



# Lincoln Downtown Design Guidelines

June 2005 (Draft)

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*Lincoln Downtown Capacity Plan*



*Lincoln Downtown Land Use Plan*

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### Design Guidelines Checklist





# Introduction

# How to Use this Document

The Downtown Lincoln Design Guidelines consist of a Design Review Checklist and five individual guideline chapters or “elements”:

- 1. Character
- 2. Architecture
- 3. Pedestrian Emphasis
- 4. Lighting
- 5. Signs

Each of the five chapters contains a series of distinct “guidelines.” Each individual guideline page provides an “intent” - that is, an initial concise “guideline statement,” as well as explanatory text and photographic examples of possible appropriate and inappropriate applications.

The visual examples are models to provide designers, developers and the Design Commission a means to effectively judge a building or project relative to appropriate and inappropriate design criteria; never are they intended to be specific examples to be replicated.

## The Checklist

The accompanying Design Guidelines Checklist, a sample page for which is shown at right, outlines each individual guideline; it is a handy tool to assess first which guidelines apply to the individual building or project and then whether the applicable guidelines are being complied with. The checklist is especially important in the Design Review process described in detail on the next page.

Lincoln Downtown Master Plan  
DESIGN GUIDELINES CHECKLIST

Project and Applicant Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Zoning: \_\_\_\_\_  
Building Use: \_\_\_\_\_  
Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
Submission Date: \_\_\_\_\_

DESIGN GUIDELINES		Applies		Complies					
		Yes	No	Yes	No				
1). Character	• Reinforce Lincoln's Sense of Place	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
	• Integrate the Environment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
	• Establish and Strengthen Gateways	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
	• Promote Architectural Compatibility	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
	• Preserve Historic Buildings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Integrate Art						<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2). Pedestrian Emphasis	• Reinforce and Enhance the Pedestrian System	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
	• Define the Pedestrian Environment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
	• Protect the Pedestrian from the Elements	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
	• Provide Places for Stopping and Viewing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
	• Create Successful Outdoor Spaces	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Integrate Universal Design						<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3). Architecture	• Provide Inviting Retail Doors	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
	• Encourage Retail Corner Doors	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
	• Promote Welcoming Residential Doors	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
	• Encourage Inviting Ground Floor Retail Windows	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
	• Promote Visually Interesting Upper Floor Windows	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
	• Use Quality Wall Materials	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
	• Create Attractive Silhouettes and Rooflines	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
	• Foster Attractive Rooftops	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
	• Provide Interesting Building Massing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
	• Promote Green Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
4). Lighting	• Ensure Buildings Are Secure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
	• Build Compatible Parking Structures	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
	• Use Skybridges Sparingly	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
5). Signs	• Orient Lighting to the Pedestrian	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
	• Integrate Building Lighting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
	• Consider Size and Placement of Wall Signs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
	• Orient Hanging Signs to the Pedestrian	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Sample Checklist

## Why Do We Need Design Guidelines?

Guidelines give developers and citizens an understanding of the city's expectations and provide consistent criteria by which to review proposed projects. They ensure a degree of order, harmony and quality within the built environment, so that individual buildings and projects succeed on their own yet also contribute to a unified and distinct downtown Lincoln district.

### Role of Design Guidelines

Lincoln's Design Guidelines support and complement the Lincoln Downtown Master Plan. The Design Guidelines help bring to life the land use and public realm frameworks of that plan, which was developed according to the goals and objectives of Lincoln citizens and city staff. Thus the Design Guidelines reflect the values and desires of the Lincoln community.

The Design Guidelines also offer designers a flexible tool for quality and innovation. Guidelines do not prescribe specific design solutions or make rigid requirements. Indeed, there will always be many ways of meeting a particular guideline. The guidelines are a descriptive template for maintaining and improving the urban character of downtown without dictating or prescribing a specific *style or theme*.

Moreover, the guidelines reinforce the “*urban fabric*” of downtown Lincoln, where buildings are built edge-to-edge and engage the streets. And they encourage new development and renovation that complements and respects Lincoln's existing historic downtown character.



## Design Review Process

All new building and exterior renovation projects within the Downtown Master Plan area are subject to design review - that is, whenever a building permit is required, the project will also go through some version of the design review process illustrated in the diagram below.

The exact steps of the review process followed is generally based on the extent of exterior work proposed, with more extensive projects typically reviewed by a Design Commission and less extensive projects by planning staff:

