
Wilkinsburg Community Art and Civic Design Commission

Design Review Handbook

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prepared by:

Loysen + Kreuthmeier Architects
5115 Penn Avenue
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15224

and

Office of Public Art
810 Penn Avenue, Suite 200
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15222



Project Credits

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Project Team

Sallyann Kluz, RA
Associate, Loysen + Kreuthmeier Architects

Renee Piechocki
Director, Office of Public Art

Kate Hansen
Program Assistant, Office of Public Art

Wilkinsburg Community Art and Civic Design Commission members (as of June 30, 2012)

Chelsea Burket
Tracey Evans
Bryan Grasso
Susan Holmes
Yvonne James
Lazae LaSpina
Carin Mincemoyer
Maria Riley
Harold Young

Marla Marcinko, Borough Manager, Ex-Officio Member
Sean Gramz, Ex-Officio Member



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Part One: Introduction

An Introduction to Wilkinsburg: Community Character

Formally established in 1887, the Borough of Wilkinsburg is a small yet dense urban community located just outside the eastern boundary of the City of Pittsburgh. Although an independent municipality, Wilkinsburg is closely connected to Pittsburgh through transit and road connections, and through economic links as well.

Penn Avenue (state road Route 8) serves as the primary business corridor and provides a direct connection to downtown Pittsburgh as well as other commercial districts of Pittsburgh's East End neighborhoods. Downtown Wilkinsburg is characterized by commercial buildings that were developed primarily in the late 19th and early 20th century, when the community served as a regional business district and supported numerous residential communities. The urban form of Wilkinsburg is similar to other urban neighborhoods in Pittsburgh and the region. It features a strong linear commercial corridor along Penn Avenue that expands outwards at the intersections of Penn and Wood Street and Penn and Center. To the west, the commercial district is bounded by the rail line and East Busway. Warehouse structures border this edge of the district, and provide larger building footprints and lot sizes than in the heart of the district. Wilkinsburg's residential districts are built immediately adjacent to the commercial district, with higher density neighborhoods closer to the commercial core evolving into lower density districts as one moves away from the business district. The borough is defined by a strong rectilinear street grid that provides both pedestrian and vehicular connectivity through the commercial and residential neighborhoods.

The commercial core itself was developed as a pedestrian-oriented district predating the influx of demand for parking. It consists primarily of three and four-story masonry structures that supported retail uses on the first floor with offices or residences above. The characteristic architecture of the commercial district follows the patterns of the region's 19th and early 20th century business districts: a high-degree of transparency on the ground floor through the use of storefront glazing; regular patterns of punched window openings on upper floors; and the use of a strong horizontal cornice line to demark the transition from the ground floor commercial to the upper floor uses. The street rhythm reflects a traditional 20 – 30 foot wide lot and structural bay, and the facades are varied with a high degree of articulation.

The 2.3 square mile borough is home to approximately 18,000 residents, down from a high of 31,000 in 1950. The population decline, which is symptomatic of the region as a whole due to the loss of heavy industry, has left the Borough with significant vacancies in both the residential and commercial districts.

In recent years, the combination of an increase in demand for off-street parking and the reduction of property values in the Borough have led to an erosion of the dense urban fabric of the commercial core and its adjacent residential neighborhoods. Surface parking has become a more predominant use in the community, particularly adjacent to the East Busway and around new commercial development that is geared to drive-in traffic. The desire for parking that is perceived as "easy and convenient" has led to new commercial buildings being pushed back from the street edge with parking in front. This pattern of development has eroded the public realm of the community and diminished the pedestrian character of the street, and reflects a suburban style of development that is at odds with the historic building patterns and overall character of the community.

Even with the loss of population and resulting loss of density, the original urban character of the borough still remains, however, and provides an opportunity to strengthen the built environment, which can in turn enhance both business and residential development. Recent development activities and active engagement by residents and business people are rebuilding a sense of place and community within the borough. The design review criteria and the process engaged by the WCACDC will provide a tool to the community members to continue to build upon Wilkinsburg's strengths and enhance its role as a vibrant urban center in the Pittsburgh region.

An Introduction to Design Review

The first introduction that many people have to design quality is when it is missing. They may notice that a place feels impersonal, unsafe, or uninhabited. They begin to compare it to places that they have enjoyed being in and begin to identify the differences between these experiences. Sometimes it is the presence of landscaping and shade trees that defines the character of a place that we love; sometimes it is the variety of scale of materials and window openings that gives us something to look at as we walk down the street; sometimes it is the presence of art and design features that capture the spirit of a community and gives a neighborhood a unique flavor.

Good design can make places more pleasant to occupy, safer for individuals and groups, and more prosperous for business owners. Good design can enhance real estate markets and increase neighborhood investment. Good design can simply make a place more interesting to visit.

In order to bring attention to the role of design in enhancing development and improving their neighborhoods, many communities establish design review procedures. Design review can provide a mechanism by which businesses, property owners, and residents can work with municipal agencies to produce and maintain an attractive community and to bring shared goals to fruition. For example, a community may have a goal "to create a pleasant pedestrian environment within the business district in order to enhance commercial activity." Design criteria might then include statements such as: new buildings should have clearly defined entrances that open to the sidewalk, as opposed to opening to a parking lot; there should be a high degree of transparency from the sidewalk providing visual connection from the interior to the exterior of buildings; and projects should provide new or maintain the existing landscaping and street trees. The reviewers would use these criteria to determine if a project should be approved or whether additional recommendations should be taken into consideration prior to approving the design. In addition, the review process, which is open to the public, provides an opportunity to discuss the design issues that are important to the community and to come up with creative solutions.

An effective design review process can:

- Guide new development to be appropriate for the community vision.
- Create a framework for community discussion about the role of design in strengthening Wilkinsburg.
- Educate the Wilkinsburg community, business owners, and developers about the value of their neighborhoods and how design affects them.
- Give Wilkinsburg residents, visitors, and business owners an opportunity to collaborate with developers on the design of the community.
- Establish clear ground rules for development.
- Provide a mechanism for communication and negotiation for both community members and developers.
- Allow for flexibility in how design criteria are addressed.

