

**ORDINANCE #12-9-2013A**

**AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 165  
OF THE MOUNT VERNON CODE OF ORDINANCES BY  
AMENDING ARTICLE 11 CONCERNING DESIGN STANDARDS**

**BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF  
MOUNT VERNON, IOWA:**

**SECTION 1. AMENDMENT.** That Chapter 165, "Zoning Regulations," of the Mount Vernon Code of Ordinances be and the same is hereby amended by amending Article 11 to read as follows:

**DESIGN STANDARDS**

**1101 Purpose**

The purpose of this part of Article 11 (1101-1104) is to establish minimum design criteria in order to protect and enhance existing development values while providing for modern aesthetics in City development generally.

**1102 Scope**

The design standards apply to all new development in the Agricultural, High-Density Residential, Limited Commercial, General Commercial, Town Center, Business Park, Light Industrial, and Urban Corridor zoning districts. These standards also apply to all new additions and modifications to existing buildings within the named zoning districts, except for maintenance projects that replace existing building materials with like materials, such as roofing. If an existing building covered by these design standards does not conform to these standards at the time of the passage of these standards and 25% or less of the exterior appearance of the existing non-conforming building is modified, then any modifications to that building shall be made consistent with the existing design of that building. If more than 25% of the exterior appearance of an existing, non-conforming building is altered or modified, the entire building, including any additions, shall be brought into compliance with these design standards.

Historic overlay districts are not subject to these requirements, but are subject to separate design regulations found in the Historic Overlay Districts section of the code and applied during the Certificate of Appropriateness process.

Note: In the remainder of this Article, Agricultural, Limited Commercial, General Commercial, Business Park, Town Center (except for that part in the Commercial Historic District), and Light Industrial districts are treated similarly and will be referred to as “Commercial/Industrial.”

#### 1103 Building Design Criteria

a. Building Size, Dimensions and Proportions.

1. Building elevations wider than 30 feet shall be divided into smaller increments through articulation of the facade. This can be achieved through a variety of techniques including the following: divisions or variations in materials, window bays, separate entrances and entry treatments, porticos, variations in roof lines, awnings, variations in brick or stone work, colonnades, arcades, or changes in facade.
2. Town Center: No single building shall have a building coverage area (building footprint) that exceeds 6000 square feet.
3. Urban Corridor: No single building shall have a building coverage area that exceeds 10,000 square feet.
4. Roof Form, Shape and Pitch. Roofs shall adhere to the following guidelines by district.
  - (a) Commercial/Industrial. Flat roofs are permitted if parapet walls are incorporated to screen the flat roof; otherwise, gable or hip roofs are required.
  - (b) Urban Corridor and HR Districts. Roof forms shall be hip, gable, or combination hip/gable. Minimum pitch shall be 6/12. Hip and gable roof forms wider than 30 feet and facing a public right of way shall be divided into smaller expressions of the form with each element no wider than 30 feet.

b. Architectural Elements

1. Exterior Building Materials. Building exteriors shall adhere to the following guidelines by district:
  - (a) In the Commercial/Industrial districts, Street-facing facades shall be clad in brick, stone or stucco. Decorative concrete masonry units may be used including split-faced, burnished or stone-faced units. Stucco shall comprise no more than 20% of any building exterior and shall be located a minimum of 3 feet above grade to prevent discoloration or damage. Wood or cement based lap

siding may be used on residential design styles only up to a maximum of 20% of the first floor and 50% of the upper stories.

- (b) In the HR and Urban Corridor districts, buildings shall be clad in brick, stone, wood lap siding or cement based lap siding. Concrete formed on site with liners to replicate other permissible building materials is permitted on commercial style buildings.

Permitted roof materials may include asphalt shingles, slate or simulated slate shingles, standing seam metal, or other similar roof materials.

c. Building Facade

Architectural Detailing, Features, and Building Articulation. Architectural detailing shall be added to the building form. Architectural detailing may include cornices, parapets, keystones, quoins, decorative brick work, accentuated window heads and sills, architectural metal as it serves period style, and similar items. Where horizontal top facades are used, such as a parapet wall, the cornice shall be articulated with ornament which steps out, or in some other fashion accentuates the top of the facade. Roof forms which overhang shall have a cornice board at the juncture of the eave and wall. Window and door heads and window sills shall be articulated with a pattern (brick) or contrasting material which emphasized the head or sill. Projecting features such as canopies and porches shall include some measure of architectural ornamentation. Gable ends on pitched roofs 6/12 or greater or with a vertical height of greater than 8 feet shall have decorative material, contrasting banding, or other architectural treatment to divide the area into smaller segments; however, if the roof or gable end is not visible from the public right of way or adjacent property lines, then gable end guidelines do not apply.

