

Section 4.1100

**DOWNTOWN
PLAN DISTRICT**

Design Manual



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General

4.1101 Purpose

The 2009 City of Gresham Downtown vision includes Downtown that is one of the region's great urban settings - a lively, diverse and appealing place to live, work, shop and play as the basis for a truly sustainable City. The Downtown will be the most active, intense and urban area in the city, with consistent building edges at or near the sidewalk that help contribute to these qualities. This Development Code will help implement that vision, providing specific urban design strategies and recommendations that raise the bar for design excellence in the built environment. Downtown public and private entities working together will make this vision for Downtown Gresham a reality. This document aims to inspire and guide development proposals toward meeting this goal.

The Development Code contains Design Guidelines and Standards that provide a framework within which to review projects in Downtown, aiding architects, designers, developers and the community in understanding the City's urban design expectations. City staff and the City's Design Commission are responsible for reviewing the design of new and significantly modified buildings Downtown, evaluating their contribution to the public's enjoyment of the building and the immediate vicinity.

The Design Guidelines and Standards contained in the Development Code provide the measures that the Design Commission and staff use to determine a proposal's success. Where there is a conflict between the provisions of the Downtown Plan District and those of other provisions of the Community Development Code, the Downtown Plan District's provisions control.

A. Design Review Process:

New development and additions and remodels within the Downtown sub-districts are subject to design review as described in Article 7 Design Review for determination of consistency with the guidelines and/or standards contained in this Code. Projects subject to design review are either brought before the Design Commission or administered by the Manager. Either the Commission or the Manager shall make findings and decisions concerning conformance with the design standards or guidelines, based on which review track is selected.

1. Two Tracks:

The City has set up two alternative Design Review tracks:

- The Discretionary Track; and
- The Clear and Objective Track.

Applicants have the choice of complying with either option. If the Clear and Objective Track is chosen, the applicant must meet all development standards. Deviation from any of the standards in 4.1100 or referenced standards in Article 7 mean the application must use the Discretionary Track.

- Discretionary Track:** The Discretionary Track is intended for applicants that would prefer to propose a quality project that might not comply with all or some of the standards in 4.1100 or referenced standards in Article 7. The aim is to encourage applicants to propose exciting, innovative designs, while still ensuring the City's design concerns and objectives for Downtown development are met. In this case, applicants shall meet the design guidelines. The Design Commission may waive a guideline or guidelines to achieve the flexibility necessary to support a particularly creative proposal. Approval requires the applicant to demonstrate to the Design Commission that the waiver from the guideline(s) would result in a development that better meets the applicable Downtown Design Principles and the intent statement preceding the guidelines.
- Clear and Objective Track:** The Clear and Objective Track includes measurable regulations used in a predictable review process to meet the desired urban form. The standards ensure a degree of order, scale and proportion within

the built environment. That said, the standards are written in a way to offer choices and allow for projects that are interesting and of superior design as individual buildings while also contributing to a cohesive Downtown district.

B. How to Use the Code:

This document guides the Design Review for any new Downtown project or projects that exceed the limits described in Article 7 Design Review. It has four sections:

1. Design Principles:

The Design Principles are the general, over-arching statements and considerations that guide the design of the built environment in design districts like Downtown. The Guidelines and Standards are written to support and carry out the principles on a project-specific level. In instances where the applicant chooses the discretionary process, the relevant principles will be reviewed for compliance during the decision-making process.

2. Downtown Sub-Districts and Development Standards:

This section describes the land use sub-districts in the Downtown and the applicable basic Development Standards. The Development Standards prescribe the basic building envelope and site requirements necessary to ensure compact forms of development appropriate for an urban environment. These Standards include permitted uses, building heights, floor area ratios, densities, setbacks, bonus provisions and other basic regulations.

3. Street Type Standards

A set of Street Types is included in this document. The Street Types are indicated on the Downtown Street Types Map. When consulting the Code, project applicants shall look at the Street Type Map for their project site to determine the Street Type. The respective Street Type Standards provide important direction concerning building locations and relationships to adjacent streets, efficient multi-modal circulation, and the provision of public spaces and pedestrian amenities. The Street Type standards are not discretionary. The cross-sections shown are conceptual and specific details of street design and engineering are found in the City's Public Works Standards. Developments must comply with the Public Works Standards.

4. Downtown Design Guidelines and Standards

The Downtown-Wide Guidelines and Standards are divided into Site Design and Building Design sections, each of which include several topics addressing a particular set of design considerations for Downtown. For each topic, there is an introductory statement describing the design intent, a list of all Design Principles that apply to that particular topic, followed by specific Guidelines or Standards.

The intent statement describes what the Guidelines and Standards are designed to achieve and sets expectations for high-quality site and building design.

The Design Guidelines are the discretionary design parameters for development that provide a statement of intent by which to evaluate the acceptability of a project's design. Design Guidelines provide the opportunity for creative design flexibility.

The Design Standards are the objective requirements for development in design districts that are based on Design Principles. Design Standards provide a clear and objective way of evaluating the acceptability of a project's design.

a. Site Design:

Site Design Guidelines and Standards primarily address the organization and arrangement of a project's components in two dimensions. They deal with the location of buildings and site features such as open space, landscaping, parking and service areas. Good site planning can minimize a project's impacts on its neighbors, improve the quality of the streetscape, relate to or establish desirable development patterns, promote sustainability and make better connections.

- b. **Building Design:** Guidelines and Standards in this section deal with the massing and exterior architectural elements of buildings – components that define the scale, quality and character of a building, such as roofs, entries, windows, materials and details.

