

## About Design Guidelines

Design guidelines are regulations applied to development projects. They are intended to upgrade physical attractiveness, be compatible with neighboring properties, promote safety, security, and livability, be environmentally responsible, and promote health and pedestrian activity.

## 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



## **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.