

# **Alternative Compliance Guidelines for the CD Zone**

## **Athens-Clarke County, Georgia**

### **June 5, 2007**



# Alternative Compliance Guidelines for the C-D Zone

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## 1.0 General Intent

Design standards for the C-D Zone District in Downtown Athens set forth a series of prescriptive measures for assuring that new buildings and alterations are consistent with the goals, objectives and policies set forth in the Comprehensive Plan for Athens-Clarke County.

New development should be sensitive to the traditional context from which the Downtown has evolved. However, accommodating new development and promoting infill helps to reduce sprawl in outlying areas.

While many projects will simply comply with the standards, there may be situations in which owners seek to use alternative means of achieving the desired results. The code, therefore, provides for an optional design review process, using more discretionary guidelines. This document provides those guidelines, which shall be applied as described below.



## 1.1 Relationship to goals in the Comprehensive Plan

The Comprehensive Plan for Athens-Clarke County identifies Downtown as a special area, which is to have specific design standards, to “protect the historic character” and also to “insure that new buildings develop in a downtown style and are of sufficient intensity.” The Comprehensive Plan also introduces certain “corridors” in which a preferred character should be promoted through regulations.

## 1.2 General design principles

The Comprehensive Plan states that the community should “develop and implement design standards for new development and redevelopment that address architectural composition (both material and form), site circulation, site and parking lot landscaping (including tree planting standards for parking lots), lighting and noise level standards.” These standards are further founded on considerations of urban design, which are set forth in the Comprehensive Plan. These include:

- creating a pedestrian-friendly environment
- establishing a sense of visual continuity while encouraging creativity and diversity in individual building designs
- promoting a mix of uses that contributes to vitality of Downtown
- conveying a sense of human scale

### **1.3 A Vision for Downtown**

The community seeks to have these attributes in Downtown Athens:

#### **1.3.1 Downtown is the place of collective memory.**

Its buildings, sites and landscape features provide a record of the historical continuum of the community. If the record disappears, the cultural continuum is disrupted. And, while remembering this continuum is important, so is anticipating the future.

#### **1.3.2 Downtown is a place of public expression.**

It is where the public goes to speak, to act, and convey who they are. This expression occurs in civic art, architecture, in activities and performances, and in public spaces.

#### **1.3.3 Downtown is a place of human and humane experience.**

It is a place people can gather to enjoy a sense of community and be entertained and enlightened.

#### **1.3.5 Downtown is accessible.**

Places are linked with safe and convenient systems that encourage movement and interaction. This applies first to the pedestrian, then public transit and non-motorized vehicles, and lastly, vehicular traffic.

#### **1.3.6 Downtown is a place of diversity.**

This is true in all senses - demographic, activities, and physical environment. It is inclusive. Downtown is a microcosm of Athens-Clarke County and the diverse cultures of the community.

#### **1.3.7 Downtown is environmentally sustainable.**

Buildings are constructed to last, and to make best use of resources. Its framework also supports sustainable commerce and movement.

#### **1.3.8 Downtown is a place of economic vitality and vibrancy.**

Downtown is symbolically and factually the economic engine of the community.

### **1.4 Applicability by Area**

These design guidelines are for use in the C-D zone where compliance with design standards is required. The alternative compliance process shall not apply to properties in the Downtown Historic District.

### **1.5 Applicability by Use**

These guidelines apply to a commercial, residential and mixed-use development in the C-D zone in which owner seeks to comply with the standards in the code through alternative measures. They also apply to any parking facilities, either surface lots or structures, whether developed as distinct land uses or in conjunction with other uses. In some cases,

staff may also use them in other conditional reviews where design compatibility is a concern.

These guidelines will not apply unless a request for alternative compliance with the design standards has been made.



## 2.0 The Character of Downtown Athens

Downtown consists of approximately 300 acres that sit above the banks of the Oconee River, in a grid of streets which is slightly skewed from a north-south axis. It is generally bounded by Pulaski Street on the west, Dougherty Street on the north, the Oconee River on the east, and Broad Street on the south. The University of Georgia defines the southern edge.

College Avenue, which runs perpendicular to Broad, generally divides Downtown and was historically a primary commercial street. Clayton also is a primary commercial street, and the intersection of these two streets still conveys the sense of a downtown center. The greatest concentration of traditional commercial storefront buildings lies along Clayton Street, between Thomas and Lumpkin Streets. These are buildings with storefronts at the sidewalk edge, with masonry walls. Other lines of commercial buildings extend outward along downtown streets, but become less intense near the edges of the area.

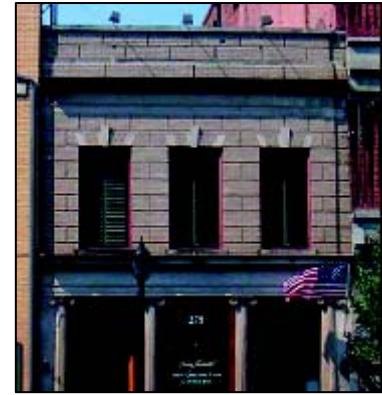
Downtown also has been the historic center of government, which is reflected by city and county buildings, as well as courts and cultural facilities. It also has a high concentration of churches. All of these institutional buildings add accent to the area and convey its importance as the civic center for the community.

Key gateways into the Downtown occur at the approximate four-corners of the rectangular collection of commercial blocks. Of these, three enter at angles, which afford a special sense of entry into the area (Prince and North Avenues and Oconee Street). Gateways also define the entry points of Broad Street. The street rises from both points into Downtown, providing dramatic views.

The view over the Oconee River is also a noteworthy feature. Since Downtown sits high above the river, view opportunities abound. The northern and western edges of Downtown are framed by older established residential neighborhoods, which are predominantly single family in scale, although some larger multifamily structures exist. These neighborhoods create distinct, green edges to the more urban character of Downtown itself.

