Urban Design Quality
Materials & Architectural Style

HALA
HOUSING AFFORDABILITY AND LIVABILITY AGENDA

Q: What's already in place?
A: Seattle's Citywide & Neighborhood Design Guidelines

About Citywide Design Guidelines

Seattle Design Guidelines

For detailed information on the Design Review Program, consult any of the following sources:

- *Seattle Municipal Code Chapter 23.41*
- *Client Assistance Memo (CAM) 238B*
- *DPD website, Design Review section at http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/aboutus/whoweare/designreview/program/.*

Introduction

The Seattle Design Guidelines are the cornerstone of the City's Design Review Program and the primary tool used by the Design Review Boards for evaluating proposed new development. The overarching goal of the design guidelines—and the Design Review Program—is to foster design excellence in private development of new multifamily and commercial projects throughout the city. The guidelines also support the Design Review Program as a forum for the public to participate in discussions about new projects in their community, and as a means of allowing flexibility in the application of Land Use Code requirements. The Seattle Design Guidelines apply to all projects required to undergo design review in all areas of the city except Downtown*. There are also neighborhood-specific design guidelines for many of Seattle's neighborhoods, which work in tandem with the citywide guidelines. Applicants with projects located within a neighborhood that has neighborhood-specific guidelines are required to consult both sets of guidelines—neighborhood and citywide—in the development and review of the project design. In the event of a conflict between citywide and neighborhood guidelines, the neighborhood-specific guidelines supersede.

WHAT IS DESIGN EXCELLENCE?

Design excellence takes many forms and can be measured in various ways. Seattle is fortunate to have a rich inventory of buildings and architectural styles throughout the city developed over many decades. One measure of design excellence is the ability of new buildings to fit seamlessly into that inventory. The ability of a building to stand the test of time by remaining functional and compatible over a period of many years is yet another sign of good design. This is reflected in choices made about materials, building assembly techniques, ongoing maintenance, and the type of energy used for heating, ventilation, and cooling. Finally, a project's contribution to the public realm, not only in terms of the building itself but also in site development, landscape and public open space, can be a measure of design excellence as well.

The Seattle Design Guidelines play an important role in helping define, design, and build projects of excellence in our city through the design review process. *For the purposes of design review, Downtown is defined as that area bounded by Denny Way on the north, Elliott Bay on the west, I-5 on the east, and Jackson Street and Dearborn Street on the south which is governed by its own set of guidelines. See the Downtown Design Review district map on the DPD website at http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/aboutus/whoweare/designreview/program/.*

This icon denotes additional information available related to the main text.

For more information about Land Use Code departures, consult SMC 23.41.012 Development standard departures (also available online through the City Clerk's Office at http://www.seattle.gov/leg/clerk/clerk.htm).

Board members listening to an applicant's presentation.

Community members reviewing presentation boards prior to the start of a meeting.

PURPOSE OF THE SEATTLE DESIGN GUIDELINES

The purpose of the Seattle Design Guidelines is to define the qualities of architecture, urban design, and public space that make for successful projects and communities, and to serve as a tool for guiding individual projects to meet those expectations through the City's Design Review Program. In contrast to the very specific regulations of the City's Land Use Code (Title 23 Seattle Municipal Code), the Seattle Design Guidelines set the stage for flexibility and dialogue during project review. An applicant may be granted a departure from the Land Use Code by demonstrating that the alternate design solution better meets the intent of the design guidelines.

Although the design guidelines by themselves cannot guarantee good design, and are not intended to resolve zoning disputes or address project impacts related to parking or traffic, they are nonetheless a powerful element of the Design Review Program. Their role is to set the parameters for discussions about proposed multifamily and commercial projects. Specifically the guidelines:

- provide clarity and focus on what is important to consider in the design of projects;
- present clear performance-based statements about what we value;
- enable the dialogue that occurs in Design Review Board meetings to be as productive and efficient as possible;
- provide a common language with which to discuss the best ways to create development that contributes to an attractive, vibrant, and livable city of the future, project by project, and;
- serve as the basis for fair and consistent recommendations by the Design Review Boards, including departures from Land Use Code requirements, where it can be demonstrated that a departure would result in a development that meets or exceeds the intent of Citywide and any applicable neighborhood-specific design guidelines.

