

Case Study: Urbandale, Iowa

For more than a decade, this established Des Moines suburb has insisted on brick for its commercial construction. According to Paul Dekker, Urbandale's Director of Community development, the brick requirement was initiated by a council member who thought that concrete buildings were "too cold", while brick was perceived as "warm" and considered a "long-lasting, quality material."

Dekker was particularly pleased that the brick requirement provided an architectural context within which Urbandale could grow while maintaining its historical integrity. Dekker elaborates, "Brick provided the city with a definitive and understandable criteria which did not require a time-consuming architectural review process." While the City didn't have the time or staff to enforce a more complex architectural code, a requirement for brick was a fairly cut and dried rule to monitor.

Dekker adds that the brick requirement also helped the city get away from the generic look of "corporate architecture". Many chain retailers have moved into the area since the brick requirement has been in place and all have been able to easily adapt their signature looks to brick construction.

The City's architectural standards state that the buildings must include enough brick so that the average person would perceive the building as brick. According to Dekker, this usually means more than 50%, but in many cases entirely brick.

Benefits for any city considering a brick requirement include an increased tax base. For example, the brick buildings on Urbandale's 100th Street carry a higher valuation than their metal neighbors and owners are able to charge higher rental rates. He notes that even in zones that are not included in the brick requirement, they are seeing more brick buildings, simply because the bar has been raised and people want their buildings to be comparable to others in town.

When asked about trends in materials, Dekker mentioned that they are seeing more concrete panel and thin brick being proposed. Neither currently meets the City's standards, he adds, "because there is no evidence that they age well."

JUST THE FACTS

City:	Urbandale, Iowa
Population:	29,000
Founded:	1917
Masonry Requirement:	Commercial = 50%+ Brick; Multi-Family = 30% Brick
Contact:	Paul Dekker, Director of Community Development 515.278.3935 pdekker@urbandale.org www.urbandale.org

Case Study: Overland Park, Kansas

After trying to enforce an “informal” brick requirement for years, Overland Park is putting its preference for brick on the books. The city’s design guidelines, which have been in the works for over three years and are expected to receive final approval in October 2002, require 40% brick or stone on all new multi-family and commercial construction. Previously the city’s site plan review committee had tried to steer builders and developers toward brick, but didn’t have the necessary legislation back them up.

According to Senior Planner Leslie Karr, “The city chose to require brick or stone for multi-family residential construction because the materials are considered high quality and solve long-term maintenance issues that come with the high occupant turn-over inherent to apartment living.”

The city went even further when specifying materials in the plan for its 151st Street Corridor, incorporating a brick requirement as a goal for the downtown district. In the plan, “Goal 13: Use of Brick” states that all nonresidential buildings shall use brick on all facades visible from the public street or parking areas, and multi-family buildings should use 100 percent brick on all facades visible from the street and a minimum of 50 percent brick on all other facades. The plan states that stone and tile can be used as an accent, but concrete block, stucco and EIFS are prohibited in all cases.

As they are embarking on the enforcement of such a strong brick requirements, Karr was pleased to hear about the success of cities like Urbandale, Iowa, which have attracted major retailers and have seen them adapt their recognizable designs and looks to the brick requirement with little or no problem.

JUST THE FACTS

City:	Overland Park, Kansas
Population:	155,000
Founded:	1960
Masonry Requirement:	Commercial/Multi-Family = 40% Brick or Stone 51st Street Corridor = 100% Brick
Contact:	Leslie Karr, Senior Planner 913.895.6196 lkarr@opkansas.org www.opkansas.org

Case Study: Aurora, Colorado

Mayor Paul Tauer said his city was tired of being a “dumping ground” for shoddy housing. Two years ago, they did something about it, passing an ordinance requiring all new homes to have facades of at least 50% brick. Councilmember (and the Mayor’s son) Ed Tauer said, “I think it sends a pretty strong message to builders and, more importantly, to buyers that Aurora’s going to be a quality area.”

Countering claims that the brick requirement will make housing unaffordable for lower income buyers, city officials said that adding three to six percent more to the cost of a new home would pay off down the road – for the community and the homeowners.

