ARCHITECTURAL GUIDELINES

FOR

NEW CONSTRUCTION

IN

Des Moines' Historic Districts

RESIDENTIAL

MASSING
MATERIALS
SITE RELATIONSHIPS
COMPOSITIONAL ELEMENTS

OUTBUILDINGS

SITE RELATIONSHIPS
FORMS
MATERIALS

COMMERCIAL

STREET RELATIONSHIPS
FORMS
MATERIALS

MOVED BUILDINGS

SITING
COMPATIBILITY

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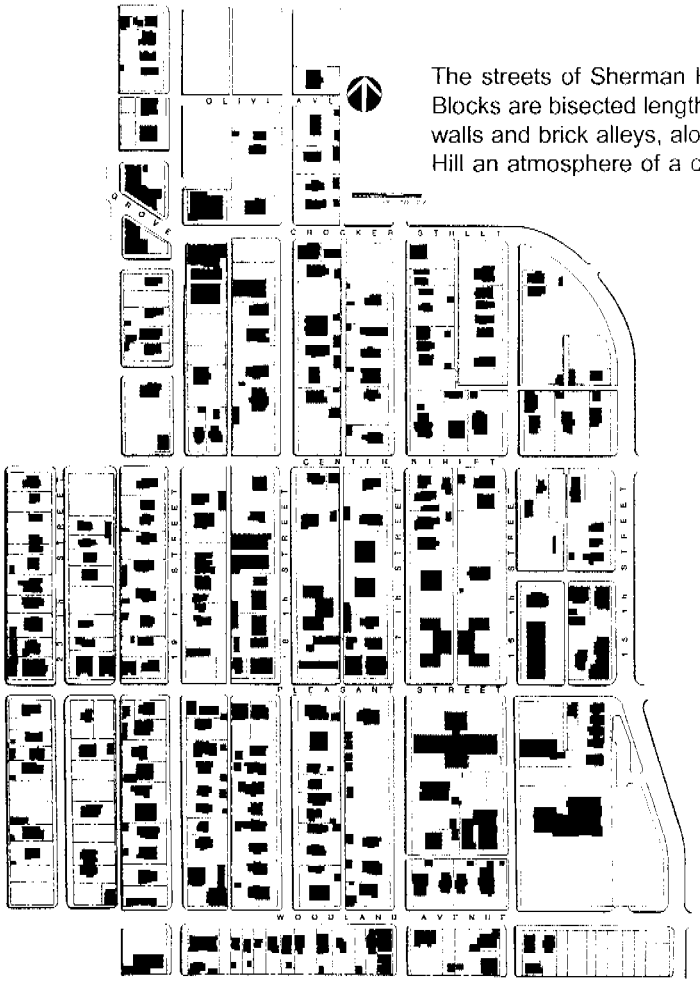
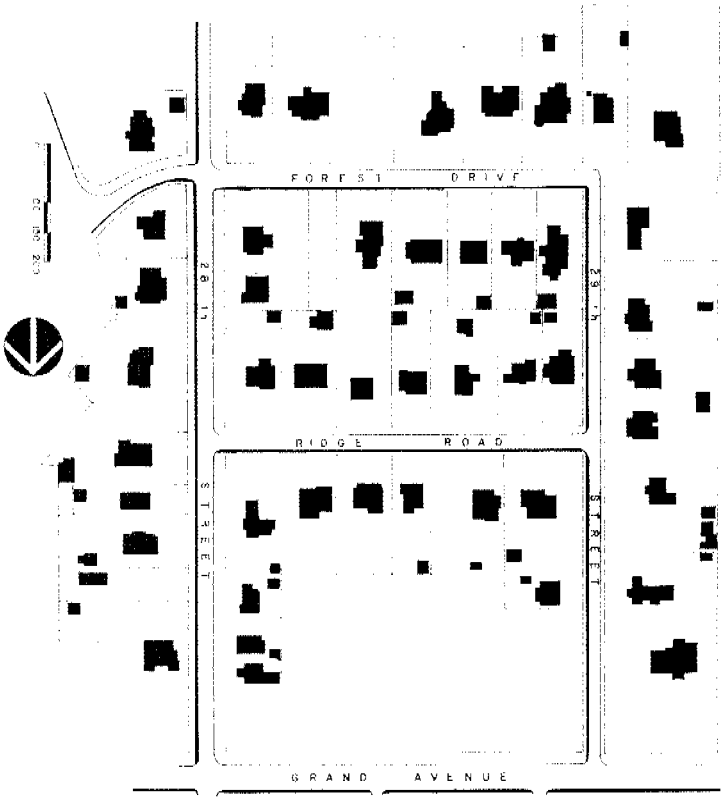


