



# City of Fairfax, Virginia

## City Council Work Session

Agenda Item # 12b

City Council Meeting 4/10/2018

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TO: Honorable Mayor and Members of City Council

FROM: Robert Sisson, City Manager *RS*

SUBJECT: Discussion of a request by Michael DeMarco and Joe Ricciardi for proposed use and building modifications on the property located at 10426 Main Street and 3981 Chain Bridge Road, also known as tax map # 57-4-02-101.

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ISSUE(S): Informal discussion of proposed uses and building modifications on the subject property. Separate applications for public hearings with the Board of Architectural Review and City Council are required to be submitted.

SUMMARY: The applicant proposes to modify and add onto an existing one-story building with a basement in the Old Town Fairfax Historic Overlay District (HOD). Proposed uses include a basement level entertainment space, retail and restaurant space, and upper story residential. The proposal is dependent upon approval of special use permits to allow for upper story residential/mixed use and entertainment (final use to be determined) in the CR – Commercial Retail District. Based on initial analysis, staff has determined that special exceptions may be required, including but not limited to maximum building height and minimum sidewalk width in the HOD, and tree canopy coverage requirements.

FISCAL IMPACT: Staff does not have a fiscal impact analysis at this time.

RECOMMENDATION: Discussion

ALTERNATIVE COURSE OF ACTION: City Council may choose not to conduct the discussion or defer discussion to a future date.

RESPONSIBLE STAFF/  
POC: Tommy Scibilia, Planner  
Jason Sutphin, Community Development Division Chief  
Brooke Hardin, Director, Community Development & Planning

COORDINATION: Community Development & Planning Building Code

ATTACHMENTS: Staff Report



# CITY OF FAIRFAX

## Department of Community Development & Planning

City Council Work Session

### WORK SESSION DATE

April 10, 2018

### APPLICANT/ OWNER

Michael DeMarco  
Joe Ricciardi

### AGENT

None

### PARCEL DATA

#### *Tax Map ID*

◇ 57 4 02 101

#### *Street Address*

◇ 10426 Main Street

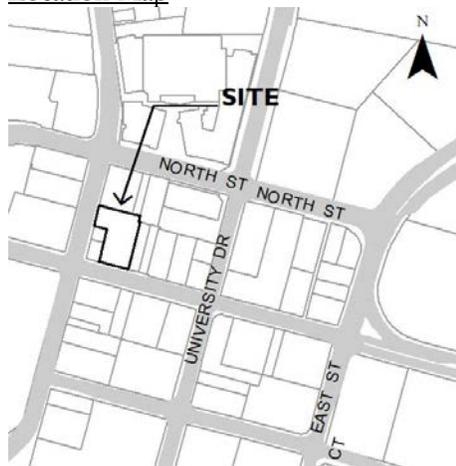
#### *Zoning District*

- ◇ CR – Commercial Retail
- ◇ HOD – Old Town Fairfax  
Historic Overlay District

### APPLICATION SUMMARY

The applicant requests to modify a building in the CR – Commercial Retail district and the Old Town Fairfax Historic Overlay District (HOD). The proposal includes entertainment space in the basement level, retail and restaurant on the first level, and 10 residential units on the added second and third levels. No applications have been submitted at this time.

### Location Map



**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The 0.33-acre site is located in the heart of the Old Town Fairfax Historic Overlay District (HOD), on the north side of Main Street between Chain Bridge Road to the west and University Drive to the east. It is currently zoned CR – Commercial Retail. The site is designated as Mixed Use on the Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map. Surrounding uses include office commercial and restaurant to the north, gas station and commercial retail to the south, a restaurant to the east, and commercial office and a bakery to the west. Table 1 provides a summary of adjacent uses.

<b>Direction</b>	<b>Existing Zoning</b>	<b>Current Use</b>	<b>Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Designation</b>
Site	CR – Commercial Retail with HOD	Vacant, Commercial – Retail (restaurant)	Mixed-Use
North	CR – Commercial Retail with HOD	Commercial – Office, Retail (Restaurant)	Mixed-Use
South	CR – Commercial Retail with HOD	Commercial – Retail (Gas Station)	Mixed-Use
East	CR – Commercial Retail with HOD	Commercial – Retail (Restaurant)	Mixed-Use
West	CR – Commercial Retail with HOD	Commercial – Office, Retail (Bakery)	Mixed-Use

**Table 1: Adjacent Property Descriptions**

The site is currently occupied by a 19,489 square foot building constructed in 1955 which contains a restaurant space facing a courtyard along Chain Bridge Road and a large, unoccupied, one-story retail and office space with a basement level, oriented south toward Main Street with approximately 82 feet of frontage. The building has been used for a variety of commercial and retail uses including office space, a bowling alley, printing shops, hand crafted boutiques, night clubs, and several restaurants with dancing and entertainment. The most recent tenant of the basement space was Icons Sports Bar and Grille, which opened in 2010 and ceased operations in 2012.

**PROJECT PROPOSAL**

The applicant proposes to modify and add onto an existing one-story building with a basement in the HOD, resulting in a three story mixed use building, at a total height of approximately 42 feet. The basement level would be modified to accommodate for a 9,018 square foot entertainment space, the use of which is to be determined; the first floor would be modified to accommodate for 4,601 square feet of restaurant space and 2,965 square feet of retail space; a new second floor to be added would accommodate for five residential units at 6,591 square feet; and the added third floor would accommodate for five residential units at 6,697 square feet.

Entrances to the basement space would be located from the front porch area on Main Street and from a stairwell in the courtyard space on Chain Bridge Road. Entrances to the upper story residential units would be located on both the Main Street and Chain Bridge Road sides of the building. A loading/service area would be provided at the northeastern portion of the building, with vehicle access off of North Street to the north. An internal elevator would serve all four floors.

The architecture is shown as a contemporary style, with a material palette including brick, large format masonry units, and metal panel. The north façade along Main Street would have a masonry base on the

first floor with the second and third floors stepped back with residential balconies. The east elevation would have brick on the second and third levels flanked by metal panel bays and with narrow balconies and fenestration for the residential units, while the base, the basement and the first floor behind the restaurant building to the east, would be solid masonry block. The west elevation would have a similar design; however, a three story portion of the building fronting the courtyard with the café entrance would be masonry block. The café space is shown with flat metal awnings above the storefront with residential balconies on the two stories above. The stairwell leading to the theatre from this courtyard is shown with a supported flat metal canopy above it as well, to be tied into the café canopy. The north elevation, where the loading dock is to be located, would be majority masonry block. The roofline of the building is shown to be flat, with slight articulation in height changes from one building plane to another. Flat roof overhangs are provided in certain locations.

### **ANTICIPATED REQUESTS**

In order to fully execute the aforementioned improvements, the applicant will be required to file applications for the following land use requests for City Council action:

- **Special Use Permit** to allow upper story residential/mixed uses in the CR – Commercial Retail district per code Section 110-3.5.1.D
- **Special Use Permit** to allow for entertainment space in the CR – Commercial Retail district, specific use to be determined, per code Section 110-3.3.1
- **Special Exception** to allow for a building height to exceed 36 feet in the HOD per code Section 110-3.7.2.B.4
- **Special Exception** to allow for a sidewalk width of less than 10 feet along the front and side (street) yards per code Section 110-3.7.2.B.4
- **Special Exception** to allow for less than 10% 10-year minimum tree canopy coverage in the CR – Commercial Retail district per code Section 110-4.5.6

These land use requests are subject to change based on further analysis by staff and design modifications to the proposal.

The applicant will also be required to file an application for a Major Certificate of Appropriateness for City Council action, following review and recommendation by the Board of Architectural Review.

### **ANALYSIS**

Staff analysis of the compliance of this proposal with the Comprehensive Plan and other City goals and policy is provided in Attachment 1.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

1. Analysis
2. Proposed plans and elevations
3. Design Guidelines excerpts

**PREPARED BY:**

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Tommy Scibilia  
Planner

4/5/18  
\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

**REVIEWED AND APPROVED:**

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Jason Sutphin  
Community Development Division Chief

4-5-18  
\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Brooke Hardin  
Director, Community Development & Planning

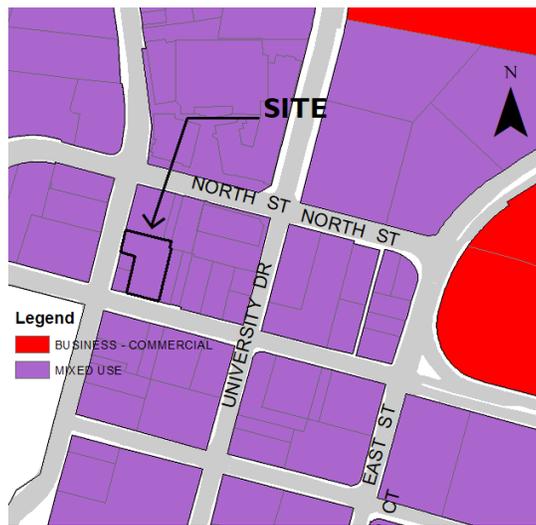
4/5/18  
\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

**ATTACHMENT 1  
WORK SESSION ANALYSIS**

**10426 MAIN STREET AND 3981 CHAIN BRIDGE ROAD**

Input from the City Council is sought on the following items on the subject property, for which staff has received preliminary submissions: land use, site layout, height, scale, architecture, parking, and pedestrian circulation and open space. Each of these subjects is discussed in more detail below. Items such as vehicular circulation, environmental considerations, and utilities will be discussed following formal application for a land use case, when more detailed information is provided to staff.

Guidance on appropriate development for this site is provided through the site designation as “Mixed Use” on the Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map as well as the site location within the Old Fairfax Historic Overlay District (HOD). Figure 1 provides the Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use map for the area around the site.



**Figure 1: Future Land Use Map**

Specific recommendations for development in mixed use districts and the HOD are provided in the Comprehensive Plan. With a location within the HOD, additional guidance on physical attributes of the development are provided in the Old Town Fairfax Design Guidelines. Specific citations from both of these documents that are applicable to the subject proposal are included in the discussion below.

**Land Use:**

The following descriptions of “Mixed Use” is provided from the Land Use Chapter of the plan.

*“Certain locations within the City call for a flexible land use category that will support development with a mixture of uses. The mixed use category supports a combination of*

*commercial, residential and institutional development to be tailored to specific site conditions and transition needs.” (Comprehensive Plan, page 164)*

*“Residential uses are generally acceptable, but the intensity of residential uses should be moderated in areas where lower intensity development provides appropriate transitions, such as in portions of Old Town Fairfax for example. In addition, residential uses should not be the dominate ground floor use within any of the mixed use districts.” (Comprehensive Plan, page 164)*

*For smaller sites, or those in which a planned mix of uses among multiple buildings isn’t otherwise feasible, a vertical mix of uses within a single structure is preferred.” (Comprehensive Plan, page 164)*

Following are descriptions of preferred development forms and uses within the HOD as provided in the Land Use Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan.

*“Old Town Fairfax should contain a variety of land uses, including retail shops, restaurants, offices, residential uses, shared or public parking facilities, and open spaces.” (Comprehensive Plan, page 165)*

*“The preferred mix of uses would include restaurants, retail, and personal services on the ground floor of buildings that are intermixed along street frontages with residential or office uses above.” (Comprehensive Plan, page 165)*

The proposal utilizes vertical mixed use with commercial spaces at the ground floor with a strong street presence, and residential uses above.

**Site Layout:**

The following citations from the Design Guidelines provide guidance on appropriate setbacks and site layout characteristics for new development within the HOD.

*“Construct new downtown buildings with a minimal setback in order to reinforce the traditional street wall.” (Design Guidelines, page 29)*

*“Avoid deep setbacks or open corner plazas on corner buildings in the downtown.” (Design Guidelines, page 29)*

*“Maintain existing consistency of spacing in the area.” (Design Guidelines, page 29)*

*“Commercial buildings in areas that have a well-defined street wall should have minimal spacing between them.” (Design Guidelines, page 29)*

The applicant is not proposing to change the overall footprint of the building. It has become an important piece of the architectural fabric of the HOD, and its narrow setback along Main Street reinforces a street wall and enclosure of the pedestrian realm. The unusually deep setback along

Chain bridge Road, with a depth of approximately 40 feet, has been programmed as a courtyard space with outdoor seating for the current restaurant use, a “break” in the street wall, but one that functions to enhance pedestrian engagement along this block.

As a mechanism to support the goals of the Comprehensive Plan and the Design Guidelines, the Zoning Ordinance has specific requirements that encourage the location and orientation of buildings as described above within the HOD. In particular, at least 50% of the length of the building face is required to be within 10 feet of the property line. Certain exceptions to this provision are permitted where the area in front of the building is usable open space, outdoor dining, plazas, or other amenities that strengthen the pedestrian environment of the HOD. The deep setback for the courtyard space along Chain bridge Road would be considered an exemption as long as it remains a usable outdoor area.

**Height:**

The following citation from the Design Guidelines provides guidance on appropriate building heights for new development within the HOD.

*“The height of new construction should relate to the prevailing height of the entire block and should be 80 to 120 percent of the existing average of the block but should not exceed three stories above grade within the historic district.” (Design Guidelines, page 31)*

In addition to the guidance on building height within the HOD as provided in the Design Guidelines, the Zoning Ordinance prescribes a maximum permitted height for any building within the HOD at 36 feet.

Staff estimates a total height of 42 feet for the proposed modified building, based on the provided roofline height of 35 feet. As stated in the staff report, the applicant will be required to file an application for a special exception from this height restriction.

The existing building heights vary on the subject property’s block, and there is a large grade increase from east to west on the property that further exacerbates the apparent height difference between the buildings on Main Street and those around the corner on Chain Bridge Road. The grade change from the east to west front corners of the subject building is 7 feet. Table 1 provides approximate heights for all buildings on the subject property’s block and their base elevations.

