

**WEST OF THE BOULEVARD
DESIGN OVERLAY DISTRICT
BACKGROUND AND DESIGN GUIDELINES**

**ADOPTED BY THE CITY PLANNING COMMISSION
DECEMBER 9, 1996**

**PREPARED BY THE
WEST OF THE BOULEVARD CIVIC ASSOCIATION**

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JUSTIFICATION

The West of the Boulevard Historic District is one of the most well preserved examples of early 20th century suburbs in Richmond. This District figures prominently in the historical development of Richmond and was placed on the National Register for Historic Places in 1994 as a registered Historic District. The district is made up predominately of single family and duplex dwellings intermixed with small apartment buildings and small commercial buildings. The variety of architectural styles in the area include Tudor Revival, Colonial Revival, Romanesque Revival, Mediterranean Revival, Queen Anne and Craftsman.

Recent infill buildings have not matched the unique architectural fabric existing within the neighborhood. The risk of future non-compatible buildings and features threatens to destroy the unique character of this Historic District.

GOALS

Our goal is to preserve the unique architectural fabric and character of this Historic District by adopting a Design Overlay District establishing guidelines for new construction in Residential Zoning Districts. These guidelines will assure all new residential structures blend appropriately with the historic buildings and thus:

1. Preserve the unique architectural fabric;
2. Promote a sense of pride among property owners resulting in improved building and land maintenance;
3. Protect property values and the City tax base; and
4. Present a positive appearance appealing to new residents as a desirable place to live and work.

NEIGHBORHOOD DESCRIPTION

Unique Established Neighborhood Character*

In 1893, the West End Land Company was the first to engage in large scale suburban planning by developing the West of the Boulevard area. Streetcars were the form of urban transportation first sparking the growth of the West of the Boulevard neighborhood and then shaping its development. Initially, this development followed Floyd Avenue and subsequently along Belmont Avenue.

One of Richmond's most significant collections of early 20th century architecture, the district features compact clusters of brick rowhouses, detached townhouses, apartment buildings, small commercial structures, three churches, a synagogue, and five schools. These buildings represent a panoply of architectural styles: Queen Anne, Romanesque Revival, Colonial Revival, Craftsman, Mediterranean Revival, and Tudor Revival. The District includes 22 properties individually listed on the National Register for Historic Places and 1763 contributing members of the West of the Boulevard Historic District, including 6 carriage houses, 340 garages and outbuildings.

The dense population of the neighborhood, close proximity to a shopping district and sidewalks with mature shade trees help define the West of the Boulevard as a flourishing pedestrian district.

*Excerpt from Richard Mercer's West of the Boulevard Exhibition at the Virginia Historical Society, 1995

Architectural Coherence and Harmony

The West of the Boulevard District has architectural significance as a well-preserved collection of residential, commercial, ecclesiastical, and educational buildings dating from c. 1895 to the mid 1940's. The District's buildings not only convey a uniformity in scale, materials, setback, and detail, but they also represent a rich variety of architectural styles of the era. As one of Richmond's most popular early 20th century neighborhoods, the West of the Boulevard District is also significant as an early example of planned community development of a middle-class streetcar suburb closely linked with Richmond's westward expansion.

Vulnerability To Deterioration

Each block within the District has the unique qualities of scale, uniform setback, building proportion, and the uninterrupted rhythm of the streetscape. The combination of these blocks into a single neighborhood creates the distinct urban fabric of the West of the Boulevard Historic District.

Much of the recent new construction has disregarded the qualities found within the District. These contemporary buildings lack the appropriate scale, proportion, and detail which make new construction compatible with the historic structures. These non-compatible infills diminish the overall cohesiveness of the neighborhood. Future insensitive and non-compatible infill buildings threaten the streetscape and integrity of the District as a whole.

The Design Overlay District Guidelines will guide the design of distinguishing architectural elements of new construction. By following these guidelines, new construction can fit harmoniously within the existing context thus helping to maintain the integrity of the entire District.

INVENTORY

Numerous styles of the early 20th Century work together to create the character which is the West of the Boulevard Historic District. The Appendix A shows samples of each residential style found within the District. A complete and detailed inventory of each of the 1763 contributing members of the West of the Boulevard Historic District can be found in the National Register for Historic Places nomination form.

