

East Market Street Pedestrian Scale Overlay Plan, Design Guidelines & Development Regulations



**Submitted jointly by the City of Greensboro and the East
Market Street Development Corporation**

February 8, 2002

Adopted by the Greensboro City Council

April 2, 2002

Updated October 29, 2021

This document was updated October 29, 2021 to incorporate minor changes in zoning designations and section references between the Unified Development Ordinance in effect at the time of adoption of the Overlay, and the Land Development Ordinance adopted in 2010.

Overlay Plan

1. Introduction

East Market Street is part of the major east-west thoroughfare that runs the breadth of the city. For much of Greensboro's history, East Market Street was the center of the African American business district in the city as well as the heart of the African American community. In the 1950's the area around the corridor was in severe physical decline. To remedy the physical conditions, this area became Greensboro's and North Carolina's first urban renewal area. Although the blighted buildings were removed and new public improvements installed, the area never regained the vitality and the position as an economic center it had once been.

In 1998, the City of Greensboro adopted the *East Market Street Corridor Development Plan*, after an intensive public planning process that lasted over 3 years. The vision statement for the plan expresses the overall goal for the improvement to this corridor.

The East Market Street Corridor shall be a vibrant community that is attractive, pedestrian friendly, and safe for the residents and businesses. Emphasis shall be attracting new businesses; making a commitment to minority opportunities and helping existing businesses thrive while maintaining the area's unique role as a cultural center for the entire community.

There are several initiatives underway directed towards achieving this vision. One recommendation of the East Market Street Corridor Development Plan, and of a market analysis subsequently completed for the corridor was to revise the development regulations to encourage new development that is attractive and more pedestrian oriented. The pedestrian scale overlay zone for East Market Street and this corridor plan are intended to compliment the other efforts in the corridor including the new streetscape and traffic management improvements, site and façade loan program, and business & development recruitment efforts by the East Market Street Development Corporation.

2. Scope and Limitations of this Report

The City of Greensboro and the East Market Street Development Corporation (EMSDC) have identified a section of the East Market Street Corridor as a potential Pedestrian Scale Overlay District. These regulations are appropriate methods to encourage the type of development that will meet the objectives of the *East Market Street Corridor Development Plan* and over time re-establish the corridor as the vibrant, healthy center it once was.

3. Defining the Corridor

The *East Market Street Corridor Development Plan* addresses an area from Church Street on the west to English Street on the east. This plan is intended for a portion of that area from the railroad overpass on the west to the US 29 interchange on the east. This section is approximately 1 mile in length.

4. Planning Issues

Land Use The predominant land use in the corridor is institutional. North Carolina A&T State University buildings dominate the north side of East Market Street between Dudley and Booker Streets. There are several large churches throughout the corridor. Other institutional uses include, the Hayes Taylor YMCA and some non-profit organizations.

Scattered throughout the corridor are small office buildings, funeral homes and clusters of retail primarily at the US 29 interchange area and between Laurel Street and Benbow Road. Other uses include a renovated apartment structure at Benbow Road and the US Postal Service Office building and trucking operation at East Market and Bennett Streets.

The most significant investment and new land use in the corridor is the redevelopment of the former Cumberland Shopping Center site at Murrow Blvd, East Market Street and E. Friendly Avenue. Construction will soon be complete on the new Dudley-Lee Center which is a 30,000 sq ft office / retail complex.

Development Constraints Acquisition of right-of-way for the widened East Market Street roadway aggravated the conditions, which inhibit development on many of the parcels sandwiched between the railroad tracks and the Street. These shallow parcels may have been made more difficult to develop by the establishment of parking standards for new development which are aimed at auto-oriented uses and users.

Site Development (setbacks, lighting, signage) Most of the structures built along the corridor were constructed in the 1960's and 70's and they reflect the automobile and thoroughfare-oriented development standards that were predominant at the time. Buildings are set back very far from the street. Many have large parking lots that front on East Market Street with the buildings set furthest away from the street. Most structures are only one or two stories high. There is no predominate style of signage and site lighting is inconsistent. Very few parcels share access, parking, landscaping or other amenities.