The streets of Sherman Hill are laid in a grid of long blocks, steeply from north to south. Blocks are bisected lengthwise by alleys giving access to sheds and garages. The retaining walls and brick alleys, along with two small clusters of commercial buildings give Sherman Hill an atmosphere of a cohesive inner-city neighborhood.

The Owl's Head and the Sherman Hill areas were designated as Local Historic Districts in 1983 and 1982 respectively, by the Des Moines City Council. This was done in order to protect, promote and enhance the historic character of the areas based on consideration of cultural history and architectural character. Both Owl's Head and Sherman Hill are also National Historic Districts and listed on the National Register of Historic Places. This historic designation will safeguard the heritage of Des Moines, stabilize and improve property values and foster neighborhood and civic pride. Des Moines expects to designate more historic districts in the future.



Council Roll Call 14,148 adopted the Historic Preservation Commission in place of Historic District Commission on October 7, 2002

along Ridge Road

OWL'S HEAD, containing approximately 50 houses, was built between 1905 and 1915 in response to the extension of street railway lines westward from the city center and became an elegant "streetcar suburb". The houses, despite variation in architectural influences, have much in common: 2-2½ stories, prominent gables and dormers on massive roof forms, material combinations of clapboard, wood shingle, brick and stucco. The large single family homes are well set back from the street on large lots, sheltered by large trees, hedges and shrubbery which gives the district a secluded atmosphere. Driveways extend from the street to large out-buildings and coach houses located at the backs of the main houses.

SHERMAN HILL is one of Des Moines' oldest centrally located residential "suburbs" and contains the city's highest concentration of late 19th and early 20th century domestic architecture. The resources of Sherman Hill, with the exception of the mid-20th century apartment complexes, date almost exclusively from the late Victorian periods - 1880 to 1920. They present many variations on two basic forms, the single family residence (usually frame) and the multi-family brick block.

These variations range from late Victorian "mansions" to simple cottage-like houses and from elaborate apartment blocks to rather plain double houses. For the most part, the apartment buildings were built after the turn of the century as apartment living came into vogue.

along Center Street

These guidelines are developed to encourage new construction in historic districts - new construction which participates in the overall historic neighborhood pattern and at the same time develops a genuine character of its own.

It is recognized that infill construction can be compatible with a historic context by establishing either a relationship based on contrast or one based on similarity. Either approach requires very careful study of the historic district and those visual characteristics that give it integrity and National Register status and following that, the establishment of a complementary relationship based on those characteristics

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Historic districts such as Owl's Head, which developed entirely as a low density residential, representing a narrow time period with few vacant sites and only a small amount of intrusive new construction, have little need for new buildings. When new construction does occur following fire or demolition there is the danger that because of its singularity and the great differences in time periods it will stand uncomfortably separate from the neighborhood by virtue of certain common elements. In situations like this a relationship of similarity between the new construction and the existing is probably the most appropriate choice.

Sherman Hill, however, developed with greater diversity of land use and building type, and has suffered some demolition and intrusive new construction. Here, because of the diversity of original buildings, new compatible in-fill based on a relationship of either contrast or similarity could be successful.

The successful project based on a relationship of contrast is a contemporary solution requiring a very skilled architect. These guidelines are not meant to restrict this type of design solution and for this reason the Historic District Commission will continue to review all proposed projects on a case-by-case basis.

Massing

New Construction

RESIDENTIAL

When planning new infill construction in a historic district the following list of characteristics of the surrounding neighborhood should be thoroughly explored and understood. The new construction should show an understanding of these characteristics of historical buildings and site features, not necessarily duplicating them all but establishing a complementary relationship based on them.

The extent to which a new project incorporates similar characteristics and blends with the surroundings will vary from project to project as deemed necessary to become a good neighbor.

