



Design Guidelines

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1. INTRODUCTION

What are Design Guidelines?

These Design Guidelines are provided as a framework that outlines the important characteristics of different building features and design concepts. Through identifying desirable building design practices and making them benchmarked for a community, future development – as well as renovations – may become naturally accepted standards.

These Design Guidelines, therefore, provide a new model to the Town of High Level's development trends; a model that encourages distinctive development patterns, while recognizing the unique characteristics of the terrain and the Town's vision for the future.

Why Do We Need Design Guidelines?

Design Guidelines are intended to create better places and encourage cohesion in the urban form. They help capture a community's character and spirit, and they offer a degree of design consistency and predictability while fostering complete, pedestrian-friendly neighbourhoods: places where people want to live, work, shop and play.

Different building circumstances – such as history or location – also warrant different design solutions. With that in mind, Design Guidelines also offer flexibility and alternative solutions. Should one practice or standard not apply to a particular project, there are others that may be adapted or incorporated to enhance a project.

What is the Intent?

The intent of this document is to provide guidance in the decision making process with respect to the design of buildings. Its focus is the downtown and residential buildings. This should enable the Town of High Level to develop with projects that are context sensitive and respect the community's vision. This is a living document, and should be revised as standards and principles evolve.

Who is Responsible? (Authority, Participation, Prioritization)

To be reviewed in conjunction with the Land Use Bylaw, Municipal Development Plan, and other community planning documents, these Design Guidelines should be reviewed by applicants, Town Staff, and community stakeholders when development applications are submitted. These Guidelines reflect the Town's vision for high quality buildings.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Existing Built Form - Observations

- (1) The Town of High Level has a mix of building styles with no consistent theme. For these reasons the Design Guidelines focus on key elements of design rather than a specific design theme. This enables both enhancement of existing building along with new forms of development.
- (2) The buildings are mainly single storey with a few two storeys. There are also vacant lands that create gaps in the cohesion of the building form along Main Street which ultimately should be developed.



- (3) While some buildings are positioned at the street frontage, the majority are set back with either landscaping or parking in front.



(4) An eclectic mix of materials exists. These include brick, stone, metal siding, wood siding, stucco and EIFS (Exterior insulation finishing system). Many of the buildings appear worn and dated and in some cases closed.

(5) Building colours generally feature earth tones with mostly beiges and browns, though a few make use of primary colours.



(6) Many buildings have large areas of blank walls facing the street and appear very box like in their design.



(7) Signage typically consists of light-box style signs and awning signs. The Fahlman Building has some small pedestrian scale signs.



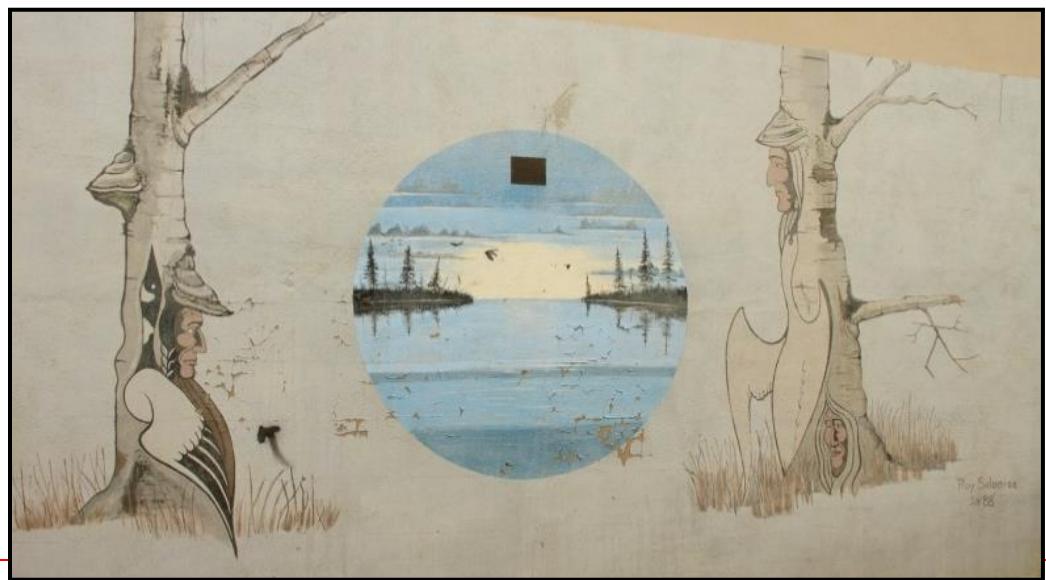
(8) Windows often have security bars or blinds blocking views into the retail space. Most buildings provide little opportunity for interaction between people on the street and retail activities.



