

OVER-THE-RHINE



HISTORIC DISTRICT

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HISTORIC CONSERVATION
GUIDELINES FOR NEW CONSTRUCTION



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INTRODUCTION

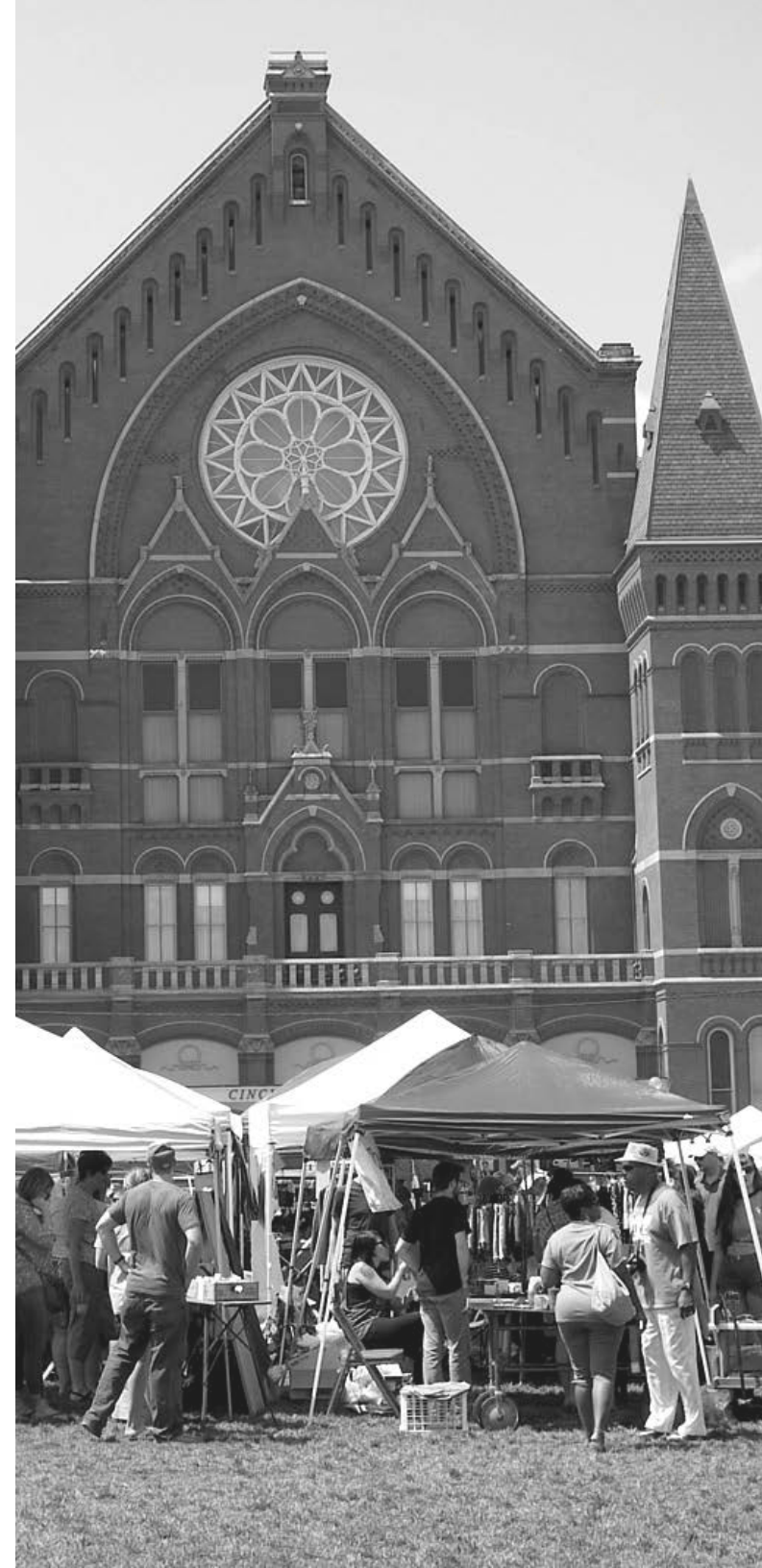
The Over-the-Rhine Historic District is Cincinnati's historic heart, and a national treasure. Few neighborhoods in America inspire like Over-the-Rhine, with its expansive collection of Italianate churches, breweries, and tenements providing one of the best surviving examples in the country of a 19th century urban neighborhood. The Historic District serves not only as the showpiece of Cincinnati's cultural heritage, but also as an economic engine and driver of the local economy. The famed travel historian Arthur Frommer said of the neighborhood, "When I look at [Over-the-Rhine], I see in my mind the possibility of a revived district that literally could rival similar prosperous and heavily visited areas."¹ Indeed, it is precisely the unique historic character of Over-the-Rhine and Pendleton that has fueled the renewal of the area and helped to facilitate a resurgence in the city as a whole.

As a national exemplar for what historic preservation can do, it is essential that the Over-the-Rhine Historic District continue to be preserved and protected so that its status as both a cultural and an economic asset for the city of Cincinnati is maintained. This includes protection not only from demolition of the historic structures that comprise the District, but also from insensitive new construction built on vacant sites in the neighborhood.

New construction has powerful impacts on the fabric and sense of place of the Over-the-Rhine Historic District, and can either enhance the historic character of the District, or damage it in harmful and irreparable ways. Moreover, due to demolition that occurred in the 20th century, new construction will ultimately comprise a very significant portion of the Historic District, and will thus play a substantial role in defining its sense of place.

Scant reference to new infill construction is present in the Revised Over-the-Rhine Historic District Conservation Guidelines of 2003. What is provided lacks clarity of intent and instruction. This document emerges from a need for a more comprehensive and illustrated set of guidelines dedicated to new infill construction, and is designed to provide extensive guidance to owners, architects, developers, city officials, citizen board members and others in the conception and review of appropriate new infill.

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Historic District
is Cincinnati's
historic heart, and
a national treasure.*



These guidelines are intended to provide a regulatory framework for new construction that supports the existing historic architecture and protects the character of the Over-the-Rhine Historic District for current and future generations of Cincinnatians and visitors alike. Definitions of key items are found in the Glossary beginning on p. 57.

The following statements describe the intention of this document:

1. Language used throughout the document is intended to convey the level of importance of compliance with each guideline referenced. Guidelines containing the words “must” or “must not” indicate that the guideline ought to be complied with in all circumstances. Guidelines containing the words “should” or “should not” indicate the intention that the guideline is very important and should be complied with in most cases, while recognizing that some high caliber designs will still comply with the spirit and intent of the Guidelines without strict adherence to the guideline in question, and warrant exemption from these guidelines. Guidelines containing the word “may” indicate the intention that compliance is optional.
2. Illustrations provided in this document are intended to accompany and clarify language provided but do not supersede it.
3. New construction is allowed on vacant sites in the Over-the-Rhine Historic District, because gaps due to demolition weaken the streetscape and the overall character of the District.
4. New construction should support and enhance the historic architecture of the Over-the-Rhine Historic District, and should not overwhelm or detract from the character of the District. The exceptional quality of the existing historic buildings in the District provides an outstanding framework for new construction.
5. New construction should be well-designed, contemporary yet compatible with, and complementary to, the surrounding historic buildings in the District. The understanding and interpretation of patterns in the surrounding historic context is essential to infill design. New construction should honor the patterns found in the height¹, massing, shape, footprint, roofs, openings, and rhythm of the surrounding historic context, but must not replicate the architectural detailing found on historic buildings.
6. The Historic Conservation Board’s review of new construction will focus on the design compatibility with contributing historic structures located within the same block face.² At times, a dearth of extant historic buildings will make it necessary to expand consideration to include historic context on the opposing block face, and/or additional block faces in both directions. Design compatibility will be assessed based on common patterns among these contributing buildings, rather than conditions found on individual contributing buildings. Review of new construction will focus particular attention on massing, scale, height, rhythm, and setback.
7. These guidelines will be used to judge the design compatibility of new construction with the historic architecture of the District.

Note

- 1 See Height Character Map on page 12 to understand the height, scale, and massing characteristics of different parts of the Historic District.
- 2 See Context Hierarchy on page 8. Context reference is based on contributing structures in proximate block faces and blocks. Materials and Openings are exceptions and these may reference contributing structures located throughout the entire District.

HISTORY¹

The Over-the-Rhine Historic District is significant in the continuing history of Cincinnati and the United States. In 1983 the District was listed on the National Register of Historic Places, in recognition of both its exceptional nineteenth-century architecture and its association with the successive waves of German immigration to America in the nineteenth century.

The Historic District's collection of commercial, residential, religious and civic architecture is one of America's largest and most cohesive surviving examples of an urban, nineteenth century community. Similar neighborhoods in other cities have been decimated or lost entirely. The Over-the-Rhine Historic District, however, continues to display its original dense, urban development patterns and buildings of excellent architectural quality, imbuing the neighborhood with a "sense of time and place." Rows of three-to five-story brick buildings constructed along the sidewalk characterize the streetscape. Many buildings have storefronts on the first floor with residential space on the upper floors. The Italianate style is the predominant architectural style in the District. Other nineteenth-century styles, including Federal, Greek Revival, Second Empire, Queen Anne, and Renaissance Revival, add to the flavor of the District.

The District also has many simply designed, working-class buildings that display modest elements of the high architectural styles.

The Over-the-Rhine Historic District encompasses a dense, urban area that displays a visual continuity conveying a sense of time and place. The physical relationship of adjacent buildings in a dense environment is accentuated by the uniform faced lines imposed on the streets. The buildings' consistent scale and height, similar materials, and architectural detailing blend to create distinctive streetscapes reflecting the historic development of the area.

In the nineteenth century Over-the-Rhine and Pendleton were home to businessmen of means and their families, shop owners, working-class families, and the poorest of immigrants. Like other urban centers of the period, this area was part of the 'walking city,' in which most people could easily walk from their homes to places of employment, entertainment, and worship. Building exteriors were designed to be experienced and appreciated by pedestrians along the sidewalks, and buildings were placed at the front of their lots for easy pedestrian access.



PROCESS OF DEVELOPING NEW CONSTRUCTION

Prior to designing an infill building in the Over-the-Rhine Historic District, developers contemplating a new construction project should undertake the following pre-design steps.



01

Understand the historic neighborhood

All successful new construction will emerge from an understanding and respect for the significance of the Over-the-Rhine Historic District as a historical place; it is therefore essential that this understanding be in place before any design efforts have begun. It is recommended that developers and their designers tour the District on foot, and study written materials on the history and significance of Over-the-Rhine.¹

02

Understand the site and surrounding context

Each vacant site in the Over-the-Rhine Historic District is contextually related to the historic buildings in the micro-context surrounding the site. Successful new construction will sensitively integrate into this micro-context. Developers and their designers should tour the area surrounding the site extensively, studying the historic buildings within the same block face and their attributes, including height, massing, setback, proportion, rhythm of openings, composition, and roofscapes. This study should focus on broad patterns that bring cohesiveness to the block face, rather than isolated anomalies on individual buildings. If there is insufficient extant historic context within the block face, developers and their designers should expand their study to the opposing block face and additional block faces in either direction, as described in the Context Hierarchy on page 8. It is also helpful to review Sanborn Fire Insurance maps to gain an understanding of what previously existed on the site, as well as the Height Character Map on page 12 to understand the existing height, scale, and massing characteristics of the historic micro-context.

03

Thoroughly review these guidelines

Once a baseline understanding of the history of the District, the development site, and the surrounding historic micro-context has been achieved, developers and their designers should consult these guidelines to work toward a high-quality design that is compatible with the historic context.

04

Notify the Community

Early in the design process, developers and their designers are encouraged to notify the appropriate community councils and other neighborhood groups of their intent to build. These community groups can provide knowledge, context, and insight to a developer/designer that will aid in the design of the project and assist in obtaining community support. This step also provides an opportunity to enhance the developer/designer's understanding of the Over-the-Rhine Historic District through the transfer of information from long-standing stakeholders in the District.

05

Compliance with Building Codes

Nothing in these guidelines shall prevent new construction from complying with all relevant building codes, including the Americans with Disabilities Act. Building Code and ADA compliance should be a foundation of the design process.

CONTEXT HIERARCHY

The foundational principal of this document is that the existing contributing historic buildings within the Over-the-Rhine Historic District provide an ideal framework for guiding compatible and sensitive new infill development. Accordingly, many of the guidelines herein ask developers and their designers to look to the surrounding historic micro-context to inform key aspects of infill design, such as height, setback, composition, rhythm, window openings, and roof shape.

The levels of contextual reference required in this document begin at the level of greatest proximity to the building site (i.e., the block face) and move outward as necessary.

Insufficient Extant Historic Context: If there are fewer than three (3) non-monumental contributing buildings located within the applicable Level of Contextual Reference, then there is Insufficient Extant Historic Context and the next level of contextual reference shall apply.



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LEVELS OF CONTEXTUAL REFERENCE

01

Block Face

The first level of contextual reference in this document shall be to "non-monumental contributing buildings located within the same block face". The block face is given primacy because it is the most fundamental building block of development in the Over-the-Rhine Historic District. Buildings within the same block face were often developed at or around the same time, under similar site constraints, and as a rule they exhibit similarities in dimensionality, urban design, and architectural language. Due to demolition, however, in some cases there is insufficient extant historic context in a particular block face on which to base important decisions about infill development. In such cases, it is necessary to expand the frame of reference to capture a wider swath of historic context.

02

Block

If insufficient extant historic context is available, the second level of contextual reference shall be to "non-monumental contributing buildings located within the same block". The block widens the contextual reference area to include not just those buildings located within the same block face, but also those contributing buildings located directly across the street on the opposing block face. While opposing block faces do occasionally exhibit significant differences in building typology, use, setback, and height, in general, buildings on opposing block faces share an underlying consistency of rhythm that makes them identifiable as cohesive blocks.

