



# **BARDSTOWN ROAD BAXTER AVE OVERLAY DISTRICT GUIDELINES**

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For additional information The Urban Design Staff recommends that you refer to the Land Development Code. The LDC is available online at:

<http://www.louisvilleky.com/PlanningDesign/LDC>

## **Bardstown Road Design Guidelines**

Ordinance No. 157, Series 2008: Appendix A  
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Metro Development Center  
Division of Urban Design

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[www.louisvilleky.gov/planningdesign](http://www.louisvilleky.gov/planningdesign)  
502.574.6230

Designed by Zachary E. Kenitzer

Dear Fellow Citizen,

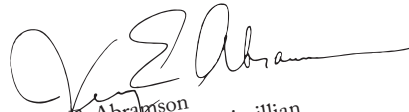
It's a pleasure for me to present this "user's guide" to the Bardstown Road / Baxter Avenue Overlay District. This is part of our effort to be helpful to property owners, business people, neighbors and anyone else interested in the design review process we've adopted for this lively and exciting, three-and-one-quarter mile commercial corridor.

First, relax. The business people who have been through the review process will tell you we're doing everything possible to protect the special character of Bardstown Road without smothering anyone's rights or creativity. I can guarantee that anyone affected by the design review process will be treated with respect and sensitivity.

Second, virtually everyone agrees that Bardstown Road has something worth protecting: The feeling you get from a place that relates well to people and from surroundings that welcome you, make you want to slow down and spend some time with others. It's a vibrant, visually appealing, sometimes slightly offbeat place that helps make Louisville an interesting and desirable place to live.

I'm convinced good, thoughtful design is part of the reason Bardstown Road works. Please help us enhance the distinctive feeling along the corridor. Let us know what you think and how we can best maintain one of our community's most important assets.

Sincerely,



Jerry E. Abramson  
Mayor and Fellow Louisvillian



## What is the BROD?

The Bardstown Road / Baxter Avenue Overlay District (or BROD, for short) was created in January 1990 to help enhance the appearance and economic vitality of one of the community's most successful and appealing neighborhood commercial areas- The stretch of Baxter Avenue and Bardstown Road running through the Highlands.

BROD is administered by the city's Division of Planning and Design Services, (502.574.6230) with input from a citizen-review panel known as the Bardstown Road / Baxter Avenue Corridor Overlay Review Committee.

Within the Division of Planning and Design Services the city's Urban Design Administrator and Staff (Overlay Staff) administers, manages, and conducts the architectural review process.

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## How does the BROD work?

The city law creating BROD set up an assortment of architectural and design guidelines and, in certain cases, a citizen-review committee process to help apply them.

The guidelines aren't hard and fast rules. They guide, trying to preserve the charm and vitality of the corridor and keep it from becoming just another suburban-style commercial strip. Bottom line: Reduce clutter and increase shop-window appeal. The design-review process balances three objectives:

**Fairness.** Everything possible is done to be even-handed and avoid needless delays to applicants.

**Continuity.** Proposals are weighed by how much they 'fit into' their surroundings, understanding that the corridor is very diverse.

**Economic vitality.** Bardstown Road is different. It's fun. Maybe even occasionally offbeat. And it's successful. Making room for everybody's interests is an important part of making the process work.

◀ Marks Feed Store is one of the many restaurants along Bardstown Road that gives Louisville a unique flavor




## What Kind Of Work Is Reviewed By The BROD?

Simply put, there are three kinds of developments subject to design review:

Any construction or exterior changes. Additions to a single family residence are also exempt from design review, provided the addition doesn't add to the number of living units or increase the total floor area by more than 20 percent.

- Any new business sign or outdoor advertising sign.
- Demolition of any structure other than a small accessory buildings.
- Sometimes that review is done with input from a citizen review committee, but it's often done on an "expedited" basis as a part of the city's normal construction and sign permit-review process.



◀ The top spire of the Schuster Building is shown at left. The building is a good example of a historic structure that has several modern tenants.

## What's "Expedited Review?"

The law says there should be a faster kind of review for changes dealing with signs and enlarging commercial buildings.

