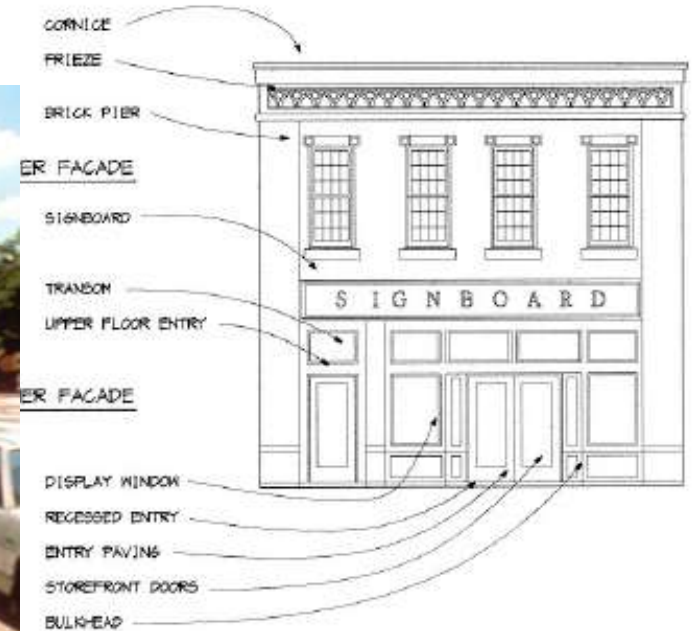


Design Guidelines: What they are, what they can accomplish



Allison Platt & Associates

NC Main Street Conference, January 26, 2012

What guides redevelopment?

- **Zoning**, which establishes the minimum standards for any use
- A **Master Plan (if one is in place)** establishes short- and long-term goals for both public and private investments
- The Federal guidelines for **Historic Preservation** are a great financial incentive to redevelopment of historic properties
- **Design Guidelines** establish the goals and objectives of development and public improvements

What are Design Guidelines?

- A “manual” for those wishing to improve their properties showing appropriate materials, outlining procedures and process, and demonstrating expectations
- The area covered is defined either by a previously established historic district, or an area without that designation (but also without tax credits except for individually listed buildings)
- Covers not only building restoration/renovation, but if desired, can also include standards for new development, signage, site and public improvements
- In almost every case the standards will be higher in districts governed by DGs than in other parts of the City.
- Zoning provides the minimum standards for development, guidelines provide the goals

What do they cover?

- Historic Preservation, zoning, and other tax incentives help with renovation of many buildings, but these are only part of the revitalization process
- For an historic downtown to become a vital and exciting heart of the city, many different elements must play their part:
 - Historic Buildings
 - New Buildings
 - New businesses and attractions
 - Attractive streets
 - Parks and amenities
 - Attractive and functional wayfinding and private signage
 - Sidewalk Dining
 - Well-ordered vehicular access and parking
 - Places designed for the comfort and enjoyment of PEOPLE!
- Tax credits and/or zoning alone cannot achieve this; design guidelines are intended to coordinate all these elements and express public commitment to high quality design

Design Guidelines are NOT:

- Site specific design.
- **Laws.** They can only work as “modifiers” and “guides” that interpret zoning and add to or refine requirements for state and federal tax credits.
 - All state and local building and zoning requirements must still be fulfilled

How do they work?

- In most communities, Historic District **Commissions** are established, and **Certificates of Appropriateness** are issued if the property meets the design standards by review of the Commission
- Within historic districts, the guidelines **work with federal and state standards and tax incentives** to ensure preservation
- Utilizing a “**carrot and stick**” strategy, cities can make façade grants and other assistance available for properties that meet the guidelines (also helps with buildings not seeking or eligible for tax credits, and for new construction)
- **Site Guidelines** are an important part of design guidelines that are often overlooked

Design Guidelines Contents

- Introduction/Maps/Secretary's Standards
- Design Principles
- Guidelines for:
 - ❖ Historic Commercial Buildings
 - ❖ Historic Industrial Buildings
 - ❖ Historic Residential Buildings (if present)
 - ❖ New Buildings in the River District (stress form rather than use)
 - ❖ Site Design
 - ❖ Commercial Corridors (if desired)
 - ❖ Streetscape and Public Space Design
 - ❖ Sidewalk Dining
 - ❖ Signage

