STERLING NEIGHBORHOOD DESIGN GUIDELINES
Sterling Neighborhood Design Guidelines

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A.1 Purpose of These Guidelines
These design guidelines provide a framework for encouraging appropriate building rehabilitation and new construction in the Sterling Neighborhood. They will ensure that work done on properties complement the overall development context and architectural styles of the neighborhood. Whether you are a homeowner planning to renovate a residence, or a developer preparing to build commercial or housing units, the overall result should be quality, influential investment. In general, these guidelines:

✓ Provide user-friendly, illustrated document for citizens, developers, governmental staff, interested partners;

✓ Provide direction to homeowners, investors and developers for the appropriate rehabilitation of existing buildings and quality new construction to maintain and enhance the neighborhood;

✓ Enable citizens and governmental reviewers to work with potential development partners and neighbors to encourage quality development;

✓ Assist residents in maintaining existing houses and buildings;

✓ Assist residents and businesses in incorporating Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles in development to promote neighborhood safety and well-being.

A.2 How to Use These Guidelines
These guidelines are intended to be used voluntarily by residents to maintain and rehabilitate their homes. They are intended to be used as a cooperative guide by governmental administrators and investors to ensure quality design in renovation projects and new development.

These guidelines include the following sections:

✓ Neighborhood Development Patterns and Forms – one and two story homes on small lots

✓ The Basic Design and Parts of a House – porch, roof, doors, windows, siding, paint, additions, accessory buildings and structures (garages, decks, and fences)

✓ Additional Design Considerations – yards, universal design, safety, energy efficiency

✓ New Houses – lot placement, building form/mass, design features

✓ Neighborhood Commercial and Institutional Buildings – lot placement, design features, landscaping, lighting

A flowchart is provided on the following page that describes the process for rehabilitating an existing house or building a new building.
Design Review Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rehabilitation of Existing House</th>
<th>Step 1: Check to see what city/county zoning and building permits are needed.</th>
<th>Step 2: Review design guidelines for recommendations. Carefully look at features like porches, windows, doors, roofs and building materials. These make a difference!</th>
<th>Step 3: Share information and talk with your contractor and other neighborhood advocates about preferred building approaches and materials.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New House or Commercial Building</td>
<td>Step 1: Review design guidelines for recommendations on building design and site development. Ensure that information is coordinated with designer or contractor.</td>
<td>Step 2: Work with city/county planning staff to determine zoning requirements and to review proposed building design and site development guidelines.</td>
<td>Step 3: Share proposed development plans with neighbors and neighborhood advocates. Be willing to consider suggestions to benefit the neighborhood.</td>
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</table>
A.3 Sterling Development Patterns and Forms

The Sterling Neighborhood consists primarily of small one- and two-story homes, with some townhomes, churches and commercial buildings. Generally, the neighborhood can be described as having a traditional neighborhood pattern with narrow streets (20-40 feet in width), small lots (average 40’) and buildings set close to the street (setbacks of 20 feet or less). The area north of Dunbar Street is somewhat different in character than the south of Dunbar, exhibiting a greater mixture of uses – residences, offices, and multi-family buildings.

A.4 The Parts of a House

A house has “key parts” that are important design features for the building, the streetscape, and the neighborhood. These parts must be carefully constructed when renovating an existing home or building a new home in the neighborhood. The house and the yard must “fit together” to have curb appeal and enhance the overall character of the neighborhood. These contributing design “parts” are: the front porch, roof, windows/doors, siding, accessory structures and the front yard.

The Front Porch

The Front Porch adds important character and visual interest to the front of a house and to the street. Homes in the Sterling Neighborhood need a front porch. It is especially important in creating curb appeal and it encourages social interaction among neighbors. The front porch should be a prominent feature of the front of the house.

✓ Porches should be maintained and kept in good repair. Replace rotted floorboards and columns with similar architectural materials and sizes. Replace broken lattice work and attach it to the underside of the porch skirt board.
Typically, a front porch should extend at least one-half the width of the front of the house. In addition, a front porch should be deep enough to accommodate seating with comfortable leg room (6-8’ minimum).

Porch rails and balusters should match the architecture of the house and meet minimum building code standards. Balusters should be attached to top and bottom rails, rather than to the porch deck or stairs.

Porch columns should match the architectural style of the house. In Sterling, most columns are simple, rectangular wood columns. Repair existing columns where possible; if they need to be replaced, use columns of same style and materials.

