

## INFO SHEET -- International Special Review District (ISRD) Design Guidelines

*A new set of Draft Design Guidelines for the [International Special Review District](#) has been developed through a community-focused planning process, led by City staff, in partnership with consultants from Schemata Workshop and a work group of community members. The Draft Design Guidelines include design guidance for location-specific areas of the Chinatown International District and additional design guidance for building alterations and new construction.*

### What are the ISRD Design Guidelines?

The Design Guidelines are a set of design standards for the International Special Review District (ISRD) that contain suggested guidance for alterations and development in the District. The ISRD is one of eight historic districts in the City of Seattle. It was established in 1973 to promote and preserve the cultural, economic, and historical features of the neighborhood, particularly those features derived from its Asian American heritage.

### When are the ISRD Design Guidelines used?

Changes to buildings and properties located within the boundaries of the ISRD require that a Certificate of Approval be issued by the ISRD Board and the Director of the Department of Neighborhoods. The ISRD Board and staff use the ISRD Design Guidelines and [Seattle Municipal Code Chapter 23.66](#) – Special Review Districts for evaluating proposed changes and new development.

In addition to the Guidelines, the Board considers the following criteria for proposed exterior alterations and treatments, rehabilitation projects and new construction projects: [Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation](#) with Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings, and the complete series of National Park Service Preservation Briefs. The Board also considers the age, architectural and historical integrity of the building. "Integrity" refers to the extent of the alterations or changes that have been made to the building over time.

### What types of changes require a Certificate of Approval?

These are some of the most requested changes that require a Certificate of Approval to be issued, before the City of Seattle will issue other permits:

<i>Change of use</i>	<i>Window treatments (decorative film, blinds)</i>
<i>Signs on buildings or within windows</i>	<i>Masonry cleaning or repairs</i>
<i>Colors/Materials</i>	<i>Rooftop mechanical equipment</i>
<i>Exterior building or site alteration</i>	<i>Artwork or temporary installations</i>
<i>Awnings and canopies</i>	<i>New construction and/or demolition</i>
<i>Doors and windows</i>	<i>Sidewalk cafes, outdoor furniture or landscaping</i>

### Who is expected to use the ISRD Design Guidelines?

The primary purpose of the ISRD Design Guidelines is to serve as a tool for the community to advocate for high quality design that contributes to the cultural and historical character of the

neighborhood. It is intended to be used by a variety of people including business owners, property owners, community members, design professionals, ISRD Board members, City of Seattle and other public agency staff. To ensure that businesses are in compliance with the historic district regulations, property owners and managers should inform new tenants about the district requirements and inform new tenants that a Certificate of Approval may be required before changes are made.

**Structure of the draft Design Guidelines** – The Guidelines include sections that address the following categories:

**Districtwide Guidance** - applies to the District as a whole, and covers guidance for: Storefront Design, Site Design, Signs, Lighting, Awnings and Canopies and Safety and Security Measures.

**Building Design** – applies to both old and new buildings of all sizes throughout the District. This includes renovations and improvements as well as new construction guidance.

**Location Specific Guidance** – these sections include specific guidance East and West of I-5, acknowledging differences in the types of buildings and characteristics throughout the ISRD.

**Document Resources** - this section includes a glossary of commonly used terms and references to planning documents and historic resources

### **How do I apply for a Certificate of Approval?**

#### **Step 1: Contact the Board Coordinator**

We recommend that applicants contact the ISRD Board Coordinator, Rebecca Frestedt, ([rebecca.frestedt@seattle.gov](mailto:rebecca.frestedt@seattle.gov) or 206-684-0226), to discuss ideas for proposed changes, new development and associated application or briefing materials. The Coordinator and Board can provide design guidance and feedback during the planning stages.

#### **Step 2: Review instructions on the ISRD website**

The [ISRD website](#) includes helpful information for submitting a successful application, including a “how-to” video.

#### **Step 3: Submit application**

Prepare and submit [Certificate of Approval application](#) materials online through the [Seattle Services Portal \(“Accela”\)](#).

**Step 4:** Refer to ISRD full Design Guidelines document for information about next steps following application.

If you have questions or would like to request additional, translated information about the ISRD Design Guidelines, please call or email the ISRD Coordinator (contact information listed above). Interpretation services are available at no charge. Please state the language requested, in English, to request assistance.