03

Additional Block Faces

After looking at the block, if there is still insufficient extant historic context available, the third level of contextual reference shall be to "non-monumental contributing buildings located within the same block plus the next block face on either side of the subject block face". This is the next most coherent context to inform infill development, as homogeneity of form and design is generally expressed at the street level throughout the Over-the-Rhine Historic District, and adjacent block faces within streets exhibit greater commonality than block faces further down.

If there is still insufficient extant historic context available, the final level of contextual reference shall be to "non-monumental contributing buildings located within the same block plus the next block face on either side of both the subject block face and the opposing block face."



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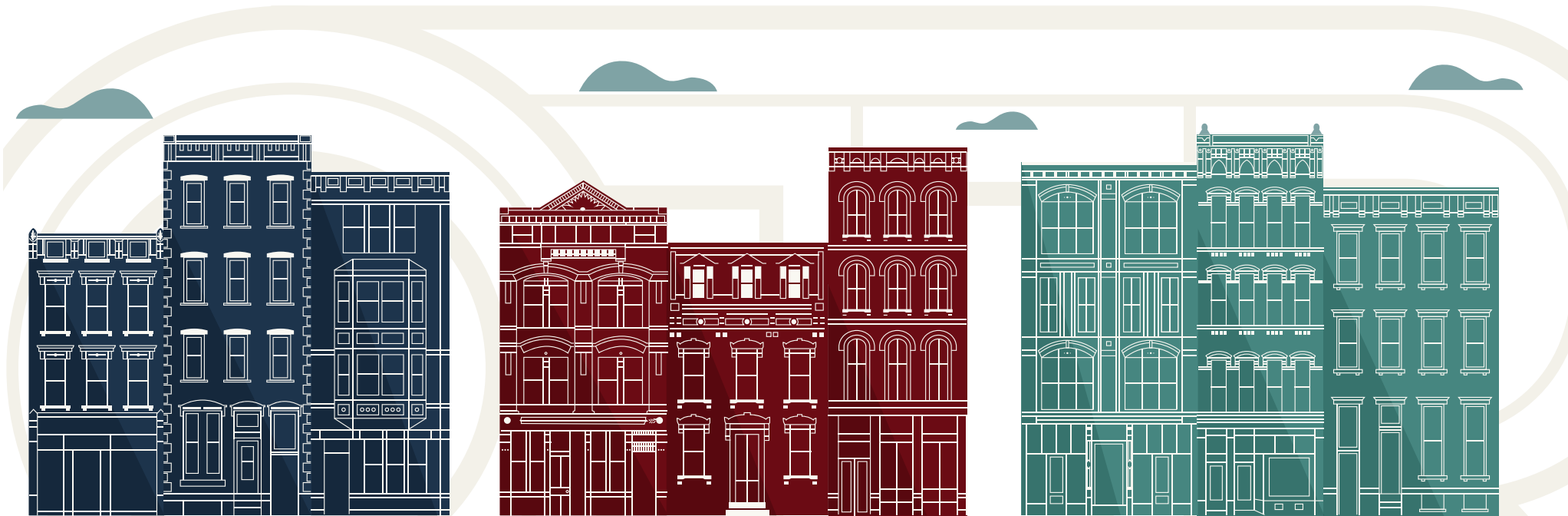
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MASSING, HEIGHT & SCALE

At right: 372 Lafayette Street in New York City demonstrates consistency in width, height, and massing with its historic context.



MASSING, HEIGHT & SCALE

HISTORIC CONTEXT

Massing, Height and Scale are fundamental to the unique identity and character of the Over-the-Rhine Historic District. The District was developed on long, narrow lots of land, resulting in the construction of tall, long, narrow buildings designed to maximize density. Thus, the quintessential building is significantly taller and longer than it is wide, with either a rectangular or “L” shape volume. The massing and height of each building varies from its neighbors, but within a limited range, resulting in the particular scale that defines each block.

The archetypal block in the Over-the-Rhine Historic District ranges from 2-3 stories, to 3-4 stories in height. Several blocks -primarily in the southern half of the District- feature a 3-5 story character. The edge of the Historic District along Central Parkway is distinctly different in character than the rest of the District and features some significantly taller buildings oriented toward the Central Business District and the West End.

Most buildings in the District are relatively narrow, 20-40 feet in width. The northwestern section of the District, reflecting the brewing heritage of the neighborhood, contains many larger footprint industrial buildings. Portions of Central Parkway are characterized by buildings of greater massing than is typical of the District.

The Height Character Analysis Map on the following page is provided to show the block-by-block height character of the Over-the-Rhine Historic District.



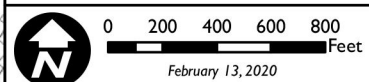
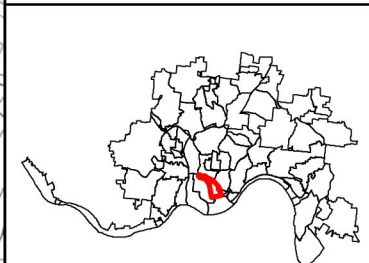
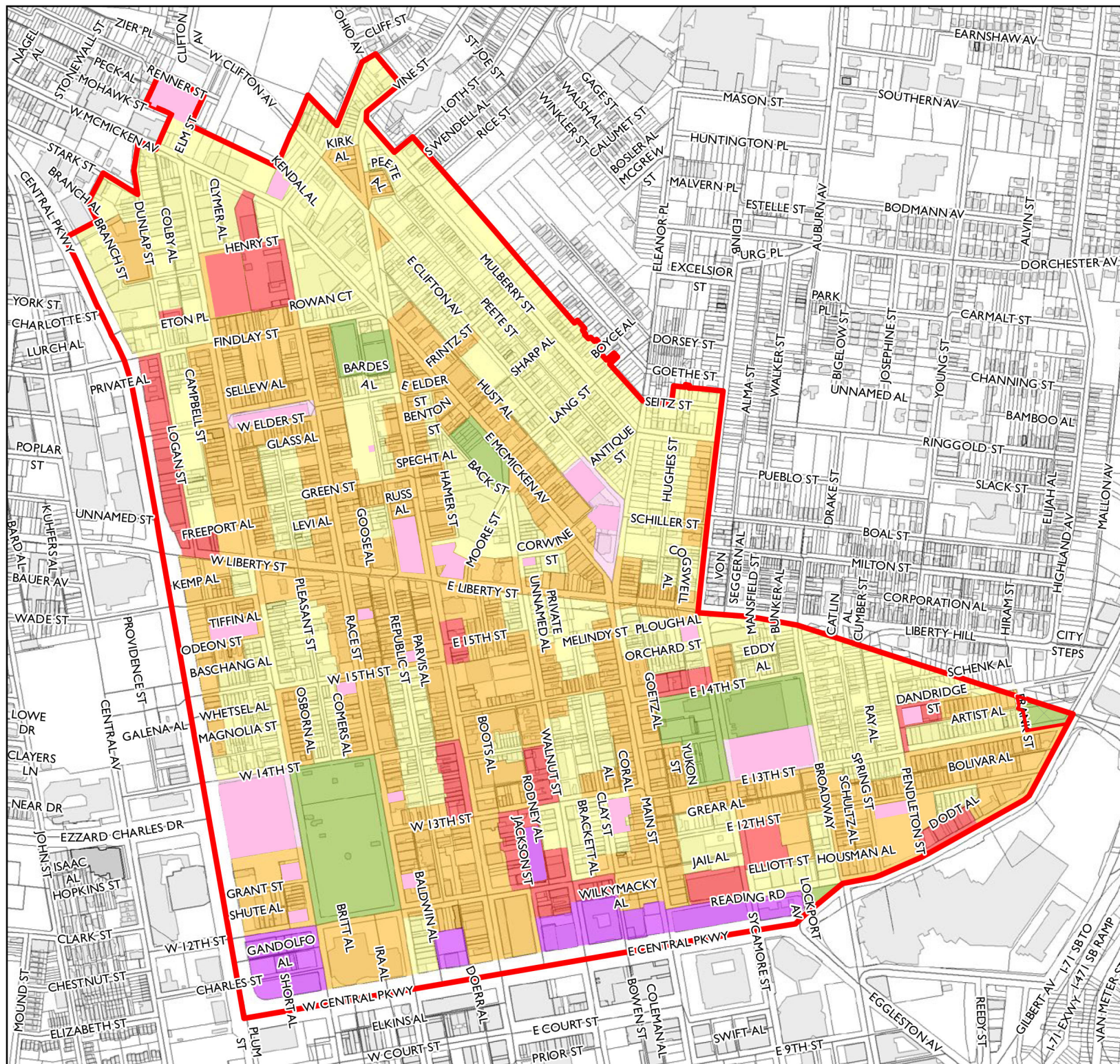
24-30 E. 15th Street typifies the massing, height, and scale of buildings found in the Over-the-Rhine Historic District.



1430-1438 Race Street typifies the massing, height, and scale of buildings found in the Over-the-Rhine Historic District.

Over-the-Rhine Historic District

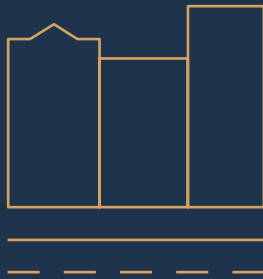
- Over-the-Rhine Historic District
- Buildings
- Building Heights**
 - 2 - 3 Stories
 - 3 - 4 Stories
 - 3 - 5 Stories
 - 5+ Stories
 - Park
 - Monumental Buildings



MASSING, HEIGHT & SCALE

01

The height of new construction should not vary more than one story from adjacent contributing buildings. Most buildings in Over-the-Rhine are between two and five stories.



SETBACK

At right: This building in central Amsterdam responds to its historic context by meeting the edge of all four property lines.

SETBACK

HISTORIC CONTEXT

The Over-the-Rhine Historic District was developed as a dense walking neighborhood with the vast majority of buildings built directly up to the sidewalk. This mostly zero setback environment presents a rich pedestrian experience full of vitality, visual interest, and public access to commercial property. A majority of buildings are also built up to the side lot lines, though some buildings have small side setbacks. In rare cases, small, detached residential buildings are set back from the street using a low, visually-permeable, decorative iron fence to mark the edge. Some larger iconic buildings such as schools, churches, and public buildings are set back from the street to provide public space, adding to their civic monumentality.

The Over-the-Rhine Historic District is dominated by zero setback streetscapes, as seen here in the 1400 block of Vine.



Some block faces have groups of buildings with small front and/or side setbacks, as seen here at 211-217 Orchard Street.



SETBACK

GUIDELINE INTENTION

New buildings are to respect the established setback pattern on the street. A zero lot line setback at the front and on the sides will be the first response to a new construction project unless a majority of other contributing buildings along the block face have setbacks.

01

Buildings should be built with zero setback from front lot lines, side street lot lines, and side alley lot lines, except as defined in 02.¹

02

Buildings should have a front setback if all of the following conditions exist:

- a. The building is a residential building.
- b. The building is not located on a corner lot.
- c. There are at least three non-monumental contributing buildings extant within the same block face, and a majority of these have a front setback of at least 2 feet.
- d. The depth of the setback is consistent with the setbacks of those contributing buildings defined in 02:c.

03

Buildings should be built with zero setback from all interior side lot lines for at least the first 20 feet of depth of the building, except as defined in 04.

04

Buildings should have an interior side setback on one or both sides if all of the following conditions exist:

- a. The building is a residential building.
- b. There are at least three non-monumental contributing buildings extant within the same block face, and a majority of these have an interior side setback on at least one side.
- c. The depth of the setback is consistent with the interior side setbacks of those contributing buildings defined in 04:b.

Note

¹ See Glossary on p. 57 for definition of *articulative recesses* and *setback*.