Pedestrian Access There is currently a great deal of pedestrian use in the corridor by the students and the residents from the surrounding neighborhoods. However they report how difficult it is to walk to destinations in the corridor, how unsafe they feel and how they have to cross through parking lots to access businesses. There are public sidewalks along East Market Street but there is very little inter connectedness between buildings and parcels.

Landscaping Most parcels were developed before the current landscaping standards were adopted. As a result, landscaping throughout the corridor is inconsistent ranging from grassed front yards to the elaborate landscaping in front of NC A&T.

Overlay Design Guidelines

5. Development Guidelines

The following development guidelines are meant to complement the overlay development requirements and work with EMSDC's Site and Façade Loan Program, meeting the following objectives:

Objectives include:

- A more intimate image for the corridor (traditionally perceived by a pedestrian as less intimidating and more inviting) which brings buildings closer to the sidewalk.
- Interconnection between sites, suggesting/encouraging multi-purpose visits to the corridor which builds on the proximity of retail grouping; and, which reduces road to site and auto to pedestrian traffic conflicts.
- Site improvements which enhance the character of the retail environment; especially those that soften the nature of automobile parking lots, and those that make the site pedestrian safe and friendly through lighting, landscaping, sidewalks, and building orientation
- Building and design which enhances the continuity of the corridor, and which enhance the opportunity to market the corridor as a place.

Article 6. Pedestrian Corridor Design Guidelines. The following guidelines should be used to guide site planning, building design and orientation toward the goal of corridor compatibility:

Section 6 .01 Details, fenestrations, context sensitivity

- (a) Blank, undifferentiated exterior walls are unattractive and should not be visible from the street.
- (b) Building exteriors facing the street right-of-way should be designed so as to present more than 50% of first floor wall area as glazed display or window.
- (c) Where buildings within the block face between two intersecting streets establish a consistent or regular pattern of windows, floor height, or other building details, new buildings should remain consistent with these regular patterns.
- (d) All rooftop mechanical equipment should be screened from view from adjacent properties and adjacent rights-of-way by use of parapet walls or screens designed to be compatible with building architecture.

Section 6 .02 Building siting and orientation

- (a) Location of entries
 - (i) Buildings, and their principal entry points, should be oriented to, and visible from the street front property line.
 - (ii) Wherever possible, buildings, and their principal entry points, should be sited in proximity to the sidewalk, forming a common building "wall," except for areas contiguous with the structures used for outdoor dining or courtyards.



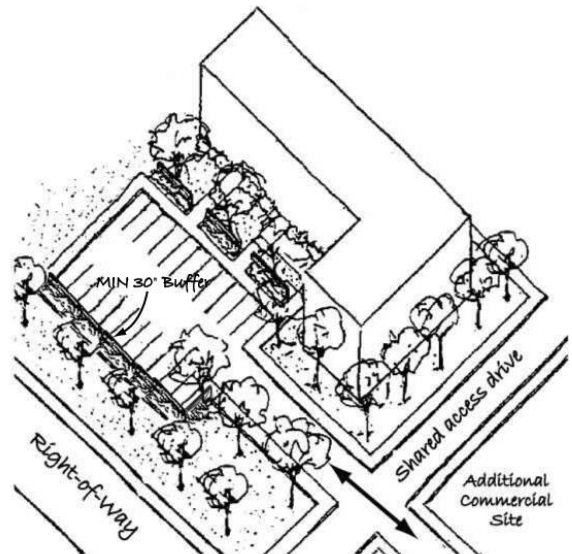
Blank, undifferentiated walls like these should not be visible from the street.



Example depicting first floor storefronts with 50% of the first floor wall area as a glazed display or window.



A consistent pattern of windows, floor heights, and building details should be maintained with new construction.



Entry points should be visible from the right-of-way.