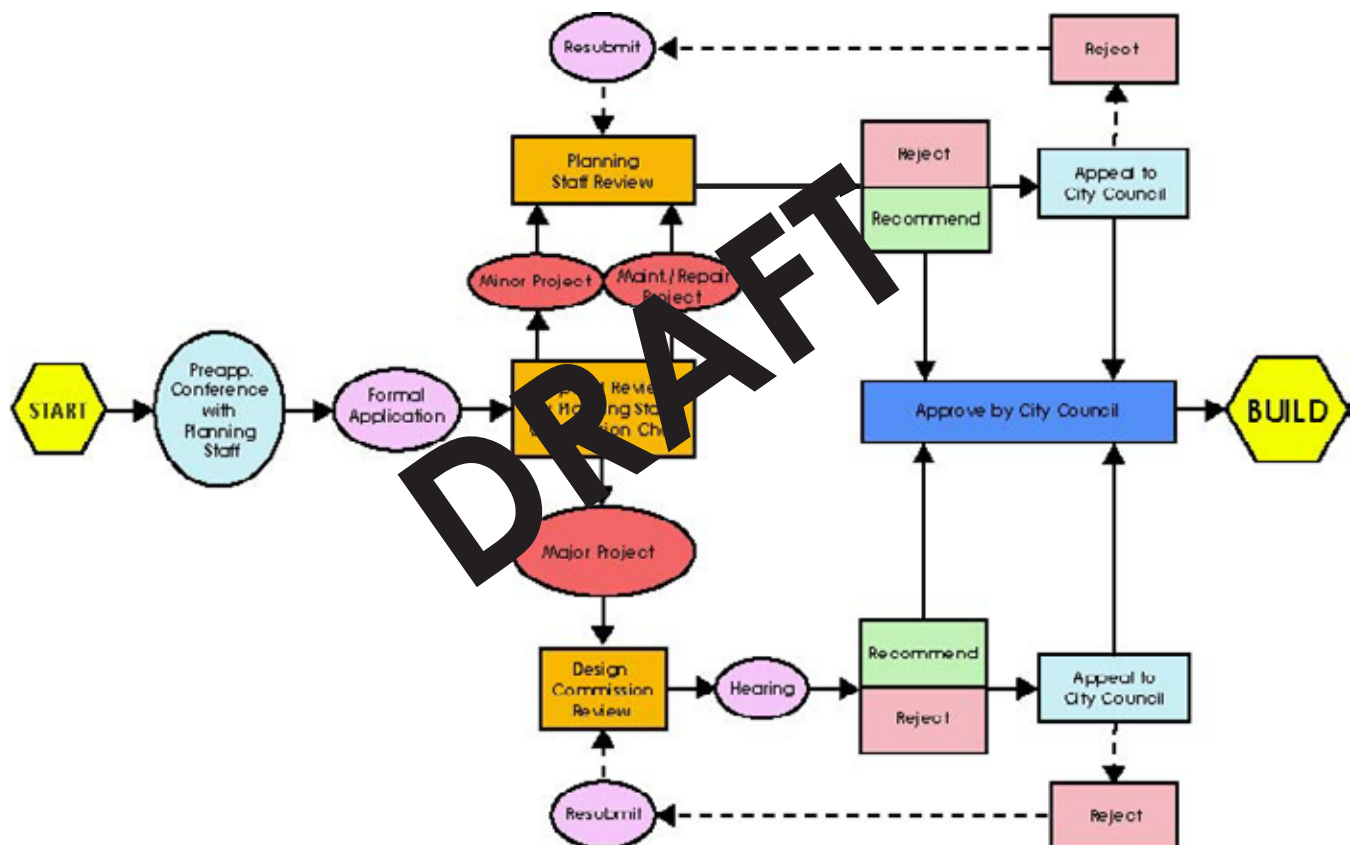
- *Major Modification* – Design Commission review
- *Minor Modification* – planning staff review or Design Commission review
- *Maintenance and Repair* – planning commission staff review

Starting at a “pre-application” conference with planning staff, the design guidelines checklist is used to determine which (if any) guidelines apply to the project.

Once the formal application is submitted, a decision is made to approve, to approve with conditions, or to deny a proposal. For instance, when a project is found to be not consistent with the design guidelines, specific conditions of approval may be imposed, or it may be decided that design details or other site factors warrant finding for approval of the project without meeting the particular design guidelines.

For those applications that are substantially inconsistent with the guidelines, staff or the a Design Commission also have the option to deny the development request.

The Design Review process takes into account only whether the project complies with the applicable design guidelines. A project's consistency with the Master Plan or any other relevant documents is determined separately by the planning commission and planning department staff.







# Character Guidelines

## Intent

The Character Guidelines address the qualities that give Lincoln its uniqueness and personality. They consider what makes downtown a special, distinct “place,” not simply a group of individual buildings and streets.

Downtown Lincoln began as the small village of Lancaster - a few log cabins located near a salt basin in the 1850s, when salt was a precious commodity and the Nebraska Territory was new.

Changes in the 1860s made lasting marks on the Lincoln of today: statehood came in 1867, and the village became the state capitol under a new name, Lincoln. It was platted with the wide streets we see today, as well as ample space for the then yet-to-be state university campus.

By 1870, regional agriculture had spawned an open-air Market Square in what is now the Haymarket Landmark District; the first trains rolled through town that same year, and the pioneer city grew into a rail center throughout the latter decades of the Nineteenth Century.

Lincoln's unique role as government and educational center has continued throughout the Twentieth Century and into the present. Today downtown Lincoln offers us a legacy of carefully-designed, distinctive buildings ranging from Bertram Goodhue's 400-foot tall State Capitol to I.M. Pei's Wells Fargo tower.



*Lincoln ca. 1920*

### Elements

These guidelines are divided into the following elements:

- Reinforce Lincoln's Sense of Place
- Preserve Historic Buildings
- Promote Linkages to Lincoln's Heritage
- Establish or Strengthen Gateways
- Promote Architectural Compatibility
- Integrate the Environment
- Integrate Art

Visual examples are included as models for design and review purposes. They are intended to provide designers and the Design Commission a means to identify appropriate and inappropriate character elements.



*11th and O Streets, downtown 1910*



## Reinforce Lincoln's Sense of Place

### Guideline

*Strengthen the qualities and characteristics that reflect downtown Lincoln's history, geography, climate and people.*

### Description

Downtown Lincoln has long been the heart of the southeastern Nebraska region and embraced its role as the area's most desirable destination in which to work, live, study and play.

The street grid of the original town plat, dating from the 1860s, emphasized the prominence of downtown Lincoln as state capitol and center of the Salt Basin. And it is appropriate that the mid-rise buildings of today's downtown are significant not as single structures but rather as a collection of well-constructed buildings that give prominence to a signature building, the monumental state capitol.

The original plat of Lincoln also laid out a minimum 100-foot-wide right-of-way for the typical downtown street, providing ample room for activities and landscaping. These wide streets invite into the downtown urban grid the lush colors and textures of the surrounding neighborhoods, farmlands, and university campus.



*Appropriate*

### Appropriate

- Background buildings whose identity comes from contributing positively to the downtown as a whole.
- Quality, long-lasting, durable materials appropriate to Lincoln's climate.
- Development of downtown cultural facilities celebrating Lincoln's history.
- Preservation and renovation of buildings and sites significant to Lincoln's heritage.

### Inappropriate

- Historic "theme-park" development not authentic or specific to downtown Lincoln's heritage.
- Design that is corporate-brand-inspired.
- Generic development that could be anywhere – such as what one might see at a typical shopping center.
- Signature buildings that visually compete with the capitol or other Lincoln landmarks.