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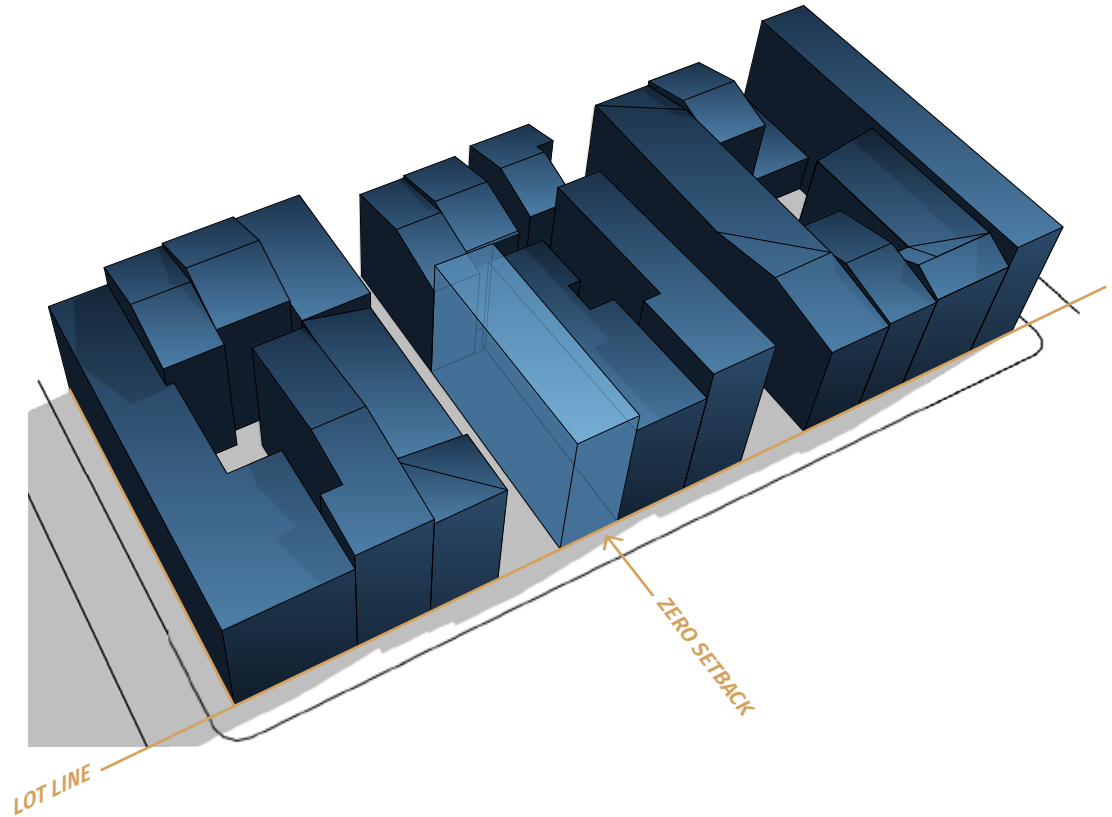
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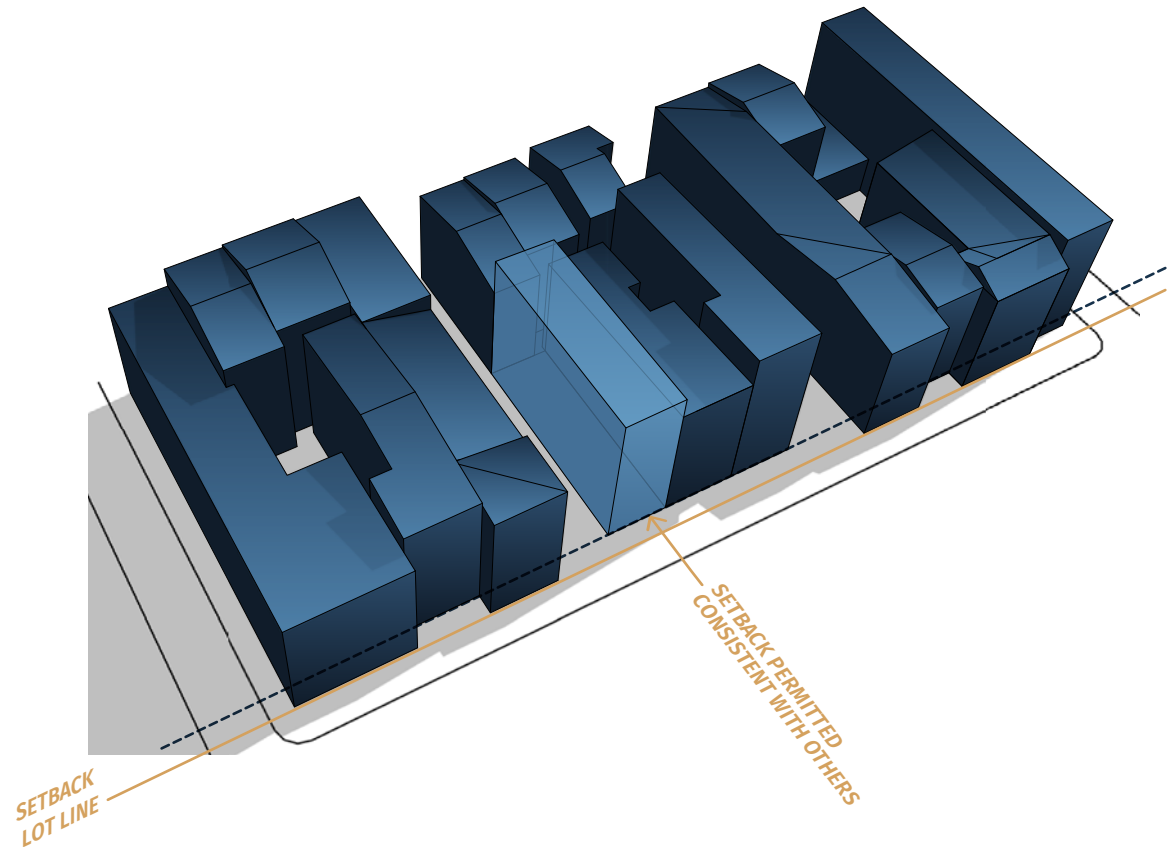
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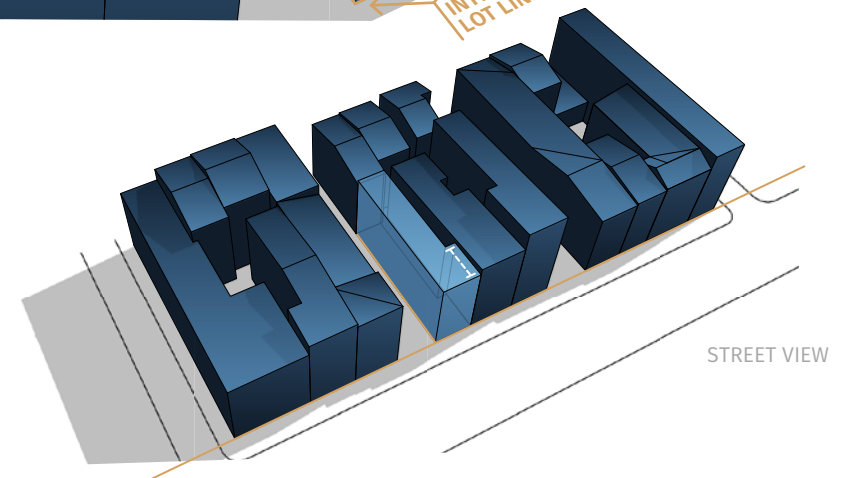
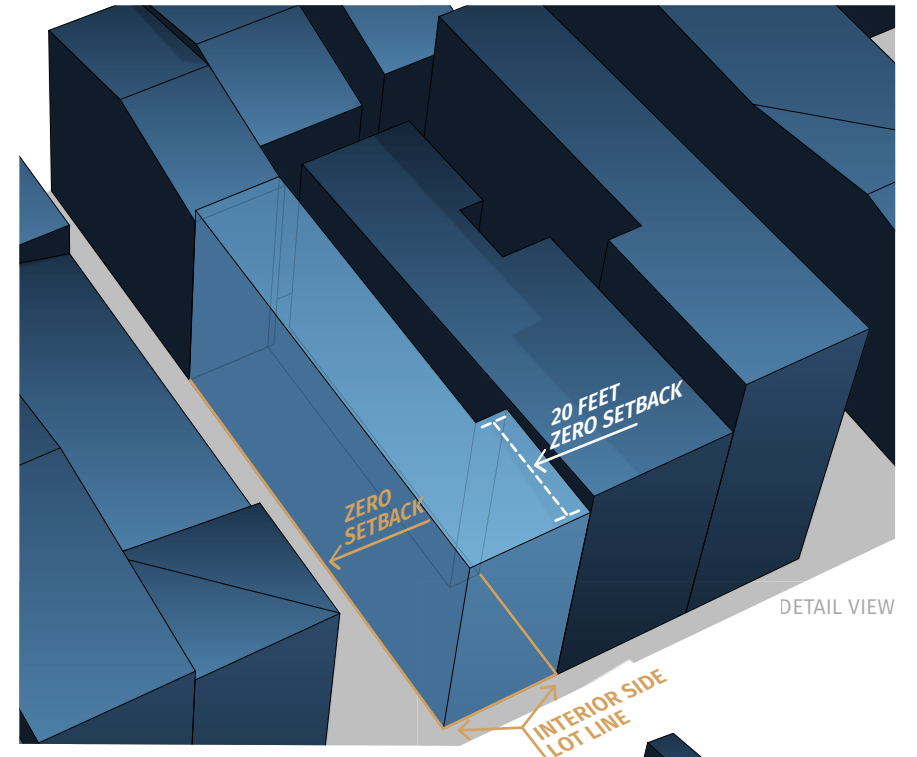
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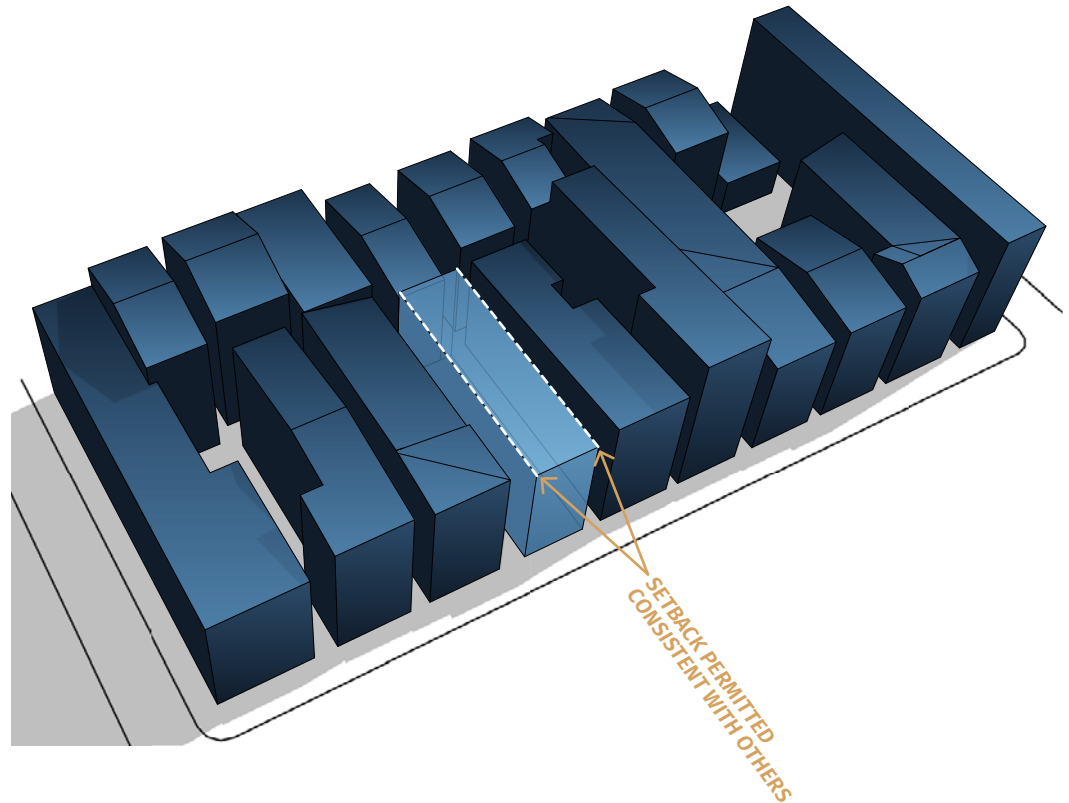
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C. TOP

B. MIDDLE

A. BASE

COMPOSITION



COMPOSITION

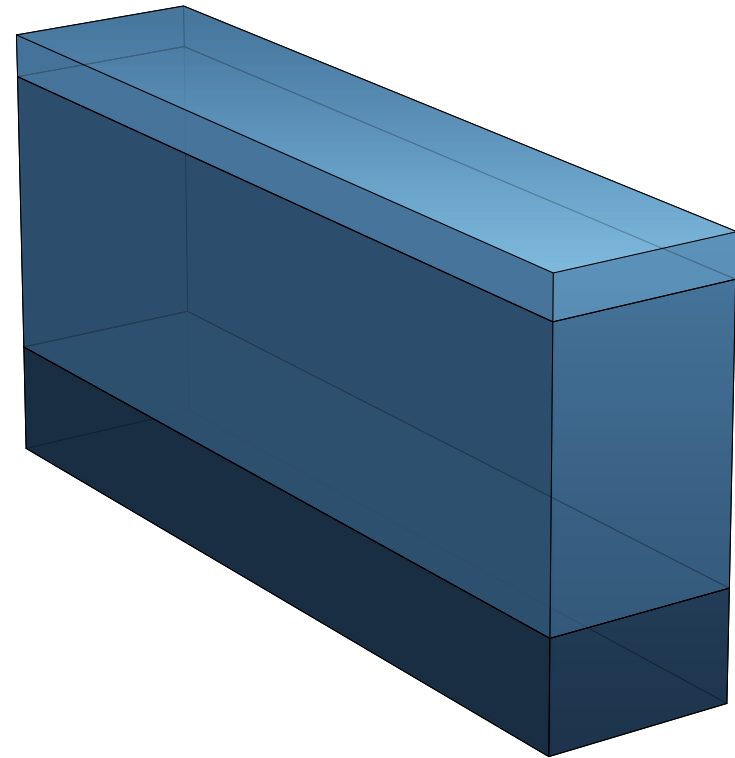
HISTORIC CONTEXT

The typical building in the Over-the-Rhine Historic District has a three-part organization consisting of a base, middle, and top. Each of these elements plays a specific role in the composition of the building.

While there is a distinct difference in the bases of commercial and residential buildings, the middle and top components of buildings in the District are similar across different uses.



1119 and 1121 Walnut Street illustrate the differences between commercial and residential bases.



COMPOSITION: BASE

HISTORIC CONTEXT

Commercial Storefronts

First-floor storefronts are common and are a significant architectural feature in the District's commercial and mixed-use buildings. Storefronts take on a dual role. First, as the place where merchants display their wares, they allow customers to “window shop”, thus providing intimate contact with the pedestrian. Second, by forming the architectural base of the building, they also give scale, rhythm, and texture to the street.

Storefronts are prevalent on commercial arterials but are also found interspersed on predominantly residential streets – particularly on corner buildings. Corner storefronts typically wrap the primary façade to face both streets.

