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Proposed Village Appearance Review Guidelines
Comments by *ad hoc* Study Committee of DTOP

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In general, the committee believes that the proposed appearance review guidelines document is too specific. We suggest that it be shortened and simplified.

We earnestly believe that the Appearance Review Committee proposed in the document be expanded. Members should be selected from the following groups:

Licensed architects
Interior designers
Landscape architects
Artists
Developers

There should be seven members of the Appearance Review Committee, including the three staff members from the village. The chair should be an architect.

The study committee suggests that design of signs is an important facet of the appearance of buildings and sites, and requests that it meet with the village consultants who are now preparing new sign design standards to help influence their decisions in this area.

6.10 APPEARANCE REVIEW GUIDELINES

6.10.1 General

A. Intent

The intent of the Oak Park Appearance Review Guidelines is to promote innovation and creativity while creating buildings with visual interest that complement the streetscape, are compatible with surrounding developments, and enhance the pedestrian oriented character and overall image of the Village.

Effective Date of the Oak Park Appearance Review Guidelines: July 1, 2008

B. Purpose

The purpose of the Oak Park Appearance Review Guidelines is to advance the interest of public health, safety and general welfare as related to the exterior of buildings by:

1. Improving property values in the Village of Oak Park.
2. Promoting civic beautification of the Village of Oak Park.
3. Protecting property rights and values by balancing the rights of landowners to use and improve their land with the corresponding rights of abutting and neighboring landowners to enjoy their property.
4. Promoting environmentally sustainable buildings;
5. Promoting the development of an economically sound and stable Village of Oak Park.
6. Integrating new construction harmoniously into the existing structures within the Village of Oak Park

C. Applicability

1. These guidelines shall be applicable to the following buildings which apply for zoning permits after the effective date of this section:
 - a. New residential buildings of three units or more, mixed unit (combination of residential and non-residential use) and non-residential buildings.
 - b. Additions to existing residential buildings of three units or more, existing non-residential and existing mixed use buildings that are visible from a public right of way.
 - c. Exterior alterations to existing non-residential, residential buildings of three units or more and mixed use buildings, including changes to exterior

HVAC or other mechanical, plumbing and electrical equipment that are visible from a public right-of-way.

D. Criteria for design approval through the Oak Park Appearance Review Process:

1. *Relate development to its environment.* The proposed design shall relate appropriately to its context. It shall relate harmoniously to the terrain and to the use, scale and architecture of existing buildings in the vicinity which have a functional or visual relationship to the proposed structure(s). Proposals that deviate substantially from established neighborhood patterns should be discouraged;
2. *Preserve the landscape.* The landscape, existing terrain, and any significant trees and vegetation shall be preserved in its natural state insofar as practicable. Tree and soil removal shall be minimized and any grade changes shall be in keeping with the general appearance of neighboring developed areas. If natural features and existing landscaping are proposed to be removed, special attention shall be accorded to plans to replace such features and landscaping;
3. *Provide open space.* All open space shall be designed to be visually and physically accessible to the maximum extent feasible. Open space shall add to the visual amenities of the vicinity by maximizing its visibility for persons passing or overlooking the site from neighboring properties. If open space is intended for active use, it shall be so designed as to maximize its accessibility for all individuals, including the disabled, encourage social interaction, and facilitate ease of maintenance;
4. *Provide efficient and effective circulation.* With respect to vehicular and pedestrian circulation, special attention shall be given to the location and number of access points to public streets and sidewalks, to the separation of vehicles and pedestrians, to the arrangement of parking areas and to service and loading areas, and to the location of accessible routes and ramps for the disabled;
5. *Provide for nature's events.* Special attention shall be accorded to stormwater runoff so that neighboring properties and/or the public stormwater drainage system are not adversely affected. Attention shall also be accorded to design features which address the affects of rain, snow and ice at building entrances and to provisions for snow and ice removal from both pedestrian and vehicular circulation areas;
6. *Integrate special features with the design.* Exterior storage areas, mechanical equipment, service areas, truck loading areas, utility connections, meters and structures, mailboxes, lighting, and similar accessory structures shall be subject to such setbacks, screen planting or other mitigation or screening methods as are reasonably required to prevent their being incongruous with or offensive to existing or proposed