Design Principles

- The Introductory section discusses good design including:
 1. Urban Design principles (Mixed uses, unified character, avoid suburban and rural land use patterns)
 2. Architecture (regional styles, building orientation, definitions, appropriate materials)
 3. Pedestrian Priority

Design Principles



Mixed Uses



Pedestrian
Priority

Contextual/ Regional
Architecture

Appropriate Architecture



Incompatible Architecture



Appropriate Materials/Design



Inappropriate Materials/Design

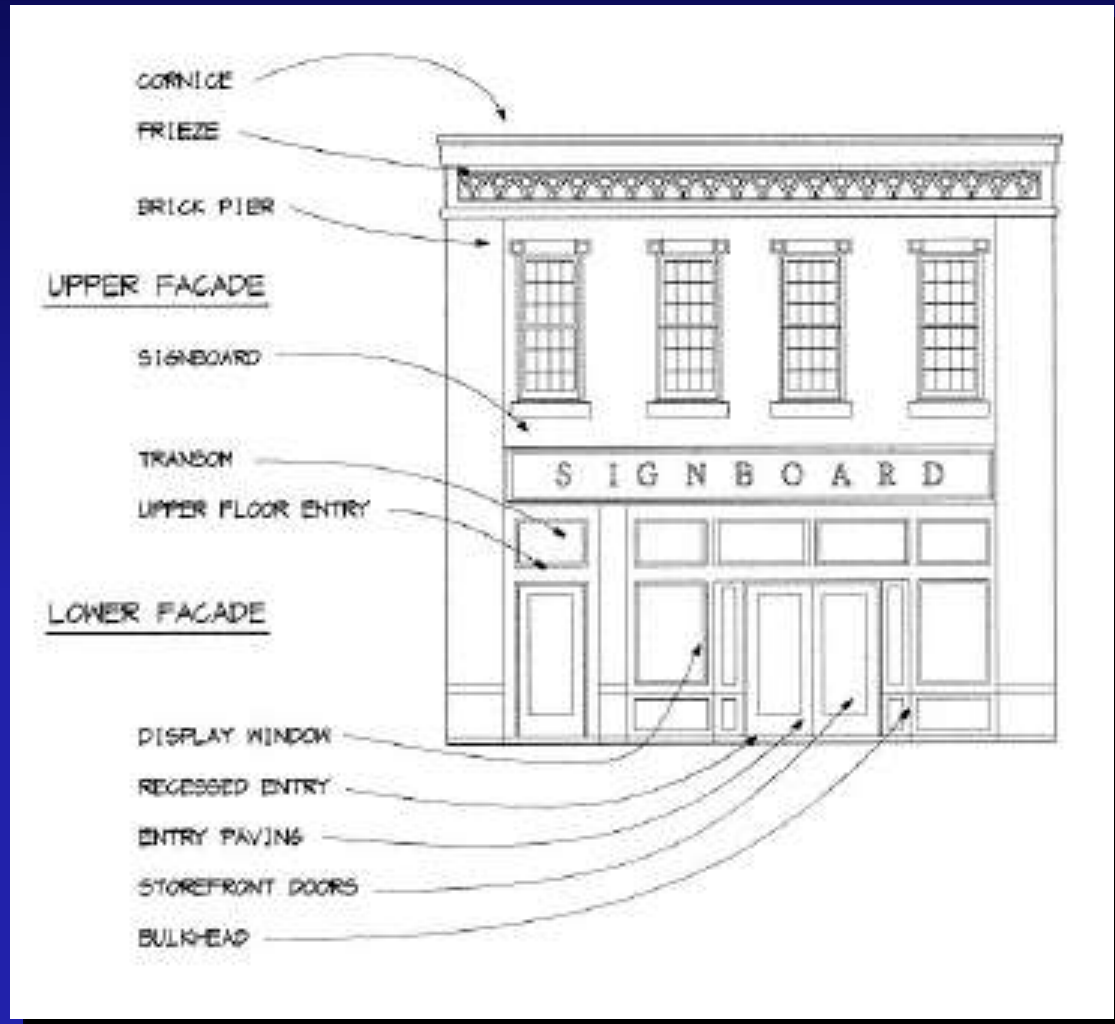


Historic Building Rehabilitation

This section is the heart of most guidelines:

