Seattle Design Guidelines
Context and Site

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CS1

Natural Systems and Site Features

Use natural systems and features of the site and its surroundings as a starting point for project design.

Design Approaches and Strategies to Consider:

A. ENERGY USE

1. Energy Choices: At the earliest phase of project development, examine how energy choices may influence building form, siting, and orientation, and factor in the findings when making siting and design decisions.

B. SUNLIGHT AND NATURAL VENTILATION

1. Sun and Wind: Take advantage of solar exposure and natural ventilation available onsite where possible. Use local wind patterns and solar gain as a means of reducing the need for mechanical ventilation and heating where possible.

2. Daylight and Shading: Maximize daylight for interior and exterior spaces and minimize shading on adjacent sites through the placement and/or design of structures on the site.

3. Managing Solar Gain: Manage direct sunlight falling on south and west facing facades through shading devices and existing or newly planted trees.

C. TOPOGRAPHY

1. Land Form: Express the natural topography and/or other desirable land forms or features in project design. These features can lend character and a clear sense of place to the advantage of the site and project.

2. Elevation Changes: Use the existing site topography when locating structures and open spaces on the site. Consider “stepping up or down” hillsides to accommodate significant changes in elevation.
D. PLANTS AND HABITAT

1. **On-Site Features:** Incorporate on-site natural habitats and landscape elements including existing trees or vegetation into project design and connect those features to existing networks of open spaces and natural habitats wherever possible. Consider relocating significant trees and vegetation if retention is not feasible.

2. **Off-Site Features:** Provide opportunities through design to link with off-site habitats such as riparian corridors or existing urban forest corridors. Avoid fragmenting habitat and increase interconnected corridors of urban forest and habitat where possible.

E. WATER

1. **Natural Water Features:** If the site includes any natural water features, consider ways to incorporate them into project design as elements of authentic placemaking and project identity.

2. **Adding Interest with Project Drainage:** Use project drainage systems as opportunities to add interest to the site through water-related design elements. Features such as trees, rain gardens, bioswales, green roofs, fountains of recycled water, and/or water art installations can create movement and sound, air cooling, focal points for pedestrians, and habitats which may already be required to manage on-site stormwater and allow reuse of potable water for irrigation.

See also DC3.C3 Habitats and Ecosystems for related guidance.

See also DC3.C4 Environmental Benefits for related guidance.
Urban Pattern and Form

Strengthen the most desirable forms, characteristics, and patterns of the streets, block faces, and open spaces in the surrounding area.

Design Approaches and Strategies to Consider:

A. LOCATION IN THE CITY AND NEIGHBORHOOD

1. Sense of Place: Emphasize attributes that give Seattle, the neighborhood, and/or the site its distinctive sense of place. Design the building and open spaces to enhance areas where a strong identity already exists, and create a sense of place where the physical context is less established. Examples include patterns of streets or blocks; slopes; sites with prominent visibility, relationships to bodies of water or significant trees, natural areas, open spaces, iconic buildings or transportation junctions; and land seen as a gateway to the community.

2. Architectural Presence: Evaluate the degree of visibility or architectural presence that is appropriate or desired given the context, and design accordingly. A site may lend itself to a “high-profile” design with significant presence and individual identity, or may be better suited to a simple but quality design that contributes to the block as a whole. Buildings that contribute to a strong street edge, especially at the first three floors, are particularly important to the creation of a quality public realm that invites social and economic interaction.

B. ADJACENT SITES, STREETS, AND OPEN SPACES

1. Site Characteristics: Reinforce interesting characteristics of sites, especially where the street grid and topography create unusually shaped lots that can add drama or distinction to the building massing.

2. Connection to the Street: Identify opportunities for the project to make a strong connection to the street and carefully consider how the building will define the perimeter of the public realm. Consider the qualities and character of the streetscape—its physical features (sidewalk, parking, landscape strip, street trees, travel lanes, and other amenities) and its function (major retail street or quieter residential street)—in siting and designing the building.
3. **Character of Open Space:** Contribute to the character and proportion of surrounding open spaces. Evaluate adjacent sites, streetscapes, trees, and vegetation, and open spaces for how they function as the walls and floor of outdoor spaces or "rooms" for public use in order to determine how best to support those spaces through project siting and design (e.g. using mature trees to frame views of architecture or other prominent features).

