

BUSINESS DISTRICT DESIGN GUIDELINES

Des Plaines, Illinois

Prepared for the **City of Des Plaines**

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Section 3: Building Design

Business District Design Guidelines

BUILDING DESIGN GUIDELINES

Building design and architectural style create and enhance a district's character for pedestrians and motorists. A specific architectural style, character or building type is not predominant in Downtown Des Plaines or along Oakton and Lee Streets. Rather there are many designs that contain various elements and a range of styles. Diversity in building design should be encouraged, but designs should be consistent with the area's overall character. Older buildings that display historic features, such as the former Des Plaines State Bank and Theater, should be preserved if feasible.

In Downtown, for example, building design should reflect the mixed-use pedestrian orientation of a "walkable" central business district. Oakton and Lee Streets are auto-oriented commercial thoroughfares with some single- and multi-family residential uses. Retail and service uses, primarily auto service and repair, are the most prevalent uses combined with some restaurants. Buildings along Oakton Street and Lee Street should reflect a typical auto-oriented commercial corridor, yet be more attractive in appearance and efficient in layout.

Building Style

- A range of architectural styles is encouraged in all districts. Architectural style is not restricted. Evaluation of appearance should be based on quality of design and relationship to surroundings.
- Harsh, plain, incompatible and/or bizarre building designs are discouraged.
- Unarticulated, flat front, all glass, or metal, futuristic style buildings are discouraged.

- All buildings should be designed with common architectural elements, including: open glass storefronts; clearly defined entrances to ground and upper floors; sign bands and awnings incorporated into the design and scale of the building; upper floor windows placed in proportion to building width and height; and, cornices and parapets.
- Adjacent buildings should have component parts in good proportion with one another. Similar design linkages should include placing window lines, belt courses, and other horizontal elements in a pattern that is harmonious and reflects the same elements on neighboring buildings.



Never designs with varying roof lines, awnings and other decorative features should be encouraged.

- Large structures should be designed to reduce perceived height and bulk by dividing the building mass into smaller scale components (i.e. height of a wall, cornice, or parapet line should match that of adjacent buildings).
- Buildings with ground-level retail and office space should, whenever possible, include open, clear glass windows to allow views into building interiors and to reinforce a positive, active shopping environment.
- Tinted or reflective glass is discouraged.
- Architectural design should articulate and enhance buildings, especially those located at street corners due to their prominence and visibility. Where appropriate, features such as cupolas, atriums, clock towers, and/or varying rooflines should be considered to add visual interest to the street.
- Monotony of design in multiple building projects by repetition of units should be avoided. Variation of detail, form and siting should be employed to provide interest. Buildings of the same design or exterior elevation are discouraged on adjacent lots.
- Buildings that attempt to use the building itself as "advertising" are discouraged, particularly where the proposed architecture is a "corporate" or franchise style.
- Historic buildings and buildings that display distinct design styles and elements of the past should be preserved if feasible.

- All exposed/visible walls on freestanding parking structures, as well as on parking structures within buildings, should be screened and articulated with architectural treatment.
- Building projections or appurtenances that obscure or conceal important architectural features are discouraged.
- Brick masonry is encouraged within the Downtown and along Oakton and Lee Streets to enhance and match the current character of the Districts.



Multi-story buildings should include first floor windows.

Building Facades & Articulation

Downtown retail building facades are varied and generally reflect good design qualities with low knee walls and open display windows. However, several buildings, including some residential structures, are not designed and articulated to provide visual interest along the street. Some building facades are not designed to easily allow redesign or retrofit for new tenants.

- Seventy-five percent of the façade area on commercial buildings between two feet and eight feet above grade should be clear windows to allow views into the building from street level. A low knee wall, approximately two feet, should also be incorporated.



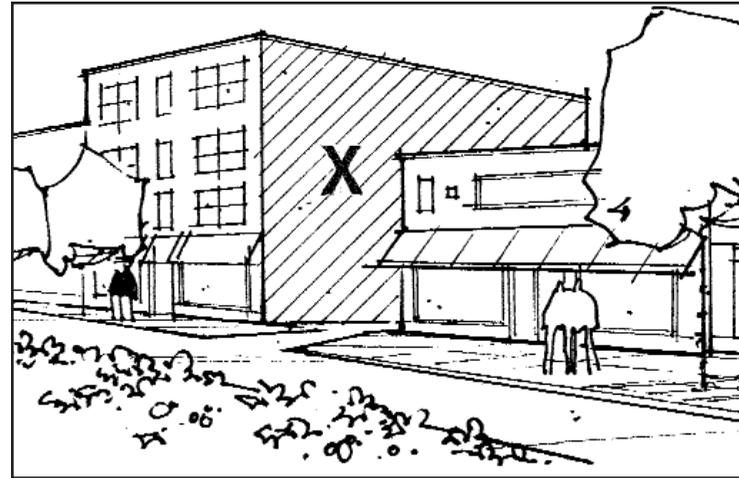
Display windows that showcase products and activity within a business are encouraged.