All wood on porches should be painted. If pressure treated wood is used, it should be properly prepared, primed, and painted as soon as possible to match house trim.

An existing front porch should not be enclosed; it should be an outdoor space that relates to the street and neighborhood.
Doors and Windows
Doors and windows add character and symmetry to the front, sides and rear of a house. Like the front porch, the front door and windows are important architectural elements that add to a building’s character when viewed from the street.

- The front of a house should be designed to clearly define the primary entrance. One entry door should be located on the front of the house. The front door should be appealing and welcoming, drawing the eye and visitors to it. A front porch centered on the front door accentuates the primary entrance.

- A two-family building should have only one single door entry on the front elevation; if a second entrance is required, it should be located on the side or the rear of the building.

- All sides of the house should have windows, doors, and other architectural details; there should be no blank walls. Windows on the same floor should be the same height and arranged symmetrically; windows on different floors should be aligned. Generally, windows should be two times as tall as they are wide.

- Windows that are replaced should fit the original opening and maintain the proportion of the original window.

Roof
The roof of a house is a major structural feature that is important to the overall functioning and integrity of the house. The design qualities of a roof can make or break the overall look of the house from the street. Roof pitch and materials add character and dimension to the overall house.

- Roof pitch is important! Roofs in Sterling are typically side and front gable roofs with a minimum pitch of 6:12. Some roofs, like a hip roof, have a pitch of 8:12.

- Roofing materials in Sterling are primarily asphalt shingles. There are some metal roofs, particularly on porches and accessory structures. Architectural grade shingles are preferred because they provide a more attractive surface with deeper shadow lines, and last longer.

- Roofs need to have a sufficient overhang -- at least 12 inches and preferably, 16 inches. This provides good drainage away from the sides of the house and adds shadow-lines that help define architectural character.
Siding and Paint

Like the roof, the exterior side walls of a house provide character and are important to the overall structural stability and energy efficiency of the house. In Sterling, most of the houses have wood siding; there are few brick houses. Because siding must withstand exterior conditions, painting is required. In addition to the quality of the paint, the preparation of the siding before painting and where the paint is applied affect the overall attractiveness of the house and durability for the long-term.

- Siding should be horizontal wood or cement fiber (e.g., Hardy Plank) – these are the preferred materials. Siding should have 4” to 6” vertical trim at all windows, doors and outside corners.

- Although vinyl siding may be cost-efficient in the short-term, it is not recommended as it is not as durable and fades over time. Vinyl siding should only be used if this is the only affordable option. If it is used, it should match the width of the existing siding and be applied so that it does not cover over architectural details or frames for windows and doors.

- Paint should be applied on a well-prepared surface. One primary color should be used for the main body of the house and a contrasting, complementary color used for the trim. An additional color could be chosen for accenting special details or an entry door. However, a good rule of thumb is to stick to two colors, and no more than three.

Additions and Decks

The design and placement of home additions and decks are important to maintaining the overall appearance of the house from the street. Carefully consider how additions relate to the main structure and be sure that any new construction meets local codes.

- Building additions should be placed to the side or rear of the existing structure and positioned such that they are setback slightly from the original building. Additions should be lower in height than the main body of the house, and set back from the front wall.

- A side addition should not increase the width of the house by more than one-third.
✓ All exterior walls on an addition should include windows, doors and other details that match the original house.

✓ Building additions on the front of the house should maintain the front building line of the existing house and the common setback established by adjacent houses on the street.

✓ Adding a second floor to a one-story home should not make the home appear significantly larger than adjacent homes.

✓ Decks and patios should be located at the side or rear and if possible, screened from view of the street to ensure privacy.

**Accessory Structures - Garages, Fences, Storage Buildings**

Garages, fences, and other accessory buildings should be carefully positioned on the lot to enhance the appearance of the primary building and yards.

✓ Accessory buildings should be smaller than the main house.

✓ Accessory buildings like garages and storage buildings should be located at the rear of the property, to minimize their visibility from the street.

✓ Accessory buildings should be constructed of similar exterior materials and architectural details to those on the main house.

✓ If possible, locate garages to allow access from the side or from a rear alley. If a garage must be attached to the side of the house facing the street, it should be setback from the front of the main house and oriented to minimize view of the garage door. (The front door and porch of the house should be the primary visual elements.)

