

## **ARTICLE 10 DOWNTOWN DESIGN OVERLAY DISTRICT**

### **490-1500 Legislative findings**

The Common Council makes the following findings relating to the downtown design overlay district:

- (1) The downtown area serves as the historic, cultural, and civic center of the City and contains a concentration of buildings, streets, and public spaces that define the community's identity. Preservation and enhancement of this character is essential to maintaining a recognizable and attractive downtown.
- (2) A well-designed downtown environment supports local businesses, encourages private investment, and promotes tourism. Clear and predictable design standards can enhance property values and contribute to long-term economic stability.
- (3) The downtown area is intended to function as a walkable, mixed-use environment. Building form, placement, and façade design directly influence pedestrian comfort, safety, and activity levels.
- (4) Building height limits are necessary to protect certain view sheds in the City of Port Washington.
- (5) Unregulated building heights, massing, and façade treatments may result in development that is incompatible with the established scale and character of downtown. Standards are needed to ensure that new construction and redevelopment are context sensitive.
- (6) The design of buildings, including their relationship to the street, transparency, and architectural detail, contributes to the quality of the public realm. A cohesive and visually engaging streetscape benefits residents, businesses, and visitors.
- (7) Property owners, developers, and residents benefit from clear, objective standards governing building height, façade design, and related elements. Such standards reduce uncertainty and improve the efficiency of the development review process.
- (8) The downtown design overlay district implements goals and recommendations of the City's comprehensive plan and any adopted downtown or redevelopment plans that call for enhanced design quality and coordinated development patterns.
- (9) While standards are necessary, the City recognizes the importance of allowing flexibility to encourage creative and high-quality design solutions that meet or exceed the intent of this district.

### **490-1501 Purpose**

The purpose of the downtown design overlay district is to promote high-quality, context-sensitive development and redevelopment within the downtown area by establishing standards for building height, massing, façade design, and site layout. These standards are intended to reinforce a pedestrian-oriented environment, preserve and enhance downtown character, support economic vitality, and ensure that new development contributes positively to the public realm while allowing for flexibility and innovation consistent with these objectives.

### **490-1502 Establishment**

The downtown design overlay district as depicted on the zoning map is established. The boundary of the district and the regulating standards may be revised pursuant to the procedures and requirements for a zoning code amendment established in Article 5.

### 490-1503 Compliance with standards

Development projects within the downtown design overlay district are subject to a range of design standards that, due to existing site conditions, building constraints, or unique redevelopment circumstances, may not always be practicable to meet in full. At the same time, the City recognizes that high-quality design solutions may, in limited cases, warrant flexibility where strict application of a standard would hinder achievement of the overall intent of this Article.

The reviewing authority may therefore approve modifications to the standards of this district where such modifications are consistent with the purpose and intent of this article. In considering a request for modification, the reviewing authority shall make findings based on one or more of the following criteria:

- (1) The proposed deviation is necessary to achieve other applicable requirements of this article;
- (2) The proposed deviation results in a design that meets or exceeds the overall quality, intent, and objectives of the downtown design overlay district, including instances where the proposal goes above and beyond baseline requirements;
- (3) The proposed deviation is warranted to preserve or reinforce historic development patterns, architectural character, or elements of the urban fabric that are unique to and characteristic of the City, or where the deviation results in a design of exceptional or distinctive architectural merit that advances the vision of the regulating plan.

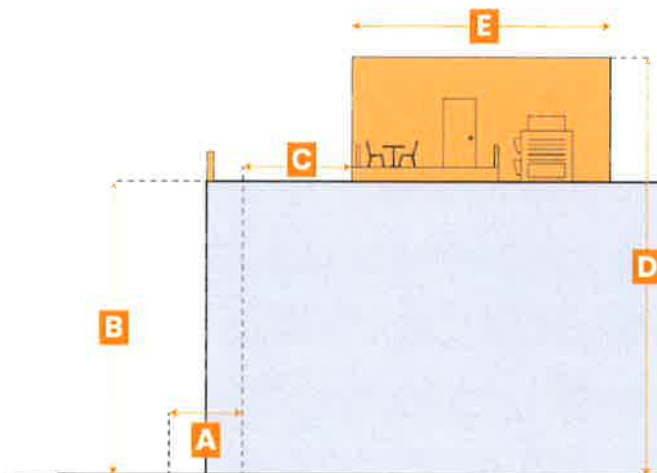
Any approved modification must be the minimum necessary to address the specific condition or objective identified and shall not undermine or lessen the overall intent of this article.

