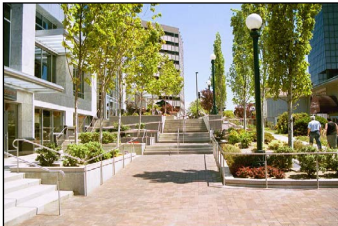


South Lake Union

Neighborhood Design Guidelines



Revised 2013
Adopted 2005

City of Seattle
Department of Planning and Development

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Acknowledgments

The following groups were instrumental in preparing the original South Lake Union Design Guidelines in 2005.

South Lake Union Friends and Neighbors (SLUFAN)
- Planning Committee

Seattle Department of Planning and Development
Seattle Department of Neighborhoods

Introduction

What are Neighborhood Design Guidelines?

Design guidelines are the primary tool used by Design Review Boards. The [South Lake Union Design Guidelines](#) apply to development that is subject to design review as set forth at SMC 23.41.004 if it is located in the South Lake Union urban center (the area bounded by Aurora Avenue, Eastlake Avenue, Denny Way, and the southern shoreline of Lake Union as reflected in Map 1 (page v). Guidelines define the qualities of architecture, urban design, and public space that make for successful projects and communities. There are two types of guidelines used in the Design Review Program:

- [Seattle Design Guidelines](#)—applying to all areas of the city except for downtown; and
- Neighborhood design guidelines—applying to a specific geographically-defined area, usually within a neighborhood urban village or center.

Once a set of neighborhood guidelines is adopted by City Council, they are used in tandem with citywide guidelines for the review of all projects within that neighborhood that fall within the scope of the Seattle Municipal Code (SMC) section 23.41.004. Not all neighborhoods within the city have neighborhood-specific guidelines, but for those that do, both sets of guidelines—citywide and neighborhood—are consulted by the Boards, with the neighborhood guidelines superseding the citywide ones in the event of a conflict between the two. Neighborhood guidelines are very helpful to all involved in the design review process for the guidance they offer that is specific to the features and character of a specific neighborhood.

As of November 2013, there were nineteen sets of neighborhood design guidelines, each following the same organization and numbering system of the City’s original citywide guidelines entitled [Design Review: Guidelines for Multi-family and Commercial Development](#) that were adopted in 1993.

The [South Lake Union Design Guidelines](#) reveal the character of South Lake Union as known to its residents and business owners. The guidelines help to reinforce existing character and protect the qualities that the neighborhood values most in the face of change. Thus, a neighborhood’s guidelines, in conjunction with the [Seattle Design Guidelines](#), can increase overall awareness of design priorities and encourage involvement in the design review process.

Revised Neighborhood Design Guidelines

The [South Lake Union Design Guidelines](#) were developed by community members and design consultants, and adopted in 2005. In 2013, the City adopted new, updated guidelines entitled [Seattle Design Guidelines](#) to replace the citywide guidelines that had been in effect since the inception of the Design Review Program in 1993.

Because the [Seattle Design Guidelines](#) uses a different organizational and numbering system than the original guidelines, DPD has revised each set of neighborhood guidelines to match the [Seattle Design Guidelines](#) in format, organization, and numbering system. The revised neighborhood design guidelines will help Board members, applicants, staff, and the public better correlate neighborhood guidelines with the updated [Seattle Design Guidelines](#).

What are the South Lake Union Design Guidelines?

Adding Specificity to Established Guidelines

In 1998, the City of Seattle's Design Review program began creating neighborhood specific guidelines in response to the large number (27 of the 34) of neighborhood plans that include urban design objectives. South Lake Union's neighborhood plan requests that neighborhood specific guidelines be created to augment and fine-tune the citywide design guidelines. The citywide design guidelines are limited in breadth to private development projects and have a legal basis in the Land Use Code.

South Lake Union Design Committee Creates Draft

In Spring 2002, the South Lake Union Planning Committee's design and character subcommittee was established to develop neighborhood specific guidelines for the South Lake Union neighborhood. The group includes community leaders, major property owners, city staff and design consultants.

