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# Table of Contents:

**Introduction** 5

- Applicability 6
- Design and Site Plan Review Process 6
- Relationship to the Zoning Code 8
- Relationship to Other Policy and Regulatory Elements 9
- Description of the Downtown Design Guidelines Area 11
- Downtown Character Areas 12
- Urban Design Concepts/Definitions 16
- Standard Design Guidelines Format 20
- Organization and Format 23

**Guiding Principles** 25

- Achieve Excellence in Design 26
- Express Human Scale 26
- Design for Compatibility and Respond to Context 26
- Encourage Creativity 27
- Address Constraints Creatively 27
- Activate the Public Realm 27
- Maximize Connectivity 28
- Design for Sustainability 28

**Site Design** 29

- Building Orientation 30
- External Pedestrian Connectivity 32
- Internal Pedestrian Connectivity 33
- Through-Block Connectivity 34
- Open Space 35
- Surface Parking 36
- Driveways and Access 37
- Service Areas 38
- Fences & Walls 38
- Landscape Design 39
- Plant and Tree Selection 39
- Sustainable Site Design 41
- Freestanding Site Features 43
- Site Lighting 44
- Working with Topography 45
- Adaptive Reuse and Integration of Existing Buildings 46
- Sensitive Site Design Transitions 49
### Table of Contents:

**Building Design** .................................................................................................................. 51
  - Building Entries .................................................................................................................. 52
  - Windows ............................................................................................................................. 53
  - Roofs ................................................................................................................................. 53
  - Materials ............................................................................................................................ 54
  - Accessory Structures ........................................................................................................ 55
  - Building Equipment .......................................................................................................... 55
  - Parking Structures/Garages ............................................................................................... 56
  - Sustainable Building Design ............................................................................................ 56
  - Compatible Building Design ............................................................................................. 57
  - Street Level Interest ......................................................................................................... 58
  - Building Articulation ........................................................................................................ 61

**Sign Design** .......................................................................................................................... 73
  - General Sign Design Guidelines ....................................................................................... 74

**Guidelines Specific to Character Areas** ............................................................................... 79
  - Tuning Fork ...................................................................................................................... 81
  - Downtown Core ............................................................................................................... 84
  - West State Street .............................................................................................................. 86
This document provides guidance for all new development and major renovation projects in Downtown. The guidelines are intended to promote high quality construction and exceptional urban design.

They will be used by the Planning Board, City staff, residents, developers, property owners, architects and others in the design review and site plan review processes. The document also serves as an education tool to demonstrate Downtown design objectives and expectations.

This chapter addresses applicability, procedures and other background information that should be reviewed prior to beginning work on a project.
Applicability
The principles and guidelines in this document apply to all proposals for new development and exterior alterations to existing buildings within the Downtown, which is referred to as the Downtown Design Guidelines Area throughout this document, or the “Downtown Area” or “Downtown” for short. The Downtown Area is shown in Figure 1.

FIGURE 1: Downtown Design Guidelines Area.

Design and Site Plan Review Process
The City of Ithaca Design Review Ordinance requires design review of projects zoned B-1b; B-2c; B-2d; and CBD. The intent is to promote desirable growth and promote excellence in architecture and urban design. Recommendations from the Design Review Board are advisory to the Planning Board. All locally designated historic properties are exempt from this design review since they undergo a special approval process conducted by the Ithaca Landmarks Preservation Commission (ILPC). The design review process is illustrated in Figure 2.
All projects must also receive approval under a Site Plan Review process prior to receiving a building permit. Unlike design review, Site Plan Review is generally required of all new construction, landscaping or infrastructure improvements that require a building permit or have a significant environmental or public impact. Like design review, site plan review seeks to improve the design of development. However, site plan review is also focused on promoting environmental sustainability and mitigating negative environmental impacts.

A project must be reviewed by the Planning Board to verify that it complies with these design guidelines, as well as the other base zoning standards in the City of Ithaca Municipal Code. Compliance with the zoning code and all applicable guidelines in this document is required for site plan approval.

FIGURE 2: Design Review Process.
Relationship to the Zoning Code

The zoning districts in Downtown establish the basic parameters for development. Many parcels in Downtown are zoned CBD (CBD-60, CBD-85, CBD-100, CBD-120 or CBD-140). Standards are identical for all CBD zones, with the exception of maximum height limits. The remaining parcels in Downtown are zoned B-2d or B-4. These zoning designations have more restrictive height limitations than the CBD zones, and also allow different uses. In addition to regulating height and use, the zoning ordinance addresses minimum lot size, setbacks, parking requirements, lot coverage and more.

A single parcel with more than one zoning designation is referred to as “split zoned.” A small number of Downtown parcels are split zoned. This occurs in the following areas:

- Parcels on the south side of The Commons to maintain the traditional scale of buildings along The Commons.
- Parcels on the south side of West Seneca Street and north side of West Green Street to transition between commercial and residential uses.
- Parcels on the east side of the 100 block of N. Aurora Street and the north side of the 300 block of E. State Street to step down in height toward The Commons.

Unlike the zoning ordinance, which is prescriptive in nature, these guidelines are intended to provide some flexibility to the applicant in achieving the general intent of each design principle. The key topics addressed in the zoning ordinance and these guidelines are shown in Figure 3.

**Figure 3: Zoning Ordinance vs. Guidelines.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRESCRIPTIVE</th>
<th>DISCRETIONARY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zoning Ordinance</td>
<td>Design Guidelines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land Use</td>
<td>Building Orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lot Size</td>
<td>Building Mass &amp; Scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lot Coverage</td>
<td>Façade Character</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking Requirements</td>
<td>Building Materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setbacks</td>
<td>Compatible Design</td>
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<tr>
<td>Building Height</td>
<td>Pedestrian Connections</td>
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<tr>
<td>Service Area Location</td>
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<td>Fences &amp; Walls</td>
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<tr>
<td>Open Space</td>
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<td>Landscaping</td>
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<td>Sustainability</td>
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<td>Lighting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sign Design</td>
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<td>Transitions Between Zones</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Relationship to Other Policy and Regulatory Elements
This section describes additional pertinent policy and regulatory documents.

Comprehensive Plan
Plan Ithaca, the City’s Comprehensive Plan, presents a broad vision for community development and outlines policies to achieve it. Plan Ithaca provides land use recommendations and establishes goals for development. Specifically, it emphasizes the importance of “compact mixed-use development” for both livability and sustainability. The guidelines respond to this goal by focusing on urban character and design quality, particularly at the street level.

Other key policies in the comprehensive plan seek to preserve and enhance neighborhood character, maintain a vibrant economy and offer a high quality of life. These policies are reflected throughout the guidelines.

Historic Preservation
Downtown contains two locally designated historic districts (Downtown West and Clinton Block). There are also three locally designated landmarks (117 West State Street - the State Theater, 123 South Cayuga Street - the former NY State Gas & Electric Building, and 115-117 North Cayuga Street - The Masonic Temple). Development proposals and renovations on locally designated properties are reviewed by the Ithaca Landmarks Preservation Commission (ILPC) under a separate process using the Historic District and Landmark Design Guidelines (HDLDG). The Ithaca Downtown Historic District, however, is a National Register District and thus not subject to review under the HDLDG. Downtown’s historic districts and landmarks are shown in Figure 4.
FIGURE 4: Historic Resources in the Downtown Area.
Description of the Downtown Design Guidelines Area

Downtown has been the economic and cultural center of Ithaca since the city was first established. It is a center of commercial development and includes residential development in a variety of forms. Within Downtown, characteristics vary within different “sub-areas” that reflect land use, building scale, architectural style and other factors. In the center of downtown, traditional mixed-use buildings dominate, with retail on the ground floor and apartments or office space on upper floors. Downtown is a walkable environment, with pedestrian activity focused around The Commons. This area draws locals and tourists alike. Farther west, along West State Street, West Seneca Street and West Green Street, a fine-grained mix of low-scale commercial buildings, multi-family apartment buildings and single-family houses are prevalent.