## 3.0 Design Areas

The community's vision for Downtown, which is established in the Comprehensive Plan, is to be pedestrian oriented area with a vital mix of uses and a higher density of development. In general, the C-D zone is to be treated as a single entity, in terms of the application of development standards, but the code does acknowledge some variations, in context. Even so, there are some differences in development patterns that will emerge in response to variations in street patterns, topography, and relationships to abutting zone districts. In order to address these differing conditions, the C-D zone is to be considered in a set of sub-areas:



### A. Downtown Historic District

This design area is bounded approximately by Hancock, Jackson, Broad and Lumpkin, with some portions extending beyond those streets. See the attached map for the specific boundaries.

This area contains a high concentration of historically significant buildings, and their preservation is a goal. It is anticipated that alterations and additions to historic buildings will occur, and new infill construction may be feasible on some parcels that do not have historic structures. A key design goal for this area is to preserve its historic significance and to assure that new buildings will be compatible with traditional commercial storefront type structures. Objectives are to maintain a clearly defined street edge that is lined with storefronts and other features that provide a sense of human scale and create interest for pedestrians. That is, the edge of the street should be defined with buildings, not with parking lots. Small courtyards and plazas may provide accents along the street, but the line of building fronts should predominate.

This area is a locally-designated historic district, and a Certificate of Appropriateness, issued by the Historic Preservation Commission is required. The design guidelines for the historic district apply to this area.

### B. West Downtown Design Area

This area is bounded approximately by Lumpkin, Broad, Pulaski and Hancock. See the attached map for the specific boundaries. It contains a mix of commercial, residential and institutional uses.

This area should be an extension of the Downtown, in terms of the general character of buildings with respect to mass, scale, materials and articulation. It should be a place that invites walking, and supports active retail uses at the street level. It should evolve as a place with a mix of old and new structures, at varied heights. Many new buildings are expected to be more than two stories tall and a relatively high density overall is anticipated.

While West Downtown should feel related to the Downtown Historic District, some greater variety in the streetscape is expected, with plazas and courtyards giving variety to the street edge. Office uses and housing is expected on upper levels.

A design goal for this area is to promote a pedestrian-friendly atmosphere that is experienced as an extension of the Historic Core. The use of buildings with storefronts at the sidewalk edge is encouraged, but some variations in building setbacks and the use of landscaped open space along the street edge is to be accommodated.

Extending the sense of scale found in the historic core and enhancing pedestrian interest are also design objectives for this area, but more flexibility in the methods of achieving this is to be provided. The visual impacts of parking should be minimized, either by enclosing parking in structures, or placing it behind active uses.

### **C. East Downtown Design Area**

This area is bounded approximately by Thomas, Foundry, Broad and Strong Streets, with some portions extending beyond. See the attached map for the specific boundaries. Several new buildings have appeared in East Downtown recently, which have helped to shape its image. Commercial buildings, with retail uses at the street level, provide a framework for defining the street edge with storefronts. A new hotel and residential units are emerging that also have first floors with extensive window area that provide interest. These reinforce a vision of defining the street wall with buildings at the sidewalk edge that convey an urban character.

At the same time, several institutional facilities exist here. They have more formal entries, and include plazas and courtyards that animate the street scene. Therefore, some variation in the character of the street edge is appropriate. However, overall, this is envisioned as a relatively densely built area, with strongly defined sidewalk edges. This area is similar to the West Downtown Design Area, in that it has a strong sense of relatedness to the historic core. A design goal for this area is to promote a pedestrian-friendly atmosphere that is experienced as an extension of the Historic Core.

The use of buildings with storefronts at the sidewalk edge is strongly encouraged, but some variations in building setbacks and the use of landscaped open space along the street edge is to be accommodated. Maintaining the sense of scale found in the historic core and providing pedestrian interest are also design objectives for this area, but somewhat more flexibility in the methods of achieving this is to be allowed.

It is also important to note that portions of this area slope downhill toward the river. This provides some special view opportunities and also modifies the ways in which storefronts align in elevation. Rather than creating a straight line, a “stair-step” effect results when storefronts of similar heights are repeated along a block.

#### **D. Dougherty Street Design Area**

This design area lies along Dougherty Street from North Avenue to Pulaski Street. See the attached map for the specific boundaries.

Dougherty Street should develop with an urban edge. At the same time, this is an area where a substantial amount of housing is anticipated. High rise housing may mix with townhouses and other mixed use developments. While much of this may be developed up to the sidewalk, there may also be projects that are set back, with courtyards and small lawns in front. Overall, some variety in the street edge is anticipated. Where buildings are set back, extensive landscaping, and street trees should set the foreground.

This area is relatively undeveloped at present, with large expanses of paved parking lots. It is not pedestrian-friendly at present, and a key objective is to enhance it to create a pedestrian-friendly street edge and to re-build a sense of connection with the historic core.

Locating buildings close to the sidewalk is encouraged here, however, it is anticipated that some new buildings in the area may be set back from the street edge, and will be perceived as individual, stand-alone structures in an open landscape. In such a case, a green, landscaped foreground should predominate. The visual impacts of parking should be minimized, either by enclosing parking in structures, or placing it behind active uses.

#### **E. River Design Area**

This area is bounded approximately by Oconee Street, Foundry Street, North Avenue and the river. See the attached map for the specific boundaries.

The River Design Area differs from the others. Steeply sloping hillsides and the river valley combine to create a more informal street pattern and provide unique view opportunities. Many buildings overlook the multi-modal center and others have views to the river. Large expanses of green space also exist, which provide opportunities to orient development to these amenities.

This means that some buildings may be more “free-standing,” rather than sitting in conventional gridded streets. Nonetheless, defining the street edge with buildings and landscaping is an important objective.

Buildings in this area should be designed to orient to the street, but also to natural amenities, including the river and adjoining green space. In this respect, some may be “double-fronted.”

The street edge of such developments also should express visual interest and convey a sense of human scale for pedestrians. However, greater flexibility in the methods of accomplishing this is appropriate here.

While building at the street edge is encouraged, there are many cases where buildings may instead be located in a landscaped setting, as individual structures. It is anticipated that buildings here may be set back from the street edge. In such a case, a green, landscaped foreground should predominate. The appearance of cars parked in both structures and surface lots are to be minimized when viewed from the street and the river edge. This also is an area where providing pedestrian connections between properties is an objective; providing connections to regional trails is also desirable.

