

Brush Park elements of design

- (d) The defined elements of design, as provided for in section 25-2-2, shall be as follows:
- (1) *Height.* Height varies in the district from one (1) to eleven (11) stories. In the area between Woodward and Brush, the original development was almost exclusively two and one-half (2 1/2) story houses. Later changes included the construction of apartment buildings among the houses, the majority of which are three (3) stories in height. The tallest building, the former Detroit Hotel, is located on Woodward Avenue in the commercial strip. All other buildings more than four (4) stories in height are located between Woodward and John R., and generally on or immediately adjacent to buildings on those streets. East of Brush, the original development ranged from one (1) to two and one-half (2 1/2) stories. Later redevelopment includes apartment buildings not more than four (4) stories tall, most often located on Brush. In the case of the nineteenth century houses located between Woodward and Brush, the two and one-half (2 1/2) story height implies more height in feet than usual, since ceiling heights in these houses are unusually high.
 - (2) *Proportion of building's front facade.* Buildings in the district are usually taller than wide; horizontal proportions exist only in incompatible later buildings, except for row house buildings.
 - (3) *Proportion of openings within the facade.* Areas of void generally constitute between fifteen (15) percent and thirty-five (35) percent of the total facade area, excluding roof. Proportions of the openings themselves are generally taller than wide; in some cases, vertically proportioned units are combined to fill an opening wider than tall.
 - (4) *Rhythm of solids to voids in front facade.* Victorian structures in the district often display great freedom in the placement of openings in the facades, although older examples are generally more regular in such placement than later examples. In later apartments, openings tend to be very regular.
 - (5) *Rhythm of spacing of buildings on streets.* The area between Woodward and Brush appears to have been developed in a very regular spacing, with fifty (50) foot lots. This regularity has been disrupted by the demolition of many of the houses, and the vacant land resulting, as well as the occasional combination of lots for larger structures, particularly close to Woodward. East of Brush, smaller lots were used in subdividing, but many buildings stand on more land than one lot, and the parcel sizes are now quite irregular, as is the placement of buildings.
 - (6) *Rhythm of entrance and/or porch projections.* Most buildings have or had a porch or entrance projection. The variety inherent in Victorian design precludes the establishment of any absolute rhythm, but such projections were often centered. On Woodward, the commercial nature of most buildings and the widening of Woodward has effectively eliminated such projections.
 - (7) *Relationship of materials.* By far the most prevalent material in the district is common brick; other forms of brick, stone and wood trim are common; wood is used as a structural material only east of Brush. Some later buildings have stucco wall surfaces. Originally, roofs were wood or slate with an occasional example of tile; asphalt replacement roofs are common.
 - (8) *Relationship of textures.* The most common relationship of textures in the district is the low-relief pattern of mortar joints in brick contrasted to the smoother or rougher surfaces of stone or wood trim. Slate, wood, or tile roofs contribute particular textural values where they exist, especially in the case of slates or shingles of other than rectangular shape.
 - (9) *Relationship of colors.* Brick red predominates, both in the form of natural color brick and in the form of painted brick. Other natural brick and stone colors are also present. These relate to painted woodwork in various colors, and there is an occasional example of stained woodwork. Roofs of other than asphalt are in

natural colors; older slate roofs are often laid in patterns with various colors of slate. Original color schemes for any given building may be determined by professional analysis of the paint layers on the building, and when so determined are always appropriate for that building.

