

# Design Review in Boise



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# Purpose of Design Review

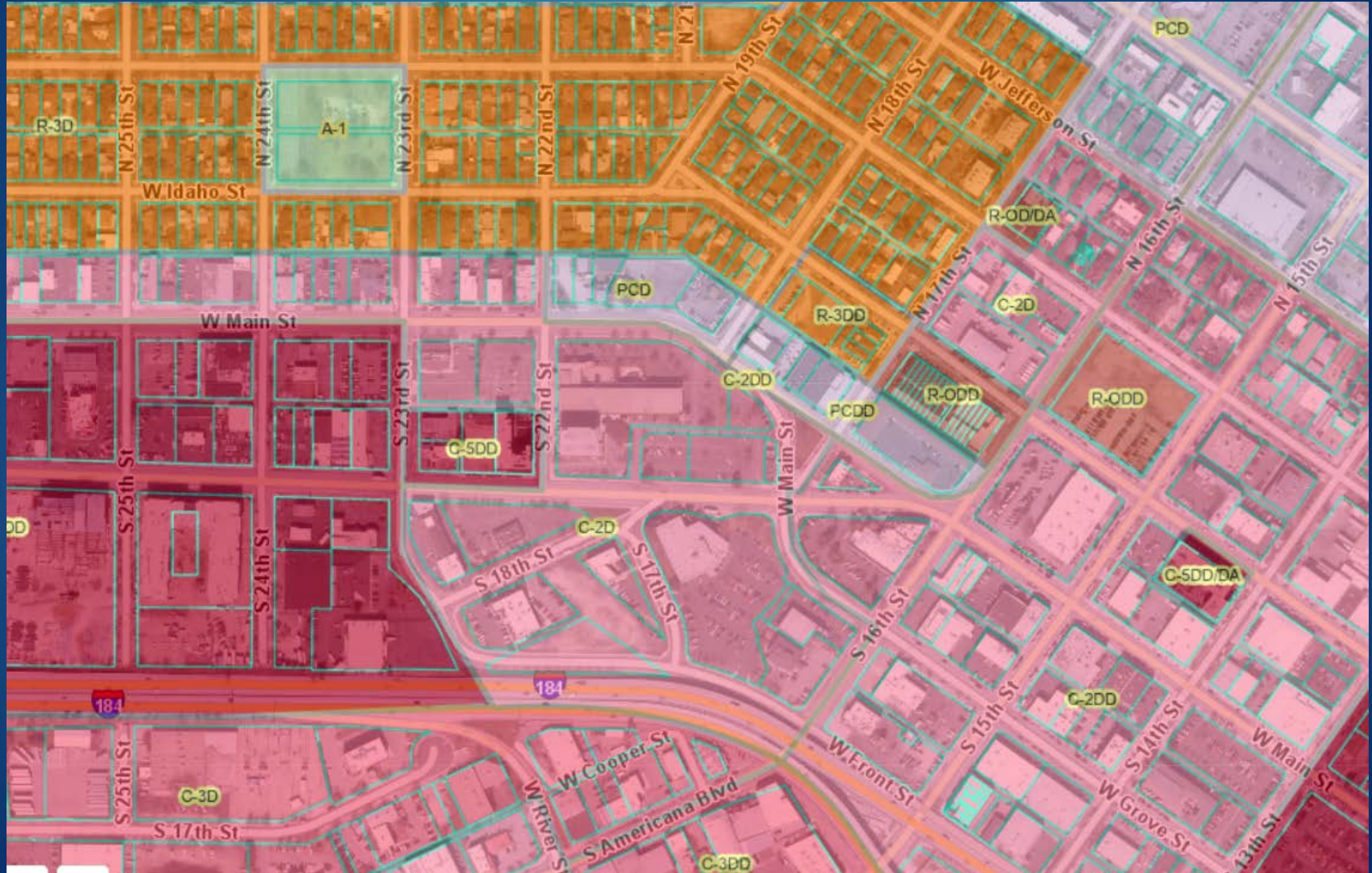
- ▶ Protect property rights and values, enhance important environmental features of the City, and to ensure that the general appearance of buildings and structures along with development of the land does not impair or preclude the orderly and harmonious development of the community
- ▶ Design Review shall regulate landscaping, review building design, site planning, signs, grading, development and beautification, including but not limited to the regulation and restriction of the type, massing, construction, reconstruction, alteration, or repair of buildings and structures to ensure compliance with the requirements of the respective overlay district

# What requires Design Review approval?

- ▶ Within the “D” and “DD” Districts, any visible exterior improvement to a site, building, or structure shall require design review.
- ▶ Detached single-family homes are exempt except for substandard lots of record
- ▶ Minor projects can be approved administratively, while larger proposals require a public hearing with the Design Review Committee
- ▶ Design Review is prohibited by code from reducing density, floor area ratio, or building height unless it can specifically be shown to be required by reason of public safety, health, or destruction or diminution of property values.

# Design Review overlay

“D” or “DD” in zoning designation



# Levels of Review

- ▶ Design Review Committee
  - ▶ Commercial buildings adjacent to residential, or buildings not adjacent to residential but over 5,000 square feet
  - ▶ Industrial buildings adjacent to residential, or buildings not adjacent to residential but over 10,000 square feet
  - ▶ Multi-family family developments not approved through a Planned Unit Development (PUD)
  - ▶ Four or more contiguous substandard lots
- ▶ Administrative
  - ▶ Two-to-six unit residential buildings, parking lots, remodels, additions, landscaping, multi-family developments less than 50 units if approved by PUD
  - ▶ Three or less contiguous substandard lots

# Design Review Committee

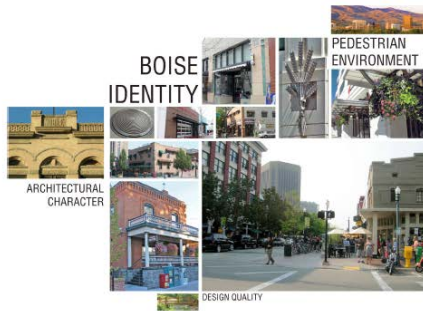
- ▶ Public hearing body
  - ▶ Second Wednesday of every month at 6:00 pm
  - ▶ In Council Chambers and virtually on Zoom
  - ▶ Notices are mailed to neighbors within 300' and the registered Neighborhood Association, published in newspaper, and posted on site
- ▶ Members are appointed by the Mayor and the Committee is made up of architects, landscape architects, attorneys, and members of public with interest in design

