

# CHARLOTTESVILLE

## ENTRANCE CORRIDOR DESIGN GUIDELINES

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# 1

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# CHARLOTTESVILLE

## ENTRANCE CORRIDOR DESIGN GUIDELINES

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# I INTRODUCTION

## A. HOW TO USE THE ENTRANCE CORRIDOR DESIGN GUIDELINES DOCUMENT

The City of Charlottesville has designated certain significant routes of tourist access as Entrance Corridors to ensure through design review that corridor development is compatible with the City's historic landmarks, buildings, and structures. The Planning Commission has been designated as the Entrance Corridor Review Board (ERB).

The purpose of these entrance corridor design guidelines is to provide a tool for property owners, developers, designers and the ERB to create, review and build quality new buildings or renovate existing structures along Charlottesville's major entrance corridors. The intent of these guidelines and the review process is to ensure a quality of development compatible with the City's historic, architectural, and cultural resources. They are based on general design concepts that came out of the Comprehensive Plan Principles and the City's Vision Statement that is discussed in the next section.

These corridors have several characteristics including:

- wide variety in character and quality
- variety in degree of permanence and potential change
- many opportunities for quality new development
- some opportunities for preservation, rehabilitation and infill
- numerous opportunities to incorporate significant vegetation and natural features
- numerous opportunities for supportive streetscape improvements

These guidelines are organized into four general chapters. Following this introduction section, there are:

*Chapter II: Guidelines for Streetscape* in which more detailed recommendations are given for landscaping, pedestrian routes, bicycle route, lighting, street furniture, public signage, public art, and utilities and communication equipment.

*Chapter III: Guidelines for Site* includes sections on connectivity between areas and neighborhoods and between and within sites, building placement, parking, landscaping and open space, lighting, walls and fences, signs, and utilities and service areas.

*Chapter IV: Guidelines for Commercial Buildings* includes sections on architectural compatibility, building mass, scale and height, facade organization and storefronts, materials and textures, color, details, roof forms and

materials, awnings, appurtenances, additions and corridor conversions, franchise design, gas station canopies, civic and institutional buildings and multi-family buildings.

These general guidelines pertain to all of the corridors and are illustrated with various examples that reflect the particular recommendation.

Beyond these four chapters are individual sections on each of the twelve corridors:

*Chapter V: Individual Corridors* documents and evaluates the existing character of these corridors, break them into distinctive sub-areas and provide more specific guidelines for each of them with text, graphics and maps. They also explain the general zoning categories of each corridor and provide a general vision for them as well.

In addition, all individuals using these guidelines are urged to review the detailed sections of the zoning ordinance for the specific zoning regulations that pertain to a particular project.

These Design Guidelines present general design priorities based on core design principles that can be adapted to individual circumstances of site and building design. While specific examples are provided, the enduring strength of guidelines relies on their flexibility. Not every case and circumstance can be anticipated, nor is the goal to prescribe the design of every development on Charlottesville's corridors. In fact, given the level of sophistication of the market in the area, it is anticipated that developers and their designers will be able to build on these principles and create unique, livable, and viable projects that meet the community's vision. The intent of these design guidelines is not to limit growth or development within the corridors or to dictate specific stylistic designs or restrict creative design solutions.

## B. BACKGROUND FOR DESIGN GUIDELINES

Charlottesville is one of the highest-rated places in the United States in which to live, work, play, and raise a family. Charlottesville citizens clearly want the city to continue be a special kind of place and a community. The quality of Charlottesville's physical environment has a direct bearing on its livability, prosperity and its ability to maintain its current status as a world-class small city.

The City has many assets that make it a vibrant, progressive and diverse community. These include an ideal location in the heart of Virginia's piedmont, a lively downtown, a broad range of neighborhoods, home to one of the top public universities in the nation, a recognized commitment to culture and arts, a strong economic position in the region, a long history of planning, an involved citizenry, a history of architectural excellence, a continuing emphasis on high quality development and an extensive network of entrance corridors.

The challenge is to encourage new development that will provide new vitality while preserving and enhancing the community's traditional strength. Entrance Corridor design review is a means to ensure quality of development compatible with the City's historic, architectural, and cultural resources.

Over the past decade, the City of Charlottesville has been investigating ways to grow. The following background information summarizes the history of this effort. These documents and studies form the basis for the design principles found in these guidelines.

