

Chapter 11 Commercial Infill

11.1 Introduction

Infill is the process of building a new structure on a vacant site within an existing neighborhood. These In fill guidelines are also applicable to the review of alterations to structures or sites within the HPOZ that are “Non-Contributing” as identified in the Historic Resource Survey.

These Commercial In fill Guidelines are intended for the use of commercially zoned property owners planning new structures (including commercial, residential and mixed-use structures on vacant sites or alterations to Non-Contributing structures or sites within the HPOZ. These guidelines help ensure that such new construction and alterations recognize and are sensitive to their historic context.

Non-Contributing structures are those structures, landscapes, natural features, or sites identified as Non-Contributing in the Historic Resources Survey for this HPOZ. Generally, Non-Contributing structures are those that have been built outside of the historic period of significance of the HPOZ, or are those that were built within that period but no longer retain the features (due to subsequent alterations) that identify them as belonging to that period. The historic period of significance of the HPOZ is usually the time period in which the majority of construction in the area occurred.

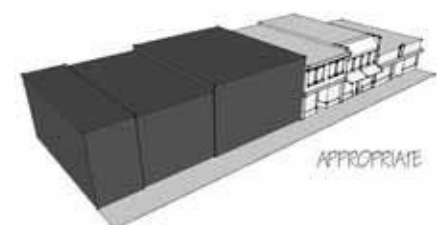
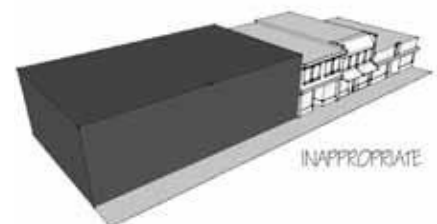
The Commercial Infill Guidelines are divided into sections, each covering a building design element. Elements from all sections will be important when planning or evaluating proposed new construction or alterations to existing non-contributing structures or sites. The Commercial In fill section of the guidelines should be used in planning and reviewing projects involving most new structures in commercial areas. They are also intended for use in the planning and review of projects for structures in areas that were originally built as commercial areas which have since been converted to residential use.

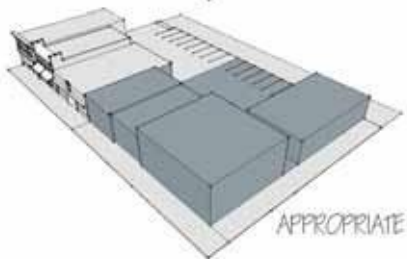
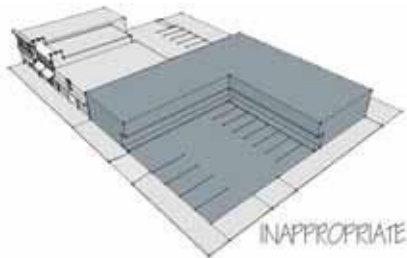
11.2 Location and Site Design

Historically, structures in commercial areas were characterized by a consistent setback usually aligned against the sidewalk. This street wall should be preserved in the design of new in fill construction. Commercial buildings were typically constructed with their side walls abutting one another, establishing a common, consistent street facade. In most cases, a rhythm of building widths was established along a street front that still exists, and this rhythm should be reflected in new construction.

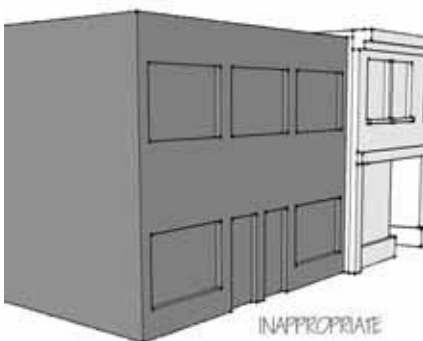
Guidelines

1. The facades of new structures in commercial areas should maintain the setback of existing historic structures along the street front.





The commercial strip-mall is a modern convention and is inappropriate in historic neighborhoods like Jefferson Park & Garvanza.



Buildings should provide a bottom, middle and top and should not be simple boxes.

Where varying setbacks exist, new construction should attempt to function as a buffer by providing a variable setback.

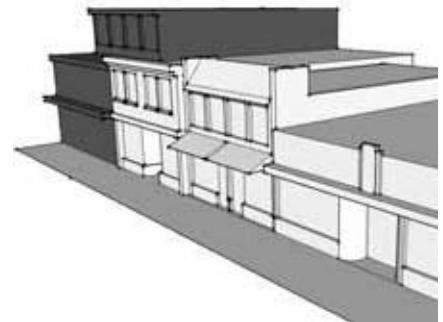
2. New structures should reflect the traditional widths of historic structures in the area. If a structure is proposed that is wider than most individual historic structures along a street, the new structure should be broken into appropriately-sized modules.
3. New structures should be built to maintain the street wall, without side setbacks.
4. Building entrances should always be oriented toward the street.
5. Parking areas and driveways should be located to the rear of commercial structures.
6. Tree planting should be dispersed throughout surface parking areas so as to minimize glare and to provide shade.
7. If new parking areas are to be created, these areas should be screened from public view by appropriate fencing or planting strips. Where fencing is to be used, materials should be consistent with wall materials found on historic buildings in the area. Where planting strips are to be used, such strips should be wide enough to allow for the planting of a variety of plant species ranging from ground cover, to medium height shrubs and to shade trees. In most cases, 3.5 feet is preferred as a minimum depth.
8. Entrances for commercial parking areas should be taken from alleys and side-streets to the greatest extent possible. When driveways along major streets are necessary such driveways should be minimal in depth. In most cases 20 feet should be the maximum for a two-way driveway.
9. Constructing modern commercial building types, such as multi-tenant strip-malls behind parking lots, is inappropriate regardless of what architectural motif is applied to the exterior of the structure.
10. Building street frontages should readily accommodate active uses such as commercial tenant space. When residential projects are proposed, a commercial mixed-use component is preferred to provide an active streetwall. When commercial space cannot be accommodated active spaces such community rooms, generous lobbies and other similar spaces are preferred. Blank walls and parking garage grilles at ground street level are inappropriate.