# Boise Citywide & Downtown Design Standards & Guidelines

INITIATED LATE 2011, ADOPTED 2013

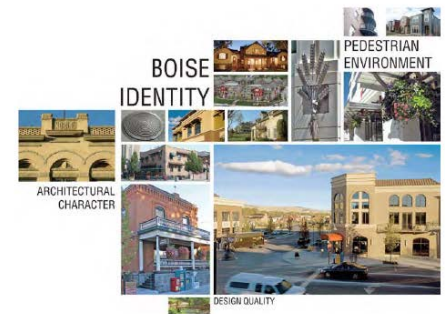
## Boise Downtown Design Standards and Guidelines

Adopted September 2013



## Boise Citywide Design Standards and Guidelines

Adopted April 2013



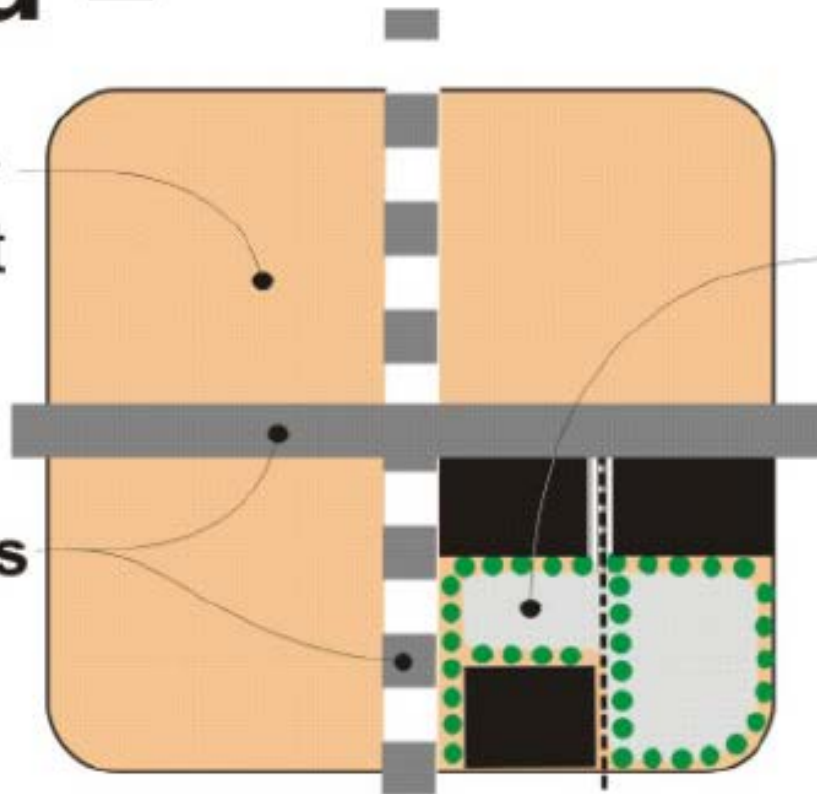
# Boise's current process



## Hybrid =

**Districts** for use & height provisions

**Street Types** for frontage standards



**Design Guidelines** for site & building design goals



# Objective vs Subjective

The Boise Design Standards and Guidelines use general design principles to encourage good design, without restricting architectural style. Principles of good design are objective while individual preference for style is subjective.

## Design Standards

**Design Standards** are performance standards on the design of sites and/or buildings.

- ▶ They are required provisions. They feature language such as "shall", "must", "is/are required", or "is/are prohibited". Some standards feature a number of different ways to meet the code (toolbox approach).

# Design Guidelines

**Design Guidelines** are discretionary provisions which promote good design of sites and/or buildings.

- ▶ They are voluntary provisions. They feature language such as “should”, “is/are recommended”, or “is/are encouraged”.

# Departures

Departures are provisions that allow an applicant to propose an alternative means of compliance with a specific standard, provided they meet the “intent” of the standard.



# BOISE DESIGN REVIEW GUIDELINES APPROACH

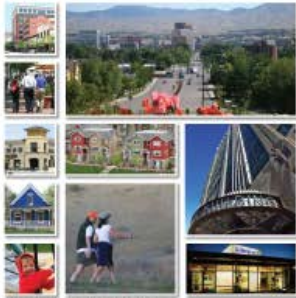
## BOISE DESIGN REVIEW GUIDELINES AND REVIEW PROCESS IMPLEMENTATION

### 1. Implement the Community's Design Goals

- Identify what design elements are most important (*key resources used in crafting design guidelines to right*)



Boise's Comprehensive Plan



Boise's 2011 Comprehensive Plan



VOLUME 1  
Frontdoor, Main Plan  
& Design Guidelines

Collister  
Neighborhood  
Plan



208 West Pine Street, Post-Office of Boise, Idaho  
The City of Boise Planning  
November 15, 2017

Various Boise neighborhood plans

Neighborhood	Design Goals	Design Guidelines
...	...	...
...	...	...
...	...	...
...	...	...
...	...	...

2008 neighborhood visual preference surveys

### 2. Find the Right Balance of Predictability and Flexibility

- Provide clear minimum standards, but integrate provisions for flexibility
- Provide clear & predictable language
- Use plenty of graphics to illustrate the standards & guidelines
- Provide for optional ways of meeting many standards (toolbox approach)



Example guidelines for compatible multifamily infill development in established neighborhoods



Example guidelines for neighborhood business districts

3.2.2 Drafting Toolkits for Multifamily Buildings: An increasingly familiar topic concerning the multifamily process, guidelines for reviewers shall be included with appropriate design. Each of the items in this toolkit below are merely one possible way to address the issue. Design options:

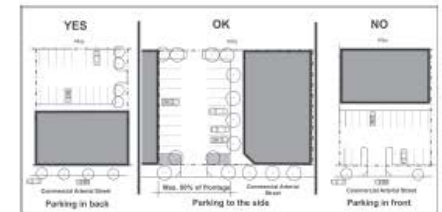
- Consider front facade with design and use of materials.
- Consider placement of outdoor seating, such as elevated seating, having views toward all ground floor windows and doors, for outdoor, accessible dining or fine dining, outdoor terrace outdoor dining, etc.
- Consider light fixture and color palette (light fixture, wall color, etc.) that is not going to be a dominant sight in looking to and buildings on.
- Sign or signage management that is present in the building or project.
- Consider neighborhood character, including height, materials, and architectural style, and how the building fits in.
- Consider how the building is used, including how the building is used, including how the building is used, including how the building is used.
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Example design standards using "toolbox" approach

