



The City of Seattle

Landmarks Preservation Board

Mailing Address: PO Box 94649 Seattle WA 98124-4649
Street Address: 700 5th Ave Suite 1700

COLUMBIA CITY LANDMARK DISTRICT DESIGN GUIDELINES

HISTORY

Both Columbia City and its neighbor, Seattle, first boomed as mill towns. But, while Seattle became dominant in the region, Columbia City was annexed by its larger neighbor just fourteen years after its incorporation. Nonetheless, Columbia City maintained its identity and remains a distinct and historic part of Seattle.

From the time of its incorporation in 1893 until its annexation by Seattle in 1907, Columbia City prospered from logging and the railroad. The Seattle, Renton, and Southern Railway stretched the seven miles from Seattle to Columbia City in 1890, establishing a profitable two-way freight business. Columbia City shipped surplus lumber to a Seattle that was rebuilding after the 1889 fire and Columbia City needed the finished goods Seattle could provide. Much of Columbia City's lumber, as well as goods from Seattle, went into its own buildings and lakeshore summer residences.

Columbia City's growth increased when C. D. Hillman used the railway to hasten real estate sales. From 1900 to 1907, Seattle and the surrounding areas grew rapidly and brought good economic times to Columbia City. Many new buildings were built along Rainier Avenue South, most of which still stand.

These buildings had stores on the ground floor and a meeting hall or dance floor upstairs. The rent supplied by the meetings, dances, and occasional apartments made construction of many of the buildings possible. As the forests around Columbia City fell under the loggers' axes, the people of Columbia City made plans to drain Wetmore Slough and make the town into a seaport as part of the 1917 Lake Washington Ship Canal development farther north. The port never developed, and the slough was filled by 1920.

With money donated by Andrew Carnegie, a branch public library was built in 1914 above a ravine deeded to the City in 1892 as a park. Although the ravine's creek now flows through sewer lines, the park remains, providing Columbia City with its "village green." Although community concern for safety resulted in the removal in 1936 of the railway from the center of Rainier Avenue South, Columbia City continued to grow along with Seattle

INTRODUCTION & POLICY

Because Columbia City is one of the few areas in Seattle to retain an individual identity or consistent architectural or historic character, it has been designated as a landmark district by municipal ordinance and entered in the State and National Registers of Historic Places. Columbia City is significant because it contains many buildings of special character that date

**Administered by The Historic Preservation Program
The Seattle Department of Neighborhoods**

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back to the turn of the century. Designation of the District encourages continued interest and support for Columbia City by focusing attention on the identity of the areas, preserving its significant qualities, creating a mechanism for enlisting broad community involvement in decision-making, and providing for compliance with the Columbia City Historic Preservation Plan (1978) and Columbia City/Hillman City/Genesee Neighborhood Plan (1998).

Columbia City today is a pleasant mixture of commercial buildings, churches, apartments, and houses. At its core is a small park or "village green", a place for the use and enjoyment of the entire community. A significant number of buildings within Columbia City embody distinctive characteristics of early twentieth century architecture and possess integrity of location, compatibility of design, scale, use of materials, and impart a feeling of association and sense of place.

In accordance with Seattle Municipal Code 25.20.(SMC 25.20) no changes may be made (including but not limited to alternation, demolition, construction, reconstruction, restoration, remodeling, painting, or signing) to the exterior of any property, building or structure in the District, which is visible from a public street, alley or right-of-way, or construct a new building or structure in the District without first receiving a Certificate of Approval, issued by the city of Seattle Landmarks Preservation Board (Board).

Applications for Certificates of Approval may be obtained from the Coordinator in the Department of Neighborhoods, Historic Preservation Program, 700 Fifth Ave, Suite 1700, PO Box 94649, Seattle, WA 98124-4649 (telephone 206-684-0226). Applications are reviewed by the Columbia City Landmark District Review Committee (Review Committee) which makes recommendations to the Board for issuance or denial of Certificates of Approval. The following is a brief statement of the procedures involved in acquiring such certificates and guidelines upon which decisions to issue or deny them will be based. Existing buildings, structures, colors, and signs may be maintained without the requirement for a Certificate of Approval, so long as the repair or replacement is made in-kind.