During the latter decades of the 19th-century, most storefronts in the District were built of brick columns faced with sandstone or cast iron pilasters. Architecturally, styles include Greek Revival, Italianate, and Queen Anne. Detailing ranges from very simple stone piers and lintels to very elaborate cast iron columns assembled in a variety of patterns. The exact size, scale and level of detail vary greatly from building to building, but most storefronts share a common design framework.

Residential Bases

Residential bases often consist of a stone foundation, typically rising 9 to 24 inches above grade and capped by a projecting sandstone or limestone water table. Some bases contain windows that provide ventilation and light to the building's basement. Residential bases may also be characterized by the presence of stoops leading to an elevated entry. These stoops vary in height, but are generally consistent in form and height with other stoops within the same block face.



1708 Elm Street exhibits the characteristics of residential bases.



119 E 12th Street exhibits the characteristics of commercial storefronts.

COMPOSITION: BASE

COMMERCIAL/MIXED-USE BUILDINGS

GUIDELINE INTENTION

New storefronts will evoke the scale, verticality, shadow detail, rhythm, and proportionality of historic storefronts in the District.

01

Commercial/mixed-use buildings should have a storefront, and the storefront should conform to the following:

- a. Storefronts should feature the basic components of a storefront system, including a bulkhead, transom windows, display windows, substantial vertical divisions, header/continuous lintel, and primary entry door. They may also include components such as columns, pilasters, sills, and storefront cornice.
- b. Storefronts should span the full width of primary façades and may wrap the corner onto secondary façades.¹
- c. Storefront height should be consistent with the general height of contributing storefronts located within the same block face.²
- d. Storefront windows should be recessed nominally from the plane of the façade.
- e. The ratio of storefront glazing to total storefront area should be consistent with the ratio of storefront glazing to total storefront area on contributing storefronts located within the District.
- f. Storefront glazing should not be covered by systems that obscure the view of the glazing from the public realm.
- g. Storefronts may be operable provided that the division, configuration, orientation, and recess of windows is consistent with the division, configuration, orientation, and recess of windows on contributing storefronts located within the same block face.²

02

Storefronts should be taller than individual upper floors.

03

Commercial/mixed-use buildings may have vehicular entry. Vehicular entry may be placed on a street-facing wall if all of the following conditions exist:

- a. The building is a garage or a commercial building for which parking is a significant part of the program.
- b. There is no feasible or practical alley access, as determined by the Department of Transportation and Engineering, that would permit the placement of vehicular entry on an alley rather than a street-facing wall.
- c. If garage doors are used, they are designed to blend inconspicuously into the wall system.
- d. If garage doors are not used, the vehicular entry and any associated equipment is set back from the plane of the façade.

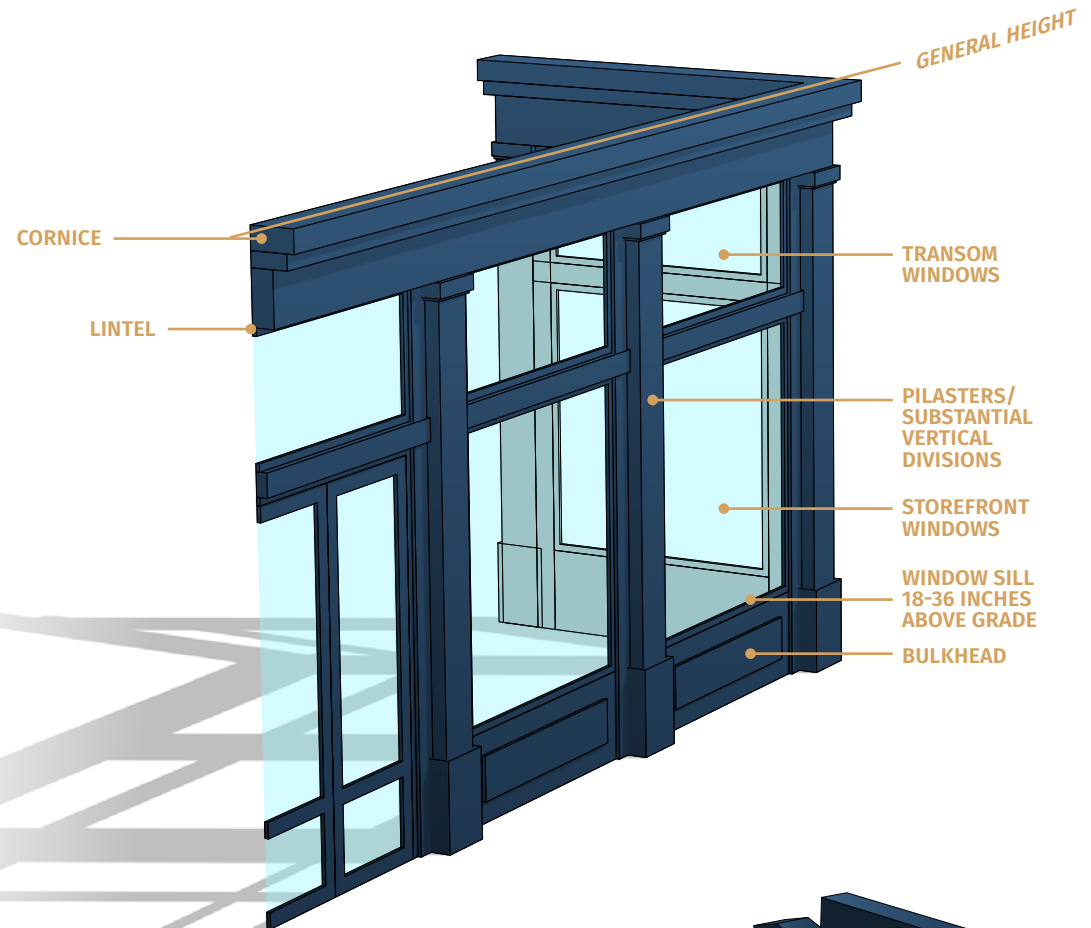
Note

- 1 Storefront height on secondary façades should match the storefront height on the primary façade.
- 2 Must follow the rules for levels of context hierarchy defined on p. 8.

01

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- b. Storefronts should span the full width of primary façades and may wrap the corner onto secondary façades.¹
- c. Storefront height should be consistent with the general height of contributing storefronts located within the same block face.²
- d. Storefront windows should be recessed nominally from the plane of the façade.
- e. The ratio of storefront glazing to total storefront area should be consistent with the ratio of storefront glazing to total storefront area on contributing storefronts located within the District.
- f. Storefront glazing should not be covered by systems that obscure the view of the glazing from the public realm.
- g. Storefronts may be operable provided that the division, configuration, orientation, and recess of windows is consistent with the division, configuration, orientation, and recess of windows on contributing storefronts located within the same block face.²

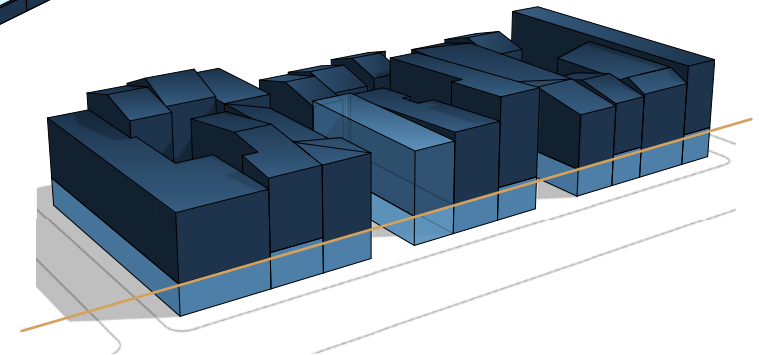


02

Storefronts should be taller than individual upper floors.

Note

- 1 Storefront height on secondary façades should match the storefront height on the primary façade.
- 2 Must follow the rules for levels of context hierarchy defined on p. 8.



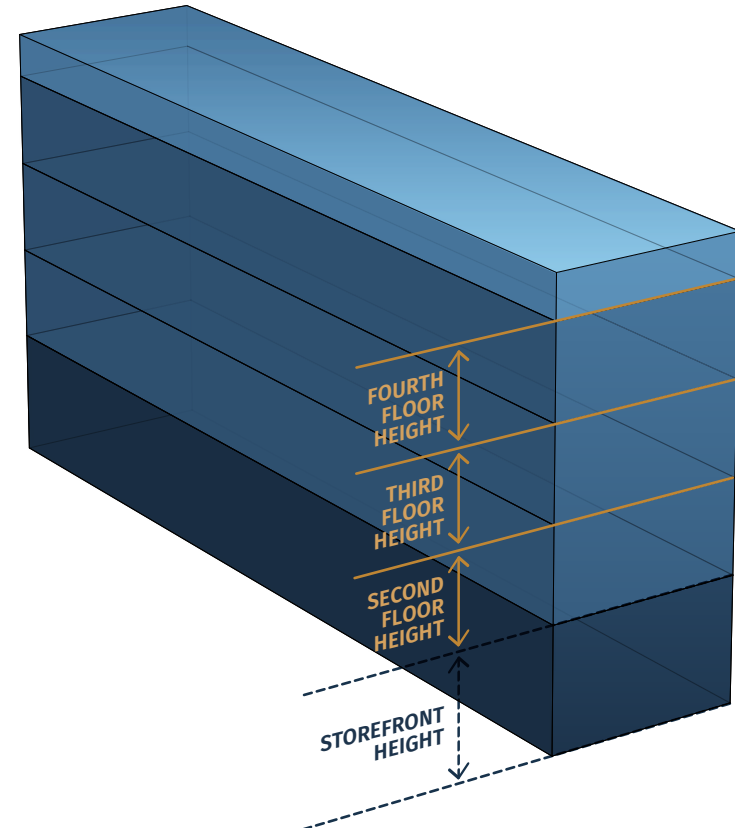
01

Commercial/mixed-use buildings should have a storefront, and the storefront should conform to the following:

- a. Storefronts should feature the basic components of a storefront system, including a bulkhead, transom windows, display windows, substantial vertical divisions, header/continuous lintel, and primary entry door. They may also include components such as columns, pilasters, sills, and storefront cornice.
- b. Storefronts should span the full width of primary façades and may wrap the corner onto secondary façades.
- c. Storefront height should be consistent with the general height of contributing storefronts located within the same block face.
- d. Storefront windows should be recessed nominally from the plane of the façade.
- e. The ratio of storefront glazing to total storefront area should be consistent with the ratio of storefront glazing to total storefront area on contributing storefronts located within the District.
- f. Storefront glazing should not be covered by systems that obscure the view of the glazing from the public realm.
- g. Storefronts may be operable provided that the division, configuration, orientation, and recess of windows is consistent with the division, configuration, orientation, and recess of windows on contributing storefronts located within the same block face.

02

Storefronts should be taller than individual upper floors.



COMPOSITION: BASE

RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS

GUIDELINE INTENTION

Residential bases will be well defined and distinguishable from the middle component of a building.

01

Residential buildings should have a base component represented by a change in material and/or design that marks the transition from base component to middle component.

02

Base component height should be consistent with the general height of base components on non-monumental contributing residential buildings located within the same block face.¹

03

Residential buildings may have vehicular entry. Vehicular entry may be placed on a street-facing wall if all of the following conditions exist:

- a. The vehicular entry is not located on the primary façade.
- b. A majority of existing buildings located within the same block have vehicular entry.
- c. If garage doors are used, they are placed at the lot line, and are designed so as to blend inconspicuously into the wall system.
- d. If garage doors are not used, the vehicular entry and any associated equipment is set back from the plane of the façade.

Note

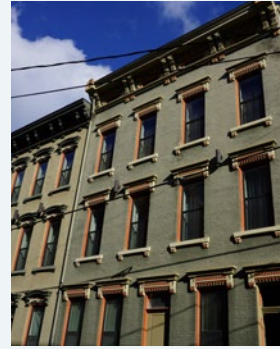
¹ Must follow the rules for levels of context hierarchy defined on p. 8.

COMPOSITION: MIDDLE

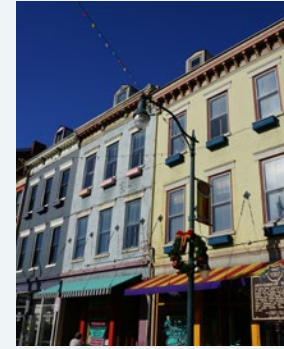
HISTORIC CONTEXT

The middle component of buildings in the Over-the-Rhine Historic District is the area between the top of the base component, and the bottom of the cornice. The middle component contains window openings, sills, lintels, and other detailing and articulation that contributes greatly to both the vertical emphasis and rhythm of the design.

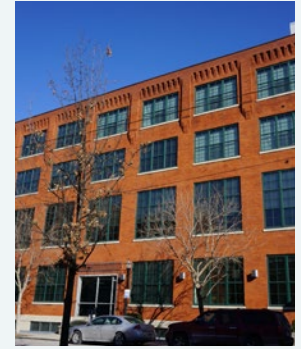
In commercial/mixed-use buildings, the middle component is typically distinguished from the storefront below through a strong horizontal element, such as a stone or cast iron lintel or cornice corresponding to a division in the use of the building. In residential buildings, the horizontal element dividing middle from base is the top of the stone foundation or water table that terminates below the building entry. In both building types, the middle component is distinguished from the more decorative top component through the application of a strong horizontal element.



1222 and 1224 Republic Street exhibit the characteristics of composition: middle in residential buildings.



118-128 W. Elder Street exhibit the characteristics of composition: middle in mixed-use buildings.