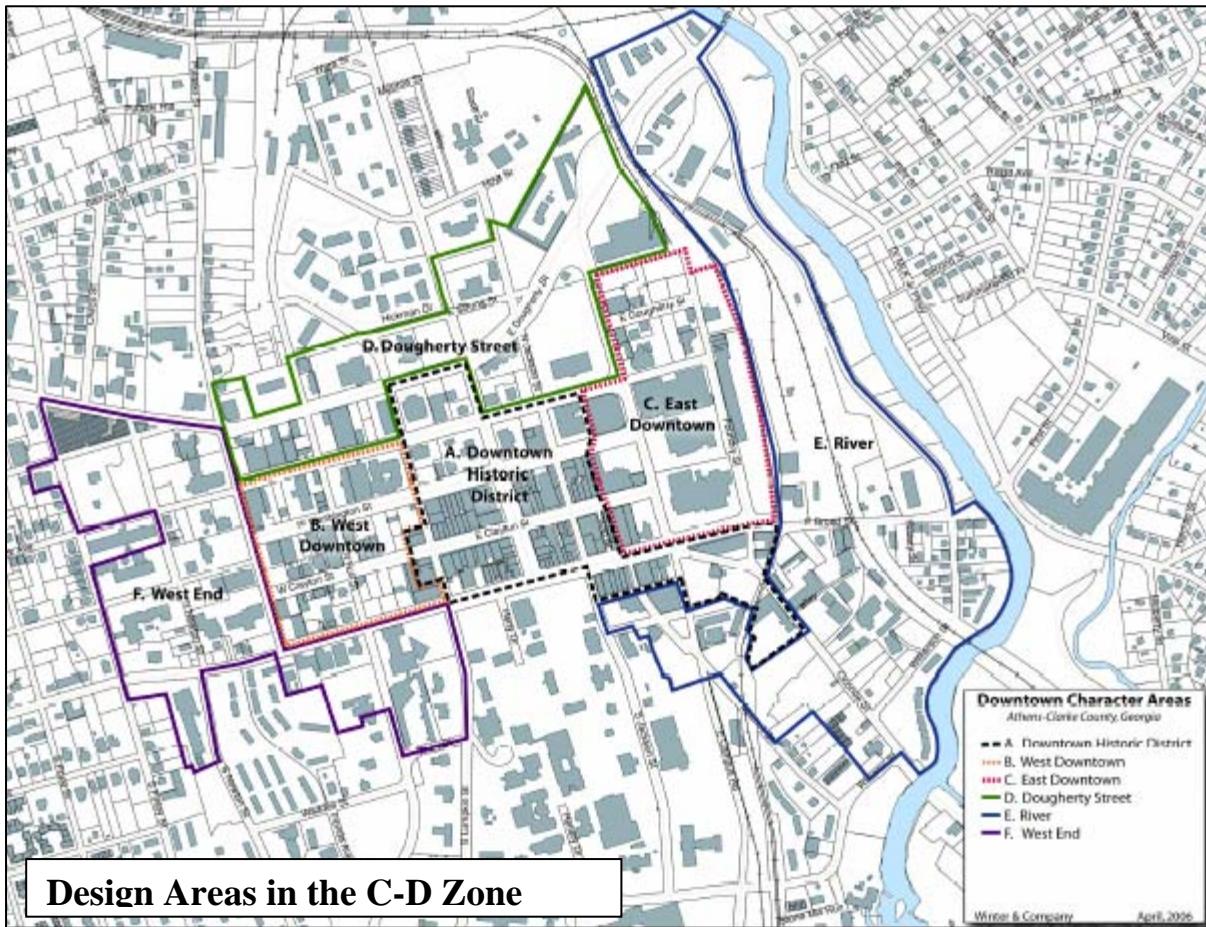
Overall, buildings in this area should maintain a sense of open space and provide through views to landmarks and natural amenities. Development should also reflect the topography of the area, by stepping building forms.

## **F. West End Design Area**

This design area is bounded approximately by Pulaski, Prince, Finley and Broad Streets, with another portion extending on the south side of Broad from Lumpkin to Newton and south until Wray Street. See the attached map for the specific boundaries. The West End area is anticipated to develop with a substantial amount of residential units, although some commercial uses and additional institutional facilities may also occur. Apartment buildings, townhouses and high rise mixed use developments will create a mix of building forms, and there may be more variety in the character of the street edge in this area.

This area has a mix of residential, commercial and institutional buildings. Many are free-standing structures, framed by yards and other landscaped areas. Varied setbacks are appropriate. It is anticipated that some buildings may be set back from the street edge. In such a case, a green, landscaped foreground should predominate. The visual appearance of parked cars, both in surface lots and in potential structures, is to be minimized.

It is also important to note that the West End design area abuts residential zones, and providing compatible transitions along these edges is an objective. Many buildings are institutional, and are “freestanding,” with formal front entries. These add accent to the urban fabric, but are not considered the context for new residential and commercial infill development; for infill of these uses, buildings that are positioned closer to the street are preferred.



### 3.1 Application of the Design Areas in the Design Guidelines

The preceding descriptions of the design areas and the general vision for each of them are to be considered when applying the design guidelines for alternative compliance situations.

## 4.0 Site Design Guidelines

### 4.1 Building Setbacks

The Zoning and Development Standards establish a requirement for building setbacks in the C-D zone. The setback requirements are defined for each of the Design Areas in the design standards. There is a minimum and maximum setback with a minimum percentage of front wall plane that must be at the required setback line. The intent is to create a sense of human scale and provide visual interest to pedestrians while also expressing the distinctions of the different Design Areas.

