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**Seattle Design Guidelines  
For Link Light Rail  
Beacon Hill Station**

CityDesign  
Seattle Department of Design, Construction, and Land Use



# Introduction

## Purpose of Seattle Design Guidelines for Link Light Rail

The purpose of the Seattle Design Guidelines for Link Light Rail is to guide the development of the public spaces encompassed by the Link Light Rail project. The Guidelines set the standards by which Link and related public improvements can be evaluated during the design, permit review, and construction process. This involves two elements:

1. Ensuring that Link Light Rail is developed according to sound urban design principles and the City's specific expectations for each station; and
2. Recognizing that the design of public spaces around light rail stations and facilities is integral to the operation and function of Link light rail within Seattle's neighborhoods.

With respect to item #2 above, the City acknowledges that some of the public spaces around light rail stations will be improved as part of the Link project, while others may be improved over time by the City, other public agencies, and/or private parties in association with redevelopment. Accordingly, the Design Guidelines for Link Light Rail focus on the vision for stations and related public spaces, without identifying who has financial responsibility for each element. Agreements between the City and Sound Transit are the best sources of information about the specific scope of the Link project.

Another important aspect of light rail is the use and development of private property near stations. A successful relationship between adjacent land use and light rail is synergistic—with each supporting the other. Since 1994 the City's Design Review Program has consulted design guidelines in the review of new multi-family and commercial buildings proposals exceeding certain density and square footage thresholds. Until such time as the City determines that additional guidelines are necessary, those guidelines—"Design Review: Guidelines for Multi-family & Commercial Buildings" and other neighborhood-specific guidelines—will apply in the review of most transit-oriented development or other private development near Link Light Rail stations.

## Who Can Use the Guidelines?

The Guidelines are intended to be used primarily by City staff in reviewing Sound Transit project drawings and plans during the permitting process. However, they will also be used by Sound Transit in the post-30% (equivalent to schematic design) design phase as a reiteration of Light Rail Review Panel recommendations and City staff guidance. Members of the public will find the Guidelines helpful as a description of the criteria the City will use to evaluate Link design work, and as a tool to help frame their own specific comments. Lastly, since the Guidelines address some of the same issues encompassed by the City's Station Area Planning Concept Packages for each station, the Site Planning, Streetscape Compatibility, and Linkages guidelines may also be useful to City staff implementing Station Area Planning recommendations and neighborhood plans.

## How the Guidelines Were Developed

The substance of the Guidelines was drawn from the following:

- In-house expertise from the CityDesign Office of the Seattle Department of Design, Construction, and Land Use;

- The Seattle Light Rail Review Panel “Scope Briefing Progress Report/July 1999,” “Concept Design Progress Report/December 1999,” and specific recommendations made at regular Panel meetings reviewing Link station design work held 1999 and 2003;
- City of Seattle Station Area Planning “Concept Packages”;
- Public comments from discussions held with Station Area Advisory Committees; and
- Adopted neighborhood plans whose boundaries encompass one or more Link stations.

A team comprised of City and Sound Transit staff prepared the Guidelines, working under the direction of CityDesign and the Light Rail Review Panel.

## **Authority**

Once community review is complete, the Link Design Guidelines will be adopted by the Seattle Light Rail Review Panel and formalized as a Joint DCLU and Seattle Transportation Director’s Rule, with the result that Link permits will be conditioned upon all design work meeting the Guidelines. Although additional site-specific negotiations will still likely occur throughout permitting and construction, the Guidelines will nonetheless provide a baseline for design quality from which those negotiations can proceed.

