

# Downtown Architectural Guidelines

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*“Guidelines should provide character and consistency while permitting an appropriate degree of creativity” Downtown Plan, page 31.*

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

These Downtown Architectural Guidelines were developed to provide guidance in the design of sites and buildings in the downtown area of Creve Coeur.

They are meant to be used by the development community to provide direction when they are preparing plans to build in this part of the city. They will also be used by the Planning and Zoning Commission in their review of development proposals to weigh the merits of a plan.

These guidelines are not intended to be a rigid set of rules or viewed as specific regulations. They are guidelines and should be used to provide direction and assist in the development and review of the city's downtown area. They should, as the plan states, "provide character and consistency while permitting an appropriate amount of creativity" (Downtown Plan, Page 31).

The overriding principles in the development of the downtown are the creation of an urban form and achieving a high quality of development.

## **OBJECTIVES**

- 1. To implement the vision established in the Downtown Plan.**
- 2. To create a “sense of place” for the City of Creve Coeur.**
- 3. To promote a very high quality of site and building design.**
- 4. To encourage flexibility and creativity.**
- 5. To create a walkable neighborhood and quality open spaces.**
- 6. To develop a permanent urban streetscape.**

## A. BUILDING FACADES

1. Each block segment should possess a mixture of architectural styles and design influences. All street-frontage establishments should provide primary access directly to the street. Long expanses of inactive building frontage should be avoided by placing street doors every 75 to 125 feet.
2. Cornice lines, string courses, and other architectural elements should be used to create a recognizable base, middle, and top to buildings. Decorative accents, such as frieze panels, shutters, and brackets are also encouraged.
3. The visual experience of moving along the street should be enjoyable and interesting. A change in major compositional elements of the street-level façade design is recommended every 50 to 100 feet. Horizontal elements should be aligned with the horizontal elements of adjoining buildings.

4. Storefronts should include recessed entranceways, transom & display windows, canopies, awnings, roof and floor overhangs, arcades, and colonnades. These elements will also help unify parts of a building or block, provide human scale, protect pedestrians, and provide a backdrop for signage and graphics.



**Figure 1: Street-level facade design changes every 75 feet while maintaining common horizontal elements (Santana Row - San Jose, CA)**

5. Particular attention should be given to craftsmanship and detailing within the pedestrian's range of touch. For instance, the use of special storefront detailing and façade ornamentation such as flower boxes and special materials can reinforce the pedestrian nature of the street.
6. Large, uninterrupted expanses of horizontal and vertical wall surface should be avoided. Building facades should respond to the relatively narrow increments of development (25 to 50 feet) with variation in fenestration, building materials, and/or building planes.
7. Buildings built upon corner parcels are encouraged to incorporate special features such as rounded or cut corners, special corner entrances, display windows, corner roof features, etc.

8. Corner buildings should have a “cornerstone” plaque built into the foundation. The plaque should have the name of the building, the year it was built, and an element identifying Creve Coeur, such as the city’s emblem or a fleur de lis.

9. Elevations facing service or parking areas and along secondary streets should be designed in a manner that provides continuity with the main street-front façade. In these cases, windows need not be provided at the ground floor level. However, long, monotonous, uninterrupted walls should be avoided.



**Figure 2: Cornice elements (Bethesda Row, MD)**

Building wall offsets, including projections, recesses, niches, fenestration, or changes of materials or color should be used to add architectural variety and interest, and to relieve the visual impact of a blank wall.

10. Parapet and roof-line offsets between facades may be provided in order to break down the scale of the block and create architectural interest and variety.

11. Parking structures and garages should be treated with the same architectural importance as the elevations of all other buildings, including design material and color compatible with the urban setting.



**Figure 3: Parking garage (Naperville, IL)**

## B. WINDOWS, BAYS, & DOORWAYS

1. Window openings and bays should reinforce human scale, maintain traditional urban patterns, be in proportion to the building elevation, and provide interest for the pedestrian.
2. Windows should allow for articulation along the building face and be framed with sills, trim, and/or lintels.
3. A vertical or square orientation for upper story windows is preferred; however other decorative window shapes may be considered.
4. The ground floor of all street-facing facades should contain at least 50% openings (windows and doors). The upper stories of all street-facing facades should contain at least 30% openings but not to exceed 75% openings.
5. Tinted windows should not be used, particularly on the first floor.



Figure 4: Recessed entrance and storefront windows (Bethesda Row, MD)

6. Doorways that are used as primary entranceways should be recessed from the sidewalk and be wide enough to demonstrate that it is the most important access way into the building.
7. Doorways should be flush with the sidewalk so that a step, ramp, or separate entrance is not necessary for disabled access.



