Design Guidelines
for the
Memphis Central Business Improvement District

October 2001
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Additional Credits
  In order to ensure continuity with other development initiatives, elements of this document
  were taken from the following:
  • Architectural Design Guidelines for the South Main Street Historic Preservation District
    Office of Planning and Development & Memphis Landmarks Commission
    Winter & Company, Boulder, CO
  • Uptown Memphis Zoning Regulations & Design Principles
    Looney Ricks Kiss, Memphis, TN
  • The Medical District Master Plan
    HOK Planning Group, St. Louis, MO
  • Downtown Memphis Streetscape Master Plan
    LDR International
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**Introduction** ........................................................................................................... 1  
  History .......................................................................................................................... 1  
  Intent of the Guidelines .............................................................................................. 1  
  Creation of the Guidelines .......................................................................................... 2  
  How to Use the Guidelines .......................................................................................... 2  
  The Application Process .............................................................................................. 3  
  Boundaries and Sub-Districts ...................................................................................... 3  

**General Principles** .................................................................................................... 5  
  Site Orientation .......................................................................................................... 6  
  Streetscapes .................................................................................................................. 9  
  Buildings: Scale, Massing, Base & Cap ..................................................................... 11  
  Buildings: Facades, Roofs, Details & Materials ....................................................... 13  
  Parking Facilities ......................................................................................................... 15  
  Parking Lot Screening and Landscaping .................................................................... 15  
  Loading Areas, Solid Waste Facilities & Service Areas ............................................. 18  
  Landscaping .................................................................................................................. 18  

**Sub-District Guidelines** ............................................................................................ 21  
  Downtown Core .......................................................................................................... 22  
  South CBID .................................................................................................................. 25  
  North CBID ................................................................................................................... 28  
  Medical District ............................................................................................................ 31  

**Checklist for Real Estate Development** .................................................................. 34  

**Appendices** .............................................................................................................. 35  
  Division 2. Sign Code .................................................................................................. A  
  Streetscape Guidelines ................................................................................................. B  
  Design Review Board Application .............................................................................. C  
  Downtown Dumpster Ordinance .................................................................................. D
INTRODUCTION
Pursuant to Chapter 7, Section 7-92 of the Code of Ordinances of the City of Memphis, the Memphis Center City Design Review Board (DRB) has been formed. The following design guidelines are offered as recommendations to its Board and to the Center City Commission Board of Directors in accordance with Section 2 of the established and approved Memphis Center City Design Review Board Bylaws. The guidelines are to be used by the DRB as basic development standards for all projects that appear before said Board.

These guidelines provide design standards to ensure compatible development and redevelopment within the Memphis Central Business Improvement District (CBID). They regulate the rehabilitation of buildings and set forth standards for new construction and streetscape improvements. The guidelines provide overarching design principles to be followed within the entire CBID, and they highlight the existing design characteristics of four sub-districts in the CBID.

All public projects or private projects involving public funds in the CBID must meet the intent and standards contained within these guidelines. In addition, these guidelines shall regulate any improvements within the public right-of-way, such as streetscape improvements as well as all signage, whether public or private.

HISTORY
The original town of Memphis was laid out in 1819 on the fourth Chickasaw Bluff overlooking the Mississippi River. The streets of the grid plan ran south to Union Avenue, north to Auction Avenue and west four to five blocks. The plan included a river bluff promenade and four public squares, the purpose of each being designated by name: Market, Auction, Exchange and Court.

Growth in the early years was slow, but by the 1840s Memphis had over thirty brick buildings, including the old Exchange Building and the Gayoso House. By 1847, the city had begun to issue bonds to finance the construction of new streets and the maintenance of those that already existed. In 1849, Memphis and South Memphis governmentally merged and six years later the residential area of Greenlaw was annexed into the city. The Pinch District grew and prospered as the commercial center of Memphis during this time and would constitute “downtown” until the 1870s. This early development of Memphis was along the riverfront and on the bluffs to the north and south of the original town.

In 1857, the railroad connecting Memphis with the Atlantic seaboard was completed and an architectural boom began. In 1859 roughly 1,400 buildings were constructed and even more were built the next year. The boom faded with the Civil War and during the 1870s the city was decimated by three yellow fever epidemics. During the 1880s, Memphis began to recover. In 1881 streetcars were introduced and in 1882 streetlights were installed on Main Street. The city laid the first sewer lines during this period and in 1887, artesian wells were discovered under the city that would provide Memphis with millions of gallons of pure water. Another building boom began that would last until the Great Depression. It was during these boom years that the various sub-distincts of Downtown Memphis developed their unique character.