WHAT DO WE VALUE IN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT?

The Seattle Design Guidelines provide guidance on universal design issues as well as the specific challenges faced by Seattle as it grows and changes. The underlying philosophy of the guidelines stems from acknowledgment of specific architectural and urban design qualities that are valued by the City and community members:

- architectural excellence as evidenced by an internationally-recognized design community; the existence of numerous organizations and citizen volunteers devoted to appreciation and cultivation of stellar architecture and urban design including the City's Design Review Program, Design Review Boards, and Design Commission; and a citizenry that is active in processes related to the design of individual projects and the city as a whole;
- design that preserves, reflects, or takes inspiration from the physical environment of hills, water, forests, and mountains that comprise the extraordinary setting surrounding Seattle;

Iconic Northwest images, above, lend Seattle some of its distinctive character.

- the character and cultivation of distinct neighborhoods that exist within the city, reflected in active citizen involvement in identifying and protecting historic and cultural resources that honor the city's diversity of people and cultures.

The design guidelines reflect these values through their emphasis on:

- beginning the design process with an understanding of the natural systems and features of the site and its surroundings;
- designing individual buildings within the larger context of a street, neighborhood, and city;
- drawing upon historical, cultural, and physical aspects of a site in order to develop a design that is authentic to Seattle and its neighborhoods while also embracing design innovation and creativity;
- encouraging the creation of public places as part of project design; and
- emphasizing the importance of developing a strong design concept for the project as a whole—both built and open space components.

WHO IS EXPECTED TO USE THE GUIDELINES?

The design guidelines are intended for a variety of audiences including developers, design professionals, neighbors, community members, Design Review Board members, Department of Planning and Development (DPD) staff, and the general public. Each has a specific role in the City's design review process. The guidelines provide all parties with a clear understanding of what the City urges project applicants to strive for in designing new development.

READER'S GUIDE

The design guidelines are organized around three themes: **Context and Site**; **Public Life**; and **Design Concept**. Each theme includes three to four individual guidelines. Each guideline consists of a number, a title, and a concise performance-based directive—all located at the top of the page.

Beneath each guideline is a series of design approaches and strategies to consider on a variety of topics, along with photos and/or diagrams to offer inspiration and guidance. The topics covered under each guideline represent issues specifically relevant to understanding and complying with the broader guideline and usually contain more detailed suggestions to consider.

While all projects are expected to meet and address all of the guidelines, they are not expected to apply all the approaches and strategies listed for each guideline. Not all the approaches and strategies will be relevant to every project. Applicants, Design Review Boards, and other reviewers should use their judgment and discretion in determining which approaches and strategies are particularly applicable to a given project.

Example Neighborhood Design Guidelines: North Beacon Hill

CS3
Architectural Context and Character

Citywide Guideline:

Contribute to the architectural character of the neighborhood.

North Beacon Hill Supplemental Guidance

I.   Architectural Context

New buildings proposed for existing neighborhoods should be compatible with, or complement the architectural character and siting pattern of neighboring buildings. New developments are encouraged to pay special attention to neighboring historic buildings, i.e. Pacific Medical Building and Fire Station 13. New developments can be more compatible with their neighbors by addressing the historic building's character through its details and/or architectural traits while remaining autonomous in stature.

i.   To make new, larger development compatible with the surrounding architectural context, facade articulation and architectural detail are important considerations in mixed-use and multifamily residential buildings. When larger buildings replace several small buildings, facade articulation should reflect the original platting pattern and reinforce the architectural rhythm established in the commercial core.

ii. New development should respond to several architectural features common in the North Beacon Hill business district to preserve and enhance pedestrian orientation and maintain an acceptable level of consistency with the existing architecture. To create cohesiveness on Beacon Hill, identifiable and exemplary architectural patterns should be reinforced. New elements can be introduced but a strong design connection should accompany it.