Section 6.03 Parking Lot Landscaping/Lighting

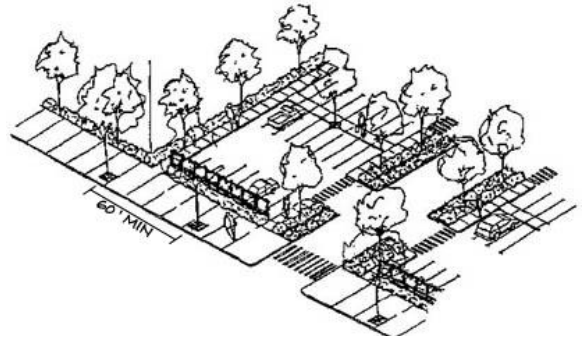
(a)

Where parking lots providing for 5 or more parking spaces are in view of the public right-of-way, there should be installed within a ten-foot wide street yard between the parking area and the street, a minimum of three (3), 1 3/4 inch caliper canopy trees and one (1), 1 3/4 inch caliper understory tree per 100 linear feet of frontage. The substitution of one understory tree for each required shade tree that would conflict with overhead utilities will be permitted within street yards.

(b) Where parking is placed between the building and the right-of-way, view of the parking from the street should be buffered to a height of 30 inches, except where vehicular sight lines may be impaired. Buffering should consist of one or a combination of the following:

- (i) Masonry walls compatible with proposed building design, and landscaped as a foundation wall.
- (ii) Screening fence of wood or approved material at least 75% opaque. Chain link fencing with wood slats is prohibited.
- (iii) Understory and evergreen trees, shrubs (installed at a rate of one per each three feet of buffer length), and groundcovers. At a minimum, 30% of a planted buffer should be evergreen.
- (iv) Any earthen berm between the right-of-way and the building should not exceed a height of 3 feet or a slope of 3:1 (Vertical : Horizontal).

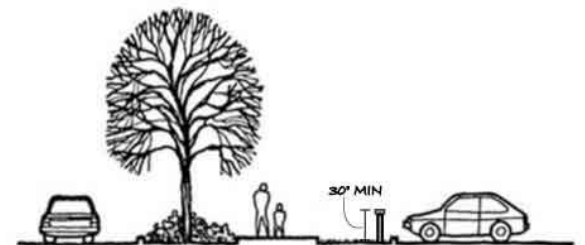
(c) To break up large expanses of parking and provide a minimum 5% landscape area, landscaped islands should be required such that no parking space may be greater than 50 linear feet away from a landscape island containing a canopy tree. Landscape islands must be



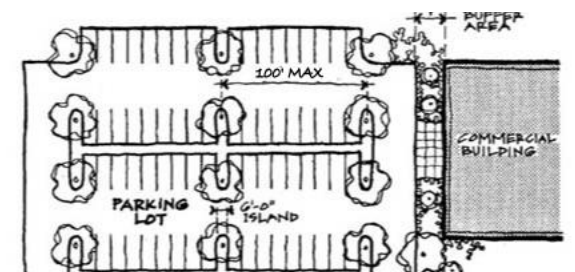
Parking lots within view of the public right-of-way must be adequately screened. Wherever feasible, connections should be provided between adjacent parking lots.



In order to screen parking lots from the right-of-way, a combination of landscaping, berms, fencing, or walls should be used.



When utilized for screening parking lots, masonry walls must be compatible with the proposed building design, and should stand at a minimum height of 30 inches.



To minimize large expanses of parking, landscaped islands should be used. No parking space should be greater than 50 linear feet from a landscaped island.

a minimum of seven (7) feet wide from back-of-curb to back-of-curb and a minimum of 200 square feet in area.

