

DRAFT - 10 DEC 2015 JOINT BOARD MEETING

DOWNTOWN URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES



MARCH 2015
CITY OF BOULDER

Placeholder - Image selection in process



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Acknowledgements

This third edition of the Downtown Urban Design Guidelines is the result of recommendations from 2015 joint-board working group consisting of representatives from the Landmarks Board, Boulder Design Advisory Board, Downtown Management Commission, the Planning Board and City staff.

Much of basis of this document may be attributed to earlier work by the Downtown Alliance, a group of city boards and commissions, non-profit organizations and neighborhood groups including the city of Boulder Planning Board; the Landmarks Board; the Boulder Design Advisory Board; the Downtown Management Commission; Downtown Boulder, Inc.; Historic Boulder; and representatives from the Whittier, Mapleton Hill, Goss Grove, and Flatirons neighborhoods.

Pending joint board meeting finalization of content



INTRODUCTION

Note:

The design guidelines include many photographs and diagrams to illustrate acceptable or unacceptable approaches. The illustrations are provided as examples and are not intended to indicate the only options.

Note:

In general, these guidelines adhere the Local, State and Federal regulations, but wherever a discrepancy may arise, the higher standard shall be applied.

What is the purpose of the guidelines?

The purpose of this third edition of the Downtown Urban Design Guidelines is to provide a basis for understanding, discussing, and assessing the design quality of proposed preservation, renovation and new construction projects located within the boundaries of the Downtown Historic District, the Non-Historic Area, and the Interface Area.

Through the use of these guidelines it is anticipated both private and public projects will endeavor to preserve and enhance the unique form, scale, visual character of downtown, and strengthen the identity of the area while encouraging new compatible development.

How are the guidelines organized?

The guidelines are organized into three sections. The first two sections address specific geographic areas of the downtown: the Downtown Historic District and the Non-Historic & Neighborhood Interface Areas. The last section addresses the Public Realm.

The sections are organized around several principle guidelines and a number of “follow-up” guidelines. Within the margins are excerpts marked “Note:” and “CODE:” reserved for more in depth references to the subject matter.

How are the guidelines revised?

The guidelines, as part of the land use code and similar to all other area plans, are adopted by Planning Board and City Council with advice from the Boulder Design Advisory Board. The Landmarks Board adopts guidelines for the Downtown Historic District included in Section 1 of the guidelines.

How are the guidelines administered?

Three review bodies are primarily responsible for administering these guidelines: the Landmarks Board (LB), the Boulder Design Advisory Board (BDAB), and the Downtown Management Commission (DMC). Specifically, the LB reviews all projects located in the Downtown Historic District and landmarked properties located outside of the District, BDAB reviews all projects with a construction value over \$25,000 in the Non-Historic and Interface Areas, and the DMC reviews projects located on the Downtown Boulder Mall.



DOWNTOWN VISION



Fig. 1 View of Downtown Boulder 2015 (Source: City of Boulder)

Downtown Boulder is characterized by the eclectic, fine grained and compact urban character of the Downtown Historic District. These qualities are reflected in the traditional buildings, streetscape and bustling economy, and the civic life of downtown. This is also where the historic fabric is the setting for contemporary, vibrant and active urban life where people are living, working, shopping, and recreating in the shadow of a visible history.

The urban design quality becomes a vital part of what makes Downtown Boulder a memorable place. These guidelines are intended to encourage the preservation and enhancement of Downtown's built environment through recognition of design attributes that are intrinsic to its character and essential to its ongoing appeal:

- Design innovation, excellence in form, and visual character that respects and references the historic architectural context;
- Human-scaled space that results from the designed interplay of enclosing mass, void, and light;
- Street-level design oriented toward the pedestrian in motion; and
- Sustainable design practice with respect to the use of water, energy, and materials.



Fig. 2 Area Map of Downtown Boulder (Source: City of Boulder)



THE DESIGN REVIEW PROCESS

Note: Scheduling a design review early is important. In addition, scheduling a design review with the appropriate review body is the responsibility of the property owner, developer or their representative. In general a meeting should be scheduled before formal application is made to the city for a building permit or development review. For more information regarding the design review and application procedure please contact (303) 441-1880.

Note: When requested LB or BDAB may act in an advisory capacity to the other board.

Note: For further map data please see the City of Boulder eMapLink GIS at http://gisims.ci.boulder.co.us/website/pds/pds_eMapLink/viewer.htm.

The Landmark Alteration Certificate (LAC) Review Process

Landmark Alteration Certificate (LAC) review through the Historic Preservation Program is required for exterior changes to landmarked properties and all properties located within the Downtown Historic District boundaries. The majority of applications are reviewed by the Landmarks Design Review committee (LDRC), that meets each week. Routine changes, such as patios and signage, are reviewed by staff. More complex projects, including demolition or new construction, are reviewed by the Landmarks Board. To find out more or for an application, visit www.boulderhistoricpreservation.net or call (303) 441-1880.

The Boulder Design Advisory Board (BDAB) Process

The Boulder Design Advisory Board (BDAB) reviews projects valued over \$25,000 located in the Non-Historic and Interface Area which involve the construction of a new building or exterior work on an existing building. The board provides comments to persons responsible for the design and development, and assures compliance with the most recent Downtown Urban Design Guidelines. BDAB also reviews projects that require a discretionary review. To find out more, visit www.bouldercolorado.gov/boards-commissions/bdab, or call (303) 441-1880.

The Downtown Management Commission (DMC) Process

The DMC manages, controls and supervises the business affairs of the Central Area General Improvement District (CAGID) which includes review of projects which extend into the public right-of-way in the downtown Boulder Pedestrian Mall. Typical projects reviewed by the DMC include outdoor eating areas, signs, awnings, and other elements. To find out more, visit www.bouldercolorado.gov/boards-commissions/downtown-management-commission, or call (303) 413-7300.

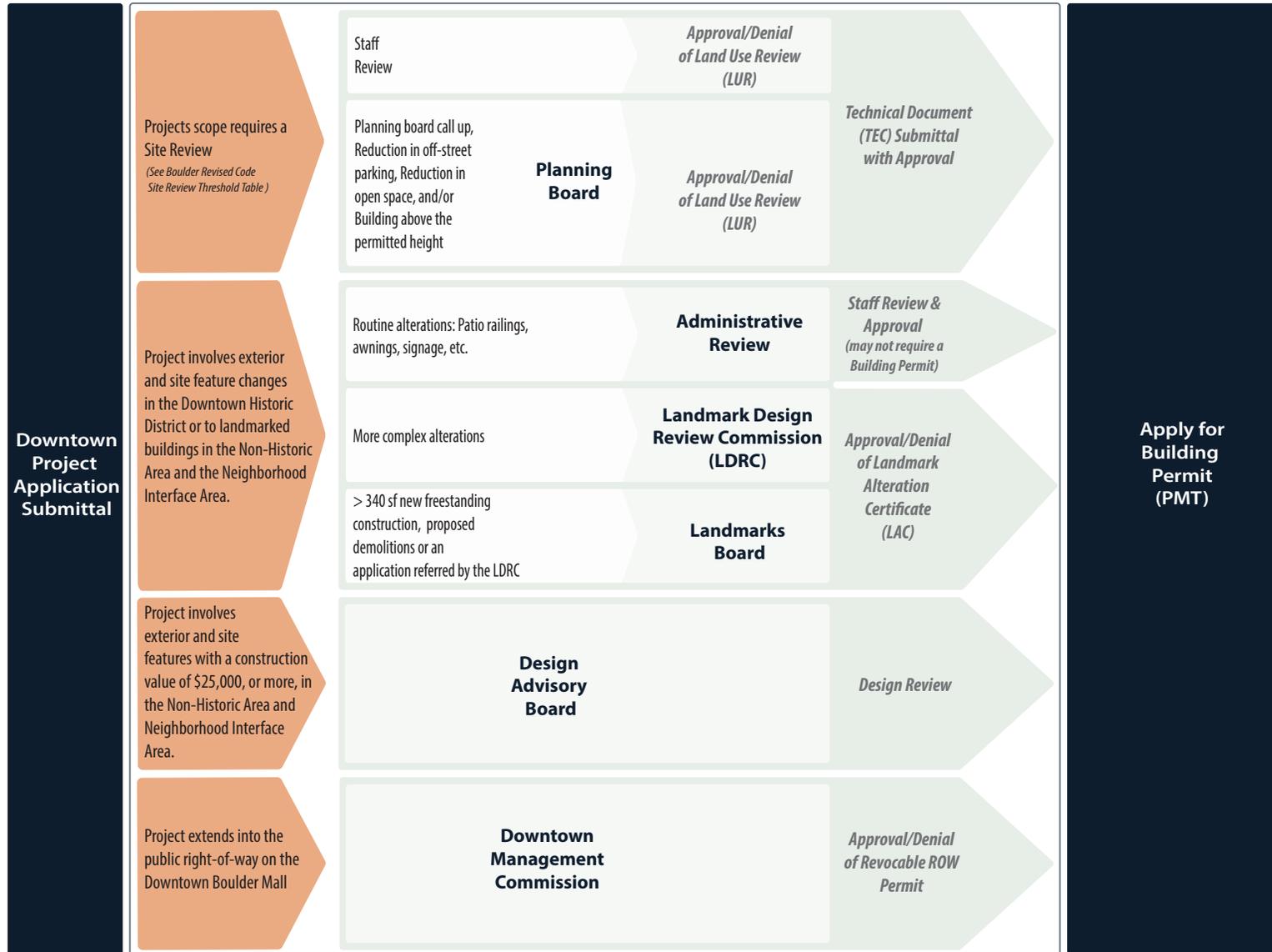


Fig. 3 Project Application Process (Source: City of Boulder)



HISTORY

Text currently under review
by city Historic Preservation
Staff.

