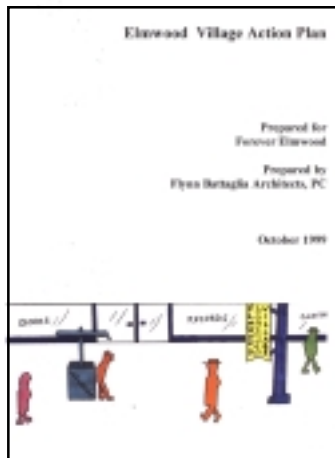


Project Background

In 1998, Forever Elmwood sponsored the creation of an Elmwood Village Action Plan by community residents, business owners, and City officials, coordinated and over-seen by urban planning consultants. The several hundred people who attended meetings and participated in the creation of the Action Plan overwhelmingly identified preservation and enhancement of the built environment as a high priority and advocated the preparation of development guidelines that would reinforce and support the unique nature of the Elmwood Village Commercial Districts and their inter-relationship with the surrounding residential neighborhoods.

Forever Elmwood moved to implement these recommendations immediately upon completion of the Action Plan. Through the summer and fall of 1999, Forever Elmwood worked with their consultants, Flynn Battaglia Architects, and the City of Buffalo to create new zoning guidelines that will better reflect the desired patterns of development along the Avenue. These recommendations have been transmitted to the City and Forever Elmwood is working with the City to have them incorporated into the City's zoning ordinance. The project was funded by the Mayor's Neighborhood Matching Fund and New York State Assemblymember Sam Hoyt.

In the spring of 2000, Forever Elmwood undertook the creation of building design guidelines to complement the completed zoning regulations. This report is the result of that effort. Again, the City of Buffalo was closely involved in this project. Adoption of these recommendations by the Common Council into the City's Site Plan and Design Review will be the final step in this process. This project was made possible with funding from the New York State Council on the Arts.



Copies of the Action Plan or the Zoning Recommendations are available at the Crane Branch Library and at the Forever Elmwood Office at 410 Elmwood Avenue.

More information on this project or any of Forever Elmwood's other activities is available from Tom Cooney, Executive Director of Forever Elmwood at 410 Elmwood Avenue, Buffalo, New York 14222, (716) 881-0707, foreverelmwood@hotmail.com.

Community Participation

Three community meetings were held during the action planning phase of this project where hundreds of people came to advocate the creation of design guidelines and gave recommendations for what those guidelines should include. In addition, at three community meetings held during the zoning project, participants took the opportunity to give suggestions for what should be included in design guidelines, and one community meeting was held during the design guidelines phase of this project where people learned about design guidelines as a community development tool and gave input into major issues on Elmwood Avenue.

In addition to community meetings, a Visual Preference Survey allowing people to identify specific development topologies to be encouraged or discouraged was completed by several hundred people. This Survey was administered at a community meeting, the Elmwood Avenue Festival of the Arts, the Lexington Street Food Co-op's annual party, and at a special meeting of business owners. Altogether, nearly 500 people have taken the survey. This survey currently resides at Forever Elmwood's offices at 410 Elmwood Avenue, where people are welcome and encouraged to stop in and complete the survey.

Finally, this project, like the two that preceded it, was overseen by a Steering Committee made up of community residents, business owners, and design professionals. City planning staff and other officials attended most Steering Committee and community meetings. The Steering Committee reviewed the desires and suggestions of the community and studied the design guidelines of other communities to see how issues had been addressed and with what success. The Steering Committee was provided technical assistance and was guided in its work by Flynn Battaglia Architects.

