Contents and Credits

Credits

First Street Task Force

Mark Armstrong	Plan Commission
David English	Historic Preservation Commission
Marce Van Glabek	Local realtor
Renee Hanlon	Resident
Bob Hoge	Business community
Gloria A. Klimek	St. Charles Park District
David Lencioni	Property and business owner
Neal Smith	Downtown St. Charles Partnership
Dan Stellato	City Council Planning and Development Committee

City of St. Charles staff

Ellen Divita	Economic Development Director
Bob Hupp	Community Development Director
Larry Malholland	City Administrator
Rita Tungare	Community Planner

Design Consultants

Hoisington Koegler Group Inc.

123 North Third Street, Suite 100
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55401-1659
612.338.0800

Contents

Introduction page 2

Intent and Scope page 3

Context and Character page 5

Community Input page 7

Development Guidelines page 8
- 1.0 Street Level Uses and Activity
- 2.0 Upper Levels
- 3.0 Parking

Design Guidelines for Public Spaces; page 12
- 4.0 Views and View Corridors
- 5.0 Gateways
- 6.0 Streetscape and Public Spaces
- 7.0 The Fox River
- 8.0 Pedestrian Movement

Design Guidelines for Sites page 20
- 9.0 Building Placement and Lot Coverage
- 10.0 Parking Character
- 11.0 Building Orientation
- 12.0 Landscape and Site Features

Design Guidelines for Buildings page 26
- 13.0 Building Design, Massing and Detail
- 14.0 Franchise Architecture
- 15.0 Signs

Project Review page 32

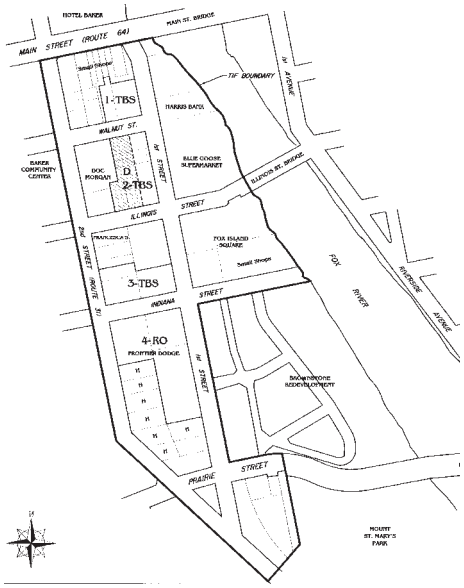
Introduction

Development and design guidelines for First Street in downtown St. Charles provide direction to development efforts following concepts initially articulated in the Downtown Strategy Plan. That document, prepared with the guidance of a community task force, demonstrated patterns of development and reinvestment for downtown and, importantly, noted certain areas of downtown that would benefit from new development activity. The principles outlined in the Downtown Strategy Plan included:

- Promote development and improvements that provide for the public's enjoyment of continuous waterfront activities
- Preserve architectural and historical integrity
- Promote a pedestrian-friendly, aesthetically pleasing, interesting and safe environment
- Preserve small town character
- Solidify and maintain a vibrant and diverse retail base that promotes a quality shopping experience
- Prioritize underutilized parcels and corridors for redevelopment
- Promote a 24-hour environment featuring a variety of land uses
- Offer family oriented experiences and activities for all ages and incomes

The First Street corridor, as noted in the Downtown Strategy Plan, is one of the areas that would benefit from additional investment. A further evolution of the Downtown Strategy Plan's direction for First Street *(shown at right)* demonstrated more explicit patterns of development and proposed a capacity for several sites to accommodate new development.

Involvement by the community in shaping directions for First Street has helped to maintain consistency with the vision for St. Charles' downtown. These guidelines, crafted with the assistance of the First Street Task Force, offer further direction for development efforts in the First Street corridor and aim to direct new development that supports the principles of the Downtown Strategy Plan.



The First Street Redevelopment Area as defined by the City of St. Charles includes all parcels between Second Street and the Fox River and between Main Street and Mount St. Mary's Park (with the exception of the Brownstone development)

One of the concept alternatives for First Street expressed in the Downtown Strategy Plan reveals patterns of development and an orientation to pedestrian activity

Intent and Scope

A key objective of the Downtown Strategy Plan (Downtown Professionals Network, November 8, 2000) is to encourage the expansion of the kind of downtown environment evidenced along Main Street into areas of the downtown where activity is less intense, and in doing so, to exemplify the best characteristics of small town "urban" development, shaping the physical form of development along First Street and improving the quality, character and compatibility of new development. First Street design and development guidelines are intended to:

- Encourage the creation of a high quality, pedestrian friendly, mixed use small town experience, including establishing a framework for how the public realm looks and functions;
- Encourage more compact and efficient urban form in order to maximize development potential and to maintain consistency with the character and intensity of activity of Main Street;
- Accentuate the character of First Street as a unique downtown district;
- Guide developers seeking to make investments in the district and protect investments made in high quality development as the area evolves;
- Assist the city and the public in reviewing proposals for development along First Street.

These guidelines will apply to all new development in the First Street district -- an area bounded by Main Street on the north, the Fox River on the east, Route 31 on the west and Mount St. Mary Park to the south. In addition to asserting some degree of guidance for new development, the guidelines may be applied to any project that clearly alters the appearance of an existing structure, including a change in the facade materials, patterns or details of windows and doors, or roof forms or materials.

It is important that this document addresses guidelines -- offering direction to the physical design of buildings and spaces along First Street. The guidelines are not mandates, although the city may choose to use them as criteria for the provision of development assistance. They are not meant to override existing city ordinances, although there may be a desire to re-work portions of the City code to ensure compliance with critical directions of the guidelines.

The guidelines attempt to provide a clear definition of urban design and development objectives that support various portions of the Downtown Strategy Plan and the City's goals for redevelopment and investment. The guidelines can be used as a basis for uniform and consistent review of development proposals within the First Street district and provide direction towards creating the kind of development characterized by

Replacement of Harris Bank

Street facing development along First Street

Connection between First Street and the Fox River

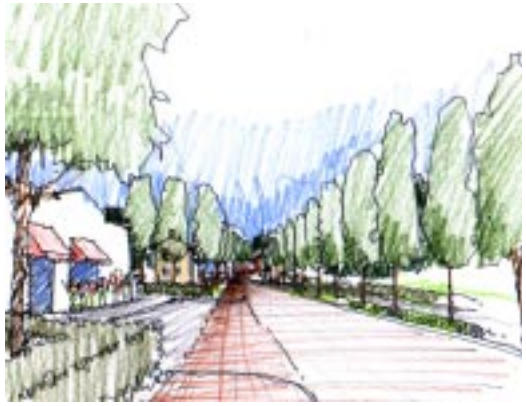
Directions explored for First Street during the creation of the Downtown Strategy Plan

"small town" form, as depicted in the Downtown Strategy Plan and as expressed by members of the St. Charles community. Equally important, however, is the fact that as the guidelines specify features considered essential to the creation of a livable community, they also strive to maintain a sense of programmatic flexibility and support the need for design creativity – a vital component of a meaningful and memorable experience.

Ultimately, the guidelines and any development that occurs along First Street must recognize the special character that exists in downtown St. Charles -- a character rooted in its small town character and its place in the Fox River valley. Preservation of the charm and diversity must be achieved while allowing for new development, redevelopment and revitalization. To do otherwise only serves to diminish the worthy efforts already made in downtown St. Charles.

These design and development guidelines represent the community's effort to maintain the value that they observe, and have worked to achieve, in their downtown. First Street, according to the community's vision, can be a vital part of downtown. These guidelines are intended to keep efforts focused on that vision.

The First Street District and its setting in downtown St. Charles, looking south with Main Street buildings in the foreground and the Fox River in the background



Connection to the River along Indiana Street

Downtown entrance at First Street "district" at Route 31 and First Street

Directions explored for First Street during the creation of the Downtown Strategy Plan

Clearly the St. Charles community values the character and spirit found in its downtown, and is committed to a vision of renewal for First Street that includes well crafted buildings, is pedestrian in scale and orientation, and is enduring. It is also clear that the Fox River is a foundation force for downtown; the river is an attraction, and the topography of downtown (which resulted from the erosive force of the river) is central to the physical form of downtown.

As a result, the guidelines need to address building character. While Main Street's architecture recalls the community's downtown heritage, modern attitudes toward construction make replication of these styles unlikely or infeasible. Recognition of the patterns and attributes of downtown's architectural heritage is wise, but the guidelines must allow First Street to respond with an architecture of its own age.

