

STAFF UPDATE MEMO

TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Andrew Warren, Planning & Building Director

DATE: November 15, 2024

SUBJECT: Zoning Ordinance Amendment #60/ORD #2001 - Downtown Northwest zoning district
Planning Commission Work Session – Tuesday, November 19, 2024

Most recently, the Planning Commission reviewed the Downtown Northwest zoning district overlay ordinance at its October 16, 2024 work session. The primary focus of the discussion was to study the potential impacts of height on the surrounding view sheds. Staff provided modeling of six (6) different vistas. Each vista point included an aerial view and a pedestrian view. During the discussion, a question came up regarding potential architectural treatments or setback that could be implemented for the significant corners in the development area. The goal would be to “soften” the edge of the building(s) while creating a more prominent architectural feature on a particular corner. Staff was asked to research this possibility and bring back any findings for the Commission’s consideration. Staff worked with Chris Jennette of Camiros to explore this idea and the attached memo offers his recommendation. While the memo does not specifically address the portion of Turner Street by the Moss Arts Center that was discussed by Planning Commission, staff believes a similar approach could likely be used in this area if desired.

The visit to Downtown Northwest is advertised and scheduled for Monday, November 18, 2024 at 5PM. We will gather at the corner of Gilbert Street and Turner Street NW before going up to the top of the Gilbert Place building. Staff will be available to walk the remainder of the study area if desired by Planning Commission.

The Commission will continue to discuss the zoning ordinance amendment at its upcoming work session on Tuesday, November 19, 2024 at 5:00PM in the Blacksburg Motor Company Conference Room and will be followed by the public hearing scheduled for Tuesday, December 3, 2024 at 6:30PM in the Town Council Chambers. Planning Commission may choose to make a recommendation to Town Council at that time.

ATTACHMENT

“Downtown Northwest Corner Design Strategy” memo from Camiros_11-11-2024



11.11.2024

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To: Town of Blacksburg | Andrew Warren, Kinsey O'Shea
From: Camiros | Chris Jennette
Re: Downtown Northwest Corner Design Strategy

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Per our recent conversation, this memorandum outlines a proposed approach to requiring development in Downtown Northwest to address the prominent corner at Main Street and Turner Street Northwest. Rather than address this specific corner condition through amending the dimensional standards, the simplest and most flexible approach would be to add an additional standard or standards to Sec. 3505-1 within the Table addressing building orientation and entry design.

Such a standard could require that a building or buildings located at the corner of Main Street and Turner Street Northwest must address the prominence of the corner by providing a unique architectural design, or providing additional setback or public space at the corner. Importantly, any building located at the corner will also have to address the Town's existing sight triangle regulations, ensuring that they do not obscure sightlines at this key corner for vehicular and pedestrian traffic.

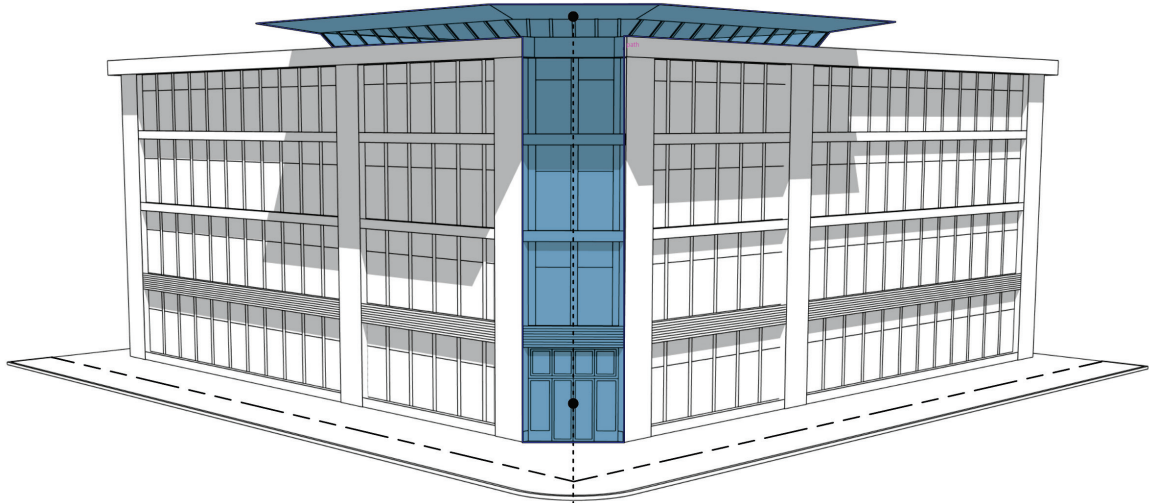
Below is an excerpt of the current Table 3505-1 that includes preliminary suggested language to address this condition, as well as an illustration that communicates the intent of such a standard on the following page.

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Proposed Corner Treatment Language + Illustration

Building Orientation and Entry Design	North Main Street and southeastern-facing frontage of Turner Street NW	All Other Streets
Building orientation and entry design standards require that buildings within the DTNW District are oriented toward the pedestrian realm, and provide legible, predictable points of access along their frontages.		
Any building or buildings located within 50 feet of the corner of Main Street and Turner Street Northwest, measured parallel to either right-of-way, must highlight this key corner through the inclusion of prominent architectural features and/or the provision of publicly accessible open space occupying the corner. Acceptable features may include but are not limited to chamfered corners, "bull nose" building forms, or other vertically punctuated architectural elements. When provided, such features or public open space shall be considered to meet any required build-to percentage.	✓	





Corner highlighted through use of architectural features such as chamfered corners, "bull nose" building forms, other vertically punctuated architectural elements, or public open space.