Steering Committee Members:

Derek Bateman
John Cromwell
Joseph Delaney
Debbie Fine
Alan Gerstman
Tom Higgins
Govindan Kartha
Christopher Guerra
Michael Morin
Rena Newton
Wendy Pierce
Ward Pinkel
Daniel Sack
Hillary Steinberg
Jerry Strickland
Kathy Toepfer
Art Ziller

Ex-Officio Steering Committee Members:

Nick Bonifacio
Mark Coppola
Charles Fisher
Joe Golombeck
Bill Grillo
Marty Grunzig
Cynthia Schwartz
Chuck Thomas

Community Objectives

The objectives that were suggested by the community throughout this process were generally of two types. They were either objectives concerning design (specifying what kind of community character to protect or build) or they were objectives relating to the ordinance itself (articulating administration and enforcement). We have broken them out and included them here, as it is these objectives that we have attempted to meet in crafting the recommendations that follow.

Ordinance Objectives:

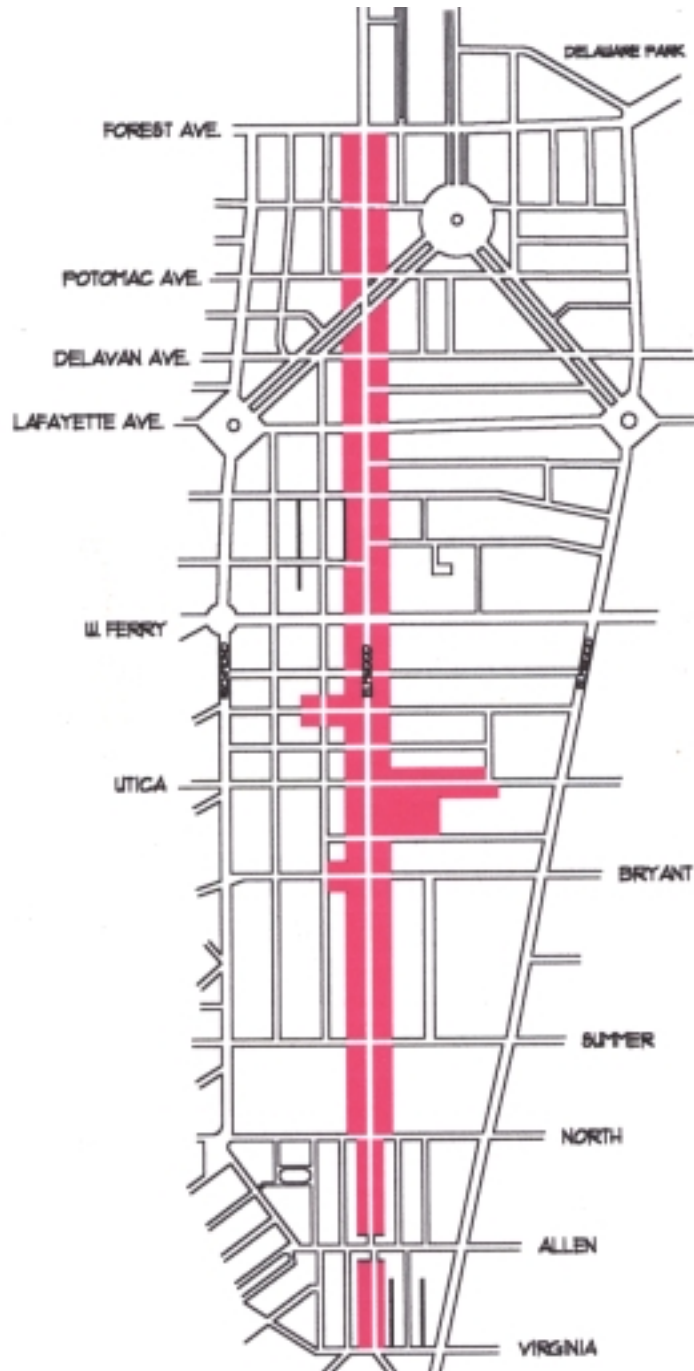
- Keep the guidelines simple and easy to comply with;
- The process should allow for additional community notification, including to Forever Elmwood and the Elmwood Task Force, as well as requiring the timely posting of large, visible signs noting the nature of the project and an appropriate contact's phone number on property when a permit application is filed;
- Concentrate on the most important issues and don't get so detailed that the guidelines preclude creativity or force a totally uniform, uncreative environment on Elmwood.

