

# INTRODUCTION

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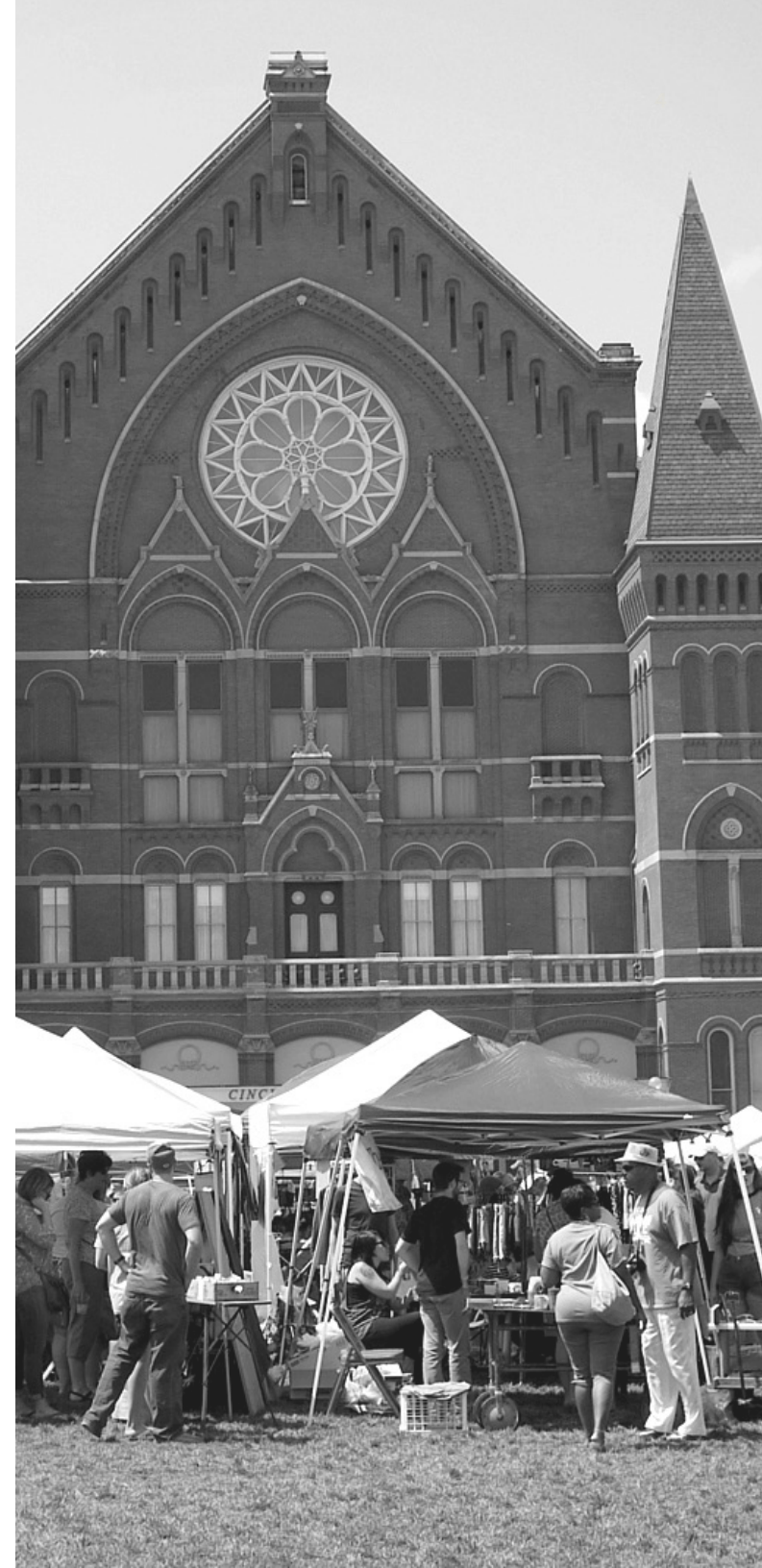
The Over-the-Rhine Historic District is Cincinnati's historic heart, and a national treasure. Few neighborhoods in America inspire like Over-the-Rhine, with its expansive collection of Italianate churches, breweries, and tenements providing one of the best surviving examples in the country of a 19th century urban neighborhood. The historic district serves not only as the showpiece of Cincinnati's cultural heritage, but also as an economic engine and driver of the local economy. The famed travel historian Arthur Frommer said of the neighborhood, "When I look at [Over-the-Rhine], I see in my mind the possibility of a revived district that literally could rival similar prosperous and heavily visited areas." Indeed it is precisely the unique historic character of Over-the-Rhine and Pendleton that has fueled the renewal of the area and helped to facilitate a resurgence in the city as a whole.