Excellent building design contributes to improving the quality of life for residents by enhancing the appearance of the City, by establishing a sense of community pride and by improving the long-term economic value of the property.

5. **Images:**

Most images, including photographs, illustrations, and maps, included in the Downtown Plan District Design Manual (4.1100) are not part of the Development Code and do not act as guidelines or standards. These images are provided to assist readers in envisioning the intent and potential outcomes of the Guidelines and Standards. Images that are not part of the Development Code are labeled as figures. Images that are part of the Development Code are labeled with a Development Code section number.

6. **Compliance with other Code sections includes but is not limited to:**

a. **Section 9.0800: Parking.**

- b. **Section 9.0100** – Buffering and Screening Requirements: New development in the Downtown Plan District is exempt from the provisions of **Section 9.0100**, except where the proposed development abuts a lot that is outside the Downtown Plan District.

- c. **Appendix 5, Section A5.510** - Utilities: Undergrounding of utilities in the Downtown Plan District shall be in accordance with **Appendix 5, Section A5.510** - Underground Utilities.

- d. **Section 9.0200** – Clear Vision Area: New development in the Downtown Plan District shall be exempt from **Section 9.0200** – Clear Vision Area, except for developments with frontage on an Urban Boulevard street type.

e. **Appendix 6.000** - Signage:

- 1. Applicability: The regulations of **Appendix 6.000** Sign Regulations shall apply in the Downtown Plan District. **Section 4.1151(B)(4)** shall apply in the following situations and shall supersede **Appendix 6.000** where conflicts occur:

- a. New Commercial and Industrial development in DCC.
- b. New Commercial and Industrial development in DTM and DMU sub-districts not visible from the Urban Boulevard street type.

- 2. Signs in DRL-1 and DRL-2:

- a. For subdivisions in the DRL-1 and DRL-2 sub-districts, the regulations of **Appendix 6, Section A6.091** Subdivisions Signs apply.
- b. For non-residential uses in the DRL-1 and DRL-2 sub-districts, the regulations of **Appendix 6, Section A6.094** Signs for Permitted Commercial uses in the OFR District shall apply.

- 3. Dwelling Structures with Two or More Units, Elderly Housing and Mixed-Use: See applicable signage Guidelines and Standards in **Section 7.0101 - 7.0103** for developments with two or more units, elderly housing and mixed-use (residential component) requiring design review.

- f. **Community Development Plan Volume 4 - Transportation System Plan:** Downtown Plan Street Types of Section 4.1140 supersede the Transportation System Plan Functional Classification System.

7. **Downtown developments are exempt from the following standards, unless otherwise specified within Section 4.1100:**
 - a. **Section 7.0100** Multi-Family Design Guidelines and Standards; and
 - b. **Section 7.0210** Transit Design Standards; and
 - c. **Section 7.0201** Single-Family Attached Dwelling Units standards;
 - d. **Section 7.0202** Commercial, Institutional and Mixed-Use Developments; and
 - e. **Section 7.0203** Industrial Developments.

Approval Criteria and Standards

4.1102 Downtown Design Principles

- A. **Offer a Vibrant Mix of Uses and a Variety of Housing Types:** A mix of uses and a variety of housing types shall be developed to support a more diverse, vibrant, 18-hour Downtown for a broad range of ages and backgrounds. Mixed-use development may be either horizontal or vertical, depending on the scale and intensity appropriate for a specific sub-area.
- B. **Promote Excellence in Design and Architectural Expression:** Each site, building and streetscape improvement must be treated as a long-term addition to Downtown. Exterior design and building materials shall exhibit both the permanence and quality appropriate to an urban district setting. Great visual interest and innovative design are critical elements of this principle, with buildings that assist in defining, enlivening the public realm and accentuating the main Gateways into the Downtown.
- C. **Create a Unique and Exciting Public Realm:** Emphasize building and site design elements that reinforce the experience of walking and biking, and promote active streets and lively public spaces. This helps achieve the Downtown Plan area goal to create a cohesive, linked system of animated public and private open spaces, parks, plazas and pedestrian pathways.
- D. **Create strong connections between Sub-Districts and Plan Districts:** Each development shall contribute aspects of City-wide connectivity, whether through big moves like through-block connections, or small surprises like distinct lighting, to sustain attention and lead the eye down the street. The Downtown sub-districts shall have a strong connection to Civic Neighborhood.
- E. **Incorporate Sustainability:** A project's design approach to infrastructure and site development shall reflect a commitment to sustainable development that contributes to a healthier and greener community.
- F. **Provide Context Sensitivity:** The Downtown Plan District is composed of several sub-areas, each with their own unique characteristics and potential to enhance district identity. Context-sensitive redevelopment must take into account proximity to existing uses, height and massing relationships, surrounding building character, street widths and functions, open spaces, desired land uses and view corridors.
- G. **Preserve and Enhance Historic Character:** Where appropriate, new developments shall build on historic and other cultural assets by recognizing the smaller patterns of the townscape without being historicist.
- H. **Create Appropriate Transitions in Height, Bulk and Scale:** New development must strive to be compatible in scale with its surroundings. Elements which contribute to the perceived scale of new construction are addressed in the context of specific site conditions, as well as in relationships between sub-districts.
- I. **Increase Transportation Accessibility:** Building, site and street design shall increase accessibility to and within the Downtown Plan area by encouraging transportation by many modes including pedestrians, automobiles, bicycles, transit and other vehicles in a functional and visually attractive manner.