



MEMORANDUM

PLANNING DIVISION
DEPARTMENT *of* COMMUNITY *and* NEIGHBORHOODS

To: Salt Lake City Planning Commission
From: Laura Bandara, Urban Designer
Date: April 24, 2019
Re: Urban Landscapes

URBAN FRAMEWORKS: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE AND URBAN PLANNING

ACTION: No action required.

RECOMMENDATION: Briefing only.

BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION: The purpose of this briefing is to familiarize the Planning Commission with basic principles of urban design as it relates to landscape architecture. Planning often relegates undefined “open space,” to a ratio or percentage of public and residential outdoor space, and too often neglects a design approach to the identity and character of these places. As a result, the appearance of building façades is elevated over our shared experience of public space. Using a landscape architecture approach to urban design, we can enliven and expand our public plazas, streetscapes, parks, promenades, and myriad other types of public space. Planning staff serves as a resource to the Planning Commission in stewardship of Salt Lake City’s public spaces.

The urban design team is eager to incorporate ecology, hydrology, geology, and climate into the design of both buildings and outdoor space, along with cultural landscape preservation and the integration of a civic commons approach to design and planning. Landscape architecture is inherently a collaborative, multi-disciplinary field. Urban design goals for this year include development of the historic landscape design guidelines, development of an Urban Forest Action Plan and Street Tree Ordinance Amendment in collaboration with Urban Forestry, Sustainability, and Public Utilities, and collaboration with the Transportation Division in the development of Street Typologies for Salt Lake City.

Salt Lake City is experiencing a period of expansive growth, which has introduced new challenges and opportunities to meet a broad range of land management and development goals. While meeting these goals, Planning staff strives to ensure that the City’s public spaces contribute positively to residents’ quality of life.

Urban design and planning that incorporates landscape architecture and site design as a guiding framework is one of the most effective ways of reconciling land-use conflicts and meeting land-use goals, while finding new and compelling opportunities to enhance our public realm. As our city grows and changes, and more demands are placed upon our infrastructure (both through population growth and climate change), consideration of the spatial quality and design of our public spaces and how they can be shaped to meet multiple needs rises in importance.

Staff will review key site design criteria that are particularly important in cities:

- Urban landform/topography
- Connections (physical and visual)
- Landscape composition
- Experience of place
- Edges and thresholds