

13. New Construction

Context & Character

While historic districts convey a sense of time and place which is retained through the preservation of historic buildings and relationships, these areas continue to be dynamic, evolving settings. Where there are vacant lots in a historic district, new construction should add to the vitality of the historic district or neighborhood. Constructing a new commercial building can be a challenge, but careful thought and planning can result in a design that enhances the character of the district.

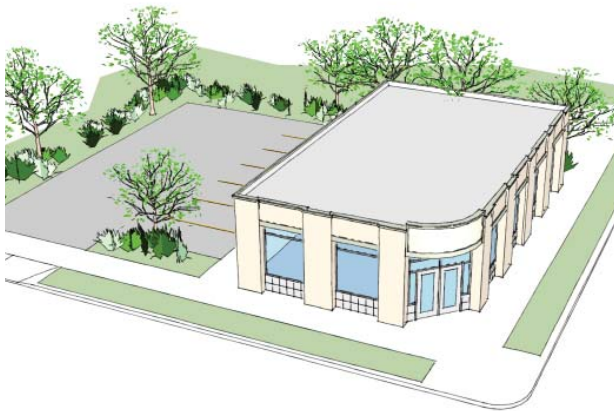
These guidelines are intended to promote sensitive design. The guidelines provide a basic framework to create an environment that respects the special setting of Salt Lake City commercial properties, maintains a cohesive neighborhood identity and is pedestrian-oriented. All new commercial buildings within the districts should be compatible with both the visual qualities of the immediate area in which the property is located, as well as the overall context of the district.

New construction can reinforce the basic visual elements of an area by incorporating the design relationships that define the historic character of the district with contemporary design and current methods of construction. New construction may achieve compatible design through appropriate massing, form, scale, rhythm, orientation, materials, fenestration and/or patterns. Design using these characteristics can contribute to the overall sense of cohesiveness and continuity of the district, without imitating historic architectural styles.

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Maintains the distinction between the ground level and upper floor, and features high quality materials that add scale, texture and variety.



Building placement includes consideration of setbacks, orientation, open space and parking.



This simplified version of a one-part commercial block, while a compatible design could have been improved by stepping it forward to the street frontage. The rear of the building would have been a better location for the surface parking.

Site Design & Orientation

The elements within and adjacent to the public way, including lighting, trees and landscaping, sidewalks and street furniture, commonly referred to as the streetscape, all combine to establish the unique character of a block or district. Successful new development recognizes, reinforces and enhances the sense of place associated with a particular urban setting.

The street block, often with its network of secondary streets and alleys, provides a common, unifying framework for the pattern, scale, dimensions and orientation of the individual lots, and consequently the buildings. Commercial buildings traditionally have storefronts and primary entrances oriented toward the street. Buildings are also generally oriented with their primary facades parallel with the front property boundary of the lot. This arrangement and relationship respects the established grid street pattern that is prevalent in most historic districts, with the exception of the Capitol Hill Historic District.

Since the automobile was not a consideration when the city first developed, incorporating modern parking requirements into a historic context can be a challenge. Siting and design should minimize the impacts of parking and driveways on the appearance of the street scene.

13.1 The traditional historic development pattern should be recognized and maintained in new development.

- A new building should be situated on its site in a manner similar to the historic buildings in the area.
- Orient a building facade and primary entrance toward the street.
- The relationship between building, landscape features and open space should relate to existing front yard setbacks and spacing of side yard setbacks within the block.

13.2 Historic street patterns should be maintained.

- New construction should not interfere with or encroach upon historic or early street or alley patterns and widths.
- Extend intern alley networks wherever possible.

13.3 Distinctive features that emphasize buildings on corner lots should be considered.

- A corner entrance can be used to accentuate corner sites.
- Both street facades should be designed as important public facades.
- Design emphasis can accentuate the corner role.

13.4 Indigenous plant materials should be included in new landscape designs.

- Drought-tolerant varieties, which are in character with plantings used historically, are preferred.



These street facades maintain the pattern of a strongly defined building wall at the sidewalk's edge.



A step back provides a transition between the historic ZCMI storefront and the infill construction.



A cutaway corner entrance emphasizes the corner location.



The new infill buildings maintain and continue the characteristic scale and rhythm of the streetscape.



Typical facades that enhance the pedestrian-friendly quality of the street scene.



Smaller building “modules” can be expressed within a single building using variations in window patterns and cornice detailing.

Mass, Scale & Form

Mass and scale are significant design considerations with major influence on compatible infill construction. Historically, commercial buildings had varied heights, a similarity of form, visually interesting profiles and a sense of human scale. While the trend has been for commercial buildings to become increasingly larger over time, it is important that new construction respect the scale of buildings in the immediate context and within the historic district.