In order to embrace the Fox River as an amenity for downtown and the community, the guidelines must address issues of building orientation, height and rooftops. Today, we see

Forces shaping downtown -- the river, the valley and hillside neighborhoods -- were articulated in the Downtown Strategy Plan

Guenther's block

Harris Bank

St. Charles Cleaners

Indiana Street

Piano Factory (now Brownstone)

Vacant lot

The character of existing development along First Street is auto-centered and sparse

buildings that turn their back to the Fox River or obstruct views of the river by virtue of their height. By addressing the orientation and height of the built environment, the guidelines promote the notion that the Fox River is an asset that lends the downtown much of its character and underscore its ability to attract people to the area.

While the immediate context of First Street may not suggest striking qualities to be borrowed by new development, redevelopment of First Street should not be seen as a chance to create something entirely new. Rather, the character of downtown and the river valley should shape and inform new development along First Street, creating the feeling of a natural extension of Main Street.

Hotel Baker and the Fox River

Main Street and the Arcada Theater

Small scale buildings and enduring style

Main Street commercial block

Patterns of development along Main Street reveal a rich architectural heritage, a respect for natural features and sensitivity to pedestrian comfort, even along a busy highway

Community Input

A workshop was conducted on 25 June 2002 to initiate the process of developing design and development guidelines for First Street. After a short introduction and a review of the evolution of plans for First Street, those attending (more than 50 people) the workshop divided into small groups to respond to a series of questions.

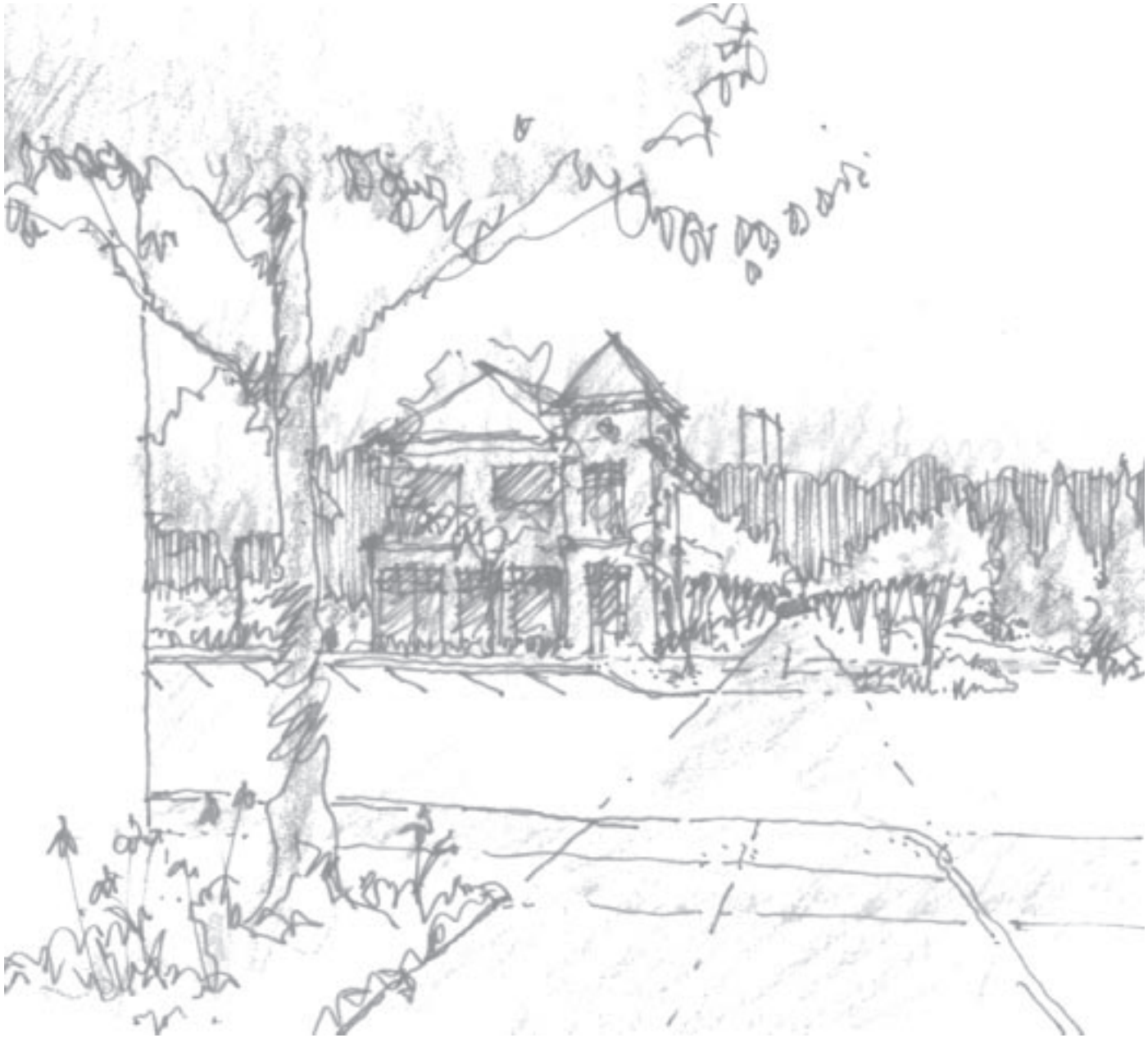
While thoughts expressed during the workshop revealed divergent opinions about the future of First Street, threads of common directions emerged, around which design and development guidelines can be framed. The following notable themes and ideas recurred throughout the workshop:

- First Street should be a district of truly mixed uses, with each building containing the greatest mix possible.
- Building height is a significant concern. The general thought is that two and three story buildings are most appropriate. Four story buildings were not ruled out, but there may be resistance to single story buildings.
- Setbacks are important in establishing the pedestrian feel of First Street; a "build-to" line at the back of the sidewalk or a very limited setback would be most appropriate.
- Pedestrian spaces, beyond those at the front of the building, cannot be overlooked. The success of the experience rests in the "completeness" of the pedestrian network.
- The orientation of new development to the river will be one of the most significant features of the First Street district. Buildings cannot be allowed to turn their backs to the river.
- There is a sense that the evolution of First Street cannot be achieved unless the developer shares in the community's vision for the district. Ultimately, this should be one of the primary components of the developer selection process.
- Definition of the "proper" mix of tenants – local vs. national – will be important to the success of First Street and to downtown. There is a sense that national retailers will find a home on First Street.
- Materials used in new construction should reflect the enduring qualities of other downtown buildings. Brick and stone would be acceptable materials, whereas the use of Dryvit was indicated as being unacceptable. Detailing is also important. It may not be good enough to use brick, for example. How the brick goes onto the building will also be important.

When considering those areas where consensus will not easily be reached, it will be important to consider several factors:

- While many workshop participants expressed a desire for a historic look, the ability of contemporary construction trades and materials to actually create "historic" buildings must be considered. In short, an honest historic building cannot be built on First Street, but we can recognize the principles that underlie the historic buildings valued by the people of St. Charles.
- The scale of buildings will be a central feature of the First Street district, but given that this is a redevelopment-oriented project, it will be difficult – maybe even infeasible – to construct small scale buildings similar to those preferred by some workshop participants. There will need to be some recognition of the financial feasibility of the overall project, which typically does not support small buildings.
- Parking will be an issue, and the Strategy Plan suggests aggregation of parking largely into structures with surface parking taking the form of more highly landscaped "parking courts." Parking below buildings may be possible for residential buildings, but geologic limitations may limit the ability to park below buildings with street level retail uses.

Development Guidelines



The creation of a mixed-use and pedestrian-oriented district along First Street will rely not only upon design guidelines that control the "flavor and function" of development on sites, but also upon a clear understanding of the kinds of uses that encourage pedestrian activity and bear a character that contributes to a visually pleasing experience. In addition, the organization of these uses along the First Street corridor and the proximity of development to public spaces and community amenities plays a significant role in the level of real or perceived pedestrian activity. In order to foster a good mix of uses, guidelines for development in the First Street district are proposed.

1.0 Street Level Uses and Activity

First Street must function as an extension of Main Street St. Charles, not an area that turns its back on the character of downtown. A vital district will be formed around a variety of uses, mixed among blocks and buildings. It is anticipated that the district will be formed around a mix of local and national retailers, as well. This is the opportunity for downtown to position itself to attract retailers that require more contemporary retail spaces with convenient, or at least reasonable, access to parking. Still, the presence of unique local retailers or eating and drinking establishments will ensure that First Street reflects the kind of uses and character found in the rest of downtown.