## Integrate the Environment

### Guideline

*Reinforce linkages and orient buildings to Lincoln's natural and landscape features.*

### Description

Building designs should capitalize on Lincoln's parks, squares, greenways and creeks. Designs should encourage use of open space amenities for residents, employees, students and visitors.

Materials, colors and forms should be used to harmonize with the natural setting and provide a smooth transition between the natural and built environments.

### Appropriate

- Active and passive gathering places and walkways oriented toward parks and open, natural spaces.
- Safe and convenient public access to open space amenities.
- Elements engaging the natural environment where the sight, sound and feel of nature can be directly experienced.
- Walkways paved with high-quality materials (such as brick or stone) that are harmonious with the natural surroundings.



*Appropriate*

## Establish and Strengthen Gateways

### Guideline

*Use architectural and landscape elements to gracefully mark transitions and entrances.*

### Description

Entrances in downtown Lincoln should be celebrated at many levels. Pedestrians, commuters and visitors should experience a sense of “entering” or moving from the public to private realm.

Pedestrian-scaled gateways may be spatially defined by using traditional building elements such as arches, arcades, pylons, columns, fountains and bridges. Landscape, sculptural and artistic elements can also be used to identify a gateway.

### Appropriate

- New buildings designed to work with existing buildings to create gateways.
- Historic markers in sidewalk paving to strengthen sense of entry into a particular district.
- Gated internal private courtyards.
- Gateways to indicate changes in land use (i.e., from retail use to residential).
- Gateways to indicate change or separation in transportation modes (i.e., from auto to pedestrian areas).
- Ornamental or decorative elements combined with lighting or signs.

### Inappropriate

- Gated multiple-block private compounds.
- Utilitarian or rustic materials such as logs, chain link or wooden fencing.



*Appropriate*



*Appropriate*



*Appropriate*



## Promote Architectural Compatibility

### Guideline

*New buildings should be “good neighbors” and contribute to the quality and character of their architectural context.*

### Description

Buildings should “fit” with their architectural surroundings – relating to nearby buildings rather than calling attention to themselves through disruptive design excesses or novel variations. Material, color, texture, scale, form, silhouette, height, rhythm and proportion all influence a structure’s compatibility with its surroundings. Architectural elements should enhance not detract from the area’s overall character.

### Appropriate

- Traditional architectural elements (for example, classical cornice) used at a scale and level of detailing proportionate to the size of the building.
- Forms, proportions, rhythms, materials, colors and architectural motifs that are suggested by and complement adjacent buildings.

### Inappropriate

- Out-of-scale, over-simplified, cartoon-like cornices or other traditional architectural elements applied without regard to size or use of the element.
- Building elements that do not respect the scale, materials, proportions and heights of adjacent historic or significantly high-quality buildings.



*Appropriate*



*Inappropriate*

## Preserve Historic Buildings

### Guideline

*Renovation, restoration and addition to historic buildings in Lincoln should respect the original structure.*

### Description

Architectural elements of individual historic buildings add to the atmosphere and uniqueness of the downtown as a whole. Older buildings should be preserved in their entirety when beneficial. If complete preservation is not possible, a sensitive and viable compromise in rehabilitation and reuse should be made that retains the building's historic character.

Financial incentives at local, state and federal levels recognize the merits of historic reuse and can add to the financial viability of preservation and renovation.

### Appropriate

- Retain significant original characteristics of scale, massing and building materials of historic buildings, particularly along their street facades.
- Additions to buildings should neither deform nor detract from the composition of the facade or be out of scale with the building.
- Distinctive stylistic features or examples of skilled craftsmanship should be treated with sensitivity. All buildings should be respected as products of their time.

### Inappropriate

- Incompatible additions or building alterations using contemporary materials, forms or colors on building facades.



Appropriate



Appropriate

## Integrate Art

### Guideline

*Public art should complement the character of a site, building or downtown as a whole. When used, public art should be integrated into the design of the building or public open space.*

### Description

Large scale public art pieces bring focus to an outdoor space while small scale pieces can bring detail and delight to the ground floor of a building or low wall. At any scale, art should not overwhelm outdoor spaces or render buildings mere backdrops. Three dimensional sculpture, murals or other art forms are appropriate only when well-designed.

If well-executed, surface art work painted or attached to a large blank wall can add interest, whimsy and spice. Sometimes murals created as community art projects can be poorly executed, easily damaged and compete with buildings and the streetscape. To be deemed appropriate, art work should be permanent and designed to age well.

### Appropriate

- Artwork designed specifically for and integrated into the building or site.
- Professionally designed.
- Durable, low-maintenance materials that are vandal-resistant.

### Inappropriate

- Amateur art projects.
- Artwork used as advertising.
- Subjects and themes that may offend, incite or embarrass the community or individuals of Lincoln.
- Display conditions that detract from the artwork.



Appropriate



Appropriate





# Pedestrian Emphasis Guidelines

## Intent

The intent of the Pedestrian Emphasis Guidelines is to promote an environment where the pedestrian is the priority. While there is a need for automobile, bicycle and transit in the downtown, in all cases the most important consideration is the ease of pedestrian movement.

Where intersections with other transportation modes occur, the pedestrian's comfort, safety and best interests must not be compromised. While there should be a clear and comfortable separation between pedestrian and vehicle areas, streets should not be restricted to being pedestrian-only.

The pedestrian should be unimpeded and comfortable in all seasons and hours of the day, and in all areas of downtown.



## Elements

The Pedestrian Emphasis Guidelines fall into the following elements:

- Reinforce and Enhance the Pedestrian System
- Define the Pedestrian Environment
- Protect the Pedestrian from the Elements
- Provide Places for Stopping and Viewing
- Create Successful Outdoor Spaces
- Integrate Universal Accessibility

Visual examples are included as models for design and review purposes. They are intended to provide designers and Design Commissioners a means to identify appropriate and inappropriate pedestrian emphasis elements. They are not intended to be specific examples that should be replicated.