A regular cadence of display windows and shop entrances enhances the pedestrian experience. Awnings, pilasters and brick facades add interest and give a human scale to the street-level facade.

An example of a large, mixed-use building broken down into smaller sub-volumes. Regulating lines and rhythms, including vertical and horizontal patterns as expressed by cornice lines, belt lines and windows, can further aid in supporting scale compatibility with adjacent structures.

PL3
Street-Level Interaction

Citywide Guideline:

Encourage human interaction and activity at the street-level with clear connections to building entries and edges.

North Beacon Hill Supplemental Guidance

I.   Human Activity

i.   Provide for sidewalk retail opportunities and connections by allowing for the opening of the storefront to the street and the display of goods on the sidewalks.

ii. Provide for outdoor dining opportunities on the sidewalk by allowing for the opening of restaurant or cafe windows to the sidewalk and installing outdoor seating.

iii. Install clear glass windows along the sidewalk to provide visual access into the retail or dining activities that occur inside.

iv. Do not block views into the interior spaces with the backs of shelving units or posters.

v.   Maximize window widths and heights along sidewalk face of buildings to create an inviting and interactive atmosphere between indoor and outdoor activities.

II.   Streetscape Compatibility

i.   Provide a shallow setback and a minor grade separation between the first floor and the sidewalk where residential uses occupy the ground floor; this will promote privacy and also accommodate entry porches and stoops.

At-grade street-level commercial uses promote an active business district.

Minor grade separations create residential privacy, and provide opportunities for front porches and stoops.

DC4
Exterior Elements and Finishes

Citywide Guideline:

Use appropriate and high quality elements and finishes for the building and its open spaces.

North Beacon Hill Supplemental Guidance

I.   Exterior Finish Materials

i.   Brick and stone are the most common surface treatment in the commercial areas and are strongly encouraged. To the left are some examples of bricks and stone used on Beacon Hill.

ii. Signs should add interest to the street level environment. They can unify the overall architectural concept of the building, or provide unique identity for a business within a larger mixed-use structure. Design signage that is appropriate for the scale, character and use of the project and surrounding area. Signs should be oriented and scaled for both pedestrians on sidewalks and vehicles on streets.

iii. The following sign types are encouraged:

   a. Pedestrian-oriented blade and window signs
   b. Marquee signs and signs on overhead weather protection
   c. Appropriately sized neon signs
   d. Multilingual signs that reflect the neighborhood's diverse population
   e. Sandwich board signs placed outside of pedestrian pathways

Multilingual signs are strongly encouraged.

Join the Conversation – June 2016

Urban Design Quality
Design Review

Q: How are Citywide and Neighborhod Design Guidelines implemented?
A: Seattle's Design Review process

Highlights of Design Review

+ Established in 1994
+ Reviewed over 1,500 built projects in Seattle
+ Reviews over 100 projects each year
+ Encourages better design
+ Provides flexibility in application of design standards
+ Improves communication among developers, neighborhoods, and the City
+ Addresses project design
  + Exterior appearance and materials
  + Arrangement of a building on a site
  + Relationship of project to its surroundings and unique location
+ There are three types of Design Review
  + Full - *involves public meetings with Design Review Boards*
  + Administrative
  + Streamlined

Design Review does *not* apply to:

+ Buildings in single family zones
+ The basic amount of development that can be placed on a site – this is prescribed by the zoning
+ The amount of parking a building must provide
+ The types of transportation improvements that must be made along with the new building
+ Environmental impacts or mitigation

Example Projects

Greenfire Campus | Ballard

Goodwill Training Center |
Downtown / Central Area / International District

1310 E Union Lofts | Capitol Hill

Urban Design Quality
Green Space & Landscaping

HALA
HOUSING AFFORDABILITY
AND LIVABILITY AGENDA

◯ **Q: Are green space and landscaping currently required by code?**
A: Yes, Seattle Green Factor requires landscaping for new development

What is the Seattle Green Factor?