"Expedited review" is for and proposal that consists of:

- Landscaping
  - Sidewalk/Street Paving, Lighting, Streetscape Furnishings, Banners.
  - New Awnings, business and other signs, wand replacement of structural elements of existing signs.
  - Exterior alterations which are not major structural changes.
  - An addition to a structure used for commercial purposes which is not visible from the public street and which does not increase the total square footage of floor space in the structure by more than 10%.
  - The guidelines apply even to "expedited review" proposals. But the review is typically done at the same time the sign or building permit request is being handled.
- Remember:** The simple fact is routine repair and maintenance-including painting-is not subject to any design review even if it needs a building permit.

## What Are The Guidelines Trying To Accomplish?

In broad terms, the guidelines look at:

Major work like new buildings, additions, or significant remodelings. In nearly every situation, the process tries to preserve the strong visual relationship between the buildings along the corridor.

Changes to or affecting older and historic buildings. Part of the special character and attractiveness of the corridor comes from the hundreds of historic buildings lining Bardstown Road. Every reasonable effort is being made to see that this source of pride and vitality is enhanced.

- **Materials.** Once again, continuity is the yardstick. Since brick and wood are the predominant materials along the corridor, use of brick or wood or any other “traditional” material is encouraged.
- **Landscaping.** Bardstown Road / Baxter Avenue is an attractive place to walk and drive. Well-maintained trees, shrubs, and other landscaping make the corridor more livable and easier to live with.
- **Parking.** Whenever possible, small, under-used lots should be made more efficient and accessible. The results are less pavement, more room for trees and people, and fewer buildings demolished. Generally speaking, new parking and other vehicular functions like Drive-Thru’s should go behind buildings.
- **Signs.** Does a sign help a business do business without taking anything away from the attractiveness of the corridor? That’s the balance the design review process is after.



“ **Highland’s** residents have benefitted from these efforts which have **created opportunities** for unique shopping and dining experiences. ”

*Metro Councilman and Local Historian Tom Owen*



## Are Economics A Factor?

Yes, definitely. In the specific case of proposed demolitions of historic structures, the law says that no one can be denied a reasonable return on their property whether it's commercial or residential.

Keep in mind, however that the properties along the corridor already have zoning restrictions on how they can be used or developed aside from any design review that might apply.

## Who Decides?

Through an expedited review, the city's Urban Design Administrator and Staff can generally decide design-review requests along with the usual permit process.

For changes that require more intensive review there's a citizen-review committee known as the Bardstown Road / Baxter Avenue Corridor Overlay Review Committee. The review committee consists of eight people-three of whom own, operate or manage a business in the corridor.

The rest of the panel consists of two architects or other type of design professional, commissioner of the Louisville Landmarks Commission, a staff member or commissioner of the Planning Commission, and a representative from one of the neighborhood associations along the corridor.

## Does The Review Cost Anything?

No. The review is free.

## Is There An Appeal Process?

Yes. Expedited Decisions may be appealed to the Committee. All decisions are reviewed by the Planning and Design Director. In the rare event that the request for appeal is denied by the Planning and Design Director the case can be further appealed in Circuit Court.

## Does The Review Cost Anything?

No. The review is free.

## Do You Need An Architect of Drawings?

If your project had a professional designer already involved, it's probably wise to get them involved in the review process. The drawings required for a building permit may be enough.

But if you have a relatively simple project to review, no one is going to ask you to hire an architect or prepare anything more than what it takes to clearly describe and illustrate what you propose doing. Just keep in mind that the more the committee can understand about your project, the easier it becomes to make a recommendation.

## Any Suggestions?

The more dialogue, the better. Get early feedback from the Overlay Staff and neighbors on your ideas.

## Adding Your Brand to the Urban Landscape -

For Additional Information See the  
Land Development Code

Signage is important to every business. By posting signs you not only create a brand image for your business, but also create an opportunity to attract customers. The Signage Guidelines promote attractive, artistic, well proportioned and thoughtfully located signs which will enhance the existing Bardstown Road / Baxter Avenue corridor. Signs are to be designed as integral parts of the site and architectural design of a proposed project.

