

# *Wick District*



## Commercial Design Guidelines

**Wick Neighbors, Inc.**

*Building a neighborhood for creative living, working  
and learning in the Heart of the City*

June 2006

## **Wick Neighbors, Inc.**

*Mission Empowered by the stakeholders, Wick Neighbors will promote and guide their interests through collaboration, planning and design, development and the promotion of the Wick District's cultural, religious, educational and business community.*

*Purpose The purpose of these guidelines is to ensure the overall quality of design, construction and material as the Wick District/Smoky Hollow Development Plan unfolds over the years. This commitment to quality has been a core value of Wick Neighbors, Inc. since it began in September of 2003. Visual quality and aesthetics are fundamental to the Wick District's market image as a new neighborhood for creative living, working and learning and will attract new residents, employers, employees, customers and audiences. And this success will depend on the cooperation of all stakeholders.*

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*Andrews Avenue*

## 1. Overview

*A Community Coming Together to Build a Neighborhood for Creative Living, Working and Learning in the Heart of the City.*

Wick Neighbors, Inc. is a nonprofit community development corporation serving the Wick District of Youngstown, Ohio. The Wick District boundaries are Madison Avenue to the north, Wood Street to the south, Andrews Avenue and Crab Creek to the east and the west side of Wick Avenue.

Andrews Avenue is the core commercial area in the Wick District. It offers sites for the potential growth of high-tech companies, offices and light industrial companies along Andrews Avenue and adjacent to the Madison Avenue Freeway. The Master Plan has also identified space for the expansion of Fireline, a successful local manufacturing company, to accommodate future growth. The proximity of these types of spaces can be attractive to companies whose employees wish to live in close proximity to their place of employment. This is particularly the case for high-tech companies where employees work around the clock.



## 2. Purpose of the Guidelines

The *Wick District Commercial Design Guidelines* focus primarily on modifications to existing and new commercial buildings in the neighborhood. More detailed guidelines for new construction can be found in the *Wick District-Smoky Hollow Design Guidelines*.

The design review process provides the following benefits:

- Enhancement of property values through a collective community commitment to neighborhood placemaking and identity.
- Increased interest and investment by property owners and tenants in improving the image of their properties.
- Protection of property owners' and tenants' investments by promoting compatible development on neighboring properties.

The guidelines are divided into sections which address existing buildings, infill construction, signage, parking, landscaping and district gateways.

### 3. Modifications to Existing Buildings

#### A. General Guidelines

1. Preserve the distinguishing original character and distinctive architectural features which characterize a building or a site.
2. Repair, rather than replace, deteriorated architectural features whenever possible.

#### B. Materials

1. The surface cleaning of structures should be undertaken with the gentlest means possible.
2. Do not sandblast masonry or wood surfaces. Sandblasting and chemical cleaning shorten the life of a building. Sandblasting may clean the building but it also permanently erodes the protective surfaces of brick and stone and accelerates deterioration.
3. Before repriming and repainting wood, clean and scrape it thoroughly and consult the specific manufacturers' recommendations
4. For historic buildings, use historically appropriate colors when re-painting.

#### C. Design Elements

1. Do not block or cover existing doors or windows.
2. A building's entrance can be enhanced with the installation of accent lighting, planters or other features that highlight existing architectural details.
3. Secondary entrances, convenient to rear or side parking areas, should be well-lit and inviting.
4. Locate utility meters, exhaust vents, and other mechanical equipment so that it is not visible from the street. Wherever possible, locate meters at the rear of the building. Existing parapet walls can provide screening for rooftop equipment; screen ground level equipment with evergreen landscaping.



*Awnings integrated into building façade*



*Exterior lighting draws attention to architectural features*

#### D. Building Additions

1. Design additions and auxiliary structures to complement, but not copy, the original structure.
2. Respect the style, height, form, roof shapes and massing of the original structure when designing an addition.
3. Use compatible exterior building materials for building additions.

#### E. Awnings and Canopies

1. Awnings and canopies should be architecturally integrated with the building to which they are attached; an awning or canopy should not cover significant architectural features of a building.
2. At least seven feet of clear space under awnings and canopies is needed to accommodate pedestrians.
3. Backlit awnings are discouraged.