Building on Previous Community Work

As a first step in identifying neighborhood priorities, previous documents were reviewed and correlated with the Design Review program's guideline categories. The guidelines reference or incorporate this material to build upon previously generated ideas, goals and main concerns. Documents referenced include:

- Guidelines for Multifamily & Commercial Buildings, City of Seattle – Oct. '93; Rev. Nov. '98
- Cascade Waterflow Handbook – July '96
- Cascade Now! – Summer '98
- Sustainable Strategies CNC – Aug. '98
- South Lake Union Neighborhood Plan – Dec. '98
- Artwork Plan for SLU – Nov. '99
- Urban Design Concepts and Analysis – Nov. '99
- South Lake Union Park and Master Plan – June '00
- SLU Sustainability and Livability Charettes – Spring '00
- SLU Streetscape and Connections – Nov. '01
- Terry Avenue North Street Design Guidelines - June '04

Guidelines at a Glance

The South Lake Union design guidelines apply to development that is subject to design review as set forth at SMC 23.41.004 if it is located in the South Lake Union urban center (the area within the area bounded by Aurora Avenue, Eastlake Avenue, Denny Way, and the southern shoreline of Lake Union), These guidelines augment the [Seattle Design Guidelines](#) adopted in 2013. The list below correlates the guidelines by subject matter and shows which [Seattle Design Guidelines](#) are augmented by [South Lake Union Design Guidelines](#). A “yes” indicates supplemental guidance is provided; a “no” indicates that the citywide guideline is sufficient. Note that the numbering system of the [Seattle Design Guidelines](#) is different from the original numbering applied to the [South Lake Union Design Guidelines](#) in 2005.

Context and Site

- CS1. Natural Systems and Site Features**yes
 Responding To Site Characteristics (former A-1, bullet 3)
- CS2. Urban Pattern and Form**yes
 Responding To Site Characteristics (former A-1, bullet 1-2, Gateway Locations and Heart Locations)
 Height, Bulk, and Scale Compatibility (former B-1, bullet 1-3)
- CS3. Architectural Context and Character**yes
 Height, Bulk, and Scale Compatibility (former B-1, bullet 4-5)
 Architectural Context (former C-1)

Public Life

- PL1. Connectivity**yes
 Human Activity (former A-4, bullet 2, 4, 7)
 Pedestrian Open Spaces and Entrances (former D-1)
- PL2. Walkability**yes
 Streetscape Compatibility (former A-2, bullet 1-2 & 4)
 Personal Safety and Security (former D-7)
 Landscaping to Reinforce Design Continuity with Adjacent Sites (former E-1, bullet 1)
- PL3. Street-Level Interaction**yes
 Streetscape Compatibility (former A-2, bullet 3)
 Human Activity (former A-4, bullets 1, 3, 5, 6)
 Transition Between Residence and Street (former A-6)
- PL4. Active Transportation**no

Design Concept

- DC1. Project Uses and Activities**yes
 Design of Parking Lots near Sidewalks (former D-4)
- DC2. Architectural Concept**yes
 Architectural Concept and Consistency (former C-2)
- DC3. Open Space Concept**yes
 Landscaping to Reinforce Design Continuity with Adjacent Sites (former E-1, bullet 2-6)
 Landscaping to Enhance the Building and/or Site (former E-2)
 Landscape Design to Address Special Site Conditions (former E-3)
- DC4. Exterior Elements and Finishes**no

Context and Priority Issues: South Lake Union

The South Lake Union neighborhood consists of a mixture of building types and uses. The diversity ranges from residential, industrial, maritime, artisan, bio-tech, social service and much more. The neighborhood has served as a commercial and light industrial support area to the city of Seattle since the late 1880's. Over the last decade, South Lake Union has become an opportunity for consideration of development issues ranging from open space, technical business and residential and social service opportunities.

As plans come and go, the neighborhood continues to explore ways to maintain the unique character of this area while encouraging strengthening of the community both physically and economically. Variation in development and types of uses are encouraged throughout the neighborhood. With opportunities to improve both the streetscape level of development and the aerial view of this valley, these design guidelines have been developed to address the specific needs of each of the subarea communities that collectively create South Lake Union. The four sub areas identified by the neighborhood plan are:

- **Westlake:** Its commercial core consisting of mid-sized (3-4 story), full block commercial and light industrial buildings characterize the Westlake area. (Bounded on the south by Denny Way, west by 9th Avenue North, east by Fairview Avenue North, and north by Mercer Street.)
- **Waterfront:** With its newly acquired South Lake Union Park, this area maintains the neighborhood's water dependent activities and strives to build upon the industrial maritime nature of the area. (Bounded on the south by Mercer Street, west by 9th Avenue North and Westlake, east by Fairview Avenue North, and thenorth by South Lake Union.)
- **Cascade:** Supporting a mixture of commercial, residential and social services, this area has a reputation for its sustainable infrastructure and local improvement projects that maintain a creative, collaborative and eclectic nature. (Bounded on the south by Denny Way, west by Fairview Avenue North, east by Interstate 5, and the north by the Mercer Street Exchange.)
- **Aurora Corridor:** The Aurora Corridor is the most undefined area of the neighborhood with an eclectic variety of building types and forms that house all types of business uses. It currently serves as a buffer to the SR 99 Corridor. (Bounded on the south by Denny Way, the west by Aurora Avenue North, east by 9th Avenue North, and the north by Mercer Street.)

