

Development of Design Guidelines

The architectural and urban design guidelines were developed by a fifteen-member citizen task force appointed by the Lawrence City Commission (Resolution 6077). The Lawrence Historic Resources Commission (2/15/01) and the Lawrence/Douglas County Planning Commission (2/28/01) reviewed and recommended approval of a rezoning request to establish the Downtown Urban Conservation Overlay District. The Downtown Urban Conservation Overlay District established the enforcement mechanism for the Downtown Design Guidelines. The Lawrence City Commission approved the Downtown Urban Conservation Overlay District (Ordinance No 7395) and the associated Downtown Design Guidelines on August 28, 2001. Ordinance No 7395 and Administrative Policy (AP-82) became effective on September 5, 2001.

The architectural and urban design guidelines represent community expectations for new construction and renovation of existing buildings in Downtown Lawrence. The architectural and urban design guidelines address the character-defining physical attributes, as identified by the citizen task force, to ensure the unique character of Downtown Lawrence is maintained with future investments in the Downtown.

The architectural and urban design guidelines are based upon the *General Urban Design Principles* adopted by the City Commission in September of 1995. While the architectural and urban design guidelines address more specific design elements, they are not meant to replace the *General Urban Design Principles*. The *General Urban Design Principles* provide additional community expectations for new development and redevelopment in Downtown Lawrence, and should be consulted when developing a project.

The General Urban Design Principles have been summarized below. For specific graphics and additional descriptions of the design principles refer to the [Downtown Urban Design Concept Plan](#).

General Urban Design Principles

1. Require urban development patterns

- Clear philosophy: Downtown Lawrence is urban, not suburban.
- Work with and actively pursue urban-oriented developers.
- Encourage and educate developers: Require developers to make compromises that will maintain the Downtown character and urban quality desired.
- Use public incentives to help facilitate urban types of development consistent with Downtown's character.

2. Respect the historic fabric and character of Downtown

- Encourage adaptive reuse of existing buildings.
- Develop incentives to foster adaptive reuse.
- Encourage development of a Downtown Historic District.

3. Develop urban and design guidelines for new and adaptive reuse projects

- Goal is not to restrict development in Downtown, but to ensure compatibility district-wide for new construction and renovation of existing structures.
- Formal adoption of guidelines.
- Administrative application of guidelines on a consistent basis.
- Guidelines should involve a public participation component before formal adoption.

4. Recognize and reinforce existing Downtown vehicular and pedestrian traffic patterns

- Massachusetts as a primary pedestrian oriented street with ancillary vehicular circulation.
- Vermont and New Hampshire define major vehicular movement patterns.
- Sawtooth parking on Massachusetts, parallel parking on Vermont, New Hampshire and numbered streets.
- Service and deliveries separated from streets (use of alleys is encouraged where appropriate).

5. Design all buildings to be pedestrian oriented at the street level

- Pedestrian-oriented storefronts (large display windows, pedestrian scale signage, canopies, awnings).
- Articulation of facades (detailing of materials and massing).
- Break up facade massing (slight variations to the setback line at the sidewalk, such as recessed entrances).
- The maximum footprint of an individual building should be limited to approximately 25,000 gross square feet.

6. Promote an understandable concept of parking and parking management

- Implementation, development, and administration of an overall parking philosophy.
- A consistent parking design philosophy (placement of parking, limiting expanses of parking areas between structures, parking lot landscaping, site access, parking setbacks, treatment along pedestrian/commercial streets such as walls, fencing amenities).
- A strategic public and private parking philosophy (revenues, incentives, mixed-use parking garages, number of spaces needed on a district wide basis).
- Downtown Lawrence accommodates the pedestrian and bicycle as well as the automobile.

7. Promote Downtown as a mixed-use district

- Proactively pursue development types that complement each other.
- Provide incentives for creative mixed-use development.
- Provide the organization that will work with developers to facilitate mixed-use development.
- Downtown should accommodate a diversity in the range of square footage's and building frontages.
- Mixed-use development may include combination of retail, office, institutional, and residential uses.

8. Provide landscape linkages

- Connect existing open spaces through a series of landscape treatments, each treatment enhancing existing uses and anticipating future development within that particular area.

9. Emphasize strong activity core development along Massachusetts Street and east/west streets

- Promote density (commercial, entertainment, institutional, residential, etc.) in Downtown while preserving the established scale and character, recognizing that Massachusetts is the established primary street.
- Densities should be greater along Massachusetts Street and less dense along peripheral streets.
- Anchor Massachusetts Street blocks with significant structures at the corners.
- Retail uses should be emphasized at the street level along Massachusetts Street.

10. Create suitable transitions into neighborhoods

- Enhance the perception of boundaries for Downtown and neighborhoods with gateways, markers, and curb modifications.
- Ensure the quality of neighborhoods by buffering commercial and institutional uses that are adjacent to established neighborhoods (landscaping, rear yard setbacks, and/or berming).
- Promote articulation of facades on all sides of buildings.
- Respect the historic fabric and character of neighborhoods.

Application of Design Guidelines

Architectural and urban design guidelines are a very important part of maintaining the unique character of Downtown Lawrence. Foremost, architectural and urban design guidelines serve as a communication tool in educating property owners and developers as to the community expectations for new construction and renovations of existing buildings. The accompanying narrative and illustrations have been developed to provide detailed information and direction to property owners, developers, and interested citizens.

Architectural and urban design guidelines also serve as a guide for staff in reviewing applications for alterations prior to the issuance of a permit by the City of Lawrence. Given the architectural variety and multiple uses in the Downtown area, the review of proposed alterations and new construction will be conducted on a case-by-case basis.

These architectural and urban design guidelines are not meant as a check-list for “good” design. Nor are they meant to be applied in such a stringent manner as to prevent creative design alternatives. However, it is the intent of these architectural and urban design guidelines to provide the regulatory authority to ensure that new construction and renovation of existing structures is consistent with the character-defining elements identified in the guidelines.

Review Principles

- These guidelines shall apply only to the exterior of buildings and to portions of existing and proposed buildings that would be visible at the pedestrian level from public rights-of-way including alleyways.
- Buildings that contain character-defining features shall be more carefully reviewed than those buildings that have been identified as non-contributing or do not retain their architectural integrity. (A list of non-contributing structures can be found in attachment A. This list deals only with primary facades and does not address secondary or rear facades.)
- While economic costs are not a primary factor in the review process, economic cost will be considered in relation to the adherence to these guidelines.
- Individual guidelines are often stated in absolute terms such as “*Buildings fronting along Massachusetts Street shall be constructed to zero front and side lot lines.*” Just as compatible design consists of individual building elements in a larger building envelope, these design guidelines are viewed as a collective document and not as independent statements.
- It is understood that a project might not meet every guideline in order to conform to the document’s intent.

- It is not the intent of these guidelines to require existing buildings to be in full compliance with these guidelines. Existing buildings that contain nonconforming elements are encouraged to make alterations that will improve the overall appearance of the building. As non-conforming buildings are altered, the proposed alterations shall be in compliance with this document.
- Staff will use these guidelines to review proposed projects in a consistent, fair and equitable manner. If staff believes a proposed project does not meet the intent of the guidelines, the applicant may appeal to the City Commission.

The following architectural and urban design guidelines shall be effective within the boundaries of the Downtown Lawrence Conservation Zoning District. The guidelines contained herein may be more or less restrictive than the regulations of the underlying zoning district. In either case, these regulations shall take precedence.