

**CITY OF SLIDELL**  
PRELIMINARY DRAFT: DESIGN GUIDELINES for  
FREMAUX AVENUE CORRIDOR & OLDE TOWNE PRESERVATION DISTRICT

MARCH 2008

**I - INTRODUCTION**

1. History:

The Tulane Regional Urban Design Center (TRUDC), under the direction of Professor Grover Mouton, offered its community outreach services to Mayor Morris and the City of Slidell under the auspices of a Tulane University-funded Research Enhancement Grant during the second half of 2007. The TRUDC worked with Mayor Morris, who had attended a session of the Mayors' Institute on City Design in 2006, hosted by the TRUDC, to identify urban design and architectural issues within the city of Slidell.

- Issues surrounding new developments in Slidell were analyzed and discussed
- Commercial corridor development was studied
- The potential for implementation of a Trailhead Interpretive Center was investigated, and funding proposals were crafted by the TRUDC on behalf of the City
- Several public information sessions were hosted by the TRUDC regarding the process of Design Guidelines and Design Review
- Urban and Architectural research and analysis was conducted throughout Olde Towne and along Slidell's commercial corridors, including Fremaux Avenue

In January 2008, the City of Slidell facilitated the expansion of these design consultancy services by commissioning the TRUDC to create a set of Design Guidelines that would govern the Olde Towne Preservation District and the Fremaux Avenue Corridor. This request was made in an effort to reinforce the important efforts of the Olde Towne District Advisory Commission, and to address the expected development pressures brought by the connection of Fremaux Avenue and Interstate 10.

Subsequently, the TRUDC has held two public information sessions, met with each member of the City Council, worked closely with the office of Mayor Morris and the Planning Department, and sought public input from commercial shop-owners, homeowners, members of community groups such as BI-PAC, and other concerned citizens.

2. Need:

The City of Slidell has identified a need to promote quality design practices within the Olde Towne Preservation District, in order to maintain and improve the urban environment and economic viability of this area, while simultaneously focusing on the Fremaux Avenue Corridor in order to help control the appearance and quality of construction along this commercial corridor as development pressure continues to rise.

While “Section 5” of City Ordinance No. 2253 permits the Olde Towne Preservation District Advisory Commission “to review and make endorsements of all plans for demolition, relocation, new construction and all plans for exterior building improvements requiring building permits,” these recommendations “shall not be binding.” Though the Commission works extremely hard to assist property owners to meet their recommendations, no force of law exists to allow compliance enforcement.

### 3. Principles & Intent:

The City of Slidell and its citizens seek to recognize, preserve, and protect the cultural and historic architecture and urban design within Olde Towne and along the Fremaux Avenue Corridor. As such, the TRUDC seeks to create regulations in the form of Design Guidelines that will allow protection of these ideals while promoting new development to invigorate the district.

Said Guidelines will be enforced at the bi-weekly convening of the Slidell Design Review Committee, chaired by TRUDC Director Grover Mouton, moderated by City Planning Director Tim Jackson, and made up of several design, code, and planning experts from within and outside of the community, each intimately knowledgeable about the existing and proposed codes, regulations, zoning, and planning requirements of the City of Slidell. Inaugural and future Design Review Committee members shall be named by the City Planning Department and Director.

The implementation of Design Guidelines and the Design Review Committee will allow the Committee to make design, siting, and landscaping recommendations that must be met before the permitting process at City Planning and Zoning can begin. (See Section IV-Enforcement)

Design guidelines and review will encourage gateway recognition for the City of Slidell and Olde Towne, particularly along Fremaux Avenue. Guidelines and review will ensure and allow for a smooth transition between the urban character of Fremaux Avenue and that of Olde Towne Slidell.

While different zones and their accompanying regulations will continue to exist throughout Olde Towne and along Fremaux Avenue, the Design Guidelines bring these areas together through a common approach to quality design while respecting any planning, zoning, safety, or design regulations which are already in place. Only where current zoning regulations defy the primary vision and purpose of the Design Guidelines has the TRUDC suggested zoning changes (See Section IV, 3). Each project and site will be considered on equal terms and with impartial judgment from the Design Review Committee.

### 4. Scope of Design Guidelines and Review Committee:

Slidell’s Design Guidelines represent an effort to review the architectural style and substance, as well as the urban spatial impact of any new construction or renovation within Olde Towne or along Fremaux Avenue.

