

1. Guidelines for New Structures

2020-11-12

a. General Information

While historic districts convey a sense of time and place which is retained through the preservation of historic buildings and the general character of the district, these areas continue to be dynamic, evolving settings. Careful thought and planning in the design and development of new structures can enhance the character of the district while providing for new and expanded activities and a vibrant community.

These guidelines are intended to promote sensitive design. The guidelines provide a basic framework to create an environment that respects the special setting of Pioneer Square, maintains a cohesive neighborhood identity and is pedestrian oriented. All new buildings within the districts should be compatible with both the visual qualities of the immediate area in which the property is located, as well as the overall context of the district. It is not intended that new buildings necessarily employ the same architectural styles as the contributing and historic buildings, as this practice leads to a false or imitation historicism. Instead, new buildings and structures should feature some of the fundamental design characteristics of historic buildings noted in the guidelines below in order to complement existing buildings rather than produce a stridently contrasting element along an otherwise architecturally consistent block front.

b. Relationship to Site, Street and Block Front

Rationale, Context and Intent

In the District, building facades are uniformly located at the front property/ROW lines, thus there is a strong street edge definition. Continuous street walls are the historical precedent with exceptions of building cornices, bay windows and ornament that project beyond the main wall surface and recessed entrances or chamfered corners of some facades.

The primary entrance, majority of the storefronts and most significant architectural features face a street. Some buildings located on street corners have the main entrance or a storefront oriented to the corner and feature additional storefronts and entrances on the street front facades as well. For proposals on corner lots, the applicant should identify which street front façade is intended to be primary. Generally, the primary facades of corner lot buildings face north-south avenues, so this should be the default unless the Board finds a compelling case to the contrary.

The intent of the guideline below is to maintain the “street wall” framed by front building facades that are generally uniformly aligned along the street ROW line.

Guidelines

- i. The building shall be oriented to the street similar to the neighboring contributing buildings and as appropriate for the conditions of the site. This generally means that the building must follow the street ROW property line. However, building entries, building corners at intersections and areas for outdoor functions may be set back if approved by the Board.

(ALTERNATE LANGUAGE) The street facing facades of all new buildings must be aligned along the property/ROW line and within 5 feet of that line. Note that the ground floor may be set back up to 8 feet from the property line if the applicant presents a proposal to provide more pedestrian, outdoor seating or display space and provided that upper story facades are aligned along the property line. Entries may be recessed up to 4 feet.

c. Height

Rationale, Context and Intent

Contributing buildings feature a variety of heights from 1 to 6 stories ,with a few exceptions such as the Smith Tower and Alaska Buildings. Stories have been added to some buildings during the era of significance.

Section 23.66.140 SMC states:

- A. Maximum Height. Maximum structure height is regulated by Section 23.49.178 Pioneer Square Mixed, structure height.
- B. Minimum Height. No structure shall be erected or permanent addition added to an existing structure that would result in the height of the new structure of less than 50 feet, except as allowed in the PSM 85-120 zone under the provisions of Section 23.49.180 for the area shown on Map A for 23.49.180. Height of the structure is to be measured from mean street level fronting on the property to the mean roofline of the structure.

However, there may be an issue regarding tall new buildings in relation their surroundings. Even though the height of contributing buildings might vary from 1 or 2 stories to 6 stories on a block front, a tall new building could be visually intrusive because of a combination of its size and non-contributing character. The Board may require that a building proposal be reduced or re-configured in height if it finds that the building’s height is not compatible within its immediate surroundings. The guidelines below provide assistance in the Board’s determination of “height compatibility” between a proposed new building and its surroundings.

The question of height compatibility is to be considered at two vantage points: 1.) at the pedestrian or street level as viewed looking down or across a public street, and 2.) From a viewpoint overlooking the District. At the street level, the intent is to ensure that the building does not appear to be an intrusion into the block front’s basic visual fabric. The sense of visual intrusion can be heightened by a number of contributing building features including synthetic materials, windows, lack of cap-middle-base configuration and stridently contemporary building elements.