✓ If fencing is desired, use a wooden, painted picket fence in the front yard or areas visible from the street. Use chain link or solid privacy fencing only in rear yards that are not visible from the street. Consider a maintainable hedge for the front yard in lieu of a fence; keep it lower than 3.5 feet.
A.4 Additional Design Considerations

Yards

The yard is an important outdoor space that shapes the overall attractiveness of a house and the neighborhood. It should be carefully planned to enhance the house and provide attractive spaces for outdoor activities.

- Keep the front yard organized and well-maintained. Keep any trash bins, toys or stored materials at the rear or side of the house, away from view from the street.
- Plant shrubs or trees where they will not interfere with underground/overhead utility lines or obscure prominent features like windows, doors, or the front porch. Use low shrubs and flowers to accent the foundation of the house.
- Use natural wood mulch in planting beds, rather than ornamental rock.

Accessibility and Universal Design

It is always a good idea to improve the exterior and interior accessibility of a house when considering maintenance or renovations. Barrier-free access can provide both residents and visitors with flexible options for access, no matter what age or physical condition. Some simple things to look for and consider include:

- Ground entrances, with no stairs or thresholds.
- Wider entry and interior doors (36” wide openings preferred) and hallways (min.42” width).
- Lever handles on doors, rather than door knobs.
- Touch control lighting and switches set no higher than 48” above the floor. Receptacles at 18” above the floor
- Single lever faucets at sinks. Front controls on ranges and side by side refrigerators.
- Kitchen and bathroom layouts sized to allow easy access when in use.

Safety

Ensure that your property is secure by using crime prevention principles commonly known as Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED). These principles emphasize visibility, defining boundaries, controlling access, and maintaining property to encourage natural surveillance and prevent crime.
Boost Visibility:

✓ Provide a clear view to the street. Trim bushes and trees to allow a good view of the street from inside your house.

✓ Ensure that the front door is visible from both the street and the driveway.

✓ Install lighting at all exterior doors. Illuminate walkways. Be sure lights do not shine into neighbors’ windows or beyond your property.

✓ Install low landscape materials around the foundation, rather than large landscape plants that can grow and obstruct views and the building.

✓ When constructing a new house, include a front porch with windows that provide “eyes” on the street.

Define Boundaries:

✓ Use attractive fencing or low plantings to define property lines and direct people to entrance walkways and the front door.

✓ Carefully choose appropriate plant materials around the perimeter of the property and under ground-floor windows. Trees and shrubs are attractive and important design features that must be maintained and placed carefully in the yard.

Control Access:

✓ Ensure that all exterior doors are secure, fit tightly in door frames, and have locks that are durable. Use dead bolt locks on all exterior doors.

✓ Make sure all windows are operable and have working locks.

✓ Install “peep hole” viewers in exterior doors.

Maintain the Property:

✓ Maintain your property and the landscaping. Make the property appear well cared for and inhabited.

✓ Replace any broken windows or doors immediately. Remove graffiti promptly.
Energy Efficiency

An energy efficient home is more comfortable and cost efficient! How the house is placed on the lot and the types and placement of landscaping can make a big difference in terms of natural features and energy use. In addition, the physical construction of the house has a direct relationship to energy usage. It is important to look at wall and roof insulation, window and door construction, and interior household appliances.

- Maintain trees on your property – they can help reduce energy costs. Plant deciduous shade trees on the south side of your home to reduce cooling costs during summer months.

- Use energy efficient light bulbs for exterior and interior lighting. Use solar-powered landscape lights along walkways.

- Check for any air leaks in the walls, floor and ceiling. Seal any gaps, especially around windows (and window air conditioners), and exterior doors. Repair window sashes and caulk glazing. Replace windows and doors that cannot be effectively repaired with Energy Star rated units that match the size and architectural profile of the existing units. Seal around furnace flues and chimneys. Insulate electrical outlets and light switches on exterior walls.

- Check the amount of fiberglass (batting) or cellulose (blown in) insulation in floors, exterior walls and the attic. Insulation in attics should be at least 12 inches (R38); insulation in basement ceilings should be at least 6 inches (R19); and insulation in exterior walls should be at least 3.5 inches (R11 to R15).

- Replace large kitchen or laundry appliances and air conditioning units with Energy Star appliances. Insulate the hot water heater and pipes leading from it; replace with an Energy Star unit.