- Guidelines and Review will:

1. Address the architectural style and urban impact of any new development within the jurisdiction of the Design Guidelines
  2. Address material choices and colors
  3. Consider the contextual urban and architectural environment of each project
  4. Address site features and signage
  5. Consider non-Design Guidelines regulations, such as parking requirements, in order to assist the property owner in moving through the permitting process.
- Guidelines and Review will not:
    1. Advise regarding traffic issues, but will consider non-Design Guideline regulations as stated above
    2. Provide a blueprint for project design
    3. Provide comprehensive design services

#### 5. Review Process:

The review process will become the first stop for property owners as they begin to seek permits to implement their new construction and renovation projects. Only with the approval of the Design Review Committee, with the Design Guidelines acting as their regulatory document, will property owners be able to proceed with Planning and Zoning permitting with the City.

For clarity of review, all proposals brought before the committee must fully represent the architectural character and urban space to be created. As such, the following drawings must be submitted:

- Elevations of all sides of any proposed building, including color and material indications
- Site plan, showing building access and interface with the public domain (sidewalk/street)
- Landscaping plan, including existing and planned additions
- Floor plan for each building level
- Roof plan

#### 6. Timeframe:

The TRUDC has been working with Mayor Ben Morris and the Planning Department since January of 2008. Design Guidelines will be released in late March of 2008 for public review, followed by a public meeting in early April 2008 dedicated to gathering input from the citizens and property owners of Slidell.

The TRUDC and City of Slidell will take all comments under advisement, will amend the Design Guidelines as necessary, and will proceed to produce a final draft for submittal to the City. Upon approval, a Design Review Committee will be assembled and organized for the first review of proposed projects within the Olde Towne and Fremaux Corridor Districts.

#### 7. Collaboration:

The TRUDC and the City of Slidell seek to craft Design Guidelines with consideration of the City's current effort to take part in the Louisiana Main Street Program. The TRUDC has also become familiar with the current city-wide master planning process conducted by Villavaso & Associates,

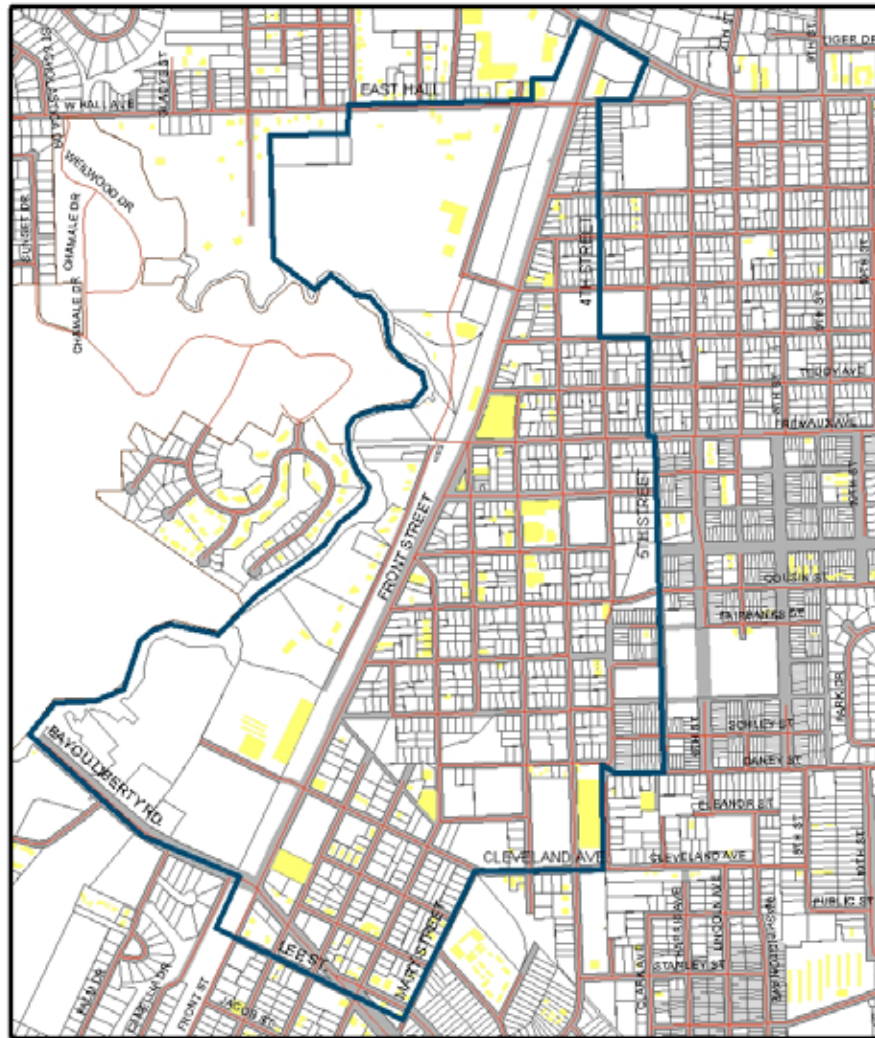
in collaboration with Urban Systems, Inc. The process will also benefit from the outreach activities and surveying of Olde Towne Slidell currently being conducted by Southeastern Louisiana University. The TRUDC has also enjoyed the assistance and support of a number of volunteer citizens and citizen organizations who share the City's goal of preserving and promoting Olde Towne Slidell while allowing Fremaux Avenue to develop as a fitting gateway for the City.