- Rehab of existing historic Commercial and Industrial Buildings
- Rehab of historic residential if present
- Discusses materials, use of like materials, and restoration of architectural components on the exterior of buildings, including storefronts, windows and doors, ornamentation, roofs, gutters and downspouts, colors

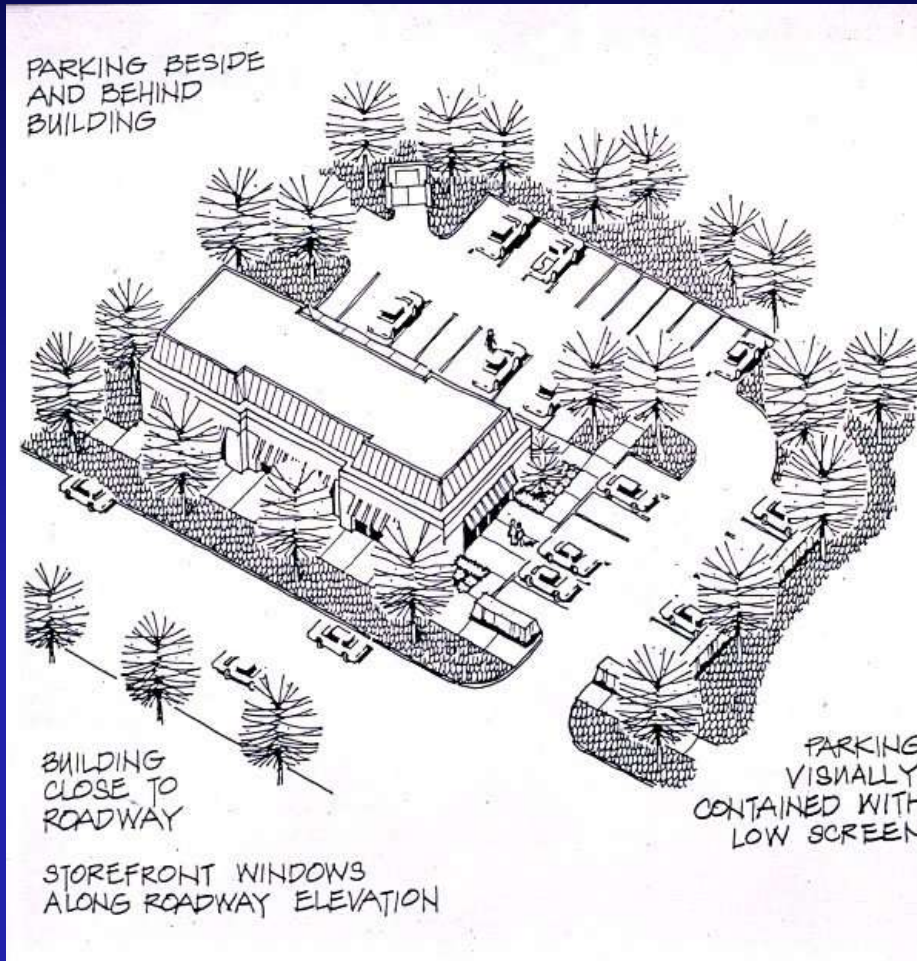
Historic Building Rehabilitation



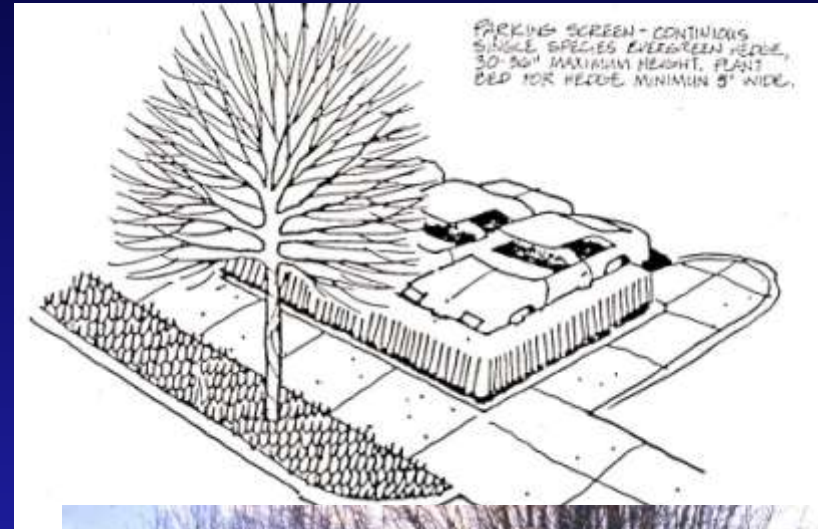
Site Design Guidelines

- This section is very important to the overall cohesiveness and character of a downtown district.
- Covers parking, screening, driveways, building siting for new construction, landscaping, and items such as linkages from parking to main streets.
- May include signage and sidewalk dining, or these may be separate sections.
- Streetscape and public space guidelines are usually separate sections, as well.