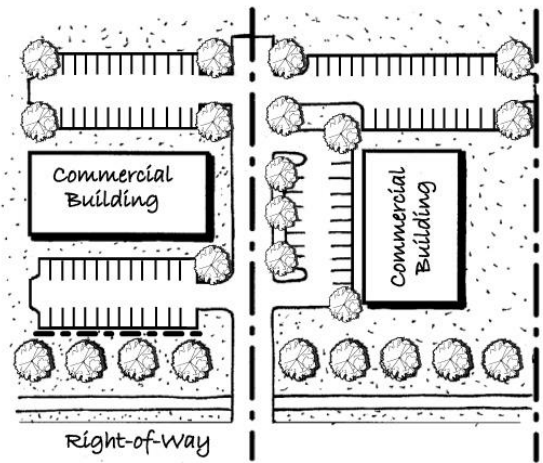
- (d) Parking areas should be illuminated during hours of operation of the use so that the minimum illumination measured at any point on the parking surface is no less than 0.5 footcandles; and so as to provide a maximum average illumination not to exceed 2.0 footcandles (measured at the ground surface); and so as not to allow adjacent property to be illuminated by more than .5 footcandles measured at the common property line.

Section 6 .04 Site Access,

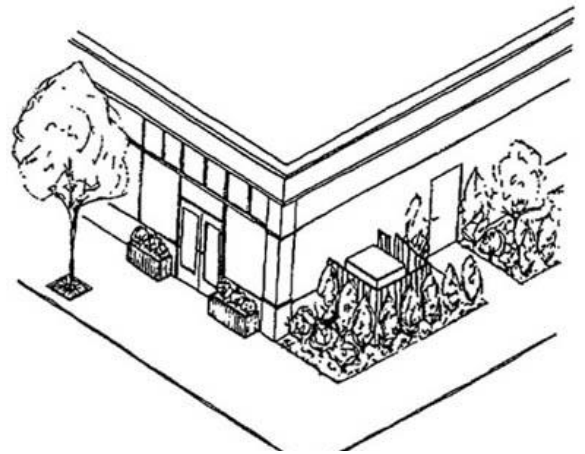
- (a) Driveways across from median openings should be consolidated wherever feasible to coordinate access at the median opening.
- (b) Driveways should be designed with adequate on-site storage for entering and exiting vehicles to reduce unsafe conflicts with through traffic or on-site traffic and to avoid congestion at the entrance.

Section 6 .05 Site Landscaping/Lighting

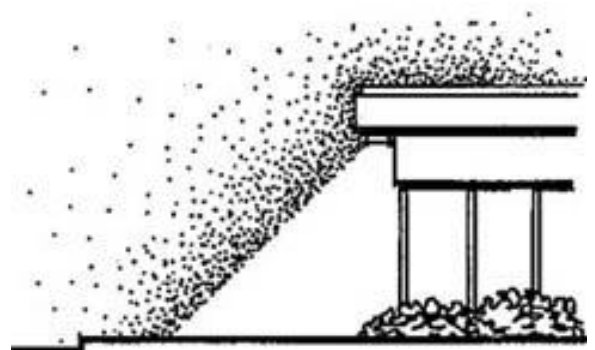
- (a) A minimum 15% of the gross site area should be landscaped open space or healthy existing vegetation.
- (b) All areas intended for pedestrian use should be well lighted by lighting fixtures that focus on lighting walkways and sitting areas. (See lighting section)
- (c) Pedestrian paths or sidewalks should be clearly distinguished from vehicular paths by landscaping, paving materials, or architectural elements.
- (d) All pedestrian paths should be handicap accessible, using ramps and curb cuts conforming to state and federal standards.
- (e) Maintenance of on site improvements is required for all developments.



Parking areas should be screened, and where appropriate, access provided between adjoining uses.

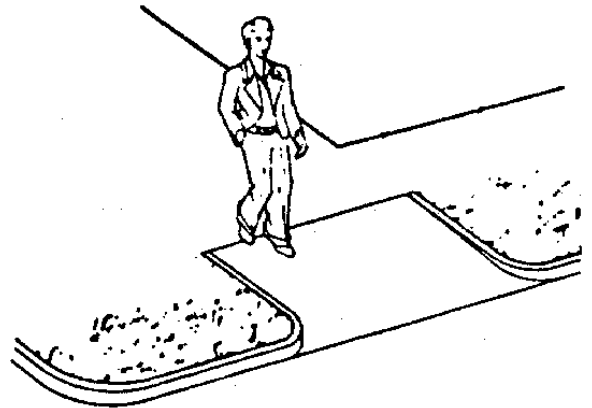


A minimum of 15% of the gross site area should be landscaped. Such landscaping should be integrated with the architecture and design of the structure, screening ground level utilities.