8. Jurisdiction:

Design Guidelines shall be applicable to the areas of the City of Slidell as described and shown below:

- The Fremaux Avenue Corridor, including all properties with frontage along Fremaux from Front Street to Interstate 10.
- Olde Towne Slidell as designated and determined by City Ordinance No. 2253

OLDE TOWNE PRESERVATION DISTRICT



## **II - PRECEDENT**

### 1. Historical Architecture:

Design Guidelines for Slidell are based on the architectural context and history of Olde Towne, in addition to the existing urban design features that allow a “small-town” feel with the advantage of a number of amenities located in a relatively small, walkable, downtown area.

Historical models under review and for comparison include:



Craftsman/Bungalow



Historical Street-front Commercial



Creole Camp



Creole Cottage



Queen Anne Revival

Equally important to the urban character of Olde Towne Slidell include preservation of some of its existing streets, buildings, and urban qualities, including traditional architecture, landscaping, public benches, and other amenities:



First Street

### **III - DESIGN GUIDELINES**

#### **1. BUILDING DESIGN ELEMENTS**

- a. Compatibility with the environment. Buildings shall exhibit the ability to provide protection from rain, sun, and high humidity.
- b. Entrances: each principal building shall have a clearly defined, inviting, highly visible customer entrance enhanced with distinguishing features such as canopies, galleries, and porticos.
- c. Facades of buildings visible to the public shall maintain the same standard of design as the front facade, including:
  - i. screening of utilities, equipment, and building services.
  - ii. continuation of building design elements such as quality of materials, galleries, cornices, and treatment of openings.
- d. Disruption of horizontal plains with vertical elements is required. This may include significant interruption by change in plain, material, opening, or design element, such as a tower or gable.
- e. Disciplined visible structural vocabulary must be maintained. Arcades, galleries, and roofs shall not appear to levitate in space, but have a visible means of support with columns and/or brackets. No overhangs in excess of 3' allowed without a visible means of support. Rafter tails are encouraged on smaller overhangs.
- f. Consistent design vocabulary for multiple structures on one property will be employed. A unifying element such as material, color, or form should be used for all structures.
- g. No building with an industrial appearance is allowed, such as a pre-engineered metal building with metal siding and devoid of historic context.
  - *Pre-engineered structures may be used; provided that historic context is incorporated in the facades. It is not the intent of these Guidelines to hinder a business's operations, but to make the business a good neighbor.*
- h. Service bays shall be oriented away from the principal street or screened.
  - *Frequently an open service bay facing a street also has an opening facing a residential area. If oriented towards the residential side, additional screening may be needed.*
- i. Smaller buildings shall reflect the design elements of historic styles, and larger buildings shall be divided into smaller elements in order to incorporate historic design context.
  - *Design Review Committee members will spend ample time in Slidell in order to understand the historic context of the City. It is incumbent to the designer to utilize historic context in the*

*building design. Remember that the building should recognize the environment, and show respect for the surrounding area. Big Box Retail, for instance, does not lend itself to the more traditional aspects of Slidell's architectural context, and thus the most expedient way of achieving historic context is to break the facade into smaller elements, putting more emphasis on the entry with balancing sub-elements.*

