



NATIONAL TRUST for HISTORIC PRESERVATION

The National Trust develops approaches and resources to help communities respond to chain drugstores. This tipsheet identifies design issues to create a drugstore that is most compatible with a community's character.

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COMPATIBLE NEW DRUGSTORE CONSTRUCTION

The successful revitalization of older Main Streets utilizes the historic character of the downtown or commercial district to its comparative advantage. Preserving what is special and unique about a downtown sets it apart from the multitude of look-alike new developments. Additionally important is the preservation of the pedestrian quality of a street. In a walkable Main Street shoppers visit a number of stores. This synergy is destroyed as car-oriented drive-throughs and massive parking lots make walking infeasible.

The good design of new buildings starts with placing them on the site so that the pedestrian nature of the downtown is maintained. In an historic area one then looks at the context, history, and building rhythm of the streetscape. By respecting the streetscape it is possible to construct new buildings that add to rather than diminish the downtown's character. Ultimately, the goal is to create a building that appears to be part of the larger streetscape -- a new building that exhibits unifying elements of the surrounding buildings. Good design for new drugstores can make a new store appear to be an integral part of the community it serves, rather than a suburban or highway prototype plopped in the middle of an historic area.

By respecting such things as height, scale, and building materials, it is possible to construct new buildings in a way that meets the needs of modern companies while at the same time respecting the historic character of a community. This does not mean new drugstores must be constructed to look old, but rather they should be constructed to be compatible with surrounding buildings. Infill architecture should not be designed to copy historic buildings, but it should remain consistent in size, scale, and character to adjacent buildings. By keeping the predominant design features of the downtown in mind, a new building can be a welcome addition and an overall enhancement to the streetscape as well as to the community.

Some cities such as Chicago have secured design agreements with major national drugstore chains regarding new construction in the city's older neighborhoods. While a formal agreement may not be feasible in every community, there are basic design principles that should be followed to promote good new drugstore construction. These principles can help your community welcome the services of a new drugstore, while retaining the character of the community that makes it so special.

DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

SIZE, SHAPE, AND SCALE

- Site Plan.** The primary façade of the newly constructed building should front at least one principal street whenever possible. Additionally, drive-throughs should not be placed on main streets, but rather someplace less obtrusive.
- Lot Size.** The predominant lot size of surrounding buildings should be respected; building anything significantly larger is inappropriate.
- Setback.** The setback of a new building, meaning how far back from the street it is constructed, should be consistent with adjacent buildings. Commercial buildings are traditionally built to the sidewalk.

- ❑ **Height.** Height should be similar to that of adjacent buildings. New construction should respect the floor to floor heights of surrounding buildings as well as the height-to-width ratio seen on the block, thereby creating a uniform streetscape without visually jarring gaps.
- ❑ **Roofline.** Rooflines should follow the predominant styles of area buildings. Similarly, the surrounding cornice line should be reflected in a compatible manner.

MATERIALS

- ❑ Materials should be compatible in color and texture to those used in the surrounding area.
- ❑ It is best to use the same materials used on adjacent buildings whenever possible.
- ❑ Avoid using materials that were unavailable when surrounding buildings were originally constructed. For example, it is inappropriate to use synthetic stucco when all surrounding buildings are composed of brick or wood.

WINDOWS AND DOORS

- ❑ New drugstores on Main Street should have storefront windows. Often times drugstore companies are resistant to windows because they utilize prime display space. At the very least, shadow-box windows should be considered when a corporate design does not call for actual windows.
- ❑ Windows and doors should be similar in height, size, and orientation to those in adjacent buildings.
- ❑ Any pattern created by window and door placement should likewise be respected.

PARKING

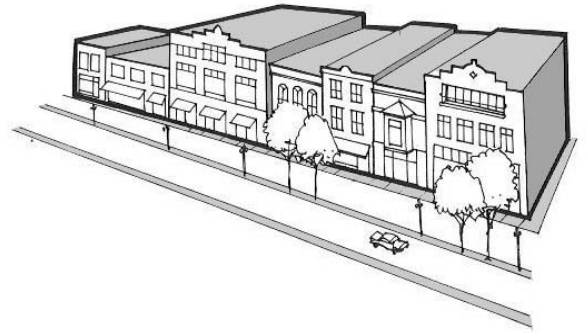
- ❑ Locating a sizable parking lot in front of a building is inappropriate.
- ❑ Encourage on-street parking when feasible.
- ❑ Whenever possible, parking lots should be located to the rear or side of the new drugstore, in a location that is unobtrusive to the main streetscape.

LANDSCAPING

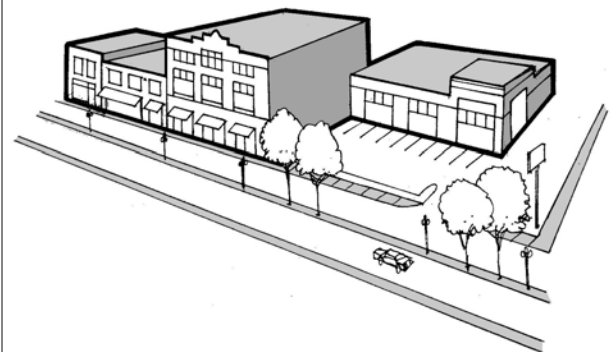
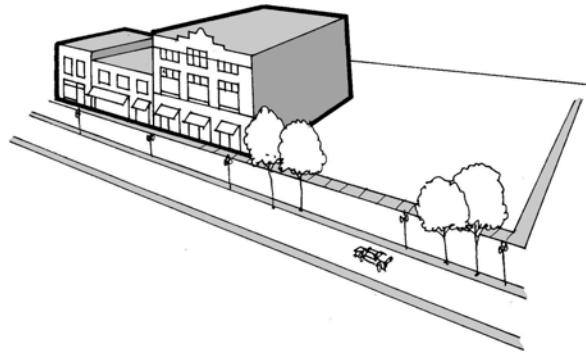
- ❑ Landscaping can be used to create a buffer between the parking lot and drugstore.
- ❑ Landscaping may also be used to soften the design of a new building by including benches and fences, built of materials compatible to the building, as well as vegetation.

SIGNAGE

- ❑ Signage should compliment the scale, design and materials of the new drugstore.
- ❑ Communities may consider placing a height cap on signage under their local zoning requirements, or establish rules regarding maximum size dimensions and placement of signs.



Historic downtown streetscape (ABOVE), and same streetscape, following loss of half the block (BELOW).



Conventional new drugstore approach to design and site planning (ABOVE), and new drugstore design that maintains "street wall," scale, with massing and parking in rear (BELOW).