Design Objectives:

- Maintain and enhance the pedestrian environment;
- Maintain the eclectic character of Elmwood Avenue;
- Respect the scale of the Elmwood Village;
- Maintain and enhance the urban nature of the community and protect against development styles or patterns usually associated with suburban communities.

Project Boundaries

The Elmwood Village Commercial District Design Guidelines are applicable to all commercially zoned properties in the Elmwood Village, as shown in the shaded areas of the map below. The Elmwood Village, also shown in the map below, extends south from Forest Avenue to Virginia Street, the western boundary being Richmond Avenue (inclusive of both sides) and the eastern boundary being Delaware Avenue (but not including Delaware Avenue or properties that front it). Please note that there are properties within the colored boundaries shown below that are residentially zoned. These properties are NOT included in these design guidelines, which refer to only commercially zoned property.



Ordinance Administration Recommendations

I. Notification

In addition to the City's normal notification procedures, the following additional notification procedures should apply to all commercial properties within the Elmwood Village as well as residential properties that are requested to be rezoned to a commercial use or where a demolition is requested:

- (1) Within three 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 office of the City Planning staff person assigned to the Planning 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 agenda will transmit each agenda of the Planning Board to the appropriate contact person(s) at the community organization(s) above one week prior to the Planning 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 supplied by the City 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.



This photo depicts the notice used to alert passer-bys to zoning requests and building permit applications in Toronto.

II. Review

Permits for new construction, alterations, signage, and site design, as well as permits for demolition, are reviewed by the Planning Board. Applications for re-zoning permits are approved by the Buffalo Common Council. While there does not appear to be support at the City level for a formal neighborhood-based design review board that would make binding decisions or recom-

mentations, there is support for a community-based design review board that would make advisory recommendations to the Planning Board and/or the Buffalo Common Council. Establishment of such a community-based review board would ease the burden of City staff by helping applicants to understand and use these design guidelines and would allow applicants to work closely with a well-organized community group in a non-adversarial setting.

At this time, to ensure timely adoption of these guidelines, these recommendations are being made to Forever Elmwood, and are not intended to be included in the ordinance itself. Our recommendations to Forever Elmwood for the creation and sustaining of this informal review board are as follows:

- (1) The members of this committee do not need to meet except as necessary to review projects, but the members should have flexible enough life-styles and schedules that they can meet with a minimum of notice when they are needed to review a proposal.
- (2) The committee should have seven members and membership should consist of the following distribution: two architects, one other development professional (developer, contractor, urban planner), two business owners, and two community residents.
- (3) Forever Elmwood should actively invite and encourage members of the community to submit resumes and explain why they would like to be a part of the committee, and should keep a file of resumes and expressions of interest on file from which to draw in cases of vacancy. When initiating this group, Forever Elmwood should lead discussions regarding length of terms or service.
- (4) The committee should keep an updated file of active block clubs and all block club captains so that they can be notified when a project comes up. Members of the community should be notified as to when the committee is meeting and invited to attend to learn more about the project. The project's sponsor or the sponsor's representative should also be invited to explain the project and answer questions.

Statement of Purpose

The design review ordinance must have a strong and clear statement of purpose which summarizes the intent of the ordinance. This ensures that when issues come up that are not specifically addressed in the guidelines themselves or are in dispute, the Planning Board can review the issue in light of the intent of the community. This is also helpful to the Planning Board when it reviews cases where an applicant feels that their project meets or exceeds the intent of the guidelines but does not meet all of the specific requirements in the guidelines.

Statement of Purpose

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

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

- Pedestrian-oriented building and site design;
- Mixed-use buildings;
- Density;
- Small scale storefronts;
- Creativity and eclecticism.