(9) The street is wider than the scale of the buildings which has resulted in a loss of character. This has been compounded by a lack of pedestrian elements such as small signage, public art, planters, hanging baskets or consistency in the streetscape elements. It is important to consider the functionality of these elements based on their location if installed.



(10) There are a few murals on the sides of buildings in the downtown; however, because of the scale of the street, building conditions and location, their presence is not largely recognized.



3. DESIGN GUIDELINE PRINCIPLES

The following five urban design principles are provided as a framework for designing high-quality, pedestrian-friendly buildings in the Town of High Level. No one principle should be regarded in higher standing than another as each is inherently dependent on one another.

1. Designing for People (The Human Scale)

People use buildings; it's not the other way around. Whether for living, working, shopping or resting, a building is supposed to be a place where people congregate to carry out their day-to-day activities. With this in mind, a building should be designed to encourage social and physical interaction. Through simple design strategies at the street level – where most interaction occurs – the Town of High Level can help promote an atmosphere where people want to be and come together.



2. Accessibility

It's hard enough to get to where we want to go sometimes; so, when we get there, the last thing we want to experience is more delays or incompatible services. Building design should, therefore, incorporate the necessary infrastructures for pedestrian accessibility to support the safe and efficient movement of people. Whether it is the promotion of active transportation, or the incorporation of the latest mobility impaired design, a building should be inviting and accommodating to all its users.



3. Safety

Ideally, pedestrians should feel comfortable and safe in the public realm 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. However, poor building design often creates places where crime and unwarranted behavior is frequented. Integrating urban design techniques that promote natural surveillance and property protection, buildings can contribute to the overall safety and comfortableness of a Town.

4. Building Form & Style

How a building is perceived – whether negatively or positively – is in large part due to its built form and architectural style. The physical location, appearance and mass of a building can sometimes be intimidating to a passerby or a community member. Therefore, a building form must take into consideration the context and history of the surrounding neighbourhood, or be designed with an openness and welcoming feeling, in order to reflect a positive message and an appealing perception. Creative and functional use of lighting, landscaping, color and signage also helps promote a positive awareness and sense of communal ownership over public and private spaces.



5. Sustainability

Whether retrofitting old buildings or designing new ones, the highest quality environmental design standards should always be considered. Not only does sustainable design involve a respect for the natural environment and local ecosystems, but it encourages functional design practices that contribute to the overall upkeep and maintenance of a building. The less we impact our natural environments, the longer we may enjoy them.

Using high quality, natural, and resilient building materials increases the lifespan of a building and are often more pleasant to look at. Sustainable, durable materials can offer flexibility in colour and style, and they are more adaptable to the wear and tear of the natural elements.



Example of a Green Roof



Example of a Living Wall

4. DESIGN GUIDELINES (DOWNTOWN)

4.1 Designing for People

(1) Building Setback

Main Street buildings should be positioned close to the sidewalk to generate greater engagement between the buildings and shoppers.



(2) Store Frontage Widths

Smaller storefronts provide more interest, add detail and provide a better human experience. 8-10m is recommended as an ideal storefront width. Long blank walls along the street frontage should be avoided: they do not contribute to the character, interest, vibrancy, or safety of the street.



(3) Scale of Buildings and Appearance

Large buildings should appear as multiple smaller ones and function as such at street level along each street it fronts. Large, contiguous buildings lack the richness that make a street feel enticing and give the sense of being a fortress with limited entrance opportunities. The scale and appearance of a building should feel approachable, interesting, and complex, while remaining cohesive overall, to make a pedestrian feel invited, interested, and comfortable.



(4) Transparency

Street-level commercial should be highly transparent, maximizing views into the retail space, and out to the street. This has benefits to inviting shoppers into the store and providing more interest in the streetscape. This transparency speaks to being a welcoming community and contributes to “eyes on the street” and greater security for pedestrians throughout the day and evening.