## Organization of the Design Guidelines

The Guidelines include the following elements for each station:

1. **Key Urban Design Issues**—a summary of the key issues for each station, providing the reader with a good understanding of the circumstances surrounding each station, and therefore a better grasp of its particular constraints and opportunities.
2. **Vision**—a concise statement of the overall vision for each station that sets the tone for the Guidelines that follow. Although there are similarities in the vision for all stations (such as making the pedestrian a priority), these vision statements attempt to reflect what is most important to the identity, role, and function of each station. The vision statement, or design goals, provide context and clarity for the actual design guidelines and thus stand as a clear statement of intent that can be referred to when questions arise during implementation of Design Guidelines. Each vision statement has been crafted from various existing materials reflecting earlier community input and discussion.
3. **Design Guidelines**—the Guidelines address several categories of issues, from large scale (such as responding to site conditions; e.g. topography) to small scale (such as the placement of station amenities; e.g. benches and kiosks). Although there is often overlap between the categories, issues are generally addressed as listed below:

**Site Planning guidelines** focus on how the project is arranged in two dimensions—the functional and aesthetic relationship of the project to its context, as well as the relationships between site features within the project. The project site may be a station and surrounding area or the trackway between stations. Issues raised within this section include:

- Existing and probable patterns of development
- Open space
- Transportation and circulation patterns
- Views

**Streetscape Compatibility guidelines** focus on the scale and character of project features, including:

- Height, bulk, and scale
- Street frontages
- Architectural elements such as roofs, windows, etc.
- Streetscape and other public realm improvements beyond the station, but supporting Link
- Landscaping
- Public art

**Linkages guidelines** focus on the connections and transitions from one site element to another, including:

- Pedestrian and bicycle circulation
- Bus connections and transfer points
- Wayfinding including station visibility, site information, and identifying signage
- ADA compliance, accessibility for all

**User Comfort guidelines** address the physical and psychological comfort provided by the Link system to passengers, pedestrians, cyclists, and other users of the system. Elements of user comfort include:

- Safety and security
- Lighting
- Station amenities (e.g. benches, kiosks)

**Materials and Finishes guidelines** address the “micro scale” of design, and focus on the durability, comfort, and timelessness of the materials and finishes for each light rail element. Issues covered by these guidelines include:

- Vandalism
- Sustainability
- Maintenance

# Design Guidelines for Beacon Hill Station

## Vision for Beacon Hill Station

With its prominent location on Lander at Beacon Avenue South and South Lander Street, the Link station should serve as an anchor and catalyst to the neighborhood business district and set the stage for future transit-oriented development. With these factors in mind, the station design should draw from the community's history, diversity, and values; notably the multicultural center El Centro de la Raza, the great variety of residential housing types and the mixture of commercial uses serving the different ethnic populations of Beacon Hill. The Beacon Hill station has the potential to shape the scale and character of the surrounding community for years to come. Its design should provide a positive foundation from which the business district and adjacent residential areas can evolve.

## Key Urban Design Issues at this Station

- Beacon Hill is home to a population from many different cultures spanning all age groups and socio-economic levels—development of the Link light rail station is an opportunity to make this aspect of the **community's identity more visible**, drawing from the cultural, historical, and demographic characteristics of its population.
- With a station entrance and plaza prominently located near the main commercial street, Beacon Avenue South, there is also an opportunity to **support and strengthen the business district** through the pedestrian activity the station will generate.
- Ensuring that the **scale and mass of the station** is compatible with the scale of existing residential development and potential commercial development as envisioned in the neighborhood plan will also be critical to the success of the station area.

## Design Guidelines

### A. Site Planning

1. **Development Pattern:** Development of the station should be consistent with the neighborhood plan vision for a vibrant, mixed-use neighborhood “urban village” with respect to:
  - a. Allowing for appropriate supporting retail activities near the station entrance, possibly in the form of street vendors (providing water and electrical hook-ups to accommodate such future uses);
  - b. Reinforcing the street corner and developing it as a community focus; and
  - c. Height, bulk, and scale— in keeping with existing and potential commercial and/or multi-family residential uses.
2. **Open Space:** As an envisioned focal point and well-used amenity in the community, the station plaza areas should accommodate pedestrian and bicycle volumes associated with general neighborhood use, as well as expected Link light rail use. Plaza designs should include waiting spaces that are visible from the street, well-lighted, comfortable, and appropriately-scaled to the pedestrian to ensure safety and inspire positive social interaction.
3. **Traffic Circulation:** Minimize conflicts between cars, buses, trucks, cyclists, and pedestrians at the Beacon Avenue and Lander Street intersection.
4. **Bicycle Parking:** Provide bicycle parking and storage facilities in proximity to the station entrance areas to meet demand upon station opening, with a plan for accommodating anticipated future demand either on- or off-site. Facilities should be secure, visible, and convenient while not in conflict with the primary flow of pedestrians.

