

DESIGN PRINCIPLES FOR REDEVELOPMENT DISTRICTS

INTRODUCTION

As Nashville becomes increasingly conscious of the need to ensure strong urban design in new development, the Metropolitan Development and Housing Agency joins other city departments and agencies in seeking new tools to promote building designs that contribute to the city's long-term vitality and street life. As MDHA, through its design review committees, exercises purview over the design of new development in redevelopment districts, which comprise much of the area in Nashville's downtown and core neighborhoods, it is important to be clear about what the agency believes are the fundamental issues that contribute to positive urban design. It is integral to MDHA's basic mission to encourage new development that it provide for a physically attractive environment that fosters investment.

Specific guidelines addressing such issues as building placement, architectural detail, and building materials have already been adopted for several areas located in redevelopment districts. These areas include East Nashville's Main Street, the Five Points area, Hope Gardens, the Gateway Boulevard, Lower Broadway, and the North Nashville historic districts of Germantown and Buena Vista. However, prescriptive guidelines for development in other areas within redevelopment districts have not been instituted.

Nashville's redevelopment districts currently encompass a range of neighborhoods with diverse characteristics and varied opportunity for new development. It would, therefore, be inappropriate if not impossible to develop a single set of design guidelines to apply equally to all of these areas. However, it is possible to discover a set of *design principles* that describe the basic design elements that universally contribute to positive urban development regardless of contextual differences. In order to shape new development projects and provide clarity for developers, the design review committees, and all other civic design interests, it is important that MDHA enumerate those principles.

The Design Principles, described more fully below, seek to foster good development without inhibiting design creativity and flexibility. Stated as five basic principles, they address (1) contextual siting, (2) the importance of pedestrian environments, (3) architectural

sensitivity, (4) respect for historic structures, and (5) durability of building materials. These Design Principles should guide architects and developers and should serve as the basis for review by MDHA's design review committees. To be considered approvable, any development project should respond to each of the five principles.

THE DESIGN PRINCIPLES

For redevelopment districts or parts of redevelopment districts for which more specific development guidelines have not been adopted by MDHA, the respective Design Review Committees shall use the design principles illustrated on the following pages to interpret general language appearing in the development plans relative to the appropriateness of contextual site design and architectural detail.

This document was approved by the Board of the Metropolitan Development and Housing Agency on May 9, 2006 as provided for in MDHA-administered Redevelopment Plans and as a supplement to language contained therein.

PRINCIPLE 1: Buildings should be sited on their respective parcels in ways that are appropriate to their context.



The plaza in front of this office building interrupts the urban street wall and detracts from the pedestrian experience.



In most areas, including the central business district, primary structures should be built up to the sidewalk with no setback to encourage street walls and pedestrian activity. If there are consistent setbacks on a particular street or in a particular neighborhood, especially in residential areas, new construction should be respectful of the existing pattern. Garages or outbuildings should also be sited to follow existing siting patterns. Whenever possible, the positioning of buildings should avoid substantial gaps in the 'street wall.' Parking should not be located between the primary building on a site and adjacent streets.

While public space may be an asset in an urban setting, setbacks to accommodate privately-developed public spaces, such as plazas, generally disrupt urban street edges and should only be permitted at the discretion of the design review committees. A plaza may be permitted when its design is integral to the purpose of an overall project and when it contributes to the design and vitality of its broader context. Private plazas should be sized and physically programmed for constant active use rather than to accommodate occasional event-oriented uses.

Buildings should be sited to respect or enhance view corridors, unique topography, and significant structures.

These downtown buildings, built up to the sidewalk, form a consistent street edge.



The setbacks of these new Germantown houses (center) respect the existing setback patterns on the street.

PRINCIPLE 2: The ground floors of new buildings should be designed to encourage pedestrian activity.

In urban areas, buildings should be designed to encourage pedestrian street life. Whenever feasible, ground floors should incorporate uses - such as office, retail, or residential space - that activate the sidewalk and encourage pedestrian traffic. Parking garages and uninterrupted building facades at the street level rob the sidewalks of visual interest and should generally not be permitted. In instances where it is unreasonable to disallow ground-level parking structures or uninterrupted facades, negative visual impacts should be obscured or mitigated through architectural articulation, landscaping, or through the use of public art. Storefronts should incorporate ample clear, non-reflective glass in order to provide a high degree of ground-level transparency. Building entrances should be located on primary streets where pedestrian traffic is concentrated.