1. *Setback from street*
2. *Space from adjacent buildings*
3. *Massing*
4. *Height*
5. *Scale*
6. *Directional emphasis*
7. *Window and door proportions and placement*
8. *Materials*
9. *Color*
10. *Character of decorative elements*

When planning new infill construction small single lots which were historically built on should be given special consideration. The redevelopment of these lots is important to the restoration of the neighborhood streetscape. They should ***not*** *remain underutilized or be kept as on-grade parking areas.*

Those designing new infill projects for historic districts may encounter code and zoning requirements which are more appropriate to suburban development and, if followed, will prevent compatible new work. Special historic district building code (Uniform Code for Building Conservation) and City Zoning Ordinance deal with this problem. Property owners should consult these publications and if necessary, seek variances.

Height

- The height of new construction should be similar in height to other original buildings of its basic architectural type: pitched roof or brick apartment structure or commercial building with flat roof. Height is the vertical distance from grade to the average height of the highest surface.
- New construction should be an appropriate height when it is viewed in relation to other original buildings on the block in which it is built in the neighborhood.
- Single-story structures are not permitted in either of Des Moines' historic districts. 1½ story structures with a steeply pitched roof (8:12 or greater) may be permitted in Sherman Hill if the height is similar to that of the other cottages in Sherman Hill and the location in the neighborhood is appropriate.

Roof Form

- Roof pitch and roof shape should be the same as that of existing original structures, repeating basic roof forms found in the original neighborhood.
- The roof volumes of new construction should be similar to that of buildings of the same basic type within the same historic district.
- Low pitched roofs (less than 8:12) are not permitted for new construction in either Owl's Head or Sherman Hill.
- Wood shingles should be used on new construction with pitched roofs if this is the predominant original roofing material in the neighborhood. Asphalt or fiberglass shingles in a medium to dark color may be an acceptable substitute.

The massing of a building is the way the main volumes of the build-ing are composed. It is a combination of the base size and shape, overall height and roof form and is most often the strongest design element of a structure.

The massing of a building can be horizontal or vertical, compact, or broken up, symmetrical or asymmetrical. During particular times in history typical approaches were taken to massing. For example, the wood frame structures of Sherman Hill were typically 2½ stories, between 25 and 40 feet in height, with 10'+ floor-to-floor heights, and a first floor height of 1½ -3' above grade. Roofs were often steeply pitched (12:12) and were typically hipped or gabled. The result was a more massive structure than is typical for single-family residences built today. This large volume, often no longer feasible in a single family residence, can be economically workable by creating a multi-family building on a site which originally had a single family building.

Materials

Vertical emphasis

- Vertical emphasis is a characteristic of the architecture of both historic districts. It should be reinforced by overall building height, vertical windows, doors with transoms, window bays, repeating column bays, and floor-to-floor heights.
- The floor-to-floor heights of new construction should match the floor-to-floor heights of adjacent historic buildings or other original buildings of its basic style and construction type.
- Strong horizontal emphasis is **not** appropriate in either the Owl's Head or Sherman Hill historic districts.

Foundations

- The amount of exposed foundation should be typically 12-18" or greater depending on the other similar original buildings in the neighborhood, compatibility with building style, adjacent buildings and site characteristics.
- The exposed portions of new foundations should be faced with brick similar to the original brick typically used in both historic neighborhoods.
- Light wells should be constructed of brick or concrete.
- Openings in foundation should be similar in size and placement to those on similar type buildings in the neighborhood.

Siding

- New construction should continue the material pallette of the historic buildings in type, size and color.
- Masonite and other synthetic sidings may be an acceptable substitute for wooden clapboard siding; however, they should be of high quality, well-detailed and appropriate in size, texture and color.
- Other very contemporary and contrasting new materials may also be appropriate when a complementary relationship is established with the surrounding context.
- Color selection should be based on architectural design, historic appropriateness and compatibility with other adjacent buildings.

The apartment blocks, because of their overall size and height, further contribute to the relatively large scale of buildings in Sherman Hill. These blocks, typically built between 1900-1920, are characterized by their brick material, simple rectangular shapes, flat fronts, orientation to the street, and concentration of overall detail at doorways, cornices and windows. These design elements contribute to the historic pattern of Sherman Hill and should be considered in the massing of new multi-family buildings.