**C. RELATIONSHIP TO THE BLOCK**

1. **Corner Sites:** Use a corner site to greatest advantage. Corner sites can serve as gateways or focal points; both require careful detailing at the first three floors due to their high visibility from two or more streets and long distances. Consider using a corner to provide extra space for pedestrians and a generous entry, or build out to the corner to provide a strong urban edge to the block.

2. **Mid-Block Sites:** Look to the uses and scales of adjacent buildings for clues about how to design a mid-block building. If the corners of the block are already occupied by buildings with strong presence, consider a simpler design that doesn’t compete with them. If street geometries are such that the mid-block site is the termination of another street view, consider a design with enough presence and detail to make the view worthwhile. Continue a strong street-edge where it is already present, and respond to datum lines created by adjacent buildings at the first three floors. Where adjacent properties are undeveloped or underdeveloped, design the party walls to provide visual interest through materials, color, texture, or other means.

3. **Full Block Sites:** Design long facades of full-block buildings so as to avoid a monolithic presence. Provide detail and human scale at street-level, and include repeating elements to add variety and rhythm to the façade and overall building design. Consider providing through-block access and/or designing the project as an assemblage of buildings and spaces within the block.

**D. HEIGHT, BULK, AND SCALE**

1. **Existing Development and Zoning:** Review the height, bulk, and scale of neighboring buildings as well as the scale of development anticipated by zoning for the area to determine an appropriate complement and/or transition. Note that existing buildings may or may not reflect the density allowed by zoning or anticipated by applicable policies.

2. **Existing Site Features:** Use changes in topography, site shape, and existing vegetation or structures to help make a successful fit with adjacent properties; for example siting the greatest mass of the building on the lower part of the site or using an existing stand of trees to buffer building height from a smaller neighboring building.

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*Under the City’s SEPA (State Environmental Policy Act) policy, multi-family and/or commercial projects with substantial height, bulk, and scale impacts will be analyzed through the design review process. Siting and design based on the principles of these guidelines will help to mitigate some of those impacts, while others may require a reduction in the height, bulk, and scale of the project. Consult SMC 23.41 for additional information.*

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*This drawing appropriately shows the proposed project within a broader context in order to assess height, bulk, and scale compatibility with surrounding buildings.*

*Slightly unconventional, yet still familiar, the skewed gable roof forms help reduce the mass of this townhouse project and allow it to blend into a neighborhood that includes single-family houses.*

*See also DC2.A Massing for related guidance.*
3. **Zone Transitions:** For projects located at the edge of different zones, provide an appropriate transition or complement to the adjacent zone(s). Factors to consider:

   a. Distance to the edge of a less (or more) intensive zone;
   b. Differences in development standards between abutting zones;
   c. The type of separation from adjacent properties (e.g. separation by property line only, by an alley or street or open space, or by physical features such as grade change);
   d. Adjacencies to different neighborhoods or districts; adjacencies to parks, open spaces, significant buildings or view corridors; and
   e. Shading to or from neighboring properties.

4. **Massing Choices:** Where a project site abuts a less intensive zone, making a successful transition is especially important. In some areas, the best approach may be to lower the building height, break up the mass of the building, and/or match the scale of adjacent properties in building detailing. In other areas, approaches to massing that differ from existing buildings but preserve natural systems or existing features, enable better solar exposure or site orientation, and/or make for interesting urban form may also be appropriate.
CS3
Architectural Context and Character
Contribute to the architectural character of the neighborhood.

Design Approaches and Strategies to Consider:

A. EMPHASIZING POSITIVE NEIGHBORHOOD ATTRIBUTES

1. Fitting Old and New Together: Create a good fit between old and new projects, and historic and modern designs through building articulation, scale and proportion, roof forms, detailing and fenestration, and/or the use of complementary materials.

2. Contemporary Design: Explore how contemporary designs can contribute to the development of attractive new forms and architectural styles and/or demonstrate ways to incorporate sustainability into the project through design, as expressed through use of new materials or other means.

3. Established Neighborhoods: In existing neighborhoods with a well-defined and desirable character, site and design new structures to complement or be compatible with the architectural style and siting patterns of neighborhood buildings.

4. Evolving Neighborhoods: In neighborhoods where architectural character is evolving or otherwise in transition, explore ways for new development to establish a positive and desirable context for others to build upon in the future.

B. LOCAL HISTORY AND CULTURE

1. Placemaking: Explore the history of the site and neighborhood as a potential placemaking opportunity. Look for historical and cultural significance, using neighborhood groups and archives as resources.

