

**§ 511-155. Elmwood Site Plan Design Review District Guidelines (Proposed 02-10-05) “Citywide Design and Site Plan” Amendment**

**A. Statement of Purpose:**

The Elmwood Site Plan Design Review District Guidelines have been created to ensure that future development (which includes new construction as well as alterations to existing buildings) of the Elmwood District maintains and enhances the unique character and scale of the community.

**1. Important aspects of community character to be protected (or enhanced in areas where it has been lost or encroached upon):**

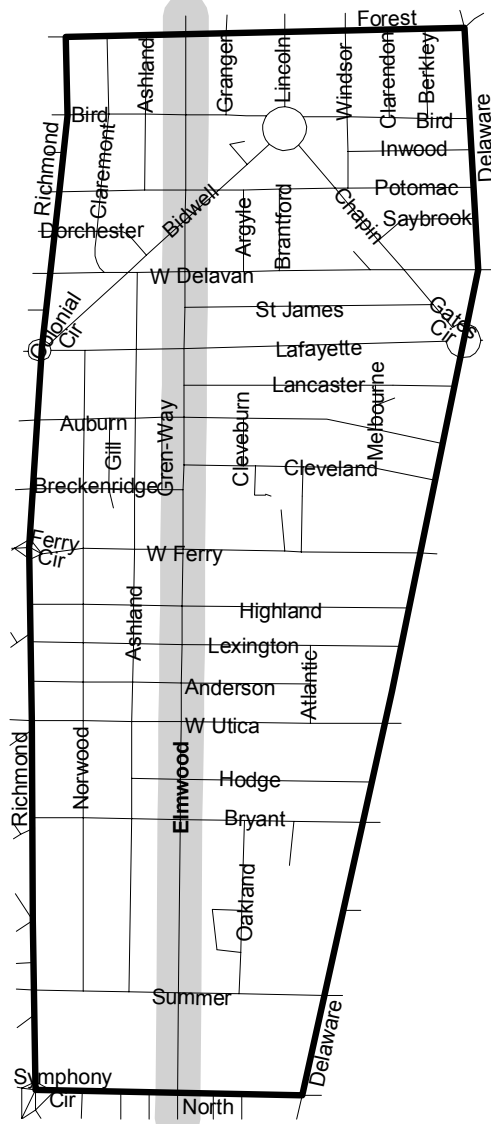
- a. Pedestrian-oriented building and site design;
- b. Mixed-use buildings;
- c. Small scale appearance;
- d. Creativity and eclecticism.

**2. Specific goals to be met through the maintenance and enhancement of these important aspects of community character:**



- a. The easy identification of the Elmwood District as a unique place within the City and the region;
- b. A lively and active street life along the Elmwood District;
- c. The promotion of safe and pleasant pedestrian access to and around the Elmwood District;
- d. The promotion of small-scale commercial enterprises that comprise the intricate web of commerce keeping the Elmwood District healthy and vibrant.

**B. District Boundaries:** The Elmwood Site Plan Design Review District Guidelines include all commercial properties located within the area extending south from the north side of North Street to the south side of Forest Avenue to the north; and east from Delaware Avenue (excluding properties fronting Delaware Avenue) to the east side of Richmond Avenue to the west – see map on the following page.

**Note:** Any properties fronting Delaware Avenue are excluded from the Elmwood Site Plan Design Review District Guidelines.



**ELMWOOD SITE PLAN  
DESIGN REVIEW  
DISTRICT MAP**

- LEGEND**
-  ELMWOOD SITE PLAN DESIGN REVIEW DISTRICT
  -  STREET

- Notes:
1. Guidelines apply only to commercial properties.
  2. Guidelines do not apply to properties that front Delaware Avenue.

Office of Strategic Planning  
City of Buffalo  
4/11/2005

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C. **Definitions relevant to the Elmwood Site Plan Design Review District Guidelines.**