Memphis, like most of the nation, suffered economically during the Great Depression; however, downtown continued to be the economic and cultural heart of the City. Downtown’s position of prominence began to sharply decline during the 1960s and 1970s as a strong trend of suburban development began to shift financial investment away from downtown. By the early 1980s, like many downtowns, Center City Memphis had fallen on hard times. Fortunately, however, a dramatic comeback began during the 1990s that has gained tremendous momentum over the past few years with major entertainment, civic and housing developments/redevelopments. These guidelines are intended to focus that growing momentum in the proper direction.

INTENT OF THE GUIDELINES
These guidelines are designed to encourage rehabilitation and new construction that is sensitive to the original style and method of construction widely used within each district. They strive to void inappropriate design features such as blank facades and suburban development patterns, while
promoting development that responds to its surroundings, maintains the established character and reinforces the urban fabric.

These guidelines are based conceptually upon the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Rehabilitation of Historic Buildings, as they amplify the intent of the Secretary’s Standards while addressing the particular local conditions. It is important to note that design guidelines are just what their name implies, “guidelines”, and they should be applied with a reasonable measure of flexibility and discretion. The Center City Commission acknowledges that exceptions to the rules will occur from time to time, and that such situations should be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

Appropriate and compatible design is crucial to maintaining the long-term investment value throughout this or any other area. These guidelines are intended to ensure that Downtown Memphis remains an aesthetically pleasing environment that preserves its historic character while creating lasting economic value for investors and the community as a whole.

CREATION OF THE GUIDELINES
These design guidelines were developed through a highly collaborative process which encouraged the meaningful input of various constituency groups having a stake in the design future of the Memphis Central Business Improvement District (CBID). Prior to developing specific ideas for the guidelines, meetings were held with people representing the Center City Commission, the City and County governments, property owners, business owners and operators, historic preservationists, and local designers in order to understand their diverse perspectives. The guidelines were then incrementally developed, reviewed by the stakeholder groups, and refined until this final product accurately reflected the key stakeholders’ consensus.

USE OF THE GUIDELINES
These guidelines are organized into two key sections: general principles and sub-district guidelines. The general principles are applicable to all portions of the CBID, and are organized according to the various design issues such as site orientation, streetscapes, buildings, signage, parking and landscaping. The sub-district guidelines address those same design principles, but provide more specific direction based on the special character of an area. Thus, someone wishing to restore a building within the Main Street Mall area would first review the general principles for buildings, then refer specifically to the Downtown Core guidelines. Finally, the Checklist for Real Estate Development in the Memphis CBID (page 34) is provided as a reference for all critical design items that the Center City Design Review Board will be reviewing.

It is important to note that within some of these sub-districts which have been designated solely for the purposes of the design guidelines, there are also formally designated historic districts. For example, the Downtown Core includes the Court Square, Adams, Madison-Monroe, and Gayoso-Peabody Districts. While these guidelines reflect principles of historic integrity, the applicant is responsible for coordination with the Memphis Landmarks Commission or other regulatory bodies that govern historic districts.

Additionally, within some of the sub-districts, additional guidelines exist in the form of development oriented design code. For instance, both Harbortown and South Bluffs developments maintain strict design standards for construction and site orientation. These guidelines are compatible with those standards, however do not directly deal with issues particular to any private development. The applicant is responsible for understanding and planning for any development oriented standards that may exist.

While signage is referenced in the Design Guidelines for the Memphis Central Business Improvement District, the governing sign code exists as an independent ordinance. That ordinance is attached as Appendix A.

While streetscape is referenced in these guidelines, detailed standards are attached as Appendix B.
THE APPLICATION PROCESS
These guidelines are intended to address any physical alterations within the CBID, which are visible from a public right-of-way, including alterations to existing buildings, new construction, signage and changes to site features. The key steps of the review process include:

- Pre-application meeting with Center City Commission (CCC) staff, preferably on-site, to receive preliminary advice prior to submitting an application.
- Application completion and submission to the CCC, to include all necessary information, such as physical dimensions, materials and colors. Applications must be deemed complete by CCC staff before they are formally reviewed and placed on the next agenda of the Design Review Board (DRB).
- CCC staff will review the application and submit written recommendations to both the DRB and the applicant prior to the meeting at which the application will be considered.
- In light of these guidelines, the DRB will consider the application, which will either be approved as submitted, approved with conditions, or denied. For additional information on the approval process, please consult with CCC staff.

