



Included In This Section

Architectural guidelines are created for a community looking to unify the intensity and timing of development or rehabilitation projects within a project area. That being said the architectural guidelines will dictate the forming, massing and material makeup of architectural work within the proposed area.

ARCHITECTURAL STANDARDS



DEFINITION OF ARCHITECTURAL STANDARDS

Architectural Standards are a set of guidelines or guiding principles that help shape the built environment, how buildings are massed and how people interact with the buildings. Items included in the architectural standards are focused around the vertical elements that make up the corridors or help frame the physical spaces in which people interact with one another or enter/exit a building. Architectural standards are important when working within the three (3) below standard downtown renovation or construction styles, specifically:

- Architectural Renovations
- Architectural Infill
- Architectural New Construction

While there are three separate sets of standards for the built environment, they have similar overarching themes that tie them all together. Outlined in the remainder of this section are the common elements between the standard styles and what elements are specific to each.

BUILDING TYPES

Outlined below are several styles of buildings currently within the downtown corridors of Mars, or would complement the current building types:

- Small Scale Main Street Buildings (image to right) – Highlights of these buildings include:
 - One to three stories
 - 3,000 – 7,000 square feet in size
 - Floor Area Ratio (FAR) of .75 for primary structure
 - Limited to no accessory structures
 - Singular uses and/or single commercial and supporting residential uses
- Medium Scale Commercial Core Building (image on right) - Highlights of these buildings include:
 - Two to Four stories
 - 5,000 – 9,000 square feet per building
 - FAR of .6-.75 for primary structure
 - Ancillary structures common up to 15% of first floor square footage
 - Up to four tenants common with multiple uses
- Large Scale Rural Buildings - Highlights of these buildings include:
 - Three to six stories
 - 6,000 – 12,000 square feet per building
 - FAR of .65 - .8 for primary structure
 - Ancillary structures common up to 10% of first floor square footage
 - Up to ten tenants common with multiple uses
- Service/Resource buildings - Highlights of these buildings include:
 - One story
 - 1,000 – 2,500 square feet per building
 - FAR of .4 - .5 for primary structure
 - Ancillary structures common up to 25% of first floor square footage
 - Sole purpose tenant on property, no ancillary uses common
- Restaurants (image on right) - Highlights of these buildings include:
 - One story
 - 2,500 – 4,500 square feet per building
 - FAR of .3 - .45 for primary structure
 - Ancillary structures uncommon
 - Parking requirements typically occupy up to 50% of the parcel
 - Sole purpose tenant on property, no ancillary uses common



Sample - Small Scale Main Street Buildings



Sample - Medium Scale Commercial Core Building



Sample - Restaurants

BUILDING USES

Building uses within a community or downtown change over time and many buildings are reused for secondary reasons. While this is a critical design element for downtown buildings, many buildings have primary uses in mind when they are designed. Understanding this we are providing sample building uses currently present within the downtown or that could complement the downtown corridors and support further economic development:

- Restaurants
- Professional offices
- Service industries
- Retail amenities
- Experience services
- Commercial services
- Civic uses
- Office spaces

While these spaces each have unique attributes for their overall space utilization, the above outline building uses can be supported in the current downtown buildings with limited to no major architectural expansions.

BUILDING CONSTRUCTION STANDARDS

Having common themes or elements among architectural styles in the community will create a unified “architectural character” for the Borough of Mars and the downtown core area. It is through this unified character that the community will be able to create a place or location within the downtown, distinct from other areas of the community and uniquely attractive. Building construction standards will help define the overall community “place”. While building styles, construction method and appearance change per community, the below conceptual building construction standards are prepared to meet the current buildings within Mars and/or the overall community vision. They are as follows:

- Long-life Buildings – Buildings must be designed in a manner to remain useful for multiple styles of tenants and be constructed in a method that will provide a minimum of 50 years of usable life.
- Brick, Stone & Wood – Buildings should be constructed of brick, stone or wood materials that fit into the overall architectural character of the community.

- Architectural Intrigue – Architectural elements should be included in the building in an effort to provide unique elements or attributes for each building
- Out of sight, out of mind - Roofing and downspouts should be out of sight, decreasing their impact to potential users and safe navigation of the downtown
- Unique, yet similar – Buildings in the corridor should have a similar look, feel and forming/massing as other buildings within the community
- Unified Location – Buildings should be constructed in a similar location on each lot, providing a singular or congruent feel among building styles and types
- Retail spaces – All frontage buildings should utilize covered retail or showcase windows. Despite the use of the building, but providing these spaces all buildings will be multi-use over their long life span.

The standards for construction listed above are not comprehensive, yet were prepared to provide a conceptual level of building construction standards. All construction standards should be further vetted by the public and community prior to installation or adoption.