13.5 The height of a new building design should reflect the established building scale of the setting and area.

- Design the building to equate with the height range seen in the area.
- Consider stepping back upper stories from the plane of the primary facade where a building is taller than those found in the block.
- The mass of a new tall building should step down in height to lower adjacent development.

13.6 The massing characteristics of the area should form the basis for the scale of new development.

- Simple rectangular solids on smaller lots are typically appropriate.
- Consider more complex massing on large sites.
- If a new building would be wider than the buildings along the block, consider dividing the building into parts that are similar in scale to buildings seen historically.

3.7 The street facade should appear similar in scale to the established scale of the current street block.

- The primary plane of the front facade should reflect the typical widths and heights of historic buildings in the block.
- The front facade should include a one-story storefront element influenced by traditional design proportions.

13.8 A new building should be designed to reinforce a sense of human scale.

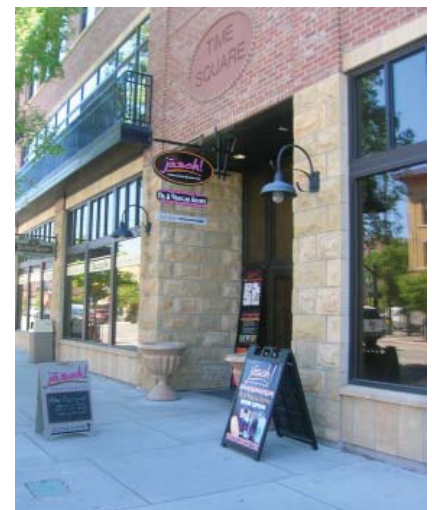
- A new building may convey a sense of human scale by employing techniques such as these:
 - Using quality building materials that help express human scale in their design, detail and proportions.
 - Using changes in building materials, color and texture.
 - Using vertical and horizontal divisions and emphasis.
 - Using architectural features to create visual interest.

13.9 Roof forms should be an integral part of the building design and overall form of the building.

- Where roof lines are visible, they should relate to the general design of other commercial roofs in the district.
- Flat roof forms are characteristic and appropriate for primary roof forms in most commercial areas.
- Screen roof top mechanical equipment from view with architecturally compatible screening features or parapet walls.



Compatible infill construction respects the established rhythms and architectural patterns found along the street frontage.



Architectural proportions and detailing of the street facade create a friendly pedestrian experience.



This contemporary interpretation of a traditional storefront features a display window that is predominantly transparent glass.



Street-facing facades should be well designed and feature high quality detailing and materials.

Architectural Character

While it is important that new development reinforce the basic character-defining features in an area, it is not necessary that it replicate or echo historic architectural styles. Stylistic distinctions between new buildings and historic buildings are preferred, when the design of the new building is sensitive and complementary to the context. These guidelines are intended to encourage creative design solutions. At the same time, they respect the patterns and characteristics of the historic districts.

13.10 Contemporary designs compatible with the character of the area and/or district may be used.

- A new design should draw upon the fundamental design elements of its context.
- An interpretation of a historic style may be considered if it is subtly distinguishable as being new.
- New storefront designs create interest and visual compatibility, while helping to convey the fact that a building is new.

13.11 The exact imitation of earlier architectural styles is discouraged.

- This can blur the distinction between old and new buildings making it difficult to interpret the architectural evolution of the district.
- New buildings should reflect their period of construction.

13.12 Creative interpretations of historical architectural details can be successful.

- New designs for traditional detailing such as columns and cornices can be used in new ways to create aesthetic appeal.
- Materials, finishes, structural systems and construction methods may be used to express a compatible new building design.

Facade Elements

The range and variety of facade elements along a street frontage can play an important role in defining the unique character of historic districts. In particular, windows, doors and architectural detailing such as cornices and moldings appear frequently. These integral elements of a building facade create a three-dimensional quality that adds to the complexity of the design. The architectural characteristics of surrounding buildings can help new buildings fit into the existing context, especially if a consistent architectural pattern is already established.

13.13 The design of a new building should include the three basic building elements: a base, a middle and a top.

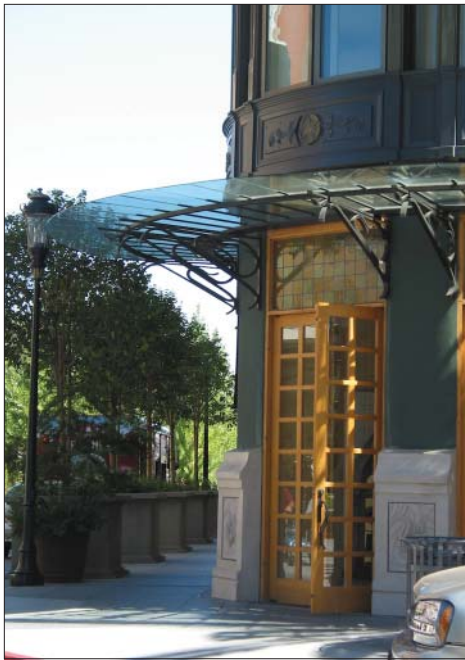
- On low rise buildings, the different parts might be expressed through detailing at the building base and eave or cornice line.
- On taller buildings, the distinction between upper and lower floors can be expressed through detailing, material, fenestration and color.
- Departures may be considered if the project better meets the intent of the design guidelines.



