, or mixed-use*
  - (e) Parking impact, sensitivities, requirements*
  - (f) Visual connections and architecture*
  - (g) Connections to natural assets, such as Zumbro River and Civic Center green spaces*
  - (h) Longevity of products, material durability*
- (3) Assess whether proposed projects enhance other downtown projects or the entire downtown.*

In summary: A large proportion of our review guidelines support these signage design guidelines.

### **Illustrations**





## 11. Awnings

(approved November 21, 2008)

### **Guiding Principles:**

Awnings are colorful, functional and attractive and create an inviting pedestrian environment as they protect shoppers and diners from the elements, provide a sign panel and shade for business, and are an inexpensive way to add color and vitality to downtown streets.

An awning, typically, is a sloped projection made of canvas or other non-rigid material, stretched over a frame and extended over a doorway or window.

### **Recommendations:**

- Awnings should fit within the frame of the storefront; broken into segments that reflect the doors and windows beneath them. Awnings should not hide the building's façade, distort its proportions, or cover architectural features. Awning colors should relate to and compliment the building façade.
- Awnings should have a minimum vertical clearance of 8'6" above the sidewalk and should project at least 36 inches from the building.
- Awnings should be attached directly to the building and require no poles or sidewalk support.
- Awnings should be retractable, when possible, for seasonal use and longevity.
- Awnings should be shed awnings, when possible, with simple horizontal valences and no end panels, as they are more transparent, allow better views into storefronts and maintain good visual connections.
- Awnings of canvas or fabric-like vinyl, stretched over a frame and extended over a doorway or window, are preferred. Metal, wood, glass or other materials will be reviewed on a case by case basis.
- Glowing awnings (backlit, light show through the material) are discouraged.

### **Background:**

In developing these recommendations we reviewed awning guidelines in other city downtown districts.

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(f) *Visual connections and architecture*

(g) Connections to natural assets, such as Zumbro River and Civic Center green spaces

*(h) Longevity of products, material durability*

***(3) Assess whether proposed projects enhance other downtown projects or the entire downtown.***

In summary: A large proportion of our review guidelines support these awning design guidelines.

**Illustrations:**



## 12. Service Entrances, Utility, Trash, Equipment Screening

(approved 12-19-08)

### **Guiding Principles:**

Service entrances, trash areas, utilities, and mechanical and electrical equipment can have a negative impact on the livability of the environment. In general, these elements should not be visible from the street, on-site gathering areas or dwelling units.

The location of service entrances, and screening of mechanical equipment should be anticipated at an early phase of design development of a project. Foresight and proper planning will accommodate these necessities without compromising the desirability of urban living. In some cases, creative solutions to screening through the use of color and material choice can enhance the building's interest and appearance.

### **Recommendations:**

- Consider service facilities as an integral part of the site plan and avoid siting service areas and mechanical equipment as an afterthought.
- Locate service, loading, and storage areas away from public streets and public spaces, when feasible. Where possible, locate service access along an alleyway.
- Locate rooftop equipment so that it is not visible from the adjacent street, or screen it with building-compatible materials.
- Use methods of rooftop screening that are durable and integral to the building's form. Screening should be designed to recede against open sky, others should be designed to relate in color and material to the building and its surrounds.
- Give consideration to potential views of the rooftop from adjacent buildings

### **Background:**

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***(g) Connections to natural assets, such as Zumbro River and Civic Center green spaces***

***(h) Longevity of products, material durability***

***(3) Assess whether proposed projects enhance other downtown projects or the entire downtown.***

In summary: A large proportion of our review guidelines support screening service entrances, utilities, trash, and mechanical equipment.



### **13. Public Art**

(drafted 06-18-09 by Avenue of the Arts Subcommittee)

(approved 06-19-09)

#### **Guiding Principles:**

Art is a product of human activity whose principle purpose is to be appreciated for aesthetic and/or intellectual reasons. Public art enhances the urban village's unique character, image, and identity. Public art contributes to a strong sense of place, neighborhood pride, sense of discovery, and it fosters social interaction. Integrating the work and thinking of artists into the planning and design of our built environment increases the quality by creating memory points and by providing functional and aesthetic continuity.