From a viewpoint or overlook, a building that is much taller than its surroundings disrupts the district's profile along the horizon. In this case, buildings at the perimeter of the District may be less disruptive as it may provide a transition to another district in Central Seattle. Guidelines

- i. The Board will establish a new building's maximum height based on its visual impact to its surroundings and impact on the District's profile based on the following criteria.
 - a) The Board may allow a building to be one-and-one-half the height of any adjacent existing building over 3 stories tall, or
 - b) Over one-and-one half the average height of the buildings on the block (including both sides of an alley).
 - c) The Board may waive requirements related to criterion b) above if the building is to be located on a street at the perimeter of the District

Alternate language.

- ii. The maximum height (in feet) of a new building shall be the average of height of existing buildings that are located within 120 feet (measured horizontally) from the perimeter of the proposed building – plus two additional stories up to a maximum of 30 feet above the average height of existing buildings. In calculating the average height of existing buildings, the applicant may choose to not include any open lots or 1 story buildings but must not include any buildings over 8 stories. Buildings outside the district must not be counted in the average. **DIAGRAM NEEDED HERE**
- iii. When the proposed building is taller than adjacent buildings, the Board may require that the visual impacts and differences in scale of the proposal be ameliorated by one of the measures below to address the scale of the proposed to be more in proportion to the smaller building:
 - a) Set the height of the building's base (ground floor façade elements) to within 5' of one or more of neighboring buildings.
 - b) Set the upper story back at least 15 feet from the primary front façade.
 - c) Other measures determined to be appropriate by the Board.

d. Characteristics of Street facing Façades

Rationale, Context and Intent

The street facing facades of most contributing and historic buildings feature the following characteristics and elements.

- Moderate size. The largest contributing building facades appear approximately 6,000-7,000 SF. These are typically on E/W streets and usually well-articulated with window patterns and other features.
 - North-South streetscapes (e.g.: 1st Ave S) feature facades between 30' to 60' wide with some wider. Building facades feature a wide variety of architectural features and heights.

- East-West streetscapes (e.g.: S, Main St), sometimes feature facades the full length of the block – approximately 110' +/- . Some E/W streets have fewer entries and storefronts and less transparency but there are exceptions to this generalization.
- Top, middle and base configuration. Most contributing buildings feature specific, well-articulated elements at the top or cornice line, middle story facades that add continuity to the variety of styles and characteristics among the District's building stock.
- Human scale, which means how the building relates to the person. Contributing buildings almost always feature building elements such as double hung windows, doors with glass, awnings, traditionally sized storefronts, etc. or materials such as brick that visually relate to human body size and activities.
- Architectural scale, which refers to building's relative bulk (as modified by articulation) in relationship to its neighbors. Generally, the facades of contributing buildings on N/S streets fall in the range of 1500 SF to 6,000 SF and nearly all of them include façade features that articulate (break down) the buildings massing.
- Transparent store fronts with entries. (This element is covered in a separate section below.)
- Rhythmic patterns of windows. (This element is covered in a separate section below.)

The intent of the guidelines in this section is to incorporate the fundamental architectural characteristics noted above into the street facing building facades of new buildings in order to increase visual compatibility between old and new buildings while encouraging new buildings to exhibit a contemporary character.