## Reinforce and Enhance Pedestrian System

### Guideline

*Maintain the pedestrian as the priority in downtown, eliminating pedestrian barriers and ensuring that walking routes are safe, direct and pleasant.*

### Description

Pedestrian routes should be attractive, easy to use and encourage walking and activity downtown. Sidewalks should be continuous, avoiding interruptions such as vehicle curbcuts or changes in direction or grade. Walkways should be free of barriers such as utility poles, newspaper boxes, cafe tables and chairs, permanent planters, tree grates or other obstructions and clutter.

Pedestrians should be separated and protected from visual and other nuisances. For instance, noise and odors should be mitigated by screening or enclosing loading docks, mechanical equipment, garbage dumpsters and other unsightly items. These components should be located away from areas where pedestrians congregate and, instead, be located in service areas or alleys whenever possible.

### Appropriate

- Maintain pedestrian access where rights-of-way have traditionally been located.
- Mid-block landscaped pedestrian walkways within “superblocks.”
- Parking lot walkways.
- Enclosures around trash dumpsters.
- Utility/substation enclosures.

### Inappropriate

- Indirect or circuitous pedestrian routes.
- Permanent or temporary pedestrian route obstructions.
- Interrupted or discontinuous pedestrian routes.



*Appropriate*



*Inappropriate*



## Define the Pedestrian Environment

### Guideline

*A building should provide a continuous, visually rich pedestrian experience along its ground floor street front.*

### Description

The most important part of a building is its ground floor – the lowest 15 feet of the facade, which a person experiences walking past or entering the building. This “pedestrian experience zone” should extend horizontally across the sidewalk and provide an enclosed, continuous and comfortable street edge for the pedestrian. Building transparency at ground floor should foster interaction between the public and private realms.

### Appropriate

- Windows - transparent or with displays at street level.
- Walls that create visual interest by providing a variety of forms, colors and compatible cladding materials.
- Facades that provide a rhythm by using bays, columns, pilasters or other articulation at street level.
- Signs and lighting at ground level that fit to the human scale.

### Inappropriate

- Blank, flat, nondescript walls not articulated by any visual interest or detail at street level.



*Appropriate*

## Protect the Pedestrian From the Elements

### Guideline

*Provide pedestrians with protection from wind, sun, rain, sleet and snow.*

### Description

Awnings and canopies are encouraged along the ground floor of buildings to protect pedestrians from rain and snow during inclement weather and provide shade in summer.

The design of awnings and canopies should be an integral component of the building facade. Awnings should be in proportion to the building and sidewalks, and not so large as to impact street trees, light fixtures or other street furniture.

### Appropriate

- Canvas fixed or retractable awnings.
- Horizontal metal canopies, especially if transom or clerestory windows are above storefront glazing.

### Inappropriate

- Vinyl or other synthetic fabrics.
- Backlit awnings.
- Oversized advertising or tenant signs on awnings.
- Oddly-shaped forms.



*Appropriate*

## Provide Places for Stopping and Viewing

### Guideline

*Provide safe, comfortable places where people can stop to sit, rest and visit.*

### Description

People-watching, socializing and eating are restful and pleasurable activities for the pedestrian; providing special places where they can do these activities increases both the pedestrian's sense of security and his actual security.

Such stopping places also add vitality to the urban environment - but only if they are used. And people will use available seating in open and populated, well-designed areas, not in secluded or awkward spots.

Seating tends to be used more frequently as rest areas between major destination points. Seating is also desirable outside food and drink establishments and near food vendors. While benches provide the simplest way to provide seating, wide steps, edges of landscaped planters and low walls can also be appropriate.

### Appropriate

- Formal or informal seating areas near active retail establishments.
- Places for stopping and viewing adjacent to parks, squares, plazas and courtyards.
- Seats with backs should be provided.

### Inappropriate

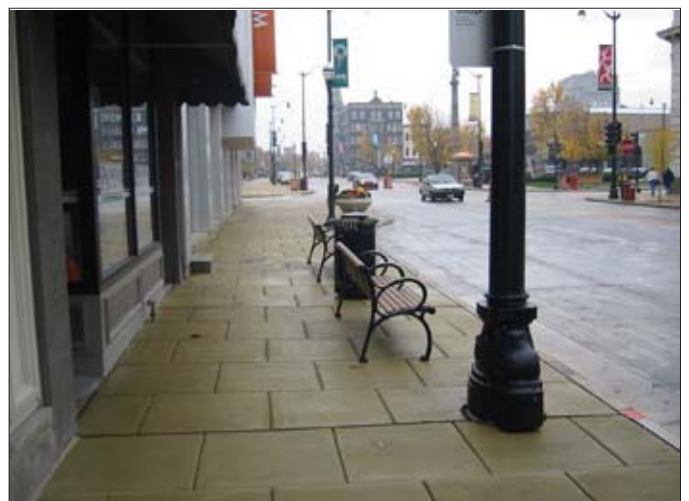
- Seating areas more than three feet above or below street grade.
- Seating in areas that are not accessible to persons with disabilities.
- Seating areas that become a public focal point such that people do not feel comfortable sitting on them.
- Seats without backs.
- Seating areas adjacent to loading, service bays or storage areas.
- Seating areas that are hidden, secluded, dark or unsecured spaces behind or to the side of buildings.



*Appropriate*



*Appropriate*



*Inappropriate*



## Create Successful Outdoor Spaces

### Guideline

*Gathering spaces should be designed for a variety of activities during all hours and seasons.*

### Description

Outdoor gathering spaces should be inviting and maximize opportunities for use. They should be spatially well-defined, friendly, accommodating, secure, easy to maintain – and “alive,” whether intimate and quiet or active and boisterous. All areas should work well for pedestrians and provide space for special events as well as passive activities.



*Appropriate*

### Appropriate

- Courtyards, squares, forecourts and plazas with active adjacent ground-floor uses.
- Buildings surrounding green spaces to give the space visual definition and provide it with the vitality of active ground-floor uses.
- Trees, shrubs, and plants to help define walkways, create appropriate transitions from park to street and provide visual interest.
- Structures, pavilions and seating areas that are easily accessible, secure and safe-feeling during day and evening hours.
- Greenways or pedestrian walkways and courtyards in residential or office development areas. If used, front doors should engage these spaces.
- Rooftops should be considered for garden terraces.
- Balconies and projecting bays.

