

# COMPREHENSIVE DESIGN GUIDELINES

City of Glendale, California



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### **Cover photo by Gary Edstrom**

**Resolution No. 11-231 Glendale, California**

**A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF GLENDALE, CALIFORNIA,  
ADOPTING COMPREHENSIVE DESIGN GUIDELINES**

**WHEREAS**, the Council has conducted a noticed public hearing pursuant to the provisions of Section Chapter 30.61 of the Glendale Municipal Code and Chapter 3, Title 7 of the Government Code of the State of California; and

**WHEREAS**, the Council has ordered the study of citywide design guidelines for development; and

**WHEREAS**, the Council has found that the Comprehensive Design Guidelines promote the public health, safety, comfort, convenience, and general welfare of the citizens of Glendale; and

**WHEREAS**, the Council has found that the Comprehensive Design Guidelines complement the intent and purpose of development regulations found in the Glendale Municipal Code provide direction for development to achieve consistency with the policies of the general plan, specific plans and community plans, and provide flexibility and creativity for hillside development; and

**WHEREAS**, the Council intends that the Comprehensive Design Guidelines will be applicable citywide and supersede the previously adopted guidelines for hillside, residential and commercial neighborhoods, including the Hillside Design Guidelines, Single-family Neighborhood Design Guidelines and Commercial Design Guidelines, and

**WHEREAS**, the Council has reviewed and considered all materials, communications, public testimony and exhibits of current record relative to the Comprehensive Design Guidelines; and

**WHEREAS**, the Council has taken into consideration the recommendation of the City of Glendale Design Review Boards and Planning Commission on the Comprehensive Design Guidelines; and

**WHEREAS**, pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act, the City Council adopted a Negative Declaration for the project.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the City Council of the City of Glendale that the Comprehensive Design Guidelines is hereby approved and adopted and that this Resolution shall take effect immediately.

**Adopted this 29th day of November, 2011**

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# Chapter 1

## VISION, PURPOSE, PROCESS AND PRINCIPLES

## 1.1 Design Review Purpose and Process

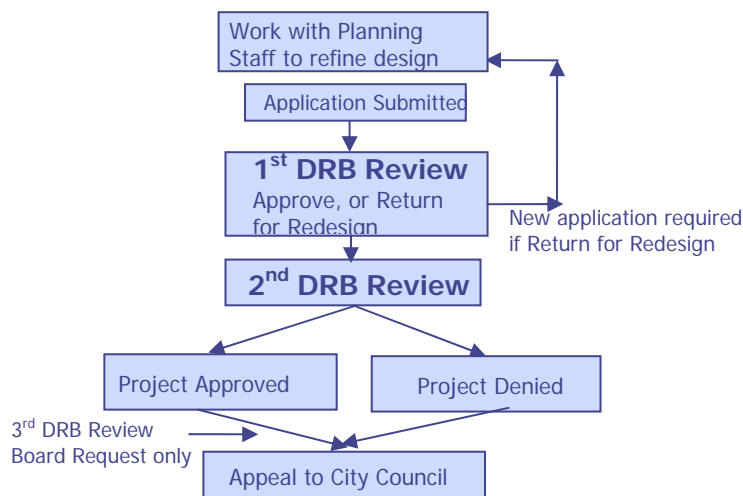
The purpose of Design Review is to ensure that new development is of high quality, relates well to its surrounding context and enhances the overall built environment.

The Zoning Code states the following as the purpose of Design Review:

- A. To protect the community from the adverse effects of poor design and to encourage good professional design practices;
- B. To enhance the beauty, livability and prosperity of the community;
- C. To encourage high quality development;
- D. To discourage poor exterior design, appearance and inferior quality which are likely to have a depreciative effect on the local environment and surrounding area;
- E. To encourage originality, creativity and diversity in design and to avoid monotony;
- F. To ensure the compatibility of multiple-dwelling projects with adjoining single-family neighborhoods;
- G. To ensure single-family design is compatible with the character inherent within the surrounding neighborhood.
- H. To preserve the city's historical and architectural heritage in geographical areas designated as historic district overlay zones.

### ***Design Review Process***

There are a few categories of projects that are exempt from a formal public design review process, outlined in 30.47.020.G. However, if the proposed project is determined to have a significant impact and/or is inappropriate the project will be required to go before the Design Review Board (See 30.47.020.G.5). Please note that projects within the Redevelopment Areas are reviewed by the Redevelopment Agency. Projects in designated historic districts or on properties listed on the Glendale Register are reviewed by the Historic Preservation Commission.



