



Seattle Design Guidelines



DESIGN
REVIEW

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City of Seattle
Department of Planning and Development

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Michael McGinn, Mayor, City of Seattle

Diane Sugimura, Director, Department of Planning and Development

Marshall Foster, City Planning Director, DPD

Guidelines written by:

Lesley Bain, consultant, Weinstein A/U

Cheryl Sizov, Project Manager, DPD

With assistance from:

Shelly Bolser, Design Review Program, DPD

Vince Lyons, Former Design Review Program Manager, DPD

Aly Pennucci, Senior Planner, DPD City Planning

Mike Podowski, Supervisor, DPD City Planning

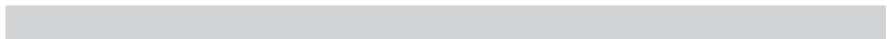
Bruce Rips, Design Review Program, DPD

Lisa Rutzick, Design Review Program Manager, DPD

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Introduction

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Introduction



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/whoware/designreview/program/>.*

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/whoware/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 multi-family 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 of 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.

Context and Site

What's inside:

CS1. Natural Systems and Site Features

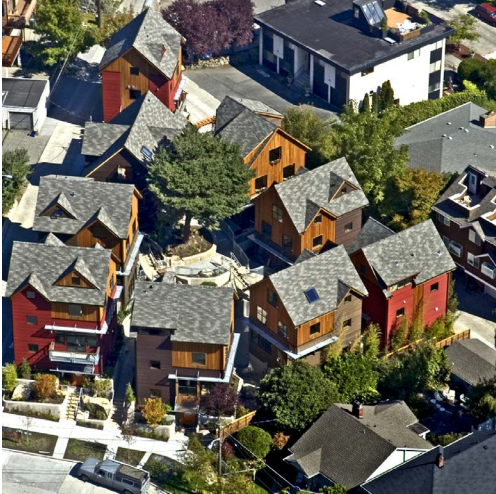
- A. Energy Use
- B. Sunlight and Natural Ventilation
- C. Topography
- D. Plants and Habitat
- E. Water

CS2. Urban Pattern and Form

- A. Location in the City and Neighborhood
- B. Adjacent Sites, Streets, and Open Spaces
- C. Relationship to the Block
- D. Height, Bulk, and Scale

CS3. Architectural Context and Character

- A. Emphasizing Positive Neighborhood Attributes
- B. Local History and Culture



CS1

Natural Systems and Site Features

Use natural systems and features of the site and its surroundings as a starting point for project design.

Design Approaches and Strategies to Consider:

A. ENERGY USE

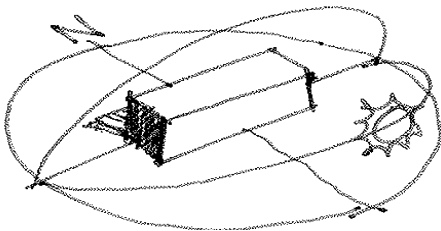
1. **Energy Choices:** At the earliest phase of project development, examine how energy choices may influence building form, siting, and orientation, and factor in the findings when making siting and design decisions.

B. SUNLIGHT AND NATURAL VENTILATION

1. **Sun and Wind:** Take advantage of solar exposure and natural ventilation available onsite where possible. Use local wind patterns and solar gain as a means of reducing the need for mechanical ventilation and heating where possible.
2. **Daylight and Shading:** Maximize daylight for interior and exterior spaces and minimize shading on adjacent sites through the placement and/or design of structures on the site.
3. **Managing Solar Gain:** Manage direct sunlight falling on south and west facing facades through shading devices and existing or newly planted trees.

C. TOPOGRAPHY

1. **Land Form:** Use the natural topography and/or other desirable land forms or features to inform the project design.
2. **Elevation Changes:** Use the existing site topography when locating structures and open spaces on the site. Consider “stepping up or down” hillsides to accommodate significant changes in elevation.



Siting longer facades east to west brings the most consistent solar exposure and daylighting into a building, providing comfortable spaces for users and potential energy savings.



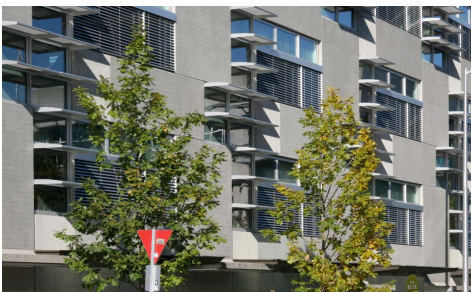
The Seattle Energy Code regulates energy-use features of new and remodeled buildings. For applicable energy standards and requirements, see the code at <http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/codesrules/codes/energy/overview/>



See also guideline DC1.A.1 Arrangement of Uses for related guidance.



See also CS2.B1 Site Characteristics, CS2.D2 Existing Site Features, and DC2.A1 Site Characteristics and Uses for related guidance.



Louvers on the windows help moderate the amount of sunlight received into this building as do the deciduous trees.



Removal or destruction of trees may be subject to additional review. Consult SMC 25.11 and SMC 23 for additional information.



See also DC3.C3 Habitats and Ecosystems for related guidance.



This swale adds interest to the site and contributes to on-site stormwater management. Densely landscaped with native plants, it is designed to hold street run-off and release it slowly into the stormwater system.



Mature trees are preserved and made a significant feature of the open space for this residential project.



All proposed development is reviewed for its impact on existing drainage and wastewater infrastructure. For information on Seattle Grading and Drainage Control codes visit www.seattle.gov/dpd/codesrules/codes/. The City and King County share jurisdiction and infrastructure in some parts of Seattle, a permit may also be required from King County (see King County Drainage and Wastewater Services at <http://www.kingcounty.gov/environment.aspx>).

D. PLANTS AND HABITAT

1. **On-Site Features:** Incorporate on-site natural habitats and landscape elements such as: existing trees, native plant species or other vegetation into project design and connect those features to existing networks of open spaces and natural habitats wherever possible. Consider relocating significant trees and vegetation if retention is not feasible.
2. **Off-Site Features:** Provide opportunities through design to connect to off-site habitats such as riparian corridors or existing urban forest corridors. Promote continuous habitat, where possible, and increase interconnected corridors of urban forest and habitat where possible.

E. WATER

1. **Natural Water Features:** If the site includes any natural water features, consider ways to incorporate them into project design, where feasible.
2. **Adding Interest with Project Drainage:** Use project drainage systems as opportunities to add interest to the site through water-related design elements. Features such as trees, rain gardens, bioswales, green roofs, fountains of recycled water, and/or water art installations can create movement and sound, air cooling, focal points for pedestrians, and habitats which may already be required to manage on-site stormwater and allow reuse of potable water for irrigation.



CS2

Urban Pattern and Form

Strengthen the most desirable forms, characteristics, and patterns of the streets, block faces, and open spaces in the surrounding area.