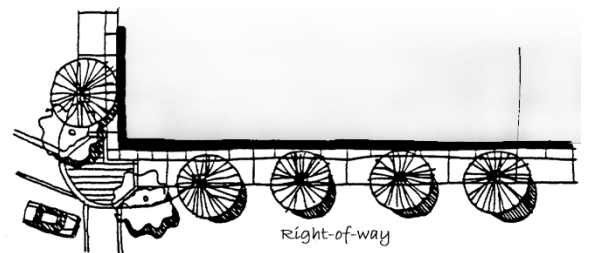
Building lighting should focus on lighting walkways and sitting areas.

- (f) Prior to development, measures should be taken to protect all natural elements from damage due to construction activities.
- (g) The area necessary for safe and efficient construction activities should be clearly identified on the site plan and staked on site.
 - (i) Trees to be preserved should be identified and protected as required by the tree preservation ordinance.
 - (ii) All sensitive areas including: wetlands, slopes, and vegetation, outside the construction zone should be protected with fencing or other barrier devices.



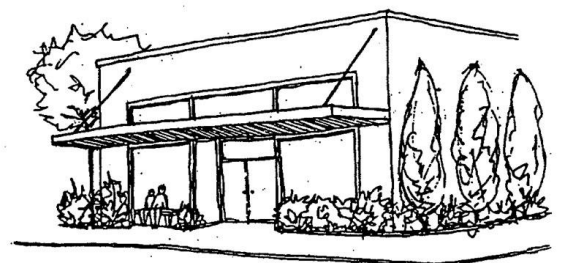
All pedestrian paths should be handicap accessible, providing curb cuts that conform to ADA requirements.

- (h) Landscaping Between Buildings.
 - (i) There should be sufficient quantities of canopy, understory and evergreen trees, shrubs and ground covers to adequately screen unattractive views at the side and rear of adjacent buildings.
 - (ii) There should be a minimum quantity of one (1) canopy tree for every 500 square feet of open space between and at the rear of buildings.



Landscaping and paving materials should be used to distinguish pedestrian paths and sidewalks from vehicular

- (i) Foundation Planting
 - (i) At minimum a 4 foot wide landscape area should be provided adjacent to all building walls (excluding driveways, entrance areas, covered walkways, service and delivery areas).
 - (ii) This landscape area should be planted with a balance of understory and evergreen trees, shrubs and ground covers.
 - (iii) These plantings should emphasize softening of large expanses of building walls length and height, accent building entrances and architectural features and screen mechanical equipment adjacent to buildings.



Plantings should be provided adjacent to all buildings and should be used to soften large expanses of building walls, accenting entrances and architectural features.

- (j) Intersection Visibility
 - (i) Landscaping must be designed and installed to minimize potential

- obstruction of critical sight lines.
- (ii) Landscape planting should be designed so as to avoid obstruction of a motorist's vision at the intersections of outlet access drives and ring roads, access roads or municipal streets.
- (iii) Unobstructed visibility between 2 and 6 feet above the height of the paved surface of the access road must be maintained at all intersections and vehicular access points.

Section 6 .06 Site Safety

(a) Site lighting

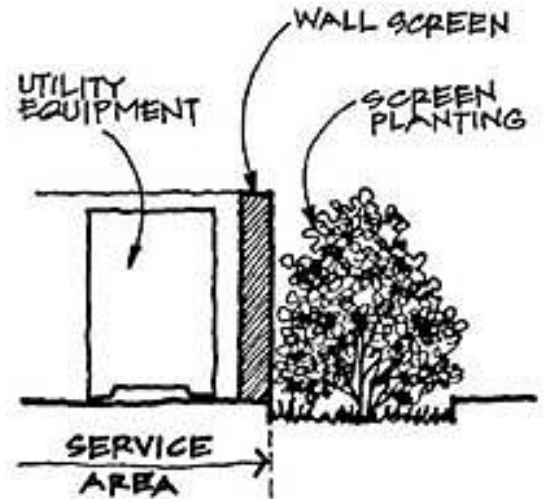
- (i) Each site must be illuminated during operating hours of the use so that site users may move in all public areas of the site without walking through areas where illumination is less than 0.5 foot candles as measured at the ground surface.
- (ii) Entries to the building, both principal and secondary, should be illuminated at all times so that not less than 0.5 foot candles of illumination may be measured at the ground surface within 5 feet of the entry. Luminaires within fixtures used to illuminate entries should not be directly visible from off the site.