Therefore, it is the intention of these guidelines to:

Direct development along First Street to ensure a mix of uses that encourages human activity

Guidelines

1.01 Provide floor plates and spaces that are appropriate and attractive to national retailers, without developing single use square footages that overwhelm the character of the street; limit *typical* leasehold spaces for retail use to 5,000 square feet per tenant.

1.02 Require that all street level space be occupied by active uses, with retail, dining and entertainment uses highly preferred and occupying a minimum of 75% of street level space. Allow lobby spaces at street level to serve upper floors of buildings.

1.03 Direct street level uses north of Indiana Street toward active uses, including retail, entertainment and dining.

1.04 Allow residential development at street level in a single use building, but only south of Indiana Street.

The goal for buildings north of Indiana Street and closer to Main Street is mixed use, with active retail occupying the street level

Buildings that are entirely residential are appropriate to areas south of Indiana Street

Sidewalk cafes, even carved from narrow walks, enliven the streets and encourage pedestrian activity

2.0 Upper Levels

While upper levels of First Street buildings will not have the same activity as those spaces located at street level, there should be a sense of apparent activity in these spaces as well. Office and residential uses are encouraged along the entire length of First Street, with large operable windows and usable balconies that offer the opportunity for occupants to be seen by people on the street.

Therefore, it is the intention of these guidelines to:

> ***Foster a sense of activity by creating upper levels of buildings with exterior spaces for occupants***

Guidelines

2.01 Require buildings to have operable windows at upper levels.
2.02 Provide usable balconies, terraces, rooftop gardens or other spaces for use by occupants of buildings.

Buildings that lend a sense of activity to the street with usable balconies are highly encouraged

Outdoor living spaces bring life to streets as well as providing an amenity for residents

3.0 Parking

Parking is often seen as a necessary evil in small towns -- we can never have enough of it, but, at the same time, we don't want to see it. Along First Street, the goal should be to provide an adequate, but not excessive, number of parking spaces to serve commercial development, and to direct the bulk of those spaces to a parking structure. Remaining parking would occur on streets and in well-landscaped surface parking lots -- parking courtyards or gardens.

Parking for new residential uses may pose greater difficulties. The market may dictate the need for two parking spaces per unit, and will likely require that those spaces be sheltered and connected to the building. As with parking for commercial and office uses along First Street, the goal must be to provide adequate parking to serve the use, but to mitigate its presence.

Therefore, it is the intention of these guidelines to:

> ***Provide adequate parking to serve development without overbuilding parking facilities or overwhelming the small town, pedestrian character desired for First Street***

Guidelines

3.01 Create structured parking facilities to serve the bulk of parking needs for commercial and office uses, recognizing the opportunities for shared or joint-use parking that will occur in a well-conceived mixed-use district.

3.02 Establish parking maximums for new development and existing development that permits no greater than the number of parking spaces required by the city's ordinance for the specified use in other parts of the community.

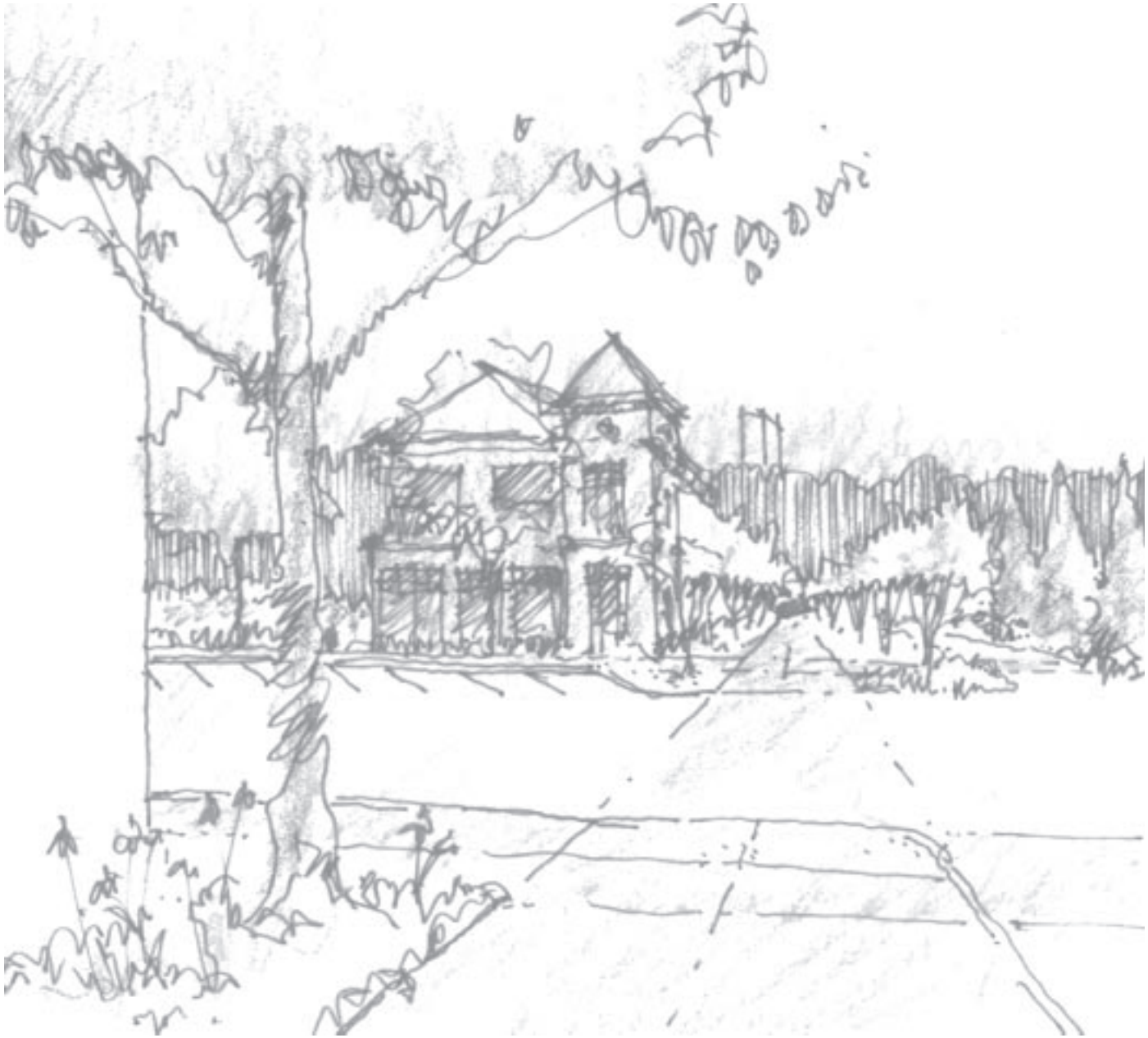
3.03 Provide on-street parking on First Street and to the greatest degree possible on cross streets in the district.

Angle parking, along at least one side of the street, offers increased street parking -- one of the keys to a vital pedestrian district

Careful definition of pedestrian zones along sidewalks is important; parked cars should not appear to "intrude" upon pedestrians

Parking structures must be designed to fit the character of streets and pedestrian ways along First Street, and not overwhelm pedestrians with their scale

Design Guidelines for Public Spaces



It is difficult to create a district-wide identity and sense of place on a piece-by-piece process. While the design guidelines applied to new private development along First Street can help to create some unifying and aesthetically improved developments, designing at the public level is extremely effective. An investment in quality public spaces and features acknowledges the community's desire to create and live in an attractive place that has lasting appeal.

4.0 Views and View Corridors

Views, in an urban environment, are largely focused on the "near view" – those buildings in immediate proximity to the viewer. However, visual connections between various parts of downtown, to downtown landmarks, and to unique features of downtown are important as they provide a larger sense of downtown and serve a practical function of orientation in the urban landscape. Along First Street, the goal should be to preserve significant view corridors and to open new corridors that highlight those features and landmarks intrinsic to downtown St. Charles – in particular, maintaining views to the "tower" at the Hotel Baker and opening views or enhancing views to the Fox River. In addition, the view along First Street might be enhanced or reinforced through the use and placement of street trees and other streetscape features.

As new development occurs along First Street, the design of rooftops might become an important element relative to views. New buildings might interrupt dramatic views toward the river, but they might also present a rather barren landscape of rooftop mechanical equipment and expanses of unadorned flat roofs. In consideration of views, the patterns, materials and details of roofs and rooftops must be addressed – fostering views or, indeed, becoming viewed elements in themselves through the development of rooftop gardens or "green roofs."

Therefore, it is the intention of these guidelines to:

> ***Consider views and the impacts of new development on views and view corridors to maintain significant sight lines and protect important viewsheds***

Guidelines

4.01 Prohibit intrusion of building development into view corridors that focus along First Street to the Hotel Baker and along street rights-of-way or extensions thereof toward the Fox River.