- j. Buildings should maintain classic proportions. For example, smaller columns should be placed closer together for a more vertical proportion, and as the structure becomes more horizontal in scale, the supports (columns) should have additional mass.
- *Like most architecture with a classical background, structural discipline and proportion are extremely important in the buildings appearance. Most elements have a pure geometry, with rectangular shapes dominating.*
- k. Fascias of buildings may not exceed sixteen inches (16") in depth, including gutter; except for fascias used as a unifying design element for multi-tenant buildings, and for placement of signage for multi-tenants. No backlit fascias.
- i. For the purpose of this ordinance, fascia is defined as the horizontal plain just below the roof or coping, and above the wall or supports.
- *The reason for the limitation in size is because of how some automobile service and oil companies have used the fascia for their pump island canopy or building as a sign through the use of bright, primary colors, frequently the same as the sign colors, and bands of light which have converted the shelter into a sign of billboard proportion. This is, in a manner, a circumvention of the sign regulations and the intent of the Design Guidelines. While this motif works well at interstate interchanges, it is out of character with the context of Slidell's Olde Towne, which is susceptible to the influence of Interstate design where Fremaux Avenue connects I-10 to Front Street. In order to limit design abuse, and to bring the automobile shelter into compliance with the historic design context, the fascia as a primary design element is removed. In order to accommodate the structure, the canopy designer will need to provide a surface for mounting a sign (if a sign on the canopy is desired), and add a sloped, or mansard roof, which will bring the building into compliance with the design guidelines. It was recommended that the maximum fascia be limited to 12", but the need for bank drive-thrus to provide open/closed signage, additional space was added to accommodate a gutter. We still recommend that the size of the fascia be kept minimal (8"-10"), if a gutter is not used. Backlighting of fascias and awnings is another distracting design feature which is out of character with our community ideals.*
- l. Mansard roofs used in conjunction with canopies, covered walkways and entries shall have a roof-like slope not greater than 12:12 or less than 4:12.
- *The Mansard as a design element became popular with the "big box" in the sixties and seventies; and while the use of an inclined plain on the front of a larger structure is desirable to give human scale, the misuse of the mansard to where it was little more than an out of vertical wall with roofing material finish proved to be unsuccessful in any design context. Therefore, if a mansard is to be used as a design feature, then it must emulate a roof rather than a wall.*

m. Buildings should have substance; design shall include base, intermediate, and cap. Changes in materials shall have a clear line of demarcation, either by offset, reveal, or border.

- *Most historic architecture of classic influence gives the buildings a defined starting and ending. Traditionally, the “base” of many structures is a shadow, with the buildings raised on piers. A base, under these Guidelines, may be a walkway or curb. While flat roofs are not encouraged, for environmental reasons, the historic use of flat roofs utilized a well-defined cornice to provide the vertical termination. A lack of vertical termination results in an incomplete appearance and industrial or “modern” style, which is not in context to Slidell. Clearly defined changes in material give materials more definition and interest, and can provide for differential movement.*

n. Shadows shall be considered as a design element.

- *This requirement is included to remind design review that color and material are altered by the amount of light on the surface.*

2. MATERIALS: Materials shall be reviewed for compliance with historic context. The following materials have historic context:

a. Walls: Wood, Brick, and Cement Plaster (stucco).

b. Roofing: Wood shakes, Slate/tile, Rigid Shingles with Ridge Tiles, Asphalt Shingles, Metal (Corrugated, V-crimp, and Standing Seam).

- *How a material is used is as important as what material is used. Plastics and polymers have proven to be susceptible to high winds and, therefore are not automatically approved. Concrete, concrete masonry units, and terra cotta blocks may be used depending on detail, color, and texture. Fiberglass and asphalt shingles are acceptable as a roofing finish when they emulate more traditional finishes. It is recommended that if fiberglass or “soft” shingles are used, then ridge tiles be used on the ridges. English ridge tiles are preferred over Spanish tiles.*

3. COLOR: Colors shall be reviewed for compliance with historic context.

a. Facade colors shall be low reflective and subtle. The use of primary, high intensity or metallic color is prohibited outside of the sign face.

b. Any activity that involves changing color or refreshing color shall be reviewed by the Design Review Committee.

c. Accurate color drawings with a list of paint numbers and elevations of every building will be required to be submitted prior to any modification.