1. Building Facade Transparency. In commercial buildings a minimum of 50% of the ground level facade fronting a public street and a minimum of 20% of the side elevations shall consist either of windows or doors to allow views into and out of the building's interior. A minimum of 10% of the front facade of all upper floors of commercial, retail, restaurant and entertainment uses shall be transparent via windows and/or balcony doorways.
2. Building Ground Level Expression. In commercial, office, and mixed use buildings above one story, the ground level shall be distinguished from the floors above by the use of one or more of the following elements: horizontal banding, an intermediate cornice line or a change in building materials, for example.

## 1104 SITE DEVELOPMENT

### a. Sidewalks and Walkways

1. Sidewalks. Pedestrian accessibility and continuity shall be provided throughout all districts, including continuous sidewalks along all public street frontages.
  - (a) Urban Corridor. Because of the residential style of this district, sidewalks should follow the guidelines for residential sidewalks as set forth in the Code of Ordinances, Chapter 136.
  - (b) All other districts. Sidewalks must be a minimum of 6 feet in width. If this is inconsistent with the surrounding sidewalk width, modifications should be made to fit with the surrounding area, but not less than ADA standards, generally five feet in width.
2. Private Walkways. Walkways to parking areas, around buildings or on private properties on or adjacent to public right of way shall be a minimum of four feet wide and constructed of either colored concrete or brick pavers. Clearly defined and lighted pedestrian walkways shall extend between parking areas and all building entrances. The surface shall consist of a stiff broom- finish.
3. Site Landscaping.
  - (a) Street trees shall be planted within a landscaped parkway or in tree pits within the sidewalk area according to City standards. Street trees shall be spaced between 30 and 40 feet apart. Specific tree species shall conform to the tree ordinance.
  - (b) Where a building fronts the sidewalk, benches, planter pots, planter boxes or hanging planter baskets may be included and integrated into the building design to enhance the pedestrian experience and to provide seasonal color. Such enhancements shall be positioned so as to leave a four foot wide clear zone to meet ADA requirements.
  - (c) Where present, all yard areas shall be landscaped with trees, shrubs, ground cover and turf grass.
4. Accessibility and curb Ramps. All sidewalks and walkways shall meet the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards for accessibility.

### b. Parking

1. Surface Parking. Parking lot design shall adhere to the following guidelines:  
Off street parking lots shall be designed and constructed utilizing civil engineering

"best practices" provided by the City Engineer. Surface lots shall be paved with hot mix asphalt or Portland cement with edges and planting islands defined by concrete curb and gutter and parking spaces defined with painted striping. Parking on gravel, dirt or unreinforced turf is prohibited. Permeable pavement surfaces are strongly encouraged. In the Urban Corridor district, off street parking shall be located in the rear of the primary building.

2. Parking Lot Landscaping. Parking lot design shall adhere to the following guidelines:
  - (a) A landscaped buffer strip at least seven feet wide shall be provided between all surface parking areas and the sidewalk or street. The buffer strip shall consist of shade trees, low shrubs and/or perennial flowers (maximum of three feet in height). Use of bio-filtration methods of landscape drainage design is strongly encouraged. Adequate sight distance shall be maintained at all driveway intersections.
  - (b) A landscape buffer at least seven feet wide shall be provided along the rear of all surface parking lots. This area shall be planted with shade trees and a continuous four foot tall shrub border or hedge of deciduous and/or evergreen shrubs.
  - (c) Landscaping shall be incorporated so that every parking space is within forty feet of a tree.
3. Bicycle Parking. Bike loops for parking at least five (5) bicycles shall be provided within 20 feet of the main entry of commercial, mixed use and public buildings.