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

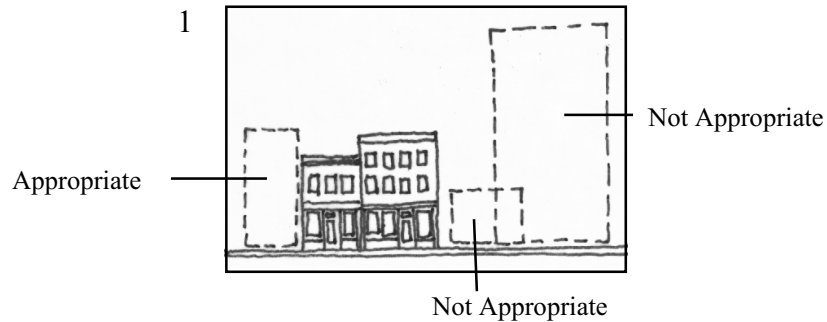
- The easy identification of the Elmwood Village as a unique place within the City and the region;
- A lively and active street life along Elmwood Avenue;
- The promotion of safe and pleasant pedestrian access to and around the Elmwood Village;
- The promotion of small-scale commercial enterprises that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

The guidelines that follow give minimum standards for meeting these goals. People are encouraged to find other creative ways of meeting these goals that can further enhance the community.

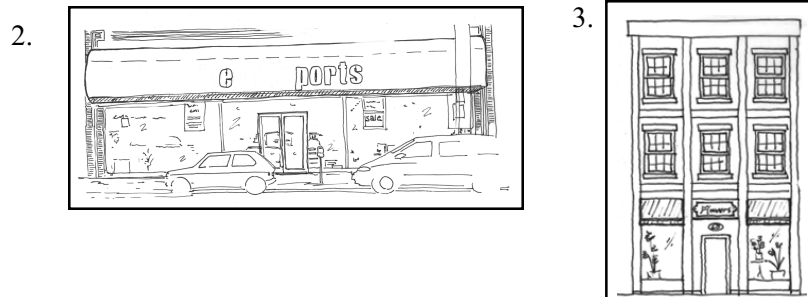
Design Recommendations

I. Scale: New buildings should maintain the predominant scale of the other buildings in the Elmwood Village.

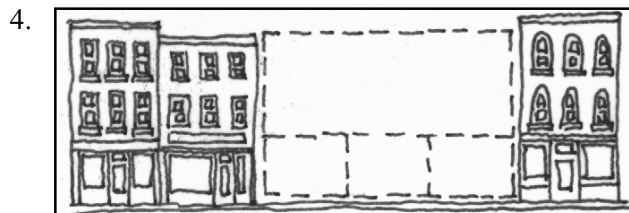
- A. New buildings should respect the predominant height of buildings along Elmwood Avenue (1). The predominant height of buildings in the Elmwood Village is three stories, sometimes with the three story portion located behind a one or two story storefront. This height provides noise separation between the residential portions of the Elmwood Village and the commercial 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 generally considered inappropriate.



- B. The floor-to-floor height of the ground floor story should be approximately 15 - 18 feet tall (2) or approximately 50% greater than the upper story floor-to-floor heights (3).

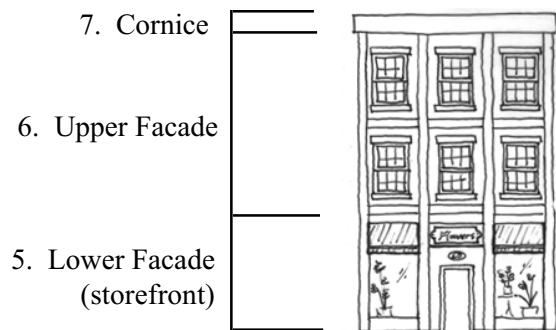


- C. New storefronts should respect the predominant width of storefronts on Elmwood, which tends to be not more than 25' wide. Where a new storefront is intended to be wider than this, it should incorporate architectural elements, such as bays, columns, and divided windows, that allow it to appear to be several smaller storefronts (4) and that would allow it to be subdivided into smaller storefronts in the future.

