

Design Guidelines: Special Considerations for Downtown Kirkland

In addition to the standard guidelines contained in the Design Guidelines for Pedestrian-Oriented Business Districts, the following list summarizes some of the key guidelines or regulations which apply specifically to Downtown Kirkland.

Pedestrian-Oriented Elements

- Most of the business core of Kirkland is already developed with fairly narrow sidewalks. New development should provide sidewalks at the recommended width. Providing wider sidewalks throughout downtown is a long-term endeavor.
- Building frontages along pedestrian-oriented streets in the Central Business District should be configured to have a 15-foot story height to ensure suitability for diverse retail tenants and enhance the pedestrian experience. Where these taller retail stories are required, special attention to storefront detailing is necessary to provide a visual connection between pedestrian and retail activity.
- Lobbies for residential, hotel, and office uses may be allowed within the required retail storefront space provided that the street frontage of the lobby is limited relative to the property's overall retail frontage and that the storefront design of the lobby provides continuity to the retail character of the site and the overall street.

Public Improvements and Site Features

- A strong street tree planting scheme is especially important in downtown because of the variety of scale and architecture encouraged in private development. Major entries into Kirkland, especially along Central Way, Kirkland Avenue, Lake Street, and Market Street, should be unified by a strong street tree program.

Parking Lot Location and Design

- Parking lot location and design is critical on busy entry streets such as Market Street, Central Way, Lake Street, Kirkland Avenue, and in the congested core area where pedestrian activities are emphasized. The Downtown Plan calls for limiting the number of vehicle curb cuts.
- Garages built on Downtown Kirkland's perimeter slopes, near residential areas, or near the waterfront can fit less obtrusively into the landscape when terraced. Treatment of the facade of the parking structure can be just as effective in mitigating the visual impacts of parking garages as pedestrian-oriented businesses, plazas, or landscaped setbacks at the ground level.

Building Scale: Fenestration Patterns

- Breaking larger window areas into smaller units to achieve a more intimate scale is most important in Design Districts 1, 2, 4, 8, and the southwest portion of 3 where new buildings should fit with older structures that have traditional-styled windows.

Building Scale: Architectural Elements

- Pedestrian features should be differentiated from vehicular features; thus fenestration detailing, cornices, friezes, and smaller art concepts should be concentrated in Design

Districts 1 and 2, while landscaping and larger architectural features should be concentrated in Design Districts 3, 5, 7, and 8.

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Building Scale: Upper Story Setbacks

- Buildings above the second story (or third story where applicable in the Downtown Plan) should Utilize upper story step backs to create receding building forms as building height increases, allow for additional solar access, and maintain human scale at the street level.
- The final arrangement of building mass should be placed in context with existing and/or planned improvements, solar access, important street corners, and orientation with the public realm.
- A rigid stair step or “wedding cake” approach to upper story step backs is not appropriate.
- Decks and/or balconies should be designed so that they do not significantly increase the apparent mass of the building within the required upper story setback area.
- In addition to applying setbacks to upper stories, building facades should be well modulated to avoid blank walls and provide architectural interest.
- Along pedestrian oriented streets, upper story building facades should be stepped back to provide enough space for decks, balconies and other activities overlooking the street.
- Landscaping on upper story terraces should be included where appropriate to soften building forms and provide visual interest.
- Continuous two or three story street walls should be avoided by incorporating vertical and horizontal modulations into the building form.
- Limited areas of vertical three, four, or five story walls can be used to create vertical punctuation at key facades. Special attention to maintain an activated streetscape is important in these areas.

Building Scale: Open Space at Street Level

- Reductions to required upper story setbacks may be appropriate where an equal amount of beneficial public open space is created at the street level consistent with the following principles:
 - Public open space should be open to the sky except where overhead weather protection is provided (e.g. canopies and awnings).
 - The space should appear and function as public space rather than private space.
 - A combination of lighting, paving, landscaping and seating should be utilized to enhance the pedestrian experience within the public open space.
 - Public open space should be activated with adjacent shops, outdoor dining, art, water features, and/or landscaping while still allowing enough room for pedestrian flow.
 - Where substantial open space “trade-offs” are proposed, site context should be the primary factor in the placement of the public open space (e.g. important corners, solar access).

Building Scale: Building Cantilevering Over Sidewalks

- Buildings may be allowed to cantilever over sidewalks if a sidewalk dedication and/or easement is required consistent with following guidelines:
 - The total length of cantilevered portions of a building should be no more than 1/3rd of the entire length of the building façade. The cantilevered portions of a building should be spread out and not consolidated in a single area on the building façade.
 - Unobstructed pedestrian flow should be maintained through the subject property to adjoining sidewalks.
 - Space under the building cantilever should appear and function as part of the public realm.
 - The sense of enclosure is minimized.

Building Material Color and Detail

- Special attention should be paid to both the design and detailing of new buildings on corner sites in the pedestrian oriented design districts. Existing buildings could incorporate some of these elements (human-scale and visual punctuation) through the use of such elements as awnings and well-designed signs at the corner.
- The Downtown Plan’s mandate for high-quality development should also be reflected in sign design. No internally lit plastic-faced or can signs should be permitted. All signs in the downtown should be pedestrian-oriented.