This building has a clearly delineated base, middle and top that conveys a sense of human scale. This is defined by a ground level storefront, the fenestration pattern as well as cornice elements and other types of horizontal banding.



Facade articulation enables a larger building to successfully integrate with its setting. It also provides an opportunity to focus visual interest and invite pedestrian activity.



13.14 The ground floor level of a building should be designed to encourage pedestrian activity and provide visual interest.

- Historically, the first floor usually received greater design attention and embellishment.
- Primary building entrances should be clearly identifiable and help define a human scale.
- The ground level of the primary facade is generally predominantly transparent glass.
- Facades that are visible from the public way should be visually interesting.
- Extensive blank walls detract from the experience and appearance of an active street scene.
- The use of shaded or reflective glass should be avoided.



Creative new designs for windows, storefronts and architectural details help convey the fact that a building is new.

13.15 Design elements and details should be employed to integrate a new building with its setting.

- Scale, proportion and composition should be influenced by the design traditions found in the immediate and wider setting.
- Similarity in fenestration patterns (arrangement of openings) among buildings in a block is an important characteristic to continue.
- Overhangs, projections, moldings and reveals create light and shadow patterns and are encouraged.
- Other elements might include signs, lighting, cornices, parapets, awnings and other decorative features.
- The absence of ornamentation may be appropriate for contemporary interpretations of modern architecture.

13.16 Consider building designs that emphasize floor levels.

- Express the distinction between the street level and upper floors through rhythm and patterns of windows, building materials and other architectural features.
- Adequate visual access and potential physical access to ground floor spaces should be provided.

13.17 Canopies and awnings should be considered to emphasize the first floor and entrance.

- Install awnings that fit the dimensions of the opening to emphasize the rhythm and proportions.
- Cloth, canvas, or metal awnings or canopies are appropriate.
- Vinyl and other synthetic materials are discouraged.
- Illumination that shines through an awning is inappropriate and should be avoided.

13.18 Consider signs as an integral design feature of the overall facade composition.

- Refer to the Design Guidelines for Signs.

13.19 The use of datestones or cornerstones displaying the building's date of construction is encouraged.



Transparent storefronts bring in more sunlight and glow at night with illumination and vitality.



Canopies provide shelter of the public, can be used to define an entry and add interest to a building facade.



Awnings add color and enliven storefronts while enhancing the character of the street scene.



This building design uses a material palette that conveys the building's construction period.



The heavy stone base creates a visual transition from sidewalk to building wall.



Simple building forms can be enlivened with the creative use of materials and color.

Building Materials

Building materials are an essential characteristic of the visual continuity of a historic district. Masonry, predominantly brick and stone, was the material primarily used for historic commercial buildings; however, wood was also used. New construction that draws from this palette of materials helps to reinforce the quality and integrity of its historic context.

13.20 Exterior building materials should be of a high quality and compatible with adjacent buildings.

- Materials should be varied to provide architectural interest.
- Combine building materials in patterns to articulate the design and create a sense of human scale through the scale of the components.
- The character and properties of materials should inform the facade design.

13.21 New alternative materials that are compatible in character to historical materials may be acceptable with appropriate detailing.

- Alternative materials for new buildings may be used if they provide texture and scale that complements their surroundings.
- Alternative materials should have a proven durability in Salt Lake City's climate.
- Different materials may be appropriate for commercial areas with historic architecture from the recent past.

13.22 Large areas of wall plane should have an appropriate finish.

- Consider articulation and modeling of the materials.
- Mirrored glass should be avoided as a primary material.

Lighting

Commercial buildings often have exterior lighting to enhance the visibility of the businesses. Historically, this type of lighting or presence has usually been limited and subtle, with modest fixtures that accentuate features such as entrances, architectural details and/or signs. This overall effect of simple, directed lighting can be effective and appropriate on new buildings.

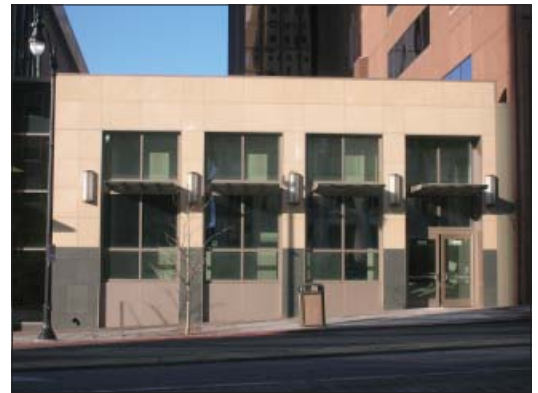
13.23 The visual impact of site and architectural lighting should be minimized.