As a national exemplar for what historic preservation can do, it is essential that the Over-the-Rhine Historic District continue to be preserved and protected so that its status as both a cultural and an economic asset for the city of Cincinnati is maintained. This includes protection not only from demolition of the historic structures that comprise the district, but also from insensitive new construction built on vacant sites in the neighborhood.

New construction has powerful impacts on the fabric and sense of place of the Over-the-Rhine Historic District, and can either enhance the historic character of the district, or damage it in harmful and irreparable ways. Moreover, due to demolition that occurred in the 20th century, new construction will ultimately comprise a very significant portion of the historic district, and will thus play a substantial role in defining its sense of place.

These guidelines provide a regulatory framework for ensuring that new construction occurs in a manner that preserves and protects the Over-the-Rhine Historic District for current and future generations of Cincinnatians and visitors alike.

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# HISTORY<sup>2</sup>

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The Over-the-Rhine Historic District is significant in the continuing history of Cincinnati and the United States. In 1983 the district was listed on the National Register of Historic Places, in recognition of both its exceptional nineteenth-century architecture and its association with the successive waves of German immigration to America in the nineteenth century.

The historic district's collection of commercial, residential, religious and civic architecture is one of America's largest and most cohesive surviving examples of an urban, nineteenth century community. Similar neighborhoods in other cities have been decimated or lost entirely. The Over-the-Rhine Historic District, however, continues to display its original dense, urban development patterns and buildings of excellent architectural quality, imbuing the neighborhood with a "sense of time and place." Rows of three- to five-story brick buildings constructed along the sidewalk characterize the streetscape. Many buildings have storefronts on the first floor with residential space on the upper floors. The Italianate style is the predominant architectural style in the district. Other nineteenth-century styles, including Federal, Greek Revival, Second Empire, Queen Anne, and Renaissance Revival, add to the flavor of the district.

The district also has many simply designed, working-class buildings that display modest elements of the high architectural styles.

The Over-the-Rhine Historic District encompasses a dense, urban area that displays a visual continuity conveying a sense of time and place. The physical relationship of adjacent buildings in a dense environment is accentuated by the uniform faced lines imposed on the streets. The buildings' consistent scale and height, similar materials, and architectural detailing blend to create distinctive streetscapes reflecting the historic development of the area.

In the nineteenth century Over-the-Rhine and Pendleton were home to businessmen of means and their families, shop owners, working-class families, and the poorest of immigrants. Like other urban centers of the period, this area was part of the 'walking city,' in which most people could easily walk from their homes to places of employment, entertainment, and worship. Building exteriors were designed to be experienced and appreciated by pedestrians along the sidewalks, and buildings were placed at the front of their lots for easy pedestrian access.



# PROCESS OF DEVELOPING NEW CONSTRUCTION

Prior to designing an infill building in the Over-the-Rhine Historic District, developers contemplating a new construction project should undertake the following pre-design steps.



01

### Understand the historic neighborhood

All successful new construction will emerge from an understanding and respect for the significance of the Over-the-Rhine Historic District as a historical place; it is therefore essential that this understanding be in place before any design efforts have begun. It is recommended that developers and their designers tour the district on foot, and study written materials on the history and significance of Over-the-Rhine.<sup>3</sup>

02

### Understand the site and surrounding context

Each vacant site in the Over-the-Rhine Historic District is contextually related to both the previously existing (historic) structure on the site, and the historic buildings on the blocks surrounding the site. Successful new construction will relate to both of these facets of the context. Developers and their designers should review Sanborn Fire Insurance maps to gain an understanding of what previously existed on-site, including the height, material construction, setback, shape of the building, and potential archeological resources still on the site. Developers and their designers should also tour the area surrounding the site extensively, studying the surrounding historic buildings and their attributes, including height, massing, rhythm of openings, detailing and ornamentation, proportion, shape, composition, and roofscapes. This study should focus on broad patterns that bring cohesiveness to the fabric, rather than isolated anomalies on individual buildings. Developers should never limit their study to contiguous buildings, but should reference historic buildings along the block face and the opposing block face.

03

### Thoroughly review these guidelines

Once a baseline understanding of the history of the district, the development site, and the surrounding context has been achieved, developers and designers should consult these guidelines to work toward a high-quality design compatible with the historic context of the Over-the-Rhine Historic District.