1. **Accordion Gate:** An metal gate assembly, jointed so that it can be moved to and locked in position across the window or other opening, in order to prevent unauthorized entry through the opening.
2. **Awning:** A rooflike cover extending over or in front of a storefront (as over the deck or in front of a door and/or window) as a shelter.
3. **Bay:** A main division of a structure
4. **Bay window:** A window or series of windows forming a bay in a room and projecting outward from the wall
5. **Belt Course:** A narrow horizontal band projecting from the exterior walls of a building, usually defining the interior floor levels.
6. **Bulkhead:** The area below the display windows at the sidewalk level.
7. **Canopy:** An ornamental projection, over a door, window, niche, etc.
8. **Coiling Shutter:** A moveable screen or cover used to protect an opening.
9. **Clerestory:** an outside wall of a room or building that rises above an adjoining roof and contains windows.
10. **Column:** A supporting post--often round in shape--found on storefronts, porches, and balconies; may be fluted or smooth.
11. **Cornice:** The projecting uppermost portion of a wall, sometimes treated in a decorative manner with brackets.
12. **Façade:** The face of a building, especially the principal face.
13. **Fascia Signboard:** A flat horizontal member of a building having to be used for a nameplate over the front of a shop.
14. **Fenestration:** The arrangement of windows in a wall.
15. **Frieze:** The portion of the facade found just below the point where the wall surface meets the building's cornice or roof overhang.
16. **Front Lot-Line:** On a regular lot, the front lot line is the shared line between the lot and a sidewalk/public right-of-way.
17. **Gable roof:** A roof that consists of two sloping planes that meet at the ridge or peak. The planes are supported at their ends by triangular, upward extensions of walls known as gables.
18. **Mansard Roof:** A roof that has two slopes on all four sides.

19. **Massing of the Building(s):** The combined effect of the arrangement, volume and shape of a building or group of buildings. Also called bulk.
  20. **Parapet:** The portion of an exterior wall that rises entirely above the roof, usually in the form of a low retaining wall; the parapet may be shaped or stepped.
  21. **Pilaster:** A shallow pier attached to a wall; often decorated to resemble as classical column.
  22. **Public Right-of-Way:** Includes the street, curb and sidewalk area in front of private property at the front lot line.
  23. **Scale:** A relative level or degree; to make in accordance with a particular proportion or scale with the surrounding architecture.
  24. **Secretary of the Interior Design Standards:** The U.S. Secretary of the Interior sets the standards for national preservation programs. The Standards for Rehabilitation provides guidelines for rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of historic properties.
  25. **Setback:** An architectural expedient in which the upper stories of a tall building are stepped back from the lower stories; designed to permit more light to reach the street.
  26. **Side light:** A framed area of fixed glass alongside a door or window opening.
  27. **Storefront:** The front side of a store or store building facing a street
  28. **Texture:** The visual or tactile surface characteristics and appearance of a building
  29. **Transom:** A small-hinged window above a door or another window.
  30. **Transparent Glass – Degree of Tinting:** Capable of transmitting light so that objects may be easily seen on the other side.
  31. **Valance:** A short drapery, decorative board, or metal strip mounted across the bottom of an awning to conceal structural fixtures.
  32. **Viewing Zone:** The viewable portion of a storefront from the outside sidewalk.
- D. **Community Notification.** In addition to the City’s normal notification procedures, the following additional notification procedures shall apply to all commercial properties within the Elmwood Site Plan Design Review District as well as residential properties that are requested to be rezoned to a commercial use or where a demolition is requested:

1. Within three business days of receipt of an application for a building permit, a demolition permit, or a rezoning request, the City will transmit a copy of the application to the appropriate contact person at the appropriate community organization(s). These contact people will be kept on file in the offices of the City Planning staff assigned to the Planning Board and Preservation Board. It will be the responsibility of the community groups to keep this information current.
  2. The City Planning staff person responsible for making up the Planning Board and Preservation Board agendas will transmit each agenda of those Boards to the appropriate contact person(s) at the community organization(s) about one week prior to the subject board meeting.
  3. Immediately upon submission of an application for a building permit or a rezoning request, the applicant is required to affix a permit request sign to the property, in such a location that it is immediately visible from the major street with which the property is associated. Said sign shall state the nature of the permit requested (building permit, demolition permit, application for rezoning, etc.) and the appropriate phone number to call for more information. Such sign will be applied by the applicant at their expense and will be made and printed with durable material to withstand weather elements, and will be a minimum size of 4' x 4', with black lettering a minimum of 4-6" tall on a white background. Such sign must be displayed for a minimum of 30 days prior to public hearing.
- E. **Demolitions.** Demolition of structures for reasons other than to preserve public health and safety are not encouraged. Any proposed demolition of private property must have a reuse plan reviewed and approved under the "Elmwood Site Plan Design Review District" prior to demolition.
- F. **Building to site relationships.** Site design should be oriented toward the pedestrian.
1. Buildings should generally be built to the front lot-line, with setbacks of up to 10' from the lot line allowed to accommodate pedestrian-friendly uses such as outdoor eating spaces or small public plazas or sitting areas that welcome pedestrians but that do not impede pedestrian traffic.
  2. Under no circumstances should parking be allowed in front of buildings. Parking located to the side of buildings should be separated from the sidewalk by a low (three to four feet tall) wall of appropriate thickness to be durable and long-lasting, a wrought-iron fence (from four to five feet tall with sufficient transparency to ensure safety on both sides of the fence, and of an appropriate gauge of metal to stand up to heavy snowfall and car accidents), or

