PASADENA

Citywide Design Principles

Adopted by City Council, October 21, 2002

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INTRODUCTION: Purposes of Design Principles and Design Guidelines

The City's Comprehensive General Plan promotes architectural and design excellence in buildings, open space, and urban design. It also recognizes that preservation of Pasadena's character and scale, including its traditional urban design form and historic character shall be given the highest priority in consideration of future development. To achieve these goals, the plan proposes urban design principles and urban design guidelines for targeted areas of the City (*Objective 5, policies 5.1, 5.2*).

Urban Design Principles

The urban design principles, first adopted by the City Council in 1992 and re-adopted in 1994 with the Land-use Element of the General Plan, are a statement of the City's vision for the desirable future of Pasadena. Applied citywide to all types of projects, they provide overall guidance to new development, encouraging it to complement the scale of the City and the quality of its finest architectural traditions.

Property owners, developers, designers, and contractors proposing new development in Pasadena should first review the Citywide Design Principles. They should then move to the design guidelines.

Design Guidelines

Design guidelines supplement the Citywide Design Principles. They offer more direction for proceeding with the design of projects. They illustrate options, solutions, and techniques to achieve the goal of excellence in new design. *It is important to remember, though, that they are performance goals, not zoning regulations or development standards; they do not supersede regulations or standards in the municipal code. In some cases, the Design Commission (or Planning Director) may waive individual guidelines for specific projects if it finds that the waiver achieves a better design solution than strict application of the guidelines. The Commission, however, must adopt a finding of overall consistency with guidelines before approving an application for design review.*

The City has more than 30 sets of adopted design guidelines. These guidelines are for areas with plans (e.g., specific plans, redevelopment plans, master development plans), historic properties (e.g., Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation & Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings), special uses (e.g., service stations), public alleys (e.g., Playhouse District), signs, and commercial areas (e.a, E. Washington Boulevard).

Portions of this introductory page are excerpted from the City of Tucson (A2) Website City of Tucson, Planning Department

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CITYWIDE DESIGN PRINCIPLES

1. Introduction

2. Main Objective

3. Guiding Principles

4. Pasadena Design Qualities

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Introduction

These Principles are a guide to development throughout the
community and are intended to achieve the following:

a) Buildings and landscapes particular to Pasadena – designs that
complement their settings and enhance the community's unique character
and special qualities.

b) Development projects that contribute to an identifiable and coherent city
form – a place that is both visually appealing and comfortable to use.

c) Creative architectural solutions that acknowledge the surrounding context
without direct mimicry of historical styles.

The principles are written to promote desirable qualities, and they should
establish a dialogue among designers, developers, and the local community.
They are applicable to all development projects subject to design review and
may be supplemented by more detailed design guidelines for a particular
project or a specified area within the City.

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Excellence in Building and Landscape Design: the over-riding objective of these City-wide Design Principles is to establish a high standard of design for all new development within the community.

The hallmark of design excellence is to create places of enduring quality that are uniquely fit to their time and place. Success depends upon the City's commitment to this objective. as well as collaboration with quality designers and visionary clients. Citywide Design Principles are one measure of the City's commitment and are the foundation for effective communication and collaboration. They identify the particular qualities and conditions that support design excellence – those qualities and conditions that contribute to Pasadena's unique identity and a coherent city form. In the end. a building or landscape design should make a positive contribution to the City and its surroundings.

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Guiding Principle 1: Enhance the Surrounding Environment

Building and landscape projects alter the existing environment. The first Guiding Principle recognizes this fact and requires that a project improve upon its surroundings to the public's benefit. A development should complement and respond to the immediate area, as well as the larger City environment; it should acknowledge the natural and cultural history of the place. Projects should also promote environmental sustainability by minimizing the use of energy, water, and other finite resources.

In particular, reuse and rehabilitation of historic buildings and structures will protect the City's important architectural heritage. New development adjacent to historic structures should respect the existing fabric and provide a transition between the old and the new.

Development projects need to recognize the importance of public space. They offer access to light, air and views, and are frequently places of social interaction. Therefore, the community's open spaces should function as outdoor rooms that are as carefully designed as its buildings. It is especially important that streets support pedestrian safety and comfort, and that commercial streets are active and engaging places.