- Maintain furnace and air conditioning systems on a regular basis. Change filters and have units serviced annually.
A.5 New Houses
Site Placement

The orientation of a house on a lot makes a difference! It can determine how houses fit together on the block and how a house functions. Maintaining building setbacks and establishing consistent plantings or lawns along the street can enhance the look of the block from the street (the streetscape). Also, careful placement on the lot is important for good access to rear yards and friendly spaces between neighbors.

✔ New houses should align with adjacent houses and maintain the existing setback patterns.

✔ The front door should face the street. If there are two entrances required (as with a duplex), one of the entrances should be from the side or a single, combined entrance should be used.

✔ Parking should be located on the side of the house or in the rear of narrow lots. Pavement in the front yard should be kept to a minimum. Recommended options include permeable pavers or concrete strips for driveways that allow rainwater to filter through to the ground.
Building Mass and Scale

New houses should relate to adjacent houses in height and width. It is important that new houses maintain the consistency along the street and not overwhelm other houses on the block.

✓ Since many of the existing houses are small, new residents may want increased living space and perhaps a two-story house. If a two story house is proposed, it should include a one-story porch in order to relate to an adjacent one-story house.

✓ Roofs should be pitched to match similar roof patterns and scaled to reflect approximately 2/3 of the floor-to-ceiling distance of the main story of the structure.
Building Materials and Architectural Features

New houses should fit with the existing neighborhood character and reflect the architecture and the building materials of existing houses on the street. They should include universal design features that allow flexibility in use and access.

- In Sterling, most of the houses are sided with 6-inch wood clapboard. Thus, the preferred exterior materials for new construction are wood or cement fiber board for siding and trim. Although another common material is vinyl, it is easily damaged, can fade over time, and is not as structurally durable as other materials. Vinyl siding should only be used if it is the only affordable solution.

- New houses should have similar characteristic features of existing houses – site orientation, front porch, roof pattern/pitch, and window patterns. Look at the houses that surround the property and repeat design features such as porches, siding windows, roof pitch and direction, door placement and yard patterns.

  - **Front porch** should be prominent and extend at least one-half to two-thirds the width of the front of the house.

  - **Windows** should be double-hung and placed symmetrically on the building. Window panes with Mullions are acceptable; however, the Mullions should be applied to the exterior and integrated into the glazing, rather than between the glass.

  - **Roofs** should have a pitch of at least 6:12 (higher pitches of 8:12 or 10:12 may be appropriate if it is a two story house). Roofs should have an overhang of at least 12-16 inches to make the eaves of the house prominent. Use architectural shingles.

  - **Siding** should be wood or cement fiber (typical, 6-inch lap); vinyl should only be used if other materials are not cost effective. Siding should incorporate 4-6-inch trim on all corners, windows, and doors.

  - **Entry doors** should be a prominent feature on the front. They should be insulated for energy efficiency and painted.

  - **Yards** should be landscaped with lawns and trees. Walkways should be well-defined and house foundations should be planted with appropriate shrubs and flowers.

  - **Accessibility ramps** (if required) should be carefully integrated into the landscape of the yard. Ideally, adjust the grade of the ground to meet the necessary height adjustments for access, rather than use structural elements to adjust the grade. Architectural details used for ramps should match porch and railing details and be painted. Simple metal railings are an option.
Architectural Details for Builders

The following graphics provide more in-depth details to guide basic home construction in the Sterling neighborhood.

[Diagram of architectural details for builders]
Fascia: min 6” painted wood, vinyl or cement fiber

Gutters & Downspouts: aluminum or vinyl

Porch Beam/Entablature: box beam, wood beam wrapped in painted wood, or cement fiber

Porch Roof: overhang min 12”, closed or exposed rafter tails

Stair Railing: wrought iron, aluminum or vinyl

Treads: 11” to 12”, treated wood or painted synthetic; 1” nosing

Risers: painted wood or cement fiber; 6”-7” high

Porch Steps: treated wood

Porch Roofing: asphalt shingles or metal

Porch Roof Trusses: at 2’ on center

Porch Ceiling: beaded vinyl, painted wood or cement fiber

Porch Columns and Railing: painted wood or vinyl

Porch Decking: painted wood or synthetic planking

Porch Deck Joists: treated wood

Porch Girders: treated wood

Lattice: wood or vinyl in treated wood frame

Concrete Footings at Brick Piers
Sample Details of Interest: Porch Roof and Decking

Porch Roofing: If Standing Seam Metal, maintain roof pitch of 3:12.
If Shingles are used, increase roof pitch to 4:12 Minimum.

Note: Roof Structure can be Constructed of mono-pitch trusses.

