

# 12

## URBAN DESIGN <sup>1</sup>

### GOAL:

- 12 Enhance Portland as a livable city, attractive in its setting and dynamic in its urban character by preserving its history and building a substantial legacy of quality private developments and public improvements for future generations.**

### POLICIES & OBJECTIVES:

#### 12.1 Portland's Character

Enhance and extend Portland's attractive identity. Build on design elements, features and themes identified with the City. Recognize and extend the use of City themes that establish a basis of a shared identity reinforcing the individual's sense of participation in a larger community.

#### Objectives:

- A.** Give form to the City and extend the intimate and human scale that typifies Portland. Preserve public access to light and air by managing and shaping the mass, height and bulk of new development. Retain the variety of alternative routes between locations that is produced by using a small block size. Focus new development at locations where necessary services already exist such as near transit stations and along transit streets. <sup>2</sup>
- B.** Preserve and enhance the character of Portland's neighborhoods. Encourage the development of attractive and unique characteristics which aid each neighborhood in developing its individual identity.
- C.** Enhance the sense Portlanders have that they are living close to nature. Improve access to the City's rivers, lakes, creeks and sloughs. Establish a system of trails that connect Portland's urbanized areas with nearby woods, forests, meadows, wetlands and riparian areas. Increase the degree to which natural areas and public open spaces penetrate the City. Extend forest and water corridors and join them to provide a network of fish and wildlife habitat areas that mesh with the City's parks, open spaces and circulation system for pedestrians. Design new development to enhance the natural environment that is so much a part of Portland's character.
- D.** Expand the use of street furniture. As new street furniture is needed, incorporate Portland design themes into its design. Examples include the City's ornamental drinking fountains, street lighting standards and other features that are designed specifically for this City. Opportunities for the employment of such motifs include utility hole covers, water meter covers, bus shelters and street signs.
- E.** Integrate into private and public development projects appropriate thematic design elements that reinforce Portland's desired identity. Examples of design themes include "The City of Roses," the spirit of Portlandia, the Great Blue Heron, ornamental street lighting standards, basalt street pavers, bridges and bridge crossings, gateways, fountains and water features, which identify or enhance Portland's character as an attractive and unique place.

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<sup>1</sup> Added by Ordinance No. 166786; Readopted by Ordinance No. 167054

<sup>2</sup> Amended by Ordinance No. 177028, October 2002

- F. Encourage innovative design solutions in private development projects that add diversity and depth to Portland's character. New development is an opportunity to add to Portland's character giving themes.
- G. Extend urban linear features such as linear parks, park blocks and transit malls. Celebrate and enhance naturally occurring linear features such as rivers, creeks, sloughs and ridge-lines. Tie public attractions, destinations and open spaces together by locating them in proximity to these linear features. Integrate the growing system of linear features into the City's transportation system, including routes and facilities for pedestrians, bicyclists and boaters.
- H. Preserve and enhance existing public viewpoints, scenic sites and scenic corridors. As new development occurs, take advantage of opportunities to create new views of Portland's rivers, bridges, the surrounding mountains and hills, and the Central City skyline.
- I. Encourage the use of materials and a quality of finish work which reinforce the sense of this City as one that is built for beauty and to last. Reflect this desire in both public and private development projects.

## 12.2 Enhancing Variety

Promote the development of areas of special identity and urban character. Portland is a city built from the aggregation of formerly independent settlements. The City's residential, commercial and industrial areas should have attractive identities that enhance the urbanity of the City.

### Objectives:

- A. Promote the use of strong design features located in distinct areas of the City that help to define the area's character. Developers should consider the character enhancing role of color and light.
- B. Enhance the residential scale of Portland's neighborhoods while accommodating the growth allowed by the City's Comprehensive Plan. Encourage the development of a distinct and attractive urban identity in each of Portland's neighborhoods. As each new community plan is created, give consideration to how it links to and coordinates with urban design elements of adjacent areas.
- C. Foster the development of an attractive urban character along Portland's commercial streets and in its commercial districts. Accommodating pedestrians as shoppers and visitors in commercial areas is a major priority of development projects. Commercial areas should allow the development of a mixture of uses, including residential uses. Add new building types to established areas with care and respect for the context that past generations of builders have provided.