## Sign Design Guidelines

1. Applicants are required to re-use and reface existing "significant or contributing signs". "Significant or Contributing Signs" are signs that are unique in design or material fabrication. These signs contribute to the history and diverse character of the BROD. (See list of significantly contributing Signs; next page). For signage to be recognized as "significantly contributing" or for existing recognized signs to be removed or altered an application must be submitted to the overlay staff.
2. Back-lit cabinet signs and monument signs including re-faced signs shall have opaque, non-illuminated face panels; only the individual letters and / or logos should be back-lit, not the entire surface of the sign.
3. Freestanding pole signs are not allowed. Existing pole signs that are associated with a property that has not been abandoned or vacant for a period of less than (1) year may be restored or refaced.
4. Signs that incorporate flashing text, animation, moving graphics, video, or LED text / image signage with a change text rate greater than (1) hour are prohibited.
5. Storefront window signage including temporary window signage and promotional advertising shall not exceed 25% of the total window area. Neon and hanging window signs are encouraged, and add to the "active atmosphere" for both vehicles and pedestrians.
6. A projecting wall sign can be erected or attached to a building's wall and extend a minimum of 18" to a maximum of 8'-0" from the wall surface. These signs are mounted perpendicular to the building's façade.
7. Projecting Banner signs can project no more than 24" from the face of the building. These signs should be attached so that they do not "flap" in the air, and should be removed or replaced when they show signs of unattractive wear.
8. Attached wall signs or projecting signs are preferred. Attached signage composed of individual letters or symbols is also preferred.
9. Monument Sign: Monument signs are allowed only for businesses with a minimum front yard of 15'-0" as measured from the street to the wall of the structure. Monument signs must also be set back a minimum of 15'-0" from the adjacent side property line. For businesses with less than the required setback requirements; attached wall, awning, or window signage is recommended.
10. Existing non conforming signage must be removed prior to new approved signs are installed. A "Significant or Contributing Sign" as defined by the guideline in A1.1 is exempt from this requirement.
11. Neon and Neon simulated bulbs such as ("fiber optic" and "LED lighting strips" that simulate neon) are encouraged and help to maintain a sense of activity and contribute to the animated environment of the corridor.
12. Projecting lighting fixtures used for externally illuminated signs shall be simple and unobtrusive in appearance. They should not obscure the graphics of the sign.
13. Directional signage is used to direct pedestrian or vehicular traffic. No more than (1) image, logo, or text combined with the "entry" or "exit" text is allowed on each directional sign. Directional signage can not exceed 3'-0" in height above finished grade.
14. All exposed conduit, electrical transformer boxes, and electrical raceways should be concealed from public view, or painted to blend in with background.



## Make Your Business More Visible

The following signage guidelines will help you bring greater awareness to your business while allowing signs to add to the diversity and character of the corridor.

### Sign Mounting and Placement

1. Signs shall be mounted or erected so they do not obscure the architectural features or openings of a building.
2. Signs may not be located in the right-of-way unless they are approved by the public works department. Exceptions include portable "A" Frame Signs which must be removed at the close of the business day. "A" frame signs can not exceed 4'-0" in height and 3'-0" in width.
3. All wood signs need to be stained or painted and have a finished appearance.
4. No sign or portion of a sign shall extend above the cornice line at the top of the building facade or exceed 20 feet in height above finished grade. Rooftop signs are prohibited.
5. New outdoor advertising billboards are not permitted. Removal of existing billboards is encouraged to promote an active and engaging atmosphere for pedestrians and vehicle traffic.

The Cricket Sign on Bardstown Road is a good example of a historic sign that has been refurbished to suit the tenant of the building. ►

#### List of Contributing Signs

Signs that contain unique design features or historical qualities that enhance the visual characteristics and diversity of the corridor.