MAP

The boundaries for the West of the Boulevard Design Overlay District include the area designated as the West of the Boulevard Historic District as listed on the National Register for Historic Places. Additionally, the Overlay District includes the areas designated on the National Register's Monument Avenue Historic District but not included in the City's Monument Avenue Old and Historic District. The area designated as the Monument Avenue Old and Historic District by the City of Richmond is excluded from the Overlay District since this area is under the control the City's more restrictive Old & Historic Overlay District zoning.

Only properties zoned for residential use within the district will be affected by the guidelines. Properties in non-residential zoned areas, such zoned B-1 and B-2, will not be subject to these guidelines.

See Appendix B for a map.

DESIGN GUIDELINES

These guidelines were developed to guide the distinguishing architectural elements of new residential construction, including garages and outbuildings. The purpose of these guidelines is to prevent new residential construction which is incompatible with the prevailing architectural characteristics found within the District. The following guidelines are in addition to all prevailing laws and are in no way to be construed to supersede existing building codes or zoning ordinances.

In developing these guidelines, the characteristics of the contributing members of the West of the Boulevard Historic District were carefully considered. Through a visual survey, 9 prominent building features which most effectively characterize and define the District were identified. The street facade has the greatest impact on the District, therefore, the guidelines only affect the street facades. The 9 features are:

Height of Cornice	Width of Building
Front Setback	Roof Form
Building Material	Fenestrations
First Floor Elevation (height above ground)	Front Door
Front Porch	

Additionally, should a residential building be destroyed (i.e. by fire), a new building with a facade matching the historic building should automatically be allowed.

Buildings within the District vary greatly. These guidelines attempt to distinguish the most prominent aspect found of each feature. For each guideline, there may be an existing exception. The goal of the guidelines is to define the characteristics based on the majority of buildings. It is important to allow a range within each characteristic for new construction allowing for the individuality of each new building.

How guidelines relate to the inventory characteristics is indicated in italics following each guideline.

Definitions

1. Contributing Member - A building identified as a Contributing Member to the West of the Boulevard Historic District or the Monument Avenue Historic District on the nomination form for the National Register for Historic Places.
2. Cornice - A projecting ornamental molding at the top of the exterior wall and below the roof.
3. Street Facade - The face or elevation of a building adjacent to a street.
4. Front Facade - The primary face or elevation of a building facing the primary street adjacent to the lot.
5. Grade - Ground level at the exterior wall of the building.
6. Fenestrations - Windows and other exterior openings on a building.

Guidelines

1. If a Contributing Member is destroyed, a building with Street Facade(s) matching the Street Facade(s) of the destroyed Contributing Member will be acceptable.

The purpose of these Guidelines is to maintain continuity between existing Contributing Members and new construction, therefore, matching the facade of an existing contributing member is, by definition, acceptable.

2. Height of Cornice - Top of Cornice shall be:
 - a. Where the new building is within 30 feet of a Contributing Member on one side only, the Top of Cornice shall match that of the adjacent Contributing Member.
 - b. Where the new building is within 30 feet of Contributing Members on two sides, the Top of the Cornice shall not be higher than the top of the higher cornice of the adjacent Contributing Members and shall not be lower than the top of the lower cornice of the adjacent Contributing Members.
 - c. Where the new building is not within 30 feet of a Contributing Member, the Top of the Cornice shall be no less than 23 feet above grade and no greater than 30 feet above grade.

- d. Under no circumstance shall the Top of the Cornice be greater than 30 feet above grade.

Continuity of Cornice lines within a block, or segment of a block, is a defining characteristic of scale within the District. By defining the height of a cornice based on adjacent Contributing Members, this continuity is maintained. Where an adjacent Contributing Member is not available or a unique situation exists making a match impractical, 23 ft. and 30 ft. is established as a minimum and maximum cornice height. 23 and 30 feet represent an average minimum and maximum height, respectively, throughout the District as well as realistic height based on contemporary construction techniques and standard materials.

3. Width of the building - The width of the Front Facade shall be:
 - a. For lot widths of 30 feet or less, the width of the building shall be greatest allowed by the Zoning Ordinance (minimum side setbacks maintained).
 - b. For lot widths greater than 30 feet, building width shall be not less than 20 feet and not greater than 30 feet.