The built environment in Downtown encompasses a unique mix of contemporary, mid-rise mixed-use buildings; smaller scale, single and multi-story traditional residential, commercial and mixed-use buildings; and a wide range of small and large single use, low-rise buildings built from the 1950’s that are more auto-oriented. The mix of these building types changes dramatically from one part of Downtown to another. A key concept in the guidelines is that Downtown is comprised of a series of “Character Areas” based on physical characteristics, which are described in the next section.
Downtown Character Areas

Downtown Ithaca is home to a wide variety of land uses and urban character. One’s experience of different subareas within Downtown varies significantly by street, block and quadrant. In response to this variety in character, the guidelines identify three distinct “Character Areas” in order to address unique design issues that occur in each. The Character Areas are mapped in Figure 5 and include:

- Downtown Core
- Tuning Fork
- West State Street

Specific guidelines for each Character Area are included throughout the document, and are a focus in Chapter 5.

FIGURE 5: Downtown Character Areas.
Downtown Core
The Downtown Core is synonymous with Ithaca’s historic commercial core. It includes The Commons and its immediate surroundings, including Cayuga Street, Aurora Street, East Seneca Street and East Green Street. Development patterns are of a traditional rectilinear grid, with rectangular-shaped lots and buildings built to the edge of the sidewalk. Within this consistent framework of buildings is a mix of building styles, including simple commercial vernacular and more ornate buildings with Italianate influences. Building heights vary but most convey a consistent ground floor height at the street level with consistent storefronts. The Downtown Core is strongly influenced by the presence of Six Mile Creek at the south.

Building heights vary but most maintain a consistent ground floor height at the street level.
Tuning Fork
The “Tuning Fork” is an area of land shaped by the convergence of East State Street, Seneca Way, and East Green Street. The street configuration results in irregularly shaped parcels. Grade changes also impact this Character Area. These factors create both opportunities and challenges for development. Buildings in the Tuning Fork are primarily commercial or mixed-use and vary in height. Existing buildings in the Tuning Fork respond to topography and the curvilinear block pattern differently, creating an inconsistent pattern of buildings. Six Mile Creek serves as an influential natural feature in this area.
West State Street
The West State Street Character Area includes properties west of Geneva Street. It is a distinctive area with many different building types, ranging from commercial vernacular to pitched roof traditional residential styles. This character area is pedestrian friendly, with street trees, wider sidewalks and some streetscape furniture. Surface parking lots are common and many undeveloped areas are paved. Although these parking lots create some gaps in the streetscape that reduce walkability, many buildings are built at or near the sidewalk edge.

Surface parking lots are common in the West State Street area.
Urban Design Concepts/Definitions
Several design-related concepts and terms are referenced in this document. This section defines these baseline ideas, which are critical to understanding the guidelines and their intent.

Project
A “project” is a general term used throughout this document to refer to any building construction, site work, renovation or other activity on a property that is subject to review of these guidelines.

Public and Private Realm
The guidelines focus strongly on the interface and relationship between private property and public areas. The term “public realm” refers to any public area, including a street, sidewalk, public plaza, park, promenade or other public way. The “private realm” refers to any activity that takes place on private property, including building edges, setback areas or other features. The interface between these elements largely determines one’s experience in an urban environment. Figure 6 diagrams the public and private realm under different conditions.

FIGURE 6: Public Realm vs Private Realm.
**Orientation**
Orientation is used to describe how a building or other site feature interacts with its surroundings. A building that is “oriented” toward the street means that its most primary side faces the street and is prominent when viewed from the street.

**Activation**
Activation typically refers to how a site or building feature animates a surrounding space. For example, a retail storefront or outdoor dining area can activate a sidewalk due to the human activity it generates.

**Interest**
“Interest” is used to describe a person’s experience in an urban environment. Site and building features such as a wall with entries, landscape features, art, windows, display areas and other elements enhance pedestrian interest. A blank, featureless wall diminishes pedestrian interest.

**Human Scale**
“Human scale” is used to describe how a person perceives a building element or a group of building elements in relation to themselves. A person relates better to building features that are of a size and scale similar to that of a human. For example, a blank wall that spans multiple stories does not properly exhibit human scale. The same wall can begin to express human scale by demarcating floors and adding appropriately sized windows and doors.

**Compatibility**
Compatibility is used to describe two ideas in the guidelines. Internal compatibility refers to how different elements of a single project relate to one another. An individual building’s materials could be either compatible or incompatible with each other. External compatibility refers to how a single project relates to its context. A building may be compatible or incompatible with neighboring properties based on its scale in relation to adjacent buildings.
**Traditional**
The term “traditional” is used throughout this document to refer to the original character of development. A traditional material is one that was used on one or more of the original buildings in a given area. For example, brick or true stucco would be considered a traditional material for Downtown. Building dimensions, architectural patterns and building placement may also be described as traditional. For example, buildings facing The Commons exhibit a traditional range of building widths.

**Façade Hierarchy**
While the primary focus of the design guidelines is the street-facing elements of a building, all sides of a structure must be considered. The emphasis on design varies based on the relationship of a façade to the public street. This document refers to “primary façades” and “secondary façades”. A primary façade is the true front face of a building. Typically a main entry is located on this façade. In some cases, a single building may have two primary façades, but all buildings should have at least one. A secondary façade may or may not include a functional entry depending on the circumstance. Where an entry is located on a secondary façade, it is typically visually subordinate to an entry located on a primary façade. A special type of secondary façade is an “interior façade.” An interior façade faces an internal side or rear property line.

Design guidelines sometimes discuss these façades differently. For example, a design guideline may encourage a primary façade to face a certain street or street type. Figure 7 illustrates the façade types that should be considered.

---

**FIGURE 7: Façade Hierarchy**

**Residential Façade Hierarchy**

- **A** Primary Façade
- **B** Secondary Façade

**Commercial Façade Hierarchy**

- **A** Primary Façade
- **B** Secondary Façade
**Street Types**

This document refers to “primary” and “secondary” streets. The guidelines place higher design expectations on building edges and setback areas that interface with a primary street. In some cases, more design flexibility is appropriate on a secondary street. Where a building only fronts a secondary street, the secondary street should be treated as a primary street. Where a building fronts two secondary streets, a project applicant should designate one of the streets as the primary street in coordination with City staff. Figure 8 provides suggested designations for each street by Character Area.

**FIGURE 8: Street Types**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Street Type</th>
<th>Downtown Core</th>
<th>Tuning Fork</th>
<th>West State Street</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Primary Streets</strong></td>
<td>State Street</td>
<td>State Street</td>
<td>State Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aurora Street</td>
<td>Aurora Street</td>
<td>Green Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cayuga Street</td>
<td>Seneca Way</td>
<td>Seneca Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Secondary Streets</strong></td>
<td>Green Street</td>
<td>Green Street</td>
<td>Geneva Street</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seneca Street</td>
<td>Clinton Street</td>
<td>Albany Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Geneva Street</td>
<td>Plain Street</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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<td>Corn Street</td>
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</table>
Priority and Secondary Guidelines
Guidelines identified as “Priority Guidelines” are required and must be met by all projects. However, there may be cases where a priority guideline simply does not apply based on the circumstances. For example, a priority guideline that requires variation in massing on upper floors would not apply to a single story building.
“Secondary Guidelines” are strongly encouraged, but not all of them are mandatory for every project. A project should meet a sufficient number of the Secondary Guidelines as determined on a case-by-case basis.

Standard Design Guidelines Format
To facilitate ease-of-use, the individual design guidelines in this document use a standard format. The format includes topic headings, intent statements related to the topic, numbered design guidelines, additional information about appropriate strategies and illustrations or diagrams. Figure 9 uses a sample design guidelines from Chapter 4 to illustrate each key element.
Key to the Sample Design Guideline Format

A. The design topic is indicated with a heading followed by an intent statement.

B. The design guidelines describe an intent or desired outcome, with supplementary information listed in bullets below. Priority Guidelines are indicated in blue text.

C. Photographs and diagrams are provided to illustrate design guideline principles. Sometimes a ☑ or a ☒ is used to indicate whether the example is appropriate or inappropriate. Captions help explain the intent of the photo and tie it to the guideline text.

D. Sidebars are sometimes included to provide additional background information or cross-references to other documents or policies.