Design Approaches and Strategies to Consider:

A. LOCATION IN THE CITY AND NEIGHBORHOOD

- 1. Sense of Place:** Emphasize attributes that give Seattle, the neighborhood, and/or the site its distinctive sense of place. Design the building and open spaces to enhance areas where a strong identity already exists, and create a sense of place where the physical context is less established. Examples of neighborhood and/or site features that contributed to a sense of place include patterns of streets or blocks, slopes, sites with prominent visibility, relationships to bodies of water or significant trees, natural areas, open spaces, iconic buildings or transportation junctions, and land seen as a gateway to the community.
- 2. Architectural Presence:** Evaluate the degree of visibility or architectural presence that is appropriate or desired given the context, and design accordingly. A site may lend itself to a “high-profile” design with significant presence and individual identity, or may be better suited to a simpler but quality design that contributes to the block as a whole. Buildings that contribute to a strong street edge, especially at the first three floors, are particularly important to the creation of a quality public realm that invites social interaction and economic activity. Encourage all building facades to incorporate design detail, articulation and quality materials.

B. ADJACENT SITES, STREETS, AND OPEN SPACES

- 1. Site Characteristics:** Allow characteristics of sites to inform the design, especially where the street grid and topography create unusually shaped lots that can add distinction to the building massing.
- 2. Connection to the Street:** Identify opportunities for the project to make a strong connection to the street and carefully consider how the building will interact with the public realm. Consider the qualities and character of the streetscape—its physical features (sidewalk, parking, landscape strip, street trees, travel lanes, and other amenities) and its function (major retail street or quieter residential street)—in siting and designing the building.



See also DC3.C1 Character of Open Space for related guidance.



Originally designed with long curving streets and few intersections, this development reinstated the street grid to better reflect and connect to neighboring properties.



For information about Seattle street improvements and standards, consult the *Right-of-Way Improvement Manual (ROWIM)* published by the Seattle Department of Transportation at <http://www.seattle.gov/transportation> under the “Resources” link.



See also PL1.A1 Enhancing Open Space for related guidance.



This drawing appropriately shows the proposed project within a broader context in order to assess height, bulk, and scale compatibility with surrounding buildings.



Under the City's SEPA (State Environmental Policy Act) policy, multi-family and/or commercial projects with substantial height, bulk, and scale impacts will be analyzed through the design review process. Siting and design based on the principles of these guidelines will help to mitigate some of those impacts, while others may require a reduction in the height, bulk, and scale of the project. Consult SMC 25.05.675 for additional information.



Slightly unconventional, yet still familiar, the skewed gable roof forms help reduce the mass of this townhouse project and allow it to blend into a neighborhood that includes single-family houses.



See also DC2.A Massing for related guidance.

3. **Character of Open Space:** Contribute to the character and proportion of surrounding open spaces. Evaluate adjacent sites, streetscapes, trees and vegetation, and open spaces for how they function as the walls and floor of outdoor spaces or “rooms” for public use. Determine how best to support those spaces through project siting and design (e.g. using mature trees to frame views of architecture or other prominent features).

C. RELATIONSHIP TO THE BLOCK

1. **Corner Sites:** Corner sites can serve as gateways or focal points; both require careful detailing at the first three floors due to their high visibility from two or more streets and long distances. Consider using a corner to provide extra space for pedestrians and a generous entry, or build out to the corner to provide a strong urban edge to the block.
2. **Mid-Block Sites:** Look to the uses and scales of adjacent buildings for clues about how to design a mid-block building. Continue a strong street-edge where it is already present, and respond to datum lines created by adjacent buildings at the first three floors. Where adjacent properties are undeveloped or underdeveloped, design the party walls to provide visual interest through materials, color, texture, or other means.
3. **Full Block Sites:** Break up long facades of full-block buildings to avoid a monolithic presence. Provide detail and human scale at street-level, and include repeating elements to add variety and rhythm to the façade and overall building design. Consider providing through-block access and/or designing the project as an assemblage of buildings and spaces within the block.

D. HEIGHT, BULK, AND SCALE

1. **Existing Development and Zoning:** Review the height, bulk, and scale of neighboring buildings as well as the scale of development anticipated by zoning for the area to determine an appropriate complement and/or transition. Note that existing buildings may or may not reflect the density allowed by zoning or anticipated by applicable policies.
2. **Existing Site Features:** Use changes in topography, site shape, and vegetation or structures to help make a successful fit with adjacent properties; for example siting the greatest mass of the building on the lower part of the site or using an existing stand of trees to buffer building height from a smaller neighboring building.

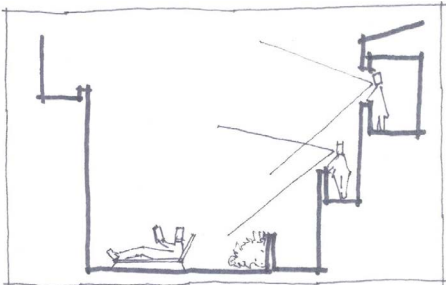
3. **Zone Transitions:** For projects located at the edge of different zones, provide an appropriate transition or complement to the adjacent zone(s). Projects should create a step in perceived height, bulk and scale between the anticipated development potential of the adjacent zone and the proposed development.

Factors to consider:

- Distance to the edge of a less (or more) intensive zone;
- Differences in development standards between abutting zones;
- The type of separation from adjacent properties (e.g. separation by property line only, by an alley or street or open space, or by physical features such as grade change);
- Adjacencies to different neighborhoods or districts; adjacencies to parks, open spaces, significant buildings or view corridors; and
- Shading to or from neighboring properties.

4. **Massing Choices:** Strive for a successful transition between zones where a project abuts a less intense zone. In some areas, the best approach may be to lower the building height, break up the mass of the building, and/or match the scale of adjacent properties in building detailing. It may be appropriate in other areas to differ from the scale of adjacent buildings but preserve natural systems or existing features, enable better solar exposure or site orientation, and/or make for interesting urban form.

5. **Respect for Adjacent Sites:** Respect adjacent properties with design and site planning to minimize disrupting the privacy and outdoor activities of residents in adjacent buildings.



Inappropriate siting of large buildings can reduce the privacy of adjacent homes. Reducing windows and decks overlooking neighboring residential property or increasing side setbacks can increase privacy.



CS3

Architectural Context and Character

Contribute to the architectural character of the neighborhood.

Design Approaches and Strategies to Consider:

A. EMPHASIZING POSITIVE NEIGHBORHOOD ATTRIBUTES

1. **Fitting Old and New Together:** Create compatibility between new projects and existing architectural context, including historic and modern designs, through building articulation, scale and proportion, roof forms, detailing, fenestration, and/or the use of complementary materials.
2. **Contemporary Design:** Explore how contemporary designs can contribute to the development of attractive new forms and architectural styles; as expressed through use of new materials or other means.
3. **Established Neighborhoods:** In existing neighborhoods with a well-defined architectural character, site and design new structures to complement or be compatible with the architectural style and siting patterns of neighborhood buildings.
4. **Evolving Neighborhoods:** In neighborhoods where architectural character is evolving or otherwise in transition, explore ways for new development to establish a positive and desirable context for others to build upon in the future.

