

ARTS DISTRICT STATION/ MONROE WARD POD OVERLAY DESIGN GUIDELINES



MONROE WARD POD OVERLAY GUIDELINES

Overview

In July 2017 Richmond City Council adopted the Pulse Corridor Plan, a planning document that outlines steps the City needs to take to create transit-oriented development around the “Pulse” Bus Rapid Transit station areas.

The Plan envisions dense, walkable, transit-oriented development around each station areas.

The first recommendation of the Pulse Corridor Plan is to create a Plan of Development Overlay so that each new development can be evaluated according to the six form elements, or design principles, described in the Plan. The six form elements will ensure that new development in the Pulse Corridor adheres to both transit-oriented design principles and sound urban design, creating a high-quality, mixed-use neighborhood.

This document provides guidance for property owners, developers, and design teams to understand the process and be prepared for the POD Review.

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Introduction

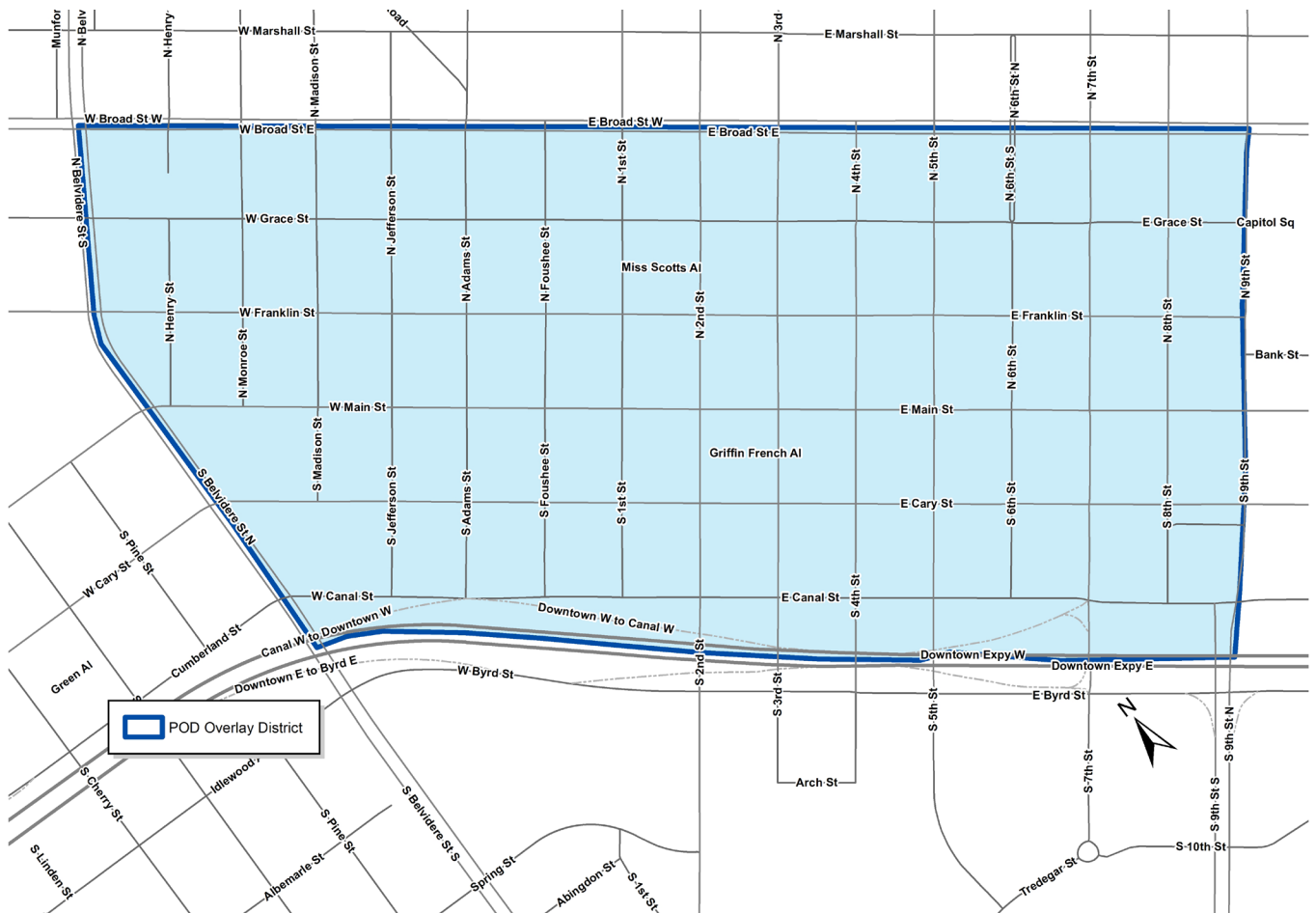
Many developments in the city already undergo a POD review; buildings of a certain size or type trigger a POD process, depending on the zoning district.