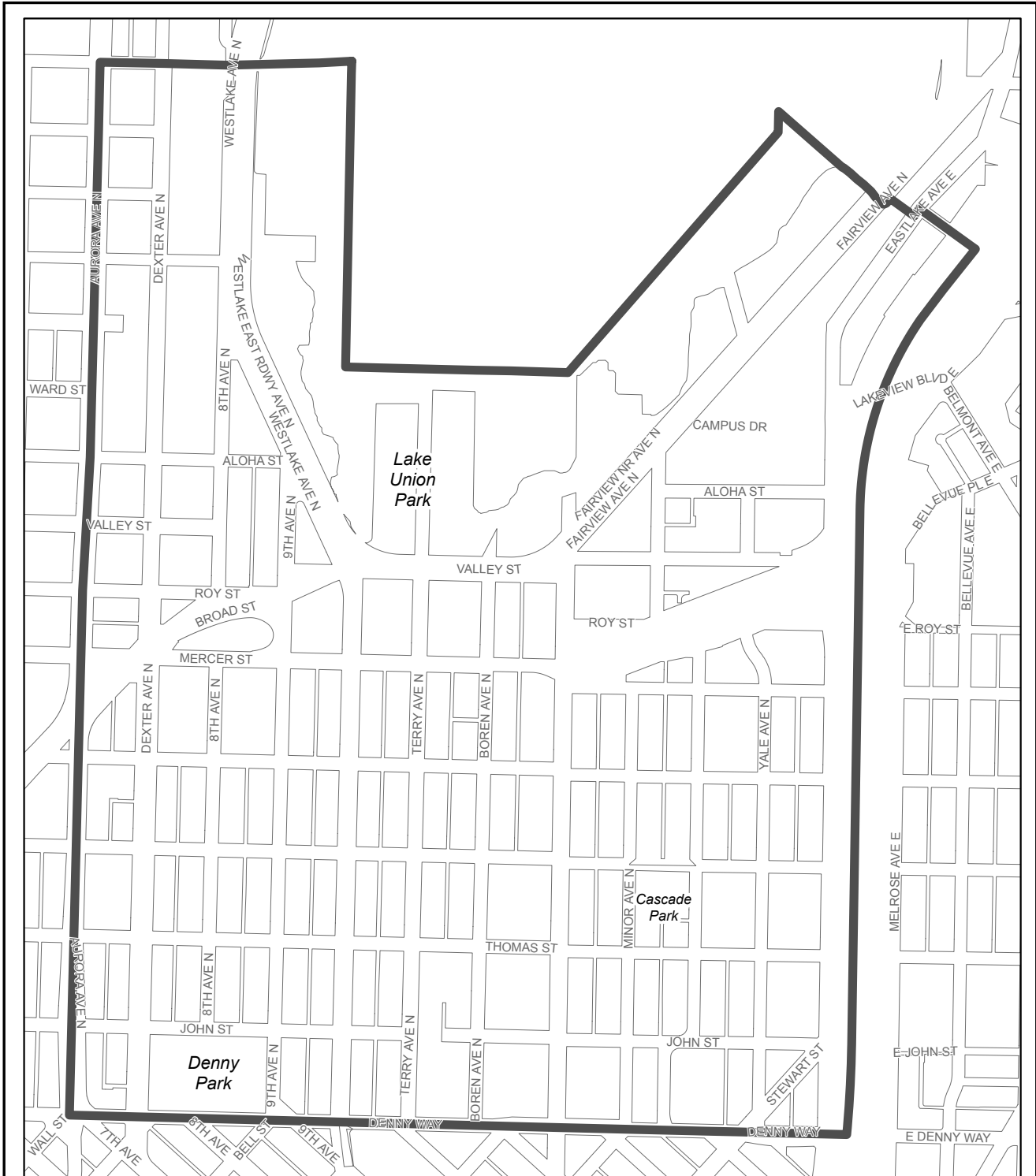
Sub Areas

These four areas have common and unique attributes. Together they could create connections from Downtown to South Lake Union, Capitol Hill, Seattle Center and the Denny Triangle neighborhood. The potential for weaving South Lake Union into the City with effective pedestrian and transportation corridors will enhance the neighborhood, fostering a diversity of live, work and play opportunities. Situated in a valley, this neighborhood has many opportunities for views of the lake, surrounding neighborhoods and the heart of Seattle, the downtown retail core. South Lake Union subareas as identified by the neighborhood plan and confirmed in recent workshops.