## **B. Streetscape Compatibility**

1. **Station Architecture:** Station architecture, materials, and forms should draw upon and relate to the history, character and cultural diversity of the Beacon Hill neighborhood and the emerging business district with an emphasis on human-scale treatment of elements at the street level. The existing context includes a variety of uses and scales including older single family development to the east and a prototypical one story grocery store development to the west. El Centro de la Raza, which is located within a large historic school house building, is directly to the north of the station site. To the south of the station and along Beacon Avenue is a mixture of lower scaled commercial buildings and multi family development. Below-grade at the platform, architecture should also emphasize human-scale but, without the need to relate to an existing context, can explore a wider range of architectural expression than at the surface.
2. **Street Improvements:** Provide pedestrian amenities and other features that are complementary to and supportive of the existing uses in the neighborhood as well as the Link light rail station and future planned development. Improvements should:
  - a. Be aesthetically and functionally well-coordinated with the rest of the street, and any other capital projects underway, so as to ensure a seamless transition from the improved section to the remainder of the existing street(s);
  - b. Include widened sidewalks, street trees, and pedestrian lighting along Beacon Avenue and Lander Street; and
  - c. Include crosswalks, distinctive paving, lighting, and signal timing that help ensure safe access across streets to station entrances.
3. **General Landscaping Requirements:** Landscape elements are required as part of the Link light rail project, with priority on trees as the most important component. Specifically, the landscaping should include the following considerations:
  - a. Maximize the planting potential of the available space, in accordance with City policy regarding tree selection and spacing; in other words, requiring trees wherever they can be planted without compromising facility function and safety, and requiring large scale trees rather than small scale where it is feasible for them to develop successfully;
  - b. Where trees cannot be accommodated but planting is desired to improve the safety and/or aesthetics of the facility, provide low maintenance shrubs and/or groundcover with emphasis on evergreen species to provide year round presence;
  - c. Complement landscaping on adjacent private property;
  - d. Provide supplemental water (by automatic or manual irrigation or by specific contract provisions for hand-watering) to ensure adequate care of newly installed material for a minimum of three (3) years after installation;
  - e. Where possible, use plantings that minimize water usage and help to attain the City's sustainability goals; and
  - f. Minimize the removal of existing significant trees and retain significant vegetation wherever possible, particularly where impacts are temporary such as removal of vegetation for construction staging. When distinctive or character-giving vegetation must be removed, it should be replaced with new plantings of a similar type and/or size as that removed.
4. **Station Landscaping:** Provide landscaping that is well-integrated into the overall station design, distinctive as part of the identity of Link, and yet compatible with the existing vegetation and landscape design of Beacon Avenue.

5. **Public Art:** Art is an important aspect of how the user and the community will perceive the Link system and each station within it. Link’s public art should be sited in prominent locations that are highly visible to pedestrians. Other considerations include:
  - a. Seizing opportunities to infuse art into functional elements of the station, such as benches, kiosks, railings, and other elements, within the overall design aesthetic of the station;
  - b. Using art to enhance Link system-wide elements and identity, while still responding to the local historical, cultural, and architectural context;
  - c. Artwork that has its own integrity individually and within the Link public art collection, and that establishes “conversations” and relationship between stations;
  - d. Developing specific artworks in collaboration with local artists and/or other cultural entities such as the Beacon Hill Library and El Centro de la Raza.

