



CEDAR RAPIDS

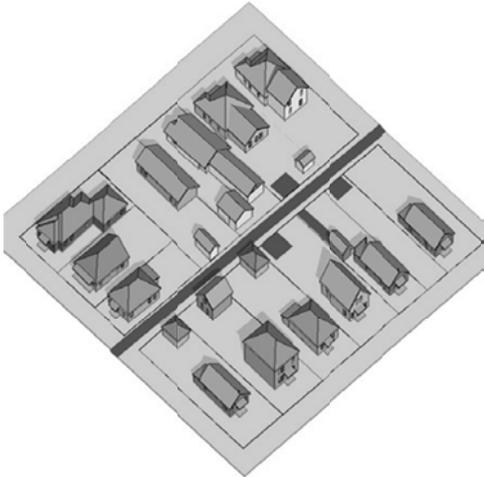
City of Five Seasons

**SINGLE FAMILY NEW CONSTRUCTION PROGRAM
4TH ROUND**

Building Design Guidelines

Background

The fourth round of Single Family New Construction (SFNC) will focus on reinvesting housing in the Neighborhood Revitalization Area (NRA) of the flood inundation area. The NRA is defined as the area outside of the Construction Study Area and the Greenway areas in the flood inundation area. The following guidelines are intended to promote development that is compatible in scale and character with that of established buildings. In the guidelines, flexibility is provided to accommodate new design solutions that will be compatible with their surroundings.



General Features of the Neighborhood Revitalization Area:

- **Parking is typically accessed from the alley.**
 - Alleys exist in most areas and most lots can be accessed from them.
 - Streets generally provide for on-street parking.
 - Primary buildings are set back from their property lines; these setbacks range from 15 to 20 feet in depth.
 - Secondary structures are prevalent along the alleys.
 - Primary structures appear similar in height and form, even though some variation in heights exists. Many are one story or one and a half stories in height. Some full two story buildings exist.
 - Street edges are defined by planting strips with mature trees.
 - Variety in landscapes occurs, but most are quite simple in character, usually a lawn and simple plantings. They are rather informal in their arrangement. Paved areas are limited to walkways, small stoops and patios.
- A traditional structure has a primary entrance that faces the street and is clearly defined by a porch, stoop or other architectural element. This similarity of orientation helps link each building with its neighbors and is a key feature that should be respected.



Design Objectives for new construction in the Neighborhood Revitalization Area:

- To maintain the traditional sense of scale in buildings.
- To maintain the traditional proportion of open space to buildings.
- To minimize negative impacts of new or renovated buildings on adjacent properties.
- To maintain access to light and air.
- To maintain a sense of privacy.

Design Objectives

In recognition that traditional development patterns in the established residential neighborhoods contribute to a sense of identity and contribute to livability, the City of Cedar Rapids holds the following Design Objectives. Any improvements in the Neighborhood Revitalization Area should help to achieve these objectives. When considering proposals through formal design review, the city shall evaluate the appropriateness of the project with these objectives in mind.

Building Mass & Scale

Objective:
Reduce the visual impacts of building heights on adjacent properties.

Objective:
Promote building masses that appear in scale with the established context.



Objective:
Promote building widths that appear similar in scale to those seen traditionally in the neighborhood.

Objective:
Promote the use of one-story elements along street fronts.

Objective:
Promote a perception of reduced scale in larger buildings by dividing them into “modules” that reflect the traditional scale of houses in the area.

Objective:
Facilitate additions to existing houses that minimize the perceived building mass.

Conservation of Traditional Buildings

Objective:
Promote conservation of buildings that reflect the established context of building mass, scale and orientation to the street.

Landscape Objectives

Objective:
Promote a sense of green space and of a tree canopy in front setbacks.

Objective:
Foster and maintain a tree canopy in residential neighborhoods.





Parking Objectives

Objective:

Reduce the visual impacts of cars in the front setbacks and promote a sense of green space and tree canopy instead.

Objective: Promote use of **detached garages, located to the rear.**



Part Two: General Guidelines for Design

These guidelines can be applied to improvements in all of the core neighborhoods of Cedar Rapids. Although they are primarily written to address new single family buildings and additions to existing single family residences, they also apply to multifamily settings.