### 3. Focus on the Block Frontages (how the developments look from the street)



Good/bad storefront examples



Different parking location standards for different areas



# Block Frontage Provisions

- ▶ Recognize that not all streets are the same
- ▶ Different types of streets warrant different frontage standards
- ▶ Block frontage provisions address:
  - ▶ Building location and orientation
  - ▶ Window transparency
  - ▶ Parking lot location
- ▶ Four different “block frontage” designations for downtown

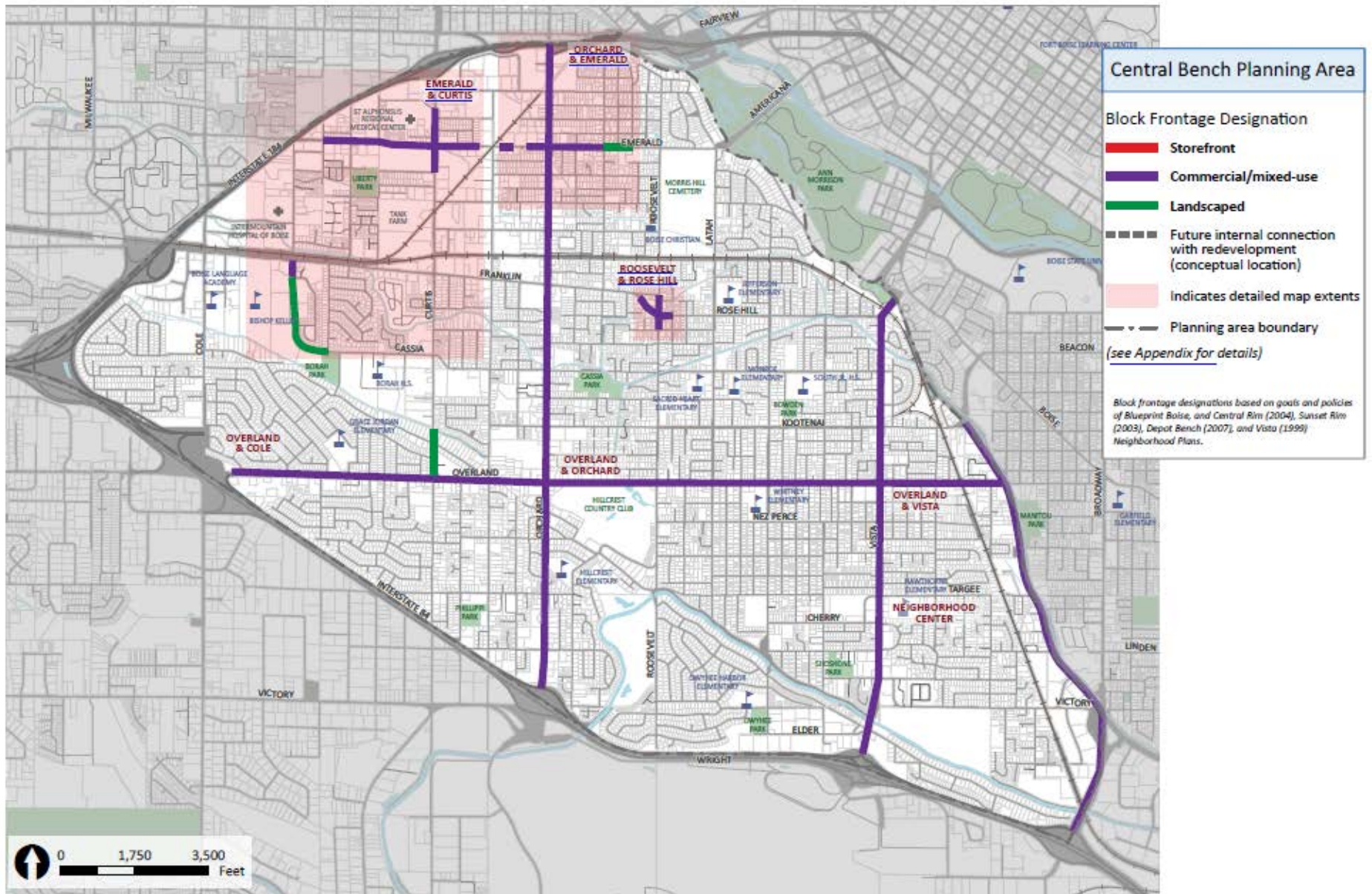


Fig. 2-1. Central Bench.


CENTRAL BENCH PLANNING AREA

Orchard and Emerald

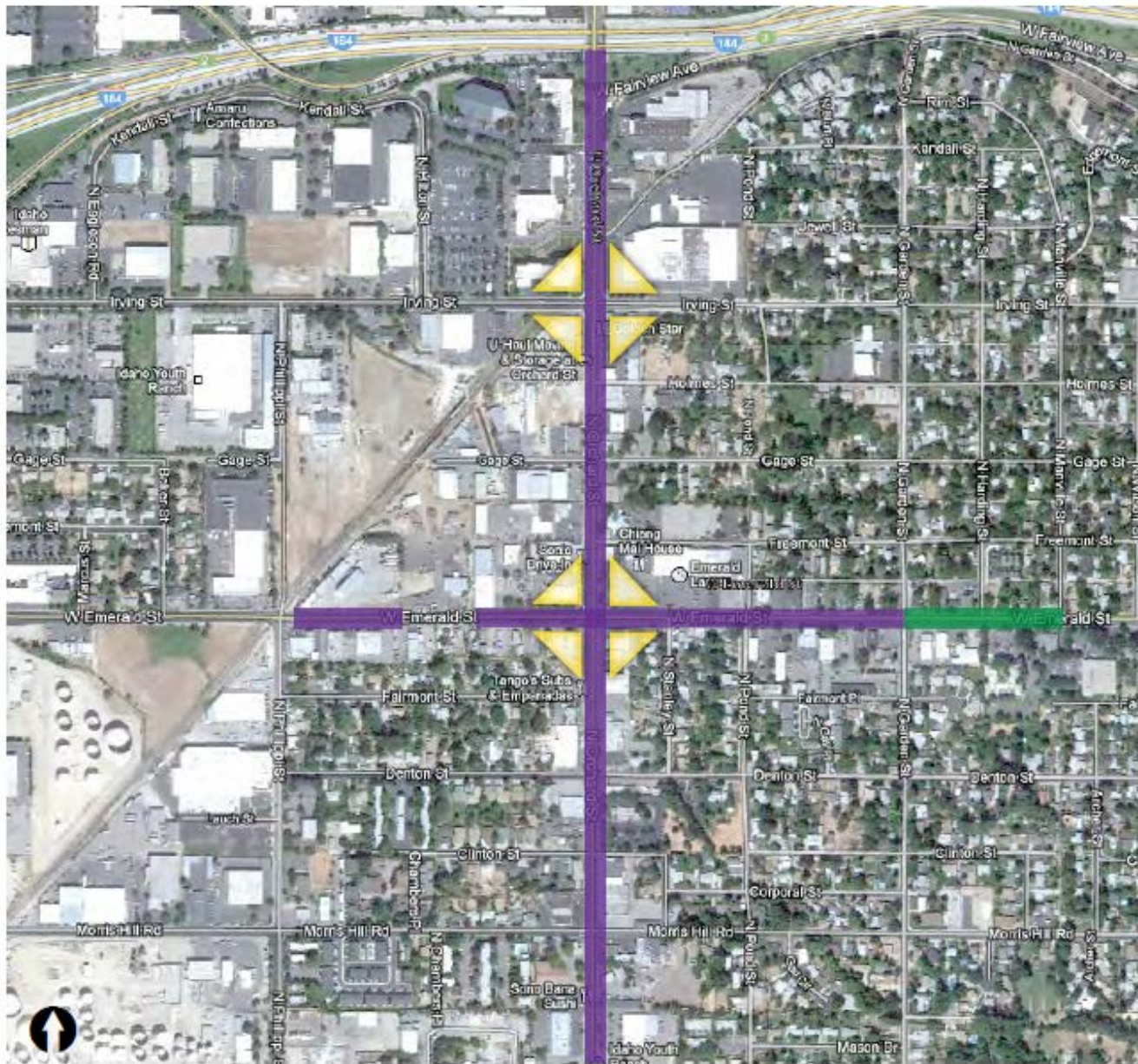
Block Frontage Designation  
(see Section 2.2 for standards)