4.02 Encourage the development of streetscapes that enhance or reinforce the First Street view corridor.

4.03 Encourage the development of rooftops as "green roofs" or rooftop gardens, or, at a minimum, require that rooftop mechanical equipment be organized and enclosed consistent with patterns, materials and details of the structure.

View corridors along streets leading to the Fox River should terminate at the river, not at a building

While more grand than roofs in St. Charles, the Chicago City Hall rooftop exemplifies the qualities of a pleasant rooftop view

5.0 Gateways

First Street can be reinforced and enhanced, even made more distinct, by the ways in which its entries are marked – especially at Route 31. The definition of a gateway as a significant place in downtown St. Charles, where the transition occurs between one place and another, can be achieved through the intentional and obvious grouping or placement of objects: landscaping, lighting, public art, signs, physical gates, or buildings. In particular, gateways to First Street should reinforce the notion that the district is a vital pedestrian place.

Therefore, it is the intention of these guidelines to:

> ***Celebrate points of entry into the district along First Street with thoughtful and engaging architecture that sets a strong pedestrian tone for the entire district, and with lesser features at entries from crossing streets***

Guidelines

5.01 Encourage the creation of gateways to the First Street District at those points where a sense of entry occurs, especially though the development of significant architectural pieces.

5.02 Establish the length of First Street as a gateway to downtown St. Charles, focusing on the public realm and enhanced streetscape development.

The natural attraction people have toward water and water features makes for a good gateway piece

Public art, if it reflects the qualities of the district, can be used to good effect in marking the entry to a district

Signage for the district might be integrated with the gateway feature

Entries to First Street at Route 31 might ultimately embrace the street and result in a gateway that reflects the character of the evolving district

6.0 Streetscape and Public Spaces

Goals for First Street focus, in part, on the creation of a pedestrian-oriented place and a district with a truly pedestrian character. Walking along First Street (or from First Street to another part of downtown St. Charles) should be encouraged through the implementation of streetscape enhancements directed at a pedestrian scale. In addition, the streets of the district can be highlighted by the ways in which the public realm begins to reflect and interface with the character of the private realm.

Streetscape enhancements should consider the use of street trees, pedestrian-scaled lighting, and pedestrian amenities – all designed to create a continuous pedestrian-centered experience for First Street. A well-conceived streetscape for First Street (and other streets in the First Street district) should also increase awareness of streets and street enhancements as civic amenities.

Of particular importance is pedestrian-scaled streetscape lighting, which not only is an obvious aesthetic enhancement, it has been shown that well-designed street lighting discourages crime and encourages long-term legitimate use of the street. Streetlighting scaled to the needs of cars only reinforces the idea that pedestrians don't belong and that the street is the domain of the car.

People desire outdoor spaces, especially ones that seem serendipitous and those that are more informal, delightful, or perhaps even whimsical. These should be spaces designed to the level of the person, so that they function for larger gatherings or for the individual; they should be located with sensitivity, so that they serve a public purpose and take advantage of amenities available in the First Street district – especially the Fox River.

Public spaces should not be designed from the "leftovers" or as decoration for a building. Rather, the space should be designed to encourage gathering, favoring orientations that take advantage of sun opportunities or filtered shade, and offering protection from winds, intrusive noises, or other detrimental factors. Even the design of seating should be considered: metal benches are either hot or cold, stone can be cold and wet; wood is often the most comfortable seating option.

Ultimately, First Street might offer a more casual experience, one where the streetscape and buildings offer opportunities for strolling and informal gathering in an environment that is inviting, comfortable and interesting for pedestrians.

Therefore, it is the intention of these guidelines to:

> ***Establish continuity and identity through streetscape development that results in a truly pedestrian place and greater sense of a First Street district; and encourage the development of publicly accessible open spaces that can be focal points for the district and for individual developments***

The patterns and details of the streetscape are important, but the goal should be to create an invitation to pedestrians, resulting from the quality of the space

Guidelines

6.01 Encourage the development of streetscape enhancements that blend the public and private realms of First Street to create a continuous and unified pedestrian experience.

6.02 Develop sidewalk areas that support pedestrian movement and allow for the introduction of streetscape enhancements; provide sidewalk widths no less than 12 feet, with expanded areas into the private realm; do not expand streets at the expense of sidewalk areas.

6.03 Highlight open spaces and plazas by extending them into sidewalk areas as an announcement of their presence, integrating the open spaces and streetscape patterns.

6.04 Create plazas, courtyards and other urban open spaces for buildings with a footprint larger than 10,000 square feet; surround public spaces with uses that activate the space, such as street level retail facing onto the space, housing, or eating and drinking venues.

6.05 Require the implementation of pedestrian-scaled lighting in the public and private areas of the First Street district, whether pole-mounted or building mounted; limit wattage of lighting fixtures in order to reduce glare; strive for patterns of even illuminance (an average-to-minimum ratio of approximately four-to-one).

6.06 Enhance street crossings (or even intersections) with pavement materials, colors or textures that highlight the crossing as a pedestrian zone; create mid-block pedestrian crossings of similar materials.

6.07 Create "green" connections between First Street and the Fox River "Riverwalk," especially between parking structures and the river.

6.08 Avoid the creation of large spaces that are developed as singular spaces; rather, create a series of smaller spaces or spaces that offer opportunities to view activity without being the focus of views.

6.09 Provide seating at the rate of 1 linear foot per linear foot of perimeter of the open space; provide "perches" that allow viewing of activity in the space; at least half of the seating in the space should be "found" seating (steps, walls, planter edges).

6.10 Require that the paved area of an open space be no greater than 60% of the space, and that it be at least half shaded within 10 years of development.

First Street should be composed of beautiful and enduring streetscape components, but the streetscape should foremost be a stage for the activity of people on the street

To encourage pedestrians to stroll along First Street, the edge between public and private spaces might become less defined

Spaces between buildings (those spaces not facing a street) should not become "leftover" spaces; rather, the design of the space should invite pedestrians with thoughtful pedestrian features or simply by the craft and detail of the buildings along the space

7.0 The Fox River

Without question, the focus of downtown St. Charles is the Fox River – it was the force that created the unique setting for downtown and it continues to be a significant factor in the patterns of development in downtown. As the St. Charles community begins to frame directions for the riverfront, it has become obvious that connections between the riverfront and the rest of downtown must be considered. In fact, the Downtown Strategy Plan highlighted this relationship, noting that there should be a seamless connection between the two, and that the pedestrian experience of downtown is one and the same as the experience along the river.

A River Corridor Master Plan (Hitchcock Design Group, Summer 2002) highlighted the community's goal of creating "a lively, downtown riverfront environment that becomes the centerpiece of downtown within the next 20 years." One of the plan's goals is to "improve access to, and between, major attractions such as the river, regional trails, retail stores, adjacent neighborhoods, public parks, buildings and parking." The role of First Street, as it evolves, will be central in fulfilling the community's vision for the Fox River as it flows through downtown.

As great of an attraction as the river may be, many instances can be cited where development has turned its back to the river or simply not engaged the river in a way that will support this vision. As First Street evolves, places where buildings turn their backs to the river, where parking immediately abuts the river, or where connections between First Street and the river are tenuous, must be corrected.

Therefore, it is the intention of these guidelines to:

> ***Maintain consistency with the goals of the River Corridor Master Plan, and work to engage the river with new development along First Street so that a seamless environment in downtown and the riverfront results***

Guidelines

7.01 Orient publicly accessible sides of buildings toward the river, which may result in more than one "front door."

7.02 Prohibit parking in areas that immediately abut the river; replace parking in these locations with public spaces that form transitions between the public space of the river and new development.