c. Outdoor Features

1. Fences and Screen Walls. Fences shall adhere to the following guidelines:
  - (a) Urban Corridor. No permanent fences shall be constructed in front of any commercial style architecture; fences are allowed for residential style architecture and must comply with the guidelines for fences in the Code of Ordinances.
  - (b) Temporary seasonal fencing may be used to mark off outdoor dining areas, so long as the area does not impede the normal flow of pedestrian traffic. See Parking Lot Landscaping for fencing in parking lot areas, Article Eight, Section 807 of the Zoning Ordinance.
2. Outdoor Storage. Outdoor storage of any kind, including vehicles, raw materials,

etc. must be fully screened from all adjacent public or private parcels or rights of way by means of fencing and/or landscaping. Seasonal equipment, supplies, etc. shall be either stored within each facility or within a permanent accessory structure. See Accessory Structures/Buildings.

3. Vending Machines. Outdoor vending machines must adhere to the following guidelines:
  - (a) Urban Corridor and Town Center. Outdoor vending machines are prohibited.
  - (b) All other districts. Commercial buildings are limited to two vending machines; these machines must be grouped together and anchored in such a way that any anchorage is concealed. No chains or cables are permitted.
4. Refuse. All dumpsters shall be screened from view by a solid enclosure constructed of materials similar to the principle building, with heavy-duty doors.
5. HVAC Equipment. HVAC equipment must be screened from view from any public street.
6. Outdoor Audio. Amplified music, public address announcements, and other forms of outdoor audio are prohibited unless authorized by special permit by the City.
7. Newspaper/Ad-paper Boxes. Newspaper/advertising paper dispensing machines are prohibited.

**SECTION 2. AMENDMENT.** That Chapter 165, "Zoning Regulations," of the Mount Vernon Code of Ordinances be and the same is hereby amended by adding the following to Article 11 to read as follows:

#### 1105 Purpose

The purpose of this part of Article 11 (1105-1108) is to preserve, enhance and extend the special historic, architectural and aesthetic features of uptown Mount Vernon. This article identifies the architectural qualities that define the Commercial Historic District and defines design standards to maintain that character in new projects and in existing building modifications.

#### 1106 Scope

The design standards emphasize existing styles and patterns and include: a) building size, dimensions, and proportions; b) exterior building materials; c) building facade

treatments and d) site design standards. The design standards apply to all new construction and to all new additions to existing buildings that are in compliance with these standards at the time of their passage, within the Commercial Historic District as they exist at the time of this ordinance adoption and as may amended from time to time by City Council action. If an existing building covered by these design standards does not conform to these standards at the time of the passage of these standards and 25% or less of any exterior elevation of the existing non-conforming building is modified, then any modifications to that building shall be made consistent with the existing design of that building. If more than 25% of any exterior elevation of an existing, non-conforming building is altered or modified, the entire building, including any additions, shall be brought into compliance with these design standards.

#### 1107 Building Design Criteria

- a. **Building Size, Dimensions and Proportions.** Building elevations wider than 30 feet shall be divided into smaller increments through articulation of the facade. This can be achieved through a variety of techniques including the following: divisions or variations in materials, window bays, separate entrances and entry treatments, porticos, variations in roof lines, awnings, variations in brick or stone work, colonnades, arcades, or changes in facade. No single building shall have a building coverage area (building footprint) that exceeds 6,000 square feet.
- b. **Roof Form, Shape and Pitch.** Roofs shall adhere to the following guidelines:
  1. **Commercial buildings:** All buildings shall have a parapet to screen the roof slope on any side of the building facing an adjacent street. Roof slopes behind storefront parapets are not dictated.
  2. **Residential buildings:** Roof forms shall be hip, gable or combination hip/gable. Minimum pitch shall be 6/12. Hip and gable roof forms wider than 20 feet and facing a public right of way shall be divided into small expressions of the form with each element no wider than 20 feet.
- c. **Architectural Elements.** Building exteriors shall adhere to the following guidelines:
  1. **Commercial Buildings.** Buildings shall be clad in brick, stone, wood lap siding, or cement based lap siding accents. Concrete formed with liners to replicate other permissible building materials is permitted. New buildings shall be clad in brick with stone accents and bases. Additions to existing buildings must be clad in a material similar to the cladding material of the original structure.

