

DIVISION 12. - DOWNTOWN AREA DESIGN GUIDELINES

- [Sec. 114-822. - Purpose and intent.](#)
- [Sec. 114-823. - Definitions.](#)
- [Sec. 114-824. - Mapped district.](#)
- [Sec. 114-825. - Land uses.](#)
- [Sec. 114-826. - Prohibitions and exemptions.](#)
- [Sec. 114-827. - Applicability.](#)
- [Sec. 114-828. - Administration.](#)
- [Sec. 114-829. - Evaluation criteria.](#)
- [Secs. 114-830—114-840. - Reserved.](#)

Sec. 114-822. - Purpose and intent.

It is the general intent of this division to control and regulate the development of land within the downtown area through the process of design review in order to:

- (1) Encourage urban design excellence.
- (2) Integrate urban design and preservation of Racine's heritage into the process of downtown development and redevelopment.
- (3) Enhance the character of the downtown area.
- (4) Promote the development of diversity and areas of special character within the downtown area.
- (5) Provide pedestrians with a pleasant, rich and diverse experience.
- (6) Provide for the humanization of the downtown area through the promotion of youth, senior citizen and arts uses and programs.
- (7) Assist in creating a 24-hour downtown area that is safe, humane and prosperous.
- (8) Assure that new development is at a human scale and that it relates to the character and scale of the downtown area.

(Ord. No. 17-99, pt. 2, 12-7-99)

Sec. 114-823. - Definitions.

For purposes of this division the following phrases have the meaning indicated:

In this chapter, *downtown area* means the area described as follows:

Begin at a point being on the centerline of North Wisconsin Avenue approximately 190 feet north of the intersection of the centerlines of North Wisconsin Avenue and Hamilton Street; from said beginning point proceed east to the **center** east line of **Main** Chatham Street, then north along

PART II - MUNICIPAL CODE
Chapter 114 - ZONING
ARTICLE VII. - SUPPLEMENTARY DISTRICT REGULATIONS
DIVISION 12. - DOWNTOWN AREA DESIGN GUIDELINES

said ~~center east line 90 feet~~ **to the centerline of Hubbard Street**; then easterly ~~along the Hubbard Street centerline 114 feet~~; then north 100 feet; then easterly 82 feet to the west line of Michigan Boulevard; then southerly along said west line 200 feet; the east to a line being the western shore of Lake Michigan **(including those lands found south of the easterly extended centerline of the Root River and the harbor's south breakwater)**; then southerly along said line to a point on the extended centerline of Tenth Street; then west along said extended centerline to a point on the centerline of Wisconsin Avenue; then north along said centerline to a point on the centerline of Ninth Street; then west along said centerline to a point on the centerline of College Avenue; then north along said centerline to a point on the centerline of Eight Street; then west along said centerline to a point on the centerline of Grand Avenue; then south along said centerline to a point on the centerline of Ninth Street; then west along said centerline to a point on the western line of the former Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad right-of-way; then southwest along said western line to a point on the centerline of Tenth Street; then west along said centerline to a point on the centerline of Racine Street; then north along said centerline to a point on the centerline of Ninth Street; then west-southwest along said centerline to a point on the **center line of Harrbridge Avenue**; ~~east line of the Union Pacific (a.k.a. Chicago and Northwestern) Railroad right-of-way~~; then northwest along said **centerline** east line to **a point on the centerline of the Root River**; a point on the centerline of Liberty Street; then east along said centerline to a point on the centerline of **Memorial Drive** ~~Marquette Street~~; then **north** south along said centerline to a point on the **centerline of West Sixth Street** line being the southern shore of the Root River; then easterly along said **centerline** shoreline to a point on the **westline of the Union Pacific (a.k.a. Chicago and Northwestern) Railroad right-of-way**; then **northwesterly on said west line to a point on the centerline of Liberty Street**; then west along said centerline to a point on the centerline of North Memorial Drive; then **north-northwesterly along said centerline to a point on the centerline of West Street**; then east along said centerline-extended to a point on the centerline of LaSalle Street; then north along said centerline to a point on the centerline of Prospect Street; then east along said centerline to a point on the centerline of Douglas Avenue; then north along said centerline to a point on the centerline of Hamilton Street; then east along said centerline to a point on the centerline of North Wisconsin Avenue; then north along said centerline to the point of beginning.