### 1. The 2001 Comprehensive Plan and Community Vision

The City Council and the Planning Commission have been strong leaders in their commitment to solving challenges and building on the community's strengths. In the current comprehensive plan they have clearly stated the City's important mission as they see it in the following vision statement:

"Mindful of our responsibility to future generations, Charlottesville will build a distinctive, world class, small city by insuring the quality of our natural and built environment. Quality of life includes all the tangible and intangible factors that make Charlottesville attractive to live in, to work in, or to visit. The quality of its natural and built environment must be extended and enhanced, its heritage conserved, and new development must be high quality and sensitive to needs.

The physical environment should preserve and augment the appearance and richness of the intellectual and sensory experience throughout the city."

Specifically in regard to the city's corridors, there have been several recent initiatives. There has been an in-depth study of these areas in a two-volume report led by Torti Gallas Partners and a subsequent rezoning of many of these designated areas with new corridor mixed-use regulations by the City. While much of the recent focus on corridors comes from these projects, the Comprehensive Plan contains various principles that relate to the design, function and character of its corridors:

- We will actively pursue strategies designed to keep the City a thriving and vital retail center of the region.
- We will support initiatives to increase commercial, retail and residential growth opportunities in our commercial corridors.
- We will encourage quality urban design in the construction of new buildings and the redevelopment of existing ones.
- We will support strategies and incentives to protect and enhance our historic resources.
- We commit to extension and enhancement of the public realm - all those spaces, public and private, we share as a community.
- We will promote and support the ideal of our City as a Park by expanding green space, the urban canopy, and improving access to our waterways.
- We will emphasize public and pedestrian spaces in the architectural fabric of our entrance corridors and throughout the City.

## B. BACKGROUND FOR DESIGN GUIDELINES

### 2. The 2001 Commercial Corridor Study (Torti Gallas)

This study was prepared by Torti Gallas and Partners, CHK in association with Robert Charles Lesser Company and Land Planning and Design. It looked at fifteen commercial corridors and proposed urban design solutions to deal with market realities. The study included a market analysis of the community and projections of future development opportunities. Those market possibilities were then applied to each of the corridors.

For each corridor, the report identified urban design issues, evaluated the potential for re-use of existing buildings, assessed parking requirements, recommended appropriate uses for properties, identified a theme, evaluated the transition from commercial to non-commercial uses, and made recommendations for mitigating any adverse impacts of development and made recommendations for appropriate urban design improvements. It also included a brief set of design guidelines, many of which are incorporated in this document.

### 3. The 2003 Zoning Ordinance

The City of Charlottesville recently made a number of revisions to the zoning ordinance including the creation of Mixed-Use Corridor Zoning. Its purpose is to create a dynamic street life by encouraging mixed-use development within appropriate areas along significant City corridors.

The creation of these redeveloped corridors is of particular importance since they are intended to serve as vital centers for economic growth and development while at the same time encouraging development that is friendly to pedestrians and alternate modes of transportation characteristic of an urban setting.

This new zoning has various objectives that include encouraging:

- the placement of buildings close to property lines
- the construction of buildings of appropriate scale
- the minimization of the impact of parking facilities and vehicular traffic
- the addition of landscaped spaces available for pedestrian use
- alternate forms of transportation
- neighborhood-enhancing economic activity
- home ownership
- neighborhood participation in the development process

## B. BACKGROUND FOR DESIGN GUIDELINES

#### 4. The 2007 Comprehensive Plan

##### Guiding Principles

The following guiding principles were adopted by both the Planning Commission and City Council to guide the 2007 Plan. The principles outlined represent the values and the vision of the people of Charlottesville and what they want their community to be. They show a consistency and a steadfast direction that has led this community to greatness over the past 200 years.

The Charlottesville Community...

- Has safe neighborhoods with identifiable centers with strong social fabric.
- Has accessibility to safe public transportation, alternative modes of transportation and interconnected pedestrian and bicycle access.
- Puts a value on trees, parks, greenspace, stream and biodiversity as adding to the appearance and livability of the City.
- Values and provides quality education for all ages, vocations and abilities.
- Provides housing opportunities with a diversity of style, scale, price, financing and location.
- Has open and accessible government and institutions that cooperate to provide quality services economically and operate through an open democratic process.
- Has a strong diversified economy with opportunities for entrepreneurship and a diversity of jobs.
- Balances the natural and built environments and practices sustainability in its decisions.
- Reaches across jurisdictional lines for regional progress.
- Values mixed use development that promotes 24 hour activity, pedestrian connectivity, and transit use.
- Promotes an intellectual climate that values arts and culture.