- Residential buildings should include windows on the first floor where possible. Where windows are not possible, such as along first floor garage areas, detailed wall articulation and foundation landscaping should be incorporated to screen solid building bases and maintain an attractive pedestrian environment.
- Building projections, such as awnings, window bays and terraces, should be pedestrian-scale, proportional to the building facade, and proportional to adjacent structures.
- Building designs should allow subsequent tenants to easily rehabilitate the façade and visible walls in a cost-effective manner.

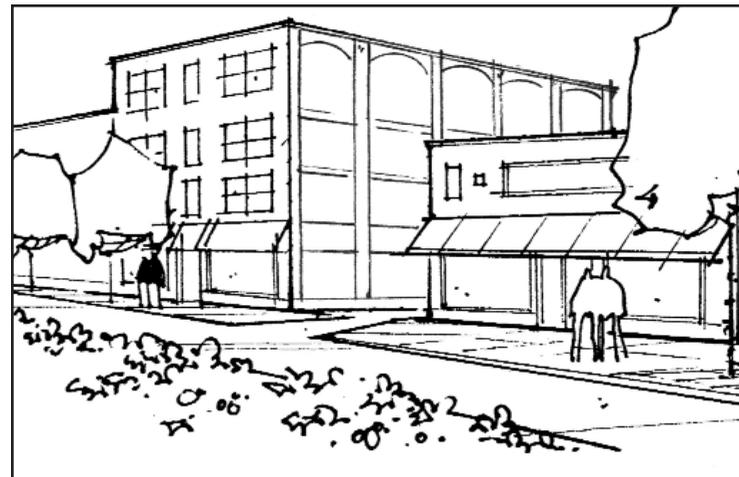


First floors of residential buildings should include interesting architectural details and/or landscaping to screen the building base.

- Solid windowless walls should be avoided. If such walls are necessary to the function of the building, they should incorporate arches, piers, columns, murals, high quality graphics, landscaping and other elements that reduce building scale and add visual interest.
- At a minimum, exposed sides of buildings should be cleaned, tuckpointed, painted and/or treated with high quality graphics to add visual interest. Direct advertising of a property or business should be limited.
- Where possible, display windows should be installed on the sides of buildings adjacent to pedestrian paths, plazas, outdoor cafes, and parking lots.
- Exposed sides and rears of buildings should be improved with steam cleaning, power washing, tuck pointing, accent painting, and limited graphics.
- All graphics on blank, exposed side and rear walls should be limited to 10% or 200 square feet, whichever is less, of the blank exposed wall area.
- New buildings should incorporate interesting architectural details or features to provide layers of interest and variety.
- Eccentric and protruding façade designs that do not relate to the street or limit future tenant changes are discouraged.



Solid walls with little or no architectural interest are strongly discouraged.



Arches, piers, columns, murals/graphics, planters and decorative lights are encouraged to add visual interest to large walls.



Existing blank wall in Downtown.



