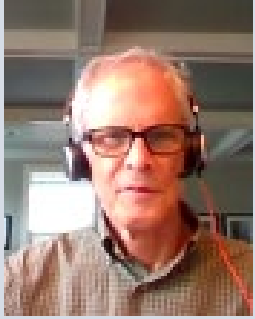


# **State of the City Report - March 15, 2023**

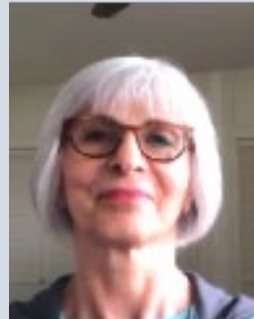
The Portland Design Commission



Brian  
McCarter,  
Current Chair  
Retired,  
principal urban  
designer/  
landscape  
architect  
ZGF Architects



Chandra  
Robinson,  
Vice Chair  
Principal  
Architect  
Lever  
Architecture



Zari  
Santner  
Retired  
landscape  
architect,  
Former  
director PPR,  
Member RACC



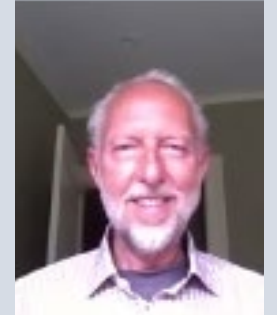
Sam  
Rodriguez,  
Past -Chair  
Architect, VP  
Millcreek  
Development



Jessica  
Molinar  
Architect,  
Senior  
designer BRIC  
Architecture



Julie  
Livingston  
Chair -  
Emeritus  
Architect,  
Senior  
manager  
Home  
Forward

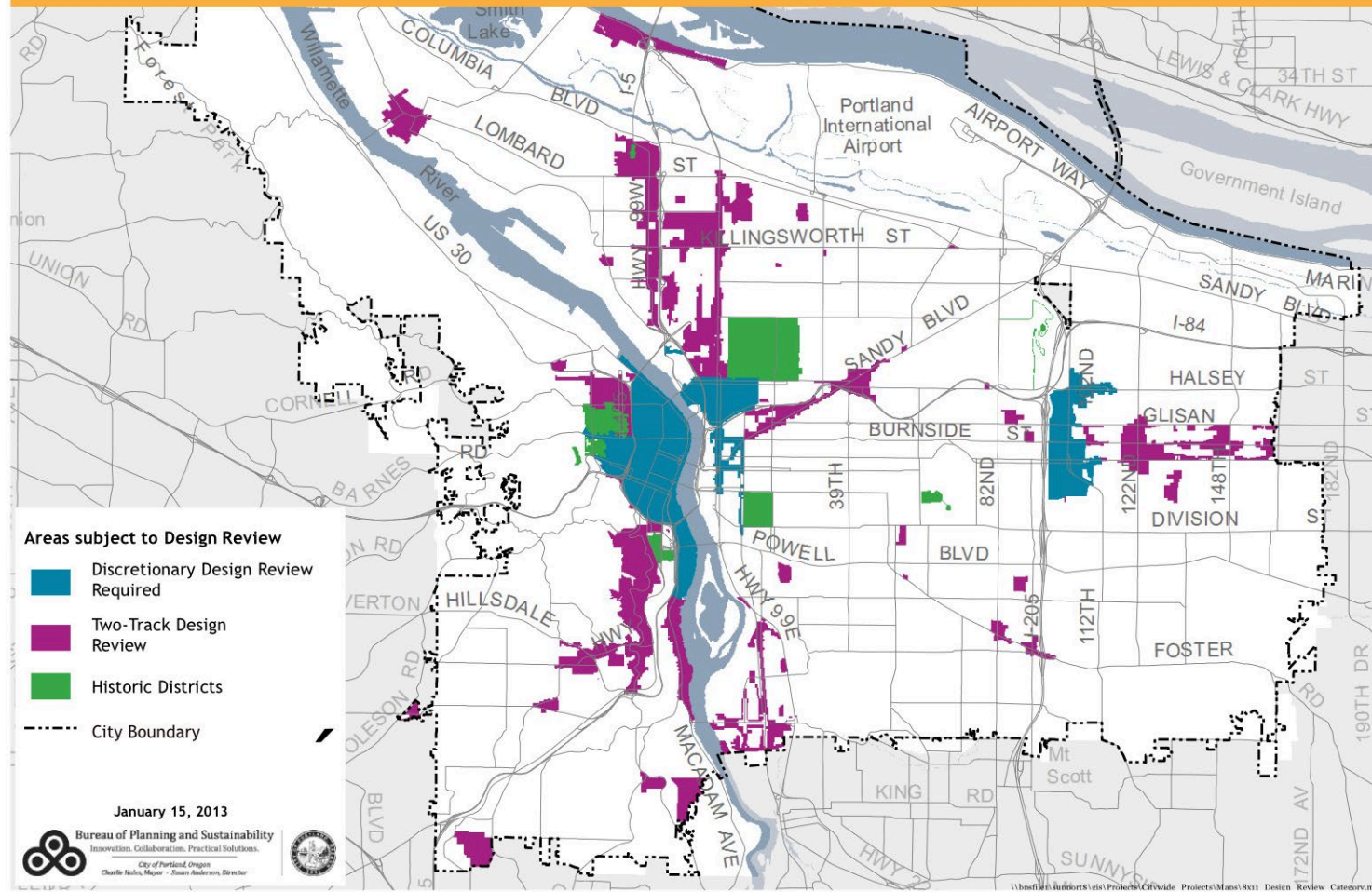


Don  
Vallaster  
Retired  
Architect  
Vallaster Corl  
Architects,  
developer

## 2023 Portland Design Commission

We're an all-volunteer panel of design and development experts that serve one to two, 4-year terms.