- Doo Wop Shop
- Leatherhead
- Cricket
- Twig and Leaf
- Tom Drexler Plumbing
- Lentini's Little Italy Park
- Old Town Liquors
- Sonotone
- Rose
- Buffalo Wild Wings
- Horton's Porter Hardware
- Falls City Beer sign for Outlook Inn

## Providing Cover and Enriching Aesthetics - For Additional Information See Chapter 8 of the Land Development Code

Awnings can add aesthetic value as well as provide shade and cover for pedestrians. There are however a few guidelines that need to be followed. Awnings and canopies should be mounted in locations that respect the design of a building and the neighboring structures; including the arrangement of bays and openings. In general, they should not obscure transom windows, grillwork, piers, pilasters, or ornamental features of a structure.

### Awning Guidelines

1. Lettering, logos, and other symbols shall take up less than 33% of the total area of an awning that is attached to a commercial structure. It is recommended that signs and logos be located on the valance area of awnings that have them.
  2. Convex or (bull nose) awnings are not allowed. Shed awnings are visually lighter and have simpler features, and they are more traditional in appearance than convex or bull nose awnings. Awnings with no end panels are more transparent and allow better views into openings and storefronts. Awnings with back-lit graphics or other kinds of interior illumination are not allowed.
  3. Approved awning fabric materials include canvas and vinyl.
  4. Metal or glass canopies may be appropriate on some buildings if they are compatible with the design and scale of the building.
  5. Awnings and canopies are to be installed at a minimum of 8'-0" above finished grade so that pedestrian entry clearances are operationally functional. Awnings must project a minimum of 24" from the building. They should be mounted on the wood or metal framing within a door or window opening (and not on the wall surrounding the opening).
  6. In openings with transoms, the awnings should be mounted on the horizontal framing element separating the storefront window from the transom. Awnings should be designed to project over individual window and door openings and not be a continuous feature extending over masonry piers or arches.
- ▼ Cumberland Brews utilizes an awning as a sign with their company name on it.





## Adding To Curb Appeal Of Bardstown Road - For Additional Information See Chapter 8 of the Land Development Code

The buildings along Bardstown Road are not only picturesque but also historic in many ways. New structures should have a “contextual fit” and reinforce the existing pattern of individual storefronts facing Bardstown Road / Baxter Avenue. Contextual design elements include building setbacks, building heights, building form, rhythm of openings, rhythm of horizontal building lines, color, materials, texture, adjacent building styles, and building details should be respected in new projects.

### Building Use and Design

- Existing structures along the Bardstown Road / Baxter Avenue corridor are encouraged to be renovated and reused. The Overlay Staff can assist a licensed Architect or design professional to develop designs that adaptively reuse these structures to meet the needs of new businesses and services. The Overlay Staff will also assist the applicant through the review and approval process.
- Buildings should be “pedestrian-friendly”. Design building façade elements that promote a pedestrian-friendly environment include; building to the edge of sidewalk, large storefront window openings at the ground floor, awnings, canopies, and lighting.
- All storefront windows and doors at ground level shall have clear glass or light window tinting. Severe window tinting or mirrored glass is not permitted unless pre-approved by staff for “special conditions”. Examples of “special conditions” may include restaurant kitchen areas, storage space, and restrooms that would need to be hidden from public view.
- New structures should be located at the front property line. Building sites should provide side yards wide enough to allow for maintenance of the building unless common party walls are provided on the lot line.
- High quality materials and historically appropriate architectural details at the ground floor / street level of buildings can both accent buildings, and provide visual interest for pedestrians and motorists.
- New structures greater than three stories high may be permissible if taller portions are set back from the street frontage so that overall sight lines are compatible, and if the increased height is not intrusive towards adjacent structures.
- A visual terminus, such as a cornice at the top of a wall helps articulate the architecture, and gives it a completed finished look.
- Roof forms that are inconsistent with the character of the Bardstown Road / Baxter Avenue Corridor include: single pitch (shed) roofs, curving roofs. Flat roof forms with parapets are well-suited to the character and image of the Bardstown Road / Baxter Avenue Corridor.
- Outdoor eating or temporary seating located within public sidewalk areas must receive staff approval prior to installation. A 4'-0" wide pedestrian zone is required in the Public “Right of Way” sidewalk area.
- All new mechanical equipment including hoods, vents, louvers, and air handlers mounted vertically or horizontally on exterior walls or roofs must be submitted for staff review and approval prior to installation. Replacement of existing mechanical equipment is considered general maintenance and will not require a staff review. Additional permits and approvals by other government agencies or authorities may be required.