*Photovoltaic roof panel*

## 4. New Construction: Infill Buildings

### A. General Guidelines

1. Commercial buildings should be designed to reflect the surrounding architectural styles and building types.

### B. Building Orientation and Setback

1. Orient buildings to the street, with the principal entrance on the street elevation.
2. Main entrances and service drives must not be placed adjacent to surrounding residential uses. Buildings may have entries located to the side of the building adjacent to parking lots, however, the street facades must be designed as an integral part of the building and provide a front along the street edge.
3. Building façades should be parallel to the street and align with the established setback of adjacent buildings.
4. Buildings and public facilities must be accessible to both the handicapped and the disabled.

### C. Energy Efficiency and Water Conservation

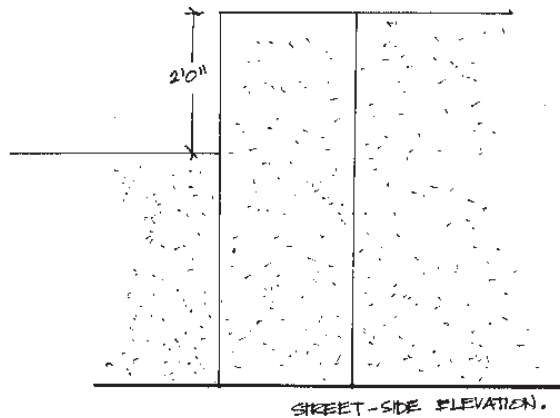
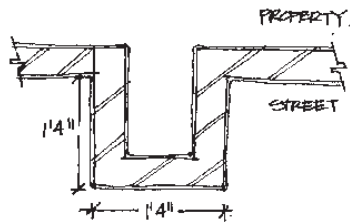
1. Design new buildings to a high standard of operating efficiency.
2. Design buildings to incorporate natural light and ventilation, where possible.
3. Use photovoltaic (PV) roof panels, where possible, to supplement a building's energy needs.
4. Reduce water usage through low-flow plumbing fixtures or by incorporating grey water recycling within buildings.
5. Use "energy-scaping" techniques to reduce cooling needs through the strategic use of new and existing vegetation.

#### D. Adaptability

1. Design buildings for full adaptability over their lifespan.
2. Design flexible spaces that can be adapted to changes in the needs of building occupants.

#### E. Materials

1. Use recycled and green building materials for new construction.
2. Consider locally- and regionally- produced materials, where available.
4. Clad buildings in durable materials that suggest a regional character, such as brick, stone, precast concrete, cement siding (i.e. Hardie Plank<sup>®</sup>), stucco, and profile metal panels. Precast concrete should be used in the manner of stone, but panels should not be embossed with brick or stone patterns.
5. When using brick, a standard modular brick should be used.
6. Brick or stone should be laid in a true bonding pattern. Stack bond is not permitted.
7. Avoid split-face block, particularly on front and side elevations, unless it is used as an accent material. When split-face block is used, alternating coursing, varied block size and change in material depth will help to give the appearance of stone.
8. Vinyl siding is discouraged, although smooth finish, premium vinyl siding may be considered in special circumstances.
9. Stucco or synthetic stucco (EIFS) are permitted four feet above the finish floor level. If stucco is used as a primary material, it should have changes in depth and projection to add detail and interest and to avoid the appearance of a monolithic wall.
10. Exposed foundation walls should be faced with stone or brick at the front elevation. Side and rear elevations may have brick-patterned concrete.
11. Accent materials such as tile, metal or other traditional regional materials are encouraged.
12. Lintels in masonry walls should be articulated with brick soldier courses, stone or precast concrete.



*Parapet wall return*

#### F. Building Walls

1. Design street-facing façades for pedestrian interest, with multiple views into a building to continue the effect of the retail frontage.
2. Walls facing a street or public parking area should be designed in small sections; break up long, horizontal expanses of wall through the use of canopies, porches, bays or projections.
3. Provide a change in color, material, fenestration or a change in the depth of material for walls facing a street or parking area. The maximum length of a "blank" facade (one contiguous material and color without fenestration, accents or change in material, color or plane) is 20 feet.

#### G. Windows and Doors

1. Windows should be of square or vertical proportion.
2. Primary glass should be clear.

#### H. Building Height

1. The maximum building height is 50 feet above ground level finish floor. This includes entrance parapets, architectural elements and other accent features.