Accessory Structures
Accessory structures are important components for many properties. Their form differs significantly depending on building type and use. In general, an accessory structure should be subordinate to the primary structure and its visibility from the street should be minimized.

BD.1. Design an accessory structure to be subordinate to the primary structure.

BD.2. Minimize the visibility of an accessory structure as seen from the public street.
   • Where possible, locate an accessory structure behind a primary building so that it is not visible from the street.

BD.3. If an accessory structure is partially or fully visible from the public street, design it to be coordinated with the design, detailing and materials of the primary structure.

City of Ithaca Zoning Code
Accessory Structures are subject to the regulations in the city zoning code: http://ecode360.com/8393835

Design an accessory structure to be subordinate to the primary structure.
**Which Chapters Apply to My Project?**
The chart below indicates which chapters are most relevant to different types of work in the Downtown Area. For some smaller projects, all relevant design guidelines may be found in one chapter (i.e., a project to expand and re-landscape a parking area may be subject only to the guidelines in Chapter 3). For larger projects, several chapters may apply (i.e., a new mixed-use or commercial project in the Downtown Area may be subject to Chapters 1-6).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>New Construction</th>
<th>Ch.1 Introduction</th>
<th>Ch.2 Guiding Principles</th>
<th>Ch.3 Site Design</th>
<th>Ch.4 Building Design</th>
<th>Ch. 5 Signs</th>
<th>Ch.6 Guidelines Specific to Character Areas</th>
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<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✗</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Building Addition</th>
<th>Ch.1 Introduction</th>
<th>Ch.2 Guiding Principles</th>
<th>Ch.3 Site Design</th>
<th>Ch.4 Building Design</th>
<th>Ch. 5 Signs</th>
<th>Ch.6 Guidelines Specific to Character Areas</th>
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<tr>
<th>Landscaping/Site Work</th>
<th>Ch.1 Introduction</th>
<th>Ch.2 Guiding Principles</th>
<th>Ch.3 Site Design</th>
<th>Ch.4 Building Design</th>
<th>Ch. 5 Signs</th>
<th>Ch.6 Guidelines Specific to Character Areas</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signage</th>
<th>Ch.1 Introduction</th>
<th>Ch.2 Guiding Principles</th>
<th>Ch.3 Site Design</th>
<th>Ch.4 Building Design</th>
<th>Ch. 5 Signs</th>
<th>Ch.6 Guidelines Specific to Character Areas</th>
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</tbody>
</table>
## Organization and Format

The design guidelines are organized and formatted to support consistent design review. See “Document Organization” below for more information about the organizational structure of the document and “Standard Design Guidelines Format” on page 21 for more information about the format of the design guidelines within this document.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document Organization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Following the introduction, the design guidelines are organized into six separate chapters by design topic, as summarized below.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 1 Introduction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The introduction summarizes the purpose and policy foundation of the guidelines. It also describes the organization and format and the design review process.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 2 Guiding Principles</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This chapter provides overarching design principles for all development in the Downtown Area to serve as a framework for the design guidelines that follow.</td>
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</table>

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 3 Site Design</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This chapter provides general site guidelines applicable to all new construction in the Downtown Area. It covers issues of site design, including street character and landscaping, building placement, connectivity, open space, parking, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 4 Building Design</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This chapter provides design guidelines for the visual and functional character of buildings throughout the Downtown Area. Topics include building scale, architectural character, materials and ground floor design.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 5 Signs</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This chapter provides guidelines for signs, including type, location and lighting.</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 6 Guidelines Specific to Character Areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This chapter provides additional guidance for new development in the specific character areas in the Downtown Area (Downtown Core, Tuning Fork and West State Street). These guidelines supplement the guidelines in Chapters 3-5 to provide additional nuanced, context-based guidance for each area.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The guidelines and the review process through which they are administered seek to maintain Downtown as a cohesive and livable place with an attractive and pedestrian-oriented environment. They promote maintenance of Downtown’s traditional character while encouraging architectural creativity and contemporary design. The following guiding principles provide a foundation for the design guidelines. Each project should be consistent with the Guiding Principles.
Achieve Excellence in Design
All development in Downtown should achieve excellence in design. This includes using high quality materials and construction methods, and paying attention to the intent of the guidelines. The bar for design in Downtown should be set high. Thoughtful designs should provide a sense of character and a positive pedestrian-oriented experience.

Express Human Scale
As discussed in Chapter 1, people relate best to a building when it includes elements that are at a scale they can easily perceive. Breaking a building up to create human scale features is critical to creating a building that positively impacts the public realm. All projects should express a human scale through the organization, scaling and composition of architectural elements.

Design for Compatibility and Respond to Context
Downtown has a rich and eclectic mix of traditional buildings that embody the character of Ithaca. Numerous historic buildings frame The Commons and provide a sense of heritage and culture. Buildings that are highly valued contribute to a cohesive quality through their materials, scale and massing, organization of functions and other features. New infill development should respect the design traditions of Downtown by drawing on these qualities.
Encourage Creativity
The guidelines establish expectations for development, but also encourage creativity in meeting expectations. Downtown has a wide mix of building types and architectural styles. This variety should be embraced and projects exhibiting architectural creativity should be encouraged. New infill and renovations should draw design inspiration from older, traditional buildings, but should also creatively exhibit contemporary design approaches.

Address Constraints Creatively
Downtown presents a variety of constraints to development. Unpredictable bedrock depths, fragmented parcel ownership and flood risks are examples. The guidelines seek to improve urban design without significantly impacting project costs. Objectives must be balanced with a realistic sense of development costs and other constraints. The guidelines encourage creative solutions and provide flexible options in meeting design objectives.

Activate the Public Realm
Downtown should continue to be a walkable environment. Projects should contribute to the public realm by creating pedestrian interest and comfort. Buildings should connect visually and physically to public streets and spaces. These principles are particularly important at the ground level.
Maximize Connectivity
Downtown properties should help establish an interconnected circulation system for all modes. Interruptions to public sidewalks and vehicle-pedestrian conflicts should be minimized. Clear and direct connections within a development site and between a development site and public areas are critically important.

Design for Sustainability
Ithaca has prioritized sustainability through both policy and practice. Site and building design will be an important factor in achieving these objectives. Projects should incorporate features, construction methods and design techniques that reduce energy, conserve resources and minimize environmental impacts to help move Ithaca toward a sustainable future.

For example, a rain barrel can help capture and recycle rain water.
SITE DESIGN

Site design refers to the arrangement and placement of buildings and site features and the relationship of these elements to public areas and neighboring properties. This chapter provides site design guidance for all projects in Downtown. It shall be used in conjunction with the Character Area-specific guidelines in Chapter Five. Figure 10 illustrates key site design considerations on a simple site plan diagram.

FIGURE 10: Key Considerations of Site Design.
**Building Orientation**

Building orientation refers to how elements and functions of a building wall relate to their surroundings. Buildings should be sited to establish a strong visual and physical connection to the public realm. A building’s primary façade should face the street in order to create an engaging and pedestrian-friendly streetscape.

**SD.1. Orient a building to the public realm.**

- Orient a building’s primary façade, including its primary functional entry, to face a street. Orienting a primary façade to a public plaza or other prominent public space is also acceptable as illustrated in Figure 11.
- If a building fronts two or more prominent public spaces, orient to as many of them as is feasible.
- If a property is located along Six Mile Creek, orient an entry toward this natural feature.
- Consider providing an outdoor space, such as a balcony, patio, or rooftop terrace that allows views to the Creek as illustrated in Figure 12.

*FIGURE 11: Building Orientation.*

Orient a building’s primary façade including its primary functional entry, to face a street. Orienting a primary façade to a public plaza or other prominent public space is also acceptable.
If a property is located along Six Mile Creek, orient an entry toward this feature. Consider providing an outdoor space, such as a balcony, patio, or rooftop terrace that allows views to the Creek.
External Pedestrian Connectivity

Excellent pedestrian access should be provided between the public realm to a site and building. A strong physical and visual relationship between these elements enhances walkability.