Public art is all forms of visual art located in a space readily accessible by the general public. Such creations may take the form of sculpture or artwork integrated into architecture or landscape. The visual art may include uniquely-designed functional elements/fixtures such as seating, walls, landscape, directional signage, hardscape, ground plane, site amenities, streetscape, lighting, building design, shade canopies, and character of interior spaces.

What public art is not:

- Art objects which are mass-produced from a standard design such as playground equipment, flags, banners or fountains
- Reproductions, by mechanical or other means, of original fine art works.
- Directional elements such as public wayfinding systems, signage, or color coding.
- Decorative, ornamental or functional elements, which are designed by the building architect.
- Landscaping alone should not be considered art.

Recommendations:

- Dedicate space for public art. (For example, consider sidewalks wide enough to place public art.)
- Work with RDA Avenue of the Arts Subcommittee, Arts Council, and other groups, in order to identify partnering opportunities for including public art in development projects.
- Artists should be commissioned for the public art.

To achieve high quality art in public places the following should be considered:

- Quality and artistic merit of the artwork
- Responsiveness and relevance to the site (its architecture, use, function, history, development, and landscaping.)
- Feasibility and quality of the public art project or artwork including but not limited to public safety, durability, quality of materials, technical, operational, maintenance, and long-term care.
- Artist's relevant experience
- Suitability of the artwork to the site

#### **Background:**

In developing these recommendations we reviewed public art guidelines and policies from other cities.



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**(f) Visual connections and architecture**

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**(h) Longevity of products, material durability**

**(3) Assess whether proposed projects enhance other downtown projects or the entire downtown.**



## 14. Building Lighting

(approved 12-19-08)

### **Guiding Principles:**

Building lighting can positively affect the quality of downtown streets and walkways by enhancing the aesthetic appeal of the building, advertising businesses in the building, and enhancing the pleasure, comfort and safety of pedestrians and diners on the walkways adjacent to building.

Building lighting is the illumination of facades, entrances and signage by building mounted lights.

### **Recommendations:**

- Incorporate pedestrian scale fixtures that compliment the building, shine downward and emit a warm light along walkways. In general, these lights should be mounted at a height not greater than 12 feet.
- All building entrances, including arcade, alley and others, should be well lit.
- Fixture style and finishes should relate to and compliment the building façade.
- Lighting sources should be concealed from view to prevent glare and promote lighting uniformity.
- Select spotlighting and colored lights used to illuminate signs or prominent building details will be reviewed on a case by case basis.

### **Background:**

In developing these recommendations we reviewed lighting design guidelines in other city downtown districts.

