



Downtown Design Guidelines - Major Topics/Changes

August 2019

Topic	Major Change	Notes
Reorganization	Consolidates 7 design chapters into one downtown section	Will apply to Port, except for Marine Terminal
Format	More specific requirements, with flexibility where appropriate for applicant to propose innovative designs that meets intent	
Context	Guidelines are geared more for urban development types (such as 5-6 story, mixed use, urban residential). Implements the Downtown Strategy.	e.g., existing MF guidelines are geared more for 3-story walkups
18.120.200s - Site Planning: addresses pedestrian visual qualities of streetscapes and developments affected by building orientation and location, service areas, and access. In addition, addresses site security, residential privacy, and open space.		
Street Fronts	Changes to the location and requirements for designated A and B Pedestrian Oriented Streets and newly designated Downtown Entry Streets, Waterfront Sites, and High Visibility Street Corners	See Designated Streets map and Street Fronts chart
Pedestrian Circulation	Simple requirements that provide good internal pedestrian circulation. Prohibits most external upper story walkways unless they provide for privacy of the building occupants.	
Buildings w/ ground floor residential	Requires buildings set back 10' from ROW or elevated ground floor unit at least 3' above sidewalk, and other privacy provisions	New requirement
Site Planning of Large Lots and Full Block Sites	Developments with two or more buildings require a unified site plan identifying circulation, building configuration, and unifying open space	New requirement
Service Areas (not including solid waste)	Screening required. Service areas must not be visible from the sidewalk and adjacent properties, or located within 20' of a residentially zoned property unless City determines it's the only option. Shall be sited for alley access if available. Locations to be shown on plans early in the process	
Solid Waste	Screening required per landscape code. Locate to avoid entrapment areas. Pedestrian-scale lighting may be required for security. Refers to Engineering Development and Design Standards provisions	Design guidelines can't solve overarching issues with siting solid waste
Multifamily Open Space	Requires 100 SF per unit (or 10% of residential floor area) of open space per unit for new construction.	Open Space is currently only required in the UR zone (15% overall)

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	Site Planning for Security	Several provisions that implement Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles (entrapment areas, visibility, visual obstruction, motorists' view, passive surveillance, access control, territorial definition, and maintainability).	New requirement
18.120.300s - Site Elements: addresses physical characteristics (e.g., size and design) of elements such as landscaping, parking areas, pathways, open spaces, site furniture, and fences.			
	Parking Areas	Perimeter screening still required. Specifically marked pathway must be provided through parking areas (every 4 rows). Two additional feet of pathway required for bumper overhang.	Augments landscaping code
	Public Open Space	New design requirements for when public open space is provided.	New requirements
	Landscaping	Requires applicants demonstrate their landscape plan "addresses and supports" the desired landscape characteristics of the individual Sub-District and identifies those characteristics for each District. Also includes provisions allowing an alternative approach to parking lot perimeter landscaping.	Augments but does not replace landscape code. Enhances character areas in Downtown Strategy
	Walkways and Circulation Elements	Includes minimum widths, safety requirements, and pathway enhancements. Requires essentially a 12' wide sidewalk with trees and pedestrian lights along building fronts where they abut off-street parking lots. Also requires 3' landscape strip, blank wall treatment, or other treatment between a building and a pathway. Requires vertical or horizontal separation between pathways and ground related units for privacy.	New requirements
	Lighting	Establishes minimum, maximum, and preferred lighting levels for different site conditions. Includes provisions for light quality and for luminaire height & mountings.	
	Fences and walls	Chain link and wooden fences prohibited in certain areas. Must not obscure building fronts or attractive site features unless screening service areas. Addresses alcove gates.	
18.120.400s - Building Design: addresses function, quality, and character of building exteriors.			
	Building Character	Requires the applicant demonstrate the project addresses and supports the architectural characteristics of the individual Design Sub-District. In certain transition areas there is flexibility for applicant to choose which district they are in.	New requirement. See Design Sub-District map. Enhances character areas in Downtown Strategy
	Registered Historic Districts and Sites	Improve transparency by including the Secretary of Interior Standards in the Code. Clarifies the review authority for major vs. minor alterations. New construction with a contemporary design character is encouraged so long as the building does not detract from the overall historic character in the District.	See separate handout