The Review Committee and Board will respond to questions or proposals concerning development in the District. They will attempt to encourage new ideas and will, in working with the people involved, keep in mind the basic purposes of the District's creating ordinance, these being to protect the historical and architectural values and significance of the District; and to create and maintain a continuity of the architectural characteristics, arrangement and general design of the buildings.

The preservation of existing historically and architecturally significant resources is highly desired. The rehabilitation standards established by the Secretary of the Interior shall serve as guidelines. The intent of the Standards is to assist the long-term preservation of a property's significance through the preservation of historic materials and features.

PURPOSE/INTENT

The purposes and goals of the Columbia City Landmark District ("District"), and the intent of these Guidelines, are:

1. To preserve, protect, enhance, and perpetuate those elements of the District's cultural, social, economic, architectural, and historic heritage;

2. To foster community and civic pride in the significance and accomplishments of the past;
3. To stabilize or improve the historic authenticity, economic vitality, and aesthetic value of the District;
4. To promote and encourage continued private ownership and use of buildings and other structures;
5. To encourage continued City interest and support in the District; and
6. To promote the local identity of the area.

CRITERIA

The Review Committee and Board shall consider the following criteria in the use of its Guidelines:

1. The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Structures;
2. The criteria of the Columbia City Landmark District Ordinance(Seattle Municipal Code Chapter 25.20) and
3. The following categories of properties of the Columbia City Landmark District:
 - A contributing building, site, structure, or object was present during the period in which the District attained its significance, has an identifiable architectural or historic significance to either the development of Columbia City or the City of Seattle, and reflects its historic integrity or has the ability to convey its significance.
 - A non-contributing building, site, structure or object either was not present during the period during which the District attained it significance, or due to alterations, additions, or other changes, no longer possesses historic integrity reflecting its architectural or historic character.

GUIDELINES/GENERAL

In addition to the Secretary of Interior Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Structures, and the criteria of the Columbia City Landmark District Ordinance (Seattle Municipal Code 25.20), the Review Committee and Board shall consider the following guidelines when making decisions regarding the District:

1. Scale should be compatible with existing development in the District.
2. The District should be pedestrian-oriented on the street level.
3. The self-contained, small-town quality of the District should be maintained.
4. A mixture of uses should be encouraged within the District, for example:
 - a. Street-level uses: restaurants, retail, commercial, and public service offices.

b. Upper-floors uses: restaurants, residential, professional offices, and commercial.

5. The inventory of contributing buildings, spaces, historic uses, historic views, and present uses should be respected and maintained.

6. New construction should be compatible with existing development in terms of scale, materials, and setback.

7. Reproduction or recreation of earlier buildings is not desired.

8. Emphasis should be given to maintaining the character of, and enhancing compatibility with, contributing buildings.

GUIDELINES/SPECIFIC

The following specific guidelines shall be used by the Review Committee and Board when making decisions:

1. Scale of Buildings and Structures. The scale of all structures, in relationship to other structures and spaces is important. The scale should continue to be small and relatively uniform.

2. Building Materials and Fixtures. Integrity of structure, form and decoration should be respected. Building facades should be brick, wood, or other materials that are in keeping with the historic character of the District. Exterior light fixtures shall be in keeping with the historic character of the District.

3. Building Surface Treatments. Approved surface treatments shall be consistent with the historic qualities of the District. No paint shall be applied to unpainted masonry surfaces. Painted surfaces shall be:

a. Repainted with the original historic color(s) of the building, provided that the business or property owner obtains a professional color analysis; or

b. Repainted with subdued colors that are appropriate and consistent with the building and other buildings in the District. Local paint stores have an "historic colors" palette that may be useful as a guide. The Board Coordinator also has a palette of historic colors that may be used as reference.