Site Design



Parking, Screening



Guidelines for sidewalk dining



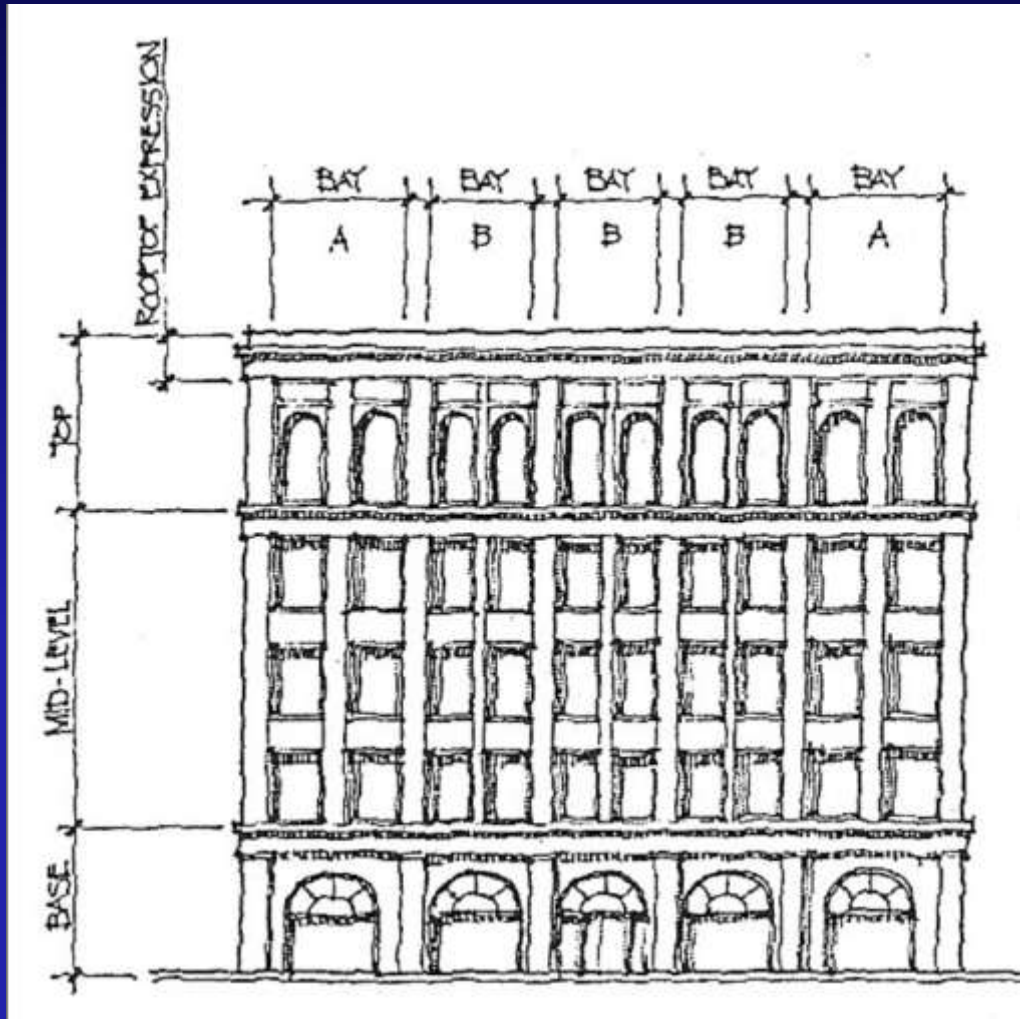
Signs, Banners



Guidelines for New Buildings

- How new buildings should fit into the historic context, and into the areas without much context.
 - ❖ Form-based, not use (height, materials design elements)
 - ❖ Site Design Guidelines would probably remain the same