On February 10, 1859, the Boulder City Town Company was organized by A.A. Brookfield, the first president, and 56 shareholders. Boulder city developed as a supply base for miners going into the mountains in search of gold and silver providing miners with equipment, agricultural products, housing and transport services, and gambling and drinking establishments. The downtown section of Boulder was the nucleus of the fledgling community, and its main thoroughfare, Pearl Street, led into Boulder Canyon and the mining camps.

The business generated from the mining camps, together with Boulder's selection as the county seat in 1861 and the site for the state university in 1876, provided the foundation for steady growth and the erection of substantial business blocks in the commercial center of the town. Businesses were established along Pearl and adjoining streets to supply every need of the urban community, local farmers, and mining camps. The downtown experienced steady growth after the 1860s. By 1883, the commercial area included enterprises such as restaurants, groceries, saloons and liquor stores, lumber yards, drug stores, dry goods stores, hardware stores, feed and flour stores, barbers, paint shops, and tailors, in addition to fraternal lodges and the county courthouse.

Streetcar service enabled residents in new areas of the city to conveniently shop and conduct business downtown. In addition, the Denver & Interurban Railroad (an intercity connection with Denver) ran along Pearl Street from 1908-1917. During the 1920s, several new commercial buildings were erected, updating the appearance of the downtown with 20th Century influences. The early 1900s saw the planning for the improvement of Boulder with the Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. master plan in 1910 and the Saco DeBoer's zoning proposal establishing the first height restrictions limiting downtown buildings to 75 feet and neighborhood shopping districts to 35 feet, as well as seven zoning districts.

By the 1950s, competition from economic development in other areas of the City led to the modernization of historic storefronts downtown. By 1977, Boulder began a period of infill, restoration, and re-use of its past architectural development which continues to present and establishment of The Pearl Street Mall in 1976-1977. The redevelopment of the downtown area during this period led to the Historic Preservation Code and nomination of Downtown Boulder to the National Register of Historic Places in 1980.

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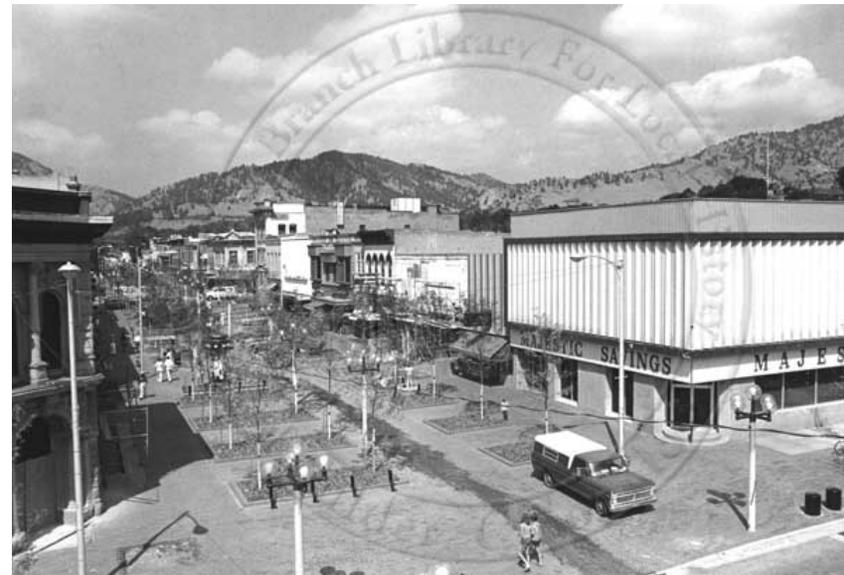
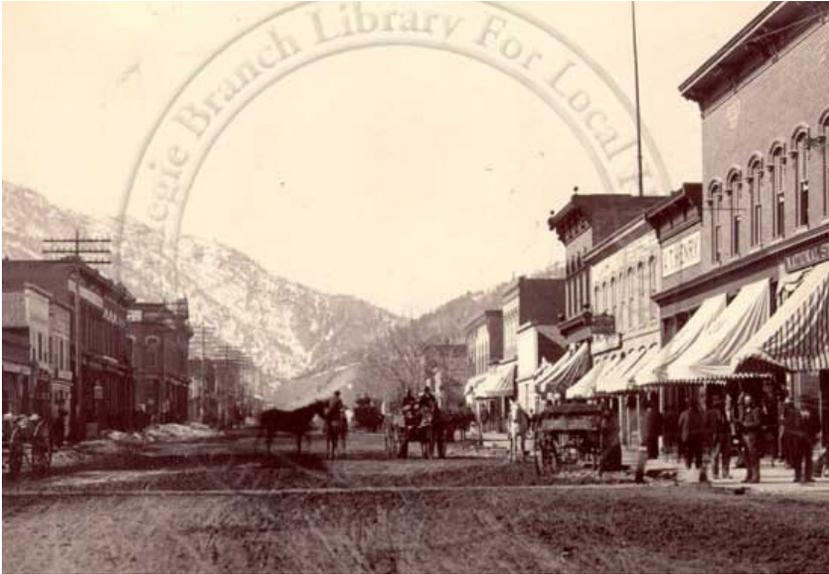


Fig. 4 Development of along Pearl Street ca. 1890, 1927, 1945 and 1976 (clockwise from top left)
(Source: Carnegie Branch Library for Local History) **Acquiring permission**

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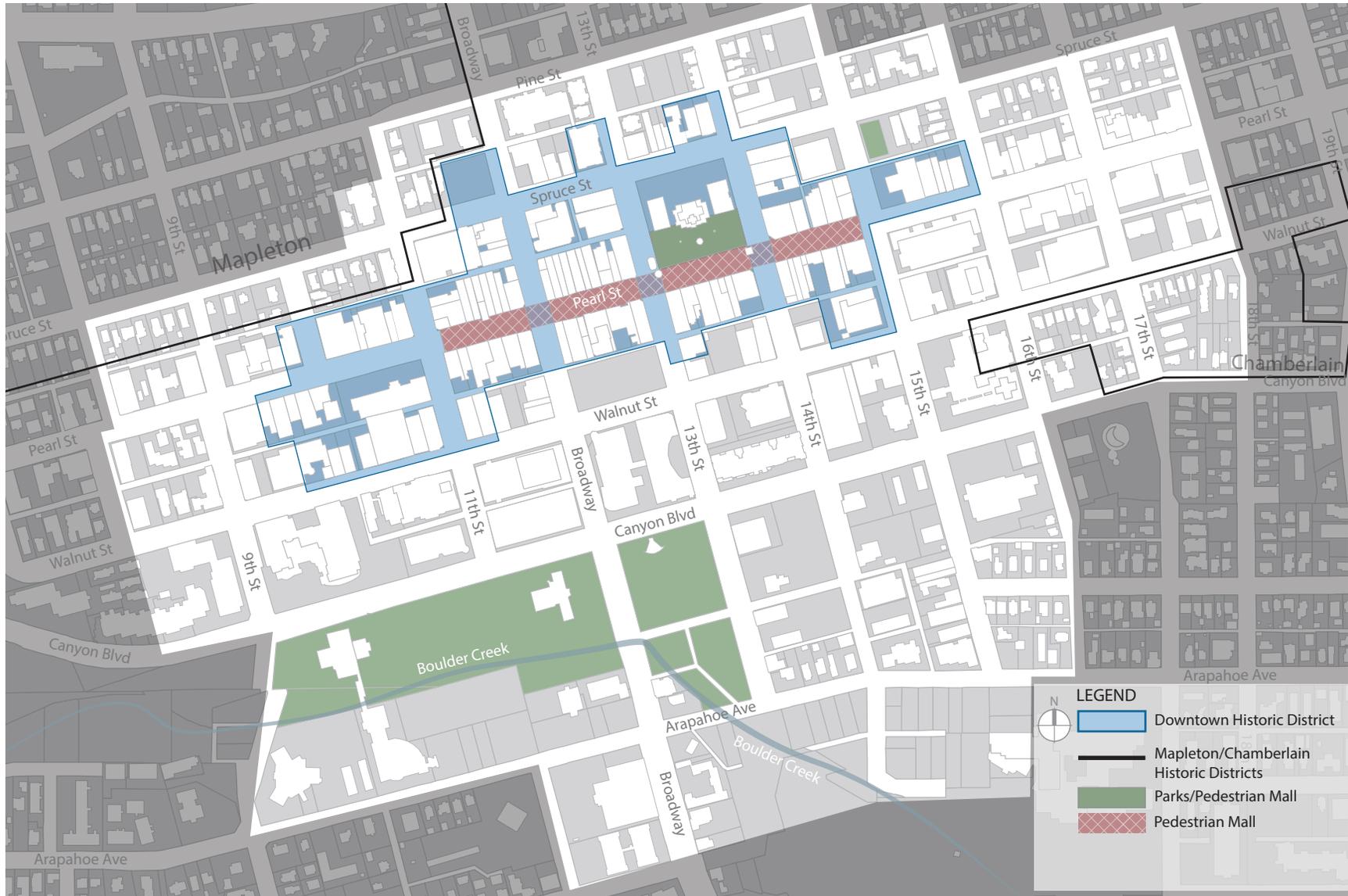


Fig. 5 Downtown Historic District Map (Source: City of Boulder)



SECTION 1: THE DOWNTOWN HISTORIC DISTRICT

Note: All buildings in the district have been evaluated for historic significance and are subject to Landmarks Board review when exterior work is involved. Any changes to a building, or site, require a Landmark Alteration Certificate prior to commencement.

The boundaries of the Downtown Historic District, designated in 1999 with a period of significance from 1858-1946, generally conform to the boundaries of the Downtown Boulder National Register Historic District. The district contains the city's greatest concentration of historic commercial buildings, especially along Pearl Street which forms its central spine. These buildings not only serve as a link with our cultural heritage; they also establish a model for design quality. Such buildings are resources for education, recreation and human enjoyment. They provide downtown with a rich character and a human scale that are unique assets for both residents and visitors.