The official Center City Commission Design Review Board Application is attached as Appendix C.

BOUNDARIES AND SUB-DISTRICTS
Development in downtown presents special opportunities and challenges not encountered elsewhere. Downtown is the most urban of all spaces within a city. To sustain its physical and economic health, downtown must be attractive, interesting, vibrant and pedestrian friendly. Furthermore, the vitality of downtown Memphis is dependent upon the preservation of the special character of each of its sub-districts.

The CBID is generally bounded by the Wolf River on the north, Crump Boulevard on the south, the Tennessee State line on the west and Danny Thomas on the east, with an extension between Poplar and Linden to Watkins encompassing the medical center as shown in the following map.

Downtown Core
The Downtown Core is generally bounded by Auction Avenue on the north, Danny Thomas Boulevard on the east, Linden Avenue on the south and the state line on the west. Many different areas of architectural influence exist within the Downtown Core including Beale Street, the Ballpark area, Civic Center Plaza and the surrounding governmental district, The Pinch and St. Jude areas. This area also contains numerous local and national historic districts.

South CBID
The South CBID is generally bounded by Linden Avenue on the north, Danny Thomas Boulevard on the east, Crump Boulevard on the south and the state line on the west. French Fort, DeSoto Park and the Ornamental Metal Museum are included in this sub-district. While largely industrial in nature, the area takes on the characteristics of surrounding residential neighborhoods to the east and west, natural environments to the south and commercial areas as defined in the South Main Special District (as defined by the Memphis/Shelby County Office of Planning and Development).

North CBID
The North CBID is generally bounded by Auction Avenue on the south, Danny Thomas Boulevard on the east, the Wolf River on the north and the state line on the west. This is a diverse area made up of newly constructed residential projects on Mud Island, historic neighborhoods in the Greenlaw and Bickford/Bearwater areas and industrial property to the north. For historic restoration projects and for commercial construction, please use the South CBID Sub-District Guidelines as an additional reference.
**Medical District**
The Medical District is generally bounded by Poplar Avenue on the north, Watkins Street on the east, Linden Avenue on the south, and Danny Thomas on the west. This area contains an eclectic mix of designs ranging from historic Victorian residences to modern “big box” retailers. Major medical and educational institutions anchor the area.

While these guidelines attempt to accurately address the character of each sub-district, cases may exist where guidelines for other areas more appropriately address an issue. For instance, a building site on the western boundary of the Medical District may be better served by the guidelines for the Downtown Core. For North CBID projects, please use the South CBID Sub-District Guidelines as an additional reference. The applicant should be familiar with the character of surrounding areas and seek advice from Center City Commission staff, as both of these will be factors in the Design Review Board’s determination.
General Principles
For New Construction and Redevelopment in the Memphis Central Business Improvement District
SITE ORIENTATION

Building Orientation
Buildings should front toward a street or other public space.

Corner Buildings
Corner buildings have at least two front facades visibly exposed to the street and should be designed to respond to these more prominent locations.

Front Setbacks
Buildings should adhere to the front setback of adjacent buildings or achieve changes through subtle increments. In most cases, this setback is consistent with the sidewalk edge and public right-of-way. Exceptions to this rule are civic and residential buildings that have a front yard. Post-WWII buildings, which violate this principle, should not be used as a reference for new building setbacks.

Access for non-residential uses
Access driveways within the commercial core of the Center City should be minimal in both number and width to promote safety and pedestrian activity. Whenever feasible, existing alleys should be utilized for access.

Access for residential uses
Within residential areas, street access to sites by driveways should only be permitted where historic precedents exist. Driveway widths should be minimized and use of on-street parking and alleys is encouraged. In most historic neighborhoods garages should be located at the rear of the lot.

Location of Parking
Parking lots are discouraged between any building and its primary street frontage. Parking lots should be sensitively located to the side and rear of buildings and should be accessed from narrow driveways or alleys with minimal disruption to the streetscape. Buildings can be used to screen parking areas from streets. Other screening elements may be used and will be determined by the character of and context of an area.
Answer these questions for the project being reviewed.