1212 Jackson Street exhibits the characteristics of composition: middle in industrial buildings.

COMPOSITION: MIDDLE

GUIDELINE INTENTION

The design of the middle component will provide a consistent architectural vocabulary along the streetscape.

01

Buildings should have a change in material and/or design that marks the transition from base component to middle component, and from middle component to top.

COMPOSITION: TOP

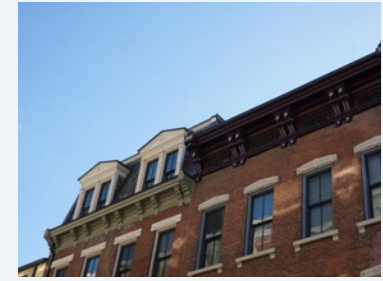
HISTORIC CONTEXT

Strong terminating elements at the tops of buildings are defining features of buildings in the Over-the-Rhine Historic District. Projecting cornices supported by decorative brackets and bold, decorative frieze panels are the quintessential tops found in the District. Historically, cornices projected over buildings to minimize rainfall on façades. Decorative cornices in the District often exhibit their own micro-composition of base, middle, top, while remaining consistent with an overarching theme throughout the District.

Some buildings feature less elaborate building tops – such as bracket-less box gutters and corbelled parapet walls – that nevertheless serve as strong terminating elements to the building. On other buildings the entire uppermost story serves as a top, realized by a mansard roof or a lower secondary cornice.



116 W. Elder Street exhibits the characteristics of composition: top.



213 and 219 Odeon Street exhibit the characteristics of composition: top.



8 Green Street exhibits the characteristics of early 20th-century composition: top.



1408 Elm Street exhibits the characteristics of composition: top.

COMPOSITION: TOP

GUIDELINE INTENTION

New buildings will provide a crowning visual termination to the composition.

01

Buildings should employ a strong top component that terminates the façade and creates shadow detail.

02

Top components should not imitate the District's historic cornices.

03

Top components should have a height that is consistent with the general height of historic top components on non-monumental contributing buildings located within the same block face.¹

04

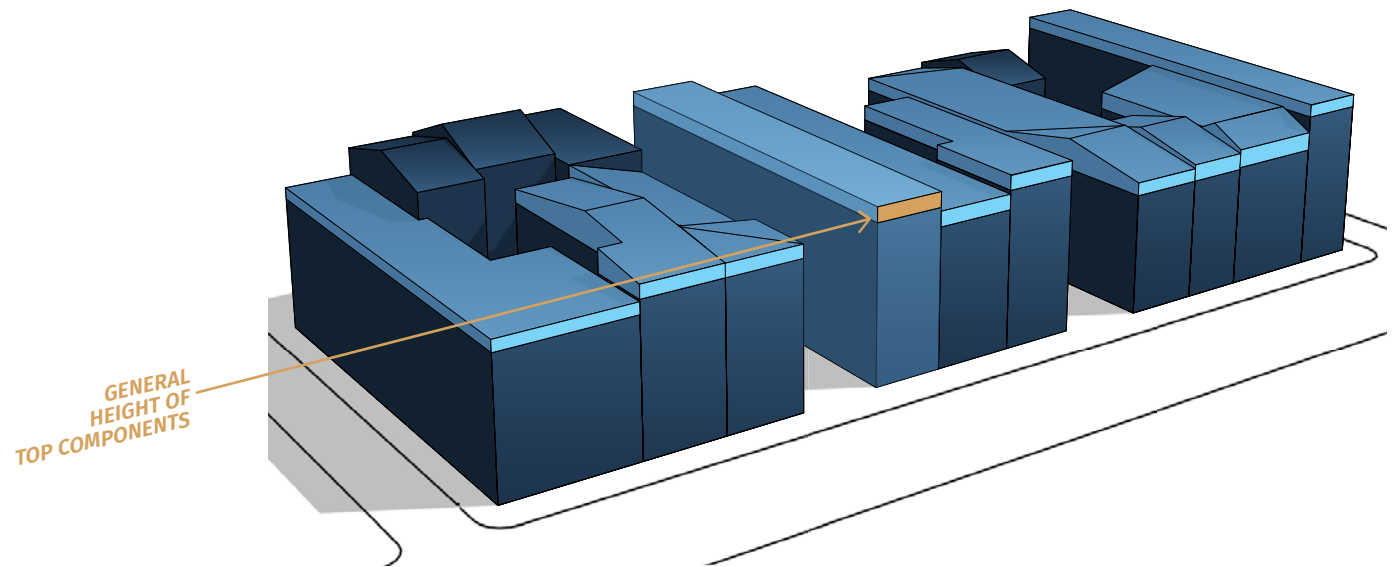
The projection (overhang) of top components beyond the plane of the façade must not exceed the furthest projection among top components on non-monumental contributing buildings located within the same block.

Note

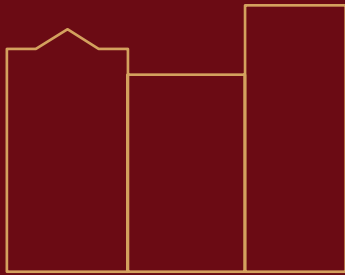
¹ Must follow the rules for levels of context hierarchy defined on p. 8.

03

Top components should have a height that is consistent with the general height of historic top components on non-monumental contributing buildings located within the same block face.¹

**Note**

¹ Must follow the rules for levels of context hierarchy defined on p. 8.



RHYTHM

At right: This building in New York City maintains the historic rhythm of the streetscape by honoring the height, width, pattern of window openings, and planar articulation of its neighbors.



RHYTHM

HISTORIC CONTEXT

The “rhythm” formed by the repetition of buildings is one of the core elements that knits the Over-the-Rhine Historic District together into a cohesive fabric. Most buildings are tall and narrow – typically 20-40 feet in width and three to four stories in height – and exhibit a variation in height from one building to the next. Most buildings also feature regularly spaced, horizontally and vertically aligned, symmetrically placed window openings that display a remarkable consistency from one building to the next. Finally, buildings tend to have articulated wall surfaces (e.g., sills, lintels, and bracketed cornices), resulting in the consistent projection of elements from the plane of façades of buildings along the streetscape.

This repetition of tall, narrow buildings of varying height, consistent fenestration geometries, and articulated wall surfaces results in a particular pattern, or “rhythm”, that gives the District’s streetscapes harmony and coherence.

1405-1417 Main Street
exemplifies the
Over-the-Rhine
Historic District’s
distinctive rhythm.



529-541 E. 13th Street
exemplifies the
Over-the-Rhine
Historic District’s
distinctive rhythm.



RHYTHM

GUIDELINE INTENTION

New buildings will reflect the visual continuity established by the repetition of similarly designed and scaled contributing buildings along the streetscape.

01

Primary façade height should vary from the primary façade height of any neighboring buildings.

02

The rhythm of window openings should be consistent with the rhythm of window openings created by non-monumental contributing buildings located within the District.

03

Buildings should sensitively maintain the established rhythm created by non-monumental contributing buildings located within the same block face.¹

04

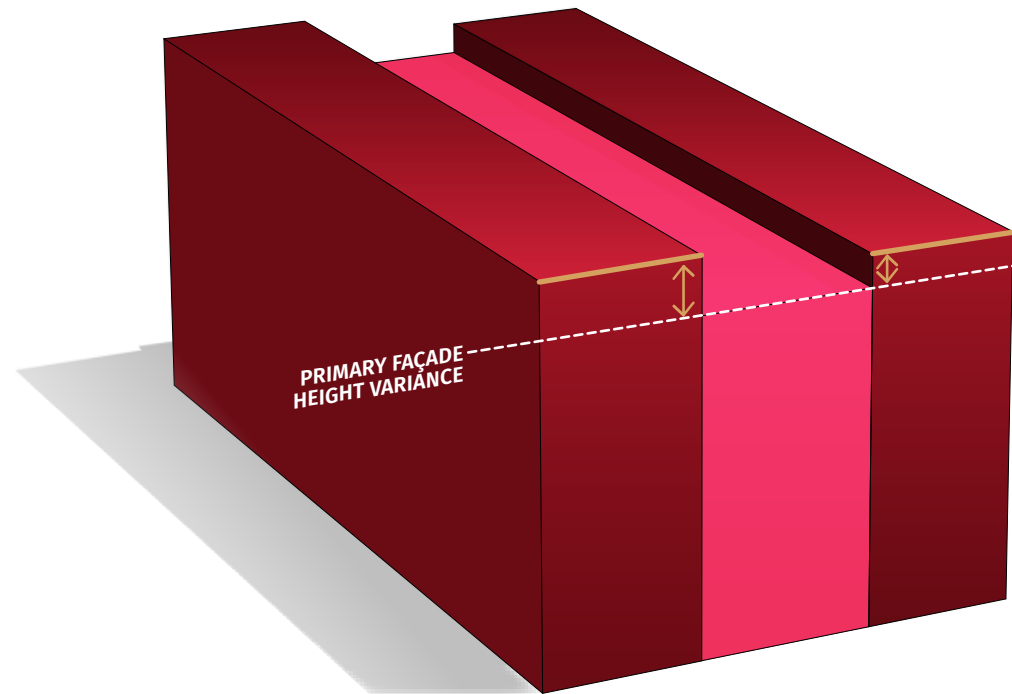
If primary façade width is greater than primary façade height, the façade design should be organized to create vertical emphasis.

Note

¹ Must follow the rules for levels of context hierarchy defined on p. 8.

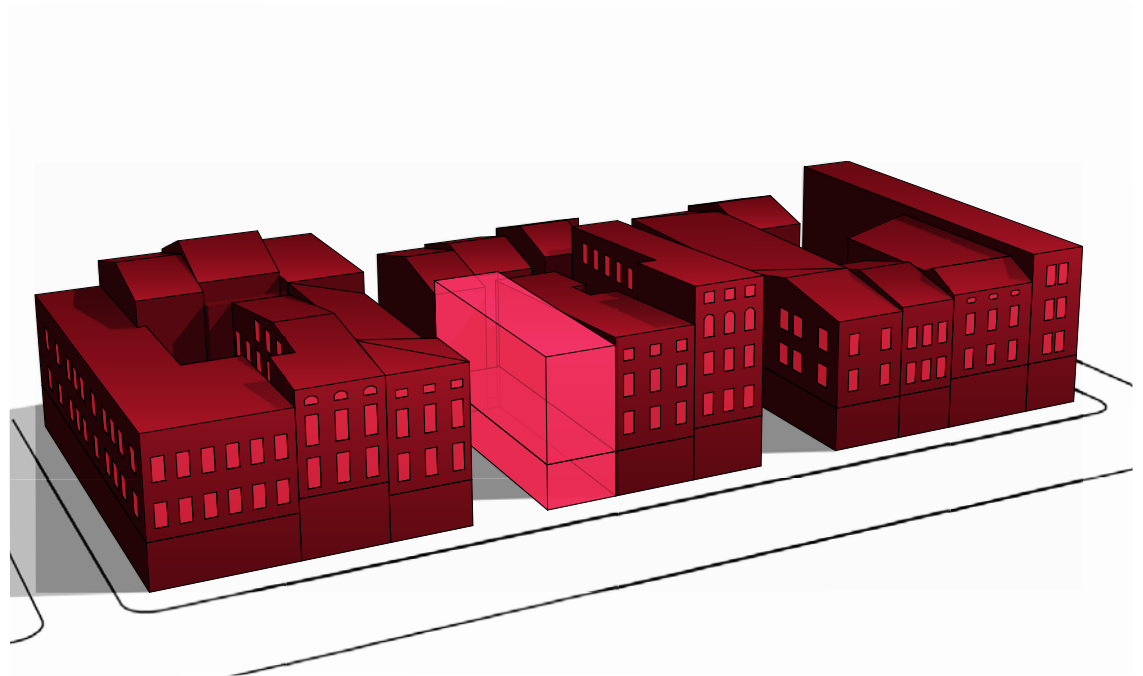
01 Primary façade height should vary from the primary façade height of any neighboring buildings.

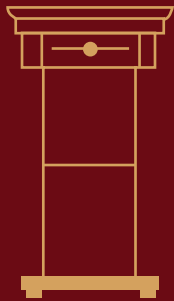
02 The rhythm of window openings should be consistent with the rhythm of window openings created by non-monumental contributing buildings located within the District.



01 Primary façade height should vary from the primary façade height of any neighboring buildings.

02 The rhythm of window openings should be consistent with the rhythm of window openings created by non-monumental contributing buildings located within the District.





OPENINGS

At right: Bahnhofstrasse 92 in Zurich, Switzerland has vertically oriented punched window openings arranged into rows and columns in reference to its historic surroundings.



OPENINGS

HISTORIC CONTEXT

Openings are fundamental to the distinctive rhythm that defines the Over-the-Rhine Historic District. Openings are found both on primary and secondary façades as well as on non-street-facing walls. Most buildings feature regularly spaced, vertically oriented individual window openings formed into horizontally and vertically aligned, symmetrical rows and columns. Windows are typically recessed into the opening, creating a strong shadow detail. Windows are typically double hung and often have decorative stone sills and lintels.

Buildings with commercial uses on the upper floors and many built after the turn of the century often feature more variation in window openings, including groupings of openings that create more of a horizontal orientation.

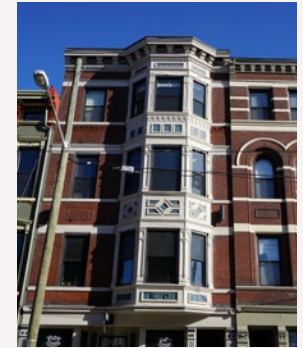
While oriel windows are not defining features of the Over-the-Rhine Historic District, they are present at a number of locations in both residential and mixed-use buildings. Oriels are designed to provide functional benefits to interior space and are also architectural expressions that add distinction and three-dimensionality to the District's typically planar masonry façades.