This review is in addition to the requirements set forth in the City's Zoning Ordinance and is intended to ensure the development will be compatible with its surroundings and will create a strong urban fabric.

The first recommendation of the Pulse Corridor Plan was to create a POD Overlay District in which each new development

would not only be evaluated for the above-mentioned criteria, but also for its adherence to the six design elements of the Pulse Corridor Plan. The design elements will guide new development to be reflective of Transit-Oriented Development principles and ensure that new buildings are generally respectful of the historic neighborhood fabric.

This POD Overlay District is bounded by Belvidere Street to the west, Broad Street to the north, Ninth Street to the east, and the Downtown Expressway to the south, as depicted in the map below.



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POD REVIEW PROCESS

The POD review process for any development in the POD Overlay area is the same for any other POD Review elsewhere in the city, except that the Director of Planning and Development Review will evaluate each development for adherence to the six form elements of the Pulse Corridor Plan.



1

STEP ONE: Meeting with applicant and PDR staff to discuss project, including the surrounding buildings and existing context.

2

STEP TWO: Complete application received, including building form and relationship to adjacent structures.

3

STEP THREE: The application is routed to other necessary reviewing agencies and departments.

4

STEP FOUR: The application is evaluated by PDR staff for adherence to the Six Pulse Corridor Form Elements, as well as by other reviewing agencies.

5

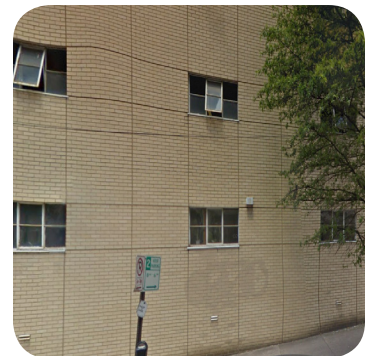
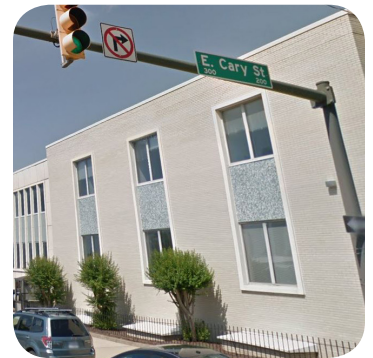
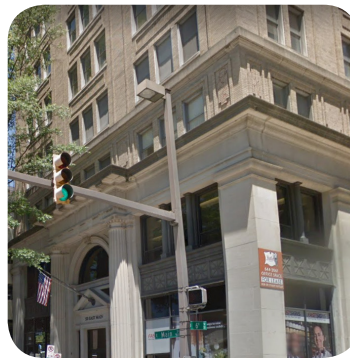
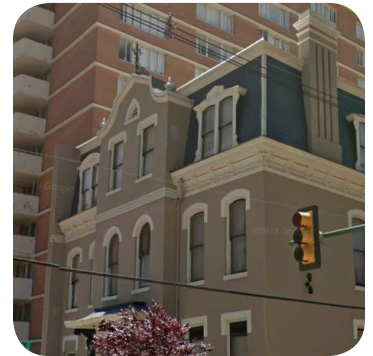
STEP FIVE: Any additional information is requested from the applicant.

6

STEP SIX: If no more information is needed, then approval is given.

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All of the images in this document are from Monroe Ward and the surrounding downtown neighborhoods. The existing historic fabric has the mixed-use, transit-oriented characteristics that new buildings need to embody, completing the neighborhood fabric. As new development builds on these principles, Monroe Ward will realize the thriving, diverse, walkable, transit-oriented neighborhood it can be.