The massing of the buildings in Owl's head, though predominantly single family, is also relatively large - 2-2½ stories with substantial bases. Many of the homes are rectangular in plan with the long side facing the street and the roof ridge running parallel to the street, incorporating prominent gable and dormers.

Site Relationships

Street Rhythm

- The spacing between buildings on a block and the size of building fronts should relate to the existing rhythm that is already established on a block face.
- Larger residential buildings should be visually subdivided and broken down in scale and given a vertical directional emphasis to maintain this rhythm.
- Horizontal and monotonous facades which break the street rhythm should **not** be used in historic districts.

Solar Design

- Elements of solar design, either active collectors, trombe walls or passive collectors, should be kept to the back or a side away from the street and incorporated into the building design to result in the site placement, massing and roof forms which are compatible with the neighborhood pattern.
- Solar collectors should be mounted flush to the roof plane and at the same angle as the roof plane.
- In-fill buildings should be designed and positioned on the site to minimize the blockage of sunlight from solariums and sunspaces of existing adjacent buildings.

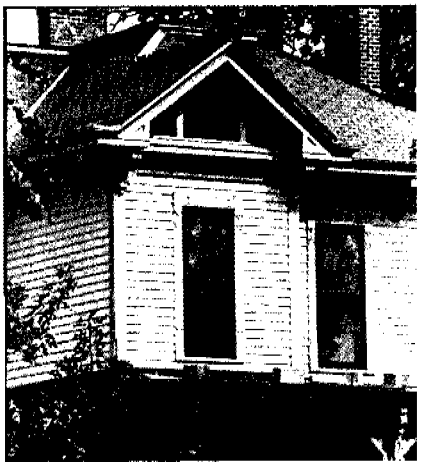
The Front

- New entry levels should match the height of the entry level of adjacent buildings of its basic construction type unless the site makes this inappropriate.
- The general historical pattern for the way the fronts of original buildings were designed should be carried to new construction of similar building types.
- Sherman Hill buildings constructed on corners should typically face the streets running north/south.
- Front porches and steps, articulation of surface areas, special emphasis at window and door areas, and other decorative features should be used in a simple contemporary version of the neighborhood pattern in order to lend emphasis to the entry and make it visible from down the street.

Historic Buildings generally have a definite "front" which faces the street. This is the location of the primary entrance and makes an inviting and interesting presence to the passerby. This often means special emphasis at window and door areas, front porches and steps, articulation of surface areas and edges, and other special features which lend emphasis to the entry when viewed from a distance down the street. Landscaping elements consistent with the established historic pattern can aid in defining the front and establish a relationship to the street which ties the new project to its context. Low hedges, fences, retaining walls and changes in grade may be necessary to maintaining continuity with other site elements common to your particular street.

Historically, Sherman Hill's corner buildings typically faced the street running north/south. Parking functions were kept to the back and the front yards were oriented to pedestrian traffic. These relationships should be maintained in any new construction.

Compositional Elements



Porches and Decks

- New buildings should have front porches if this is the historic pattern in the neighborhood.
- New porches should have proportions and materials similar to original porches in the neighborhood.
- Decks and other semi-private outdoor areas should be located at the back and screened from public view.
- Insubstantial vertical supports such as undetailed 4"x4" posts or decorative wrought iron are **not** permitted.
- Porch posts and columns should have the support visually expressed below the porch with lattice or skirting infill between supports.
- Porches should have a connection to the interior by the use of windows and doors.

Garages

- Double garages should have two single doors rather than one double-wide door.
- Garages which are part of new construction should be located in a position relative to the main building which is the same as other original garages and outbuildings in the historic district.
- Garages built into new residential structures should **not** visually dominate the front of the building and should **not** be set further toward the street than the primary elevation.

Details

- The windows of new construction should repeat the rhythm and the size and shape of window openings found in the walls of similar historic buildings.
- Horizontal sliding windows and awning windows are **not** permitted in Des Moines' historic districts because of their horizontal proportion.
- Large areas of solid blank wall should **not** be created on any highly visible elevations in historic districts.
- Window trim elements should be used in a manner similar to the original buildings in the neighborhood or in a simplified contemporary version of this.

The spacing between buildings on a block and the size of a building "front" is often fairly regular and establishes a rhythm, which should be maintained with new infill construction. Much larger buildings should be broken down in scale to maintain this rhythm.