- The goal of this section will be to gracefully integrate new architecture into the historic downtown context, and to protect and enhance the historic core.

New Infill Buildings



New buildings should fit the context

Private Development: Renovation



Portsmouth, VA

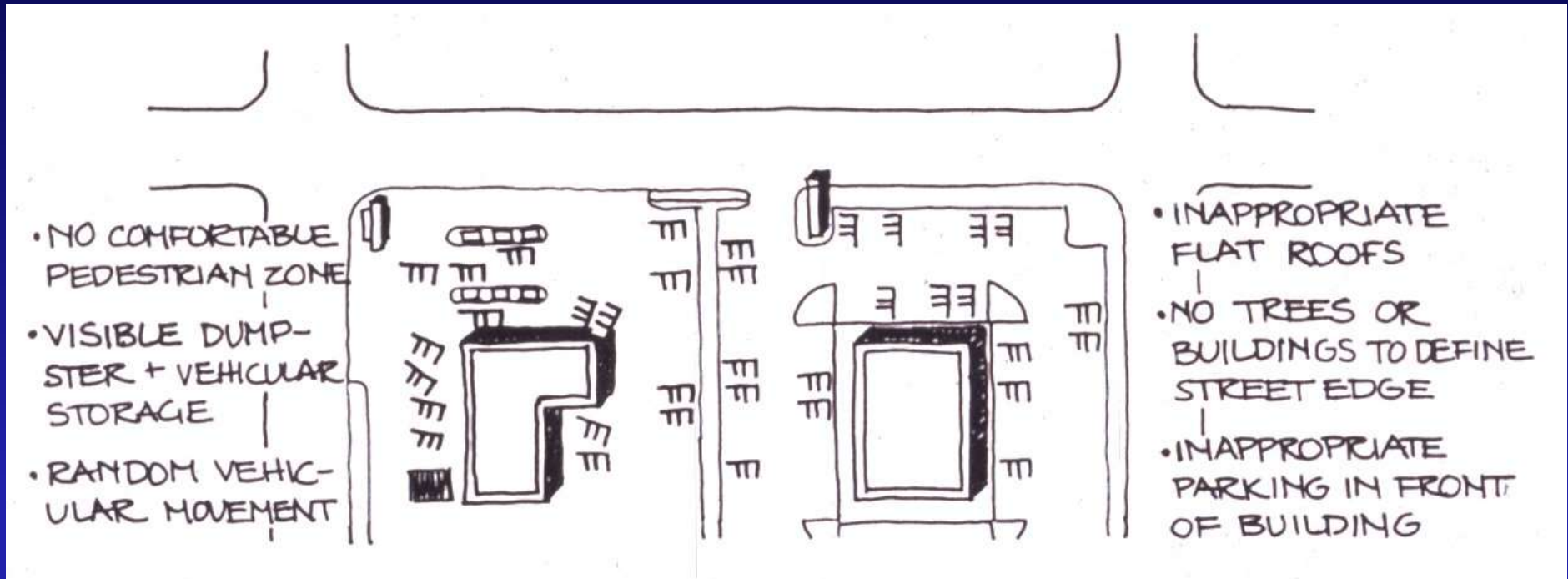
Even existing buildings that are not historic can be made to complement an historic downtown