### Inappropriate

- Pocket parks, forecourts and plazas without active enclosing uses along retail streets.
- Separation from the street by visual barriers or change of grade.
- “Leftover” green spaces, busy streets, parking lots or other adjacent unhospitable areas.
- Active-use courtyards or plazas adjacent to “activity-sensitive” areas such as fire stations or hospitals.

## Integrate Universal Design

### Guideline

*Accommodate accessibility for persons with disabilities in a manner that is integral to the design of the building and public right-of-way.*

### Description

On existing buildings and sites, all ramps, lifts and elevators should be designed to be graceful and natural parts of a project, rather than simply a means of meeting the requirements in an awkward or minimal manner. On new buildings and sites, all entrances should be designed to minimize or eliminate the need for ramps, lifts or elevators for persons with disabilities.

### Appropriate

- Ramps to existing building entrances that provide direct access but are screened and/or integrated into the stairway design.
- Ramps constructed of similar or compatible materials as the building, stairs and walkways.

Other universal design features such as:

- Handrails at all exterior stairs.
- Detectable warnings at top step of all exterior stairs.
- Accessible parking near entrances to buildings.
- Entry doors that do not open out onto the sidewalk.
- Entry doors that have sufficient space at their latch stile side to allow a person in a wheelchair to independently open the door.

### Inappropriate

- Ramps that obstruct or limit pedestrian access from stairs or walkways.
- Ramps that do not provide safe and convenient access to building entries.



*Appropriate*



*Inappropriate*



# Architecture Guidelines



## Intent

The Architectural Guidelines promote quality development while reinforcing the individuality, spirit and values of Lincoln. They foster design of buildings and sites that is representative of Lincoln's heritage and character, and suits its climate, landscape and downtown street grid.

### Elements

Within each downtown planning area, building proposals must consider and respond to requirements from the following architectural elements:

- Provide Inviting Retail Doors
- Encourage Retail Corner Doors
- Promote Welcoming Residential Doors
- Encourage Inviting Ground Floor Retail Windows
- Promote Visually Interesting Upper Floor Windows
- Use Quality Wall Materials
- Create Attractive Silhouettes and Rooflines
- Foster Attractive Rooftops
- Provide Interesting Building Massing
- Ensure Buildings Are Secure
- Build Compatible Parking Structures
- Use Skybridges Sparingly



## Provide Inviting Retail Doors

### Guideline

*Doors should create an open atmosphere that draws customers inside*

### Description

Primary business entry doors for retail and commercial establishments should be transparent, allowing passersby to see the activity within the building and bringing life and vitality to the street. Doors with extra-large openings that blend the street activity with the building's interior are appropriate for restaurants and cafes.

### Appropriate

- Large cafe or restaurant doors that open the street to the interior by pivoting, sliding or rolling up overhead.
- Doors with a minimum of 50% window area.
- Building lighting emphasizing entrances.
- Transom, side lites or other window combinations.
- Doors combined with special architectural detailing.
- Double or multiple door entries.
- Well-detailed or ornate door hardware.

### Inappropriate

- Solid metal or wood doors with small or no windows.
- Primary entry doors raised more than three feet above sidewalk level.
- Doors flush with building facade.
- Clear anodized aluminum frames.
- Glazing with simulated divisions.
- Reflective, opaque or tinted glazing.



*Appropriate*

## Encourage Retail Corner Doors

### Guideline

*Locate entry doors on corners of retail buildings wherever possible.*

### Description

Corner entries reinforce intersections as important places for pedestrian interaction and activity. Transparent doors and windows are strongly encouraged. Entries at 45 degree angles and free of visual obstructions are also encouraged.

### Appropriate

- Doors with large glass areas.
- Primary building entrance should be at corners.
- Doors combined with roof or facade architectural elements such as bays or towers.
- Building wall lighting emphasizing entrance.

### Inappropriate

- Blank walls at corners of public streets.
- Visual and physical obstructions such as large columns.
- Primary entry doors made of clear anodized aluminum.
- Primary entry doors that are solid and windowless.
- Utility boxes, meters or mechanical units near the entrance door.
- Glass areas with simulated divisions (internal or applied synthetic materials).
- Reflective, opaque or tinted glazing in the door.



*Appropriate*



*Inappropriate*



*Inappropriate*



## Promote Welcoming Residential Doors

### Guideline

*Residential front and lobby doors should provide a friendly transition between the public and private realms.*

### Description

Doors should be substantial enough to suggest privacy yet welcoming to those who approach and enter. The design of a door should respond to its setting. If a door faces an active street, it is appropriate to separate the door from the street with a comfortable change of grade – perhaps two or three feet. For less active areas, transitional stoops or terraces might be used.

### Appropriate

- Multi-panel painted doors.
- Doors combined with transom windows or side lites.
- Durable, high-quality metal door hardware.
- Wood solid core doors.
- Doors accessed from canopy-covered entries.
- Moderate, human-scaled change of grade from sidewalk level to townhouse door – up approximately three feet or waist level; not above eye level.
- Lobby entries to multi-family buildings providing double or multiple doors.

### Inappropriate

- Sliding glass doors.
- Unarticulated, flush doors.
- Doors raised more than three feet above sidewalk level for townhouse-style housing.
- Doors accessed directly from parking lots.
- Door glazing with simulated divided lites.
- Doors not directly accessed from the street or courtyard.
- Doors glazed with reflective or tinted glazing.



Appropriate



Inappropriate

## Encourage Inviting Ground Floor Retail Windows

### Guideline

*Use windows that draw customers into stores, shops and restaurants.*

### Description

Retail and commercial uses should use windows that add activity and variety at the street level, inviting pedestrians in and providing views both in and out.

Transparency beckons people inside – whether a shop, gallery, restaurant or office. Restaurants and cafes benefit from windows that open allowing passersby to see, hear and smell the activity within. Views into stores should not be blocked.