2. Residential buildings: Permitted roof materials include asphalt shingles, slate or simulated slate shingles, standing seam metal, or other similar roof materials.
- d. Color of Building Exterior. Commercial Historic District building exteriors should assume similar visual characteristics to the historic structures in the District. Brick shall be natural red or red-orange. Paint color applied to exterior surfaces is required to be generally consistent with the paint colors used throughout the historic district. It is prohibited to paint a brick surface.
  - e. Masonry or Concrete. Design elements such as foundation, chimney, brick and mortar joints should assume similar characteristics as other historic structures. Smooth concrete may be used as a foundation material if the foundation is not exposed more than 2 feet above the ground.
  - f. Building Facade
    1. Canopies and Awnings. Retractable canopies or retractable awnings are encouraged in commercial architectural styles and are allowed with all styles of architecture. Such awnings/canopies shall be made of canvas, vinyl, or other non-rigid materials. Awning shapes or profiles shall be a right angle (cross section projecting from the wall) with an allowed drop of 8 inches. Curved sections (horizontal projection) are allowed for openings of 10 feet or narrower.
    2. Architectural Detailing, Features, and Building Articulation. Architectural detailing shall be added to the building form. Architectural detailing may include cornices parapets, keystones, quoins, decorative brick work, accentuated window heads and sills, architectural metal as it serves period style, and similar items as enumerated below. Architectural details shall adhere to the following guidelines:
      - (a) Where horizontal top facades are used, such as a parapet wall, the cornice shall be articulated with ornament which steps out, or in some other fashion accentuates the top of the facade. Roof forms which overhang shall have a cornice board at the juncture of the eave and wall. Window and door heads and window sills shall be articulated with a pattern (brick) or contrasting material which emphasized the head or sill. Projecting features such as canopies and porches shall include some measure of architectural ornamentation. Gable ends on pitched roofs 6/12 or greater or with a vertical height of greater than 8 feet shall have decorative material, contrasting banding, or other architectural treatment to divide the area into smaller segments.

- (b) If the roof or gable end is not visible from the public right of way or adjacent property lines, then gable end guidelines do not apply.
3. **Building Facade Transparency.** In Commercial Historic District buildings, a minimum of 50% of the ground level facade fronting a public street and a minimum of 20% of the side elevations shall consist either of windows or doors to allow views into and out of the building interior. A minimum of 10% of the front facade of all upper floors of commercial district buildings shall be transparent via windows and/or balcony doorways.
  4. **Window Design.** Commercial district storefront architecture shall have large fixed expanses of glass on the lower floor. Prairie style windows can incorporate a large amount of glass but should be broken into smaller window pane units by exterior muntins or smaller sash units. Residential buildings shall incorporate windows similar in dimensions and character to residential windows.
  5. **Building Ground Level Expression.** In Commercial Historic District buildings of more than one story, the ground level shall be distinguished from the floors above by the use of one or more of the following elements: horizontal banding, an intermediate cornice line, or a change in building materials.
  6. **Franchise Architecture.** Standard franchise architecture (building design that is trademarked or identified with a particular chain or corporation and is generic in nature) is prohibited. Franchise or national chains must follow this ordinance to create a building that is supportive of the overall context established within the historic district.

## 1108 SITE DEVELOPMENT

### a. Sidewalks and Walkways

1. **Commercial Property Sidewalks.** Sidewalks must follow the current pattern for commercial style buildings and extend the sidewalk from the building front to the curb. Walkways to parking areas, around buildings or on private properties on or adjacent to public right of way shall be a minimum of four feet wide and constructed of either colored concrete or brick pavers. The color applied to surfaces is required to be generally consistent with the paint colors used throughout the historic district. See Section 1107d.
2. **Residential Property Sidewalks.** Sidewalks must be a minimum of 6 feet in width. If this is inconsistent with the surrounding sidewalk width, modifications may be

approved to fit with the surrounding area; however, ADA requirements must be met in all cases.