### 490-1504 Building height

Buildings in the downtown design overlay district may not exceed the maximum building heights depicted in Exhibit 10-1 establishing maximum building heights.

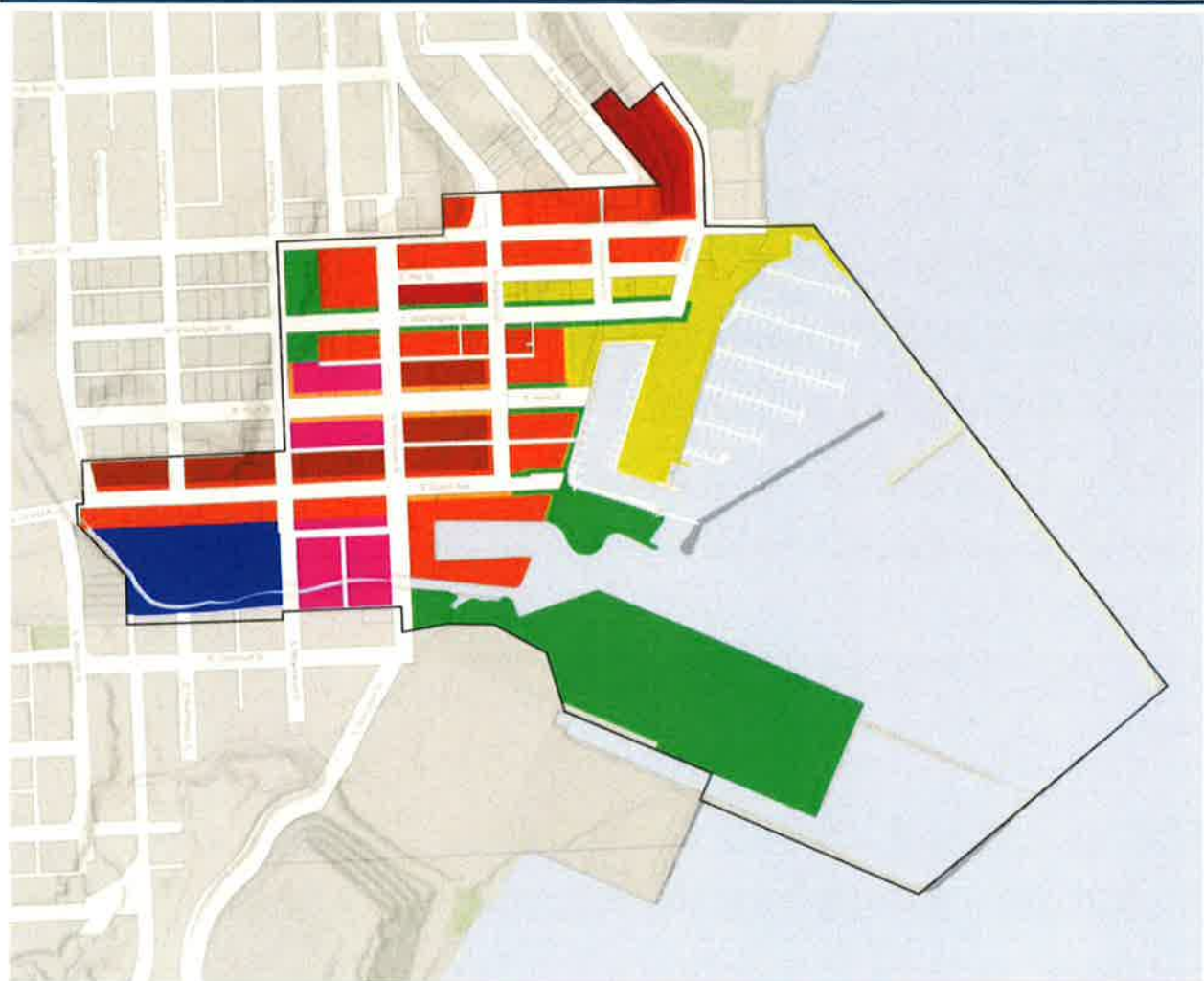
Within the build-to-zone, building heights are limited to the height as represented by the color along the street frontage. Height at the build-to-zone is measured to the base of roof eaves, parapet walls, or similar elements. Behind the build-to-zone is a building step back, typically 8 feet unless otherwise specified. Additional building elements are permitted within the step back limit including rooftop decks, penthouses, and mechanical equipment not to exceed the height as shown on the block interior (Exhibit 10-1).