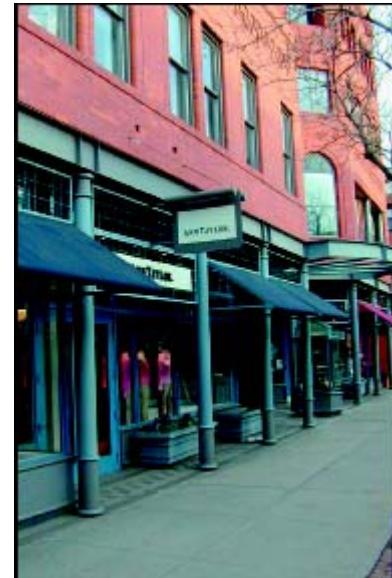
In most cases, the primary plane of the building should be at the required building line. However, setbacks may be modified if the intent of the standard is maintained as described below.

#### **4.1.1. Define the building plane at the required front setback with architectural elements.**

Imply a building plane at the standard setback line by providing structural features at the street level that suggest a storefront composition.



*This building front has variations in its depth. A planter serves to define the front line at the sidewalk edge.*



*This building front also has variations in its depth. Steel columns define the building face at the sidewalk edge.*

#### **4.1.2. Contribute to the character of the street edge with open space.**

The minimum length of building front that must be at the required setback may be reduced if it can be demonstrated that the resulting open space would contribute positively to the character of the street edge.

### **4.2 Parking Structures**

In the Zoning and Development Standards, a parking structure is required to have a “wrap” of other uses to maintain a traditional street edge. Commercial space is the typical design solution, since it provides a pedestrian friendly and active edge.

The standards mandate that a minimum of 70% of a building face on a parking structure be “wrapped” with other uses. However, there may be some cases in which site constraints make it impractical to do so. To the greatest extent feasible, this standard should be met. However, when it is not possible to meet the standard, a portion of the required active use may be substituted with other features that meet the intent of the standard by providing visual interest and a sense of scale as described at right.

#### **4.2.1 Design the street edge of a parking structure to provide interest to pedestrians.**

The ground floor of a building should be composed of one or more of the following:

- display windows

- display cases
- architectural details
- public amenities
- wall art

#### **4.2.2 Design alley sides of parking structures to be visually interesting.**

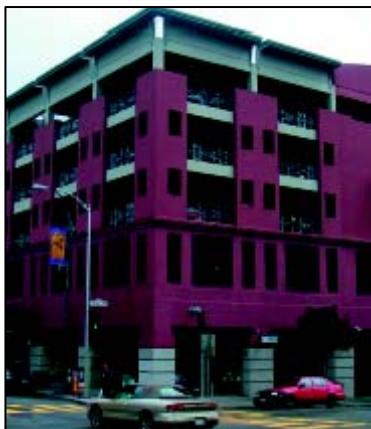
Where a “wrap” of active uses is not practical, consider lining the ground floor alley sides of parking structures with visually interesting architectural screens.

#### **4.2.3 Design the upper floors of parking structures to be visually interesting.**

Where a parking structure is not “wrapped” or extends above a “wrap” of active uses, architectural elements including grills, railings and murals, should be used as screens.



*Parking structures designed to provide interest to pedestrians at the street edge. Upper floors are screened with architectural grills, railings and murals.*



### **4.3 Surface Parking Lots**

Section 9-25-8(E) of the Athens-Clarke County Codes requires surface parking lots to be sited in combination with active uses. The standards also require a landscape buffer of a planting density described in Section 9-25-8 and Section 8-7-15(J) of the Athens-Clarke County Code.

The intent of the standards is to minimize the visual impact of parked cars and ensure a pedestrian friendly environment. If this intent is met, the width and planting density of the required landscape buffer may be altered as described below.

#### **4.3.1. Provide a visual buffer between surface parking lots and public rights-of-way.**

Use a combination of landscape and structural elements to meet the intent of the planting density requirement. Buffer surface parking lots with uses that can animate the street edge.

#### **4.4 Buffers & Connections**

Providing connections between residential and commercial uses is encouraged. If a pathway or other connection is provided to link neighborhood serving commercial uses with an adjacent residential neighborhood, an exception to buffering requirements may be considered as follows.



*A surface parking lot is screened with a combination of trees, a low hedge, a metal fence and stone piers.*



*A stone wall, metal fence and trees screen a surface parking lot while an automated teller machine helps animate the street edge.*

#### **4.4.1. Provide and enhance pedestrian connections between abutting properties.**

When access would be beneficial, use one or more of the following elements:

- landscaped pedestrian paths
- plaza or public art walk

### **5.0 Building Design Standards**

#### **5.1 Horizontal Definition of Building Facades**

The standards define prescriptive measures for establishing horizontal definition of building facades with the intent of conveying a similar scale at the first and second floor

levels of buildings. The specific measures used to achieve horizontal definition may be varied through design review providing that the resulting design is compatible with the intent of the standards.

If the intent of the standards is maintained, the depth of the required molding may be modified, or the distance of a required wall setback may be adjusted. In addition, other methods of creating a horizontal definition may be considered, as provided below.

### **5.1.1. Define the first and second floors with clearly distinguishable horizontal details.**

This can be achieved with one or more of the following:

- change in material
- change in wall plane
- change in color
- change in texture or pattern
- architectural panels



*Alternative methods of achieving a horizontal definition:*

1. *Upper left - A change in materials and a wall plane setback at the second floor level*
2. *Lower left - Banding at the first floor level created by a change in material and texture*
3. *Upper right - A change in material and color at the first floor level*
4. *Lower right - A horizontal molding and canopy at the first floor level and a spandrel and line of window sills at the second floor level*

## 5.2 Vertical Definition of Building Modules

The Zoning and Development Standards mandate an articulation of vertical elements that reflect the scale of traditional buildings downtown. This encourages a pedestrian-friendly environment by establishing a rhythm of building modules along the street.

Prescriptive measures are defined in the code. However, the intent of the standards may be achieved in other ways. The dimensions of the prescribed options for vertical elements may be modified if the intent of the requirement can be met as described below.