Seattle Green Factor is a score-based code requirement that increases the amount and improves the quality of landscaping in new development. Landscaping plays an important role in how new development looks and functions. Well-designed landscaping:

+ Improves the look and feel of a neighborhood
+ Reduces stormwater runoff
+ Cools cities during heat waves
+ Provides habitat for birds and beneficial insects
+ Supports adjacent businesses
+ Decreases crime

If a project is required to meet the Seattle Green Factor, it must reach a minimum score established by zoning. A designer can chose from a "menu" of landscape credits for various features, including green roofs, rain gardens, vegetated walls, and trees and shrubs. A design can receive bonus credits if it includes planting along the sidewalk, native plants, or a food garden.

Where is Green Factor required?

Green Factor applies in the following zones:

+ Commercial and Neighborhood Commercial (NC1, NC2, NC3, C1, C2) Minimum score 0.30
+ Industrial Commercial (IC) within urban village or urban center boundaries Minimum score 0.30
+ Development in South Downtown (variety of zones within the South Downtown planning area) Minimum score of 0.30 for development with 20,000 gross square feet or more
+ Midrise and Highrise Multifamily Residential (MR, HR) Minimum score 0.50
+ Lowrise Multifamily Residential (LR) Minimum score 0.60
+ Yesler Terrace (MPC-YT) Minimum score of 0.30 per development, 0.50 per sector
+ Seattle Mixed (SM) Minimim score 0.30

Green Factor Score Sheet

Revised 12/28/10

Green Factor Score Sheet   SEATTLE × *green factor*

Project title:

enter sq ft of parcel

Parcel size (enter this value first) * — 5,000   **SCORE** — -

Landscape Elements**	Totals from GF worksheet	Factor	Total
A Landscaped areas (select one of the following for each area)			
1 Landscaped areas with a soil depth of less than 24"	enter sq ft 0	0.1	-
2 Landscaped areas with a soil depth of 24" or greater	enter sq ft 0	0.6	-
3 Bioretention facilities	enter sq ft 0	1.0	-
B Plantings (credit for plants in landscaped areas from Section A)			
1 Mulch, ground covers, or other plants less than 2' tall at maturity	enter sq ft 0	0.1	-
2 Shrubs or perennials 2'+ at maturity - calculated at 12 sq ft per plant (typically planted no closer than 18" on center)	enter number of plants 0	0.3	-
3 Tree canopy for "small trees" or equivalent (canopy spread 8' to 15') - calculated at 75 sq ft per tree	enter number of plants 0	0.3	-
4 Tree canopy for "small/medium trees" or equivalent (canopy spread 16' to 20') - calculated at 150 sq ft per tree	enter number of plants 0	0.3	-
5 Tree canopy for "medium/large trees" or equivalent (canopy spread 21' to 25') - calculated at 250 sq ft per tree	enter number of plants 0	0.4	-
6 Tree canopy for "large trees" or equivalent (canopy spread 26' to 30') - calculated at 350 sq ft per tree	enter number of plants 0	0.4	-
7 Tree canopy for preservation of large existing trees with trunks 6"+ in diameter - calculated at 20 sq ft per inch diameter	enter inches DBH 0	0.8	-
C Green roofs			
1 Over at least 2" and less than 4" of growth medium	enter sq ft 0	0.4	-
2 Over at least 4" of growth medium	enter sq ft 0	0.7	-
D Vegetated walls	enter sq ft 0	0.7	-
E Approved water features	enter sq ft 0	0.7	-
F Permeable paving			
1 Permeable paving over at least 6" and less than 24" of soil or gravel	enter sq ft 0	0.2	-
2 Permeable paving over at least 24" of soil or gravel	enter sq ft 0	0.5	-
G Structural soil systems	enter sq ft 0	0.2	-
sub-total of sq ft =	0		
H Bonuses			
1 Drought-tolerant or native plant species	enter sq ft 0	0.1	-
2 Landscaped areas where at least 50% of annual irrigation needs are met through the use of harvested rainwater	enter sq ft 0	0.2	-
3 Landscaping visible to passersby from adjacent public right of way or public open spaces	enter sq ft 0	0.1	-
4 Landscaping in food cultivation	enter sq ft 0	0.1	-
Green Factor numerator =			-