- Waterfront
- Westlake
- Aurora Corridor
- Cascade



South Lake Union subareas as identified by the neighborhood plan and confirmed in recent workshops.



South Lake Union Urban Center

 Urban Center
Boundary



0 230 460 920 Feet

Note: Design Review does not apply to all zones. See the Seattle Municipal Code, section 23.41.004 for more details.

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South Lake Union
Design Guidelines
2013

CS1

Natural Systems and Site Features

Citywide Guideline:

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

South Lake Union Supplemental Guidance

I. Responding to Site Characteristics

New development is encouraged to take advantage of site configuration to accomplish sustainability goals. The Board is generally willing to recommend departures from development standards if they are needed to achieve sustainable design. Refer to the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design* (LEED) manual which provides additional information. Examples include:

- i. Solar orientation
- ii. Storm water run-off, detention and filtration systems
- iii. Sustainable landscaping
- iv. Versatile building design for entire building life cycle

CS2

Urban Pattern and Form

Citywide Guideline:

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

South Lake Union Supplemental Guidance

I. Responding to Site Characteristics

- i. Encourage provision of “outlooks and overlooks” for the public to view the lake and cityscapes. Examples include provision of public plazas and/or other public open spaces and changing the form or facade setbacks of the building to enhance opportunities for views.
- ii. Minimize shadow impacts to Cascade Park.

iii. Gateways

Reinforce community gateways through the use of architectural elements, streetscape features, landscaping and/or signage. Gateways can be defined through landscaping, artwork, and references to the history of the location that create a sense of place. Gateways are transition locations, places that mark entry or departure points to a neighborhood for automobiles and pedestrians. They are sites that create opportunities for identification, a physical marker for the community to notice they are entering a special place. Methods to establish gateways should consider the site’s characteristics such as topography, views or surrounding building patterns. Elements could include building out to meet the corner where appropriate, or tools such as:

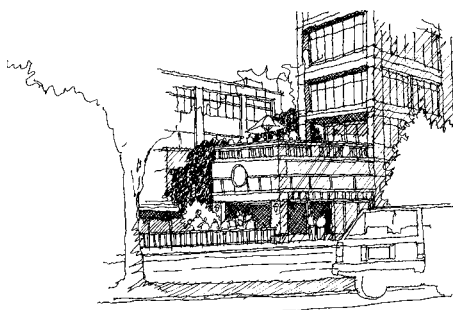
- a. setbacks to allow for pedestrian friendly spaces;
- b. signage;
- c. landscaping;
- d. artwork;
- e. facade treatments.

The following locations, at this time, are places that have been identified as gateways for South Lake Union due to the level of traffic flow, general visibility and/or development potential. The following locations, pending changes in traffic patterns, may evolve with transportation improvements:

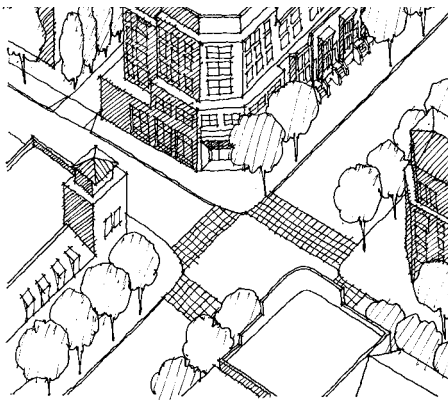
- f. Westlake & Denny



Public art.



Setbacks for activity.



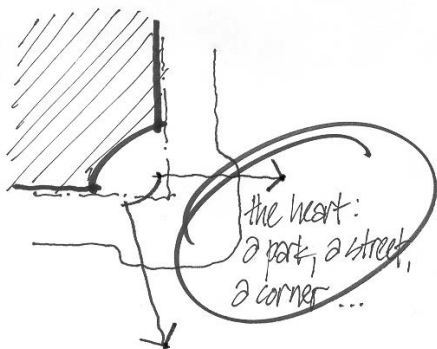
Building form and facade details



A plaza surrounded by people-generating activity such as retail.

