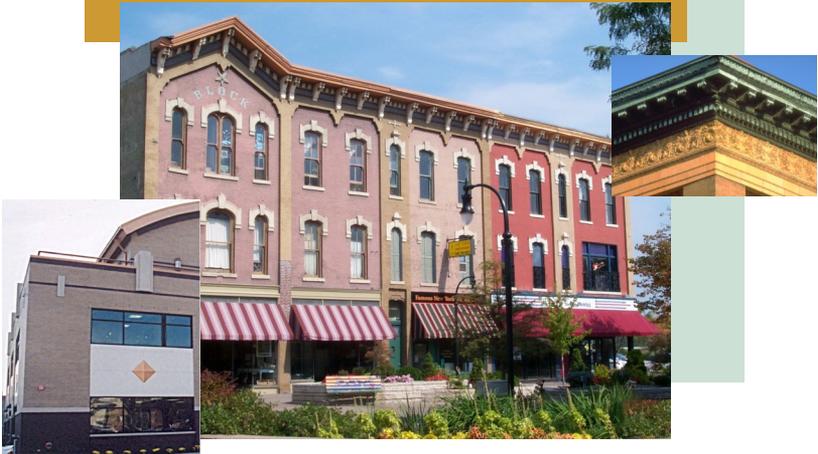


CITY OF ROCK ISLAND &
RENAISSANCE ROCK ISLAND

Downtown Design Guidelines



Helpful Design Standards for:

- New Construction
- Historic Rehabilitation
- Urban Design & Parking

For more detailed assistance & incentive programs call:
309.732.2900 (City of Rock Island)
309.788.6311 (Renaissance Rock Island)

Downtown Design Guidelines

Rock Island's downtown design guidelines are intended to assist those making investments in new or renovated buildings. Improving the appearance of downtown is an important objective of the downtown strategic plan.

Downtown's Key Strengths:

- **Compact** – the Quad City area's smallest downtown
- **Intact** – a pedestrian-friendly downtown
- **Historic** – scale and age provide a strong sense of place

These Design Guidelines Support the Following Mission:

To establish and manage downtown Rock Island as a creative and innovative experience for visitors and residents and to enhance the framework for private investment.

Downtown Boundary Map

See opposite page.

Incremental Steps to Achieve the Mission, Embracing the Main Street Four Point Approach:

- **Economics** – measures to insure business success
- **Design** – quality aesthetics to raise our expectations
- **Organization** – effectively and efficiently implementing our vision
- **Marketing** – better telling our story

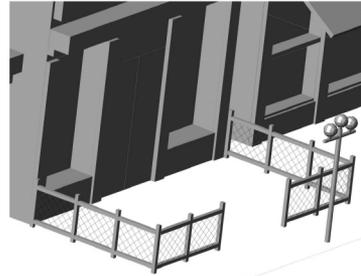
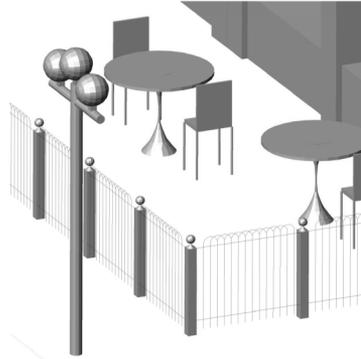
Design Review: Binding or Not?

These design guidelines are used to help property owners understand the importance of design considerations and to raise expectations of good design. Binding application of the guidelines occurs only with the use of certain city or federal programs, such as the Facade Improvement Program and the New Markets Tax Credit Program. Downtown buildings that are designated Rock Island Landmarks go through a separate review process under the purview of the Preservation Ordinance with the Rock Island Preservation Commission. In addition, some downtown structures may be located within the Riverfront Corridor Overlay District, which is reviewed by the Rock Island Planning & Redevelopment Division and Rock Island Planning Commission. All projects must meet applicable building, zoning and sign codes.

Streetscape and the Public Realm

Streets and sidewalks are some of our most important public spaces. While the construction and maintenance of the public realm is the responsibility of the City of Rock Island, private development must be coordinated with these improvements and property owners are encouraged to supplement the City's investment.