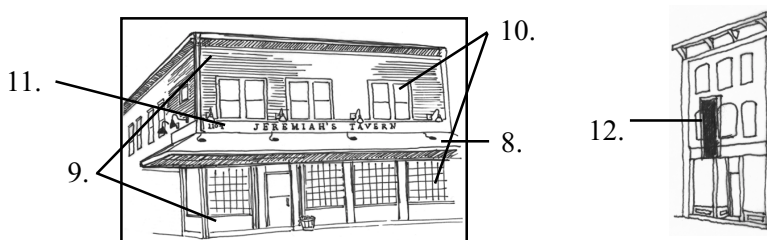


- II. General Design:** Architectural designs and details that respect the character of the Elmwood Village Commercial District should be incorporated to keep buildings from looking bland, break up the mass of larger buildings, and create a strong pedestrian orientation.

- D. Buildings should follow a traditional organizational composition, including a strongly articulated lower facade (5), an identifiable upper facade (6), and a decorative cornice (7) capping the building.



- E. Buildings should create visual separation between the lower facade and the upper facade, as this creates a strong orientation toward the pedestrian. Some design elements that are particularly successful in creating this separation include utilizing canopies (8), varying textures (9), varying window patterns (10), incorporating sign friezes or storefront cornices (11), and avoiding extending signage for ground floor uses to upper floors (12).

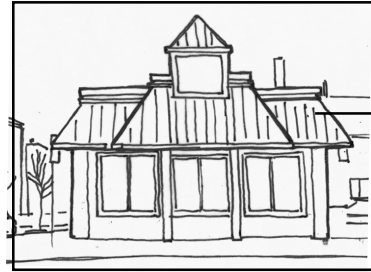


- F. Use design elements, such as window bays, columns, awnings, changes in material or texture, and window and entrance design and placement, in a way that serves to break up the massing of the building.
- G. Incorporate a sufficient amount of detail into buildings so that they do not appear bland. Details on existing buildings, such as transoms, decorative cornices, pilasters, columns, or beltcourses should not be covered up or removed.
- H. 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) are inappropriate.
- I. Buildings built on corners or built 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 facade and incorporate the appropriate details, materials, and fenestration.
- J. Mechanical equipment should be located on the rear of buildings or on the roof, properly screened with a parapet.

- J. Roof design should be functional and in-scale and character with the building and the community. On Elmwood, roofs are generally either front gable steeply-pitched or flat/slightly pitched surrounded by a parapet (13). Under no circumstances should roofs make up more than 25% of the visible facade area of the building (14). 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.



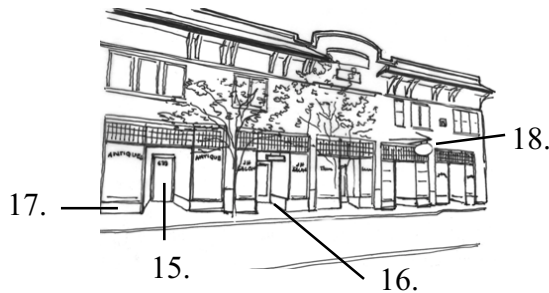
13.



14.

III. Entrances: Entrances should be well-articulated and oriented toward the primary street.

- K. Architectural detail should be incorporated into the ground floor facade in order to create an easily identifiable and welcoming entrance. On Elmwood this is typically accomplished through: recessed entries placed between two display windows (15); decorative or distinctive entryway paving (16); bulkheads of contrasting materials (17) - note that bulkheads should not extend higher than 30" from the ground plane; and/or perpendicular signage or awnings placed directly over the entrance (18).



17.

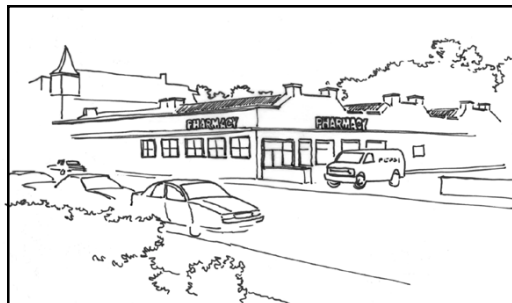
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18.