***Design Review Process Flow Chart***



## 1.2 Intent and Purpose of the Design Guidelines

The intent of the Design Guidelines (Guidelines) is to provide predictability for property owners and developers, as well as residents and other stakeholders in the Glendale community. The Guidelines will be used by all those applying for permits in the City of Glendale, by City staff, the Design Review Board (DRB), City Council and the Redevelopment Agency. In order to approve a project under Design Review, decision-makers must find that the project is consistent with the intent of the Design Guidelines.

## 1.3 Relationship with other Documents

Relationship to General Plan  
Relationship to Community Plans  
Relationship to Zoning Code  
Relationship to Historic District Design Guidelines for Residential Districts  
Relationship to Previously Adopted Design Guidelines  
Organization of Document

These Guidelines should be considered the minimum threshold for good design. Developers, designers, architects and owners are encouraged to design and build projects that exceed these minimal expectations by incorporating innovation, creativity and sustainability in all aspects of design, and by reaching for LEED certification or equivalent (or other sustainability measures). In addition, the overall character of the neighborhood and surrounding context should be carefully considered, including historic character, overall look and feel, quality and scale of the architectural and landscape design.

The Guidelines do not recommend any specific architectural style or styles, but encourage a diversity of styles. Similarly, the Guidelines do not prescribe specific means of achieving design intent, but rather provide examples of how it might be achieved. A project's architect or designer can achieve the same intent by a variety of other means. In addition, City staff, the Design Review Board, Redevelopment Agency or Council may find that a project need not comply with certain guidelines due to particular site conditions or if compliance with the Guidelines would restrict the achievement of innovative design or community benefit.

## 1.4 How to Use the Design Guidelines

**The Guidelines must be used in their totality, as a holistic document.** The organization is intended to go from basic, broad urban and architectural design principles to more specific site planning and architectural design recommendations based on types of streets and places within the City. In association with the General Plan, Specific Plans and Community Plans, guidelines for specific neighborhoods are provided. As Community Plans are adopted, specific neighborhood guidelines will be amended. A property owner, architect, developer or designer should pay close attention to the fundamental principles set forth by the Guidelines, as well as the specific information provided by the place type and neighborhood. The project will be assessed by the decision makers at each level.

## 1.5 Urban and Architectural Design Process and Principles

The design process is an interrogative process engaged in by a development team. In addition to important questions such as “how do I satisfy my client’s program and budget?” and “how do I solve all the technical aspects of the building?” are a series of questions that must be answered in relation to design. City staff and the Design Review Board or Redevelopment Agency will also engage in this dialogue with the project team. It is of paramount importance to ask the right questions early during the design process. The design guidelines are intended to convey overall best practices. However, conditions vary from site to site, and there may be a more appropriate solution that is in conflict with or is not included in the guidelines. **Innovative design solutions that are consistent with the spirit of the design principles identified in this document will be considered and are encouraged.**

This section is intended to assist the project designer to best understand some of the priorities to consider when designing a project, and how that project will be evaluated by City staff and the decision makers. These concepts will form the basis of the staff report provided to the Design Review Board. The staff report is divided in to three main sections: Site Planning and Design; Mass and Scale; Design and Detailing. The following will provide basic criteria by which the project is evaluated. All of these principles are expanded upon in subsequent chapters.

## 1.6 Site Planning and Design

The first consideration in the design of any project should be its relationship to its context. In order to reinforce a sense of place, all new development, renovation and additions should be sited and configured to provide an appropriate response to the surrounding context in arrangement on the site, existing topography, existing trees, relationship to the street, and vehicular and pedestrian access. In addition, consideration should be given to solar and wind orientation to maximize sustainability.

In order to develop an appropriate contextual response, questions to be asked at the very early stages of the design process include:

### 1.6.1 What is currently on the site, and when was it built?

If the structure(s) is more than 30 years old, review photographs of the building with the City’s Historic Preservation Planner. If it is an identified or potential historic resource under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), further environmental review will be required. If the structure is not an identified historic resource, analysis of the design and construction is necessary if it is to be retained and modified.

### 1.6.2 Will the proposed project be compatible with surrounding uses?

First, check the Zoning Code to make certain the use or mix of uses is allowed in the site’s zoning designation. If so, check the uses in the surrounding area to make sure the overall situation will be advantageous to the project proposal, and vice versa.

