

City of Hazleton  
**Downtown Overlay District  
Illustrated Design Guidelines**

Published by the Greater Hazleton Chamber of Commerce  
Downtown Overlay District Review Committee

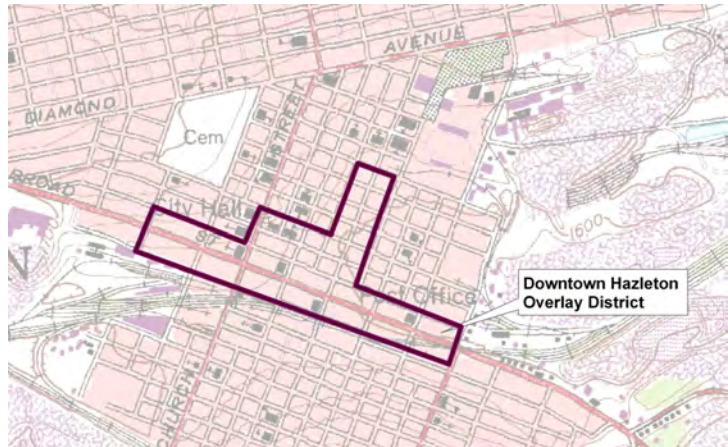
20 West Broad Street  
Hazleton, PA 18201

(p) 570-455-1509 (f) 570-450-2013  
dpalermo@hazletonchamber.org  
www.hazletonchamber.org

## The Downtown Hazleton Overlay District

Historically, Downtown Hazleton was a compact commercial district with bustling shops, restaurants, and a variety of other business establishments that served the surrounding region. Many of the downtown's buildings, which were built in early 20th-century, were designed for retail use to appeal to shoppers who walked the city's streets, including inviting entrances, window displays, and signage that drew pedestrians off the city's street and into the building interiors.

Due to changing economic conditions, many of the core downtown's buildings no longer serve their intended retail purpose and have been vacated or adapted for office space or other institutional uses that no longer need to be as inviting to the pedestrian, particularly along Broad Street. Others suffer from years of deferred maintenance, while others have been demolished. This has left the commercial core with many empty buildings in need of adaptive reuse and renovation, and vacant lots that deter pedestrian activity within the downtown and discourage investment. A lack of standards and guidelines has also resulted in lack of a unified streetscape, with many types of awnings, signs, and materials applied to building facades.



*The boundaries of the Downtown Overlay District include both sides of Broad Street between Locust and Poplar Streets; both sides of Church Street between Broad and Maple Streets; both sides of Laurel Street between Broad and Maple Streets; and both sides of Wyoming Street between Broad and Holly Streets.*

The Broad Street Corridor Project, which is expected to be complete in 2013, will result in new sidewalks, lighting, street trees, and other streetscape improvements along Broad Street. In order to build upon these improvements, the City of Hazleton has established a Downtown Overlay District to guide future development and rehabilitation of the City's commercial core that will make the downtown more visually cohesive and pedestrian friendly. Specifically, the goals of this overlay district are to:

- Preserve and reinforce the historic commercial architecture and urban character of the core downtown district while allowing innovative and creative infill development, site design, and architecture that continuously evolves over time;
- Promote a vibrant downtown that supports commercial and cultural activities;
- Enhance the pedestrian safety and orientation of downtown Hazleton to encourage walkability;
- Enhance the City's attractiveness to residents and visitors alike; and
- Promote downtown investment, stimulate business, and attract new business.

**The Downtown Overlay District guidelines are not meant to stifle creativity or individuality.** The City of Hazleton does not want every building in downtown to be painted the same color or be adorned with the exact same signage and awnings. Individual business and property owners are encouraged to be creative in thinking about the image that new and renovated buildings will portray as part of the entire downtown community. When in doubt, do not hesitate to call the Greater Hazleton Chamber of Commerce's Downtown Overlay Review Committee office at 570-455-1509 with questions and ideas. Sample photos, reference materials, paint palettes and awning materials and colors are available to all downtown business and property owners interested in making improvements.