A defining feature of the District is "compact clusters of rowhouses and detached townhouses." The building width is a distinctive feature of a row or townhouse. 20 and 30 feet represent an average minimum and maximum building width, respectively, throughout the District.

4. Front Setback - The setback of the Front Facade, excluding front porches, shall match a contributing member on an adjacent side, but not be less than allowable by the Zoning Ordinance.

Continuity of building setbacks within a block, or block segment, is a defining characteristic within the district. By defining the front setback of the main building mass based on adjacent Contributing Members, this continuity is maintained.

5. The Front Facade shall have a pitched main building roof visible from the street. Flat main building roofs visible on the Front Facade shall not be allowed.

The roof form is a defining feature of any structure, particularly within this District. The vast majority of Contributing Members have a pitched roof above the cornice visible from the street.

6. The prominent building material on a Street Facade(s) shall be "standard" size brick, horizontal siding, or stucco.

The main exterior building material is a defining feature of any structure, particularly with this District. Brick, horizontal siding and stucco are the most prominent building materials found throughout the District.

7. Fenestrations - Fenestrations of the Front Facade shall conform to:
 - a. No sliding glass doors or windows.
 - b. First and second floor windows shall not be less than 15 square feet each, rough frame size.
 - c. Head height, top of window, of first and second floor windows shall be not less than 7'-6" above finish floor.
 - d. One decorative/accent window less than 15 square feet shall be allowed.
 - e. Windows, except decorative/accent windows, shall have operational sashes.

The proportion of the fenestrations to the building is a defining feature throughout the district. Maintaining minimum fenestration sizes and head heights ensures proper proportion with building height and width (defined above) consistent with buildings throughout the District.

8. First Floor Elevation - First floor finish elevation shall be:
 - a. Where the new building is within 30 feet of Contributing Members on one or two sides, the floor elevation shall match one adjacent Contributing Member.
 - b. Where the new building is not within 30 feet of a Contributing Member, the first floor elevation shall be minimum 2'-6" above grade.

Continuity of first floor elevations within a block, or segment of a block, is a defining characteristic of scale within the District. By defining the first floor elevation based on adjacent Contributing Members, this continuity is maintained. Where an adjacent Contributing Member is not available or a unique situation exists making a match impractical, 2'-6" is established as a minimum height above grade. The first floor of Contributing Members throughout the District is raised above grade a minimum of 2'-6". This height is also realistic based on contemporary construction techniques and the potential need for handicap access.

9. Front Door - The main entrance (front) door shall face the street and be in the Front Facade.

The entrance sequence from the street into a building throughout the District is: street, sidewalk, small yard with walkway, porch or stoop, front door. Locating the front door in the Front Facade facing the street, this sequence is preserved.

10. Front Porches - Front porches on the Front Facade are not required. However, if a front porch is provided:
- a. No treated lumber shall be visible.
 - b. Porch columns shall have a minimum size of 8” wide x 8” deep or 8” diameter.
 - c. Top of Porch Cornice:
 - 1) Where the new building is within 30 feet of a Contributing Member on one side only, the Top of Porch Cornice shall match that of the adjacent Contributing Member.
 - 2) Where the new building is within 30 feet of Contributing Members on two sides, the Top of Porch Cornice shall be no higher than the top of the higher cornice of the adjacent Contributing Members and not lower than the top of the lower cornice of the adjacent Contributing Members.

Front porches, or evidence of an original front porch, is consistently found throughout the District. The materials, height and column size define the character and proportion of the porch in relationship to the adjacent Contributing Members. Cornice height guidelines are defined in a similar fashion to Guideline #2. Column width is established to maintain proper proportion and scale consistent to existing porches within the District. Although material of porches throughout the District varies, visible treated lumber is a contemporary material incompatible with the historic materials of the District.

11. Where a garage or accessory building faces a street, the prominent building material on a Street Facade(s) of a garage or accessory building shall be “standard” size brick, horizontal siding, or stucco.

The main exterior building material is a defining feature of any structure, particularly with this District. Brick, horizontal siding and stucco are the most prominent building materials found throughout the District.

- End of Guidelines -

STATEMENT OF NEIGHBORHOOD SUPPORT

Neighborhood support for the Design Overlay District as expressed through the West of the Boulevard Civic Association has been strong and continuing. The Board directed the Zoning/Land Use Committee to design and implement a Design Overlay District in the spring of 1994, following the granting of the National Register Historic Designation, and has supported the Committee's work with enthusiasm.