-  Storefront
-  Commercial/mixed-use
-  Landscaped
-  Future internal connection with redevelopment (conceptual location)

Street Corners

-  High visibility street corners and gateway sites (see Provision 3.6.1 for special design standards)

Block frontage designations based on goals and policies of Blueprint Boise and Original South Boise Neighborhood Plan (2003).



## 2.2 Block Frontages & Standards

The chart below summarizes some key standards for each of the four designated block frontage types. For detailed provisions, review the specific standards for each block frontage type set forth below.



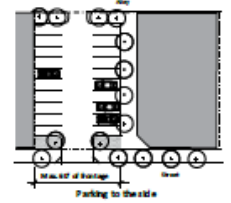
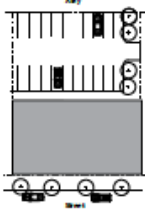
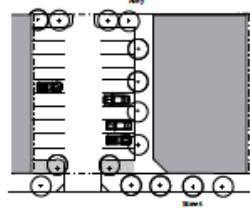
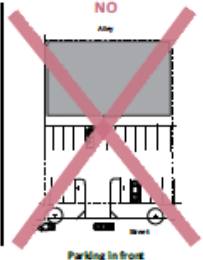
	Storefront	Commercial/Mixed use	Landscaped	Other	
Permitted frontages		<p>← storefront -or- landscaped frontages are permitted →</p>		<p>← storefront -or- landscaped frontages are permitted</p>	
Parking location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New surface or structured parking along street shall be placed to the side, rear, below or above storefronts</li> </ul> 	<p><b>GOOD</b></p>  <p>Parking in back</p>	<p><b>ACCEPTABLE</b></p>  <p>Parking to the side</p> <p><i>For multi-building developments, no more than 50% of frontage shall be parking or vehicular access areas.</i></p>	<p><b>NO</b></p>  <p>Parking in front</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No parking lot location restrictions</li> </ul>
Other key provisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Min commercial space depth = 30' (new buildings only)</li> <li>No ground floor residential uses except lobbies/entrances for upstairs units</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Landscaping to soften façade and screen blank wall surfaces.</li> <li>Provide minimum facade windows/transparency for residential buildings (at least 15% of the entire façade)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide minimum façade windows/transparency for non-residential uses (between 15-40% of ground floor façade, depending on building setback)</li> </ul>		

Fig. 2-7. Summary of key standards for each of the four block frontage designs.

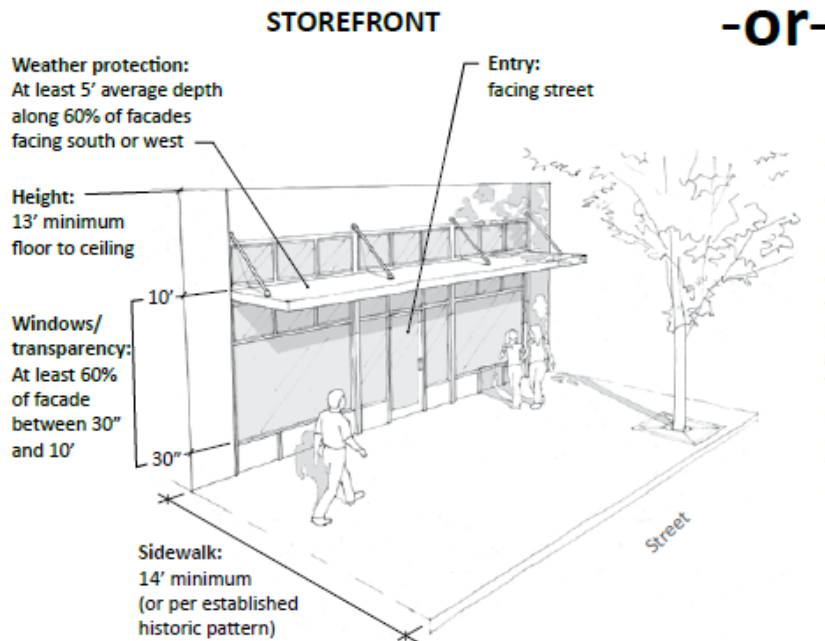


# Commercial/Mixed-Use Block Frontages

## Description/Intent:

The Commercial/Mixed-Use block frontage designation serves areas that accommodate a mixture of ground floor uses and allows a diversity of development frontages provided they contribute to the visual character of the street and enhance the pedestrian environment.