Address	Description	Appx Height (feet)	Base Elevation (feet above sea level)
10426 Main St	Subject	13 (42 proposed)	430 (varies between 426 and 433)
10430 Main St	Bakery	18	435
3989 Chain Bridge Rd	Office	27	435
3977 Chain Bridge Rd	Office	43	431

<b>3971 Chain Bridge Rd</b>	Restaurant	26	423
<b>10435 North St</b>	Restaurant	37	420
<b>10427 North St</b>	Mixed use	33	410
<b>3988 University Dr</b>	Restaurant	21	416
<b>10400 Main St</b>	Retail	18	421
<b>10410 Main St</b>	Office	26	422
<b>10412 Main St</b>	Printing shop	25	423
<b>10414 Main St</b>	Restaurant	23	424
<b>10416 Main St</b>	Restaurant	20	426
<b>Average</b>		26.42	

**Table 1: Neighboring Building Heights and Elevations**

The prevailing height and apparent height due to significant grade changes on and around the subject property varies considerably, however based on staff's height estimations, the average building height on the block is 26.42 feet. 120% of this height, per the Design Guidelines metric, is 31.70 feet. It is noted that it is unclear at this time from where the applicant is measuring the proposed building's height. Per code Section 1.5.11 building height is the vertical distance between grade plane and the highest point of a flat roof. Grade plane is defined as the imaginary reference plane representing the average of finished ground level adjoining the building at exterior walls.

**Scale:**

The following citations from the Design Guidelines provide guidance on building form to establish an appropriate scale for new construction within the HOD. It should be noted that many of these citations refer to items to be dually reviewed for a Major Certificate of Appropriateness, which has not yet been applied for.

*“Often new commercial buildings will be constructed on sites much larger than the traditionally sized lots. Existing traditional buildings are twenty to forty feet wide and fifty to one hundred feet deep. These assembled parcels can translate into new structures whose scale and mass may overwhelm neighboring existing structures. Therefore, while this building type needs to respond to the various building conditions of the site, it also should employ design techniques to reduce its visual presence.” (Design Guidelines, page 26)*

*“Institutional and multi-lot buildings by their nature will have large footprints. Therefore, the massing of these large-scale structures should be reduced so they will not overpower the traditional scale of Fairfax's historic district. Techniques could include varying the surface planes of the building, stepping back the buildings as the structure increases in height, and breaking up the roofline with different elements to create smaller compositions.” (Design Guidelines, page 30)*

*“The width of infill buildings should be similar to, and compatible with, adjacent buildings along the street.” (Design Guidelines, page 31)*

*“Most commercial buildings in downtown average twenty to thirty feet in width. If new buildings are wider than this size, their primary facades should be divided into bays to reflect the predominant width of the existing buildings. Buildings that front on three or four sides should use this bay division technique on all appropriate facades.” (Design Guidelines, page 31)*

*“When the primary facade of a new commercial building is wider than forty feet, modulate it with bays.” (Design Guidelines, page 31)*

*“Reinforce the human scale of the historic district by including elements such as porches, entrances, storefronts, and decorative features.” (Design Guidelines, page 31)*

This building is significantly larger in scale than most buildings within the HOD, although much of the building is obscured by surrounding structures. The proposal would not change the footprint of the building. The frontage along Main Street is approximately 82 feet, and the frontage visible from Chain Bridge Road is approximately 60 feet. Scale-reduction techniques, such as plane modulation, material variation, and height step backs are incorporated in key areas throughout the design. Elements such as covered entrances and canopies are introduced at ground level to reinforce the pedestrian scale.

### **Architecture:**

The applicant will be required to submit an application for a Major Certificate of Appropriateness, which will undergo a thorough review for recommendation by the Board of Architectural Review to City Council. The Design Guidelines chapters 4, 6, and 10-12 deal with new construction and improvements within the HOD. These chapters have been included in full as **attachment 3** to this report. Relevant highlights are extracted for discussion below.

*“Forms may be either symmetrical where the building is the same on either side of a central axis or it may be asymmetrical where the building is different on either side of the axis. Many of the buildings in Old Town Fairfax's Historic District have relatively simple building forms... Use forms in new construction that relate to those of existing neighboring buildings on the street.” (Design Guidelines, page 29)*

*“Roof design, materials and textures should be consistent with the existing structures in the historic district. Common roof forms include hipped, gable, flat, and shed roofs. Common roof materials in the historic district include metal, slate, composition shingles, and wood shingles as well as rubber membranes and built-up roofs of tar and gravel.” (Design Guidelines, pages 31-32)*

*“When designing new storefronts or elements for storefronts, conform to the configuration and materials of traditional storefronts.” (Design Guidelines, page 32)*

*“The rhythm, patterns, and ratio of solids (walls) and voids (windows and doors) of new buildings should relate to and be compatible with adjacent facades.” (Design Guidelines, page 33)*

*“The selection of materials and textures for a new building should be compatible with and complement neighboring buildings. In order to strengthen the traditional image of the historic district, brick and wood siding are the most appropriate materials for new buildings.” (Design Guidelines, page 34)*

*“Large scale multi-lot buildings whose primary facades have been divided into different bays and planes to relate to existing neighboring buildings may vary materials, shades, and textures.” (Design Guidelines, page 34)*

*“Synthetic sidings are not historic cladding materials in the historic district and their use should be avoided.” (Design Guidelines, page 34)*

*“The selection and use of colors for a new building should be coordinated and compatible with adjacent buildings, and in Fairfax's historic district various traditional shades are appropriate. Brighter colors are more appropriate as accents on signs and awnings.” (Design Guidelines, page 35)*

*“More successful new buildings may take their clues from historic images and reintroduce and reinterpret designs of traditional decorative elements.” (Design Guidelines, page 35)*

*“When an addition is necessary, it should be designed and constructed in a manner that will not detract from the character-defining features of the historic building.” (Design Guidelines, page 36)*

*“Limit the size of the addition so that it does not visually overpower the existing building.” (Design Guidelines, page 36)*

*“If additional floors are constructed on top of a building, set the addition back from the main facade so that its visual impact is minimized.” (Design Guidelines, page 36)*

*“The new work should be differentiated from the old and should be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.” (Design Guidelines, page 36)*

*“The design of new additions can be compatible with and respectful of existing buildings without being a mimicry of their original design.” (Design Guidelines, page 36)*

*“Use materials, windows, doors, architectural detailing, roofs, and colors which are compatible with historic buildings in the district.” (Design Guidelines, page 36)*

The proposed design takes a modern approach to the redesign of the building. It appears to incorporate brick, though at this time it is unclear the color, while a range of more contemporary materials like metal panel are introduced on a large scale. Large contemporary upper-story windows and flat rooflines are unlike forms found in the HOD. The Design Guidelines generally encourage new construction that is sympathetic to, while not mimicking, historic architecture in both form and material. Staff believes more traditional design features and decorative elements found throughout the district should be incorporated into the building's design, while allowing flexibility for limited contemporary elements. It should be noted that 10426 Main Street is not listed as a contributing structure to the City of Fairfax Historic District, as added to the National Register of Historic Places

in 1987, due primarily to its age at the time of nomination. Among other nomination criteria, buildings cannot be considered as contributing or historic by the National Park Service until they have aged 50 years, and so at present, this building could potentially be reconsidered for a historic designation. A design heavily influenced by historic architecture might not be appropriate for a modification to this building, which is already of a unique scale and construction era within the HOD, but perhaps one more compatible to 1950s-era design.

### **Parking:**

The plans do not detail parking, but it is noted that there are no parking requirements in the HOD. There is currently street parking along the Main Street frontage of the subject property and a number of other free on- and off-street parking options located throughout the HOD. There are also 25 garage spaces allocated for patrons of the subject property in the Old Town Plaza parking garage, which is stated in the Old Town Plaza development agreement and in the deed of the subject property.

### **Pedestrian Circulation and Open Space:**

The following excerpts relating to pedestrian networks and open space are included in the Land Use Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan.

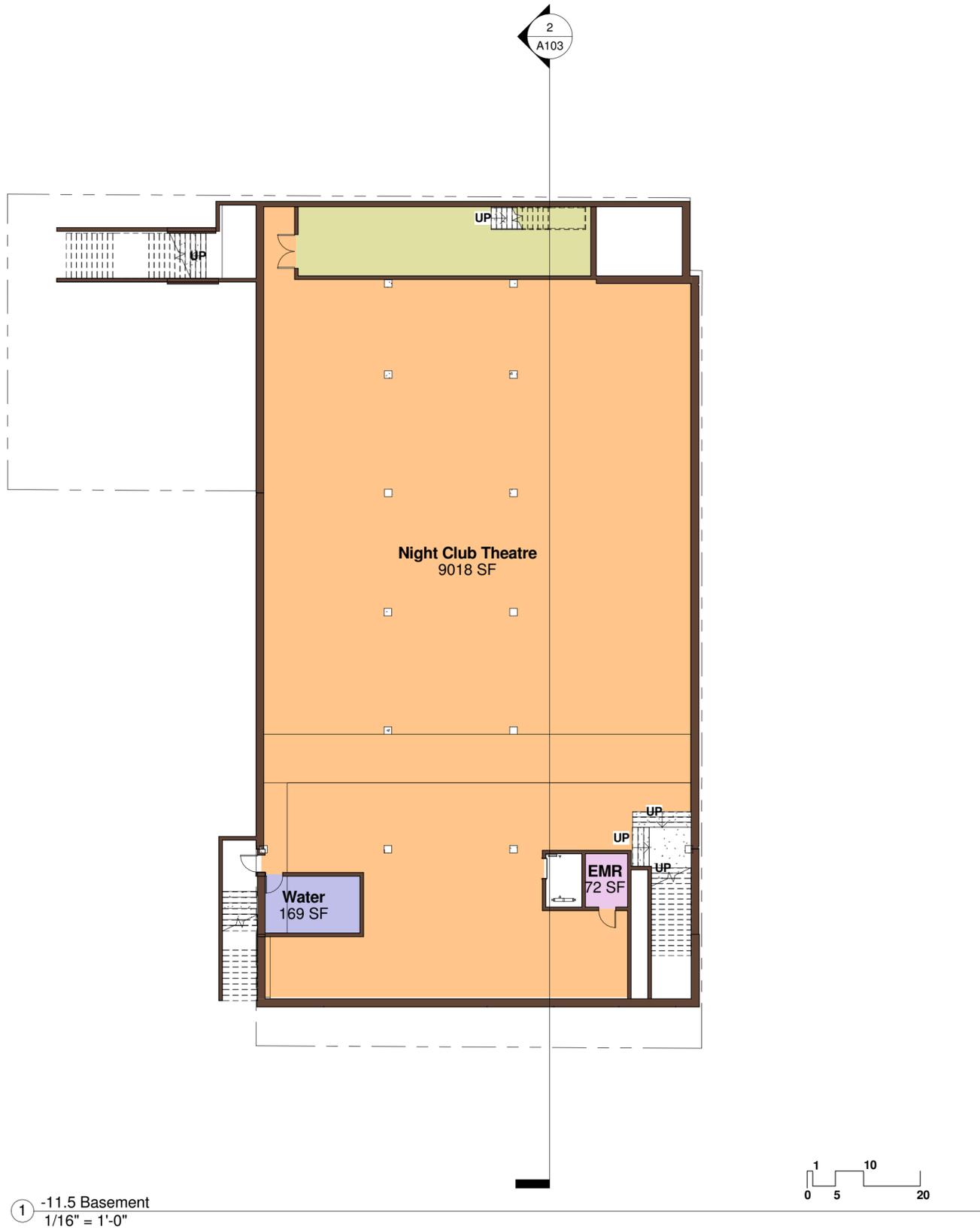
*“Open space that provides uninterrupted pedestrian connections within the mixed use area and to adjacent areas, and can accommodate public gathering should be integrated within the project(s).” (Comprehensive Plan, page 164)*

*“Pedestrian plazas, mini parks, and other open green space should be provided throughout the entire Old Town area at highly visible locations and at natural nodes of pedestrian activity.” (Comprehensive Plan, page 164)*

The physical site constraints preclude an extensive network of open space on the subject property, however the presence of a courtyard along Chain Bridge Road can be taken advantage of to activate the space and make it an engaging pedestrian amenity. The pedestrian network is fairly strong within the HOD already, and because this building has frontage on adjacent streets, it takes full advantage of this.

Bicycle racks and other pedestrian amenities have not been identified at this time.

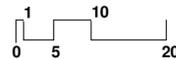
The Zoning Ordinance requires a 10 foot sidewalk within the HOD. The plans have not reflected this, and as noted in the staff report, the applicant will be required to apply for a special exception. It is noted that the City is currently developing a plan for this section of Main Street that will evaluate the existing streetscape conditions and provide recommendations for improvements to the pedestrian environment where possible.



