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Downtown Design Guidelines

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Downtown Design Guidelines

(as adopted by the Design Committee June 12, 1980, approved by the Planning Commission July 15, 1980 and adopted by the Portland City Council November 19, 1980)

Portland, Oregon December 1980



Portland City Council

Francis Ivancie, Mayor
Charles Jordan, Commissioner
Michael Lindberg, Commissioner
Mildred Schwab, Commissioner

Portland Design Committee

Dave Soderstrom, Chair
Toby Fairbank
Ann Gardner
Patrick Jordan
Gus Minden
Michele Russo
Harold Bahls, Jr.

Prepared by

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Photographs by Michael Harrison, John V.A.F. Neal, Bruce Forster, and the Oregon Historical Society

Portland's downtown represents a major investment in both money and in generations of effort spent to establish and maintain a quality urban environment. It is the commercial, retail, governmental and residential center of our city. This area also serves as the ceremonial meeting place of the entire metropolitan community. Our traditions, special character, history and civic life are focused most clearly on this oldest part of Portland. To protect this investment the City requires that all projects be approved by the Design Committee before a building permit is granted.

Design Review in Context*

In the late 1960's, to encourage desirable development, the City of Portland adopted an interim Downtown Plan Review Ordinance. This process provided for case-by-case review of both design and land-use aspects of new development. Zoning regulations were suspended while new regulations were developed. A Citizens Advisory Committee formed to develop goals for downtown. After two years of work, this committee forwarded a document titled *Planning Guidelines: Portland Downtown Plan* to the Planning Commission. That body reviewed and amended the document and recommended it to the Portland City Council for adoption.

In December 1972 the Council concluded its review of the Goals and Guidelines document and adopted it as a guide to day-to-day decision making on the downtown. At the same time the Council knew that the goals and guidelines were the beginning step in the planning process for downtown Portland. Subsequent activities undertaken to both further refine and expand on the 1972 Goals and Guidelines included: development of a Downtown Parking and Circulation Policy; an urban renewal plan; adoption of new downtown development regulations including two new zones, a reviewed Downtown Commercial Zone and a special overlay zone (Z Overlay Zone); creation of the Yamhill, Skidmore Fountain and Old

Town historic districts; reconstitution of the Design Committee; and development of downtown design standards to alert architects and developers to community concerns, and to guide the Design Committee in their review process.

All projects proposed for the downtown are subject to design review. Projects located within the boundaries of historic districts are reviewed by the Landmarks Commission. All other projects are reviewed by the Design Committee.

Before a project is issued a building permit, it must be approved by the Design Committee. Decisions of the Design Review Committee and the Landmarks Commission may be appealed to the Portland City Council. The regulations of the building and zoning codes must also be complied with.

The Review Process

Applications for design review may be obtained at the Portland Bureau of Planning or Building Bureau. An application for design review must be accompanied by a set of plans and renderings including the following:

- A site plan including the shape and location of all buildings and major land uses within 200 feet of the project site perimeter.
- A complete set of building elevations, isometrics or perspectives, including a listing of materials and colors to be used.
- A large-scale set of elevations, either one-half inch or one-quarter inch to one foot, of the project within twenty-five feet of grade.
- A parking plan showing the location of all on-site parking and loading facilities, including access and egress routes.
- A ground floor plan showing all grade changes and indicating the uses of the various spaces.
- Typical floor plans as necessary to describe all levels of the building.
- Sections of the project or building as necessary to adequately describe the shapes and relationship of spaces.
- A landscape plan showing all planting areas, street furniture, street trees, outdoor art, and other outdoor features of the project including a listing of materials and colors.

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*For more information consult *The Identity of Place* by Michael Harrison and *Planning Guidelines: Portland Downtown Plan*. Both are available from the Portland Bureau of Planning, 621 SW Alder St., Portland, OR 97205.

Ordinance 150762 Approving These Design Guidelines for Use by the Design Committee

An Ordinance adopting guidelines for downtown design and directing the City's Design Committee to use these guidelines in the review of projects located in the Z Downtown Development Zone, and declaring an emergency.

The City of Portland ordains:

Section 1. The Council finds:

1. That Ordinance No. 148159, passed and effective July 25, 1979, substituting a new Chapter 33.62 D Design Zone in Planning and Zoning, of the City of Portland, directed that the Planning Commission, with the assistance of the Design Committee, prepare for City Council consideration, guidelines for project evaluation and acceptability, and that after adoption by the City Council, these guidelines be utilized by the Design Committee or the director or his delegate on all design review applications.
2. That the Design Committee developed design goals and guidelines to meet this requirement starting in September of 1979 and finally adopting goals and guidelines on June 12 of this year. During this period, the Committee held frequent public hearings, actively collected the comments of design and development professionals, downtown business interests, the Downtown Neighborhood Association, city agencies and bureaus concerned with downtown development, and the public at large.
3. That numerous changes were made in the goals and guidelines resulting in five major redraftings with the objective of accommodating suggestions made to the Committee during the public review process.
4. That the Planning Commission was party to the development of these guidelines through their representative on the Design Committee and a major briefing on the draft guidelines where the Commission's comments and suggestions were solicited.
5. That the Design Committee unanimously adopted design goals and guidelines on June 12, 1980, and recommended that they be adopted by the Planning Commission and the City Council for the Committee's use in evaluating downtown development projects.
6. That the Planning Commission conducted a public hearing on the design goals and guidelines as adopted by the Design Committee on July 15, 1980, and unanimously adopted the guidelines recommending that City Council also adopt them for use in project evaluation by the Design Committee.
7. That the public interest will be served by City Council adoption of design guidelines.

NOW, THEREFORE, the Council directs:

- a. The Downtown Design Guidelines and Goals, contained in the attached Exhibit "A", are to be used by the Design Committee in evaluation of development projects within the Z Downtown Zone.
- b. That these guidelines are to be used to give direction rather than prescriptive requirements and that the Design Committee and the City Council shall have the authority to waive individual guidelines for specific projects where it is found that such waiver will better accomplish the four goals for downtown design than strict application of the guideline.
- c. That the Design Committee may also address itself to aspects of a projects design which are not covered in the guidelines where the Committee finds that such action is necessary to better achieve the Goals for Downtown Design.
- d. That the Design Committee may modify, delete or add to these design guidelines where such a change will aid in the accomplishment of the Goals for Downtown Design; provided, however, that the specific modification, addition or deletion may not take effect until approved by the Portland City Council.

Section 2. The Council declares that an emergency exists because adoption of these guidelines is essential to provide both the Design Committee and prospective developers with guidance for the review of downtown development projects; therefore, this Ordinance shall be in full force and effect from and after the date of its adoption by Council.

Passed by the Council, NOV 19 1980

Mayor Connie McCready
Michael Harrison:ad
October 27, 1980

Attest:



Auditor of the City of Portland