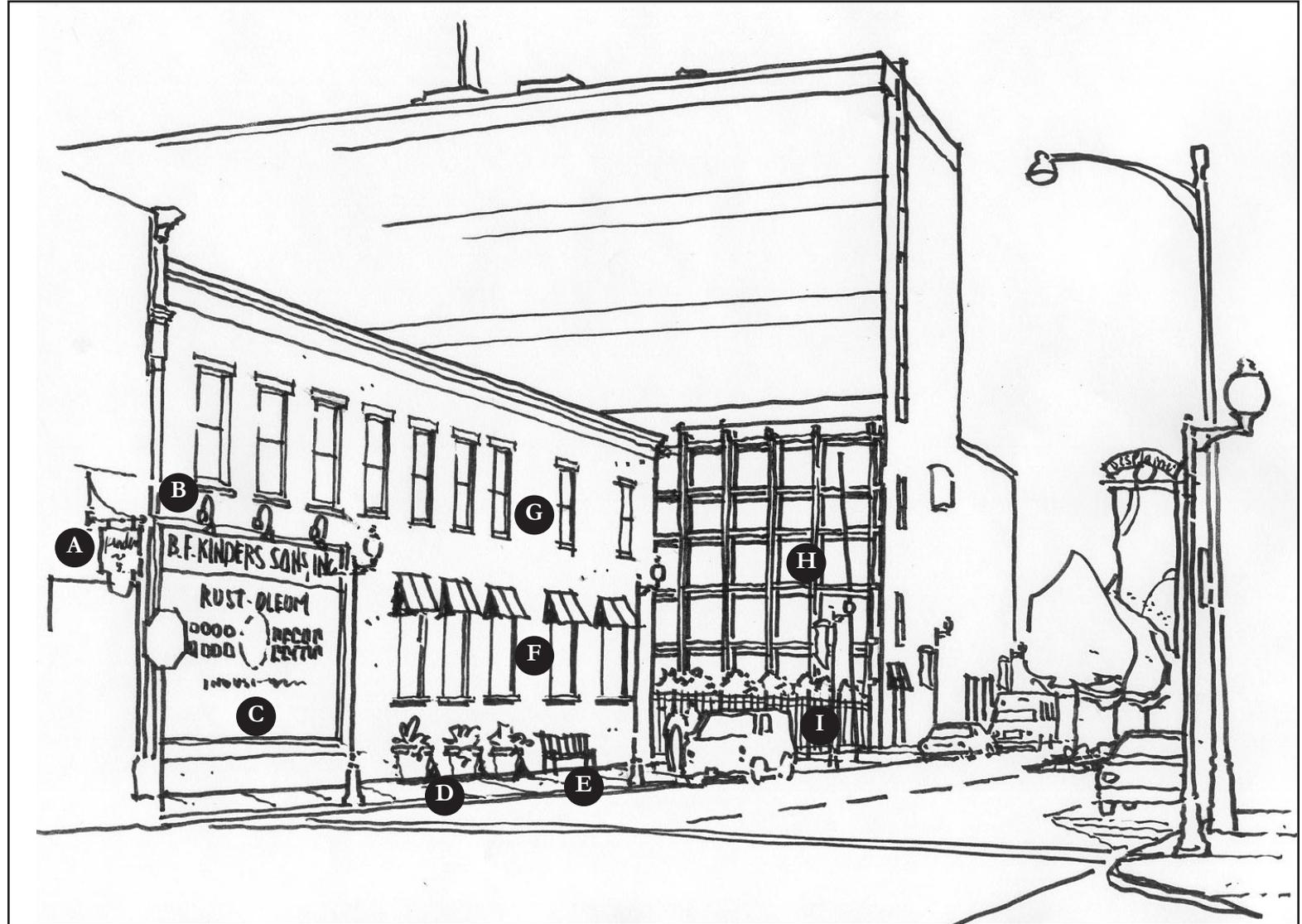
Attractive murals and decorative lighting provide visual interest on a blank wall.

DOWNTOWN FACADE CONCEPT

- A. Consider blade/projecting signs to add interest to pedestrians and motorists.
- B. Add architectural lighting.
- C. Improve sign graphics.
- D. Add moveable planters for seasonal interest.
- E. Provide benches for pedestrians.
- F. Add windows/awnings to break up building wall.
- G. Steam clean and tuck point brick where needed.
- H. Add trellis or architectural feature on blank wall.
- I. Add fencing/landscaping to screen parking and service areas.



Existing building side facades with little articulation and no streetscape amenities.