In recognition of the role that design review can play in enhancing Wilkinsburg, the Community Art and Civic Design Commission (WCACDC) was established in 2009. The Commission role is to review, make recommendations, and approve proposed designs for new and renovated structures, landscapes, works of art, memorials, and monuments on all public property and on all private property designated for commercial use. Commission approval is required before building permits for such projects are issued by the Borough. The WCACDC derives its authority from empowering legislation passed by the Borough Council in November 2009, a copy of which is included in the appendices of this handbook.

How to Use this Handbook

The purpose of this document is to provide a roadmap to the design review process utilized by the WCACDC, including both a description of what criteria are used by the Commission in making its recommendations and an explanation of how the design review process works. The handbook is also intended to help those interested in making improvements to their property better understand the community's design goals, and how they can engage the design review process to achieve positive results.

Applicants and interested parties are encouraged to review the handbook prior to beginning the design process in order to familiarize themselves with both the procedures that will be undertaken and the design goals that are important to the community. The handbook is not intended to be prescriptive in nature; rather it is the intention of the Commission to work collaboratively with the applicant to achieve results that are beneficial to both the applicant and the Borough.

The Design Review Handbook includes: what projects must be reviewed; who reviews them; the application process for review; the review procedures; and the design review criteria that will be utilized during the review process. In addition, the Appendices portion of this document includes sample application forms, submission requirements, samples of letters and certificates of review, and a glossary of commonly used terms.



Part Two: Procedures

Projects that must be reviewed by the Wilkinsburg Community Art and Civic Design Commission (WCACDC) include:

- All new and renovated structures;
- Landscapes;
- Works of art; and
- Memorials and monuments,

located on all public property and on all private property designated for commercial use. Such projects require approval from the WCACDC prior to the issuance of a building permit.

Projects that **do not** need to be reviewed by the Commission include:

- Renovations and repairs involving in-kind replacement of materials and assemblies;
- Painting of existing structures, unless located on public property, and excluding murals, other painted artworks and painted signs; and
- Temporary structures (180 days or less).

Commission Membership

The membership of the WCACDC consists of eleven (11) members, appointed by Borough council or by the community organizations that they represent. Members are eminent in their respective professions and known advocates for the arts and design. The members include: one architect; one landscape architect; two professional visual artists; one representative of the Wilkinsburg Community Development Corporation; one representative of the Chamber of Commerce; one representative from the Wilkinsburg Historical Society; one curator, arts administrator, or urban planner; three residents of Wilkinsburg, one representing each ward and who have an affiliation in arts or design; the Director of Code Enforcement, in an ex-officio capacity; and the Borough Manager, in an ex-officio capacity.

Beginning the Process

Applicants are encouraged to begin the review process with the Wilkinsburg Community Art and Civic Design Commission at an early stage of project development, when changes to the project can still be made.

Applicants must complete an Application to the WCACDC (available on-line and in Appendix A of this Handbook) and prepare a preliminary submission packet to review with Code Enforcement staff, including:

- Location Map
- Site Plan, including adjacent context
- Labeled photos of site and its context
- Project narrative (maximum of one page), describing the scope of work, concept and project goals
- For artworks, information about artists or how artists will be selected.

Staff will assist the applicant in identifying materials that will be required for presentation to the Commission, based on the scope and type of project. Recommended materials can be found in the Application Materials Checklist included in Appendix B of this handbook. Staff will work with the applicant to develop the timeline for review by Commission, including identifying potential site visits.

Presentation Materials

Staff will assist the applicant in identifying the materials that will be required for presentation to the WCACDC. At minimum, the applicant should present:

- Location map
- Site Plan
- Labeled photos of existing site and its context
- Illustrative drawings of proposed project in context, including but not limited to: colored site plan / landscape plan; elevations, including scale figures
- Documentation of community process and/or engagement, including narrative and timeline

Presentations for Public Art, Monuments and Memorials should include:

- Project description
- Budget
- Drawings, models, or other materials that clearly represent the appearance of the project
- Samples of materials, material product sheets
- Construction documents, unless not required by the Commission
- Conservator's report, if required
- Project timeline
- Description and timeline of the community engagement process
- Letters of support
- Copy of artist's contract
- Maintenance plan
- Monument and Memorials shall include information about the person, event, or quality that is being honored

All illustrative presentation materials should be clearly labeled with adjacent street and place names, north arrow, and drawing scale. Applicants are highly encouraged to submit three-dimensional representations of the proposed project illustrating prominent views to and from the proposed project.

Public Meeting

Once the initial application process has been completed, a public meeting with the WCACDC will be scheduled. Public meetings are held ten times per year and advertised via public notice once annually. These meetings are open to the public, and are held in the Wilkesburg Borough Building, located at 605 Ross Avenue, Wilkesburg, Pennsylvania, 15221.

At the public meeting, the applicant should be prepared to make a brief presentation of the project to the Commission members, including visual representation of the proposed project. Commission members may ask questions of the applicant and may additionally invite comment from the public.

Commission discussion of the project will be public. After discussion, including input from the Code Enforcement staff, the Commission may take one of the following actions:

- Approve Project Application as Submitted
- Approve Project Application with Conditions
- Table Project Application Pending Resubmission

- Deny Project Application
- Final Acceptance for Works of Public Art, Monuments and Memorials

Actions Taken by the Commission

Approve Project Application as Submitted

If a project is approved as submitted, the applicant may complete the Zoning and Building Permit application process without further action from the WCACDC.

Approve Project Application with Conditions

During the review process, changes may be made to the project in collaboration between the applicant and the Commission members in order to better address the review criteria established by this handbook. If the applicant agrees to these changes, the project may be approved with conditions. Once these conditions have been satisfied and reviewed by the Code Enforcement staff, the applicant may complete the Zoning and Building Permit application process without further action from the WCACDC.

Code Enforcement staff shall provide an update on projects that have met their approval conditions at a subsequent meeting of the WCACDC.

Table Project Application Pending Resubmission or Modifications

In the event that a project does not adequately address the review criteria established by this handbook or key design issues are unresolved, the Commission may choose to table the project pending resubmission with modifications. The project may then be resubmitted, taking into consideration the comments from the Commission members and the Code Enforcement staff.

In the event that the applicant does not reappear before the Commission within 6 months of the original hearing date, the application will be considered inactive and will be tabled until resubmission of the application. A request for an extension of this time frame may be submitted, in writing, to the Commission for consideration.