B. LOCAL HISTORY AND CULTURE

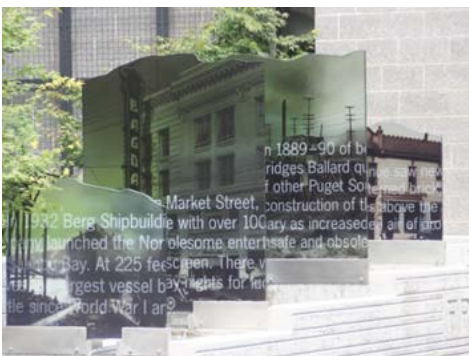
1. **Placemaking:** Explore the history of the site and neighborhood as a potential placemaking opportunity. Look for historical and cultural significance, using neighborhood groups and archives as resources.
2. **Historical/Cultural References:** Reuse existing structures on the site where feasible as a means of incorporating historical or cultural elements into the new project.



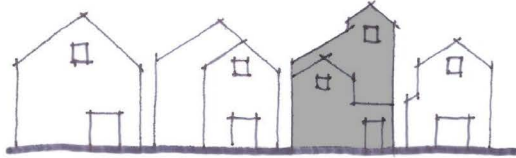
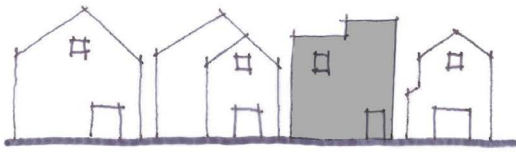
See also DC2.C3 Fit with Neighboring Buildings for related guidance.



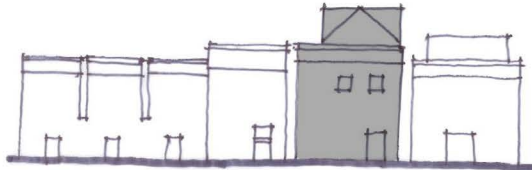
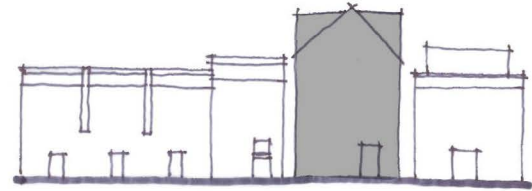
Maintaining the scale and architectural character of this 1910 building was an important element in reflecting its prior occupancy and cultural associations while updating the building for contemporary uses and opening another chapter in its history.



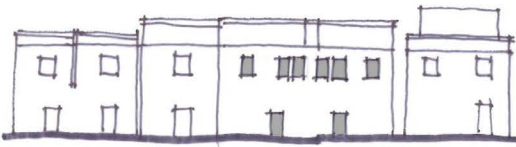
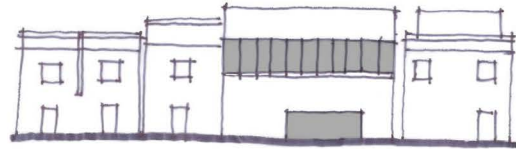
Artwork referencing local history at the public plaza level of this project provides a link to the past in this rapidly changing neighborhood.



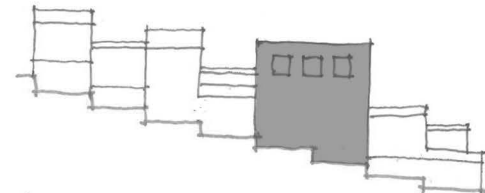
As shown in the lower figure, rooflines can reinforce the architectural character of a street.



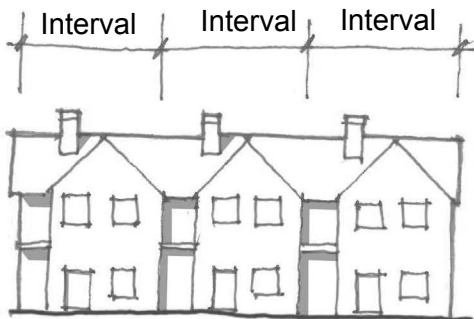
Incorporating architectural features like cornices is more compatible with adjacent buildings, by lowering the apparent, conflicting height of the building illustrated in the lower figure.



In areas that have a number of buildings that feature a distinctive architectural concept or style, referring to that organizational concept can achieve compatibility at a deeper level as shown in the lower diagram.



The pattern and proportion of windows, doors and other glazed areas (fenestration) is important in determining the building's architectural character. The lower image illustrates that by following the proportion and pattern of neighboring buildings the consistency of the overall streetscape is maintained or increased.



This building is articulated into intervals to be compatible with adjacent structures. Articulation methods include modulation, broken roof lines, building elements (chimneys, entries, etc.) and landscaping.



This mixed-use building expresses intervals through modulation, a mix of roof forms, landscaping and other elements.



This apartment building incorporates architectural elements typical of nearby buildings such as bay windows, cornice lines, double hung windows, building modulation and horizontal banding. Also, the street front landscaping helps it to better fit in an established neighborhood.

This project relates well to its neighbors by reflecting similar proportions, materials and architectural features.



Public Life

What's inside:

PL1. Connectivity

- A. Network of Open Spaces
- B. Walkways and Connections
- C. Outdoor Uses and Activities

PL2. Walkability

- A. Accessibility
- B. Safety and Security
- C. Weather Protection
- D. Wayfinding

PL3. Street-Level Interaction

- A. Entries
- B. Retail Edges
- C. Residential Edges

PL4. Active Transportation

- A. Entry Locations and Relationships
- B. Planning Ahead for Bicyclists
- C. Planning Ahead for Transit



PL1

Connectivity

Complement and contribute to the network of open spaces around the site and the connections among them.

Design Approaches and Solutions to Consider:



See also CS2.B3 Character of Open Space for related guidance.



See also PL3.C2 Interaction, DC1.A2 Gathering Places, DC3.B3 Connections to Other Open Spaces, and DC3.B4 Multifamily Open Space for related guidance.



Two small tables with chairs suit the scale of this sidewalk perfectly and make it clear what the adjacent retail space has to offer.



The Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) is responsible for permitting all work in Seattle's rights-of-way (ROW). For information about ROW permitting and Seattle's street improvements and standards, consult SDOT's Street Use division page at http://www.seattle.gov/transportation/stuse_home.htm.

A. NETWORK OF OPEN SPACES

1. **Enhancing Open Space:** Design the building and open spaces to positively contribute to a broader network of open spaces throughout the neighborhood. Consider ways that design can enhance the features and activities of existing off-site open spaces. Open space may include sidewalks, streets and alleys, circulation routes and other open areas of all kinds.
2. **Adding to Public Life:** Seek opportunities to foster human interaction through an increase in the size and/or quality of project-related open space available for public life. Consider features such as widened sidewalks, recessed entries, curb bulbs, courtyards, plazas, or through-block connections, along with place-making elements such as trees, landscape, art, or other amenities, in addition to the pedestrian amenities listed in PL1.B3.