04

### Notify the Community

Early in the design process, developers and their designers should notify the appropriate community councils, the Over-the-Rhine Foundation, and other neighborhood groups of their intent to build. These community groups can provide knowledge, context, and insight to a developer/designer that will aid design of the project and assist in obtaining community support. This step also provides an opportunity to enhance the developer/designer's understanding of the Over-the-Rhine Historic District through the transfer of information from long-standing stakeholders in the neighborhood.

05

### Compliance with Building Codes

Nothing in these guidelines shall prevent new construction from complying with all relevant building codes, including the Americans with Disabilities Act. Building Code and ADA compliance should be a foundation of the design process.



<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Robert Wimberg, *Cincinnati: Over-the-Rhine* (Cincinnati: Ohio Bookstore, 1988); Don Heinrich Tolzmann, *Over-the-Rhine Tour Guide: Cincinnati's Historic German District, Over-the-Rhine, and Environs* (Milford: Little Miami Publishing Company, 2010)

# HOW TO USE THIS DOCUMENT

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This document is divided into 9 chapters outlining the major elements to be addressed in new construction.

The guidelines within each chapter are expressed using the modal verbs **"should"**, **"must"**, or **"may"**.

Guidelines containing **"must"** or **"must not"** are mandatory in all circumstances.

Guidelines containing **"may"** are optional.

While guidelines containing **"should"** are critical, the relevant authority may, at its discretion, grant relief from one or more "should" guidelines if at least two of the following standards are met:

- a. The developer/designer presents at least three design concepts to the Urban Conservator for review at a pre-design conference, and the final project design has been reviewed and approved by the Urban Design Review Board.
- b. The project is exceptional and enhances the Over-the-Rhine Historic District's unique standing as one of America's most cohesive surviving examples of an urban, 19th-century neighborhood.
- c. The project otherwise demonstrates a strong commitment to excellence in design and to enhancing the visual continuity established by the district's historic buildings.



# STANDARD SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

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## The following submittals are required on all new construction projects:

- Narrative statement of intent behind the design, including how it meets the guidelines and preserves and enhances the integrity of the Over-the-Rhine Historic District.
- Map identifying the site in the context of the Over-the-Rhine Historic District, including existing building footprints within a two block radius.
- A copy of 1930 Sanborn map depicting the subject site. Additional Sanborn maps from earlier are also accepted.
- 3D massing model of entire block on both sides of the street, including up to two blocks away in both directions where needed. The model must include roof profiles, turrets, steeples and other important roof features.
- Existing and proposed site plan, including north arrow, street names, building footprints, parcel lines, and setback dimensions from all property lines labeled. All properties contiguous to the subject building's side property lines must be included.
- Proposed front, side, and rear elevation drawings, including all buildings on contiguous properties, with labeled measurements for height, width, setback, and dimensions [using graphic scale].
- Photographic elevation of entire block face showing the streetscape with the existing undeveloped site, and the streetscape with the proposed building superimposed onto the block face. All buildings must be labeled with measurements for height, width, setback, and dimensions [using graphic scale]. For corner sites, photographic elevations must be provided for all block faces on which the proposed building has frontage.
- Photographic elevation of the entire block face on the opposite side of the street. For corner sites, photographic elevations must be provided for all block faces opposite the proposed building.
- Annotated elevation drawing for each guideline chapter depicting how the proposed building meets that specific guideline.
- Diagram or photographic elevation of the entire block face depicting the horizontal rhythm of the streetscape with the proposed building included. For corner sites, diagrams/photographic elevations must be provided for all block faces on which the proposed building has frontage.
- Diagram or photographic elevation of the entire block face depicting the compositional [base, middle, top] rhythm of the streetscape with the proposed building included. For corner sites, diagrams/photographic elevations must be provided for all blocks on which the proposed building has frontage.
- Diagram or photographic elevation of the entire block face depicting the vertical rhythm of the streetscape with the proposed building included. For corner sites, diagrams/photographic elevations must be provided for all blocks on which the proposed building has frontage.
- Wall section of the facade(s) cut through major openings from ground through roof.
- Sitrine drawings or images showing that any rooftop decks and roof access enclosures are not visible from contiguous street(s).
- Sitrine drawings or images showing that any mechanical systems, elevated solar panel arrays, and other non-deck rooftop appendages are not visible from contiguous streets at any point within 40 feet of the subject building.
- Material specifications and samples for all exterior materials, including, but not limited to, exterior cladding, mortar, detailing and ornamentation, fencing, windows, doors, and roofing.
- Proposed front, side, and rear axonometric and/or rendered perspective drawings.



