

## **ARTICLE 12**

### **BUILDING DESIGN AND COMPOSITION**

#### **Section 12.01 Purpose.**

High quality architectural design and building composition are important elements in reinforcing a comfortable, human-scale environment, and for maintaining a unique sense of place in the City of Richmond. In particular, the attractiveness and economic vitality of the City’s downtown areas are largely a reflection of the shape, placement, design, and quality of the built environment. Accordingly, it is the purpose of this Article to:

1. Maintain the visual environment of the City, protect the general welfare, and ensure that the City’s property values, building designs, appearance, character, and economic well-being are preserved and respected through minimum design and appearance standards.
2. Encourage creativity, imagination, innovation, and variety in architectural design and building composition through design principles that promote harmony in the physical relationships between structures in the City.
3. Preserve the unique heritage, history, and architectural character of existing buildings in downtown Richmond as these buildings are renovated and re-used, and as changes and improvements are made.
4. Reinforce and support a healthy development pattern in which new buildings and building modifications maintain the City’s unique character through complementary and appropriate use of building materials, scale, massing, and architectural details.
5. Inhibit criminal activity and provide a pleasant, rich and diverse experience for pedestrians in the downtown area through minimum facade transparency requirements.

#### **Section 12.02 Scope.**

The provisions of the Article shall apply to all planned buildings and structures in the City; all alterations, renovations, expansions or other work that includes exterior changes to existing buildings; and all development projects and uses subject to review per Article 18 (Site Plan Review), except as follows:

1. **Single- and two-family (duplex) dwellings.** The provisions of this Article shall not apply to single- and two-family dwellings and accessory structures in any district.
2. **Code requirements.** This Article is not intended to supercede or supplant established building and fire code regulations, nor to regulate the quality, durability, maintenance, performance, load capacity, or fire resistance characteristics or workmanship of building materials.

## Section 12.03 General Requirements.

Building construction, alterations, renovations and expansions, and other work subject to the provisions of this Article shall comply with the following general requirements:

### A. Architectural Standards.

Decorative and functional architectural features, details and ornamentation (such as arches, colonnades, columns, pilasters, detailed trim, brick bands, contrasting courses of material, cornices or porches) shall be incorporated into all building facades at a scale appropriate to the size and bulk of the building, as determined by the Planning Commission.

1. **Rear façade.** All sides of a building shall be complementary in design, details, and materials. Where a side or rear facade is visible from a public street, or if parking is located at the side or rear of a building, the facade shall include windows, building materials, and architectural features similar to those present on the front facade of the building (see illustration).
2. **Façade variation.** Building façade walls exceeding 100 feet in length shall be subdivided into bays, through the location and arrangement of architectural features and design variations, to provide a changing and varying facade appearance. Such features and design elements may include, but are not limited to the following (see illustration):
  - a. Projections, bays or recesses, not exceeding ten (10) feet in depth.
  - b. Enhanced ornamentation and architectural detailing.
  - c. Variations in building height or window patterns.
  - d. Distinctively shaped roof forms, detailed parapets, and cornice lines.

### B. Public Entrances.

Public entrances shall be emphasized with framing devices, such as, peaked roof forms, porches, overhangs, archways, larger door openings, display windows, accent colors, tile, moldings, pedestrian-scale lighting, and similar devices.

### C. Roof Design.

Roof-top mechanical equipment, HVAC systems, exhaust pipes or stacks, elevator housings, satellite dishes and other devices and equipment shall be screened from public rights-of-way and adjacent uses by a parapet wall or similar device extending around all sides of the building (see illustration).

Pitched and shingled roof forms with overhanging eaves shall be incorporated into a new building design where determined necessary by the Planning Commission in accordance with the purpose of this Article.

**D. Security and Safety Equipment.**

Exterior security gates or roll-down security doors shall be prohibited. Link or grill type security devices shall be permitted only if installed on the interior of the building, within the window or door frames. Such security equipment shall be recessed and completely concealed during regular business hours, and shall be predominantly transparent to allow maximum visibility of the interior.

Fire escapes shall not be permitted on a building’s front facade, except where the Building Official determines that no other option is available to provide the required means of egress.

**Section 12.04 Standards for Exterior Facade Materials.**

All building construction, alteration, renovation, and other development activity subject to the provisions of this Article shall conform with the following standards for exterior building facade materials:

**A. Purpose.**

The following standards for the use of exterior building facade materials are established in this Ordinance for the purpose of:

1. Maintaining the City’s unique visual environment, appearance, architectural character, and economic well-being through minimum design and appearance standards for each zoning district in the City.
2. Promoting harmony in the physical relationships between structures in the City.
3. Reinforcing and supporting a healthy, pedestrian-oriented development pattern through complementary and appropriate use of building materials, scale, massing, and architectural details.