### 5.2.1. Buildings should appear similar in width to those seen traditionally.

This can be achieved by one or more of the following:

- change in material
- variations in wall planes
- change in color
- change in texture or pattern
- architectural detailing



*Vertical definition accomplished in a variety of ways:*

*Top Left photo: varied setbacks in wall planes, emphasized in some cases with decorative trim elements (quoins).*

*Bottom Left Photo: Notches in the building wall establish a definition, even though they do not extend down to the street level.*

*Right photo: Projecting balconies and windows aligned vertically achieve a vertical definition in this building*

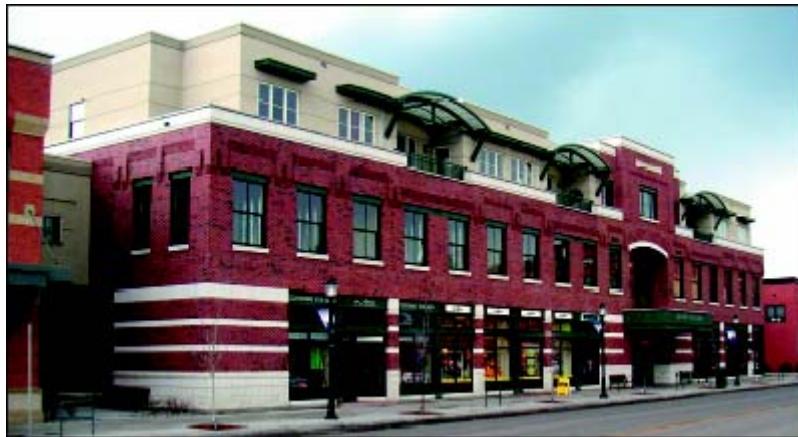
## 5.3 Primary Entrance

The primary entrance of a building should, ideally, face the street to match traditional building patterns and encourage pedestrian access. However, the entry may be offset or oriented differently, if it is clearly defined from the street and other elements provide a sense of connection with the street.

### 5.3.1 Define the primary entrance of a building from the street.

This can be implied by the following:

- recessed entrance with the door located perpendicular to the sidewalk
- entrance court
- other methods that imply a front building entrance on the street



*A large inset defines the primary entrance to this building. Note also how the emphasis of the first floor columns helps to achieve a definition of vertical modules.  
(Bozeman, MT)*



*This canopy defines the primary entrance. Notice also how a horizontal articulation is achieved with moldings and a change in materials*

## 5.4 Transparency

A minimum percentage of glass is prescribed in the standards for walls that face a public way. The intent of the standards is to maintain the sense of visual continuity along the street, provide interest to pedestrians and contribute to a traditional sense of scale. If the design intent is maintained, the prescribed transparency percentages may be modified as follows.

### 5.4.1 Maintain the apparent solid-to-void ratios of facades seen on traditional commercial and residential buildings in the area.

This can be achieved using one or more of the following techniques:

- lower areas of transparency can be appropriate on upper floors if the building detail implies horizontally and/or fenestration is achieved with other means
- larger areas of transparency can be appropriate if they are located above the first floor or highlight an entrance.

### 5.4.2 For walls that face secondary public ways, consider a reduced percentage of transparency.

Alternative methods that may be used to provide a sense of traditional scale and visual interest include:

- display windows
- display cases
- architectural details
- public amenities
- landscaping
- signs



*Variations in transparency may be appropriate where the overall sense of scale and visual interest is achieved.*



*Landscaping, combined with articulation of materials along a secondary wall, may be considered in some circumstances. This would not be appropriate along a primary street frontage.*



*Display cases and murals may sometimes be used on secondary walls*



*Preferred percentage of transparency*

## 5.5 Building Materials

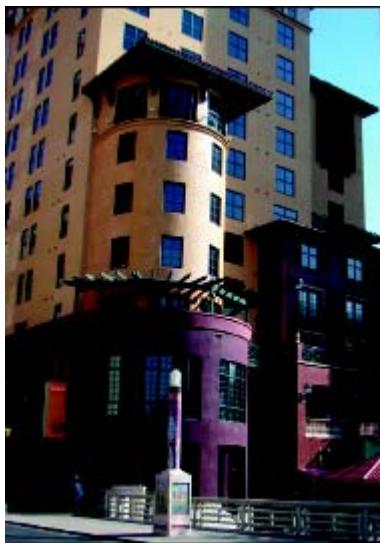
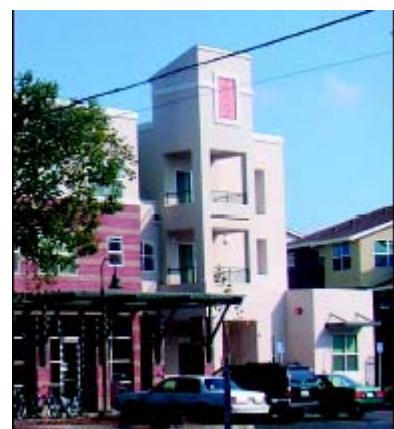
Because traditional masonry materials exhibit the desired sense of texture, they are the preferred building materials. However, other materials may be appropriate in limited amounts if they are sufficiently detailed to exhibit the sense of scale, texture and interest traditionally provided by masonry materials. To do so, substitute materials must include details with enough depth to create noticeable shadow lines and variations in texture and color.

The minimum percentage of permitted materials may be modified if the overall intent of maintaining visual continuity and a sense of traditional scale along the street is maintained as follows.