- Coordinate the type and placement of sidewalks, street trees, lighting, benches, waste receptacles and other street furniture with the City's Design Review Committee (call 732-2920).
- Use innovative railing designs to define outdoor spaces, such as cafés, from pedestrian movement areas.
- Enrich the downtown with public art.



Innovative railing designs define outdoor spaces.

Setbacks and Street Frontage

Maintaining a continuous street frontage is one of the most important elements in promoting pedestrian activity and establishing a quality "face" to the public realm. Deep setbacks, often found in newer commercial corridors, are NOT appropriate in the downtown.

- Establish a zero setback along at least 80 percent of all street frontage.
- Maintain the original historic line of the building setback.



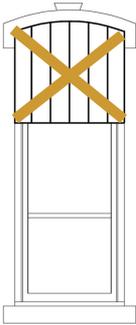
Maintain the historic setback. Center building in this illustration is incorrect.

Historic Resources

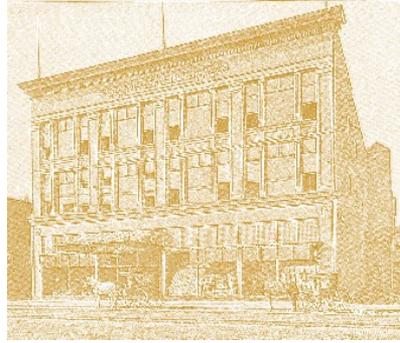
Historic buildings and sites are important reminders of our past, represent significant resources that should be reused, and establish a framework for future development.

Historically or architecturally significant structures should be preserved.

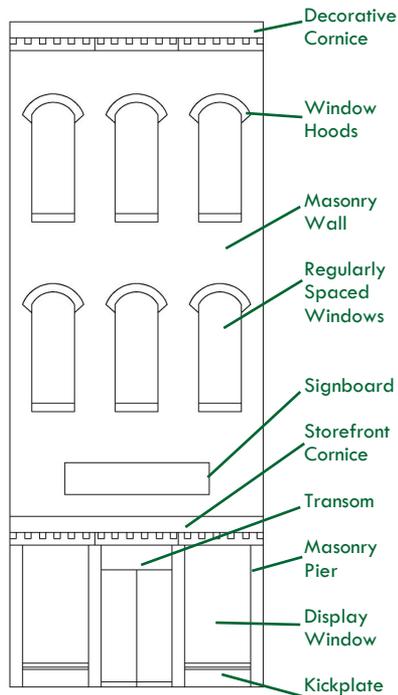
- Repair rather than replace deteriorated architectural features. If replacement is necessary, the new feature should be compatible in composition, design, and color.
- Applying new material that would cover original material is discouraged.
- Preserve the size and shape of the storefront and upper story windows.



Do not cover portions of historic window openings for the sake of buying "standard" inserts. Reducing the size of window openings destroys the value of older buildings



1713 3rd Avenue, circa 1901.

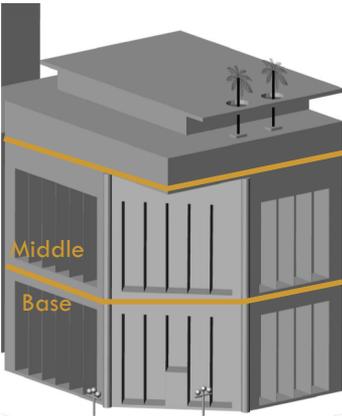
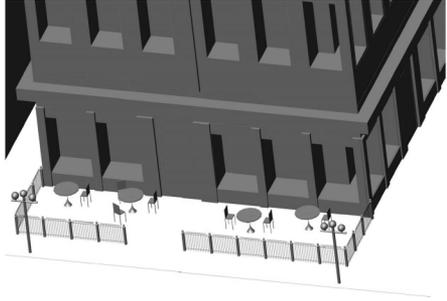


Facade detailing should be a prevailing standard in historic rehabilitation. New infill construction can gain design clues from traditional building elements.