### 1.6.3 What is the development pattern on the surrounding blocks?

A number of factors combine to make up the development pattern of a particular neighborhood, block or street including: block pattern, size, and shape of individual lots; vehicular access to individual sites; configuration of buildings on each site, and relationship of buildings to the street. One or more of these factors can vary in the new development and still maintain respect for and positive association with the existing development pattern. However, if enough of these characteristics are significantly different, the proposal may not be appropriate.

### 1.6.4 What is the relationship of vehicular access and parking and how does that compare to surrounding properties?

The location and arrangement of the curb cut, driveway, garage entry and location is an important aspect of the overall site plan. This arrangement could be similar to other properties in the area. Design alternatives that minimize the view of the garage from the street and/or reduce the amount of driveway area are preferred. Vehicular access from an alley or side street is preferred.

### 1.6.5 Along the street frontage of the adjacent blocks, what is the relationship of the buildings to the street?

The relationship of the building to the street includes the location of the building in relationship to the property lines and to the sidewalk, location and configuration of entries to the site and the building. While there is wide variety within almost all of Glendale's districts and neighborhoods, by looking carefully at the existing context certain common characteristics will become apparent. Again, not each and every characteristic need be repeated in the new development, but the overall look and feel should be respectful of what exists in order to fit in with the surrounding context. If the overall design intent of the project is to differentiate itself architecturally, for a commercial or civic function for example, that relationship should be made clear.

### 1.6.6 Street Frontage

***Does the building appear inviting from the street?*** The detailing at the street should not only reinforce the overall design concept, but also appear inviting as viewed from the street. The City of Glendale has a strong tradition of buildings that are open and active as viewed from the street.

***Are there entries, window openings or other architectural features at the street frontage?*** A sense of openness should be reinforced by open and inviting entries and street facing facades. The main entry of the building should be visible, preferably from the street, and integrated well into the overall design. While an entry feature is important, it should not overwhelm the building or the entire façade.

***If corner site, does building address the corner?*** By their nature, corner sites demand special attention because they are more visible than other lots on the block. The view from the street intersections often helps give a sense of identity to a place. Particularly for corner lots, no street façade should appear as if it is the rear or side of the building. Projects and buildings designed for corner sites should pay particular attention to how the project is viewed from the corner and from both streets.

#### **1.6.7 What is the solar and wind orientation?**

Buildings should be placed and arranged on the site to maximize opportunities for passive solar and ventilation design.

#### **1.6.8 What is the scale of the surrounding structures?**

Prior to designing the overall site plan of the project, a review of the mass and scale of surrounding properties is important. Some neighborhoods and districts were developed over a specific period of time and as a result the overall configuration of the site, mass and scale of the buildings on each property have similar characteristics. Other districts were developed over decades and have a more eclectic set of characteristics of mass and scale. In addition to necessary Zoning Code review for allowable heights and setbacks, a review of surrounding context relative to mass and scale is essential to influence configuration, placement and design characteristics on the site.

#### **1.6.9 Is the property in a historic district?**

There are historic districts in the City of Glendale. If your project is within one of these districts, you must review the Guidelines and requirements for the District and work with the Historic Preservation Planner. All projects proposed for a Glendale Register-listed property or that sit within a designated historic district will be subject to review by the Historic Preservation Commission.

#### **1.6.10 Are there characteristic special to the neighborhood?**

Many neighborhoods have unique characteristics that make the neighborhood distinctive. Characteristics that deserve special attention include overall topography, significant landscape characteristics, uniformity or diversity of buildings in the neighborhood, mass, scale and placement of existing buildings, character of building including quality of construction craft, details and materials.

#### **1.6.11 What is the overall site design concept?**

Once all the above criteria are taken into account, there should be an overall design concept that governs the site design.

### **1.6.12 If the site has a sloping topography, does the building and site design follow the topography?**

When building on the hillsides in Glendale, it is important to modify the landform as little as possible when building a new structure or addition. Grading and construction of retaining walls should be minimized. It is preferable to avoid retaining walls, especially those in public view—some additional grading to avoid unnecessary retaining walls is acceptable. Whatever grading is necessary, effort should be made to maintain as much of the slope as possible, and to provide smooth transitions to the natural slope. Use of large retaining walls to flatten portions of the site is strongly discouraged. Information on all retaining walls is required for design review.