Exhibit 10-2. Building height step backs



- A Build-to-Zone
- B Height limit at Build-to-Zone
- C Minimum required step back
- D Height limit within step back
- E Building elements permitted within building step back limit

Exhibit 10-1. Maximum building heights (Map date 04-07-2026)



**Key:**

- 33 feet
- 38 feet
- 43 feet
- 48 feet
- 53 feet
- 58 feet
- 61 feet

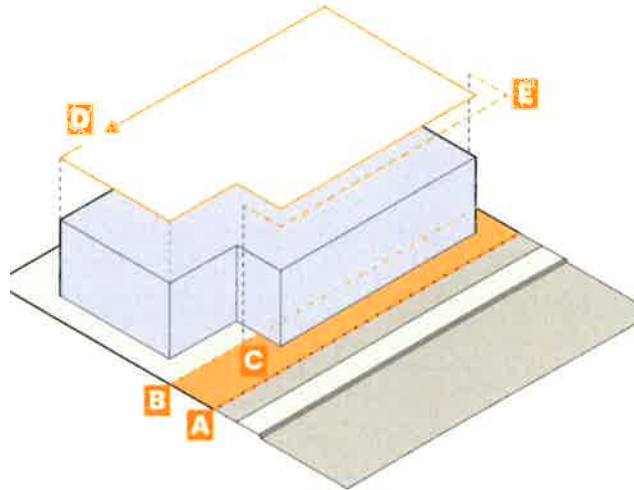
**Note:** There is an 8-foot step back along some of the street frontages.

**490-1505 Build-to-zone**

Similar to a traditional setback, a build-to-zone defines a minimum and maximum building setback from the front lot line. Build-to-zones help define a street wall along a corridor to ensure consistent urban form.

Generally, a build-to-zone should be about 0-10 feet deep to allow for flexibility in site planning. Between 50 to 100 percent of the building frontage should be within this zone. Areas between the building façade and street when not located in the build-to-zone must be improved with street furnishings, outdoor seating, public spaces, or other non-building improvements that contribute positively to the public way and character of the street.

Exhibit 10-3. Build-to-zone



- A Street setback, minimum
- B Street setback, maximum
- C Build-to-zone (area between A and B)
- D Principal building perimeter
- E Minimum percentage of principal building frontage required in build-to-zone

**490-1506 Building materials**

Building materials should harmonize with the surrounding environment but still allow for modern construction practices.

Desirable features of building materials include durability, texture, color, and visual diversity. Higher quality materials are required along the street level and street facing facades, while lesser quality materials are allowable on upper stories and on rear facing facades.

Table 10-1. Building materials

Required materials for public-facing facades	Prohibited materials as primary material for public-facing facades	Decorative materials permitted as a portion of public-facing facades
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brick</li> <li>• Stone</li> <li>• Decorative concrete masonry units</li> <li>• Metal panel systems</li> <li>• Materials with comparable appearance and durability as the above listed materials</li> <li>• Other creatively used, high quality and durable building materials</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EIFS (Exterior Insulation Finishing System)</li> <li>• Vinyl or aluminum siding</li> <li>• Corrugated metal</li> <li>• Wood</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decorative finished block systems</li> <li>• Aluminum composite materials</li> <li>• Glass/glazing</li> <li>• Precast concrete</li> <li>• Decorative concrete block</li> <li>• Decorative façade panels</li> <li>• Finished wood</li> </ul>

**490-1507 Street wall/character areas**

**A. Generally.** Street walls/character areas are public streets that function as important corridors where buildings have minimal setbacks and include active ground level uses producing a vibrant street life.

