

# Clifton Neighborhood Business District Urban Design Plan



**Credits**  
 This plan was prepared for the City Planning Commission and Clifton Town Meeting by the Department of Public Works, Division of Engineering, Office of Architecture and Urban Design, on behalf of the Department of Development.  
 H. W. Stevens, Director, City Planning Commission  
 Neil D. Surber, Director, Department of Development  
 A. D. Bird, Director, Department of Public Works  
 James R. Krusling, City Engineer  
 Ronald B. Kull, Project Designer  
 Michael Bryant, Project Designer  
 Marcia Shortt, Graphic Designer  
 Howard Tommelein, Economic Consultant  
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## Illustrated Site Plan

## Policies

### Introduction

The Clifton Urban Design Plan is a conceptual plan which consists of proposals and guidelines for the commercial retention/improvement of the business district. The goal is to maintain and improve the importance of the business district as a support element to the residential environment of Clifton and neighboring communities. Specific changes, as they are proposed, will be measured against the concepts outlined in this plan. The plan is a guideline for, but not limited to, solutions in specific circumstances.

The neighborhood business district is the focal point of the Clifton community. Though small by some comparison, the three block area has continued to provide residents with their day-to-day needs. Because it is small, most residents think of it as a village shopping district and because they also want to maintain a healthy residential environment, they also prefer to keep the business district compact and highly efficient. This plan works toward achieving both interests.

The strength of the business district is dependent on several elements:

1. a resource of middle to upper income residents;
2. progressive business persons offering diversity in shoppers' goods;
3. multi-family housing located in and around the commercial core providing walk to shopping convenience.

Its future is dependent upon the attainment of additional needs to satisfy contemporary shopping habits.

The treatment area included in this plan extends generally from Whitfield to Clifton Avenue, from Dixmuth to Hosea. The statements included here are created for the purpose of maintaining and improving the business district. The guidelines outlined here define long range solutions in some areas. In some locations, short term solutions have been adopted to assist in achieving these long range goals and to eliminate existing problems in specific areas.

### Business Retention Improvement

Existing businesses should be reinforced and new establishments attracted which satisfy shoppers' needs and contribute to an attractive pedestrian shopping environment. To accomplish this, a community organization should be developed to:

1. increase convenient, off-street parking;
2. encourage property owners to maintain commercial properties in good functional and aesthetic condition;
3. monitor businesses to remain aware of vacancy levels and businesses planning to move or go out of business;
4. encourage conformance to sign and facade guidelines of the plan.

All commercial development and customer parking expansion for commercial activities should occur within the designated business district. A compact commercial area should be developed within the business district to enhance the sense of vitality and create an image of a physically unified and functionally diverse area. Businesses should be designed to reinforce the existing pattern of small storefronts facing Ludlow and be visually open to provide interest and light to the street.

### Pedestrian Circulation

The plan encourages a dense concentration of pedestrians and autos on Ludlow to reinforce the existing sense of vitality in the business district. This can be accomplished by:

1. maintaining the street orientation of shops by encouraging entrances directly off the sidewalk or an identified public way and de-emphasizing secondary rear entrances to commercial space;
2. creating focal points within/or contiguous to the sidewalk space to:
  - a. encourage social interaction;
  - b. satisfy the need to disseminate community information;
  - c. provide a place for special community gatherings;
  - d. all focus areas should be adequately lighted and designed in such a manner as to insure pedestrian safety.
3. developing street amenities and adequate sidewalk width to enhance the pedestrian environment with benches, lighting, landscaping, graphics, canopies, signs and other amenities contributing to a pedestrian character.

All intersections, crosswalks, and where practical, entrances to commercial space, should be made accessible to the physically handicapped.

Hazardous conflict between pedestrians and autos should be eliminated to facilitate pedestrian movement across streets. Crosswalks should be located near transit stops and be identified with appropriate treatments to create a pedestrian, rather than vehicular orientation.

### Vehicular Circulation

Clifton Avenue and Ludlow Avenue are the major streets and should continue to carry cross Clifton traffic and truck traffic serving the business district. Traffic congestion poses a threat to both vehicular and pedestrian safety and is intensified by access and egress to off-street parking from Ludlow. A network of secondary streets should be developed to safely accommodate traffic exiting from parking and direct it to major streets for dispersion, eliminating in time automobile exits onto Ludlow. Alternate routes that could direct cross-town traffic around the Clifton community should be improved. Public transit routes use Clifton, Ludlow and Middleton with several stops in the business district. No changes in existing bus stops should be made without consultation with the community organization. Any new bus stops should be located at street intersections to most effectively serve adjacent residential areas and reinforce the business district as a focus for community life.