Development in the Downtown Historic District must be especially sensitive to issues of compatibility. The economic success of the downtown is in many ways dependent on maintaining the historic character and quality that sets the downtown apart from other shopping areas. For this reason, the preservation, restoration, and appropriate rehabilitation of older buildings in this district is of great importance.

The urban design objectives for the Downtown Historic District are to:

- Preserve and restore historic buildings.
- Preserve the integrity of the historic architectural features of individual buildings.
- Ensure that alterations and new construction strengthen and maintain the historic integrity of individual buildings and of the district at large.
- Encourage new development that will respect and enhance the visual character.
- Preserve the central area as a place for intense pedestrian activity.



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Note: The city's planning department maintains a file of each building in the downtown area more than 50 years in age. The official Inventory/Survey forms on file indicate the level of significance of each building within the Downtown Historic District. For more information please visit www.boulderhistoricpreservation.net, or call (303) 441-1800.

There are three categories of historic properties:

Local Landmark Buildings

These buildings are officially designated as city of Boulder local landmarks. They have a special character, historic, architectural, or aesthetic interest or value in Boulder's local history. Landmarked buildings may include contributing properties to the Downtown Historic District. The greatest care must be given to preserving, restoring, and designing additions to these buildings.

Contributing Buildings

Contributing buildings are those built during the district's period of significance (1858 through 1946), that exist in comparatively "original" condition, or that have been appropriately restored, and that clearly contribute to the historic significance and integrity of the area. Such buildings may have additions that are compatible with the historic character of the original building, have original material now covered, or have experienced some alteration yet continue to convey some sense of history. Rehabilitations and additions should be sensitive and appropriate to the historic building and district.

Non-Contributing Buildings

There are two types of non-contributing buildings in the historic area: 1) buildings built during the district's period of significance that have been altered to such an extent that historic information is not interpretable and restoration is not possible. Such buildings should be evaluated on a case by case basis to determine if saving and restoring them is feasible or desirable; and, 2) buildings erected after 1946 which are not individually significant. For alterations to these buildings, the guidelines for new construction and/or remodel of non-contributing buildings in this section apply.

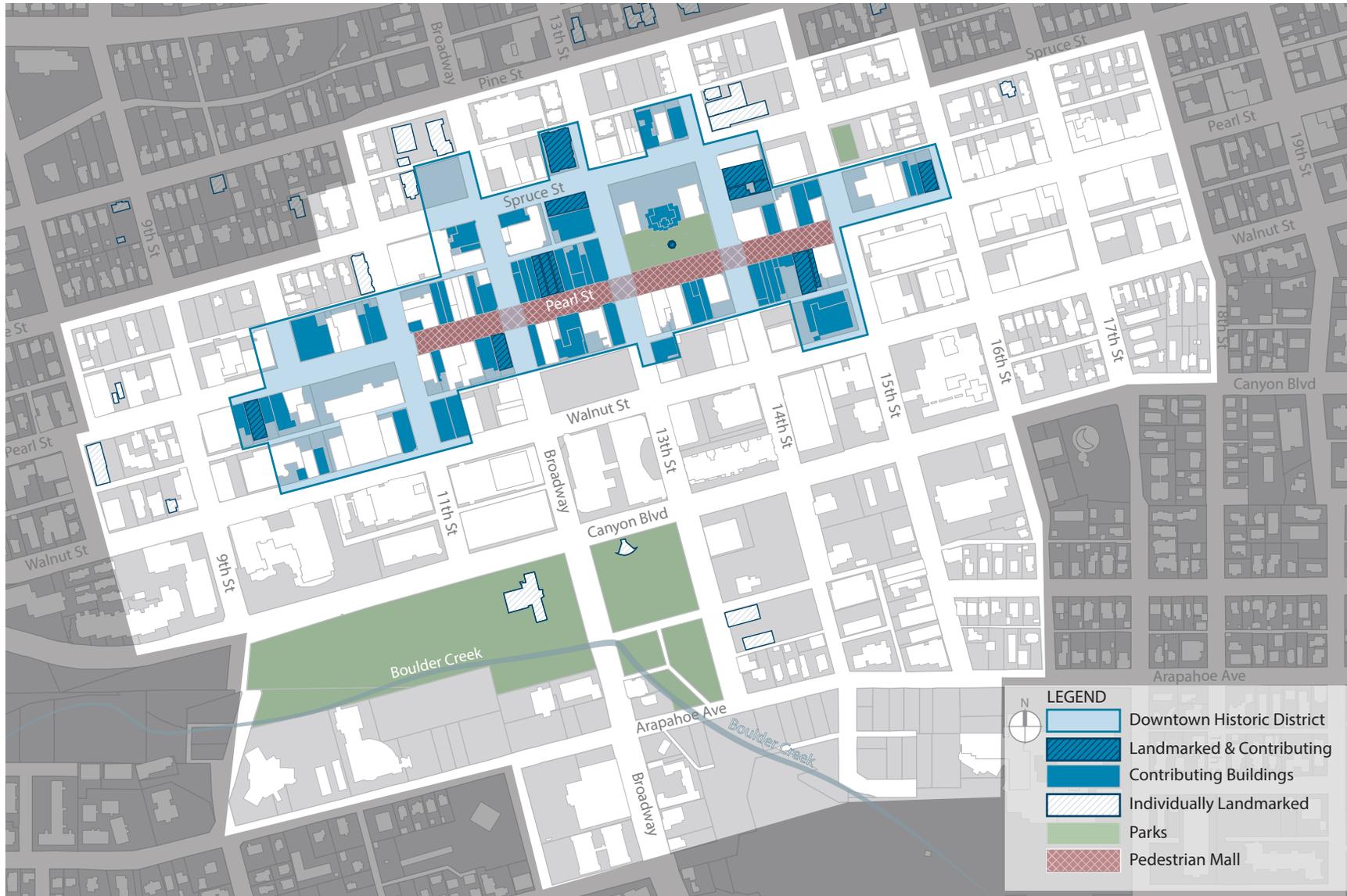


Fig. 6 Downtown Historic District Properties (Source: City of Boulder)



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Note: It is neither the intention of this guideline to recreate the past, nor to encourage theme design in the historic district, if the original building facade or original building materials do not exist. However, if documentary evidence such as photographs of the original does exist, then an acceptable alternative is to reconstruct the facade.

1.1 Use building materials that reinforce the integrity of the overall historic district

The use of traditional, durable materials as the primary building material is encouraged to reflect the historic building construction and development pattern within the district. Choose accent materials similar in texture and scale to others in the district.

These following materials are generally appropriate:

- Full dimension brick and stone masonry
- Finish carpentry details, e.g. cornice molding, door and window casing
- Finished lumber to achieve traditional patterns, e.g. horizontal siding rather than diagonal
- Finished, embossed or painted metal and sheet metal
- Clear or lightly tinted glass
- Ceramic tiles
- Brick, clay and ceramic pavers
- Slate, finished metal, glazed ceramic and tile roofs
- Brick, concrete and stone lintels
- brick, wood or stone columns

The following materials are generally inappropriate:

- Thin veneer products
- Vinyl Replacement Windows
- EIFS systems, or EIFS decorative elements
- Faux or simulated materials
- Coarsely finished, “rustic” materials, such as wood shakes, shingles, barn board or stained fir plywood.
- Poorly crafted or “rustic” woodworking and finishing techniques
- Indoor-outdoor carpeting or astro-turf
- Corrugated metal and fiberglass (unless used sparingly)
- Moss rock
- “Antique” or old brick with partial paint, mottled light variegated brick, oversized brick and white brick mortar
- Ornate wrought-iron, “New Orleans” style grille and rail work
- Stucco surfaces that are highly textured such as those sometimes associated with a “hacienda” or “Mediterranean” style
- Expanded metal
- Silver or clear anodized aluminum sheets
- Silver or clear aluminum extrusions for windows and doorways
- Residential type sliding glass doors

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Note: For further information on recommended treatments for historic properties please see [The Secretary of the Interior Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating Restoring & Reconstructing Historic Buildings.](#)

- Imitation wood siding or stone
- Flat or molded plastic sheeting in quantities exceeding five square feet when used as primary facade materials
- Imitation metal “rock work”
- Plastic molded imitations of any conventional building material
- Mirror or metalized reflective glass
- Glass block



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1.2 Guidelines for the preservation and restoration of local landmarks and contributing buildings

While it is acknowledged that changes to structures in the Local Downtown Historic District will occur over time, it is also a concern that these changes do not damage the historic building fabric and character of downtown. Preservation of the exteriors and storefronts of these buildings will continue their contribution to the unique historic character of the downtown. Any building renovation or alteration, no matter the planned use, must retain the overall design integrity of the historic building by protecting the original features and materials and respecting the traditional design elements.

The following are the guidelines for the preservation and restoration of local landmarks and contributing buildings:

1.2.1 Preserve Original Character, Façades and Materials

Wherever possible retain these elements through restoration and repair, rather than replacement. If portions of the original material must be replaced, use a material similar to the original.