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Guiding Principle 2: Incorporate Human Values and Needs

Buildings and places should reflect the values of the community and promote the well being of its citizens. Building and landscapes should create places that are amenable to human comfort and use. They should also provide an enduring investment in the community.

The community will benefit from buildings that are inviting and sustain interest. A building's design should accommodate the intended use, and it should clearly communicate its access and use. Measurements and proportions need to relate to and reflect the importance of people, often referred to as "human scale" design.

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Guiding Principle 3: Show Creativity and Imagination

These Design Principles encourage a variety of creative responses. Different eras and a diversity of people have shaped the City and given it a unique collection of buildings and landscapes. Its architectural heritage is the result of the creative vision and imagination of many groups and individuals. While a new building should respect the surrounding character, it should avoid nostalgic misrepresentations that confuse the relationships among buildings over time. The City will benefit most from creative designs that show individual expression, richness, and variety.

It is imperative that the City continues to support this diversity of creative and cultural expression. Likewise, each designer and developer needs to recognize that they are making a lasting contribution to the community. At its best, their work will collectively add interest, variety and distinction to the community.

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Pasadena Design Qualities

These are some of the qualities that lend much of Pasadena a special character and particular sense of place

...at the scale of the community:

- Community Identity: *historic buildings; memorable building features*
- Physical Connections: *linked plazas, courtyards, street, alleys and passages*
- Visual Relationships: *mountain views; landmark views; axial and framed views*
- Cultural Expression: *historic districts; civic art*

...at the scale of the street:

- Spatial Definition: *commercial buildings at or near street edge; street trees*
- Public Character: *ample sidewalks; street furniture; entries along sidewalks*
- Protected Sidewalks: *on-street parking; mature canopy trees; awnings*
- Sidewalk Activity: *street-level shops; frequent entries; sidewalk dining*

...at the scale of the site:

- Integrated Planning: *parking behind buildings; buildings oriented to street*
- Outdoor Rooms: *defined courtyards; intimate gardens*
- Comfortable Access: *gracious, shaded entries; paseos (outdoor passages)*
- Human Occupation: *shade trees; fountains; lush planting; warm materials*

...at the scale of the building:

- Contextual Fit: *strong massing; horizontal division (base, middle, top)*
- Three-Dimensional Quality: *rhythmic order; deep openings; shadow lines*
- Visual Transparency: *prominent building entries; shop windows*
- Human Scale: *rich visual detail*

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Pasadena Design Qualities

These are some of the qualities that lend much of Pasadena a special character and particular sense of place

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...at the scale of the residential neighborhood:

- Traditional Patterns: *attractive street elevations; consistent setbacks*
- Neighborhood Linkages: *sidewalks coincident with street; outdoor passages*

...at the scale of the residential street:

- Neighborly Streets: *highly visible street elevations; front porches*
- Walkable Streets: *protected paths; interesting streetscape with varied dwellings*

...at the scale of the residential lot:

- Landscape Setting: *verdant front yards; attractively planted common areas*
- Useable Open Space: *residential courts; site amenities; private yard areas*

...at the scale of the residential dwelling:

- Visual Appeal: *compatible changes in form, material and color*
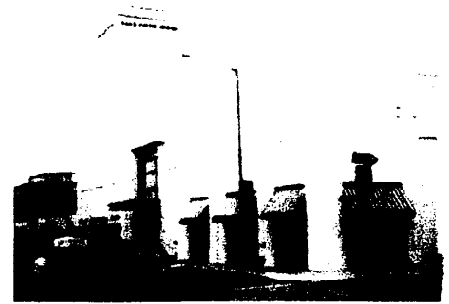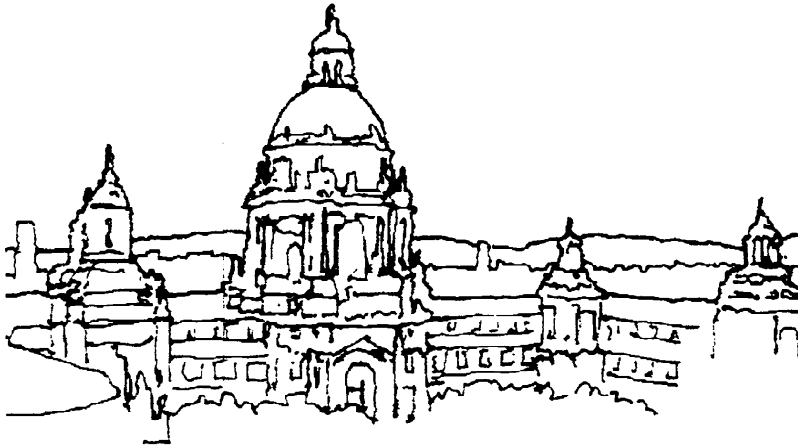- Residential Scale: *porches; balconies; decorative features and trim*

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Pasadena Design Qualities: Illustrations

1. Community Character

2. Street Environment

3. Site Planning

4. Building Design

5. Residential Neighborhood Character

6. Residential Street Environment
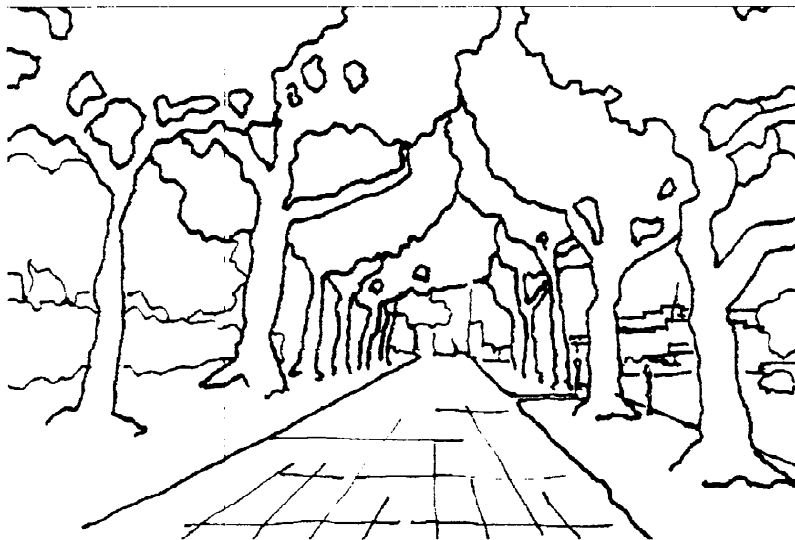
7. Residential Lot Design

8. Residential Dwelling Design

Pasadena Design Qualities: Illustrations
Community Character

Community Identity: *A community should portray a strong identity, including the presence of recognizable districts and landmarks.*

