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This guidebook provides a user-friendly interpretation of Ordinance 2001-14 and the amending ordinance 2003-11 which establish minimum architectural design standards for new non-residential development. The graphics and corresponding text within this manual are interpretations of the standards and are intended to be used only as examples of those standards. This guidebook is not intended to be a substitute for the provisions within Sections 9 and 24 of the Orange County Code. The reader is encouraged to review the complete contents of ‘Architectural Standards and Guidelines for Commercial Buildings and Projects’ within Section 9-551 of the Orange County Code of Ordinances. Most importantly, this Guidebook is not intended to stifle alternative design solutions which are found to be consistent with the intent and purpose of the Ordinance. The Building Official or his/her designee shall determine such consistency.

For more information contact:

Planning Division: 407-836-5600
Building Division: 407-836-5550
The stated **Intent and Purpose** of these design standards is:

- To promote architectural and site design treatments which enhance the visual appearance of non-residential development within the County.

- To ensure compatibility and appropriate visual and physical screening in association with commercial, office and industrial uses.

- To maintain and enhance the attractiveness of the streetscape within the community.

- To create and maintain a strong community image and identity by providing for architectural and landscaping treatments that enhance the visual impact and contribution of commercial, office and industrial development in Orange County.

- To require articulation that reduces the mass, scale and/or potentially uniform monolithic appearance of large commercial, office and industrial buildings, and insure that such projects incorporate architectural and landscaping features that provide visual interest while allowing design flexibility.
Architectural Consistency with Adjacent Structures - Primary Facades will be architecturally compatible and consistent in character with the facades in the surrounding area (especially in rural settlements, historic areas, historic structures, etc.)

Architectural Consistency Among Adjacent Facades (same building) - Secondary Facades on the same building shall be designed with an architectural style, detail, trim features, and roof treatments which are consistent with that of the other Primary/Secondary Facades on the same structure.

Consistent Level of Detail Among Facades (same building) - All Primary/Secondary Facades on the same building shall be designed with a similar level of treatment, detail and visual interest as other Primary/Secondary Facades on said structure.

Alternatives to Windows and Entrances - In lieu of actual windows or entrances, the design may incorporate niches and alcoves with significant architectural delineation and definition in order to suggest windows, entry features and to meet the spirit of the Ordinance.

Corporate Colors – The use of corporate colors is permitted provided that such colors are not patterned so as to compete for visual attention (e.g. polka-dots, stripes). The use of corporate colors shall not create an advertisement of the building itself. Corporate colors shall not violate any other color limitations within the Ordinance.

Visibility from Adjacent Residential Area - Any side of an Office, Commercial or Industrial use structure not otherwise meeting the definition of a Primary or Secondary Façade, but which is visible from and adjacent to residential areas, shall be deemed a Secondary Façade and shall meet the architectural requirements for same.

Exceptions to Secondary Façade Applicability - Secondary Façade standards may be deemed not applicable or only partially applicable by the Building Official if it is determined that the narrowness and/or lack of visibility of the subject space or façade renders a strict enforcement of the architectural standards to be unfeasible or unnecessary. Any such determination may only be made where the subject space between structures is less than 10 feet wide. Regardless of any such determinations of inapplicability, when the space between buildings is over 10 feet wide, all tree and landscape provisions shall apply.
Which zoning categories and which projects are subject to these regulations?

- Professional Office (P-O);
- Retail Commercial (C-1);
- General Commercial (C-2);
- Wholesale Commercial (C-3);
- Non-residential components of Planned Developments (PD);
- Free-standing commercial uses permitted in the I-1A, I1/I5, I-2 / I-3 and I-4 zoning districts by right or by special exception such as convenience stores and restaurants;
- Industrial uses within 50 feet of residentially-developed parcel;
- Industrial uses within 75 feet of any major, arterial or collector roadway.
- Temporary sales offices and model home centers shall comply with the Primary and Secondary Façade requirements of the Ordinance.
- The landscaping provisions for both Primary and Secondary Facades apply to temporary sales offices and model centers.
- The standards are applicable to redevelopment or renovation of existing buildings when more than 50 percent of a Primary or Secondary façade are involved. This 50 percent standard only applies to that façade undergoing renovation or redevelopment. New development or building expansions involving more than a 50 percent increase in gross floor area require full compliance.
- Principle uses, whether they occur on parent parcels or on out-parcels;

- Free-standing ancillary or secondary uses including kiosks, ticket booths, carwashes and gas station canopies.