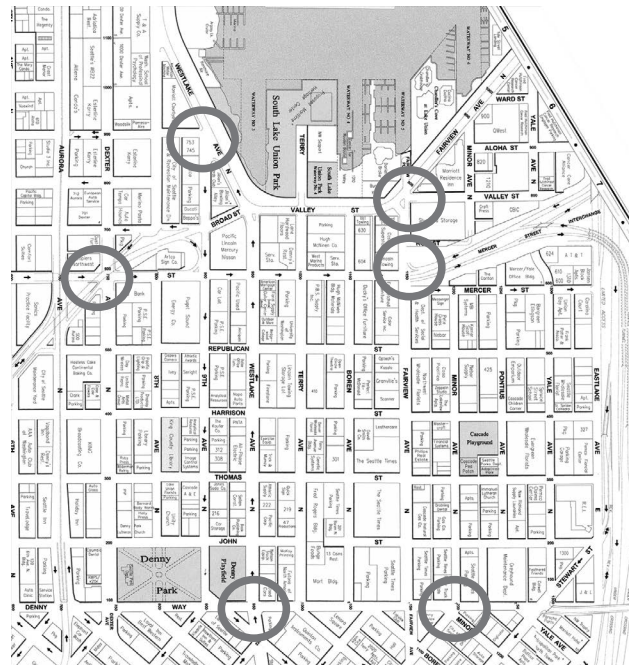


Public space through a site.



An example of a curb bulb.

- g. Westlake & 9th
- h. Dexter & Mercer
- i. Fairview & Valley
- j. Fairview & Denny
- k. Fairview & Mercer



Map of gateway locations

iv. Heart locations

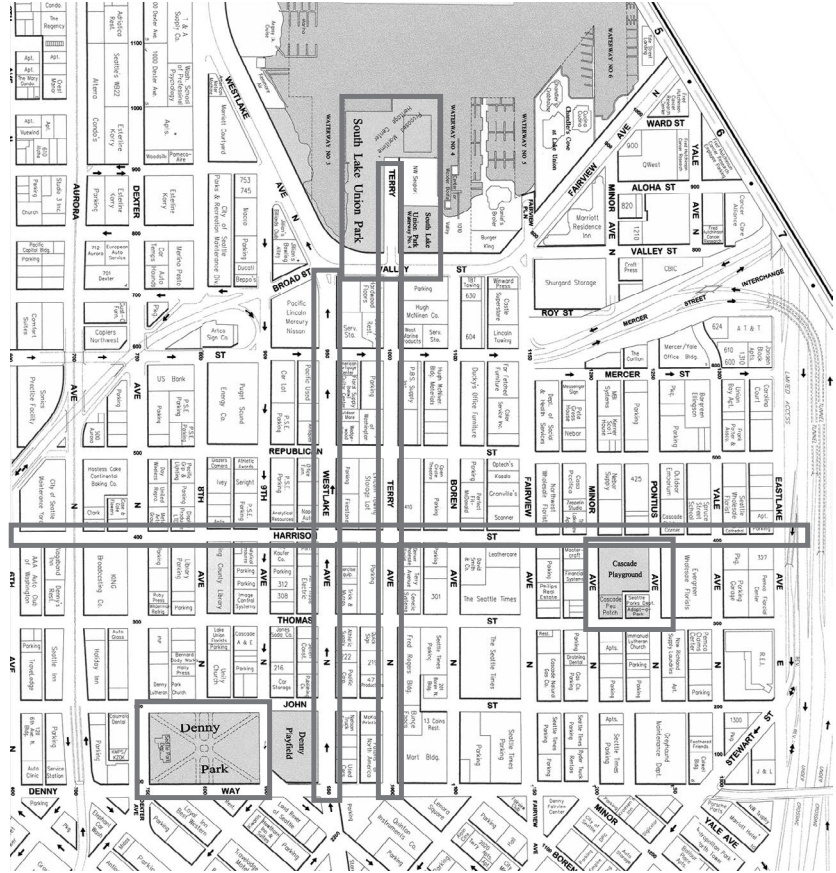
Several areas have been identified as “heart locations.” Heart locations serve as the perceived center of commercial and social activity within the neighborhood. These locations provide anchors for the community as they have identity and give form to the neighborhood. Development at heart locations should enhance their central character through appropriate site planning and architecture. These sites have a high priority for improvements to the public realm. A new building’s primary entry and facade should respond to the heart location. Special street treatments are likely to occur and buildings will need to respond to these centers of commercial and social activity. Amenities to consider are: pedestrian lighting, public art, special paving, landscaping, additional public open space provided by curb bulbs and entry plazas.

The following locations have been identified as heart locations within South Lake Union:

- a. Cascade Park
- b. South Lake Union Park
- c. Denny Park
- d. Harrison Street
- e. Terry Avenue North
- f. Westlake Avenue North



An example of how the orientation of buildings and the uses contained within can support an active pedestrian street.



Map of heart locations.