Neighborhood residents have shown support for the Design Overlay District at the Virginia Historical Society Exhibit on the history of the area, at the Belmont Library exhibit and during an informational meeting held at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts on March 4, 1996. No negative comment have been received by the Committee, either in person or as a result of requesting comments to the WOBCA mailing address at the Historical Society or Belmont Library exhibits.

A list of buildable vacant lots was compiled by WOBCA members with the help of City staff. All property owners of buildable lots within the District were mailed the attached letter, first class mail, informing them of our intentions and inviting them to the informational meeting. Additionally, City Council members of the 1st, 2nd and 5th Districts, the City Manager, the Mayor and Department of Community Development Staff were given draft copies of the DOD proposal along with an invitation to attend this meeting. The meeting was publicized at the Belmont Library and through the WOBCA newsletter with a circulation of 5,000.

The information meeting was conducted by WOBCA members Barbara Rose, Jonathan Spodek and Steve Kadar. The developmental history of these guidelines and a detailed discussion of each guideline were presented. Kathryn Farmer, Senior Planner for the City of Richmond, discussed the process the City is proposing for implementation of Design Overlay Districts. The group discussion and response following the presentation was overwhelmingly positive.

The attached surveys were distributed at the March 4th meeting. The surveys returned at the meeting and subsequently by mail, indicate a 95% support rate for the guidelines. 60% of the respondents reported either owning a vacant lot or living on a block where there is a vacant lot.

The reasons given for favoring the DOD were of two sorts: To protect property values and To maintain and protect the architectural integrity of the neighborhood. Usually the respondents mentioned both factors in their responses. To most, this meant maintaining the "old style" of architecture. In addition, one person wrote, "If I want to be around ugly housing, I'll move back to the suburbs."

The non-positive response neither indicated support or opposition to the DOD. They simply favored a "less restrictive" guidelines.

NEIGHBORHOOD ACTIVITIES

This Design Overlay District proposal was developed solely by volunteers made up of residents of the proposed District. The residents and property owners of the District have been given numerous opportunities to express their views and contribute to the planning process for the Design Overlay District. The views expressed and suggestions put forth were instrumental in developing the goals and guidelines of this Design Overlay District.

Initially, a display regarding the Design Overlay District was located during a reception for the WOBCA at the Virginia Historical Society in February 1995 held in conjunction with an exhibit on the history with the West of the Boulevard Historic District. The display was staffed by volunteers explaining the purpose and goals of the Design Overlay District.

The presentation boards were again displayed at the Belmont Branch of the Richmond Public Library in May 1995. These boards outline the basic goals of the Design Overlay District. Through the use of photographs and architectural sketches, examples of appropriate and inappropriate new construction were illustrated. A second display was set up at the Belmont Library in February and continues at this time.

The West of the Boulevard Civic Association Newsletter, with a circulation of 5,000, has carried extensive coverage of the development of the Design District Overlay process. The March issue summarized the Design District Overlay goals and guidelines. Through a network of diligent volunteers, the Newsletter is distributed to all households within the West of the Boulevard Civic Association boundaries, which encompass the proposed boundaries of the Design Overlay District.

The information meeting was conducted by WOBCA members Barbara Rose, Jonathan Spodek and Steve Kadar. The developmental history of these guidelines and a detailed discussion of each guideline were presented. Kathryn Farmer, Senior Planner for the City of Richmond, discussed the process the City is proposing for implementation of Design Overlay Districts. The group discussion and response following the presentation was overwhelmingly positive.

3125 & 3127 Stuart Avenue

3125 Stuart Avenue: Rowhouse, Craftsman, Ca. 1922. Brick (9-course American); 2 stories with low basement; hipped roof with a parapet (slate); 2 asymmetrical front bays; 1-story, 1-level, 1-bay wood, brick, & concrete porch with square wood columns.

3127 Stuart Avenue: Rowhouse, Craftsman, Ca. 1922. Brick (9-course American); 2 stories with low basement; hipped roof with a parapet (slate); 2 asymmetrical front bays; 1-story, 1-level, 1-bay wood, brick, & concrete porch with square wood columns.