Downtown area design review commission ("design review commission"). Design review commission means the commission established by section 114-828, having the authority to review activities as described in this division.

Maintenance activities. Maintenance activities means those activities directed at keeping the property in proper condition and do not alter the property's exterior design features. Examples of maintenance activities include tuck pointing and repainting of surfaces that have previously been painted.

PART II - MUNICIPAL CODE
Chapter 114 - ZONING
ARTICLE VII. - SUPPLEMENTARY DISTRICT REGULATIONS
DIVISION 12. - DOWNTOWN AREA DESIGN GUIDELINES

(Ord. No. 17-99, pt. 2, 12-7-99; Ord. No. 10-06, pt. 1, 5-24-06)

Sec. 114-824. - Mapped district.

(a) The downtown area design guidelines shall be implemented through the imposition of this division's regulation as an overlay district, supplementing the existing underlying zoning districts within the downtown area.

(b) Sub-districts within the Downtown area are: River, State Street corridor, Marquette corridor, Sixth and Seventh Streets corridor, Main Street corridor, Marina, and Gaslight. Each sub-district presents opportunities and challenges that warrant individual design considerations as contained in the "Downtown Design Standards" adopted by common council resolution number 06-7041 on May 16, 2006.

~~(c) The Access Corridor Development Review Committee shall review projects within the River sub-district located west, north and northwest of the Root River, and areas within the State Street corridor sub-district, using the design considerations contained in the "Downtown Design Standards" adopted by common council resolution number 06-7041 of May 16, 2006.~~

(Ord. No. 17-99, pt. 2, 12-7-99; Ord. No. 20-06, pt. 3, 5-24-06)

Sec. 114-825. - Land uses.

(a) All permitted uses and conditional uses as allowed by the underlying zoning districts shall likewise be allowed in the downtown area.

(b) *The following uses may be allowed by conditional use permit in addition to those uses described in (a) above:*

- 1. Boat luanches, piers, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, private retaining walls and private storm water facilities.***
- 2. East of the Marquette Street: outdoor storage of watercraft typically carried overland on trailers on parcels directly adjacent to the Root River.***
- 3. Throughout the Downtown Area: outdorr storage of watercraft typically carried manually, such as canoes and kayaks.***
- 4. Outdoor storage of recreation equipment as an accessroy use.***
- 5. For lands in a I-2 District, land uses which are otherwise permitted uses but may create noise, heat, vibration, or radiation, which are detectable at the property line, or involve materials which pose a significant safety hazard.***
- 6. For lands in a B-5 District, industrial land uses which are***

PART II - MUNICIPAL CODE
Chapter 114 - ZONING
ARTICLE VII. - SUPPLEMENTARY DISTRICT REGULATIONS
DIVISION 12. - DOWNTOWN AREA DESIGN GUIDELINES

otherwise not permitted therein.

7. Uses which are otherwise not permitted unless under the control of a Flex Development overlay or a Planned Development conditional use permit.

(Ord. No. 17-99, pt. 2, 12-7-99)

Sec. 114-826. - Prohibitions and exemptions.

In the downtown area, the following prohibitions and exemptions shall apply:

(1) No person shall undertake any new exterior construction activity, any building expansion, or any exterior renovation/rehabilitation activity for projects whose impact will result in the alteration of the visual character or impact of the facade without first making application to the design review commission and receiving approval from the design review commission and/or common council as prescribed in this division, nor without receiving all applicable permits.

(2) No person shall install new or replacement signs, regardless of value, without first making application to the design review commission and receiving approval from the design review commission and/or common council as prescribed in this division, nor without receiving all applicable permits.

(3) Signs advertising occasional sales, services or events are exempt from the requirements of subsection 114-826(2) of this division.

(4) Maintenance and repair activities that do not alter the property's exterior design features are exempt from the requirements of this division.

(5) Outdoor storage of products, equipment, and other materials (as a primary or accessory use) unless otherwise noted in Sec. 114-825.