7.03 Extend views and pedestrian ways along rights-of-way and "extensions" between the river and First Street.

The Fox River is seen as the "jewel" of downtown St. Charles, and development should engage the riverfront as a great public space

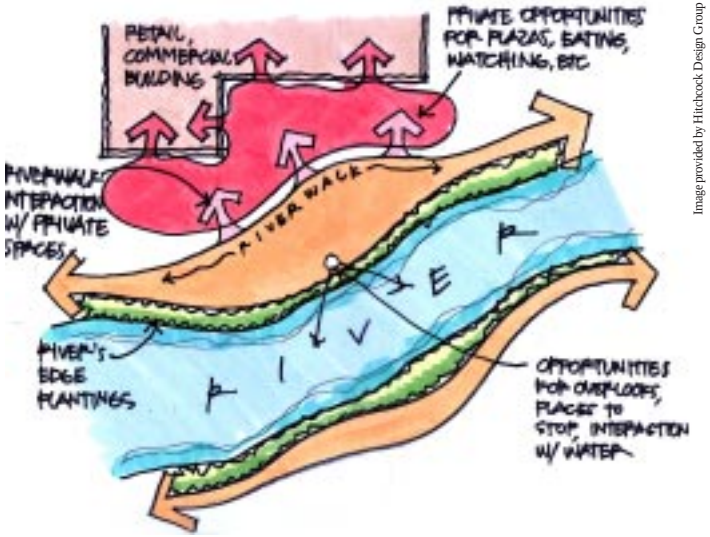


Image provided by Hitchcock Design Group

The connection between the riverfront and development along First Street should feel like a continuous and lively public space, creating a connection between downtown and the river that is seamless

8.0 Pedestrian Movement

Pedestrian movement is a primary concern of the First Street district and is central to the notion of creating mixed-use walkable place. Today, vehicles might dominate the street at the expense of pedestrians, and in some areas of First Street, sidewalks are simply not conducive to pedestrian movement. Lack of streetscape and pedestrian amenities, the presence of long stretches with no activity, and discontinuous curb-side walks all discourage pedestrian activity.

The safety and comfort of pedestrians is of greatest importance in the evolution of First Street. Wherever there is a potential conflict between a pedestrian and a vehicle, wherever a pedestrian might be put in danger or inconvenience by a car, the right-of-way should be given to the pedestrian. Therefore, places where cars cross the pedestrian zones should be minimized in both number and extent of crossing area.

As First Street evolves with attention to a pedestrian orientation, the ability of buildings to support pedestrian movement should be considered. The introduction of building components that offer protection to pedestrians, such as awnings and arcades, might encourage pedestrian activity. Where used, such elements do not have to be continuous, but should suggest to pedestrians that their route affords some protection from the elements, even if short gaps exist along the route.

Therefore, it is the intention of these guidelines to:

> ***Foster pedestrian movement and activity by protecting pedestrian spaces from intrusions by cars and providing elements that offer comfort for pedestrians as they move through the First Street district***

Guidelines

8.01 Require continuous sidewalks from corner to corner at a width appropriate to pedestrian movement with sidewalks always placed adjacent to the curb.

8.02 Reinforce primary pedestrian movement corridors with wayfinding devices (special pavements, signs, graphics).

8.03 Place utility functions (electrical boxes, signal control boxes) underground or along cross streets to avoid conflicts with pedestrian movement.

Connections between buildings and to the "back" sides of buildings must be designed as interesting, inviting spaces to encourage the kind of pedestrian activity envisioned for First Street

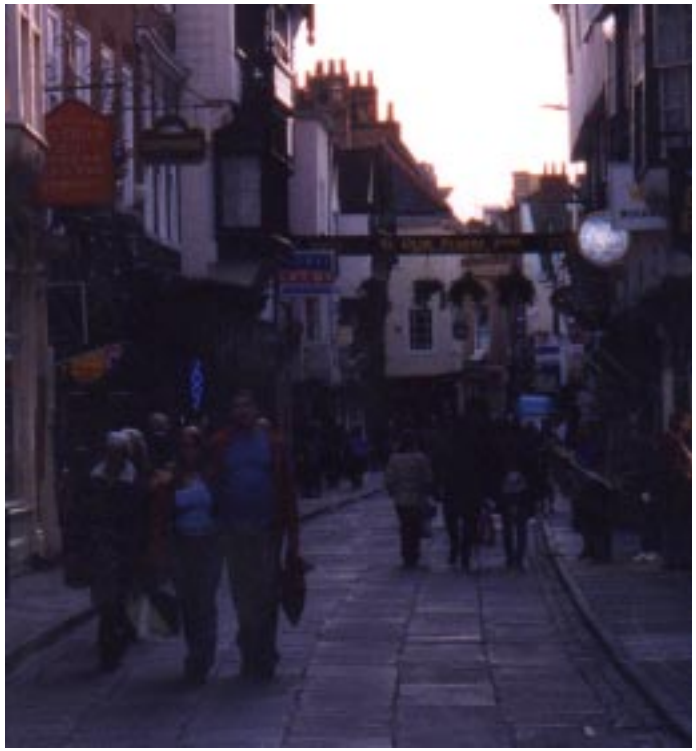
Awnings, traditionally used to block severe sunlight into storefronts, provide a certain level of protection from the elements for pedestrians, even if they are not continuous along a storefront

8.04 Locate curb cuts only at cross streets at mid-block to minimize interruptions of pedestrian zones.

8.05 Provide “protection” for the pedestrian zone in the form of bollards, large planters, or trees where parking is not allowed along a street.

8.06 Explore the use of “concurrent stop” or “all walk” traffic control on heavily pedestrian intersections to eliminate pedestrian-vehicle conflicts.

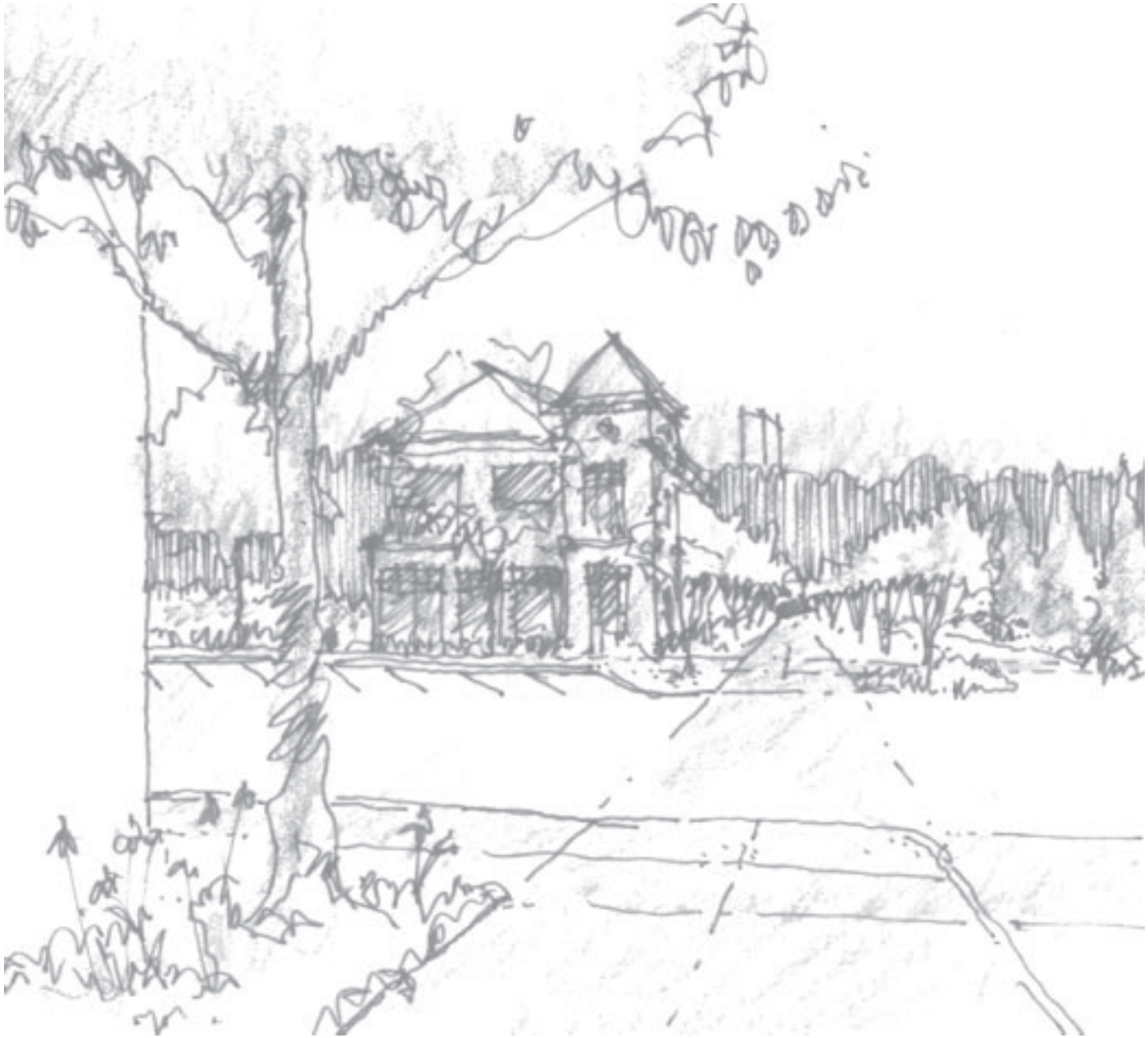
8.07 Provide overhead cover for pedestrians; use arcades, building projections or awnings to afford a minimal level of protection from the environment; cover extending over the sidewalk (awnings) should be located between 9 feet and 12 feet above the walk, and should project over not more than one-third the width of the walk (but not more than 4) feet; such overhead cover should not limit the introduction of street trees or street lights; cover afforded by an arcade (a covered passageway along the street side of a building) shall maintain a series of building columns at the sidewalk edge, be a minimum of 5 feet deep but no deeper than 2/3 the height of the arcade.