4. Storefront. Building facades should have a greater proportion of window and door openings than wall spaces on pedestrian levels. Any exterior façade alteration shall respect the original architectural integrity of the storefront. Recessed entryways and/or alcoves shall be maintained for existing street-level storefronts. Original fenestration shall be preserved (i.e., windows, transom areas, and door design). Storefront materials should be brick, wood, concrete, and tile, or a combination thereof.

5. Transparency. To provide street-level interest that enhances the pedestrian environment, street level uses shall have highly visible linkages with the street. Windows at street-level shall permit visibility into the business, and visibility shall not be significantly obscured by security bars or gates, frosting, etching, painting, extensive signage, window darkening film or mirrored film, window treatments, or other means.

The intent is to encourage pedestrians to focus on the products or services offered, rather than the signage.

6. Landscaping. Landscaping is encouraged but not required. Approval of the use of landscaping, including window boxes and planters, shall be based on the applicant's desire and ability to maintain the landscaping.

7. Street Use. Any work that affects a street, alley, sidewalk, or other public right-of-way, shall be reviewed by the Review Committee and Board. Emphasis shall be placed on creating and maintaining pedestrian-oriented public spaces and rights-of-way. Street trees and other plant materials that add human enjoyment to the District shall be encouraged. Decorative treatments within the sidewalk, including special paving patterns and building entryway tiling shall be preserved. The use of alleys for services and public-oriented activities shall be encouraged.

8. Street Furniture. All elements of street furniture, including but not limited to street lights, benches, trash receptacles, and planters, shall be reviewed by the Review Committee and Board as to their specific compatibility with the District. Street furniture must be appropriately sized and sited to afford generous provisions for pedestrian flow.

9. Parking. To mitigate the potential impacts of required accessory parking and loading on the District, the Review Committee and Board may review parking requirements for individual building rehabilitation projects or changes of use in existing buildings. The Board may write a letter of support to the Department of Planning and Development Director for a reduction in required parking or loading for a specific building rehabilitation project, new construction, or change of use in an existing building if the Review Committee and Board find that reasonable application of the parking or loading standards will adversely affect the character of the District or will not further District goals.

10. Awnings/Canopies/Marquees. Marquees, awnings, and canopies will be encouraged at street level. Shiny, high-gloss materials are not appropriate. Distinctive architectural features shall not be covered, nor shall installation damage the structure. Awnings may be installed on upper levels where appropriate.

11. Signs. All signs on or hanging from buildings or windows, or applied to windows, are subject to review and approval by the Review Committee and Board. Sign applications will be evaluated according to the overall impact, size, shape, texture, lettering style, method of attachment, color, and lighting in relation to the use of the building, the building and street where the sign will be located, and the other signs and other buildings in the District. The primary reference will be to the average pedestrian's eye-level view, although views into or down the street from adjacent buildings will be an integral feature of any review.

The regulations in Seattle Municipal Code Chapter 23.55 (Signs) and the following guidelines shall apply to signs in the District. The provisions of these guidelines apply to at least the following: (1) any sign located out-of-doors; (2) indoor signs located within three feet of a window and visible from the street, sidewalk or other public place; and (3) "place of business" identification signs.

These provisions are not intended to apply to signs that are to be displayed for only a limited time or to draw attention to short-term occurrences such as farmers markets, street fairs, sales, special offerings, particular seasonal observances, or to merchandise in customary window displays.