- Guidelines During ARC and Board review of proposals, the applicant must demonstrate that the façade in question must address the guidelines' intent noted above regarding the District's fundamental architectural characteristics. In so doing, that demonstration must not be based on a single existing building example, but rather based on an analysis of several contributing buildings that feature the characteristic in question.
- Building façades that face the public realm should be articulated with a strong rhythm of regular vertical and horizontal elements. Vertical and horizontal elements should break down the visual scale of larger buildings and create a rhythm that visually minimizes the overall massing consistent with historic development patterns. . **NEED GRAPHICS**
- The front of all new buildings must feature an "articulated" top, middle and base configuration as approved by the Board. The articulation of the three façade sections may be achieved through a number of measures such as 1) physical elements such as cornices, transparent storefronts 2) changes in façade features such as window patterns and materials or 3) other measures approved by the Board. The general size and characteristics of the top, middle and base are described below. **PHOTO-DIAGRAM NEEDED HERE**
 - Top: Elements may include a prominent cornice visible from the adjacent street, a top floor with a different window pattern, materials or architectural features, horizontal articulation, identifiable parapet, or other feature approved by the board. **EXAMPLES NEEDED HERE**
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- c) Middle: Relatively uniform window patterns per Section f, below, materials, articulation measures such as pilasters and other features such as balconies. EXAMPLES NEEDED HERE
 - d) Base: Comply with Section e. Storefronts and Ground Floor Design. The base shall consist of the ground floor façade or, if the Board approves, a combination of ground floor and mezzanine space. However, if the mezzanine space is included the separation of the ground floor and mezzanine space must be articulated with different fenestration and other features such as a canopy. In no case shall the base be no more than 30 feet in height. DIAGRAM NEEDED HERE
- iv. Building facades that are wider than 75 feet as measured parallel to the property line, must be articulated vertically into identifiable façade segments **if** the adjacent contributing or historic building facades are 60 feet wide or less. Articulation may be achieved by dividing the ground floor into separate storefronts with separate entries, grouping façade windows into repetitive patterns, varying window types, materials that have a similar size and texture to traditional masonry, or other measures approved by the board. The Board may waive this requirement if it determines that the proposal is compatible with nearby streetscape context. .
 - v. New building facades must feature at least two of the following elements to provide a human scale:
 - Distinctive window patterns such as grouped windows, multiple paned windows, or glass artwork such as stained glass or prismatic windows
 - A canopy with unique features or supports
 - Balconies or window boxes
 - A cornice or upper story with patterns or special detailing
 - Unique pedestrian light features (especially at a building entrance)
 - A unique architecture feature such as a bay window or corner entrance.
 - Other feature or characteristic approved by the Board.

Proposed elements to achieve a human scale must be approved by the Board. Elements employed to satisfy this requirement may be used to satisfy other guidelines.

e. Storefronts and Ground Floor Design

Rationale, Context and Intent

Commercial storefronts are a defining characteristic of the District and important to the streetscape qualities, pedestrian interest and security and overall character of a building. . . Typical ground floor storefronts of existing buildings typically feature prominent entries, large display windows, transom windows and center recessed entry doors framed within a bay by columns on the sides, a

bulkhead/base/kickplate generally 18 – 24 inches tall (Check in field) and topped with a cornice, sign band or frieze. DIAGRAM NEEDED HERE to illustrate the ground floor façade terminology

The intent of the guidelines below is to increase the compatibility between existing and new buildings and maintain visual consistency along a blockfront. It is not necessary that new storefronts mimic the storefronts of contributing or historic buildings. New ground floor building fronts and store fronts may feature contemporary elements and materials. However, these guidelines do address fundamental functional and visual characteristics such as transparency, public/commercial realm transition, human scale, pedestrian interest, weather protection and architectural proportions. An additional objective is to provide a safe and attractive pedestrian environment by providing lines of sight and encouraging natural surveillance through strategic placement of doors, windows

Guidelines

- i. **Unless** the Board determines an active ground floor building front (“pedestrian oriented building front”) is **not** necessary the ground floor façade must feature
 - a) Transparent window areas or window displays over at least 75 percent of the ground floor façade between 2’ and 8’ above the sidewalk. The windows shall look into the building’s interior or be configured as merchandise display windows. The building must be designed so that the windows satisfying the requirement for “pedestrian oriented façades” do not look into service or storage areas or other unsightly rooms. Window darkening and/or reflective film in ground or upper floor windows on primary building facades is not permitted. (8/93, 7/99, 7/03)

Special purpose buildings that do not sell retail merchandise may propose an alternate solution to providing an interesting pedestrian experience.