SD.2. Provide a physical pedestrian connection between a site and the public realm. Appropriate options include:

- A door that opens directly to a public space.
- A walkway that connects a building to a public space through a setback area.
- A plaza, outdoor seating area or patio that connects a building to a public space.

SD.3. Where applicable, connect a site to the Downtown pedestrian and open space network, including the Creek Walk.
**Internal Pedestrian Connectivity**

A site design should establish an internal pedestrian circulation system that connects site components and is integrated with the public realm.

**SD.4. Establish an internal walkway system that connects key site features, such as building entries, parking areas, and open spaces.**

- Use landscaping, special paving and distinct lighting to accentuate and clarify a site’s circulation system.
- Consider directing an internal walkway through a plaza, courtyard or other outdoor feature.
- Size an internal walkway of an adequate width to allow safe pedestrian access.
- Design an internal walkway to be ADA accessible.
- Integrate an internal walkway system with the public pedestrian circulation system.

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*Establish an internal walkway system that connects key site features, such as building entries, parking areas, and open spaces.*

*Integrate an internal walkway system with the public pedestrian circulation system.*
**Through-Block Connectivity**

Long blocks can create barriers to pedestrian access. Projects are encouraged to provide a pedestrian connection through a long block where possible to increase area-wide pedestrian connectivity.

**SD.5. Provide public pedestrian access through a block.**

**Methods include:**
- A simple path connecting two streets through a block.
- A pedestrian paseo integrated with an open space or retail amenity that connects through a block.
- An alley that is designed to be shared by pedestrians and automobiles.

Provide a pedestrian pathway integrated with an open space or retail amenity that connects through a block where feasible. This may require coordination with neighboring property owners.
Open Space
Courtyards, street-adjacent plazas, linear outdoor dining areas, and other open spaces provide places for customers and tenants to gather and engage in activities. When located adjacent to a public space, these features can activate and enhance the pedestrian experience. A project should incorporate open space into a site design where feasible.

SD.6. Incorporate an open space into a site design where feasible.
- Consider placing an open space so that it is visually and physically connected to a public space.
- Link an open space to internal site features and the public realm.
- Size an open space to be adequate for its function.
- Enclose an open space by framing it with building edges, landscaping or other site elements.
- Site an open space to maximize sun exposure.
- Program an open space with site features or activities that will keep it lively and occupied.

Orient an open space to be visually and physically connected to the public street and sidewalk.

Enclose an open space by framing it with building edges, landscaping or other site elements.
Surface Parking

Building walls “frame” the spaces they abut. With careful design, a building can provide enclosure to a public space in a manner that enhances pedestrian comfort. Conversely, a surface parking area adjacent to a street or public space can create a void in the built street edge that decreases pedestrian comfort. Where a surface parking area is provided, its visual impact on the public realm should be minimized.

SD.7. Locate a surface parking area to the interior of a site, away from the public street.
• Set back a surface parking area a minimum of twenty feet from the property line.

SD.8. If surface parking is located adjacent to a street, buffer or screen it. Use or combine the following methods:
• Landscaping
• Site walls
• Decorative fencing
• Public art
• Other methods that meet the intent of this guideline
Driveways and Access
Automobile access is often critical to the functionality of a site. However, it should be unobtrusive. Driveways should be designed to promote safety and minimize pedestrian-vehicle conflicts.

SD.9. Minimize the number of vehicular access points to a site.
- Encourage shared, consolidated access between adjacent properties.
- Discourage driveway access from a primary street where other options are available.

SD.10. Minimize the width of a driveway where it crosses a pedestrian way.
Service Areas
Service areas, such as trash receptacle and loading areas, can negatively impact the streetscape and pedestrian experience when visible. These features should be integrated and coordinated with site and building features. The visual impact of a service area on the public realm should be minimized.

SD.11. Locate a service area so that it is not visible from the public street.
• Locate a service area to the interior of a site, and away from the public street wherever possible. If a service area is located within view of a public street, screen it from view with a solid wall, opaque fence or landscaping.

Fences & Walls
Fences and walls are often used to enclose a private outdoor space. Retaining walls are used to address site topography. Fences and walls should be carefully coordinated with the overall site design of a property. Visible fence and wall materials should be compatible with materials used throughout a site and on a building. Fence and wall guidelines are most critical for areas of a site that are visible from the public realm.

SD.12. Coordinate a fence or wall with an overall site design concept.
• Create fence or wall opening as needed to integrate an internal circulation system.

SD.13. Use a fence or wall material that is compatible with other building and site materials.
• Coordinate a fence material with a primary or secondary material on a primary building.
• Use a consistent material(s) and pattern for a publicly visible fence or wall.
Landscape Design

Lanscaping can enhance a project by providing visual interest, tying together key site features, providing shade, screening unattractive site features from public view and providing buffers between properties. Landscaping can also help to soften an urban environment. Landscaping should be used to visually enhance a public space.

SD.14. Preserve an existing tree wherever possible.
   • “Design around” an existing tree.
   • Consider integrating an existing tree as a site feature or design element.
   • Plant additional trees to increase canopy.

SD.15. Use a coordinated landscape palette to establish a sense of visual continuity within a site.
   • Use a consistent palette throughout the property. Variation is encouraged, but landscaping elements should be thoughtfully organized.

SD.16. Use landscaping to highlight a building entry, walkway or other feature.

SD.17. Use landscaping to provide screening along a sensitive edge, like a residential property or natural feature.

SD.18. If a property is located along Six Mile Creek, provide a landscape buffer area between a building and the Creek Walk.

Plant and Tree Selection

Plants and trees that are proven successful in Ithaca’s climate should be selected to reduce the need for maintenance and replacement.


SD.20. Use native tree and plant species that thrive in Ithaca’s climate.
   • Use drought tolerant species that requires minimal irrigation.
If a property is located along Six Mile Creek, provide a landscape buffer area between a building and the Creek Walk.

Use plants or other landscaping to highlight a building entry, walkway or other feature.
Sustainable Site Design

Sustainability is a critical community objective in Ithaca and is prioritized in many city policy documents. Site designs should contribute to a sustainable future for Ithaca. Incorporate sustainability features wherever possible. Site design elements should reduce energy consumption and stormwater runoff.

SD.21. Site a building or open space to maximize sun exposure and utilize passive solar design.

SD.22. Integrate low impact development (LID) features to minimize impacts to the municipal stormwater system and area watersheds.

• Include a stormwater management feature, such as a bioretention area or rain garden, as a site amenity or landscape feature.
• Use permeable surfaces and paving systems that allow water infiltration.
• Use generous site landscaping to absorb site runoff.
• Collect and use rainwater for irrigation.

SD.23. Use landscaping to reduce the need for heating and cooling.

• Use trees and landscaping to create shade in warm months and sun exposure in cool months.

SD.24. Choose a site material that reduces energy consumption.

• Use a local, recycled material where possible.
• Use a light colored surface material that reflects heat.
• Consider incorporating an energy-generating feature on a site. This may include a wind turbine, freestanding solar panel, solar powered lighting or other similar feature.
Maximizing Solar Exposure

Development A is designed to maximize the solar exposure of the building and the plaza/open space. Also, Development A utilizes trees and landscaping to reduce the need for heating and cooling.
Freestanding Site Features
Freestanding site features include benches, sculptures, planters and other similar elements. They are functional design components and can also enhance a project aesthetically. They can provide pedestrian interest, complement open spaces or animate special areas.

SD.25. Provide a freestanding feature to enhance a site element and/or the public realm. Potential features may include, but are not limited to:
- Benches
- Tables
- Planters
- Public Art
- Kiosk

SD.26. Integrate a freestanding feature within the overall design of a site.
- Locate a feature so that it does not impede pedestrian circulation or vehicular access.
- Locate a feature to take advantage of an active area on a site, such as within an open space, along a walkway or near a building entry.
- Do not use excessive site furnishings that may go unused.
- Use a material that is consistent and that coordinates with other site and building materials.
Site Lighting

Site lighting is important for safety and can be used to enhance a design. Lighting should be carefully designed and placed to minimize unnecessary light pollution.