2. Historical/Cultural References: Reuse existing structures on the site where feasible as a means of incorporating historical or cultural elements into the new project.
Public Life

What’s inside:

PL1. Open Space Connectivity
   A. Network of Open Spaces
   B. Walkways and Connections
   C. Outdoor Uses and Activities

PL2. Walkability
   A. Accessibility
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PL3. Street-Level Interaction
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PL4. Active Transportation
   A. Entry Locations and Relationships
   B. Planning Ahead for Cyclists
   C. Planning Ahead for Transit
Open Space Connectivity

Open space should complement and contribute to the network of open spaces around the site and the connections among them.

Design Approaches and Solutions to Consider:

A. A NETWORK OF OPEN SPACES

1. Enhancing Open Space: Design the building and open spaces to positively contribute to a broader network of open spaces throughout the neighborhood. Pay particular attention to the first three floors of the building that front public spaces and influence how pedestrians will experience those spaces. Consider ways that design can enhance the features and activities of existing off-site open spaces. Open space may include sidewalks, streets and alleys, circulation routes and other open areas of all kinds.

2. Adding to Public Life: Seek opportunities to foster human interaction through an increase in the size and/or quality of project-related open space available for public life. Consider features such as widened sidewalks, recessed entries, curb bulbs, courtyards, plazas, or pass-through routes, along with place-making elements such as trees, landscape, art, or other amenities, in addition to the pedestrian amenities listed in Public Life 1, B3. Providing interactive media and/or free wi-fi services within these areas can also attract pedestrians and add activity to the street.

B. WALKWAYS AND CONNECTIONS

1. Pedestrian Infrastructure: Connect on-site pedestrian walkways with existing public and private pedestrian infrastructure, thereby supporting pedestrian connections within and outside the project.

2. Pedestrian Volumes: Provide ample space for pedestrian flow and circulation, particularly in areas where there is already heavy pedestrian traffic or where the project is expected to create or attract new pedestrians to the area.

3. Pedestrian Amenities: Provide pedestrian amenities where necessary to enliven the area and attract interest and interaction with the site and building. Examples of pedestrian amenities include seating and other street furniture, lighting, year-round landscaping, seasonal plantings and pots, trees, pedestrian scale signage, site furniture, art work, awnings, large storefront windows, and engaging retail displays and/or kiosks.
C. OUTDOOR USES AND ACTIVITIES

1. Selecting Activity Areas: Concentrate activity areas in places with sunny exposure, views across spaces, and in direct line with pedestrian routes.

2. Informal Community Uses: In addition to places for walking and sitting, consider including space for informal community use such as performances, farmer’s markets, kiosks and community bulletin boards, cafes, or street vending.

3. Year-Round Activity: Where possible, include features in open spaces for activities beyond daylight hours and throughout the seasons of the year, especially in neighborhood centers where active open space will contribute vibrancy, economic health, and public safety. These may include:
   a. Seasonal plantings or displays and/or water features;
   b. Outdoor heaters and overhead weather protection;
   c. Ample, moveable seating and tables and opportunities for outdoor dining;
   d. An extra level of pedestrian lighting;
   e. Trees for moderate weather protection and shade; and/or
   f. Free 24-hour wi-fi service.

In this project a "woonerf" creates a shared common space for both people and cars that is larger than either would have on its own. These shared spaces are practical solutions for higher-density development on tight lots.

Glazed, operable walls can be opened fully to the street, expanding the public space along this retail street.

An extra wide sidewalk here is an appropriate response to an anticipated high volume of pedestrians. Weather protection, seating, plantings, bike racks, and waste cans are all comfortably accommodated in the space provided.

* woonerf: A driveway shared by pedestrians and vehicles, such as Pike Place in the Pike Place market.
PL2
Walkability
Create a safe and comfortable walking environment that is easy to navigate and well-connected to existing pedestrian walkways and features.

Design Approaches and Solutions to Consider:

A. ACCESSIBILITY

1. **Access for All**: Provide access for people of all abilities in a manner that is fully integrated into the project design. Design entries and other primary access points such that all visitors can be greeted and welcomed through the front door. Refrain from creating separate “back door” entrances for persons with mobility limitations.

2. **Access Challenges**: Add features to assist pedestrians in navigating sloped sites, long blocks, or other challenges. Examples include exterior stairs and landings, escalators, elevators, textured ground surfaces, seating at key resting points, through-block connections, and ramps for wheeled devices (wheelchairs, strollers, bicycles).