SCHEME 5H  
 10426 MAIN STREET  
 CITY of FAIRFAX, VA  
 DESIGN STUDIES  
 03/28/18

CHAIN BRIDGE ROAD

MAIN STREET



① 0.0 First Floor  
1/16" = 1'-0"

② 14.0 Second Floor  
1/16" = 1'-0"

Area Schedule (Gross Building)	
Level	Area
-11.5 Basement	10802 SF
0.0 First Floor	10364 SF
14.0 Second Floor	9597 SF
25.0 Third Floor	8966 SF

Unit Mix		
Level	Name	Area

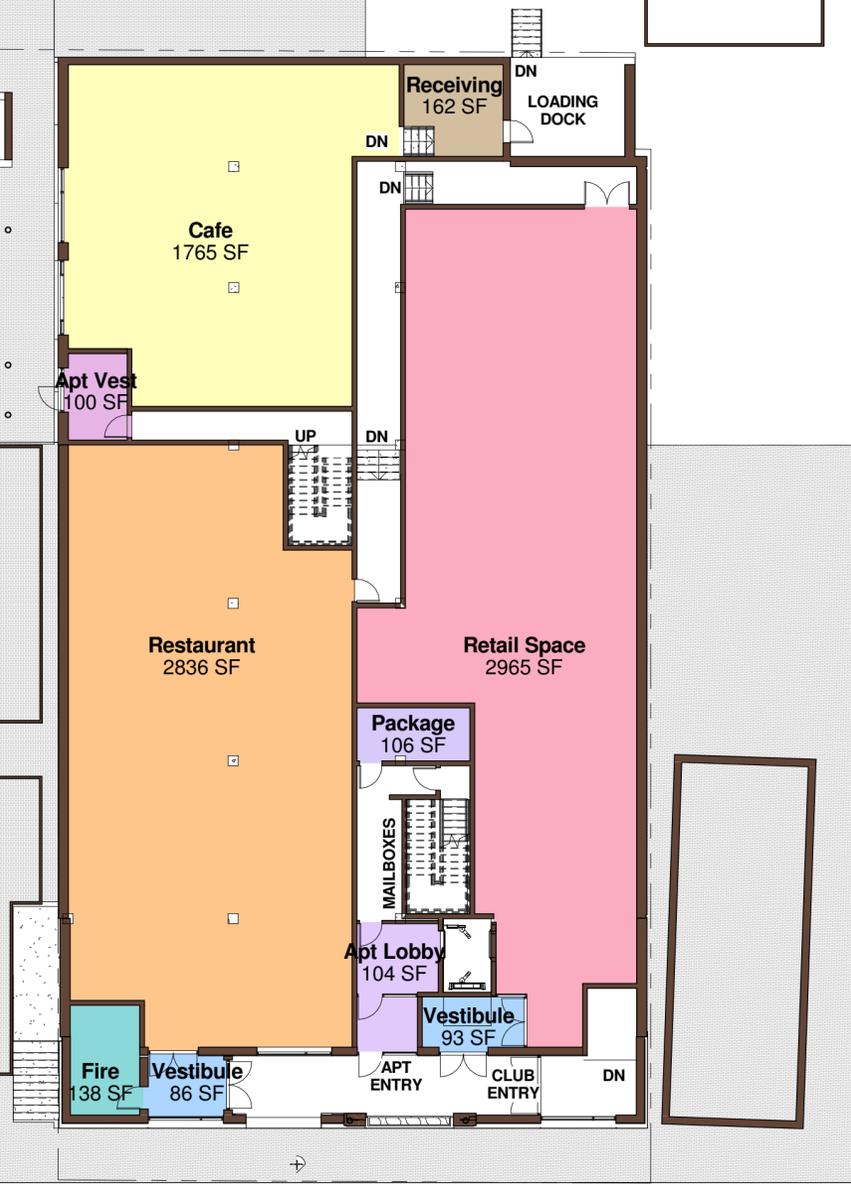
Not Placed	Terrace	Not Placed
Not Placed	Terrace	Not Placed
Not Placed	Lounge	Not Placed

-11.5 Basement		
-11.5 Basement	Water	169 SF
-11.5 Basement	EMR	72 SF
-11.5 Basement	Night Club Theatre	9018 SF
-11.5 Basement	Mechanical	635 SF

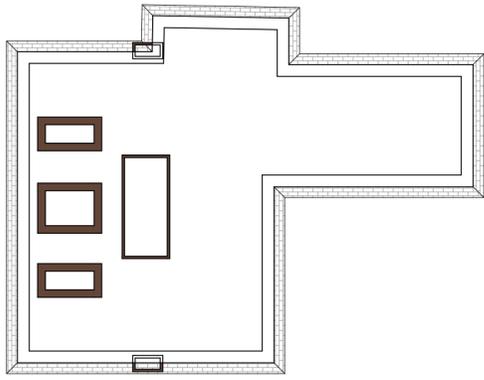
0.0 First Floor		
0.0 First Floor	Retail Space	2965 SF
0.0 First Floor	Restaurant	2836 SF
0.0 First Floor	Apt Lobby	104 SF
0.0 First Floor	Vestibule	86 SF
0.0 First Floor	Package	106 SF
0.0 First Floor	Apt Lobby	56 SF
0.0 First Floor	Vestibule	93 SF
0.0 First Floor	Fire	138 SF
0.0 First Floor	Cafe	1765 SF
0.0 First Floor	Apt Vest	100 SF
0.0 First Floor	Receiving	162 SF

14.0 Second Floor		
14.0 Second Floor	1 Bedroom Den	951 SF
14.0 Second Floor	2 Bedroom	1248 SF
14.0 Second Floor	2 Bedroom	1410 SF
14.0 Second Floor	2 Bedroom Den	1397 SF
14.0 Second Floor	Terrace	231 SF
14.0 Second Floor	Terrace	395 SF
14.0 Second Floor	Roof Equip	464 SF
14.0 Second Floor	Spin Rm	268 SF
14.0 Second Floor	2 Bedroom Den	1585 SF
14.0 Second Floor	BM	97 SF

25.0 Third Floor		
25.0 Third Floor	2 Bedroom Den	1563 SF
25.0 Third Floor	2 Bedroom Den	1362 SF
25.0 Third Floor	2 Bedroom Den	1398 SF
25.0 Third Floor	1 Bedroom	966 SF
25.0 Third Floor	2 Bedroom	1408 SF
25.0 Third Floor	Jan	34 SF



SCHEME 5H  
10426 MAIN STREET  
CITY of FAIRFAX, VA  
DESIGN STUDIES  
03/28/18



3 AERIAL VIEW from CHAIN BRIDGE + MAIN STREET

3

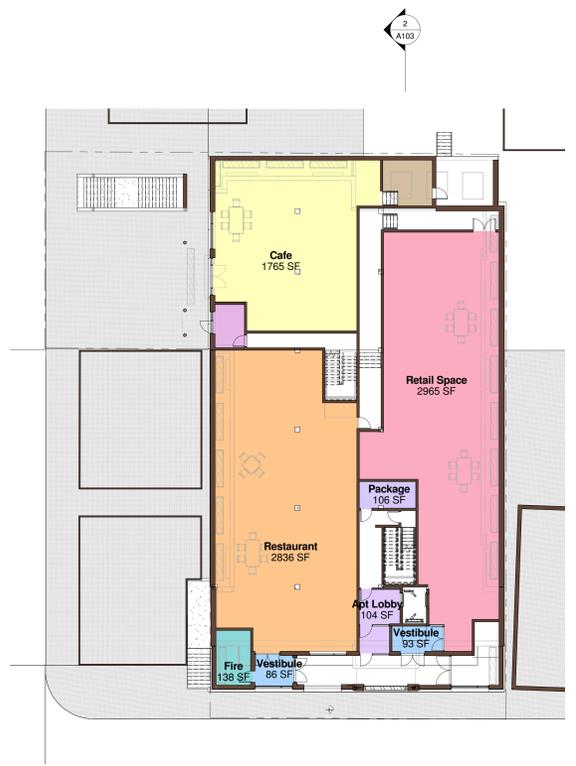


2 N-S SECTION  
1" = 20'-0"

2

1 25.0 Third Floor  
1/16" = 1'-0"

1



8 West Elevation  
1/16" = 1'-0"



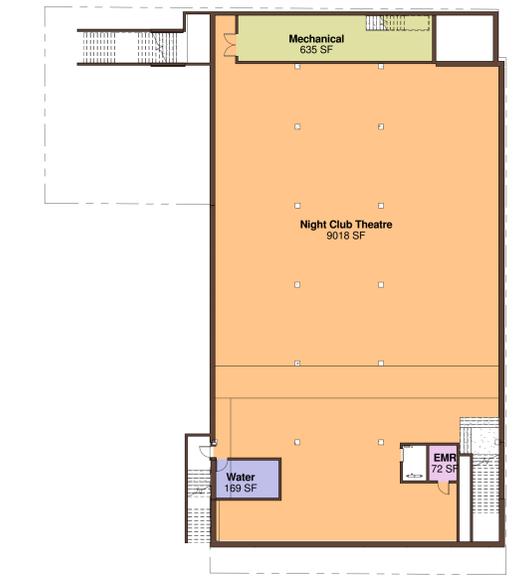
7 North  
1/16" = 1'-0"



6 East  
1/16" = 1'-0"



5 South Elevation  
1/16" = 1'-0"



Apartment Unit Mix		
Level	Name	Area
-11.5 Basement	Water	169 SF
-11.5 Basement	EMR	72 SF
-11.5 Basement	Night Club Theatre	9018 SF
-11.5 Basement	Mechanical	635 SF
0.0 First Floor	Retail Space	2965 SF
0.0 First Floor	Restaurant	2836 SF
0.0 First Floor	Apt Lobby	104 SF
0.0 First Floor	Vestibule	86 SF
0.0 First Floor	Package	106 SF
0.0 First Floor	Apt Lobby	56 SF
0.0 First Floor	Vestibule	93 SF
0.0 First Floor	Fire	138 SF
0.0 First Floor	Cafe	1765 SF
0.0 First Floor	Apt Vest	100 SF
0.0 First Floor	Receiving	162 SF
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14.0 Second Floor	2 Bedroom	1410 SF

Apartment Unit Mix		
Level	Name	Area
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14.0 Second Floor	Terrace	395 SF
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14.0 Second Floor	Spin Rm	268 SF
14.0 Second Floor	2 Bedroom Den	1585 SF
14.0 Second Floor	2 Bedroom Den	1585 SF
25.0 Third Floor	2 Bedroom Den	1563 SF
25.0 Third Floor	2 Bedroom	1362 SF
25.0 Third Floor	2 Bedroom Den	1398 SF
25.0 Third Floor	2 Bedroom Den	1398 SF
25.0 Third Floor	1 Bedroom	966 SF
25.0 Third Floor	2 Bedroom	1408 SF
25.0 Third Floor	Jan	34 SF

Area Schedule (Gross Building Area)	
Level	Area
-11.5 Basement	10802 SF
0.0 First Floor	10364 SF
14.0 Second Floor	9597 SF
25.0 Third Floor	8966 SF



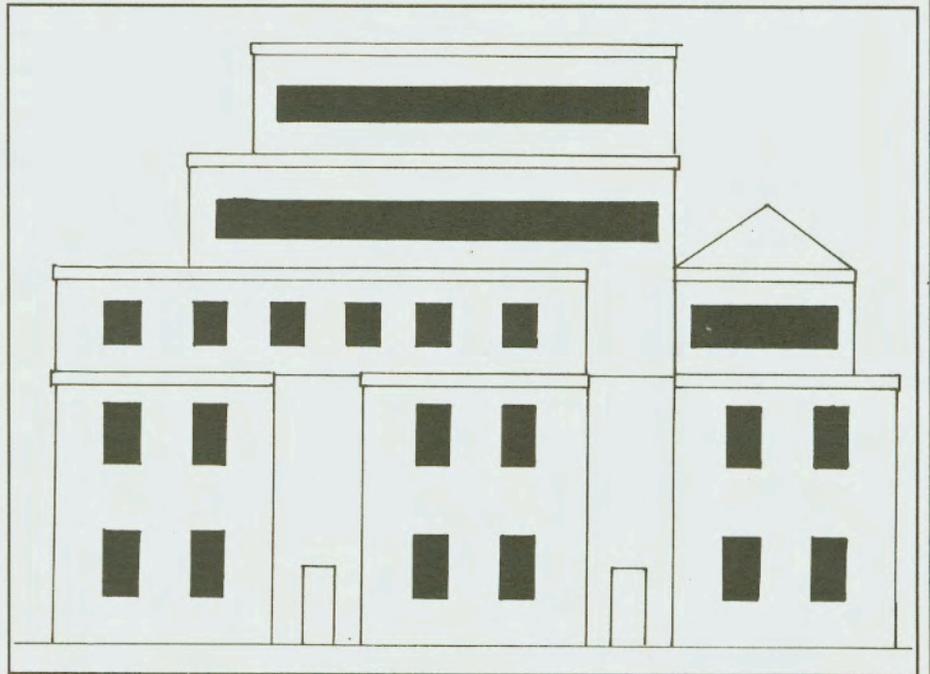
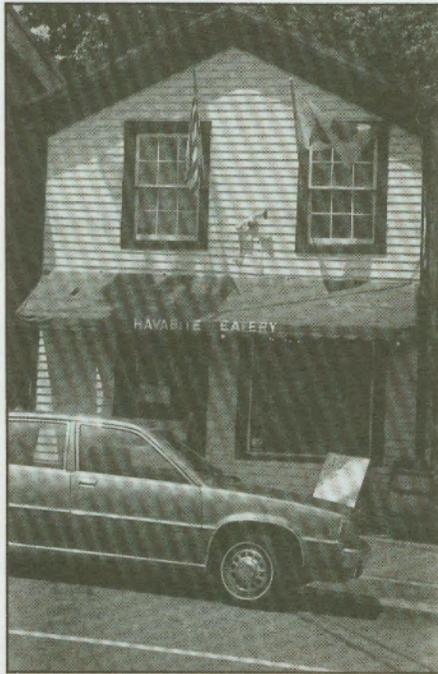
11 AERIAL VIEW from CHAIN BRIDGE ROAD  
11 - MAIN STREET



10 View from Chain Bridge Road



9 View from Main Street



## **Design Guidelines**

The Old Town Fairfax  
Historic and Transition Districts

**THE CITY OF FAIRFAX, VIRGINIA**



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## **Design Guidelines**

The Old Town Fairfax  
Historic and Transition Districts

**THE CITY OF FAIRFAX, VIRGINIA**

**JUNE 1993**

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July 1, 1992 - June 30, 1994

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## Purpose

With these design guidelines, the City hopes to maintain and build on the distinctive architectural character of the Old Town Fairfax Historic District and to create a more unified appearance between it and the surrounding Old Town Fairfax Transition District. These guidelines can assist property owners and City officials in designing and evaluating proposals for both the rehabilitation of existing structures and the construction of new buildings in the districts. The guidelines extend to landscape and site features as well as signs within both districts.