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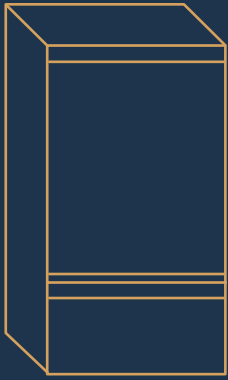
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MASSING, HEIGHT  
& SCALE



01

# MASSING, HEIGHT & SCALE

## HISTORIC CONTEXT

Massing, Height and Scale are fundamental to the unique identity and character of the Over-the-Rhine Historic District. The district was developed on long, narrow parcels of land, resulting in the construction of tall, long, narrow buildings designed to maximize density. Thus, the quintessential building is significantly taller and longer than it is wide, with either a rectangular or “L” shape volume. The massing and height of each building varies from its neighbors, but within a limited range, resulting in the particular scale that defines each block. While some blocks feature buildings that range from 2-4 stories in height, others have a 3-5 story range. Most buildings in the district are relatively narrow, 25-50 feet in width.

24-30 E. 15th Street typifies the massing, height, and scale of buildings found in the Over-the-Rhine Historic District.



1430-1438 Race Street typifies the massing, height, and scale of buildings found in the Over-the-Rhine Historic District.





# MASSING, HEIGHT & SCALE

## GUIDELINE INTENTION

New buildings in Over-the-Rhine are to reflect the historic massing and height within the district and should support the continuity of scale established by the historic fabric. Major deviations from the established massing, height, and scale can irrevocably detract from the character of the neighborhood.

01

**Building width should be within 10% of the average width of non-institutional contributing buildings located within the same block face.\* †**

02

**Building height should be within 10% of the average height of non-institutional contributing buildings located within the same block face.\***

03

**Building height must not exceed the tallest non-institutional contributing building on the block face, or be less than the shortest non-institutional contributing building on the block face.**

### Note

\* If there are fewer than three (3) non-institutional contributing buildings located within the same block face, then the average must be calculated using non-institutional contributing buildings located within the same block face plus an additional block face in both directions.

† Projects developed on a single historic lot where the width of the lot is less than the minimum width allowed by this guideline are exempt from this guideline. Where this guideline conflicts with Chapter 02: Setback, Chapter 02: Setback shall take precedence.

04

**Buildings should be rectilinear in form.**

05

**Building height should be greater than width, and building depth should be greater than width.**

06

**In addition to the foregoing guidelines, development on two or more contiguous historic lots, or on one or more consolidated lots with total width of 40 feet or more, must meet all of the following requirements:**