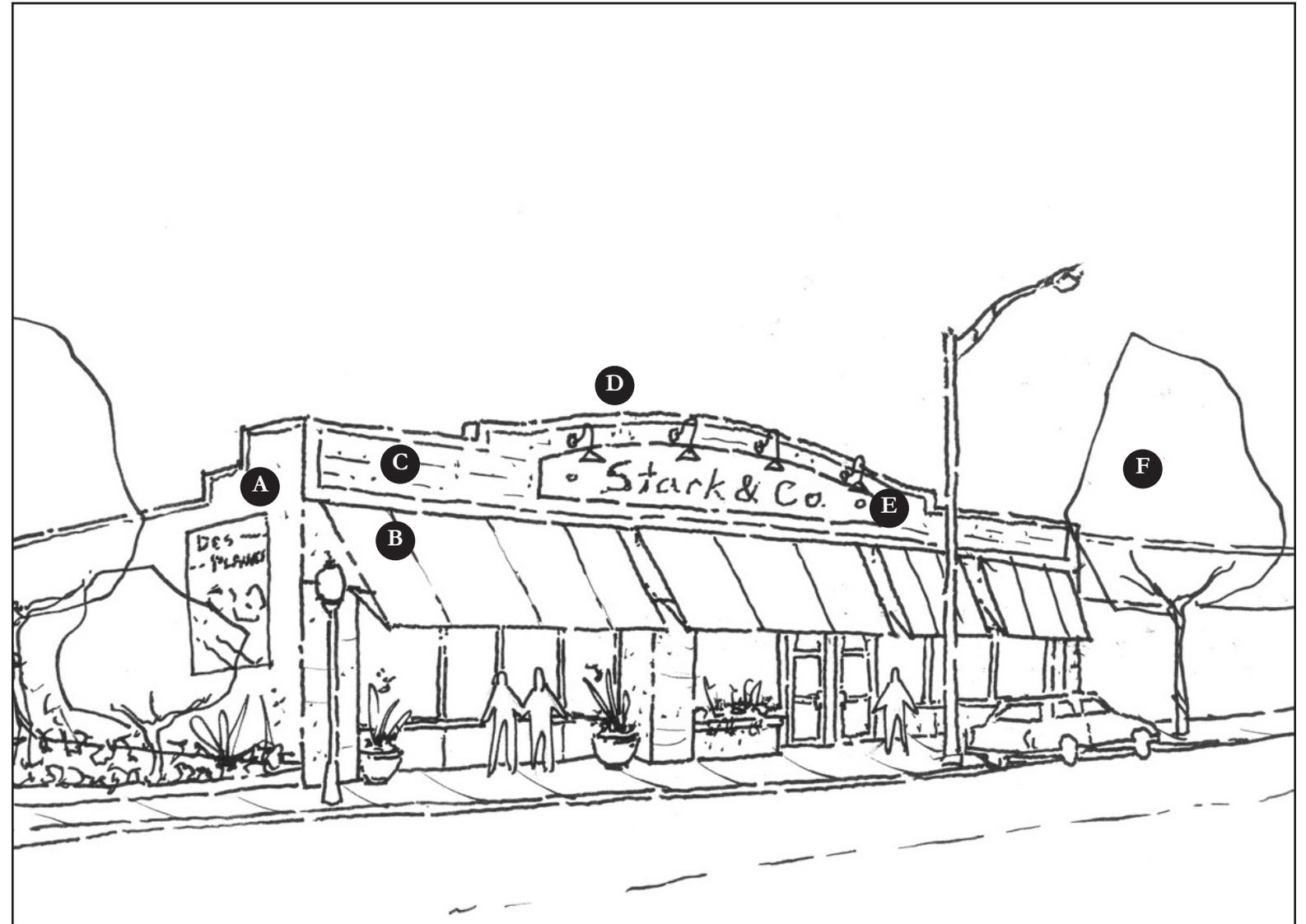
Building Enhancement Concept

DOWNTOWN FACADE CONCEPT

- A. Add murals/graphics to blank walls.
- B. Add awnings to create visual interest and break up large storefront wall.
- C. Add new material to break up large storefront wall.
- D. Consider new cornice/wall shape and architectural details.
- E. Incorporate sign board, new graphics and architectural lighting into building design.
- F. Add landscaping and street trees to soften the street wall and screen parking areas.



Existing facade with "dated" appearance.