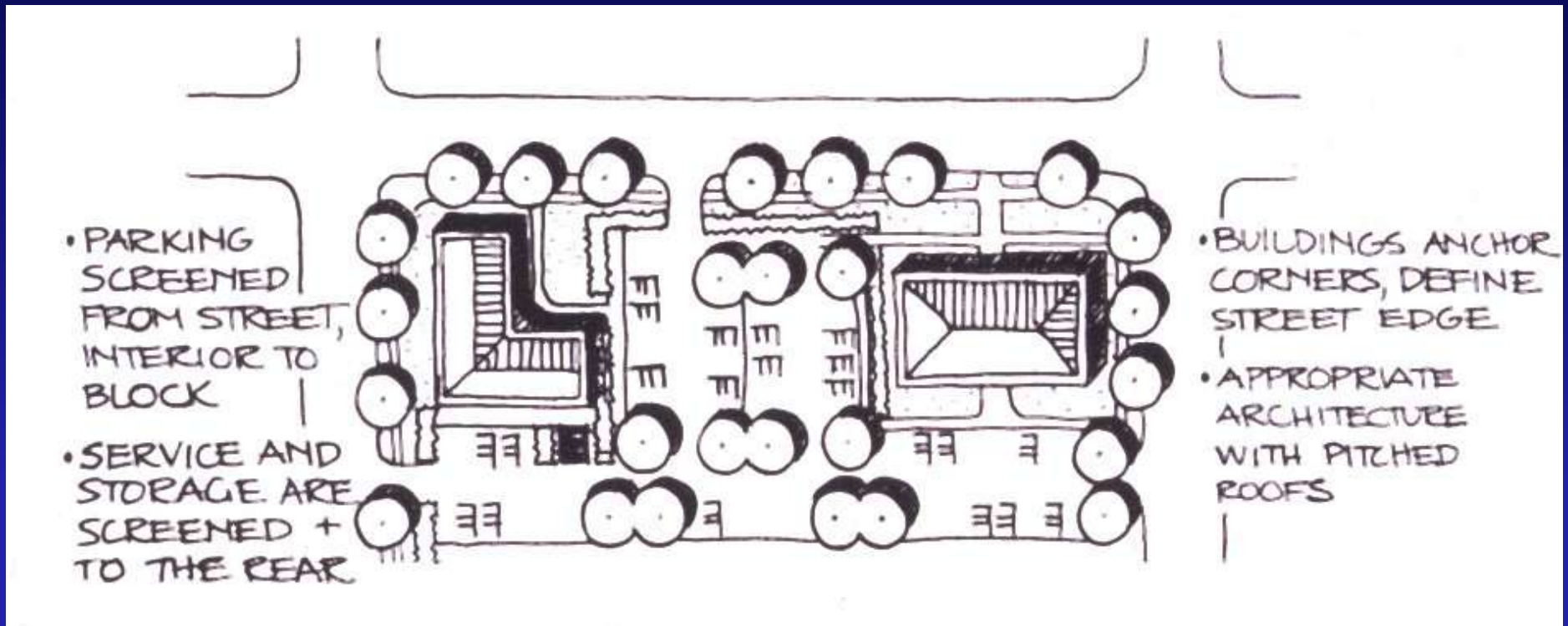
New Corridor Buildings & Site Design

- Existing commercial strip corridors and development patterns are often unattractive, but are usually the way visitors approach historic downtowns.
- Appropriate site design, signage, building materials, and building placement can have a huge positive impact on these areas without adding a lot of cost.
- Better design will encourage higher-end commercial uses and possible future office.

Corridor Building and Site Issues



Proposed Corridors



Proposed Corridors



Issues

- Are there citizens with the background and desire to serve on a historic district commission? If not, are you willing to provide opportunities for education?
- Is your community ready to deal with an additional layer of controls, especially given the current economic climate?
- If you wish to create a downtown (or any other) historic district, this is a complex and time consuming process.
- With a district in place, there is still a need for guidelines.
 - This can start with buildings only, which are largely covered by the Secretary of the Interior Standards, or with buildings and sites, and grow over time.

Advantages

- Saving your community's architectural heritage!
- Competitive/marketing advantage over communities without standards and guidelines.
- Assistance for property owners in understanding the process and desired goals of historic revitalization.
- Demonstration of a public commitment to quality that will attract higher quality developers and property owners.