BUSINESS DISTRICT
DESIGN STANDARDS,
REQUIREMENTS, AND
BEST PRACTICES

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THE CITY OF BRISTOL has adopted a set of business district design standards for future developments to contribute to the holistic, cohesive vision of our community. These design standards promote a unified aesthetic framework so that future developments play a part in the long-term viability, functionality, and overall desirability of the City of Bristol. Property owners are strongly encouraged to coordinate with City staff to ensure all zoning standards are met; City staff is always available to meet with you to discuss your project. When you succeed, we all succeed.

GOALS OF DESIGN GUIDELINES:

- Promote a pro-active growth and development strategy to strengthen the long-term economic viability of the community
- Promote quality building practices.
- Preserve and enhance the City’s visual appeal to ensure Bristol’s appealing quality of residential life and allure to visitors

ZONING REGULATIONS AND DESIGN GUIDELINES

Zoning regulations and design standards work together to shape compatible development. Chapter 4 and 4A of the Zoning Ordinance addresses basic zoning standards such as height, setbacks, lot coverage, and density. The design standards build upon these requiring consideration of building materials and architectural elements.
BUILDING MATERIALS

Durable building materials not only add vitality and life to your structure, but also aesthetic value. We recommend using the following materials for your structure, either standalone or in any combination you see most desirable.

- Cement fiber
- Engineered wood/composite
- Masonry
- Rust resistant architectural metals
- Stucco
- Integral color CMU block (suggested limit of 15% of façade and utilized as an accent material)

We offer great flexibility in building materials to suit your business’s needs. Some of our districts and overlays, however, have certain prohibited and limited building materials.

The following materials are prohibited in all business districts:

- Unpainted, Unfinished CMU/cinder block.
- Single-sheet corrugated or ribbed panel metal siding
The usage of wood is also limited within the B-2, Central Business District. It is available to be used as a building material within this district as an accent material provided it is used for storefront design, which includes windows, window sashes, trim, doors, bulkheads below display windows, columns, pilasters, and cornices.

ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES

Zoning regulations require commercial buildings within commercial overlays to incorporate architectural features. The size of your structure determines how many are required for each façade.

Structures less than 50,000 square feet are required to have three architectural features on their street-facing façades. Facades adjacent to the street-facing façades are required to use at least two architectural features.

For structures 50,000 square feet or more, street-facing façades are required to use a minimum of five architectural features. The adjacent façades must use a minimum of three architectural features.

- Accent Material
- Arches
- Articulated Cornice lines
- Awnings
- Balconies
- Brackets
- Building perimeter landscaping
- Columns
- Dormers
- Horizontal Offsets
- Landscaping trellises
- Overhangs
- Pilasters
- Porches
- Protrusions
- Recessed Entryways
- Street-level display windows
- Varying Rooflines
ARCHITECTURAL FEATURE

Accent Material

Arches:

Balconies:

Brackets:

Dormers:

Horizontal Offsets:
ARCHITECTURAL FEATURE EXAMPLES

Articulated Cornice Lines:

Building Perimeter Landscaping:

Landscape Trellises:

Awnings:

Columns:

Overhangs:
Pilasters:

Porches:

Protrusions:

Recessed Entryways:

Street-level display windows:

Varying rooflines:
Architectural features present:

- Accent Material
- Awning
- Front perimeter landscaping
- Overhang
- Protrusion
- Street-level display windows
STANDARDS IN PRACTICE

Architectural features present:

- Accent Materials
- Awnings
- Roofline Variances
- Pilasters
STANDARDS IN PRACTICE

Architectural features present:

- Accent Materials
- Recessed Entryway
- Roofline Variances
- Street-Level Display Windows
EXTERIOR LIGHTING

Lighting adds visibility and safety to your site. However, provisions exist that prohibit and/or curb the production of light pollution that may encroach onto adjacent properties.

Lighting fixtures designed to project light downward are recommended. Street lights that project above their horizontal plane are prohibited.