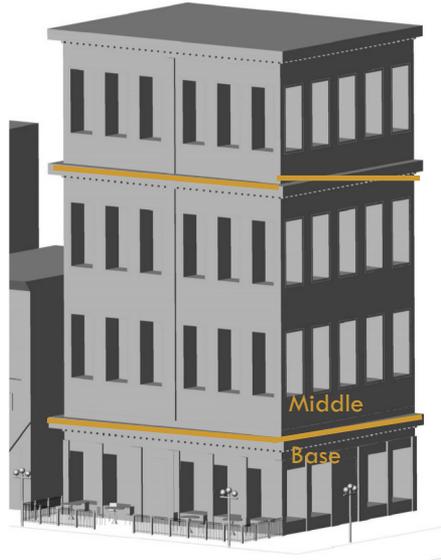
Building Facades and Access

The “face” that a building presents to the street should be scaled for pedestrians, exhibit quality materials, and provide interest.

- Provide at least one pedestrian entrance from the primary street for every 100 feet of horizontal wall space.
- Dedicate a minimum of 50 percent of the ground floor elevation for doors and windows on commercial buildings.
- Create buildings with a base, middle and top to enhance the pedestrian experience.



Create buildings with a base, middle and top. These buildings illustrate two interpretations.



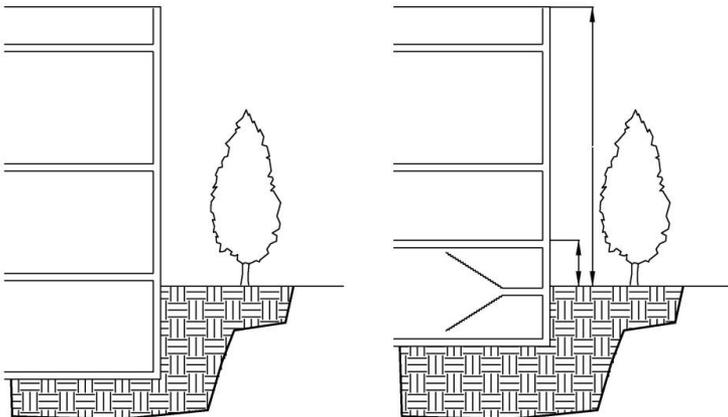
- Restore or recreate the historic alignment of architectural features with other buildings on the block. These lines unify the street visually.
- Retain traditional exterior materials whenever possible. If changes are desired or necessary, consider the continuity of exterior facade treatments in the surrounding historic buildings. 

- Orient upper story windows either vertically or square. Windows should not be reduced from their original dimensions.
- Maintain traditional recessed entries where they existed.
- Provide visual depth and shade with awnings.
- Keep doors and windows clear of security-type roll up metal doors on public streets.
- Clean facades with the gentlest means possible. Sandblasting permanently damages old brick.

New Construction

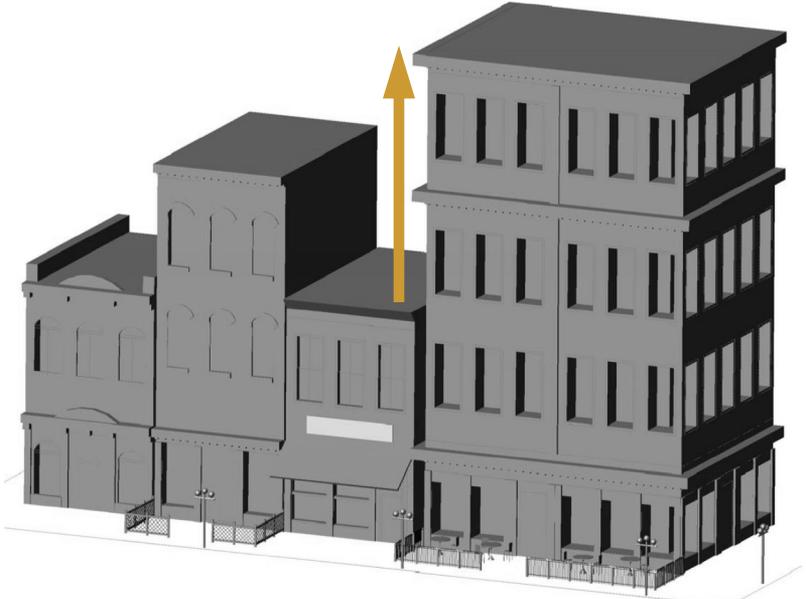
Repetitions of traditional facade features create patterns pleasing to pedestrians. While these features may be interpreted in new and contemporary ways, they generally incorporate traditional design elements.