BUILDING MAINTENANCE STANDARDS

Proper maintenance and upkeep on a building is the sole responsibility of a property owner. Many residents in communities that have witnessed economic distress forget this and in response prefer to keep their buildings at “status quo”. By allowing the community to accept lower than average standards, residents are stating that “good enough” is their new level of standard. This will only serve to create an apathetic nature among tenants and personify the deteriorated state of a downtown corridor. Outlined below are sample MINIMUM building maintained standards for all properties:

- Buildings must be kept “high, tight and dry” – Buildings must be maintained to this standard to retain their occupancy permit and allow for spaces to remain habitable
- Free from broken or damaged surfaces – Buildings must remain free from broken or damaged surfaces that are visually impactful to the overall context of the community. Common deficiencies in this topic include:
 - Broken windows
 - Broken doors
 - Deteriorated paint or wall surfaces
 - Failing awnings or shade structures

- All buildings must be kept up to local building standards – All buildings must be kept up to date with local buildings standards for the City, County or other governing agencies
- Building exteriors must remain accessible – All entrances must remain accessible and unblocked
- Store frontage must remain open and free of clutter – buildings with store frontage must remain open and free of clutter that would otherwise negatively impact the overall community character

INTENSITY OF DEVELOPMENT

Portions of downtown Mars currently have a dense and compact intensity of development. Buildings are currently spaced closer together, creating a corridor of limited automobile access, improving interaction space and promoting a more walkable atmosphere. Other sections of the downtown (Grand Ave corridor) Lack of adequate density of development is causing the downtown to seem more vacant or devoid of people. Elements of the current intensity of development are:

- Larger lots and limited frontage buildings
- Increased offsets and non-uniform building offsets
- Increased amounts of curb cuts or roadway entrances/exits to support vehicle traffic
- Limited visibility for signage or storefronts
- Increased amounts of ROW or pavement within the downtown
- High frequency of parking facilities immediately adjacent to a building
- Limited alleyway or pedestrian access ways between parking and storefronts

Improving the density of development within the downtown would improve the quality of life for residents and attract new visitors, all while allowing for further economic gain due to increased rental spaces for local business expansion. While the current style of development intensity within the downtown is that of an automobile centric scale, the community has potential for improving the density within the downtown and infilling the “missing teeth” of the Main Street corridor to create a more vibrant downtown.

FORMING AND MASSING

Successful downtown corridors and business districts have a centralized forming and massing of buildings, focusing the most intense development within the community at the center and creating more open space around the periphery of the community. Currently the Borough of Mars does not follow this method of development as illustrated with the ancillary or suburban developments around the periphery of the community. To remedy this, the Borough of Mars should adopt a set of infill or forming and massing developments to correct this problem.

- Buildings are roadway facing – All buildings should have their main entrance facing the Main Street thoroughfare if their parcel has a Main Street side. This will encourage additional store frontage and improvements along the ROW of Main Street.
- Buildings have no additional setback or public space on frontage – Buildings should have a uniform or similar setback off of the roadway. Uniform building setbacks create a sense of enclosure and provide a sense of safety, as well as increase visibility for all buildings
- Parking is located in the rear of buildings – primary parking facilities should always be located at the rear of the property. Limited frontage parking should be provided. No additional setbacks or parking other than on-street parking should be allowed along the Main Street frontage.
- Consistency building massing – Buildings should be located along the corridor to create a consistent look and feel for the vertical plane on the building side. Buildings do not need to all be the same height or construction method yet should be placed in close enough proximity to provide the feeling of enclosure along the back side of the sidewalks.

In order to adequately correct this problem, the community will need to introduce incremental development and become diligent about allowing development and promoting development that works toward the overall community goals. Incremental development is a simple principle that focuses around creating a logical progression or series of development steps for all underutilized spaces. They are as follows:

- Space activation and/or pop-up shop – This increment of development is focused around creating temporary or less permanent uses in the space to test viability.
- Neighborhood scale permanent development – neighborhood scale development is focused around creating a single story development serving a singular use. This development style is quickly outgrown or expanded upon
- Downtown scale development – Downtown scale development is the third step in the progression, focusing on multi-story development for multiple tenants.
- Medium scale development – Medium scale development is for buildings up to 40' in height and having up to ten (10) tenants. This is the largest scale suitable for the current conditions in Mars
- Urban scale development – Urban scale development is the highest order of development in incremental development, focusing on high density and buildings over 75' in height. These do not fit into the Mars architectural style currently.

These styles of incremental development should be further reviewed and alerted as the community continues to transform over the coming decades.

MANAGING NEW CONSTRUCTION

As buildings are renovated, torn down or have disaster events take place, it is important to have guidelines in place for accurate construction to meet the desired community feel and appearance. Outlined below are two types of new construction that can affect the Borough:

Infill

Infill construction will take place in currently open voids or unused spaces within the community fabric. Outlined below are proposed guidelines for construction of new buildings to meet the facade guidelines

- Buildings must be located in line or even with the current building facades
- Building facades must be an accurate representation of the architectural styles present within the building street corridor
- Materials used for construction of the storefront/facade shall be like other street corridor buildings
- Windows and doors shall be constructed of similar materials, size and proportions
- Window placement and spacing shall be like other buildings from the corridor
- Building heights shall be similar to surrounding buildings within the corridor
- Colors (accent and building) shall be congruent with the community

Disaster Situation

When a disaster (natural or man-made) causes a void within the community fabric, buildings shall be constructed to fill any voids. Outlined below are guidelines for the construction of buildings that have been stricken by a disaster

- Buildings shall be constructed to a similar architectural era or character as meets the overall community character or adopted design guidelines
- Building facades shall be constructed similar in character to the remainder of the community or as adopted in community design guidelines, recreating the following:
 - Architectural character
 - Architectural elements (cornices, transoms, etc.)
 - Storefront usage (recessed, window areas, etc.)
- Buildings must be located in line or even with the current building facades
- Windows and doors shall be constructed of similar materials, size and proportions as appropriate for the scale and density of development
- Window placement and spacing shall be no less than 75% of store frontage
- Building heights shall be similar to surrounding buildings within the corridor
- Colors (accent and building) shall be congruent with the community