(6) Public recreation facilities which involve no pavement or buildings.

(7) Essential services as defined by Section 114-238.

(Ord. No. 17-99, pt. 2, 12-7-99; Ord. No. 10-02, pt. 1, 6-18-02; Ord. No. 20-06, pt. 4, 5-24-06; Ord. No. 4-10, pt. 1, 5-4-10)

Sec. 114-827. - Applicability.

(a) Persons contemplating a project in the Downtown Area should review the Downtown Design Guidelines and Downtown Design Standards adopted by common council resolutions Res. 06-7040 and Res. 06-7041 of May 16, 2006, as guides in understanding the purpose, scope and intent of this division.

(b) The design guidelines expressed in this division shall apply to all facilities such as, but not limited to, office, commercial, residential facilities containing five or more living units, lodging, museum,

PART II - MUNICIPAL CODE
Chapter 114 - ZONING
ARTICLE VII. - SUPPLEMENTARY DISTRICT REGULATIONS
DIVISION 12. - DOWNTOWN AREA DESIGN GUIDELINES

theater, governmental, parking and utility. All facilities, regardless of type, must be designed with the following considerations.

(1) *Context.* The facility is designed in a manner that is mindful of and complementary to the existing building and natural environment. The facility should strengthen and enhance the characteristics of the setting, or at least maintain key unifying architectural or natural patterns. Existing facilities need not be mirrored in every aspect, but rather used as a starting point in the development of a design.

(2) *Harmony.* The facility utilizes materials, forms and colors that serve as unifying elements with the surrounding built and natural environment. Such uniformity is not intended to inhibit creativity, innovation and individuality in the overall design of a facility.

(3) *Conformance.* The facility does not detract from those architectural details found to be most successful and prominent in historical and landmark downtown area structures.

(4) *Linkages.* The facility reflects the individuality of the specific area or district in which it is located and, if reasonably possible, articulates identifiable architectural patterns.

(5) *Compatibility.* The facility should be compatible with nearby buildings' architectural scale, color, rhythm and proportions.

(6) *Historical integrity.* The facility respects the unique historical context of the downtown area. Rehabilitation, remodeling and addition projects shall retain, wherever practicable, the original structure's character, scale and composition. Distinctive stylistic features or examples of skilled craftsmanship shall be retained and preserved wherever practicable.

(7) *View opportunities.* The facility is sensitive to new and existing opportunities with which to observe and enjoy surrounding points of interest and activity.

(8) *Quality.* The facility incorporates materials and design features that convey permanence, durability and quality.

(9) *Environmental sensitivity.* The facility should incorporate materials, construction techniques, systems and design methods that increase energy efficiency. Use of salvaged materials or reuse of existing materials is encouraged when appropriate. Materials should be used that are not harmful to the environment, not only during their use in the facility but also in their production.

(c) Planned developments as defined in article III, division 3, of this chapter shall not require review under article VII, division 12 of this chapter.

(Ord. No. 17-99, pt. 2, 12-7-99; Ord. No. 20-06, pt. 5, 5-24-06)

Sec. 114-828. - Administration.

(a) A downtown area design review commission is hereby created. Membership on the design review commission shall consist of the director of city development, a common council alderperson representing the downtown area, a member of the landmarks preservation commission, a member of the Downtown Racine Corporation or similar successor organization, a registered architect or building design professional, a person operating a retail business within the downtown area, an at-large member and a person owning property within the downtown area. All members of the design review commission shall be residents of the City of Racine. The director of city development shall act as

PART II - MUNICIPAL CODE
Chapter 114 - ZONING
ARTICLE VII. - SUPPLEMENTARY DISTRICT REGULATIONS
DIVISION 12. - DOWNTOWN AREA DESIGN GUIDELINES

secretary of the design review commission and shall be responsible for scheduling meetings, preparing agendas and minutes and keeping records of the commission. The citizen members of the design review commission shall be appointed by the mayor, subject to the confirmation of the common council. Vacancies shall be filled in the same manner.