Deleted: Elmwood and

vegetation of a maturity, density, and hardiness that creates a mostly opaque “wall” of vegetation approximately one foot thick and four feet high that remains reasonably dense throughout all four seasons and can be expected to thrive in an urban environment.

3. New site uses should accommodate existing mature trees and all sites should incorporate appropriate landscaping.
4. New buildings built on corner lots should be placed on the lot in such a way that they hold the corner by building to the front and side street lot lines.
5. Dumpsters should be completely and attractively screened from the public right of way.

**G. Specific standards and considerations.**

1. Scale. New buildings should maintain the predominant scale of other buildings in the Elmwood District:
  - a. New buildings should respect the predominant height of buildings within the area. The predominant height of buildings is between two to two and one half stories, sometimes with the 2 ½ story portion located behind a one or two story storefront. This height provides noise separation between residential neighborhoods and the District; creates the density levels that are critical to maintaining a viable and pedestrian-friendly commercial district; and contributes to the safety of the district and its liveliness. One story buildings and buildings of more than five stories are considered inappropriate.
  - b. The floor-to-floor height of the ground floor story should be approximately 13 – 18 feet tall or approximately 50% greater than the upper story floor – to – floor height(s).
  - c. New storefronts should respect the predominant width of storefronts in the Elmwood District, which tends to be not more than 25’ wide. Where a new storefront is intended to be wider than this, it should incorporate architectural elements, such as bays, columns, and divided windows, that allow it to appear to be several smaller storefronts and thus allow it to be subdivided into smaller storefronts in the future.
2. General Design. Architectural designs and details that respect the character of the Elmwood District should be incorporated to

encourage building design diversity, break up the mass of larger buildings, and create a strong pedestrian orientation.

- a. Traditional organizational composition, including a strongly articulated lower façade, an identifiable upper façade, and a decorative cornice capping the building is encouraged.
- b. Buildings should create visual separation between the lower façade and the upper façade, as this creates a strong orientation toward the pedestrian. Some design elements that are particularly successful in creating this separation include utilizing canopies, varying textures, varying window patterns, and incorporating sign friezes or storefront cornices. Signage extending above the first story of a building is discouraged for ground floor uses that do not extend to upper floors.
- c. Include design elements such as window bays, columns, awnings, changes in material or texture, and window and entrance design and placement, in a way that serves to break up the massing of the building.
- d. Details on existing buildings, such as transoms, decorative cornices, pilasters, columns, or beltcourses are encouraged and should not be covered up or removed from existing buildings.
- e. Exterior materials should be durable and of high quality. On facades that are easily visible from the street(s), synthetic materials that mimic natural materials (such as vinyl siding, dry-vit or concrete block) may be inappropriate. In the case of a property within the.
- f. Buildings built on corners, or on lots where the size or setback of adjacent buildings makes more than one side visible from the public right-of-way, must treat each visible side as a primary façade and incorporate the appropriate details, materials, and fenestration.
- g. Mechanical equipment should be located on the rear of buildings or on the roof and be properly screened (e.g., with a parapet).
- h. Roof design should be functional and in-scale and character with the building and the community. In the Elmwood District, roofs are generally either

front gable steeply-pitched or flat/slightly pitched surrounded by a parapet. Roofs should not make up more than 25% of the visible façade area of the building, except where the portion of the roof on the façade is considered “useable space,” as with a Mansard style roof. The cornice and/or parapet is an area where architectural detail and materials are important as they can add distinctiveness and visual emphasis to a building, but they should be designed to be consistent with the body of the design in scale and detail.