B. WALKWAYS AND CONNECTIONS

1. **Pedestrian Infrastructure:** Connect on-site pedestrian walkways with existing public and private pedestrian infrastructure, thereby supporting pedestrian connections within and outside the project.
2. **Pedestrian Volumes:** Provide ample space for pedestrian flow and circulation, particularly in areas where there is already heavy pedestrian traffic or where the project is expected to add or attract pedestrians to the area.
3. **Pedestrian Amenities:** Opportunities for creating lively, pedestrian oriented open spaces to enliven the area and attract interest and interaction with the site and building should be considered. Visible access to the building's entry should be provided. Examples of pedestrian amenities include seating, other street furniture, lighting, year-round landscaping, seasonal plantings, pedestrian scale signage, site furniture, art work, awnings, large storefront windows, and engaging retail displays and/or kiosks.



See also DC3.B2 Matching Uses to Conditions for related guidance.



See also DC3.B4 Multifamily Open Space for related guidance.



In this project a “woonerf”^{*} creates a shared common space for both people and cars that is larger than either would have on its own. These shared spaces are practical solutions for higher-density development on tight lots.



Glazed, operable walls can be opened fully to the street, expanding the public space along this retail street.



^{*} woonerf: A driveway shared by pedestrians and vehicles, such as Pike Place in the Pike Place market.

C. OUTDOOR USES AND ACTIVITIES

1. **Selecting Activity Areas:** Concentrate activity areas in places with sunny exposure, views across spaces, and in direct line with pedestrian routes.
2. **Informal Community Uses:** In addition to places for walking and sitting, consider including space for informal community use such as performances, farmer’s markets, kiosks and community bulletin boards, cafes, or street vending.
3. **Year-Round Activity:** Where possible, include features in open spaces for activities beyond daylight hours and throughout the seasons of the year, especially in neighborhood centers where active open space will contribute vibrancy, economic health, and public safety. These may include:
 - a. seasonal plantings or displays and/or water features;
 - b. outdoor heaters;
 - c. overhead weather protection;
 - d. ample, moveable seating and tables and opportunities for outdoor dining;
 - e. an extra level of pedestrian lighting;
 - f. trees for moderate weather protection and shade; and/or
 - g. 24-hour wi-fi service.



An extra wide sidewalk is an appropriate response to an anticipated high volume of pedestrians. Weather protection, seating, plantings, bike racks, and waste cans are all comfortably accommodated in the space provided.



PL2

Walkability

Create a safe and comfortable walking environment that is easy to navigate and well-connected to existing pedestrian walkways and features.

Design Approaches and Solutions to Consider:

A. ACCESSIBILITY

1. **Access for All:** Provide access for people of all abilities in a manner that is fully integrated into the project design. Design entries and other primary access points such that all visitors can be greeted and welcomed through the front door. Refrain from creating separate “back door” entrances for persons with mobility limitations.
2. **Access Challenges:** Add features to assist pedestrians in navigating sloped sites, long blocks, or other challenges. Examples include exterior stairs and landings, escalators, elevators, textured ground surfaces, seating at key resting points, through-block connections, and ramps for wheeled devices (wheelchairs, strollers, bicycles).

B. SAFETY AND SECURITY

1. **Eyes on the Street:** Create a safe environment by providing lines of sight and encouraging natural surveillance through strategic placement of doors, windows, balconies and street-level uses.
2. **Lighting for Safety:** Provide lighting at sufficient lumen intensities and scales, including pathway illumination, pedestrian and entry lighting, and/or security lights.
3. **Street-Level Transparency:** Ensure transparency of street-level uses (for uses such as nonresidential uses or residential lobbies), where appropriate, by keeping views open into spaces behind walls or plantings, at corners, or along narrow passageways. Choose semi-transparent rather than opaque screening.



See also PL3.C1 Security and Privacy, PL4.B2 Bike Amenities for related guidance.



See also DC4.C Lighting for related guidance.



Activity on this urban sidewalk is easily monitored from the many entries and windows fronting the street. A variety of potted plants, artwork, and other amenities give the sidewalk a strong residential character and scale.



See also *PL4.B2 Bike Amenities*, *PL4.C2 Transit Amenities* for related guidance.



Even this relatively narrow sidewalk has clearly demarcated zones for street trees, pedestrians, and retail-related elements, making it a pleasant place to stroll.



See also *DC4.B2 Coordination with Project Design* for related guidance.



This transparent canopy provides identity and weather protection at the building entry while ensuring that light will filter through to the space below.

C. WEATHER PROTECTION

1. **Locations and Coverage:** Overhead weather protection is encouraged and should be located at or near uses that generate pedestrian activity such as entries, retail uses, and transit stops. Address changes in topography as needed to provide continuous coverage the full length of the building, where possible.
2. **Design Integration:** Integrate weather protection, gutters and downspouts into the design of the structure as a whole, and ensure that it also relates well to neighboring buildings in design, coverage, or other features.
3. **People-Friendly Spaces:** Create an artful and people-friendly space beneath building canopies by using human-scale architectural elements and a pattern of forms and/or textures at intervals along the façade. If transparent canopies are used, design to accommodate regular cleaning and maintenance.

D. WAYFINDING

1. **Design as Wayfinding:** Use design features as a means of wayfinding wherever possible, and provide clear directional signage where needed.



PL3

Street-Level Interaction

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

Design Approaches and Solutions to Consider:

A. ENTRIES

1. **Design Objectives:** Design primary entries to be obvious, identifiable, and distinctive with clear lines of sight and lobbies visually connected to the street. Scale and detail them to function well for their anticipated use and also to fit with the building of which they are a part, differentiating residential and commercial entries with design features and amenities specific to each.
 - a. **Office/commercial lobbies** should be visually connected to the street through the primary entry and sized to accommodate the range and volume of foot traffic anticipated;
 - b. **Retail entries** should include adequate space for several patrons to enter and exit simultaneously, preferably under cover from weather.
 - c. **Common entries to multi-story residential buildings** need to provide privacy and security for residents but also be welcoming and identifiable to visitors. Design features emphasizing the entry as a semi-private space are recommended and may be accomplished through signage, low walls and/or landscaping, a recessed entry area, and other detailing that signals a break from the public sidewalk.
 - d. **Individual entries to ground-related housing** should be scaled and detailed appropriately to provide for a more intimate type of entry. The design should contribute to a sense of identity, opportunity for personalization, offer privacy, and emphasize personal safety and security for building occupants.
2. **Ensemble of Elements:** Design the entry as a collection of coordinated elements including the door(s), overhead features, ground surface, landscaping, lighting, and other features. Consider a range of elements such as:
 - a. overhead shelter: canopies, porches, building extensions;
 - b. transitional spaces: stoops, courtyards, stairways, portals, arcades, pocket gardens, decks;
 - c. ground surface: seating walls; special paving, landscaping, trees, lighting; and



See also PL4.A Entry Locations and Relationships for related guidance.