## Public Art

Public Art is an important part of any urban area, and is especially important in an area such as the Bardstown Road Overlay. Public Art is welcomed as it not only makes your building more appealing but also adds to the richness of our community.

## Public Art Guidelines

1. Public art may include the following amenities, but is not limited to, that form of sculpture, mural or painting, water element, lighting, or other form of creative expression which is viewable within a development site or upon a building. Logos or elements of advertising for a businesses or organizations are not considered public art.
2. Public Art shall be designed, executed and supervised by recognized artists or other design professionals who have been trained or have consistently provided examples of artistic work in their medium of expression.
3. Public Art must be integrated with the design of every project or development, and shall aesthetically enhance the urban environment of the District.
4. Public Art proposals should conform to the design guidelines and master plan established by the Mayor's Committee for Public Art (MCOPA).
5. Historic Signs which have been painted directly onto walls and represent out of date logos or logos for businesses that are no longer in business are encouraged to remain in either their existing faded condition or restored to their original condition. These signs are recognized as contributing to the historic artistic character of the corridor and our community.



Here is an aerial view of Bardstown Road and Eastern Parkway. The lively intersection is in the middle of the BROD and combines excellent design elements.





## Planning For The Future - For Additional Information See the Land Development Code

Site Planning is an important part of any project. Your site should incorporate attractive and maintainable landscaping to enhance the hardscape of the building. Plants can be used in minimizing the visual impact of parking lots and service areas along BROD.

### Planning, Parking Guidelines

1. Development Plans, shall minimize the adverse visual impact of utility lines on the corridor. Underground lines or service from the alley, where feasible, is encouraged.
2. Combining existing small, under-utilized lots to create shared parking areas that are more efficient and more accessible is strongly encouraged.
3. Parking areas and Drive-Thru's should be located to the side or rear of structures.
4. Parking areas adjacent to the public sidewalks must use landscaping, trees, colonnades or other construction, to maintain the building line created by structures along the sidewalk.
5. Adequate perimeter landscaping, fencing, or a combination of both is required to help screen parked vehicles from full public view. The screening height should range between 30" and 36" above finished grade of parking lot. This height will enable drivers of vehicles to safely see and avoid other pedestrians and vehicles while screening most of the parked vehicles mass.
6. New development projects should provide adequate and significant screening to adjacent residential structures. Opaque landscape buffers and other forms of screening shall be used to minimize noise and lighting impact.
7. Intensity, location, color, and direction of lighting shall be sensitive to nearby residential areas.
8. Fencing and screening shall be constructed of materials compatible with the principal structure.
9. Chain link fencing must not be visible from Bardstown Road/Baxter Avenue.
10. The number and width of curb-cuts on the corridor should be minimized to promote pedestrian circulation. Existing continuous curb-cuts should be reduced to widths necessary for vehicular traffic.



## Preserving The Past For The Future

Historic buildings (65 years of age or older) help to anchor the BROD to our community's history. Buildings can serve as reminders to future generations how Louisville's citizens lived and worked in the past while meeting business and residential requirements today through adaptive reuse. These buildings can be used for future adaptive reuse opportunities. Contributing historical structures are structures that have unique designs, are constructed with unusual materials, or served the public in a manner that was important to the local area. Such structures also add character to the pattern of established development in the corridor.

Given the significant role of historic structures in the corridor, demolition of any structure will entail stringent review.