These elements include:

- A. Full-dimension bricks, or stone
- A. Display window bulkheads
- C. Storefront display windows
- D. Recessed and corner entrances
- E. Secondary entrances and detailing
- F. Storefront transom
- G. Sign bands and storefront cornice
- H. Parapet walls, caps, and roof cornices
- I. Upper story vertically proportioned windows and fenestrations
- J. Columns, pilasters, and piers
- K. Decorative window sills, lintels, window hoods, and other window assembly elements

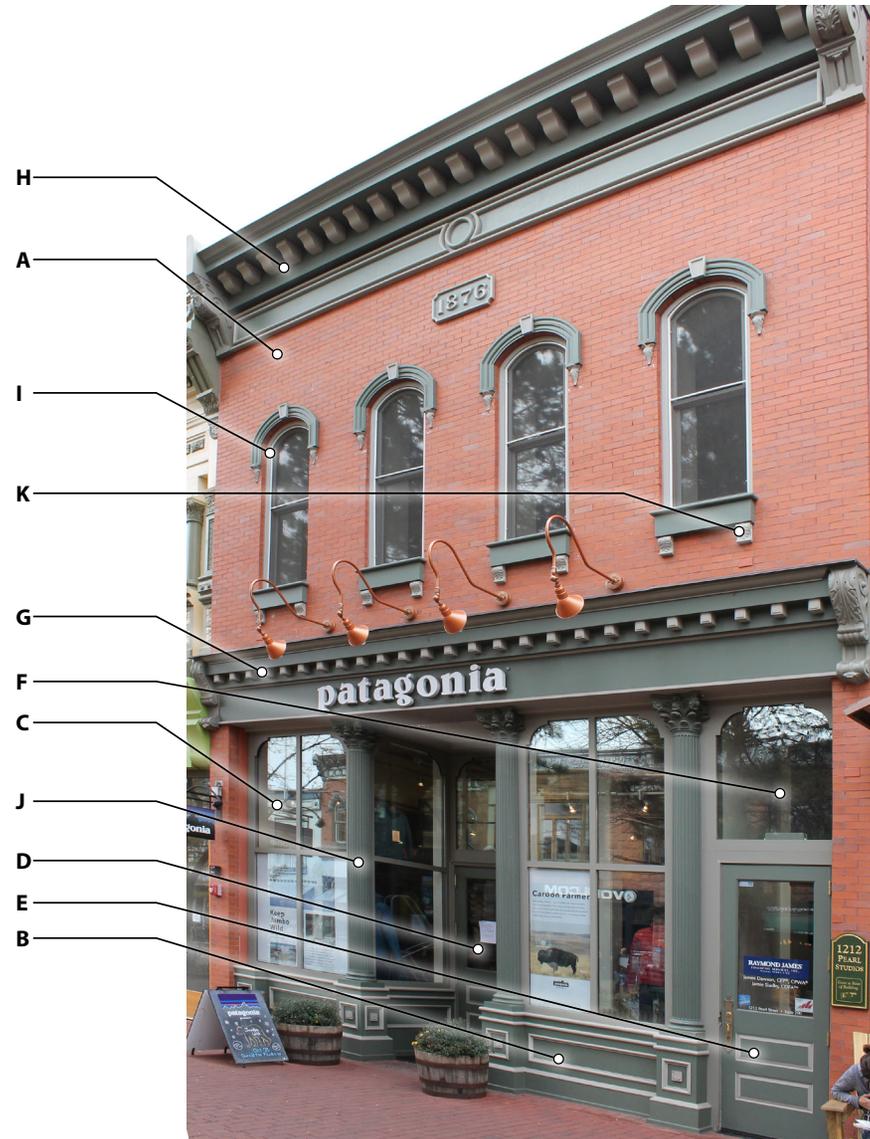


Fig. 7 Historic Building Facade Elements (Source: City of Boulder)



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Note: For more information on paint removal, restoration and rehabilitation of decorative wood elements and brick please see the Secretary of Interior Technical Preservation Services publications at <http://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs.htm>.

1.2.2 Avoid concealing or removing original materials.

If the original material has been covered, uncover it if feasible. See the Secretary of Interior Technical Preservation Services publications for specific recommendations to preserve, rehabilitate, and restore historic buildings.

1.2.3 Maintain the historic building setback line

Preserve the historic relationship of the building to the street or property line. Where buildings are built to the alley edge, consider secondary customer entries if original materials and features are not damaged.

1.3 Guidelines for contemporary alterations and additions to local landmarks and contributing buildings

1.3.1 Awnings may be used to provide visual depth and shade

Awnings should be designed to fit the storefront opening to emphasize the building's proportions. Awnings should not obscure or damage important architectural details. An eight foot clearance from the sidewalk to the awning is required.

Operable fabric awnings are encouraged. Metal awnings or canopies that are similar in form to fabric awnings may be appropriate when designed as an integral part of the building facade, and do not appear as tacked-on additions. Awning color should be coordinated with the color scheme of the entire building front. Mechanized awnings and awnings on the upper stories are discouraged.

1.3.2 Distinguish additions to historic buildings

Additions to historic buildings should be subtly distinguishable from the original while maintaining visual continuity through the use of design elements such as proportion and scale, siting, facade set-back, and materials that are of a similar color and texture.

When design elements contrast too strongly with the original structure, the addition will appear visually incompatible. Conversely, when the original design is replicated, the addition is indistinguishable and the historical evolution of the building becomes unrecognizable.

A. For additions to a historic building, retain the original proportions, scale, and character of the main facade. Position the addition so it is subordinate to the original building. Express the difference between the original facade and the addition with a subtle change in color, texture or materials.



CODE: See the B.R.C Form and Bulk Standards for additional information on heights, setback, encroachments into the setback, and other zoning district specific requirements.

B. Maintain the proportions and the established pattern of upper story windows. In additions, upper floors should incorporate traditional vertically proportioned window openings with less window glazing and transparency than the lower floors. Use windows similar in size and shape to those used historically to maintain the facade pattern of the block.

C. Maintain the rhythm established by the repetition of the traditional 25' facade widths for projects that extend over several lots by changing the materials, patterns, reveals, building setbacks, or by using design elements such as columns or pilasters.

D. Set back additions to roofs of historic buildings, in order to maintain the height of the primary facade. New floors should be substantially set back from the primary facade so that the original building height and facade are clearly distinguishable from the new upper floor as seen from the street.

1.3.3 Select building colors appropriate to the area's historic character

In general, select a color scheme that will visually link the building to its past as well as to others in the area. Consider colors that are compatible with the building's predominant materials, or do an analysis of colors pre-existing on the building and use one of the colors found.

A. Develop a comprehensive color scheme. Consider the building as a whole as well as the details that need emphasis. Softer muted colors establish a uniform background. Establish a hierarchy for the color palette with one color on similar elements such as window frames. Reserve brighter colors for small special accents to emphasize entry ways and to highlight special structural ornamentation.

B. It is not appropriate to paint unpainted brick. If the brick is already painted, paint removal is preferred. Avoid paint removal procedures that damage the original brick finish such as sand blasting or caustic chemicals. Before removing paint conduct a test to determine detrimental effects. If the existing paint on the brick is in poor condition and paint removal will damage the underlying brick, the brick should be repainted.

1.3.4 Minimize the visibility of mechanical, structural, or electrical appurtenances

Use low-profile mechanical units and elevator shafts that are not visible from the street. If this is not possible, setback or screen rooftop equipment from view. Be sensitive to views from the upper floors of neighboring buildings. Skylights or solar panels should have low profiles and not be visible from the public right-of-way. These features should be installed in a manner which minimizes damage to historic materials.



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Note: Furthermore, architectural styles that directly copy historic buildings, and theme designs, such as “wild west” are not appropriate.

Note:
1.4.1 Items are for reference and are not intended to be used as comprehensive checklist

1.4 Guidelines for new construction and remodeling non-contributing buildings in the downtown historic district

The purpose of this section is to provide guidance for the design of new construction and the renovation of non-contributing buildings in order to retain the historic character of the overall district. While new building design is expected to reflect the character of its own time acknowledging the downtown as a living district, it is important that it also respect the traditional qualities that makes the downtown unique such as massing, scale, use of storefront detailing, and choice of materials.

Guidelines from Section 1.3 concerning awnings, paint color, lighting, and appurtenances are also applicable to the non-contributing buildings.

1.4.1 Consider traditional design elements in new designs

Careful integration of traditional facade features reinforces patterns and visual alignments that contribute to the overall character of the district. While these features may be interpreted in new and contemporary ways, they generally include the following:

- A. Full-dimension brick or stone
- B. Display window bulkheads
- C. Display windows
- D. Recessed and corner entrances
- E. Entry door(s) and detailing
- F. Storefront transom
- G. Sign bands and storefront cornice
- H. Parapet walls, caps, and roof cornices
- I. Upper story vertical window patterns, shapes, and fenestrations
- J. Pilasters and piers
- K. Decorative window sills, lintels, window hoods and other window assembly elements
- L. Historic 25' building modules rhythm

1.4.2 Maintain the historic building setback line

Construct new buildings to maintain the continuity of the relationship of the historic building line to the street and adjacent properties, and/or the block.



Fig. 8 Historic building 25' module rhythm (Source: City of Boulder)

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CODE: See B.R.C Form and Bulk Standards for more information on height limits and specific zoning districts.

1.4.3 Construct residential units to include entry stoops and/or porches

Residential entry porches are encouraged to extend 18" to 30" above grade.

1.4.4 Consider the height and mass of buildings

In general, buildings should appear similar in height, mass, and scale to other buildings in the historic area to maintain the historic district's visual integrity and unique character. At the same time, it is important to maintain a variety of heights. While the actual heights of buildings are of concern, the perceived heights of buildings are equally important. One, two and three story buildings make up the primary architectural fabric of the downtown, with taller buildings located at key intersections.

A. Relate the height of buildings to neighboring structures at the sidewalk edge. For new structures that are significantly taller than adjacent buildings, upper floors should be set-back a minimum of 15' from the front facade to reduce the perceived height.

B. Consider the effect of building height on shading and views. Building height can shade sidewalks during winter months leading to icy sidewalks and unappealing pedestrian areas.

1.4.5 Maintain a human scale rather than a monolithic or monumental scale

Smaller scale buildings and the use of traditionally-sized building components help to establish a human scale and maintain the character of downtown. Standard size brick, uniform building components, and standard window sizes are most appropriate.