On the process of choosing the exact figure for the masonry requirement, Mayor Tauer notes, “It’s a balancing act. It’s not easy to pick a perfect number, but everybody wants to stop bad development. Everybody’s in favor of some kind of masonry standard.”

Adding a long-term perspective, Ann Sullivan, executive director of the Rocky Mountain Masonry Institute, said, “I think you can look to Denver’s history to see what brick has done to communities, You look at such beloved neighborhoods as Washington Park, Bonnie Brae, Park Hill. Despite boom and bust times, those neighborhoods retained their good looks and quality. I think that’s what Aurora can expect.”

JUST THE FACTS

City:	Aurora, Colorado
Population:	290,000
Founded:	1907
Masonry Requirement:	Residential = 50% Multi-Family = 60%
Contacts:	Council Member Ingrid Lindemann 303.341.1735 ilindema@ci.aurora.co.us Mayor Paul Tauer 303.739.7015 ptauer@ci.aurora.co.us www.ci.aurora.co.us

Case Study: Village of Orland Park, Illinois

Mayor Dan McLaughlin feels so strongly about the benefits of brick that he recently took to the airwaves, touting the success of Orland Park's eight-year-old masonry ordinance, in a radio spot for the Illinois Masonry Advisory Council.

Commenting on the skeptics who initially opposed the ordinance because of concerns over its restrictions, Mayor McLaughlin said, "We heard all those arguments from some very powerful lobbying interests. But we passed the ordinance anyway. Our trustees had the foresight to envision what Orland Park would be like in 10, 20 or 50 years. They rejected the notion of 'minimum quality' growth by requiring that 'the quality be built in...before the developer moved on.'"

He goes on to say, contrary to the critics' predictions, "Home building is booming in Orland Park. Quality attracts quality! That ordinance helps build stability and higher resale values of homes in our town. Ask any of our new residents."

On a personal note he says, "In addition to being the Mayor of Orland Park, I'm also president of the Plumbing Contractors Association. One of the things I've learned over the years in this business is that brick ensures the property value of a home like no other exterior product. A brick home appreciates faster, requires no maintenance, provides energy efficiency, fire safety, and a higher resale value. By requiring brick or masonry we're making sure that our builders build quality homes now and for future generations."

He sums up Orland Park's commitment to brick construction as a tool for promoting quality growth saying, "We believe that brick makes for a better home, and better homes make for a better village."

JUST THE FACTS

City:	Orland Park, Illinois
Population:	51,077
Founded:	1892
Masonry Requirement:	Residential = 90% Multi-Family = 50% Commercial = 100%
Contact:	Mayor Dan McLaughlin (708) 403.6160 officials@orland-park.il.us

Case Study: Eden Prairie, Minnesota

The fastest growing suburb in Minnesota in the 1980s, the City of Eden Prairie weathered the growth spurt without sacrificing the integrity of its historic architecture. One of the tools it used to maintain its was a masonry ordinance, enacted in 1982, requiring all commercial and multi-family development to be built with an exterior of at least 75% brick, stone or glass.

City Planner Mike Franzen says that having the masonry ordinance in place for the past 20 years have definitely been good for the City – both aesthetically and in terms of the durability of buildings. “I look around in the older parts of Minneapolis and see brick and stone buildings being restored, while buildings sided with EIFS or other less durable materials would simply be torn down.” Seamlessly blending the old and the new was a crucial task for Eden Prairie, a community in which the town board held its first meeting on the same day Minnesota became a state - May 11, 1858.

He notes that because of Eden Prairie's long-standing commitment to quality building, the “bar has been raised for all the surrounding communities, as well. You are seeing more brick in new retail across the whole area because the market now demands it.”

Franzen said the ordinance was initiated to ensure a more finished look in both commercial and residential construction and that they internally refer to the ordinance as the “brick or better” requirement, meaning that no more than 25% of a structure can be built with less durable materials including wood, stucco, vinyl, metal or plastic.

JUST THE FACTS

City:	Eden Prairie, Minnesota
Population:	60,000
Founded:	1858
Masonry Requirement:	Commercial = 75% Multi-Family = 75%
Contact:	Mike Franzen City Planner (952) 949.8487 mfranzen@edenprairie.org