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Why is a POD Overlay important in the Pulse Corridor?

The goal of the Pulse Corridor Plan is to support a walkable urban environment around Pulse stations through the adherence to principles, goals, and recommendations. The Plan states six Principles for the corridor:

1

MIXED USE: Housing, employment, entertainment and daily needs are near each station area. Mixed-use can be vertical or horizontal within a neighborhood context.

2

VIABLE TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS: Walking and biking to accomplish everyday tasks is an option for people living and working near station areas.

3

DENSE, COMPACT DEVELOPMENT: New buildings are taller and larger in the Pulse Corridor to add housing and jobs to create a more walkable vibrant area.

4

HISTORIC PRESERVATION: Retaining existing historic buildings is a priority. Smaller historic buildings add to a diversity of style and use along the Corridor.

5

TRANSIT ACCESS: Individuals have easy access to the Pulse and to the local transit network, enabling few or no car trips.

6

CONNECTIVITY: A well-connected street grid and transit network is the glue that leads to successful Transit-Oriented Development.

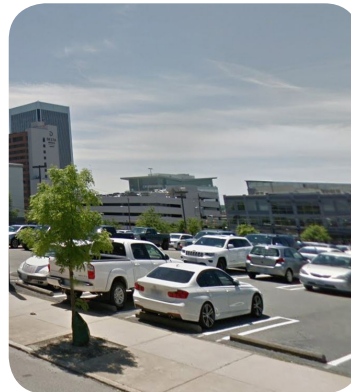
The Pulse Corridor runs through the spine of Richmond, connecting to Henrico County in the west and Rockett's Landing in the east. The character of development in this area is important to the whole region. The Pulse Corridor Plan is Richmond's first transit-oriented development plan. Success in this endeavor will inform future efforts to increase livability in the center of the city.

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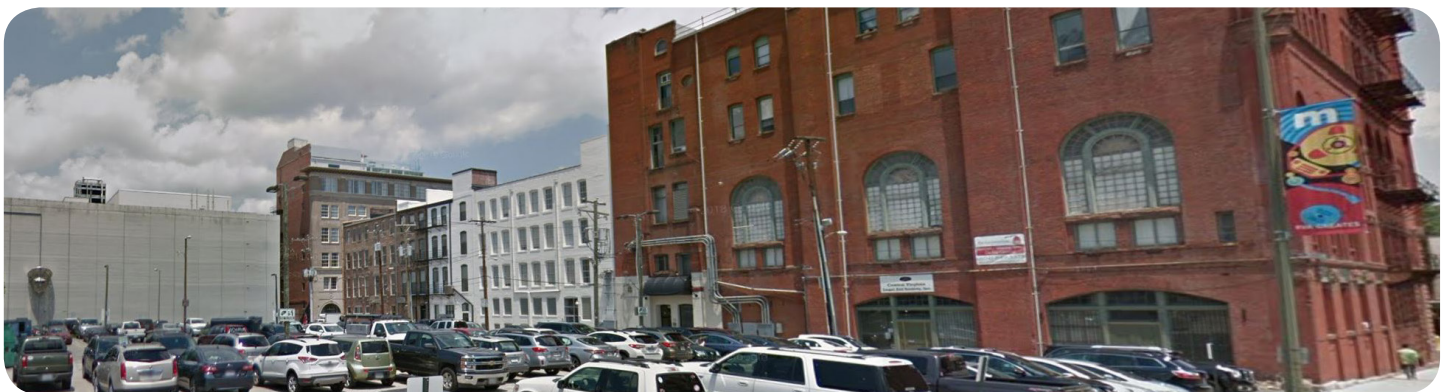
Why is a POD Overlay important in Monroe Ward in particular?

Monroe Ward was once a thriving residential and commercial neighborhood that has suffered the consequences of decades of land use and design decisions such as site clearances, surface parking lots and one-way streets. Twenty-five percent of the buildable land area in Monroe Ward is dedicated to surface parking, and many of the buildings built in the 1960s - 1980s have long, monolithic facades which create dead streetscapes and are not conducive to urban engagement. On the other hand, historic homes and storefronts in the neighborhood are generally excellent examples of buildings that create dynamic, human-scaled neighborhoods.