(5) Awnings

Awnings should be provided for weather protection, afternoon shade and additional architectural detail. At a minimum, awnings should extend over entrances. Awnings also assist in breaking up the blank appearance of a building drawing the eye of the pedestrian to focus on the street level shop windows. The intent is to create a downtown environment that is comfortable and inviting to pedestrians, which is enhanced by weather protection.



(6) Enhancing Buildings at Night

Consider how the building will look at night and in different seasons. For example, consider providing exterior outlets for seasonal lighting. The intention is to enhance pedestrian comfort and safety all times of day and throughout the year.



(7) Landscaping

Consider adding landscaping such as planters, window boxes, and hanging baskets etc. to soften the building edges and provide natural elements to the building. Landscaping plays an important role in providing the feel about a place and has significant benefits some of which include: softening up the appearance of rigid building and hard surface landscape, adding colour to the area and providing shading for people to rest.



(8) Streetscape Amenities

Landscaping combined with other streetscape amenities (benches, seating walls) and public art (Murals, Interactive Elements) contribute to providing an active street frontage. Bike parking should also be provided on or near commercial buildings to encourage active transportation.



(9) Signs

(a) Signs should be illuminated from the front using downward lighting (pendant or similar). Light box style signage should generally be avoided.



(b) Small signs facing perpendicular to the building should be provided for pedestrians to locate business tenants.



4.2 Safety

(1) Building Design

Building design should discourage crime and unwarranted behavior by incorporating the following principles:

- Large transparent windows at street level as previously shown.
- Additional storeys with windows overlooking the street are encouraged.
- Pedestrian lighting maintaining consistent illumination along with incorporation of low level lighting (ambient lighting) and lighting to enhance at night architectural features of building facades. Lighting should aim to be dark-skies certified.
- Entrances should not be concealed or stepped back.
- Entrance doors should consist of mostly glass.
- Place any amenities such as bike racks and benches in highly visible areas.
- Use of small security stickers and hidden security cameras.



(2) Store Frontage

(a) Security bars in windows and doors should be avoided. They indicate a sense of danger and portray an image of an unsafe area. Alternative security measures such as interior security cameras should be considered.



(b) Dark and or reflective glazing should be avoided at street level. Allowing pedestrians to see inside a store creates visual interest and can entice shoppers by displaying the services and goods offered. It also contributes to safety by increasing visibility inside and outside the store, which deters crime.



4.3 Building Form & Style

(1) Roof Elements and Detail Treatments

Single storey buildings should have roof elements and detail treatments that provide character and style. These elements can also be used to enhance main entrance points, which should be easy to identify and feel welcoming.



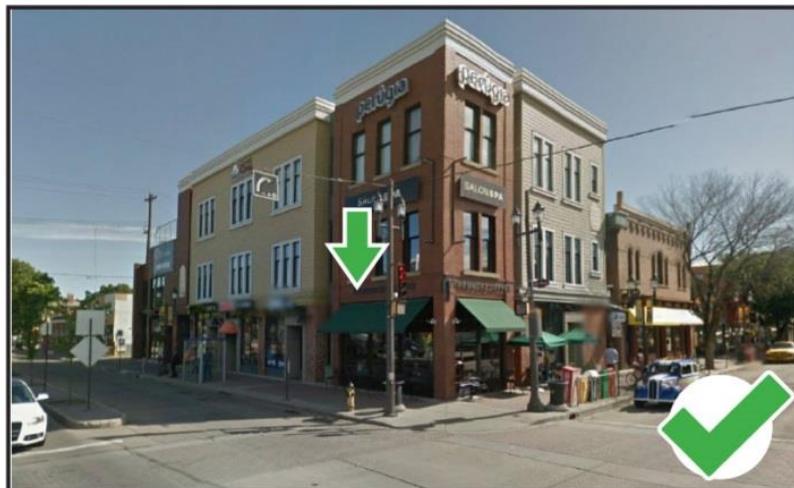
(2) Awnings

Awnings should contain secondary signage with minimal advertising. Design and fonts should be consistent on the same building.



(3) Corner Lot Buildings

- (a) Buildings on corner lots should be located at the property line of each street frontage. This does not prohibit angled or sculpted corners.
- (b) Buildings on corner lots should also activate the side street with the same level of detail as the front, continuing the use of windows, doors, awnings, and signage on the side.
- (c) Buildings on corner lots should provide one or more of the following:
 - (i) a corner entrance with decorative landscaping and/or public art;
 - (ii) outdoor amenity space, such as seating space; and
 - (iii) an identifiable architectural element, such as a turret, tower element, sculpted corner design, bay windows, awnings or balconies.