## Illustrated Design Guidelines

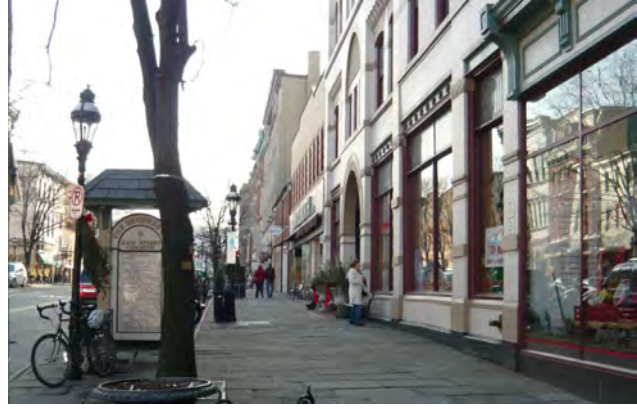
The following illustrations are provided to help communicate the intent of the Downtown Hazleton Overlay District Ordinance. It should be noted that only select standards are illustrated within this document, and that lack of illustrations for the remaining standards does not in any way excuse property owners from the need to abide by all requirements of the ordinance.

### *New Construction:*

New infill development shall attempt to maintain the horizontal rhythm of primary street facades by using a similar alignment of windows, floor spacing, cornices, awnings, and other architectural elements.



*New buildings shall not be set back from the build-to line to accommodate parking or driveways. Source: Barry Isett & Associates, Inc.*



*Example of how a consistent build-to line and buildings with a regular rhythm of windows, doors, and other architectural features create a comfortable and interesting pedestrian environment (Bethlehem, PA). Source: Barry Isett & Associates, Inc.*

### *Rehabilitation of Historic Buildings (listed or deemed eligible for listing on the National Register)*

Distinctive stylistic features or examples of skilled craftsmanship that characterize historic buildings shall, whenever possible, be preserved. Removal or alteration of any historic material or distinctive architectural features shall be avoided. Deteriorated architectural features shall be repaired or replaced in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's *Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*. In the event that replacement is necessary, the new material shall match the material being replaced in arrangement, design, color, texture, and other visual qualities.



*Example of how the 1928 American Legion Building (deemed eligible for listing on the National Register) has distinct Art Deco architectural features that should be preserved, including the pane windows, stone window sills, stone carvings, unique brick patterns and colors, and projecting entry. Source: Barry Isett & Associates, Inc.*



*Example of how the ca. 1924 American Bank and Trust Company (deemed eligible for listing on the National Register) has distinct Neoclassical architectural features that should be preserved, including the portico, stone columns, and decorative cornice. Source: Barry Isett & Associates, Inc.*





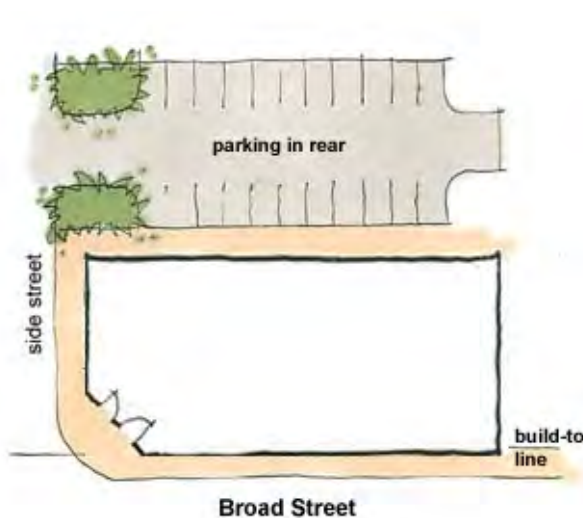
While not formally recognized as historically significant, there are many historic buildings within the Overlay District, such as this one along Laurel Street, with important character-defining architectural elements that should be preserved. In this example, bay windows, decorative molding, recessed entryways, and glass storefronts with residential apartments above add visual interest and diversity to the streetscape.