(b) Observability

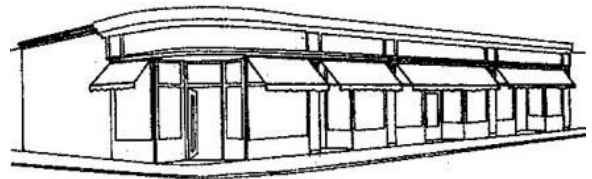
- (i) A portion of the walls adjacent to parking areas and walkways should be glazed so as to allow for observation of all parking areas and walkways from inside the building.
- (ii) Site landscaping and building features should not be installed or maintained in a way which allow a person to hide from observation by pedestrians on the site.

(c) Railroad side safety

- (i) The design of parking areas, walkways, and buildings must prevent areas along the Norfolk - Southern Railroad right-of-way from being used to loiter or dwell without observation.



Landscaping or a wall screen should be used to screen mechanical equipment from adjacent to buildings.



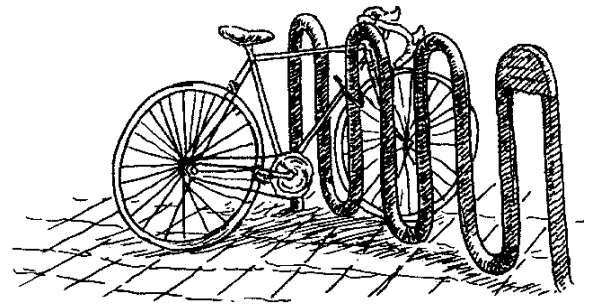
A portion of walls adjacent to parking areas and walkways should be glazed.

Section 6.07 Bicycle and Pedestrian Interconnections

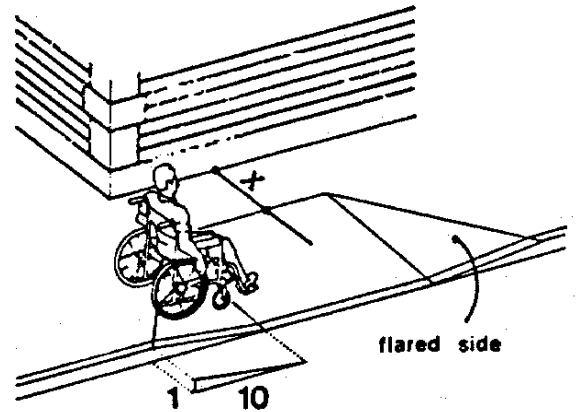
- (a) Opportunities for bicycle/pedestrian mobility should be enhanced through site design strategies and bicycle/pedestrian access ways that seek to shorten walking distances and increase accessibility between uses.
- (b) Pedestrian circulation should be provided between abutting commercial properties through the use of walkways and similar pedestrian-oriented facilities

Section 6.08 Handicapped accessibility

- (a) An accessible route to the principal entry to the building within the boundary of a site should be provided to meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- (b) Bike access and parking accommodations
 - (i) Vehicular parking lots should include bicycle parking areas and facilities to reduce the need for vehicular access.
- (c) For each 10 vehicular parking spaces, one space in a bike rack should be provided.



Increased accessibility for bicycle mobility can be enhanced through site designs that incorporate bicycle racks.



Sidewalks and pedestrian paths along rights-of-way and parking lots should incorporate design features compliant with ADA standards to accommodate individuals with disabilities.