- Distinguish additions to historic buildings while respecting the proportion and architectural elements of the original structure.
- Incorporate elements in the “Buildings Facades and Access” section above in new construction.
- Do not construct half-level or split-level first floors that extend both above and below grade. 🏠

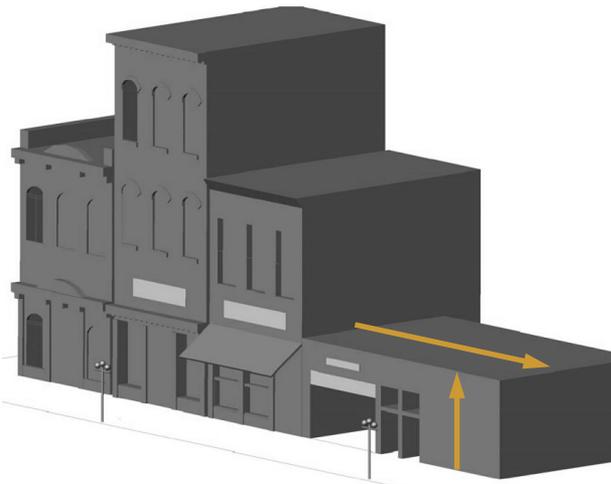


*First floor levels should be at grade level as in left hand picture.
Half levels will offset the exterior window appearance and relationship to nearby buildings.*

Downtown Design Guidelines



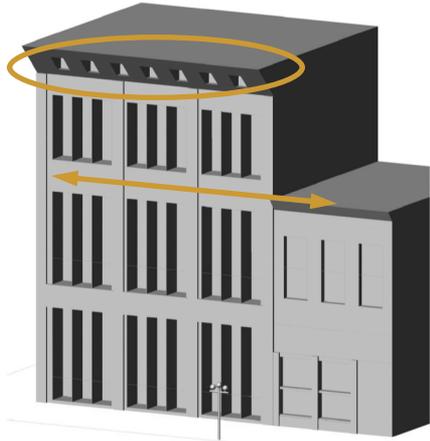
Corner buildings in downtown Rock Island are typically taller than those interior to the block.



*Consider height, width and mass of surrounding buildings.
The building to the right is not in scale.*

- Construct corner buildings taller than buildings interior to the block.
- Consider the height, width and mass of other buildings in the downtown.
- Carry similar or compatible materials around all sides of buildings. Û

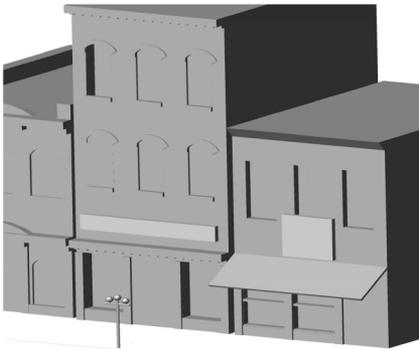
- Maintain a human building scale rather than a monolithic or monumental scale by using standard size brick, uniform building components and window sizes complementary to surrounding buildings.
- Break the mass of the facade into a number of smaller bays on large sites in order to maintain a rhythm similar to surrounding buildings. This is particularly true for storefront level facade elements.
- Use building materials that have a texture, pattern and scale similar to those in the downtown.
- Finish the building with a distinctive roofline or cornice.



Even new construction can have a distinctive cornice line and relate in scale to its surroundings.

Commercial Signs

Commercial signs should function to identify and locate businesses, promote



Place signage in the frieze board (left). Do not obscure architectural details (right).

merchandise or service within, attract customers, provide direction and information, and in some cases create visual delight and architectural interest.

- Design signs as an integral yet noticeable part of a building's overall design.
- Coordinate sign design with regulations in the Rock Island Sign Ordinance. All signs are required to receive a permit (call 732-2900 or 732-2910).