Example of how covering over these character-defining architectural features (windows and storefronts) with stucco to accommodate residential use on the first floor ruins the character and repetition of the original architectural features. Source: Barry Isett & Associates, Inc.

### Area and Bulk Requirements

No minimum front or side yard setbacks are required within the Overlay District. The primary facade of each building shall maintain the established build-to line of the block(s) on which it is located.

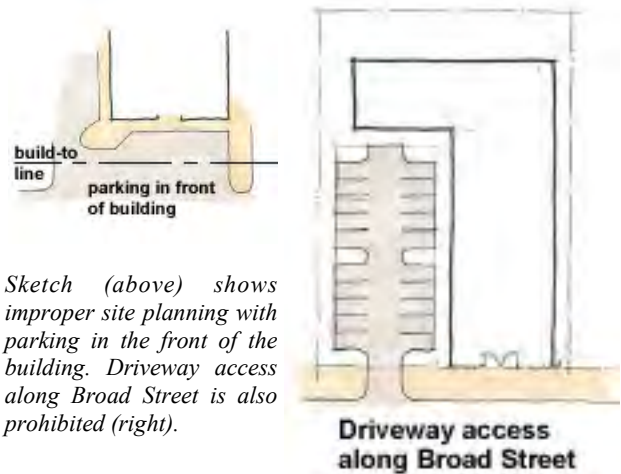


Sketch (above) showing proper site planning with new building constructed up to the build-to line with parking to the rear.

Hazle Drugs (at right) is a good example of a properly sited building with a well-defined public pedestrian entrance at the corner. Its building façade is oriented towards both Broad and Wyoming Streets, and its length is broken up by many windows that create visual interest for the pedestrian.

### Building Orientation and Entrances

In the case of properties located along Broad Street, the front facade of buildings shall be oriented towards Broad Street with the main public pedestrian entrance on this front facade. On corner properties, a secondary entrance along the side street is encouraged but not required. However, facade treatments, such as those listed in Section 12, shall be required for both facades.



Sketch (above) shows improper site planning with parking in the front of the building. Driveway access along Broad Street is also prohibited (right).





*New construction should be a minimum height of two stories and a maximum height of four stories. Source: Barry Isett & Associates, Inc.*



*Example of how consistent building heights create a cohesive aesthetic and comfortable pedestrian environment (Annapolis, Maryland). Source: Barry Isett & Associates, Inc.*

### *Windows and Facades*

At least 40 percent of the length of the ground floor facades between an elevation of three feet and seven feet above grade shall consist of windows, glass doors, or other transparent building surfaces providing for an unobstructed visual connection from the outside to the inside of the building.



*Example of how a consistent build-to line and buildings with large windows at street level create a comfortable and interesting pedestrian environment (Bethlehem, PA). Source: Barry Isett & Associates, Inc.*



*Upper story windows of front facades shall not be boarded or covered, and shall comprise a minimum of 30 percent of the facade above the ground floor. Source: Barry Isett & Associates, Inc.*



*Reflective, black glass and glass tinted more than 40% in windows and doors is prohibited on the ground floor facade. Source: Barry Isett & Associates, Inc.*



*Blank facades shall not be permitted along any exterior wall facing Broad, Church, Laurel, or Wyoming Streets within the Overlay District where such wall abuts a public sidewalk. Source: Barry Isett & Associates, Inc.*



### *Building Materials/Colors*

Painted concrete block, aluminum, vinyl, or fiberglass siding, and asphalt shingles are not allowed on building facades adjacent to the public right of way (on the ground floor). Exterior colors shall be compatible with the colors on adjacent buildings, subject to review by the Downtown Overlay District Review Committee and approval by the Planning Commission. Proposed colors shall be specified for any building exterior treatment prior to painting of any structure, windows, awnings, or other façade feature.