Generously sized plazas and sidewalks, lush plantings, a variety of paving materials, colorful signs and storefronts, good lighting, and plenty of seating greatly encourage year round activity at this popular shopping area.



Above-grade residential entries and extensive detailing provide privacy for residents and clearly demarcate the private, semiprivate, and public areas along this sidewalk.



Well detailed landscaping promotes a successful transition from public to private space.

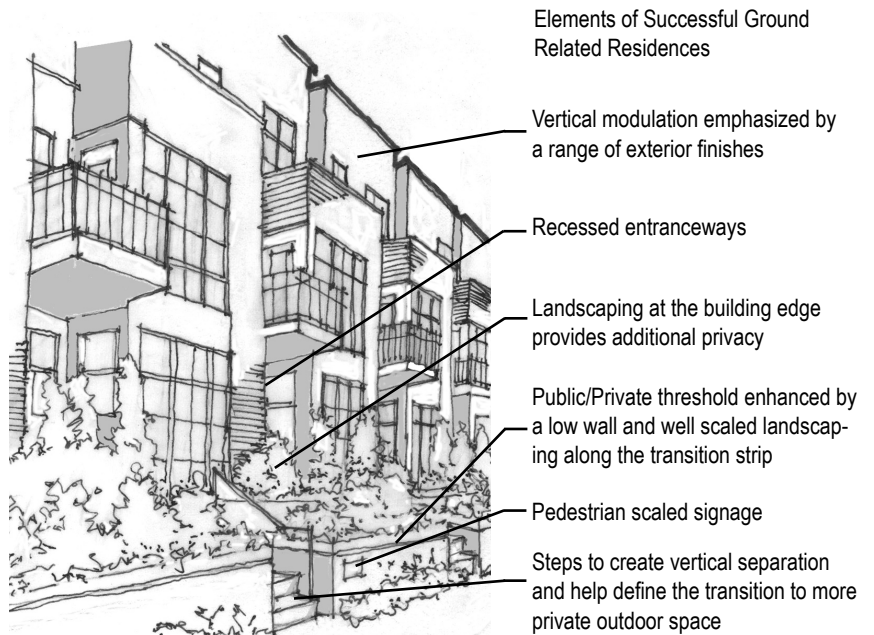


Repetitive vertical elements help define individual ground related residences.

- d. building surface/interface: privacy screens, upward-operating shades on windows, signage, lighting.

B. RESIDENTIAL EDGES

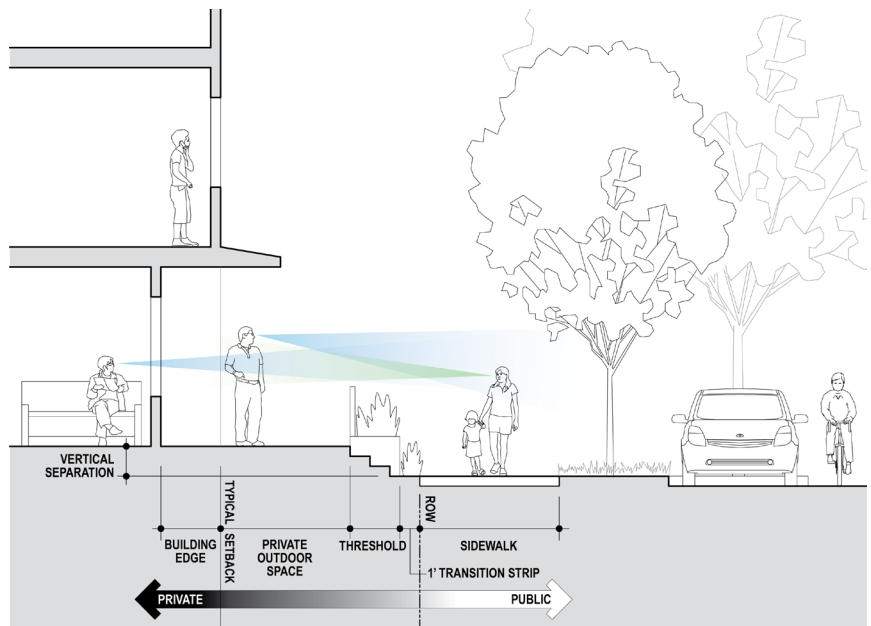
1. **Security and Privacy:** Provide security and privacy for residential buildings through the use of a buffer or semi-private space between the development and the street or neighboring buildings. Consider design approaches such as elevating the main floor, providing a setback from the sidewalk, and/or landscaping to indicate the transition from one type of space to another.
2. **Ground-level Residential:** Privacy and security issues are particularly important in buildings with ground-level housing, both at entries and where windows are located overlooking the street and sidewalk. Consider providing a greater number of transition elements and spaces, and choose materials carefully to clearly identify the transition from public sidewalk to private residence. In addition to the ideas in PL3.B1, design strategies include:
 - a. vertical modulation and a range of exterior finishes on the facade to articulate the location of residential entries;
 - b. pedestrian-scaled building addressing and signage, and entry elements such as mail slots/boxes, doorbells, entry lights, planter boxes or pots; and
 - c. a combination of window treatments at street level, to provide solutions to varying needs for light, ventilation, noise control, and privacy.





Active and transparent facades are particularly important in the design of live/work residences.

- Buildings with Live/Work Uses:** Maintain active and transparent facades in the design of live/work residences that are required to orient the non-residential portions of the unit toward the street. Design the first floor so it can be adapted to other commercial use as needed in the future.
- Interaction:** Provide opportunities for interaction among residents and neighbors. Consider locating commonly used features or services such as mailboxes, outdoor seating, seasonal displays, children's play equipment, and space for informal events in the area between buildings as a means of encouraging interaction.



Successful ground related housing employs vertical and horizontal separation to achieve an appropriate transition from public to private property.

C. RETAIL EDGES

- Porous Edge:** Engage passersby with opportunities to interact visually with the building interior using glazing and transparency. Create multiple entries where possible and make a physical and visual connection between people on the sidewalk and retail activities in the building.
- Visibility:** Maximize visibility into the building interior and merchandise displays. Consider fully operational glazed wall-sized doors that can be completely opened to the street, increased height in lobbies, and/or special lighting for displays.
- Ancillary Activities:** Allow space for activities such as sidewalk vending, seating, and restaurant dining to occur. Consider setting structures back from the street or incorporating space in the project design into which retail uses can extend.



This farmer's market spills over into the street creating a crowded, but lively and entertaining urban open space where residents, vendors, artists, and musicians all gather and mix. Shop owners often bring their wares into the street as well, further adding to the diversity of people and goods.