- structures and surrounding properties. Special features which are essential to a building's function shall be incorporated into the original design, not added as an afterthought;
7. *Protect Oak Park's heritage.* The demolition or alteration of historic buildings or sites shall be avoided, whether these exist on the proposed property or on adjacent properties. Significant buildings are those located in a Historic District or noted in an official architectural survey. New buildings, additions, and alterations shall be sympathetic to and complement the scale and design of surrounding buildings and buildings of architectural merit;
 8. *Consider the microclimate.* Any development which proposes new structures, additional lot coverage, or the installation of machinery or equipment which emits heat, vapor, fumes, or noise shall endeavor to minimize, insofar as practicable, any adverse impact on light, air, and water resources, or on the noise and temperature levels of the immediate environment.
 9. *Protect existing scale and streetscape.* The arrangement of new buildings should respect and be compatible with adjacent existing buildings. New buildings should be located in line with the adjacent building fronts to retain traditional street patterns and the integrity of village blocks and their corners.
 10. *Protect solar access.* New structures shall have minimal adverse impact on solar access to open space and adjacent buildings in order to preserve and provide for active and passive solar utilization where practicable;
 11. *Reduce energy utilization.* New buildings should incorporate best available technologies and materials in order to maximize energy efficient design;
 12. *Minimize shadow impacts.* New buildings and additions to existing buildings shall be shaped to reduce substantial impacts of shadows on public open spaces. In determining the impact of shadows, the following factors shall be taken into account: the amount of area shaded, the duration of shading, and the importance of sunlight to the kind of open space being shadowed;
 13. *Make service access secondary to pedestrian access.* Any point of vehicular access for delivery of goods shall respect the character of the pedestrian corridor where it exists or is proposed; and
 14. *Achieve design excellence.* Endeavors to achieve design excellence in all new structures are encouraged.

6.10.2 Building/Street Relationship

- A. **Building Orientation:** Orient buildings to create a positive relationship to the street. Position the primary building facade to face the street and interrelate the activities of the building with street activities.

- B. The primary building facade and main public entry shall be immediately accessible to the primary abutting street. In the case of a corner lot, the arterial street, as defined in the Village Comprehensive Plan, shall be primary. In the case where two arterial streets cross, the primary building facade may be positioned to face either arterial street.
- C. When there is only one building in a proposed commercial or mixed-use building that will be occupied by multiple tenants, at least fifty percent of the building's primary building facade shall be oriented toward the primary abutting street. The primary building facade is that which has the majority of storefronts, entrances, and windows.
- D. Street Edge:
 - 1. Buildings shall be in line with the established front building line along the street edge to create a consistent relationship of buildings and to form a visually continuous, pedestrian-oriented street front.
 - 2. The majority of a primary street edge at grade shall be occupied by the building facade.

6.10.3 Building Façade Guidelines

- A. First floor building elevations facing the major street shall have varied patterns of windows, changes in plane of surface, articulations, reveals, pilasters or contrasting materials which will eliminate bare walls. Visually breaking up long walls into a variety of modules or sections not longer or higher than about thirty feet by means listed above, in order to give the impression of a smaller building, is encouraged.
- B. Every building shall have a entry door that is prominent and clearly visible from the major abutting street. Arcades, colonnades, arches, awnings, canopies, roofs, porticos, recesses, projections, or cornices are suggested.
- C. Storefront display windows in retail uses shall be clear glass and shall take up no less than 50% of the first floor area. Storefront display window sills shall be no higher than three feet above grade.
- D. Building Materials
 - 1. The following exterior finishes materials are encouraged:
 - a. natural clay brick,
 - b. ceramic tile,
 - c. terra cotta,
 - d. glass,
 - e. stone or cast stone,
 - f. metal, aluminum, steel,
 - g. glass block (although discouraged on street façades),

- h. molded cornices and trim in alternate materials such as glass fiber reinforced concrete (GFRC) or fiberglass reinforced plastic (FRP),
 - i. wood,
 - j. fiber cement materials, cement plaster (stucco) and similar materials
 - k. architectural finished concrete.
2. The following exterior finish materials are discouraged:
- a. aluminum siding,
 - b. metal industrial type siding,
 - c. Vinyl siding
 - d. asphalt siding,
 - e. E.I.F.S. (synthetic stucco) cedar shakes,
 - f. concrete masonry units T1-11 and other plywood siding materials.

E. Awnings and Canopies:

1. Utilize an individual awning or canopy for each storefront bay; avoid use of a continuous awning or canopy across multiple storefront bays.
2. The front extended edge shall be compatible in height to others in the same block, but in no case shall be lower than eight (8) feet above grade.
3. Gas station canopies: *[there should be some guidelines included here concerning design of canopies for gas stations. The Study Committee did not conclude what those should be, but suggest that existing guidelines be studied in those communities where visual appearance of gas stations and their canopies have been enhanced]*

F. Mechanical Equipment Screening

Mechanical equipment, HVAC rooftop units, cooling towers, exhaust fans, and air intake ducts shall be screened from view by an architectural screen or parapet. Such screens shall be designed to be compatible and shall be considered as part of the overall design for the building, not an appendage or after thought. Such screens are not necessary if the mechanical equipment itself becomes an integral part of the architectural design.

G. Building Utility Services

1. New power, telephone and cable utility service wiring shall be located underground.
2. Existing power, telephone and cable utility service wiring shall be relocated underground to the maximum extent feasible.