European traditions and development patterns are decidedly pedestrian in their orientation; on First Street, the scale of buildings, the materials and details of streets and public spaces, and the space of the street should all support pedestrian movement

Simple features like sidewalk historic markers contribute significantly to the pedestrian experience and add detail to an otherwise often overlooked element of downtown

Design Guidelines for Sites



Ultimately, private development will offer the greatest impact on the experience of First Street. A well-conceived and designed public realm means little if it is not directly supported by the kinds of building development that attracts people and encourage human activity. The design of the private realm should begin with the design of sites.

First Street
Downtown St. Charles, Illinois

9.0 Building Placement and Lot Coverage

To the extent that individual parcels are seen as individual development projects, the opportunities for creating a mixed-use and pedestrian-oriented pattern of development is lost. If continuity can be established across site boundaries, with consistent building placement and compatible sizes of development in adjacent sites, the patterns will reflect a greater sense of a district, and the sense of a pedestrian-oriented environment will be fostered.

This will not mean that all buildings are large or all small, or that they will all be placed equidistant from the front property line. Compatibility is the goal, not uniformity, and appropriately addressing the public realm and pedestrians is the key.

Sites along First Street should be developed to the maximum reasonable extent with tax producing, income generating development. To do otherwise not only makes development less feasible, but it diminishes the quality of the "urban" experience that might occur here. The key will be creating an appropriate balance between buildings and pedestrian spaces, all shaped to create a great pedestrian place

Therefore, it is the intention of these guidelines to:

> ***Establish continuity in site development patterns resulting in compatible and maximum development and fostering a greater sense of a district***

Guidelines

9.01 Limit the size of a building footprint as a mean of maintaining consistency with historical patterns of development in downtown St. Charles; typically along First Street, a building footprint should not occupy more than 75% of a block.

9.02 Place buildings at the right-of-way line or property line to the greatest extent possible, especially at the lowest two levels, but in no case should a building occupy less than 50% of its street frontage at these points; where buildings do not meet the right-of-way line or property line, the space shall be occupied by an active use (outdoor eating and drinking or outdoor sales) or a public space (a pocket park or plaza).

Buildings should be placed to occupy the street edge to the greatest degree possible, creating a continuous pedestrian-oriented facade along First Street

Spaces where buildings do not fully occupy the street edge should be filled with active uses, such as sidewalk cafes, outdoor sales areas or gardens intended to invite pedestrian activity

10.0 Parking Character

A goal of the Downtown Strategy Plan is the creation of a truly pedestrian-oriented place. While automobile parking will remain an element of the urban pattern, minimizing its impact on the pedestrian experience should remain a primary goal in new development.

Parking structures will be used to accommodate a significant portion of First Street's parking demand. A good parking structure is conceived in terms of utility and aesthetics. Often, however, these structures are simply "dressed up" rather than designed as good buildings. In the First Street corridor, the opportunity to conveniently store cars cannot become more important than the kinds of street-level activity that the Downtown Strategy Plan holds as one of its core principles.

In addition to accommodating cars, it is likely that bicyclists will see development along First Street as attractive, especially as the community pursues the development of its downtown riverfront. Accommodation of bicycle parking should be a goal for new development.

Parking lots should be seen as places of human activity, not just a place to store cars; as a result, they should become attractive, even inviting spaces

Parking spaces along the streets will be the most desired of the parking available; it should be designed as an element of the sidewalk as much as a part of the street

Therefore, it is the intention of these guidelines to:

> ***Make buildings the focus of development, not parking areas, and accommodate a realistic projection of parking demand without overbuilding parking facilities. Provide bicycle parking to encourage alternative transportation modes in the district***

Guidelines

10.01 Provide entries to parking structures or parking lots at midpoints of blocks and perpendicular to streets, using the least amount of curb cut/driveway area possible, and, to the greatest degree possible, locate parking to the sides or rear yards of new development

10.02 Strongly discourage the development of new parking facilities adjacent to First Street; prohibit entries to parking structures or lots directly from First Street.

10.03 Design parking structures as buildings rather than ramps, following principles that might apply to structures meant for people, not for ones meant for cars; design the structure so that cars and lighting are not visible (or are largely obscured) from street views or nearly residential structures; place above grade structures largely internal to new development.

10.04 Create patterns of an "orchard" parking lot (establishing tree canopy providing at least 25% shade within ten years of planting) for any surface parking lot with a capacity of 20 or more cars; treat the ground plane in a manner that further humanizes the parking lot.

10.05 Limit the size of new parking lots to no larger than ¼ of a block face along First Street.

10.06 Screen surface parking lots with high canopy trees and nearly opaque vegetation, walls or ornamental fencing to 30 inches above grade, or higher with greater degrees of transparency.

10.07 Develop on-street parking along First Street as a means to encourage street-level activity and to protect pedestrian spaces.

10.08 Establish parking maximums for commercial uses along First Street in order to maintain adequate but not excessive parking spaces in the district.

10.09 Provide bicycle parking for all new development greater than 5,000 square feet; provide a minimum of 4 spaces for every 5,000 square feet of street level use; provide spaces in a visible and preferably sheltered location.

Parking lots, in the rare case where they may be adjacent to a street, should be screened with attractive built and natural materials, designed to reflect the character of the building served by the parking lot

Bicycle parking should be incorporated into the design of sites and designed to be an integrated feature of the streetscape (rather than being seen as an element that looks "tacked on")

11.0 Building Orientation

Legibility of downtown districts are typically based on a rigid organization of streets and blocks, with development largely organized on the same grid. Outside of downtown areas, the street grid is less apparent – streets don't always form a grid, intersections are less frequent, and there is little to dictate the organization of buildings on a site. Problems in continuity result when each site determines its own orientation and the sense of a continuous district is lost; above all, First Street must be seen as an extension of the patterns of downtown, and the resulting organization of development should reflect downtown's basic grid structure.

As the Downtown Strategy Plan strives for a greater orientation to pedestrians, it is logical to orient development toward zones where pedestrian activity is likely. Buildings might, therefore, be directed with their primary axis toward First Street, or within a site, toward routes intended for pedestrian circulation. Vehicle circulation routes might follow routes defined for pedestrians, yielding greater legibility of both the district as a whole and the individual development site.

Therefore, it is the intention of these guidelines to:

> ***Orient buildings toward zones of pedestrian activity (both on- and off-site), and create consistent orientation to First Street as the primary street in the district***

Guidelines

11.01 Design buildings in the First Street district with the primary axis of the building perpendicular to First Street.

11.02 Prohibit service and loading facilities from an orientation that allows them to be visible from First Street.

Buildings should be oriented to the street in largely traditional ways, with primary entrances facing directly onto the street and buildings that are typically set "square" to the street

In a truly pedestrian-oriented place, buildings might be approached by pedestrians from any or all sides; there is no "back side" to buildings in this kind of place, so some degree of architectural treatment will be required at all publicly accessible or viewed sides of a building

12.0 Landscape and Site Features

While attention is often directed to establishing continuity between buildings, the first way that someone experiences a building is through its site. If we desire to establish a stronger feeling of a district as First Street evolves, and by implication a stronger sense of identity through the continuity that is established, the patterns and materials used in the development of the site should also be considered.

A good deal of coherency can be established through the repetition of a common palette of materials on sites within a district. Palettes might be established for plants and lighting, and for how those same features are organized on a site. A planting pattern is more likely to be recognized if developed at a large scale, and those patterns might become recognized as designed elements of the district. In the First Street district, these broader patterns of the landscape might be directed toward the creation of pocket parks, courtyards and urban open spaces and gardens (as opposed to more suburban landscape treatments such as berm plantings and vegetative buffers).

The function of plants on a site is important as well. Too often, the landscape is an afterthought and the first component to be eliminated in a budget crunch. By recognizing that the landscape can reduce stormwater runoff, relieve heat gain in parking areas, reinforce circulation patterns, and even foster civility, a greater emphasis should be placed on high quality landscape development.