Building Enhancement Concept

Building Design

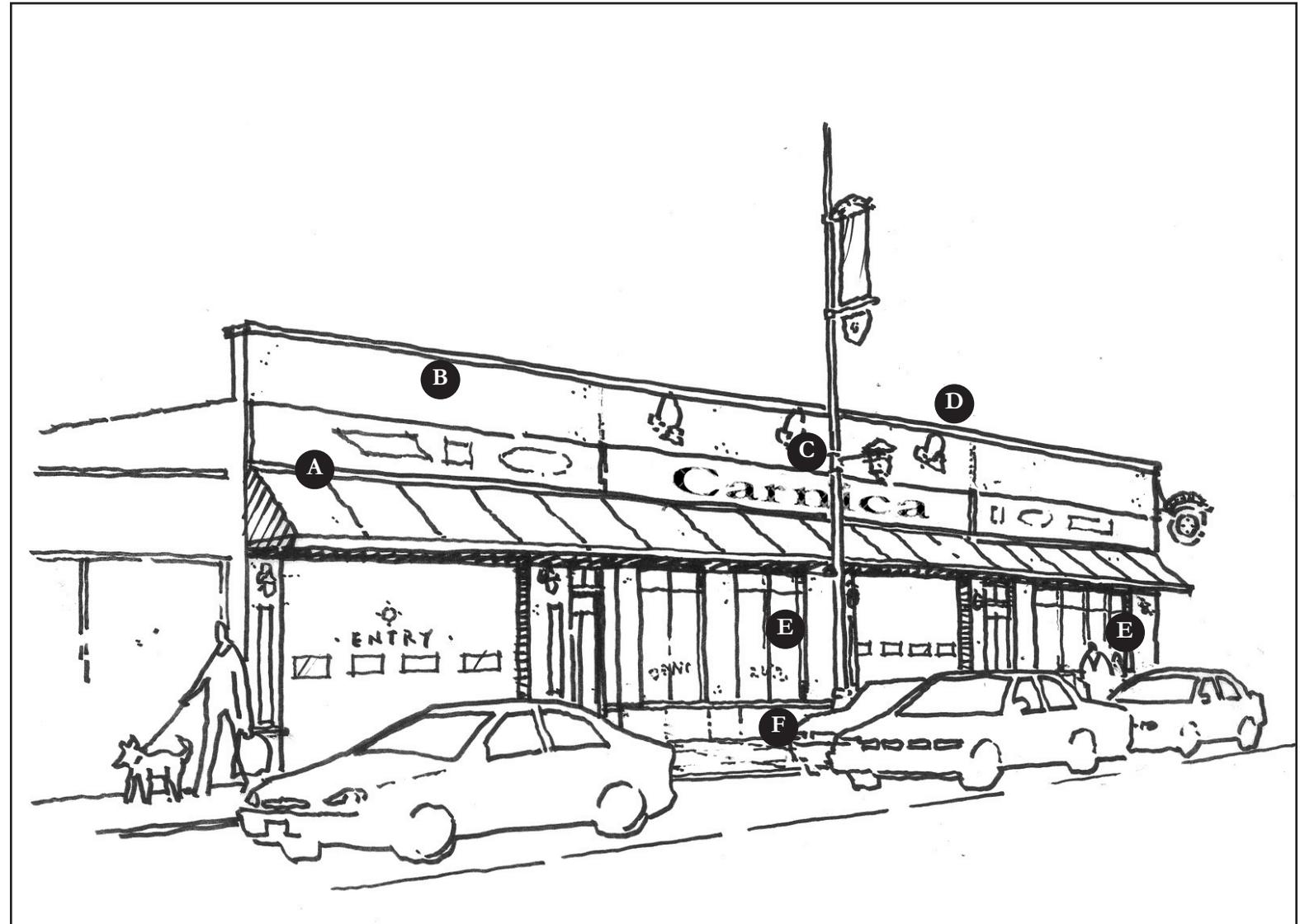
BUSINESS DISTRICT DESIGN GUIDELINES

OAKTON FACADE CONCEPT

- A. Create consistent horizontal architectural elements such as sign bands and awnings across the building.
- B. Remove shingle materials and install new materials across facade.
- C. Coordinate and simplify signage by integrating into overall design.
- D. Add architectural lighting over signage.
- E. Add larger windows to open up blank walls and create visual interest.
- F. Establish traditional storefront kneewall



Existing service business facade along Oakton Street.



Building Enhancement Concept

Building Entrances & Windows

Building entrances and windows should be oriented to the street and designed to be easily accessible. If a building has a parking lot in the rear, clearly defined rear entrances are needed to provide access. Safety and security issues, as well as aesthetic and visibility considerations should be addressed regarding the use of rear building entrances.

- Primary store entrances should be located along the street, with secondary entrances located behind the building or along a secondary street.
- Building windows and doors should be clear glass oriented to the street and proportionate to the building scale.



Clearly defined rear building entrances.

- All building entrances should be designed so that doorways and vestibules are easily seen by shoppers and visitors, easily distinguished by tenants and use, and open and visible from the sidewalk.
- All rear and side walls that have entrances adjacent to parking lots should be improved with graphics/murals.
- Tinted and/or reflective glass is discouraged.
- Mill finish (non-colored) aluminum metal window and door frames are discouraged.



Entrances oriented to the street and proportional windows are encouraged.

Building Awnings

Some building awnings are garish in color, inconsistent in style or color and do not relate to adjacent buildings. Unattractive and oversized awnings detract from the attractiveness of a building, as well as the streetscape.

- Building awnings should be consistent and complementary in color and style with the building facade and awnings of adjacent buildings.
- Excessively bright and brilliant awning colors should be avoided.
- Letter style on awnings for multi-tenant buildings should be consistent.