This blank wall robs the sidewalk of vitality and visual interest.



Street-level retail in the Gulch is designed to generate pedestrian activity.



This garage on Church Street illustrates that active ground-level spaces can be incorporated into the design of parking structures.

PRINCIPLE 3: The architectural styles and forms of new buildings should be appropriate to their context.

New buildings should generally be designed to complement their surroundings by incorporating the basic rhythms, forms and materials of existing building patterns. Civic structures may be excepted from this principle, as they represent opportunities to introduce iconic architecture that stands out from its context.

Architecture should build upon the distinctive identity of individual neighborhoods. In terms of style and form, what is appropriate in one context may not be appropriate in another.

The historical differences in architectural style that exist in a particular place speak to its evolving past and tell the story of its people over time. New construction that imitates historic architectural styles fails to continue to tell this story and may compromise the value of authentic historic structures by confusing genuine history with reproduction. Contemporary styles and architectural features are encouraged. Exterior building design should also avoid the creation of themed environments that create a false sense of being in an alternate time or place.



This house near Five Points incorporates the scale and materials of its context in a contemporary style. Its 'corner store' form successfully transitions adjacent commercial and residential properties.



This new building conveys the false impression that it is historic. Imitative or themed architecture distorts a person's sense of time and place.

PRINCIPLE 4: The architectural integrity of existing historic buildings should be preserved and respected.



The original architecture of these historic East Nashville homes has been preserved.

Genuine historic architecture is valuable for its cultural and aesthetic contributions to the city. It is a frequent source of a city's vitality and street life. Demolition of buildings that are listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places should be strongly discouraged.

Taking into consideration the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, alterations to historic properties should be done in such a way as to preserve the original character of the building. Any additions to historic buildings should respect their form and scale and should seek to build on the original building's character in an architecturally distinctive but complementary way.



The storefront on these Broadway buildings was renovated in a way that does not preserve the original character of the structures.

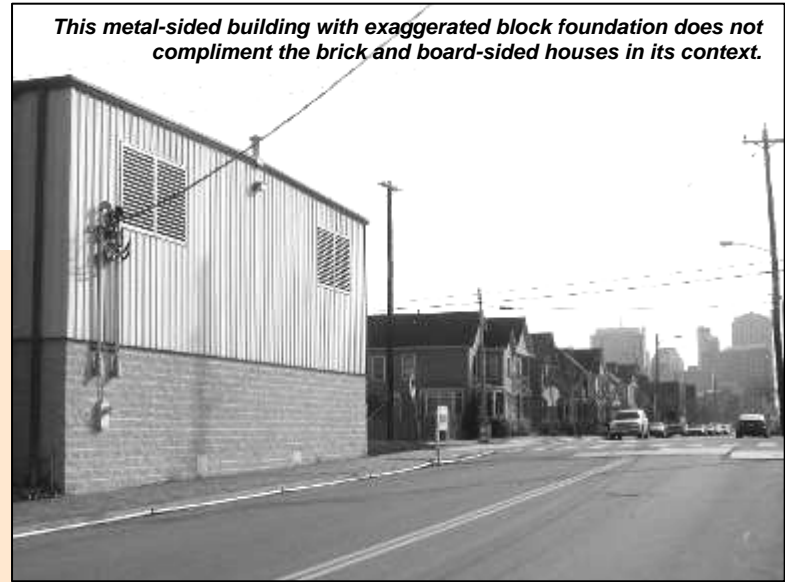
Fifth Avenue is one of the few remaining historically intact streets in downtown Nashville.



PRINCIPLE 5: Building materials should be durable and aesthetically appropriate to their context.

Exterior building materials should convey a sense of refinement and stability rather than impermanence, and the selection of materials should be based on compatibility with a building's context. EIFS, unfinished exposed concrete, and industrial metal are discouraged in all contexts and should only be permitted when used as accent materials integral to a project's design. Wood, brick, stone, cementitious board (e.g. hardieplank), steel, aluminum, finished concrete and glass are examples of durable materials that are generally appropriate. New buildings should achieve a visual balance of glazed and non-glazed surfaces.

Special care should be given to the design of exposed parking structures. Like any other buildings, parking structures should be clad with materials that contribute to their context.



This metal-sided building with exaggerated block foundation does not compliment the brick and board-sided houses in its context.