- b) A primary building entry facing the street front with lighting for pedestrian safety and comfort. A new storefront shall incorporate architectural detailing such as, but not limited to ornamental glazing, railings and balustrades, awnings, canopies, decorative pavement as an accent on special areas of the facade, decorative lighting, seats, architectural molding, and signage to articulate the entrances
- c) Weather protection (e.g. canopy, awning, or other cover from the rain) at least 5’ wide over at least 65 percent of the front façade. The weather protection must be located between 8’ and 15’ above grade unless the Board determines there is a compelling reason to the contrary.
- d) A floor to floor ground floor height of at least 15 feet but not greater than 20’, excluding any mezzanines. The Board may waive this requirement if there are special conditions such as the provision of a mezzanine or special use.
- e) A “base” that articulates the connection between the bottom of the façade and the ground plane. Such bases should be incorporated under windows and at the bottoms of columns and pilasters. Bases of approximately 18-24 inches in height above grade are generally appropriate. Base materials should be durable - concrete, stone metal, or other as approved

by the board and may be poured, precast, or cut to fit.

- ii. Unless otherwise authorized by the Board because of local conditions, building fronts facing a public street must not feature an untreated ground floor “blank wall” of more than 30 feet or longer as measured horizontally without having a ground level window or a door lying wholly or in part within that 30-foot section. If the Board determines that a blank wall on the ground floor or a street facing façade is necessary or justifiable then it must be treated in one of the ways below.
 - a) Install a vertical trellis in front of the wall with climbing vines or plant materials
 - b) Provide a landscaped planting bed or a raised planter bed in front of the wall of sufficient size to support. Plant materials that will obscure or screen at least 50 percent of the wall’s surface within 4 years.
 - c) Provide artwork (mosaic, mural, sculpture, relief, etc.) over at least 50 percent of the blank wall surface.
 - d) Other method as approved by the Board. For example, landscaping or other treatments may not be necessary on a wall that employs high quality building materials (such as brick) and provides desirable visual interest.
 - e) Special architectural lighting may be used to highlight a successful treatment.

f. Windows

Rationale, Context and Intent

Windows are prominent features of a building architecture and contribute to a building’s sense of massing, proportion, and rhythm. The size and shape of windows, depth and width of frames, materials and color and type of glazing, dramatically affect a building’s appearance. In the Pioneer Square Preservation District there are a wide variety of historic window types such as single hung, double hung, fixed, awning, pivot and casement windows. Most historic windows in Pioneer Square are wood but metal windows also exist.

The intent of guidelines for windows in new buildings is to reflect the general placement, proportion and composition of window types within the District but allow contemporary window types with current technological innovations to improve energy conservation and durability.

Guidelines

- i. Design windows to be compatible with the placement, scale, type, materials and operation of windows and their openings in surrounding buildings. Design windows to be compatible with the architectural character of the new facade and the surrounding buildings. This may be accomplished in new buildings by sizing, orienting and/or

configuring upper floor windows in a similar manner to near-by contributing and historic buildings. The Board may accept other means to accomplish compatibility of new window designs.

- ii. Window walls (façades where windows are the dominant façade material) and ribbon windows (where windows form horizontal bands along a front facade) are not generally acceptable in the District. However, the Board may allow such glazing systems in special situation such as where there is no architectural or historic context to respond to or when the new construction is a “bridging” or “hyphen” element separating it from historic buildings.

- iii. Window detailing *Note: sometimes we set requirements for window details by requiring one of a number of options such as trim, a few inches recess, multi-pane glazing, etc. to prevent really faceless façades. We could do that here, but the Board may feel that it is too restrictive. On the other hand, nicely detailed (mostly wood) windows are characteristic of the District so that this is an area where new buildings could recall that tradition.*

How about something like this:

The street facing façades of buildings shall employ treatments of upper story windows to articulate their connection to the façade and provide a human scale. Sheer façades where the windows are in the same plane as the façade cladding are not acceptable unless the windows include some form of enhancement articulation. Windows must feature one or more of the following architectural techniques:

- a. Recess or project individual windows above the ground floor at least two inches from the façade plane.
- b. Feature multiple panes
- c. Feature trim or distinguishing materials around the window at least 4” wide.
- d. Feature a projecting sill or head jam at least 2” wide.
- e. Other measure approved by the Board.