- L. Major entrances should be oriented toward the primary street and should typically be located in the center of the building facade (or storefront where more than one storefront is located in a single building). Under no circumstances should a building's primary entry be located through a parking lot (19).

19.

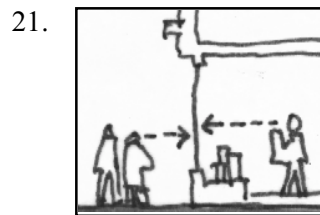


- IV. Fenestration: Window design should respect the window patterns (including size, proportion, spacing, and rhythm) of the street. First floor window and display design should create a feeling of transparency on the ground floor of the building. This contributes to a sense of safety and is welcoming to pedestrians.**

- M. The viewing zone of the first floor facade (from 2' to 8' above the ground plane) should be made up of approximately 75% clear 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 (20). This amount of clear, 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 facade and incorporate these fenestration patterns, unless doing so would be unduly obtrusive into a primarily residential street.



- N. Sill heights for window displays should not exceed 30". Window displays are encouraged, but visibility into the building from the sidewalk should be maintained (21).



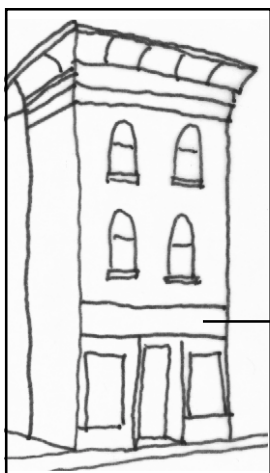
- O. Display windows should generally be designed as large full glass openings. Smaller panes or ornamentation on storefront windows should generally be reserved for clerestories or sidelight areas so as not to present a residential or fake historic character.
- P. Upper stories should incorporate window patterns and designs that are compatible with and complimentary to existing upper story window patterns on the block.
- Q. 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. Clear glazing should be retained and not replaced with tinted glass or any opaque material.
- R. Security devices such as coiling shutters and accordion gates are not permitted 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.

Signage and Awnings:

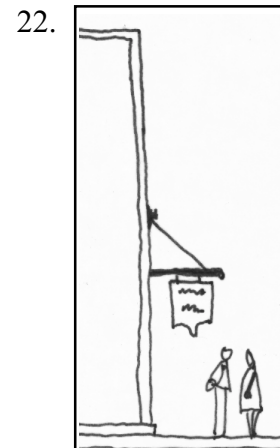
Signage and awnings should be pedestrian-oriented in size, placement, material, and color.

- S. 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 (22). No more than one horizontal sign per establishment should generally 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.

- T. Wall signs attached flush to the building facade 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 sign board spot above the first floor windows and entryway where wall signs can be attached (23).



- U. Signs for ground floor establishments should not extend past the ground floor facade (see illustration 12).
- V. Free-standing pole signs should not be used under any circumstances. Free-standing signs (24) 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 on Elmwood Avenue). 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.



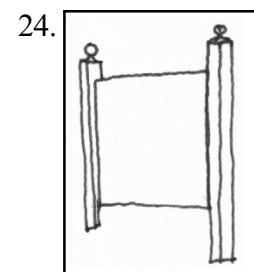
- W. Under no circumstances should signs or awnings be attached to a building in such a way that obscures or damages significant architectural elements of the building.

- X. 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. Lettering and logos are permitted on the valance flap of the awning but lettering is generally discouraged on the main body of the awning.

- Y. Under no circumstances should so-called plastic-formed or vacuum-formed awnings or any other style of awning whose primary purpose is to act as signage be permitted.

- Z. Under no circumstances should awnings or signs be back-lit 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.

- AA. Neon signs and accents are a part of the character of the Elmwood Village Commercial 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.



Site: Site design should be oriented toward the pedestrian.

- BB. 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.
- CC. 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 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.
- DD. New site uses should accommodate existing mature trees and all sites should incorporate appropriate landscaping.
- EE. 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.
- FF. Dumpsters should be completely and attractively screened from the public right of way.