

Building Value for the Future

MASONRY ORDINANCES STRENGTHEN LOCAL COMMUNITIES

PHOTOS BY
JEFF KLAYMAN

John Openlander wants Maplewood's property values to grow. For good reason: he's the director of public works for the municipality, and he'd like to see both residential and commercial properties prosper and increase in value.

Two years ago, Maplewood became the newest municipality in St. Louis County to enact a masonry ordinance. At the time, Openlander said that the new rules were triggered by concern over a surge in residential tear downs and the quality of the subsequent replacement construction. "The chief interest in this ordinance was to make sure that the city gets top-quality construction on any new structures that are built," he said at the time. To find out how area masonry ordinances were affecting local construction, we recently contacted Openlander as well as officials in Florissant and Ellisville to see what effect masonry ordinances were having in their jurisdictions.



THANKS TO MAPLEWOOD'S RECENTLY-ENACTED MASONRY ORDINANCE, JAMES PLACE IN MAPLEWOOD IS A NEW FOUR-SIDED MASONRY DEVELOPMENT AT SUTTON AND JAMES AVENUES. THE 10,000-SF. PROPERTY WILL CONSIST OF RETAIL ON THE FIRST FLOOR AND MEDICAL ON THE SECOND.

MAPLEWOOD

In this inner ring suburb, city officials have been offering wide-spread support for their new ordinance. Covering both new commercial and residential construction, the ordinance requires that single family houses and duplexes built in

neighborhoods of primarily brick or stone be constructed from that same material on both the front and side elevations. New commercial construction that is non-corner is required to have brick or stone on a minimum of 90 percent of the front and side elevations, while concrete masonry can be used on the rear. Corner units, on the other hand, are required to have a minimum of 90 percent brick or stone on all four sides.

The business community, according to Openlander, was tentative at first to embrace the masonry requirements, preferring a more unregulated approach. The developer of the new James Place on Sutton Avenue, for example, initially dragged his feet when planning the development. But after going ahead with the full-masonry project, he is now "very happy with it," according to Openlander.

FLORISSANT

A trip down North Highway 67 (N. Lindbergh) is a real eye opener for someone who hasn't been to the city recently. Since we last reported on Florissant's ordinance some six years ago, development along the municipality's premier thoroughfare has been exploding. The city's regulations are limited to commercial structures, requiring four-sided masonry—brick or natural stone—for its pleasing appearance and low maintenance requirements.

"I've had a lot of people say, 'Yes, it looks great,'" **John Morgan**, city building commissioner, tells us. "I've had visitors from other cities say: 'I can see the difference in the quality of construction when I come to your city.'"

Masonry ordinances are dramatically different from municipality to municipality, which only makes sense since no two cities are exactly alike in their needs or in the composition of their existing building stock. The large amount of new development erected on vacant lots in Florissant has gone smoothly.

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COMMERCE BANK (LEFT), AMERICAN CLEANERS BUILDING (RIGHT, BELOW).



The city, however, has encountered resistance from some developers of big box structures, which normally receive a purely functional approach that often lacks the preferred aesthetic of the surrounding community. City officials are currently in negotiations to resolve the issue.

ELLISVILLE

Dating back to the 1980s, the Ellisville ordinance is a customized creation, vesting decision authority for commercial projects to an architectural review board. Rather than specific masonry requirements, the ordinance strongly encourages the use of masonry by categorizing it as a preferred material. According to **Eric Sterman**, assistant city manager, the board decides the masonry issue on a project by project basis.

“The ordinance was implemented by the city council in an effort to encourage development that was aesthetically pleasing and structurally sound,” says Sterman. “Since the same standards apply to everybody, the ordinance is more acceptable to developers.”



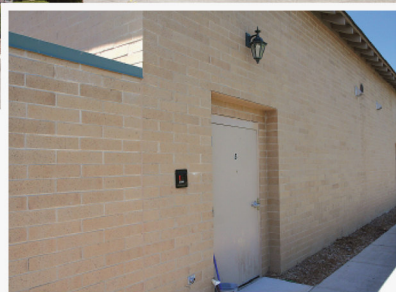
FOUR-SIDED MASONRY REQUIREMENTS FOR COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS MEAN EVERY ELEVATION WILL BE PLEASING FOR RESIDENTS AND VISITORS TO FLORISSANT.

For residential construction, the percentage of masonry required is dependent on the size of the structure. A small house, for example, has to be 80 percent masonry. Larger houses, which tend to have masonry exteriors, aren't subject to specific requirements. This approach has produced positive results. “City officials believe that the ordinance has been effective in reaching the goals that were desired,” Sterman concludes.

Maplewood, Florissant and Ellisville have very different masonry ordinances, illustrating that there is more than one approach to writing an effective ordinance. Not only do masonry ordinances simplify the review process, they continue to prove that architectural guidelines requiring masonry construction are the single most effective way to ensure that the homes and buildings created today will remain a source of pride and value for decades to come.



THE ELLISVILLE EXCHANGE CLEARLY DEMONSTRATES THE VALUE OF EMPHASIZING MASONRY CONSTRUCTION.



MASONRY is a publication of the Masonry Institute of St. Louis.