What type of drawings shall I submit for review? In addition to any drawings and exhibits required elsewhere within the Code of Ordinances, complete architectural elevations of each side of all proposed buildings, ancillary structures and/or free-standing structures (e.g. canopies, screen walls, kiosks, carwashes,) shall be submitted. A site plan, at a scale of approximately 1 inch:20 feet, shall also be submitted which clearly identifies and distinguishes all foundation planting areas and paving material surfaces.

Which projects are exempt from the Standards? Except for restrictions on exterior colors, places of worship, hotels, motels and timeshares within the C-1, C-2, C-3 and PD zoning districts are exempt from these regulations.

How are colors restricted? Buildings exterior surfaces (including those within the C-1, C-2, C-3 and PD districts associated with places of worship, hotels, motels and timeshares) may not incorporate electric, fluorescent or neon color schemes. Also, buildings are limited to a maximum of three colors. One additional color may be incorporated for trim and cornice features. The three-color scheme may be repeated when a visually-distinctive break or separation of architectural plane is provided. Unpainted natural stone or roofing material is exempt from these restrictions.
Architectural Definitions (Sec. 9-553)

Awning or canopy is any cloth, plastic or metallic covering or shelter that is suspended or projected over a window, door, walkway, gas pump island or outdoor space.

Cornice is an ornamental band of molding at the top edge of a building or free-standing wall that flares outward to provide a continuous crown. Free-standing walls that provide visual screening of trash enclosures, loading docks, service areas, mechanical equipment or grocery cart enclosures would all benefit from cornice detailing.

Ornamental and Structural Detail is a colored, raised or decorative feature that provides a focal point or highlight within an otherwise flat, unarticulated wall section. Such detail does not include incidental drainage (down spout), electrical, mechanical or other such equipment, corporate logos, textures, colors or materials.
Primary Façade(s) shall mean any and all sides of a building which: 1) face an adjacent public right-of-way; or 2) has a primary customer entrance. NOTE: Many buildings have multiple Primary Facades.

Secondary Façade(s) shall mean any and all sides of a building that, while not fulfilling the definition of a Primary Façade, is either visible from a public right-of-way or roadway or has a secondary or tertiary customer entrance. NOTE: Many buildings have multiple Secondary Facades.
Landscaping helps tie together buildings, define space and create a human-scaled pedestrian realm. Quality landscaping is an essential component of the built urban form of the city. It fosters unity of design and helps development blend with the natural landscaping. Existing landscaping should be retained where possible. Do not assume mass clearing is preferable simply because it may be easiest.

Builders in Orange County are encouraged to consider using drought-tolerant plants and other xeriscape techniques. These include amending the soil, mulching, grouping plants by water need and using water-efficient irrigation equipment and schedules.

The following describes the landscaping required along all Primary and Secondary Facades on Commercial, Office and Industrial* uses.

NOTE: For parcels LESS than 1/2 acre, the provision of landscaping materials along the Primary and Secondary Facades becomes one of the Optional Design Features, not a requirement, that are described within this guidebook.

Commercial, Office and Industrial* parcels of 1/2 acre or larger, will establish an eight-foot-wide building perimeter foundation landscape. The landscape is measured perpendicular to the façade and will be planted immediately adjacent to and along 100 percent of the Primary Façade (along at least 50 percent of Secondary Facades). If a sidewalk is designed immediately adjacent to the Primary or Secondary Façade, the landscaping will instead be placed between the walk and the adjacent curb or walk lining any parking or rights-of-way.

The landscaped area must be a minimum of eight feet wide and should include shrubs and groundcover with one understory tree for each 25 feet or fraction thereof of the linear length of the Primary Façade (along 50 percent of the linear length of the Secondary Façade). The required understory trees can be substituted with one palm tree for each 15 feet of the linear length of the Primary or Secondary Façade. Understory trees may be planted no closer than 10 feet on center and such understory and/or palms may be clustered.

*Section 9-552, provides for applicability to Industrial uses within 50 feet of residential development or within 75 feet of an adjacent ROW or those Industrial uses fronting on any major, arterial or collector road.