## Historic Preservation Guidelines

1. Changes to the exterior of Contributing Historical Structures and other structures within the corridor which were constructed in the last 65 years and that have not been significantly altered shall be reviewed in accordance with the standards established for Contributing Historic Structures by the United States Secretary of the Interior, but the Planning and Design Director or Committee may relax these standards in the interest of accomplishing the intentions of these Guidelines.
2. The design of new or substantially remodeled structures which are adjacent to Contributing Historic Structures should be compatible with them and should incorporate similar design details or references where appropriate.
3. No application to demolish any Contributing Historical Structure or structure built within the last 65 years shall be approved by the Urban Design Administrator unless the applicant demonstrates to the satisfaction of Urban Design Administrator and the Historic Preservation Officer
  - (a) That the rehabilitation of a Structure or construction of a new Structure will have a greater positive impact on the District's economic vitality and appearance than would preservation of the Structure proposed to be demolished and the rehabilitation of the Structure or the construction of the new Structure would not be possible or economically feasible without the demolition of the Structure proposed to be demolished; or
  - (b) That the applicant cannot obtain a reasonable economic return from the property or Structure unless the Contributing Historical Structure or Structure constructed within the last 65 years is demolished in accordance with the application.

“ Its a **lively** area that reflects Louisville's **quirky** and **fun** side. ”

*Mayor Jerry Abramson*



## Further Questions

If you have questions about the BROD, our Staff will be glad to answer any questions you might have about the guidelines, processes or applications.

## Department of Codes And Regulations Division of Planning and Design Services

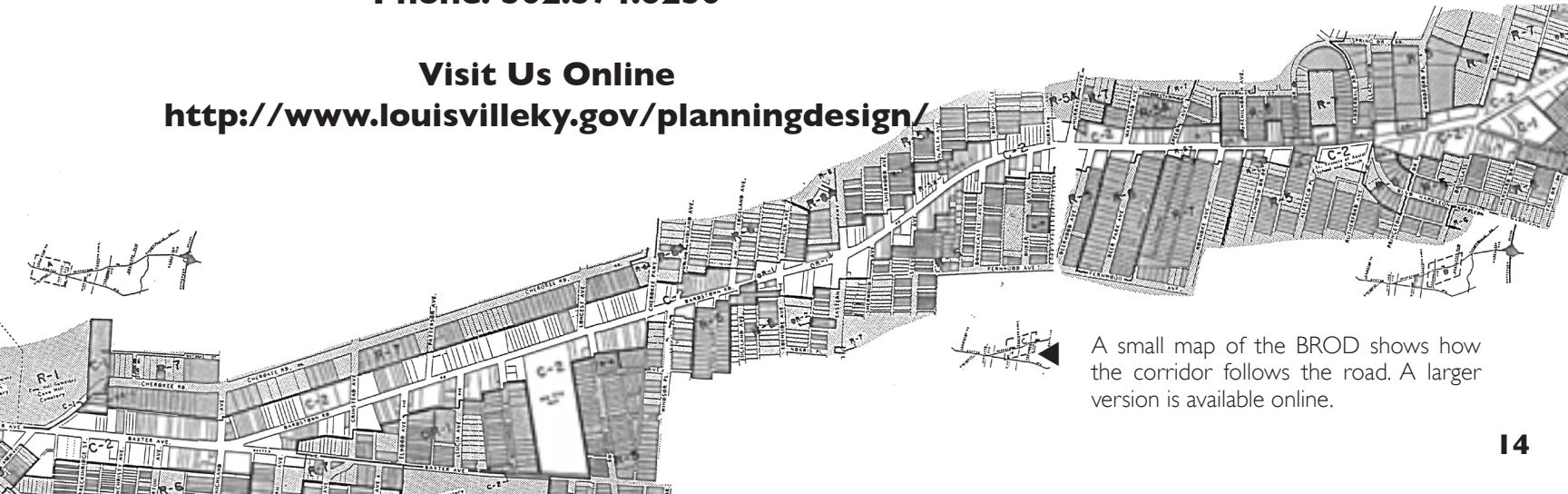
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## Disclaimer

The foregoing information listed in this document does not relieve the applicant of the responsibility for obtaining the necessary permits and approvals required by other governing agencies or authorities. For additional code information please refer to the Land Development Code for other possible requirements.



A small map of the BROD shows how the corridor follows the road. A larger version is available online.



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