## 12.3 Historic Preservation

Enhance the City's identity through the protection of Portland's significant historic resources. Preserve and reuse historic artifacts as part of Portland's fabric. Encourage development to sensitively incorporate preservation of historic structures and artifacts.

### Objectives:

- A. Preserve and accentuate historic resources as part of an urban environment that is being reshaped by new development projects.
- B. Support the preservation of Portland's historic resources through public information, advocacy and leadership within the community as well as through the use of regulatory tools.
- C. Maintain a process that creates opportunities for those interested in the preservation of Portland's significant historic resources to participate in the review of development projects that propose to alter or remove historic resources.
- D. Maintain and periodically update the inventory of Portland's potentially significant historic resources.

- E. Protect potentially significant historic structures from demolition until the City can determine the significance of the structure and explore alternatives to demolition.
- F. Preserve artifacts from structures and sites that are historically, architecturally and/or culturally significant and seek to reintroduce these artifacts into the City's streetscape and building interiors.

#### **12.4 Provide for Pedestrians**

Portland is experienced most intimately by pedestrians. Recognize that auto, transit and bicycle users are pedestrians at either end of every trip and that Portland's citizens and visitors experience the City as pedestrians. Provide for a pleasant, rich and diverse experience for pedestrians. Ensure that those traveling on foot have comfortable, safe and attractive pathways that connect Portland's neighborhoods, parks, water features, transit facilities, commercial districts, employment centers and attractions.

##### **Objectives:**

- A. Providing for pedestrians should be a primary mode of transportation throughout the City. Ensure that the safety and convenience of pedestrians are not compromised by transportation improvements aimed at motor vehicle traffic. Movement patterns for pedestrians should contribute to Portland's sense of community and provide for connections between areas of the City.
- B. Enhance the environment occupied by Portland's pedestrians. Seek to enrich these places with designs that express the pleasure and hold the pleasant surprises of urban living.
- C. Provide Portland's sidewalks with buffering from auto traffic and auto parking areas; provide trees that will shade sidewalks on hot days; provide sidewalks of adequate width to accommodate the pedestrians that future development is expected to generate; provide convenient connections from sidewalks to parks, developments, and attractions; and ensure that the pedestrian circulation system is safe and accessible to children, seniors and the disabled (including the blind).
- D. Reinforce commercial areas that include a storefront character and/or are on transit streets by requiring development to be oriented to pedestrians.
- E. Complete the 40-Mile Loop and Willamette Greenway trails and establish links between these trails and Portland's residential neighborhoods and parks.
- F. Link Portland's trails and parks to the system of greenspaces being created for the metropolitan region.
- G. Retain rights for pedestrian access and circulation when considering requests for street vacations. Preserve existing pedestrian routes and protect routes needed by pedestrians in the future. Ensure that street vacations do not reduce access to light and air or the intimate scale that is so much a part of Portland's character.

#### **12.5 Promote the Arts**

Humanize the City through promotion of the arts and excellence in design. Encourage the placement of art at locations that are visible to the public. Expand Portland's collection of public art. Punctuate the community with works of art used to emphasize focal points, mark transitional locations, celebrate public buildings and to enhance the City's sidewalks, open spaces, plazas and parks.

##### **Objectives:**

- A. Provide a part of the construction cost of public projects for the purchase and installation of art.
- B. Create incentives for the provision of public art as part of private development projects.

- C. Emphasize important places, transitions and gateways within Portland by celebrating them with works of art. Use art to add interest to the experience of the City's citizens and to accent locations such as transit stations, sidewalks, streets, parks and building lobbies that are visited by many people.
- D. Foster the growth of the public art collection within Portland that is part of our legacy to the City's future.