Deny Project Application

Projects that do not appropriately address the review criteria of this handbook may be denied at the discretion of the Commission.

Project applications that have been denied may not be resubmitted for a minimum of one year from the date of denial. Projects that have made substantial changes from the initial submission may be apply as new submissions. Substantial changes may include, but are not limited to: overall change to design strategy; significant materials changes; or selection of new artist or designer.

Final Acceptance for Works of Art, Memorials, and Monuments

When a work of art, memorial, or monument will be owned by the Borough of Wilkesburg and added to its collection, the applicant makes a presentation of the completed work to the Commission. If the work was completed as proposed, or with changes that are acceptable to the Commission, this final acceptance review establishes ownership by the Borough. If the work was not completed as proposed, or with changes that are not acceptable to the Commission, the work is not owned by the Borough and the applicant must remedy the project and reapply for final acceptance.

Site Visits

In the process of reviewing the applications, the Commission may determine that one or more site visits are necessary in order to fully understand the scope of the project and its impact on the community. Times for site visits may be established at the first review of the project, and will generally be scheduled prior to the next meeting of the Commission.

Applications for Zoning and Building Permit Approval

All applications for Zoning and Building Permit Approval will be reviewed by the Code Enforcement division. If projects are located on public property or on commercially-designated private property and have not previously been reviewed and approved by the WCACDC, the Code Enforcement official will refer the project to the WCACDC for review.

In order to expedite review, applicants are encouraged to begin the Commission review process early in the project. As such, applications may be made directly to the Commission prior to the application for Zoning or Building Permit.

Conceptual and Pre-Development Workshops

In addition to the regularly scheduled Commission meetings, WCACDC holds Conceptual and Pre-Development Workshops with potential applicants. These workshops are collaborative sessions that are held in the conceptual phase of a project. Together, the project team and the Commission members will review project goals, key issues pertaining to the particular site and its context, define a schedule for the project review, and establish a roadmap for moving the project forward. The workshops are non-binding and open to the public.

Pre-Development Workshops do not take the place of the required Commission review and approval process, but are intended to help facilitate the design and review process for projects of significant scale and investment.

Courtesy Reviews

Courtesy Reviews for projects that do not require Commission approval may be requested. Similar to Pre-Development Workshops in format, such reviews are intended to provide design guidance and ensure that projects of all types attain a high degree of excellence that will enhance the community as a whole. Examples of projects that may request Courtesy Reviews include residential development and projects on private non-commercial properties. Courtesy Reviews are non-binding and open to the public.

Collaboration and Coordination with Other Commissions, Committees & Plans

The Wilkesburg Community Art and Civic Design Commission strives to review projects in coordination with other commissions, committees and plans that have been adopted or accepted by agencies of the Borough of Wilkesburg, including neighborhood and business district guidelines.

In order to do so, Commission members are asked to familiarize themselves with existing plans that have been developed by the other agencies and commissions of the Borough, as well as with plans that have been prepared by neighborhood groups, business associations, community development agencies, and local non-profits. The Commission will consider applications for development in the context of these plans. The Commission may invite representatives from other commissions and organizations to participate in the discussion of the proposed projects.

Applicants are likewise encouraged to familiarize themselves with existing planning documents that impact the context of their proposed project, and be prepared to explain how their project reflects the goals established in these plans. Applicants are highly encouraged to reach out to local organizations to inform them of their proposed project in advance of the application to the Commission. They may be asked to provide information regarding discussions that they have had with community organizations regarding how their proposed project aligns with existing community plans. Applicants should additionally be prepared to present information about how members of the community, including residents and business owners impacted by a project, have been informed about and included in the project.



Part Three: Design Review Criteria

Introduction to Design Review Criteria

The Design Review Criteria indicated below are to be used by the members of the Community Art and Civic Design Commission in their project review. For each of these criteria, the handbook includes a statement of Design Intent, an overview of the Strategies in place to bring about the stated Intent, and a series of Recommendations as to how property owners may implement the Strategies in order to achieve the Intent. The Recommendations are intended to evolve over time and will be added to based on best practices. The goal of the Design Criteria is not to be prescriptive but to encourage creative solutions while illustrating successful approaches that have been used in Wilkinsburg and other communities.

1. Preserving and Enhancing the Urban Fabric

Design Intent:

To maintain and enhance the urban character of Wilkinsburg, including its strong street grid, pedestrian scaled environment, and its historic buildings.

Strategy:

Acknowledge and respect the historic development patterns of the community in the proposed design, including: the historic street grid; significant spaces, structures and design elements; build-to lines; pedestrian-oriented streets; and view corridors.

Recommendations:

- The historic street grid should be preserved wherever possible, enhancing connectivity throughout the community. New development should not interrupt the historic street grid.
- Historic and culturally significant structures, landscapes, and artworks should be preserved and enhanced.
- The inherent walkability of the community should be preserved. Sidewalks and pedestrian crossings should be enhanced, and curb-cuts onto primary streets should be minimized.
- Community safety should be enhanced through street connectivity and promoting “eyes on the street”. Windows and entrances should provide views to and from the public right-of-ways.
- Accessibility should be enhanced throughout the community through improvements to public space, intersections, and crosswalks. Signalization at intersections and signage should take into consideration a variety of impairments, including sight, mobility, and auditory.
- Primary building entrances should be located on primary streets and sidewalks.

The **Public Realm** of a community is the outdoor area that is experienced by members of the public, regardless of whether it is publicly or privately owned. The Public Realm includes public rights-of-ways, public spaces, yards and the facades of private buildings that front onto the public street, and hillsides and landscapes that are visible from public spaces and places.

The term **Open Space** refers to the area of a lot that is not occupied by structures, parking areas, or driveways.

Density is the amount of building area per lot area. Maintaining an established pattern of building density in a community is important to maintaining its overall sense of place and urban context. Low density areas are characterized by

- Parking areas should not be located between the public right-of-way and the primary building façade. Parking and loading is encouraged to be located either behind or to the side of the building, allowing for building frontage along the right-of-way.
- Proposals for new development and significant alterations should take into consideration view corridors in the community. Presentation materials should include perspective views from primary streets to illustrate the impact of the proposed project on the view corridor.
- Proposals should maintain a building density in keeping with the urban character of Wilkinsburg.

large areas of open space with a few small scale buildings, such as single-family houses. High density areas are characterized by larger tall buildings that are typically built to the street edge and have little open space or surface parking adjacent to them.