SD.27. Scale site lighting to reflect its purpose.
- Use a small-scale fixture with down-lighting or light bollards to illuminate a pedestrian walkway.
- Use medium scale (15 to 18 feet in height, roughly) overhead lighting for a common outdoor space, building entry, parking area or internal driveway.

SD.28. Minimize light spill onto adjacent properties and toward the sky.
- Use a fixture(s) that provides even lighting for a plaza, courtyard or patio area.
- Shield site lighting to minimize off-site glare.
- Orient fixtures toward the ground.

SD.29. Integrate a lighting fixture with the design of the overall building and site.
- Use a style that is compatible with a building and site design. For example, use a contemporary fixture for a contemporary building.
- Choose a material that is compatible with materials used on the building and throughout a site.
Working with Topography

Some projects occur on sites with significant topography and grade change. A site design should work with existing topography wherever possible rather than creating a flat site. This is a sustainable practice and helps to retain terrain that contributes positively to Downtown’s character. A regrading effort should not negatively impact the public realm. These guidelines are particularly important for projects in the Tuning Fork Character Area.

SD.30. Design a site to integrate with and take advantage of existing topography.

- Incorporate a topographic feature as an open space or landscape amenity where feasible.
- Where on-site parking is provided, consider taking advantage of site topography to provide subterranean or partially subterranean parking.
- “Terrace” a building into a hillside to minimize site disturbance and create private outdoor spaces and site features.
- Step the foundation of a building along a sloped street and create a rhythm of building entries that change vertical position along with the slope of a street.
- Where a taller wall is necessary, use a series of landscaped terraces or stepped walls.
Adaptive Reuse and Integration of Existing Buildings

Downtown’s character is strongly influenced by the variety of commercial, mixed use and residential buildings. Redevelopment is anticipated and encouraged in Downtown, but it should be balanced with conservation of current buildings. This involves reusing existing buildings and integrating existing buildings into new development projects. Reusing a building prevents the use of energy and resources required to produce new construction materials, significantly reducing environmental impacts. New development should explore opportunities to integrate an existing building or buildings into a site design. These practices are particularly relevant in the West State Street Character Area, where an eclectic mix of buildings is a key feature. For locally designated historic buildings or buildings within a locally designated historic district, please also refer to the City of Ithaca Historic District and Landmark Design Guidelines.

SD.31. **Encourage reuse an existing building instead of developing a new building, especially in the West State Street character area.**

- Consider a use that activates and enhances a public space.
- When conducting an adaptive reuse project, consider redesigning a parking or other paved area between a building and the street as an active outdoor use, such as a plaza, outdoor seating area, display area or similar space.
- Establish increased landscaping in an existing parking area where the number of parking spaces can be reduced.

SD.32. **Consider providing a rooftop addition to an existing building instead of demolishing the existing building.**

Additional care should be taken when the original building is a historic building.

- Design a rooftop addition to be subordinate to the original building.
- Transition in scale between the rooftop addition and an adjacent traditional building.
- Set back the walls of the rooftop addition from those of the original structure.
- Use a different material on the rooftop addition to differentiate it from the original building.
- Design a façade and massing pattern on a rooftop addition to be compatible with, but not replicate, the original structure.
If a proposed redevelopment site contains an existing building, consider integrating the existing building into the overall site and building design rather than demolishing it. Here are some recommendations:

- Create a shared outdoor space between the two buildings.
- Transition in scale downward toward the existing building when the new development is taller.
- Integrate pedestrian site circulation between the two buildings.
- Consolidate and share parking between the two buildings, and potentially with other uses nearby.
- Create shared vehicular access between the two buildings, and potentially others nearby.

### Adaptive Reuse of an Existing Building

A. Surface parking lots receive landscaping enhancements to improve aesthetics.

B. Under-utilized space is activated and updated with a contemporary architectural element (pergola) that provides additional seasonal flexible-use space.

C. Paved area becomes an outdoor patio and dining area.

D. New landscaping buffers the patio area from the street, and provides pedestrian interest to passersby.

E. New accessibility improvements enhance pedestrian and ADA access.
This diagram shows how a new infill project could work within the existing site without demolishing the original building. The new structure could step down in scale to transition smoothly to the original building. Parking consolidation between uses would allow for site enhancements.
Sensitive Site Design Transitions

Site design features should be used to reduce conflicts between adjacent properties. The most typical Downtown condition is a commercial property adjacent to a residential property. Where a potential conflict occurs, the impacts of a commercial activity should be mitigated. Sensitive transitions are also important for a project’s interface with Six Mile Creek and Creek Walk. A building should be placed to sensitively transition to this natural feature.

SD.34. Minimize negative impacts of a commercial operation on an adjacent residential property.
- Locate a commercial activity that generates noise, odor or other similar impacts away from a shared lot line with a residential property.
- Where a commercial use is adjacent to a residential use, buffer or screen the commercial activities. This could include a buffer area with landscaping and amenities such as an exercise area, picnic area, or pedestrian walkway.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sensitive Site Design</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
SD.35. If a property is located along a curved portion of Six Mile Creek, place a building edge(s) along the to respond to the Creek’s curvilinear shape. Appropriate placements include:

- Curved
- Angled
- Rectilinear
- Stepped

### Building Placement Adjacent to Six Mile Creek

**Curved**

*The buildings match the curvature of the creek and activate the Creek Walk with plaza spaces and pedestrian access.*

**Angled**

*Angled buildings frame the Creek and provide plaza space and a centralized creek access.*

**Rectilinear**

*Rectilinear buildings are placed along the Creek so that they provide triangular plaza and open space along the Creek Walk.*

**Stepped**

*A series of buildings provides a “stepped” edge to the Creek. Open space along the Creek Walk is broken up and distributed more evenly along the edge of the site.*
The design of buildings and arrangement of their features can strongly impact the public realm. Buildings should incorporate “human scale” components to break them up into smaller, perceivable elements that are closer in size to a typical person, adding to pedestrian comfort and increasing walkability. Architectural treatments should accentuate key building elements and provide visual interest at interfaces with the public realm. Buildings should be designed to sensitively “fit in” to an existing neighborhood by using certain materials, or drawing on the basic characteristics of nearby buildings and neighborhoods.
Building Entries

Building entrances provide a key visual connection between the public and private realm. A door should be easily recognizable and should provide a strong visual and physical connection to the public realm. Building entries should be spaced to provide visual continuity along a street and read similarly to traditional buildings in an area.

BD.1. Design the primary entrance to a building to be clearly identifiable.

- Use an architectural element(s) to highlight an entrance.
  Potential treatments include:
  » Canopy
  » Arcade
  » Portico
  » Stoop
  » Building recess
  » Awning
  » Moldings

BD.2. Use an authentic, functional entry on a street-facing façade where possible.

BD.3. Size and proportion an entry element to be in the range of heights and widths of nearby traditional entries.

- Size a door to be easily readable and recognizable, but to not be overly large.
- Use a vertically oriented door that is in keeping with traditional door patterns in the area.

BD.4. Maintain a regular rhythm of entries along a street.

- Use a common door height on a ground floor and on a visible upper floor.
- Provide space between entries on a building to be generally consistent with spacing on nearby traditional buildings.
Windows

Windows are a key design element for Downtown buildings. Their design and arrangement should express a human scale, create visual continuity with context and provide visual interest to the public realm.

BD.5. **Locate and space windows to express a traditional rhythm and create visual continuity. This is particularly relevant in the Downtown Core and Tuning Fork Character Areas.**
  - Provide consistent horizontal spacing between windows on a floor.
  - Vertically align windows on upper and lower floors.
  - Provide a common head height for windows on a single floor. Minor deviations may be appropriate for an accent, but vertical alignment and horizontal spacing should remain consistent.
  - If a glazed wall is utilized, use spandrels, moldings, awnings or sills to provide vertical and horizontal expression.

BD.6. **Place a window opening to correspond to an actual interior space.**

BD.7. **Size and proportion a window to be in the range of heights and widths of nearby traditional windows.**
  - Size a window to be easily recognizable, but to not be overly large.
  - Use a vertically oriented window on an upper floor that is consistent with traditional window proportions in the area.