- (10) *Relationship of architectural detail.* On the buildings of the Victorian period, elaborate detail in wood, stone, or sheet metal was common; areas treated include porches, window and door surrounds, cornices, dormers, and other areas. Later buildings are generally simpler, but include less elaborate detail in similar areas.
- (11) *Relationship of roof shapes.* Examples of many roof shapes, including pitched gable roofs, hip roofs, mansard roofs, and gambrel roofs are present. Different types are sometimes combined in a single structure, and tower roofs, cupolas, lanterns, belvederes, monitors, conical roofs are used on various Victorian houses. Flat roof areas in the center of hip or mansard roofs are frequent. Later apartment and commercial buildings generally have flat roofs not visible from the ground. The generally tall roofs add height to the houses of the Victorian period.
- (12) *Walls of continuity.* Between Woodward and Brush, the houses originally honored common setbacks which provided for front lawns. Some of the later apartments have not been set back to the same line as the houses amongst which they were built, thus disturbing the original line of continuity. On Woodward, the commercial development is typically at the sidewalk, creating a wall of continuity; this is not entirely continuous due to parking lots and some buildings set well back. On John R. and Brush, and east of Brush, buildings are typically placed at or near the sidewalk with little or no front yard. Where buildings are continuous, a wall of continuity is created.
- (13) *Relationship of significant landscape features and surface treatments.* The major landscape feature of the district is the vacant land, which creates a feeling that buildings are missing in the district. Some houses have more than the standard fifty (50) foot lot, and have wide side yards. Individual houses have front lawns often subdivided by walks leading to the entrance; lawns are exceedingly shallow or non-existent in the area between Beaubien and Brush. Side drives are rare, access to garages or coach houses being from the alleys. The closing of Watson and Edmund Place between John R. and Brush has created landscaped malls uncharacteristic to the district. Some walks of stone slabs have survived; others have been replaced in concrete. Sidewalks are characteristically close to the curb.
- (14) *Relationship of open space to structures.* There is a large quantity of open space in the area, due to demolition of buildings. The character of this open space is haphazard as it relates to buildings, and indicates the unplanned nature of demolitions due to decline. The feeling created is that buildings are missing and should be present. On Watson and Edmund between John R. and Brush, the streets have been removed and replaced with landscaped malls. The traditional relationship of houses to street has thus become a relationship between houses and landscaped strip open space.
- (15) *Scale of facades and facade elements.* In the large houses between John R. and Brush, the scale tends to be large, and the facade elements scaled and disposed to emphasize the large size of the houses. Towers, setbacks, porches and the like divide facades into large elements. On Woodward, the scale ranges from very large, and emphasized by many small window openings, as in the former Detroit Hotel, and very large, made up of large architectonic elements, such as the churches, down to quite small, with large windows emphasizing the small size, as in some commercial fronts. East of Brush, the scale is smaller and the detail less elaborate, creating a more intimate setting with the buildings closer to the street. Later apartments are large in scale with simple but large elements near the ground and repetitive window openings above, frequently capped by a substantial cornice.
- (16) *Directional expression of front facades.* A substantial majority of the buildings in the district have front facades vertically expressed. Exceptions are some commercial buildings on Woodward, row houses on John

R. or Brush, and some duplexes or row houses east of Brush.

- (17) *Rhythm of building setbacks.* Buildings on the north-south streets generally have little or no setback, while older houses on the east-west streets between Woodward and Brush have some setback, which varies from street to street, though generally consistent in any one block. Later apartments and commercial structures in that area often ignore the previously established setback. Between Brush and Beaubien, setback is generally very limited, only a few feet, if any, lawn space being provided between sidewalk and building.
- (18) *Relationship of lot coverage.* Older single family houses between Woodward and Brush generally occupy about twenty-five (25) to thirty (30) percent of the building lot, not including coach houses or garages. Later apartments and commercial buildings often fill a much higher percentage of the lot, sometimes approaching or reaching complete lot coverage. Between Brush and Beaubien, lot coverage for residential structures is generally about forty (40) percent, with commercial and later apartment buildings again occupying larger percentage of their lots.
- (19) *Degree of complexity with the facades.* The older houses in the district are generally characterized by a high degree of complexity within the facades, with bay windows, towers, porches, window and door hoods, elaborate cornices, and other devices used to decorate the buildings. Newer houses in the northern end of the district and older houses in the southern end tend to be somewhat simpler than high Victorian structures between them; later apartments and commercial buildings tend to more classical decorative elements of a simpler kind.
- (20) *Orientation, vistas, overviews.* Houses are generally oriented to the east-west streets, while apartments and commercial structures are more often oriented to the north-south streets. The construction of the Fisher Freeway has created an artificial public view of the rear yards on Winder between Woodward and Brush. The vacant land in the area, largely the result of demolition, creates long-distance views and views of individual buildings from unusual angles which are foreign to the character of the neighborhood as an intensely developed urban area. Garages and coach houses are located in the rear of residential properties, and are generally oriented to the alley.
- (21) *Symmetric or asymmetric appearance.* In the Victorian structures, examples of both symmetric and asymmetric design occur; symmetry is more characteristic of the earlier houses, while the high Victorian examples are more likely to assemble elements in a romantic, asymmetric composition. Later houses to the north are more often symmetrical, especially when derived from classical precedent. Asymmetrical but balanced compositions are common. Later apartments are generally symmetrical.
- (22) *General environmental character.* The environmental character is of an old urban neighborhood which has undergone, and is undergoing, considerable change. The original development, reflected in the Victorian period houses, has been altered by the provision of more intensive residential development in the early twentieth century, the change in character of Woodward from residential to commercial at about the same time, and a long period of decline. (Ord. No. 369-H, § I, I-23-80)