View corridors are dominant lines of sight of observers (including both pedestrians and drivers) looking to objects and sites of significance to the community, such as historic buildings, parks, green hillsides, and the commercial core. View corridors provide visual organization and provide navigational keys for visitors.

2. Creating and Enhancing the Landscape

Design Intent:

To preserve and enhance the open spaces of Wilkinsburg, including parks, public streets, squares, and sidewalks.

Strategy:

Design projects in concert with the Borough's open space goals. Proposed development should not detract from existing open space or impede on future plans. Site improvements on private commercial property also contribute to the quality of open space in the community and should be considered in the context of the Borough as a whole.

Recommendations

Parks & Open Space

- Proposals should reflect the Borough's plans for parks and open space, as defined in its planning documents, including the Comprehensive Plan, the Comprehensive Recreation, Park and Open Space Plan, and others.
- Projects that are located adjacent to existing parks and open space should be designed to enhance these places rather than competing with or detracting from them.

Public Streets & Sidewalks

- Building placement and location on the site should be considered in the context of public streets, sidewalks and open spaces. Where appropriate, build-to lines established by neighboring structures and the historic patterns of development should be maintained.
- The pedestrian environment of sidewalks and streetscapes should be enhanced by appropriate urban street furniture, including trash and recycling receptacles, seating, pedestrian-scaled lighting, and bicycle racks.
- Plans for new and improved streets and sidewalks should enhance accessibility throughout the community.
- Plans for new and improved streets and sidewalks should encourage pedestrian and cyclist comfort and safety.

Street Trees & Plantings

- Street trees should be used to create a sense of unity and order throughout the community. Their placement and species selection should create a sense of rhythm along the street.
- Existing street trees should be preserved or appropriately replaced. New street trees should be incorporated into streetscape plans and projects.

Landscape refers to any space, either public or private, from the building façade out. Landscape is a language that defines open spaces and directs people and circulation throughout the community. The urban landscape should contribute to the overall perception of the community and enhance its unique character and sense of place.

The **Build-to Line** of a street is a means of preserving an established pattern of development along an urban street. The Build-to Line of a street is established by drawing an imaginary line that falls within three feet of the line along which most buildings in a block have the majority of their front façade.

Heat Islands are areas in which significantly more solar energy is absorbed and stored than in surrounding areas. This energy is released in the form of heat. An example of this is the temperature contrast that we experience standing in an asphalt parking area versus in a grassy lawn in the middle of the summer – we will be much hotter standing on the

- Street tree species should be considered for their contribution to the urban canopy and their aesthetic contribution to the streetscape.
- Plans should encourage the integration of plantings and shade trees to reduce the impact of solar heat gain in the summer, while reducing the amount of paved surface areas.
- Developers and property owners are encouraged to utilize street tree guidelines for Wilkinsburg. Plans should reflect best practices for urban areas and the project's unique circumstances.

Sustainability in the Landscape

- Biodiversity of plant species and the provision of habitat for beneficial insects and birds should be considered in the design and specification of landscaped areas. Native species of plants are encouraged.
- Innovative stormwater management techniques should be incorporated into the landscape, both public and private. Some of these techniques may include the use of stormwater tree pits, on-site bioretention, and permeable paving in parking areas.
- Off-street parking and loading areas should incorporate shade trees and landscaped areas to reduce the heat island impact of larger paving surfaces. Permeable paving is encouraged.

Parking & Loading Areas

- Off-street parking and loading areas adjacent to the public streets and open space should be appropriately screened with a combination of planting and fencing or site walls.
- Parking areas should not be located between the public right-of-way and the primary building façade. Parking and loading is encouraged to be located either behind or to the side of the building, allowing for building frontage along the right-of-way.
- On-street parallel parking is encouraged as a means to both enhance convenience in the commercial core and as a traffic calming measure.

Site Materials

- Site materials, including fencing, lighting, paving, plants, etc., should be selected for both their aesthetics and their longevity. Maintenance requirements of the site materials should be taken into consideration in site planning.
- Site elements, including lighting, fences, walls, benches, etc., should be urban in character and be constructed from materials that are appropriate to the urban streetscape. Site elements should be appropriately scaled and should not block public rights-of-way or impede site or building access.
- Residential-style site amenities, including wooden fences, are discouraged in commercial areas.

asphalt than in the grass, and long into the evening we can feel the heat that has been stored by the asphalt.

Heat islands increase the demand for energy in the form of air conditioning and mechanical cooling, and play a role in increased ozone action days in our cities and towns, which negatively impacts our health. Heat islands can be reduced by providing more reflective surfaces that will not absorb energy from the sun, including light-colored roofs and paving, and by increasing the amount of landscape planting and shade trees on our streets and building sites.

Stormwater is the term applied to rain when it reaches the ground or building surfaces. In urban areas such as Wilkinsburg, large quantities of stormwater cannot be absorbed by the ground because areas of paving, roofs, and other hard surfaces (also called impervious surfaces) prevent it from reaching the soil. Stormwater which is not absorbed by the ground must be routed into the Borough's sewer system. However, as the areas of roads and other impervious surfaces has increased, the amount of water that is handled by the sewer system has also increased. This has placed heavy demands on the aging pipes and infrastructure, and increases the amount of raw sewage that is released into our rivers and streams when there is significant rainfall. When we can reduce the amount of stormwater that is released into the sewer system, we can help protect our water supply and the ecological balance of our rivers and streams.

Site and Landscape Lighting

- Site lighting, including parking lot lighting, should be designed to enhance the landscape, while providing safety and visual comfort for the user.
- Light fixtures should be selected for appropriate footcandle level based on use (e.g. street lighting versus pedestrian lighting versus landscape lighting).
- Light fixtures should be proportional to both pole size and mounting height.
- Street lighting should be considered from the point of view of both the vehicular user and the pedestrian.
- Site and landscape lighting should employ dark-sky standards as established by the International Dark Sky Association (www.darksky.org).
- Landscape lighting (that which is used in planted areas) should not compromise the health of plants and trees.
- Landscape lighting should work in coordination with street and pedestrian lighting, but should be utilized as an artful accent, not as a primary lighting strategy.