* Do not count public rights-of-way in parcel size calculation.
** You may count landscape improvements in rights-of-way contiguous with the parcel. All landscaping on private and public property must comply with the Landscape Standards Director's Rule (DR 6-2009)

Example projects
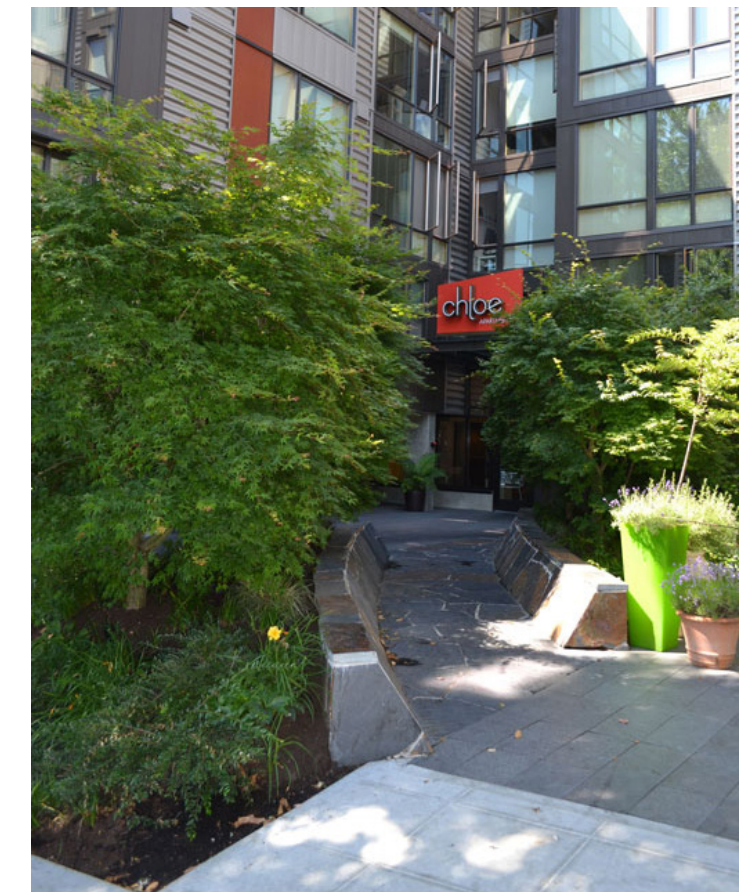
Chloe Apartments, Capitol Hill
7-story mixed-use building
+ Parcel size: 29,035 sq ft (~8,300 planted)
+ Green Factor Score achieved: 0.31 *(0.30 required)*
+ Landscaping visible to passers-by from adjacent public right of way or public open spaces: 4,400 sq ft