- Does the building front toward the street and/or all other public spaces?
- Is the building’s setback comparable to surrounding properties and historic precedent?
Answer these questions for the project being reviewed.

- Are driveways strategically located off of alleys or sidestreets?
- Are driveway widths minimized and pedestrian friendly?
- Is parking located to the rear or the side of the building and properly screened?
STREETSCAPES

Sidewalks
Compatibility in sidewalk design and materials is desirable for any given block-face, but not necessary throughout any given district. Sidewalk width is determined by the area’s development density. For example, narrower sidewalks are acceptable in the Greenlaw District, while much wider widths are needed in highly urbanized areas such as the Downtown Core.

Landscaping
Streetscape landscaping should consist primarily of shade trees. Hedges and evergreen trees should be limited to screening purposes (e.g., parking areas), foundation plantings or front lawns where appropriate. Streetscapes or residential areas, such as the Greenlaw District, should include a planting strip located between the curb and sidewalk.

Street Furniture
Street furniture, such as benches, trash receptacles, and kiosks, should be appropriate for the pedestrian activity and circulation of the areas such as the Downtown Core, Beale Street and the Pinch District. Street furniture should be strategically located based on observation of pedestrian usage. Any item placed within the public right of way must allow a continuous 5-foot pedestrian clearance.

Lighting
Street lighting within the Center City should generally consist of pedestrian-scaled decorative fixtures.

Specific Streetscape Standards
Many areas within the CBID have special supplemental streetscape standards. Please check with the Center City Commission staff for more information and reference Appendix B for detailed streetscape recommendations.
Answer these questions for the project being reviewed.

- Is the sidewalk width compatible with the level of pedestrian activity in the area?
- Is landscaping of a hardy species and planted in beds large enough to sustain growth?
- Does street furniture block pedestrian activity or obscure vehicular views?
- Is street lighting pedestrian scaled with decorative fixtures?
BUILDINGS: Scale, Massing, Base & Cap

Scale
The overall scale of new buildings should relate to that of adjacent buildings. Where opportunities exist, new buildings should provide a transition between existing buildings of differing scales. The ground-level scale of new buildings should be compatible with a human scale.

Massing
The basic mass and proportions of a new buildings or addition should be compatible with the massing of surrounding buildings. Massing characteristics within the Center City vary by district. For example, the massing of buildings within the Central Downtown Core tends to be rather box-like. However, residential buildings such as those in Greenlaw feature more complex massing characteristics, including varied buildings footprints and pitched roofs. Except where historic precedents exist, long uninterrupted façade and roof planes should be avoided.

Base & Cap
All buildings should incorporate an articulated base and cap. A building’s base and cap are conveyed through a clearly defined horizontal element along the bottom and top of the building.
Answer these questions for the project being reviewed.
- Does the height of the building relate to the height of surrounding properties?
- Does the building’s mass and proportions relate to surrounding properties?
- Does the building have a clearly articulated base?
- Does the building have a clearly articulated cap?
BUILDINGS: Facades, Roofs, Details & Materials

Facades
Facades fronting streets shall be emphasized through the use of fenestration, and clearly articulated public entrances and higher quality details and materials. All entrances to a building should be defined and articulated by design elements (such as lintels, pediments, pilasters, columns, porticos, porches, awnings and canopies). Window and door openings should generally have a vertical orientation and be vertically aligned. Commercial storefronts should have a traditional design with a kick plate and wooden or iron framing, or, where appropriate, shall be clearly contemporary with a liberal amount of glass and minimal framing. Blank walls facing streets should be avoided.

Roofs
Roof forms should be appropriate to the building’s architecture and surrounding context.

Materials
Materials, textures and colors should be appropriate for the building’s architecture and surrounding context. Previously unpainted masonry should not be painted. Masonry should not be sand blasted.

Details
Architectural details should be appropriate to a building’s design and surrounding context. Detailing shall be historically replicated for restorations, but generally simplified in the case of new construction. Restored buildings should faithfully duplicate details, such as decorative cornices, window moldings, dentils and corbelling, based upon existing fabric or historic documentation like photos or drawings. In order to distinguish new construction from existing, details should be minimized or simplified for additions or new buildings.

Skybridges should only be used in highly selected circumstances.
Answer these questions for the project being reviewed.