PL4

Active Transportation

Incorporate design features that facilitate active forms of transportation such as walking, bicycling, and use of transit.

Design Approaches and Solutions to Consider:

A. ENTRY LOCATIONS AND RELATIONSHIPS

1. **Serving all Modes of Travel:** Provide safe and convenient access points for all modes of travel.
2. **Connections to All Modes:** Site the primary entry in a location that logically relates to building uses and clearly connects all major points of access.

B. PLANNING AHEAD FOR BICYCLISTS

1. **Early Planning:** Consider existing and future bicycle traffic to and through the site early in the process so that access and connections are integrated into the project along with other modes of travel.
2. **Bike Facilities:** Facilities such as bike racks and storage, bike share stations, shower facilities and lockers for bicyclists should be located to maximize convenience, security, and safety.
3. **Bike Connections:** Facilitate connections to bicycle trails and infrastructure around and beyond the project. Design bicycling access points so that they relate to the street grid and include information about connections to existing trails and infrastructure where possible. Also consider signage, kiosks, building lobbies, and bicycle parking areas, where provided, as opportunities to share bicycling information.



See also PL3.A1 Entries for related guidance.



See also PL2.B1 Safety and Security, PL2.C1 Weather Protection for related guidance.



A simple bike rack, well-located, makes it possible for this bicyclist to lock his/her bike just outside a shop and quickly and efficiently accomplish a neighborhood errand.



See also PL2.C1 Locations and Coverage for related guidance.



Transit amenities needn't be grand or expensive to be effective. This Metro shelter provides just enough to meet the needs of transit patrons who are waiting for their ride—weather protection, a place to sit, some vegetation, and a newspaper vending machine.



At this busy transit stop, special paving subtly demarcates separate areas for transit patrons and pedestrians as a way of managing high volumes of people on the sidewalk.

C. PLANNING AHEAD FOR TRANSIT

1. **Influence on Project Design:** Identify how a transit stop (planned or built) adjacent to or near the site may influence project design, provide opportunities for placemaking, and/or suggest logical locations for building entries, retail uses, open space, or landscaping. Take advantage of the presence of transit patrons to support retail uses in the building.
2. **On-site Transit Stops:** If a transit stop is located onsite, design project-related pedestrian improvements and amenities so that they complement (or at least do not conflict with) any amenities provided for transit riders. Consider the proximity of transit queuing and waiting areas to other pedestrian gathering spaces, aiming for enough room to accommodate all users. Similarly, keep lines of sight to approaching buses or trains open and make it clear through location and design whether project-related pedestrian lighting, weather protection, and/or seating is intended to be shared by transit users.
3. **Transit Connections:** Where no transit stops are on or adjacent to the site, identify where the nearest transit stops and pedestrian routes are and include design features and connections within the project design as appropriate.

Design Concept

What's inside:

DC1. Project Uses and Activities

- A. Arrangement of Interior Uses
- B. Vehicular Access and Circulation
- C. Parking and Service Uses

DC2. Architectural Concept

- A. Massing
- B. Architectural and Façade Composition
- C. Secondary Architectural Features
- D. Scale and Texture
- E. Form and Function

DC3. Open Space Concept

- A. Building-Open Space Relationship
- B. Open Spaces Uses and Activities
- C. Design

DC4. Materials

- A. Exterior Elements and Finishes
- B. Signage
- C. Lighting
- D. Trees, Landscape and Hardscape Materials



DC1

Project Uses and Activities

Optimize the arrangement of uses and activities on site.

Design Approaches and Solutions to Consider:

A. ARRANGEMENT OF INTERIOR USES

1. **Visibility:** Locate uses and services frequently used by the public in visible or prominent areas, such as at entries or along the street front.
2. **Gathering Places:** Maximize the use of any interior or exterior gathering spaces by considering the following:
 - a. a location at the crossroads of high levels of pedestrian traffic;
 - b. proximity to nearby or project-related shops and services; and
 - c. amenities that complement the building design and offer safety and security when used outside normal business hours.
3. **Flexibility:** Build in flexibility so the building can adapt over time to evolving needs, such as the ability to change residential space to commercial space as needed.
4. **Views and Connections:** Locate interior uses and activities to take advantage of views and physical connections to exterior spaces and uses, particularly activities along sidewalks, parks or other public spaces.

B. VEHICULAR ACCESS AND CIRCULATION

1. **Access Location and Design:** Choose locations for vehicular access, service uses, and delivery areas that minimize conflict between vehicles and non-motorists wherever possible. Emphasize use of the sidewalk for pedestrians, and create safe and attractive conditions for pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers by:
 - a. using existing alleys for access or, where alley access is not feasible, choosing a location for street access that is the least visually dominant and/or which offers opportunity for shared driveway use;
 - b. where driveways and curb cuts are unavoidable, minimize the number and width as much as possible; and/or



See also PL1.C2 Outdoor Uses and Activities, DC3.A Building-Open Space Relationships for related guidance.



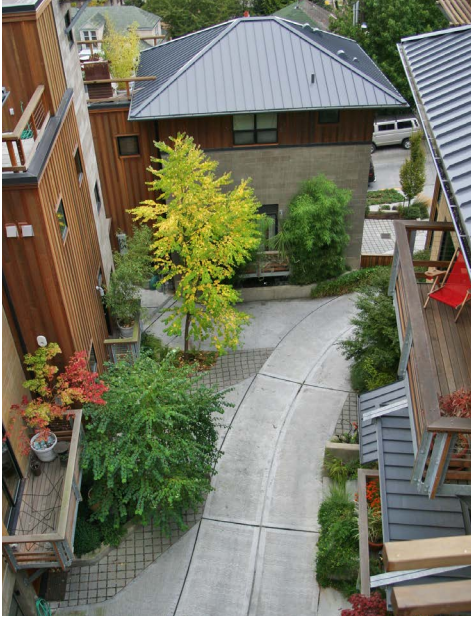
Retail and entertainment uses placed at the heart of this development enliven the entire project and provide a central space for people—residents and visitors—to gather.



See also DC2.E1 Legibility and Flexibility for related guidance.



For information about Seattle access and parking requirements, consult SMC Chapter 23.54 Quantity and Design Standards for Access and Off-Street Parking at <http://clerk.ci.seattle.wa.us/~public/toc/23-54.htm>.