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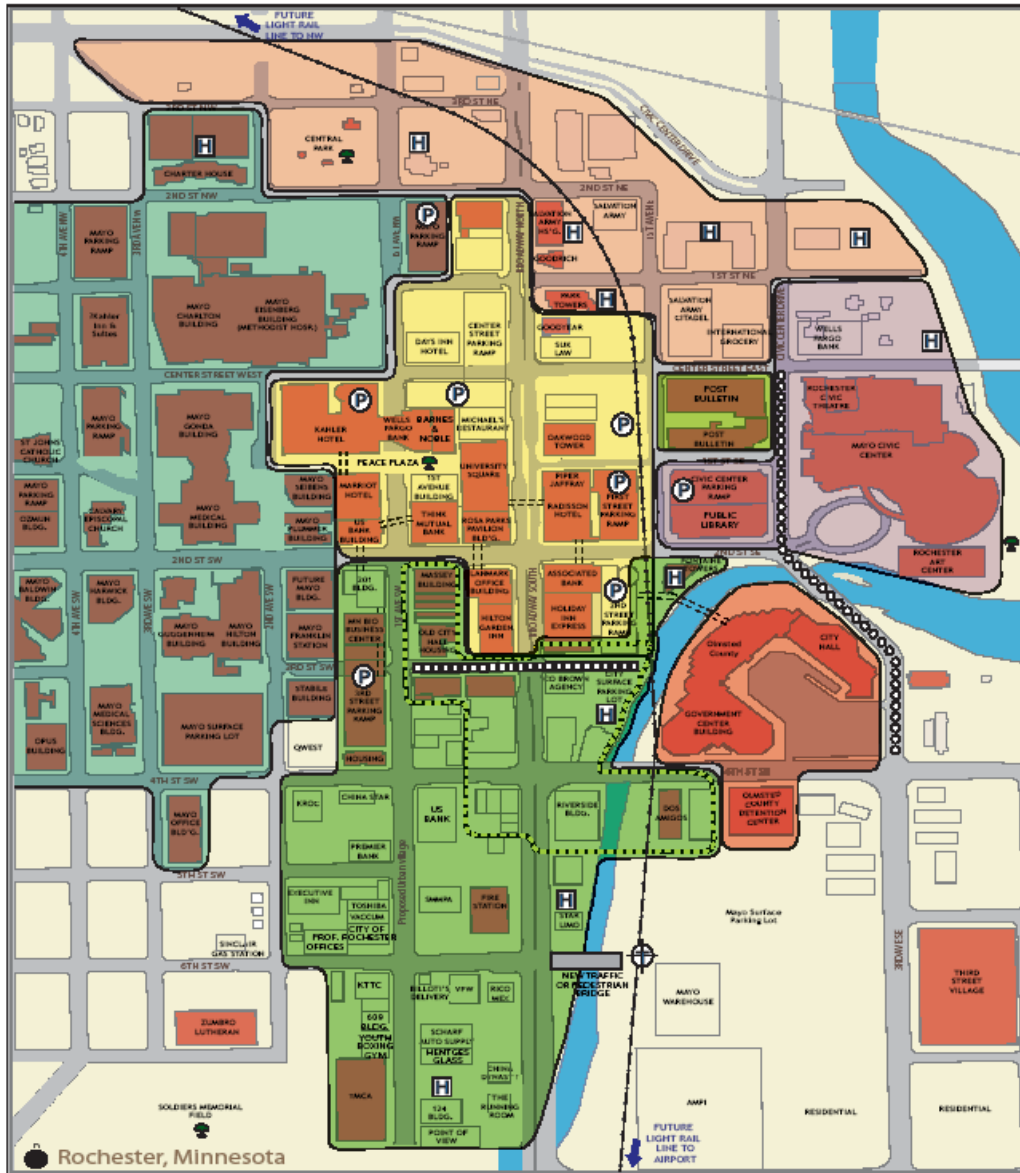
In summary: A large proportion of our review guidelines support these lighting design guidelines.

**Illustrations**



# Appendix A – RDA Downtown Rochester Vision Plan

## DOWNTOWN ROCHESTER VISION PLAN



Rochester, Minnesota



Architecture | Engineering | Planning  
FEBRUARY 18, 2008

### DISTRICT COLOR KEY

- |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #fff9c4; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> DOWNTOWN CORE DISTRICT             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- High Density, mid/high rise housing</li> <li>- Hotels and extended lodging</li> <li>- Office buildings and primary employment</li> <li>- Traditional retail and dining</li> <li>- Visitor services</li> </ul> </li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #c8e6c9; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> URBAN VILLAGE             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mixed use neighborhood</li> <li>- Walkable, urban lifestyle</li> <li>- Housing, 2-5 story, flats and loft-style</li> <li>- Ground floor retail and dining</li> <li>- Historic buildings</li> <li>- Contemporary and ethnic restaurants</li> <li>- Boutiques, specialty retail</li> <li>- Entertainment venues</li> </ul> </li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #bbdefb; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> MAYO MEDICAL DISTRICT             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Medical practice, education, and research</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #e1bee7; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> CULTURAL DISTRICT             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Community culture and entertainment</li> <li>- Outdoor events, park, river, trail connectors</li> <li>- Civic Center, art, theatre, library</li> </ul> </li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #ffe0b2; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> TRANSITIONAL MIXED-USE             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- High density housing, mid/high rise residential</li> <li>- Historic park and structures</li> <li>- Support services for elderly population cluster</li> </ul> </li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #ffb74d; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> CIVIC DISTRICT             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Government Center</li> <li>- City and County services and facilities</li> </ul> </li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #c8e6c9; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> BUSINESS</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #fff9c4; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> PRIVATE &amp; PUBLIC BUS TRANSIT CENTER</li> </ul> |
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likely to be Considered for Redevelopment  
Buildings or parking lots with the color red, or solid  
ding are considered the least likely for potential new  
development.

IT RAIL  
NSIT HUB

ORIC DISTRICT

LIC GATHERING SPACE

**H** HOUSING

**P** PARKING

**III** HISTORIC 3RD STREET

**OOO** AVENUE OF THE ARTS