## Vision:



-or-

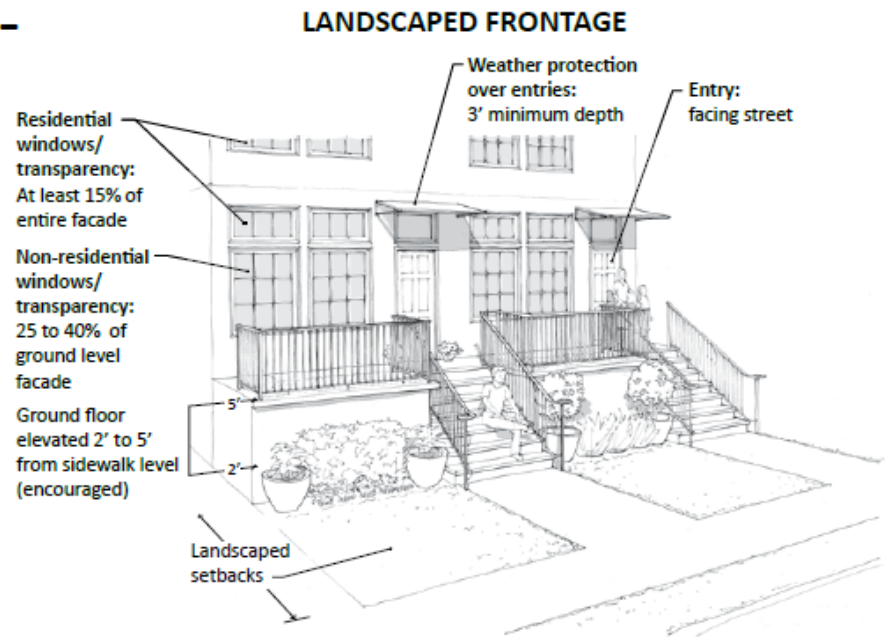




Fig. 2-14. Storefront vision, key standards, and examples.

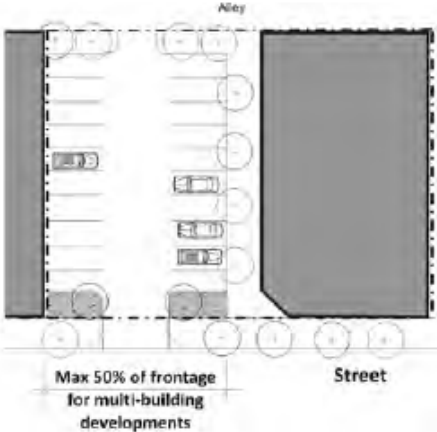



Fig. 2-15. Landscaped frontage vision, key standards, and examples.

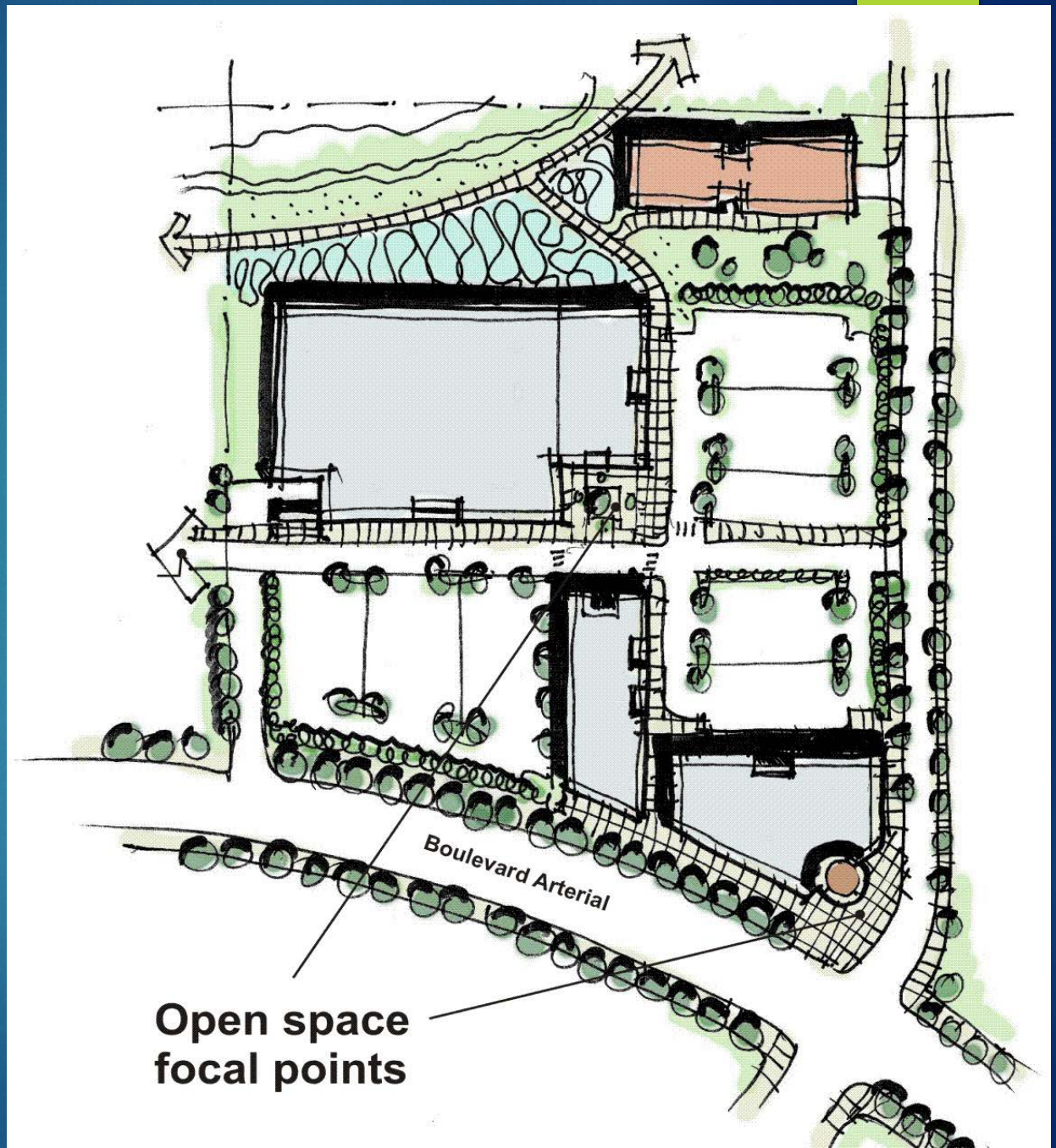
## Commercial/Mixed-Use Block Frontage Standards:

Element	Standards (↻ indicates a <i>departure</i> opportunity)	Examples and Notes
<b>Ground floor:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Land use</li> </ul>	See <a href="#">BCC 11-06-01.05</a> for details. Generally, uses could include a combination of commercial and residential uses.	Commercial example with landscaped setback: 
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Floor to ceiling height</li> </ul>	13' minimum for <i>Storefronts</i> and zones where ground floor commercial uses are required (applies to new buildings only).	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ground floor height, residential uses</li> </ul>	Elevated between 2' to 5' above the sidewalk level is encouraged, particularly where consistent with the surrounding context.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Retail space depth</li> </ul>	30' minimum where ground floor commercial uses are required. (applies to new buildings only) ↻	
<b>Building placement</b>	Buildings may be placed up to the sidewalk edge provided they meet <i>Storefront</i> standards set forth below. Maximum building setbacks shall be 20'. ↻ The area between the street and building shall be landscaped, <i>pedestrian-oriented space</i> (see <a href="#">Provision 3.5.2</a> ), or private patio space. The minimum setback for buildings with ground floor residential uses is 10'. ↻	Residential example with landscaped setback: 
<b>Building entrances</b>	Building entrances facing the street are encouraged. At a minimum, at least one building entry visible and directly accessible from the street is required. For uses that front on multiple Commercial/Mixed-Use designated block frontages, an entry along both streets is encouraged, but not required.	
<b>Façade transparency</b>	For <i>Storefronts</i> , at least 60% of ground floor between 30" and 10' above the sidewalk. ↻ Display windows may count for up to 50 percent of the transparency requirements provided they are at least 30 inches in depth to allow changeable displays. Tack-on display cases shall not qualify as transparent window areas. Other buildings with non-residential uses on the ground floor within 10 feet of sidewalk, at least 40% of the ground floor between 4-8 feet above the sidewalk. ↻ Other buildings with non-residential uses on the ground floor within 20 feet of the sidewalk, at least 25% of the ground floor between 4-8 feet above the sidewalk. ↻ Residential buildings, at least 15% of the entire <i>façade</i> (all vertical surfaces generally facing the street). ↻	

Commercial/Mixed-Use Block Frontage Standards (continued)

Element	Standards (↻ indicates a <i>departure</i> opportunity)	Examples and Notes
Weather protection	<p>For south &amp; west-facing <i>Storefronts</i>, weather protection at least 5' in average depth is required along at least 60% of <i>façade</i>. Retractable awnings may be used to meet this requirement;</p> <p>For all other <i>façades</i>, weather protection at least 3' deep over primary business and residential entries is required.</p>	
Parking and driveways	<p>Parking shall be placed to the side, rear, below or above uses. For multi-building developments, surface and structured parking areas (ground floor) are limited to no more than 50% of the street frontage. ↻</p> <p>Surface parking lots adjacent to the street shall be screened with landscaping per <a href="#">Table 3.8.3</a>. ↻</p> <p>New parking structures shall feature landscaped setbacks at least 10' in width. ↻</p> <p>Drive through lanes between the street and a building shall be considered as a parking area for the purpose of these standards.</p>	
Landscaping	<p>For setbacks adjacent to buildings with windows, provide low level landscaping that maintains views between the building and the street.</p> <p>For setbacks adjacent to <i>façade</i> areas without windows, provide plant materials that screen <i>blank walls</i> and add visual interest at both the pedestrian scale and motorist scale. For extended wall areas, provide for a diversity of plant materials and textures to maintain visual interest from a pedestrian scale.</p>	
Sidewalk width	Per the <a href="#">Livable Street Design Guide</a> .	

Example of building/  
parking lot  
configuration along  
street with the  
Commercial/ Mixed-  
Use Block Frontage  
designation



# Why Block Frontage Provisions Are a Good Idea For Boise

- ▶ Best tool available to shape community “Form”
- ▶ Tailor provisions to fit situation
  - ▶ Storefront
  - ▶ Arterials & transit corridors
  - ▶ Neighborhood safety, eyes on the street
  - ▶ Areas that warrant flexibility
- ▶ Adaptable – to future changes
  - ▶ As conditions or goals change, you can change block frontage designations

# 3

## Site Design / Elements

### Purpose & Content

The purpose of this chapter is to provide guidance and parameters for the layout and design of site development features consistent with the goals and policies of Blueprint Boise.

The sections in this chapter include:

- [3.1](#) Non-Motorized Circulation & Connections
- [3.2](#) Vehicular Circulation & Connections
- [3.3](#) Parking Structures & Drive Through Lanes
- [3.4](#) Internal Open Space / Design
- [3.5](#) High Visibility Street Corners & Gateway Sites
- [3.6](#) Service Area Location & Design

## 3.1 Non-Motorized Circulation & Connections

### Intent:

- To provide safe and direct pedestrian access in commercial and multi-family areas;
- To minimize conflicts between pedestrians and vehicular traffic;
- To provide a network of pathways that can be expanded over time;
- To provide attractive internal pedestrian routes that promote walking and enhance the character of the area; and
- To create a safe, convenient, and efficient network for vehicular circulation and parking.

### Cross-References:

[ACHD Roadways to Bikeways Plan, 2009](#)

[ACHD Pedestrian-Bicycle Transition Plan, 2005](#)

### Standards/Guidelines:

#### 3.1.1 Internal circulation.

Half and full block developments within downtown are encouraged to provide mid-block pedestrian connections. These could range from outdoor publicly accessible 24-hour a day connections to internal building connections open during business hours. Such connections could be particularly attractive for retail, residential or a mixture of these uses. See Fig. 3-1 for good examples.

#### 3.1.2 Pedestrian access to sidewalk.

All buildings shall have clear pedestrian access to a public sidewalk. Where a use fronts onto two streets, access shall be provided from the road closest to the main entrance, but preferably from both streets.

#### 3.1.3 On-site pedestrian connections.

Pedestrian paths or walkways connecting all businesses and the entries of multiple commercial buildings frequented by the public on the same development site shall be provided.



Fig. 3-1. The blocks surrounding Portland's Jamison Square illustrate good examples of internal pedestrian connections.



Fig. 3-2. Denver's Writer Square is another good example of a downtown block with internal pedestrian connections and pedestrian spaces.

## 3.3 Parking Structures & Drive Through Lanes

### Intent:

- To mitigate the impact of parking facilities on the streetscape and pedestrian environment; and
- physically and visually integrate parking facilities into the design of developments.

### Related standards:

- See [Chapter 2](#) for applicable block frontage (including parking lot/structure location) standards; and
- See [BCC 11-07-03](#) for minimum parking requirements

### Standards/Guidelines:

#### 3.3.1 Parking structure design.

Preferably, parking structures are hidden underneath or behind uses so that their impacts to the street are minimized. For example, providing ground floor retail along the streetfront, with structured parking behind is desirable, where the market conditions for retail are viable.