- a. Use multiple detached volumes to break the building into separate structures.
- b. Meet at least two of the following standards:
  - i. The developer/designer presents at least three design concepts to the Urban Conservator for review at a pre-design conference, and the final project design has been reviewed and approved by the Urban Design Review Board.
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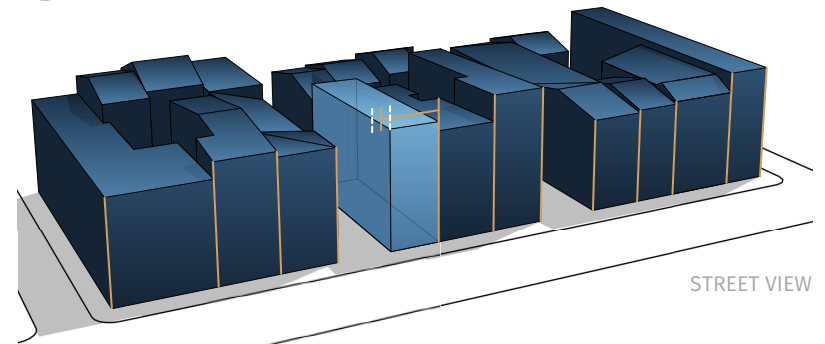
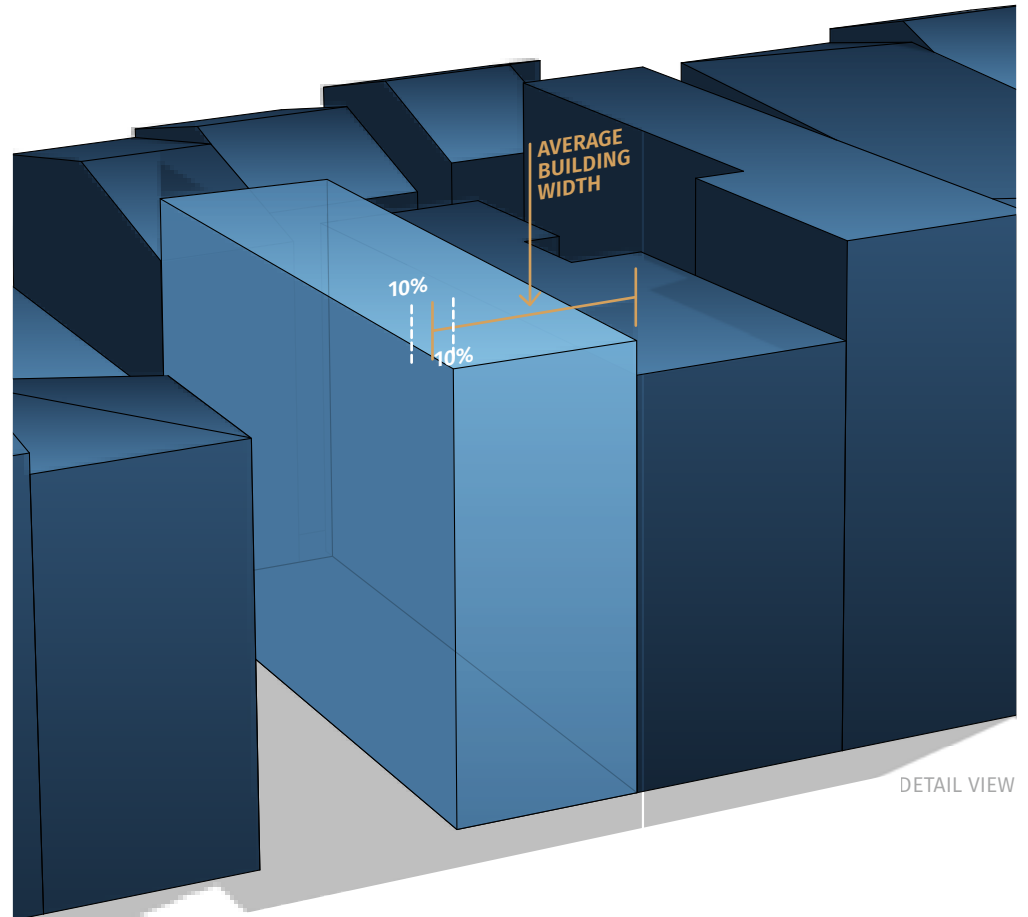
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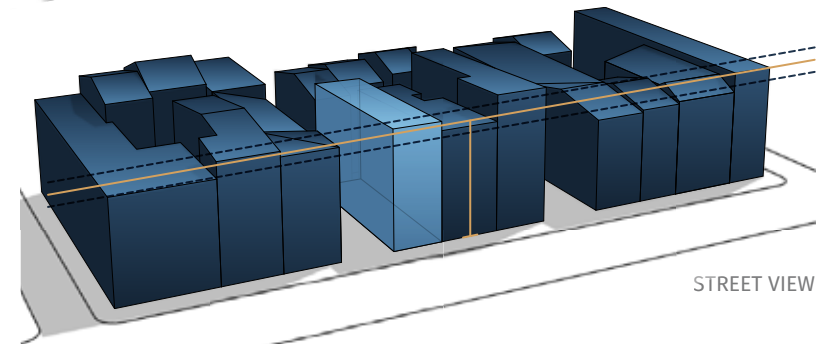
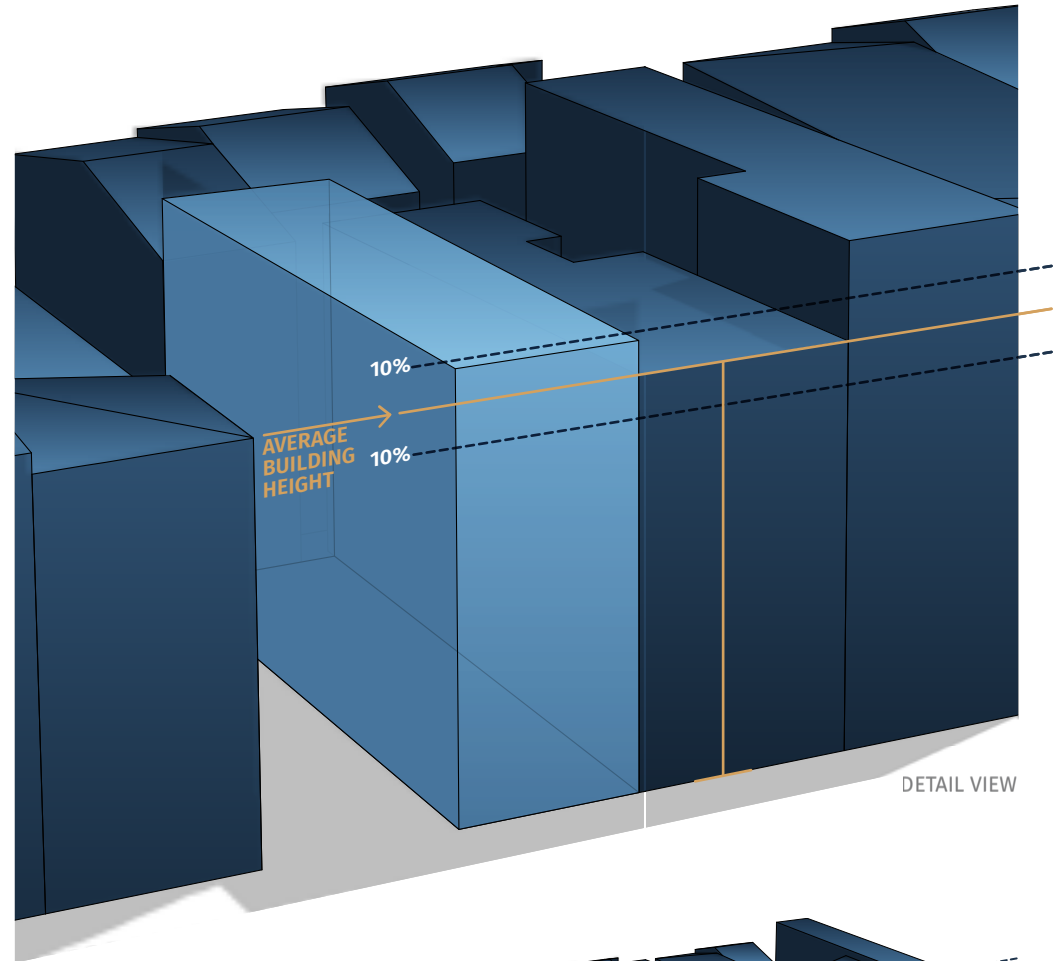