B. SAFETY AND SECURITY

1. **Eyes on the Street**: Create a safe environment by providing lines of sight and encouraging natural surveillance through strategic placement of doors, windows, balconies and street-level uses.

2. **Lighting for Safety**: Provide lighting at appropriate lumen intensities and scales; including pathway illumination, pedestrian and entry lighting, and/or security lights.

3. **Street-Level Transparency**: Ensure transparency of street-level uses by keeping views open into spaces behind walls or plantings, at corners, or along narrow passageways. Choose semi-transparent rather than opaque screening.

Activity on this urban sidewalk is easily monitored from the many entries and windows fronting the street. A variety of potted plants, artwork, and other amenities give the sidewalk a strong residential character and scale.
C. WEATHER PROTECTION

1. Locations and Coverage: Overhead weather protection is encouraged and should be located at or near uses that generate pedestrian activity such as entries, retail uses, and transit stops. Address changes in topography as needed to provide continuous coverage the full length of the building, where possible.

2. Design Integration: Integrate weather protection and drainage into the design of the structure as a whole, and ensure that it also relates well to neighboring buildings in design, coverage, or other features.

3. People-Friendly Spaces: Create an artful and people-friendly space beneath building canopies by using human-scale architectural elements and a pattern of forms and/or textures at intervals along the façade. If transparent canopies are used, provide for regular cleaning and maintenance.

D. WAYFINDING

1. Design as Wayfinding: Use design features as a means of wayfinding wherever possible, and provide clear directional signage where needed.
PL3
Street-Level Interaction

Encourage human interaction and activity at the street-level with clear connections to building entries and edges.

Design Approaches and Solutions to Consider:

A. ENTRIES

1. **Design Objectives:** Design primary entries to be obvious, identifiable, and distinctive with clear lines of sight and lobbies visually connected to the street. Scale and detail them to function well for their anticipated use and also to fit with the building of which they are a part, differentiating residential and commercial entries with design features and amenities specific to each.

   a. **Office/commercial lobbies** should be visually connected to the street through the primary entry and sized to accommodate the range and volume of foot traffic anticipated;

   b. **Retail entries** benefit from a direct relationship to the public sidewalk and should include adequate space for several patrons to enter and exit simultaneously, preferably under cover from weather.

   c. **Common entries to multi-story residential buildings** need to provide some level of privacy and security for residents but also be welcoming and identifiable to non-residents with business in the building. Design features emphasizing the entry as a semi-private space are recommended and may be accomplished through signage, low walls and/or landscaping, a recessed entry area, and other detailing that signals a break from the public sidewalk.

   d. **Individual entries to ground-related housing** when scaled and detailed appropriately, provide for a more intimate type of entry in order to provide a sense of identity, opportunity for personalization, to offer privacy, and to emphasize personal safety and security for building occupants.

See also PL4.A Entry Locations and Relationships for related guidance.
2. Ensemble of Elements: Design the entry as an ensemble of a variety of elements including the door(s) itself, overhead features, ground surface, landscaping, lighting, and other features. Consider a range of elements such as:
   a. Overhead shelter: canopies, porches, building extensions;
   b. Transitional spaces: stoops, courtyards, stairways, portals, arcades, pocket gardens, decks;
   c. Ground surface: seating walls; special paving, landscaping, trees, lighting; and
   d. Building surface/interface: privacy screens, upward-operating shades on windows, signage, lighting.

B. RESIDENTIAL EDGES
1. Security and Privacy: Provide security and privacy for residential buildings through the use of a buffer or semi-private space between the development and the street or neighboring buildings. Consider design approaches such as elevating the main floor, providing a setback from the sidewalk, and/or landscaping to indicate the transition from one type of space to another.

2. Ground-level Residential: Privacy and security issues are particularly important in buildings with ground-level housing, both at entries and where windows are located overlooking the street and sidewalk. Consider providing a greater number of transition elements and spaces, and choose materials carefully to clearly identify the transition from public sidewalk to private residence. In addition to the ideas in B.1. above, design strategies include:
   a. Vertical modulation and a range of exterior finishes on the facade to articulate the location of residential entries;
   b. Pedestrian-scaled building addressing and signage, and entry elements such as mail slots/boxes, doorbells, entry lights, planter boxes or pots; and

Elements of Successful Ground Related Residences

- Vertical modulation emphasized by a range of exterior finishes
- Recessed entranceways
- Landscaping at the building edge provides additional privacy
- Public/Private threshold enhanced by a low wall and well scaled landscaping along the transition strip
- Pedestrian scaled signage
- Steps to create vertical separation and help define the transition to more private outdoor space

Repetitive vertical elements help define individual ground related residences.