	Topic	Major Change	Notes
	Architectural Composition, Massing & Articulation	Provisions to address architectural scale (<i>how buildings relate to one another in terms of size, configuration, and placement.</i>) The guideline offers a variety of ways (not just modulation) to achieve appropriate architectural scale. The measures vary for commercial and residential uses because the layout of interior spaces is usually different. Requires ways to break up buildings longer than 120 feet (roughly ½ block in Downtown) through significant modulation.	
	View Preservation	Roofline modulation required for specific blocks associated with the view from Deschutes Parkway to Mt. Rainier.	Additional zoning code changes to preserve views from designated observation points.
	Streetscape privacy and shading	Special requirements for all developments in the SE Residential Neighborhood District.	Does 18.175 for Infill still apply here?
	Human Scale Building Elements (<i>how buildings relate to a person</i>)	<p>2-4 human scale elements required depending on character area or street designation. One detail from each required: window/entry treatments, building façade details, decorative or textural enhancement.</p> <p>High Visibility Street Corners shall locate a building or structure within 15' of the street corner or be configured with a corner plaza and include special design features.</p> <p>The Guideline notes there is no intention that building character and detail be ornate, they can be simple if finely detailed & manufactured. Building elements and details should be consistent with the building's overall design character (e.g., do not put a "historic" feature on a contemporary styled building.)</p>	
	Pedestrian Oriented Facades and Weather Protection	Describes the transparency and weather protection standards for pedestrian oriented building facades where they are required on A and B pedestrian oriented streets.	
	Materials & Colors	A detailed chart with district specific materials requirements and limitations. At a minimum, stone masonry or architectural concrete shall be used on first floors for non-residential or mixed use buildings.	
	Blank Wall Treatments	Blank walls are prohibited (not just to be minimized) facing a public street, pedestrian-oriented space, common usable open space, or pedestrian pathway unless treated with one of a number of methods listed.	
	Above Ground Parking Garage Design	Requires façade treatment, such as grills or landscaping, of ground floor structured parking near sidewalks. Also requires articulation (not necessarily modulation) of upper story garages to prevent a monolithic appearance.	



Development Codes Overview

These codes may be augmented by design guidelines

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Development codes set a baseline requirement that can be augmented by the design guidelines. These are just some of the main Olympia Municipal Codes (OMC's) or other standards that apply to development projects. Other applicable laws may also apply depending on the project, such as federal ADA or Washington State safe walking routes to schools.

Topic	Development Code	Design Guidelines	Notes
Basic Development Standards (OMC 18.04-18.08)	Sets quantitative requirements (e.g., maximum height, required building setbacks from the property line, impervious surface limits, etc.)	Augment basic standards (e.g., roof modulation, maintain continuity of streetscape by aligning building setbacks)	
Landscaping and Screening (OMC 18.36)	Sets basic requirements (e.g., when landscaping is required, amount of vegetation coverage, use native vegetation or plants suitable to climate, invasive species prohibited, minimum tree size at planting, parking lot landscaping, what should be included on a landscaping plan)	Augment basic standards (e.g., create a natural appearance by using a limited number of plant species)	Landscaping and street trees in the public right of way are covered by the EDDS and OMC 12.44 – Street Trees. Landscaping in stormwater ponds is covered by the Drainage Design and Erosion Control Manual
Parking (OMC 18.38)	Requirements for amount of vehicle or parking stalls required per use, design of parking lots, commercial loading berths, shared parking lots, etc.	Augment basic standards (e.g., parking lots should not be located at the front of the building.)	
Signs (OMC 18.43)	Requirements for the amount, size, and types of signs allowed	Augment basic standards (e.g., requirement not to cover historic elements of a building.)	The sign code includes the design standards for downtown signs.

Building Codes (OMC Title 16 references several applicable codes)	Various codes known collectively as “the building code,” which the City has adopted, as amended by the Washington State Building Code Council, and thereafter amended by the City of Olympia	These can be augmented by design guidelines (e.g., screening mechanical equipment). However, many elements the building code deals with are internal to the structure and not viewable to the public, thus require no design guideline augmentation.	Includes various codes for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Construction ○ Fire Safety ○ Flood resistance ○ Grading ○ Passive Radon Gas Control ○ Sound transmission ○ Mechanical equipment ○ Plumbing ○ Pipe sizing ○ Waste/venting ○ Installation ○ Energy Conservation ○ Manufactured Homes ○ Hazards Mitigation ○ Hazardous Materials ○ Swimming Pool and Spas
Engineering Design & Development Standards (EDDS)	EDDS govern all new construction and upgrading of public facilities, whenever in the right-of-way or on-site for: transportation and related facilities, storm drainage, sewer and water, and parks, recreation, and open space.	The EDDS include design requirements	
Drainage Design and Erosion Control Manual	Various stormwater requirements, including pollution control, sediment and erosion control, hydrologic analysis, and best practices to control flow volumes.	Can be augmented by design guidelines, mainly in terms of green landscaping	



How is this Topic Addressed?