(4) Mixed Use Development

In multi-unit buildings, office and small business uses should be encouraged on the ground floor to increase street-level activity during the day.



(5) Building Colour & Texture

A building should avoid the use of one colour or use of one material but instead use colour to provide greater definition and contrast to a building. The illustrations to the right are good examples of how the use of paint, trim and minor changes to an existing structure can have a significant impact on its visual presence within the streetscape.



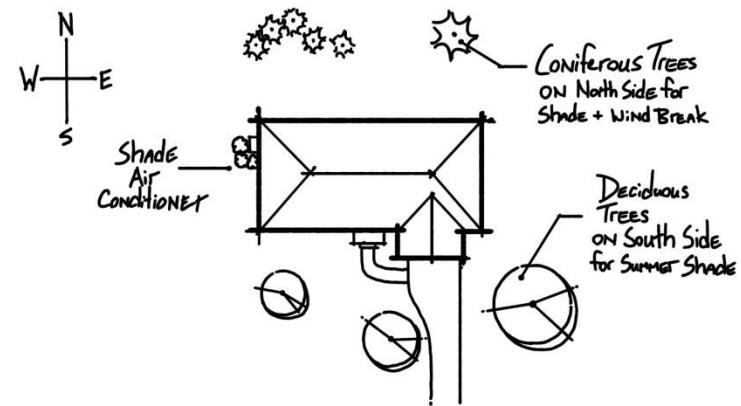
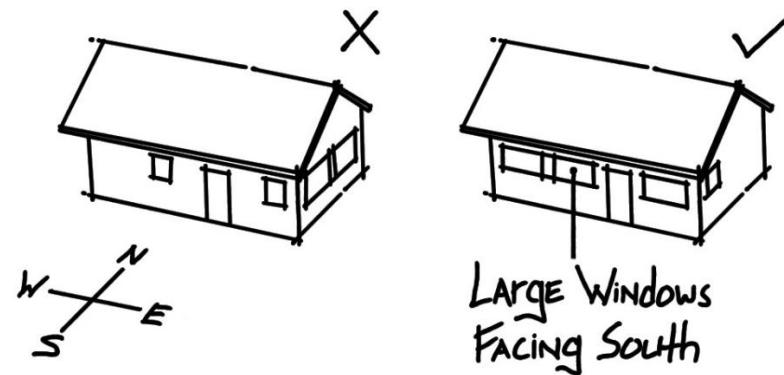
4.4 Sustainability

(1) Building Materials

Sustainable and regenerative building practices are encouraged (eg. LEED standards) and should be considered. This includes using local sources, existing on-site materials and energy efficient products where possible. Building materials should be durable, low maintenance and provide additional detail/texture. Stone, masonry, stucco and wood are preferred over metal siding, vinyl, sheet paneling, unfinished cement and plywood.

(2) Solar Gain

The building should be configured for an optimized passive solar design, for the purpose of greater heating and cooling efficiency.



(3) Green Roofs

Green roofs are encouraged and should be designed to mitigate stormwater runoff. Green roofs should provide leisure opportunities for building tenants.



(4) Protective Strip

A small protective strip of concrete or stone should be provided at the base of a building. This protects the cladding from damage due to shoveling and rot.



5. MULTIPLE UNIT DWELLING (APARTMENT FORMAT) DESIGN GUIDELINES

5.1 Designing for People

(1) Multiple Unit Dwelling Adjacent to Lower Density

A Multiple Unit Dwelling should be separated from a lower density residential use by a distance of at least 3 m. Where a building is greater than 9 m in height, this distance should increase 1 additional metre for each metre increase in building height.



(2) Colour and Articulation

Use colour and articulation to break up the building façade to create character, and identity with both vertical and horizontal modules to avoid creating a building where the mass of the structure becomes dominant or has a blank appearance.



(3) Garbage Screening

Garbage areas should be screened in a manner that complements the design materials of the site.



(4) Entrances

An entrance to an apartment building should be framed with the use of pillars that are in scale or proportional to the structure and or landscaping features. The purpose is to create an intuitive and inviting experience.