**B. Designated areas.** The following streets are designated as street wall/character areas:

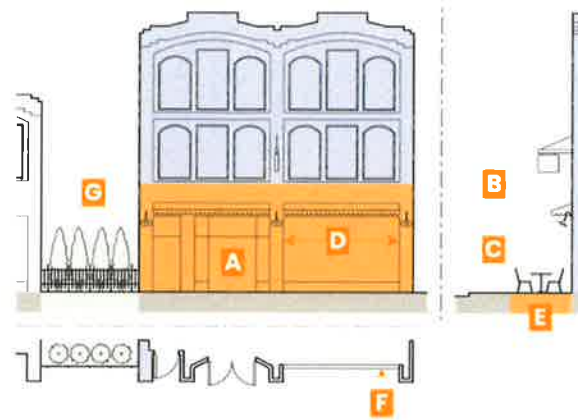
- (1) Franklin Street from Jackson Street to Grand Avenue

- (2) Main Street from Milwaukee Street to the waterfront
- (3) Grand Avenue from Webster Street to the waterfront
- (4) Washington Street from Milwaukee Street to the waterfront
- (5) Wisconsin Street from Grand Avenue to the bridge over the Sauk Creek

**C. Standards.** Development fronting a street wall/character area must comply with the following standards:

- (1) The first-floor façade must be visually distinct from upper façade zones but integrated with the overall architectural character of the building.
- (2) The street level of the building must have not less than 3 visually diverse and expressive features such as:
  - (i) Hoods, canopies, or awnings (including marquees; awnings may not be plastic or fiberglass)
  - (ii) Projecting signs
  - (iii) Planters
  - (iv) Seating walls
  - (v) Bay windows
  - (vi) Railings
  - (vii) Pedestrian-scale street lighting between 12 and 15 feet in height
  - (viii) Recessed entries
  - (ix) Transom windows
- (3) The first floor must incorporate street activating features including not less than 2 of the following elements:
  - (i) Outdoor cafes
  - (ii) Outdoor seating
  - (iii) Plazas
  - (iv) Porches
  - (v) Decks
  - (vi) Niches
  - (vii) Pedestrian-oriented signage
  - (viii) Decorative lighting

**Exhibit 10-4. Street wall/character areas**



- A** Visually distinct first floor
- B** Street level features
- C** First floor street activating features
- D** Glazing/windows along not less than 25 percent of façade length
- E** Enhanced pavement at key locations
- F** Horizontal façade articulation
- G** Features within gaps between buildings

- (4) Glazing/windows must be included along not less than 25 percent of the total façade length.
- (5) Enhanced pavement materials should be used at key locations such as crosswalks, sitting areas, and entries; these materials include but are not limited to pavers and/or textured concrete.
- (6) Parking areas must include substantial decorative fencing/garden walls and ornamental/shade trees.
- (7) Facades must be articulated horizontally, or with material changes, to prevent the creation of spans greater than 80 feet in width. Acceptable forms of façade articulation include the following:
  - (i) Recesses or protrusions at least 2 feet in depth
  - (ii) Changes in material type
  - (iii) Interruption with a visually prominent pedestrian entry that is emphasized through the use of architectural details or special materials.