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At a public workshop in April 2017, the public brought up several important issues that are not within the direct purview of the design guidelines. Here is where or how these other issues are addressed:

Topic	How is this addressed by Design Guidelines or Other Codes?
Environmental Quality and Sustainability	Most environmental regulations are in various parts of the municipal code such as the Critical Areas Ordinance (OMC 18.32), Drainage Design & Erosion Control Manual and Engineering Design & Development Standards (EDDS). A separate Shoreline Master Program (SMP) guides development within 200' of the shoreline along Budd Inlet, Capitol Lake, and other designated shorelines of the state. Design guidelines support these other tools by promoting design solutions that address environmental concerns and allow flexibility for environmentally friendly elements such as rain gardens, solar panels, and urban green space.
Safety and Security	<p>The proposed design guidelines address personal safety and security through provisions that adhere to Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles, including: avoid entrapment areas, provide adequate lighting, employ passive surveillance, and encourage street activity. Design guidelines also support the principle that attractive, well-maintained places encourage social interaction and are less likely to attract vandalism or crime. Guidelines can address these objectives by calling for easily maintainable materials, welcoming storefronts, and creating a pleasant environment that encourages friendly social exchange.</p> <p>However, design is only part of a larger program to enhance human safety and comfort in the public realm. The City operates programs such as the Downtown Ambassadors and police Walking Patrol to address real and perceived safety issues. Through a partnership with the Olympia Downtown Alliance the City is also assessing lighting other conditions to identify where public and private investments, including a low-interest loan award, can be focused to improve security and a feeling of safety for all downtown users.</p>
Building Height and Bulk	Building height requirements are in the zoning development code (OMC Title 18) and for areas in the shoreline in the Shoreline Master Program (SMP.) Heights along the water vary from 35' to 65' with a 2-story residential height bonus. Elsewhere in downtown, heights vary from 42' in some areas in the southeast to 75' plus a 2-story residential height bonus in the core. Depending on the proposed location and height of the project, façade articulation techniques in the design guidelines may be required to reduce the perceived scale of large buildings and add visual interest.
Homelessness and Affordable Housing	Design guidelines cannot directly address these issues, however can make development more expensive if they dictate highly expensive building materials, are too restrictive or delay the permitting process. Our aim is not

	<p>to do that. The City is taking many direct steps to address affordable housing and homelessness. A few of the key actions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The City is developing a broad, community-driven Homeless Response Plan; has created a mitigation camping site; and has opened the Plum Street Village – a temporary emergency housing shelter site. • A new Home Fund (sales tax levy) will provide approximately \$2.3m annually to provide housing for the most vulnerable. The City will start to receive this funding in September 2018, and a new Home Fund Coordinator will be hired to help develop and manage a plan for these funds. • A new Homeless Response Coordinator has been hired. This position is responsible for leading development of a homeless response plan, including coordinating immediate and longer-term actions with a variety of community partners and stakeholders to address humanitarian needs; impacts to downtown, businesses and neighborhoods; and public resource needs. • Developing code updates to provide more opportunities for the development of middle size/middle income housing units within our community.
Public Restrooms	Providing public restrooms cannot be readily achieved through design guidelines. The City is working on a separate Sanitation (Public Restroom) Master Plan to guide future restroom development, including a summary of best practices for location, operation and design.
Public Parks	Public parks is not addressed through these design guidelines. Development of public parks is addressed through the Parks Master Plan.
Streetscape Design	The City's Engineering Design & Development Standards (EDDS) establish requirements for sidewalks and streets. While the design guidelines will not address improvements in the public right-of-way, we will coordinate with the Public Works Department to ensure that the design guidelines and streetscape standards work together for maximum effectiveness.
Street Trees	Street tree requirements are in the Engineering Development and Design Standards (EDDS) and OMC 12.44. The City is actively working to ensure future street tree plantings will provide the right tree in the right place.
Public Open Space	Undeveloped public land that is permanently set aside to protect the special natural character of a particular location is not addressed by the design guidelines. This type of public open space may include, but is not limited to, wetlands, wetland buffers, creek, stream or river corridors, forested areas, ravines, bluffs, or other geologically hazardous areas and undeveloped areas within parks.