3. Entrances. Entrances should be well articulated and oriented toward the primary street.
  - a. Architectural detail should be incorporated into the ground floor façade in order to create an easily identifiable and welcoming entrance. This is typically accomplished through: recessed entries placed between two display windows; decorative or distinctive entryway paving; bulkheads of contrasting materials – note that bulkheads should not extend higher than 30” from the ground plane; and/or perpendicular signage or awnings placed directly over the entrance.
  - b. Major entrances should be oriented toward the primary street. Under no circumstances should a building’s primary entry be located through a parking lot.
  
4. Fenestration. Window design should respect the window patterns (including size, proportion, spacing, and rhythm) of the street. First floor window and display design should create a feeling of transparency on the ground floor of the building. This contributes to a sense of safety and is welcoming to pedestrians.
  - a. The viewing zone of the first floor façade (from 2’ to 8’ above the ground plane) should be made up of approximately 75% transparent glass. Signs painted on windows and temporary window signs are encouraged, so long as they do not obstruct more than 30% of the view from the sidewalk to the interior. This amount of transparent, unobstructed glass is necessary on first floor facades in order to provide a safe and welcoming sidewalk environment. Where a new building is to be located on a corner, each side visible from a street should

- be considered a primary storefront façade and incorporate these fenestration patterns, unless doing so should be unduly obtrusive into a primarily residential street.
- b. Sill heights for window displays should not exceed 30". Window displays are encouraged, but visibility into the building from the sidewalk should be maintained.
  - c. Display windows should generally be designated as large full glass openings. Smaller panes or ornamentations on storefront windows should generally be reserved for clerestories or sidelight areas so as not to present a residential or fake historic character.
  - d. Upper stories should incorporate window patterns and designs that are compatible with and complimentary to existing upper story window patterns on the block.
  - e. Existing windows, transoms, or sidelights are important scale and character elements and should not be covered up or changed in size unless in an effort to restore the original appearance of the building. Transparent glazing should be retained and not replaced with translucent glass or any opaque material.
  - f. Security devices such as coiling shutters and accordion gates are discouraged on front facades. Alternative security devices such as lighting, alarms, and interior barriers are generally more effective in deterring crime and less likely to create an oppressive or unsafe feeling on the sidewalk.
5. Signage and Awnings. Signage and awnings should be pedestrian-oriented in size, placement, material, and color.
- a. Perpendicular signs placed about 8' – 12' feet above the ground plane, extending no more than 5' from the building face, and with a total area of no more than 16 sq. ft. are strongly encouraged. No more than one horizontal sign per establishment shall be permitted, except in those instances where an establishment has more than one customer entrance or faces onto more than one public right-of-way/ side street.

- b. Wall signs attached flush to the building façade are also encouraged, so long as they do not extend above the roofline and do not obscure architectural details or features, including windows, transoms, and clerestories. On existing buildings there will often be a fascia signboard spot above the first floor windows and entryway where wall signs can be attached.
- c. Signs for ground floor establishments should not extend above the ground floor façade, unless the establishment itself extends to the upper stories.
- d. Freestanding pole signs should not be used under any circumstances. Freestanding signs may be permissible in circumstances where a commercial use is being developed in a building that has already been developed with a substantial setback from the property line (such as offices being developed in former residential spaces). Under these circumstances, freestanding signs should not project past the property line, obscure the building, be more than five feet in total height, or have a total area exceeding 16 sq. ft. Nor should these signs extend all the way to the ground, allowing someone to conceal themselves behind them. These signs should be set back at least 2' from the public right-of-way.
- e. Under no circumstances should signs or awnings be attached to a building in such a way that obscures or damages significant architectural elements of the building.
- f. Awnings that are functional for shade and shelter purposes are encouraged. These awnings should be made of canvas or a canvas-like material, should fit the shape and scale of the window or door they are sheltering, and should be designed to be compatible with and complimentary to building signage and design. Awnings should not be considered signs and lettering or signage should not be located on any portion of an awning, including the valance.
- g. Under no circumstances should plastic-formed or vacuum-formed awnings or any other style of awning whose primary purpose is to act as signage be permitted.

- h. Under no circumstances should awnings or signs be backlit or internally lit. Instead lighting should typically come from direct shielded light sources and be carefully integrated into the overall design of the building so as to provide visibility and safety but to avoid creating glare or light distribution that adversely affects motorists, pedestrians, or neighboring properties.
- i. Neon signs and accents are a part of the character of the Elmwood District and are generally encouraged so long as they are carefully designed with shapes and colors that complement the architecture of the building and the district. Temporary neon advertising signs should be limited to no more than two individual signs per storefront.