Footcandles are a measure of light levels. Smaller numbers indicate lower light levels while larger numbers indicate high levels of light.

Dark Sky Standards are lighting standards established by the International Dark-Sky Association (IDA), with the intention of reducing light pollution in cities and towns across the country. Light pollution from our cities and towns disrupts ecosystems, affects human sleep patterns, and wastes energy. The concept established by the IDA to fight light pollution is simple: light what you need, when you need it.

3. Relationship of Buildings to their Surroundings

Design Intent:

To encourage proposed development and significant renovations to enhance and complement the urban fabric of Wilkinsburg, and consider development proposals in light of their contribution to the overall built environment.

The intent is not to discourage new and innovative building forms or use of materials, but to identify the desirable characteristics of the built environment of Wilkinsburg and encourage new development and renovations to enhance and complement those characteristics.

Strategy:

View each building and structure not simply as its own element, but as a contributing part to the urban fabric of Wilkinsburg. Be aware of the context of the proposed structures and the relationship between their building and adjacent structures and landscape.

Recommendations

- Applications should include photos and illustrations of the existing context, including adjacent structures, streetscapes, and views to and from the site. Applicants are encouraged to submit perspective illustrations and/or models that illustrate the proposed project in the context of the site.
- Buildings should be designed to be compatible with the urban character of the Borough. This includes the scale and massing of the buildings, as well as the materials selection, discussed in more detail below.

The **Build-to Line** of a street is a means of preserving an established pattern of development along an urban street. The Build-to Line of a street is established by drawing an imaginary line that falls within three feet of the line along which most buildings in a block have the majority of their front façade.

Building Scale, Massing and Height

- Building articulation should maintain established street rhythms and proportions through the articulation of structural bays, window and door patterns, and entrance locations.
- Where appropriate, build-to lines established by neighboring structures and the historic patterns of development should be maintained.
- Buildings should be compatible in height with their context. Height variations may be used to articulate design features and draw attention to the building, but should be considered in the overall context of the street and adjacent structures.
- Roof lines and their materials should be appropriate to both the adjacent context and to the building function. Residential roof forms are discouraged from use on non-residential buildings.

A **bay** is a unit of form that is used in architecture used to provide scale and modulation to a building. On a building façade, it can be marked off by vertical elements, such as columns, and is frequently related to the internal structural of the building.

Massing, or **building massing**, is the overall volume and shape of a structure or building. For a building or structure to look appropriate in its context, its massing should reflect the massing of the structures adjacent to it. For example, on a block where most of the buildings are three or four stories tall and built to the sidewalk edge, a new building that consists of a one-story massing and is set back from the sidewalk will look

Building Fenestration: Entrances & Windows

- Primary building entrances should be located adjacent to the sidewalk and be oriented to pedestrians approaching the building from the public street. Primary entrances should be highlighted through the use of vision glazing, exterior and interior lighting, trim, and street numbers.
- New buildings are encouraged to explore creative compositions that provide a high degree of transparency between the street and the interior of the building, while also providing allowances for privacy. Generally, the ground floor of a building should have a higher degree of transparency than upper, more private floors.
- In renovation projects, windows should maintain the proportions of the original window openings whenever possible.
- Wherever possible, windows are encouraged to be operable, allowing occupants to open them for fresh air.
- When provided, security gates and grilles should be installed on the inside of windows and glazed areas rather than on the exterior of the building. They should be able to be folded or removed when not in use. Artistic and sculptural approaches to providing security measures are also encouraged.

Building Materials

- Building materials should be carefully chosen for their quality, longevity, and be appropriate to the context of adjacent structures. Brick, stone, and other high quality masonry materials are encouraged for commercial and institutional structures.
- Materials can and should be used creatively to enhance the scale of the building facades and the character of Wilkinsburg. The use of fine-grained materials, such as brick and stone masonry and the creative application of wood and corrugated products, is encouraged. Monolithic materials, such as stucco and sheet products, should be used carefully and modulated both through their detailing (including joint and fastening patterns) and by the use of other fine-grained materials in contrast to them.
- Colors should be complementary to each other and to the character of the building. In cases where facades are restored to their original historic design, color palettes should be reflective of the colors typical from that era.
- Modern facades should also reflect their era, and may be appropriate places to explore non-traditional color palettes, or the use of modern building materials that do not require painting, such as metals or fiber cement boards.
- Original masonry materials, including brick and stone, should not be painted unless they show significant deterioration that can be shown to require painting. Painting existing masonry can accelerate its deterioration by trapping moisture within

inappropriate and out of place.

Different types of buildings will also have different types of massing. Commercial buildings are generally a rectangular mass with a flat or low-slope roof. Residential homes may be simple rectangular masses or more complex shapes, typically with sloped or gabled roofs.

Scale is the relationship of the size of the building to the buildings around it (its context) and to pedestrians. The term mostly refers to the massing of the building, but can also refer to the articulation of its façade and the pattern of window and door openings.

Street and building rhythms refer to the proportion of building facades in relation to the public right-of-way. Historically, these proportions were articulated in horizontal bays that reflect the internal structure of the building and the pattern of typical lot widths. In the heart of the Wilkinsburg commercial district, these proportions are generally 20 to 30 foot wide bays and buildings. Window patterns and entrance locations are also reflective of these proportions.

Façade articulation is the variation in the surface of a building face created through changes in plane, recessed windows and openings, applied textures, changes in materials, horizontal banding, and cornices, among other techniques. Articulation gives textures and visual interest to the building surface and adds scale.

the wall. Only if masonry has previously been painted and cannot be effectively restored should it be repainted.

Additional Design Considerations

- Buildings should incorporate both interior and exterior lighting that highlights entrances and architectural features, while enhancing the real and perceived safety of the area around the building.
- Mechanical equipment and dumpsters should be screened from view or otherwise integrated into the overall design of the building and site.
- New building construction and major renovations should be barrier-free and provide access to the ground-floor without steps or other obstructions.

4. Sustainable Design

Design Intent:

To promote development within the Borough that enhances the long-term sustainability of the community, including not only “green” development, but also the economic and cultural sustainability of Wilkinsburg.

Strategy:

Design with sustainable design goals in mind, including: enhancing community connectivity; promoting energy efficiency; reducing infrastructure stresses; enhancing economic opportunity; and minimizing both short-term and long-term environmental impacts.