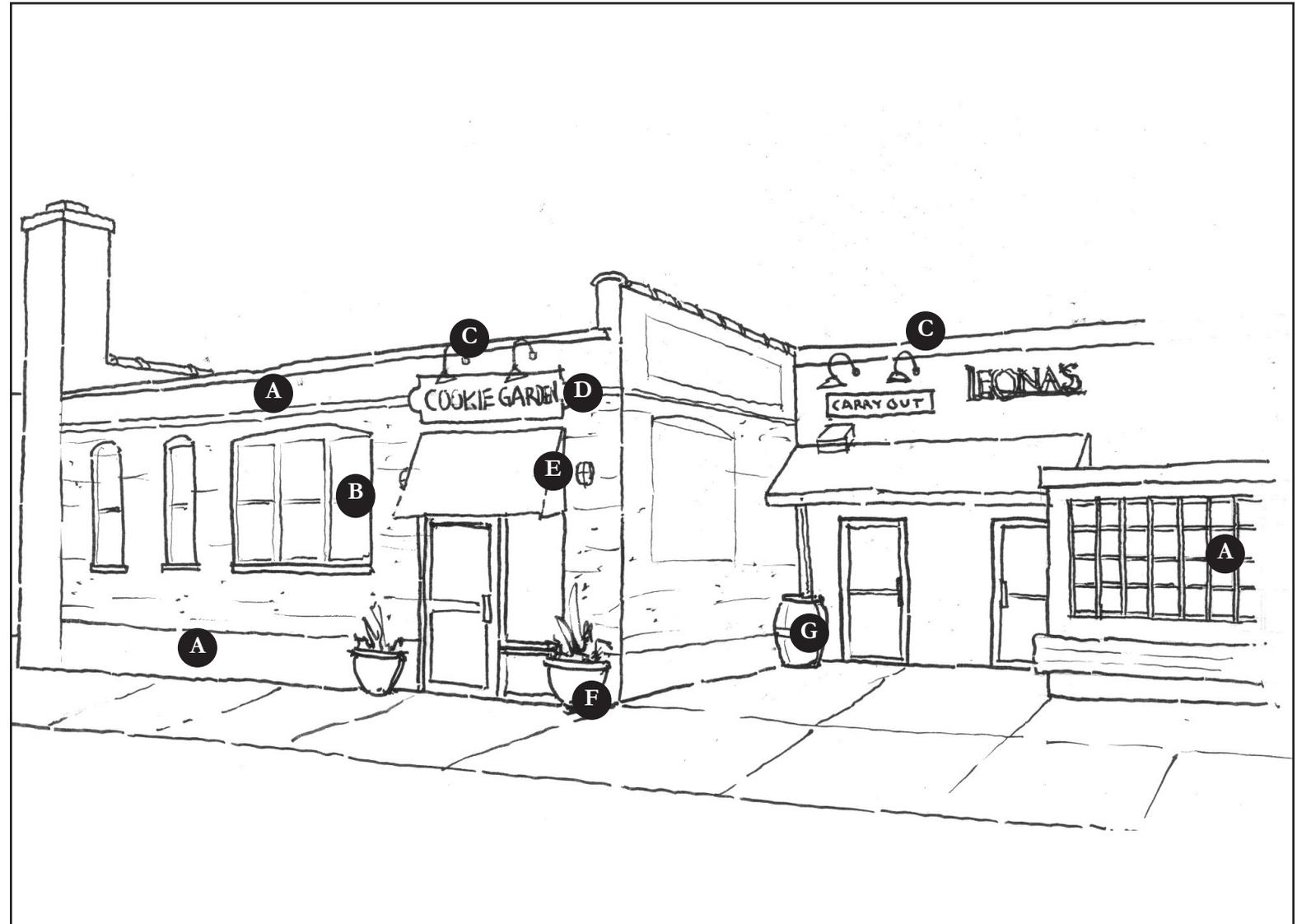
Building awnings should be consistent with the building style.

REAR WALL/ENTRANCE CONCEPT

- A. Add murals/graphics, faux windows, details or color bands to break up blank walls.
- B. Remove bars from windows.
- C. Integrate architectural lighting over rear entrances.
- D. Limit signage to small, simple signs integrated into overall architectural design.
- E. Add awning over doorway.
- F. Add moveable planters to add seasonal color.
- G. Reduce long, exposed down spouts by using barrel cisterns linked to underground pipes.



Existing rear wall and entrances.



Rear Wall/Entrance Concept

Building Lighting

Few buildings in Downtown or along Oakton and Lee Streets have special lighting that highlights architectural features. The majority of lighting comes from streetlights and internally lit building signage.

- Special building lighting should be encouraged to add visual interest and increase nighttime visibility and safety.
- Building lighting should be carefully planned and integrated into the design/style of the building and streetscape.
- Electrical conduit and mechanical equipment for building or signage lighting should be hidden from view or carefully integrated into building design.



Building lighting should be carefully planned into building design and electrical conduit hidden from view.

Building Materials

Numerous buildings in the business districts are designed using one material and do not incorporate alternative or secondary materials. Although many buildings contain high-quality masonry, others have lower quality materials, such as smooth plaster, wood, and aggregate brick/stone.