(5) Decks

Decks need to be integrated into the design of the overall building to avoid dominating the design of the structure. Supports for decks should be proportional to the scale of the building and maintain the rhythm of the colour and materials. Where there are no supports, the decks should be set back into the building to enable the design features of the structure to be the dominant element.



(6) Roof Elements

The roof lines should generally replicate a pitched slope dwelling roof that includes variation to avoid a generic appearance to the structure. More modern contemporary roof lines are also supported or flat roofs that containing a designed parapet or motifs along the edge of the roof line to provide the appearance of a designed roof line.



(7) Landscaping

Landscaping plays a critical role in softening up the bulk form of a structure, beautification, creating shade, and as amenity features. Landscaping can also be used to enhance design characteristics of the building. Landscaping should include a mix of shrubs, trees and flowers around the building and along interfaces with lower density areas and the streetscape. The layout of landscaping is important to prevent undesirable activities; this includes pruning trees to enable clear visibility below the tree line, and low-lying shrubs along with providing good pathway illumination.



(8) Parking

Parking should not be located where visible from the streetscape or adjoining properties. Screening through the use of landscaping, earth berms or solid fencing can assist with the transition from a parking lot to an adjoining property. With higher densities the desire will be to encourage underground parking. Where a large open area is required for parking, the layout should be broken up into landscaped islands. Entrance ways leading to the parking areas should also be landscaped to enhance the entrance to the site.



6. TOWNHOUSE DESIGN GUIDELINES

6.1 Designing for People

(1) Rooflines

The articulation of the roof line is important to assist in keeping the character of an existing residential environment along with breaking up the mass of the structure. The design should also complement enhancing or framing key elements of the materials. Flat roofs should generally be avoided.



(2) Colour & Articulation

Use colour and articulation to break up the building and make it feel like a series of smaller units. This involves the use of colour or texture in both horizontal and vertical elements to assist in identifying each unit. Providing strong trim around door and window edges coupled with contrasting paint assists to enhance variation in the structure. Material variation further assists to enhance key elements of the building's design.

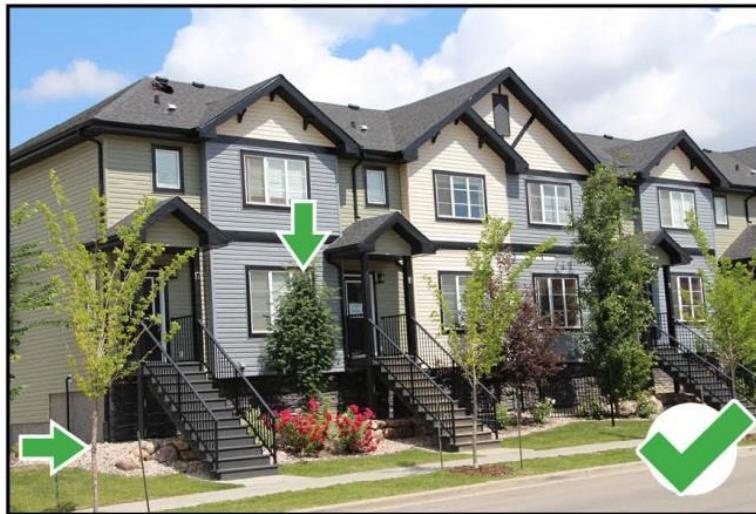
(3) Garages

Projecting garages towards the street frontage should generally be avoided. Garages should be located behind the building in order to provide greater enhancement of the building's design to the streetscape. This is particularly important where there is more than one dwelling joined together, otherwise vehicles and garages become the dominant structure when viewed from the street.



(4) Landscaping

Landscaping can also be used to enhance design characteristics of the building and the overall streetscape. Units should feature a combination of trees, shrubs and flower beds throughout the lot but specifically used to highlight or enhance building features.



7. MULTIPLE UNIT DWELLING (GROUND-ENTRY FORMAT) AND DUPLEX DESIGN GUIDELINES

7.1 Designing for People

(1) Scale & Form

(a) Homes should be designed so that each has a unique contribution to the community and is of a scale and design that complements single residential dwellings. Floor plans can be the same, but colour, trim, details and materials should be different to provide high quality design and consistency within a neighborhood.



(b) Duplexes and Multiple Unit Dwellings that have ground-oriented entryways or units should appear as though they are single detached homes with variations provided in the design.



(2) Rooflines

Further to 7.1, rooflines should be articulated in a manner that they form the appearance of a single dwelling with the intention of creating a comfortable, residential character.