### Appropriate

- Windows that open by pivoting, sliding or shuttering.
- Painted wood panels or tile clad panels below windows.
- Transom Windows

### Inappropriate

- Clear or light bronze anodized aluminum windows.
- White painted aluminum framed windows.
- Residential-styled bays, multi-paned divided lites, half-round or other similar forms.
- Small scale windows



*Appropriate*



*Inappropriate*

## Promote Visually Interesting Upper Floor Windows

### Guideline

*Windows should create an open and inviting atmosphere that enhances the experience of the building both inside and out.*

### Description

The windows of a residential building should be pleasing and coherent. Their size and detailing can add a human scale and visual interest to the building.

### Appropriate

- Multiple lites or divisions.
- Operable windows.
- Trim around framed openings.
- Appropriately scaled stone exterior sills and lintels where installed in a masonry wall.
- Regular spacing and rhythm of similarly shaped windows.
- “Punched” windows recessed from building facade, not flush.

### Inappropriate

- Simulated divided lites.
- “Strip” windows with more horizontal than vertical emphasis.
- Windows flush with building facade.
- New or replacement vinyl frames and sashes.



*Appropriate*



## Use Quality Wall Materials

### Guideline

*Use materials that create a sense of permanence.*

### Description

Quality wall materials can provide a sense of permanence and bring life and warmth to downtown. Articulation of wall materials should be bold, using materials that show depth, quality and durability. It should be apparent that the materials have substance and mass, and are not artificial, thin “stage sets” applied only to the building’s surface.

### Appropriate

- Boldly articulated window and storefront trim.
- Natural or subdued building colors.
- Limited use of bright accent trim colors.
- Varied yet compatible cladding materials.
- Masonry materials – brick and stone or terra



*Appropriate*



*Inappropriate*

## Create Attractive Building Silhouettes and Roof Lines

### Guideline

*Create interesting and detailed roof lines and silhouettes.*

### Description

Building roof lines should enliven the pedestrian experience and provide visual interest with details that create forms and shadows. A building's silhouette should be compatible with those of other buildings along the existing streetscape.

In some cases, it may be appropriate to mark an entryway with a distinct form, such as a tower, to emphasize the significance of the building entry.

For residential buildings, roof massing should be simple yet detailed and articulated. For example, flat roofs may be appropriate if they have a cornice designed with depth and detail expressing the top of the building wall. Dormers set into sloped roofs may be appropriate. These forms provide visual interest and bring additional living space, light and ventilation to upper floor and attic spaces.

### Appropriate

- Dormer windows.
- Towers or similar vertical architectural expressions of important building functions such as entries.
- Varied roof line heights.
- If cornices are used they should be well detailed. They should have significant proportions (height and depth) that create visual interest and shadow lines.

### Inappropriate

- Unarticulated roof lines.
- Poorly detailed decorative roof forms.



*Appropriate*



*Inappropriate*

## Foster Attractive Rooftops

### Guideline

*Integrate rooftop elements into building design.*

### Description

Roof shape, surface materials, colors, mechanical equipment and other penthouse functions should all be integrated into the overall building design.

Roof mounted mechanical equipment should be hidden from view by parapets. If building parapets do not provide adequate screening, screening walls or enclosures installed as an integral part of the architectural design should be used.

Roof terraces and gardens are encouraged.

### Appropriate

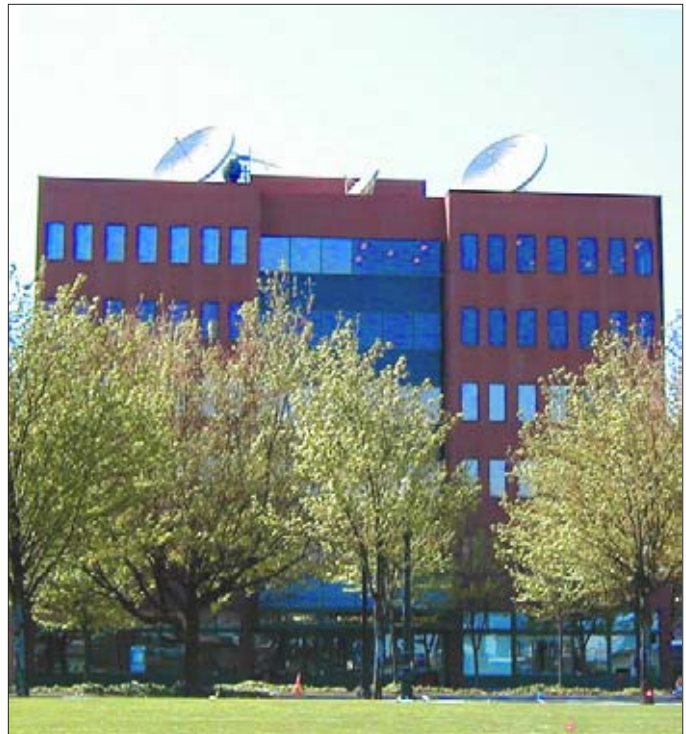
- Screened mechanical units.
- Rooftop penthouse occupied residential or office spaces.
- Rooftop gardens.
- “Green” roofs that reduce stormwater runoff.

### Inappropriate

- Exposed rooftop mechanical or electrical units.
- Exposed telecommunications equipment, including satellite dishes, cell-phone towers or antennae.



*Appropriate*



*Inappropriate*



## Provide Interesting Building Massing

### Guideline

*Use scale-defining devices to break up the longitudinal dimensions of buildings, creating a comfortable sense of enclosure by establishing an uninterrupted street edge.*

### Description

The length and breadth of a building should be friendly in scale and inviting to the pedestrian. Portions of a large building mass should be broken into smaller, appropriately scaled modules, with changes in plane indicated by bold projections and indentations. This allows an overly large building to appear as smaller, side-by-side buildings. Vertical and horizontal elements should be used to create a human scale and form a coherent pattern providing visual interest to the pedestrian.