The intent of sign regulations is to ensure that signs relate physically and visually to their location; that signs reflect the character and unique nature of the business; that signs do not hide, damage, or obstruct the architectural elements of the building; that signs be oriented toward and promote a pedestrian environment; and that the products or services offered be the focus, rather than the signs.

a. Window Signs and Hanging Signs. Generally, painted or vinyl letters in storefront windows and single-faced, flat surfaced painted wood signs are preferred. Extruded aluminum or plastics are discouraged and may not be allowed. Window signs shall not cover a large portion of the window so as to be out of scale with the window, storefront, or facade.

b. Blade Signs. Blade signs (double-faced projecting signs hanging perpendicular to the building), that are consistent in design with District goals are encouraged. Blade signs shall be installed in a manner that is in keeping with other approved blade signs in the District. They shall not hide, damage, or obscure the architectural elements of the building. The size should be appropriately scaled for the building.

c. Symbolic Three-Dimensional Signs. Symbolic three-dimensional signs, such as a shaving mug, barber pole, pawn shop symbol, or other symbols illustrating the product being sold on the premises are acceptable provided they meet other sign guidelines. Signs shall reflect the character and use within.

d. Off-Premise Signs. Off-premise signs are prohibited except where areas have been reserved for groups of signs or for signs that identify the District as a whole as approved by the Board.

e. Upper Floor Signs. Signs conforming to the requirements of subsection (a) above shall be allowed on windows of upper floors as applicable.

f. Sandwich Board or "A-Frame" Signs. These types of signs are not allowed in Columbia City pursuant to Seattle Municipal Code 23.55.012.

g. Sign Lighting. Sign lighting should be subdued and incandescent. Back-lit signs are prohibited. Signs that flash, blink, vary in intensity, revolve or are otherwise in motion or appear to be in motion shall not be permitted.

h. Neon Signs. Neon may be permitted where judged appropriate on a case-by-case basis. Size, letter style, color, intensity and overall impact of the neon sign shall be evaluated for compatibility with the other signs and buildings in the District. If a plexiglass backing is proposed, it shall be clear and colorless. Neon signs should be designed to reflect the unique nature of the use within the building. Mass-produced neon signs are strongly discouraged.

The number of allowable neon signs shall be limited to one for each 10 linear feet of business frontage or portion thereof. Signs need not be spaced one per 10 feet, but may be clustered, provided the grouping does not obscure visibility into the business. Permitted neon signs may be located in transom windows. Neon is permitted only as signage and shall not be used as decorative trim.

12. Additions to Existing Buildings

a. All new additions, penthouses, and building systems equipment shall be located to allow the architectural and historic qualities of the building to be dominant when viewed from the public right-of-way or other primary viewpoints.

b. Although additions to historic buildings are not discouraged, they should be located to maintain the integrity of the primary facade. Additions shall not be attached to the primary façade. It is generally inappropriate to construct a story that is a full-floor addition.

c. Building additions should be compatible with the massing, scale, form, fenestration and materials of the original building. However, an addition should be designed to be recognized as a product of its own time and should be distinguishable from the historic building.

13. New Construction

a. Siting. New construction shall be compatible with historic buildings in terms of the setback, orientation, spacing, and distance from adjacent buildings.

i. Commercial (Including mixed-use)

A. Orientation

1. Commercial buildings adjacent to public open space, including Columbia Park and the Columbia Library grounds, should front on and relate to the street(s) and the public open spaces through, including but not limited to, the use of: (a) entryways, windows, pedestrian scale site lighting, awnings, and signage that clearly identify uses and shops but that are scaled to the pedestrian; (b) site furniture, artwork, or amenities such as fountains, benches, pergolas, and kiosks; and (c) landscaping that screens undesirable elements or that enhances the space and architecture.

2. At the District's primary intersections (South Edmunds, South Ferdinand and South Hudson Sts), corner developments should feature angled corner entrances that foster pedestrian activity and reinforce historic precedent and the importance of the intersections.

B. Setback. Because commercial street facades are uniformly located at the front property lines, there is a strong street edge definition in the District. Continuous street walls with little or no ground-level setbacks are the historical precedent.

ii. Residential (Including multi-family)

A. Orientation

1. Primary facades and main entrances shall front on the street. Garages located on primary elevations are discouraged.

2. Residential buildings adjacent to public open space, including Columbia Park and the Columbia Library grounds, should front on the public open spaces and relate to the open space through the use of entryways, porches, and permeable landscaping. Fences are discouraged.

