

Staff Report
September 9, 2008

DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR DOWNTOWN FAÇADE GRANTS

In response to City Council direction, staff met with representatives of Wheatfield's Grocery about a possible façade grant for the building at 413 Northwestern into which the Grocery is moving. Staff has also received inquiry about a possible façade grant for the building at 101 Main Street, the location of a State Farm Insurance office. These buildings are much newer than the buildings that have received façade grants and have never had basic design elements that the grant program seeks to preserve, such as the building face on the street right-of-way, shared party walls with the buildings on both sides, and the commercial store front. The redevelopment of these two projects is imminent.

Staff is proposing expanding the Downtown Façade Grant Program to include the buildings on select sites around the periphery of the downtown, and on sites within the downtown that are significant in terms of their location or use. This program would promote improvements to buildings that are prominent because of their location. Some sites are visually important in the downtown because they either terminate a view or are prominent to entrances into the Main Street Cultural District. The program expansion would require a different set of design guidelines to reflect the different design character of buildings on these sites. The attached draft guidelines are provided for your review and comment. They are intended to draw in the design elements that typify the downtown, but also be applicable to these prominent sites that do not have the alignment of buildings that is typical along Main Street itself. The guidelines need a little more work before releasing them for public comment or adoption, but they should provide a good sense of what the standards would entail when complete.

If the City Council wants to pursue the expansion of the Downtown Façade Grant program, staff would first fine tune the draft standards and then provide the public and stakeholders an opportunity to comment on them. A final draft would then be prepared for the Council's consideration. In October, the City Council could take action on changing the façade grant program and on grants for 413 Northwestern and 101 Main Street. At that time, staff could also report two related City Council referrals: increasing the impact of the façade program and applying it in Campustown.

Design Guidelines

For buildings on prominent sites beyond the Main Street core

Purpose. The following guidelines apply to buildings on select sites around the perimeter of the downtown, or on sites within the downtown that may not reflect the same location and development patterns of sites to which the City's Downtown Façade Grant Guidelines apply, but which nonetheless contribute to the downtown's visual character. These sites are significant in terms of their location as a view terminus, their location on major entrance points to the downtown, or their historic development with stand-alone buildings providing important community service.

The guidelines established for these buildings draw upon prominent or important design elements that typify the downtown. They nonetheless reflect the locational differences between these stand-alone sites and those that more rigidly align the downtown streetscape.

These guidelines are intended to apply to additions or alterations to existing buildings on these sites as part of the City's façade grant program. The purpose of the façade grant program for these prominent sites is to encourage improvement to the facades of these buildings that acknowledge or respect the original character of these buildings while also adding characteristics that reinforce the character and quality of the downtown. In this way, the downtown will have a more consistent image.

Design Standards.

1. Quality materials

- a Any face visible from public right-of-way must have clay brick as the material on more than 50% of its exterior facade area, not including windows and doors. Pre-cast concrete may be used only for lintels, sills and other accents.
- b Allowed materials on the rest of the exterior are cut stone and concrete block, except smooth face block.

2. Façade modulation

- a. Modulation in the façade shall be achieved through structural shifts in the building footprint that are reflected in the façade, or through obvious structural elements that create a regular rhythm of supports (e.g., columns, projecting pilasters, buttresses).
- b. Regularly spaced pilasters or columns shall be combined with regularly spaced window and door openings on all primary facades.
 - a No façade shall have a length exceeding forty (40) feet uninterrupted by a shift in the footprint, with the recessed/projecting portion measuring at least 10% of the façade width.

3. Fenestration

- a Primary facades shall have windows comprising at least 30% of the width of the façade, and at least 20% of the area of the façade.

- b Secondary facades shall have the same fenestration as primary facades, or be detailed with projecting pilasters (6 inch projection minimum), combined with clay brick siding over the entire façade.
- c Windows shall have a vertical proportions that are no taller than 3 times the width of the window, and no shorter than the width of the window, except as follows:
 - i Horizontal window openings may be filled with vertically oriented windows banked together (separated by wide mullions) into groupings of no more than 3. Multiple groupings are allowed if separated by a wall pillar that is at least as wide as one of the banked vertical windows.
 - ii Chicago style windows are appropriate, but may not be banked together with other window assemblies. They must be separated by a wall pillar that is at least as wide as the sidelite of the Chicago style window.
- d Colonial window motifs are not appropriate in the downtown. Preferably, windows should be divided by wider mullions rather than narrow muntin bars. If muntin bars are used, they shall be limited to upper-floor windows, and shall have the appearance of true-divided lite windows.

4. Roof

- a Roofs must vary in height or form
- b Roof pitch shall be 6:12 or steeper unless hidden by a parapet with a projecting cornice
- c Prohibited materials for roofs: corrugated sheet metal, fiberglass panel products

5. Building massing for new buildings

Structures shall be designed with vertical proportions and/or design elements such as colonnades extending two stories in height, projecting towers or steep-pitched roof forms that cascade and graduate down onto lower level roof forms.

6. Awnings

- a Fabric only
- b No rigid
- c No internally lit
- d Shape
- e Signs?

7. Building entrances

- a Option A: The primary pedestrian entry of the building shall face or be no more than 90 degrees from facing a street and shall be identified, defined and reinforced by significant architectural elements of mass, such as building recesses, canopies or porticos supported by columns or protrusions in the front facade, or if the entrance faces the street, significant variations in the roof or parapet. This entry shall be connected to the pedestrian sidewalks on the street with landscaped walkways separated from vehicle paving. (O-GSE)

- b Option B: The primary pedestrian entry of the building shall be recessed or framed, accomplished by a sheltering element such as an overhang, arcade or portico. The sheltering element shall provide at least six feet of width and four feet of depth. (CVCN)

Minimum Qualifications for Grant.

Grants may be offered for improvements to select portions or features of a façade when it is not feasible to do an entire façade renovation. However, the improvements must contribute to a project that, when complete, will be generally consistent with all design standards. To determine this, an application for a façade grant must include an elevation plan for the building as it is intended to look when complete. The City may approve grants based upon a proposed improvement's contribution to the finished product, and may deny a grant for improvements that, while compliant in part, are not significant in terms of how the overall building is intended to ultimately look.

If a project is phased, grants shall be offered only to those improvements that are done in correct sequence of construction. For example, if the finished project requires installing or changing windows, these must be done before grant monies may be expended on siding materials, since siding is generally installed after windows are in place.