BD.8. **Design a window to create depth and shadow on a façade. This is particularly relevant in the Downtown Core and Tuning Fork Character Areas.**
  - Design a window to appear to be “punched” into a masonry wall.
  - Do not use a window that appears pasted on to a façade.

Roofs

Roofs contribute to a building’s character. Roofs should be integrated with overall design of a building and be compatible with surrounding context.

BD.9. **Design a roof to be architecturally consistent with the overall architectural design and detailing of the structure in terms of the form and material.**

BD.10. **Design a roof to be compatible in massing and form to traditional buildings in the surrounding context.**
  - Where a variety of roof forms is prevalent in an area, allow flexibility.
Materials

A wide variety of materials are used Downtown, including traditional and contemporary. This diversity should be encouraged. Materials and their composition strongly impact the perception of a building or site. They should be used to convey human scale and provide visual interest to the public realm. Materials should also be proven durable in Ithaca’s climate to prevent deterioration over time.

**BD.11. Use materials to convey a sense of human scale and visual interest.**

- Add visual interest through texture, finish and detailing.
- Use changes in material to add visual interest and express a human scale.
- Use an accent material to highlight an important feature like an entry or window.
- Use materials to create contrast and shadow.
- Use a limited number of materials so that a façade does not appear overly busy or confusing.
- Avoid overuse of visually “flat” or panelized materials (such as synthetic stucco or EIFS) that result in monotonous, featureless surfaces. Limited applications of synthetic stucco or another visually flat material may be appropriate as a wall panel or as an accent on an upper floor, but should be complemented with a material rich in texture or with a dynamic finish.

**BD.12. Use a material that is compatible with the surrounding context. This is particularly important in the Downtown Core and the Tuning Fork.**

- Use a traditional material or an alternative material that is similar in appearance to a traditional material.

**BD.13. Use a high quality material that is proven durable.**

- Use a material that is proven durable in Ithaca’s climate.
- Use a ground level material that can withstand on-going contact with the public and retain its quality.
Accessory Structures
Accessory structures are desired for many properties. An accessory structure should be subordinate to a primary structure and its visibility from a public space should be minimized. A visible accessory structure should be compatible with a primary structure.

BD.14. Design an accessory structure to be subordinate to a primary structure.
- Locate an accessory structure to the rear of a primary structure.
- Where possible, locate an accessory structure so that its view from the street is blocked by the primary structure.
- Size an accessory structure to be at a lower scale and size as compared to the primary structure.

BD.15. If an accessory structure is partially or fully visible from the public street, design it to be compatible with the primary structure.

BD.16. Use detailing and materials that are coordinated with the primary structure.

Building Equipment
Utility service boxes, telecommunication devices, cables, conduits, vents, chillers and fans are among the equipment that is often attached to a building. This equipment draws away from the structure itself and can adversely affect quality of the pedestrian experience. Buildings should minimize the visual impact of mechanical and other building equipment on the public realm, including the Creek Walk.

BD.17. Minimize the visual impact of building equipment and equipment affixed to a building.
- Locate a utility connection or service box to the sides or rear of a building. If this equipment must be included on a street facing façade, locate it on a secondary façade.
- Screen equipment with an architectural screen wall, fencing and/or a landscape element.
- Integrate a visible window air conditioning unit into the design of a building. Screen a window air conditioning unit that is visible from the public realm with an architectural feature where possible.
- Use low-profile mechanical equipment on a rooftop.
- Set back rooftop mechanical equipment from the building edge.
- Locate a satellite dish on a side or rear façade so that it is not visible from the street.
Parking Structures/Garages
Parking structures can consolidate parking, thereby decreasing the need for large surface parking areas. Their design at the street level and upper levels should minimize the visibility of parked cars. For ground floor design on a parking structure, refer to “Street Level Interest” below.

BD.18. On upper floors, minimize the visibility of parked cars and prevent a monotonous appearance on a parking garage wall.
• Use an architectural screen, special architectural feature, landscaping or another method to screen vehicles.

BD.19. Place a screening feature to fit within the overall architectural design of the parking structure.

Parking Structure Screening
Appropriate methods include:

- A landscaping screen.
- An architectural screen.
- Wrap with an active use.
Sustainable Building Design

Sustainability is a critical objective for Ithaca and the city’s buildings will play a critical role in achieving it. Buildings should be designed to maximize energy efficiency. Designs should also address seasonal changes in natural lighting and ventilation conditions. Buildings in Downtown should incorporate sustainable design features wherever possible, with an understanding that sustainability objectives must be balanced with those of placemaking and urban design.

BD.20. **Consider including a building design feature that conserves energy.**

- Utilize external shading (landscape and/or integrated into the building) to keep out summer sun and let in winter sun.
- Design a building to take advantage of energy-saving and energy-generating opportunities.
- Design windows to maximize light into interior spaces.
- Use exterior shading devices, such as overhangs, to manage solar gain in summer months and welcome solar access in winter months.
- Incorporate a renewable energy device, including a solar collector or wind turbines.
- Utilize highly efficient internal equipment (e.g. lighting, plug loads) and controls.
- Use energy and water-efficient appliances and fixtures.

BD.21. **When redeveloping a site, salvage or reuse site and building materials where possible.**

- Incorporate a functional existing building into a redevelopment project in order to minimize waste and greenhouse gas emissions associated with demolition.

BD.22. **Include a feature or amenity that encourages walking or biking as an alternative to driving.**

- Include bicycle storage facilities, covered bicycle parking, employee showers and other bicycle-friendly amenities in a building or on-site.
- Include excellent pedestrian facilities that are well connected to the external pedestrian circulation system.

BD.23. **Provide a parking area that supports fuel-efficient and electronic vehicles.**

- Provide compact parking spaces.
- Provide one or more electronic vehicle (EV) charging stations.
Compatible Building Design
Buildings should be compatibly scaled and draw on Downtown’s architectural traditions, yet also allow new, creative designs. This will create visual continuity along the street and a cohesive transition from building to building. This guideline is particularly relevant in the Downtown Core and Tuning Fork Character Areas.

BD.24. Design a building and its elements to maintain a scale that reflects elements on nearby traditional buildings.
• Articulate a building mass to include vertical and horizontal elements that are similar to those elements on nearby traditional buildings.
• Align the floors of a building to generally align with those of traditional buildings on a block.

Maintain the traditional pattern of building orientation and setbacks on a given block.

Design a building and its elements to maintain a scale that reflects elements on nearby traditional buildings.
Street Level Interest

A building’s ground floor strongly impacts the pedestrian experience on an adjacent public space, like a sidewalk or public plaza. Architectural elements must be combined to establish interest for pedestrians. A blank or featureless ground floor can diminish interest. This applies to both standard buildings and parking structures. Options for creating street level interest are shown in Figure 13. The Figure also suggests which techniques should be prioritized based on adjacent “street type” and Character Area. As shown, more flexibility is appropriate on a façade that faces a secondary street.

BD.25. Design a ground floor to engage the public realm and provide visual interest for pedestrians.

- Use the street level interest options in Figure 13. Note that features identified in the table as appropriate on a façade that faces a secondary street may also be used on a façade that faces a primary street. However, features identified as appropriate for a primary street should make up the majority of the façade.
- Where a property does not front a primary street, City staff and applicant should designate a street as the primary street.
- Apply these guidelines to a parking structure that occurs at the street level.
FIGURE 13: Street Level Interest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Street Level Interest Option</th>
<th>Character Area</th>
<th>Downtown Core</th>
<th>Tuning Fork</th>
<th>West State Street</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Functional Entry</td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Windows</td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Display Windows</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Decorative Wall Surface</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Landscaping</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Wall Art</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* See Figure 8 in the Introduction for the classification of street types in each character area.
Building Articulation

Building articulation includes vertical or horizontal changes in materials, color, wall plane or other elements that reduce real and perceived building scale. All Downtown buildings should incorporate articulation methods. For the purposes of these guidelines, building articulation methods include two categories:

• Façade Articulation. Façade articulation methods reduce perceived building mass. They break down a building into human scale components and express a sense of horizontal and vertical scale. However, these methods do not significantly affect the overall square footage of a floor or building. All Downtown buildings should incorporate façade articulation methods.