PHOTO EXAMPLES NEEDED HERE



This contemporary Pioneer Square building features windows with multiple panes and extended sills which adds scale and nuanced detailing. Additionally, the groups of windows are recessed from the pilasters to enhance the façade's sculptural qualities and visual "rhythm".

g. Materials

Rationale, Context and Intent

The most common facing materials are brick masonry and cut or rusticated sandstone, with limited use of terra cotta and tile. Wooden window sash, ornamental sheet metal, carved stone and wooden or cast-iron storefronts are also typically used throughout the District. The relatively restricted palette of materials and consistency from building to building that contributes greatly to both the historic and urban design assets of the District. Recognizing the need to allow cost-effective and durable contemporary materials the intent of these guidelines is to ensure that materials on new buildings are highly durable and well detailed so that they do not look cheap or become dilapidated. At the same time building materials should not unnecessarily call attention to their contemporary nature through, for example, garish patterns or high reflectivity. Guidelines

- i. Materials used on new construction should complement their surroundings in terms of size of unit or panel, scale, profile, texture, sheen, reflectivity, and other physical characteristics. Proposed building materials should assure durability through such documentation such as extended warranties, independent testing or certification and/or successful long-term use in similar conditions, with high quality finish compatible with those traditionally used. Synthetic stucco siding materials are generally not permitted. (7/99). The Board may require a change of materials if it determines that the proposal is not durable or compatible with its surroundings. Faux material that imitate other materials are generally not appropriate or acceptable on new buildings.
- ii. Ground floor facades should be composed of materials that are durable to touch and resistant to vandalism. Brick, stone, tile and such materials are preferred. EIFS, sheet metal and panelized systems are not allowed on the ground floor of street facing facades.

h. Color

Rationale, Context and Intent

The District's color palette emphasizes various tones of red brick masonry or gray sandstone. While new buildings may feature a broad spectrum of colors for trim, signage and accents, new building facades with traditional, muted colors will better fit into their context. Guidelines

- i. For all buildings, the applicant should consider the other existing materials colors and paint colors of the buildings on the block and consider how the color will coordinate with or enhance that color pallet of the block. If a desirable color has already been used nearby, consider a different shade, adjusting its tint or adding an accent color.
- ii. Color may be used to convey a message about the type of business, or the quality of the products sold. However, the Board may reject specific colors associated with corporate branding or identity if those colors dominate the building's façade or its storefront or conflict with the historic qualities of the building's architecture.
- iii. Do not paint stone or brick materials on street facing facades.
- iv. Unless the Board finds a compelling reason to the contrary, the predominant colors of street facing facades should be muted, emphasizing natural earth tones such as greys, tans, brick reds, off-white, and buff.

I. Solar Panels and other roof top features

Rationale, Context and Intent

Roof top equipment such as solar panels, water treatment facilities and air conditioning units may be necessary and beneficial in terms of energy use and general sustainability. However, they can detract from a building's historic and visual qualities. The guidelines below are intended to minimize these adverse effects.

Guidelines

- i. New roof top equipment other than solar panels shall be setback from the street facing building edge per SMC 23.66.140 so as not to be visible by pedestrians situated directly across the street from the building if possible.
- ii. The Board may require screening or painting of rooftop equipment to reduce visual impacts.

- iii. Per SMC23.66.140 solar panel are allowed on the roof tops up to 7 feet above the roof and must be set back 10 feet. For buildings allow enclosed rooftop recreational spaces solar panels can be up to 15 feet above the roof of the main structure. Placement on rooftops is preferred but non-primary facades locations and other locations may be considered when the solar panels are installed in such a manner that minimizes their visibility from the street. What about on gable or hipped roofs?

J. Mechanical Systems

Rationale, Context and Intent

New mechanical equipment such as air conditioning units are often necessary to the proper use and functioning of a building, but such features can detract from the building's visual qualities.

Guidelines

- i. The preferred location for mechanical systems is in the building interior. In cases where locating systems in the interior is not possible, exterior mechanical systems equipment, including but not limited to air conditioning units, compressors, boilers, generators, ductwork, louvers, wiring and pipes, shall be installed on non-street facing building facades or roof tops. If installed on roof tops, see guideline I above.
- ii. Mechanical equipment shall be installed in such a manner avoids, or if that is not possible, minimizes its negative visual impacts. (7/99)

K. Building Mounted Lighting

Rationale, Context and Intent

Building mounted lighting serves several functions such as illuminating a sign or storefront display, identifying an entry, marking a pedestrian path, offering security, or enhancing architectural features. Additionally, lighting fixtures themselves can be important building elements that affect a building's character and attractiveness.