B. Height, Bulk, and Scale

- i. Address both the pedestrian and auto experience through building placement, scale and details with specific attention to regional transportation corridors such as Mercer, Aurora, Fairview and Westlake. These locations, pending changes in traffic patterns, may evolve with transportation improvements.
- ii. Encourage stepping back an elevation at upper levels for development taller than 55 feet to take advantage of views and increase sunlight at street level. Where stepping back upper floors is not practical or appropriate other design considerations may be considered, such as modulations or separations between structures.
- iii. Relate proportions of buildings to the width and scale of the street.

CS3

Architectural Context and Character

Citywide Guideline:

Contribute to the architectural character of the neighborhood.

South Lake Union Supplemental Guidance

I. Height, Bulk, and Scale

- i. Articulate the building facades vertically or horizontally in intervals that relate to the existing structures or existing pattern of development in the vicinity.
- ii. Consider using architectural features to reduce building scale such as:
 - a. landscaping;
 - b. trellis;
 - c. complementary materials;
 - d. detailing;
 - e. accent trim.

II. Architectural Context

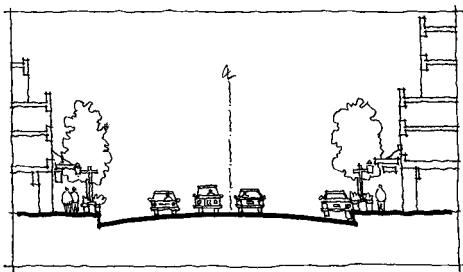
- i. Support the existing fine-grained character of the neighborhood with a mix of building styles.
- ii. Re-use and preserve important buildings and landmarks when possible.
- iii. Expose historic signs and vintage advertising on buildings where possible.
- iv. Respond to the history and character in the adjacent vicinity in terms of patterns, style, and scale. Encourage historic character to be revealed and reclaimed, for example through use of community artifacts, and historic materials, forms and textures.



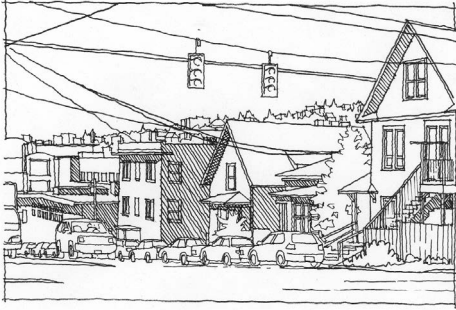
Breaking larger buildings down into separate volumes reduces apparent bulk.



The roofline of this large development adds to the structure's residential identity and reduces its apparent bulk.



Consider stepping back elevations at upper levels for large-scale development and relate proportions of buildings to width and scale of the street.



Context - neighborhood residential buildings.



Context - light industrial building design; plasters, large casement windows, brick and terra-cotta cladding.



Context - window detailing.



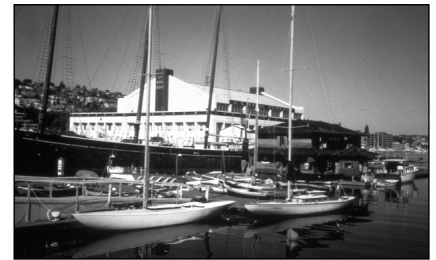
Adaptive Reuse - light industrial-style large windows, parapet, building facade broken up by vertical elements to reduce the scale

- v. Respond to the working class, maritime, commercial and industrial character of the Waterfront and Westlake areas. Examples of elements to consider include:
 - a. window detail patterns;
 - b. open bay doors;
 - c. sloped roofs.

- vi. Respond to the unique, grass roots, sustainable character of the Cascade neighborhood. Examples of elements to consider include:
 - a. community artwork;
 - b. edible gardens;
 - c. water filtration systems that serve as pedestrian amenities;
 - d. gutters that support greenery.



Context - creative, contemporary architecture with variegated forms and details.



Context - maritime character.

PL1 Connectivity

Citywide Guideline:

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



Sidewalks as open space: a pedestrian-friendly streetscape.



New developments should design for safe, well-lit pedestrian connections through sites that connect to surrounding areas.

South Lake Union Supplemental Guidance

I. Human Activity

- i. Keep neighborhood connections open, and discourage closed campuses.
- ii. Reinforce pedestrian connections both within the neighborhood and to other adjacent neighborhoods. Transportation infrastructure should be designed with adjacent sidewalks, as development occurs to enhance pedestrian connectivity.
- iii. Design for a network of safe and well-lit connections to encourage human activity and link existing high activity areas.

II. Landscaping To Reinforce Design Continuity With Adjacent Sites

- i. Support the creation of a hierarchy of passive and active open space within South Lake Union. This may include pooling open space requirements on-site to create larger spaces.



