



# Commercial Design Guidelines

3104-20 North Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Drive  
Department of City Development | [milwaukee.gov/CRE](http://milwaukee.gov/CRE)



## SITE LAYOUT AND BUILDING PLACEMENT

1. **Development Approach and Multiple Parcel Combination** – The listing page is marketing three adjoining parcels. –
  - 3104 North Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Drive: a vacant corner lot
  - 3116 North Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Drive: a parcel with an existing building and parking lot.
  - 3120 North Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Drive: a parcel resulting from a vacation of North 3<sup>rd</sup> Street.
  - All three parcels are directly or indirectly affected by a north-south sewer easement that has a no-build prohibition.

All three parcels from this point forward will be referred to as the “Project Site.”

2. **Certified Survey Map (“CSM”)** – A CSM will be required to combine the three adjoining parcels under one tax-key and address. The CSM must be approved prior to closing.
3. **Sewer Utility Easement** – No buildings can be constructed over the sewer easement. See attached information for pertaining to the sewer easement location, dimensions and conditions.
4. **Vehicle Access** – The Project Site can be accessed by the existing drive on North Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Drive (“MLK”) or by the alley. Access to 3104 North MLK may be accessed from Burleigh Street at a location acceptable to the Department of Public Works.
5. **Parking Location** –
  - **Existing Building:** If utilizing the existing building, the existing parking lot north and west of the building can be re-used for parking. Parking is not allowed on the corner of North MLK and Burleigh Street.
  - **New Construction:** For a new building, the parking should be predominantly behind the structure and/or along the north side of the building. Limited parking can also be located over the north-south sewer easement and over the southern portion of the 3104 North Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Drive parcel that was formerly occupied as a gas station and is impacted with soil & groundwater contamination. Parking may also be located off the rear alley unless a unique site layout can achieve better site utilization and building design.
6. **Front Street Setback** – While a building is required to be setback between 0’ to a maximum of the average of the adjacent sites, for the purpose of this unique site, a development on the corner will need to be greater than allowed to ensure the new building is not within the sewer easement. The front setback may range from the eastern edge of the sewer easement to the front property line extended from the block to the south.

Please be advised that while this setback is needed for the sewer easement, the setback will not meet zoning code requirements and a Board of Zoning Appeal dimensional variance will be required. The Department of City Development will support a dimensional variance for a high quality building with appropriate design features. The Department of City Development may also support a south setback from West Burleigh Street if interested Buyer can demonstrate that the environmental conditions warrant economic infeasibility.

7. **Side Street Setbacks** - The building should generally be up to the street property line of West Burleigh Street and should not be more than 5' from that line as required by LB2 zoning.
8. **First Floor Uses** – The area at the interiors of buildings along MLK and Burleigh must be active uses and not used for mechanical, utilitarian, storage and parking uses.
9. **Storm Water Management Techniques** – Pervious paving materials, landscaping, green roofs and underground bio retention should be used in the urban setting. Storm water management ponds should not be used.
10. **Environmental** - Development within the 3104 North Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Drive parcel must be approved by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources because the soil and/or ground may be impacted with contamination. See environmental report(s) on listing page.

## MASSING AND FORM

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1. **Building Height** – A building on an arterial street should preferably be 3 stories in height or meet the context of the neighborhood to ensure sufficient bulk. If appropriate with the existing neighborhood context, additional floors may be appropriate. LB2 zoning requires a minimum height of 18'
2. **First Floor Height** – The first floor height to the finished ceiling should be at least 14' in height to ensure appropriate scale of the base of the building in relation to the upper floors.
3. **Building Elevation Design** – Urban buildings should have a vertical emphasis rather than a long, horizontal appearance. Building façades oriented to MLK and Burleigh shall provide architectural variety and human scale detailing. Elements which may be used to achieve this include windows, vertical pilasters, and patterns of openings that provide surface variation; changes in color, texture or materials; art, or ornamentation integral to the building. Large areas of undifferentiated or blank facades along MLK and Burleigh are prohibited.
4. **Roof Type/Shapes** – The roof configuration should typically be flat. Special corner elements, entrance area massing and similar conditions may have roof that vary from the predominant roof form, however care should be given not to over-emphasize these elements and shapes in an inappropriate manner for the context.
5. **Massing at Corner** – The massing of the building should address the intersection of the two most principal commercial streets with an element of interest and significance.

## FACADES

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1. **Street Facing Facades** - The facade shall be oriented to main arterial street with the primary entrances and storefronts facing that street. Finished elevations should wrap around corners where visible from principle streets.
2. **Wall Depth / Material Detailing** – The overall quality of façade is significantly impacted by the perceived “depth” of the façade. Walls that have different materials and elements that occur in the same plane will appear flat and life-less and should be avoided. Where the differing materials of a façade meet up, there should be a significant change in surface plane, likely 4-8 inches in difference. Differing materials should typically terminate at inside corners.
3. **Delineation Between First / Base Floor and Upper Floors** – The area where the first floor commercial base meets the second floor, residential, or other use, should be clearly defined with a strong cornice, sign band or other significant element.

