

4.3 Facades and Architectural Features

Objective: Building facades and architecture shall bring life to the street on all sides of the building. Entries for both customers and service shall be accommodated.

Facades that are clean, neat and well maintained are essential for the success of a commercial district. Properly designed and inviting facades can enliven and activate the street.

Many buildings in the Silver Spring Business District could benefit from facade improvements and updates. The following building facade guidelines and photographs provide a general guide for addressing building facade improvements as well as the construction of new buildings within the district.

4.3.1 Facade Improvement Guidelines for Existing Buildings

- Before any changes are made to an historic building, it is important to thoroughly understand the contribution of the existing conditions to the integrity of the historic structure. To that end, there is a need for the owners of historic and/or more traditional buildings to undertake the necessary research to establish how the building was originally designed and constructed. This should be the starting point for all future changes. Special attention should be paid to building details such as doors and windows, trim and ornamentation, storefronts and awnings, proportion and rhythm of architectural elements, use of color, materials, and facade composition. Signage, another important element of the building facade, is discussed in detail in section 4.4.

- Any changes made to existing building facades should maintain or enhance the visual richness of detail and add interest to the building, particularly at the street level.
- Materials should be high quality and consistent with the architectural style of the building.
- Primary entrances should be maintained on Silver Spring Drive.
- Rear entrances intended as secondary entrances for customers as well as service entrances, should be maintained with the same care as the primary facade.
- Permanent blocking of window openings or any portion of the window opening on the street facade should not be permitted. This is not intended to prohibit seasonal display signage.
- Facade improvement grants and low interest loans could be made available for property owners to improve the existing buildings within the business district.
- Trash receptacles should be screened from public view.
- Consideration should be given to shared trash and refuse collection between business owners.

4.3.2 Facade and Architectural Feature Guidelines for New Buildings

- All facades shall be pedestrian friendly with activity facing the street. The treatment shall be predominantly windows along the primary

facade(s) and a mix of windows with areas of more solid mass along secondary facades. Solid mass areas also may be utilized for the service areas located on the rear or side of the building (preferably the least prominent and visible facade). The visual connection to the interior activities contributes to the overall image and character of the street.

- Primary and secondary facades are determined by where customers enter. Primary is the “front” entrance, secondary is the side where customers can see into the interior and may have access and/or where service may be accommodated.
- The majority of the surface on the primary facade should be windows to allow visual access in and out of the space. Storefront windows can establish a distinct visual identity for a business image. Quality display windows should be considered as essential as an attractive sign. Display windows typically frame the entryways and should be designed to attract customers.
- The secondary facades should include a large amount of glass for display, but less than on the primary facade in order to accommodate service entrances and necessary storage on the interior.
- For buildings which lie along the edge of Silver Spring Drive, the primary entrances for buildings should be located on Silver Spring.
- Service entrances for the buildings should occur along the rear of the building and be incorporated into the overall design of the building, including similar quality of materials and care for aesthetic quality.
- Mechanical equipment that must be located on the roof of buildings should not be visible from the side of the street opposite the building.

- The economic market and architectural design of the buildings will determine if there are various tenants within each building or a single tenant. For example, a building plan for numerous tenants might have a layout with a central service corridor and entrance from the side. For tenants requiring the entire building, the primary entrance (front of the building) should face Silver Spring Drive and service should occur from the back or side (whichever is least prominent).
- The architectural composition of building elevations shall express base, middle, and top articulation on all facades, and the base of buildings should include elements that relate to the human scale. These should include doors and windows, material texture, projections, awnings and canopies, ornament, etc.
- Side and rear facades shall be compatible with the overall building design concept and treated architecturally to avoid blank walls and monotonous elevations unless otherwise obscured from view.
- The architectural character of buildings should be enhanced with natural materials and special features to define entrances, corners and links to other buildings and public places.
- Signs, awnings, and facade treatments should be integrated with the architectural character.
- The relationship between building footprint and street shall be parallel or perpendicular rather than oblique or diagonal to all streets (except in the case of diagonal streets in which the footprint should be parallel and perpendicular to at least one street front). Front facades shall be parallel to the street with the major roof ridges either parallel or perpendicular to at least one street front.

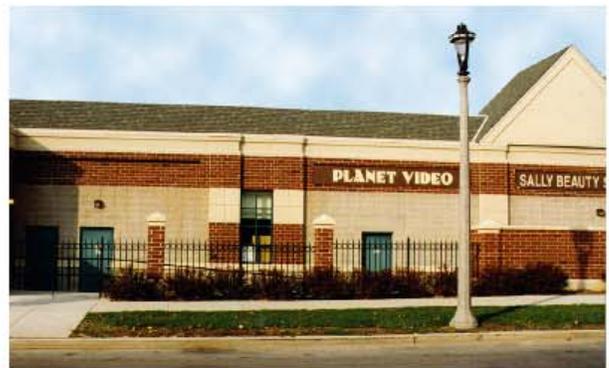
- Where public places are desired, the buildings should be used to form the public place by emphasizing the shape of plazas or square with appropriately scaled design details and windows to enhance pedestrian movement.



Contemporary style and use of details



Individual storefront identities created with a pedestrian scale and focus



Back of building should have been designed to focus on the street, not appear as the 'back'



Multifamily housing concealing parking and in scale with surrounding neighborhood



Both sides of the building have a pedestrian focus and are well designed