The intent of the guidelines is to *guide* design decisions within the districts, not dictate them. These are a set of principles, not a set of strictly followed laws. The Board of Architectural Review should follow the intent of the guidelines but interpret them generally and not substitute them for common sense and good judgment. These guidelines are not designed to be overly specific or to dictate certain designs to owners and designers. Their purpose also is not to encourage copying or mimicking particular historic styles but to provide a general design framework for new construction. Good designers can take these clues and have the freedom to design appropriate, new architecture within both districts. The zoning code provides more specific regulations and property owners should consult with the Zoning Office before undertaking any building projects within these districts.

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## 4 Private Site Guidelines in the Historic District

The relationship between a historic building and its site, landscape features, outbuildings, and other elements within the property boundary all contribute to the historic district's overall image. Site features should be considered an important part of any project to be reviewed by the Board of Architectural Review. In reviewing site-by-site cases the Board should continually consider the context of the entire district. Elements in public ownership, such as sidewalks, streets, landscaping, and street lighting, also contribute to the character of the district (see Chapter 13: Guidelines for Public Improvements).

These site elements fall into the following categories:

## PARKING

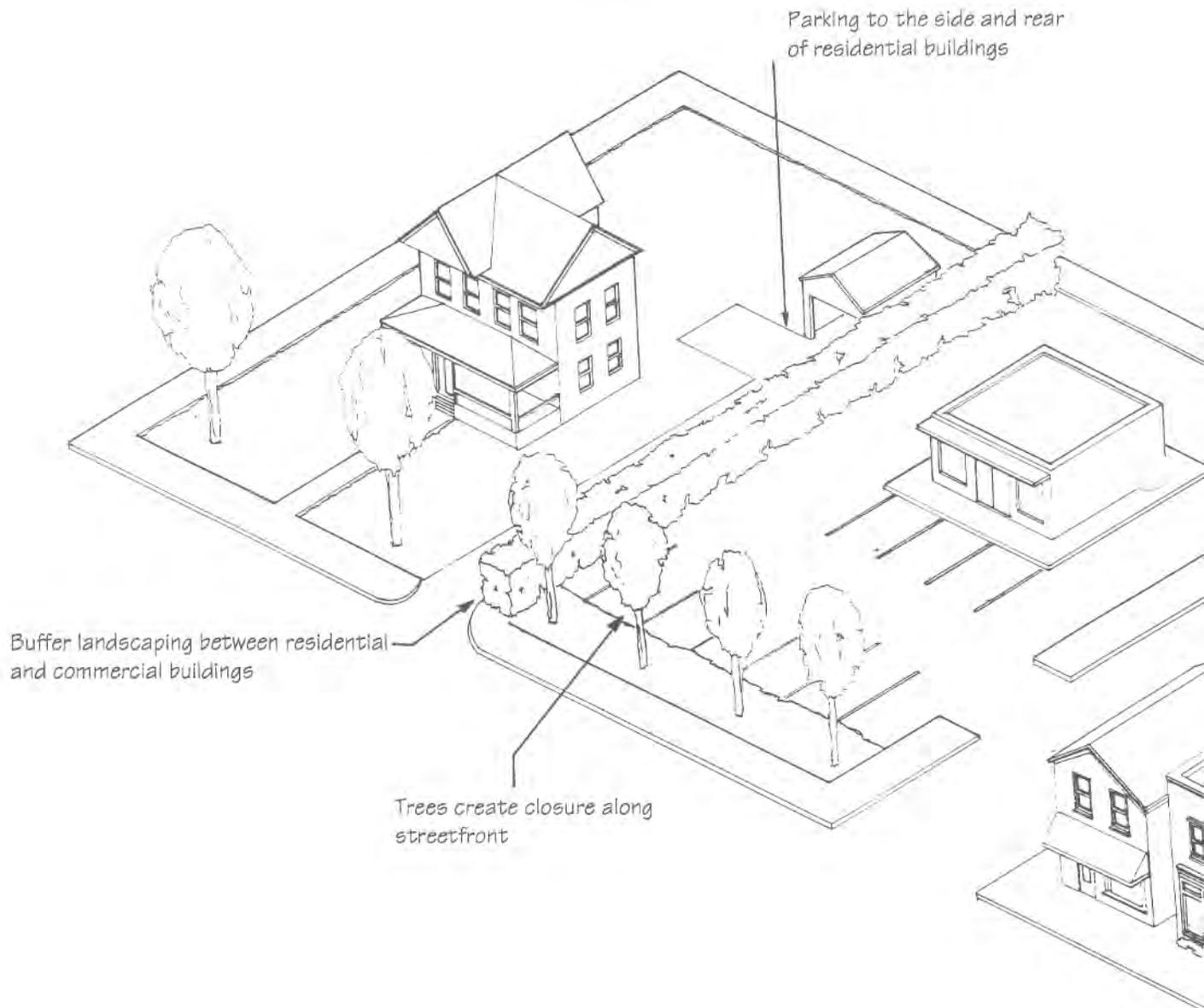
1. Do not allow parking in the front yard of either commercial or residential buildings.
2. Commercial buildings in the downtown should provide parking in the rear of the lot or in public lots.
3. Residential buildings should have driveways with parking areas only at the sides and rear of the building.
4. Landscape and screen parking areas.

## PAVING MATERIALS

1. Use appropriate traditional paving materials like brick, stone, and scored concrete.
2. Asphalt use should be limited to driveways and parking areas. Do not use to repair sidewalks or use for drainage areas.

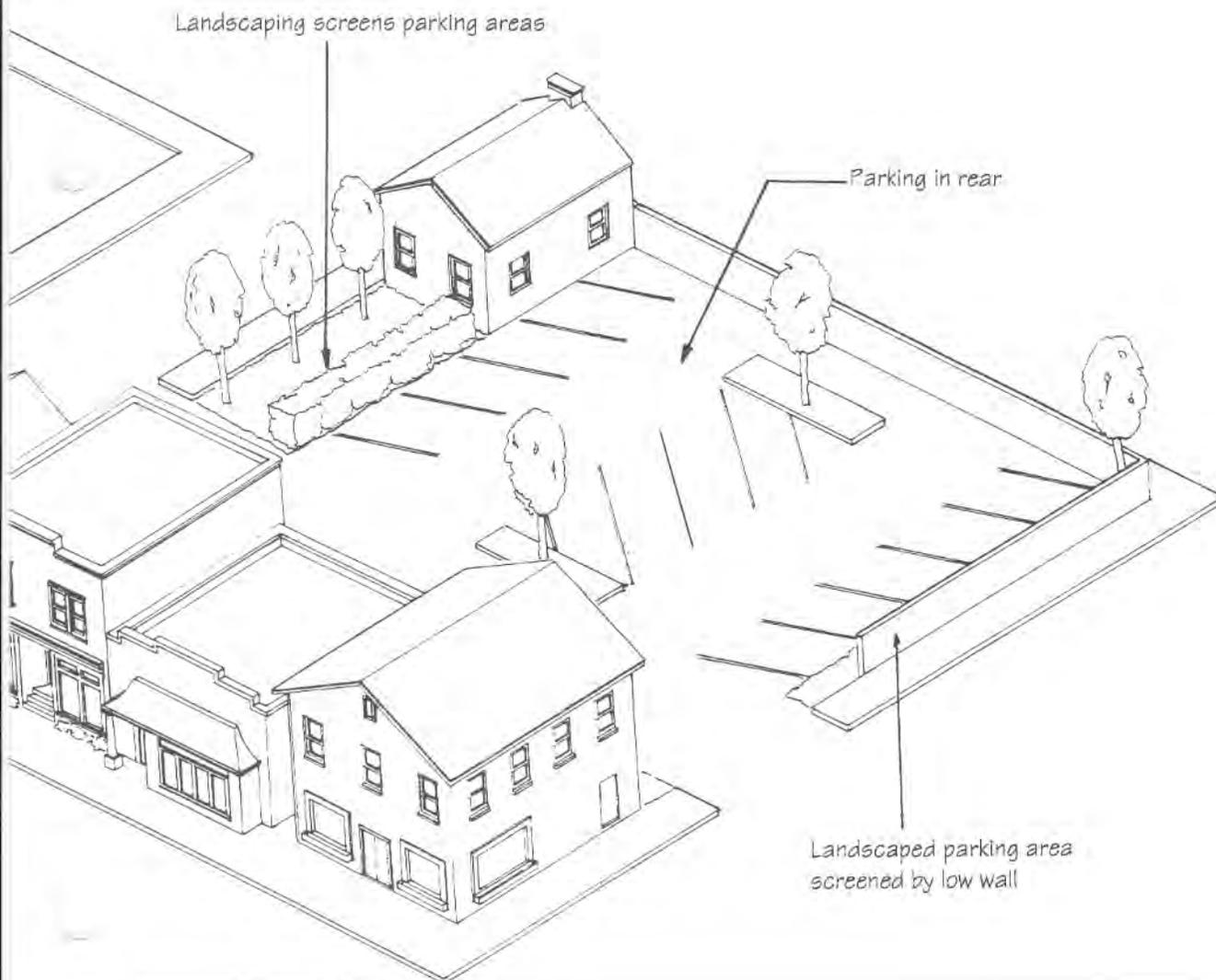
## LANDSCAPING

1. Landscaping should be used to complement the



buildings of the district and to enhance the streetscape.

2. Landscaping should help complete the sense of closure along street frontages, and should be compatible with surrounding landscaping.
3. Existing trees should be maintained and protected whenever possible.
4. Use trees and plants that are traditional or indigenous to the area.
5. Avoid removing live trees or shrubs.
6. Replace diseased or dead plants, especially large trees, with like species of a significant size.
7. Choose ground cover plantings that are compatible with adjacent sites, existing site conditions, and the character of the building.
8. Select mulching and edging materials carefully and do not use plastic edgings, lava, crushed rock, or other historically unsuitable materials.



## LIGHTING

1. In residential areas, use lighting fixtures that are understated and complement the residential quality of the surroundings.
2. Avoid lights that are too bright, such as "crime" lights and bright floodlights, when surrounding lighting is subdued.
3. If a more intense light source is needed, metal halide is preferable to high pressure sodium vapor, which casts a yellowish light, or mercury vapor, which casts a cool white light.
4. In the downtown, consider special lighting of key landmarks and facades.
5. Encourage merchants to leave their display window lights on in the evening to provide extra illumination at the sidewalk level.
6. Coordinate lighting in private parking lots to match public fixtures.
7. New lighting fixtures should be compatible with the design of the building.
8. The height of freestanding lights on private sites except for parking lots should follow the zoning code, and all light should be directed downward into the site.
9. A combination of free-standing and wall-mounted fixtures is recommended in order to yield varied levels of lighting.

## FENCES AND WALLS

1. Maintain existing materials that add to the character of the historic district such as stone walls, hedges, wooden picket fences, and wrought-iron fences.
2. When a portion of a fence needs replacing, salvage original parts for a prominent location. Match old fencing in material, height, and detail. If this is not possible, use a simplified design of similar materials and height.
3. For new fences or walls, use materials that relate to materials in the neighborhood and take design clues from nearby historic fences and walls.
4. Avoid using chain-link fencing, split rail fences, and concrete block walls.
5. When appropriate, use streetfront fences or walls of traditional materials and design that do not screen historic structures.
6. Relate commercial privacy fences to the materials of the building. If the commercial property adjoins a neighborhood, use a brick or stone wall, a wood fence, or a hedge as a buffer.

## GARAGES, SHEDS AND OTHER STRUCTURES

1. Choose designs that are compatible with the major buildings on the site or take clues from older outbuildings in the area.
2. Use a traditionally pitched roof which is generally steeper than most modern prefabricated outbuildings and use traditional materials such as wood or brick.
3. Avoid placing new outbuildings in front of the dwelling. If the design complements the main building, however, it can be visible from primary elevations or streets.
4. Place metal or wood prefabricated utility sheds in areas that are not visible from primary elevations or streets.

## APPURTENANCES

1. Place site appurtenances, such as overhead wires, utility poles and meters, antennae, exterior heat exchangers, and trash containers, where they are least likely to detract from the character of the site and screen with landscaping or fences as necessary.
2. Encourage the installation of utility services underground on private property.

Building Types  
Siting  
Complexity of Forms  
Directional Expression  
Massing and Footprint  
Height and Width  
Scale  
Roof Design  
Storefronts and Entrances  
Doors and Windows  
Porches  
Foundations  
Materials and Textures  
Color  
Architectural Details  
and Decorative Features  
Exterior Lighting  
Additions



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## 6 Guidelines for New Construction in the Historic District

The following guidelines offer general recommendations in the design for all new buildings in the Old Town Fairfax Historic District. The intent of these guidelines is not to be overly specific or to dictate certain designs to owners and designers. The intent is also not to encourage copying or mimicking particular historic styles. These guidelines are intended to provide a general design framework for new construction. Good designers can take these clues and have the freedom to design appropriate, new architecture for Fairfax's historic district.

These criteria are all important when considering whether proposed new buildings are appropriate and compatible; however, the degree of importance of each criterion varies within each area as conditions vary. For instance, setback

and spacing between buildings may be more important than roof forms or materials since there is more variety in regard to the last two criteria on most streets. Not all criteria need to be met in every example of new construction.

New additions which have a significant visual impact can justifiably be categorized as “new construction” and should adhere to the following criteria as applicable.

## **SPECIAL NOTE**

Besides the guidelines for new construction contained in this chapter, various articles of the City of Fairfax’s Zoning Ordinance and Building Code deal with new construction. These relevant sections should be thoroughly reviewed by any property owner before undertaking new construction. There are several permits and approvals (depending on the particular project) that must be secured from the Zoning Office and Code Enforcement Office before construction can begin.

## **BUILDING TYPES WITHIN THE HISTORIC DISTRICT**

When designing new buildings in the historic district one needs to recognize that while there is an overall distinctive district character, there is, nevertheless, a great variety of historic building types, styles, and scales throughout the district. Likewise, there are several types of new construction that might be built within the district. The design parameters of these new buildings will differ depending on the following types:

### **1. Infill**

Infill buildings are the traditional downtown building form that fills in holes in a larger block of buildings. This type of building generally has a limited setback, attaches to or is very close to neighboring structures, and takes many of its design cues from the adjoining buildings.