1.4.6 Improve rear or side alley elevations to enhance public access from parking lots and alleys.

Where buildings are built to the alley edge, consider opportunities for alley display windows and secondary customer or employee entries.

Screening for service equipment, trash, or any other rear-of-building elements should be designed as an integral part of the overall design. Where intact, historic alley facades should be preserved along with original features and materials. Alterations should be compatible with the historic scale and character of the building and block.



*Fig. 9 Infill development with compatible materiality, historic building proportioning, and distinguishing contemporary features, Boulder, CO
(Source: Studio Architects)*

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Fig. 10 Surface parking located towards the rear of the property and screened from the street (Source: City of Boulder)



Fig. 11 Building integrated trash enclosure (Source: City of Boulder)



Fig. 12 Secondary alley entrance (Source: City of Boulder)



CODE: All lighting must also comply with B.R.C. Section 9-9-16, "Outdoor Lighting".

Note: All surface parking lots are required to meet the B.R.C. development standards for parking lot landscaping and screening.

1.5 Exterior building lighting should be designed to enhance the overall architecture of the building

1.6 Reduce the visual impact of structured and surface parking

- A. Parking structures are should be compatible to the historic district and adjacent buildings.
- B. All parking structures should be architecturally screened and/or wrapped with an occupiable use.
- C. Locate any surface parking to the rear of the property.
- D. All surface parking must be screened.
- E. Pedestrian routes in structures and parking lots should be easily identifiable and accessed, with clear visual connections to the sidewalks and buildings.
- F. Security lighting should be designed for safety, as well as night-time appearance.

1.7 Handicapped access shall be appropriately designed

- A. In most cases the principal public entrance to a building should also be the principal entrance for handicapped accessibility. In existing buildings, where the only route is not accessible from the principal public entrance a rear or side service entrance route may be considered.
- B. Ramps and related accessibility modifications to a historic property should be compatible with the character of the building.

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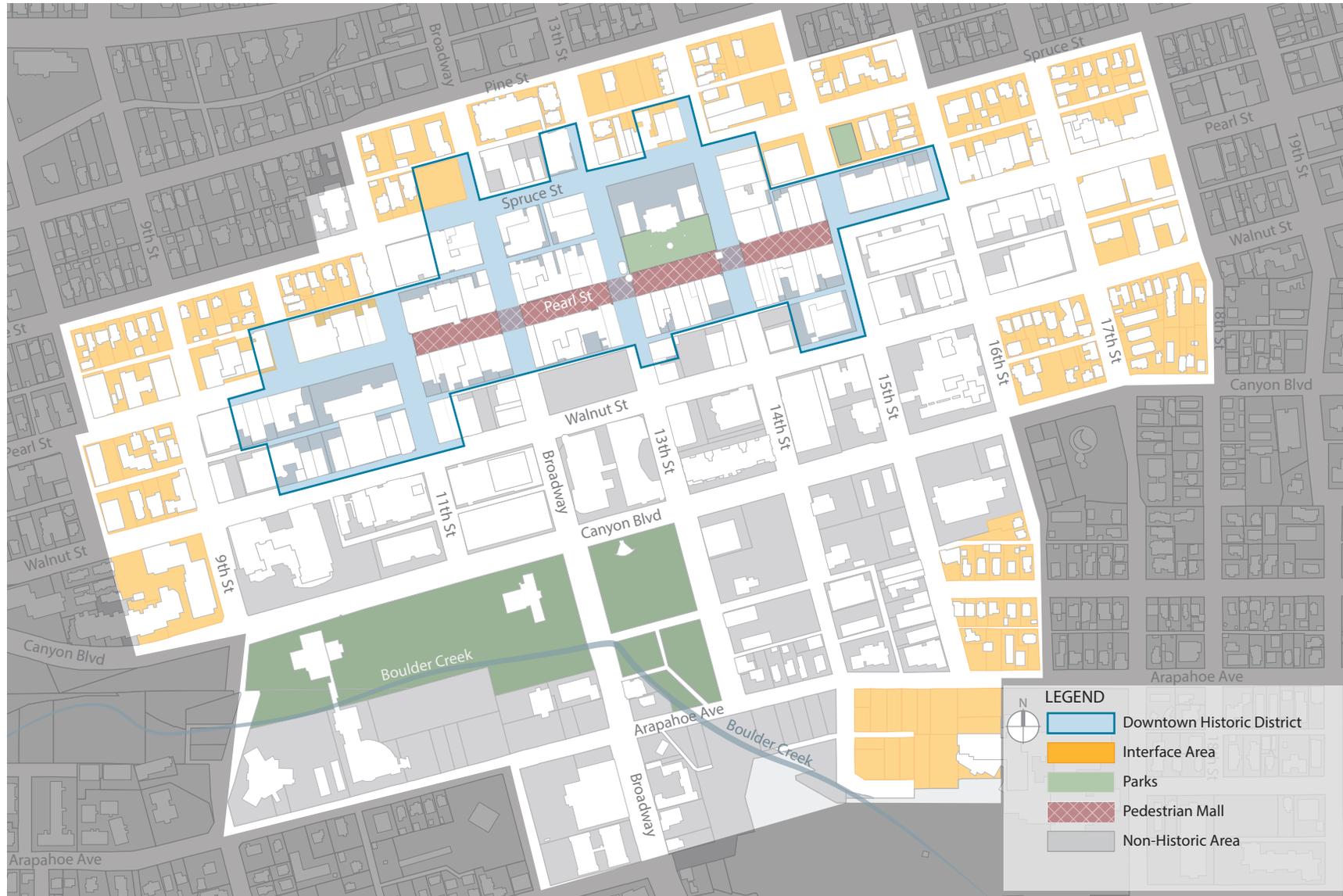


Fig. 9 Map of the Downtown Historic District, Non-Historic and the Interface Area (Source: City of Boulder)



SECTION 2: THE NON-HISTORIC & INTERFACE AREAS

Notes: A good neighborhood policy has been implemented by downtown property and business owners and residents living in adjacent residential neighborhoods as a positive way to communicate about issues of "livability" in the interface area. Its purpose is to establish a standard of cooperation and a code of conduct not generally addressed by existing law. While compliance is voluntary, the policy asks that a "Good Neighbor Agreement" between commercial property or business owners and surrounding neighborhood residents be agreed to and signed. The policy asks owners to take action on a number of issues including: trash; litter; graffiti removal; the use of alternate transportation modes by employees; employee parking; noise, animal, pest, and weed control; deliveries; and employee/tenant education. For information on how businesses in the interface area can participate in the Good Neighbor Policy contact the DMC at (303) 441-4000.

Important design elements are 1) the Non-historic Area's relationship to its surroundings, including the Historic Area, the Civic Park area, and the residential quality of the Interface Area, 2) the pedestrian quality of the area including the downtown Boulder mall, east and west Pearl Street, Spruce and Walnut streets, Canyon Boulevard, and the north-south streets that connect Civic Park to the mall area, and 3) new building design can reflect the character of its own time and meaningful juxtapositions, while respecting the integrity, scale, and massing of historic buildings in the area.

Creative interpretations of traditional design elements, and designs that reflect the character of their time, are encouraged. The designs should be compatible with the surrounding historic context, but distinguishable. These guidelines also discourage projects that create inhospitable pedestrian design, and buildings that are inappropriate in scale and massing to their surroundings.

The Interface Area is composed of the blocks that link the core of the downtown to the surrounding residential neighborhoods. This area requires special design sensitivities that must be addressed when commercial buildings are located adjacent to residential areas. Impacts to the surrounding residential areas can be minimized through careful design which respects the scale and quality of adjacent residential uses and deftly transitions the commercial and residential areas.

The urban design objectives for the Non-Historic and Interface Areas are to:

- Reinforce the character of downtown as a pedestrian place by encouraging architectural solutions that are visually pleasing, reflective of contemporary times yet stylistically appropriate to the context, and compatible in scale and character with their street.
- Encourage sensitive design along the edge where the downtown commercial area abuts residential neighborhoods.
- Emphasizes a clear distinction between the commercial and residential interface areas.
- Maintain the diversity in building type and size, and respect the adjoining residential character.
- Discourage adverse impacts from noise, night lighting, poor building design, and commercial service areas on adjacent residential neighborhoods.

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Fig. 10 Contemporary storefront facade with transparency, compatible height, and innovative use of materials, Palo Alto, California (Source: Olson Kundig)



Fig. 12 Contemporary multi-family residential with human scale materials in Boulder, CO (Source: Studio Architects)



Fig. 11 Contemporary rowhome with traditional roof form and contemporary use of traditional materials in Goes, Netherlands (Source: Pasel Kuenzel)



Note: See Section 1.1 for recommended building materials

2.1 Commercial buildings in the Non-Historic and Interface Areas

2.1.1 Consider incorporating traditional facade elements in new and contemporary ways

See Section 1: The Downtown Historic District for specific building elements.

2.1.2 Maintain the historic or predominant building setback line.

- A. Maintain the relationship and continuity of the building wall to the street or property line.
- B. For commercial uses in residential buildings, maintain the predominant residential setback of the block, including any porches.

2.1.3 Consider the height, mass, and scale of buildings

In general, buildings should appear similar in height, mass, and scale to other buildings in the area. At the same time, it is important to maintain a variety of heights. While the actual heights of buildings are of concern, the perceived heights of buildings are equally important. One, two and three story buildings make up the primary architectural fabric of the downtown, with taller buildings located at key intersections.

- A. Consider the height and proportion of buildings to neighboring structures. For new structures that are significantly taller than adjacent buildings, upper floors should be set-back a minimum of 15 feet from the front facade to reduce the perceived height.
- B. Consider the effect of building height on shading and views. Building height can shade sidewalks during winter months leading to icy sidewalks and unappealing pedestrian areas.
- C. Maintain the traditional, established breaks between buildings, such as alleyways.
- D. For projects located in the Interface Area, construct buildings three floors or less and consider the adjacent residential height, mass, and scale.
- E. Commercial construction on a primarily residential block should be designed to reflect a residential character, e.g. residential setback on a primarily residential street.