## 12.6 Preserve Neighborhoods

Preserve and support the qualities of individual neighborhoods that help to make them attractive places. Encourage neighborhoods to express their design values in neighborhood and community planning projects. Seek ways to respect and strengthen neighborhood values in new development projects that implement this Comprehensive Plan.

### Objectives:

- A. Encourage new developments to respond to the positive qualities of the place where they are to be built and to enhance that place through their development. Developers should consider the character enhancing role played by the use of color and light.
- B. Respect the fabric of established neighborhoods when undertaking infill development projects.
- C. While accommodating increased density build on the attractive qualities that distinguish the area. Add new building types to established area with care and respect for the context that past generations of builders have provided.

## 12.7 Design Quality

Enhance Portland's appearance and character through development of public and private projects that are models of innovation and leadership in the design of the built environment. Encourage the design of the built environment to meet standards of excellence while fostering the creativity of architects and designers. Establish design review in areas that are important to Portland's identity, setting, history and to the enhancement of its character.

### Objectives:

- A. Establish design districts and historic design districts for areas of attractive character within the City. Use design zones to enhance the character of the area. Establish guidelines of design acceptability that ensure continuation of each design district's desired character. Design guidelines should make the public's objectives for the design review process clear to those developing property.
- B. Continue the design review process to ensure public review of public and private development proposals at locations linked with Portland's character, setting, history, identity and image. Consider the details of development projects as well as the impacts of the project as a whole.
- C. Provide clear guidelines of design acceptability that share the public's concern and objectives for the design review process with developers and designers. Use examples to illustrate a variety of ways to achieve compliance with each design guideline.
- D. Consider the application of the design review requirement to parts of Portland expected to experience significant change.
- E. Foster innovative design solutions that meet the guidelines of design acceptability. Use the design review process to encourage the generation of creative and innovative design solutions. Recognize that an innovative design solution may require exceptions to specific design guidelines to accommodate designs of great quality and sensitivity to Portland's character.

- F. Establish development standards that foster compatible design solutions in areas not subject to design review. Identify and establish standards aimed at improving how development projects fit into the community.
- G. Create incentives for developers and designers to voluntarily submit their project for design review. Consider allowing adjustments to quantitative development standards as an incentive for voluntarily going through design review.
- H. Establish specific zoning requirements that further the implementation of the Urban Design Goal and the Goal's associated policies and objectives.

## 12.8 Community Planning

When community and/or neighborhood plans are developed include consideration of urban design issues as a part of them. Use consideration of urban design issues to help establish, preserve and enhance the identity and character of each community plan's study area.

### Objectives:

- A. Consider as part of the development of community plans the following urban design issues: the need for new design zones; the protection of significant historical resources; the location of major and minor points of transition, gateways and focal points; the protection and enhancement of scenic resources; the location of existing public attractions; good locations for possible new attractions; the locations of trails, walkways, bikeways, and off-street paths; the location of existing open spaces; and the need for new public open spaces.<sup>3</sup>
- B. Use urban design considerations to guide the evolution of the character of these areas. As each new community plan is created, give consideration to how it links to and coordinates with urban design elements of adjacent areas.
- C. Explore the potential for linkages between a community plan's urban design elements and other planning strategies that have been or are being created. Include consideration of open space, scenic, cultural and historic resources, and environmental areas.
- D. Include in new community plans conceptual proposals for future development projects that stimulate the imagination and help identify the community plan's development objectives.
- E. Use the creation of new design districts and zoning standards to reduce the likelihood of conflicts between new and existing developments. Address problems that emerge when new infill development is at greater density than existing development.
- F. Support the development of voluntary, or suggested, design guidelines and distribute them to those considering development projects. Use these guidelines to foster the growth of consistent development patterns that reinforce the desired character of Portland's neighborhoods and the City as a whole.
- G. Use the community and neighborhood planning processes to help establish, enhance and preserve the area's character and identity and to foster the evaluation and protection of significant historic resources.

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<sup>3</sup> Amended by Ordinance No. 177028, October 2002