Wood Tung and Grove Porch Decking

Lattice Strips Set Horizontally and Vertically at 3" off Center
1x2 Treated Wood Stops
2x4 Treated Wood Frame

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Sample Details of Interest: Stair and Railing Details
Sample Details of Interest: Roof and Gutter Details

- **15# Roofing Felt**
- **5/8" Plywood or OSB Sheathing**
- **Attic Insulation**
- **Wood Rafters or Trusses**
- **Wall Insulation**
- **Fiberglass Shingles With Minimum 15 Yr. Warranty**
- **Continuous Aluminum Dripage**
- **Metal Gutter**
- **1x6 Fascia, painted**
- **3/8" Plywood Soffit With 2" Diameter Vents**
- **2x8 or 2x10 Frieze Board**
- **Wood Siding**

- **Surface-Mounted Gutter:**  
  Galvanized Ogee or Half-Round
- **Metal Downspout:** Rectangular or Round
A.6 Neighborhood Commercial and Institutional Buildings

In addition to residential buildings, the Sterling Neighborhood contains commercial and institutional buildings along the perimeter of the neighborhood, as well as within the northern portion between Arlington Road and Pendleton Street. Over the years, commercial and institutional buildings have replaced residential structures and created areas of transition. Now, these transitional areas need special attention and guidance in order to direct the land use and development pattern desired for the neighborhood and recommended by the Sterling Neighborhood Master Plan. It is important that any new commercial or institutional expansion or development recognize the surrounding neighborhood context and land development features and that it enhance and complement those elements in any land use, building architecture and site development pattern. In addition, it is essential that there be good communication with surrounding neighbors and the larger neighborhood, thus strengthening community relationships.

Above: Commercial office development adjacent to residential at Arlington Road and Leach Street.
Below: Neighborhood commercial on Jenkins Street.
Mass and Scale
New buildings should be of similar size to neighboring buildings and not overwhelm them in mass and scale.

✓ If the building is to be located on the perimeter of the neighborhood, a building height of up to 3 stories (35-45 feet) is acceptable; if it is to be located on the interior of the neighborhood, a 1.5 to 2 story building (20-30 feet) is more appropriate.

✓ Small buildings should be simple in architectural form and relate to the pedestrian scale of the neighborhood by using traditional storefront designs, simple signage, directed lighting and awnings.

✓ Larger buildings should have varied heights and dimensions, such as offsets in walls and roofs. Porches and canopies should be used to reduce building mass.

Architectural Features and Materials
Buildings should reflect the architectural features and materials of the neighborhood.

✓ A primary entrance should face the street and there should be sidewalk entrance from the street (as well as from the parking area).

✓ Place windows and architectural details on all façades.

✓ The preferred building materials for commercial buildings are wood or masonry.
Parking, Streets and Sidewalks

- Locate parking to the side and rear of buildings. Share parking and driveways where feasible. Minimize the width of entrances and the number of curb cuts. Landscape parking lots with canopy trees at the street and provide plantings within large lots for shade.

- New streets should connect with and follow patterns of existing streets in the neighborhood. Pavement should be reduced to manage traffic speed and preserve neighborhood accessibility. All streets should include pedestrian sidewalks and a minimum 3-5 foot planting strip. Street trees are preferred.

- Accessory structures such as trash receptacles and ground HVAC units should be located to the side or rear and screened from streets and adjacent residences.

Landscaping

All commercial properties should be landscaped to convey an inviting business image and be a welcoming neighborhood amenity.

- Use trees along street edges and within parking areas. Consider thorn-less and fruitless plants that are drought-tolerant and low-maintenance.
Protect plantings in parking areas and along drives with curbing or other unobtrusive devices.

Ensure that all plantings are of a manageable type and located so that they do not interfere with sight lines at drives and intersections.

Use suitable trees, shrubs and privacy fencing to buffer adjacent residential properties, but not to create blind areas.

**Signage and Lighting**

- Signs for businesses should be limited to one or two signs per building that are mounted on the face of the building, on the window or on an awning. Multiple businesses on the same parcel should share a ground monument sign at the street.

- Lighting should be directed to specific signs or building areas and should not spill beyond property boundaries.

- Exterior lighting should be no more than needed for access and safety.

**Safety and Crime Prevention**

New commercial developments should incorporate CPTED design principles in the overall site development plan. These principles address: defined boundaries, visibility, controlled access, and maintenance.