In areas where parking structures are exposed to the street, the following standards apply:

1. Structured parking facilities shall be designed to meet applicable building design provisions in [Chapter 4](#), including architectural character, massing and *articulation*, building elements and details, building materials, building lighting, and *blank wall* treatments. Some flexibility to the massing and *articulation*

standards may be considered via the *departure* process due to the large floor-plates needed for a parking garage, provided the design treatment appropriately fits the context. For example, a parking garage wall facing a freeway will warrant greater flexibility in *façade articulation* than a smaller scale street with a mix of uses. See Fig. 3-8 and Fig. 3-9 below for acceptable parking garage design examples.

2. Parking garage entries should be designed and sited to complement, not subordinate, the pedestrian entry. Locate the parking entry away from the primary street, to either the side or rear of the building.



Fig. 3-8. Preferably, parking structures are located behind uses as in this shopping mall example.



Fig. 3-9. In the first example, design details are included to articulate the facade and add visual interest. In the second example, a trellis structure provides for a green screen of the parking structures.



## 3.8 Landscaping Design

### Intent:

- Promote well-conceived and attractive landscaping that reinforces the architectural and site planning concepts in response to site conditions and context;
- To enhance environmental conditions;
- To maintain and enhance the character of the area;
- To reduce negative potential impacts between adjacent and neighboring uses;
- To encourage the use of attractive and drought tolerant plant materials native to the Treasure Valley region;
- To ensure that plants will quickly achieve their intended visual objectives;
- To promote tree retention and the protection of existing native vegetation;
- To define, break up, and screen parking areas to reduce potentially negative impacts on adjacent uses; and
- To provide for the long-term establishment and health of new landscape plantings.

### Cross-Reference:

- The provisions herein shall supplement the landscaping standards in [BCC 11-07-05](#).

### Standards/Guidelines:

#### 3.8.1 Landscaping types.

Below are described five landscaping types. These landscaping types may be required by different sections of the design standards herein.

1. Type A landscaping. (see Fig. 3-38)
  - a. Type A landscaping shall function as a full screen and visual barrier. This landscaping is typically found between residential and nonresidential areas and to screen unwanted views;
  - b. Type A landscaping shall consist of:
    - (i) A mix of primarily evergreen trees and shrubs generally interspersed throughout the landscape strip and spaced to form a continuous screen;
    - (ii) Trees shall be spaced to provide a visual screen as detailed in paragraph (vi) below;
    - (iii) Groundcover; and
    - (iv) The selected plant materials and configuration shall be able to completely screen 60 percent of the unwanted views within five years of planting and fully screen the unwanted view within six years. This requirement will account for the type of plant materials, size at planting, and their typical growth rate.

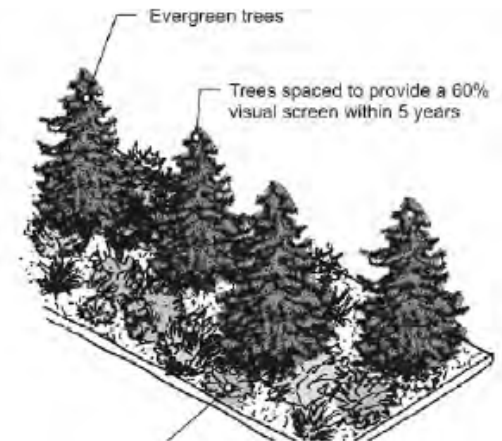


Fig. 3-38. Type A landscaping.

# 4

## Building Design

### Purpose & Content

The purpose of this chapter is to provide guidance and parameters for the design of buildings in Downtown Boise that meet the following objectives:

- Design buildings that respond to the unique context of the site;
- Design buildings that address the street and create a pedestrian-friendly environment;
- Promote original and distinctive building design;
- Utilize building materials that convey a sense of quality and permanence;
- Promote building form that adds character to Boise's skyline;
- Incorporate sustainable development practices;
- Demonstrate respect for historic structures; and
- Contribute to the overall sense of identity of Downtown Boise.

The sections in this chapter include:

- [4.1](#) Architectural Character
- [4.2](#) Building Massing & Articulation
- [4.3](#) Building Elements & Details
- [4.4](#) Building Materials
- [4.5](#) Building Lighting
- [4.6](#) Blank Wall Treatments

# 4.1 Architectural Character

## Intent:

- To promote original and distinctive building design;
- To promote building design that responds uniquely to the site's context;
- To allow for a diversity of architectural styles;
- To promote distinctive roofline designs that contribute to Boise's Downtown skyline; and
- To demonstrate respect for surrounding historic structures.

## Standards/Guidelines:

### 4.1.1 Encourage architectural diversity.

Downtown Boise has evolved over the past 100+ years as uses, technology, and design styles have changed. The design standards and guidelines herein seek to allow for architectural diversity, provided the design meets block frontage, massing and *articulation*, materials and detail provisions herein. Below ([Provisions 4.1.2](#) and [4.1.3](#)) are some considerations in determining the appropriate architectural style of individual buildings.

### 4.1.2 Promote original and distinctive building design.

Applicants for new buildings shall demonstrate how the design accomplishes the following objectives:

1. Creative *façade* composition with a rich layering of design elements that provides visual interest from a variety of vantage points.
2. Integrate design techniques that distinguish a buildings' top, middle, and bottom (see Fig. 4-1 and Fig. 4-2 for examples) on all buildings at least three-stories in height. Considerations in achieving objective:
  - a. Bottom - distinctive ground or lower floor design utilizing durable materials, prominent building entry, clear window *fenestration* and/or *storefront articulation* pattern, and design details that lend a pedestrian scale to the building and add visual interest;
  - b. Middle – distinctive window *fenestration* and *articulation* patterns; and
  - c. Top – distinctive roofline treatment that adds visual interest from all observable angles.

*Departures* will be considered for buildings that employ distinctive sculptural forms that will contribute to Boise's Downtown skyline. See Fig. 4-5 for examples.



Fig. 4-1. Good examples of original and distinctive design.

