

Section 93. Architectural Design Standards for Non-Residential Structures.

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These regulations are intended to ensure the construction of new structures in commercial areas is consistent with the intent of the Comprehensive Plan.

93.1. Single Tenant Structures. All new commercial structures and all new non-residential structures in the commercial districts shall meet the following standards:

93.1.1. Outside of pedestrian retail districts, building surfaces over two stories high or fifty feet in length shall be relieved with changes of wall plane (i.e., recesses and projections) that provide strong shadow or visual interest.

93.1.2. Buildings shall utilize natural building materials, such as wood, stone, and brick on building exteriors, except that roofing materials may be man-made. Steel or other metals shall not be used on building exteriors, except as may be necessary for roofing, window trim, gutters, and downspouts. Unpainted, smooth-faced concrete block, except when textured or tinted, shall not be used on building exteriors. Synthetic stucco shall not be used on building exteriors. All sides of a building may impact on its surroundings and shall be considered for treatment with an architectural finish of primary materials (i.e., brick and stone), unless other materials demonstrating equal or greater quality are used. As a general rule, except in industrial zoning districts, front facades shall be at least 80 percent brick and stone. Side facades shall be at least fifty percent brick and stone. Rear facades do not have a minimum suggested standard for primary materials unless they are visible from a public right-of-way.

93.1.3. Material or color changes generally shall occur at a change of plane. Piecemeal embellishment and frequent changes in material shall be avoided. A horizontal accent stripe (e.g., a foot wide stripe of different color) shall be used to help reduce the monotonous color and break up the appearance of large building walls.

93.1.4. Facade colors shall be low reflectance, subtle, neutral, or earth tone colors. High intensity colors, metallic colors, black, or fluorescent colors shall not be used. Building trim and accent areas may feature brighter colors, including primary colors, provided that the width of the trim shall not exceed four (4) feet.

93.1.5 Building colors shall be carefully chosen so that each building complements that of its neighbors. Colors can be classified as the “base” color (used on the majority of the building surface), “trim” color (used on the window trim, fascia, balustrades, and posts), and “accent” color (used on signs, awnings, and doors). The base color shall consist of more subdued earth tones or brick shades. Trim colors shall have contrasting lighter or darker shade than the base color. If natural brick is used, it shall not be painted.

93.1.6. The use of awnings on buildings is recommended so as to provide much needed protection from sun, wind, and rain, and to improve aesthetics of the building exterior.

93.1.7. Awnings are recommended to be constructed with a durable frame covered by a canvas material. Awnings that are backlit through translucent materials may be acceptable but are not particularly encouraged. Aluminum and other metal canopies are acceptable in most instances, particularly when integrated into shopping center designs. Flameproof vinyl, canvas or metal awnings and canopies may be used.

93.1.8. Solid colors are preferred over striped awnings, but striping is permitted if colors compliment the character of the structure or group of buildings.

93.1.9. Awnings are encouraged for first floor retail uses to provide architectural interest and to encourage pedestrian activity. Where awnings are used, they shall be designed to coordinate with the design of the building and any other awnings along the same block face.

93.1.10. The design of fences and walls shall be compatible with the architecture of the main building(s) and shall use similar materials. All walls or fences fifty feet in length or longer, and four feet in height or taller, shall be designed to minimize visual monotony through changes in plane, height, material or material texture or significant landscape massing. Except in M-I zoning districts, chain link fencing is prohibited. Use of special fencing design or materials shall be discussed in cases where site security is paramount. All fencing materials must be approved by the department prior to construction.

93.1.11. Rooftop mechanical and electrical equipment shall be screened from public view by building elements that are designed as an integral part of the building architecture, or by a parapet wall.

93.2. Shopping Centers including Automobile Related Establishments. All new shopping centers and automobile related establishments containing less than 50,000 square feet shall meet the standards listed in Section 93.1. In addition, the following standards shall apply:

93.2.1. Within a shopping center, a logical hierarchy of building forms shall be created. Building heights and masses shall be greatest in the focus area and inner portion of the support area (the part closest to the focus area), and shall transition to lower heights and less mass outward from the focus area to the outer edge of the support area. Building massing shall be varied to create a logical hierarchy of building forms, to break up long expanses of façade, and to create shade and shadow. Buildings at the outer edge of an activity center's support area shall be comparable in height and mass with the surrounding neighborhood beyond the support area.

93.2.2. Building location, setbacks, and orientation shall be carefully considered so as to increase pedestrian comfort.

93.2.3. As far as practicable, buildings in activity centers shall not be separated from fronting streets by large parking lots. At a minimum, placement of out-parcel buildings between a large parking lot and the street shall be used to help define the streetscape, and lessen the visual impact of the parking lot from the street.

93.2.4. Auto service facilities shall not have their service bays facing the street, and parking for all uses shall be located to the side or rear of the building rather than in the front yard. Regardless, service areas and/or service bays shall be screened or sited so they are not visible from the street.

93.2.5. Vehicles under repair shall be kept either inside a structure or in an area which is screened from views from the street.

93.2.6. Service areas shall provide adequate queuing space that does not impede vehicle circulation through the site or result in vehicles stacking into the street.

93.2.7. Perimeter and security fencing, when needed, shall be constructed of attractive materials which are compatible with the design and materials used throughout the project. Razor wire or electric fencing shall not be used, and chain link fencing is discouraged but if used shall be black, vinyl coated.

93.2.8. Separate structures (canopy, car wash, cashier's booth, etc.) on the site shall have consistent architectural detail and design elements to provide a cohesive project site. If a car wash is incorporated into the project, it shall be well integrated into the design. The car wash opening shall be sited so that it is not directly visible as the primary view from the street into the project site.

93.2.9. All areas devoted to the outside storage of vehicles, merchandise, and/or equipment not intended for display for public rent, lease, or sale, shall be screened from view from the right-of-way of the highway or public road along the entire property frontage, except in areas where access crossings have been approved. Screening may be accomplished by a natural vegetative buffer, by a building, by an earthen berm, by a 100 percent opaque, solid wooden fence or wall, or combination of these screening methods. The use of low-lying landscaping that does not screen the display areas from view from the public right-of-way shall not be deemed to comply with this policy.

93.3. The Zoning Enforcement Officer may approve the construction of a building which is in conformance with the performance criteria established in this section. The Zoning Enforcement Officer may require a hearing before the Commission at his/her discretion.

93.4 Any applicant whose permit has been denied by the Zoning Enforcement Officer may appeal the decision to the Commission.