3. Where relocation of existing power, telephone and cable utility service wiring is not feasible due to limitations of the utility company infrastructure, utility service wiring shall be located overhead at the rear of buildings so that they are not visible from the public right-of-way. Provide landscaping, walls and fences to hide utility service wiring to the greatest extent possible.

H. Lighting

1. Front and rear entrance to the building shall be illuminated with electric site lighting fixtures.
2. Exterior spotlighting fixtures may be used to illuminate prominent building details.
3. Electric site lighting fixture illumination intensity shall be dimmed to minimum security levels of one foot-candle after hours of building occupancy.
4. Electric site lighting fixture illumination intensity shall not exceed one foot-candle at property lines at all times.
5. Integrate design of site electric lighting fixtures with building and site design.
6. Provide underground power lines to building and electric site lighting fixtures.
7. The height of electric site lighting fixtures shall be proportional to the building and site. Site lighting fixtures shall not be higher than the highest roof ridge, or twenty feet, whichever is higher.
8. Electric site lighting fixtures shall be shielded to eliminate light pollution.
9. Electric site lighting fixtures to illuminate off-street parking lots and loading berths shall be located, aimed and shielded so as not to reflect direct rays of light onto adjacent streets or properties.

I. Parking and Loading Areas

1. Parking areas shall be located at the rear or side of the lot.
2. Adjacent property owners shall cooperatively work together to share driveways to minimize the number and width of driveways and curb cuts.
3. See Section 6.4: *Landscaping and Buffering* of the Zoning Ordinance for screening of parking lots and loading areas.

6.10.6 Appearance Review Committee

A. Appearance Review Committee Members.

There is hereby created the Village of Oak Park Appearance Review Committee
Members shall be as follows:

1. Village Manager or his/her designee
2. Village Planner or his/her designee
3. Director of Building and Property Standards or his/her designee
4. In the event that the project is designated as a Historic Landmark, located in a Historic District or identified as a structure of merit or significant in an official

Village architectural survey, the Chair or the Historic Preservation Commission Staff Liaison will be invited to be in attendance.

5. Four additional public members should be selected from the following occupations:
 - a. Architects
 - b. Interior designers
 - c. Landscape architects
 - d. Artists
 - e. Developers
6. The chair of the committee shall be an architect.

B. Rules of the Committee.

1. Four members of the Appearance Review Committee shall constitute a quorum.
2. The affirmative vote of at least four members of the Appearance Review Committee will be required for approval of plans before the review, or for the adoption of any action by the Appearance Review Committee.

C. Pre-application conference: Any applicant or prospective applicant for a building permit may file a written request for a preliminary conference with the Appearance Review Committee. The conference shall be held within fifteen days of the receipt of the request. At the conference the Committee will review preliminary exterior elevation drawings or photographic examples, landscape plans, and material selections. Committee will give applicant their informal opinion to assist the applicant in the development of a final submittal which would be consistent with the requirements and purposes of the Appearance Review Guidelines.

D. The Appearance Review Committee does not have the authority or responsibility to design or assist in the design of any building or project submitted for approval except that the Committee may make suggestions in an attempt to make the design consistent with the Appearance Review Guidelines.

E. Appearance Review Submittal Requirements.

Applicant shall submit seven packets containing the following:

1. Plat of Survey.
2. Zoning analysis.
3. Stipulation of building use.
4. Stipulation of number of dwelling units, net and gross square footage of non-residential use, and number of parking spaces.
5. Site plan.
6. Stipulation of whether the building is within a Historic District, a Historic Landmark or identified as "Significant" or a "Structure of Merit" in Village of Oak Park architectural surveys.

7. Photos of existing neighborhood and/or drawings depicting how the proposed design contextually responds to the existing built environment.
8. Landscape plan identifying the location, caliper and species of trees, shrubs, durable landscape barriers, screen plantings, grass, ground cover, planters and planting areas.
9. Lighting plan identifying the location, height and type of all exterior building electrical lighting proposed.
10. Identification of the existing and proposed buildings on the site and adjacent sites, including exterior elevations of all sides.
11. Samples representing accurate color, texture, pattern, finish and range of variations of all exterior building materials proposed.

F. Meetings of Appearance Review Committee.

Upon receipt of a completed Appearance Review submittal documents, a meeting of the Appearance Review Committee will be scheduled and held within fifteen (15) business days. At the meeting, the application may be approved, approved with modifications or denied with written findings explaining why the proposed design does not meet the appearance review guidelines. Upon approval of a submitted application or approval with modifications, the applicant may proceed with the building permit process.

- a. A decision of the Appearance Review Committee may be appealed to the Village Board and may be modified, revised or affirmed. Such appeal shall be filed within ten (10) business days of the decision and the Village Board will hear such appeal at its next regularly scheduled meeting.
- b. Time extensions may be authorized by the Appearance Review Committee, provided the applicant demonstrated that there are circumstances, difficulties or practical hardships which make compliance with a six (6) months' approval period unreasonable.

End