### Appropriate

- Break down long expanses of building frontage both horizontally and vertically.
- Tripartite facade division – base, middle and top for taller buildings (over three stories).
- Terrace back upper levels.
- Vertical articulation of windows, columns and bays.

### Inappropriate

- Long unbroken volume along street facade.
- Smooth, undifferentiated facade.
- Suburban-styled horizontal orientation of building elements – walls, doors and windows.



Appropriate



Appropriate



Inappropriate

## Promote Green Architecture

### Guideline

*Use sustainable design practices whenever possible as long as they do not detract from the pedestrian activity and economic viability of downtown.*

### Description

Address the health of downtown in a holistic manner, considering environmental quality and long-term benefits to downtown activity and vitality. Guidelines and direction from official environmental certification programs such as LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) may be helpful in determining sustainable practices.

### Appropriate

- Consider how all of a building's systems work with each other and with the building envelope to maximize efficiency.
- Use highly durable local materials.
- Follow a maintenance strategy to run building systems at maximum efficiency over the long term.

### Inappropriate

- "Green" practices that detract from high-quality design.
- Application of "green" design for marketing hype alone.
- Application of "green" design water quality enhancement projects (swales) that erode the urban character of downtown.



Appropriate Green Roof



Appropriate Green Roof



## Ensure Buildings are Secure

### Guideline

*Buildings should provide a safe entry and environment for all users during all hours of the day.*

### Description

Downtown should be a place where people of all ages feel safe throughout the year during all hours of the day. However, downtown buildings should not become “fortress-like” and separated from public areas.

New buildings should create “eyes on the street” with active uses bringing people together and deterring crime naturally. People who inhabit buildings see their surroundings and are seen by others thereby inhibiting criminal activity. When security measures such as gates, screens or fencing are used, they should be designed as integral components of the building or site.

### Appropriate

- Interior or exterior roll-up or sliding security gates that are not visible from the public right-of-way.
- Secured loading bays or service areas.
- Gated private courtyards or plazas.
- Security cameras or surveillance devices screened from view or integrated into the building design.

### Inappropriate

- Fixed exterior security gates on building edges that are visible from the public right-of-way.
- Fixed exterior security screened windows along public streets or gathering areas.
- Gated residential development.



Appropriate



Inappropriate



## Build Compatible Parking Structures

### Guideline

*Parking structures should be designed so that they are consistent in form, massing and materials with most other buildings in the downtown.*

### Description

Parking garages play an important role in the success of any downtown. However, too often they are incompatible with nearby buildings because they are designed for parking function without consideration of architectural quality.

Frequently the dominant architectural features of the garage are multiple layers of long, dark, horizontal ventilation openings and concrete structure at each parking level.

Parking garages should instead be designed to appear like any other occupied building in the downtown. To achieve this, their horizontal form must be broken down – for instance, adding more wall surface while reducing openings, providing adequate ventilation through a series of stacked, punched openings rather than the long horizontal gaps, and using detailing at cornices or on window trim. Active retail uses on the ground floor also help garages fit in with the rest of downtown.

### Appropriate

- Ground-floor retail or other active uses.
- Small openings that may be glazed to function as windows.
- Glass-enclosed elevators along the building edge.
- Stairways, elevators and parking entries and exits that occur preferably at mid-block but never at corners of retail streets.
- Single auto exit/entry control point to minimize driveways.
- Vertical expression of building structure.



*Appropriate*



*Inappropriate*

### Inappropriate

- Parked cars on the ground-floor that are visible from adjacent sidewalks.
- Exposed sloped floors visible from the street.
- Stairways, elevators and parking entries and exits occurring at the building's corners, where retail is a more appropriate use.
- Horizontal expression of building structure.

## Use Skybridges Sparingly

### Guideline

*All-weather upper floor connections between structures across public rights-of-way should be limited.*

### Description

While skybridges can create comfortable connections between buildings, they can greatly contribute to the loss of street activity and may have social implications of stratifying and separating citizens by income or ethnicity. Furthermore, they signal that streets are inhospitable and should be avoided. When used, skybridges should be transparent and subordinant visually to adjacent buildings.



*Appropriate*

### Appropriate

- Connecting hospital buildings, jails and courthouses or similar building types where public safety and security concerns warrant separation of users.
- Connecting convention centers with headquarters hotels, when at-grade connections are not feasible.
- Construction at third floor or higher.
- Minimum width and height of structure relative to adjacent street and buildings.
- Glass window walls for transparency in and out.

### Inappropriate

- Connecting office, retail, housing, educational or government uses.
- “Signature” architectural design elements – forms or features that call out for attention.



# Lighting Guidelines



## Intent

The lighting of buildings and open spaces should not only provide security, but also contribute to the overall sense that the downtown is active and vital all hours of the day.

Lighting should be designed not simply to be utilitarian but to create a pleasant, welcoming atmosphere that does not contribute to “light pollution.” Use of glaring, offensively colored lights should be discouraged.

Historic light fixtures should be consistent with the history and character of downtown Lincoln. A single fixture type should be used throughout downtown with slight variations allowed to identify distinct districts such as the Haymarket.

Fixtures should be visually “quiet” – they should not overpower or dominate the streetscape. Combining light fixtures with traffic signals or other poles is encouraged to reduce pedestrian obstructions and visual clutter along sidewalks.

### Elements

Within each downtown planning area, building proposals must consider and respond to requirements from the following lighting elements:

- Orient Lighting to the Pedestrian
- Integrate Building Lighting



## Orient Lighting to the Pedestrian

### Guideline

*Lighting should be used to highlight sidewalks, street trees and other features, and harmonize with other visual elements in the greater downtown.*

### Description

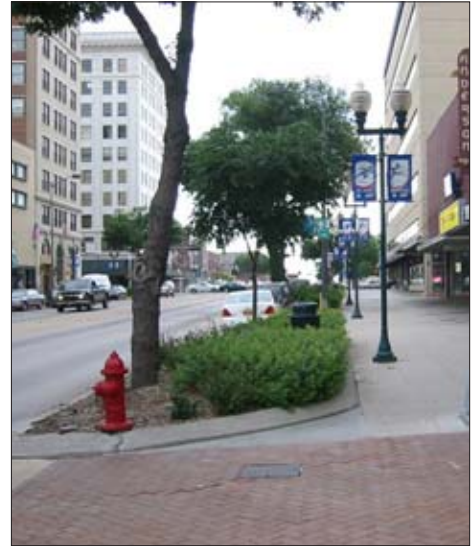
Street lighting should be provided on all public streets, sidewalks, pedestrian walkways and public open spaces. Lights may also be used to highlight trees and similar features within public and private plazas, courtyards, walkways and other similar outdoor areas at night to create and inviting and safe ambiance.