Example of good landscape scheme
Soften the public realm with landscaping at key pedestrian nodes.
THE INTENT of this section is to orient non-residential buildings toward the public right-of-way, the roadway or toward private internal collector-type roadways. The orientation helps physically define the streets and public spaces as places of shared use. Street lined by building facades are more interesting to move along, especially for pedestrians, and provide a safer environment.

PRIMARY FAÇADE CONSISTENT ARCHITECTURAL TREATMENT All Primary Facades of a building shall be designed with consistent architectural style, detail, trim features and roof treatments. In addition, all the Primary Facades of a structure shall be designed with a similar level of treatment, detail and visual interest. This includes the design of windows, primary entrances, roof forms (e.g. parapet, gable, hip, mansard, or combination) and architectural elements (e.g. columns, pilasters, overhangs, balustrades, towers, dormers, cupolas and/or other projections of façade and fenestration). In lieu of actual windows or entrances, the design may incorporate niches and alcoves with significant architectural delineation and definition in order to suggest window and entrance features.

MID-BLOCK STRUCTURES Non-residential (see Applicability section) buildings located at mid-block should be oriented to face the right-of-way/roadway unless it can be shown that compelling site conditions necessitate a different orientation. If compelling site conditions necessitate that the building not face the right-of-way/roadway, then the building is considered to have two Primary Facades; the façade that faces the right-of-way/roadway and the façade that incorporates the primary customer service entrance.

CORNER LOT STRUCTURES Non-residential buildings located on corner lots shall be oriented to face a right-of-way/roadway, unless it can be shown that there are compelling site conditions that necessitate a different orientation. If compelling site conditions necessitate that the building not face such right-of-way/roadway, then the building is considered to have three Primary Facades: the two façades that face both adjacent right-of-ways/roadways, and the third façade that incorporates the primary customer service entrance.
General Provisions

Architectural Consistency with Adjacent Structures - Primary Facades will be architecturally compatible and consistent in character with the facades in the surrounding area (especially in rural settlements, historic areas, historic structures, etc.)

Architectural Consistency Among Adjacent Facades (same building) - Secondary Facades on the same building shall be designed with an architectural style, detail, trim features and roof treatments which are consistent with that of the other Primary/Secondary Facades on the same structure.

Consistent Level of Detail Among Facades (same building) - All Primary/Secondary Facades on the same building shall be designed with a similar level of treatment, detail and visual interest as other Primary/Secondary Facades on said structure.

Alternatives to Windows and Entrances - In lieu of actual windows or entrances, the design may incorporate niches and alcoves with significant architectural delineation and definition in order to suggest windows, entry features and to meet the spirit of the Ordinance.

Corporate Colors – The use of corporate colors is permitted as long as the colors are not patterned so as to compete for visual attention (e.g. polka-dots, stripes). The use of corporate colors shall not create an advertisement of the building itself. Corporate colors shall not violate any other color limitations within the Ordinance.

Visibility from Adjacent Residential Area – If any side of an Office, Commercial or Industrial structure does not otherwise meet the definition of a Primary or Secondary Façade, but is visible from an adjacent residential area, it will be considered a Secondary Façade and will meet the architectural requirements for a Secondary Façade.

Exceptions to Secondary Façade Applicability – The Building Official may determine that Secondary Façade standards are not applicable or only partially applicable. A façade’s narrowness or lack of visibility can
make a strict enforcement of the architectural standards unfeasible or unnecessary. Any such determination will only be made where the subject space between structures is less than 10 feet wide. When the space between buildings is more than 10 feet wide, regardless of any such determinations of inapplicability, all tree and landscape provisions shall apply.
Primary Facades on Industrial and Office use parcels (not commercial), which are larger than ½ acre, shall incorporate at least one of the Optional Design Features (ODF) from the list below. However, those Industrial and Office use Primary Facades that also include a customer entrance (and associated architectural entry treatments) must incorporate at least one additional ODF.

Primary Facades on Commercial use parcels, which do not incorporate a customer entrance, shall incorporate at least two other ODF from the list below.

Secondary Facades on Commercial, Industrial or Office use parcels larger than ½ acre shall incorporate at least one of the ODF from the following list.