### **1.6.13 Does the landscape design complement the building design and conserve water?**

The landscape design and building design should work together as an integrated whole. The landscape design should employ drought tolerant plants, and water conserving irrigation.

### **1.6.14 Does the site design manage stormwater on site (Are Low Impact Development Standards incorporated)?**

Permeable paving and retention areas should be used as much as possible to retain water on site. Low Impact Development Standards should be incorporated wherever possible to retain stormwater on site.

### **1.6.15 Additional site planning considerations:**

What types of landscaping are in the neighborhood? What is the level of maintenance? Where is open space in the neighborhood and how is it configured? Where are the views? What exterior lighting exists and what would be appropriate? If in a high fire area, is there a clear zone around the building? Is there a clear view to the residence for safety? For hillsides, has drainage been addressed?

## **1.7 Mass and Scale**

One of the most important and challenging design issues for new architectural projects is to manage new proposals within the existing surrounding building fabric. While new proposals need not copy existing development in order to fit in, managing mass and scale of a new project to respect adjacent development is important to the overall urban design of our districts and our city.

### **1.7.1 What's the big idea (architecturally speaking)?**

Each architectural proposal should have an overall architectural concept that governs design decisions. Evaluation of the project should then include appropriateness of the formal concept, and how successful the execution of the concept is as set forth in the building design.

### **1.7.2 How does project massing relate to the overall scale of the neighborhood, street and adjacent buildings?**

The mass and scale of the project should provide an appropriate response to the neighborhood context. This does not mean copying what exists on the adjacent sites, as new development is often larger than existing development. However, there must be sufficient architectural recognition and transition of mass and scale to adjacent properties.

### **1.7.3 Does project massing reinforce overall design concept or does it detract?**

In addition to providing an appropriate response to the context, the mass and scale of the project should reflect the governing design idea(s) of the project. It is essential to identify the location of the open space in the overall configuration of the project in relationship to adjacent structure(s) for the best design and function for the project.

### **1.7.4 Is scale and proportion of buildings appropriate to surrounding context?**

A project can be designed to make it appear more monumental or to help diminish the apparent size and scale of its mass. Design decisions of placement of building forms in relation to one another, emphasis of horizontal and vertical elements, size scale and placement of entries, doors, windows and other architectural elements all contribute to the perceived mass and scale of the project. Proper use of these and other design elements make it possible for projects varying in size to be designed to visually fit into the surrounding context.

### **1.7.5 How are major building elements designed and configured?**

Location and configuration of entries, prominent building elements and features should relate to overall building concept as well as neighborhood pattern, site configuration and slope, relationship to streets and corners, and views to and from the site. Differentiating the building with a hierarchy of architectural elements can also assist in achieving a balanced proportional relationship to the surrounding context and within the project itself.

## **1.8 Design and Detailing**

The design and detailing of the building is paramount to a quality environment. The project design should be consistent throughout a project, recognizing that a building is 3-dimensional and must be well designed on all sides. Quality in detail and design contributes not only to the long-term value of a home, but the neighborhood as well.

### **1.8.1 Are elevations well designed, in scale, proportion, materials, details?**

All buildings should be designed with attention to proper scale and proportion within itself and in relation to its neighbors. All materials and details should be durable and of high quality, to reinforce the overall building design.

**1.8.2 What does the roofscape look like?**

Roofs are the fifth elevation of any building and give important character to a building in its massing, materials and details. Solar panels and photovoltaics should be well-integrated into the overall roofscape and not look like just another piece of mechanical equipment.

**1.8.3 Is all rooftop equipment screened?**

In areas of the City where rooftop equipment is allowed, it must be screened well, and screening should be fully integrated into overall building design.

**1.8.4 Do the landscape design and paving materials complement the building?**

The landscape design should enhance the overall site and complement the building(s). There should be a variety of plants that work together well while maintaining mature trees to the greatest extent possible.

**1.8.5 What about the lighting design?**

The lighting design should complement the overall building design, with lighting that is not excessive. Spillover light should be avoided and dark sky techniques utilized by reducing or eliminating uplighting. The goal is to light the building and site rather than feature the design of the light fixtures. When fixtures can be seen, their design should be appropriate to the overall project.

**1.8.6 Is signage necessary for project or site?**

A sign program is required for multi-tenant commercial buildings. The intent of a sign program is to unify the signage consistent and complementary to the building design. All signage should be appropriate in size, style, location, color and materials to the overall project. Signs should not be too numerous or too large and should not visually overpower the site or structure.

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