Overview

The proposed design guidelines include new requirements for open space within multifamily developments. This refers to space intended for use by the residents of a building, rather than the public. The intent is to promote the health and well-being of downtown residents, desirability of downtown as a residential neighborhood, and to relieve pressure on public parks and open spaces.

Residential open space may be in the form of:

Private open space: area designed and intended for *private* residential use; OR

Common open space: area within a development designed and intended for the *common* use or enjoyment of residents, not individually owned nor dedicated for public use.



Outdoor play areas for shared residential use are one type of residential open space. See back for more examples.

Examples:

Rooftop decks, indoor recreation facilities, balconies, plazas, courtyards, gardens, children's play areas, pools, water features.

Current Regulation	Proposed Change
15% of a residential project's area must be "open space." However, this only applies in the Urban Residential (UR) zone (which encompasses much of the SE Downtown Neighborhood area.)	Throughout all of downtown, <i>new</i> multifamily buildings must provide onsite open space of at least 100 sf per dwelling or 10% of residential unit floor area (excluding hallways and common areas). Does not apply to remodeling of existing residential units or additions to existing residential structures. The type of open space provided is flexible. Additional design requirements also apply.

Possible Types of Residential Open Space



Balconies for private residential use



Rooftop Gardens



Indoor recreation rooms



Outdoor plazas

Overview

The City's adopted Comprehensive Plan shifted emphasis from protecting particular views from public streets to protecting and enhancing views from certain public observation points. The plan guides the City to identify important views to be protected from key public observation points through a public process using graphic visualization software. The Downtown Strategy completed this for views related to downtown (a subsequent process will address other citywide views.) The objective was to identify where the City should take steps to protect existing views that were identified as being the most important.


The City looked at over 50 views identified by the public and found the community has already taken steps to preserve 33 of these through shoreline acquisitions or existing regulations. Ten remaining views were selected for further study by using 3-D visualization software. Ultimately, the Downtown Strategy, which was adopted in April of 2017, called for the City to explore steps to protect an additional three views from points shown on the map to the right:


- West Bay Park to Mt. Rainier (#5)
- East Bay Overlook to the Capitol Dome (#9)
- Deschutes Parkway to Mt. Rainier (#10)




What are the Proposed Changes?

Proposed steps involve changes to both the design guidelines and zoning development standards.

West Bay Park to Mt. Rainier		
Current Regulation	Proposed Change	
Describes that a lookout or view corridor to Mt. Rainier must be preserved from the right of way on West Bay Drive.	Establish a specific observation point from which to preserve the view of Mt. Rainier.	
	Remove the 2-story height bonus on Block 123 so that future development will not obstruct the view.	
	Additional design guidelines regarding architectural composition, massing, and articulation to reduce building scale and add visual interest.	

East Bay Lookout to Capitol Dome (and Drum)		
Current Regulation	Proposed Change	
Describes that a lookout or view corridor to the Capitol must be preserved from the right of way on East Bay Drive.	Establish a specific observation point from which to preserve the view of the Capitol Dome and Drum.	
	Remove the 2-story height bonus on Block 122 and reduce the bonus option to the extent necessary on Block 14 so that future development will not obstruct the view.	
	Additional design guidelines regarding architectural composition, massing, and articulation to reduce building scale and add visual interest.	

Deschutes Parkway to Mt. Rainier		
Current Regulation	Proposed Change	
Describes that a lookout or view corridor to Mt. Rainier must be preserved from the right of way on Deschutes Parkway.	Establish a specific observation point from which to preserve the view of Mt. Rainier.	
	Vertical modulation is required for new buildings on Blocks 74, 75, and 84, on the 5 th story and above, along the west face of the building.	
	Additional design guidelines regarding architectural composition, massing, and articulation to reduce building scale and add visual interest.	

Overview

A key objective of the design guidelines is to reinforce the historic character of the downtown core. The Secretary of Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties (SOI) guides all developments in the Historic District and for register properties.

Current Approach

A development application may be subject to the SOI standards only, or, if the change is more substantial, both the SOI plus other applicable design guidelines. The SOI standards are not written in the Code, so transparency is lacking. Also, the review process for minor vs. substantial alterations is not clear upfront.



