Appendix A-2
Court Avenue Design Standards
Applicable within the Court Avenue Historic Area

Intent:

The Court Avenue Historic Area is identified in Map 6. The Court Avenue Historic Area has a rich historic past and legacy. It is highly encouraged that the design of new buildings and additions and alterations to existing buildings be designed to provide a compatible “place specific” solution that compliments the existing, commercial style brick character of the Court Avenue Historic Area and highlights the Beaux Art design of the Civic Center Historic District.

New buildings should be designed to be integrated into the unique and specific urban context of Court Avenue. New buildings should not imitate the classically inspired architecture of the Civic Center Historic District along the east and west riverbanks of the Des Moines River.

To build on the pedestrian character of Court Avenue and to compliment the longer range goals for a major pedestrian way along the riverfront, projects along Court Avenue have a predominance of retail, consumer services, civic, cultural or entertainment uses at the street level.

Buildings and uses that add pedestrian traffic and green spaces are encouraged. It is also recommended “people places” be created between buildings. Street level parking is strongly discouraged.

Except where otherwise noted, if the improvements to multiple-family residential property or to commercial or industrial property include a new building, a building addition over 50% of the existing building area, or renovations to a building that have an estimated cost for building permit purposes that exceeds 50% of the assessed value of the existing building, then the property must also conform with the design standards set forth in this appendix to qualify for a partial exemption from taxation under the Restated Plan.

Compliance with these standards will be reviewed by the Community Development Director or the Director’s designee for recommendation to the City Council. An application for tax abatement must be approved by the City Council before it may be forwarded to the Polk or Warren County Assessor to allow the abatement.

Requirements:

1. Uses:
   Any building within the Court Avenue Historic Area shall be designed and constructed in a manner intended to accommodate retail, consumer services, civic, cultural or entertainment uses along more than 75% of the building frontage along each street.

2. Exterior Materials:
a. A minimum of 75% of the building façade facing any street shall be brick and a minimum of 50% of all other building façades shall be brick to continue the predominance of brick as a building material in the Court Avenue Historic Area while allowing for the introduction of contemporary building materials. The area of each façade devoted to windows and doors shall be disregarded in determining this percentage. A traditional brick size is required (approximately 8 inches long and 4 inches wide) for street-facing façades.

b. The balance of the exterior materials shall be durable and long lasting. Exterior insulation finishing systems (EIFS) and wood shall not be considered durable for the purposes of this requirement.

3. Exterior Building Details:
   a. Various design measures must be taken to subdivide the façade and add visual richness to the area to achieve a scale of new construction similar to the scale of the existing historic building pattern in this area. Belt courses, vertical subdivision into bays, cornices, changes in patterns of masonry openings, fluctuation in height and other interruptions to monotonous repetitions must be implemented to break up the façade into segments not more than 20 feet wide.

   b. New construction must have a street level ceiling height of at least 11’ to carry out the typical pattern of architectural emphasis of the street level; existing historic building ceiling heights in this area range from 12’ to 16’ in height.

   c. Window patterns, types and sizes should be compatible with the historic nature of Court Avenue and other similar turn-of-the-century commercial districts. Residential windows shall be predominately a 2:1 proportion of height to width. Operable residential windows are preferred. Commercial windows should be clear, non reflective glazing and designed with large panes.

4. Lot Coverage, Setbacks and Height:
   a. New buildings must have a 75% lot coverage to encourage an appropriate level of development intensity and achieve compatibility with existing historic structures.

   b. A minimum of 70% of the linear frontage of the street façade of any new construction must be set at the right-of-way line to maintain the concept of a street wall consistent with the existing historic structures. However, any building constructed along the western 1/2 of the 400 block of Court Avenue must be set back at least 52 feet from the centerline of Court Avenue to preserve the public views of the Polk County Courthouse.

   c. New buildings shall not exceed 80 feet in height for any portion of the building set at or within 20 feet of a street property line to insure new construction does not overwhelm adjacent historic buildings.