#### I. Building Roofs, Parapets and Cornices

1. Roofs may be pitched, flat, or a combination thereof.
2. Design parapets to conceal rooftop mechanical units.
3. If a change in parapet height exceeds two feet, the parapet should return 90 degrees on both sides by a minimum of one foot, four inches.
4. Elevations or portions of elevations that are visible from a street or parking area should incorporate a cornice or other architectural element to top the building. Cornices may be projected brick, stone or precast courses, or molded fiberglass. They should be scaled appropriately to the building mass and be at least eight inches high.



*Awning integrated into building façade*

#### J. Awnings and Canopies

1. Awnings and canopies should be architecturally integrated with the building; an awning or canopy should not cover significant architectural features of a building.
2. At least seven feet of clear space under awnings and canopies is needed to accommodate pedestrians.
3. Backlit awnings are discouraged.

#### K. Lighting

1. Distinctive, well-designed exterior lighting will accent a building's architectural features and heighten security.
2. Hide or shield exterior light fixtures so that the light produced does not infiltrate neighboring properties.
3. Select the type, height and location of fixtures, and the color of the light, to highlight building features and to avoid subjecting pedestrians or motorists to glare.



*Sign message and location*



*Hanging sign  
externally illuminated*



*Signs on window glass*

## 5. Signage

### A. Goals of the Signage Guidelines

Signs are an integral part of the commercial character of an area and can have a significant impact on the street or neighborhood where they occur.

Signage guidelines are complex and can lead to an oversimplification of the potential visual excitement of a neighborhood. At the same time, lack of any control can lead to visual chaos.

The street-level facade of a building is the most visible for both pedestrians and motorists. To be effective, signs must call attention to the business and create an individual image for the property. But signs also contribute to the overall image of the neighborhood, adding variety and liveliness to both building facades and streetscapes.

These guidelines provide an overall signage concept plan to help establish a graphic identity for the district, while allowing for individual character to be expressed

The guidelines will help determine sign design, message, location, size, color, and lighting, in an effort to:

- Improve the visual character of the commercial district through consistency, clarity, quality and quantity of signage elements.
- Provide guidance for creating signs that are attractive and functional.
- Provide an outline for signage that communicates its message in a clear, concise manner.
- Encourage creativity while complying with a general set of standards.

### B. Sign Message

1. Business signs should include only the formal name of the business, the nature of the business and the street address. There should be no advertising of brand names. Avoid an accumulation of outdated service club affiliations, credit card decals, and other sign clutter.



*Wall and rooftop signs with a consistent typeface and design*



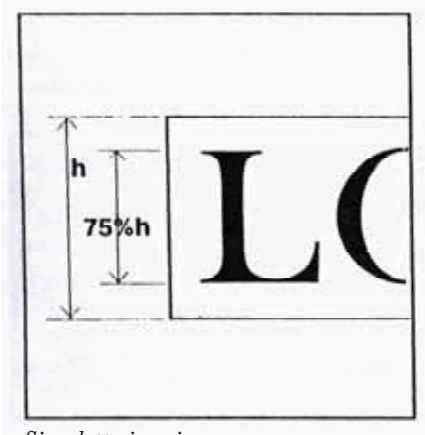
*Plantings should not be taller than the base of a sign*

### C. Sign Types

1. Signs may be flush with a wall or projecting. wall-mounted, awning, window signs may also be appropriate for the district, depending on their context.
2. Projecting signs shall be mounted on the structural piers of the building. They shall be no lower than the height above the sidewalk permitted by the Building Code and no higher than the base of the building or 14 feet, whichever is the lower. Hanging signs should project no more than four feet from the face of the building. All projecting signs should be externally lit with the light source shielded from viewer to prevent glare.
3. Awning can also serve as signs with contrasting colors applied onto the valance or skirt of the awning. Usually six inch to eight inch letters are sufficient. Lettering on the main awning is not permitted.
4. Temporary advertising signs, sale or lease signs, etc. attached to the building or display windows should be limited to 30 days of display time.
5. Neon, changeable text, flashing and pole signs are strongly discouraged.