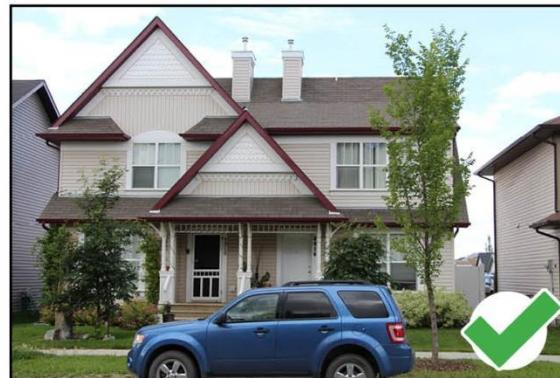
(3) Landscaping

Landscaping can be used to enhance design characteristics of the building and the overall streetscape. Units should feature a combination of trees, shrubs and flower beds throughout the lot but specifically used to highlight building features such as entrances.



(4) **Parking**

Parking should be located at the rear of the building or to the side and setback from the main structure to avoid vehicles and asphalt dominating the street frontage. Where a garage is located in the front of the building it should be of a scale and separation to be representative of other single dwelling units in the area.



8. SINGLE DETACHED OR MANUFACTURED DWELLINGS

8.1 Designing for People

(1) Landscaping

Landscaping can be used to enhance design characteristics of the building and the overall streetscape. Units should feature a combination of trees, shrubs and flower beds throughout the lot but specifically used to highlight site features such as pathways.



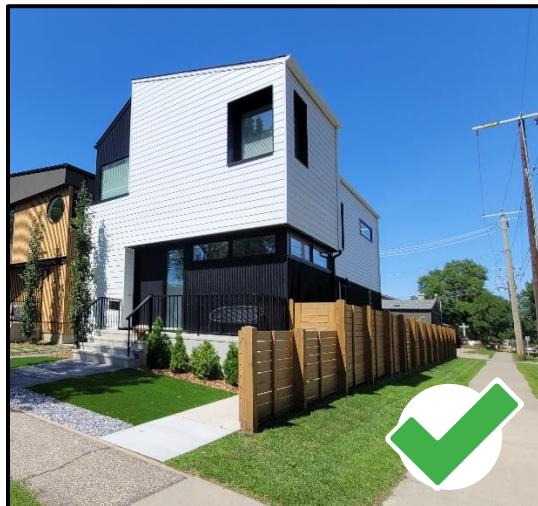
(2) Scale & Form

Homes should be designed so that each has a unique contribution to the community and is of a scale and design that complements other buildings on the street. When developing multiple single detached dwellings on the same street, the scale, form, colour, details, and materials should be varied to reduce monotony; homes on the same street may have variations within a cohesive style or be completely unique and diverse. The intention is to create a street that feels cohesive, interesting, and includes individuality.



(3) Corner Lots:

Homes on corner lots should be oriented towards the front property line, not the flankage. In other words, the home should be oriented (including the main entrance) to face towards the narrow side of the lot, not the long one. This creates consistency with the rest of the homes on the street. The side of the home along the frontage should include articulation and details to avoid being a large blank surface.



(4) Parking:

For properties with reasonable access from a lane/alley: all garages, and driveways should be encouraged to be located at the rear of the property. There are several unique circumstances where parking in the front may be advisable: to preserve mature trees, to mitigate mobility barriers, to retain pre-existing permanent structures, or if there is a concurrent plan to build a backyard unit. Focusing parking in the rear avoids vehicles and asphalt dominating the street frontage. Where a garage is located in the front of the building it should be of a scale and separation to be representative of other single dwelling units in the area.

(5) Manufactured Homes and Skirting

The materials and design of all manufactured homes should be similar to or compatible with a single detached dwelling. The foundation of a manufactured home must be fully covered from view with a material that is similar to or complements the main material of the home by way of colour and texture. All foundation coverings/skirting must be made of a material that is expected to last in fair condition for at least 15 years.