Recommendations

Community Connectivity

- New development should be located convenient to public transportation.
- Projects are encouraged to incorporate amenities for those using public transportation, such as bus shelters, benches, and awnings.
- Projects should include accommodation for bicycle parking.
- New development should provide easy pedestrian access, including sidewalks.

Stormwater Management

- Projects are encouraged to incorporate innovative stormwater management techniques in order to reduce the amount of water introduced into the Borough’s storm sewer system. These techniques may include: on-site bioretention; the use of permeable paving; rain barrels; and gray water systems.
- Trees and site plantings should be used to both filter and absorb excess stormwater through the design and implementation of rain gardens whenever possible.

Sustainable Materials

- The use of regional materials reduces energy use by minimizing transportation, while also providing economic benefit to the region by promoting local industry and jobs. Projects are encouraged to use materials and products that are harvested and/or manufactured within 500 miles of the project site.
- Projects are encouraged to use materials that are manufactured from recycled and salvaged products.

Community Connectivity refers to the concept of emphasizing shared resources and providing residents with easy access to necessary everyday services, including shopping, community institutions, health care, banking, schools, etc. Increasing community connectivity through careful planning, including enhanced pedestrian and transit access, reduces the environmental impact of transportation and enhances accessibility for all residents, which in turn provides social and economic benefits to residents and businesses alike.

Graywater refers to wastewater that has been generated from activities such as laundry, dishwashing, and bathing. While it cannot be used for drinking or cleaning, graywater can be recycled on-site for use in irrigation, constructed wetlands or bioswales, and toilet flushing. Keeping graywater out of the sewer system helps to reduce the stress on our aging sewer infrastructure and reduces the amount of overflow into the rivers that occurs during significant storm events. In addition, by recycling graywater, we reduce the demand for fresh

- Projects are encouraged to reuse and / or repurpose building materials. They are also encouraged to donate salvageable materials to organizations that may reuse or repurpose materials.

Energy Use

- Projects are encouraged to reduce energy demands. Techniques to consider include the use of on-site renewable, including solar energy and geothermal heating and cooling systems, and the design of high-efficiency building envelopes to reduce summer heat gains and winter heat losses.
- Projects should reduce the impact of heat islands through the introduction of shade trees at paved areas, the reduction of paving overall, and the use of light colored materials on paved areas and roofs to minimize the solar gains.

Sustainable Sites

- Projects should apply dark-sky lighting standards to the design of site and building lighting in order to reduce light pollution within the community.
- Projects should reduce water demand through the selection of plantings appropriate to the climate, including drought-tolerant species that will require minimal water during summer months.

water, which is becoming an increasingly valuable resource.

There are numerous sources of **Regional Materials** in western Pennsylvania. Readily available regional materials include brick and other masonry units, concrete, certain types of lumber, gypsum-based products, recycled steel and other metals, and locally grown plantings.

Infrastructure is the basic physical structure that is required to maintain a community, including: transportation system (streets and roads); sewer system; water supply system; power grid (electricity); etc.

Infrastructure stresses refer to the pressure and strain that is placed on these different systems by a variety of factors, which lead to their deterioration and eventual failure. Some of these factors include: aging of the systems (e.g. pipes begin to crack and break over time); lack of maintenance due to funding shortages; and increased demands such as increased need for electricity to power lights, computers, and air conditioners.

By reducing infrastructure stresses through better resource management and the implementation of sustainable development techniques, we can reduce system failure and prolong the life of the systems.

5. Signs & Advertising Devices

Design Intent:

To encourage signs and advertising devices in the Borough of Wilkinsburg to positively contribute to the built environment, enhance the business district, and do not create visual clutter.

Strategy:

Design signs and advertising devices to harmonize with the character of the buildings and open spaces on and in which they are located, taking into consideration the design, size, height, mounting, illumination, color, and materials. All signs and advertising devices shall conform to the requirements of the Zoning Code, and shall be reviewed in consultation with the Code Enforcement official of the Borough of Wilkinsburg.

Recommendations

General

- The use of signs and advertising devices, including awnings and banners, should be carefully considered within the context of both building design and the character of adjacent structures. For example, signage that may be appropriate for the business district may not be appropriate for a neighborhood district and vice versa.
- Signs should complement rather than detract from buildings and structures on which they are located.
- The location of signs and advertising devices should minimize the impact on views to and from sites.
- Signs and advertising devices should be designed and oriented to pedestrians and slow moving traffic.
- The number of signs on a site or structure should be minimized in order to maximize legibility and reduce visual clutter.
- When multiple signs are located on a structure or open space, the signs should complement each other and be consistent in form, scale, color, etc.
- The design of signage and advertising devices should provide clear, legible messages through the use of appropriate typeface, materials, and colors.
- Businesses are encouraged to install permanent identification signage in lieu of banners and other temporary devices.
- Where permitted, temporary sandwich boards on the sidewalk should be removed on a nightly basis, and should only be utilized during regular operating hours of the business that they are promoting.
- Internally illuminated signs and advertising devices are discouraged. Sculptural letters, such as those cut from metal or wood, may be artfully lit from behind.
- Signs and advertising devices which incorporate movement are discouraged.
- Billboards, including LED-based structures, are discouraged.

Signs & Advertising Devices on Buildings & Structures

- Sign materials should be complementary to the existing architecture and building materials. Materials should be selected for durability and maintainability.
- Signs placed on buildings should not conflict with architectural features, such as entrances, windows, cornices, pediments, etc.

Part Three: Design Review Criteria

- Signs and advertising devices should be independent elements that are applied to buildings and structures, and which can be readily removed without damaging adjacent finishes and materials. Signs and advertising devices painted or laminated directly onto buildings are discouraged.
- Temporary advertising and related signage, such as sale and event signage, should not be located on the exterior of buildings and structures. Such signage may be located in windows, but should not prevent views into or out of occupied spaces.

Part Four: Public Art Review Criteria

The Community Art and Civic Design Commission reviews proposals for public art, monuments, and memorials on public property and private property designated for commercial use. Artistic taste and judgments regarding aesthetic quality can be subjective. The role of the Commission is to provide advice and guidance to applicants from the diverse vantage points represented by the individuals who serve on the Commission. In addition, the role of the Commission is to provide the community a platform to express their opinions about projects proposed in the Borough. The Commission will use the following criteria, their individual expertise and opinions, and the feedback presented by the community to evaluate works of art, monuments, and memorials.