• Mass Variation. Mass variation methods reduce actual building mass and scale. They modulate a building floor or wall in a manner that creates a physical relief in an architectural form. Variations may affect enclosed square footage on a floor and building.

Building Articulation methods are illustrated in Figure 14.
Façade Articulation Methods

A1 Accent Lines
Accent lines include vertical and horizontal expression lines on a building wall. An accent line often projects slightly from the face of a building wall.

Examples include:
• Moldings
• Sills
• Cornices
• Canopies
• Spandrels

A2 Color Changes
Color changes include significant vertical or horizontal changes (15’-30’ min) in color on a building wall.

A3 Material Changes
Material changes include significant vertical or horizontal changes (15’-30’ min) in material on a building wall.

A4 Minor Wall Offsets
A minor wall offset is a vertical expression line created by notching a building wall for its full height. Minor wall offsets are typically 5 feet or less.
Mass Variation Methods

**A5 Height Variation**

A height variation is an actual reduction in the vertical scale of a building of at least one floor.

**A6 Increased Setbacks**

An increased setback is similar to a minor wall offset, but with a larger dimension. It is established by providing a larger setback on a portion of a wall for its full height.

**A7 Upper Floor Stepback**

An upper floor stepback is similar to an increased setback, but it only occurs on an upper floor(s). It is created by setting back an upper story building wall relative to those on a lower story.
Combining Building Articulation Methods

A single building articulation method is typically insufficient to achieve a desired design outcome or promote architectural creativity and interest. Combining multiple methods into a single building is highly encouraged. As shown in Figure 15, a building often includes some or all of the building articulation methods identified previously in Figure 14.

**FIGURE 15: Combining Building Articulation Methods**

- A1 Accent Lines
- A2 Color Changes
- A3 Material Changes
- A4 Minor Wall Offsets
- A5 Height Variation
- A6 Increased Setbacks
- A7 Upper Floor Stepbacks
The following pages provide specific recommendations for combining building articulation methods. Suggested methods vary based on the specific design issue to be addressed and the dimensions and circumstances of a project. Recommendations are provided for the following objectives:

- Reflecting traditional scale at the street
- Addressing a sensitive edge (low-scaled residential, historic building, creek)
- Maintaining a public view corridor/providing solar access
- Provide solar access
- Creating outdoor space

BD.26. **Use a combination of “façade articulation” and “mass variation” methods shown in Figure 14 to reduce the perceived and/or actual mass and scale of a building.**
Reflecting Traditional Scale at the Street

Intent: Reflect traditional building widths and heights along a public street.

**Width**

**Long Walls:** Combine at least (3) three of the following:
- A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, A6


**Short Walls:** Combine at least (2) two of the following:
- A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, A6


*Criteria for determining a Long Wall and Short Wall are shown in the table.

**Height**

**Long Walls:** Combine at least (3) three of the following:
- A1, A2, A3, A5, A7
  (Use A5 or A7 for at least 50% of the wall length)


**Short Walls:** Combine at least (2) two of the following:
- A1, A2, A3, A5, A7


*Criteria for determining a Long Wall and Short Wall are shown in the table. Not applicable in the West State Street Character Area.
Addressing a Sensitive Edge

Intent: Transition in scale to prevent a looming wall. Sensitive respond to building placement patterns of a historic district or resource. Sensitive edges include low-scale residential properties, historic properties or the Creek Walk.

Low Scale Residential Neighbor

Height Transition: If a development is taller than two stories and shares a side lot line with a low-scaled residential property, articulate at least 50% of the building wall along the shared lot line. This can occur at any point on the wall. Use one or combine the following:

- A6, A7 (a minimum of 10 feet as illustrated)

The example building shown in plan view to the right uses A6. Increased Building Setback, and provides it at the rear. The cross sections show both options, but they can be combined on a single building.

*Suggested dimensions are shown in the diagram to the right.
Low Scale Historic Neighbor

If the Historic Low Scale Residential Neighbor described above is a historic resource or is located in a locally designated historic district, use the following articulation methods in addition to those suggested above.

Height Transition: If a development is taller than two stories and shares a side lot line with a low-scaled residential property, articulate at least 50% of the building wall. This should occur at the front of the lot. Use one or combine the following:

- A6, A7 (a minimum of 10 feet as illustrated)

Front Setback Compatibility: If a development is adjacent to a historic resource, provide an increased setback from the front lot line of the historic resource to align with its front wall. Use the following:

- A6 (a minimum of 8 feet as illustrated; provide for a minimum of 10 feet from the required setback line)
Creek Walk

If a building is located next to the Creek Walk, articulate the building wall that is adjacent to it. Use one or combine the following:

- A6, A7 (All buildings should provide an increased setback of at least 5 feet from the required setback line; Buildings should provide an increased setback of at least 5 feet from the required setback line. Components greater than 2 stories should be stepped back an additional 10 feet.)
Maintaining Public Views/Increasing Solar Access

Intent: Maintain or create views down a public street, to the sky or to a natural feature. Maximize sunlight to the public realm or a private outdoor space, either at the street level or on an upper level.

Long Walls: Use one or more of the following on at least 50% of a wall:
- A5, A6, A7

Short Walls: Use one or more of the following if feasible:
- A5, A6, A7

*Criteria for determining a Long Wall and Short Wall are shown in the table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Downtown Core</th>
<th>Tuning Fork</th>
<th>West State Street</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Long Wall =</td>
<td>&gt; 40 ft.</td>
<td>&gt; 60 ft.</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short Wall =</td>
<td>&lt; 40 ft.</td>
<td>&lt; 60 ft.</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Creating Outdoor Space

Intent: Create an opportunity for private outdoor space for tenants, customers or other building users on a ground floor, upper floor or rooftop.

At the Ground Level: Use A6.

On an Upper Floor or Rooftop: Use A5 or A7

*Criteria for determining a Long Wall and Short Wall are shown in the table.
Interior Façade Articulation
A secondary façade typically refers to a wall that does not face a prominent public space, like a street or public plaza. Secondary façades include interior side walls and rear walls. Priority conditions include:

- Where an interior façade is set back from an interior lot line.
- A façade facing a parking area or internal circulation component or alley.

Use minimal articulation methods to express human scale on an interior façade. Additional articulation is encouraged but not required.
Signs are important to businesses in Downtown. Their design should balance functional requirements with objectives for character, design and compatibility. Orderly sign location and design can make fewer and smaller signs more effective. The design guidelines promote the use of signs which are aesthetically pleasing, of appropriate scale, and integrated with surrounding buildings in order to meet the community's desire for quality development. All signs throughout the city are subject to the regulations in the Sign Ordinance of the City of Ithaca, which provides the definitions and legal framework for a comprehensive and balanced system of signage.
General Sign Design Guidelines

Signs should contribute to a cohesive character of the Downtown Area. All signage should also be compatible with the materials, colors and details of the building. Its content should be visually interesting and clearly legible. Illumination sources should be shielded to minimize glare and light pollution. A sign should remain subordinate to a primary building.

S.1. Design a sign to be compatible with the primary building.
   - Use materials, colors and details that are compatible with those used for the building.

S.2. Design and locate a sign to be subordinate to a site and primary building.
   - Design a sign to be simple in character.
   - Design the content of a sign to be clearly legible. Traditional block and curvilinear styles that are easy to read are preferred.
   - Limit the number of colors used on a sign. In general, no more than three colors should be used, although accent colors and additional colors for illustrations may be considered.
   - Locate and design a sign to emphasize rather than overshadow building features.
Lighting

S.3. **Shield a sign illumination source to minimize glare and light pollution.**

- Use a compatible shielded light source to illuminate a sign.
- Direct lighting towards a sign from an external, shielded lamp.
- Do not overpower the building or street edge with sign lighting.
- If halo lighting is used to accentuate a sign or building, locate the light source so that it is not visible.
- If internal illumination is used, design it to be subordinate to the overall building composition.
- If internal illumination is used, use a system that only backlights the individual characters of sign text.
- Avoid internal illumination of an entire sign panel.