- High-quality, durable materials, which do not require frequent maintenance (brick, stone, and glass) should be used for all facades as well as the sides and/or rears of buildings that are visible from streets and parking lots.
- Decorative block, smooth/textured synthetic plaster, and wood trim should be used only for decorative accent purposes and limited in their use on building facades and visible walls.



The use of low quality materials, such as aggregate stone, is strongly discouraged.

- Cinder/concrete block, stucco, metal, plywood, vinyl siding, unfinished pre-cast concrete, unfinished poured-in-place concrete, aggregate stone/rock and glass block windows should not be used on building facades or on walls that are visible from streets, sidewalks, and parking lots.
- Wall materials should be the same for all elevations or if more than one is used, they should be harmonious. Facade treatment with face brick at the front elevation and common brick at the other elevations is not acceptable. Exterior exposed walls constructed of untextured, unpatterned concrete or cement block in common bond is not permitted.



The use of glass block windows on the front facade is strongly discouraged.

Building Colors

Building colors within the Districts generally relate to other buildings and to a specific palette of colors within one building. Most buildings constructed of masonry/brick use light to medium colors and are compatible with one another. However, some building colors are garish and do not relate to adjacent buildings.

- In Downtown, building colors should be generally compatible with the area's context. In all three districts, primary colors such as blue, yellow, and red are discouraged unless used sparingly for subtle trim accents. Earth tones, red/brown masonry and colors complementary to the primary building color are preferred.



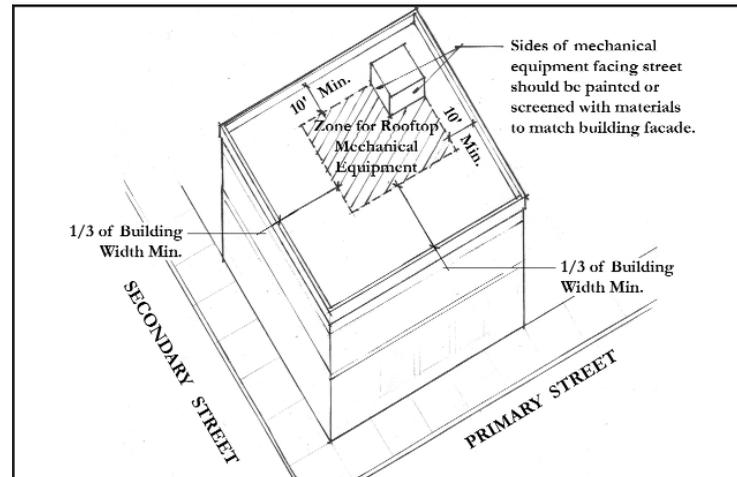
Rooftop mechanical equipment should be screened.

- Compatible, consistent color schemes for future developments and/or redevelopments are encouraged.
- Colors shall be harmonious with adjacent buildings and brilliant colors used only for accent.

Mechanical Equipment

- Mechanical or utility equipment on the ground or on roofs or other parts of a building that cannot be located out of view should be screened by walls constructed of materials similar to those of the primary facade. Screening should be effective in all seasons.

- Mechanical equipment along the front or visible side facade is discouraged. Corner buildings are also discouraged from locating mechanical equipment on the secondary street frontage.
- All vents, gutters, downspouts, flashing, electrical conduit and similar appurtenances should be hidden, screened or at the least painted to match the adjacent surface.
- Rooftop mechanical equipment should be located in the center or a rear corner of a building away from the street elevation and screened from public view or located as not to be conspicuously visible.



Rooftop mechanical equipment should be located in the rear corner of the building.

Building Signage

In Downtown, business signage is generally controlled in regards to size and placement, and appropriate to the pedestrian scale. However, in Downtown and along Oakton and Lee Streets some building/business signage is redundant, excessive, oversized and/or difficult to view and read. The size, placement and number of signs should be better controlled and enforced. Unattractive business signs and temporary signs clutter storefronts, buildings and sidewalks. On some properties, business and temporary signs are deteriorating. Poorly designed business signs and/or signs made from low quality materials send customers a negative message.

- Sign colors and materials should be consistent with the colors and materials of the building and awnings.
- Business signage should be simple and incorporated into a building's architecture. Such signs should serve to identify a business while contributing to the attractiveness and pedestrian friendly orientation of the street. The quality, size, placement and look of signs should all be considered in the overall design of the building.
- Sign materials, size, color, lettering, lighting, location, and arrangement, should be harmonious with building design and should be compatible with signs on adjoining buildings. Signs should have good proportions. Materials used in signs should be weather retardant.