Often overlooked are opportunities for public art in an urban environment. Art can be used along First Street to tell stories about the heritage, people and events of the community, and the natural history of the region. It would seem that public art can be made purposeful, as well. Seating could be sculptures, manhole covers might convey messages about nature, and wide sidewalks or street intersections might become tableaus for art.

Therefore, it is the intention of these guidelines to:

Establish continuity in the details of site development to maintain coherency as a district and to introduce features that relate stories of the community

Guidelines

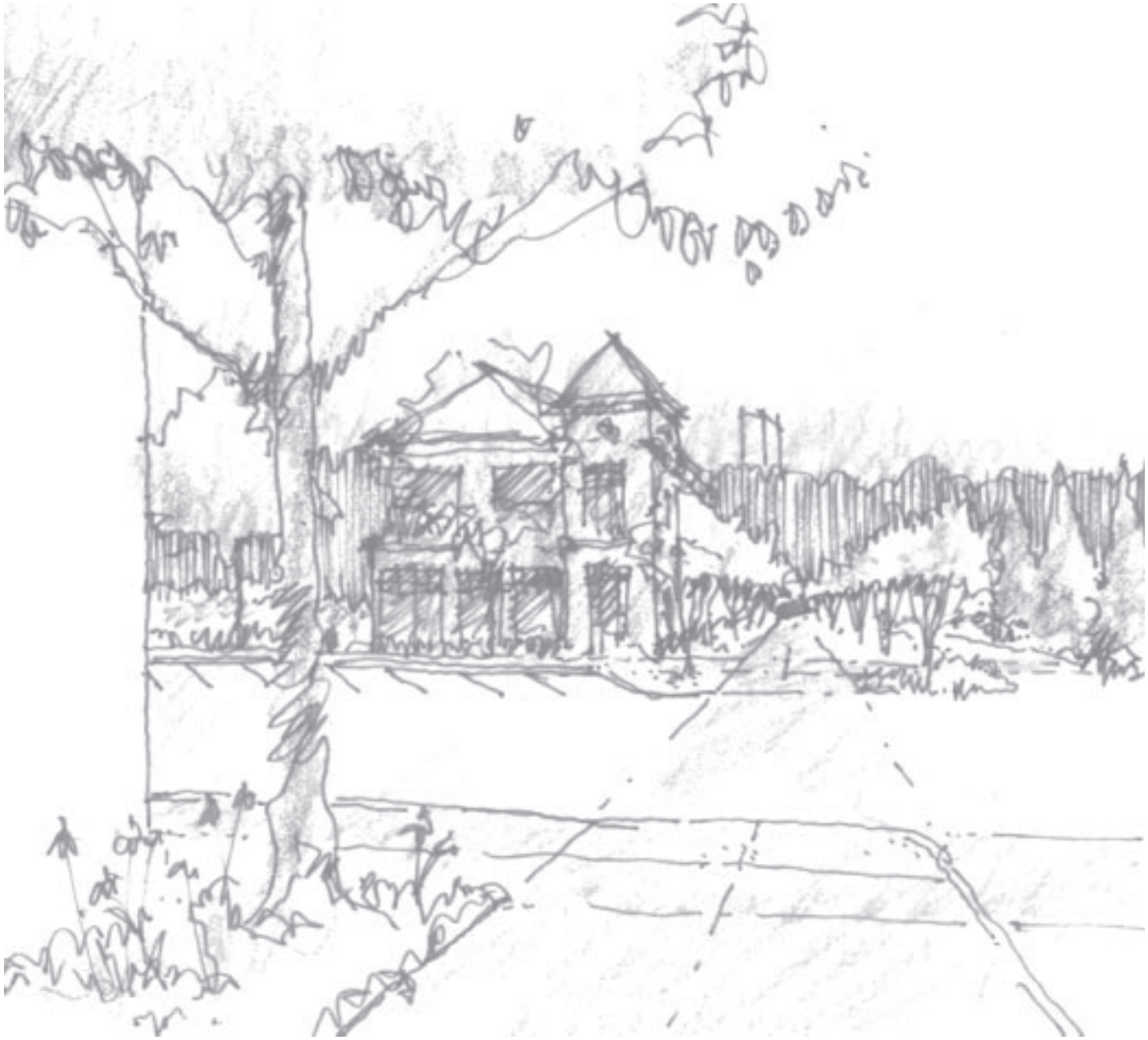
12.01 Develop landscape patterns that are shaped as spaces for people (gardens, courtyards and pocket parks).
12.02 Require the introduction of public art for all buildings over 10,000 square feet; encourage particular focus on the use of art in combination with utilitarian elements.
12.03 Refer to Design Guidelines: Corridor Improvement Commission (DLK, September 21, 2001) for direction relating to site furnishings.

Urban problems and utilitarian elements offer opportunities for public art and story telling

Urban gardens and garden-like edges to privates spaces or parking lots offer spaces and objects of value to pedestrians

Unique landscape development with an "urban" character are appropriate along First Street

Design Guidelines for Buildings



Continuity for the First Street district can be achieved through the application of consistent treatment of public spaces and considered treatment of sites. But in a well designed place, people fail to recognize the efforts directed toward these areas, and, instead, recognize “place” only from the buildings. It is, therefore, vital that buildings respond with even greater sensitivity to the opportunities of place-making, with designs that reflect the pedestrian orientation of the district and that create an enduring -- and maybe even endearing -- stock of new buildings for downtown St. Charles.

13.0 Building Design, Massing and Detail

The point where buildings meet the street is most important in the fabric of downtown St. Charles: it is the place where the activity of the street is offered the opportunity to intertwine with commerce, housing, entertainment and dining. Placement of the building near or at the back edge of the sidewalk not only reinforces the vital relationship between public and private spaces in downtown, but the ways in which the building rises from the street defines the public space of the street.

In downtown St. Charles, there is evidence of vital buildings that offer a sense of history, continual use and continuity within their context – due largely to the fact that they have been around, in some cases, for nearly a century. While the continued use of these structures may be important, the design of new or replacement buildings is critical. These structures should give the sense that they have been built with the intention of being around for a long time, and that they will potentially serve a range of uses over their lifetimes.

Because people move at speeds much slower than cars, their attention is directed at details and elements much different than they can experience in a car. As a result, buildings should offer the greatest possible interaction with pedestrians to encourage pedestrian activity and presence.

Many, if not most, of the buildings in downtown St. Charles are masonry buildings occupying a portion of a block. The design of new construction along First Street should respect the character of the other downtown buildings by reflecting horizontal (cornice and windows) and vertical (structural columns and windows) articulation, as well as the expanse of the building along the street. While development may result in larger buildings along First Street than along Main Street, the appearance of a smaller building can be achieved through careful attention to scale and details and the use of a series of repeated "modules."

Therefore, it is the intention of these guidelines to:

Encourage the development of buildings that reflect the architectural heritage of downtown without copying historic architecture; allow buildings to be "of their own time;" design buildings that result in enduring value, so that in the future, they are as revered as the landmark buildings in the rest of downtown

Buildings along First Street should have enduring qualities and a sense that they were crafted by human hands

Look to older buildings for cues of scale, materials and details, but recognize that they were not built using contemporary construction standards; build them, however, so that they will be worthy of "marking" by future generations of St. Charles residents

Buildings should embrace the pedestrian at street level, with expanses of glass at the storefront and a level of detail and material selection directed to a pedestrian level

Guidelines

13.01 Develop buildings of two to four stories and in keeping with the character of the river valley; buildings shall be a minimum of two stories; maximum building heights shall be four stories or 58 feet.

13.02 Step fourth floors back from street level facades a minimum of 6 feet and a maximum of 16 feet; terminate the building with a cornice or roof line that is "legible" from the street.

13.03 Design the lower levels of buildings with pedestrian scale, and a sense of human hand and craft rather than machine production; distinguish the street level of the building from upper levels through the use of an intermediate cornice, a change in building materials or detailing, an awning, trellis or arcade, or lintels at upper level windows.

13.04 Design buildings with the sense that street level and second stories are predominantly windows; street level facades or facades facing plazas, pocket parks or urban open spaces should be transparent glass (50% or more); facades facing publicly accessible walkways, but not facing streets should be a minimum of 25% transparent glass; upper floors should also contain transparent glass (30% or more); the use of mirrored, tinted or opaque glass or spandrel panels is not acceptable.

13.05 Develop buildings with street-level, pedestrian-oriented uses at street-facing façades and along façades facing publicly accessible pedestrian routes; no more than 25% of a street-facing façade should be occupied by a use that does not encourage or invite walk-in or walk-by traffic; multi-tenant spaces are encouraged at street level and the second level.