### **2. Multi-lot**

Often new commercial buildings will be constructed on sites much larger than the traditionally sized lots. Existing traditional buildings are twenty to forty feet wide and fifty to one hundred feet deep. These assembled parcels can translate into new structures whose scale and mass may overwhelm neighboring existing structures. Therefore, while this building type needs to respond to the various building conditions of the site, it also should employ design techniques to reduce its visual presence.

### **3. Institutional**

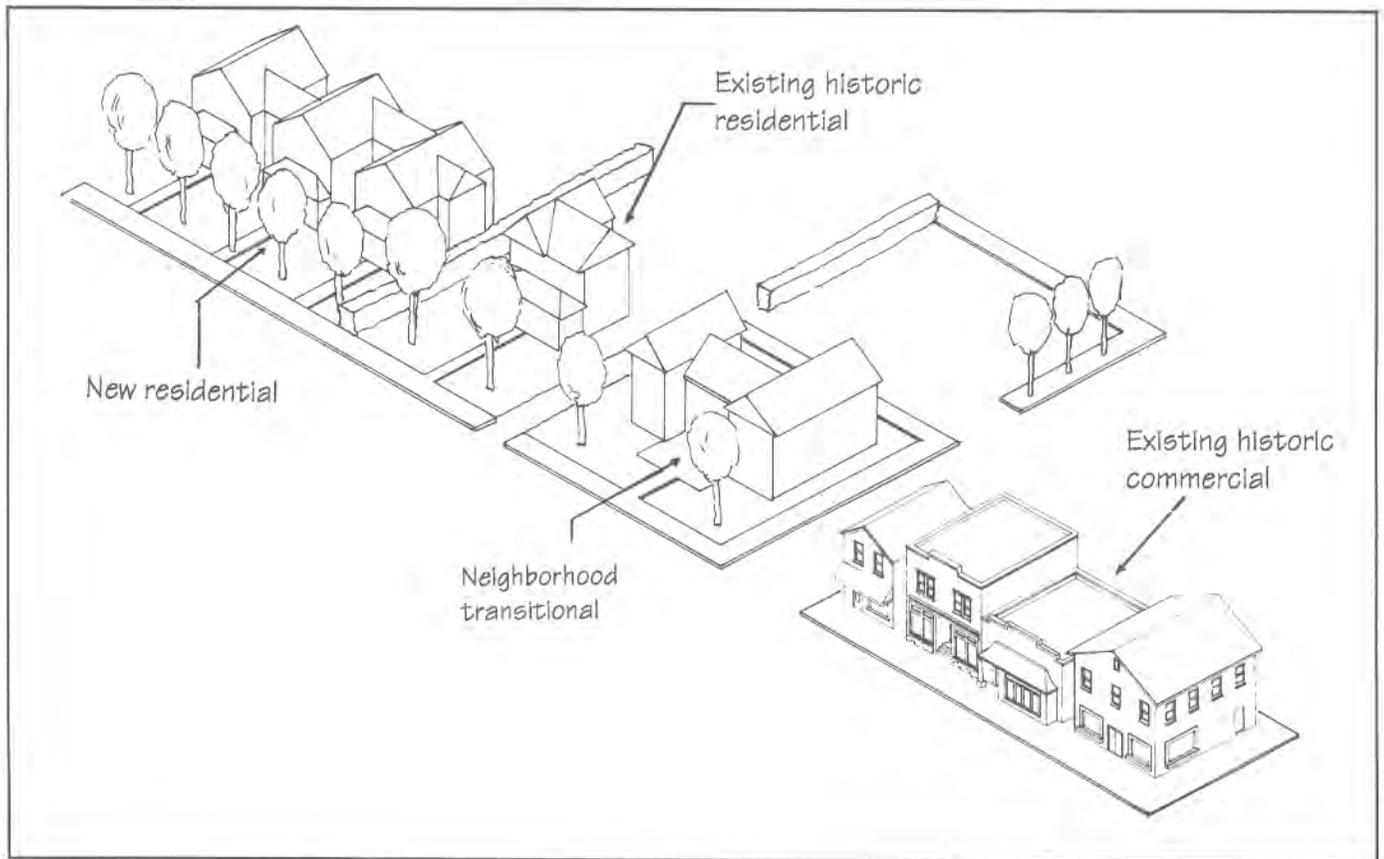
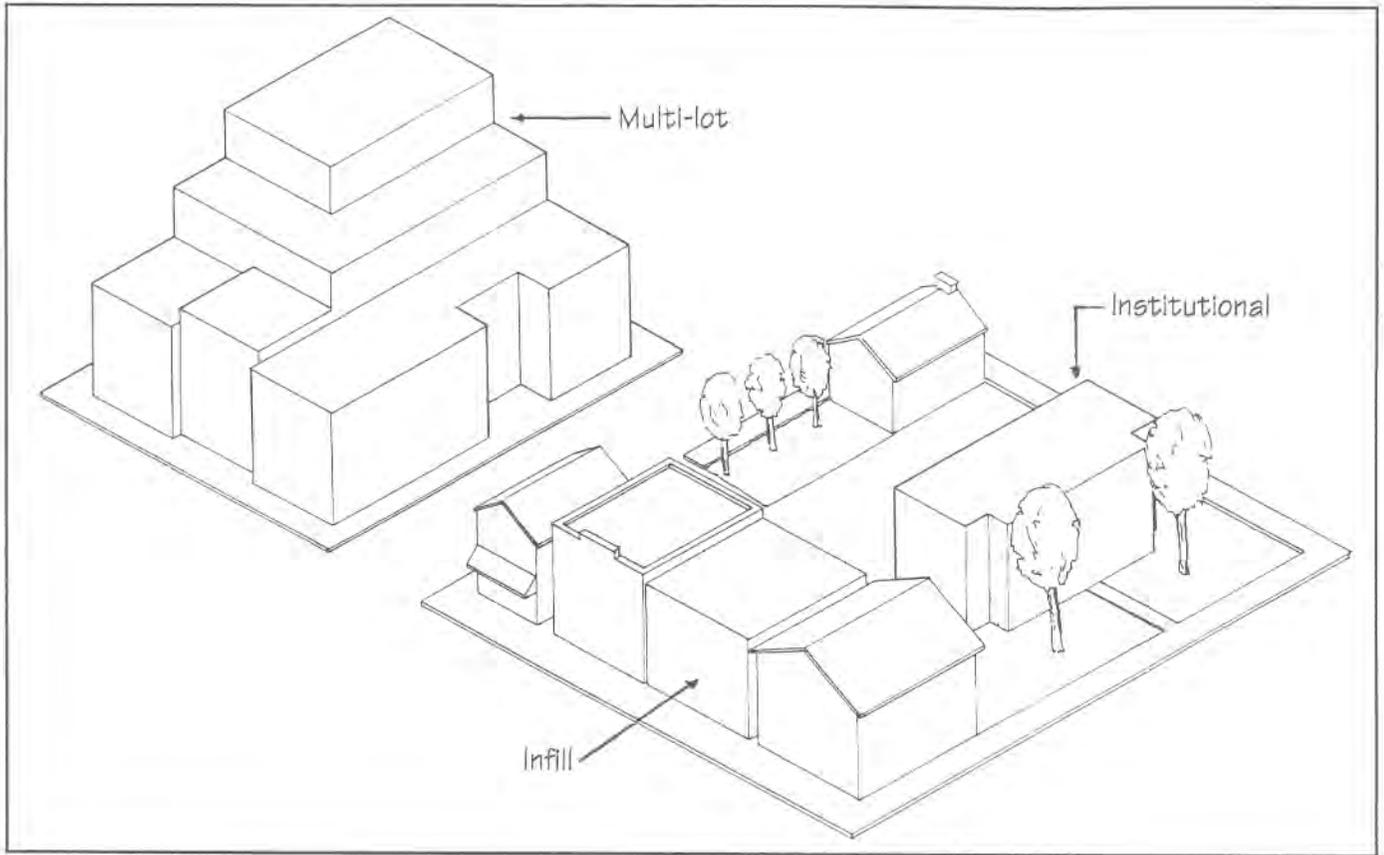
Government buildings, churches, schools, and libraries are all structures that represent a unique aspect of community life and frequently have special requirements that relate to their distinct uses. For these reasons, these buildings usually are free standing and their scale and architectural arrangements may be of a different nature than their residential and historic neighbors but their materials should blend with the character of the district.

### **4. Neighborhood Transitional**

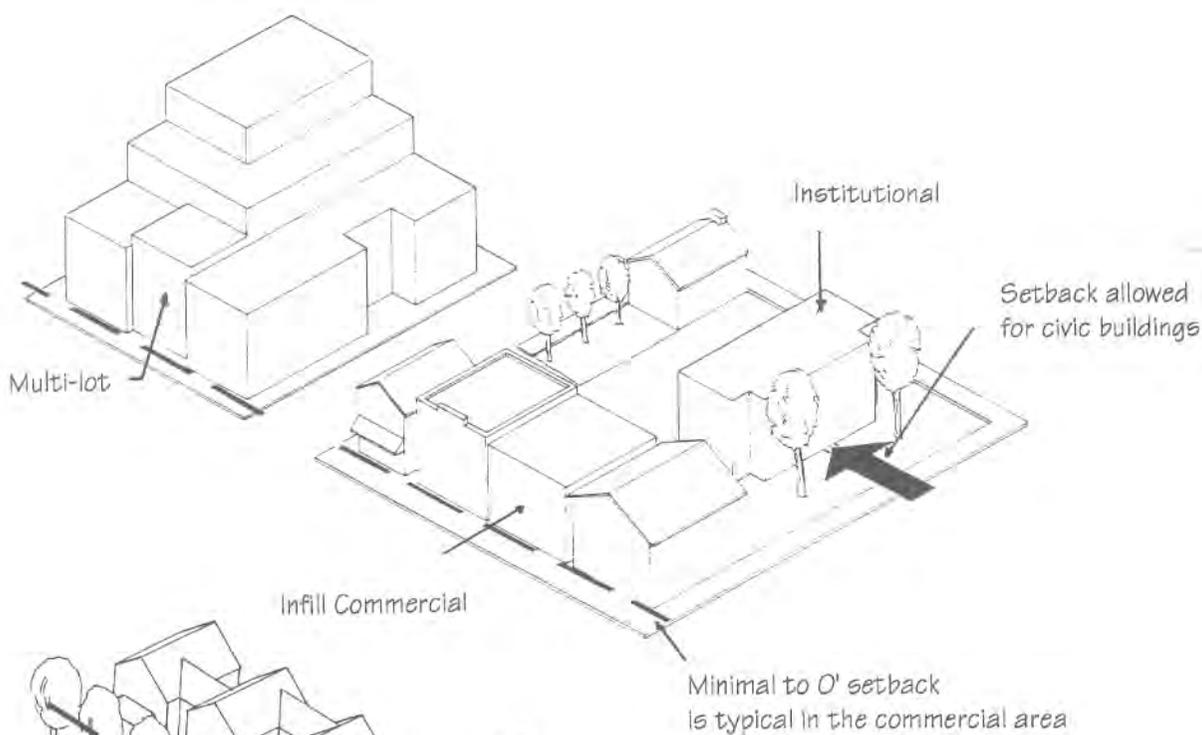
Neighborhood transitional commercial buildings are located on sites that adjoin residential areas. The design of these buildings should attempt to relate to the character of the adjacent neighborhood as well as to the commercial core. While these buildings may be larger in scale than residential structures, their materials, roof forms and massing should relate to residential forms.

### **5. Residential**

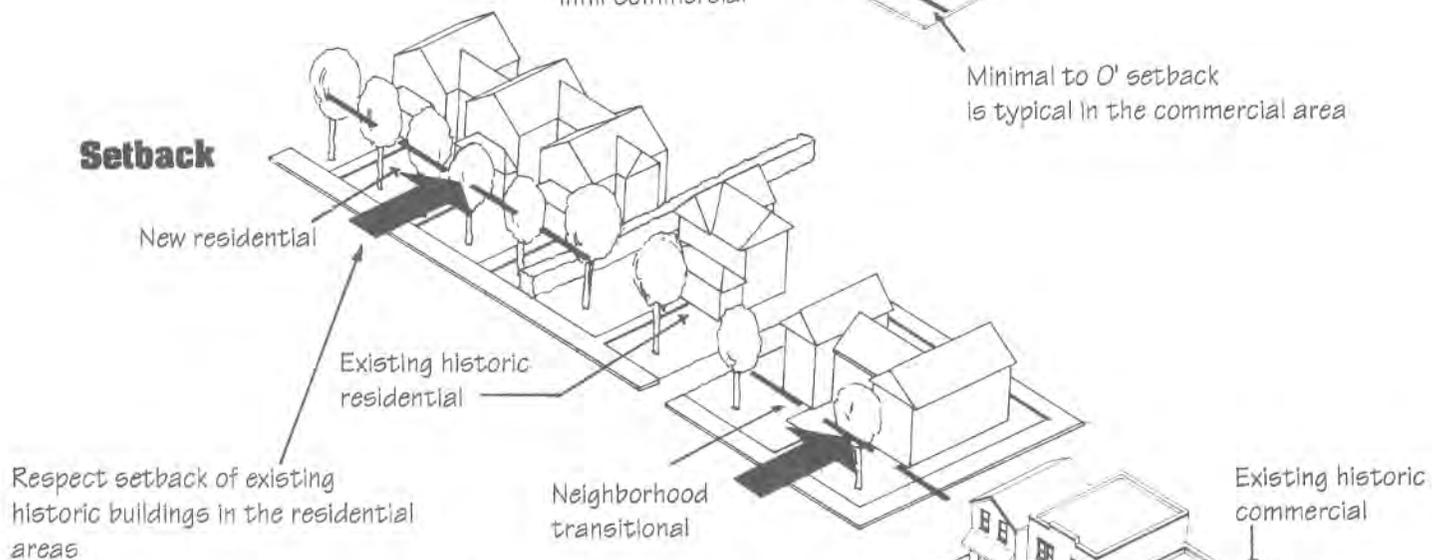
While there is limited opportunity to construct many more residential structures, there is the possibility of the occasional new house appearing in the district. Its design should take its cues from neighboring historic residences.