- Lighting should be a subtle addition to the property.
- It should not visually dominate the site or intrude on adjacent property.
- Where used, lighting should accent architectural details, building entrances and signs.
- Avoid lighting expansive wall planes.

13.24 Fixture design should complement the design of the building.



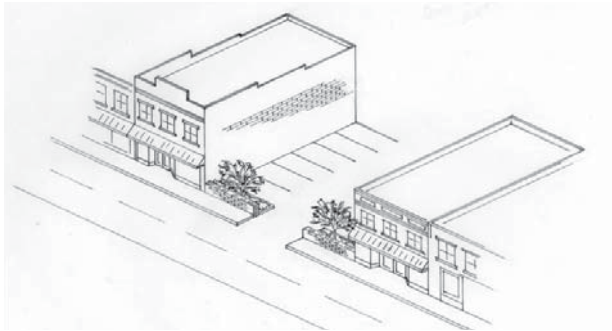
Lighting used to highlight the building entrance and windows.



Lighting can enhance a facade and as a design element provide visual interest along the street



When built directly on the street, design new parking garages to complement adjacent historic buildings in materials, fenestration and overall design.



Landscaping helps to screen this parking lot.

Parking

Most older buildings were not designed to accommodate the automobile. So vehicle parking may detract from the visual character and quality of an area. Therefore, a new parking facility should be an attractive, well designed addition to the area.

3.25 Parking areas should be located away from the street frontage and where they are least visually obtrusive.

- Off-street parking should be located inside or behind a building, where its visual impact will be minimized.

13.26 Landscaping should be integrated with surface parking to screen the view of parked vehicles from the street.

- New parking areas should be screened through the use of planted areas, fences, hedges and decorative walls.
- Landscape materials should have a similar setback and location as the streetscape elements of adjacent properties.
- Large parking areas should be divided with plantings.
- Mature trees should not be removed to construct new lots or expand parking areas.

13.27 Bikeways and pedestrian walkways should be separated and buffered from external and internal circulation within parking lots.

13.28 Parking structures should be sensitive to the surrounding historic neighborhood and streetscape.

- Pay particular attention to the visual continuity and cohesiveness of the street scene.
- Mass, scale, materials, detailing and fenestration should be comparable to historic buildings.
- Allow space for active uses that provide pedestrian interest along the sidewalk.
- This may include retail or office space, display windows, built-in benches or street furniture, murals and public art, and plantings.
- Sloping circulation bays should be internal to the building and not expressed in the exterior treatment of the building.

13.29 Consider locating a parking structure behind a commercial and/or residential front to shield the facility from the street.

13.30 Walkways should safely lead pedestrians from parking areas to building entrances.



Site multi-story parking lots in the downtown area at interior areas of the block; design them to screen vehicles as much as possible, such as this garage in the 100 block of State Street.

Building & Street Facade Evaluation



These are illustrations of the application of the Design Guidelines for New Construction.

The facing page evaluates the role and 'performance' of the design guidelines in the composition of the street facade.



New Construction Design Guidelines

Criteria & Performance Evaluation

SITE DESIGN GUIDELINES

(13.1, 13.2, 13.3, 13.4)

Respects typical orientation & setbacks

Frontage and entrances orient to the street

Maintains street patterns

PARKING

(13.25, 13.26, 13.27, 13.28, 13.29, 13.30)

Vehicle parking is internal to the project and effectively screened from the street

MASS, SCALE & FORM

(13.5, 13.6, 13.7, 13.8, 13.9)

Height falls within the established range

The sense of human scale, established by variations in materials, texture, patterns, color and architectural details, is reinforced

Uses complex massing, variations in height and vertical bay divisions, to reduce mass

Reflects the character of roof forms in the area

ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER

(13.10, 13.11, 13.12)

Draws upon the fundamental similarities among historic buildings without replicating them

FACADE ELEMENTS

(13.13, 13.14, 13.15, 13.16, 13.17)

Vertically articulates the street facade, establishing different treatment for the building's base, middle and top

Employs a different architectural treatment on the ground floor facade than upper floors

Employs shade and shadow to enhance the composition

BUILDING MATERIALS

(13.20, 13.21, 13.22)

The palette of materials reinforces massing and changes in horizontal or vertical planes

Materials contribute to a sense of human scale

Materials appear to have a proven durability

LIGHTING

(13.23, 13.24)

Provides a subtle addition to the building design