**B. Schedule of Facade Materials by Zoning District.**

The use of exterior facade materials shall comply with the following maximum standards (see table next page):

District Name	Symbol
Single-Family Residential Districts	R-1, R-2, and R-3
Two-Family Residential District	R-T
Multiple-Family Residential District	RM-1
Manufactured Housing Park District	R-4
Office District	O
Local Business District	B-1
Central Business District	B-2
General Business District	B-3
Limited Industrial District	I-1
General Industrial District	I-2
Public/Semi-Public Services District	PSP

**Notes to table (next page):**

1. Utility brick is larger than standard brick (typical utility brick = 3 5/8 inches x 11 5/8 inches).
2. CMU = Concrete Masonry Unit.
3. EIFS = Exterior Insulation and Finish System.
4. EPS = Expanded Polystyrene.
5. Standards apply to multiple-family and non-residential uses in all zoning districts.

**B. Schedule of Facade Materials by Zoning District.**

The use of exterior facade materials shall comply with the following maximum standards:

BUILDING MATERIALS		MAXIMUM PERMITTED FACADE COVERAGE BY ZONING DISTRICT (percentage)						
		R-1, R-2, R-3, R-4, R-T, PSP	RM-1	O	B-1, B-2	B-3	I-1, I-2	PSP
BRICK	Face, terra cotta, or ceramic	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	Jumbo or utility <sup>1</sup> brick	25%	25%	25%	25%	50%	100%	100%
STONE	Natural stone, stone veneer or simulated stone materials	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
CONCRETE	Formed in place, pre-cast panels or blocks	10%	10%	10%	10%	25%	75%	50%
	Split-face CMU <sup>2</sup> or similar decorative block	25%	25%	25%	25%	50%	100%	50%
SIDING OR SHINGLES	Vinyl, metal, or other synthetic materials	75%	75%	50%	50%	25%	25%	25%
	Wood, cement board, or similar materials	100%	100%	75%	75%	50%	50%	50%
ENGINEERED FINISH PRODUCTS	EIFS <sup>3</sup> , plaster, stucco or similar materials	25%	10%	10%	10%	15%	20%	20%
	Hard-coated EPS <sup>4</sup> or similar polyurea hard-coated foam materials	25%	10%	20%	20%	25%	20%	20%
GLASS	Translucent, dark tint or mirrored	10%	10%	10%	10%	25%	50%	50%
	Transparent, pale tint or energy efficient	75%	75%	75%	75%	75%	75%	75%
	Glass block	25%	10%	10%	10%	50%	50%	50%
SHEETS, PANELING OR SIMILAR	Metal	0%	0%	0%	0%	25%	50%	50%
	Wood	50%	75%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

## Section 12.05 Additional Standards for Buildings in the B-1 and B-2 Districts.

The following additional standards shall apply to all building construction, alterations, renovations, expansions, and other work subject to the provisions of this Article in the B-1 and B-2 Districts:

### A. Awnings.

Awnings accessory to buildings in the B-1 and B-2 Districts shall be subject to the following (see illustration):

1. **Use.** Awnings shall be primarily designed to protect pedestrians, display windows, and public entrances from the weather; and to add color and visual interest to the street level façade.
2. **Maintenance.** Awnings shall be kept in good repair to maintain the original appearance and ensure public safety.
3. **Materials.** The awning shall be constructed of durable, fire-resistant materials. The use of vinyl, plastic, rigid fiberglass or metal panels as covering materials shall be prohibited.
4. **Secured to building.** All awnings shall be securely attached to the building.
5. **Consistency.** Awnings shall be consistent with the character of historic buildings and shape of the facade's architectural elements, and shall not obscure architectural details. Where adjacent awnings conform with this Ordinance, new awnings shall be consistent with the existing awnings in terms of appearance, scale, height, projection, and location.
6. **Projections and clearance.** Awnings shall not project more than eight (8) feet into a street right-of-way, and shall be set back a minimum of six (6) feet from a curb line or 18 feet from a non-curbed edge of pavement. A minimum eight (8) foot clearance shall be maintained under the awning. Awnings proposed to project or overhang into a public right-of-way shall require City Council approval prior to installation.
7. **Awning signs.** Signs on awnings shall comply with the standards of Section 13.05 (Building-Mounted Signs).