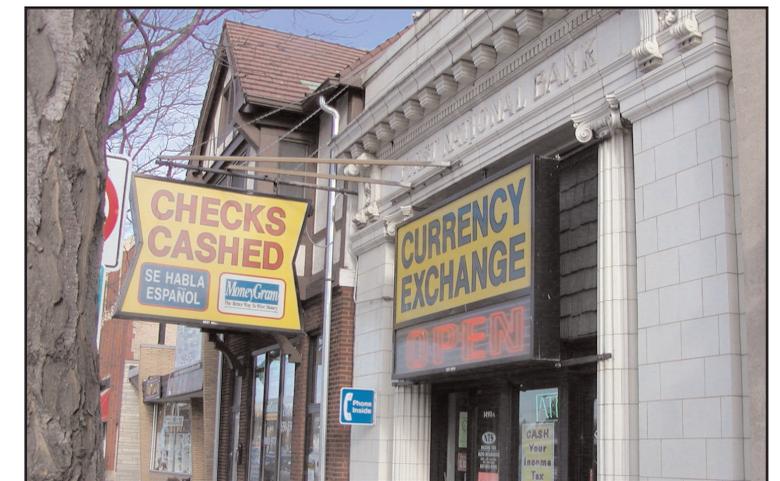
Window lettering and displays are encouraged to provide interest.

- Window lettering, either vinyl applied or painted, is encouraged to add interest to storefronts. Temporary pin-ups, flyers and signs should be avoided.
- Business signs should not obstruct or obscure architectural details or significant architectural elements.
- Decorative overhanging or blade signs are encouraged along the street with the size controlled and coordinated with a building's façade design. Decorative "icon" signs such as coffee cups, barber poles, toothbrushes, and ice cream cones provide visual interest. Sign brackets, hardware, and lighting systems should be kept to a minimum and screened wherever possible.



Small projecting "blade" signs are an interesting alternative to conventional signs.

- Decorative overhanging or blade signs must not exceed six square feet in size with a maximum height of three feet and placed at a minimum ten feet above the sidewalk. They should extend no more than four feet from the face of the building.
- Business signs should be placed on a building so they are oriented for viewing by pedestrians.
- Text on business signs should be simple and easy to read.
- Billboards should not be placed on top of buildings, or on blank sidewalls, in vacant lots, or parking areas.
- To avoid visual clutter along the street, redundant signage or multiple external signs should not be used.

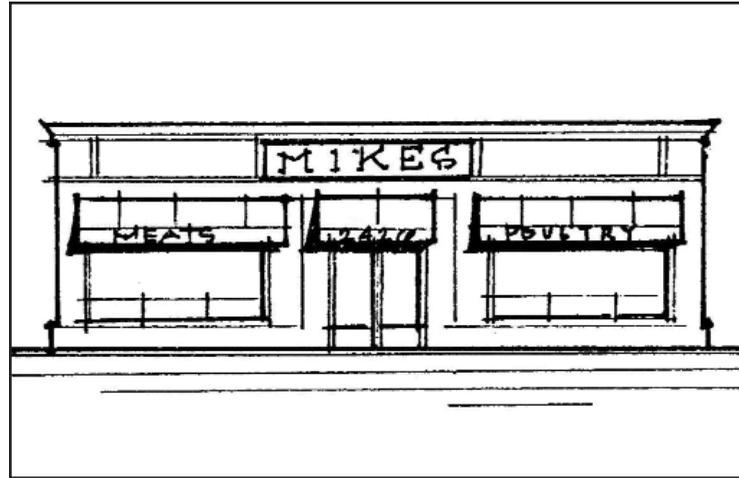


Some business signage is excessive, oversized and redundant.

Building Design

BUSINESS DISTRICT DESIGN GUIDELINES

- Business signs should not be placed at or above the cornice or roof lines of buildings.
- Signs should be constructed of high-quality durable materials. Sign colors should be used harmoniously and with restraint.
- Business signs should be placed on the front of buildings only, unless the building is located on a corner or has rear or side entrances.
- Overhanging signs should be limited to one sign per business, including "icon" signs unless the business is located on a corner.
- Sign lighting should be carefully considered in the building design. If direct lighting is used, glare, brightness, visible hardware and maintenance issues should be addressed. Strategically placed lamp fixtures that are compatible with the sign design and building architecture are encouraged for illuminating signs. When external spot or flood lighting is used, it should be arranged so that the light source is shielded from view.
- Neon signage and lighting should be limited to one sign per business. Neon lighting and signage that outlines the entire window is strongly discouraged.



Typical Sign Band Location on Building.



Signs identifying rear entry and access should be clearly displayed.



Multiple window signs, particularly temporary pin-ups and flyers, are discouraged.



Multiple signs and neon lighting are discouraged.