*Two examples where ground-floor building facades have been painted a different color from what already exists on the upper floors. In this case, the Committee would recommend that the ground-floor facades be painted to match the existing color palate found above, and that the awning colors also compliment what already exists. Source: Barry Isett & Associates, Inc.*

*Example where a building undergoing renovation has been painted with colors compatible with the adjacent building. Complimentary stone veneer has been added to the ground floor façade and the existing cornice have been painted to accentuate its detailed molding. Source: Barry Isett & Associates, Inc.*

### *Off-street Surface Parking*

In instances where parking is to be provided on a vacant lot or a portion of the property that is not occupied by a building or structure, the parking lot edge abutting a public sidewalk shall be delineated with an 18 to 36 inch high wall, decorative fencing material, landscaping, or a combination of elements to create a buffer between the parking area and the pedestrian and provide continuity of the build-to line of adjacent buildings.



*Example where the Christ Lutheran Church parking lot along Church Street is effectively screened by landscaping. Source: Barry Isett & Associates, Inc.*

*Asphalt shingles and aluminum siding are not permitted on building facades at the ground floor level. Source: Barry Isett & Associates, Inc.*

### Lighting

Lighting within the Overlay District should serve to illuminate facade entrances and signage to provide an adequate level of pedestrian safety while enhancing the aesthetic appeal of the buildings.



Example where lighting is directed to illuminate the building sign and entrance (Annapolis, MD). Source: Barry Isett & Associates, Inc.



Example of canvas awning affixed to the Broad Street Business Exchange. Source: Barry Isett & Associates, Inc.

### Awnings

Awnings are encouraged to provide sun protection for display windows, shelter for pedestrians, visual interest, and an exterior sign panel for businesses. All awnings shall support the development of a unified urban character within the Overlay District. Awnings must be constructed of durable, protective, and water repellent materials, such as canvas or vinyl or architectural materials that are intended to complement the design of the building. Plastic or fiberglass awnings are not allowed. Awnings must project a minimum of 36 inches from the building. Recommended color palettes for awnings that are maintained by the Downtown Overlay District Review Committee should be reviewed prior to beginning work. No awning shall be backlit. Awnings may display only the name of the business conducted or products or services sold therein, which may appear on the vertical face only.



Two examples of awnings that do not meet the standards of this ordinance. In both cases, the awnings are too narrow and constructed of plastic. In the example at left, the amount of text also makes it appear cluttered, and an awning constructed as part of the building already exists above it, so it appears awkwardly placed. In the example at right, the awning obscures the transom window above the storefront and detracts from the character of the building. The example at left also has too many signs affixed to the building façade, as no commercial establishment shall be permitted a total of more than two signs. Source: Barry Isett & Associates, Inc.



## Signage

Signs shall be architecturally compatible with the style, materials, colors, and details of the building to which they are affixed and with other nearby signs and buildings while providing for adequate identification of the business. Signs shall not be dominant but shall be proportionate, appropriate, and complimentary to the building and existing signs and surroundings. Logos or graphics are permitted so long as they are harmonious with the overall design.



*In this example, window lettering is appropriately applied to simply convey the business name, hours, and services.*



*In the example above, a sign is inappropriately mounted to the top of an existing awning. In the example at left, the sign is inappropriately spray-painted on the building.*



*In this example, a gooseneck lamp is appropriately used to illuminate the projecting sign, and prevents direct light from shining on abutting properties or in the normal line of vision of the public using the streets or sidewalks.*



*In the example at left (Jim Thorpe, PA), colorful projecting signs are hung from decorative brackets. While each is different, they create a unified aesthetic due to their similar size and position. In the example at right, the sign is affixed directly on the building and complements the paint color, historical character, and symmetry of the architecture. Source: Barry Isett & Associates, Inc.*