- Do not obscure or destroy architectural details with signs. ^U
- Place building signage in the sign frieze board that separates that ground level storefront from the upper facade or project it from the face of the building no more than 18 inches into public right-of-way as mandated in the International Building Code.
- Illuminate the sign surface with direct lighting. Internally lit signs are generally discouraged because they can form masses of light which, when viewed in groups, can be unpleasant. Creative neon lighting is encouraged.
- New billboards are prohibited.
- Temporary banners are considered permanently attached signs and must meet square footage requirements and receive a permit. (Call 732-2900).
- Murals intended to serve an artistic and/or historic function rather than an advertising function are not considered signs and are encouraged. Commercial murals must meet Sign Ordinance requirements.

Placement of Equipment

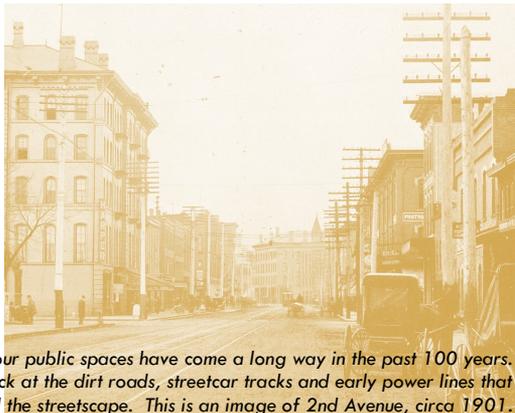
Unightly equipment and service areas detract from the visual quality of the urban experience.

- Minimize the visibility of dumpsters, HVAC, mechanical, electrical or utilitarian elements by placing to the rear of the property and screening from public view.

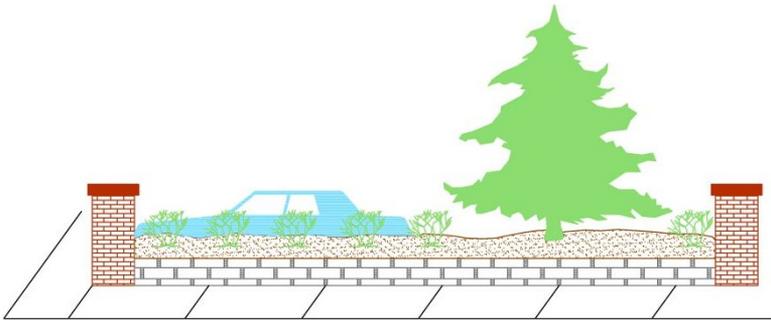
Parking and Access

Driveways and expanses of parking lots fronting major streets decrease pedestrian safety, interrupt the quality of the pedestrian experience and discourage walking.

- Leave the curb uninterrupted for safety of pedestrians. Side streets and alleys should be used for vehicular access.
- Locate off-street parking to the rear of the building. If physical constraints prohibit rear-lot



Aesthetics in our public spaces have come a long way in the past 100 years. Take a look back at the dirt roads, streetcar tracks and early power lines that dominated the streetscape. This is an image of 2nd Avenue, circa 1901.



Landscape off-street parking areas of five or more spaces.

parking, any parking that fronts a primary street should be screened along the public right-of-way with a wall or fence. Ū

- Landscape off-street parking areas of five or more spaces. Parking areas must, at a minimum, conform to the landscaping requirements in the Rock Island Unified Zoning Ordinance (call 732-2900). Additional landscaping that provides shade, reduces urban heat build-up, filters pollutants from air and water, and improves the visual quality of downtown is encouraged.
- On-street parking and loading zones must be approved by the Rock Island Public Works Department, 732-2200.
- Improve rear or side alley elevations to enhance public access from parking lots and alleys.
- Upgrade downtown alleys as pedestrian access routes and efficient commercial service access with decorative paving, lighting and signage.
- Design parking structures so that they create a visually attractive and active pedestrian environment through occupied space that conceals a parking deck.
- Design disabled access in an appropriate manner that is clearly visible



The addition of a disabled access ramp at the entrance to City Hall did not negatively impact the appearance of the building. Notice the addition of street trees. The photo on the left dates to circa 1940.



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