Well detailed landscaping promotes a successful transition from public to private space.
This farmer's market spills over into the street creating a crowded, but lively and entertaining urban open space where residents, vendors, artists, and musicians all gather and mix. Shop owners often bring their wares into the street as well, further adding to the diversity of people and goods.

c. A combination of interior window coverings for windows that are close to the sidewalk in order to provide solutions to varying needs for light, ventilation, noise control, and privacy. Fenestration and glazing design, adjustable blinds, sheer curtains, opaque draperies, and/or shutters (interior or exterior) are options to consider.

3. **Buildings with Live/Work Uses:** Maintain active and transparent facades in the design of live/work residences that are required to orient the non-residential portions of the unit toward the street. Design the first floor such that it can be adapted to commercial use as needed in the future.

4. **Interaction:** Provide opportunities for interaction among residents and neighbors. Consider locating commonly used features or services such as mailboxes, outdoor seating, seasonal displays, children’s play equipment, and space for informal events in the area between buildings as a means of encouraging interaction.

**C. RETAIL EDGES**

1. **Porous Edge:** Engage passersby with a “porous edge” between the building and street as appropriate to building uses. Create multiple entries where possible and make a physical and visual connection between people on the sidewalk and retail activities in the building.

2. **Visibility:** Maximize visibility into the building interior and merchandise displays. Consider fully operational glazed wall-sized doors that can be completely opened to the street, increased height in lobbies, and/or special lighting for displays.

3. **Ancillary Activities:** Allow space for activities such as sidewalk vending, seating, and restaurant dining to occur. Consider setting structures back from the street or incorporating space in the project design into which retail uses can extend.
Active Transportation

Incorporate design features that facilitate active forms of transportation such as walking, cycling, and use of transit.

Design Approaches and Solutions to Consider:

A. ENTRY LOCATIONS AND RELATIONSHIPS

1. Serving all Modes of Travel: Select access points that easily and conveniently accommodate arrival by all modes of travel, while also reducing conflicts between modes as needed.

2. Connections to All Modes: Site the primary entry in a location that logically relates to building uses and clearly connects all major points of access. Highlight entries and spaces leading up to them through the use of special paving, landscaping, public art, and/or architectural features.

B. PLANNING AHEAD FOR CYCLISTS

1. Early Planning: Consider existing and future bicycle traffic to and through the site early in the process so that access and connections are integrated into the project along with other modes of travel.

2. Bike Amenities: Amenities such as bike racks and storage, shower facilities and lockers for cyclists should be located to maximize convenience, security, and safety."

3. Bike Connections: Facilitate connections to bicycle trails and infrastructure around and beyond the project. Design cycling access points so that they relate to the street grid and include information about connections to existing trails and infrastructure where possible. Also consider signage, kiosks, building lobbies, and bicycle parking areas, where provided, as opportunities to share cycling information.

A simple bike rack, well-located, makes it possible for this cyclist to lock his/her bike just outside a shop and quickly and efficiently accomplish a neighborhood errand.
C. PLANNING AHEAD FOR TRANSIT

1. Influence on Project Design: Identify how a transit or light rail stop (planned or built) adjacent to or near the site may influence project design, provide opportunities for placemaking, and/or suggest logical locations for building entries, retail uses, open space, or landscaping. Take advantage of the presence of transit patrons to support retail uses in the building.

2. On-site Transit Stops: If a transit or light rail stop is located onsite, design project-related pedestrian improvements and amenities so that they complement (or at least do not conflict with) any amenities provided for transit riders. Consider the proximity of transit queuing and waiting areas to other pedestrian gathering spaces, aiming for enough room to accommodate all users. Similarly, keep lines of sight to approaching buses or trains open and make it clear through location and design whether project-related pedestrian lighting, weather protection, and/or seating is intended to be shared by transit users.