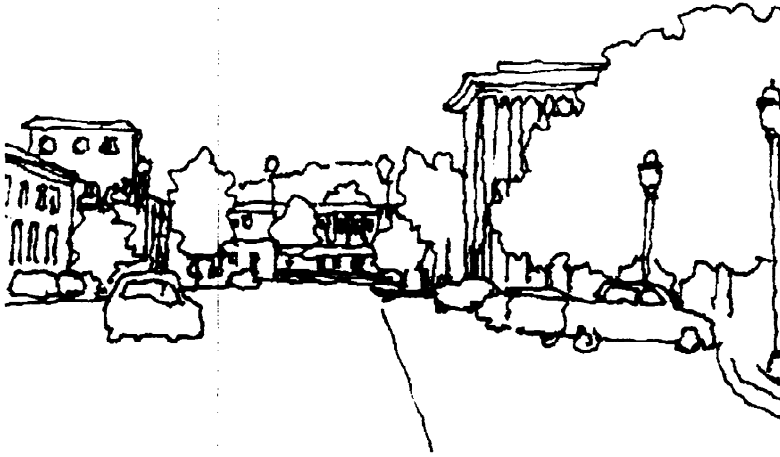

Precedent: *memorable building features*

Physical Connection: *A community should connect through a network of public spaces and paths.*
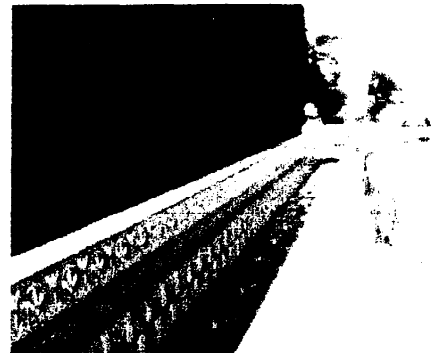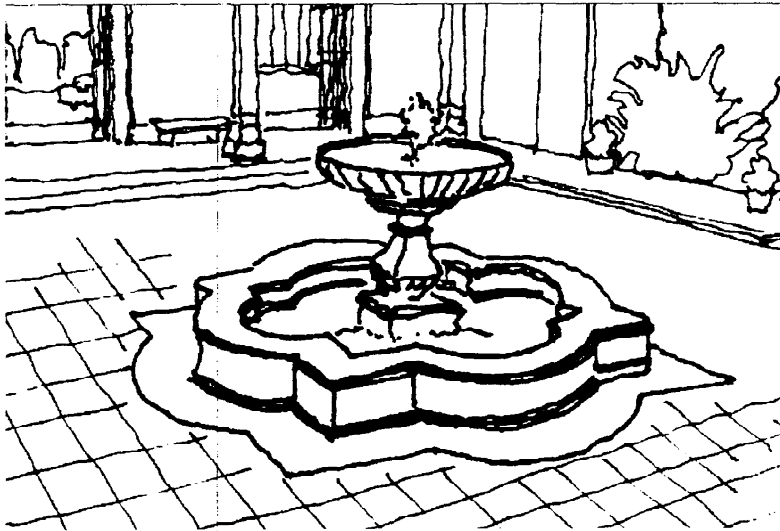

Precedent: *linked outdoor spaces*

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Pasadena Design Qualities: Illustrations
Community Character

Visual Relationships: *A community should take advantage of important views and vistas, and provide numerous opportunities for access to light and air.*

Precedent: *axial and framed views*

Cultural Expression: *A community should express local history and culture.*

Precedent: *civic art*

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Pasadena Design Qualities: Illustrations
Street Environment

Spatial Definition: *A street should read as a well-defined space.*

Precedent: *commercial buildings at street edge*

Public Character: *A street should readily communicate that it is public space.*

Precedent: *entries along sidewalk*

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Pasadena Design Qualities: Illustrations
Street Environment

Protected Sidewalks: *A street should contribute to the physical safety and comfort of pedestrians.*

Precedent: *canopies and awnings*

Sidewalk Activity: *A street should be an active and engaging place.*
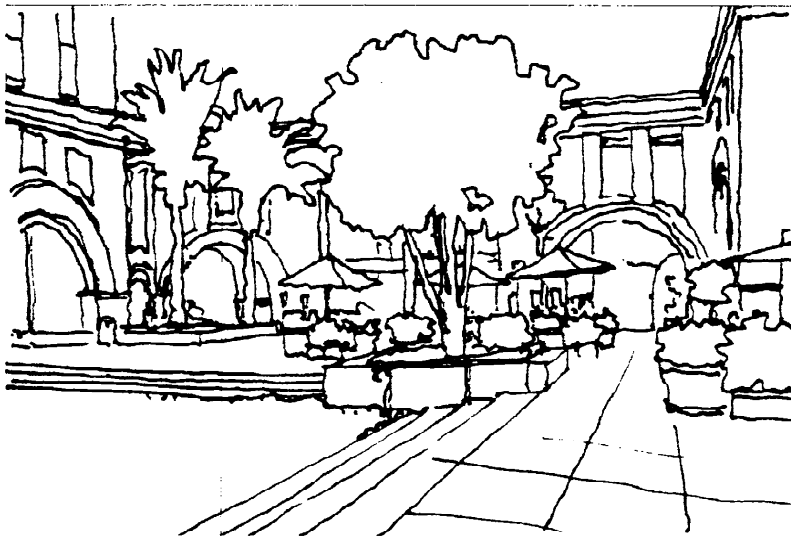