2.1.6 Maintain a human scale, rather than monolithic or monumental scale

- A. Avoid large featureless facade surfaces. Include architectural elements and patterns that divide the facade into familiar intervals. A single facade should not exceed a maximum of 75 linear feet.
- B. Consider how the texture and pattern of building materials will be perceived. Use traditionally sized building components in a way that incorporates details, textures, and patterns to establish a sense of human scale.



DOWNTOWN URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES

Note: A goal of the city is to make the downtown as accessible as possible. All accessible design elements must conform to all applicable Federal, State and Local laws and codes. Wherever a discrepancy may arise, the higher standard shall be applied.

Note: See Section 3 for encroachments into the public right-of-way discussion on revocable lease and allowable dimensions.

CODE: All lighting must also comply with B.R.C. Section 9-9-16, "Outdoor Lighting".

C. Maintain the distinction between upper and lower floors. Develop the first floor facade as primarily transparent. Consider using windows and other architectural features to create a pattern that will reinforce the traditional facade rhythm found on commercial buildings in the downtown area. Lower floors are generally differentiated by a higher percentage of glazing and transparency than upper floors.

2.2 Residential buildings in the Non-Historic and Interface Areas

- A. Maintain the diverse architectural character of the residential buildings in the interface area.
- B. Construct residential units to include entry stoops and/or porches. Residential entry porches are encouraged to extend 18" to 30" above grade.
- C. When feasible, maintain residential uses in historic residential buildings.

2.3 Handicapped access shall be appropriately designed

- A. In most cases the principal public entrance to a building should also be the principal entrance for handicapped accessibility.
- B. Ramps and related elements should be modest in their design and be visually integrated with the overall building design and site plan. They should not appear as a separate addition to a building facade.

2.4 Open space and right-of-way considerations for the Non-Historic and Interface Areas

- A. Consider the quality of open space incorporated into new and renovated buildings
- B. When appropriate, integrate the surrounding open spaces into the building design. Well programmed plazas, courtyards, outdoor seating and dining areas on or adjacent to open spaces and pedestrian routes are encouraged.

2.5 Exterior building lighting should be designed to enhance the overall architecture of the building

2.6 Design attractive alleys and rear building facades

- A. Design all sides of the building including alley elevations. Well designed rear building entrances, windows, balconies, and planting areas are encouraged.
- B. All trash enclosures should be integral to the building and all receptacles screened from view.
- C. All lighting should provide security and pedestrian visibility.

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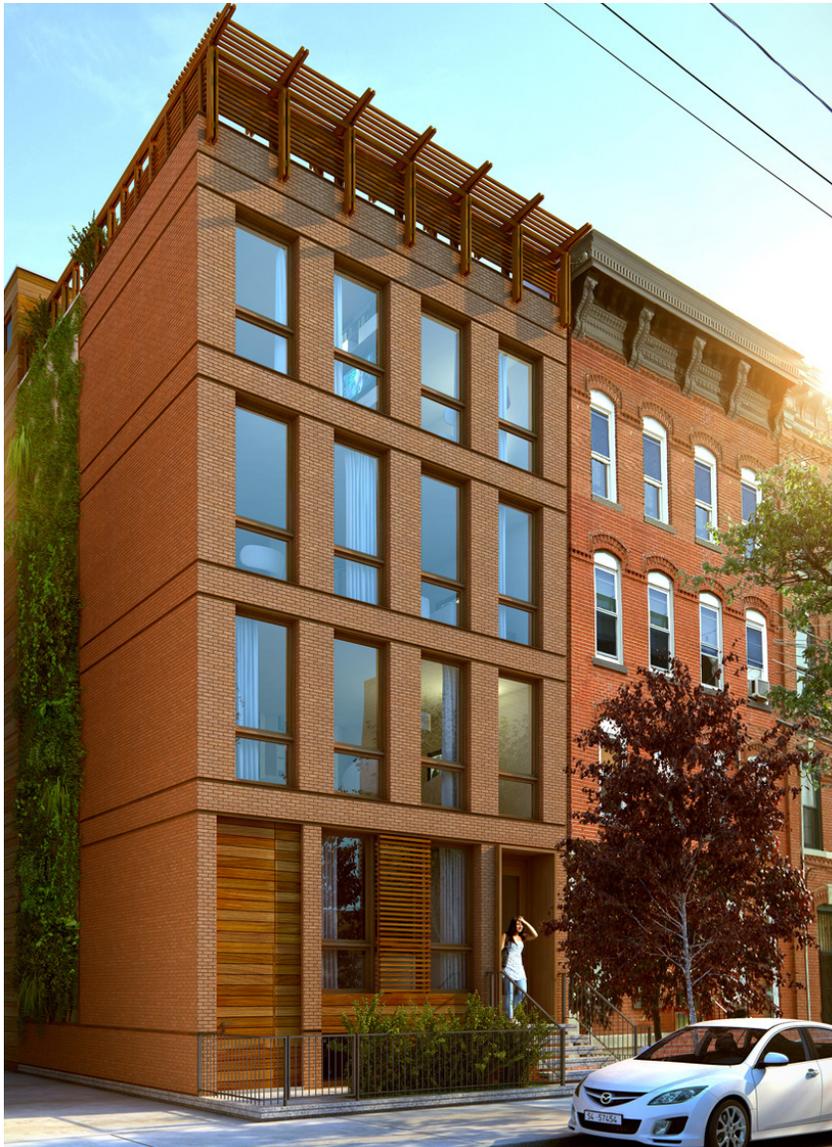


Fig. 13 Contemporary infill with a differentiated first floor to upper floor and sophisticated references to the adjacent building (Source: Jorge Mastropietro)



Fig. 14 Contemporary infill with a storefront first floor, contemporary awnings and references to the adjacent building's mass and scale (Source: City of Boulder)

SECTION 2: THE NON-HISTORIC & INTERFACE AREAS Placeholder - Pending image selection and licensing acquisition 31



DOWNTOWN URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES

CODE: All parking lots are required to meet the B.R.C. development standards for parking lot landscaping and screening..

2.7 Reduce the visual impact of structured and surface parking

- A. All parking structures should be architecturally screened and/or wrapped with an occupiable use.
- B. Locate any surface parking to the rear of the property.
- C. All surface parking must be screened.
- D. Pedestrian routes in structures and parking lots should be easily identifiable and accessed, with clear visual connections to the sidewalks and buildings.
- E. Security lighting should be designed for safety as well as night-time appearance.



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DOWNTOWN URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES



Fig. 17 The Downtown Pedestrian Mall (Source: City of Boulder)



SECTION 3: THE PUBLIC REALM

CODE:

Awnings, signage, patio extensions, and other associated structures or objects extending into the public right-of-way require a revocable right-of-way permit and/or lease agreement, see B.R.C Section 8-6-6 for more information.

The term “public realm” refers to the entire system of open space, landscaping, signage, streets and sidewalks, by which people circulate through and experience the downtown. Our image of downtown Boulder, and the ease and safety with which we move through it, is determined by the quality of the streetscape.

The urban design objectives of the Public Realm Guideline are to:

- Unify the visual image of downtown by creating a series of public sitting areas, completing the rhythm of street trees and street lighting, and providing landscaping with seasonal color or other qualities of visual interest.
- Create a pedestrian oriented environment that is safe, accessible, visually pleasing, and comfortable.
- Strengthen downtown’s visual connections. Visually and functionally connect the downtown Boulder mall and Civic Park, or east and west Pearl Street to the mall.
- Maintain the visual unity and historic character of the downtown Boulder mall through the use of traditional materials.
- Respect and preserve adjacent residential neighborhoods through the use of sensitive streetscape design.
- Encourage design and sign placement that promotes downtown businesses while complementing the character and scale.
- Promote signs that are designed as an integral yet noticeable part of a building’s overall design.
- Promote the design of signs that are good neighbors within their block.
- Encourage comfortable spaces by integrating appropriate landscaping and street trees into the public realm.
- Create an overall image in which a building, signage, and site design relate to each other.



DOWNTOWN URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES

Note:

The following is meant as a supplement to the city's Sign Code. Sign permits, obtained through the Planning Department, are required. Signs that extend into the downtown Boulder mall public-right-of-way, will require review by the Downtown Management Commission. For further information call the DMC (303) 441-4000 and the Planning Department (303) 441-3270.

CODE:

Signs on historic buildings or in historic districts must also comply with the B.R.C. Chapter 10-13 "Historic Preservation" and "Signs" 9-9-21 provisions.

3.1 Signs

Commercial signs should function to identify and locate businesses, promote commercial activity, attract customers, provide direction and information, and in some cases create visual delight and architectural interest.

3.1.1 *Following are principle sign types that are applicable in the downtown:*

A. Wall Signs:

Wall signs are limited in size and defined as projecting less than 15 inches from the building. Wall signs should be positioned within architectural features such as the panels above storefronts, sign bands, on the transom windows, or flanking doorways. Wall mounted signs should align with others on a block to maintain established patterns.

B. Projecting Signs:

Projecting signs should be positioned along the first floor level of the facade. Projecting signs may take on their own special shape, or create their own symbol within the overall facade design.

C. Awning Signs:

Awnings should be positioned to emphasize special shapes or details of the facade, to draw attention to the shop entrances or to emphasize a display window. Awning signs may be illustrated with letters or symbols.

3.1.2 *Signage should be designed as an integral part of the overall building design*

In general, signs should not obscure important architectural details. When several businesses share a building, signs should be aligned or organized in a directory.