(b) Citizen members of the design review commission shall be appointed for a period of three years. If they no longer qualify under the category for which they were appointed, their term shall expire. The other members shall serve during the time they hold their respective offices. Except for initial appointments, appointments shall be made on November 1.

(c) The design review commission shall review applications for conformance with the downtown design guidelines for all new exterior construction activities, all building expansions, and all exterior renovation/rehabilitation activities having a project cost of \$5,000.00 or more in the aggregate.

(d) Application for design review shall be made to the director of city development.

(e) The design review commission shall review applications during open meetings. Reviews shall be conducted within 30 days after a complete application is filed with the director of city development or the activity shall be deemed approved.

(f) The design review commission shall issue written findings to the chief building inspector within 21 days after the application was filed with the director of city development. The written findings shall indicate whether or not the proposed activity being reviewed meets the downtown area design guidelines, and the findings shall be immediately transmitted to the applicant. If the design guidelines are found not to be met, the applicant may file revised plans for review by the design review commission addressing any deficiencies.

(g) The chief building inspector shall issue building and/or occupancy permits within the downtown area for projects requiring review by the design review commission, after receiving written approval by the design review commission, or in the event of an appeal, by the common council, except as otherwise provided herein, and in addition to other approvals required by law, ordinance or regulation.

(h) An applicant may appeal a decision of the design review commission if the commission finds that the proposed activity is not in conformance with the downtown area design guidelines. The appeal shall be filed with the department of city development within 30 days after the design review commission issues its written decision. Appeal shall be made to the city plan commission and filed with the director of city development. The plan commission shall consider the appeal and make a recommendation to the common council within 30 days after the appeal was filed.

(Ord. No. 17-99, pt. 2, 12-7-99; Ord. No. 8-01, pt. 1, 3-6-01; Ord. No. 15-04, pt. 5, 4-19-04)

Sec. 114-829. - Evaluation criteria.

The following design guidelines evaluation criteria shall be used to determine if a proposed activity fulfills the objectives of this division:

(1) *Traffic circulation.* All vehicular and pedestrian circulation systems shall provide adequate and reasonably safe access through the downtown, and should promote a pedestrian friendly environment.

(2) Environmental Design. All projects should incorporate sustainable

environmental design, processes and practices.

(3) (2) Building-Arrangement.

a. The layout, mass, orientation and height of the structures on the site, ***including areas for use by motorized vehicles for circulation, parking and storage,*** should allow for appropriate use of the proposed development in light of surrounding uses, traffic patterns, pedestrian facilities, neighboring and opposite structures, and topography. The arrangement of structures on the site shall also be evaluated for their potential impact on the provision of city services, such as access for emergency vehicles.

b. The setback of structures shall conform to those of the underlying zoning district unless the following criteria provide a greater distance:

1. From surface water (OHWM), floodway, or 100 year floodplain: 60 feet from the mapped or surveyed limits.

2. From open drainage channels: 25 feet from th OHWM if documentalbe, or from the centerline of the channel if not documented.

3. From slopes exceeding 12%: 25 feet from the top of the slope, and from the bottom of the slope.

4. From a designated habitat area: 25 feet.

5. From a Primary Environmental Corridor, Secondary Environmental Corridor, Isolated Natural Feature, as identified by the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, as recognized or modified by the City of Racine: 25 feet.

6. Reductions of the setbacks listed in 1-5 above may be approved through the conditional use process, if environmental protection objectives are accomplished to the same or greater degree.

(4)(3) Project Building design. All ***projects*** buildings shall be designed with attention and sensitivity to the historical, architectural, and physical context in which they are, or are to be located. Special attention should be paid to the sidewalk level of buildings through the creation of pedestrian orientated details. ***Project Building***-design considerations are as follows:

a. General requirements are that all buildings should have ***a unified design treatment and ;*** finished construction on all sides; ***facades facing the river***

PART II - MUNICIPAL CODE
Chapter 114 - ZONING
ARTICLE VII. - SUPPLEMENTARY DISTRICT REGULATIONS
DIVISION 12. - DOWNTOWN AREA DESIGN GUIDELINES

shall be considered in design and function as if a street facade; any roof treatments or parapets shall extend completely around the building; and all rooftop equipment shall be screened from view.