1. Artist Selection

Intent:

To attract high-quality artists and designers to create projects in Wilkinsburg.

Strategy:

Follow best practices in the field for choosing an artist or designer to create a work of art, monument, or memorial.

Recommendations

- For works on public property, artists or designers are chosen through a peer review process by a committee that includes project stakeholders, Borough representatives, arts and design professionals, and community members.
- When works of art, memorials, or monuments are proposed by individuals or organizations with little or no experience with these types of projects, it is recommended that they consult with an experienced public art advisor. A list of advisors can be obtained from the Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council or the Public Art Network of Americans for the Arts.
- The Commission will carefully consider the community engagement strategies used in for each project, the content of the project, materials used, intended lifespan, and required maintenance.

2. Community Engagement

Intent:

To encourage participation of Wilkinsburg's residents and visitors in the physical and social development of Borough.

A community can be defined in many different ways. For the purpose of these review criteria, a community is a group of people who are connected by a common denominator such as geography, interest area, participation or membership in a group, occupation, or other area. More than one community may be interested in the development of a project, and applicants are encouraged to define the communities that their project serves and how to engage each one.

Strategy:

Encourage individuals or organizations proposing works of art, monuments, or memorials to involve the community in the development of the project in a meaningful capacity.

Recommendations

- The role of community members should be well defined, enabling a clear understanding of how they will participate in the process and what the limits of their participation will be.
- Artist selection panels or committees should include at least two residents of Wilkinsburg who live or work close to the proposed project site.
- When it is suitable to the artist or designer who is developing the work of art, monument, or memorial, community members can be invited to participate in design development.
- The concept and design for the proposed work of art, monument, or memorial must be clearly presented to the community during at least one open, public forum outside of the required Commission review meetings. This meeting must take place before the project is presented to the Commission for final design approval. Details from these meetings, including photographs and notes, should be presented to the Commission. Applicants are responsible to present the project in a location close to the project site.
- Letters of support for the project from residents and business owners who live or work close to the project site are required.
- Applicants are required to give a written description and timeline of the community engagement processes used to develop the project until the time of the review by the Commission. They will also be required to give a written description and timeline for future community outreach if an application is approved.
- Applicants must develop a process for keeping the community informed that can be presented to the Commission for review. Regular progress reports should be made to the community to update them about the status of the project. Applicants may contact the Wilkinsburgh Community Development Corporation for a list of community organizations, individuals, and listservs.

3. Aesthetic Considerations

Intent:

To encourage works of art, monuments, and memorials in the Borough that demonstrate aesthetic excellence, responsiveness to location, creativity, and inventiveness. The Commission would like to see the Borough be the location for temporary and permanent works of art by a variety of artists to provide residents and visitors with a breadth of art experiences.

Strategy:

Encourage works of art, monuments, and memorials that will enhance the experience of the Borough and / or bolster Wilkinsburg's distinct sense of place.

Recommendations

- Proposed artwork, memorials, and monuments should be of a high level of aesthetic and artistic quality. Enduring aesthetic value will especially be considered for works that are to be placed in the Borough on a long-term basis.
- The Commission will review the budget, timeline and intent for each project and consider if the proposal has reached its highest potential.
- The artwork, memorial, or monument shall be the appropriate scale and in context of the proposed location. Proposed locations should take the following into consideration: visibility; public accessibility, safety; relationship to existing architectural, landscape, natural, and social features; future development plans for the area; environmental impact; and relationship to other artworks in the vicinity.
- Each project will be evaluated to determine if it presents a hazard for public safety, or adds to public safety by improving the quality of the location.
- The Commission will examine the breadth of projects available to the public and consider how and if the proposed project adds to the diversity of projects, artistic approaches, content, and use of materials in the Borough.
- To encourage diversity in public experience of art and design, the Commission will consider the quantity of works of art, monuments, or memorials created by a single artist or designer on public property.
- When appropriate, the Commission will encourage temporary projects, so the range of works of art, monuments, and memorials in the Borough are relevant to contemporary artistic practices, design practices, and community experiences.
- The Commission will consider proposals in the context of other works of art available for public appreciation in the Borough as well as the appropriateness of a proposal in its proposed site. The Commission will encourage projects that demonstrate appeal to a range of community members.

4. Project Feasibility

Intent:

To encourage feasible projects in Wilkinsburg that have excellence in process as well as design and production.

Strategy:

Examined each project for its feasibility and convincing evidence of the artist's, designer's, and commissioning organization's ability to successfully complete the work as proposed. Factors include but are not limited to project budget, timeline, past work experience, soundness of materials, community engagement, and applicable zoning, construction, and design guidelines.

Recommendations

- Projects will only receive final approval from the Commission once all of the required funding has been identified, including maintenance funds. Applicants may choose to divide their project into smaller, interdependent phases if the entire project can not be completed during one phase. The Commission will consider the related components in context when reviewing phases.
- A contract must be in place between the artist, designer, and commissioning organization that addresses all aspects of the proposed project, including design, fabrication, and installation as well as copyright, Visual Artists Rights Act of 1990 (VARA), maintenance responsibilities, and lifespan of the work.
- The commissioning organization, group, or individual responsible for bringing the project to fruition must identify one point person to serve as the liaison to the Commission.
- A detailed budget must be submitted for each project. The Commission will take into consideration if the budget meets the scope of work proposed for the project. The Commission may require applicants to provide professional cost estimates.
- Projects should not conflict with other plans by the Borough for the chosen site(s). Applicants are encouraged to work with the Borough to identify other organizations that would benefit from being informed about the proposed project.

The **Visual Artist Rights Act of 1990 (VARA)** grants protection to moral rights to artists, regardless of the physical ownership of the work, or regardless of who holds the copyright to the work. VARA exclusively grants authors of works that fall under the protection of the Act to the following rights:

- Right to claim authorship;
- Right to prevent the use of one's name on any work that the author did not create;
- Right to prevent the use of one's name on any work that has been distorted, mutilated, or modified in a way that would be prejudicial to the author's honor or reputation;
- Right to prevent distortion, mutilation, or modification that would prejudice the author's honor or reputation.

In addition, authors may prevent intentional or grossly negligent destruction of a work. Exceptions to VARA require a waiver from the author in writing.