### C. Proportions and Size

1. A sign should not overpower the structure to which it is attached. It should be proportional to the area where it is being located.
2. The maximum height of the letters shall not exceed 75% of the height of the background on which they appear.
3. In residential and mixed-use commercial areas, signs should have a pedestrian scale so that they can be read easily from sidewalks and adjacent areas.
4. In cases where multiple businesses are located in one building, a single directory sign can consolidate the multiple individual business names.
5. Signs should be sized proportionally according to their surroundings. Wall signs should be sized appropriately to fit within the architectural feature to which it is attached. For example, a sign attached to a transom window above a doorway should not extend above, below or outside the transom.



*Sign lettering size*



*Back-lit sign incorporating creative graphics*

#### D. Location and Placement

1. A wall sign should complement the design of the building to which it is attached, and directly relate to window openings and bays.
2. If a building has an existing sign band or fascia, signage should be contained within this area.
3. Free-standing signs should take into consideration their relationship to street, sidewalk and building on the lot.
4. Place free-standing signs so they are visible to on-coming vehicular traffic.
5. Free-standing signs should be placed within a planted landscaped bed, or should be located in a way that defines the sign base.

#### E. Materials and Color

1. Signs should be designed and constructed of extremely durable, high-quality, low-maintenance materials. For example, if wood is used for a sign face, it should be properly sealed to prolong its life.
2. Materials should be consistent with or complimentary to those of the building façade to which the sign is attached (if wall-mounted), or to the architectural design of the associated building.
3. Materials should not reduce a sign's legibility. For example, do not use materials that create glare and/or make signs unreadable.
4. A medium- or dark-colored background with light-colored letters is preferable to a white background with dark letters.
5. Individually mounted letters of metal, plastic or other durable material are a legible, unobtrusive and effective way to establish identity. Plan the size and placement of letters to relate to the overall facade of the buildings. Install letters on a mounting strip, rather than directly to the building face, to allow for sign alterations at a later date.
6. When implementing awning signs, opaque fabric is recommended. Signage on awnings may be painted or screen printed.

Avante Garde  
**Bauhaus Bold**  
 Bookman  
**Eras Bold**  
 Eurostile  
 Goudy  
 Helvetica  
*Kaufman*  
*Mistral*  
 Optima  
 Parisian  
 Palatino  
 Post Antiqua  
 Serif Gothic  
 Stone Sans  
 Times  
 University Roman  
*Zapf Chancery*

*Letter styles are numerous.  
 Choose one that complements  
 the building*

7. A limited number of colors should be used. It is recommended that no more than three colors be used, plus white, black, or an accent color. Fewer than three colors is perfectly acceptable since too many colors can decrease legibility.
8. Sign colors should complement the color scheme of adjacent and associated buildings, and be compatible with the nature of the business. Choose a color that contrasts with the background of the signboard. Light letters on a dark background usually provide the easiest reading.
9. Letter styles are numerous and vary tremendously. The building owner or tenant should have no problem finding a style representing the desired image.
10. Fluorescent or "day-glo" colors are not permitted.

#### F. Lighting

1. Avoid internally-illuminated signage. If used, internally-illuminated cabinet signs should have an opaque background with only the letters illuminated.
2. If externally-illuminated signage is used, fixtures should project light from above or below the sign. The fixtures should be proportional to the sign and the building to which they are attached, and should not obstruct the sign in a way that decreases its legibility. Light fixtures should be directed away from pedestrians and motorists, and should not create glare. Light fixtures should not incorporate bare bulbs.
3. Locate lighting conduits, wiring, raceways, etc. to be as inconspicuous as possible.
4. No flashing or moving signs are permitted.