b. Scale of buildings should generally not exceed ten stories in height. However, building heights along Main Street and 6th Street should not exceed five stories unless the succeeding stories are terraced back from the street setback line a minimum distance of 35 feet. No building should project the appearance of being less than a two story height.

c. Facades should exhibit rhythms similar to those found in adjacent structures. Long, unbroken, monolithic or unarticulated facades shall not be utilized.

d. Windows should be recessed from the facade. Street level facades should have storefront glazing or details that suggest a similar relief in the facade. Glazing should be transparent. Non-storefront windows should, at minimum, be double hung, true divided lites and be operable or project the appearance of being operable.

e. Bays and doorways should be developed consistent with the historic character of existing buildings in the downtown area. Bays should be sheathed with materials that contrast, yet complement the building walls. Doors should be transparent with multiple or single lites. Corner entries and recessed doorways are encouraged.

f. Walls exposed to the exterior should be constructed of materials providing a sense of longevity and permanence. Buildings should maintain and foster the use of masonry as the primary exterior wall cladding material.

g. Color selection for exterior surfaces, materials and equipment should not detract from the surrounding area. Neon and fluorescent tones are discouraged.

h. Rooflines of buildings should be compatible with the silhouette of buildings along the existing streetscape. Roof shape, surface material, colors, mechanical equipment and other penthouse functions should be integrated into the total building design. Roof mounted mechanicals should be hidden from view by parapets, screening walls or enclosures installed as an integral part of the architectural design. Buildings less than three stories in height shall not have gable-end or sloped roofs. Mansard roofs are discouraged.

i. Awnings and canopies are encouraged. If provided, they should be designed as an integral component of the building facade. A fixed or retractable canvas awning, designed to be sensitive to the environment into which it is to be introduced, is appropriate. Awnings or canopies shall not be used as a primary means of signage.

(5)~~(4)~~ *Parking and loading layout.* Proposed parking and truck loading facilities shall be designed, located and screened to minimize adverse visual impact on adjacent properties.

(6)~~(5)~~ *Landscaping.* Landscaping design should enhance the overall appearance of the downtown area, create a logical transition to adjacent development, screen incompatible structures and uses, and minimize the visual impact of parking facilities on adjacent sites and roadways. Plant materials shall be selected so as to withstand the city's climate and the microclimate on the property.

PART II - MUNICIPAL CODE
Chapter 114 - ZONING
ARTICLE VII. - SUPPLEMENTARY DISTRICT REGULATIONS
DIVISION 12. - DOWNTOWN AREA DESIGN GUIDELINES

(7) ~~(6)~~ *Signage.* Signs should be minimal in number and size. Placement of signs shall not unduly obscure or interfere with sight lines to other properties. Signs should be architecturally compatible and contribute to the historic character of the area through the incorporation of tasteful presentations utilizing appropriate logos, symbols, graphics and/or text. Free-standing signs should incorporate architectural features or materials of the buildings or facilities they are intended to promote. Signs shall comply with all zoning requirements.

(8) ~~(7)~~ *Site illumination.* Site illumination shall be designed, located and installed so as to minimize adverse impacts on adjacent streets and properties, provide security, and enhance the overall quality of the development. Some site illumination design considerations are as follows:

- a. Exterior building lighting may be used to articulate a particular building design or accentuate an outstanding architectural feature. Neon silhouette accent lighting, bulb or flashing lighting, or fluorescent lighting is inappropriate.
- b. Parking lot and walkway lighting should relate a pedestrian scale and be sensitive to the historic atmosphere of the downtown area.

(9) ~~(8)~~ *Historic preservation.* Preservation of unique historic or architectural landmarks is encouraged. Development designs that do not detract from desirable architectural resources on surrounding sites are also encouraged.

(10) Modifications to criteria. The above criteria may be modified by provisions of the Flex Development overlay, a Planned Development conditional use permit, or by administrative discretion as may be afforded by this Chapter.

(Ord. No. 17-99, pt. 2, 12-7-99)

Secs. 114-830—114-840. - Reserved.