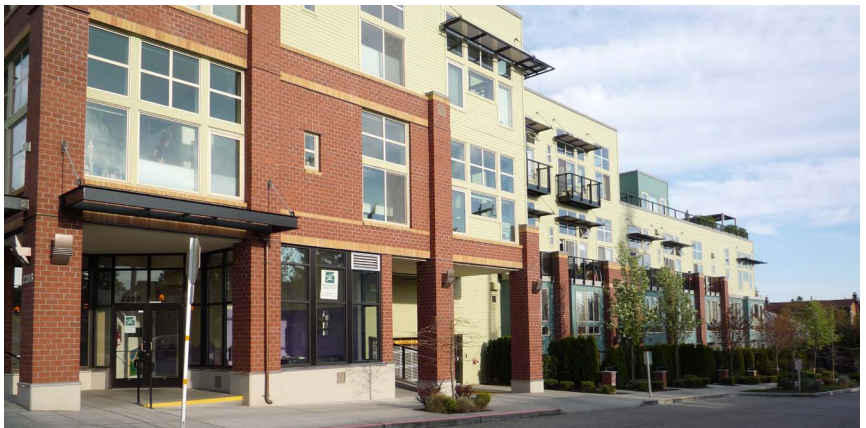
This internal “street” not only provides access to all housing units, but also serves as interior open space and as a multipurpose area when residents want to gather together.

c. employing a multi-sensory approach to areas of potential vehicle-pedestrian conflict such as garage exits/entrances. Design features may include contrasting or textured pavement, warning lights and sounds, and similar safety devices.

2. **Facilities for Alternative Transportation:** Locate any facilities for alternative transportation such as shared vehicles, carpooling and charging stations for electric vehicles in prominent locations that are convenient and readily accessible to expected users.

C. PARKING AND SERVICE USES

1. **Below-Grade Parking:** Locate parking below grade wherever possible. Where a surface parking lot is the only alternative, locate the parking in rear or side yards, or on lower or less visible portions of the site.
2. **Visual Impacts:** Reduce the visual impacts of parking lots, parking structures, entrances, and related signs and equipment as much as possible. Consider breaking large parking lots into smaller lots, and/or provide trees, landscaping or fencing as a screen. Design at-grade parking structures so that they are architecturally compatible with the rest of the building and streetscape.
3. **Multiple Uses:** Design parking areas to serve multiple uses such as children’s play space, outdoor gathering areas, sports courts, woonerf, or common space in multifamily projects.
4. **Service Uses:** Locate and design service entries, loading docks, and trash receptacles away from pedestrian areas or to a less visible portion of the site to reduce possible impacts of these facilities on building aesthetics and pedestrian circulation. Where service facilities abut pedestrian areas or the perimeter of the property, maintain an attractive edge through screening, plantings, or other design treatments.



The parking garage entrance to this building has been carefully designed so as not to dominate the pedestrian entrance at the corner of the building, but still provide clear cues to motorists on where to enter. The pillars and planting areas signal to both pedestrians and motorists that the driveway is where the modes cross and therefore requires extra awareness and caution.



DC2

Architectural Concept

Develop an architectural concept that will result in a unified and functional design that fits well on the site and within its surroundings.

Design Approaches and Solutions to Consider:

A. MASSING

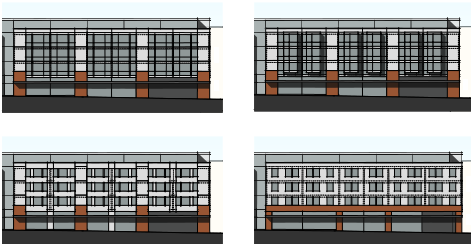
- 1. Site Characteristics and Uses:** Arrange the mass of the building taking into consideration the characteristics of the site and the proposed uses of the building and its open space. In addition, special situations such as very large sites, unusually shaped sites, or sites with varied topography may require particular attention to where and how building massing is arranged as they can accentuate mass and height.
- 2. Reducing Perceived Mass:** Use secondary architectural elements to reduce the perceived mass of larger projects. Consider creating recesses or indentations in the building envelope; adding balconies, bay windows, porches, canopies or other elements; and/or highlighting building entries.

B. ARCHITECTURAL AND FAÇADE COMPOSITION

- 1. Façade Composition:** Design all building facades—including alleys and visible roofs—considering the composition and architectural expression of the building as a whole. Ensure that all facades are attractive and well-proportioned through the placement and detailing of all elements, including bays, fenestration, and materials, and any patterns created by their arrangement. On sites that abut an alley, design the alley façade and its connection to the street carefully. At a minimum, consider wrapping the treatment of the street-facing façade around the alley corner of the building.
- 2. Blank Walls:** Avoid large blank walls along visible façades wherever possible. Where expanses of blank walls, retaining walls, or garage facades are unavoidable, include uses or design treatments at the street level that have human scale and are designed for pedestrians. These may include:
 - a. newsstands, ticket booths and flower shops (even if small or narrow);
 - b. green walls, landscaped areas or raised planters;
 - c. wall setbacks or other indentations;
 - d. display windows; trellises or other secondary elements;
 - e. art as appropriate to area zoning and uses; and/or



See also CS2.D4 Massing Choices for related guidance.



The four different facade designs above demonstrate how the placement of secondary architectural features can have a tremendous impact of the character and scale of a building.



Well-balanced horizontal and vertical elements create a pleasing façade that adds interest to the massing of this full-block, mixed-use project.



Steep roof pitches, nicely detailed eaves, and the use of a variety of materials all give this corner property a strong presence in a neighborhood of traditional houses.



See also CS3.A1 *Fitting Old and New Together* for related guidance.



Sunshades and window mullions give texture and human scale detailing to this glass curtain-wall building.



See also DC1.A3 *Flexibility* for related guidance.

- f. terraces and landscaping where retaining walls above eye level are unavoidable.

C. SECONDARY ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES

1. **Visual Depth and Interest:** Add depth to facades where appropriate by incorporating balconies, canopies, awnings, decks, or other secondary elements into the façade design. Add detailing at the street level in order to create interest for the pedestrian and encourage active street life and window shopping (in retail areas). Detailing may include features such as distinctive door and window hardware, projecting window sills, ornamental tile or metal, and other high-quality surface materials and finishes.
2. **Dual Purpose Elements:** Consider architectural features that can be dual purpose—adding depth, texture, and scale as well as serving other project functions. Examples include shading devices and windows that add rhythm and depth as well as contribute toward energy efficiency and/or savings or canopies that provide street-level scale and detail while also offering weather protection. Where these elements are prominent design features, the quality of the materials is critical.
3. **Fit With Neighboring Buildings:** Use design elements to achieve a successful fit between a building and its neighbors, such as:
 - a. considering aspects of neighboring buildings through architectural style, roof line, datum line detailing, fenestration, color or materials,
 - b. using trees and landscaping to enhance the building design and fit with the surrounding context, and/or
 - c. creating a well-proportioned base, middle and top to the building in locations where this might be appropriate. Consider how surrounding buildings have addressed base, middle, and top, and whether those solutions—or similar ones—might be a good fit for the project and its context.

D. SCALE AND TEXTURE

1. **Human Scale:** Incorporate architectural features, elements, and details that are of human scale into the building facades, entries, retaining walls, courtyards, and exterior spaces in a manner that is consistent with the overall architectural concept. Pay special attention to the first three floors of the building in order to maximize opportunities to engage the pedestrian and enable an active and vibrant street front.
2. **Texture:** Design the character of the building, as expressed in the form, scale, and materials, to strive for a fine-grained scale, or “texture,” particularly at the street level and other areas where pedestrians predominate.