Link Apartments, West Seattle
6-story mixed-use building
+ Parcel size: 36,648 sq ft (~9,500 planted)
+ Green Factor Score achieved: 0.305 *(0.30 required)*
+ Landscaping visible to passers-by from adjacent public right of way or public open spaces: 8,028 sq ft
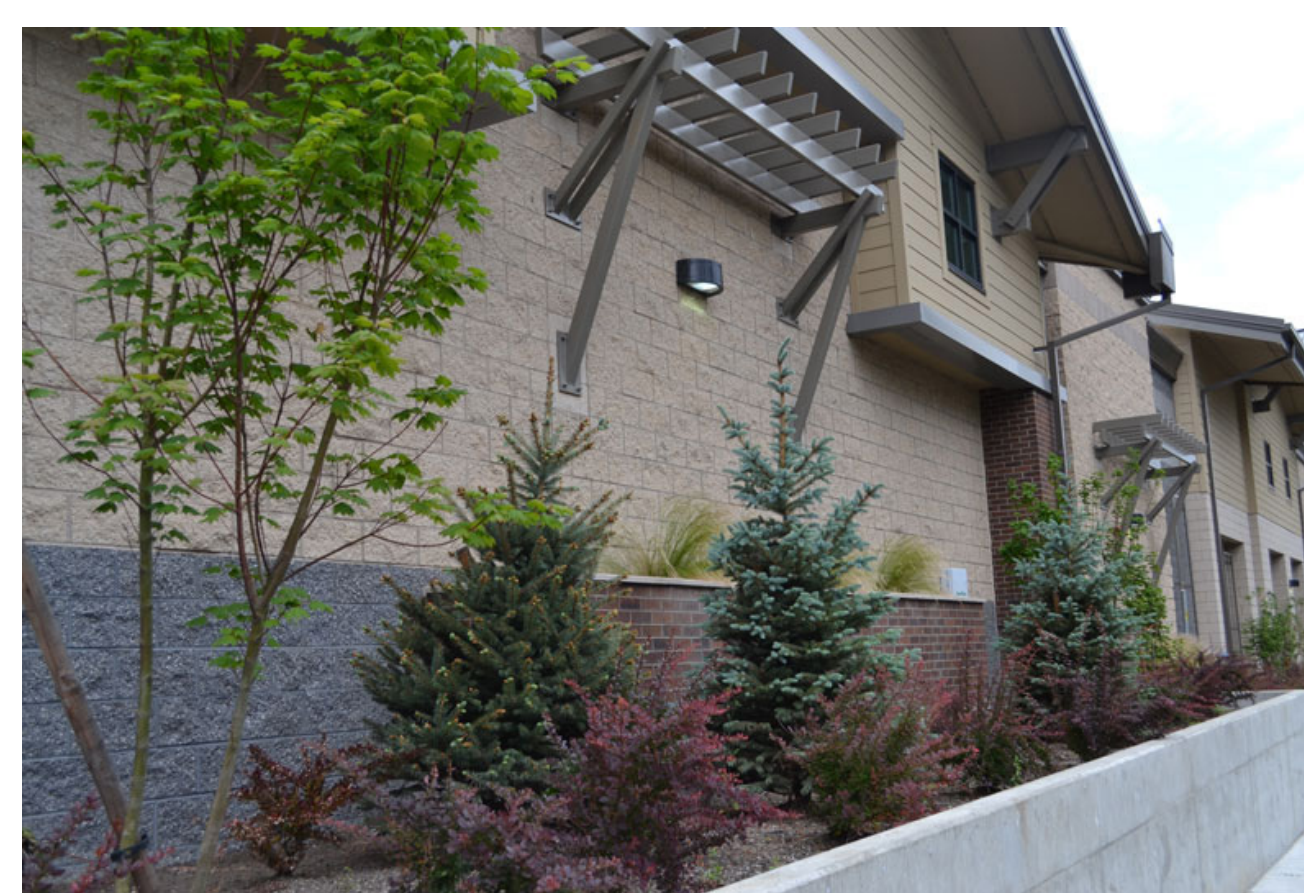
Pinehurst Safeway, Pinehurst
Grocery Store
+ Parcel size: 143,175 sq ft (~26,800 planted)
+ Green Factor Score achieved: 0.322 *(0.30 required)*
+ Landscaping visible to passers-by from adjacent public right of way or public open spaces: 10,000 sq ft

Urban Design Quality
Upper-level setbacks

An upper-level setback is a type of design standard that requires that the upper portion of a building be further away from the property line or from a street.

Requiring upper-level setbacks can have several outcomes. Upper-level setbacks:

+ allow more daylight to reach the street level

+ can create open space and amenity areas for people in the building

+ can be placed when buildings are adjacent to the right-of-way to help transition between zones

+ reduce the amount of floor area that can be developed than if no upper-level setback were required