South Lake Union
Design Guidelines
South Lake Union Neighborhood Design Guidelines apply within the Urban Center
Citywide Guideline:

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

South Lake Union Supplemental Guidance

Responding to Site Characteristics

New development is encouraged to take advantage of site configuration to accomplish sustainability goals. The Board is generally willing to recommend departures from development standards if they are needed to achieve sustainable design. Refer to the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design* (LEED) manual which provides additional information. Examples include:

- Solar orientation
- Storm water run-off, detention and filtration systems
- Sustainable landscaping
- Versatile building design for entire building life cycle
CS2
Urban Pattern and Form

Citywide Guideline:

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

South Lake Union Supplemental Guidance

Responding to Site Characteristics

1. Encourage provision of “outlooks and overlooks” for the public to view the lake and cityscapes. Examples include provision of public plazas and/or other public open spaces and changing the form or facade setbacks of the building to enhance opportunities for views.


Gateways

Reinforce community gateways through the use of architectural elements, streetscape features, landscaping and/or signage. Gateways can be defined through landscaping, artwork, and references to the history of the location that create a sense of place. Gateways are transition locations, places that mark entry or departure points to a neighborhood for automobiles and pedestrians. They are sites that create opportunities for identification, a physical marker for the community to notice they are entering a special place. Methods to establish gateways should consider the site’s characteristics such as topography, views or surrounding building patterns. Elements could include building out to meet the corner where appropriate, or tools such as:

- setbacks to allow for pedestrian friendly spaces;
- signage;
- landscaping;
- artwork;
- facade treatments.

The following locations, at this time, are places that have been identified as gateways for South Lake Union due to the level of traffic flow, general visibility and/or development potential. The following locations, pending changes in traffic patterns, may evolve with transportation improvements:

- Westlake & Denny
- Westlake & 9th
Heart locations

Several areas have been identified as “heart locations.” Heart locations serve as the perceived center of commercial and social activity within the neighborhood. These locations provide anchors for the community as they have identity and give form to the neighborhood. Development at heart locations should enhance their central character through appropriate site planning and architecture. These sites have a high priority for improvements to the public realm. A new building’s primary entry and facade should respond to the heart location. Special street treatments are likely to occur and buildings will need to respond to these centers of commercial and social activity. Amenities to consider are: pedestrian lighting, public art, special paving, landscaping, additional public open space provided by curb bulbs and entry plazas.

The following locations have been identified as heart locations within South Lake Union:

- Cascade Park
- South Lake Union Park
- Denny Park
- Harrison Street
- Terry Avenue North
- Westlake Avenue North

Attachment 14 to the DPD Design Guidelines Ordinance
An example of how the orientation of buildings and the uses contained within can support an active pedestrian street.

Map of heart locations.

Height, Bulk, and Scale

1. Address both the pedestrian and auto experience through building placement, scale and details with specific attention to regional transportation corridors such as Mercer, Aurora, Fairview and Westlake. These locations, pending changes in traffic patterns, may evolve with transportation improvements.

2. Encourage stepping back an elevation at upper levels for development taller than 55 feet to take advantage of views and increase sunlight at street level. Where stepping back upper floors is not practical or appropriate other design considerations may be considered, such as modulations or separations between structures.

3. Relate proportions of buildings to the width and scale of the street.
CS3
Architectural Context and Character

Citywide Guideline:
Contribute to the architectural character of the neighborhood.

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Height, Bulk, and Scale
1. Articulate the building facades vertically or horizontally in intervals that relate to the existing structures or existing pattern of development in the vicinity.
2. Consider using architectural features to reduce building scale such as:
   - landscaping;
   - trellis;
   - complementary materials;
   - detailing;
   - accent trim.

Architectural Context
1. Support the existing fine-grained character of the neighborhood with a mix of building styles.
2. Re-use and preserve important buildings and landmarks when possible.
3. Expose historic signs and vintage advertising on buildings where possible.
4. Respond to the history and character in the adjacent vicinity in terms of patterns, style, and scale. Encourage historic character to be revealed and reclaimed, for example through use of community artifacts, and historic materials, forms and textures.
5. Respond to the working class, maritime, commercial and industrial character of the Waterfront and Westlake areas. Examples of elements to consider include:
   - window detail patterns;
   - open bay doors;
   - sloped roofs.
6. Respond to the unique, grass roots, sustainable character of the Cascade neighborhood. Examples of elements to consider include:
   - community artwork;
   - edible gardens;
   - water filtration systems that serve as pedestrian amenities;
   - gutters that support greenery.

Context - neighborhood residential buildings.

Context - light industrial building design; pilasters, large casement windows, brick and terra-cotta cladding.

Context - window detailing.

Adaptive Reuse - light industrial-style large windows, parapet, building facade broken up by vertical elements to reduce the scale.

Context - creative, contemporary architecture with variegated forms and details.