3. Transit Connections: Where no transit or light rail stops are on or adjacent to the site, identify where the nearest transit or light rail stops and pedestrian routes are and include design features and connections within the project design as appropriate.
Design Concept

What’s inside:

DC1. Project Uses and Activities
   A. Arrangement of Interior Uses
   B. Vehicular Access and Circulation
   C. Parking and Service Uses

DC2. Architectural Concept
   A. Massing
   B. Architectural and Façade Composition
   C. Secondary Architectural Features
   D. Scale and Texture
   E. Form and Function

DC3. Open Space Concept
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   B. Open Spaces Uses and Activities
   C. Design

DC4. Materials
   A. Exterior Elements and Finishes
   B. Signage
   C. Lighting
   D. Trees, Landscape and Hardscape Materials
DC1
Project Uses and Activities
Optimize the arrangement of uses and activities on site.

Design Approaches and Solutions to Consider:

A. ARRANGEMENT OF INTERIOR USES

1. Visibility: Locate uses and services frequently used by the public in visible or prominent areas, such as at entries or along the street front.

2. Gathering Places: Maximize the use of any interior or exterior gathering spaces by considering the following:
   a. A location at the crossroads of high levels of pedestrian traffic;
   b. Proximity to nearby or project-related shops and services; and
   c. Amenities that complement the building design and offer safety and security when used outside normal business hours.

3. Flexibility: Build in flexibility so the building can adapt over time to evolving needs, such as the ability to change residential space to commercial space as needed.

4. Views and Connections: Locate interior uses and activities to take advantage of views and physical connections to exterior spaces and uses, particularly activities along sidewalks, parks or other public spaces.

B. VEHICULAR ACCESS AND CIRCULATION

1. Access Location and Design: Choose locations for vehicular access, service uses, and delivery areas that minimize conflict between vehicles and non-motorists wherever possible. Emphasize use of the sidewalk for pedestrians, and create safe and attractive conditions for pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers by:
   a. Using existing alleys for access or, where alley access is not feasible, choosing a location for street access that is the least visually dominant and/or which offers opportunity for shared driveway use;
   b. Where driveways and curb cuts are unavoidable, minimizing their number and width as much as possible; and/or

See also DC2.E1 Legibility and Flexibility for related guidance.


For information about Seattle access and parking requirements, consult SMC Chapter 23.54 Quantity and Design Standards for Access and Off-Street Parking at http://clerk.ci.seattle.wa.us/~public/toc/23-54.htm.
This internal “street” not only provides access to all housing units, but also serves as interior open space and as a multipurpose area when residents want to gather together.

c. Employing a multi-sensory approach to areas of potential vehicle-pedestrian conflict such as garage exits/entrances. Design features may include contrasting or textured pavement, warning lights and sounds, and similar safety devices.

2. **Facilities for Alternative Transportation:** Locate any facilities for alternative transportation such as shared vehicles, carpooling and charging stations for electric vehicles in prominent locations that are convenient and readily accessible to expected users.

### C. PARKING AND SERVICEUSES

1. **Below-Grade Parking:** Locate parking below grade wherever possible. Where a surface parking lot is the only alternative, locate the parking in rear or side yards, or on lower or less visible portions of the site.

2. **Visual Impacts:** Reduce the visual impacts of parking lots, structures, entrances, and related signs and equipment as much as possible. Consider breaking large parking lots into smaller lots, and/or provide trees, attractive landscaping or fencing as a screen. Design at-grade parking structures so that they are architecturally compatible with the rest of the building and streetscape.

3. **Multiple Uses:** Design parking areas to serve multiple uses such as children’s play space, outdoor gathering areas, sports courts, or common space in multifamily projects.

4. **Service Uses:** Locate and design service entries, loading docks, and trash receptacles away from pedestrian areas or to a less visible portion of the site to reduce possible impacts of these facilities on building aesthetics and pedestrian circulation. Where service facilities abut pedestrian areas or the perimeter of the property, maintain an attractive edge through screening, plantings, or other design treatments.

The parking garage entrance to this building has been carefully designed so as not to dominate the pedestrian entrance at the corner of the building, but still provide clear cues to motorists on where to enter. The pillars and planting areas signal to both pedestrians and motorists that the driveway is where the modes cross and therefore requires extra awareness and caution.
DC2
Architectural Concept
Develop an architectural concept that will result in a unified, functional and harmonious design that fits well on the site and within its surroundings.

Design Approaches and Solutions to Consider:

A. MASSING

1. Site Characteristics and Uses: Arrange the mass of the building taking into consideration the characteristics of the site and the proposed uses of the building and its open space. Special situations such as very large sites, unusually shaped sites, or sites with varied topography may require particular attention to where and how building massing is arranged as they can accentuate mass and height.