118 and 120 W. 14th Street exhibit the characteristics of window and door openings



1126 Walnut exhibits the characteristics of grouped window openings.



1428 Race exhibits the characteristics of oriel windows.

Door openings follow the patterns and characteristics of windows, accentuating the verticality and symmetry of buildings. Entries have different sizes, locations, and styles depending on the use and period of the building. Entrances to residential buildings usually feature a single wooden door, set off to one side of the primary façade and recessed into the brick. On mixed-use buildings, especially along north-south commercial arterials, entrances to the residential upper floors are placed either in one of the outermost bays of the primary façade, or on a side exterior wall of the building accessible through a narrow breezeway.

OPENINGS¹

GUIDELINE INTENTION

The openings of new buildings will establish a relationship with the size, placement, and configuration of openings found on non-monumental contributing buildings in the District.

01

Window openings should be taller than they are wide in a proportion consistent with the general proportions of window openings on non-monumental contributing buildings located in the District.

02

The ratio of window openings to total area of the middle component of the façade should be consistent with the ratio of window openings to total area of the middle components of façades on non-monumental contributing buildings located in the District.

03

Windows:

- Should be recessed nominally from the plane of the wall.
- Must not have internal-only grids.

04

Buildings may have oriel windows² under the following conditions:

- Oriels should be used only in limited instances, with a well designed and quality approach.
- The introduction of oriels should not disrupt the feeling of continuity of the wall surface.

Note

- Storefront openings must follow the requirements set forth in Chapter 03: Composition: Base.
- Oriels are found infrequently and are not intended to be a dominant feature within the District, nor are they intended to be a dominant feature within a facade design.
- Must follow the rules for levels of context hierarchy defined on p. 8.

05

Window openings should be arranged into columns, as follows:

- The number of columns of openings should be consistent with the number of columns found on non-monumental contributing buildings of similar width in the District.
- Columns should be evenly spaced.
- Window openings should be vertically aligned with other openings within the same column.
- Columns should be symmetrical.

06

Window openings should be arranged into rows, as follows:

- Rows should be present for each story.
- Rows should be evenly spaced.
- Window openings should be horizontally aligned with other openings within the same row.

07

Buildings should have a door opening providing access to the sidewalk.

08

The size and proportions of door openings should be consistent with the general size and proportions of door openings found on non-monumental contributing buildings located within the same block face.³

09

Door openings should not be sunken below grade. Door openings on residential buildings may be elevated but must not be substantially higher than the height of the base component.

05

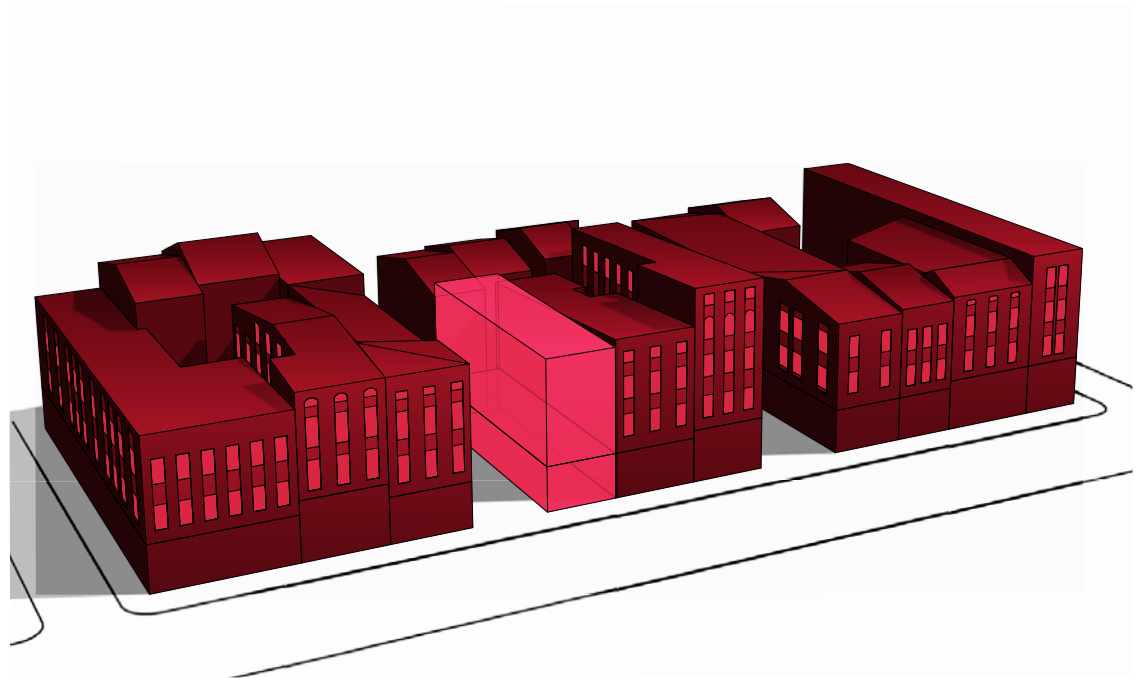
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- c. Window openings should be vertically aligned with other openings within the same column.
- d. Columns should be symmetrical.

06

Window openings should be arranged into rows, as follows:

- a. Rows should be present for each story.
- b. Rows should be evenly spaced.
- c. Window openings should be horizontally aligned with other openings within the same row.

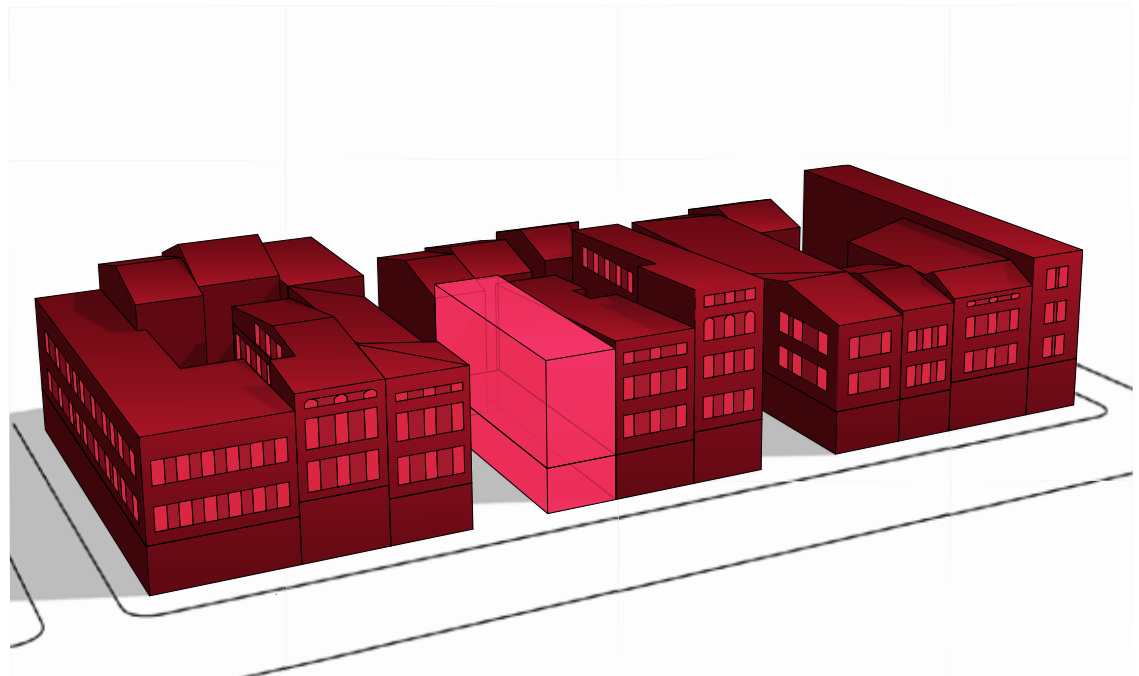


05 Window openings should be arranged into columns, as follows:

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ROOF

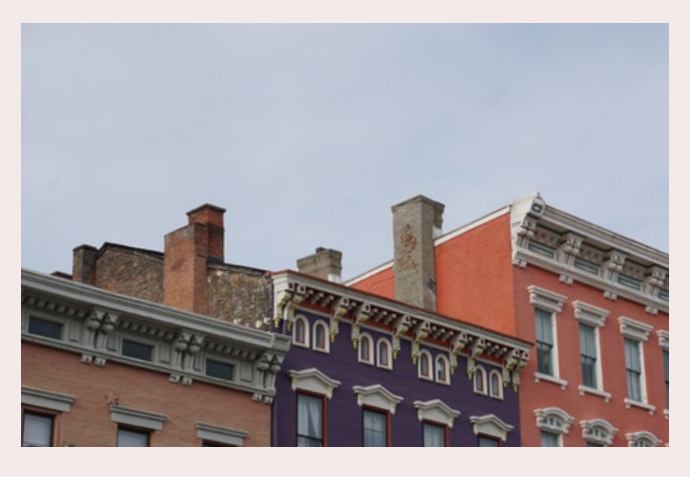
At right: The reception hall at the Musée de Cluny at 28 Rue du Sommerard in Paris, France draws inspiration from the roof forms of the adjacent Roman ruins – the Thermes de Cluny.



ROOF

HISTORIC CONTEXT

Roofs help define not only the pedestrian experience of the Over-the-Rhine Historic District from street level, but also the unique aerial views of the District from hillsides and rooftops. The roofs that are featured most commonly in the District are side-gabled roofs and low-pitched shed roofs. Mansard roofs and sawtooth roofs at the rear of buildings are found sporadically. Monumental buildings in the District feature a variety of roof shapes, including dormers, multiple gables, hip roofs, and towers.



1425 and 1427 Main Street typify roof forms commonly found in the Over-the-Rhine Historic District.

ROOF

GUIDELINE INTENTION

Roof profiles will reflect the roof profiles of contributing buildings within the block face. The impacts of rooftop appendages on street-level, aerial and elevated panoramic views of the District will be minimized.

01

Roofs should be built using a roof profile found on at least one non-monumental contributing building located within the same block face.¹ The following profiles are appropriate:

- a. Side-Gabled Roof
- b. Side-Gabled Sawtooth Roof
- c. Descending Low-Pitched Shed Roof
- d. Ascending Low-Pitched Shed Roof
- e. Flat Roof²

02

Roof pitch should be consistent with the pitch of corresponding roof profiles found on non-monumental contributing buildings located within the same block face.¹

03

Rooftop decks and roof access enclosures should be no more than minimally visible from abutting streets, and should not be highly visible from the public realm. Roof access enclosures should be no larger than the minimum size required for access when visible from the street and/or exceeding the permitted height.

04

Mechanical systems, elevated solar panel arrays, and other non-deck rooftop appendages should not be highly visible from contiguous streets at any point within 40 feet of the building and should not be highly visible from the public realm.

Note

- 1 Must follow the rules for levels of context hierarchy defined on p. 8.
- 2 Flat roofs may be used regardless of whether there are any flat roofs found in the surrounding historic context

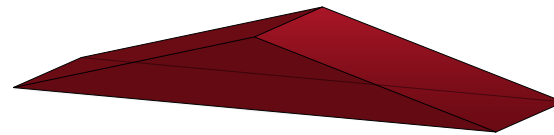
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- Flat Roof²

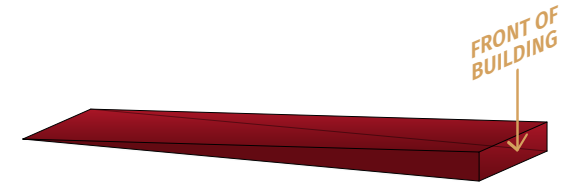
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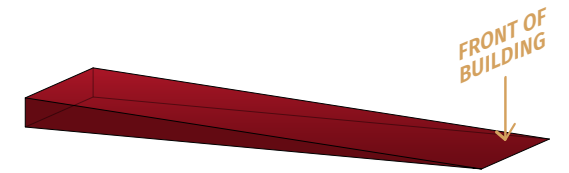
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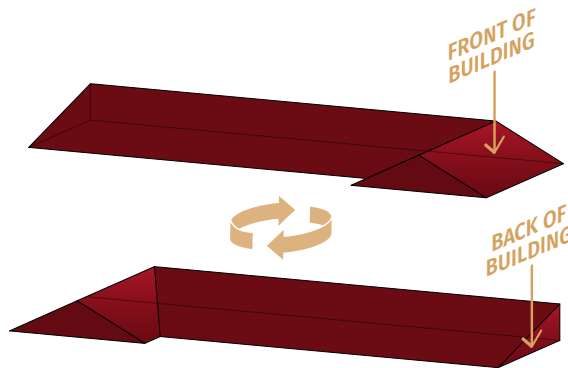
SIDE-GABLED ROOF



DESCENDING LOW-PITCHED SHED ROOF



ASCENDING LOW-PITCHED SHED ROOF



SIDE-GABLED SAWTOOTH ROOF

Note

- Must follow the rules for levels of context hierarchy defined on p. 8.
- Flat roofs may be used regardless of whether there are any flat roofs found in the surrounding historic context