Today, Monroe Ward is positioned between VCU's Monroe Park campus, and the Central Business District, both of which are experiencing rapid development and are two of the highest concentrations of employment and activity in the region. Monroe Ward can build upon this energy and be that critical link joining these areas. It is important that new development help establish neighborhood character and increase walkability.



Monroe Ward has been referred to as the “detached garage of the Central Business District”, due to its large number of surface parking lots. New development will forge a strong link between the CBD and VCU's growing Monroe Park campus.



MONROE WARD POD OVERLAY GUIDELINES

Step One:

Siting and Context

Each site in Monroe Ward is different. Many of the available sites for building are currently surface parking lots. Each site is surrounded by different buildings with unique characteristics.

Evaluation of each POD will take into consideration the adjacent buildings as well as the context of the existing block face and across the street.

In addition to the new building, elevations should depict any existing buildings on either side, and include height, window patterning, ground floor height, vertical facade articulation and materials of existing adjacent buildings.



Below:
(The only building in this document not located in Richmond)
Morris Adjmi's 465 Pacific Street, Brooklyn.
An excellent example of contextually-sensitive design that embodies the six form elements.

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Six Form Elements

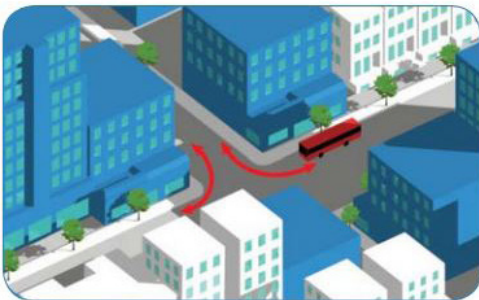
All projects in the POD Overlay area will be evaluated against the six form elements introduced in the Pulse Corridor Plan.

The intent of these design elements is to provide guidelines for producing buildings that create the new Monroe Ward yet not so specific as to inhibit the design team and owner's creative process.

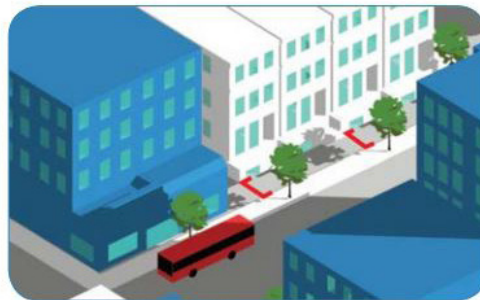
It is not the intention of Planning and Development Review staff to design buildings or be overly proscriptive. There is

ample room for creating buildings that are innovative, contemporary, and reflective of their setting - geographically and temporally.

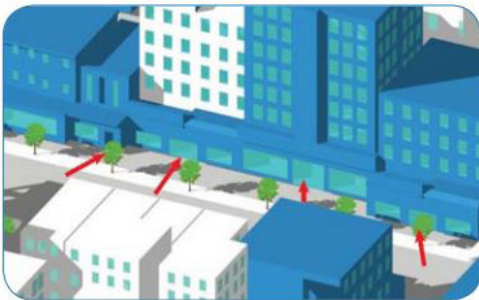
PDR staff strongly encourages applicants to schedule an initial meeting at the onset of the design process, within this POD Overlay district an applicant must meet with City staff to discuss the site and its surroundings as well as project programming, design, and due diligence, including surrounding buildings and neighborhood character.