B. Setback. Residential buildings should maintain setbacks set by adjacent buildings and historic precedent.

b. Massing/Scale. Massing, or physical bulk and size, of all new buildings in the District must be consistent with the massing of existing historic buildings.

i. Commercial

A. Height. New developments exceeding the typical one to three story height of the District's historic buildings should honor the scale, massing, and proportion of the adjacent buildings.

ii. Residential

A. Height/Width. New construction that exceeds the height and width of adjacent buildings should be designed to be compatible by breaking up the mass of the building to conform to widths of residential historic buildings in the District.

c. Form. The form, or overall shape, of new construction should relate to neighboring historic buildings and promote a visual sense of continuity. Unusual building and roof forms are discouraged.

i. Commercial

A. Roof Form

1. Design rooflines to reflect the traditional roof configurations found on historic commercial buildings within the District.
2. Detailing of the parapets of commercial buildings with cornices and stepping is preferred.

ii. Residential

A. Roof Form. Design and maintain rooflines to reflect traditional roof configurations and pitches found on historic residential buildings in the District.

d. Facade Composition. Use a solid-to-void ratio, or window-to-wall ratio, that is similar to that which is found on historic buildings within the block and throughout the District. Façade design must provide visual interest (depth and relief) and avoid large unbroken surface areas.

i. Commercial

A. Windows. Alignment, proportions and groupings of windows on upper floors should relate to the ground-floor building elements, as well as be sympathetic to the fenestration patterns of the historic building stock within the District.

B. Storefronts/Doors

1. For compatibility with the small town character of the District's commercial storefronts, design street-facing walls with multiple bays and entryways to develop an architectural rhythm consistent with other commercial buildings. Long uninterrupted walls shall be avoided.
2. To provide street-level interest that enhances the pedestrian environment, the ground floor shall have highly visible linkages with the street. The ground floor of new construction with street frontage should have generous storefront windows.
3. Canopies and awnings are encouraged.

ii. Residential

A. Windows and Doors

1. The relationship of width to height of windows and doors and their placement on the façade should reflect the same relationship found on other residential historic buildings within the District.

2. Window and door casing and trim should be designed with depth and visual relief.

e. Materials, Colors and Finishes. Materials commonly used on historic buildings in the District are preferred. Colors should be subdued and consistent with the historic buildings within the District.

i. Commercial

- A. Building facades should be brick, wood, stone, and stucco, or a combination thereof.
- B. Storefront materials should be brick, wood, concrete, stone, glass or tile.
- C. Wood windows and doors are preferred. Metal windows and storefront systems will be reviewed for compatibility with neighboring historic buildings. Vinyl and other synthetic materials are discouraged.

ii. Residential

- A. Building facades should be clad in stucco, brick, or wood clapboard, shiplap or shingle siding, or a combination thereof. Synthetic materials and faux wood graining are discouraged.
- B. Wood and metal-clad windows are preferred. Vinyl windows are discouraged.

Adopted by the Landmarks Preservation Board on December 6, 2006

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR'S STANDARDS FOR REHABILITATION

In addition to the Columbia City Landmark District Ordinance and Guidelines, the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation with Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings, and the complete series of Historic Buildings Preservation Briefs developed by the National Park Service shall serve as guidelines for proposed exterior alterations and treatments, rehabilitation projects, and new construction.

Rehabilitation is an approach to the treatment of historic properties. It acknowledges the need to alter or add to a historic property to meet continue or changing uses while retaining the property's historic character.

Following are the ten Standards:

1. A property will be used as it was historically or be given a new use that requires minimal change to its distinctive materials, features, spaces, and spatial relationships.
2. The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.
3. Each property will be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or elements from other historic properties, will not be undertaken.
4. Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right will be retained and preserved.

5. Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.
6. Deteriorated historic features will be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture, and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.
7. Chemical or physical treatments, if appropriate, will be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatments that cause damage to historic materials will not be used.
8. Archeological resources will be protected and preserved in place. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken.
9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.
10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction will be undertaken in such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.