The goal is to encourage installation of architectural compatible light fixtures that enhances pedestrian comfort and safety. Light fixtures should also complement the building's architecture in proportion, style and material as well as function.

- i. Building lighting for all buildings shall enhance pedestrian comfort and safety and be mounted and oriented, to minimize glare and shadows. High contrast environments are counter-productive to security and should be avoided. Lighting fixtures should include cut off angles and be directed at the surface to be seen. Storefront display lighting is encouraged as it contributes to the soft illumination of the sidewalk as well as providing security and business advertising. Lights should not produce glare or light splash into the interior of neighboring buildings.
- ii. Fixtures should be mounted at an appropriate height to provide a sufficient level lighting for pedestrians. Exposed conduit is not allowed in new buildings.

- iii. Fixture attachments should be integral to the building's architecture. Light placement should be coordinated with other building elements and give the appearance that the light was not an afterthought.
- iv. When lighting is used to enhance architectural features, the lighting should be arranged in a way that emphasizes the architectural features but is still pedestrian orientated. Too much light on the face of the building can detract from architectural features or distort their appearance.
- v. On building facades facing alleys, locate and orient lights at appropriate heights to improve public safety and encourage positive activities in the alleys. (7/03) However, the more intimate nature of the alley and the use of neighboring buildings should be considered when determining the placement, fixture style and lighting level. (E.g.: Consider possible light splash into residential units.) The Board may require a project to include alley lighting in the proposed redevelopment of a building.
- vi. For lighting of signage, see Seattle Municipal Code 23.66.160 Signs and District Rules for Signage.
- vii. Provide down lighting over all building entrances with a minimum light level of 1-foot candle on the pavement surface.

L. Pedestrian Weather Protection - Awnings and Canopies

Rationale, Context and Intent

Awnings and canopies are structures attached to buildings above storefront windows and entrances to provide weather protection. Awnings are light-weight structures constructed of metal framing with fabric or vinyl covering. Canopies are heavier, more permanent structures constructed of rigid materials such as metal or metal framing with glass. (7/99) Awnings, canopies and similar features are useful in providing pedestrian comfort and can add to a building's visual interest. Many contributing and historic buildings feature or have in the past featured awnings or canopies.

Guidelines

- i. Awnings shall be sloped, rather than bubble type. No writing may be placed on the sloping portion of the awning. (12/94) Scalloped or cut-out valances are not acceptable, nor are side panels. (8/93) Return of valances on awnings shall be permitted, but no signage of any kind shall be permitted on valance returns.
- ii. Shiny, high-gloss awning materials are not permitted. Awning colors shall be subdued to ensure compatibility with the character of the District. (7/03)
- iii. Canopies that are compatible in design, scale, materials, color, details, and method of attachment with the building and that do not display a false historical appearance are permitted. (7/03).

- iv. Awnings and canopies covering more than one story are not allowed.
- v. Awnings and canopies must serve a functional purpose, and therefore shall project a minimum of five (5) feet horizontally. (7/03)
- vi. Internally illuminated awnings or canopies are not permitted. Neon is not allowed on awnings or canopies. (7/03)

M. Security Bars and Gates

Rationale, Context and Intent

Pursuant to SMC 23.66.100, the Pioneer Square Preservation District was created, in part, because of its historic and architectural significance, and remarkable business environment. District goals include preserving, protecting, and enhancing the historic character of the area, and encouraging the development of street level pedestrian-oriented businesses that attract citizens and visitors to the neighborhood.

Guidelines

- i. Installation of permanent metal security bars in storefront windows is prohibited. Permanent ornamental gates are permitted in street front entrances where the Board determines added security measures are necessary. Retractable roll down and scissor type gates are permitted only in garage door openings and in alley locations that require high levels of security. (5/96)