2. Reducing Perceived Mass: Use secondary architectural elements to reduce the perceived mass of larger projects. Consider creating recesses or indentations in the building envelope; adding balconies, bay windows, porches, canopies or other elements; and/or highlighting building entries.

B. ARCHITECTURAL AND FAÇADE COMPOSITION

1. Façade Composition: Design building facades—including alleys and visible roofs—considering the composition and architectural expression of the building as a whole. Ensure that facades are attractive and well-proportioned through the placement and detailing of all elements, including bays, fenestration, and materials, and any patterns created by their arrangement. On sites that abut an alley, design the alley façade and its connection to the street carefully. At a minimum, consider wrapping the treatment of the street-facing façade around the alley corner of the building.

2. Blank Walls: Avoid large blank walls along visible façades wherever possible. Where expanses of blank walls, retaining walls, or garage facades are unavoidable, include uses or design treatments at the street level that have human scale and are designed for pedestrians. These may include:
   a. Newsstands, ticket booths and flower shops (even if small or narrow);
   b. Green walls, landscaped areas or raised planters;
   c. Wall setbacks or other indentations;
   d. Display windows; trellises or other secondary elements;

See also CS2.D4 Massing Choices for related guidance.
C. SECONDARY ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES

1. Visual Depth and Interest: Add depth to facades where appropriate by thoughtfully incorporating balconies, canopies, awnings, decks, or other secondary elements into the façade design. Add detailing at the street level in order to create interest for the pedestrian and encourage active street life and window shopping (in retail areas). Detailing may include features such as distinctive door and window hardware, projecting window sills, ornamental tile or metal, and other high-quality surface materials and finishes.

2. Dual Purpose Elements: Consider architectural features that can be dual purpose—adding depth, texture, and scale as well as serving other project functions. Examples include shading devices and windows that add rhythm and depth as well as contribute toward energy efficiency and/or savings; or canopies that provide street-level scale and detail while also offering weather protection. Where these elements are prominent design features, the quality of the materials is critical.

3. Fit With Neighboring Buildings: Use design elements to achieve a successful fit between a building and its neighbors, such as:
   a. Echoing aspects of neighboring buildings through architectural style, roof line, datum line detailing, fenestration, color or materials,
   b. Using trees, landscaping or other screening to buffer the building from its neighbors, and/or
   c. Creating a well-proportioned base, middle and top to the building in locations where this might be appropriate. Consider how surrounding buildings have addressed base, middle, and top, and whether those solutions—or similar ones—might be a good fit for the project and its context.

D. SCALE AND TEXTURE

1. Human Scale: Incorporate architectural features, elements, and details that are of human scale into the building facades, entries, retaining walls, courtyards, and exterior spaces in a manner that is consistent with the overall architectural concept. Pay special attention to the first three floors of the building in order to maximize opportunities to engage the pedestrian and enable an active and vibrant street front.

2. Texture: Design the character of the building as expressed in the form, scale, and materials of the building to strive for a fine-grained scale or “texture” particularly at the street level and other areas where pedestrians predominate.

E. FORM AND FUNCTION

1. Legibility and Flexibility: Design buildings such that their primary functions and uses can be readily determined from the exterior, making the building easy to access and understand. At the same time, design flexibility into the building so that it may remain useful over time even as specific programmatic needs evolve. Strive for a balance between building legibility and flexibility.
DC3
Open Space Concept

Integrate open space design with the design of the building so that each complements the other.

**Design Approaches and Solutions to Consider:**

**A. BUILDING-OPEN SPACE RELATIONSHIP**

1. **Interior/Exterior Fit:** Develop an open space concept in conjunction with the architectural concept to ensure that interior and exterior spaces relate well to each other and support the functions of the development.

**B. OPEN SPACE USES AND ACTIVITIES**

1. **Meeting User Needs:** Plan the size, uses, activities, and features of each open space to meet the needs of expected users, ensuring each space has a purpose and function.

2. **Matching Uses to Conditions:** Respond to changing environmental conditions such as seasonal and daily light and weather shifts through open space design and/or programming of open space activities. For example, place outdoor seating and gathering areas where there is sunny exposure and shelter from wind. Build flexibility into the design in order to accommodate changes as needed; e.g. a south-facing courtyard that is ideal in spring may become too hot in summer, necessitating a shift of outdoor furniture to a shadier location for the season.

