



APPENDIX F

DESIGN GUIDELINE RECOMMENDATIONS



Avondale Estates Existing Conditions Analysis: Review of existing documents and recommended changes.

Review of design guidelines, including Avondale Estates Code – Article VIII Historic Preservation ordinance; Avondale Estates Historic District Residential Guidelines, and Avondale Estates Architectural Review Board Design Guidelines, and recommendations on changes that could remove barriers to development and will help development to be more predictable and attractive.

Issues to address are:

- Content
- Format
- Presentation

Content:

The purpose of both documents is to provide property owners, developers, contractors, board members, and commissioners with the information and tools needed to guide renovations or new construction towards a style that recognizes the historical, cultural, and aesthetic heritage of the City and is deemed appropriate in appearance; one that is in keeping with the character of the Avondale Historic District. They are intended to educate and guide users through project development and design review. Both documents contain graphic content designed to provide direction and text to explain pertinent procedures. However, the Avondale Estates Historic District Residential Guidelines tie the desirable outcome to how the following items; plan, architecture, and landscape features are addressed while the Avondale Estates Architectural Review Board Design Guidelines tie successful context appropriate architecture, for both renovations and new construction, to this expanded list of site, placement, orientation, scale, footprint, as well as elements of structure, form, materials, openings, and architectural detailing, setting, streetfront, streetscape, landscape, illumination, and parking. The former is more general than the later and this distinction is never explained.

When reviewing the two documents it can be difficult to determine if the AE Historic District Residential Guidelines aim to inform the AE Architectural Review Board Design Guidelines stylistically, or govern them, or vice versa. In reading the two documents very carefully it seems that 1) the Residential Guidelines apply to all residential architecture in Avondale, not just that in the historic district (pg. 9), and 2) the Architectural Review Board Design Guidelines apply to all building in the City of Avondale “encompassing historic and non-historic properties, residential and commercial structures, alternations to extant properties and infill development” (pg. 3), which implies it is the true governing document for all development. This might require some clarification or simplification.

The AE Historic District Residential Guidelines decision making process utilizes Preservation Criteria and Design Review when evaluating proposed projects and provides a list of commonly asked questions. The AE Architectural Review Board Design Guidelines decision making process utilizes Development Criteria and Design Review when evaluating proposed projects and provides a list of commonly asked questions. It is unclear if these two approaches are similar or different, and mention of the “Criteria” occurs on the first page of the corresponding document and not in the Definitions. If these two kinds of Criteria are significant to the historic and non-historic properties, residential and commercial structures, alternations to extant properties and infill development, i.e. everything that occurs in Avondale, it would be appropriate to explain what the Criteria are, how they differ, and how they are applied by the associated governing body.

As a side note, on page 8 of the Architectural Review Board Design Guidelines it states that Design Criteria are also known as “standards and guidelines” which are identified as a separate section in the table of Contents of that document. This may be a tad confusing or counterproductive as the document has already been identified as being a set of Guidelines in the title. Simplification and the reduction or elimination of synonyms throughout both documents might be more helpful overall.

All other applicable City of Avondale codes should be fully named and the appropriate sections should be referenced in both documents when necessary to clarify design or submission requirements. It is recommended they be mentioned early on and specifically referenced as appropriate in each section.

Both documents provide Definitions that pertain to the content and process being presented. However, there appear to be some definitions missing that would further the usefulness of the documents (*a list can be provided*). In addition to providing some more definitions, the simplification and the reduction or elimination of potentially confusing synonyms throughout both documents might be helpful.

Format:

Where similar content is included, it is not presented in the same order and/or format. This is counter productive; the two Guidelines should act to reinforce each other and it would seem that the order and manner in which information is presented should be the same for ease of use. Ideally, the two would be combined into one document, with all shared principles communicated at the beginning of the new/combined document. If the Residential Guidelines and the Architectural Review Board Design Guidelines are joined, it makes sense to adjust the Table of Contents as follows:

Acknowledgements & Contacts

History

Heritage of the Area

The Historic District Designation/Map

The Rest of Avondale

Text & Graphics

Purpose/Intent

Preserve & Enhance Existing Architecture

Locations/Maps

Guide Future Growth/New Construction

How to Use the Guidelines

Text & Graphics

Procedure/Review Process

Roles

Common Questions

Assistance/Available Resources

Application/Criteria

Evaluation of Compatibility & Impact

Required Documents

Sample Application/Other Required Documents

Site Plan:

Building Placement

Building Orientation

Building Scale

Building Footprint

Other Applicable City Codes

Architecture:

Building Forms

Building Materials

Building Openings

Building Details

Accessory Structures

Other Applicable City Codes

Landscape Architecture: Includes Hardscape items such as Streetscape, Illumination, Parking, and Site Furnishings, not just Plant Palettes, Planting Plans, and Planting Details.