### B. Building Entrances.

All buildings shall have at least one (1) public entrance that faces a public street right-of-way. Additional public entrances shall be permitted on the rear or side facade, including primary access to other uses in a multi-tenant building.

### C. Expression Line.

The street level facade of any building shall be distinguished from the remainder of the building with a horizontal expression line on the façade located between the highest point of the street level and the bottom edge of any second floor windows (see illustration):

1. **Permanent design element.** The expression line shall be incorporated into the façade as a permanent design element, and shall be created by a change in building material, architectural design, setback, recess, projection, cornices, belt courses, corbelling, molding, stringcourses or other sculptured design element.
2. **Consistency with adjacent buildings.** Where the Planning Commission determines that a consistent expression line has been established on adjacent buildings, it shall be continued on any new construction or expansion, or the Commission may require a transitional design element (such as columns, piers, bays or changes in façade materials) between the existing and proposed expression lines.

**D. Windows and Façade Transparency.**

Buildings with frontage on a public or private right-of-way, street, sidewalk, public park, or plaza shall be designed to encourage and complement a pedestrian-scale environment, with window openings and facade transparency subject to the following (see illustration):

1. **Street level facade.** A minimum of forty percent (40%) and maximum of seventy five percent (75%) of the street level façade shall be transparent.
2. **Upper level facade.** A minimum of twenty-five percent (25%) and maximum of sixty percent (60%) of the upper level façade shall be transparent.
3. **Glazing.** Primarily clear or lightly tinted glass shall be used in the B-1 and B-2 Districts. Mirrored windows and glass curtain wall systems shall be prohibited, and translucent glass shall be limited to bathroom windows and similar use areas requiring privacy.
4. **Pattern and arrangement.** The pattern of window openings on a building facade in the B-1 and B-2 Districts shall be subject to the following:
  - a. Windows shall be arranged into proportionally-spaced horizontal window lines, and a balanced pattern of vertical window bays.
  - b. Windows on all floors above the street level shall be vertical in orientation, and shall include prominent sills and framing elements.
  - c. Spaces between windows or window bays shall be formed by columns, mullions, or other facade materials.
  - d. The Planning Commission may permit the use of shutters or spandrel glass to form a false window opening needed to complete an established window pattern, upon determination that the interior layout or other conditions prevent the inclusion of a clear glass window.
5. **Consistency with adjacent buildings.** Consistent window patterns or arrangements established on adjacent buildings shall be continued or extended as part of any new construction or expansion. Architectural elements (columns, piers, bays or similar elements) shall be incorporated into the facade where necessary to form a transition between contrasting window patterns or arrangements.

**E. Demolition.**

Existing buildings in the B-1 and B-2 Districts shall not be moved or demolished unless the Building Official has ordered the demolition for safety reasons, or the Planning Commission has approved a plan for re-development of the lot.

**F. Façade Preservation.**

Significant architectural details on existing buildings in the B-1 and B-2 Districts shall not be destroyed or obscured during façade renovations, which shall be further subject to the following:

1. The pattern and proportions of existing window and door openings, vertical lines of columns and piers, and horizontal lines of spandrels, cornices, and other primary structural elements shall be maintained.
2. Only that portion of an existing building proposed to be altered shall be subject to the standards of this Article, provided that the Planning Commission shall consider the proposed alteration within the context of the overall building architecture, the character of adjacent buildings, and the purpose of this Article.

**G. Expansions and Renovations.**

The Planning Commission may approve the continuation of existing wall materials for an expansion or renovation of an existing building in the B-1 and B-2 Districts, provided that the overall design and architectural character of the expansion is consistent with the existing building and the purpose of this Article.

**Section 12.06 Alternative Designs or Materials.**

To encourage creativity, imagination, innovation, and variety in architectural design, the Planning Commission may waive or modify the requirements of this Article upon determining that the proposed architectural design or exterior façade material meets all of the following conditions:

1. The proposed design or material is consistent with the purposes of this Article.
2. The proposed design or material would enhance the character of the building, and would be equal or superior to designs or materials permitted by this Article.
3. The proposed design or material would be in harmony with the character of adjacent buildings and the surrounding district.