Proposal

Improve transparency by including the SOI Standards in the Code. Clarify the review authority as outlined below. The downtown design guidelines encourage new construction in the historic district to have a contemporary design character so long as the building does not detract from the overall historic character in the district.

Historic Property Designation	Type of Development	Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation (18.105)	New Downtown Design Guidelines (18.120)	Review Authority
Individually Designated Register Property	Rehabilitation or Minor Alteration	✓		OHC
	Substantial Alteration	✓	✓	JRC
"Contributing" Property in Historic District	Rehabilitation or Minor Alteration	✓		OHC
	Substantial Alteration	✓	✓	JRC
"Non-Contributing" Property in Historic District		✓	✓	JRC
New Construction in Historic District		✓	✓	JRC

OHC = Olympia Heritage Commission

JRC = Joint Review Committee (select members of Heritage Commission and Design Review Board)

Additional Proposals	
1.	Exempt historic properties from the Building Design section of the new downtown design guidelines.
2.	18.105 is updated to include the SOI Standards written out in full (with language to clarify that the most current version of the SOI Standards will supersede.) 18.105 applies to all historic districts.
3.	<p>Include criteria for determining whether a project is a “minor” vs. “substantial” alteration.</p> <p><u>PROPOSED DEFINITIONS:</u></p> <p>“Substantial alteration means:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adding building stories. Except adding one story (e.g.: penthouse) that is setback at least fifteen feet from all building facades facing a public street (not an alley) is considered a minor addition. • Adding new rooms, structures, or spaces to an existing building (not including an existing or former single-family residence) that are visible from a public street (not an alley). • Adding structural building elements to the building façade that alter the exterior appearance of the building facing a public street (not an alley) such as new alcoves, entries, storefronts, porches, balconies, windows, siding etc. • Any other added element to a building visible from a public street (not an alley) that the City may identify as a substantial addition that is not identified as a “minor alteration” below. <p>“Minor alteration” means:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adding new rooms, structures, or spaces to an existing building that are not visible from a public street. • Adding new building rooms, structures, or spaces to an existing or former single-family residence. • One added story (e.g., penthouse) that is setback at least fifteen feet from all building facades facing a public street (not an alley). • Added weather protection such as a canopy, awning, or marquee provided it meets all other applicable guidelines and regulations when installed and when removed.
4.	Create a GIS layer of designated contributing and non-contributing properties as determined by the National Register of Historic Places designation report for the Downtown historic district.



About Design Guidelines

Design Guidelines Address a Variety of Topics

- **Site Planning:** Such as orientation to the street, location of driveways and entries
- **Site Design:** Such as landscaping, lighting, and pedestrian open space
- **Building Design:** Such as character, architectural elements, details, and materials

Example of Various Guidelines

Provide one street tree at least every 40' on center.



How Design Guidelines Differ from Zoning Regulations

Zoning codes typically include development standards that establish maximum building height and bulk and requirements for setbacks, parking, and site access in quantitative terms. Zoning standards are relatively inflexible, yet design guidelines are intended to provide flexibility.

Zoning standards and design guidelines must be consistent and not contradict one another. Topics such as screening, landscaping, and signage may be covered by both zoning development standards and design guidelines. In such cases, zoning standards state the basic requirements which are added to by provisions in the design guidelines.

One way to think about it is that both zoning standards and design guidelines are tools to help shape new development - analogous to the tools needed to carve a wooden sculpture. The zoning standards correspond to a chain saw making the big cuts that establish the overall form (e.g., maximum building height, number of parking stalls), while the design guidelines are more like a set of chisels that the sculptor uses to refine the details that give the sculpture its character (e.g., roofline modulation, orientation of parking on the site).

Design Guidelines Can Allow Flexibility Along with Clear, Consistent Direction

Ideally, design guidelines promote positive communication between the project applicant, the reviewing body (the City's Design Review Board (DRB) for downtown projects), and the public. The guidelines should clearly articulate expectations and promote creativity for how to meet them. At the same time, the City needs to be able to say no to proposals that do not meet the minimum requirements or intent.

The proposed method for Olympia's Downtown Design Guidelines to meet these objectives is for each major topic to include:

- An intent statement that clearly identifies the guideline's objective.
- A requirement that clearly states a minimum level of performance that can be objectively evaluated. In some cases, this may be a numerical standard.
- Provisions that allow for alternate solutions that achieve the guideline's intent.