### 5.5.1 New building materials should provide the visual interest traditionally provided by masonry.

This can be achieved by one or more of the following:

- a change in texture or pattern
- a change in color
- architectural detailing



*In these examples, synthetic stone, cast concrete and stucco are used. Scoring joints, moldings, and contrasting trim elements help to create texture and scale.*

## Additional Design Examples



*Transparency*



*Vertical articulation a combination of material changes and pilasters*



*Variations in wall plane create vertical expression*



*Vertical articulation*



*Architectural metal cladding used in limited amount*



*Horizontal emphasis created by canopy overhang*



*Building composed of a “base, middle and cap,” which establishes a horizontal expression*



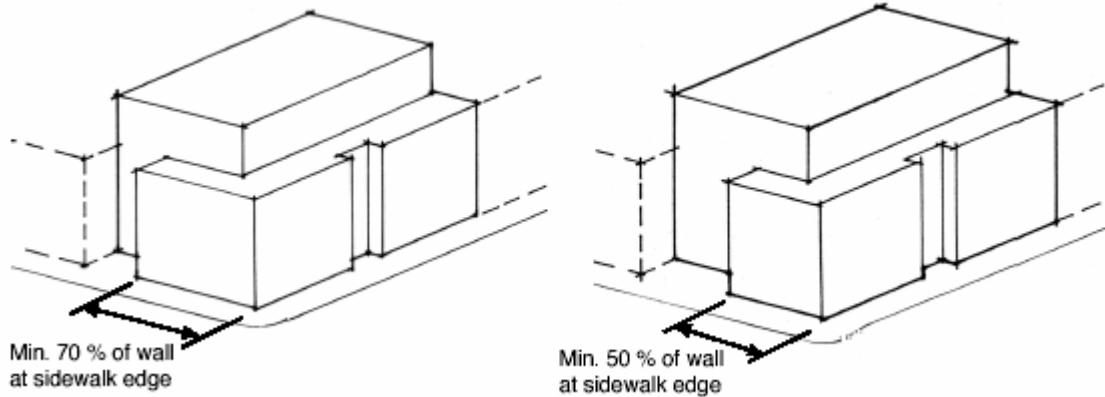
*Horizontal definition of first floor; second floor with intermittent balconies*



*Alternative materials*

Dougherty Street	Not required	Not required
River	Not required	Not required
West End	30 feet	50%

<sup>1</sup>The minimum percentage of the front wall plane between the street right-of-way and the maximum building setback line. The maximum length of a wall, set at an angle not exceeding 45 degrees to the street right-of-way and set back further than the maximum front setback line, shall not exceed 50 feet.



2. Parking structures. Any structured parking shall have leasable and occupiable commercial or residential uses between the property line and parking at street level. These other uses shall extend a minimum of 70% of the linear street frontage of the structure.

3. Surface parking lots.

- Accessory surface parking areas shall not be located in the front yard or the side yard adjacent to a street (not including alleys).
- A surface parking lot as a principal property use shall comply with the following setback requirements:

<u>Design Area</u>	<u>Min. Street Setback</u>
Historic District	Not Permitted
West Downtown	10 feet
East Downtown	10 feet
Dougherty Street	10 feet
River	10 feet
West End	10 feet

- A landscape buffer shall have a minimum depth of 10 feet between a street right-of-way (not including alleys) and the parking area. The landscape buffer shall incorporate a sight-obscuring hedge screen, which shall grow to be at least 24 inches and no more than 42 inches higher than the finished grade of the parking area, except for required vision clearance areas. Screen plantings shall be of such size and number to provide the

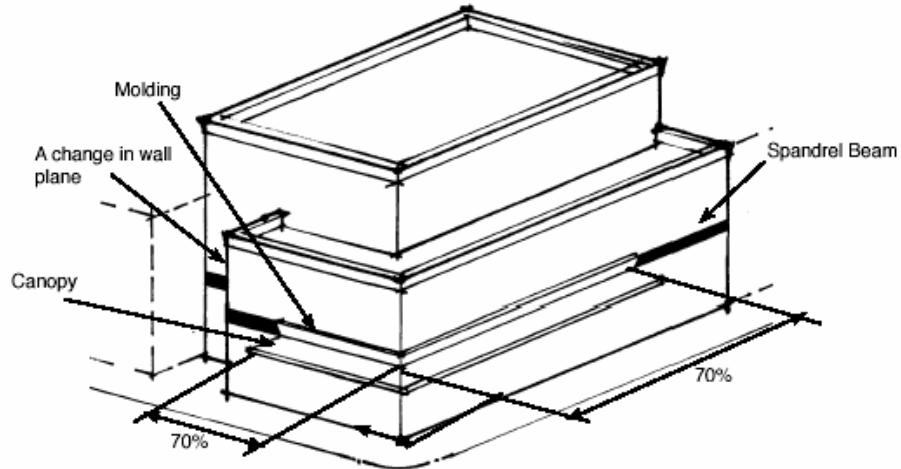
required screening within 12 months after installation. Adequate provisions shall be made to protect plant materials from being damaged by vehicles using the parking area.

- d. Surface parking areas shall be shaded by trees in accordance with section 8-7-15(J).
- e. Raised pedestrian walkways shall be installed through surface parking areas of 50 or more spaces or more than 100 feet in average width or depth.
- f. Surface parking lots with 50 spaces or more shall be divided into separate areas and divided by landscaped areas or walkways at least ten feet in width, or by a building or group of buildings.

4. Public sidewalks shall be provided adjacent to a public street along the street frontage.
5. Trash storage areas, mechanical equipment, and similar areas shall be screened from view from adjacent public rights-of-way.
6. Outdoor storage areas and loading facilities shall be screened from view from adjacent public rights-of-way.
7. Transit amenities, bus shelters, and pullouts shall be required in accordance with the Athens-Clarke County Transit Service.