3.1.3 *Use simple signs clearly convey a message*

A. Sign Materials:

Sign materials should be durable and easy to maintain. Appropriate sign materials include painted or carved wood, carved wooden letters, epoxy letters, galvanized sheet metal, stone, specialty or decorative glass, clear and colored acrylic, or neon.

B. Illumination:

Lighting external to the sign surface with illumination directed toward the sign is preferred. External lighting may also highlight architectural features. Internally lit signs are generally discouraged. The light level should not overpower the facade or other signs on the street. The light source should be shielded from pedestrian view. The lighting of symbol signs is encouraged. Internal lighting may be appropriate where only letters are illuminated or neon is used. Neon is acceptable, though restricted in size, if it does not obscure architectural detail or overly illuminate display windows.

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DOWNTOWN URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES



Fig. 18 Downtown wall sign with directional lighting (Source: City of Boulder)



Fig. 19 Awning signs and patio extension (Source: City of Boulder)



Fig. 20 Projecting sign (Source: City of Boulder)

SECTION 3: THE PUBLIC REALM



DOWNTOWN URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES



Fig. 21 Street Type Key Map (Source: City of Boulder)



C. Sign Shapes:

Signs should be designed in simple, straight-forward shapes that convey their message clearly. Symbols are easily read and enhance the pedestrian quality of the downtown.

D. Graphics:

Lettering styles should be proportioned, simple, and easy to read. In most instances, a simple typeface is preferred over a faddish or overly ornate type style. The number of type styles should be limited to two per sign. As a general rule, the letter forms should occupy not more than 75% of the total sign panel.

3.2 The Streetscape

3.2.1 Use the existing street hierarchy as a basis for designing the streetscape

The concept of a street hierarchy is based on understanding how various downtown streets function. For example, Canyon Boulevard and Broadway are major vehicular streets, thus street improvements should provide for large volumes of traffic while buffering pedestrians from traffic impacts. Four types of streets have been identified:

A. The downtown Boulder mall (a vehicle-free pedestrian street):

The downtown Boulder mall, which encompasses Pearl Street from 11th to 15th Streets, is the most intensely used pedestrian zone in the downtown. As a shopping, festival, and public gathering place it will remain a vehicle free area with a unified brick paving design. Intense landscape treatments, including seasonally-varied plantings and coordinated street furniture, add to the pedestrian ambiance.

B. Canyon Boulevard and Broadway (major vehicular through streets):

Canyon Boulevard and Broadway accommodate large volumes of traffic moving through the downtown. Streetscape features should be designed to buffer pedestrians from traffic impacts, provide greater building setbacks and detached sidewalks with planting strips between the sidewalk and curb. The exception is the section of Broadway between Canyon Boulevard and Spruce Street in which attached sidewalks are needed to accommodate more intense pedestrian use. In areas with detached sidewalks, well designed landscaping and street trees should be provided. On Canyon Boulevard, the use of landscaped median strips and pedestrian safe zones should be designed to minimize pedestrian/vehicular conflicts.

C. 9th, 10th, 11th, 13th, and 14th Streets (north/south pedestrian connectors):

These five north/south streets provide the main pedestrian connections between the downtown Boulder mall and the Civic Park. Where these streets cross Canyon Boulevard, which is very wide, crosswalk designs that visually link the north and south sides of the boulevard are important. The use of similar materials, intersection gateway features, landscaping, and street furniture will help to visually



DOWNTOWN URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES

Note:

In general, the predominate material in the downtown is brick. The use of brick to highlight and define the streetscape zones is especially appropriate in the blocks adjacent to the mall. Other appropriate materials include sandstone, or the use of art work which is stenciled or sandblasted into the concrete surface.

Note:

Colored concrete scored or formed to imitate brick or stone is inappropriate .

weave the areas together and promote pedestrian access between these two important downtown public gathering places.

D. All other streets in the downtown (general pedestrian oriented streets):

In order to create a unified downtown image, all streets should share common features. At minimum, these should include similar sidewalk scoring patterns, similar paving materials, similar street trees and tree grates, coordinated street furniture, the inclusion of sidewalk neck downs and pedestrian safe zones, removal of pedestrian obstructions, and consolidation of streetscape elements such as newspaper vending boxes, other traffic and directional signage, and pedestrian scale street lighting.

E. Alleys (general pedestrian oriented streets):

Alleys serve as secondary circulation and alternative routes for both pedestrians and vehicles to navigate downtown. Downtown alleys can provide an alternate means of access to shops, restaurants and other commercial uses. Care must be taken in balancing the service function of the alley and making alley's safe and functional for pedestrians.

F. Paseos (pedestrian only streets):

Paseos in downtown provide mid-block pedestrian only access. Paseos should be encouraged in large projects to promote pedestrian circulation throughout the downtown. Design such connections to be interesting places, not merely hallways to parking lots or alley service loading areas. They should be handicap accessible, illuminated, appropriately landscaped, and paved in materials compatible with their locations and surrounding context.

3.2.2 Use materials that reinforce the continuity and integrity of the overall downtown district

Any variations from the standard materials and patterns required by the Design and Construction Standards should be based on a streetscape plan that illustrates how the variation adds to the visual unity of the downtown streetscape, adjacent properties, and the overall image of the block. The design and materials should be durable, classic, and elegant including:

- A. Brick
- B. Sandstone
- C. Scored grey concrete
- D. Black enamel street furniture and utility elements, e.g. right-of-way lighting, benches, trash cans, bollards, etc.
- E. Outdoor seating



Fig. 22 Brick, sandstone, and scored concrete defining a corner zone
(Source: City of Boulder)



Fig. 23 Brick pavers and street features within the Pedestrian Mall
(Source: City of Boulder)



Fig. 24 Typical bicycle rack and tree grate
(Source: City of Boulder)

SECTION 3: THE PUBLIC REALM



DOWNTOWN URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES

CODE:

See B.R.C. Section 9-9-1, "Streetscape Design Standards" for additional requirements.

Note:

Permanent kitchen equipment, new basement level extensions, second floor extensions and greenhouses are generally not permitted within the right-of-way.

Note:

Light weight or movable handrails, chains, ropes and unsupported railings are inappropriate railing materials.

3.2.3 Use a basic sidewalk design to unify the visual image of downtown

In most locations throughout the downtown, sidewalks average 15 feet wide from curb to property line. Streets in the downtown should incorporate the following basic sidewalk elements:

A. Frontage zone

The frontage zone width may vary by street and allows for extensions into the right-of-way which create comfortable and attractive sitting areas. Included within this zone are projecting signs, awnings, cafe seating, and gated patio encroachments.

- Design public right-of-way extensions that are visually appropriate to the street character.
- Seating areas for dining are limited to the width of the building frontage. All tables and chairs are to be removable.
- Railing designs should reflect an open, transparent feeling. Visually closed-in railings that "box-in" the extension area are not appropriate.
- Consider building programs and spatial layouts which provide alternative solutions to the need for gated, exterior dining areas.
- Create comfortable and attractive sitting areas, plazas, and small open spaces.
- Orient seating to take advantage of views, sunshine in the winter, and shade in the summer.

B. Pedestrian zone

The sidewalk pedestrian through zone is the area that must be kept clear of all obstacles.

- Pedestrian zones should be delineated from the curb zone or buffer areas.

C. Curb zone

The curb zone should consist of a 4' wide area measured perpendicular from the inside of the curb.

- Street elements and landscaping should be organized to allow for pedestrian access to adjacent street parking.
- On residential transition streets in the Neighborhood Interface blocks use landscaping in the curb zone rather than hard surface concrete.

D. Corner Zone

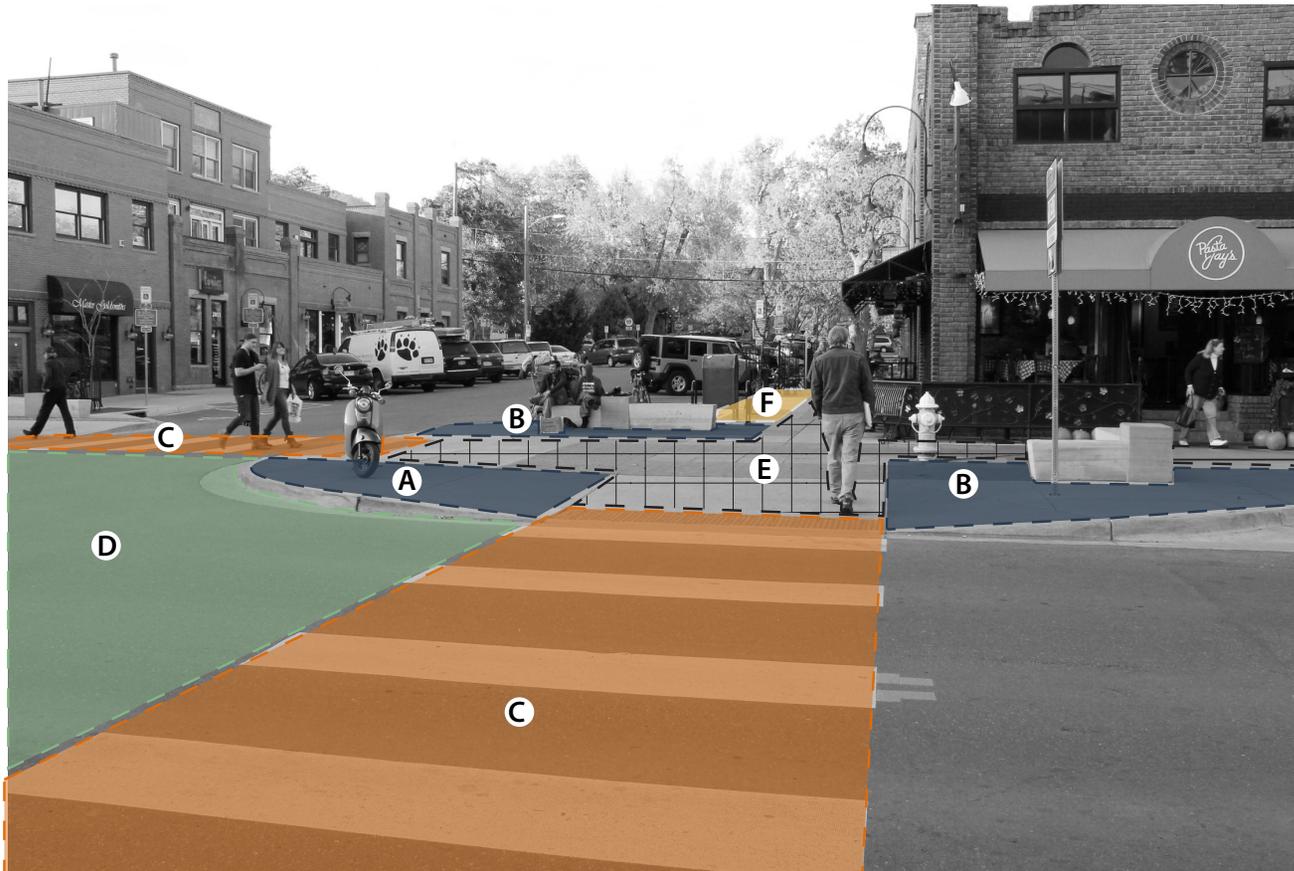
At a minimum, the standard corner zone should include the following elements:

- A pedestrian area with only essential "regulatory" elements such as signal posts are allowed. All other amenities such as benches, bike racks, newspaper racks, are prohibited.
- Corner "amenity areas" are located at either side of the pedestrian area. Elements such as benches and bike racks should be carefully arranged in an attractive and accessible fashion.



- (A)** Pedestrian Mall - 10' maximum extension into the right-of-way.
All other streets - 6' maximum extension into the right-of-way.
- (B)** Pedestrian Mall - An unobstructed pedestrian area of between 8' to 9'6" is required on the downtown Boulder mall.
All other streets - An unobstructed pedestrian area of no less than 7 feet is required between vertical elements such as trees or poles and buildings.
Basic surface treatment includes brushed natural color gray concrete tooled in a maximum 4' x 4' square with brick accents
- (C)** A minimum 4' wide curb zone includes the street trees, street furniture and utility elements.
Basic surface treatment includes brushed natural color gray concrete tooled in a 2' x 2' square pattern, possibly with brick accents
Street elements which do not interfere with people accessing cars parked at the curb, mail boxes, trash receptacles, bus stops, bollards, and news racks.

Fig. 25 Diagram of the typical sidewalk zones (Source: City of Boulder)



- (A)** Corner Zone - A pedestrian area or clear zone that is free of obstacles and lined up with the sidewalk pedestrian zone. Standard surface treatment includes brushed natural gray concrete scored in a 2' x 2' square pattern parallel to the street.
- (B)** Corner "amenity areas" - The amenity areas may incorporate benches, bike racks, news racks, and similar elements. Standard surface treatment includes brushed natural gray concrete scored in a 4' x 4' square pattern and may have brick detailing.
- (C)** Crosswalks - Pedestrian crosswalks should be a minimum of 10 feet wide with a 1' buffer on either side. Standard surface treatment includes truncated dome ramps and marking the crosswalk zone.
- (D)** Intersection Squares - the center area of intersections have the same surface material as the surrounding street surfaces.
- (E)** Pedestrian Zone
- (F)** Curb Zone

Fig. 26 Diagram of the typical corner and intersection zones (Source: City of Boulder)



3.3 Items currently under review by City Landscape Architect for code redundancies

Note: Unsuitable streets trees not to be placed in the public right-of-way include Box Elder, Cottonwood, Chinese and Siberian Elm, Poplar, Russian Olive, Silver Maple, Tree of Heaven, Willow, evergreens that create sight obstructions, and clump forms or multi-stem trees.

Benches should be arranged to facilitate social interaction.

E. Intersections

Important streets may require additional material detailing to match adjacent streetscape design and overall block character.

- Materials include utilizing brick and scored concrete patterning similar to adjacent pedestrian and curb zones in the crosswalks and special paving within intersection squares. Important intersections are the areas between the Civic Park and downtown Boulder.

3.3 Landscaping

3.3.1 Select street trees that are appropriate to their intended location and function

Plant trees that will tolerate full sun, drought, varying soil pH and will have a relatively compact crown. Keep in mind that the conditions of various planting sites in the downtown will vary and should be evaluated for individual landscape objectives and suitability to the specific street they are to be planted. The following guidelines should be followed:

- A. Large trees should be located along Canyon Boulevard, wide right-of-way streets, and principal access streets such as Pearl and Walnut Streets. Large trees should also be used to highlight corners, to provide cover for large plazas, or as accents against the skyline.
- B. Medium or large scale trees may be located on all other downtown streets.
- C. Medium trees, with narrow spread canopies, should be located in narrow streets, to fill in mid-block areas, provide visual relief and scale definition to large walls, provide shade and canopies for sidewalks and plaza areas, and establish large areas of color above eye level.
- D. Small trees should be used to provide seasonal color and a visual focal point for special locations such as a building entrance, corner area, sitting area, bus stop, or other significant area or view corridor.
- E. Trees in rights-of-way should be maintained with a minimum head height of 8' over sidewalks and 14' over the vehicular streets.
- F. Low maintenance trees are desirable which have low water requirements and can adapt to the downtown environment.
- G. Install street trees in tree grates except at locations where they occur in special raised planters in the curb zone, in large planted areas that are integrated with a sidewalk area, and in locations where existing trees located in the curb zones have a root system that has pushed up above grade where the use of a grate will injure the tree.
- H. Maintain at least a 10 foot distance between tree trunk and building line. This refers to the distance between a tree and building, not the distance necessary to maintain an unobstructed pedestrian area between a tree, as a vertical element, and a railing that encloses a sidewalk



DOWNTOWN URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES

Note:

Tree and landscape maintenance or commercially zoned properties, the maintenance of trees, tree grates, and surrounding hard and soft landscaping located in the public right-of-way is the responsibility of the private property owner. This includes all maintenance and repair of landscaping, trees, irrigation, spraying, fertilizing, and replacing plant materials and tree grates.

The city provides pruning, removal of street trees in the public right-of-way, safety inspections, and consultation on street trees that may pose a health or safety concern.

Note: Contact the Downtown Management Commission and for additional information regarding street furniture, trash receptacles, bicycle stands, and bollard variations for the Pedestrian Mall.

restaurant

- I. Tree grates should be aligned with paving pattern score lines and be placed with careful consideration of sidewalk use, such as a sidewalk cafe or curb cuts.
- J. Do not locate trees that will obstruct building entrances, corner visibility, or within any sidewalk pedestrian zones that must remain unobstructed.
- K. Consider alternative methods to increase tree soil volume, e.g. Modular, pre-engineered suspended pavement and structural cell systems.

3.3.2 Select Ground Level Plants That Suit Their Location And Function

- A. Use landscaping, shrubs and ground cover to accent areas.
- B. Limit the use of annuals and high maintenance plants to the planting beds in the pedestrian mall. Use drought tolerant, climate appropriate landscaping, including scrubs, flowering perennials, ground cover, and ornamental grasses in planter beds.
- C. Do not use gravel or rough stone in place of ground cover in the curb zone.
- D. Whenever feasible, flowers and ornamental grasses should be used in combination to accent gateway locations and special sites.
- E. Plantings are preferred in natural, at-grade planting beds rather than planter pots or other containers.
- F. Consider maintenance requirements in the placement and design of these features.

3.3.3 Maintain the character of Canyon Boulevard

- A. Continue the large tree rows on either side of the street and center landscape median.
- B. In general, trees and other plant material should be arranged in an urban linear pattern that parallels the street rather than a less formal random arrangement.
- C. The primary trees along Canyon do not need to be planted with tree grates.
- D. The median should be planted to enhance the “boulevard” quality of the corridor.
- E. Incorporate grasses, paved areas or ground covers within the overall design of tree rows.

3.4 Street furnishings create a unified visual appearance in downtown

- A. In general, install standard benches, trash receptacles, appropriately sized-bollards, pedestrian-scale street lighting, and bike stands in durable black metal to unify the visual quality of the downtown.
- B. Strategically locate newspaper stands, kiosks and other furniture adjacent high-traffic areas, e.g. bus stops, intersections, etc.
- C. Create attractive, safe and comfortable bus stops crafted in durable and elegant materials.

3.5 Preserve historic features of the streetscape

- A. Whenever possible, preserve, restore, and reuse historic fixtures of the streetscape, such as a flagstone sidewalks, globe light fixtures, or any other existing historic features located in the public right-of-way.



Fig. 27 Sandstone and iron patio railing extending into the right-of-way (Source: City of Boulder)



DOWNTOWN URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES

Note: The Arts Commission, the Downtown Management Commission, the DDAB, and the LPAB are among the groups involved in making public art decisions in the downtown.

- B. Historic signs, such as those painted on side walls, should be preserved.
- C. Extensions into the right-of-way involving historic resources should be compatible and not substantially alter the property.

3.6 Enrich the downtown with public art

- A. Carefully site public art within appropriate areas of the public realm. Consider the context, materials, purpose of the artwork at the proposed site.
- B. Freestanding artwork should not obscure building elements. Thoughtfully integrated artwork may be incorporated into the surface or facade design.
- C. Artwork may be utilized as gateway features within discrete areas of downtown.
- D. Public art should be complementary and subordinate to associated historic properties.



Fig. 28 West Pearl gateway obelisk (Source: City of Boulder)