Notes:
1) Customer service entrances (which include associated formalized architectural entry treatments) shall satisfy only one of the two required ODF on Commercial parcels. That is, the Primary Façade(s) of Commercial uses shall incorporate at least one ODF in addition to any customer service entrances.
2) Landscaping is required along the Primary and Secondary Facades of all Commercial, Office and Industrial use parcels which are larger than ½ acre. Under Required Landscaping above, see the provision involving 50 percent landscape coverage along Secondary Facades.
3) Landscaping along Primary and Secondary Façades becomes one of the Optional Design Features only on Commercial, Industrial and Office parcels which are less than ½ acre.
Optional Design Features (ODF):

**A primary customer entrance** including associated architectural entry treatments and pedestrian-scaled landscaping.

**Arcades or colonnades** a minimum of six feet wide on primary facades and eight feet wide on secondary facades or other roof/wall treatments that provide shade and a break in at least 50 percent of the vertical plane of the building.

**Display windows** with associated architectural trim features are strongly encouraged along the façade of buildings. Display windows attract window-shopping pedestrians and add vitality to the streetscape. Display windows shall not become a surface for advertising. Generally, display windows should extend, for example, from approximately 36 inches above finished grade to approximately six feet above finished grade. The windows shall cover at least 50 percent of the length of the wall. (Note: Windows located too high for pedestrian use or too high to add visual interest to a building façade are discouraged and shall not be accepted.)

**Awnings** associated with windows and doors and which are fabricated of materials and colors which enhance the building’s architecture are strongly encouraged along an appropriate horizontal length of the buildings façade.

**Windows** covering an architecturally-appropriate portion (at least 40 percent) of the façade.

**Landscaping** is an option only on parcels LESS than ½ acre.

**Any other treatment** that, in the opinion of the building official, meets the spirit and intent of this Section is acceptable.
THE INTENT of requiring a minimum level of architectural ornamentation is to add visual appeal to new construction and to maintain and enhance the attractiveness of the streetscapes within the County.

Both single and multiple-tenant buildings are required to provide a minimum of three of the following features:

Parapets with arched, gabled, stepped or decorative features and cornice treatments over the primary customer entrance area that is integrated with the building’s style and massing.

Canopies or porticos integrated with the building’s massing, styling, details and materials.
Peaked roof forms that offer a variety of peak heights.

Overhanging eaves that extend a minimum of three feet.

Arcades a minimum of six feet in depth.

Arches or arched forms.

Display windows extending from 36 inches above finished grade upward and extending proportionately along the first floor façade and at the customer entry area.
Ornamental details that are integrated into the building structure.

Clock or bell tower or other approved vertical feature.

Sculptured artwork but not corporate logos or advertising.

Any other treatment that meets the intent of the design standards is acceptable.
Many issues contribute to the visual impact of buildings on adjacent properties, on travelers within the adjacent rights-of-way, and on the character of neighborhood. Building materials, awnings, location/screening of equipment and color are each important in shaping a project’s visual impact.

The use of certain materials, colors and lighting techniques are restricted on Primary and Secondary Facades. The following are specific, non-optional design limitations:

**Materials - Primary Facades**

Corrugated metal panels, used as a finish material, are prohibited on Primary Façades. Architecturally detailed metal panels may be acceptable after consultation with and consideration by the Building Official.

Smooth-faced concrete or concrete masonry units (CMU) on Primary Facades shall incorporate a stucco or other decorative finish and be painted in accordance with Section 9-555. Split-faced CMU are encouraged.

**Materials - Secondary Facades**

Corrugated metal panels, used as a finish material, shall not cover more than 30 percent of a Secondary Façade. The same approved and architecturally-detailed metal panels used on Primary Façades will be encouraged for use on Secondary Facades.

Smooth-faced concrete or concrete masonry units (CMU) on Secondary Facades shall be painted and incorporate a stucco or other decorative finish and shall not cover more than 30 percent of a Secondary Façade.
Awnings: Except for those portions of awnings or canopies that may have received County approval for backlit sign copy area, backlit awnings or canopies are specifically prohibited. This includes backlit awnings or canopies on, for instance, service stations, convenience stores or other retail establishments. Furthermore, pre-wiring of awnings or canopies for back-lighting is prohibited.

Ancillary Structures: Ancillary structures, like car washes, cashier booths and canopies over gas pumps will incorporate the same architectural detailing, design elements, materials, colors and roof design as the principal structure, including a comparable peaked-roof pitch and parapet or cornice treatments.