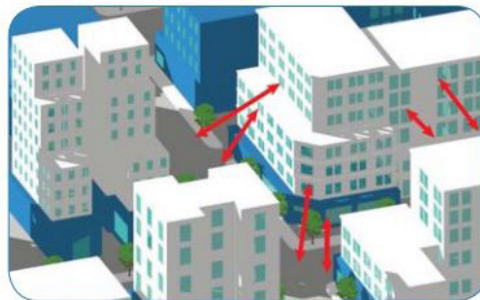
Hold the Corner



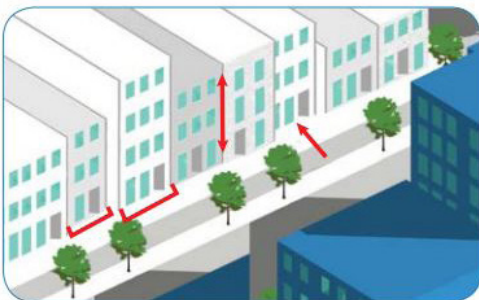
Appropriate Setbacks/Stepbacks



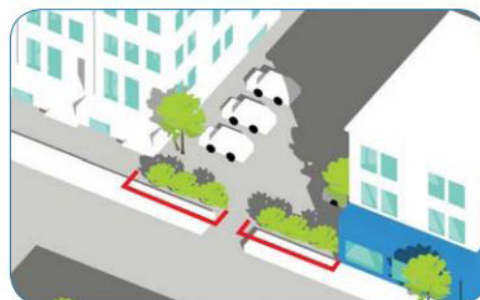
Entrances Face the Street



Transparency



Façade Articulation



Screened Parking/Services

All projects in this POD Overlay area will be evaluated against the six form elements introduced in the Pulse Corridor Plan.

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Form Element #1 Hold the Corner:

Buildings and spaces at intersections have active ground floors that wrap around the corner.

The images to the right and bottom right are both good examples of existing historic buildings in the neighborhood holding the corner. The building in the image below has one entrance that faces Cary Street, and along 1st Street there are no doors or windows, effectively disconnecting the building from that block face.

Over the past decades, as buildings were torn down to make way for parking lots, and new buildings were built, the north/south streets in Monroe Ward lost more fabric and character than the east/west streets. Ensuring that new buildings hold the corner and address both streets will begin to rebuild the neighborhood fabric.



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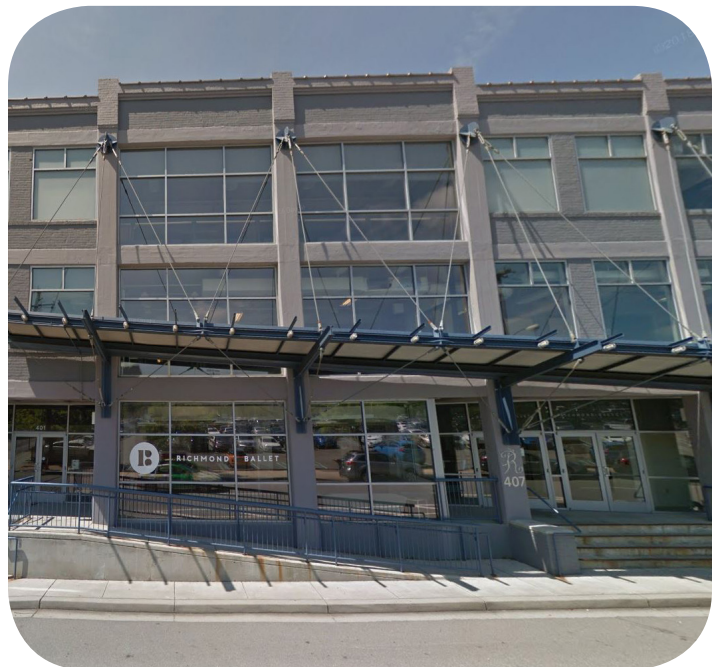
Form Element #2

Entrances Face the Street:

Main entrances to businesses and residences front the street, fostering pedestrian activity.

Many newer buildings have main entrances that face parking lots rather than the street. In this suburban style not only does the building form prioritize the car over other means of transportation, it removes activity from the street. Entrances that face the street foster pedestrian activity and keep the streetscape active.

The Attorney General's Office building at Ninth and Grace (in the image to the right) is a good example of a strong entrance facing both streets as well as of vertical articulation and transparency.