# ILLUSTRATIONS

Parapet wall exceeds height of rooftop mechanical units



**Roof Design**



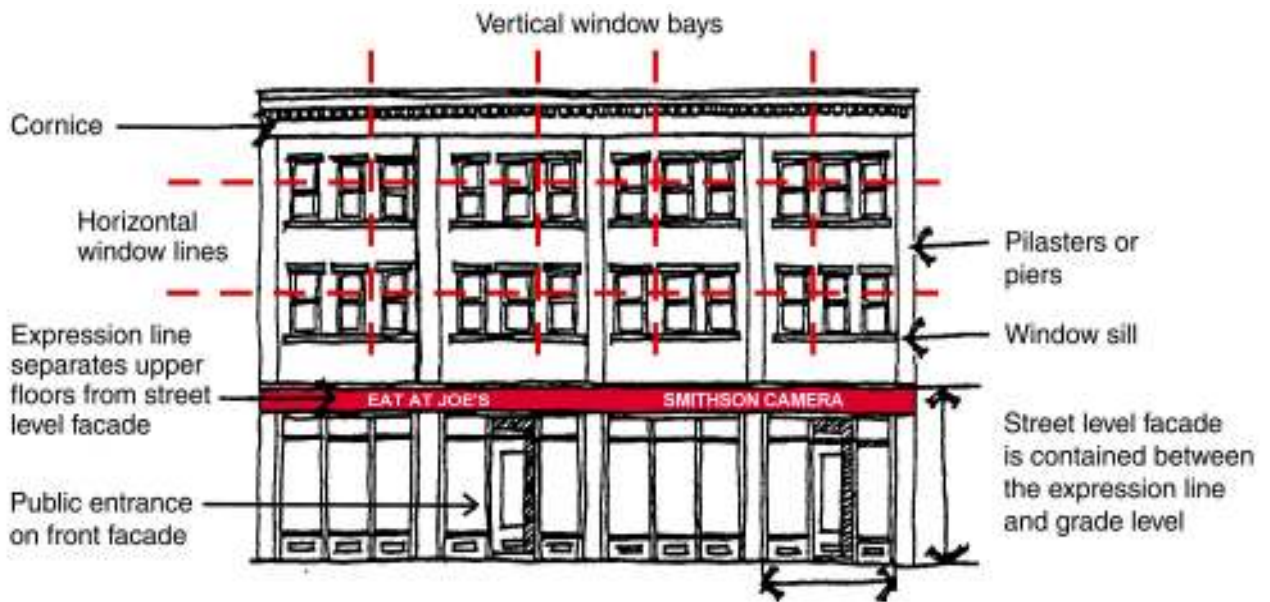
**Rear Entrance**



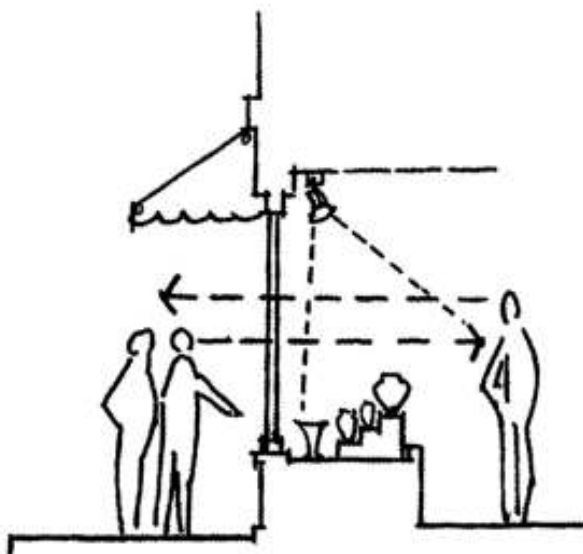
**Facade Variation**



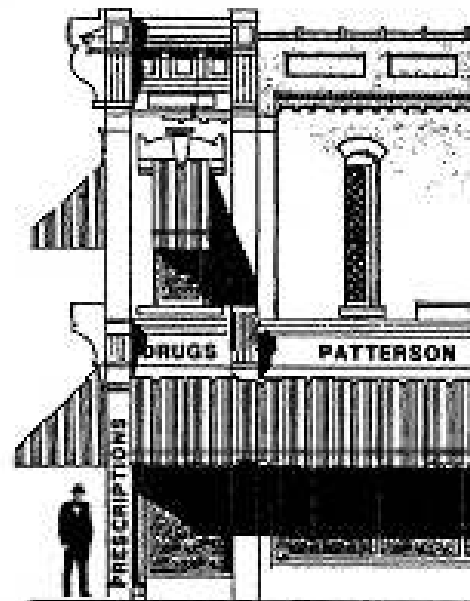
# ILLUSTRATIONS



**Arrangement of Facade Elements**



**Facade Transparency**



**Awnings**