- Are public entrances clearly articulated?
- Are window and door openings proportionately spaced and vertically aligned?
- Have blank walls facing streets and public spaces been eliminated?
- Does the roof form match the context of surrounding properties?
- Are materials of proven durability used and do those materials reflect the construction of surrounding properties?
- In restoration projects, have architectural details been historically replicated?
- In new construction or additions, has the architectural detail been based on surrounding properties yet minimized?
PARKING FACILITIES
Parking Structures
Parking structures fronting a street shall be compatible with surrounding buildings. Walls facing streets shall utilize materials, colors, and a pattern of openings that are sympathetic to surrounding buildings, especially at the ground level. Along most streets, frontage should consist of retail or service business space on the ground level. Parking garages are encouraged to have a minimum floor-to-ceiling height of 14 ft on the ground level. Along street frontage, spandrel panel should be designed with horizontal plates and not ramps.

All parking facilities should be designed for maximum optimization throughout a 24-hour period and for multiple uses.

PARKING LOT SCREENING & LANDSCAPING
Parking Lot Screening
The perimeter of all parking lots shall be visually screened through the use of walls, fences and/or landscaping, with an emphasis on any portions fronting a street. The method of screening shall be determined by the site’s context: The most urban portions of the Center City should emphasize masonry walls and fences, while more residential areas might emphasize landscape screening. In all cases parking should not extend past the established building line on a block. If landscaping is used, it should generally consist of evergreens or thickly branched deciduous plants in order to provide year round screening. However, screening should not be taller than 30 inches to avoid a security hazard where people can hide.

Parking Lot Landscaping
Shade trees should be provided at a minimum rate of one tree per five parking spaces, with an emphasis placed on peripheral plantings. Surface lots exceeding 15 parking spaces should satisfy the tree-planting requirement, in part, through internal plantings.
Answer these questions for the project being reviewed.

- Does the parking garage utilize materials, colors and openings that are sympathetic to surrounding properties?
- Are spandrel panels on garages aligned horizontally with no ramps facing the street?
- Is the garage masked with another activity or is the ground level animated with a retail use?
Answer these questions for the project being reviewed.

- Is the parking lot visually screened in a manner that respects the setback of surrounding properties?
- Is one shade tree provided for every five parking spaces in the landscape plan?
LOADING AREAS, SOLID WASTE FACILITIES & SERVICE AREAS
Loading docks, solid waste facilities, recycling facilities and other service areas should be placed to the
rear or to one side of buildings in visually unobtrusive locations with minimum impact on views of such
area. Impacts on the public right-of-way should also be minimized for spillover glare, noise or exhaust
fumes. Screening should be achieved through the use of walls, fences and landscaping. Recesses in
the building, and/or depressed access ramps may also be used for service areas. Businesses are
encouraged to consolidate and share refuse areas and equipment. The load capacity of service area
paving must be able to withstand heavy truck activity.

LANDSCAPING
All areas not occupied by streets, sidewalks, buildings, parking or other improvements shall be planted
with trees, shrubs, hedges, ground cover and/or lawn, unless such areas consist of attractive existing
vegetation to be retained. Plantings should be designed in a manner that is complimentary to
surrounding buildings and the context of the block, street and district in which the site is located. The use
of repetition, structured patterns, informal arrangements, complimentary textures and colors, and other
design approaches should reinforce the overall character of the area.

Landscaping should not obscure significant architectural features.

Materials of planting containers should be durable and low maintenance.
Answer these questions for the project being reviewed.

- Are loading docks and waste facilities placed at the rear of the building and screened?
- Have ramps or recesses been created in the buildings for service areas?
Answer these questions for the project being reviewed.

- Are all areas not occupied by building, streets or other real improvements planted/landscaped?
- Does landscaping compliment surrounding textures, colors and character of the existing neighborhood?
- Is landscaping designed to avoid obscuring building openings and architectural detail?
- Are plantings of a sustainable nature in an urban environment?
- Are containers appropriately sized and of a low-maintenance construction?
Sub-District Guidelines
For New Construction and Redevelopment in the
Memphis Central Business Improvement District
DOWNTOWN CORE
Much of the Downtown Core is regulated by standards for historic districts that are available from the Memphis Landmarks Commission.

Setbacks
Most buildings should be built to the sidewalk edge. Large institutional buildings and buildings along high traffic boulevards may be sited behind a landscape treatment with a minor setback of fifteen to twenty feet.