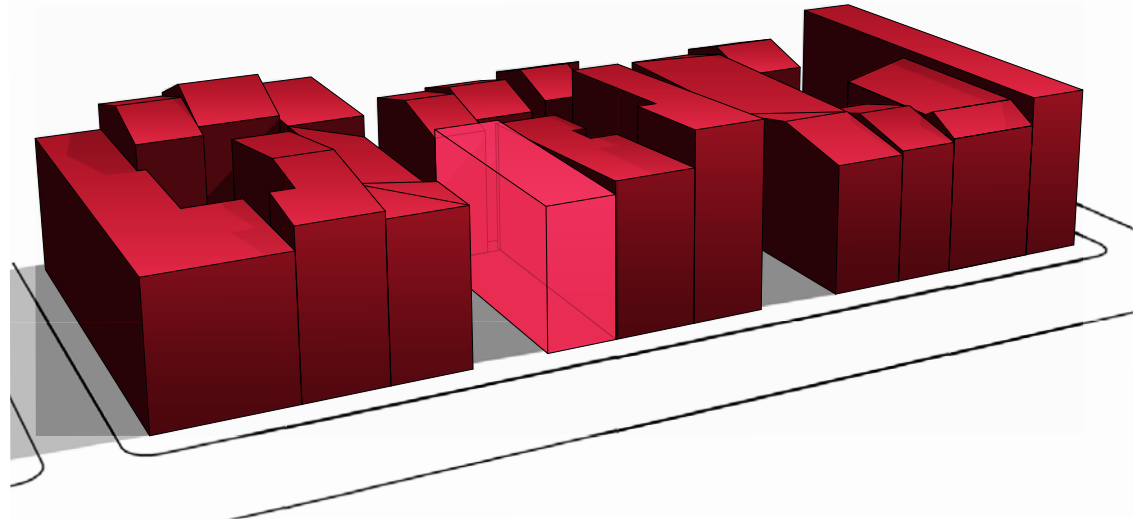
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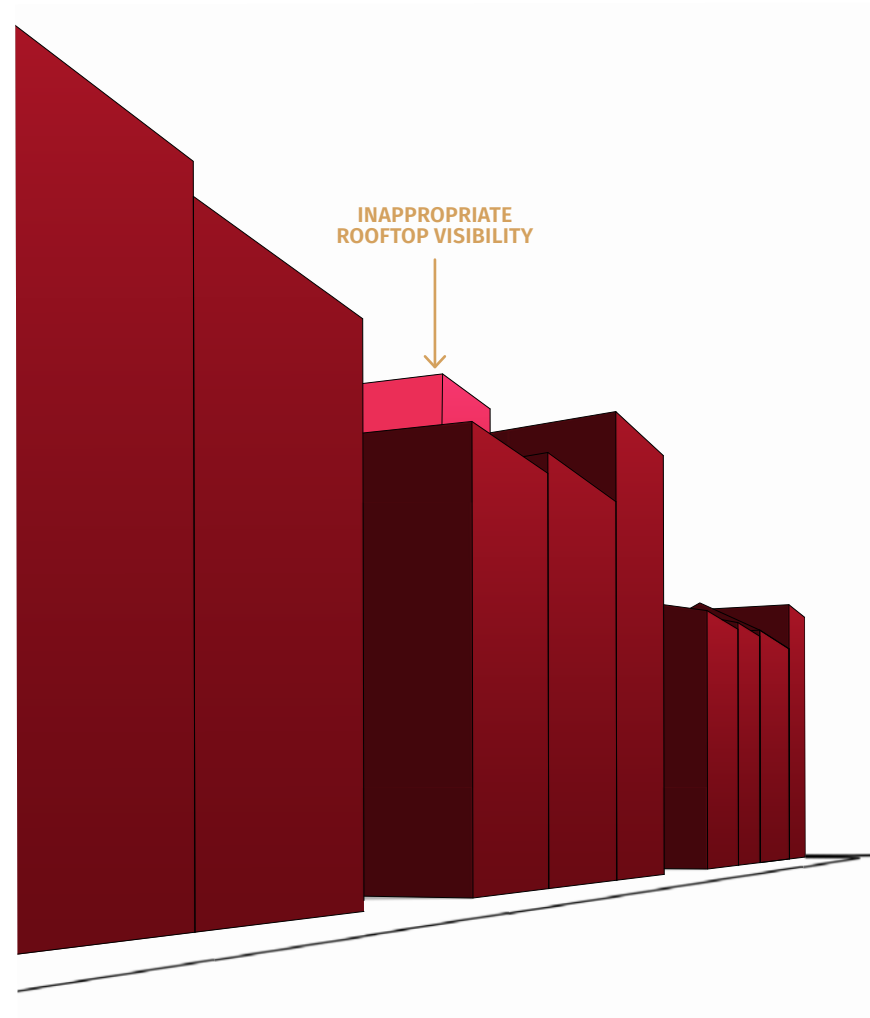
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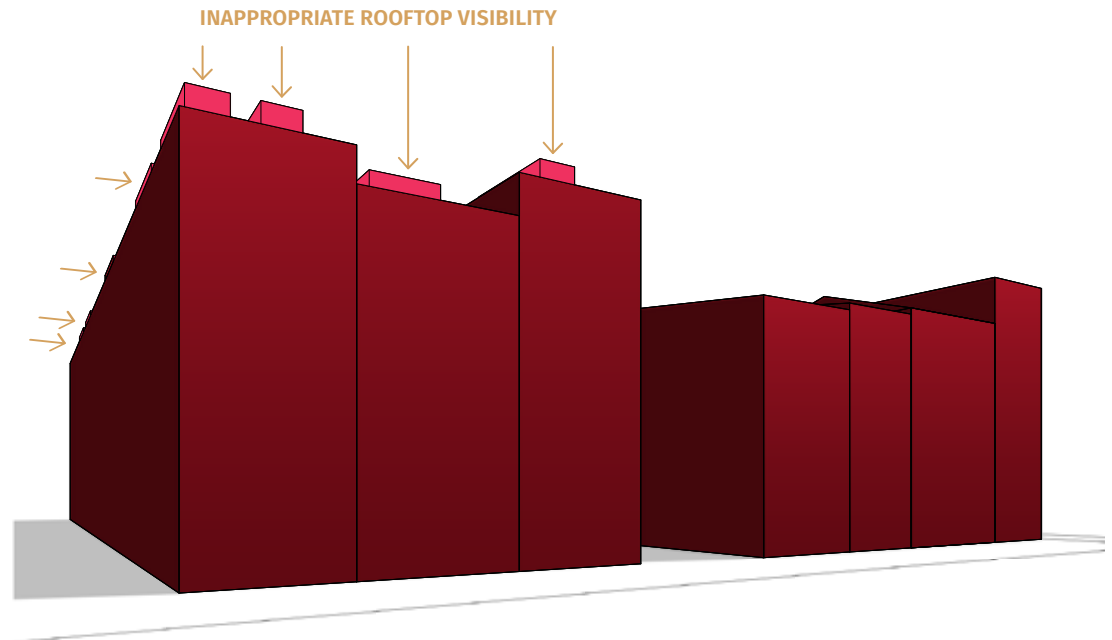
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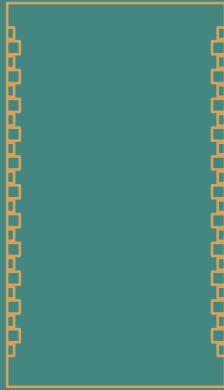
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MATERIALS

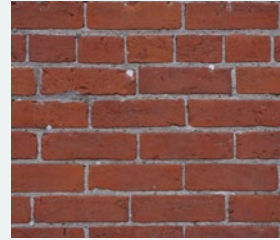
At right: This building in London, England successfully evinces the quality and solidity of materials on its historic neighbors by using a contemporary, modular brick cladding and a distinctive accent material on the oriel window and window surrounds.



MATERIALS

HISTORIC CONTEXT

Materials form an essential part of the identity of the Over-the-Rhine Historic District, and brick is the character-defining material of the District. The neighborhood evolved from primarily wood frame construction with wood clapboard siding in the earlier part of the 19th-century, to primarily brick masonry buildings in the mid-to-late 19th-century as the District entered what is considered to be its period of significance. Thus, the vast majority of Over-the-Rhine buildings are made of brick. Other materials characteristic of the District include limestone and sandstone (sills, lintels, and the occasional façade), wood (doors, windows, box gutters, cornices, and siding on early buildings), metal (lintels, sills, cornices, and roofs), cast iron (storefronts), and wrought iron (fire escapes, fencing).



Buildings in the District are primarily constructed of handmade, orange-red clay bricks stacked using the common bond pattern, as seen here at 1219 Sycamore Street.



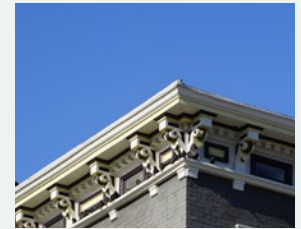
Decorative metal header at 1418 Elm Street.



Decorative stone lintel at 1431 Elm Street.



Decorative cast iron storefront at 116 East 14th Street.



Decorative metal brackets and wood trim form the cornice at 116 West 14th Street.

MATERIALS

GUIDELINE INTENTION

Materials used on new construction will rise to the standards of quality, authenticity, and durability set by materials found on contributing buildings in the District.

01

Buildings should use materials found on contributing buildings or materials that honor the best qualities of historic materials.

02

Materials should meet the quality standards of materials found on contributing buildings in the District. Quality of materials is based on the following criteria:

- Life span/durability.
- Authenticity.
- Visual continuity with non-monumental contributing buildings located within the District.
- Color, texture, design, dimension, reflectivity.

03

Brick used as exterior cladding should meet the following requirements:

- King and Queen sized brick are not appropriate and should not be used.
- Brick should have either historic (2½ x 8¼ inches) or modular (2¼ x 7⅞ inches) dimensions.
- At least one full wythe of 4 inches (depth) brick should be used.
- Faux-historic brick is not appropriate and should not be used. Brick should seek to root itself in its current time.

04

Materials should be used in a well-designed approach on all sides of the building

05

Lintels and sills should be made of limestone or sandstone, cast stone with a limestone veneer applied, or an appropriate alternate material.

06

Window components should be made of wood, aluminum clad wood, metal, or an appropriate alternate material.

07

Storefront systems should meet the following requirements:

- Lintels, pilasters, and vertical divisions should be made of cast iron, steel, limestone, sandstone, or cast stone with a limestone veneer applied. Brick is permitted where contributing brick storefronts are extant within the same block.
- Window framing and muntins should be made of wood, steel, or a dark colored alternate material.

08

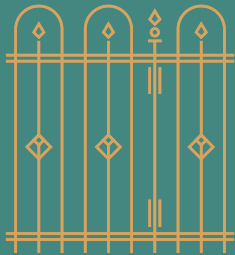
Residential bases should be made of stone or an appropriate alternate material.

09

Doors should be made of wood, metal, or a stain grade material.

10

Buildings must not use stucco, synthetic stucco, vinyl, CMU, or plastic as cladding materials.



MISCELLANEOUS

At right: This building at Oudeschans 53 in Amsterdam integrates balconets into the rhythm of openings on the façade.

Amsterdam, the Netherlands

08



MISCELLANEOUS

HISTORIC CONTEXT

A number of important features of buildings in the Over-the-Rhine Historic District fall within the Miscellaneous category, including porches, balconies, and stoops.

Porches

Side porches (veranda) are found on some buildings in the District. Typically, they are built into the “L” of the building, filling the void created by the building’s keyback. Front porches do not exist in the District.

Balconies

True balconies are rare in the District. Fire escapes are prevalent and often double as balconies.

Stoops

Stoops are common in the District on residential buildings with elevated entries. Stoops serve as a form of street furniture and foster increased pedestrian interaction in the public realm.

MISCELLANEOUS

PORCHES

01

Buildings should not have front porches.

02

Buildings may have side porches if they are placed in the void created by an interior side setback.

03

Side porches should be built in a rectangular geometry.

BALCONIES

01

Buildings may have protruding balconies if they are placed at the rear of the building, or on a non-street-facing wall in the void created by a keyback.

02

Buildings may have recessed balconies if they are placed on a non-street-facing wall.

03

Buildings may have balconets on any exterior building wall, provided that they are rectangular in form.

STOOPS

01

Residential buildings may have one or more stoops if a stoop is present on at least one non-monumental contributing building located within the same block.¹

02

Stoop height, width and depth should be consistent with the general height, width and depth of stoops on non-monumental contributing buildings located within the same block.¹

03

Stoops should not have railings; however, where railings are required by law, they should be simple metal railings similar in style, scale, thickness, and diameter to historic railings, fencing, or other iron work found on non-monumental contributing buildings located within the District.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES

01

Building sites should be evaluated for their potential for archaeological resources. If, after a survey of Sanborn Maps and consultation with staff, or if during construction archaeological resources are discovered, existing archaeological survey protocols must be followed.

Note

¹ Must follow the rules for levels of context hierarchy defined on p. 8.

APPENDIX



Abutting Having lot lines in common.

Abutting Street A street that is abutting a lot containing the subject building.

Alley A public or private way less than 21 feet in width that may provide vehicular access to abutting properties.

Articulative Recess A slight change in plane in part of an exterior wall, usually decorative.

Attic A story directly under the roof of a contributing building that is shorter than the other stories in the building.

Balconet A false, non-structural balcony or railing at the outer plane of a glazed window-opening reaching to the floor, and having, when the window or door is open, the appearance of a balcony.

Base Component The bottommost portion of a building, commonly represented in commercial buildings by a storefront, and in residential buildings by a foundation capped by a water table.

Block A block face and its opposing block face.

Block Face The properties abutting each other on one side of the street, and lying between the two nearest intersecting or intercepting streets.

Building Width The horizontal distance between the sides of the primary façade.

Cladding The outermost material layer covering the exterior of a building.

Commercial Building A building developed entirely for commercial purposes.

Composition The arrangement of a building into base, middle, and top components.

Contributing Building A historic building that is designated by the City of Cincinnati as contributing to the historic significance of the Over-the-Rhine Historic District.