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Form Element #3

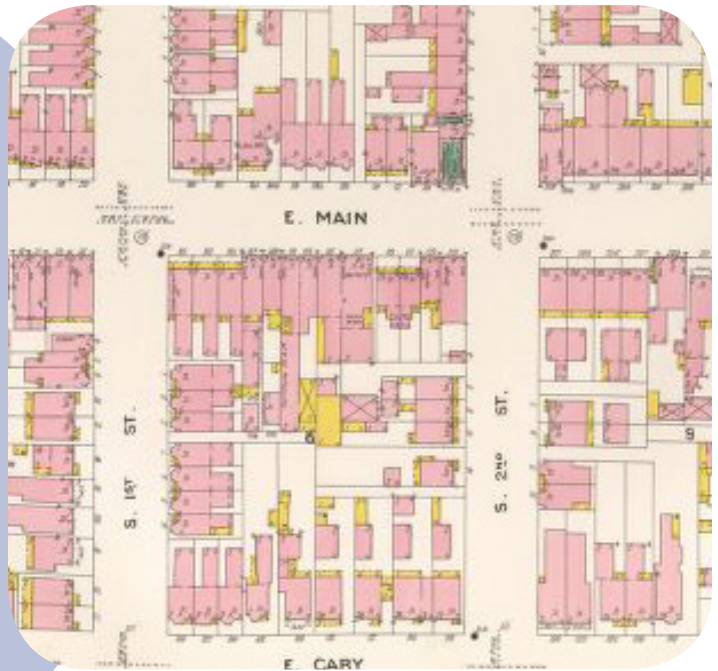
Appropriate Setbacks and Stepbacks:

Commercial uses are closer to the street while residential uses are set back to foster privacy and to create a semi-public space. Stepbacks at upper stories create a means to honor existing form without overwhelming it.

Each parcel in Monroe Ward is different. The neighborhood is characterized by a mix of historic buildings and surface parking lots, which present an interesting design challenge. New buildings should not mimic historic buildings, but they should be reflective of their environment and the buildings around them.

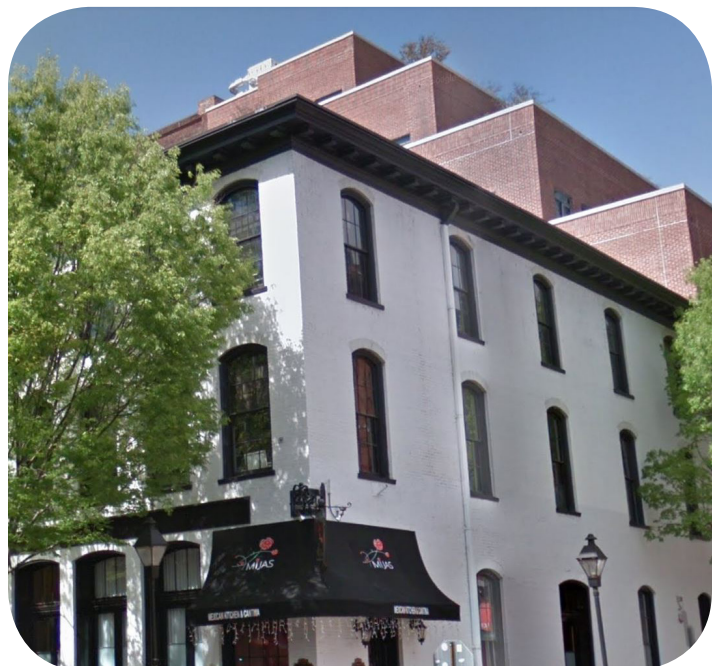
A **setback** is the placement of a building in relation to the street and sidewalk. Both B-4 and TOD-1 dictate setbacks in relation to other buildings. B-4 specifies that buildings must match the setback of adjacent buildings up to ten feet. TOD-1 requires that dwelling units on the ground floor have a setback of 10-15 feet. For all other uses no front yard is required and a front yard greater than 10 feet is not permitted. The setback requirements in B-4 and TOD-1 codify a new building's relationship to the buildings around it. TOD-1's stipulation that commercial buildings come to the right-of-way while residential units on the ground floor are set back is consistent with the historic building pattern of Monroe Ward.

A **stepback** is a way a building can respond to the buildings around it. In Monroe Ward, most of the historic architecture is three stories or fewer. When new buildings are much taller than existing buildings, the new building can respond by stepping back at the height of the adjacent buildings.



Above: a Sanborn Fire Insurance map of Monroe Ward from 1905, showing commercial buildings built to the right-of-way, and residential buildings set back.