Setbacks of a new construction should take into consideration the building's location on the block and the setback of other buildings on that block. If a majority of historic buildings on a block have a similar setback, then the new construction should maintain that same setback or match the setback of the building(s) adjacent to it. In Sherman Hill large buildings at corners may be set back further than other buildings on the block as this is a typical pattern in that particular historic district. (Please see *The City of Des Moines Zoning Ordinance* for set-backs on individual blocks in Sherman Hill)

The facades and general design of most structures in Sherman Hill have a balanced but predominately vertical emphasis. This is reinforced by overall building height, vertical windows, tall doors with transoms, tower elements, window bays, repeating column bays and large floor-to-floor heights.

In Owl's Head an outbuilding is generally placed behind the principal building with doors that face the street. Driveways are long and entered from the front. In some instances, adjacent homes may share driveways and even garages.

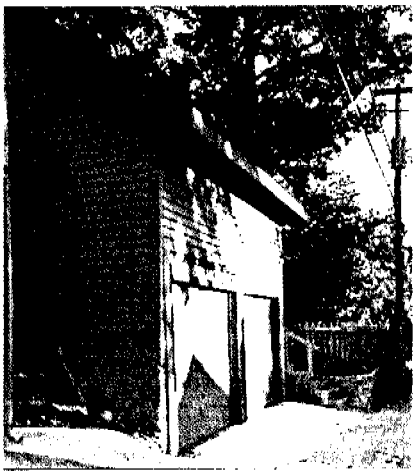
The Historic District Commission would support a variance from the zoning ordinance to allow for outbuildings taller than 17' in height, and to allow outbuildings to be set along the alley. Current zoning ordinances limit the height of outbuildings and regulate their position on the site. The Historic District Commission would support a variance to allow for a greater than 12' height, as measured from ground level to the midpoint between the eaves and the ridge of a gabled, hipped or gambrel roof, and to allow outbuildings to be set along the alley.

Historically, outbuildings in Sherman Hill appear to be approximately 25'x15' or smaller. Larger buildings will be considered on a case-by-case basis by considering design features which reduce scale.

Site Relationships

New Construction

OUTBUILDINGS



Alley Pattern

- New outbuildings should be set along the alley or as close to the alley as current city codes will allow.
- The Sanborn maps should be consulted to determine the historical placement of outbuildings before considering any new construction.
- Curb cuts should **not** be created where the alley pattern exists except where there is no other acceptable alternative for the continued functioning of the site.

Driveway Pattern

- The typical pattern of outbuildings historically established in the neighborhood should be continued in any new construction.
- Additional curb cuts should be kept to a minimum and whenever possible avoided.
- Double wide curb cuts and double wide driveways should **not** be created.
- Circular driveways are important to the design of the house and should be retained.

Sherman Hill's outbuildings are generally adjacent to the alley with doors that open onto the alley. Many homes were built on narrow lots which could not accommodate a driveway entering from the street. The 1901 Sanborn maps indicate that it was not uncommon to have more than one outbuilding on a site.

Original outbuildings were usually built in the same style and materials as the principal structure and generally had windows cut into the same elevation of the roof peaks. Wood frame, single family homes generally had clapboard garages with a roof shape and window pattern similar to the main house. Large apartment buildings generally had brick garages that ran the full width of the lot. Original garages and sheds contribute to the character of a historic neighborhood and they should be repaired and retained. Requests for demolition should be considered only in the most extreme cases.

Forms

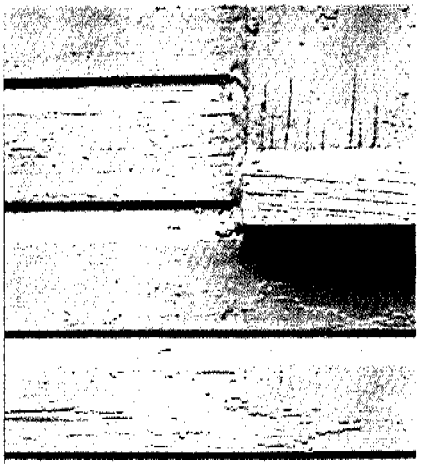
Massing

- New outbuildings should be subordinate to the primary building.
- New outbuildings should be simple in design while incorporating traditional elements of scale, roof form, and material.
- The height should typically be 1 to 1½ stories with a 10' floor-to-ceiling height.