#### D. Building Design Standards.

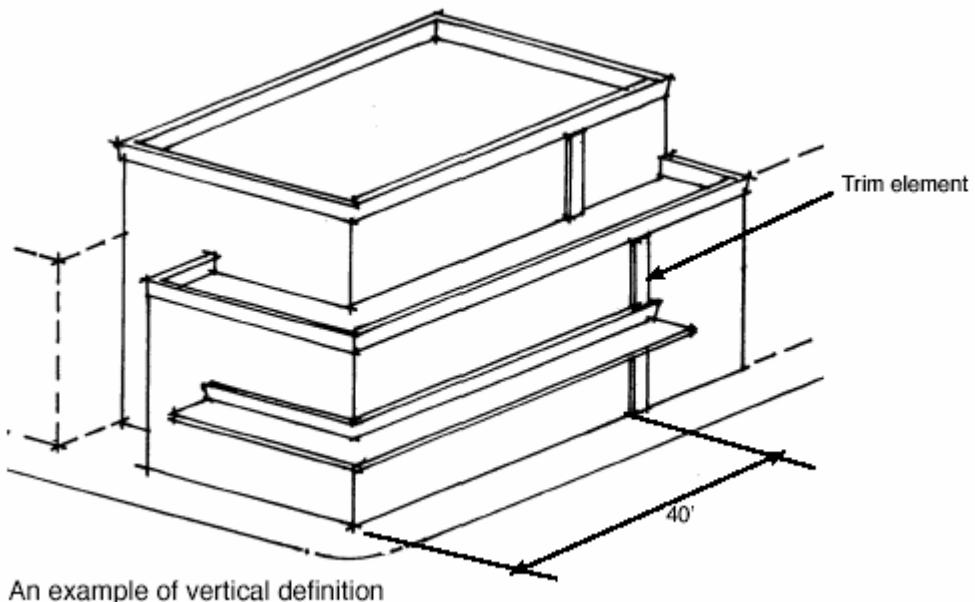
1. Horizontal definition of the building façade. First and second floor levels of a wall of a building that faces a public street shall be horizontally defined with clearly distinguishable horizontal details, which shall extend for a minimum of 70% of the wall length. A horizontal element shall define the first floor and the second floor. The required horizontal articulation may be achieved by using one of the following methods:
  - a. A molding, ornamental trim, window casing or sill that projects a minimum of three inches from the primary wall surface, and/or
  - b. A setback in the primary wall plane at the second and/or third floor level, a minimum of five feet from the floor below, and/or
  - c. A permanently affixed canopy, extending a minimum of four (4) feet from the building face, and/or
  - d. A horizontal fascia that defines floor structure between the first and second floors, and/or
  - e. An eave of a porch, portico, or other similar element, which extends a minimum of 18 inches from the building face.



Examples of horizontal definition achieved through use of moldings, changes in wall plane, canopies and a spandrel beam. The moldings and canopies shown would each independently meet the requirement for horizontal articulation extending 70% of the wall length.

2. Vertical definition of building modules. Vertical definition shall be provided at a minimum of every 40 feet of façade length, using one or more of the following methods:

- a. A molding, ornamental trim, or window casing projecting a minimum of three inches from the primary wall surface and is a minimum of three inches wide, and/or
- b. A setback in the primary wall plane a minimum of three feet from the building face and for a minimum width of three feet.



An example of vertical definition

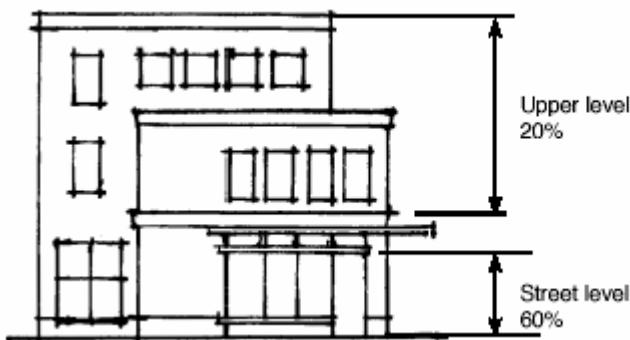
3. Primary entrance. The primary public entrance of a building shall face a street and be directly linked to a public sidewalk. It shall be positioned no more than five feet above the finished grade at the front of the building.

- a. Buildings shall incorporate lighting and changes in mass, surface or finish to give emphasis to entrances.
- b. Buildings shall incorporate arcades, roofs, alcoves, porticoes and/or awnings at public entrances that protect pedestrians from the rain and sun.

4. Transparency. A minimum percentage of any wall facing a public street shall be transparent glass and shall be provided as follows:

Design Area	Street Level	Upper Levels
	min. %	min. %
Downtown Historic District	60%	20%
West Downtown	50%	20%
East Downtown	50%	20%
Dougherty Street	30%	20%
River	30%	20%
West End	30%	20%

- a. Transparency at the street level shall be measured from the finished grade at the street to 10 feet above grade for the entire width of the wall.
- b. The following alternative design treatments may be used, singularly or in combination, to meet half of the transparency requirement at the street level:
  - (1) A display case, defined as a box with transparent glass facing the street with a solid panel behind for display of products and images of goods and services offered in the area.
  - (2) Wall art, including murals, sculptural and other decorative treatment of exterior walls.
  - (3) Landscaping, which is to be at least three feet high at the time of planting and of a type that will produce an opaque, evergreen planting screen capable of growing to a height of at least six feet within three years.
- c. Windows must allow views into working areas or lobbies, pedestrian entrances or display areas.



5. Building materials. No more than 25% of a wall surface, singularly or in combination, may be of plaster, stucco, or metal sheet siding. Metal siding shall be prohibited on the first floor.

# **TEXT AMENDMENTS RE. C-D ZONE DESIGN STANDARDS**

Section 9-10-4, entitled “Downtown district – Parking,” is hereby amended by deleting the title of said section in its entirety and substituting the following in lieu thereof:

**“Sec. 9-10-4. Downtown district - Required parking.”**

**Sec. 9-10-6. Design Standards for “C-D” zone.**

A. Design areas. For the purpose of this title, the C-D zone is divided into design areas as described in the “Alternative Compliance Guidelines for the CD Zone – Athens-Clarke County, Georgia,” (hereinafter “Alternative Compliance Guidelines”), dated June 5, 2007, adopted herein by reference, and available for public inspection in the offices of the Athens-Clarke County Planning Department and the Clerk of Commission.

*Downtown Historic District*

*West Downtown*

*East Downtown*

*Dougherty Street*

*River*

*West End*

B. Design area boundaries. The location and boundaries of the design areas in the Commercial-Downtown (C-D) zoning district listed in paragraph (1) above are delineated on the Official Zoning Map of Athens-Clarke County, Georgia. The Official Zoning Map of Athens-Clarke County, Georgia, constituting the component part of the Zoning Ordinance of Athens-Clarke County, Georgia, by virtue of and in compliance with section 9-3-3 and section 9-3-6 thereof, is hereby amended by adding the boundaries of said design areas within the C-D zoning district, as shown on Attachment A hereto. The date of this amendment to the Official Zoning Map of Athens-Clarke County, as shown by Attachment A, shall be noted on said Official Zoning Map in the Clerk of Commission’s office and duly noted in the minutes of the Commission meeting. When uncertainty exists with respect to the location of the boundaries of any design area in the C-D zone, the rules of section 9-3-4, concerning zoning district boundary lines, shall apply in determining design area boundary lines. The boundary limits of individual design areas shall be completely contained within the C-D zone. In the event that a parcel is rezoned to the C-D designation, the Mayor & Commission contemporaneously with such rezoning shall assign a design area to such parcel. Such determination shall be based upon the parcel’s proximity to an existing design area and characteristics of the existing design area that are similar to those of the rezoned parcel.