1. Architectural Character

Diversity in architectural design is a part of the heritage of the older established neighborhoods. Even in areas where many buildings are more than a hundred years old, a variety in forms, materials and details reflect this diversity. And, in other areas, more recent buildings reflect changing approaches to style. At the same time, many of these buildings are compatible with their neighbors because they share fundamental relationships of building mass and scale, orientation and setback. New, creative designs are encouraged, when they also respect these basic development patterns of their neighborhoods.

Guideline:

Creative new designs that are compatible with the design traditions of the established neighborhoods are encouraged.

- It is not the intent of these guidelines to require that new buildings copy older building styles.
- Use traditional building form and patterns.
- Use traditional materials in creative new ways. Consider new detail techniques and differentiate new construction from old.

2. Building Orientation

Buildings that appear to face the street need to be compatible with the established context. A primary entry that is clearly visible from the street will also help to convey a sense of connection with the neighborhood.

Guideline:

Clearly identify the front entry as seen from the street.

- Aligning the front wall plane to be parallel with the front property line is generally preferred.
- In some cases, the front door itself is positioned perpendicular to the street, whereas the entry should still be clearly defined with a walkway that orients to the street.

3. Building Form

Traditional buildings have rectilinear forms, and these are generally preferred in the established neighborhoods. However, more diversity in building form can still be compatible where the overall mass and scale is similar to that of traditional structures in the neighborhood.

Guideline:

Using building forms that are similar to those seen traditionally in the neighborhood is encouraged.

- Other forms that help to reduce the perceived scale of buildings are also appropriate.

4. Roof Form

Traditional buildings have rectilinear forms, and these are generally preferred in the established neighborhoods. However, more diversity in roof form can still be compatible where the overall mass and scale is similar to that of traditional structures in the neighborhood.



Guideline:

Using roof forms that are similar to those seen traditionally in the neighborhood is encouraged.

- Traditional buildings have sloped roofs and these are generally preferred in established neighborhoods.
- Sloping roof forms are typical; these include gable and hip types.
- Other roof forms that help to reduce the perceived scale of buildings are also appropriate.
- Flat roofs may also be appropriate depending on style. If a roof is pitched, it should generally have at least an 8/12 pitch.

5. Building Height

A key objective is to reduce the perceived scale of new buildings, while accommodating some increase in actual building heights. This is generally achieved by keeping the height of the building wall relatively low. In some areas including space in a floor worked into a sloping roof form is a technique that reduces building height.

Guidelines:

Separate taller buildings from adjacent properties with greater side yard setbacks.

- Traditionally, taller buildings have occurred on larger lots, where larger side yard setbacks can be used to separate the building mass from adjacent properties. This tradition should continue. Where planning a full two-story building, for example, provide larger setbacks.
- Minimize the impact on small neighboring single family homes.

Consider incorporating a second floor within the roof form.

- This building type, termed a “one and a half story” helps to reduce perceived building mass while providing a substantial amount of floor area on the upper level.

6. Mass and Scale

Traditionally, larger buildings in the established neighborhoods were designed to appear to be divided into smaller components. Many appear as a single central mass, with small volumes attached. Others have variations in wall surfaces that contribute to this effect. This tradition should be continued.



Guidelines:

Construct a new building and building additions to be similar in mass and scale to those residences seen in the neighborhood.

- On larger structures, subdivide larger masses into smaller “modules” that are similar in size to single family residences seen in the neighborhood.
- Domes and A-frames are inappropriate building forms.

Elements that reduce mass and scale of larger buildings include:

- A one-story porch in front
- Varied setbacks of front and side walls
- A side dormer is less than 30% of the length of the side wall.
- Varied roof forms



7. Tower, Turret or Cupola Element

Architectural features such as tower, turret or cupola elements are traditional features on some styles. These features can help break up the volume of a building’s mass.