3. **Connections to Other Open Space:** Site and design project-related open spaces should connect with, or enhance, the uses and activities of other nearby public open space where appropriate. Look for opportunities to support uses and activities on adjacent properties and/or the sidewalk.

4. **Multifamily Open Space:** Incorporate common and private open spaces in multifamily projects for use by all residents, and design them to encourage physical activity and social interaction. Some examples include areas for gardening, children’s play (covered and uncovered), barbeques, resident meetings, and crafts or hobbies. Plan for multiple uses on parking access courts to make the most of open space on the site.
C. DESIGN

1. **Reinforce Existing Open Space**: Where a strong open space concept exists in the neighborhood, reinforce existing character and patterns of street tree planting, buffers or treatment of topographic changes. Where no strong patterns exist, initiate a strong open space concept that other projects can build upon in the future.

2. **Amenities and Features**: Create attractive outdoor spaces well-suited to the uses envisioned for the project. Use a combination of hardscape and plantings to shape these spaces and to screen less attractive areas as needed. Use a variety of features, such as planters, green roofs and decks, groves of trees, and vertical green trellises along with more traditional foundation plantings, street trees, and seasonal displays.

3. **Support Natural Areas**: Create an open space design that retains and enhances on-site natural areas and connects to natural areas that may exist off-site and may provide habitat for wildlife. If the site contains no natural areas, consider an open space design that offers opportunities to create larger contiguous open spaces and corridors in the future with development of other public or private projects.

See also CS2.A1 Character and Open Space and CS2.B3 Surrounding Open Space for related guidance.

See also CS1.D1 On-site Features and CS1.D2 Restoring Habitats for related guidance.

See also CS1.E2 Potable Water for related guidance.

Although small, this elegantly detailed and appointed interior courtyard is a perfect complement to the architecture of the surrounding building.

A reflecting pool leads the eye straight to the entry while other open space elements—trellises, raised beds, and artwork—create several smaller open spaces each with its own character in this relatively small open space off the street.
DC4
Exterior Elements and Finishes

Use appropriate and high quality elements and finishes for the building and its open spaces.

Design Approaches and Solutions to Consider:

A. BUILDING MATERIALS

1. Climate Appropriateness: Select durable and attractive materials that will age well in Seattle’s climate and rain, taking special care to detail corners, edges, and transitions. Highly visible features, such as balconies, grilles and railings should be especially attractive, well crafted and easy to maintain. Pay particular attention to environments that create harsh conditions that may require special materials and details, such as marine areas or open or exposed sites.

B. SIGNAGE

1. Scale and Character: Add interest to the streetscape with exterior signs and attachments that are appropriate in scale and character to the project and its environs.

2. Coordination With Project Design: Develop a signage plan within the context of architectural and open space concepts, and coordinate the details with façade design, lighting, and other project features to complement the project as a whole.

See also PL2.D1 Design as Wayfinding for related guidance.
C. LIGHTING

1. **Functions**: Use lighting both to increase site safety in all locations used by pedestrians and to highlight architectural or landscape details and features such as entries, signs, canopies, plantings, and art.

2. **Avoiding Glare**: Design project lighting based upon the uses on and off site, taking care to provide illumination to serve building needs while avoiding off-site night glare and light pollution.

D. TREES, LANDSCAPE AND HARDSCAPE MATERIALS

1. **Choice of Plant Materials**: Reinforce the overall architectural and open space design concepts through the selection of landscape materials. Choose plants that will emphasize or accent the design, create enduring green spaces, and be appropriate to particular locations taking into account solar access, soil conditions, and adjacent patterns of use. Select landscaping that will thrive under urban conditions.

2. **Hardscape Materials**: Use exterior courtyards, plazas, and other hard surfaced areas as an opportunity to add color, texture, and/or pattern and enliven public areas through the use of distinctive and durable paving materials. Use permeable materials wherever possible.

3. **Long Range Planning**: Select plants that upon maturity will be of appropriate size, scale, and shape to contribute to the site as intended. It may be necessary to create a landscaping plan for various stages of plant maturity, such as 5, 10, and 20 year plans in order to ensure the landscaping will perform and function as needed over the life of the project.

4. **Place Making**: Create a landscape design that helps define spaces with significant elements such as trees.

E. PROJECT ASSEMBLY AND LIFESPAN

1. **Deconstruction**: Design the project so that it may be deconstructed at the end of its useful lifetime, with connections and assembly techniques that will allow reuse of materials.