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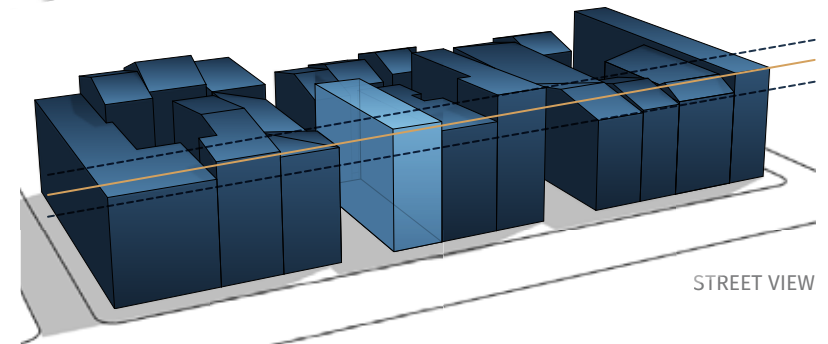
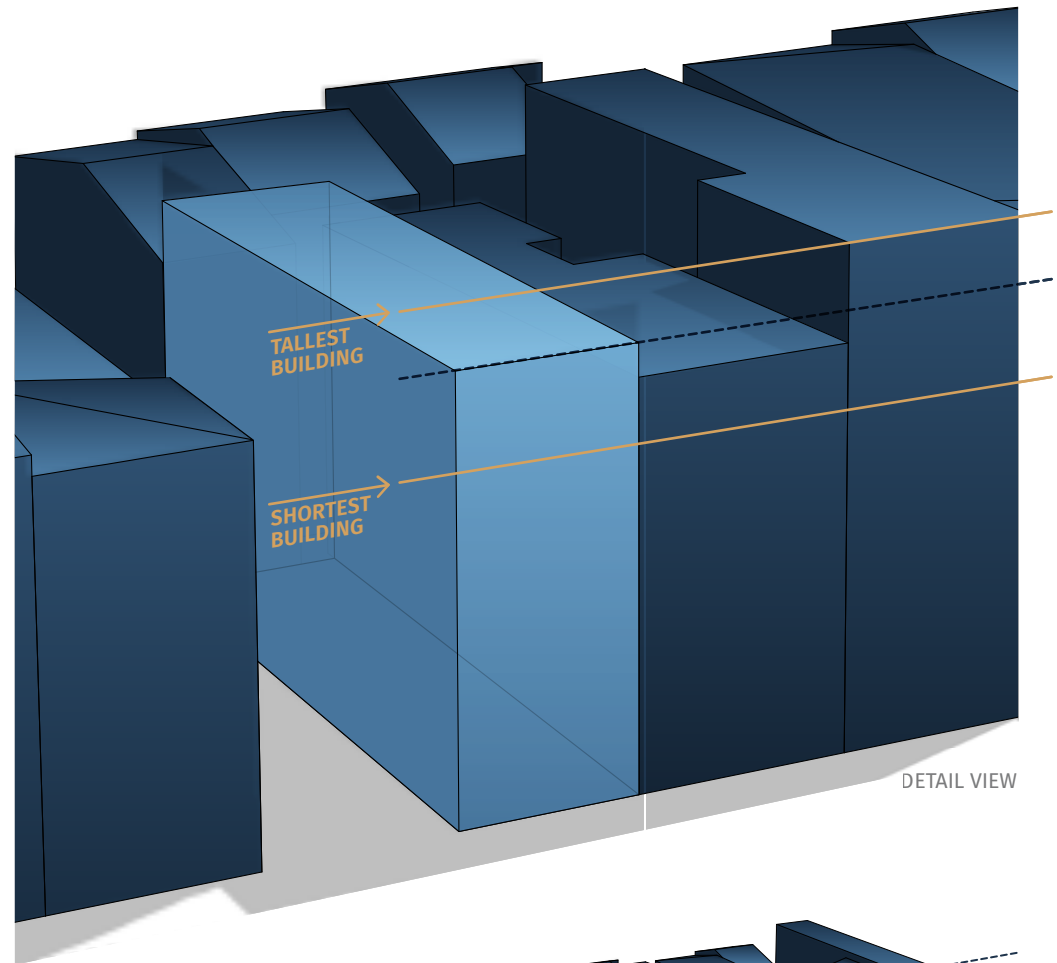
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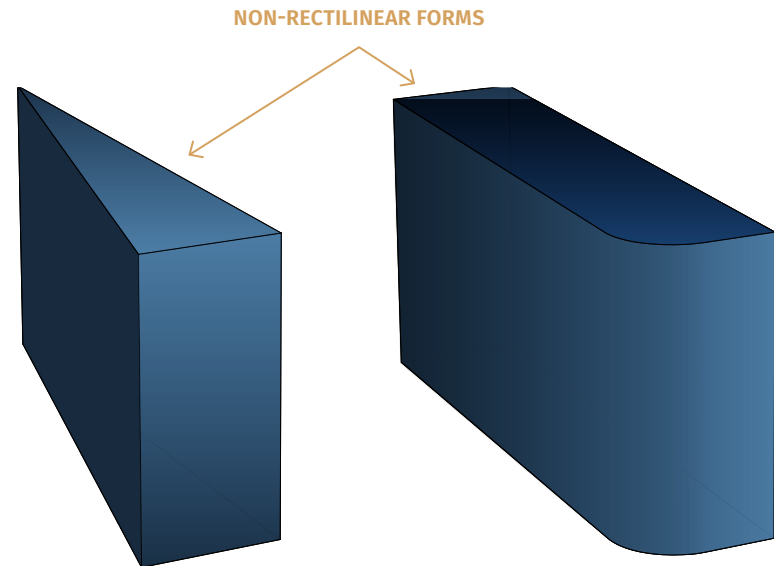
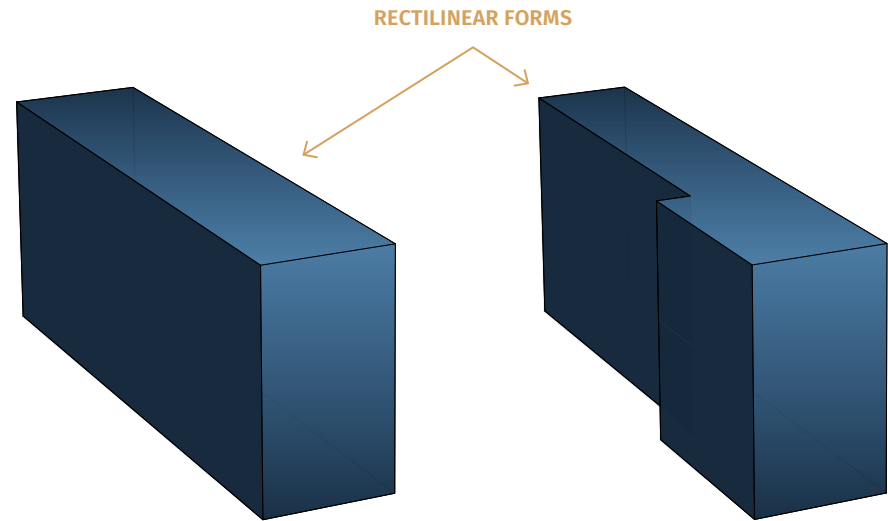