9. SECONDARY SUITE DESIGN GUIDELINES

9.1 Designing for People

(1) Entrance Design

Access to a secondary suite may be through a shared entrance with a common area or through an independent external entrance. In the format of a shared entrance, each unit needs to be accessible without passing through another unit. The external entrance of the suite should appear as the entrance to distinct unit, not just a side or back door of the principle unit; ways to achieve this include awnings, pillars, bannisters, lighting, door design, in addition to including the unit number. The principal entrance to a backyard unit should be intuitive, highly visible and safe for residents, visitors and service providers (e.g. delivery, emergency responders, etc.). Generally, sliding glass doors should be avoided because they do not convey being a main entrance and can be more difficult to open and access for those with physical disabilities.

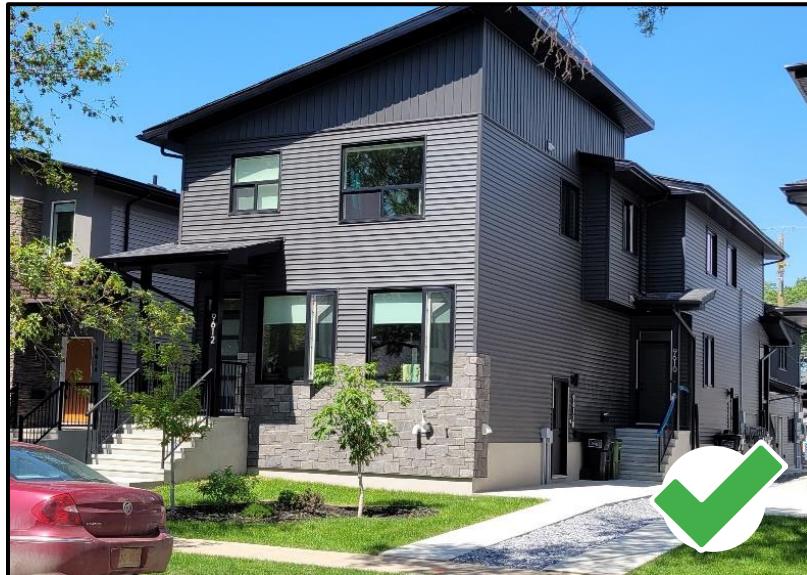


(2) Staircases to Access the Unit Entrance

As needed, staircases included within the building are encouraged. If the entrance is accessed by an external staircase, it is encouraged for it to be covered, to enhance safety and accessibility after rain or snow.

(3) Subordinate and Compatible

Whether a secondary suite is built as an addition or part of the original design of a building, the suite should be designed to be subordinate to and compatible with the principal building. This includes using materials that match or are complementary. The overall scale and form of the building should be compatible with single detached homes.



10. BACKYARD UNIT DESIGN GUIDELINES

10.1 Designing for People

(1) Entrance Design

The entrance should appear as the entrance to a dwelling unit, not just the door to an accessory building or garage; ways to achieve this include awnings, pillars, bannisters, lighting, door design, in addition to including the unit number. The principal entrance to a backyard unit should be intuitive, highly visible and safe for residents, visitors and service providers (e.g. delivery, emergency responders, etc.). Generally, sliding glass doors should be avoided because they do not convey being a main entrance and can be more difficult to open and access for those with physical disabilities.



(2) Staircases to Access the Unit Entrance

As needed, staircases included within the building are encouraged. If the entrance is accessed by an external staircase, it is encouraged for it to be covered, to enhance safety and accessibility after rain or snow.



(3) Subordinate and Compatible

A backyard unit should be designed to be subordinate to and compatible with the principal building. This includes using materials, architectural styles, and details, that match or compliment the principal building. The overall scale and form of the building should be compatible with single detached homes.



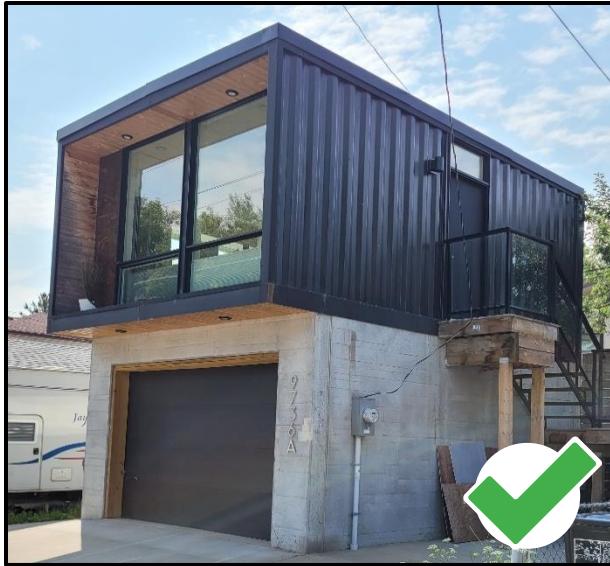
(4) Landscaping

Landscaping can be used to enhance design characteristics of the building. Units should feature a combination of trees, shrubs and flower beds throughout the lot but specifically used to highlight building features such as entrances. For backyard units that are adjacent to or exposed to a lane/alley, landscaping is encouraged, but it is recognized that space may be limited when the backyard unit includes a garage.