Overlay Development Regulations

(C) East Market Street Pedestrian Scale Overlay District Established: The East Market Street Pedestrian Scale Overlay District is hereby established as a Pedestrian Scale Overlay District.

1) Purposes of the Overlay District: The East Market Street Pedestrian Scale Overlay District regulations, adopted and prescribed in this Ordinance, are found by the City Council to be necessary and appropriate to:

- a)** Revitalize a commercial corridor so as to serve the needs of the community, including the adjacent university and college communities;
- b)** Modify the image of the corridor, moving away from the existing vehicular-oriented thoroughfare to an image which is attractive to pedestrian access and use;
- c)** Encourage a desirable and mutually supportive mix of uses in close proximity to each other;
- d)** Provide commercial and employment opportunities which are easily accessible to neighborhood residents;
- e)** Create a corridor with a distinct sense of place and character;
- f)** Encourage high quality building and site design;
- g)** Encourage uses of a specific character, type; and market;
- h)** Encourage a corridor character that is both attractive and compatible between public and private spaces; and
- i)** Implement the East Market Street Corridor Development Plan.

2) Use Limitations:

- a) First Floor Uses:** Uses on the first floor shall be limited to those Retail Trade uses; Business, Professional, & Personal Services uses; Educational & Institutional uses; and Manufacturing and Industrial uses permitted by right, with development standards, or with Special Use Permits in the underlying zoning district.
- b) Upper Floor Uses:** Uses on all floors above the first floor shall be limited to those uses permitted by right, with development standards, or with Special Use Permits on the first floor, or any residential use listed under the Residential Uses subsection of Table 30-8-1.

3) *Building Setback and Set-to Lines:*

a) Street Setbacks: Minimum building setback from the public right-of-way shall be not less than one (1) foot. Where existing buildings along a block face between two intersecting streets establish a uniform building setback line, new buildings shall conform to that established setback.

b) Rear Setbacks: Minimum building setback from the rear property line shall be not less than forty-five (45) feet.

c) Other Interior Setbacks: Minimum building setback from other interior property lines shall be zero (0) feet. Where buildings are set back from interior property lines, not less than ten (10) feet shall separate buildings on adjacent lots. Where buildings are set back less than five (5) feet from interior property lines, permanent easements over five (5) feet of the adjacent property must be obtained and recorded in the Office of the County Register of Deeds so as to permit maintenance.

4) *Building Height:*

a) The maximum building height shall not exceed fifty-five (55) feet.

b) Where existing structures within the block face between two intersecting streets establish a uniform building height of less than fifty-five (55) feet, the maximum building height shall not exceed that uniform building height by more than fifty percent (50%) of that uniform building height, nor fifty-five (55) feet.

5) *Building Materials:*

a) Neither concrete block (with the exception of architectural split face block) nor corrugated metal shall be used as a primary material for the exterior walls or surfaces of a building.

b) Primary materials for walls and facades visible from the right-of-way shall be limited to brick, masonry units, glass, and metal accents.

6) *Signs:* Except as provided below, signs shall meet the requirements of Section 30-14.

a) Freestanding Signs: Freestanding signage requiring a permit shall be limited to monument signs. No sign exceeding 150 square feet shall be permitted within the Pedestrian Scale Overlay District.

b) Projecting Signs: No more than one (1) right-angle sign is allowed for each business entrance. The bottom of a projecting sign shall be at least eight (8) feet above any sidewalk, parking area, or other paved area. The area of a projecting sign will be calculated in

the overall attached signage and shall not exceed twenty-four (24) square feet maximum area on each side.

c) Wall Signs: Horizontal wall signs are encouraged. No wall sign shall project more than six (6) inches into the public right-of-way.

7) Building Lighting:

a) Property owners and managers are encouraged to safely illuminate building entry/exit locations; however, such areas shall only be illuminated using shielded lighting or off-building lighting that does not generate glare or otherwise allow the light to be viewed directly from off the property.

b) Building walls may be illuminated.

c) No building illumination shall cause the site to exceed maximum site lighting limitations.