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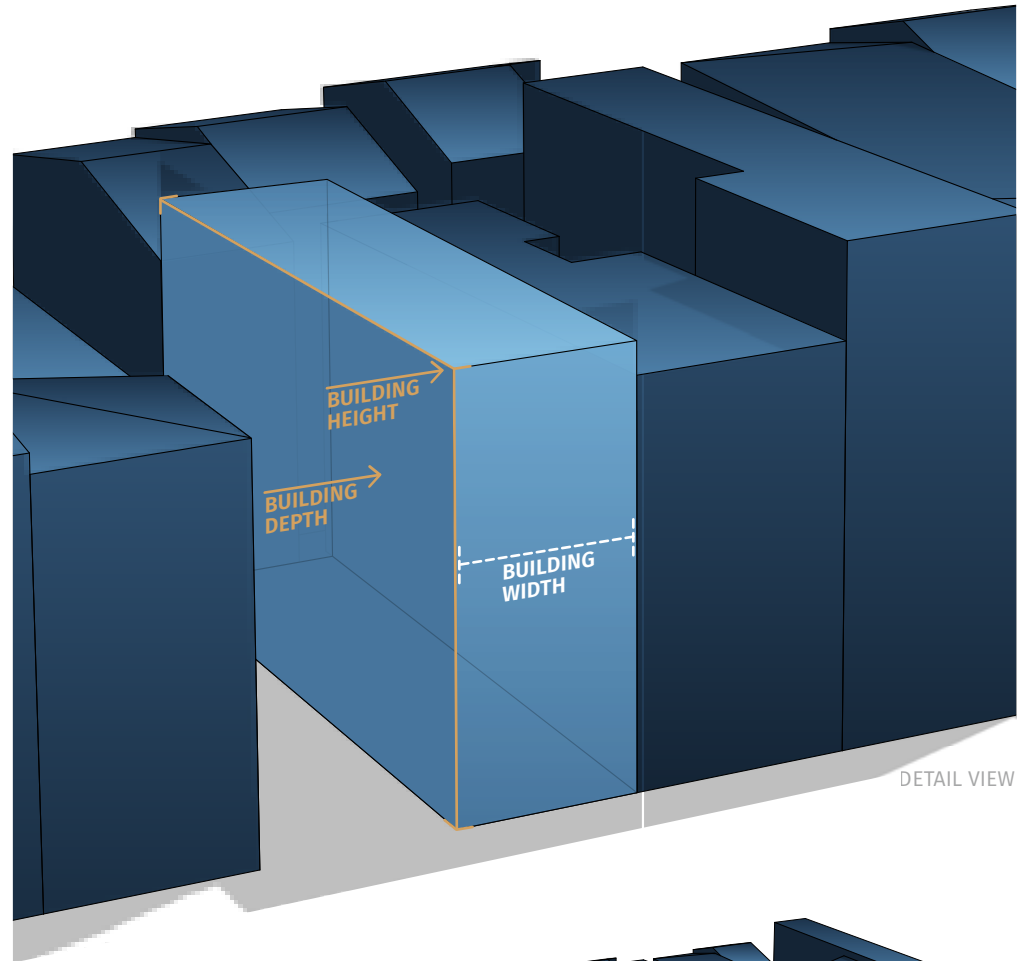
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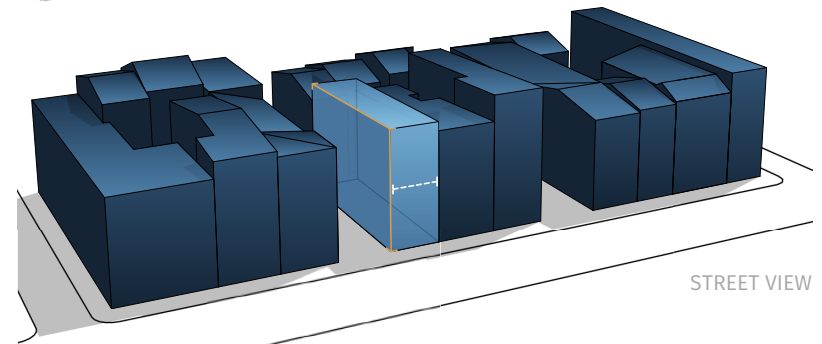
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DETAIL VIEW



STREET VIEW

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