

Willamette Falls Downtown District Policies and Design Guidelines

The District Policies and Design Guidelines are mandatory for future development within the Willamette Falls Downtown District, and will be applied during detailed development plan review.

Purpose. The plan policies and design guidelines promote development of high-quality buildings and open space that reinforce the four core values of the site: public access, economic development, healthy habitat, and cultural and historic interpretation. The guidelines are also intended to promote compatibility with the historic character of the district, while allowing contemporary interpretations of the historic patterns.

Guideline 1. Enhance the Special Character of the Willamette Falls Downtown District.

Principles:

Unique setting. Buildings and landscape elements should establish an aesthetic that considers the site's natural setting and industrial history, and promotes permanence and quality. Design elements to consider are materials, massing, views and viewing areas, building transparency, orientation to public and semi-public spaces, and landscaping.

Celebrate the river and falls. Where appropriate, the unique natural setting of the site should be celebrated by building and open space design. Integrate the experience of the river and the falls through site design. Special attention should be paid to development at the river's edge.

Streets. Re-establishment of the historic street grid is fundamental to the new district. Buildings and open spaces should orient themselves toward or open up to these streets. Special care should be taken for the design of ground floor, street-level uses.

Views. Take advantage of views toward the river and falls. Step structures down to follow natural change in elevation from the basalt bluffs to water's edge. Open up views toward Canemah down Main Street, and toward river from future 3rd and 4th Streets and the Riverwalk.

Materials. Building materials should reflect the industrial character of the site. Proposed materials must be high quality and express a sense of permanence fitting for the industrial history of the site. The first two floors of development especially should use materials that reinforce the high-quality, comfortable pedestrian environment.

Guideline 2. Design for the Comfort and Safety of Pedestrians.

Principles:

Network. Incorporate the pedestrian network that accompanies the street grid and public pedestrian ways into the design of buildings and open spaces. Link pedestrian paths in open space areas to public sidewalks and building entrances. Incorporate main entrances that orient to Main Street.

Visual Interest. Establish areas of visual interest on the ground floor of buildings where they face main streets. Incorporate seating and viewing areas in front of buildings and in open space areas where appropriate.

Natural setting. Locate and design buildings and open space areas to consider effects of sunlight, rain, shadow, wind, and views of the river and the falls. Maximize the amount of direct and indirect sunlight to adjacent public spaces.

Signs. Use pedestrian-scaled signage within the district that offers clear direction into and around the site. Private commercial signage should reflect the pedestrian character of the district and reflect the history of the site. Signage should not obscure or detract from views toward the water or the falls. Conversely, larger publicly-oriented and gateway signage is encouraged when appropriate and complementary to the district.

Lighting. Place and direct outdoor lighting to ensure that the ground level of the building and associated outdoor and pedestrian areas are well lit at night. Integrate exterior lighting so that it does not detract from the uses of adjacent areas. Lighting should be Dark Sky compliant.

Guideline 3. Maintain Downtown Character

Principles:

Continuity. The Willamette Falls District is an extension of the historic downtown. At the same time, the scale of buildings and industrial history of the district should create a different feeling. Buildings and open space areas should pay special attention to existing heights and the transition between the two downtown districts. New development should consider architectural patterns and materials existing in downtown, and also create a new sense of place.

Block Structures. Respect the block structures of the historic downtown. The pedestrian and vehicular experience of streets and sidewalks should be continuous across the barrier of 99E.

Parking. Locate parking to minimize impact on building appearance, streetscape, and pedestrians. Plan for the primary method of car storage to be within structures. Show that parking can flexibly serve different users, times of day, and could be reconfigured for other purposes. Develop, orient and screen structured parking to complement adjacent buildings. Reduce automobile/pedestrian conflicts around parking areas and support the pedestrian environment.

Guideline 4. Re-Use, Rehabilitate, Restore and Interpret Buildings and Structures

Principles:

Key structures. Preservation or rehabilitation of key structures should be a priority in the design of new buildings and open space. Highest value is placed on the following structures: De-Ink Building, #4 Paper Machine, Mill O, Hawley Building, and the Woolen Mill Foundation. If any these key structures must be removed, the applicant must document the specific reason for doing so, and propose mitigation to compensate for the loss of site character.

Other structures. Incorporate remnants, key features or other significant portions of existing structures into project design. The district's 150-year history as a mill site (flour, wool, paper) and a manufacturing center should be celebrated and recognized when new buildings and uses are established.

Archaeology. Incorporate pre-colonial history of the site into new development where appropriate. Monitor archeology when disturbance of native soil is proposed.

Interpretation. Weave interpretive elements throughout the site to provide multiple and diverse opportunities to learn and reflect on the site's history.

Guideline 5. Build for Long-term Use

Principles:

Future development. Locate buildings to allow for infill on adjacent vacant or underdeveloped parcels. Design compatible transitions between buildings and open spaces. Promote visibility and accessibility between open spaces and adjacent uses.

Quality materials. Promote permanence and quality in new development through the use of substantial and attractive building materials. Re-use existing industrial materials where appropriate.

Guideline 6. Incorporate Ecology into Design

Principles:

Riparian edge. Promote healthy habitat when designing new buildings and open space at river's edge. Take advantage of natural resource enhancement opportunities along the riverbank.

Landscape. Integrate and juxtapose ecological landscape elements with the intense urban and industrial history of district. Create continuous canopy of street trees, where practicable. Integrate innovative stormwater treatment systems with the overall site and development site design.

Buildings. Incorporate sustainable building practices into site and building design. Bring features of the site's natural setting inside buildings as a means for better integrating buildings with significant site elements. Consider shared utilities (eco-districts).

Guideline 7. Create a World-Class Riverwalk

Principles:

Riverwalk design. Establish permanent, prominent and breathtaking public access along the riverfront to structures, water, cultural history, and the falls. The riverwalk should be inviting to a wide range of people, including families and children. Allow for multiple, creative and unexpected opportunities to physically and visually connect to the river.

Integration. Integrate riverwalk with private development as it moves through the site, yet maintain its prominence along the river frontage. Reflect unique aspects of the place

with unifying design elements integrated throughout and connects people physically and emotionally with the river

Views. Emphasize diverse scenic views of the falls and river from the riverwalk. Include views of the falls that reveal themselves as one proceeds along the riverwalk.

Guideline 8. Create Quality Public Spaces

Principles:

Access to public space. Emphasize arrival by foot, bike or transit while accommodating the automobile. Public spaces should accommodate different ability levels.

Flexibility. Invite flexible programming through site design, rather than being designing for single use. Design for use in multiple ways by many different groups, on seasonal and daily basis. Public space should work at different times of day, weather conditions, and for different users.

Relationship to surroundings. Capitalize on adjacent buildings or natural features to create interesting visual experiences or vistas. Integrate design with adjacent private development. Reflect local character and personality.