Corner Lot A lot bounded on two or more adjacent sides by streets, or by portions of such streets.

Cornice A molded, decorative, projecting horizontal member that crowns the top of a building.

CORNICE COMPONENTS

Box Gutter A rectangular rain gutter built into the slope of a roof, above the cornice.

Bracket An angled structural and/or decorative element that actually or visually supports the box gutter/cornice soffit.

Corbel A type of bracket built into a wall and projecting outward to support the box gutter/cornice soffit.

Dentil One of a series of small, decorative rectangular blocks placed at regular intervals under the soffit of a cornice.

Frieze A decorative horizontal band typically containing rectangular trimmed panels and through-the-cornice windows.

Through-the-Cornice Windows
Attic windows built into the cornice.

Elevated Solar Panel Array An array of solar panels attached to a roof in which the panels are angled toward the sun, and do not lay flat against the roof surface.

Faux-Historic Brick Modern brick that attempts to match the color and texture of historic brick.

Front Lot Line A lot line dividing a lot from a street. On a corner lot only one street line may be considered as a front line; provided that, where the length of a shorter street line is less than 90 percent of the length of the longer street line, the shorter street line is considered as the front lot line.

Front Setback A space or gap between the front lot line and any portion of the primary façade, excluding articulative recesses.

Grade Ground level, as measured by the average of the slope between two points.

Historic Being from the period of significance (1840-1941) of the Over-the-Rhine Historic District, with special emphasis on the period 1840-1900.

Historic Lot A lot in the Over-the-Rhine Historic District as it existed historically, as represented on the 1904 Sanborn Insurance Maps of Cincinnati.

Historic Non-Monumental Corner Lot A historic corner lot with a depth of up to 90 feet.

Interior Side Lot Line A side lot line separating a lot from another lot or lots.

Interior Side Setback A space or gap between an interior side lot line and any portion of the side exterior wall(s), excluding articulative recesses.

Keyback An interior side setback beginning at a point at least 20 feet removed from the primary façade, typically extending back to the rear lot line, and resulting in a private breezeway, alleyway, or outdoor space.

Lintel A horizontal member, typically structural, that spans the top of a window or door opening.

Lot A parcel of land occupied or capable of being occupied by a use, building, or group of buildings and accessory buildings and uses, together with such open spaces as are required by the Cincinnati Zoning Code and having frontage on a street.

Lot Line The boundary enclosing a lot.

Massing The general shape and size of a building.

Materials The substances that are used to form the visible exterior of a building.

Mechanical Equipment Any device or apparatus used relating to heating, ventilation, air conditioning, plumbing, fire suppression, transportation, or any other building system.

Micro-Context The contributing buildings in closest proximity to the subject building, and defined at the smallest level as those contributing buildings located within the same block face.

Middle Component The area of a building located between the base component and the top component, typically constituting the largest bulk of the building and containing the majority of its design elements.

Mixed-Use Building A building developed for two or more types of end use.

Monumental Building Contributing buildings in the Over-the-Rhine Historic District recognized for their special cultural significance and/or distinctive qualities of height, massing, and scale.

Neighboring Building A building on a lot that shares an interior side lot line with the subject building.

Opposing Block Face The block face directly across from the subject block face.

Oriel Window A bay window projecting from an upper story (or stories) on a building façade.

Over-the-Rhine Historic District A geographic area covering parts of Over-the-Rhine, Pendleton, and Mount Auburn that is protected by the City of Cincinnati based on its cultural and architectural significance as a representation of the period in Cincinnati's urban development from 1840-1941, and particularly that period prior to 1900.

Primary Façade The street-facing wall that faces the primary street.

Primary Façade Height (New Construction) Primary façade height is measured from the established grade at the lot line or from the average natural grade at the building line, to the top of the primary façade, including any terminating ornamental/functional features.

Primary Street The abutting street with the widest right of way.

Public Realm Any portion of the Over-the-Rhine Historic District that is accessible to the public, including streets, alleys, rights of way, and public parks.

Rear Lot Line A lot line opposite the front lot line. In the case of an irregular, or triangular lot, it means a line within the lot, ten feet long, parallel to and at the maximum distance from the front lot line.

Residential Building A building that is entirely residential in use, single or multi-family, and does not have a storefront.

Rhythm A regularly recurring sequence or pattern within and among buildings.

Right of Way Real property for or devoted to (1) public transportation purposes; or (2) the placement of the city's municipal utility easements and other traditional uses along a transportation route. The definition of right of way includes, without limitation, public highways, streets, avenues, alleys, sidewalks, bridges, aqueducts, and viaducts within the city.

Roof The structure forming the upper covering of a building.

Roof Access Enclosure A small structure on or above the roof of a building whose exclusive purpose is to provide access to a rooftop.

Roof Deck A flat surface on or above the roof of a building that provides space for recreation, typically surrounded by railings.

Roof Pitch A numerical measure of the steepness, or slope, of a roof.

Rooftop Appendage Any structure, surface, fixture, equipment, furniture, or other item that is attached to the roof.

Scale The size of a building judged in relation to other buildings.

Secondary Façade Any street-facing wall that is not the primary façade.

Secondary Façade Height (New Construction) Secondary façade height is measured from the established grade at the lot line or from the average natural grade at the building line, to the top of the façade, including any terminating ornamental/ functional features.

Secondary Street An abutting street that is not the primary street.

Shadow Detail An area of darkness cast on an exterior building wall caused by a protrusion or recession in the plane of the wall.

Side Alley Lot Line A side lot line separating a lot from an alley.

Side Lot Line A lot line that is not a front lot line or a rear lot line. A side lot line separating a lot from a street is a side street lot line. A side lot line separating a lot from another lot or lots is an interior side lot line.

Side Street Lot Line A side lot line separating a lot from a street.

Significant Part of the Program (Parking) Where there are at least 50 onsite parking spaces, or at least 50% of the total project square footage is dedicated to parking.

Sill A horizontal member that spans the bottom of a window opening.

Stoop A small uncovered exterior stair ending in a platform at the entrance to a building.

Storefront The ground floor façade of a retail store, restaurant, bar, personal services establishment, or other commercial enterprise.

STOREFRONT COMPONENTS

Bulkhead/Knee Wall The portion of a storefront that serves as a platform for the display windows.

Column A vertical structural member designed to support compressive loads in a storefront system.

Display Windows Large windows in a storefront used to attract attention to a business and its merchandise or services.

Pilaster A projecting, non-load bearing vertical member having the appearance of a column, with a capital and a base, but being purely ornamental in function.

Storefront Cornice/Lintel A horizontal member that terminates the uppermost portion of the storefront, separating it from the upper floors above.

Transom Windows Windows located above the main display windows and separated by a transom.

Story/Floor That portion of a building included between the upper surface of a floor and the upper surface of the floor or roof next above.

Street A public or private right-of-way 21 feet or more in width whose primary function is to furnish the chief means of access to properties abutting it.

Street-Facing Wall An exterior building wall that faces an abutting street.

Subject Building A building or structure being considered for a Certificate of Appropriateness.

Top Component The uppermost horizontal terminating element of a building façade, often represented by a change in both plane and material.

Transom A horizontal crosspiece separating the top of a window or door from a smaller window above.

Use The type of human activity for which a building is purposed.

Water Table A horizontal projecting string course, molding, or ledge placed at the top of the foundation so as to divert rainwater from a building.

Window Opening An opening in the wall of a building for admission of light and air.

Wythe A single thickness of brick in masonry construction.

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LIST OF MONUMENTAL BUILDINGS

BUILDING :

6th District Public School Building
 15th District School Building (Rothenberg School)
 Baptisten Kirche (German Baptist Church)
 Cincinnati Music Hall
 Deutsche Evangelisch Reformierte Salem's Kirche
 (Salem German Evangelical Reformed Church)
 Deutsche Evangelische St. Paulus Kirche
 (St. Paul's German Evangelical Church)
 Deutsche Evangelische Zion's Kirche
 (German Evangelical Church of Zion)
 Deutsche Protestantische St. Johannes Kirche
 (St. John's German Protestant Church)
 Findlay Market Building
 First English Lutheran Church
 Hamilton County Memorial Building
 Jackson Brewery Building
 Krohn-Fecheimer Shoe Co. Building
 Nast Trinity Methodist Church
 Old Woodward School Building
 Philippus Kirche (Philippus Church)
 Prince of Peace Lutheran Church
 St. Francis Seraph Church
 St. Francis Seraph School Building
 St. John the Baptist Church Steeple
 St. Marien Kirche (Old St. Mary's Church)
 St. Paul's Church

ADDRESS:

1525 Elm St, Cincinnati, OH 45202
 241 E Clifton Ave, Cincinnati, OH 45202
 1610 Walnut Street, Cincinnati, OH 45202
 1241 Elm St, Cincinnati, OH 45202
 1425 Sycamore St, Cincinnati, OH 45202

 1429 Race St, Cincinnati, OH 45202

 14 W 15th St, Cincinnati, OH 45202

 1205 Elm St, Cincinnati, OH 45202

 1801 Race St, Cincinnati, OH 45202
 1208 Race St, Cincinnati, OH 45202
 1225 Elm St, Cincinnati, OH 45202
 208 Mohawk Street, Cincinnati, OH 45214
 1310 Pendleton St, Cincinnati, OH 45202
 1310 Race St, Cincinnati, OH 45202
 1310 Sycamore St, Cincinnati, OH 45202
 106 W McMicken Ave, Cincinnati, OH 45202
 1528 Race St, Cincinnati, OH 45202
 1615 Vine St, Cincinnati, OH 45202
 14 E Liberty St, Cincinnati, OH 45202
 1715 Republic St, Cincinnati, OH 45202
 123 E 13th St, Cincinnati, OH 45202
 444 Reading Rd, Cincinnati, OH 45202

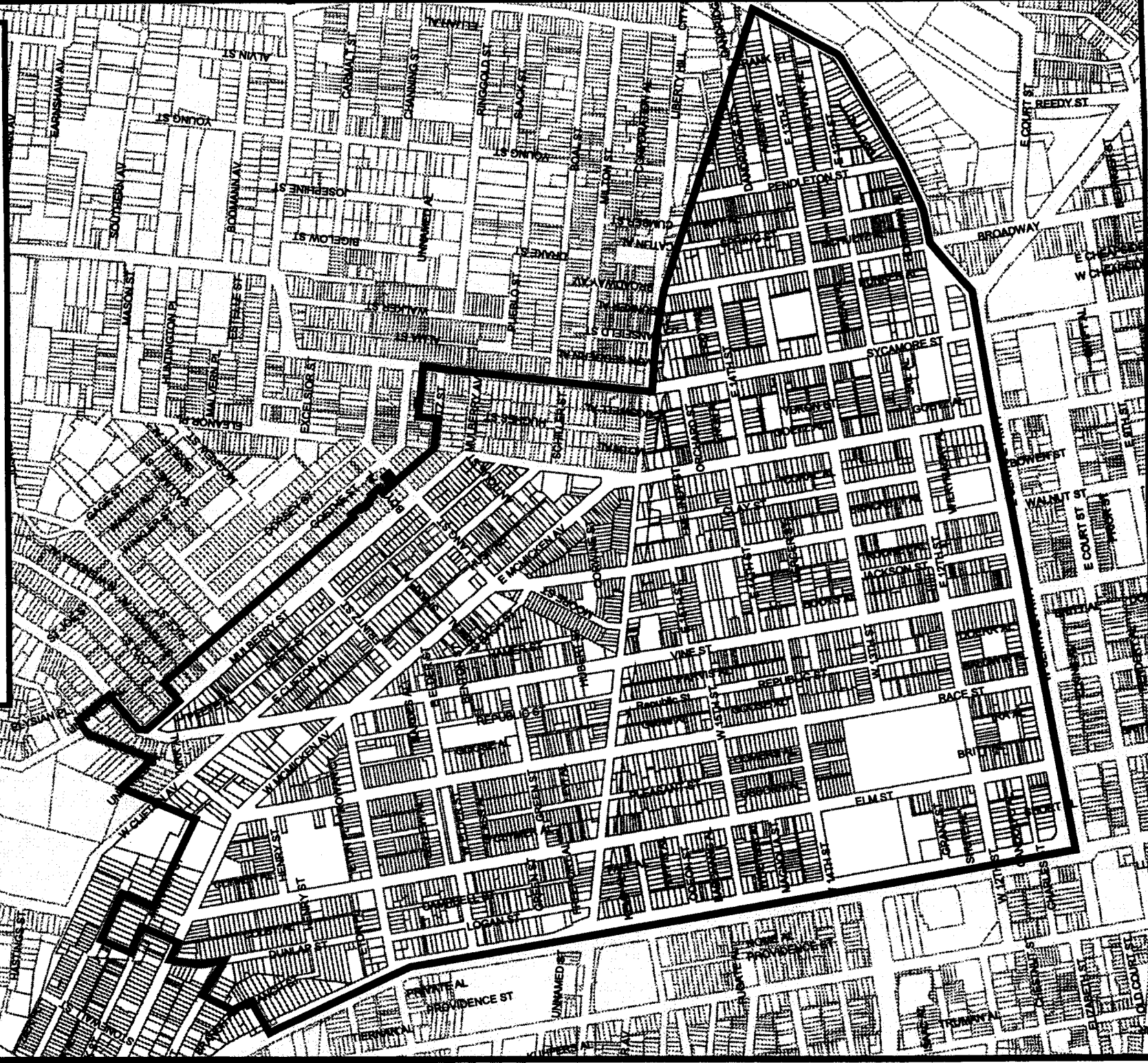
Over-the-Rhine Historic District

Historic Conservation Office
Community Development and Planning Department

May 2003



0 600 1200 Feet





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