Screening of Shopping Carts: Screening needs to be provided for all outdoor storage of customer shopping carts adjacent to the building. Shopping cart areas shall be screened by a four-foot-high (minimum) wall. The exterior face of the screen wall should be architecturally treated, for instance, by using colors, materials, finish or trim, in a manner consistent with that of the adjacent Primary or Secondary Façade.

Screening of Ground Level Equipment: A wall of sufficient height should surround any exterior ground-level mechanical equipment. The wall should completely screen the equipment from view. This includes any equipment like food freezers, air handling units and the like which may be located between any structure and an adjacent residential area or right-of-way. The screening wall should appear as an architectural extension of the principle building and will incorporate cap and architectural trim and features consistent with the adjacent facade. When such equipment is visible only from adjacent commercial or industrial uses and not a right-of-way, the screen wall may instead be painted to match the color of the building.

Exterior Building Colors:

Colors and color schemes possessing electric, fluorescent or neon qualities are not permitted on the exterior of any buildings or structures.
A maximum of three different colors may be used on the exterior of any building. One additional color may be used for highlighting the trim or cornice work. A color composition may be repeated where a clear and distinctive architectural break is incorporated which gives the appearance of a separate building.

Graphics, color schemes and/or murals are not permitted on building exteriors except as may be permitted within an approved signage proposal and otherwise consistent with the Orange County Code of Ordinances.
**REQUIRED ROOF TREATMENTS: Optional Design Features**

The intent of requiring a minimum of roof treatment is to promote visual interest, to avoid large, monolithic roof planes and to screen rooftop equipment. The roof design standards below apply to all principle structures as well as free-standing ancillary or secondary structures like kiosks, cashier booths and car wash enclosures.

Single and multiple-tenant buildings are required to incorporate variations in the roofline peaks and features which are architecturally consistent with the building's mass and scale. Roofs shall incorporate at least two of the following features:

- Decorative parapets which extend a minimum of three feet above the finished roof surface and which are high enough to block the view of any mechanical equipment or fixtures which may be located on the roof.

- A three-dimensional cornice treatment which measures a minimum of 12 inches in height and which includes three vertical (not horizontal) changes in plane and a variety of thicknesses in relief ranging from greatest at the top to the least at the bottom thereby giving visual weight to the upper most plane.

- Overhanging eaves that extend at least three feet beyond the supporting walls with a minimum fascia depth of six inches.

- Three or more roof/peak planes per façade.

- A sloping roof height (measured from the top of the supporting wall vertically to the peak of the sloping roof) shall not exceed the average height of the supporting walls. The sloping roof height shall not be less than a pitch of 4:12. However, a pitch of 3:12 may be acceptable depending on the mass and scale and elevations and renderings showing the appropriateness and compatibility of the design.

- Any other treatment that meets the spirit and intent of the Ordinance.

Backlit awnings used as a mansard or canopy roof shall be prohibited in both single and multiple-tenant buildings.

Exterior rooftop equipment including any HVAC roof refrigeration or other mechanical fixtures shall be concealed from eye-level view from any public right-of-way and from any adjacent properties by incorporating a parapet wall extension and capped cornice treatments.
REQUIRED CUSTOMER SERVICE TREATMENTS

In addition to providing protection from the sun and shelter from adverse weather conditions, customer service treatments also provide a visually-inviting space for visitors and enhance the streetscape perspective. The following requirements are not applicable to single-tenant buildings with a gross floor area of 10,000 square feet or less, or to multiple-tenant buildings and projects with a gross floor area of less than 20,000 square feet.

Single-tenant buildings with a gross floor area of more than 10,000 square feet, but less than 20,000 square feet, shall have a highly visible primary customer entrance.

Single-tenant buildings with more than 20,000 square feet of gross floor area shall incorporate the same, highly visible primary customer entrance and incorporate decorative landscape planters or wing walls with integrated landscaping.

Multiple-tenant buildings and projects that have more than 20,000 square feet of gross floor area shall incorporate the following:

- Highly-visible primary customer service entrances on the anchor tenant structure(s).