Figure 5: Recessed store entrance with an arcade or covered walkway (CityPlace - West Palm Beach, FL)

## C. EXTERIOR MATERIALS

1. Materials should be selected for their suitability to the type of buildings and the design in which they are used. These materials should be durable and of high-quality.
2. The primary building material should be brick, stone, or a combination of both. The use of EIFS or stucco should be limited to a secondary material and should be used to provide architectural variety and interest.
3. Split-faced block, or similar type of concrete masonry unit, may be used at service areas and secondary streets but should not be used as a primary material along these elevations.



**Figure 6: Brick is the primary material in these buildings with EIFS used only for banding and the facade change in the background (Birkdale Village – Huntersville, NC)**

4. Siding, of any kind, should not be used.
5. Materials other than those listed above may be used for architectural trim and accent applications including, but not limited to, cornices, string courses and other accents.

## D. ROOFLINES

1. Flat roofs are encouraged, particularly along primary streets, such as Olive Boulevard, New Ballas, and Studd Roads. These rooflines should incorporate a cornice that clearly identifies the tops of buildings.
2. Other acceptable roof styles are hipped and front-gabled but should not be the dominant style along primary streets. Shed (single pitch) and mansard roofs are discouraged.

3. Roof variations that provide interest and break-up the scale of the building are encouraged.

4. Roofs that provide useful space, such as roof gardens, terraces, sitting areas, or other outdoor activities, are encouraged.



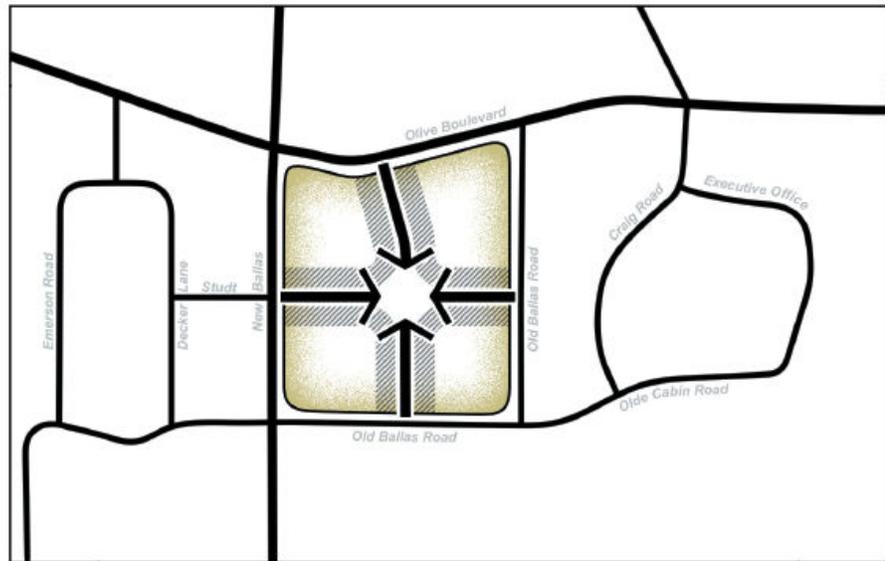
**Figure 7: Roof variations help break-up the scale of a tall building (Arlington Heights, IL)**

5. All rooftop equipment, including, but not limited to, satellite and other telecommunication equipment, air handling units, elevator equipment, cooling towers and exhaust fans are to be screened from view. Building screens should be part of the architectural design with similar detailing and materials and not appear as add-ons.

## E. BUILDING HEIGHT

1. For the most part, structures should be fairly consistent in height with adjacent buildings, with fluctuations of not more than three (3) stories.
2. One (1) story buildings are strongly discouraged.
3. Residential structures, including only condominiums, apartments, and hotels, may be built up to ten (10) stories within the "town center" area, which is at the intersection of Studt and Hamm Roads. However, such structures must be set back from the intersection 100 to 150 feet to provide for an adequate open space or "town square." No ten (10) story buildings should be located within 300 feet from Olive Boulevard.

4. Buildings greater than six (6) stories in height should be tapered and stepped by reducing the structure's bulk as the building height increases.



5. Where adjacent buildings are of different heights,

**Figure 8: Taller buildings should only be permitted at the intersection of Hamm and Studt, which is designated as the "symbolic center" for the downtown (Downtown Plan, P. 28)**

architectural elements, such as balconies, windows, storefronts, or string courses, should be aligned in order to establish a compatible and harmonious design relationship with adjacent and nearby buildings, and further, to establish and/or maintain a pedestrian-scale streetscape.