Scale & Massing
Building height should reflect the character of surrounding properties. Most buildings should range from four to six stories. The appropriate scale may be smaller in areas around the edges of the Downtown Core, like on Beale Street or in the Pinch Historic District, where the buildings are two to four stories tall. Taller buildings may be appropriate through the center of the Downtown Core like in the Madison-Monroe Historic District and Gayoso-Peabody Historic District. Massing generally should be box-like and vertically oriented while proportions may vary within the district. Exceptions are allowed for large, high-density developments.

Base & Cap
Most buildings should have an articulated base and cap. The base should be achieved with a storefront, watertable, belt course or other acceptable alternative. The cap should be achieved by a cornice, cornice brackets or belt course of masonry or other acceptable alternative. Articulated parapets are widely used throughout many of the historic districts.

Roofs
Structures should generally have the appearance of a flat roof.

Facades
Architectural styles may be diverse but should complement the district. Existing architectural styles include Neo-Classical, Beaux-Arts, Second Renaissance, Sullivanesque, Romanesque Revival, Gothic Revival and Art Deco. Attention should be given to appropriate proportions and fenestration openings. Front façade should address the street and articulate the main entrance through the use of details, ornament, materials and façade plane variations. New buildings in many of the historic districts should be simplified in design and detailing, however cohesiveness between properties should be maintained through window rhythms and door spacing.

Predominant Materials & Details
Building material should be primarily brick with other masonry such as terra cotta and stone. Cast iron detailing includes columns, window moldings, fire escapes, corrugated shutters, drain pipes, ornamental relief and attic ventilation grilles. Terra cotta detailing includes window moldings and upper level spandrel decoration. Stone detailing is encouraged in architectural ornaments including pilasters, columns, decorative spandrels and garlands. Terra cotta and stone are most predominant in civic structures. Otherwise, brick is most predominant throughout the Downtown Core.

Signage
Signs are encouraged to be façade-mounted, façade-painted, projecting, canopy and temporary sandwich boards. See Appendix A for detailed signage regulations.

Streetscape
The streetscape is diverse. Some areas such as Beale Street, South Second Street and the Main Street Mall have coordinated streetscapes. Positive elements include consistent building setbacks, wide sidewalks, street trees, decorative street lamps, on-street parking, canopies and street furniture. See Appendix B for detailed streetscape recommendations.

Screening for Parking Areas
Preferred treatment: Opaque or semi-opaque masonry walls between 3’ and 4’ in height. Ornamental metal can be integrated with the wall.
Secondary treatment: Ornamental metal fence combined with low masonry wall and/or evergreen shrubs or thickly-branched deciduous shrubs.
Answer these questions for the project being reviewed.

- Does the building front toward the street?
- Does the building height relate to surrounding properties?
- Does the building have an articulated base and cap?
- Are entrances and window openings proportionately spaced and vertically aligned?
- Are materials of proven durability and do they relate to surrounding properties?
- Is the parking garage masked with another activity?
SOUTH CBID

Much of the South CBID is regulated by the South Main Special District Zoning Plan, which is available from the Memphis/Shelby County Office of Planning and Development.

Setbacks
Most buildings should be built to the sidewalk edge. Minor setbacks and sideyards may be permitted in some areas made up of large, historic warehouses.

Scale & Massing
Buildings are generally two to five stories, box-like and vertically oriented. Height of surrounding properties should be respected. For instance, most South Main buildings are vertically oriented two or three story structures and infill projects should respect this. Likewise, much larger projects are appropriate for a warehouse district.

Base & Cap
Most commercial buildings may articulate a base and cap through storefronts, watertable belt courses, bulkheads, cornices and parapets and shall be proportionate to the massing of the buildings. Larger industrial or residential developments may use recessed or extended loading docks and entryways to articulate a base.

Roofs
The majority of structures have flat roofs with parapets.

Facades
Most buildings are commercial vernacular in design. However, there are examples of Georgian Revival, Eclectic and Beaux-Arts architecture. Attention should be given to appropriate proportion and fenestration. Horizontal fenestration (c. 1920-1930) is common. The buildings address the street by an articulated main entrance and through the use of details, ornament, materials, and façade plane variation. Many of the warehouse structures are vehicular-oriented with loading docks and large openings. The level of detail decreases from north to south through the South CBID.