Accent lighting fixtures may be used on a building, sign structure or within the landscape. They must be aimed or directed to preclude light projection beyond immediate objects intended to be illuminated.

As part of your site plan submittal, you must also submit a lighting plan that adheres to requirements within Ordinance No. 5-08.
OTHER BUSINESS DISTRICT REQUIREMENTS

EQUIPMENT SCREENING

Keep your site looking clean and orderly by screening dumpsters and electrical and mechanical equipment. Different materials for consideration include walls, fencing, landscaping, or a combination of these. We recommend screening that is equally effective during all seasons. Dumpsters must be screened.

FENCING

Fencing offers quality, safety, and transition between residential neighborhoods and businesses. Different fencing options we recommend are open type fences with masonry posts, solid decorative concrete or masonry walls or other durable material.

Chain-link fencing may be restricted in some settings.
Building design addresses how your structure appears and various other details regarding the architectural and aesthetic qualities of your building. In addition to those design standard requirements, we recommend following these building design standards. The best practices included on pages 13-18 are voluntary.

BUILDING MASSING

Consider building massing that is broken into human scale. Keep things interesting for passersby and offer structural variety along the public street.

Options for doing this include:

♦ Changes in the roof or wall place.
♦ Projected or recessed elements.
♦ Varying rooflines.

To create a development that is a good neighbor to others, consider keeping a consistent height and scale compared to surrounding buildings in the area.

A good example of proper building massing for a multi-unit commercial development:
Site design addresses the arrangement of buildings and other features on a site. It also includes how a site will relate to its neighbors. In addition to building setback requirements included in the Zoning Ordinance, we recommend following these site design guidelines.

**BUILDING PLACEMENT**

In order to contribute to a positive street appearance, we suggest the following practices:

- Position buildings so a main entrance faces a public street.
- Position solid/blank facades, drive-thrus, and service areas away from public streets, avoiding the “back of the building” appearance.
- If buildings are on a corner lot, place as much of the building towards the intersection. This anchors the lot and takes advantage of high visibility.
BUILDING ENTRANCES

Enhance the prominence and visibility of your entrance by using large entry doors, porches, protruding or recessed entrances, or other architectural features.

BUILDING ACCESS

Consolidate or minimize the number of curb cuts for motor vehicles to promote pedestrian safety and ease of use.

Inter-parcel access to adjacent properties is encouraged in order to create a more navigable development.
LOADING, DRIVE-THRU, & SERVICE AREAS

Service areas are critical to business operations. However, their visual impact should be minimal from public view and surrounding residential areas.

Locate your loading, service areas, and drive-thrus in the least visible areas of the site.

Screen these areas from view with fencing, landscaping, or a combination of both. If there are no other options available due to street and site layouts, service areas located near public streets are encouraged to be screened from public view with solid screen landscaping, berms, grading, and/or masonry or similar materials.
PARKING

Minimize the visibility of parking. A good way to do this is to locate parking to areas behind the building or to the interior of the site.

Avoid a “sea of asphalt” feel. Break up large parking areas into smaller pods, separated by landscaping. Consider utilizing shade trees to provide some comfort during the summer.

Soften the view of parked cars from a public sidewalk or street by providing a landscape buffer of shrubs, trees, and groundcover.
CLEAR GLASS WINDOWS

The use of transparent glass on your ground floor is more inviting and friendly to passersby and creates more interest. The use of transparent glass may also add to the security and safety of the area, with people understanding that there are eyes on the street, which can reduce the occurrence of crimes.

UNDERGROUND UTILITIES

When possible, utilities should be installed underground. This includes electric, telephone, television and internet cable, fiber optics and other such utilities.
CONTACT US

City staff is always happy to help. Give us a call, send us an email, or stop by our office.

Department of Development Services
City of Bristol, Tennessee
104 8th Street
Bristol, TN 37620

t: 423.989.5515

e: cyoung@bristoltn.org