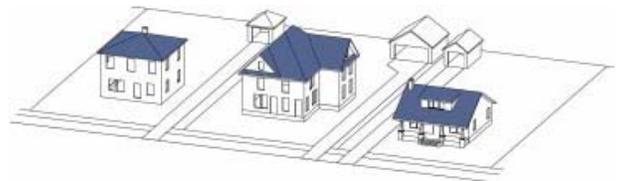
Guideline:

Locate tall building elements so that they may be framed by lower portions of the building.

- Frame taller elements with one-story building elements.

8. One-Story Element

Including a one-story element at the front of a taller building will help to reduce its perceived mass. Traditionally, a one-story porch served this function on many buildings. In other cases, it is simply a portion of occupied space that is one story in height.



Guideline:

Incorporate a one-story element at the front of a building to reduce the building’s perceived mass as seen from the street.

- This could be a porch or enclosed building space.
- A building inset in some cases can also help to reduce the perceived mass. This can be achieved by varying wall planes, limiting the height of the opening to one story, and sizing it similar to a traditional porch element.

9. Porches

Generally houses within the Oak Hill Focus Neighborhood have some type of porch or landing incorporated into their design. The front porch is an important design element both as it relates to the existing character of the neighborhood, but also as a means of enhancing social interaction and promoting a sense of community.



Guideline:

Incorporate a porch or similar form in the design of any new residence in the neighborhood.



10. Decks

Generally there are three types of decks: decks at grade, second-story decks and roof decks. Care should be taken with their design to make them fit into the traditional character of the neighborhood. Consider privacy impacts on neighboring properties.

Guideline:

Minimize the appearance of any deck.

- Decks should be subordinate in terms of scale and detailing.
- Locate decks to the rear of the building.
- Whenever possible, second-story decks should be incorporated into the roof and mass of the building.

11. Front Wall Plane

Traditionally, the front wall plane of the house range between 12 and 16 feet. In some cases, the wall plane was as much as 30 feet, although this condition was primarily found on large two-story hipped roof buildings.

Guideline:

Reduce the perceived mass of a building by keeping the front wall plane in scale with those seen traditionally.

- Typically, the front wall plane should not exceed 24 feet; after that, a setback in plane should occur.
 - In some cases, a lesser setback may be sufficient to be effective. Sometimes, a reduced setback, used in conjunction with a change in materials, will achieve the objective.
 - If the wall is only one story in height, the variation in setback is less critical.



12. Side Wall Plane

The overall size of sidewalls of a building, those that are parallel to side property lines, are key considerations in maintaining a traditional scale in the established neighborhoods. Side walls that are lower in height, and that appear to be within the dimensions of those used traditionally in the area are preferred.

Guideline:

The side walls of a building should appear similar in scale to those seen traditionally in the neighborhood.

- In general, a side wall should not exceed 30 feet in length. If a wall is to be longer than this, provide a setback in the wall plane and/or change in height. A change in materials may also help to reduce the perceived scale.

13. Windows

Consider how the location of windows alongside walls can affect the perceived scale of a building and may affect neighboring properties.

Guideline:

Arrange windows in side walls to minimize impacts on adjacent properties, when feasible.

- When feasible locate new windows away from those on neighboring properties, for example, avoid locating them directly opposite your neighbors window.



14. Dormers

Dormers appear in some buildings in the established neighborhoods as a means of providing light and air to upper floors. Dormers are encouraged because they help to reduce the overall mass of a building. At the same time, a dormer should be in proportion, such that it does not overwhelm the building as seen from adjacent properties.

Guideline:

Dormers shall be in scale with those used traditionally in the neighborhood.

- The dormer window to wall proportions should be similar to those found traditionally in the neighborhood.



15. Front Yard Setbacks

It is generally preferred that a new building be in line with adjacent ones, to maintain a consistent character to front yards. Where there is a uniform alignment, a new building should match the existing buildings on a block. In other cases, where there is a narrow range of variation in setbacks, then a new building may fit within that established range.

There are some cases where exceptions are appropriate. For example, it may be better to have a greater setback on a new building where this would maintain a sense of open space for adjacent properties in the front of the lot and to maintain solar access. In such cases, the overall mass and scale of the building and how it will be perceived from adjacent properties should be considered. Comments from adjacent property owners should be taken into consideration in these situations.