Materials

S.4. **Use a permanent, durable material for a sign.**

*Use a permanent, durable material.*
### Guidelines for Specific Sign Types

The table below includes additional guidelines applicable to specific sign types. They shall be used in concert with the general signage guidelines above. The definitions included below are established in the City of Ithaca Sign Ordinance.

#### Wall Signs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wall Signs</th>
<th>S.5. Locate and design a wall sign to promote design compatibility among buildings.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A sign fastened, painted or otherwise erected on the wall of a building so that the wall becomes the sign’s supporting structure and wholly or partially forms its background.</td>
<td>• Place a wall sign to align with other signs on nearby buildings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Design a wall sign to minimize the depth of a sign panel or letters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Design a wall sign to fit within, rather than forward of, the fascia or other architectural details of a building.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Window Signs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Window Signs</th>
<th>S.6. Design a window sign to preserve transparency at the sidewalk edge.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A permanent sign affixed to a window surface or in front of or behind a window in such a manner that the window acts as its frame or background.</td>
<td>• Use a minimal amount of opaque material on a window sign.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Scale a window sign so that it only covers a modest amount of a glass window panel.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Projecting Signs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Projecting Signs</th>
<th>S.7. Locate and design a projecting sign to relate to building entries and convey visual interest.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Any sign that projects from the exterior of any building.</td>
<td>• Locate a small blade sign near the business entrance, just above or to the side of the door.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Mount a larger blade sign higher on the building, centered on the façade or positioned at the corner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Design a bracket for a projecting sign to complement the sign composition.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Awning Signs

A sign that is painted, printed, or stenciled onto the surface of an awning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.8.</th>
<th>Design printing on an awning to be subordinate to the awning.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Scale a printing on an awning sign to only cover a modest amount of the awning material.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Use a color that contrasts well with the color of the awning.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Canopy Sign

A sign that is painted, printed, or stenciled onto the surface of a canopy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.9.</th>
<th>Design signage to fit within and be subordinate to the architectural canopy element.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Use lettering or graphics that fit within the canopy structure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Use colors that contrast with a canopy material.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Monument Sign

A sign or signs mounted, painted on or fastened to a freestanding wall, pier or other sign structure, of which any horizontal dimension of a structural member exceeds 18 inches between two feet and eight feet above grade level.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.10.</th>
<th>Locate a monument sign to integrate with a site design.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Ensure that a monument sign does not encroach on or interrupt a prominent site feature or internal walkway.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.11.</th>
<th>Scale a monument sign to be of a size and height that expresses human scale.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Use a low profile monument sign that is easily readable, but does not block views to a building.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This chapter provides special guidelines for each of the three Character Areas defined in Chapter 1. It discusses areas of emphasis for specific topic areas. The guidelines and content shall be used in addition to the general guidelines provided in Chapters 3, 4 and 5. Downtown Character Areas are shown in Figure 16.
FIGURE 16: Downtown Character Areas.
**Tuning Fork**

The “Tuning Fork” is an area of land shaped by the convergence of East State Street, Seneca Way, and East Green Street. The street configuration results in irregularly shaped parcels. Grade changes also impact this Character Area. These factors create both opportunities and challenges for development. Buildings in the Tuning Fork are primarily commercial or mixed-use and vary in height. Existing buildings in the Tuning Fork respond to topography and the curvilinear block pattern differently, creating an inconsistent pattern of buildings. Six Mile Creek serves as an influential natural feature in this area.

**Building Orientation and Placement**

The Tuning Fork serves as a major gateway into Downtown from the east and its blocks are irregularly shaped due to transportation improvements undertaken during Urban Renewal. The primary streets in the Tuning Fork are State Street, Seneca Way and Aurora Street. Buildings in the Tuning Fork should orient toward these streets to provide a visual connection to the public realm and activate it. To respond to the area’s function as a gateway, buildings should locate special architectural features or outdoor spaces at corners along State Street. Building edges should be established along primary streets to create a sense of enclosure to the street and pedestrian space.

**TF.1. Place a building to establish a strong and consistent built edge along a primary street in order to frame the street.**

- Place buildings relatively close to the back of a sidewalk edge in the Tuning Fork.
- Setbacks of zero to five (0-5) feet are appropriate for all street-facing façades.
- An additional setback area may be appropriate to provide an expanded sidewalk, entry plaza, landscaped area or other outdoor feature provided that it is still designed to establish a street edge through materials or other features.

Buildings in the Tuning Fork respond to topography and the curvilinear blocks differently, creating an inconsistent pattern of buildings.

The Tuning Fork serves as a major gateway to Downtown from the east.
Setbacks of zero to five (0-5) feet are appropriate for all street-facing façades in the Tuning Fork.
Building Placement for Curvilinear Parcels

Curvilinear blocks and parcels are prevalent in the Tuning Fork. Under this condition, placing a building to be parallel with the property line can present challenges. Buildings fronting a curvilinear street should frame the public realm, but more flexibility in placement is appropriate.

TF.2. Place a building with a curvilinear frontage to create a sense of enclosure to the street. Appropriate methods include the following:

- Curved
- Angled
- Rectilinear
- Stepped
Downtown Core
The Downtown Core is synonymous with Ithaca’s historic commercial core. It includes The Commons and its immediate surroundings, including Cayuga Street, Aurora Street, East Seneca Street and East Green Street. Development patterns are of a traditional rectilinear grid, with rectangular-shaped lots and buildings built to the edge of the sidewalk. Within this consistent framework of buildings is a mix of building styles, including simple commercial vernacular and more ornate buildings with Italianate influences. Building heights vary but most convey a consistent ground floor height at the street level with consistent storefronts. The Downtown Core is strongly influenced by the presence of Six Mile Creek at the south.

Building Orientation and Placement
The Downtown Core is the “heart” of the Character Area and includes a critical open space in the Commons. State Street (including the Commons), Aurora Street and Cayuga Street are the primary streets. Buildings should orient toward these streets in order to activate the street and provide a visual connection to the public realm. Building edges should also be established as close to a property line along a primary street as possible in order to create a sense of enclosure to the street and pedestrian space, and to respond to the typical, limited setback patterns in Downtown.

DC.1. Place a building to establish a strong and consistent built edge along a primary street in order to frame the street.
• Place buildings as close to the back of a sidewalk edge as possible.
• An additional setback area may be appropriate to provide an entry plaza, landscaped area or other outdoor feature provided that it is still designed to establish a street edge through materials or other features.
Building Placement in the Downtown Core

Buildings in the Downtown Core should be placed as close to the back of the sidewalk edge as possible.

Building heights vary but most convey a consistent ground floor height at the street level.
West State Street
The West State Street Character Area includes properties west of Geneva Street. It is a distinctive area with many different building types, ranging from commercial vernacular to pitched roof traditional residential styles. This character area is pedestrian friendly, with street trees, wider sidewalks and some streetscape furniture. Surface parking lots are common and many undeveloped areas are paved. Although these parking lots create some gaps in the streetscape that reduce walkability, many buildings are built at or near the sidewalk edge.

Building Orientation and Placement
Buildings in West State Street exhibit a wide variety of forms, orientation, placement and coverage. The eclectic mix of buildings helps give the area its unique character. Buildings should orient their main façade and entry toward a primary street (State Street, Green Street, Seneca Street). If a property does not contain frontage on a primary street, a building should orient toward a secondary street (Geneva Street, Albany Street, Plain Street, Corn Street). Front setbacks range in West State Street. Some buildings are placed at the back of the sidewalk while others are set back between zero and ten (0-10) feet from the street. Buildings should be placed relatively close to the street, but some flexibility is appropriate. Greater flexibility may be appropriate along other streets in this Character Area.

WSS.1. Provide a consistent built edge along a primary street in order to frame the street, but allow some flexibility in the specific location.
   • Setbacks of zero to fifteen (0-15) feet are appropriate for all street-facing façades.
   • An additional setback area may be appropriate to provide an entry plaza, landscaped area or other outdoor feature provided that it is still designed to establish a street edge through materials or other features.
Building Placement in West State Street

Setbacks of zero to fifteen (0-15) feet are appropriate for all street-facing façades in West State Street.

Architectural creativity, adaptive reuse and variety is encouraged in West State Street.