Appendix A

3323 & 3325 Stuart Avenue

3323 Stuart Avenue: Rowhouse, Craftsman, ca. 1924. Brick (English); 2-1/2 stories with single shed dormer; false mansard roof (slate); 3 asymmetrical front bays; 1-story, 2-bay wood and brick porch with round Doric columns, square wooden balustrade and brick pier foundation.

3325 Stuart Avenue: Rowhouse, Colonial Revival, ca. 1924. Brick (English) 2-1/2 stories with double pedimented gable dormers; false mansard roof (slate); 3 asymmetrical front bays; 1-story, 2-bay wood and brick porch with round Doric columns, and square wooden balustrade.



3220 Stuart Avenue

3220 Stuart Avenue: Rowhouse, Colonial Revival, Ca. 1917. Brick (stretcher); 2 1/2 stories with 1 gable dormer and 1 shed dormer; false mansard roof (glazed pan tile); 3 asymmetrical front bays; 1-story, 1-level, 1-bay wood and brick porch with square wooden columns atop brick piers.



Appendix A

2821 Floyd Avenue

2821 Floyd Avenue: Detached dwelling, Romanesque Revival, ca. 1907. Brick (stretcher); 2 stories: tile mansard roof; 4 front bays; asymmetrical; 1-story, 1-level, 1-bay porch with square stone columns, brick-arched opening with stone keystone, brick spandrels, and stone quoins; second story balcony with double-arched brick and stone motif and stone balustrade; decorative stone cornice; corner, square, 2 story tower with 2-stage pyramidal roof; stone quoins and belt courses.



2904 Floyd Avenue

2904 Floyd Avenue: Detached dwelling, Romanesque Revival, 1914. Brick (stretcher) 2 stories; slate mansard roof with asymmetrical front gables and projecting hipped section; 5 front bays, asymmetrical; 1-story, 1-level, 1-bay entrance porch with brick and stone arched opening and stone balustrade above; round-arched second story windows; decorative brick cornice; gables flanked by brick pinnacles. Architect: D. Wiley Anderson.



Appendix A

3500 & 3502 Hanover Avenue

3500 Hanover Avenue: Rowhouse, Tudor Revival, 1930. Brick (English) and stucco on 2nd story; 2 stories; gable roof with an asymmetrical clipped gable (slate); 2 asymmetrical front bays; 1-story, 2-bay wood, brick, & concrete porch with square columns; built by Muhleman and Kayhoe.

3502 Hanover Avenue: Rowhouse, Tudor Revival, 1930. Brick (English) and stucco on 2nd story; 1 1/2 stories; clipped end gable roof (slate); 1 front gable dormer; 2 asymmetrical front bays; 1-story, 1-level, 2-bay porch with square brick columns; casement windows; built by Muhleman & Kayhoe.



3521 Grove Avenue

3521 Grove Avenue: Detached dwelling, Tudor Revival, 1925. Brick (6-course American); 2 stories; 2-front bays; slate gable roof with asymmetrical front gables; 1-story, 2-bay porch; leaded casement windows; built by Muhleman & Kayhoe.



Appendix A

3523 Grove Avenue

3523 Grove Avenue: Detached dwelling, Spanish Colonial Revival, 1925. Brick and stucco; 2 stories; 2 front bays; pan tile gable roof; 1-story, 3-bay porch; exterior brick chimney; built by Muhleman & Kayhoe.



305 Roseneath Road

305 Roseneath Road: Detached dwelling, Spanish Colonial Revival, Ca. 1925. Brick (stuccoed); 2-stories; 3-front bays; pan tile gable roof with a central front gable; 1-story, 3-bay porch with arched bays and rondels.



Appendix A

3143 Grove Avenue

3143 Grove Avenue: Detached dwelling, Queen Anne, Ca 1900. Brick (stretcher); 2-1/2 stories with square tower; cross gable roof (standing seam metal); 4 front bays; 1-story, 7-bay wrap-a-round porch with Corinthian columns and turned wooden balustrade; 2/2 double hung windows with decorative trim and pediments.



102 North Sheppard Street

102 North Sheppard Street: Detached dwelling, Queen Anne, Ca 1916. Brick (stretcher); slate cross gable roof with a pyramidal-roofed side tower; 2 stories; 3 front bays; 1-story, 1-bay entrance porch with bracketed turned posts, and a spindle frieze; large corbelled interior brick chimney.