*Vegetated swales in parking lots help to filter stormwater runoff*



*Fence screening parking*

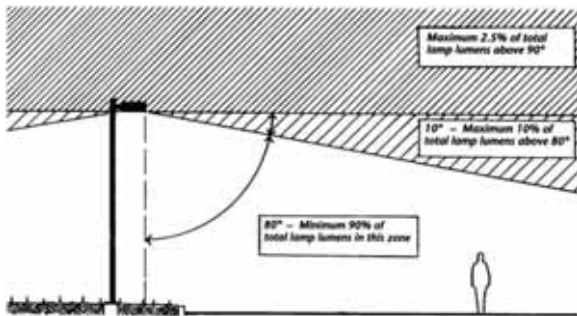
## 6. Parking

### A. General Guidelines

1. The design of parking lots must respond to the surrounding land use patterns. Wherever a parking lot is adjacent to a residential use the lot shall be screened with landscaping to ensure that it is not visible from the bordering residential properties. Parking lots shall be placed either behind or to the side of buildings.
2. Standard parking spaces should be at least nine feet wide. Ten-foot-wide spaces are permitted, but nine-foot-wide spaces are preferred to minimize the pavement needed for parking areas.
3. Handicapped spaces must meet ADA regulations.
4. Shared parking is encouraged throughout the district.
5. Stripe lot spaces and travel lanes to simplify traffic circulation.

### B. Screening and Landscaping

1. Parking must be screened from front and side view with a wall or fence along the property line. .
2. Fencing may be located behind the property line in combination with plant materials to screen parking areas.
3. Minimize turnaround areas to allow for green space and plantings around and within surface parking lots.
4. Landscaping for parking lots that hold more than ten cars should cover at least five percent of the total lot area.
5. Trees are encouraged to soften the appearance of surface parking areas and to absorb heat. Shade trees should be provided at a rate of one for every ten cars.
6. The landscaping of parking lots can serve an environmental function as natural collection areas for stormwater runoff. Areas of ground cover or grass should be included to collect and filter surface runoff.
7. Choose hardy, salt tolerant trees, shrubs and groundcover for parking areas.
8. Develop a plan for removing and storing snow. Piling snow on planting beds should be avoided.



*Cut-off fixture for pedestrian and parking lot lighting*

### C. Materials

1. Permeable surfaces should be considered for parking lots to control stormwater runoff.

### D. Lighting

1. Parking lots must be well-lit for pedestrian safety and protection from vandalism.
2. Light internal parking areas with omni-directional floodlights, located along principle parking aisles.
3. Employ “lightshielding” techniques for parking lots to minimize unnecessary light runoff while maintaining a high level of safety.
4. Entrances to parking areas should be well-lit and clearly marked.
5. Accent lighting is encouraged in the landscape strip around the perimeter of parking lots; this lighting should be located so as not to create an obstacle for pedestrians.

### E. On-Street

1. Markings should occur every 22 feet.
2. Spaces should be 8 feet wide.
3. On-street parking may occur on one side of the street only, on the same side as housing units where possible.

### F. Off-Street

1. Standard parking spaces should be at least nine feet wide. Ten-foot-wide spaces are permitted, but nine-foot-wide spaces are preferred to minimize the pavement needed for parking areas.



*Street trees, tree lawns, tree grates, and high quality paving add to the ambience of the commercial areas.*



*Screen and plant parking areas*

## 7. Landscape

### A. General Guidelines

1. Plants add color and texture to buildings and can help soften large expanses of paving.
2. Landscaping should complement the architecture of a building, drawing attention to a building's entrance and unifying open spaces through the repeated use of selected forms, sizes and textures in plan materials.

### B. Screening

1. Parking lots, storage, areas, refuse areas and other objectionable views can be screened by eight to ten foot wide planting areas.
2. Evergreen plantings are best for screening purposes.

### C. Plant Materials

1. Choose hardy, salt tolerant plant species to reduce maintenance requirements.
2. Combine low-growing ground covers, mid-sized shrubs and ornamental trees for a multi-level landscape.
3. The use of too many plant materials will appear chaotic and uncontrolled, particularly on a small site. A simple combination of plants looks neat and is easier to maintain.
4. The variety of plants should be diverse enough to achieve four-season interest. Combine evergreen plantings with those that provide fall color and flowering plants for best effect.
5. Consider the mature size of a tree or plant when making landscape decisions.

### D. Placement

1. Space plants, trees and shrubs to accommodate growth and maintenance.
2. Concentrate flowers (or other plants selected for their color, form and fragrance) near building entries.
3. Group trees to create shade and maximum visual impact.
4. Arrange plants in masses rather than straight lines.



*Paving in the front setback is discouraged*

#### E. Other Design Standards

1. Provide landscaping in the front building setback; paving the front setback area is discouraged.
2. Railroad ties and pressure-treated materials are inappropriate in an urban setting.
3. Popular suburban landscaping forms, such as boulders and rock gardens, are discouraged in urban commercial areas.