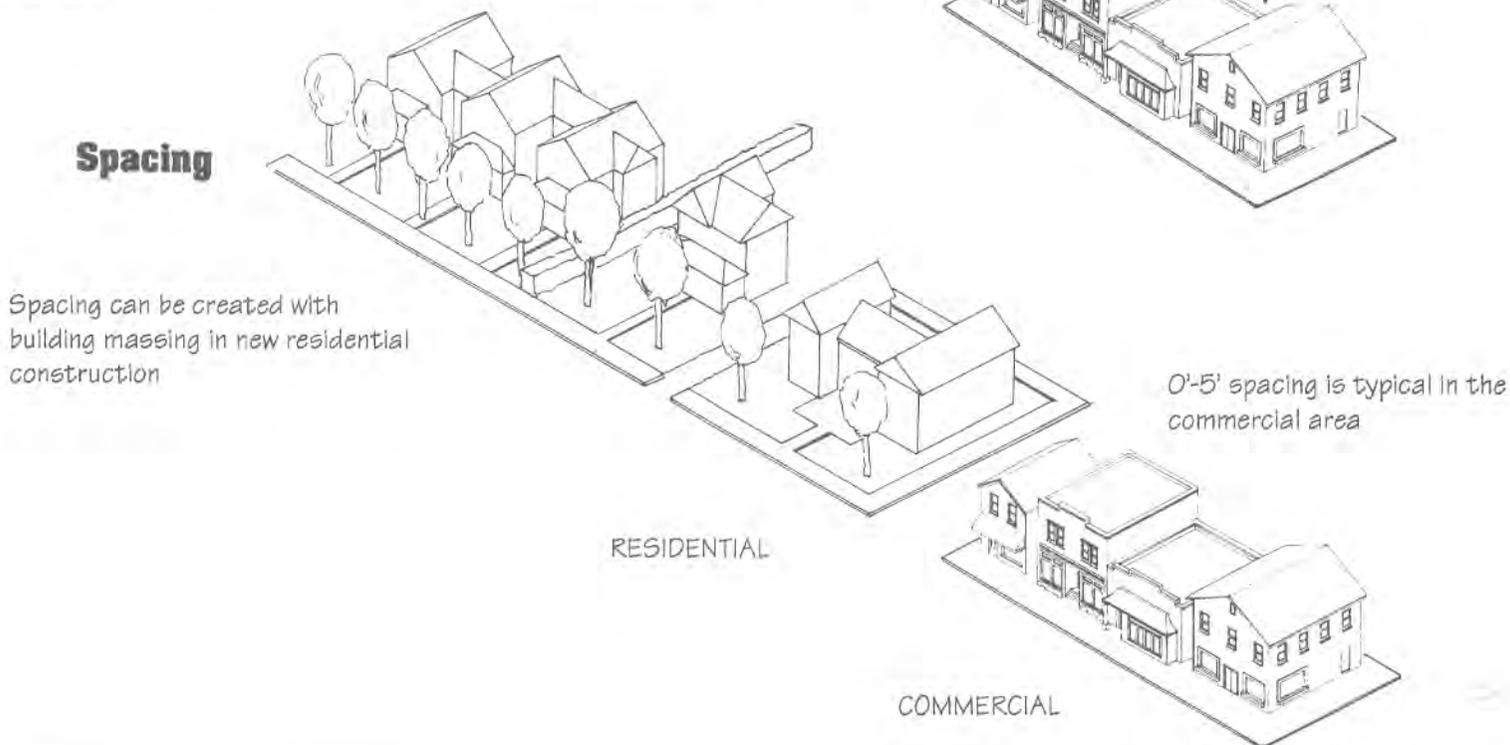
**Setback**



**Setback**



**Spacing**



## SITING

For the purposes of these guidelines, site refers not only to the area of ground that the building sits on, but also to the position of the building on the site (setback and spacing).

Front setback is the required area between the property line and the front wall of the building as further defined in the Fairfax Zoning Ordinance. See the zoning ordinance for the detailed requirements for front yard and minimum setbacks.

Spacing between buildings depends on the size of the lot, the size of the building, and side-yard setback requirements. Consistent spacing between a row of buildings helps to establish an overall rhythm along a street. See the zoning ordinance for detailed requirements.

Site also includes a variety of elements such as parking, outbuildings, landscaping, and fences which are covered in Chapter 4: Private Site Guidelines in the Historic District. Siting of new buildings and structures should be established only after the setbacks, views, and locations of surrounding buildings have been considered. Buildings and structures should be sited in such a way as to continue the closure of space provided by existing buildings in the historic district.

1. Construct new downtown buildings with a minimal setback in order to reinforce the traditional street wall.
2. Avoid deep setbacks or open corner plazas on corner buildings in the downtown.
3. Keep residential setbacks the average of the setbacks of neighboring dwellings on either side of the new building.
4. For institutional buildings, either reinforce the street wall through a minimal setback, or use a deep setback within a landscaped area to emphasize the civic function.
5. Maintain existing consistency of spacing in the area. New residences should be spaced similarly to the average spacing between houses on that block.
6. Commercial buildings in areas that have a well-defined street wall should have minimal spacing between them.
7. In areas that do not have consistent spacing, consider limiting spacing in order to establish an overall rhythm.

## COMPLEXITY OF BUILDING FORM

The overall form of a building relates to a combination of massing, size, symmetry, propor-



*Simple*

tions, projections, and roof shapes. A building's form, or shape, can be simple (a box) or complex (a combination of many boxes used with projections or indentations). The level of complexity usually relates directly to the style or type of building. Forms may be either symmetrical where the building is the same on either side of a central axis or it may be asym-



*Complex*

metrical where the building is different on either side of the axis. Many of the buildings in Old Town Fairfax's Historic District have relatively simple building forms.

1. Use forms in new construction that relate to those of existing neighboring buildings on the street.
2. If desired, give new civic or institutional buildings more complex forms, reflecting their distinctive use and functional needs.

# DIRECTIONAL EXPRESSION/ PROPORTION

This guideline addresses the relationship of height and width of the front elevation of a building mass. A building is horizontal, vertical, or square in its proportions and directional expression. Respect the directional expression of the majority of the surrounding buildings.



*Horizontal*



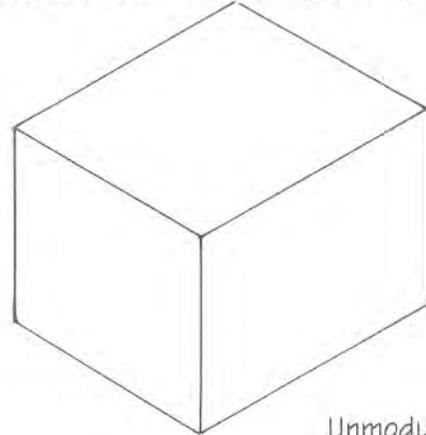
*Horizontal (left) and Vertical*

# MASSING AND BUILDING FOOTPRINT

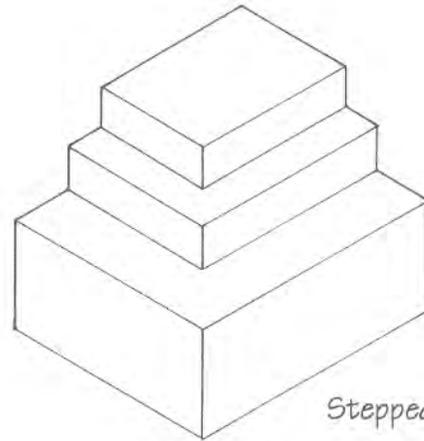
While the typical footprint of a commercial building from the turn of the twentieth century might be twenty feet wide by sixty feet long or 1200 square feet, new downtown buildings can be expected to be somewhat larger.

1. New infill buildings' footprints will be limited by the size of the existing lot and their massing in most cases should be simple rectangles like neighboring buildings.

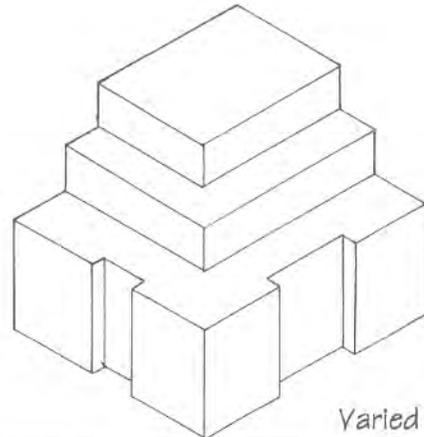
2. Neighborhood transitional buildings should have small building footprints similar to nearby dwellings. If their footprint is larger, their massing should be reduced to relate to the smaller scaled forms of residential structures.
3. Institutional and multi-lot buildings by their nature will have large footprints. Therefore, the massing of these large-scale structures should be reduced so they will not overpower the traditional scale of Fairfax's historic district. Techniques could include varying the surface planes of the building, stepping back the buildings as the structure increases in height, and breaking up the roofline with different elements to create smaller compositions.



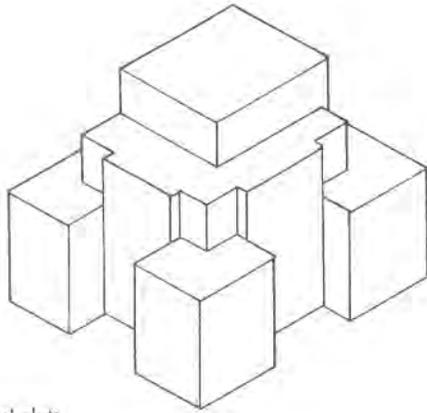
*Unmodulated mass*



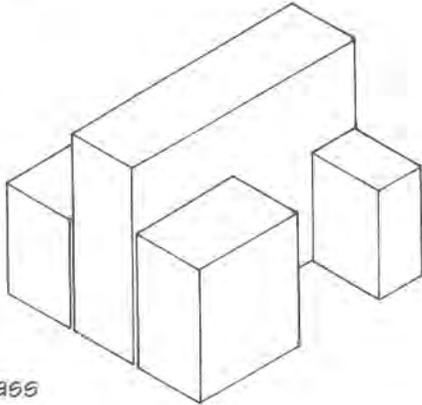
*Stepped back height*



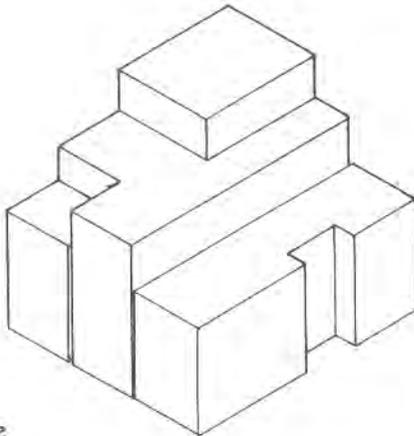
*Varied wall surface*



Varied height



Irregular mass



Composite

## HEIGHT AND WIDTH

Because of the variety in architectural styles in the Old Town Fairfax Historic District, there is a corresponding variety in building heights of one to three stories. Building width is more consistent and ranges from twenty to forty feet.

1. The height of new construction should relate to the prevailing height of the entire block and should be 80 to 120 percent of the existing average of the block

but should not exceed three stories above grade within the historic district.

2. The width of infill buildings should be similar to, and compatible with, adjacent buildings along the street.
3. Most commercial buildings in downtown average twenty to thirty feet in width. If new buildings are wider than this size, their primary facades should be divided into bays to reflect the predominant width of the existing buildings. Buildings that front on three or four sides should use this bay division technique on all appropriate facades.
4. Freestanding institutional buildings on lots other than commercial street walls may have larger proportions than the prevailing norm, but this variation should be judiciously exercised.

## SCALE

Height and width create scale, or the relationship between the size of a building and the size of a person. Scale also can be defined as the relationship of the size of a building to neighboring buildings, and of a building to its site. The design features of a building can reinforce a human scale or can create a monumental scale. Most buildings in the historic district relate to the human scale and are not monumental.