Below: a successful example of a building stepback in Shockoe Slip.



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Form Element #4

Transparency:

Façade fenestration allows visibility to and from the street. This is especially important on the ground floor, where fenestration should occupy a higher percentage of the building face.

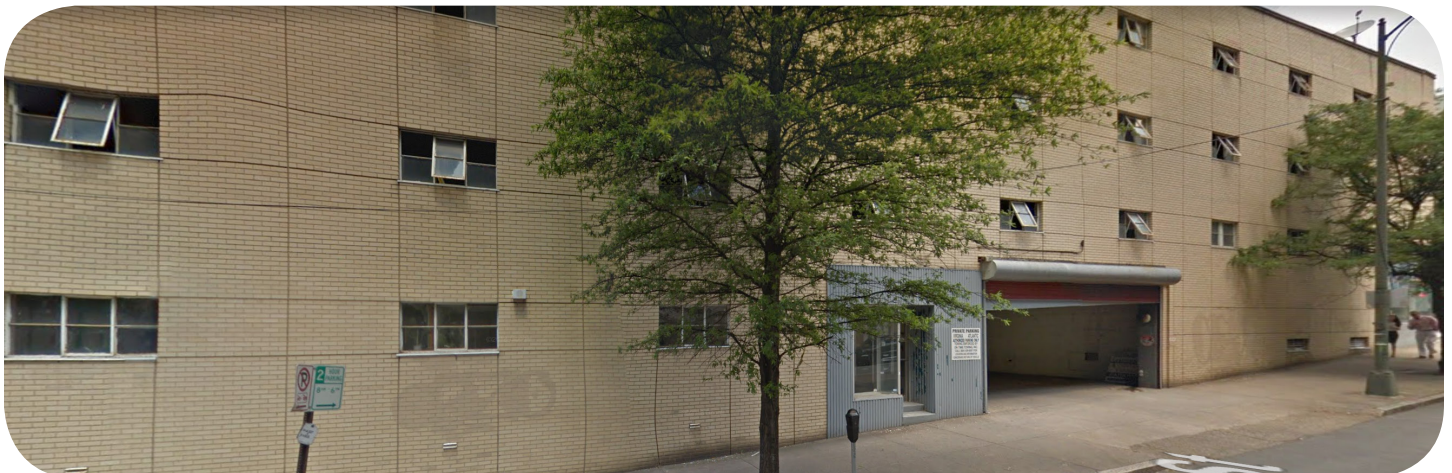
One way to make a street safer and more comfortable for pedestrians is to ensure that people can see into and out of buildings. Creating “eyes on the street” reduces street crime, increases social interaction, and increases a pedestrian’s sense of safety.

Buildings with no transparent windows, especially long facades with no windows or articulation, create tunnel-like environments where a pedestrian is entirely cut off from anyone inside a building.

On the right, Pop’s Market on Grace Street is a good example of an inviting space with expansive views both into and out of the windows. On the other hand, this parking garage on Sixth Street (below) is a prime



example of how a building can entirely prohibit interaction between its interior and pedestrians on the street.



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Form Element #5

Façade Articulation:

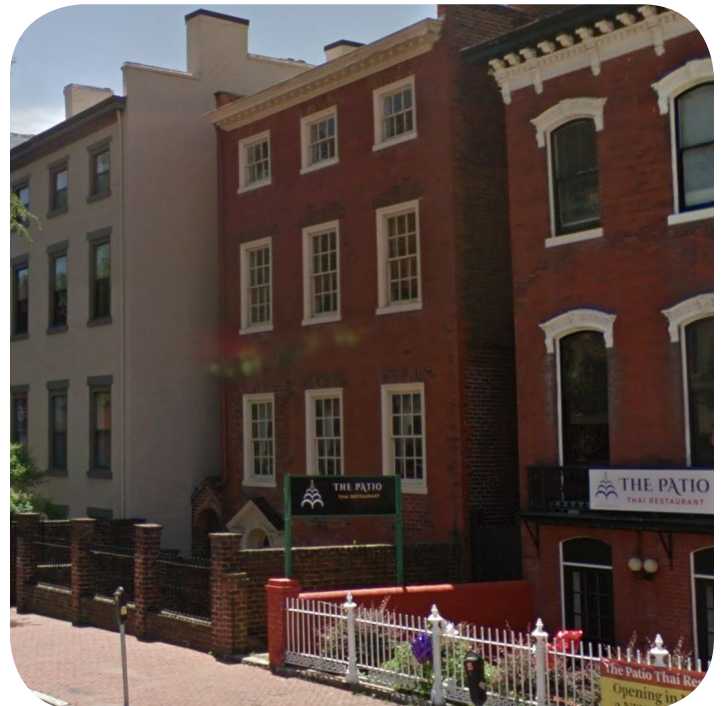
Long, monolithic facades should be broken up and made more human-scale by varying the streetwall plane, height, colors and materials.