Precedent: *street level shops*

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Pasadena Design Qualities: Illustrations
Site Planning

Integrated Planning: *A site should support the functional and visual integration of on-site facilities and uses.*

Precedent: *buildings oriented to street*

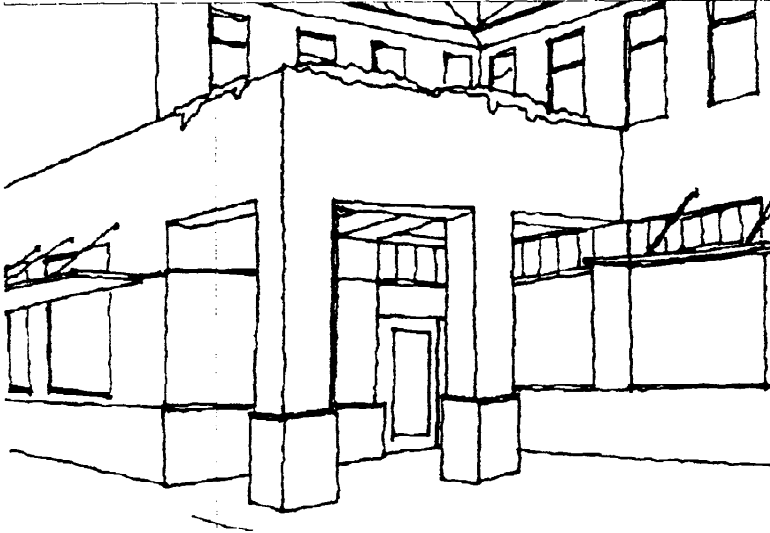**Outdoor Rooms:** *A site should have places amenable to outdoor activity and use.*

Precedent: *defined courtyards*

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Pasadena Design Qualities: Illustrations
Site Planning

Comfortable Access: *A site should establish an easy transition between exterior and interior space.*

Precedent: *generous, shaded entries*

Human Occupation: *A site should include amenities for comfortable social interaction.*

Precedent: *shade trees, fountain, and lush plantings*

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Pasadena Design Qualities: Illustrations
Building Design

Contextual Fit: *A building should fit with its surroundings.*

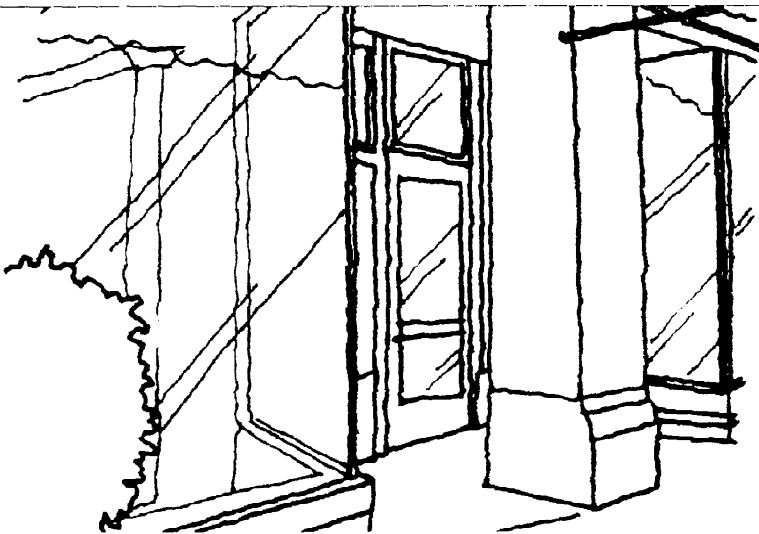**Precedent:** *strong massing with horizontal divisions*

Three-Dimensional Quality: *A building should add interest and variety to its surroundings.*

Precedent: *rhythmic order and deep openings*

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Pasadena Design Qualities: Illustrations
Building Design

Visual Transparency: *A building should offer helpful cues about its access and use.*

Precedent: *prominent building entries and shop windows*

Human Scale: *A building should contribute to a more pleasant and humane living environment*

Precedent: *rich visual detail*

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