Roof

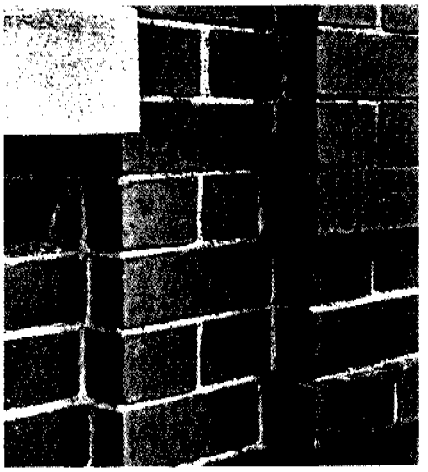
- The roof form of an outbuilding should be similar to the roof form of the principal structure. The pitch of a gable roof should typically be no less than 6:12.

Materials



Siding

- A new garage or outbuilding should relate well to the principal structure in material. Brick, narrow lap siding or board and batten may be appropriate.
- Masonite and other artificial siding may be an acceptable substitute for clapboard if the wall is detailed in a manner similar to original siding.
- Prefabricated metal outbuildings are **not** permitted.
- The new outbuilding should **not** attempt to mimic the house or look like a barn or other non-original building.



Masonry

- New masonry outbuildings should be complementary to primary brick buildings in color, texture, and detail.

Windows and Doors

- New outbuildings should use a window pattern which follows that of the primary structure. Codes limiting window openings within 3' of the lot line and/or within 6' of other buildings must be satisfied.
- Overhead panel doors or upward-acting doors may be used in a new outbuilding. Two car garages should have two single doors rather than a double wide door to avoid a strong horizontal orientation.

The Storefront

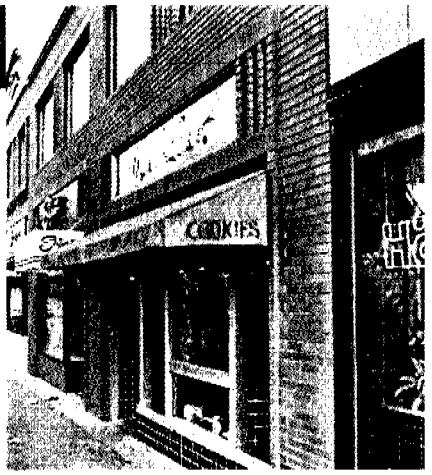
- New commercial construction in historic districts should be pedestrian, rather than auto-oriented. New storefronts should enhance the experience of the pedestrian by creating an inviting relationship with the street.
- New commercial design should be contemporary but based on traditional storefront design typical to the original neighborhood and typical to its time period.
- New storefronts should be set up to the sidewalk or public right-of-way and be flush with the front facade of neighboring buildings.

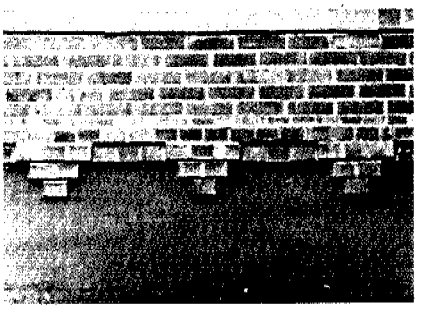
Traditional Elements

- New commercial buildings should incorporate the traditional elements of: 1) storefront with entry and large windows; 2) upper level facade with regularly spaced windows; and 3) cornice that cap the building.
- Signage should be in one or more of the traditional locations (see illustrations below) and designed to be read by the pedestrian.
- New buildings should relate to surrounding buildings in rhythm of window openings, cornice design, regulating lines, material and signage placement.
- Canvas awnings should be used for weather protection and solar shading.

COMMERCIAL

New Construction





Street Relationships

The revitalization of small commercial and neighborhood service areas is strongly encouraged. Areas such as the south side of Woodland Avenue and along Crocker Street in the Sherman Hill Historic District are a part of the neighborhood's overall character and a part of this neighborhood's historic pattern. The visual relatedness of these areas is critical to their own vitality and to the support they provide to the overall character of the district. New infill construction, well integrated with existing buildings, is necessary to provide the critical mass of businesses and services which make a real neighborhood center.