### C. Linkages

1. **Pedestrian Access and Circulation:** Facilitate pedestrian movement and gathering above grade at the entrance and plaza area, below grade on the platform, and between the two with adequate capacity in and around the elevators and on sidewalks within 300’ of the station entrances. The design/site plan should consider:
  - a. Clear pedestrian connections to the station entrance and elevators from the sidewalks along Beacon Avenue South and South Lander Street;
  - b. Pedestrian corridors identified through paving patterns, colors, signage, and/or landscaping, that extend across streets to increase system safety and legibility for users and alert motorized vehicles that pedestrian movement is a priority in this area;
  - c. Gathering areas at each station entrance, within clear sight of connecting pedestrian paths, sized to accommodate anticipated use; and
  - d. Direct routes from the elevators to the platform, ideally with the platform visible from the elevator vestibule.
2. **Bicycle Connections and Amenities:** The station should be designed to accommodate cyclists, including:
  - a. Bicycle parking and storage facilities as described under “Site Planning” guidelines;
  - b. Elevators adequately sized to accommodate at least two bikes along with riders and other passengers; and
  - c. Bicycle trail information posted clearly at each entrance.
3. **Transit Connections:** The Beacon Hill station should provide clear and easy connections for passengers transferring between Link light rail and buses. Because not all bus stops may be within view of the station entrances, there should be clear direction to pedestrians at and beyond the station entrances to ensure clear and safe connections for transferring passengers, including:
  - a. Information posted about connections between light rail and bus service including schedules and a system map showing bus stops and lines that connect with Link light rail; and
  - b. Pedestrian paths that connect directly to the main City sidewalks and bus stops.

4. **Wayfinding:** Station entrances should be visible and easily identifiable as part of the Link system, while still being compatible with the Beacon Avenue and Lander Street streetscapes. Ideally, both entrances should be visible from one block away with wayfinding elements including:
  - a. Appropriately-scaled signage that provides direction not only for the Link system, but to key destinations within the vicinity of each station entrance including El Centro de la Raza and the new branch library;
  - b. Easy orientation through clearly identifiable pathways;
  - c. Below grade, orientation to above-ground features and destination; and
  - d. Station entrance architecture that functions as a landmark by being visible from various points around the immediate neighborhood.

## D. User Comfort

1. **Station Amenities:** The station should include the following amenities:
  - a. Phone and/or security alerts (on or near platform)
  - b. Recycling and waste receptacles (including cigarette receptacles at station entrances)
  - c. Clocks
  - d. Information display cases or kiosks, including newspaper racks
  - e. Seating—benches, standing bars or rails
  - f. Weather protection—canopies and windbreaks
  - g. Trees and landscaping
2. **Lighting:** Assist wayfinding and promote safety by incorporating a combination of lighting conditions including ambient, direct, and path lighting in the design of the station, both below-grade in the tunnel and at the platform itself. Lighting should be installed to highlight station entrances and access to destinations, such as the nearby El Centro de la Raza and the proposed new Beacon Hill Branch Library.
3. **Security:** The station should be designed with Crime Prevention Through Environment Design (CPTED) principles in mind in order to promote a crime-free environment for Link users.

## E. Materials and Finishes

1. **Finish Materials:** The station, at-and-below-grade, should include a variety of finish materials and textures that contribute to creating a well-proportioned and unified building, with all components being integral to the whole, relating to their surroundings, and exhibiting human scale at the street level.
2. **Durability and Maintenance:** All finish materials and other station elements shall age and weather well, be durable, vandal resistant and easily maintainable.
3. **Integration of Life/Safety Elements:** There are numerous life/safety controls, signals, and equipment which are necessary to the operation of Link, but which should nonetheless be seamlessly integrated into the design of each station. Although many of these may be “stock” items and not custom-designed for Link, every effort should be made to ensure they are compatible with the station design or otherwise sited unobtrusively to avoid distracting from the overall station design.