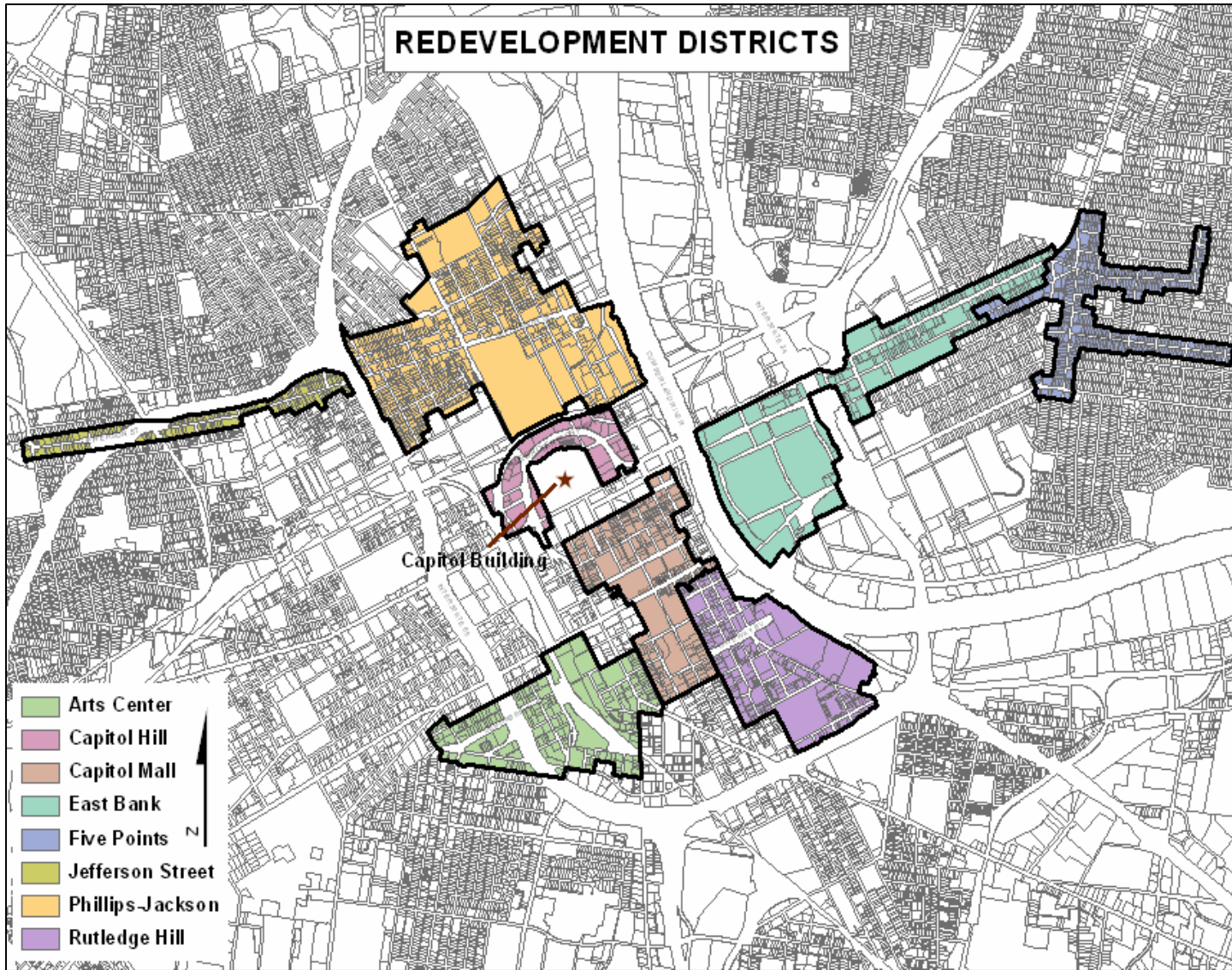


These townhomes in Hope Gardens incorporate masonry, cementitious siding, and stucco surfaces with adequate glazing in a colorful and balanced way.



This new office building (center) achieves a good balance of glazed and non-glazed surfaces and uses materials that complement historic and contemporary contexts.

MAP: Nashville's Redevelopment Districts



This map shows the locations of redevelopment districts in Nashville at the time of adoption of these principles (Central State R.D., located near the International Airport, not shown). As noted in the introduction, certain portions of existing redevelopment districts already have more specific guidelines that have been adopted for new development. These principles are intended to apply to all existing redevelopment districts and to any districts that may be instituted in the future.