3. Walkways. Walkways to parking areas, around buildings or on private properties on or adjacent to public right of way shall be a minimum of four feet wide and constructed of either colored concrete or brick pavers. The color applied to surfaces is required to be generally consistent with the paint colors used throughout the historic district. See Section 1107d.
  4. Commercial Historic District Landscape. Street trees shall be planted within a landscaped parkway or in tree pits within the sidewalk area according to City standards. Street trees shall be spaced between 30 and 40 feet apart. Specific tree species shall conform to the tree ordinance.
  5. Where a building adjoins the sidewalk, benches, planter pots, planter boxes or hanging planter baskets may be included and integrated into the building design to enhance the pedestrian experience and to provide seasonal color. Such enhancements shall not be positioned so as to impede the normal flow of pedestrian traffic.
  6. Where present, all yard areas shall be landscaped with trees, shrubs, ground cover and turf grass.
  7. Accessibility and Curb Ramps. All sidewalks and walkways shall meet the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards for accessibility.
- b. Parking. Parking lot design shall adhere to the following guidelines:
1. Off street parking lots shall be designed and constructed utilizing civil engineering "best practices" provided by the City Engineer.
  2. Surface lots shall be paved with hot mix asphalt or Portland cement with edges and planting islands defined by concrete curb and gutter and parking spaces defined with painted striping. Parking on gravel, dirt or turf, or any other surface than those specified is prohibited. Permeable pavement surfaces are strongly encouraged.
  3. Parking Lot Landscaping.
    - (a) A landscaped buffer strip at least seven feet wide shall be provided between all surface parking areas and the sidewalk or street. The buffer strip shall consist of shade trees, low shrubs and/or perennial flowers (maximum of three feet in height). Use of bio-filtration methods of landscape drainage

design is strongly encouraged. Adequate sight distance shall be maintained at all driveway intersections.

(b) A landscape buffer at least seven feet wide shall be provided along the rear of all surface parking lots. This area shall be planted with shade trees and a continuous four foot tall shrub border or hedge of deciduous and/or evergreen shrubs.

(c) Landscaping shall be incorporated so that every parking space is within 40 feet of a tree.

4. Bicycle Parking. Bike loops for parking at least five (5) bicycles shall be provided within 20 feet of the main entry of commercial, mixed use and public buildings.

c. Outdoor Features

1. Fences and screen walls. Fences shall adhere to the following guidelines:

(a) Commercial Properties. No permanent fences shall be constructed in front of any commercial style architecture.

(b) Residential Properties. Fences are allowed for residential style architecture and must comply with the regulations for fences in the Code of Ordinances. Temporary seasonal fencing may be used to mark off outdoor dining areas, so long as the area does not impede the normal flow of pedestrian traffic.

The total height of wall and fence shall not exceed 48 inches.

2. Outdoor Storage. Outdoor storage of any kind, including vehicles, raw materials, etc. must be fully or partially screened from all adjacent public or private parcels or rights of way by means of fencing or landscaping. Seasonal equipment, supplies, etc. shall be either stored within each facility or within a permanent accessory structure. See Accessory Structures/Buildings.

3. Vending Machines. Outdoor vending machines are prohibited.

4. Refuse. All commercial dumpsters shall be screened from view by a solid enclosure constructed of materials similar to the principle building, with heavy-duty doors.

5. HVAC Equipment. HVAC equipment must be screened from view from any public street.

6. Outdoor Audio. Amplified music, public address announcements, and other forms of outdoor audio are prohibited unless authorized by special permit by the City.

7. Newspaper/Ad-paper Boxes. Newspaper/advertising paper dispensing machines are prohibited.

**SECTION 3. REPEALER.** All Ordinances and parts of ordinances in conflict with the provisions of this Ordinance are hereby repealed.

**SECTION 4. SEVERABILITY.** If any section, provision or part of this Ordinance shall be adjudged invalid or unconstitutional, such adjudication shall not affect the validity of the Ordinance as a whole or any section, provision or part thereof not adjudged invalid or unconstitutional.

**SECTION 5. WHEN EFFECTIVE.** This ordinance shall be in effect from and after its final passage, approval and publication as provided by law.

First reading on the 9<sup>th</sup> day of December, 2013.

Second reading on the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2013.

Third and final passage on the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2013.

\_\_\_\_\_  
SCOTT C. PETERSON, MAYOR

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
SUE RIPKE  
ASSISTANT CITY ADMINISTRATOR/CLERK

I certify that the foregoing was published as Ordinance No. \_\_\_\_\_ in the Mount Vernon Sun on the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2013.

\_\_\_\_\_  
SUE RIPKE  
ASSISTANT CITY ADMINISTRATOR/CLERK