##### Sustainability Principles

The 2007 Comprehensive Plan is also based on principles of sustainability. Sustainability requires meeting the human needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. At the local level, this means striking a balance to meet current needs of this community while also protecting resources so they will remain available and plentiful for future generations. Sustainability is most often linked with the preservation and protection of environmental resources to maintain the health of the streams, wetlands, plants, and animals that make up the ecosystem in which we live. This concept can also be extended to the broader context of protecting the historic context of Charlottesville, our unique and valued quality of life, and the social capital of the people in this community. All policies, goals, objectives and actions in this Comprehensive Plan are evaluated within the context of sustainability and guiding principles that flow from it.



## B. BACKGROUND FOR DESIGN GUIDELINES

### 5. Green Building and Sustainable Design Principles

Sustainability means meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Green building means building practices that use energy, water, and other resources wisely. The City of Charlottesville and the Entrance Corridor Review Board (ERB) support the principles of green building and sustainable design in order to create a community that is healthy, livable, and affordable:

- Mixed-use development provides an alternative to sprawl that allows residents to live within walking distance of activities, thereby reducing time spent in the car.
- Infill development is an efficient use of land that can provide diversity in housing sizes and types, and can revitalize neighborhoods.
- Adaptive reuse of a historic building or living in a pre-owned home reduces consumption of land and materials for new construction, and may reduce housing costs.
- Options for walking, bicycling, and transit promote healthy living and reduce dependence on automobiles and energy use.
- Designing buildings for the local climate helps conserve energy.
- Durable building materials such as brick, wood, cementitious siding, and metal roofs are economical and more compatible with the character of the community.
- Locally obtained building materials, rapidly renewable or recycled materials, non-toxic materials and finishes (products with zero or low volatile organic compounds), and wood certified by the Forest Stewardship Council provide sustainable choices.
- Energy efficient construction techniques, such as structural insulated panels (SIPS), careful sealing and insulation, and integration of natural with artificial light sources.
- Low impact development methods (porous pavement, rain gardens, vegetated buffers, green roofs) retain storm water on site and protect street water quality by filtering runoff.
- Use of rating systems such as LEED, Energy Star, and Earth Craft House are encouraged.

Nothing in these guidelines should be construed to discourage green building or sustainable design. If such a design is found to conflict with a specific guideline, the ERB shall work with the applicant to devise a creative solution that meets that applicant's goal for sustainability that is also compatible with the character of the district and the property.

Charlottesville's special visual character is defined by the area's natural beauty, historic resources, architectural quality, distinctive building materials, and cultural variety expressed in the built environment. The intent of the entrance corridor guidelines and review process is to protect the City's historic, architectural and cultural resources, by ensuring a quality of development compatible with those resources through design control measures. Charlottesville's Entrance Corridor Guidelines are based on the following ten Design Principles:

- **Design For a Corridor Vision**

New building design should be compatible (in massing, scale, materials, colors) with those structures that contribute to the overall character and quality of the corridor. Existing developments should be encouraged to make upgrades consistent with the corridor vision. Site designs should contain some common elements to provide continuity along the corridor. New development, including franchise development, should complement the City's character and respect those qualities that distinguish the City's built environment.

- **Preserve History**

Preserve significant historic buildings as well as distinctive architecture from more recent periods. Encourage new contemporary design that integrates well with existing historic buildings to enhance the overall character and quality of the corridor.

- **Facilitate Pedestrian Access**

Encourage compact, walkable developments. Design pedestrian connections from sidewalk and car to buildings, between buildings, and between corridor properties and adjacent residential areas.

- **Maintain Human Scale in Buildings and Spaces**

Consider the building scale, especially height, mass, complexity of form, and architectural details, and the impact of spaces created, as it will be experienced by the people who will pass by, live, work, or shop there. The size, placement and number of doors, windows, portals and openings define human scale, as does the degree of ground-floor pedestrian access.

- **Preserve and Enhance Natural Character**

Daylight and improve streams, and retain mature trees and natural buffers. Work with topography to minimize grading and limit the introduction of impervious surfaces. Encourage plantings of diverse native species.

- **Create a Sense of Place**

In corridors where substantial pedestrian activity occurs or is encouraged, or where mixed use and multi-building projects are proposed, one goal will be creating a sense of place. Building arrangements, uses, natural features, and landscaping should contribute, where feasible, to create exterior space where people can interact.