## **F. BUILDING PLACEMENT**

1. Buildings should be positioned at or near the sidewalk and form a “street wall” with an allowance for articulation.
2. Front, side, and rear yard setbacks within the downtown area should be held to a minimum.
3. Buildings should occupy the entire width of the lot except in cases where a mid-block access drive is provided.
4. Buildings should directly front the street. The placement of buildings at odd or irregular angles to the street should be avoided.
5. Any breaks in the street wall should be used for open space, plazas, public art or pedestrian ways.
6. Building placement should account for location of utilities and mechanical equipment. When such equipment is placed on the exterior of a building effective means of screening shall be provided.

## G. LANDSCAPING, OPEN SPACE, & AMENITIES

1. High quality landscaping shall enhance the open space and architecture throughout downtown.
2. The design of landscaping, walls, railings and other street elements should allow visibility into and out of the open space.
3. Create landscaped corridors for bicycle and pedestrian use that connect the downtown area with the golf course and to other local destinations.
4. An area of open space should be set-aside for public use. The area should be of sufficient size to act as the “town square” or “town center” and become the focal point of the downtown area. It should act as the general meeting or gathering area for visitors. The area should also accommodate civic and community activities (including a farmer’s market or a small concert).
5. The open space area should be constructed and adorned to resemble a plaza and not a park. Use of landscaping will help to define edges and create a sense of three-dimensional containment to the space.



**Figure 9: Lush landscaping and a fountain are elements of this open space within the public domain (Glenview - Chicago, IL)**

6. New buildings downtown are encouraged to incorporate public spaces to enhance the pedestrian environment, reinforce the downtown open space network, and offset additional demand for public open space from downtown employment.
7. New residential buildings downtown are encouraged to incorporate usable private common open space.
8. While much of the open space is in the public realm, private development is encouraged to provide open space that connects to and enhances the greater open space framework.

9. Design open spaces to promote a visually pleasing, safe, and active environment. Views and solar access from the principal area of the open space should be especially emphasized.
10. Utilize new roadway corridors as open space corridors with median landscaping to create continuous linear open space connections.
11. Develop quality open space plans for each roadway corridor and public easement. Public rights-of-way should be treated as an extension of the park system.
12. Downtown amenities should include site furniture, art work, fountains, informational kiosks, and pedestrian-scaled site lighting and signage that identify uses and shops.

## H. STREETS, STREETScape, & SIDEWALKS

1. Streets should be pedestrian-friendly and be designed for low traffic speeds with tight curb radii and curb neck-downs or other appropriate traffic calming devices.
2. Streets should be laid-out in a grid pattern with block lengths between 300 to 500 feet. The “squared” pattern of the grid may be modified in consideration of phasing provided that street connections and block lengths are addressed.
3. On-street parking should be provided along the entire street frontage of primary streets with the exception that curb neck-downs be provided near intersections.
4. Sidewalks along primary streets may be ten (10) to fifteen (15) foot wide and be installed on both sides of the street along with a five (5) foot wide tree lawn between the sidewalk and the street. The tree lawn shall provide for interruptions to allow pedestrian connectivity to the street. In cases where street trees would block signage, a tree can be replaced with low-lying bushes, planter boxes, or significantly-sized potted plants.

5. Sidewalks along secondary streets should be eight (8) to ten (10) feet wide and be installed on both sides of the street. While a tree lawn is not necessary, tree wells, planter boxes, significantly-sized potted plants, or other landscape amenity in proper size and proportion to the street and building should be provided along the street provided that the sidewalk width is not less than eight (8) feet wide.



**Figure 10: Wide sidewalks, street trees, potted plant, and an information kiosk create a walkable environment (Easton Town Center, OH)**

6. Pedestrian routes should be interconnected, should not possess dead-ends, and comply with ADA standards.

7. Crosswalks should be provided at each street intersection and be constructed with stamped concrete, pavers, or other material or color different from the street that causes the walk to stand-out as a design feature.



**Figure 11: On-street parking, wide sidewalks, street trees, and crosswalks help create a walkable streetscape (The Boulevard, MO)**

## **I. SITE GRADING**

1. Avoid massive grading to create flat building "pads" and avoid abrupt or unnatural appearing grading design. Blend grading with the contours of adjacent properties.
2. Where natural or existing topographic patterns contribute to beauty and utility of a development, they shall be preserved and developed. Modification to topography will be permitted where it contributes to good appearance.
3. Grades of walks, parking spaces, terraces, and other paved areas shall provide an inviting and stable appearance for walking and, if seating is provided, for seating.
4. Avoid long ramps or slopes in excess of ADA requirements.