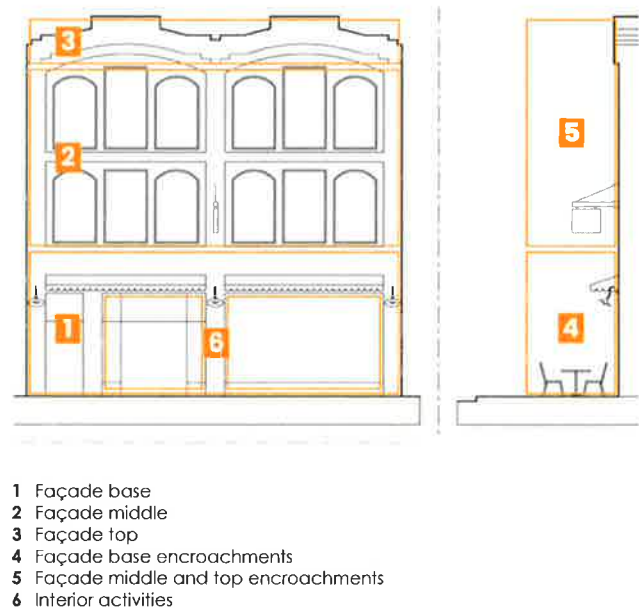
Gaps between buildings along the street wall/character area's build-to-zone exceeding 12 feet in length must be filled with alternative features that create a strong continuous visual pattern such as ornamental walls or fences not exceeding 4 feet combined with tree rows, landscaping, or hedges

#### 490-1508 Façade composition

Facades fronting street wall/character areas must consist of the following elements:

- (1) Zone 1 Façade Base: The base anchors the building to the ground and is the interface between the building and people. The base of the building includes any exposed basement, all of which should avoid spandrel glass and other non-transparent windows.
- (2) Zone 2 Façade Middle: The middle of a building abstractly communicates the building's function or use. The transition between the middle and the base or the middle and the top of a building is often articulated by the use of contrasting materials, or ornamental elements.
- (3) Zone 3 Façade Top: The top terminates the building against the sky and provides opportunity to create an interesting silhouette and, in conjunction with surrounding buildings, an interesting skyline.
- (4) Zone 4 Façade Base Encroachments: Base encroachments include any element at the base of a building that extend beyond the property line. Elements in this zone may include architectural features, signage, awnings, lighting, and other adornments.

Exhibit 10-5. Façade composition



- 1 Façade base
- 2 Façade middle
- 3 Façade top
- 4 Façade base encroachments
- 5 Façade middle and top encroachments
- 6 Interior activities

- (5) **Zone 5 Façade Middle & Top Encroachments:** Middle encroachments include any element about the base of the building that extend beyond the property line. Elements in this zone may include architectural features, bay windows, signage, balconies, awnings, and other embellishments.
- (6) **Zone 6 Interior Activities:** Interior activities include uses that occur on the private side of a building's façade on the ground floor. This zone is important to ensure a certain amount of activity on the ground floor to enliven the street.

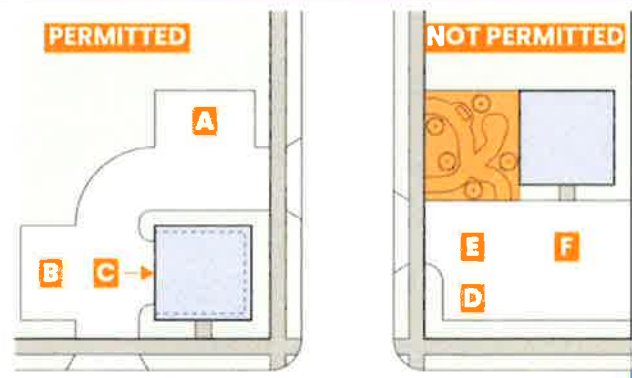
Building facades should create a general harmony among buildings. They should be composed with the following details:

- (1) Buildings should have a visually distinguishable base, middle and top.
- (2) Rooftop landscaping and vegetation and/or occupiable rooftop areas are encouraged due to the high visibility of rooftops from nearby properties.
- (3) Buildings should demonstrate a rhythm in the façade – typically organized according to the structural frame of the building.
- (4) Building windows and entries should generally be designed with vertical proportions and should avoid continuous horizontal elements such as ribbon windows and continuous awnings overhangs. Curtain wall facades are prohibited in order to maintain the character of downtown.
- (5) Windows and entries should be designed with elements that increase the sense of depth in the façade via change in material, color, and/or horizontal articulation and recesses measuring at least 4 inches.
- (6) Special attention should be paid to overall building height and massing in relation to adjoining buildings in order to maintain a scale and character compatible within downtown subareas.
- (7) Buildings built on abutting lots should have moderate visual diversity in terms of materials and façade compositions in order to create a significant, visual distinction in materials, style, and aesthetic character. The massing, however, should be harmonious with adjacent buildings.