- **Create an Inviting Public Realm**

Design inviting streetscapes and public spaces. Redevelopment of properties should enhance the existing streetscapes and create an engaging public realm.

- **Create Restrained Communications**

Private signage and advertising should be harmonious and in scale with building elements and landscaping features.

- **Screen Incompatible Uses and Appurtenances:**

Screen from adjacent properties and public view those uses and appurtenances whose visibility may be incompatible with the overall character and quality of the corridor, such as: parking lots, outdoor storage and loading areas, refuse areas, mechanical and communication equipment, Where feasible, relegate parking behind buildings. It is not the intent to require screening for utilitarian designs that are attractive, and/or purposeful.

- **Respect and Enhance Charlottesville's Character**

Charlottesville seeks new construction that reflects the unique character, history, and cultural diversity of this place. Architectural transplants from other locales, or shallow imitations of historic architectural styles, for example, are neither appropriate nor desirable. Incompatible aspects of franchise design or corporate signature buildings must be modified to fit the character of this community.

## D. ROLE AND PURPOSE OF DESIGN GUIDELINES

### 1. General Role and Purpose

The Charlottesville Corridor Design Guidelines are intended to serve a number of purposes. They are to:

- Educate property owners, designers, developers, the public, and plan reviewers on what the City of Charlottesville expects and desires for new development along the designated corridors.
- Present clear concepts based on the City's Comprehensive Plan principles for achieving this vision.
- Identify important design concerns and recommend appropriate design approaches.
- Illustrate specific techniques to use when planning and designing developments and individual buildings.
- Provide an objective and fair basis for review of projects by the ERB.

### 2. How Guidelines Relate to Other Regulations

These guidelines do not reproduce all the specific requirements stated in the Zoning Ordinance, Subdivision Regulations, or other applicable development regulations. Applicants are advised to consult any necessary related documents. In the event that there appears to be differences regulations, the more stringent standard shall apply.

This guidelines publication is an official policy document that expands upon the concepts of the design principles set forth in the Comprehensive Plan. While the guidelines provide specific recommendations for development, they cannot, and are not intended to, cover all circumstances. Rather, the structure and content of the manual are meant to give developers and reviewers the perspective to address the unique conditions of each project and the flexibility to develop designs that meet the intent, principles and spirit of the guidelines.

In the event of a conflict between any provision of these guidelines and the mandatory requirements of an applicable City ordinance, including, without limitation, the City's zoning ordinance and the City's ordinances implementing the state Fire and Building Codes, the mandatory requirement of the City ordinance shall establish what shall be required of the applicant. Except as may otherwise be expressly provided within City Code Chapter 34, Article II, Division 3 (Entrance Corridor Overlay Districts) the ERB, in its application of these guidelines to review of a particular application, shall have no authority to waive the mandatory requirements of any City ordinance.

### 1. Authority: Zoning Ordinance and State Enabling Legislation

Entry corridor review was first created in the Zoning Ordinance in 1991. The 2003 Zoning Ordinance revisions designated the Charlottesville Planning Commission as the Entrance Corridor Review Board (ERB). The Zoning Ordinance states:

“The entrance corridor overlay district is intended to implement the comprehensive plan goal of protecting the city’s historic, architectural and cultural resources, by ensuring a quality of development compatible with those resources through design control measures. The purposes of this article are to stabilize and improve property values; to protect and enhance the city’s attractiveness to tourists and other visitors; to sustain and enhance the economic benefits accruing to the city from tourism; to support and stimulate development complimentary to the prominence afforded properties and districts having historic, architectural or cultural significance; all of the foregoing being deemed to advance and promote the health, safety and welfare of the general public.”

Section 15.2-2306 of the Code of Virginia authorizes localities to regulate the design of development along arterial streets or highways that are significant routes of tourist access to the locality or to designated historic landmarks, buildings, structures or districts, to ensure that such development is architecturally compatible with the historic landmarks, buildings, and structures to which these routes lead.

### 2. Standards for Review

The following features and factors must be considered by the ERB in determining the appropriateness of proposed construction, reconstruction, alteration or restoration of buildings or structures:

- Overall architectural design, form, and style of the subject building or structure, including, but not limited to the height, mass and scale;
- Exterior architectural details and features of the subject building or structure;
- Texture, materials and color of materials proposed for use on the subject building or structure;
- Design and arrangement of buildings and structures on the subject site;
- The extent to which the features and characteristics described within the paragraphs above, are architecturally compatible (or incompatible) with similar features and characteristics of other buildings and structures having frontage on the same EC street(s) as the subject property; and
- Provisions of these Entrance Corridor Design Guidelines.