The majority of truck delivery will remain on Ludlow and be limited to specific times and locations to best serve businesses with the greatest demand. Where practical, and in any new development, create off-street delivery points. However, it is the intention of the plan that off-street parking not be sacrificed to accommodate delivery trucks in existing parking areas.

### Expanded and more efficient utilization of public transit shall be encouraged through improved routing and scheduling. Any new bus stops should not contribute to the problems of vehicular congestion on Ludlow.

### Parking

The business district presently suffers from a lack of off-street parking spaces, heavily congested access to the available parking, and inefficient utilization of some existing lots. Surveys, conducted in the last year, indicate that existing parking lots are used to capacity in busy shopping periods and the Clifton business people have identified the lack of adequate parking as the prime deterrent to their economic viability. Comparisons with other viable neighborhood business districts show that the Clifton N.B.D. has a significantly higher ratio of commercial square footage/parking space. A market survey of shoppers in the business district indicated that 65% arrive by car. The plan recommends that the Clifton N.B.D. increase its off-street parking to be competitive with other N.B.D.'s, specifically, a commercial square footage/parking space ratio of 250 is established as a goal, which based on the present commercial area warrants an additional 150 spaces.

The following steps should be taken to increase the convenient off-street parking:

1. Existing parking lots should be shared and made more efficient through improved access and more efficient layout.
2. Existing small, underutilized lots should be combined to create larger, more efficient parking areas.
3. Existing parking lots should be expanded rather than introducing additional, separate parking areas.

All new parking should occur within the designated business district. Private investment should be the primary source of funds coordinated with any available public monies through a community organization.

All parking areas should be landscaped and screened to provide an effective buffer for adjacent residential properties. Lighting for parking areas should be sensitive to nearby residences in color, intensity, and scale.

### Aesthetics

The following guidelines are recommended to improve the appearance of the business district and enhance the village concept in a physical form.

### Storefronts and Facades

Exterior building materials should be in harmony with surrounding buildings in color and texture. Projections and appendages should be in scale with the total composition of the building itself. Storefronts should be visually open to the street and, where practical, entrances recessed to increase the effective sidewalk space and provide sheltered pedestrian access.

### Signs

Signs should be designed to communicate with pedestrians or persons in slow moving vehicles and to be harmonious with the architecture of the buildings on which they are located.

### All signs should be placed flat against buildings without concealing any of the architectural features of the buildings and be designed for good visibility and consistent in size with other nearby signs. Businesses should be encouraged to use traditional symbols (such as a barber pole for a barber shop) or translate the nature of their business into a symbol which can be used as a sign. The predominant copy of all signs should identify the business on the premises or its principal product or service.

### Flashing or neon signs should not be permitted, except for theater marquees; roof top signs, any sign which extends above the roof line of a building, or above the window sill line of the second floor of buildings should not be permitted. Obsolete signs and unused supports should be removed. Ground signs should be used only for parking lots or businesses which are accessible by automobile and provide off-street parking; their size and height should be limited.

### Awnings

Awnings should be harmonious with the architecture of the building on which they are located, should not conceal architectural features of the buildings, should not project more than 6 feet from the face of the building, and be compatible in shape and material with other nearby awnings. Structural supports for all awnings should be contained within the awning covering.

The placement of all utilities underground is a long range goal; in the short term the business district should be studied toward eliminating as many existing poles, transformers, and overhead wires as possible to reduce the visual clutter in the village area.

### Open Space/Street Amenities

The proximity of Burnet Woods satisfies the need for large open space. Small focal areas should be developed contiguous to the sidewalk to provide settings for informal gatherings. Each should include landscaping, pedestrian scaled lighting, special paving, an information kiosk, benches, trash receptacles, bike racks, and other appropriate street furniture.

Focal points should be developed to identify points of entry to the village shopping district and pedestrian oriented areas for informal and/or formal community gathering. The plan recommends the following:

### Clifton and Ludlow

Two new bus shelters on east side of Clifton; relocate existing shelter on west side of Clifton out of sidewalk space; new bus shelter west of fire house on Ludlow; expanded area at southeast corner focused around community tree; make entire intersection concrete with a change in texture at the crosswalks; appropriate street amenities and furniture as shown on the plan to emphasize this area as a gateway to the business district from the north, east, and south.