- Decorative landscape planters or wing walls and intermittent, shaded outdoor gathering spaces located in association with the customer entrance or integrated with the pedestrian circulation path of the complex.
The intent of this section is to avoid the construction of building facades that lack visual interest by requiring at least a minimum of architectural detailing facades.

All facades of buildings with a gross floor area of 20,000 square feet or more shall be required to incorporate at least three of the treatments listed below. At least one of these treatments shall repeat horizontally and all such design elements shall repeat at intervals of no more than 30 feet, either horizontally or vertically.

All facades of buildings with a gross floor area of less than 20,000 square feet shall be required to incorporate at least two of the treatments listed below and again, at least one of these treatments shall repeat horizontally.

All such design elements shall repeat at intervals of no more than 25 feet, either horizontally or vertically.

Optional Façade Treatments

- Expression of a vertical architectural treatment with a minimum width of 12 inches.
- Building step-backs, offsets or projections involving a minimum of three feet in depth.
- Color change.
- Texture and/or material change.
- Architectural banding.
- Pattern change.
- Any other treatment that meets the spirit and intent of the Ordinance.

Example of appropriate commercial façade
This commercial façade has visual interest achieved through the use of natural materials, variation in horizontal and vertical articulations, thoughtful use of windows and color change.
Drive-through lanes and windows shall satisfy all of the following standards:

Drive-through windows/lanes located between the right-of-way and the associated building shall incorporate an eight-foot-wide landscape buffer extending the entire length of the drive-through cueing or stacking area. (see landscaping of drive-through lanes Code Section 24-4)

Drive-through windows or lanes that are visible from a right-of-way or roadway will be screened by a five-foot-wide landscape buffer that extends the entire length of the drive-through cueing or stacking area.

A permanent porte-cochere structure shall be constructed over the drive-through, service and any other associated customer service windows. The porte-cochere(s) shall extend the width of the drive and be a minimum of 20 feet in length. The porte-cochere(s) shall be structurally and architecturally-integrated into the building and provide architectural detailing and roof treatments that are consistent with the facade and roof design of the building. The porte-cochere may encroach into the side yard setback.

Example of acceptable drive-through
The above photo is an example of an acceptable porte-cochere over a drive-through.

Example of unacceptable drive-through
The photo shows an unacceptable example; the structure needs to extend over the entire width of the second drive-through lane.
Service areas and loading docks are prohibited from locations adjacent to any roadway unless they are enclosed on all sides. All sides of the enclosure must replicate the architectural detailing, materials, finish material and landscaping of the principal structure’s Primary Façade.

Service areas and dumpsters shall be visually screened from public view by a masonry wall constructed to a minimum height of 6 feet above finished grade.

Service area and dumpster areas shall be directed away from any adjacent residential developments.

No part of a dumpster or the materials stored within a service area are to extend above the required masonry wall.

The masonry wall shall be constructed of decoratively-finished concrete block, brick, stucco or other decorative material. The wall shall be detailed so as to replicate the architectural style of the principal structure.

No chain link, unfinished concrete block (painted or otherwise), barbed wire or wood will be permitted materials as part of a wall.

Each enclosure shall include a decorative, opaque gate equal in height to the masonry wall.

Each service area, loading dock and dumpster requiring fencing shall further comply with the landscape requirements in Code section 24-4.
Stormwater ponds and open drainage ways shall, in addition to serving necessary stormwater runoff functions, be designed to function as a visual amenity. Stormwater ponds that do not require fencing may be incorporated within the design of any required landscaping yard provided that the landscape yard is a minimum of 15 feet wide.
Curb stops are required wherever a parking stall abuts a pedestrian walkway.

Pedestrian walkways shall be a minimum of five feet wide and curbed wherever possible. If, however, a lack of available space creates a parking design challenge, walkways should be seven feet wide to address any potential vehicular overhang encroachment.

Shaded project sidewalk and pedestrian crosswalk systems shall be integrated within the project’s design and coordinated to move people safely and comfortably to and from buildings, parking areas and adjacent rights-of-ways. Safe and pleasant pedestrian circulation is accomplished by creating well-defined, shaded pedestrian corridors which are, to greatest extent possible, separated from vehicular use areas.

Pedestrian crossings are to be identified and highlighted with signage and constructed of special paving materials (not simply with paint) in order to identify them as such. Concrete/colored brick pavers, stamped concrete or other paving materials are all acceptable.