# I INTRODUCTION

## E. DESIGN REVIEW AUTHORITY

### 3. Design Review Process

The following description summarizes the design review process. Please consult the Zoning Ordinance for specifics. Property owners must apply for and receive a certificate of appropriateness (COA) from the ERB for all development requiring a site plan. The director may grant administrative approval for other new construction, additions or modifications not requiring a site plan, and for signs, windows, doors, roof coverings, and siding. Single or two-family houses are not required to apply under this section.

Some activities that do not require a COA include:

- Interior alterations to a building or structure;
- Construction of ramps and other modifications to serve the handicapped;
- Repair and maintenance of buildings or structures which are non-conforming for failure to comply with the provisions of this article;
- General maintenance of buildings or structures, where no substantial change in design or materials is proposed; and
- Additions or modifications to a building or structure, where no substantial change in design or materials is proposed, as determined by the director of neighborhood development services or his designee.

### 4. Application

An application for a COA shall be filed with the director of neighborhood development services by the owner or contract purchaser of the subject property. A complete application shall include all plans, maps, studies, reports, photographs, drawings, and other informational materials which may be reasonably required in order make the determinations called for in a particular case. Each application shall also include a narrative description, the building elevations, a landscaping plan, proposed lighting and the required application fee.

### 5. Order of Review

If Entrance Corridor review is required, it shall take place concurrent with site plan review, if required, and prior to issuance of a building permit. No preliminary or final site plan or site plan amendment shall be approved until the Entrance Corridor Certificate of Appropriateness has first been approved.

When an EC property is the subject of an application for Special Use Permit, the Entrance Corridor Review Board shall recommend to City Council as to whether the proposed use will have an adverse impact on the Entrance Corridor, and if so, shall recommend conditions which , if imposed, would mitigate those impacts.

### 6. Appeals

Following approval of an application by the ERB, the director of neighborhood development services, or any aggrieved person, may note an appeal of that decision to the city council. Following a denial, the applicant, the director of neighborhood development services, or any aggrieved person may appeal the decision to the city council.

## F. DESIGNATED ENTRANCE CORRIDORS IN CHARLOTTESVILLE

Entrance Corridor Overlay districts have been established on lots and parcels of land contiguous to the streets and highways listed below, from the edge of right-of-way to the full depth of the lot or parcel:

**1. Route 29 North** from the corporate limits to Ivy Road

Zoning: Highway Corridor (HW), Urban Corridor (URB), Emmet Street Commercial (ES)

**2. Hydraulic Road** from the corporate limits to the 250 Bypass

Zoning: Highway Corridor (HW)

**3. Barracks Road** from the corporate limits to Meadowbrook Road

Zoning: Urban Corridor (URB)

**4. Ivy Road** from the corporate limits to Emmet Street

Zoning: Urban Corridor (URB)

**5. Fontaine Avenue/Jefferson Park Avenue** from the corporate limits to Emmet Street

Zoning: University High Density, R-2U, Neighborhood Commercial Corridor (NCC), & B-2.

**6. Fifth Street, SW** from the corporate limits to the beginning of the Ridge Street Design Control District

Zoning: R-1S, McIntire-5th Residential, Highway Corridor (HW)

**7. Avon Street** from the corporate limits to the CSX Railroad tracks

Zoning: R-1S, B-2, Downtown Extended (DE)

**8. Monticello Avenue/Route 20** from the corporate limits to Avon Street

Zoning: R-1S, Highway Corridor (HW)

**9. Long Street** from the corporate limits to St. Clair Avenue

Zoning: Central City Corridor (CC), B-1, B-2, R-2

**10. East High Street/9th Street** from Long Street to East Market Street

Zoning: High Street Corridor (HS), Central City Corridor (CC), Downtown North Corridor (DN)