5. Lifespan and Maintenance

Intent:

To approve projects with reasonable maintenance needs that can be adequately managed by the Borough or other entity charged with the maintenance of the project. To ensure that art completed in the Borough does not become a financial burden to the Borough or other entity, and that artwork that is not maintained well does not become an aesthetic detriment to the Borough.

Strategy:

Ensure that long term projects are constructed of durable, quality materials that can be and adequately sustained by the entity charged with maintenance. Ensure that short term projects are constructed of appropriate materials that will last for the duration of the project.

Recommendations

- The Commission accepts that “maintenance free” is not a realistic expectation for any project. Determine the expected lifespan for all works of art, monuments, and memorials as well as the intended appearance of the projects as they age.
- Determine in advance what will happen to a project once it is removed from public view and include these details in the contract. Who will be in charge of removing the work and where will the components go?
- Unless otherwise directed by the Commission, the materials for works of art, monuments, and memorials that have a planned lifespan of over three years must be reviewed by a professional conservator. A maintenance plan must be developed in collaboration with the conservator.
- The entity that will be responsible for owning and / or maintaining the work of art, memorial, or monument during its lifespan must be clearly identified. That entity must submit a letter stating their acceptance of these responsibilities.
- Projects on public property that include gardens or greenspace must identify three entities who will be responsible for maintaining the project during its lifespan. These entities must submit a letter stating their acceptance of these responsibilities.
- Maintenance funds of at least 10% of the project budget should be raised before the project begins fabrication.
- Ensure that the proposal is appropriate for the weather, physical conditions, and topography of the site.

6. Memorials and Monuments

Intent:

To ensure that long-term memorials and monuments located in Wilkinsburg have a quality of timelessness and make a statement of significance to future generations.

Strategy:

Examine each proposal for a monument or memorial for its long-term relevance to the community; appropriateness of scale, location, budget, materials; and aesthetic quality.

Recommendations:

- Memorials or monuments should represent a person, event, or concept (e.g. peace) deemed significant to Wilkinsburg's history.
- Memorials or monuments honor a person or group of people who lived in the past or a past event. Permanent memorials and monuments will not be considered for individuals, groups, or events less than 15 years after their death or the conclusion of the event. The exception is projects that are creation and renovations of public places and amenities, as outlined in #4 below.
- Because open space is a valuable public asset to be protected for future generations, temporary memorials and monuments will be encouraged over long term placements that may render public space unusable.
- The creation or renovation of public places and public amenities as a memorial or monument, e.g. planting trees, renovating parks, or creating playgrounds, is encouraged.

Part Five: Appendices

- A. Application Forms
- B. Submission Requirements Checklist
- C. Sample Letters / Certificates (to be provided by WCACDC)
- D. Empowering Legislation (to be provided by WCACDC)
- E. Review Process Flowchart



**Borough of Wilkinsburg
Application for Review
to the Wilkinsburg Community Art and Civic Design Commission**

Municipal Building, 605 Ross Avenue
Wilkinsburg, PA 15221-2145
phone: (412)244-2923 fax: (412)244-2922

Address of Request:

Applicant Name:

Address of Applicant:

Applicant phone number:

Applicant e-mail:

Applicant is :

- Owner of property
- Lessee of property
- Other (explain) _____

Property Owner Name (if other than applicant):

Address of Property Owner:

Property Owner phone number:

Property Owner e-mail:

What is being reviewed:

- New or renovated structures
- Landscape
- Works of art
- Memorials and/or monument

Type of review requested:

- Review of project on publicly owned property
- Review of new construction on commercial property
- Review of renovation on commercial property
- Pre-Development Review
- Courtesy Review

Project includes (check all that apply):

- Landscaping
- New construction
- Exterior lighting
- Exterior signage
- Exterior renovation
- Surface parking
- Work of art, memorial or monument

For completion by Borough staff:

Date of completed application submission _____

Proposed date of WCACDC presentation _____



**Borough of Wilkinsburg
Submission Requirements Checklist
to the Wilkinsburg Community Art and Civic Design Commission**

Municipal Building, 605 Ross Avenue
Wilkinsburg, PA 15221-2145
phone: (412)244-2923 fax: (412)244-2922

Applicants are required to complete the Application to the Wilkinsburg Community Art and Civic Design Commission and to submit the following supporting materials. Materials must be submitted to Borough staff a minimum of 2 weeks prior to the meeting date.

All applications must include:

- Twelve (12) paper copies of all materials, collated and stapled/clipped with application on front. No materials should be larger than 11" x 17". These packets will be distributed to the members of the Commission.
- Electronic version of the submission packet in either JPEG or PDF format. Please limit file size to 2 megabytes.
- Location Map.
- Site Plan, including adjacent context, and highlighting area of work.
- Labeled photos of site and its context.
- Project narrative (maximum of one page), describing the scope of work, concept, and project goals.
- Project budget.
- Statement of property ownership and, where appropriate, description of lease, rental or other agreement by applicant.
- Narrative and timeline of community outreach and engagement, including proposed activities as appropriate.
- Images of existing conditions.
- Illustrative drawings of proposed project in context, including but not limited to: colored site plan / landscape plan; elevations, including scale figures.

In addition, application may be required to include:

- Project elevations.
- Site detail, including grading, landscaping, lighting, and ground floor building plan.
- Maintenance plan (if applicable).
- Specific colors and fonts to be used on any text elements, including signage.
- Cut sheets or visual representation of proposed site furnishings, including benches, fences, lighting, etc.
- Details of any changes to project since initial submission and review by Commission.
- Material samples and colors, including siding, glass and other exterior finishes.
- Documentation of outreach to adjacent property owners (e.g. letters of notification).
- Letters of support from adjacent property owners and others impacted by project.
- Other materials required to clearly communicate the design intent to the members of the Commission.

Applications for Public Art, Monument and Memorial projects must include:

- Project description
- Budget
- Drawings, models, or other materials that clearly represent the appearance of the project

- Samples of materials, material product sheets
- Construction documents, unless not required by the Commission
- Conservator's report, if required
- Project timeline
- Description and timeline of the community engagement process
- Letters of support
- Copy of artist's contract
- Maintenance plan

Monument and Memorials Only:

- Information about the person, event, or quality that is being honored