8) Parking:

a) Minimum Parking Requirements: In those portions of the Overlay District with underlying zoning of CM and O, a minimum of one (1) space for each 300 square feet of retail or office gross floor area shall be provided on site, except as modified below.

b) Parking Credits and Exceptions:

i) In all areas, on-street parking spaces on the right-of-way between the two side lot lines of the site may be counted to satisfy the minimum off-street parking requirements.

ii) Where parking is available off-site within 400 feet of the front entry to the building, and that parking is owned or controlled under a permanent and recorded parking encumbrance agreement for use by the occupants or employees on the site, said parking may be counted to satisfy the off-street parking requirements.

iii) In those portions of the Overlay District with underlying zoning of C-M and O, and which are occupied as a retail use, all parking all parking located behind the front setback of the building shall be double-counted so that each such parking space behind the front setback shall be counted as if it were two (2) spaces available to satisfy the off-street parking requirements for such retail use.

iv) Where it can be demonstrated through a documented parking study that the demand for parking of the combined uses of two (2) or more buildings can be satisfied with the shared and jointly accessible off-street parking available to

those buildings, then a special exception to these parking requirements may be granted by the Board of Adjustment to satisfy the minimum parking requirements.

c) Location: All parking serving the site and counted toward minimum parking requirements shall be located on the site, on the street as allowed in (b)(1) above, and/or within 400 feet of the site.

9) *Parking Structures:*

a) No parking structure may be designed or installed so as to present to the street or public right-of-way an elevation or façade with openings, fenestrations, and structural elements which are of a slanted or diagonal nature reflecting the incline of ramps.

b) Any parking structure exceeding twenty-five (25) feet in height shall be set back from the right-of-way a minimum of one (1) horizontal foot for each two (2) vertical feet of height.

10) *Site Landscaping and Lighting:*

a) The standards for site landscaping and site lighting established for the underlying zoning and use shall govern the development and redevelopment of property within the Overlay District.

b) Exceptions from underlying site landscaping and lighting standards may be approved as part of site plan review by the Technical Review Committee where it is shown that said landscaping and lighting meets the guidelines identified in the East Market Street Pedestrian Scale Overlay Plan.

11) *Screening:*

a) Utility connections and equipment shall be enclosed or screened from view from public areas of the site, including from parking lots.

b) Trash containers, compactors, dumpsters, and storage areas shall be placed on a concrete pad and surrounded by a fence or wall enclosure (of not less than the height of trash or storage to be screened) of durable materials compatible in design with the building and building materials.

c) Loading docks shall be screened from view from the street right-of-way.

12) *Spacing and Number of Vehicular Access Points:*

a) Separation between access points on all state highways shall be in accordance with North Carolina Department of Transportation Access Classification System & Standards.

b) No more than one (1) vehicular access to East Market Street shall be permitted on any site unless one (1) such access is shared between the subject site and an adjacent site.

c) Upon review of traffic, circulation, and pedestrian safety issues, the Greensboro Department of Transportation (GDOT) may approve additional driveway access points for a given site.

13) Cross Access: Each site shall provide cross a cross access point and cross access easement to allow circulation between sites. Property owners shall:

a) Record an easement in the Office of the County Register of Deeds allowing cross access to and from the adjacent properties;

b) Agree that any pre-existing driveways, in excess of those permitted herein, shall be closed and eliminated after construction of the joint use driveway; and

c) Record a joint maintenance agreement in the Office of the County Register of Deeds defining maintenance responsibilities of property owners that share the joint use driveway and cross access system.

14) Pedestrian Sidewalks:

a) Whenever a building is set back from the sidewalk or street right-of-way, an uninterrupted, hard surface sidewalk of not less than five (5) feet in width shall be installed and maintained to connect the public sidewalk with the principal entry to the building.

b) Sidewalks shall be provided along the length of any façade abutting parking areas. Such sidewalks shall be located at least four (4) feet from the façade of the building to provide planting beds for foundation landscaping.

c) Pedestrian circulation shall be provided between abutting properties through the use of walkways or identifiable pathways.

d) Curb cuts and ramps shall be provided where necessary to meet the Americans with Disabilities Act.