4. **Roof Cornice Line** - Traditional commercial street buildings typically have a perimeter parapet which helps define the building stylistically. The building should have a defined and significant top edge.

## FIRST FLOOR / STREET LEVEL FACADES

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1. **First Floor Building Façade Materials** – High quality, durable finish materials should be used on the first floor street façade of buildings. This may include materials such as face brick and stone. Utility, decorative scored or split-faced block are not appropriate. Split face block might be considered at the base up to no more than 2 ½ feet above the sidewalk. Simulated stucco is not durable enough for use on the first floor.
2. **Entrances** – Buildings should have entrances on the primary arterial street frontage. On site at street intersections, entrances should be preferably at corners. Entrances should generally be recessed within the façade and be sized accordingly for the use, with use of double doors, sidelights and other appropriate detailing.
3. **Storefront Windows** - Storefront windows must always meet minimum zoning code requirements, but should also be well designed to reflect the typical traditional street patterns. Storefront windows should have a slight in-set so as not to appear flat. Glass should be clear, non-tinted glazing.
4. **Storefront Window Proportions** - Windows should be large glazed panels, possible with smaller transom units above. A lower bulkhead not exceeding 2' above sidewalk grade is generally most appropriate. Window should fill most of the height of the first or base floor, to at least 12' above sidewalk grade. A series of narrow, vertical windows are typically not appropriate. Long groupings of storefront windows should typically have intermediate piers that help incorporate the commercial base with the massing above, ensuring the building does not appear "top-heavy or unsupported"
5. **Extensions Into the Public Right of Way** - Hoods, fixed awning and other projecting elements towards the top of the base floor elevation are encouraged to help engage the street and further define the building in a three dimensional manner.
6. **Fabric Awnings** - Awnings should not be a vinyl material nor be back lit.
7. **Wall Signage** – Building signage should be integral to the design of the façade, place in the sign band above the first floor windows or on blank wall areas specifically intended for signage. Signage can be internally illuminated individual letter signs or external illuminated traditional board signs. No internally illuminated box signs are permitted.

## UPPER FLOOR FACADES

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1. **Upper Floor Building Façade Materials** – Street-facing façades should have finished quality materials. Brick veneer is typically the most appropriate choice for a traditional neighborhood arterial street. Block, vinyl siding or other low quality materials are not appropriate.
2. **Upper Floor Windows** – Windows on upper floors should be proportioned and placed in relation to grouping of storefront or other windows and elements in the base floor. Windows should have a vertical emphasis. The windows on the upper story facade should generally be double-hung, tall and narrow in proportion, and spaced appropriately. Fenestration patterns that are designed as individual windows should ensure there is some depth to the window from the surface of the wall. An in-set of at least 4", preferably 8", is appropriate to achieve an appearance of depth to the façade. This is particularly important when the windows are set in a stucco finished exterior wall.

3. **Upper Floor Balconies** – The design and positioning of any street-facing balconies should be integral with the overall design of the building, relating to overall massing, window placement and proportion. Balconies that have some in-set aspect or are nested in corners typically work well. Balconies that have the appearance of being tacked on are discouraged

## SITE DETAILS

1. **Pedestrian Paving / Sidewalks** – In the urban environment, the ground space between the building frontage and the public sidewalk should typically be paved. In unique case on portion of building façades that do not have windows, landscaping in integral planters might be acceptable.
2. **Service and Loading Docks** – Utilitarian functions such as service and loading docks, trash enclosures, utility vaults, communication equipment, and other similar functions and equipment should be located at the rear or alley side of a development. Where function such as trash enclosures, loading docks, utility equipment and similar objects might be visible from a side street or neighboring property, they should be screened with a masonry wall made of similar material as that of the building.
3. **Parking Lot Landscaping** – Parking lots, where fronting on streets, should have Type “B” landscaping, as required by the zoning code. This consists of trees, shrubs and decorative metal fencing. Masonry walls are strongly encouraged. See the Zoning Code for details. Interior of larger parking lots should also have trees in appropriately spaced medians.
4. **Landscaping of Open Space** – The portions of the site that are not occupied by building or parking areas should be landscaped. Perimeter areas along street edges should include trees, shrubs, decorative metal fences.
5. **Free Standing Signage** – Free Standing signs should be avoided whenever possible and should only be considered where unique sites have access from streets opposite of the main façade. Small directional pedestrian and parking lot signage should be integral to the design.
6. **Fences and Buffer at Neighbors** – Adjacent properties should be screened from the parking lot of the development per requirements of the Zoning Code.