Benches



Special paving.

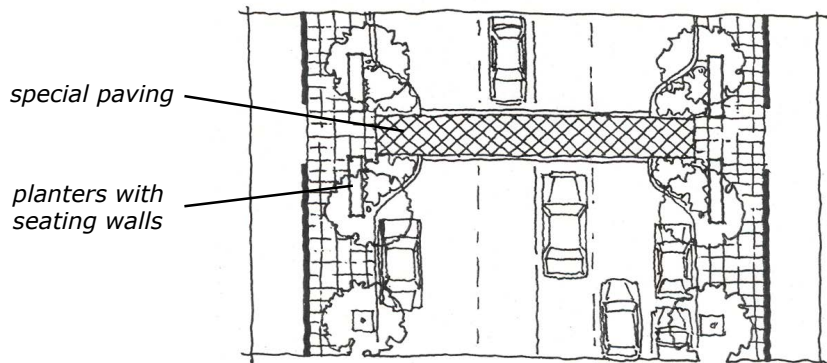


Curb bulb.

III. Pedestrian Open Spaces and Entrances

New developments are encouraged to work with the Design Review Board and interested citizens to provide features that enhance the public realm, i.e. the transition zone between private property and the public right of way. The Board is generally willing to consider a departure in open space requirements if the project proponent provides an acceptable plan for features such as:

- a. curb bulbs adjacent to active retail spaces where they are not interfering with primary corridors that are designated for high levels of traffic flow;
- b. pedestrian-oriented street lighting;
- c. street furniture.



Streetscape amenities help buildings connect to, and enhance centers of commercial and social activity.

PL2

Walkability

Citywide Guideline:

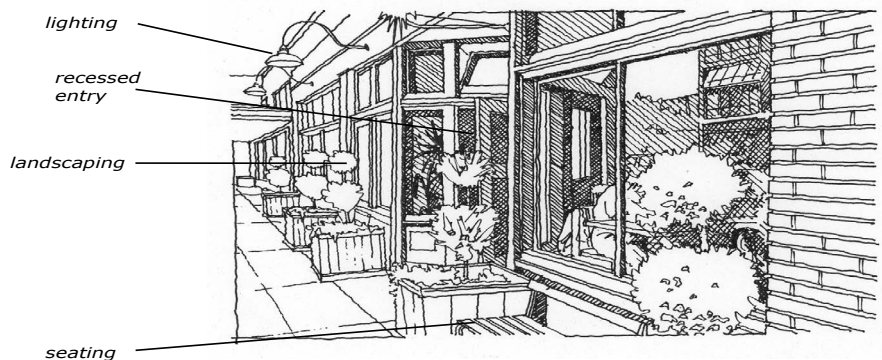
Create a safe and comfortable walking environment that is easy to navigate and well-connected to existing pedestrian walkways and features.

South Lake Union Supplemental Guidance

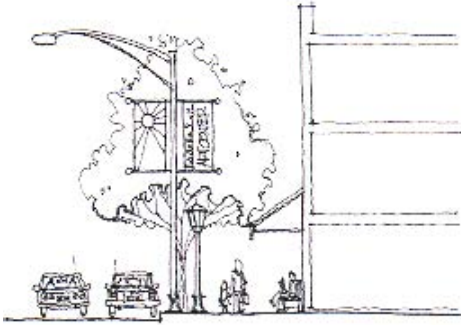
I. Streetscape Compatibility

The vision for street level uses in South Lake Union is a completed network of sidewalks that successfully accommodate pedestrians. Streetscape compatibility is a high priority of the neighborhood with redevelopment. Sidewalk-related spaces should appear safe, welcoming and open to the general public.

- i. Encourage provision of spaces for street level uses that vary in size, width, and depth. Encourage the use of awnings and weather protection along street fronts to enhance the pedestrian environment.
- ii. Provide pedestrian-friendly streetscape amenities, such as:
 - a. tree grates;
 - b. benches;
 - c. lighting.
- iii. Where appropriate, configure retail space so that it can spill-out onto the sidewalk (retaining six feet for pedestrian movement, where the sidewalk is sufficiently wide).



A street level use that integrates pedestrian amenities into the siting and design of the building.



A lighting program should consist of street lighting, pedestrian lighting, and internal illumination from storefronts



Concentrations of retail activity are enhanced with comfortable spaces that encourage pedestrian activity.