Guidelines:

When feasible, place a building where it has less impact to your neighbor's light access.

- For example, if the building lot is oriented east and west, consider placing your building closer to the south property line in order to provide more sun to your northern neighbor.

When constructing a new building, locate it to fit within the range of yard dimensions seen on the block.

- Provide a front yard similar in depth to its neighbors.

16. Side Yard Setbacks

Where the height of a side wall is to be greater than that of adjacent houses, consider increasing the side yard setback when feasible.

Guideline:

Provide a greater setback when the height of the new side wall is greater than a neighboring building.

- Consider light, air and privacy issues.



17. Fences

Most front yards in the neighborhood are open and contiguous within each block, while rear yards may be enclosed with a fence.

Guidelines:

Avoid installation of fences around a front yard, unless it is consistent with most of the lots within the block.

Use fence materials that complement the materials of the house and adjoining buildings.

- Wood, wrought iron, and textured synthetic fences are encouraged.
- Chain-link fences should not be installed in the front and side yards and discouraged in rear yards.

18. Building Materials

Use traditional building materials that reflect the building scale found in the neighborhood. Newer materials can also reflect the traditional scale as well and may be appropriate.

Guideline:

Use building materials that contribute to the traditional sense of scale on the block.

- Materials that are made of components that convey a sense of scale are preferred. Examples are lap siding (of wood or synthetic materials), brick and stone. Stucco and plaster, when detailed with scoring joints, changes in surface and other devices, also can convey a sense of scale that is in keeping with traditions.
- In some cases, a change in building materials along wall surface can also help to reduce the perceived scale of the building.

19. Parking

Traditionally, on-site parking has been a subordinate element to the visual setting in older established

neighborhoods of Cedar Rapids. For example, parking is primarily served from the alley. Few properties have driveways accessed from the street or parking in the front setback. This should be continued where feasible.

Guideline:

Minimize the visual impacts of parking on a site.

- On corner lots consider using the side wall for the garage door.
- Garage doors should remain subordinate to the front wall plane.
- Consider using a detached building placed at the rear of the lot for a parking garage.



20. Accessory Structures

Using an accessory structure to accommodate parking and storage is encouraged, because doing so will help to reduce the perception of the overall mass of building on the site.

Guideline:

Locate an accessory structure to the rear of the lot.

- Locate an accessory structure at the rear of the lot and off the alley when feasible. These buildings should be subordinate to the primary structure on the lot. Generally, single-level structures that do not exceed 600 square feet.

21. Landscaping

Maintaining a sense of lawn in the front setback is an objective. In general, a minimum of 70% of the required front setback area should be plant material. This may include grasses, groundcovers, shrubs, trees and other vegetation.

Guideline:

When feasible, provide a greater setback or a jog in the wall plane or other measure that could save a significant mature tree that contributes to the tree canopy in the neighborhood.

22. Lighting

Providing a lighting source in the front yard creates a pedestrian-friendly environment and overall sense of security during the evening hours.



Guidelines:

Lighting fixtures should be compatible with the style of the home, such as a decorative light pole or a light fixture attached to the front exterior.

When possible, motion sensors should be utilized to avoid extended periods of operation.

Floodlights are not appropriate in the front yard. When used in the back yard, floodlights should be on motion sensors to control the periods of operation.

Rehabilitation

These guidelines can be applied to improvements in all of the core neighborhoods of Cedar Rapids. In order for rehabilitation to be eligible the following guideline must be met in addition to all other guidelines in this document.

Gut Rehab: will require projects involving extensive rehabilitation in terms of total removal and replacement of all interior (non-structural) systems, equipment, components or features of the existing structure to be rehabilitated or converted, whereby the existing structure will be reduced (as part of the rehabilitation or conversion of the structure) down to the basic structure or exterior building shell (e.g., the foundation system; exterior walls; roofs; and interior structural components such as columns, beams, floors and structural bearing walls). Gut rehabilitation may also include structural and non-structural modifications to the exterior of the structure. All other Green Streets criteria and program requirements must be met.