Materials & Details
Brick, terra cotta and stone are the predominant building materials for commercial structures. Pressed metal and cast iron are also used. Architectural detailing includes corbelling, stone belt courses and articulated parapets. Brick is the predominant building material for warehouses. Most have little architectural detail, but several do have brick corbelling, decorative brickwork, inset stone medallions, stone belt courses and articulated parapets.

Signage
The most predominant sign types are façade-mounted and façade-painted. Projecting and canopy signs also exist. Many signs are not internally illuminated. See Appendix A for detailed signage regulations.

Streetscape
Existing streetscape features include: decorative street lamps, concrete sidewalks, some street trees, coordinated benches and trash receptacles. However, much of the existing character is industrial in nature with little coordination of streetscape. See Appendix B for detailed streetscape recommendations.

Screening for Parking Areas
Preferred treatment: Opaque or semi-opaque masonry walls between 3’ and 4’ in height. Ornamental metal can be integrated with the wall.
Secondary treatment: Ornamental metal fence combined with low masonry wall and/or evergreen shrubs or thickly-branched deciduous shrubs.
Answer these questions for the project being reviewed.

- Does the building front toward the street?
- Does the building height relate to surrounding properties?
- Does the building have an articulated base and cap?
- Are entrances and window openings proportionately spaced and vertically aligned?
- Are materials of proven durability and do they relate to surrounding properties?
- Is the parking lot screened in a manner that respects the setback of neighboring properties?
Much of the North CBID is regulated by the Uptown Zoning Plan, which is available from the Memphis/Shelby County Office of Planning and Development. These guidelines respect this zoning but do not address the level of detail provided in the Uptown Document.

**Setbacks**
Commercial buildings should be built to the sidewalk edge. Houses should have a small and uniform set back from the street and sidewalk.

**Scale & Massing**
Commercial buildings should generally be from one to four stories in height. Most are box-like and vertically oriented. Houses are one to two stories in height. They tend to have complex massing, involving segmented building footprints and pitched roofs. Simple forms include shotgun and Craftsman, while complex forms include Queen Anne and Colonial revival.

**Base & Cap**
Houses should have a foundation for the base while the cap is the cornice and roof. Commercial buildings should be articulated through storefronts, bulkheads, belt courses and cornices or other appropriate alternatives.

**Roofs**
Houses may have a wide variety of roof forms such as gabled, hipped, flat or combination thereof. Commercial buildings should have the appearance of a flat roof.

**Facades**
While the predominant style is the Queen Anne cottage, Italianate, Eastlake and Colonial Revival cottages and shotguns exist as well. Most historic houses have floor to ceiling windows, standing seam metal roofs and decorative wood trim. Commercial styles include Romanesque Revival and Art Deco. Attention should be given to appropriate proportions and fenestration. Commercial buildings should address the street and articulate the main entrance through details, ornament, materials and façade plane variations.

**Materials & Details**
The most predominant residential building type is wood frame with clapboard siding. Detailing includes decorative gables and wood trim, Doric and Ionic columns, Palladian windows, and multiple corbelled chimneys with terra cotta chimney pots. For commercial and multi-family projects, brick should be the predominant building material. Cast iron may be used extensively as first floor columns, attic vent grilles and fire escapes.

**Signage**
Signage is encouraged to be diverse, including façade-mounted, façade-painted, projecting and canopy signs. See Appendix A for detailed signage regulations.

**Streetscape**
Commercial areas require a more coordinated streetscape with pedestrian-scaled lights, street trees, and/or street furniture to create a safe and comfortable sidewalk for people to walk to their destination. Residential streetscape is articulated through uniform setbacks and comfortable sidewalk width. See Appendix B for detailed streetscape recommendations.

**Screening for Parking Areas**
**Primary treatment:** Opaque or semi-opaque masonry walls between 3’ and 4’ in height. Ornamental metal can be integrated with the wall.
**Secondary treatment:** Ornamental metal fence combined with low masonry wall and/or evergreen shrubs or thickly-branched deciduous shrubs.
Answer these questions for the project being reviewed.

- Does the building front toward the street?
- Does the building height relate to surrounding properties?
- Does the building have an articulated base and cap?
- Are entrances and window openings proportionately spaced and vertically aligned?
- Are materials of proven durability and do they relate to surrounding properties?
- Is the parking lot screened in a manner that respects the setback of neighboring properties?
MEDICAL DISTRICT

Setbacks
Buildings may be built to the sidewalk edge, however, many are set back from the street and sidewalk containing a front yard with landscaping and/or lawn.