#### 4.1.2 Promote original and distinctive building design (cont.).

3. Complement, but don't replicate/nearby historic buildings. Make the new building a building of its own time. Most future private development in Downtown will be infill development which may range in size from small mid-block sites to half-block developments. The desired approach for infill development is to design buildings that respond uniquely to its context – in terms of block frontage (see [Chapter 2](#)) and massing/articulation (see [Section 4.2](#)). For sites adjacent to historical buildings, the building design must demonstrate respect for such resources via building massing, *façade articulation*, ground floor design, building materials, *façade* detailing, and or other design treatments. Fig. 4-5 through Fig. 4-8 exhibit qualities that help them complement buildings in their surrounding context.

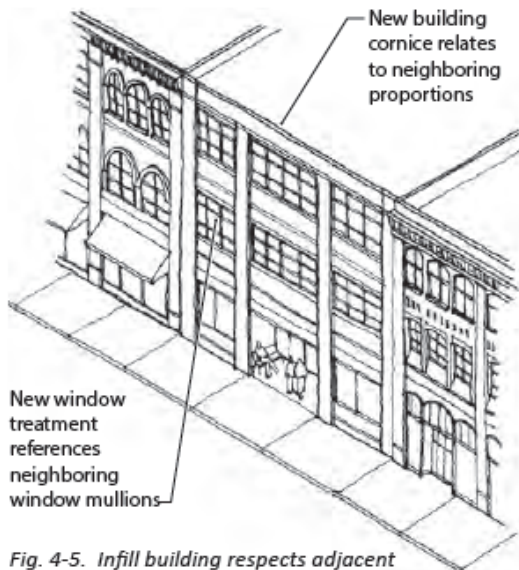


Fig. 4-5. Infill building respects adjacent architecture's proportions and rhythm without mimicking it.



Fig. 4-6. Good example of infill.

- Bay widths proportional to existing buildings
- Unique reference to building to right
- Color change relates to adjacent building floor heights
- Storefront continued from building to left

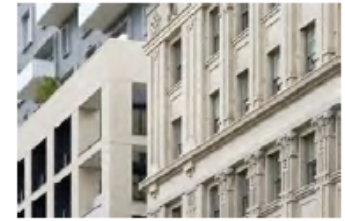


Fig. 4-8. Denver's "sugarcube" building fits into context with color and emphasis of piers between windows while announcing self-confident design.



Fig. 4-7. Boise infill example.

- Relate articulation to Idanha Building without mimicing
- Distinct entry with plaza

#### 4.2.1 Tower massing (cont.).

3. **Tower separation standards.** Towers (portion of building above the sixth floor) shall maintain 30 feet of separation from other towers. Along alleys, a minimum 15-foot setback from alley is required for towers. For other side and rear property lines, 15-foot minimum setbacks are required for towers.

Exceptions:

- a. Alley, side, and/or rear tower setbacks may be reduced or waived if recorded agreements are in place that prohibit tower construction within the minimum required setback area on adjacent site;
  - b. For sites adjacent to a tower that do not meet the above setback standards, a reduction of the minimum tower separation standard to no less than 20 feet is permitted provided no other reasonable design options exist for the tower floorplate; and
  - c. For sites less than  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the block size, the tower side, rear, and alley setback requirements shall only be applied above the tenth floor.
- *Departures* will be considered allowing a reduction of the above setbacks/separation standards provided design treatments are included to maximize privacy and minimize skyline, skyview, and access to light impacts. Factors to consider in determining if a proposed *departure* meets the intent include the extent of building area that doesn't meet setback/separation requirement, lot size and configuration, surrounding context, skyline views from a full range of observable views, and subject building uses.

Provide minimum tower separation standards of 30'

Fig. 4-13. Separation and setbacks from nearby towers. The diagram to the right shows a typical downtown block with an alley. The diagram below shows a block without an alley.

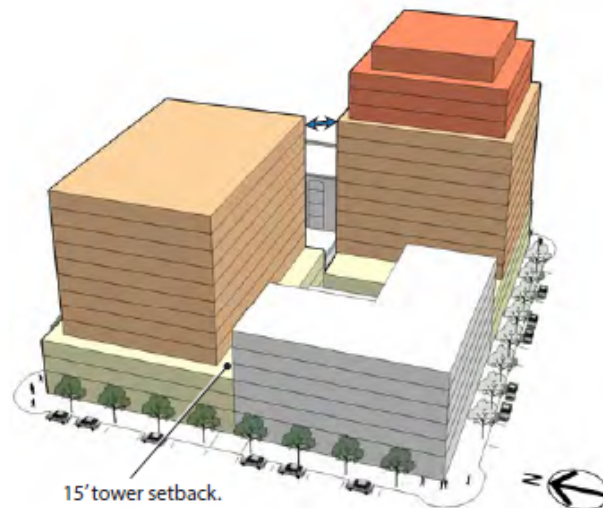
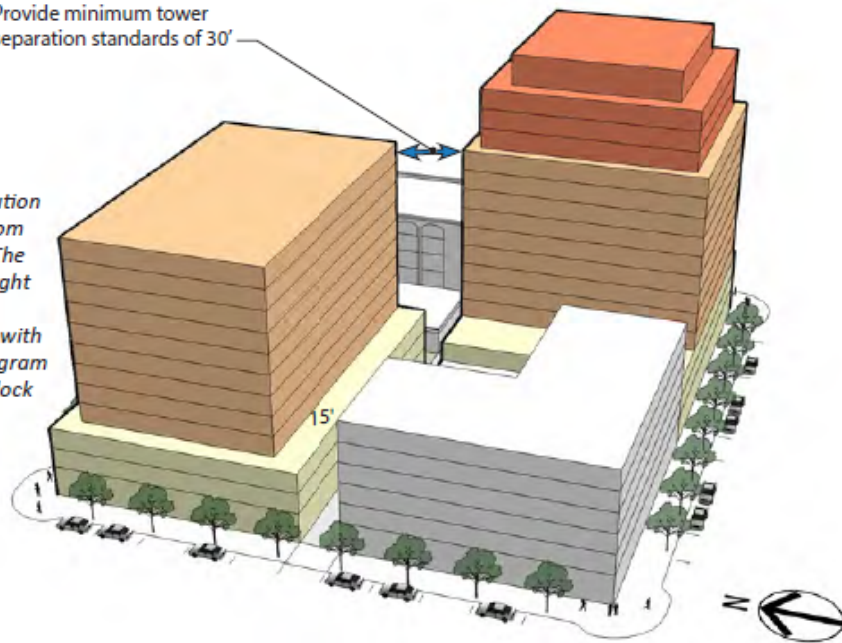


Fig. 4-14. Examples of towers too close to neighboring buildings, resulting in loss of light, privacy, and skyline variation.

4.2.2 Maximum façade width (cont.).



# Questions and Answers