



Urban Design Element

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Urban Design Element

discussion

As Seattle grows and changes, urban design policies can help conserve and enhance aspects of the physical environment that make Seattle special to its residents and visitors. These aspects include: its layered, well-defined and diverse neighborhoods; compact, intimate walkable scale; the mixing of uses; close relationship with natural systems; and its parks, streets, and public spaces. Urban design also attempts to direct growth to produce positive outcomes while reducing the negative impacts of change, and guides the fit of old with the new.

Urban Design policies can raise the standards for how private and public developments contribute to the appearance and quality of the city.

Urban design policies build on the ideas and principles outlined in this Plan's urban village strategy and provide an additional tool for implementing the strategy.

Through zoning regulations and design review, the City helps shape the appearance of individual projects. The designation of several historic districts in the city conserves the character of those valued neighborhoods. The way the City builds and maintains major infrastructure, including parks and roads, will continue to define key public spaces and the connections among them.

Urban design policies described here provide a citywide context that will give a coherent approach to the City's future actions in regulating, building and maintaining the city. The policies reflect the diversity of neighborhoods and populations and are part of building equitable communities across the city. The policies also address:

- How to reflect the city's natural setting and features in the shape of new public infrastructure and private development.
- How to fit new development into the city's built form, including the street grid and neighborhood character, that has evolved over 150 years.

- How to enhance the visual and functional qualities of public open spaces and streets.

goal

- UDG1** Maintain and enhance Seattle's character and sense of place, including its built environment and how it respects its natural setting, as the city grows and changes.

A

Natural Environment

natural environment policies

- UD1** Encourage the preservation, protection, and restoration of natural features and land forms such as bluffs, beaches, streams, and remaining evergreen forests that give Seattle its unique sense of place.
- UD2** Encourage design that provides physical and visual connections to the natural environment surrounding Seattle, with an emphasis on shorelines and public views of the Olympic and Cascade Mountains.
- UD3** Encourage design that recognizes natural systems and integrates ecological functions such as stormwater filtration or retention with other infrastructure and development projects.
- UD4** Respect topography, water and natural systems in the built environment, such as by using development regulations or design to "step up or down" hillsides to accommodate significant changes in elevation, or by siting tall buildings to harmonize with the city's topography.
- UD5** Increase public access to water---both physical and visual.
- UD6** Encourage designs for buildings and public spaces that maximize access to sunlight and provide protection from inclement weather conditions.



- UD7** Extend landscape strategies to typically under-designed sites such as surface parking lots, rooftops and around freeways.
- UD8** Look for ways to connect new developments to the public open space system.
- UD9** Connect open spaces in a citywide network.
- UD10** Design landscaping strategies that can contribute to urban food production.
- UD11** Promote the use of indigenous plants in landscaping to emphasize the region's natural identity.

B**Built Environment****built environment policies**

- UD12** Design public infrastructure and private developments to emphasize the positive aspects of existing block and street patterns.
- UD13** Integrate new housing in single-family neighborhoods in ways that allow flexibility in the size and design of units, recognizing the character and scale of existing neighborhoods.
- UD14** Design streets to give them distinctive identities based on a citywide street hierarchy.
- UD15** Design streets as public spaces by encouraging active, rich ground floor facades, especially along important walking routes.
- UD16** Preserve, strengthen, and, as opportunities permit, reconnect Seattle's street grid as a means to knit together neighborhoods and to connect various districts of the city.
- UD17** Develop a system of street designs that reflect a street's function, right-of-way width, adjoining uses and opportunities for providing open space and green infrastructure, such as storm water infiltration.

- UD18** Design streets in urban villages to be pedestrian-friendly by means such as respecting street grids, providing connections between major activity centers, incorporating public open spaces, and having commercial buildings with retail and active uses that abut the sidewalk.
- UD19** Design multifamily areas as attractive residential communities with high quality residential buildings, appropriately scaled landscaping, setbacks, street amenities, and limited commercial uses that support the local population.
- UD21** Use building forms and height to enhance desirable city patterns of attractive and walkable neighborhoods.
- UD22** Use groupings of tall buildings, instead of solitary towers, to enhance topographic form or define districts.
- UD23** Allow taller buildings in key locations, such as close to light rail transit stations, to provide visual focus and define activity centers.
- UD24** Design tall buildings with setbacks to provide sunlight to public streets, parks, or open spaces, and access to major public views or view corridors.
- UD25** Locate and site tall structures in ways that respect natural surroundings and key natural features, such as by having lower building heights near major water bodies.
- UD26** For buildings that are not tall, reduce setbacks from the street, while maintaining adequate sidewalk width for pedestrians, to encourage better scale relationships between horizontal width of streets and vertical walls of buildings.



C

Public Space

public space policies

- UD27** Encourage new approaches to street design that expand the role of streets as public spaces.

- UD28** Encourage well-defined outdoor spaces that are of adequate size to serve potential users and that are well integrated with adjoining buildings and spaces.

- UD29** Consider the needs of growing demographic and ethnic groups in the design of public space.

- UD30** Connect large parks and open spaces to each other and to population concentrations, such as urban villages.

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