II. Personal Safety and Security

Enhance public safety throughout the neighborhood to foster 18-hour public activity. Methods to consider are:

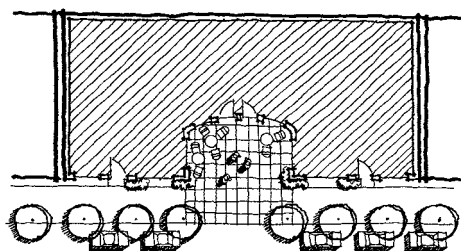
- i. enhanced pedestrian and street lighting;
- ii. well-designed public spaces that are defensively designed with clear sight lines and opportunities for eyes on the street;
- iii. police horse tie-up locations for routine patrols and larger event assistance.

PL3

Street-Level Interaction

Citywide Guideline:

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



Take the “indoors” outdoors by spilling interior space onto plazas, walkways and sidewalks, where appropriate.



South Lake Union Supplemental Guidance

I. Streetscape Compatibility

Where appropriate, consider a reduction in the required amount of commercial and retail space at the ground level, such as in transition zones between commercial and residential areas. Place retail in areas that are conducive to the use and will be successful.

II. Human Activity

- i. Create graceful transitions at the streetscape level between the public and private uses.
- ii. Design facades to encourage activity to spill out from business onto the sidewalk, and vice-versa.
- iii. Reinforce retail concentrations with compatible spaces that encourage pedestrian activity.
- iv. Create businesses and community activity clusters through co-location of retail and pedestrian uses as well as other high pedestrian traffic opportunities.

III. Transition Between Residence and Street

Consider designing the entries of residential buildings to enhance the character of the streetscape through the use of small gardens, stoops and other elements to create a transition between the public and private areas. Consider design options to accommodate various residential uses, i.e., townhouse, live-work, apartment and senior-assisted housing.

DC1

Project Uses and Activities

Citywide Guideline:

Optimize the arrangement of uses and activities on site.

South Lake Union Supplemental Guidance

I. Design of Parking Lots Near Sidewalks

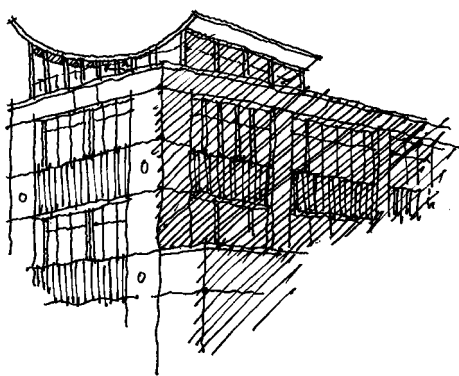
Providing parking below grade is preferred.

DC2

Architectural Concept

Citywide Guideline:

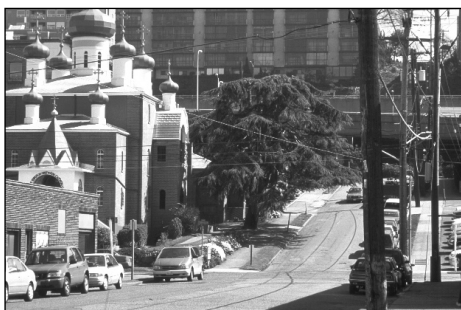
Develop an architectural concept that will result in a unified and functional design that fits well on the site and within its surroundings.



South Lake Union Supplemental Guidance

I. Architectural Concept and Consistency

Design the “fifth elevation” — the roofscape — in addition to the streetscape. As this area topographically is a valley, the roofs may be viewed from locations outside the neighborhood such as the freeway and Space Needle. Therefore, views from outside the area as well as from within the neighborhood should be considered, and roof-top elements should be organized to minimize view impacts from the freeway and elevated areas.



DC3 Open Space Concept

Citywide Guideline:

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



South Lake Union Supplemental Guidance

I. Landscaping To Reinforce Design Continuity With Adjacent Sites

- i. Encourage landscaping that meets LEED criteria. This is a priority in the Cascade neighborhood.
- ii. Where appropriate, install indigenous trees and plants to improve aesthetics, capture water and create habitat.
- iii. Retain existing, non-intrusive mature trees or replace with large caliper trees.
- iv. Water features are encouraged including natural marsh-like installations.
- v. Reference the City of Seattle Right Tree Book and the City Light Streetscape Light Standards Manual for appropriate landscaping and lighting options for the area.



II. Landscaping To Enhance The Building And/Or Site

Consider integrating artwork into publicly accessible areas of a building and landscape that evokes a sense of place related to the previous uses of the area. Neighborhood themes may include service industries such as laundries, auto row, floral businesses, photography district, arts district, maritime, etc.

III. Landscape Design To Address Special Site Conditions

Landscaping should be designed to take advantage of views to waterfront and downtown Seattle.

