

# U DISTRICT NEIGHBORHOOD DESIGN GUIDELINES UPDATE

## Design Guidelines & Principles of Urban Design

### What are neighborhood design guidelines?

Design Guidelines define the qualities of architecture, site design, and open space that make successful projects, and are a tool for guiding individual projects towards successful design outcomes. The goal of the design guidelines is to foster design excellence in private development of new multifamily and commercial projects throughout the city.

The Seattle Citywide Design Guidelines apply to all projects required to undergo design review in all areas of the city. Applicants with projects located in the University District are required to consult both neighborhood and citywide guidelines in the development and review of the project design.

### How are the U District Design Guidelines used?

The updated University District Design Guidelines will identify specific qualities of building and site design that reinforce unique design characteristics of the University District. Design Review Boards will use the guidelines to provide design guidance on the design of proposed development.

The example below shows how a neighborhood specific design guideline can shape project design.

### Urban Design Considerations

The Design Guidelines encourage careful and thoughtful design that promotes quality urban design outcomes by discussing desirable architectural treatments and design outcomes. The following are key urban design principles to consider.

#### Respond to Physical Context & Site Features

The site design and placement of building(s) should respond to context and contribute positively to the natural and built environment.



Strengthen desirable form, public spaces, and development patterns. Consider solar alignment for open spaces, and respond to established streetwalls.



The pedestrian-scaled street wall of 1-3 stories is reinforced by setting the upper massing back articulating the base at a human-scale.



A contemporary massing emphasizes positive design elements in the context by using a complimentary color of brick and similar proportions.



Integrate sustainable systems in the site design, such as this green roof and storm-water retention feature.

#### 1 CITYWIDE DESIGN GUIDELINES

An applicant with a project site at 50th and University Way reads the **Citywide Design Guidelines**, and sees a guideline about corner sites:



**CS2.C - Corner Sites**  
Corner sites can serve as gateways or focal points. Consider using a corner to provide space for pedestrians, or build out to the corner to provide a strong urban edge.

#### 2 NEIGHBORHOOD DESIGN GUIDELINES

The applicant then sees that the **University District Neighborhood Design Guidelines**, designate the site as a "gateway":



**CS2.C - Corner Lots**  
For buildings located on corner lots identified as gateways, consider providing special building elements distinguishable from the rest of the building.

#### 3 EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE MEETING

The applicant designs the massing of the building to respond to the guidelines by indicating a special design treatment at the corner. The Design Review Board supports the design approach at the Early Design Guidance Meeting.

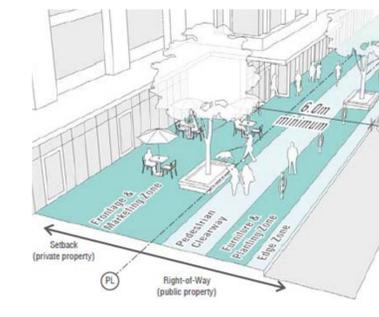


#### Reinforce the Public Realm and Public Life

Good design addresses the issue of how buildings interface with the adjacent sidewalk, street, and public realm with pedestrian connections, transparency, open spaces, and amenities.



Transition space between the sidewalk and building should respond to the differing needs for access and privacy for residential and commercial frontages.



Strategic setbacks can support active street frontages and vibrant pedestrian environments.



Prioritize pedestrian, bike, and transit access, amenities, and facilities. Integrate easy access to bike storage.



Private patios with vertical separation from the sidewalk and lush landscaping provide usable spaces for tenants while contributing to a pedestrian-oriented environment with visual interest.

#### 4 DESIGN PROGRESSION

The applicant uses the Board's guidance and continues developing a more detailed design. The design is submitted to City staff, who recommend the corner element be revised to better meet the Board's guidance and the Design Guidelines.



#### 5 RECOMMENDATION MEETING

The applicant revises the design and presents it to the Design Review Board. The Board recommends that the depth of the protruding frame at the corner is increased to emphasize a "strong, dramatic presence at a prominent corner."



#### 6 DESIGN APPROVAL

The applicant revises the design per the Board's condition by enhancing the corner element. City staff approves the design after the changes have been made.



#### High Quality Building Concept, Design, Materials, and Construction

Facades should therefore be designed to have a pleasing scale and appearance, proportion and rhythm, solid-to-void relationship, and materiality.



The scale and texture of the materials and rhythm created by entries and storefronts creates a human scale.



The mass at the corner is differentiated by lifting the base and applying a related but unique expression at the corner.



The massing is broken into a distinct base and top, expressed through differentiating materials and scale of articulation. The base features vertical elements, while the top features horizontal elements.



The tower is articulated with significant shifts in the massing. Balconies provide visual interest and indicate a residential use.

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What should design in the University District look like?

Take a look at these images and let us know why you like or dislike the design of the buildings. What design characteristics would you like to see or not like to see in the University District?

Refer to the [Urban Design Considerations](#) on the previous board for some ideas on what to look for.