E. FORM AND FUNCTION

1. **Legibility and Flexibility:** Strive for a balance between building legibility and flexibility. Design buildings such that their primary functions and uses can be readily determined from the exterior, making the building easy to access and understand. At the same time, design flexibility into the building so that it may remain useful over time even as specific programmatic needs evolve.



DC3

Open Space Concept

Integrate open space design with the design of the building so that each complements the other.

Design Approaches and Solutions to Consider:

A. BUILDING-OPEN SPACE RELATIONSHIP

1. **Interior/Exterior Fit:** Develop an open space concept in conjunction with the architectural concept to ensure that interior and exterior spaces relate well to each other and support the functions of the development.

B. OPEN SPACE USES AND ACTIVITIES

1. **Meeting User Needs:** Plan the size, uses, activities, and features of each open space to meet the needs of expected users, ensuring each space has a purpose and function.
2. **Matching Uses to Conditions:** Respond to changing environmental conditions such as seasonal and daily light and weather shifts through open space design and/or programming of open space activities. For example, place outdoor seating and gathering areas where there is sunny exposure and shelter from wind. Build flexibility into the design in order to accommodate changes as needed; e.g. a south-facing courtyard that is ideal in spring may become too hot in summer, necessitating a shift of outdoor furniture to a shadier location for the season.
3. **Connections to Other Open Space:** Site and design project-related open spaces should connect with, or enhance, the uses and activities of other nearby public open space where appropriate. Look for opportunities to support uses and activities on adjacent properties and/or the sidewalk.
4. **Multifamily Open Space:** Design common and private open spaces in multifamily projects for use by all residents to encourage physical activity and social interaction. Some examples include areas for gardening, children's play (covered and uncovered), barbecues, resident meetings, and crafts or hobbies.



See also DC1.A4 Views and Connections for related guidance.



See also PL1.C1 Selecting Activity Areas for related guidance.



See also PL1.A2 Adding to Public Life, PL1.C2 Informal Community Uses, and DC1.A2 Gathering Places for related guidance.



A gentle curve creates interesting sightlines and makes the space seem larger than it is along this shared walkway.



See also CS2.A1 Character and Open Space and CS2.B3 Surrounding Open Space for related guidance.



Going vertical with plantings is especially useful where space is at a premium—a wall of green still makes an impact.



See also CS1.D1 On-site Features and CS1.D2 Restoring Habitats for related guidance.



Although small, this elegantly detailed and appointed interior courtyard is a perfect complement to the architecture of the surrounding building.

C. DESIGN

1. **Reinforce Existing Open Space:** Where a strong open space concept exists in the neighborhood, reinforce existing character and patterns of street tree planting, buffers or treatment of topographic changes. Where no strong patterns exist, initiate a strong open space concept, where appropriate, that other projects can build upon in the future.
2. **Amenities and Features:** Create attractive outdoor spaces well-suited to the uses envisioned for the project. Use a combination of hardscape and plantings to shape these spaces and to screen less attractive areas as needed. Use a variety of features, such as planters, green roofs and decks, groves of trees, and vertical green trellises along with more traditional foundation plantings, street trees, and seasonal displays.
3. **Support Natural Areas:** Create an open space design that retains and enhances on-site natural areas and connects to natural areas that may exist off-site and may provide habitat for wildlife. If the site contains no natural areas, consider an open space design that offers opportunities to create larger contiguous open spaces and corridors in the future with development of other public or private projects.



A reflecting pool leads the eye straight to the entry while other open space elements—trellises, raised beds, and artwork—create several smaller open spaces each with its own character in this relatively small open space off the street.



DC4

Exterior Elements and Finishes

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

Design Approaches and Solutions to Consider:

A. BUILDING MATERIALS

1. **Exterior Finish Materials:** Building exteriors should be constructed of durable and maintainable materials that are attractive even when viewed up close. Materials that have texture, pattern, or lend themselves to a high quality of detailing are encouraged.
2. **Climate Appropriateness:** Select durable and attractive materials that will age well in Seattle's climate, taking special care to detail corners, edges, and transitions. Highly visible features, such as balconies, grilles and railings should be especially attractive, well crafted and easy to maintain. Pay particular attention to environments that create harsh conditions that may require special materials and details, such as marine areas or open or exposed sites.

B. SIGNAGE

1. **Scale and Character:** Add interest to the streetscape with exterior signs and attachments that are appropriate in scale and character to the project and its environs. Signage should be compatible in character, scale, and locations while still allowing businesses to present a unique identity.
2. **Coordination With Project Design:** Develop a signage plan within the context of architectural and open space concepts, and coordinate the details with façade design, lighting, and other project features to complement the project as a whole, in addition to the surrounding context.



Small shops each with their own sign make for a colorful and vibrant-street presence that exemplifies Ballard's healthy urban life. Other areas may be better suited to a more restrained and coordinated palette of signs. Either way, signs play a large role in a project's character.



See also *PL2.D1 Design as Wayfinding* for related guidance.



Building materials are not limited to brick and mortar—this building covered almost entirely with a variety of plants is literally a green façade.



Concrete, aluminum, steel, and vibrant colors combine here for a dramatic street presence.

C. LIGHTING

1. **Functions:** Use lighting both to increase site safety in all locations used by pedestrians and to highlight architectural or landscape details and features such as entries, signs, canopies, plantings, and art.
2. **Avoiding Glare:** Design project lighting based upon the uses on and off site, taking care to provide illumination to serve building needs while avoiding off-site night glare and light pollution.

D. TREES, LANDSCAPE AND HARDSCAPE MATERIALS

1. **Choice of Plant Materials:** Reinforce the overall architectural and open space design concepts through the selection of landscape materials. Choose plants that will emphasize or accent the design, create enduring green spaces, and be appropriate to particular locations taking into account solar access, soil conditions, and adjacent patterns of use. Select landscaping that will thrive under urban conditions.
2. **Hardscape Materials:** Use exterior courtyards, plazas, and other hard surfaced areas as an opportunity to add color, texture, and/or pattern and enliven public areas through the use of distinctive and durable paving materials. Use permeable materials wherever possible.
3. **Long Range Planning:** Select plants that upon maturity will be of appropriate size, scale, and shape to contribute to the site as intended. It may be necessary to create a landscaping plan for various stages of plant maturity, such as 5, 10, and 20 year plans in order to ensure the landscaping will perform and function as needed over the life of the project.
4. **Place Making:** Create a landscape design that helps define spaces with significant elements such as trees.

E. PROJECT ASSEMBLY AND LIFESPAN

1. **Deconstruction:** When possible, design the project so that it may be deconstructed at the end of its useful lifetime, with connections and assembly techniques that will allow reuse of materials.



Glass, wood, steel, glass—and rooftop plants all combine successfully in this project.