**11. Preston Avenue** from McIntire Road to Rosser Avenue

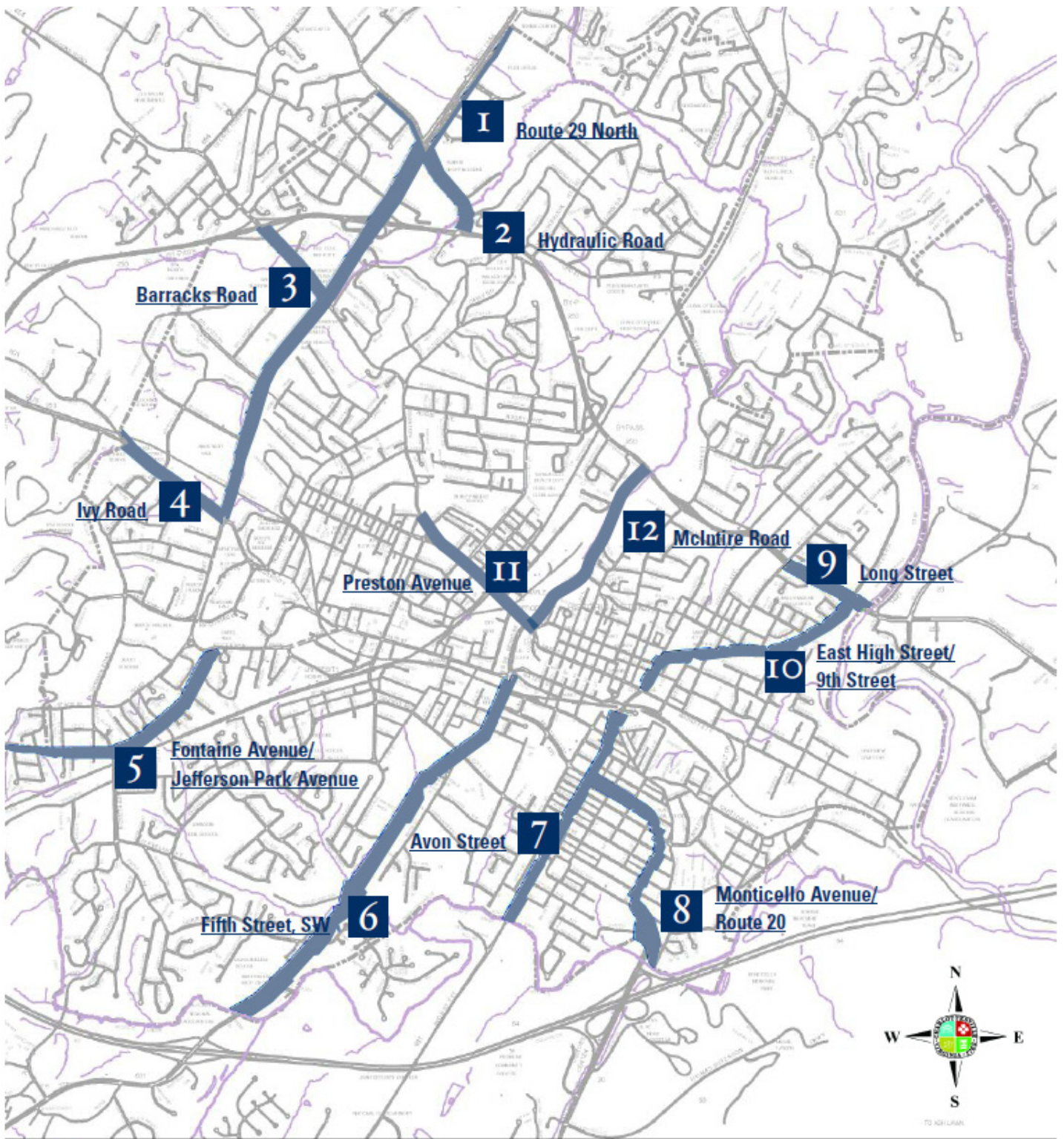
Zoning: Central City Corridor (CC), B-3, R-1S w/ Public Park Overlay, McIntire-5th Residential

**12. McIntire Road**, from Preston Avenue to Route 250

Zoning: R-1, R-1S, R-3, McIntire-5th Residential, Public Park Overlay

# I INTRODUCTION

## F. DESIGNATED ENTRANCE CORRIDORS IN CHARLOTTESVILLE



ENTRANCE CORRIDOR

City of Charlottesville

0 500 1,000 2,000 3,000 4,000 Feet

## AVAILABLE GUIDELINES SECTIONS

These entrance corridor design guidelines have been divided into the following sections so that you need only read those pertinent to your project.

I. Introduction

II. Streetscape

III. Site

IV. Buildings

V. Individual Corridors

Guideline sections are available from the Charlottesville Department of Neighborhood Services. Online they may be accessed through <http://www.charlottesville.org> at the Planning Commission home page.

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