

URBAN DESIGN OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

NOVEMBER 8, 2004

CAP INDY CENTER

THOUGHTS ON GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR URBAN DESIGN:

ARCHITECTURAL TRENDS IN NEW IN-FILL DESIGN IN URBAN CONTEXTS:

Designing in-fill in historic urban areas is not as simple as following a set of guidelines. Several examples were shown in the slide presentation in October of how architects for new structures have struggled with finding the optimum balance between “being of its own time” and respecting the historic context. The examples ranged from extreme contrast to a “right on” blending of historic and contemporary elements. The examples included:

- A. Soldier Field, Chicago: Extreme contrast in scale and form
- B. St. Boniface Church Competition, Chicago: Radical contrast in form and materials of construction
- C. Thermae Spa, Bath England: Use of both contemporary and historic materials (i.e. limestone and glass curtain wall)
- D. Harvard Club Addition, New York City: Contemporary glass curtain wall and limestone blend of materials. Massing and detailing in a modernist format that relates to the original McKim Mead & White Neo Classical Beau Arts structure in a re-interpretive statement.
- E. Federal Courthouse Addition, Wheeling, West Virginia: Use of original limestone form in a contemporary interpretation. Highly contextual response in form, massing and scale.
- F. Emmis Broadcasting Building, Indianapolis, IN: Good use of harmonious materials and articulation to reduce massiveness.

These examples illustrate not only the struggle of the designer but the opinion gap as to what is appropriate. While some of the above examples seem extremely inappropriate to most of us, there are those design professionals who believe them to be good solutions to putting new construction within a historic context. For this reason, the following Principles are offered to establish a starting point for discussion of what we want to see happen in Indianapolis.

PRINCIPLE I. BUILDING SITING

Siting and location of new structures should relate to their immediate contexts. They should maintain consistent setbacks and alignments with existing buildings. Sidewalk activity should be reinforced through active entrances and storefronts.

PRINCIPLE II. BUILDINGS SHOULD RELATE IN MASSING AND FORM:

Buildings should provide setbacks and articulation that provide for adequate light and ventilation for the streetscape. The use of these elements should also provide visual relief that reduces massiveness and appropriately scales the proposed buildings to their respective contexts.

PRINCIPLE III. BUILDING TO BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

While diversity and individual design expression is to be encouraged, new in-fill structures should be good neighbors. Façade organization, rhythm columns, piers, cornice height, bay articulation, window patterns, and entrances should relate to the immediate surrounding contexts.

PRINCIPLE IV. ACTIVATED STREETSCAPES

New structures must encourage street level activity and visual interest. Active uses should be programmed for street pedestrian level such as commercial and retail activities. Blank and unrelieved walls should be avoided at the pedestrian level.

PRINCIPLE V. MITIGATE THE IMPACT OF PARKING FACILITIES

Surface parking should be strongly discouraged and demolition of existing structures for surface parking should uniformly be rejected. Where new surface parking occurs, it should be screened with permanent materials such as iron, steel, masonry or concrete materials and softened with appropriate landscaping and street trees. Parking garages should have activity at the pedestrian level, such as restaurants or other commercial spaces. The upper levels should be designed within the same consideration given for habitable uses. They should relate to and blend with their surrounding contexts.

PRINCIPLE VI. OPEN SPACES:

Open spaces should relate to and encourage pedestrian activity. They should be located in areas of high active use, e.g. City Market West Plaza and Monument Circle. Existing public open space should be preserved as a matter of highest priority. Efforts should be made to encourage activity in open spaces that are under utilized through the use of informational/ retail kiosks, fountains, and vehicular traffic mitigation and control.

PRINCIPLE VII: PUBLIC ART & AMENITIES

Public art and pedestrian amenities have a civilizing effect and help create a sense of identity and friendliness to the public domain. They enrich the experience of the regional center for the resident and the visitor and create a sense of place and image for the community.

PRINCIPLE VIII: ARCHITECTURAL DETAILS

- A. Openings: Should be articulated and proportioned in a way that is characteristic of the surrounding context
- B. Building Materials: Preference should be given to natural and fired masonry; transparent-non reflective glazing; rigid steel & aluminum panels; copper, zinc alloy, and slate roofing; precast concrete and cast stone. The following materials are to be discouraged:
 - Synthetic stucco
 - Corrugated metal siding
 - Aluminum, vinyl, cementitious and wood siding (except in Historic Districts where certain siding types are permitted)
- C. Detailing and Ornamentation

Appropriate use of detailing whether historic or contemporary should be encouraged. It can be an important element of scale and character and identity of a structure or area.

D. Color:

Color should accent and reinforce the detailing and ornamentation on the structures. In general, color should harmonize with the surrounding context. The use of strong color, either in intensity or value should be applied in limited areas and should be avoided in large structures. However, going too far the other way with buildings that have little color dimension is undesirable as well.

Borough Center Design Guidelines & Development Code, Design Review Committee, South Bound Brook, New Jersey, 2002 draft

Gettysburg Design Guide: A guide for maintaining and rehabilitating buildings in the Gettysburg Historic District, Richard C. Sutter & Associates, The Gettysburg Historic Architectural Review Board, 1997

Downtown Louisville Development Review Overlay Districts Urban Design Principles and District Guidelines, Louisville Development Authority, City of Louisville, 1994

Kentucky Streetscape Design Guidelines for Historic Commercial Districts, Kentucky Heritage Council and the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet, Frankfort, KY 2002

Revitalizing Downtown, The Professional's Guide to the Main Street Approach, National Main Street Center, Washington D.C., 1996

The Urban Design Handbook: Techniques and Working Methods, Urban Design Associates, W.W. Norton & Co., New York, 2003