Scale & Massing
Buildings are very large, some encompassing an entire block. Heights vary from three to over twenty stories.

Base & Cap
New construction projects should clearly articulate a base and cap unless it is anticipated to have an adverse effect on surrounding structures. Many buildings were built after WWII and lack a base and cap. Some older structures define the base and cap through material changes and the use of belt changes.

Roofs
The majority of the structures have flat roofs.

Facades
Many buildings are modern by design. They stress horizontal planes over vertical planes.

Materials & Details
The main building materials are concrete, brick and glass. Post-WWII buildings contain little or no detailing.

Signage
Some façade-mounted signs exist but freestanding signs prevail in the district. Coordination of directional signage and wayfinding systems should be a priority. See Appendix A for detailed signage regulations.

Streetscape
The quality of the streetscape is currently very low due to very wide streets, unscreened parking lots, tall cobra-head streetlights, few trees and no street furnishings. Some areas around unified institutions have coordinated streetscapes. Future elements should include: consistent building setbacks, wide sidewalks, street trees, decorative street lamps, on-street parking, canopies and street furniture. See Appendix B for detailed streetscape recommendations.

Screening for Parking Areas
Primary treatment: Opaque or semi-opaque masonry walls between 3’ and 4’ in height. Ornamental metal can be integrated with the wall.
Secondary treatment: Any combination of opaque or semi-opaque masonry wall and/or evergreen shrubs or thickly branched deciduous shrubs.
Answer these questions for the project being reviewed.

- Does the building front toward the street?
- Does the building height relate to surrounding properties?
- Does the building have an articulated base and cap?
- Are entrances and window openings proportionately spaced and vertically aligned?
- Are materials of proven durability and do they relate to surrounding properties?
- Does the parking garage use materials, colors and openings that are similar to surrounding buildings?
CHECKLIST FOR REAL ESTATE DEVELOPMENT IN THE MEMPHIS CBID

Site Orientation
- Does the building front toward the street and/or all other public spaces?
- Is the building’s setback comparable to surrounding properties and historic precedent?
- Are driveways strategically located off of alleys or sidestreets?
- Are driveway widths minimized and pedestrian friendly?
- Is parking located to the rear or the side of the building and properly screened?

Streetscape
- Is the sidewalk width compatible with the level of pedestrian activity in the area?
- Is landscaping of a hardy species and planted in beds large enough to sustain growth?
- Does street furniture block pedestrian activity or obscure vehicular views?
- Is street lighting pedestrian scaled with decorative fixtures?

Building Scale
- Does the height of the building relate to the height of surrounding properties?
- Does the building’s mass and proportions relate to surrounding properties?
- Does the building have a clearly articulated base?
- Does the building have a clearly articulated cap?

Building Construction and Materials
- Are public entrances clearly articulated?
- Are window and door openings proportionately spaced and vertically aligned?
- Have blank walls facing streets and public spaces been eliminated?
- Does the roof form match the context of surrounding properties?
- Are materials of proven durability used and do those materials reflect the construction of surrounding properties?
- In restoration projects, have architectural details been retained or historically replicated?
- In new construction or additions, has the architectural detail been based on surrounding properties yet minimized?

Parking, Loading and Service Areas
- Does the parking garage utilize materials, colors and openings that are sympathetic to surrounding properties?
- Are spandrel panels on garages aligned horizontally with no ramps facing the street?
- Is the garage masked with another activity or is the ground level animated with a retail use?
- Is the parking lot visually screened in a manner that respects the setback of surrounding properties?
- Is one shade tree provided for every five parking spaces in the landscape plan?
- Are loading docks and waste facilities placed at the rear of the building and screened?
- Have ramps or recesses been created in the buildings for service areas?

Landscaping
- Are all areas not occupied by building, streets or other real improvements planted/landscaped?
- Does landscaping compliment surrounding textures, colors and character of the existing neighborhood?
- Is landscaping designed to avoid obscuring building openings and architectural detail?
- Are plantings of a sustainable nature in an urban environment?
- Are containers appropriately sized and of a low-maintenance construction?

Sub-Districts
- Does the project respect guidelines for its sub-district?
- Does the project take into consideration other planned developments in the area?