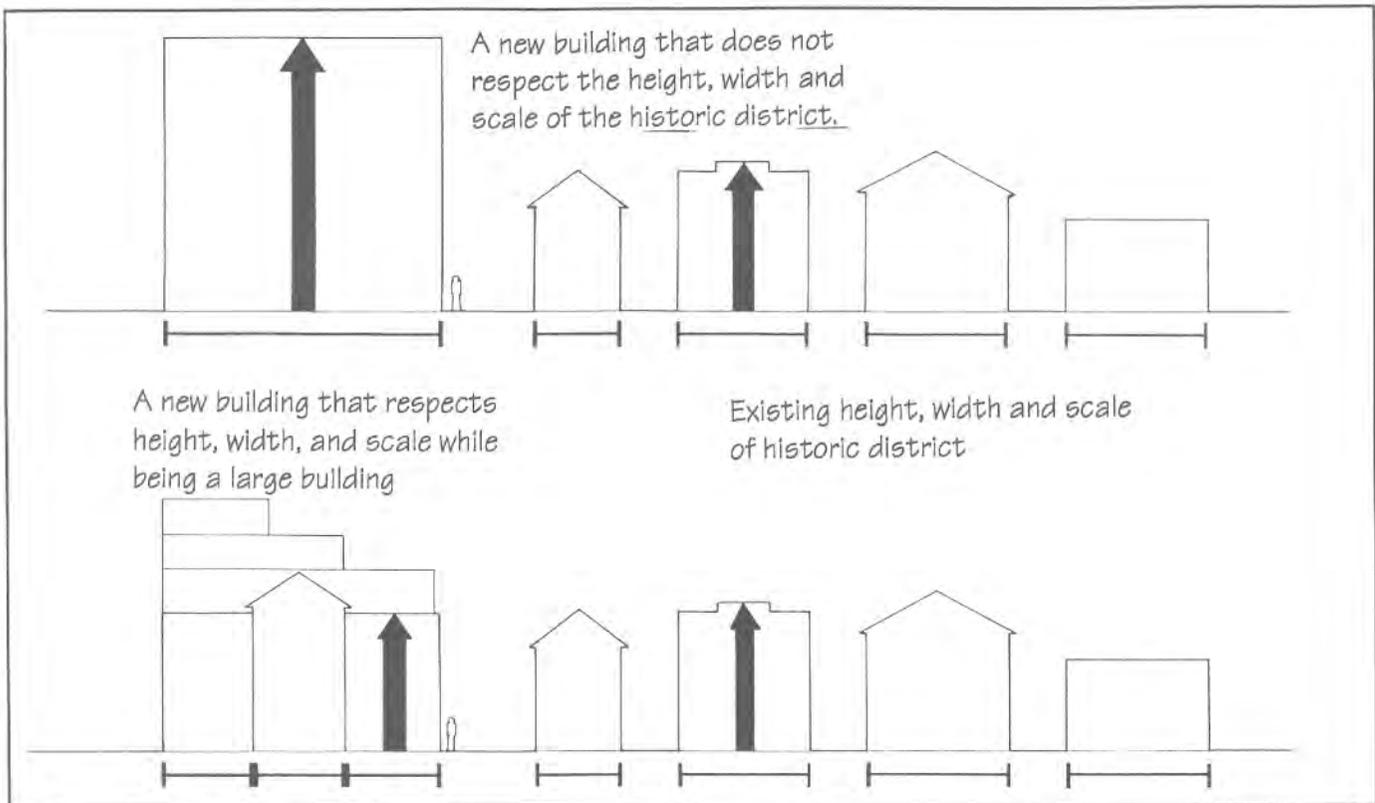
1. When the primary facade of a new commercial building is wider than forty feet, modulate it with bays.
2. Reinforce the human scale of the historic district by including elements such as porches, entrances, storefronts, and decorative features. As an exception, institutional or governmental buildings may be more appropriate on a monumental scale.

## ROOF DESIGN

Roof design, materials and textures should be consistent with the existing structures in the historic district. Common roof forms include hipped, gable, flat, and shed roofs.

Common roof materials in the historic district include metal, slate, composition shingles, and wood shingles as well as rubber membranes and built-up roofs of tar and gravel.

1. The roof design of small infill commercial buildings should usually be flat or sloped behind a parapet wall.



*Height, Width and Scale*

2. Neighborhood transitional buildings should use roof forms that relate to the neighboring residential forms instead of the flat or sloping commercial form.



*Neighborhood Transitional roof form*

3. Institutional buildings that are freestanding may have a gable or hipped roof with variations.
4. Multi-lot buildings or large-scaled buildings should have a varied roof line to break up the mass of the design using gable and/or hipped forms.
5. While there are various roof forms in downtown, mansard roofs, large towers, and turrets generally have not been historic elements in Fairfax's skyline.
6. In general, the roof pitch of an older dwelling is steeper than a new tract house and this factor is more important than the type of roof in most neigh-

borhoods. Shallow pitched roofs and flat roofs are inappropriate in historic residential areas.

7. For new construction in the historic district use traditional roofing materials such as metal or slate.
8. Avoid using thick wood cedar shakes if using wood shingles; instead use thinner more historically appropriate wood shingles or asphalt shingles which resemble wood.
9. Do not use mansard type roofs on commercial buildings; they were not used historically in Fairfax's downtown area.



*Typical downtown building roof forms*

10. If using composition asphalt shingles do not use light colors. Consider using darker textured type shingles that resemble slate or wood shingles.
11. Rubber membrane roofs or built-up roofs can be

used on flat or sloping roofs that are not visible from public areas.

12. If roof-mounted mechanical equipment is used, it should be screened from public view on all sides. The screening material and design should be consistent with the design, textures, materials, and colors of the building. The screening should not appear as an afterthought or addition to the building.

## STOREFRONTS AND ENTRANCES

1. When designing new storefronts or elements for storefronts, conform to the configuration and materials of traditional storefronts.
2. Keep the ground levels of new retail commercial buildings at least sixty percent transparent up to a level of ten feet if possible.
3. Articulate the bays of institutional or office buildings to provide visual interest.
4. Include doors in all storefronts to reinforce street-level vitality. Discourage "mini-malls" with one central door to the interior unless individual storefronts also have usable entrances and display windows.
5. Neighborhood transitional buildings, in general, should not have transparent first floors and the design and size of their facade openings should relate more to neighboring residential structures.
6. Institutional buildings generally would not have storefronts, but their street levels should provide visual interest and display space could be integrated into the design.
7. Any parking structures facing on important downtown streets or on major pedestrian routes should contain storefronts or other forms of visual relief on the first floors of these elevations. Street level facades of commercial structures should not have blank walls; they should provide visual interest to the passing pedestrian.

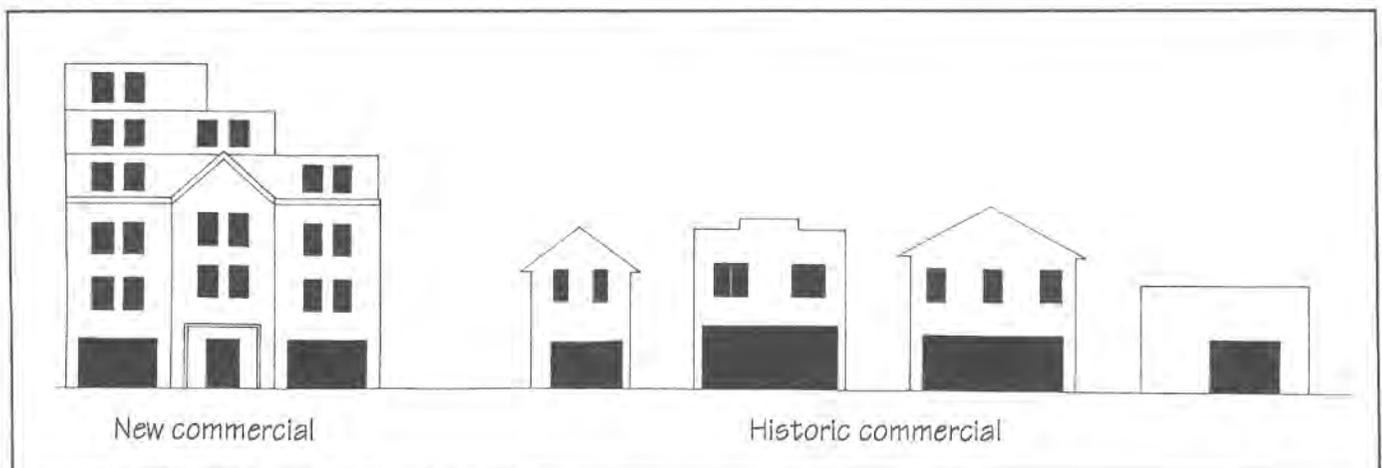
## DOORS AND WINDOWS

1. The rhythm, patterns, and ratio of solids (walls) and voids (windows and doors) of new buildings should relate to and be compatible with adjacent facades. The majority of existing buildings in Fairfax's historic district have a higher proportion of wall area than void area except at storefront level.



*Window pattern, size, proportion and ratio of wall to window area*

2. The size and proportion, or the ratio of width to height, of window and door openings of new buildings' primary facades should be similar and compatible with those on surrounding facades. The proportions of the upper floor windows of most of Fairfax's historic buildings are more vertical than horizontal. Glass storefronts would generally have more horizontal proportions than upper floor openings.
3. Traditionally designed openings generally are recessed on masonry buildings and have a raised surround on frame buildings. New construction should follow these methods in the historic district as opposed to designing openings that are flush with the rest of the wall.
4. Many entrances of Fairfax's historic buildings have special features such as transoms, sidelights, and decorative elements framing the openings. Consid-



*Window and Storefront voids on commercial buildings*

eration should be given to incorporating such elements in new construction.

5. Darkly tinted glass is not an appropriate material for windows in new buildings within the historic district.

## PORCHES

Many of Fairfax's historic houses have some type of porch.



There is much variety in the size, location, and type of porches and this variety relates to the different residential architectural styles.

Since this feature is such a prominent part of the residential areas of the district,

strong consideration should be given to including a porch in the design of any new residence in these areas.

## FOUNDATIONS

The foundation forms the base of a building. On many buildings it is indistinguishable from

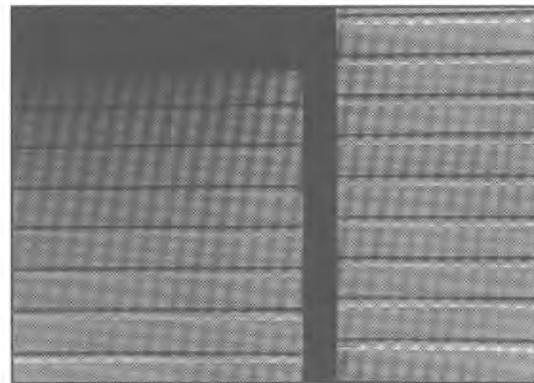


the walls of the buildings while on others it is a different material or texture or is raised well above ground level. Solid masonry foundations are common for both residential and commercial buildings. Masonry piers, most often of brick, support many porches.

Distinguish the foundation from the rest of the structure through the use of different materials, patterns, or textures. Respect the height, contrast of materials, and textures of foundations on surrounding historic buildings.

## MATERIALS AND TEXTURES

1. The selection of materials and textures for a new building should be compatible with and complement neighboring buildings. In order to strengthen the traditional image of the historic district, brick and wood siding are the most appropriate materials for new buildings.



2. Large scale multi-lot buildings whose primary facades have been divided into different bays and planes to relate to existing neighboring buildings may vary materials, shades, and textures.
3. Synthetic sidings are not historic cladding materials in the historic district and their use should be avoided. For a more detailed discussion of synthetic sidings see Chapter 5.

## COLOR

1. The selection and use of colors for a new building should be coordinated and compatible with adjacent buildings, and in Fairfax's historic district various traditional shades are appropriate. Brighter colors are more appropriate as accents on signs and awnings.
2. Placement of color is another important factor in defining a building's appearance. See Chapter 11: Guidelines for Painting for a discussion of color and color placement on historic structures.

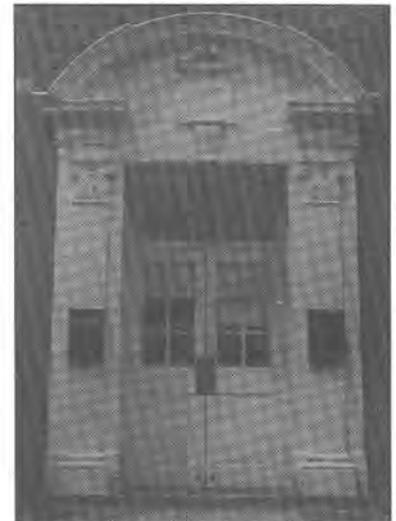
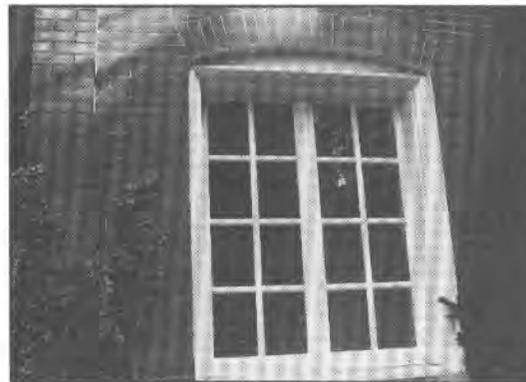
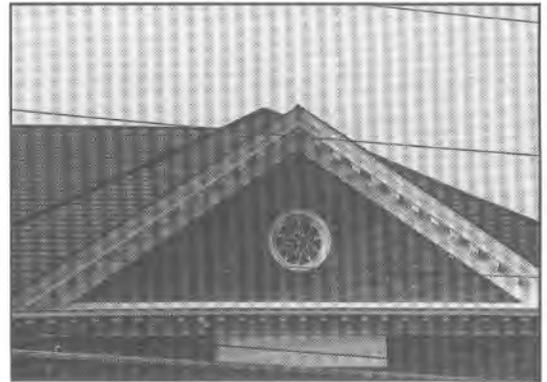
## ARCHITECTURAL DETAILS/DECORATIVE FEATURES

The details and decoration of Fairfax's historic buildings vary tremendously with the different styles, periods, and types. Such details include cornices, roof overhang, chimneys, lintels, sills, brackets, brick patterns, shutters, entrance decoration, and porch elements. The important factor to recognize is that many of the older buildings in the district have decoration and noticeable details. At the same time some of Fairfax's more recent commercial historic structures have minimal architectural decoration. Also many of the buildings were simply constructed often without the services of an architect and limited budgets precluded costly specialized building features.

It is a challenge to create new designs that use historic details successfully. One extreme is to simply copy the complete design of a historic building and the other is to "paste on" historic details on a modern unadorned design. Neither

solution is adequate for the issue of designing architecture that relates to its historic context and yet still reads as a contemporary building. More successful new buildings may take their clues from historic images and reintroduce and reinterpret designs of traditional decorative elements.

1. Cornices are a common element on most of Fairfax's historic buildings from all past eras and their inclusion in new construction will help relate the new design to existing structures.



2. Chimneys are a common element on most of Fairfax's historic buildings from all past eras and their inclusion in new construction may help relate the new design to existing structures, depending on the scale of the new structure.