### Appropriate

- Street lights of historical design.
- Pole standards black or dark green in color.
- Standards accommodating banners and hanging flower pots (potentially including automatic drip irrigation for pots).
- Footlighting that illuminates walkways and stairs.
- Fixtures concealed and integrated into the design of buildings or landscape walls and stairways.
- Bollard lighting that is directed downward toward walking surfaces.
- Seasonal string lights on buildings and trees.

### Inappropriate

- Flashing or colored lights.
- Exposed cords, outlets or other electrical devices that may provide safety hazards and are unsightly.
- Contemporary fixtures or over scaled, utilitarian fixtures such as “cobra-head” lights.
- Concrete light fixture bases taller than eight inches.
- Ornamental or contemporary light fixtures.
- Low pressure sodium lamps.



*Appropriate*



*Inappropriate*

## Integrate Building Lighting

### Guideline

*Exterior lighting of buildings should be an integral component of the facade composition.*

### Description

Architectural lighting may be used to articulate the particular building design. Lighting of cornices, uplighting and other effects may be used.

Lighting should not cast glare into residential units or onto adjacent lots or streets in any way that decreases the safety of pedestrians and vehicles. Lights may, however, be used to create effects of shadow, relief and outline that add visual interest and highlight aspects of the building.

### Appropriate

- Wall-washing lighting fixtures.
- Decorative wall sconce and similar architectural lighting fixtures.
- Screened uplight fixtures on buildings or integrated with landscape.
- Lighting that provides natural color.

### Inappropriate

- Neon silhouette accent lighting.
- Bulb or flashing lighting.
- Fluorescent tube lighting.
- Security spotlight.
- Low pressure sodium lamps.



Appropriate



Inappropriate





# Sign Guidelines

## Intent

Signs may provide an address, identify a place of business, locate residential buildings or generally offer directions and information. Regardless of their function, signs should be architecturally compatible with and contribute to the character of the downtown. Signs should be good neighbors – they should not compete with each other or dominate the setting due to inconsistent height, size, shape, number, color, lighting or movement.

### Elements

Within each downtown planning area, building proposals must consider and respond to requirements from the following sign elements:

- Consider Size and Placement of Wall Signs
- Orient Hanging Signs to the Pedestrian



## Consider Size and Placement of Wall Signs

### Guideline

*Signs should be sized and placed so that they are compatible with the building's architectural design.*

### Description

Signs should not overwhelm the building or its special architectural features. Signs should not render the building a mere backdrop for advertising or building identification.

### Appropriate

- Signs should be incorporated into the building architecture as embossing, low relief casting or application to wall surfaces.
- Signs should be constructed of individual, three-dimensional letters, as opposed to one single box with cutout flat letters.
- Signs may be painted or made with applied metal lettering and graphics.
- Signs should be durable and long lasting.
- Signs may incorporate lighting as part of their design.
- Signs should be located above storefronts, on columns or on walls flanking doorways.

### Inappropriate

- The material, size and shape of signs that overwhelm, contrast greatly or adversely impact the architectural quality of the building.
- Roof-mounted signs.
- Backlit signs.
- LED animated signs.
- Video signs.
- Painted window signs.



*Appropriate*



*Inappropriate*



## Orient Hanging Signs to the Pedestrian

### Guideline

*Hanging signs should be oriented to the pedestrian and highly visible from the sidewalk.*

### Description

Signs should not overwhelm the streetscape. They should be compatible with and complement the building's architecture, including its awnings, canopies, lighting and street furniture.

### Appropriate

- Required sign lighting should be integrated into the facade of the building.
- Signs should be constructed of high-quality materials and finishes.
- Signs should be attached to the building in a durable fashion.

### Inappropriate

- Signs interfering with sight lines, creating a safety hazard or obstructing views.
- Roof-mounted signs.



*Appropriate*

Lincoln Downtown Master Plan  
**DESIGN GUIDELINES CHECKLIST**

Project and Applicant Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Zoning: \_\_\_\_\_

Building Use: \_\_\_\_\_

Other : \_\_\_\_\_

Submission Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**DESIGN GUIDELINES**

	Applies		Complies	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
<b>1). Character</b>				
• Reinforce Lincoln's Sense of Place	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Integrate the Environment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Establish and Strengthen Gateways	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Promote Architectural Compatibility	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Preserve Historic Buildings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Integrate Art	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>2). Pedestrian Emphasis</b>				
• Reinforce and Enhance the Pedestrian System	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Define the Pedestrian Environment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Protect the Pedestrian from the Elements	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Provide Places for Stopping and Viewing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Create Successful Outdoor Spaces	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Integrate Universal Design	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>3). Architecture</b>				
• Provide Inviting Retail Doors	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Encourage Retail Corner Doors	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Promote Welcoming Residential Doors	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Encourage Inviting Ground Floor Retail Windows	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Promote Visually Interesting Upper Floor Windows	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Use Quality Wall Materials	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Create Attractive Silhouettes and Rooflines	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Foster Attractive Rooftops	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Provide Interesting Building Massing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Promote Green Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Ensure Buildings Are Secure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Build Compatible Parking Structures	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Use Skybridges Sparingly	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>4). Lighting</b>				
• Orient Lighting to the Pedestrian	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Integrate Building Lighting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>5). Signs</b>				
• Consider Size and Placement of Wall Signs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Orient Hanging Signs to the Pedestrian	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>