The design of this infill construction is only successful when based on a complete understanding of the traditional storefront elements and how they were used in the design of commercial buildings.

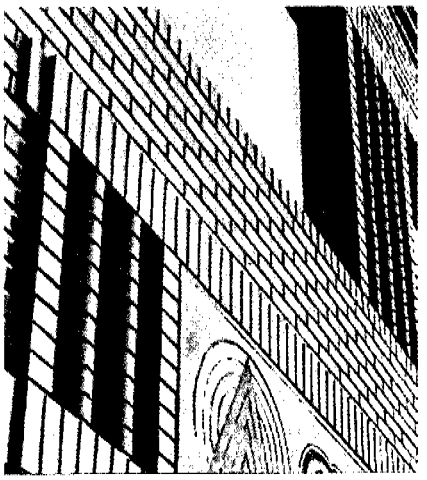
Massing

- New commercial buildings should maintain the overall size, scale, height and vertical orientation of the traditional commercial building and of the other original commercial buildings in the district.
- New commercial buildings which are much larger in scale should be subdivided into smaller vertically oriented sections which match the historic pattern.
- Window and door location, size and proportions should relate to the context.
- Mansard, hip and chalet style roofs are typically **not** appropriate in historic districts.
- New commercial buildings should adjoin another building or reinforce the street facade rather than be free standing and surrounded by parking. Any spacing from adjacent buildings should be similar to any historically established spacing.

Masonry and More

- New commercial buildings should typically be brick with a glass storefront. Contemporary materials may be permitted if a good visual relationship is established with the context.
- New brick should be similar in texture, size and color to the brick of original commercial buildings on the block and in the area.
- Mirrored or dark glass and materials typically used in single family residential situations are not appropriate.
- A relationship should be established to the major regulating lines of adjacent buildings such as cornice height, top of storefront and other subdivisions.

Forms



Materials

The traditional storefront enhanced the street by the large windows with inviting views inside, pedestrian rather than auto orientation, facade base, middle and cap, entry from sidewalk/street side, and traditional placement of signage. A contemporary interpretation of these elements, based on an understanding of traditional storefront features, can be developed using completely modern materials such as aluminum and ceramic tile or traditional materials such as brick and cast iron and still visually strengthen and integrate a commercial area.

Imitation of the exact details of adjacent buildings is seldom appropriate since the design statements made by any new building must have meaning based on its own functions and construction techniques. Compatibility is possible even between vastly different styles. Scale, the relationship of the individual parts to the whole, and the relationship of that to the human, must be considered carefully and a relationship of scale rather than imitation design should be established.

Generally, moving a building into a historic district is a way to save it and to provide for infill development which otherwise might not occur. The placement of the building on the new site should contribute to the significance of the district as a whole and conform to the historic spatial organization of the district.

The Sherman Hill Historic District has a number of vacant parcels and may be able to absorb a number of moved buildings. (See map inside front cover.) Generally, houses moved into this district should be 1 ½ to 2 ½ stories, have a gabled or hipped roof, and if wood framed have wood clapboard siding. Typically, the building should have been built prior to 1920 and have a front porch which can be rebuilt or restored.

Moving a house into a district will have the least impact if only one or two buildings are moved onto a street and those buildings are placed between existing buildings or adjacent to one existing building. Moving a large number of buildings onto a street can create a false sense of historic development and should be considered carefully.

The Siting

- The historic orientation, immediate setting and general environment of the moved structure should be reestablished on the new site.
- Infill buildings should be placed on a brick-faced or stone-faced foundation and the foundation should be exposed similarly to that of other buildings on the street.
- The moved structure should be sited similarly to other buildings on the block with similar setbacks and side yards.
- A building should be moved to a site where it has an orientation to the sun which is the same as it had originally.

Style

- A building should only be moved into a historic district when it can be successfully incorporated into the district. A building should not be moved into a district merely because it is over 50 years old or of a unique architectural style.
- Buildings moved into a district should generally conform to the mass, architectural style, height, materials and age of other buildings in the district.
- Original porches, chimneys or architectural features that were removed when a building was moved should be restored when the building is at its new location.
- Rehabilitation, additions or new work should conform to the applicable guidelines in this document and to current City codes.

MOVED BUILDINGS

New Construction

Siting

Compatibility