## EXTERIOR LIGHTING

1. Lighting for new structures in the historic district should reflect the style and era of the proposed building.

2. Fixtures should utilize an incandescent lighting source whenever possible.
3. If a more intense light source is needed, metal halide is preferable to high pressure sodium, which casts a yellowish light or mercury vapor which casts a pale white light.
4. A combination of free-standing and wall-mounted fixtures is recommended in order to yield varied levels of lighting.

## ADDITIONS

An exterior addition to a historic building may radically alter its appearance. Before an addition is planned, every effort should be made to accommodate the new use within the interior of the existing building. When an addition is necessary, it should be designed and constructed in a manner that will not detract from the character-defining features of the historic building.



*Additions to 4023 Chain Bridge Road*

Many of the smaller commercial buildings may be enlarged as development pressure increases in downtown Fairfax and some of the historic residences may be enlarged as the needs of new owners change. These existing structures may be increased in size by constructing new additions on the rear or side. The design of these new additions should follow the previously listed guidelines for new construction on all elevations that are prominently visible. There are several other considerations that are specific to new additions in the historic district and are listed below.

### 1. Function

Attempt to accommodate needed functions within the existing structure without building an addition.

### 2. Size

Limit the size of the addition so that it does not visually overpower the existing building.

### 3. Location

Attempt to locate the addition on rear or side elevations that are not visible from the street. If additional floors are constructed on top of a building, set the addition back from the main facade so that its visual impact is minimized. If the addition is located on a primary elevation facing the street or if a rear addition faces a street, parking area, or an important pedestrian route, the facade of the addition should be treated under the new construction guidelines.

### 4. Design

New additions should not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work should be differentiated from the old and should be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.

### 5. Replication of Style

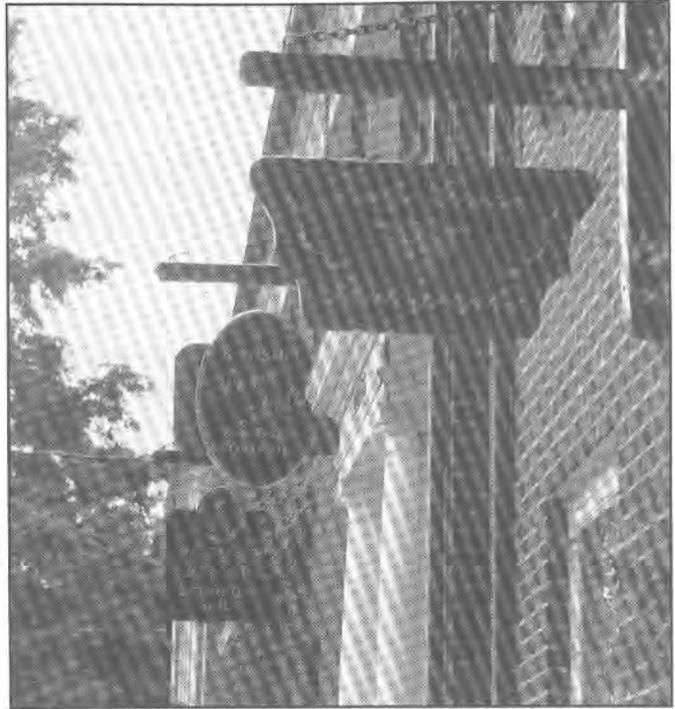
A new addition should not be an exact copy of the design of the existing historic building. If the new addition appears to be a part of the existing building, the integrity of the original historic design is compromised and the viewer is confused over what is historic and what is new. The design of new additions can be compatible with and respectful of existing buildings without being a mimicry of their original design.

### 6. Materials and Features

Use materials, windows, doors, architectural detailing, roofs, and colors which are compatible with historic buildings in the district.

### 7. Attachment to Existing Building

Wherever possible, new additions or alterations to existing buildings and structures shall be done in such a manner that, if such additions or alterations were to be removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the building or structure would be unimpaired. Therefore, the new design should not use the same wall plane, roof line, cornice height and materials that make the addition appear original to the historic building.



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## 10 Guidelines for Signs

Signs are a vital and a necessary part of the downtown scene. A balance should be struck between the need to call attention to individual businesses and the need for a positive image for both the historic and the transition districts. The City of Fairfax has a detailed sign ordinance including specific regulations for the Old Town Fairfax Historic District. See the zoning code for further details.

### **GENERAL SIGN GUIDELINES: HISTORIC DISTRICT**

Signs in the historic district should be a part of the architectural composition of the building. They should complement the scale, color, and

architectural features of the building. Signs should be oriented to pedestrian rather than to vehicular traffic.

### 1. Placement

Place signs so that they do not obstruct architectural elements and details that define the design of the building and respect the signs of adjacent businesses.

### 2. Number and Size

The number of signs used should be limited to encourage compatibility with the building and discourage visual clutter. See the zoning code for further details.

### 3. Execution

Signs should be executed by sign professionals who are skilled at lettering and surface preparation. All signs should be simple, visible, legible and direct. Mixed upper and lower case letters are easily read and serif letters are eye-catching. No single lettering style is preferred. Lettering should be limited to two styles per building.

### 4. Design

Many signs are not readable or simply do not convey an image appropriate for the business or the building. Often, sign painters or graphic designers can and should assist with sign design.

### 5. Shape

Shape of signs for commercial buildings can conform to the area where the sign is to be located. Likewise, a projecting sign may take on the shape of the product or service provided such as a shoe for a shoe store.

### 6. Materials

Use traditional sign materials such as wood, glass, gold leaf, raised individual metal or painted wood letters, and painted or vinyl letters on wood, metal, or glass. Wall signs should not be painted directly on the surface of the wall. Window signs should be painted or have decal flat letters and should not be three dimensional.

### 7. Color

Use colors that complement the materials and color scheme of the building, including accent and trim colors. A limit of three colors is recommended for signs, although more colors may be appropriate in exceptional and tastefully executed designs.

### 8. Illumination

Generally, signs should be indirectly lit with a shielded incandescent light source. Back-lit plastic signs are not recommended for the historic district.

### 9. Buildings with Multiple Tenants

A master sign plan should be submitted for the building to include a directory sign that is coordinated with any other individual signs. Each business on the main level should have the same limits for total area computed as a portion of the individual building frontage.

## SIGN TYPES : HISTORIC DISTRICT

(See zoning code for detailed regulations)



Free-standing signs, building mounted signs, sandwich signs and banners are allowed in the historic district. Rooftop signs, portable signs (other than sandwich signs) and marquee signs are not allowed.

### 1. Free-Standing Signs

- A **hanging sign** is one suspended from braces, beams, or other supports connected to a pole implanted upright in the ground. Hanging signs should be compatible with the size of the building facade.
- Ground-mounted signs** should be placed in a manner that will not obstruct motorists' view from the surrounding streets or driveways. These signs are more appropriate for new developments within the historic district.
- Post top signs** are inconsistent with the character of the district and should not be used.

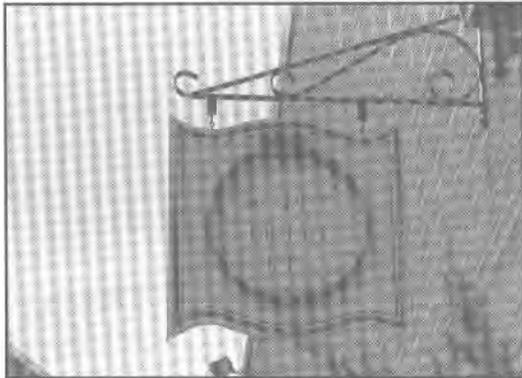
### 2. Building Mounted Signs

- Wall signs** for commercial buildings can be located above the storefront, within the frieze of the cornice, on covered transoms, or on the pier that frames display windows or generally on flat, unadorned surfaces of the facade or in areas



Wall mounted sign

clearly designed as sign locations. For residential buildings, flat signs attached to the wall at the first floor or between porch columns is appropriate.



Projecting sign

- b. A **projecting sign** is one which is attached perpendicular to the wall of a building, and it should be sized to be compatible with the facade. There should be sufficient height for clearance for pedestrians but the sign should generally not be higher than the window sill of the second story. Projecting signs should be hung at ninety degrees to the face of the building. For residential buildings, small projecting signs attached to the wall at the first floor or porch column are appropriate and should not be located higher than the top of the porch.
- c. **Window signs** are those attached to the inside or outside face of a window and are generally painted letters or decals. Window signs should be approximately at eye height for good pedestrian visibility. Optional locations could include near the top or bottom of the display window glass. Window signs are also appropriate on upper floor windows and the glazing of doors.



Window sign

- d. **Awning and canopy signs** should generally be placed on the valance area only. Letters may be painted, screened or sewn on the fabric.

### 3. Sandwich Signs

A sandwich board is a portable sign which is constructed of durable materials and which has two flat faces, with or without changeable copy. It is designed to be displayed on the ground but it is only allowed where it will not inhibit pedestrian circulation.

## SIGN GUIDELINES: TRANSITION DISTRICT

(See zoning code for detailed regulations)

The goal of the transition district is to respect and reinforce the distinctive character of the neighboring historic district. While some of the developments can be expected to be larger scale in the transition district, the sign requirements should attempt to generally reflect the sign character of the historic district.

1. Back-lit wall mounted linear signs within the transition district should have dark backgrounds with light letters.
2. Neon signs can add variety and color to the transition district if carefully designed and placed. They should be limited to one per business and limited to the name and/or logo of the business.
3. No free-standing time-and-temperature signs are recommended.



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## II Guidelines for Painting

A properly painted building accentuates its character-defining details. Painting is the least expensive way to maintain historic fabric and make a building an attractive addition to a historic district. Many times however, buildings are painted inappropriate colors or colors are placed incorrectly. Some paint schemes use too many colors but more typical is a monochromatic approach in which one color is used for the entire building. These guidelines are for the historic and the transition district.

1. Remove loose and peeling paint down to the next sound layer, using the gentlest means possible: hand scraping and hand sanding (wood and masonry) and wire brushes (metal). A heat gun can be used on wood for heavy build up of paint. Never use an open flame. Do not use sandblasting or high-pressure water wash to remove paint from masonry, soft

metal, or wood. Take precautions when removing older paint layers since they may contain lead.

2. Insure that all surfaces are free of dirt, grease, and grime before painting.
3. Prime surfaces if bare material is exposed or if changing types of paints, such as from oil-based to latex. Use primers formulated for the material to be painted, for instance metal primers for metal and oil-based primer for wood.
4. Do not apply latex paint directly over oil-based paint as it may not bond properly and can pull off the old oil-based paint.
5. Use a high-quality paint and follow manufacturer's specifications for preparation and application.
6. Do not paint masonry that is unpainted.
7. Choose colors that blend with and complement the overall color schemes on the street. Do not use bright and obtrusive colors.
8. For the majority of buildings, the numbers of colors should be limited to three. It is best to treat similar elements and surfaces with the same color to achieve a unified, instead of an overly busy and disjointed appearance.

For **commercial buildings**, trim, including cornices, storefront, and window framing should be painted the same color. The wall, if painted, should be a contrasting color. The window sash and doors can be painted a different accent color than the walls and trim. If the cornice or storefront is particularly ornate, the wall color can be introduced back into the trim as an accent for raised panels and trim or a second accent color that is a shade of the trim can be used.

Likewise, the number of colors for **residential buildings** should be limited to three also. One color for the wall, a contrasting color for the trim and an accent color for sash, doors and shutters. The accent color may also be used for the roof. An additional color for the foundation may be introduced. If the building is particularly ornate and has many different wall materials, additional colors can be introduced. See below.

9. The choice of colors can differ according to architectural style:
  - Federal and Colonial Revival:** Softer colors should be used on these buildings since the style is a return to classical motifs.
  - Victorian and Queen Anne:** Deep, rich colors or more neutral natural colors can be used on the exterior trim and walls of late Victorian-era houses. The important objective is to highlight the different textures of these decorated structures. Shingles can be treated with a different color or shade from the color of the siding on the same building.
  - Vernacular:** These buildings are generally very simple designs with plain detailing. One color should be used for the trim and a contrasting color for the wall.



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## 12 Guidelines for Awnings

Awnings can contribute to the overall image of downtown by providing visual continuity for an entire block, helping to highlight specific buildings, and covering any unattractively remodeled transom areas above storefronts. They also protect pedestrians from the weather, shield window displays from sunlight and conserve energy. Awnings are appropriate within the historic and the transition districts.

### **AWNING TYPES**

#### **Standard Sloped Fabric**

Whether fixed or retractable, sloped awnings are the traditional awning type and are appropriate for most historic buildings, both residential and commercial. Sloped awnings may be used on new buildings as well.



### **Boxed or Curved Fabric**

More current design treatments, these types of awning are best used on a non-historic or new commercial buildings.

### **Canopies and Marquees**

Appropriate on some commercial buildings, canopies and marquees should fit the storefront design and not obscure important elements such as transoms or decorative glass.

### **Aluminum or Plastic**

Seldom are these awnings appropriate for historic buildings but they can be used in the transition district if they are compatible with new construction and if they are plastic coated and appear close to a traditional fabric awning.

### **Signs on Awnings**

1. As appropriate, use the front panel or valance of an awning for a sign. Letters can be sewn, screened, or painted on the awning fabric; avoid hand-painted or individually made fabric letters that are not professionally applied.
2. See the zoning code for size and placement requirements for awning signs.

## **AWNING GUIDELINES**

### **Awning Design and Placement**

1. Place awnings carefully within the storefront, porch, door, or window openings so they do not obscure elements or damage materials.
2. Choose designs that do not interfere with existing signs or distinctive architectural features of the building, or with street trees or other elements along the street.
3. Choose an awning shape that fits the opening in which it is installed.
4. Make sure the bottom of the awning valance meets code requirements.

### **Awning Fabric and Color**

1. Coordinate colors with the overall building color scheme. Solid colors, wide stripes, and narrow stripes may be appropriate, but not overly bright or complex patterns.
2. Avoid using shiny plastic-like fabrics.
3. Avoid using metal, hard plastic, or overly ornate fabric awnings.