C. Site Design Standards.

1. Maximum building setbacks. The maximum building setback from a property line adjacent to all street rights-of-way (not including alleys) shall be as follows:

Design Area	Maximum Setback	Minimum Wall Percentage <sup>1</sup>
Downtown Historic District	0 feet	70%
West Downtown	0 feet	50%
East Downtown	0 feet	50%

Plain concrete block (CMU), synthetic stucco (e.g., EFIS), mirror glass, and tinted glass with a tint of 20% gray or greater are prohibited exterior building materials.

6. All properties in the “C-D” zone shall have a minimum floor area (FAR) ratio of 0.40. Expansions of existing development for which at least 50% of the original structure is retained are exempt from the minimum FAR. Plazas and pedestrian areas, conforming to the standards of section 9-25-8-F.2, shall count as floor area for the purpose of meeting the minimum FAR. Reductions of the lot area calculation shall be allowed for flood plain, bodies of open water, wetlands, riparian buffers, slopes greater than 25 percent, buffers required by section 9-15-3, and public utility easements, if these areas remain vegetative or landscaped.
- E. Alternative Compliance. Except for properties within the Downtown Historic District, applicants may request alternatives to compliance with the design standards of this section through a design review process guided by the separate Alternative Compliance Guidelines for the C-D Zone. Applications for alternative compliance will be processed through the Type III procedure described in Chapter 9-4 (Procedures). The Planning Commission shall review alternative compliance applications in light of any comments received from the public, the intent of the standards of this section, and the applicable design guidelines. An alternative compliance application may be approved upon a finding by the Planning Commission that:
  1. The request would result in public benefits greater than any negative impacts; and
  2. The request is consistent with the goals, objectives, and policies set forth in the Comprehensive Plan of Athens-Clarke County; and
  3. The request is consistent with the attributes of the Downtown and of the Design Area described in the Alternative Compliance Guidelines; and
  4. The request conforms to the relevant Alternative Compliance Guidelines.

### **Sec. 9-15-3. Buffer requirements.**

- B. Front yard buffers. Except in the C-D zone, all All nonresidential and multifamily uses adjacent to a local street and/or adjacent to or directly across from a single-family or two-family residence or district, and parking for two-family and single-family attached, must abide by the following front yard buffer requirements:

### **Sec. 9-25-8. Site design standards.**

- D. Non-residential design standards for “E” zones, the “I” zone, the “IN” zone, and “C” zones (other than C-D) not on corridor types on the Athens-Clarke County Corridor Designations Chart, as provided in section 9-25-8-J.
- E. Non-residential design standards for “C” (other than C-D), “IN” or “E” zones located on Level One or Level Two corridor types based on the Athens-Clarke County Corridor Designations Chart, as provided in section 9-25-8-J, and any non-residential use other than agricultural buildings in any “AR”, “RS”, or “RM” zone.
  1. Orientation and scale.

d. ~~All properties in the “C-D” zone shall have a minimum floor area ratio of 0.40.~~ If located on a Level One corridor type, developments of properties in “C-G” or “C-N” zones shall have a minimum floor area ratio of 0.40. If located on a Level Two corridor type, developments of properties in “C-G” or “C-N” zones shall have a minimum floor area of 0.25. Expansions of existing development for which at least 50% of the original structure is retained are exempt from these FAR minimums. Plazas and pedestrian areas, conforming to the standards of section 9-25-8-F.2, shall count as floor area for the purpose of meeting the minimum FAR. Reductions of the lot area calculation shall be allowed for flood plain, bodies of open water, wetlands, riparian buffers, slopes greater than 25 percent, buffers required by section 9-15-3, and public utility easements, if these areas remain vegetative or landscaped. For properties with frontage on more than one designated corridor, the higher floor area ratio shall apply.

G. Parking lot landscaping and screening standards. All parking lots, which for purposes of this section, include areas of vehicle maneuvering, parking, and loading, shall be landscaped and screened as follows:

1. Screening at required yards.
- c. The screen height may be achieved by a combination of earth mounding and plant materials, ~~developed to the standards contained in section 9-15-3, “buffer requirements”.~~
2. Screening Parking abutting property lines. ~~A screen developed to the standards contained in section 9-15-3, “buffer requirements”, Except in the C-D zone, a ten-foot-deep buffer~~ shall be required when parking abuts a property line. Where a buffer between zones is required, the screening shall be incorporated into the required buffer strip, and will not be an additional requirement.

K. C-D zone standards. In addition to the requirements of this chapter, all development in the C-D zone shall comply with the regulations and design standards of Chapter 9-10 “Commercial (C) Districts”.

#### **Sec. 9-30-9. Design requirements.**

E. Development and maintenance. The development and maintenance as provided below shall apply in all cases, except single-family and two-family dwellings.

6. Streetscape standards.
  - b. In all zones, except single-family zones and the C-D zone, where parking facilities or driveways are located adjacent to residential or agricultural zones, school yards, or like institutions, a sight-obscuring fence, wall, or evergreen hedge not less than five feet, nor more than six feet high shall be provided on the property line as measured from the high grade side. Said wall, fence or hedge shall be reduced to 30 inches within required setback areas, or within ten feet of street property lines, and shall be maintained in good condition. Screen plantings shall be of such size and number to provide the required screening within 12 months after installation. Adequate provisions shall be made to protect walls, fences or plant materials from being damaged by vehicles using said parking areas.