In 1905, there were an average of 25-30 buildings per block in Monroe Ward. As historic buildings were torn down, the buildings built in their place were significantly larger, in some cases filling entire blocks. This can create empty streetscapes, especially when combined with few windows and doors. New development should reflect the existing character of the neighborhood and recreate a human-scale environment through appropriate vertical façade articulation. At intervals of approximately 30 feet, a new building's façade should be broken up by change in setbacks, material, or other strong visual feature.



Above: a monolithic facade with little variation and no interaction with the street.

Below left: this building seems to have vertical articulation at first, but actually offers no variation at the pedestrian level. **Below right:** new buildings can take the lotting pattern of older building's varied architectural design that makes the streets places where people want to be.



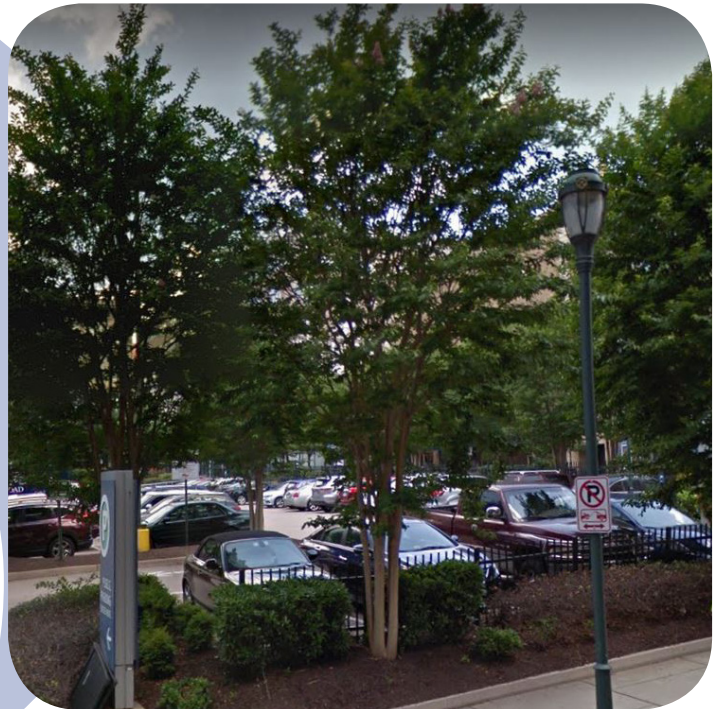
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Form Element #6

Screened Parking/Services:

Attractive landscaping pushed to the sidewalk helps to maintain a streetwall and mitigate the disruption caused by surface parking lots and utilitarian services.

This is especially important in Monroe Ward, a neighborhood where currently 25% of the buildable area is in use as surface parking lots. In times where on-site parking is required or desired by the property owner, parking should be located behind the building and not visible from the street or screened by landscaping. Standards for landscaping and screening of parking areas are outlined in Section 30-710.13 of the zoning ordinance, as required by zoning districts. PODs will require that all parking lots, regardless of size, are screened.



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The building in the image below is one example of how a building can embody the six form elements and be responsive to the buildings around it.

Note that the building uses setbacks to respond to a three-story historic building on the right, while rising twelve stories adjacent to the seven-story building on the left.

**Appropriate Setbacks/
Stepbacks**

Hold the Corner

**Screened
Parking**



Transparency

Facade Articulation

**Main and Secondary Entrances Face
the Street**

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Contact:

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