#### 490-1509 Parking and loading/service

- A. Generally.** Parking areas must be designed to be safe and visually pleasing public experiences rather than unwanted and undesirable places.
- B. Parking location.** Surface parking must be located under, behind, and/or on the side of buildings and not at the intersection of two streets, between a street and a public place, or between the building and the street.
- C. Parking buffer.** Surface parking along street edges must be bordered by not less than 6 feet of space incorporating decorative fencing/walls and ornamental/shade trees. Surface parking may not abut a sidewalk.
- D. Parking design.** Surface parking shall be designed as an integrated

Exhibit 10-6. Parking location

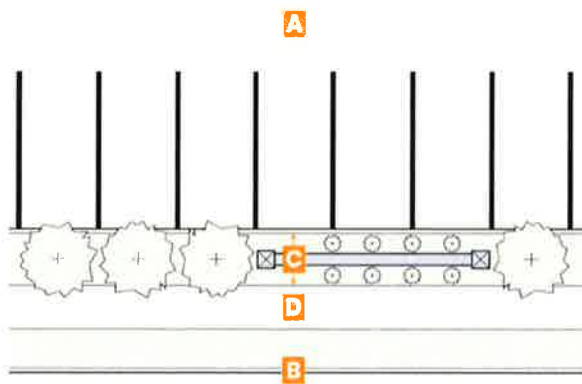


- A Behind the building
- B Beside the building
- C Under the building
- D Not on the corner of an intersection of two streets
- E Not between a street and a public place
- F Not between a building and a street

vehicular/pedestrian space providing not less than 2 of the following aesthetic features similar to courtyards, plazas, or garden areas:

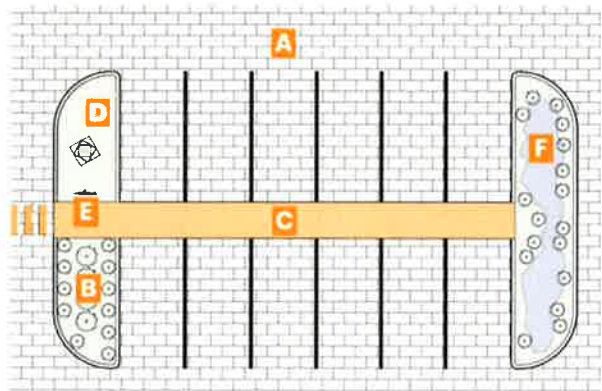
- (1) Decorative paving
- (2) Landscaping
- (3) Pedestrian pathways
- (4) Sculptural elements
- (5) Wayfinding signage
- (6) Stormwater features

Exhibit 10-7. Parking buffer



- A Surface parking
- B Street edge
- C Minimum landscape buffer incorporating decorative fencing/walls and ornamental/shade trees
- D Sidewalk

Exhibit 10-8. Parking design



- A Decorative paving
- B Landscaping
- C Pedestrian pathway
- D Sculptural element
- E Wayfinding signage
- F Stormwater feature

**E. Loading.** Service and loading areas shall be designed with the same or harmonious architectural treatments as the principal building façade. Service and loading areas shall be screened only when visually appealing construction of certain elements is not possible.

**F. Parking structure design.** Parking structures must continue the principal façade materials and details. Parking structures must be open in design and partially below grade when feasible to reduce overall building height. Active ground-level uses must be integrated with a parking structure to the extent feasible. Uninterrupted spans of parking structure walls exceeding 120 feet are not allowed.

**490-1510 through 490-1599 reserved**