13.06 Encourage retail, eating and drinking, and entertainment uses that open directly onto a public street or publicly accessible pedestrian way (rather than through an interior lobby).

13.07 Design buildings with street frontages greater than 24 feet with an apparent division of the facade into increments or modules; use changes in materials (with materials drawn from a "family" of materials), window bays, entrance definition or separated entries, variation in roof lines, awnings and variation in setback (recognizing direction offered by 13.02).

13.08 Orient pedestrian oriented uses toward any public plaza or public outdoor spaces created adjacent to the building.

13.09 Accentuate building entrances to upper floors to ease in wayfinding; distinguish building entrances from the rest of the building façade and other entrances (storefront entrances) into the building.

13.10 Use building materials in a meaningful way, but not in ways that result in a false representation of history; the use of brick and stone as dominant materials in a building are highly encouraged; details of facades should reflect an orientation to pedestrians in the size and

Where buildings do not immediately address the street, or along passages leading away from streets, the resulting spaces should be ones of activity and should have a sense that they were designed for occupation by people

Buildings should be designed with a minimum of two usable stories, to address First Street with their primary facades, to encourage pedestrian activity with large storefronts, and to create focal points only at logical places along the building and in the context of the district

patterns of materials; detailing of materials shall result in full or half pieces at corners (no odd or other fractional pieces that terminate a facade); mortar shall generally match the color of the brick or stone; accent materials used in parapets, lintels, cornices, sills, bases and decorative building elements shall be brick, stone, cast stone or architectural precast concrete, wood (except that wood shall not be used at parapets), untreated copper, terra cotta, or dark colored pre-finished metal.

13.11 Use earth tones or muted colors in buildings and the colors of materials used in the building construction; lighter colors or bright colors shall be used only in minor accents; sloping roofs shall be dark in color; colors may be further defined by the city to achieve overall compatibility among buildings, with the goal being a composition that is set in the river valley in which no single building stands out or overpowers the views or the natural landscape of the valley.

13.12 Employ building focal points or "landmark" elements (clock towers, turrets or other architectural devices) with discretion; place these elements where they can be placed in a progression of landmarks in the fabric of First Street and downtown.

13.13 Design commercial buildings with attention to the cornice or parapet in an effort to build consistency with downtown's historic buildings; contemporary interpretations of the parapet are encouraged, while simple replication of a historic parapet is not desired.

13.14 Encourage the development of usable rooftop spaces; the height of rooftop arbors or garden features shall not be considered in the height of the building, but shall not exceed 12 feet in height; such features must be set back from facades facing public rights-of-way at least 10 feet; enclosed structures, including those used for roof access, shall not exceed 15% of the area of the roof and "open" roof structures shall not exceed 30% of the roof area.

13.15 Avoid the use of "plastic" or backlit awnings; the use of more traditional awning materials and forms is encouraged; limit awnings to the extent of storefront windows only (such that awnings do not cover architectural columns or elements).

13.16 Screen rooftop mechanical equipment from all views (including views from buildings); if a parapet is used for screening, its height shall be included in the calculation of building height; materials used for screening of equipment shall be the same or very similar to materials used in other similar surfaces of the building.

13.17 Screen objectionable elements from public view; locate trash and recycling facilities within the shell of the building or create screens for such facilities that are contiguous to the building and architecturally consistent.

The use of quality materials, ones that lend an enduring quality to new buildings, with scales and forms that feel right to pedestrians are the goal for First Street

Varied roof forms and wall planes add interest to the building, and make them more comfortable to pedestrians walking along their facades

Details, even simple details like awnings, will be important in conveying a pedestrian scale; some buildings might house uses that are not typically seen as pedestrian, but can fit First Street if the building design reflects the principles of the district (such as the auto repair shop, which allows passersby to see into repair bays as they walk along the street)

14.0 Franchise Architecture

The character of downtown St. Charles is based in an enduring stock of buildings, many of which have seen several transformations in use without violating their original architectural integrity. It is expected that new uses will value the overall architectural integrity, and choose to "fit" into the First Street district. Quite simply, franchise or corporate architecture will not be permitted.

Therefore, it is the intention of these guidelines to:

> ***Preclude the development of new uses that employ franchise architecture, corporate colors or symbols other than signage to identify their presence***

Guidelines

14.01 Prohibit franchise or corporate architecture from First Street.

Drug stores have, in some cases, reacted positively to the existence of design guidelines and built facilities that are a reasonable fit for a downtown; the design of this building may allow it to serve another use should the drug store decide to close its doors; caution should be exercised with franchises as many require drive-up windows, which can be as troublesome as corporate architecture

Many franchises desire locations where there traffic levels are high, and will develop facilities that respect the patterns and details of downtown buildings

15.0 Signs

A well-designed building will accommodate signs in a way that is intrinsic to the architecture -- the signs just seem to belong to the building. Their design reflects the style, materials, colors and details of the building, and even finds a way to work with signs on adjacent and nearby buildings. In this way, signs become an integral part of the building design.

Often, a building is home to more than a single business. Here, the signs do not need to match, but should strive for compatibility -- and certainly not outdistance other building signs by being more flashy, larger or entirely different in their design. Even for national retailers or franchises, the goal must be compatibility.

For legibility, signs have to be illuminated. The focus of the light should be on the message portion of the sign, with the lighting fixture designed as an architectural detail. The nature of First Street (and of downtown St. Charles in general) is that brightly lit, flashing or gaudy signs are generally inappropriate; sensitively designed sign lighting is encouraged.

Therefore, it is the intention of these guidelines to:

> ***Emphasize architectural compatibility in signs on buildings and foster legibility for signs across the district by strict adherence to sign codes and guidelines***

Guidelines

15.01 Signs shall be placed on buildings according to traditional commercial building designs, where a "sign band" immediately above the storefront provides a consistent and legible location for signs; signs shall not be placed where they obscure architectural detailing or features; projecting signs are encouraged.

15.02 Construct signs of materials that are consistent or compatible with the architecture of the building on which they are located, and in particular, on the facade on which the sign is placed; natural materials such as wood and metal are encouraged; flashing and neon signs are not appropriate.

Signs should be integrated into the architecture of the building and not overwhelm the scale of the building or the sense of pedestrian orientation desired for First Street

Free standing signs might work well as a feature related, but not integral, to a building; in some cases, the design of the building might be allowed to be more expressive, resulting in a more significant "sign" -- this is, most likely, the exception, not the rule, for First Street

Signs directed to the scale of the pedestrian can be most intriguing; as architectural ornament, they still maintain sensitivity to the underlying architecture

A level of review that engages the public about the design of a proposed building is critical to the success of the First Street district, but development directions must be posed to the public in drawings that can be well understood. Drawings or graphic demonstrations should focus on the quality of the experience, and allow "reviewers" to feel as if they are walking down First Street and viewing the actual building.

The goal of guidelines for First Street is to foster development that responds to the unique qualities and character of downtown St. Charles and the district. However, the end result for most people will not be an attractive public space or a good looking building; rather, they will remember the experience they had in this place. Review of proposals for development should, therefore, focus not so directly on the architectural and engineering drawings, but on a demonstration of the pedestrian experience. While it may be difficult for most people to discern this from an architectural site plan or elevation, other kinds of drawings are quite effective in communicating the sense of the experience.

Submittals for review of development projects should include (in addition to any other required submittals to the city) the following:

- a colored illustrative site plan
- a colored illustrative landscape plan
- a building rooftop plan
- a colored elevation drawing of all sides of the proposed development
- three-dimensional drawings of the proposed building from a pedestrian perspective showing:
  - the building's relationship to the street (or streets) and pedestrian spaces along the street
  - proposed public spaces or plaza spaces developed as a part of the project
  - proposed surface parking lots if included in the proposal
  - the relationship between the proposed building and the Fox River, if the project abuts the river
- materials samples arranged to show the juxtaposition of materials, mounted on a board with a soft gray (neutral) background, including:
  - major materials used in the construction in all colors proposed, with a minimum sample size of 24 inches square
  - three courses of brick or samples of stone, including the mortar, in the size and patterns proposed for the building

Illustrations should indicate landscape improvements at a scale that approximates their size five years after planting.

For some projects, for instance those that are significant in terms of the impact on the district, additional materials may be required. Computer simulations of the proposed development, or even a computer "walk-through" may be requested.

Image provided by CDFM2 Architecture

Technology allows architects to create more realistic images of proposed buildings, thereby permitting "reviewers" to better understand how the proposed building will "fit" into its setting

First Street
Downtown St. Charles, Illinois

Design and Development Guidelines

submitted to:

City of St. Charles

22 July 2002

prepared by:

Hoisington Koegler Group Inc.