Context - maritime character.
PL1
Open Space Connectivity

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

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Human Activity
1. Keep neighborhood connections open, and discourage closed campuses.
2. Reinforce pedestrian connections both within the neighborhood and to other adjacent neighborhoods. Transportation infrastructure should be designed with adjacent sidewalks, as development occurs to enhance pedestrian connectivity.
3. Design for a network of safe and well-lit connections to encourage human activity and link existing high activity areas.

Landscaping To Reinforce Design Continuity With Adjacent Sites
- Support the creation of a hierarchy of passive and active open space within South Lake Union. This may include pooling open space requirements on-site to create larger spaces.
Pedestrian Open Spaces and Entrances

New developments are encouraged to work with the Design Review Board and interested citizens to provide features that enhance the public realm, i.e. the transition zone between private property and the public right of way. The Board is generally willing to consider a departure in open space requirements if the project proponent provides an acceptable plan for features such as:

- curb bulbs adjacent to active retail spaces where they are not interfering with primary corridors that are designated for high levels of traffic flow;
- pedestrian-oriented street lighting;
- street furniture.

Streetscape amenities help buildings connect to, and enhance centers of commercial and social activity.
Citywide Guideline:
Create a safe and comfortable walking environment that is easy to navigate and well-connected to existing pedestrian walkways and features.

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Streetscape Compatibility
The vision for street level uses in South Lake Union is a completed network of sidewalks that successfully accommodate pedestrians. Streetscape compatibility is a high priority of the neighborhood with redevelopment. Sidewalk-related spaces should appear safe, welcoming and open to the general public.

1. Encourage provision of spaces for street level uses that vary in size, width, and depth. Encourage the use of awnings and weather protection along street fronts to enhance the pedestrian environment.
2. Provide pedestrian-friendly streetscape amenities, such as:
   - tree grates;
   - benches;
   - lighting.
3. Where appropriate, configure retail space so that it can spill-out onto the sidewalk (retaining six feet for pedestrian movement, where the sidewalk is sufficiently wide).

A street level use that integrates pedestrian amenities into the siting and design of the building.
Personal Safety and Security

Enhance public safety throughout the neighborhood to foster 18-hour public activity. Methods to consider are:

- enhanced pedestrian and street lighting;
- well-designed public spaces that are defensively designed with clear sight lines and opportunities for eyes on the street;
- police horse tie-up locations for routine patrols and larger event assistance.
PL3
Street-Level Interaction

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

South Lake Union Supplemental Guidance

Streetscape Compatibility
Where appropriate, consider a reduction in the required amount of commercial and retail space at the ground level, such as in transition zones between commercial and residential areas. Place retail in areas that are conducive to the use and will be successful.

Human Activity
1. Create graceful transitions at the streetscape level between the public and private uses.
2. Design facades to encourage activity to spill out from business onto the sidewalk, and vice-versa.
3. Reinforce retail concentrations with compatible spaces that encourage pedestrian activity.
4. Create businesses and community activity clusters through co-location of retail and pedestrian uses as well as other high pedestrian traffic opportunities.

Transition Between Residence and Street
Consider designing the entries of residential buildings to enhance the character of the streetscape through the use of small gardens, stoops and other elements to create a transition between the public and private areas. Consider design options to accommodate various residential uses, i.e., townhouse, live-work, apartment and senior-assisted housing.
Citywide Guideline:
Optimize the arrangement of uses and activities on site.

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Design of Parking Lots Near Sidewalks
Providing parking below grade is preferred.
Citywide Guideline:

Develop an architectural concept that will result in a unified, functional and harmonious design that fits well on the site and within its surroundings.

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Architectural Concept and Consistency

Design the “fifth elevation” — the roofscape — in addition to the streetscape. As this area topographically is a valley, the roofs may be viewed from locations outside the neighborhood such as the freeway and Space Needle. Therefore, views from outside the area as well as from within the neighborhood should be considered, and roof-top elements should be organized to minimize view impacts from the freeway and elevated areas.
DC3
Open Space Concept

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

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Landscaping To Reinforce Design Continuity With Adjacent Sites

1. Encourage landscaping that meets LEED criteria. This is a priority in the Cascade neighborhood.
2. Where appropriate, install indigenous trees and plants to improve aesthetics, capture water and create habitat.
3. Retain existing, non-intrusive mature trees or replace with large caliper trees.
4. Water features are encouraged including natural marsh-like installations.
5. Reference the City of Seattle Right Tree Book and the City Light Streetscape Light Standards Manual for appropriate landscaping and lighting options for the area.
Landscaping To Enhance The Building And/Or Site
Consider integrating artwork into publicly accessible areas of a building and landscape that evokes a sense of place related to the previous uses of the area. Neighborhood themes may include service industries such as laundries, auto row, floral businesses, photography district, arts district, maritime, etc.

Landscape Design To Address Special Site Conditions
SLU-specific supplemental guidance Landscaping should be designed to take advantage of views to waterfront and downtown Seattle.