11.3 Building Mass, Scale, and Form

Historic commercial areas in the Los Angeles were generally comprised of two- to three-story flat roofed structures comprised as rectangular solids. Building forms most often consisted of a base that housed the storefronts, a middle that may have consisted of apartments or of office space and a top accentuated by a cornice or parapet.

Guidelines

1. New structures should maintain the average scale of historic structures within the area.
2. New structures should draw from surrounding historic structures in establishing an identifiable base, middle and top. Simple box forms with no vertical delineation are inappropriate.
3. New structures that are taller than existing historic commercial structures in the area should be designed to emphasize the existing cornice heights in the area.
4. The basic building form for new commercial structures should be a simple rectangular solid.
5. New commercial structures should attempt to reflect the traditional commercial storefront widths in a historic commercial area.
6. A flat roof is the preferred roof form.
7. Building heights should not be out of scale with adjacent residential properties and should utilize transitional heights when appropriate.
8. A residential building vocabulary is not appropriate for Western Avenue or Jefferson Boulevard. Mixed-use or residential buildings along these streets should draw from historic commercial buildings in the area to define massing and modulation.
9. Projecting residential balconies facing commercial streets are inappropriate.



In-fill buildings should set back upper floors that defy existing rooflines.



In-fill construction that is simple, open and deferential to historic structures, need not recreate historic architectural features.



In-fill projects should avoid the use of inappropriate materials such as foam plant-ons.



The structural bay pattern and simple profile make this building appropriate to an historic streetscape.



Important storefront components are shown.

11.4 Materials and Details

Materials commonly used on facades of historic commercial structures included brick, stucco, and masonry. Architectural details were usually embellishments added to the solid plane of the facade or parapet details rising from it. Echoing these traditions in the design of new construction will help to preserve the distinctive character of our historic commercial areas.

Guidelines

1. Building materials should be similar to those used historically. A stucco commercial structure on a street comprised mainly of masonry commercial structures would be inappropriate.
2. Generally, architectural details should be arranged to emphasize the horizontal features of facades.
3. Architectural details should echo, but should not exactly mimic, details found on historic facades.
4. The colors and dimensions of permanent finish materials, such as brick, tile, and stucco, should be similar to these used historically.
5. The use of architectural detail to break up the visual mass of oversized buildings is encouraged.
6. Materials such as foam plant-ons, rough textured stucco, faux lentils, cornices or quoins, etc. are inappropriate.
7. Signage on commercial in fill structures should follow the signage guidelines laid out in the Commercial Rehabilitation Chapter.
8. Durable and high-quality materials should be used at ground-level. Stucco as a primary building material at ground-level is inappropriate.

11.5 Openings, Storefronts, and Entries

The character of historic commercial block fronts is largely defined by the storefronts, entryways, windows and doors that were designed to create street level interest for pedestrians and passersby. While a historic commercial block front might be comprised of a variety of architectural styles all of these structures would have presented a similar face to the sidewalk, with large expanses of glass storefront windows, welcoming well-marked entryways, and largely regular, horizontally massed windows at the ground floor. Upper floor windows are most often fenestrated with punch-style windows that provide depth and establish a clear pattern of openings. Maintaining this

common vocabulary is an important part of maintaining the character of historic commercial districts.

Guidelines

1. On the ground floor of new commercial structures, a majority of the primary architectural façade should echo traditional retail storefronts. The use of a bulkhead, expansive storefront windows, recessed entries and transoms are encouraged.
2. The ground floor of the primary architectural façade should be comprised primarily of transparent elements and pedestrian entrances.
3. Recessed entryways are strongly encouraged for primary entrances on the ground floor level.
4. Primary entryways should be clearly marked through the use of important defining architectural elements, such as transoms, awnings, lintels, or surrounds.
5. Multi-story structures should provide a clear delineation, by way of differentiated materials and features, between the ground floor, the upper floors and the roof of the building.
6. Upper story windows should be regularly spaced and horizontally massed on the primary architectural façade. Recessed “punch-style” windows are generally preferred.
7. Upper story windows that are flush-mounted to a façade are in appropriate.
8. On structures occupying corner lots, corner entryways with strong architectural emphasis are encouraged.