Types of Landscapes

Other Applicable City Codes

Definitions/Glossary

Text & Graphics

The Definitions provided in each document appear in different sections; Definitions, Glossary, and sometimes without a heading. They also appear in within a variety of different graphic conventions. This is potentially confusing to the reader, who may not recognize when a definition is presented. Simplification of the presentation, standardization of the location of definitions, and the reduction or elimination of synonyms throughout both documents might also be helpful.

Presentation:

The document design of both items under consideration is problematic as the page layout of both the AE Historic District Residential Guidelines and the AE Architectural Review Board Design Guidelines is difficult to navigate. These Guidelines are technical and impart important information. The design and organization of the Guideline documents should reflect that. The pages should be orderly and easy to follow. The Tables of Contents should follow the same order and each page should be identified by a page number.

The graphic background, which is a combination of shaded boxes and lines, is very distracting. The existing background graphic should be discarded. Additionally, following a vertical 8.5x11 format rather than a horizontal one would add to clarity.

The font styles utilized in each document are okay and seem to be more or less consistent regarding font size and spacing, but not style. Additionally, both utilize lower case letters for headings, which seems rather informal given the nature of these documents. The pages also contain horizontally oriented text in either the center of or on the right side of a page. This is unnecessary and distracting. The font should be easy on the eye and no less than 10 point in size, preferably 11 point.

In the AE Architectural Review Board Design Guidelines the term “Basics” is used to call attention to Plan Submission Requirements and/or items required by the Application Checklist, and it is never stated where the Checklist can be found. Requirements should be noted by that term alone and the user should be clearly told where the Checklist is located. Also the “Key” (S# or G#) identified on page 10 (User’s Guide/How to use this Booklet) appear in a small and unusual font style that is either hard to read or does not register when viewing the page. Perhaps because there are some many other things competing for your attention on the page. As a general note, if you need a User’s Guide to help you understand how to use a regulating document that may be a sign there is something inherently wrong with what has been created.

In the AE Historic District Residential Guidelines terms which require explanation appear in both “Definitions” sections and a “Glossary.” Both contain a different set of terms and each utilizes a different font style and size. This is confusing.

When utilizing “Text & Graphics” examples to demonstrated preferred architectural styles such as Tudor Revival, English Cottage, Colonial Revival, Craftsman, Dutch Colonial Revival, Eclectic (Mission, Tudor, Craftsman), Prairie, and Renaissance Revival, it is important to define what makes that example a successful representation of the style, particularly if it is characterized as being “Eclectic.” It is equally important to identify and to explain what works in current/modern buildings that complement the styles listed above, not just the existing historic examples. In their current incarnations, this is not clear in either document.

Images of architectural elements, or other regulated features, should be accompanied by concise and well thought out notes that define what is acceptable as it is vital to explain why the image being referenced is appropriate. It is not enough to show a single photo of a building with out an associated description and perhaps even specific notes with liter lines going to the element(s) that pertain. Up to three or four images of each architectural style, with an associated description, might be more useful in demonstrating the range of that particular type of architecture.

Both documents provide a list of Avondale street addresses when a local building of appropriate visual character is located. Unfortunately there are few or no notes to accompany the address which will help the applicant/viewer to understand what is “good” about that particular example. A Visual Appendix or reference guide could be created using the listed addresses, along with a bullet list or paragraph of text for each that identifies the successful elements of the building and explains why they are acceptable. Other aspects of existing properties in Avondale are identified as being good examples of a particular concern, but are not accompanied by an image for the “good” example. A consistent approach should be applied to both image inclusion and text references and ideally the two are tied together in both documents.

In some places where a diagram and imagery are presented together; for example in the AE Architectural Review Board Design Guidelines where a building façade diagram is accompanied by photos, the Key/Legend or liter lines and labels which should link the pieces of information to one another are missing. It should not be assumed that everyone understands what is intended by the pairings. When this happens the value of the information presented is often diluted and/or confusing.