- *A single color pallet is not practical to regulate. However, the designer is cautioned not to use strong or primary colors which would make the building into a sign or logo. Also, remember that the quality of light at this latitude makes strong colors appear more intense. If stronger more intense colors are used, their expanse should be limited and shadows and complementary colors used to offset their intensity.*

#### 4. CANOPIES

- a. Free (or semi-free) standing canopies, such as those used as shelters for pump islands, and porte-cocheres, shall be of similar style and materials as the building. Canopies are not considered the principal structure.
  - *Even though the pump island canopy may be the largest structure on the property it is still considered accessory to the convenience store, or office.*
- b. Unless site conditions preclude, canopies shall be attached to and made an integral part of the main building.
- c. Canopies shall have columns, beams, and/or brackets of sufficient scale to give a visible means of support.
  - *Today's technology allows very small elements to hold up very large elements; however, in Slidell's Olde Towne, which has a classical background, this can be visually disturbing. In order to achieve classic proportions, as required above, the supporting structure must have more substance.*
- d. Clearance under canopies shall not exceed sixteen feet (16'), and cantilevered overhangs shall not exceed fifteen feet (15').
  - *Acceptance of clearances required for large trucks resulted in that of highway underpasses.*
- e. Task lighting shall be utilized to reduce light spillage. Intense general lighting under canopies is not allowed.
  - *Task lighting is the practice of putting lighting where the task is, rather than the reliance of large quantities over a large area.*
- f. Fascias: refer to building design elements.
  - *Refer to item 1.k.i.*
- g. Disrupt long horizontal plains with vertical elements.
  - *The designer will probably find it necessary to provide a vertical element in order to have a plane on which to mount a sign, but the rationale was to create more visual interest, without big signs and bright lights. Also, refer to item 1.i.*

#### 5. SITE FEATURES

- a. Fence or hedge of not less than 30" or more than 48" in height along property lines of each public street (not to interfere with site triangles). Fence shall be wood picket, or wrought iron pickets with masonry columns. Vehicular screening may be waived if a fence is used.

- *The use of low fencing along the street lines helps define the public from the private, gives a scale to the sidewalks, and provides a screen for parking and services. The use of a hedge along the property line is acceptable in lieu of a fence.*
- b. Sidewalks of not less than four feet (4') in width connecting sidewalks in public right-of-way to the building entry.
- *This requirement is necessary for alternative access. In the event that sidewalks or bike paths have not yet been installed, the project should still provide walks to their proposed locations.*
- c. Sidewalks along the facade with a customer entrance and connecting parking areas and adjacent buildings, in order to minimize pedestrian traffic within vehicular drives and parking areas.
- *This requirement is required by the American with Disabilities Act, and may be required under the Life Safety Code, in certain conditions.*
- d. Distinguish internal pedestrian walkways from driving surfaces through the use of special materials.
- *This requirement is also required under the Americans with Disabilities Act. Care should be taken not to use heavy textures on walkways which could prove hazardous with small wheels on strollers, and wheelchairs.*
- e. Screen mechanical equipment, electrical entries, dumpsters, and equipment (not used by the customer) from the public view. Screening may be by fence, landscaping, or building element, such as a parapet.
- *Whenever possible, vending machines, ice machines, and restrooms shall be located in the main building. Air pumps, vacuums, water stations, public telephones, etc. should be out of the main traffic flow and integrated into the landscape. Car wash should have its openings oriented away from the street and be of a design consistent with other structures.*
- f. Automobile and marine sales and displays shall follow the restrictions of parking areas, and the landscaping, signage, and lighting requirements associated with parking lots and circulation. Areas used for storage of vehicles or water-craft to be serviced shall be screened with opaque fencing and/or landscaping.
- *It is appropriate to apply the same standards to the display of vehicles and water-craft, as that of customer parking.*

## 6. SIGNAGE

No off-premise signs are permitted within the Olde Towne & Fremaux Corridor Districts.

- *The most common off-premise sign is a billboard.*

## **IV - ENFORCEMENT**

### 1. City/Parish:

Architectural Review shall be performed by Tulane University, Regional Urban Design Center or alternative successor review body designated by the Mayor, which shall make recommendations to the Building Inspector prior to permits being issued.

- *The purpose of the Architectural Review is not to add an additional step to the permit process, but to assist the designer within the design and documentation process. The review body, or its agent, will be available to the designer to answer questions related to the design guidelines and the permit process. The review body will not design the project (or portion of the project), but will assist the designer to work within the intent of the Architectural Guidelines, and to rule on circumstances which make total compliance impractical, either because of site considerations or user design criteria.*

### 2. Appeals:

Appeals shall be in accordance with the newly established Design Review Process.

- *Any person aggrieved by a decision of any of the officers, departments, commissions, boards or bureaus that administer the provisions of these land use regulations may appeal to the Board of Zoning Adjustments within thirty (30) days after the decision has been rendered.*

### 3. Regulatory Overlap

Any and all zoning changes suggested by the Design Guidelines will be presented for public review and political adoption. As such, wherever current zoning, safety code, or other regulations conflict with the regulatory code of the Design Guidelines, the existing code shall prevail.