### Middleton and Ludlow

Bus shelter on north side of Ludlow; appropriate street amenities and furniture as shown on the plan to emphasize this area as a gateway to the business district from the west.

### Telford and Ludlow

Emphasize continuity with pedestrian link from Howell Avenue parking to crosswalk and north side of Ludlow; appropriate street amenities and furniture as shown on the plan.

Street improvements should create a sense of order within the business district through standardized design and appropriate location.

### Multi-Family Housing

The large multi-family structures adjacent to the business district have played an important role in maintaining its economic viability and should be reinforced as:

1. a land use which tends to control commercial expansion of the business district;
2. a transition from commercial to single family residential areas;
3. a vital source of "walk-in" trade for the business district.

A community organization should be developed to:

1. promote the image of Clifton as a desirable environment for apartment living;
2. encourage owners of existing multi-family structures to reinvest and assist them in any possible way to do so;
3. promote the construction of new multi-family housing to complement the existing structures and offer a wider choice in apartment living.

New housing should be developed to take advantage of the potential market for medium sized, relatively expensive units based on the accessibility of the area to the university/hospital complex. Off-street parking facilities should be developed for existing multi-family structures where practical.

### Direction For The Future

This plan was precipitated by problems that occurred in the NBD nearly two years ago. At that time, the demolition of a fine old building and the introduction of incompatible uses were prevented from becoming a reality by the adoption of an IDC (Interim Development Control) area. It is the hope of this community that the plan will prepare them for adoption of an EQD (Environmental Quality District) by establishing some guidelines for incorporation into EQD legislation.

EQD is a special zoning overlay ordinance that has been adopted by the Planning Commission and City Council. Its purpose is to define, in very specific terms, guidelines for retention/improvement of the quality of life that should exist above and beyond the minimum standards required by zoning. Such legislation is prepared by the City staff and community residents after the NBD Urban Design Plan has been adopted.

The proposed EQD for the Clifton neighborhood business district is an extension of the previous I.D.C. area and incorporates additional areas where zoning restrictions alone are not sufficient to control future development. The EQD guidelines will reflect the concepts and concerns of the community for the future business district.

### The following objectives have been identified:

1. Protect the economic viability of existing shops by providing the necessary elements for continued business stability and improvement, including reduced congestion, aesthetic treatment for shops and streetscape, increased parking and improved service areas.
2. Preserve the character of the surrounding environment by identifying the limits of the business district and developing effective buffers between business and residential areas.
3. Promote a village shopping environment by improving the aesthetics, circulation, and diversity of goods and services offered.
4. Preserve the existing large multi-family structures in and around the business district.
5. Encourage new development in designated areas, consistent with the policies of the plan and compatible with the surrounding environment.
6. Make every effort to find acceptable locations within Clifton for individuals and businesses displaced by the effects of this plan.
7. Whenever appropriate, houses should be moved rather than demolished.

### New Development

The plan proposes that new development be concentrated in the area bounded by Ludlow, Telford, Shiloh, and the Roslyn Apartments, to:

1. Eliminate housing rehabilitation that does not improve the physical and aesthetic characteristics of the area;
2. Increase housing alternatives within the NBD;
3. Provide additional commercial space for shopper satisfaction;
4. Provide additional community parking;
5. Provide off-street space for public improvement and aesthetic support to the rest of the business district.
6. Reinforce the high impact development within the limited area of the NBD.

This new development would be primarily for commercial and housing uses with parking available to customers and residents alike. It should reinforce Ludlow as the primary pedestrian street and maintain the typical small shops along the street and be compatible with the scale of the surrounding environment. Vehicular access and movement would conform to the circulation policies of the plan.

By adopting EQD, this development, as well as others identified on the implementation chart and shown on the final plan, will be subject to review and approval prior to construction.

Proposed Development Staging							
Project	Estimated Cost	Financial Source	Project Year				
			1	2	3	4	5
Howell Ave. Parking Improvements	\$300,000	Private & Public					
Streetscape Improvements							
Clifton-Ludlow	\$171,546	Public					
Middleton-Ludlow	\$ 38,734	Public					
Telford-Ludlow	\$ 51,719	Public					
Voluntary Facade & Sign Improvements	\$500-5,000 Per Building	Private					
Whitfield-Ludlow Parking Improvements	\$ 80,000	Private					
Hosea Improvements							
Cul-de-sac Parking	\$ 15,000	Private					
Development Block Parking Commercial Housing	\$5-7,000,000	Private					