(5) Privacy Considerations

Site-specific approaches should be applied to enhance senses of privacy and comfort between dwelling units on and between lots. Backyard unit placement, window off-setting, selective window frosting, and vegetation placement are recommended approaches. The larger windows in a unit are encouraged to face the lane/alley.



(6) Scale, Materials, and Form

If a backyard unit is two storeys, methods should be applied to reduce its perceived mass and to reinforce its subordinate nature. In particular, reducing the floor area of the upper storey, dedicating part of the second storey as a balcony, designing an awning between the first and second storey, or incorporating the second floor with a pitched roof. Articulation with materials and colours can also assist in reducing the perceived mass of the building.



11. ASSESSMENT SHEETS

The following assessment sheets are to assist with the assessment of the applications against the Design Guidelines:

DOWNTOWN

Design Elements	Meets Intent	Does Not Meet Intent	Not Applicable
Building Setback – 4.1(1)			
Store Frontage Widths – 4.1(2)			
Scale of Buildings and Appearance – 4.1(3)			
Transparency – 4.1(4)			
Awnings – 4.1(5)			
Enhancing Buildings at Night – 4.1(6)			
Landscaping – 4.1(7)			
Streetscape Amenities – 4.1(8)			
Signs – 4.1(9)			
Building Design – 4.2(1)			
Store Frontage – 4.2(2)			
Roof Elements and Detail Treatments – 4.3(1)			
Awnings – 4.3(2)			
Corner Lot Buildings – 4.3(3)			
Mixed Use Development – 4.3(4)			

Building Colour & Texture – 4.3(5)			
Building Materials – 4.4(1)			
Solar Gain – 4.4(2)			
Green Roofs – 4.4(3)			
Protective Strip – 4.4(4)			

MULTIPLE UNIT DWELLING (APARTMENT FORMAT)

Design Elements	Meets Intent	Does Not Meet Intent	Not Applicable
Multi-Unit Adjacent to Lower Density – 5.1(1)			
Colour and Articulation – 5.1(2)			
Garbage Screening – 5.1(3)			
Entrances – 5.1(4)			
Decks – 5.1(5)			
Roof Elements – 5.1(6)			
Landscaping – 5.1(7)			
Parking – 5.1(8)			

TOWNHOUSES

Design Elements	Meets Intent	Does Not Meet Intent	Not Applicable
Rooflines – 6.1(1)			
Colour and Articulation – 6.1(2)			
Garages – 6.1(3)			
Landscaping – 6.1(4)			

MULTIPLE UNIT DWELLINGS (GROUND-ENTRY FORMAT) and DUPLEXES

Design Elements	Meets Intent	Does not Meet intent	Not Applicable
Scale and Form – 7.1(1)			
Rooflines – 7.1(2)			
Landscaping – 7.1(3)			
Parking – 7.1(4)			

SINGLE DETACHED OR MANUFACTURED DWELLINGS

Design Elements	Meets Intent	Does Not Meet Intent	Not Applicable
Landscaping – 8.1(1)			
Scale & Form – 8.1(2)			
Corner Lots – 8.1(3)			
Parking – 8.1(4)			
Manufactured Homes and Skirting – 8.1(5)			

SECONDARY SUITES

Design Elements	Meets Intent	Does Not Meet Intent	Not Applicable
Entrance Design – 9.1(1)			
Exterior Staircases – 9.1(2)			
Subordinate and Compatible – 9.1(3)			

BACKYARD UNITS

Design Elements	Meets Intent	Does Not Meet Intent	Not Applicable
Entrance Design – 10.1(1)			
Staircases to Access the Unit Entrance – 10.1(2)			
Subordinate and Compatible – 10.1(3)			
Landscaping – 10.1(4)			
Privacy Considerations – 10.1(5)			
Scale, Materials, and Form – 10.1(6)			