# DESIGN REVIEW AREAS



## Portland Design Zones

We review development proposals in the city's design overlay zones, which make up about **7% of land within the City limits**. Generally, there are two types of design zones: Central City – governed by the Central City Fundamental Design Guidelines and a series of widely dispersed zones in Portland's traditional mixed use town centers, neighborhood centers and main streets – governed by our recently updated Citywide Design Guidelines.

# THREE TENETS OF DESIGN

Build on **context**

**CONTEXT-RELATED GUIDELINES** balancing the aspirations of the future desired character with today's setting. The guidelines are sequenced to telescope from big picture to site-specific.

Contribute to the **public realm**

**PUBLIC REALM-RELATED GUIDELINES** that strengthen a building and site's relationship with the public rights-of-way and open spaces.

Promote **quality and resilience/permanence**

**QUALITY AND RESILIENCE-RELATED GUIDELINES** that underscore holistic site and building designs that benefit people and climate.

## OUR TOOLS – Citywide and Central City Fundamental Design Guidelines

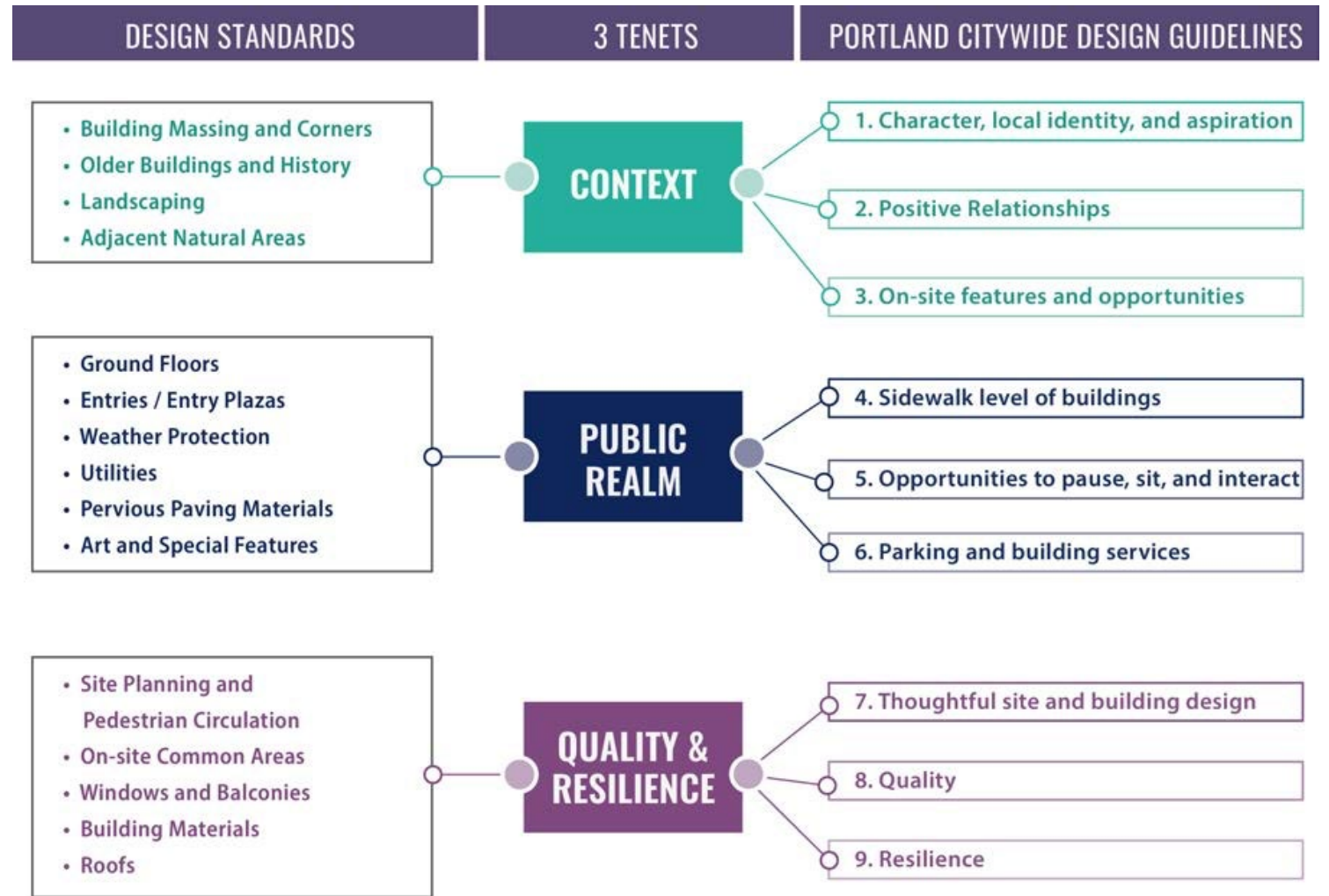
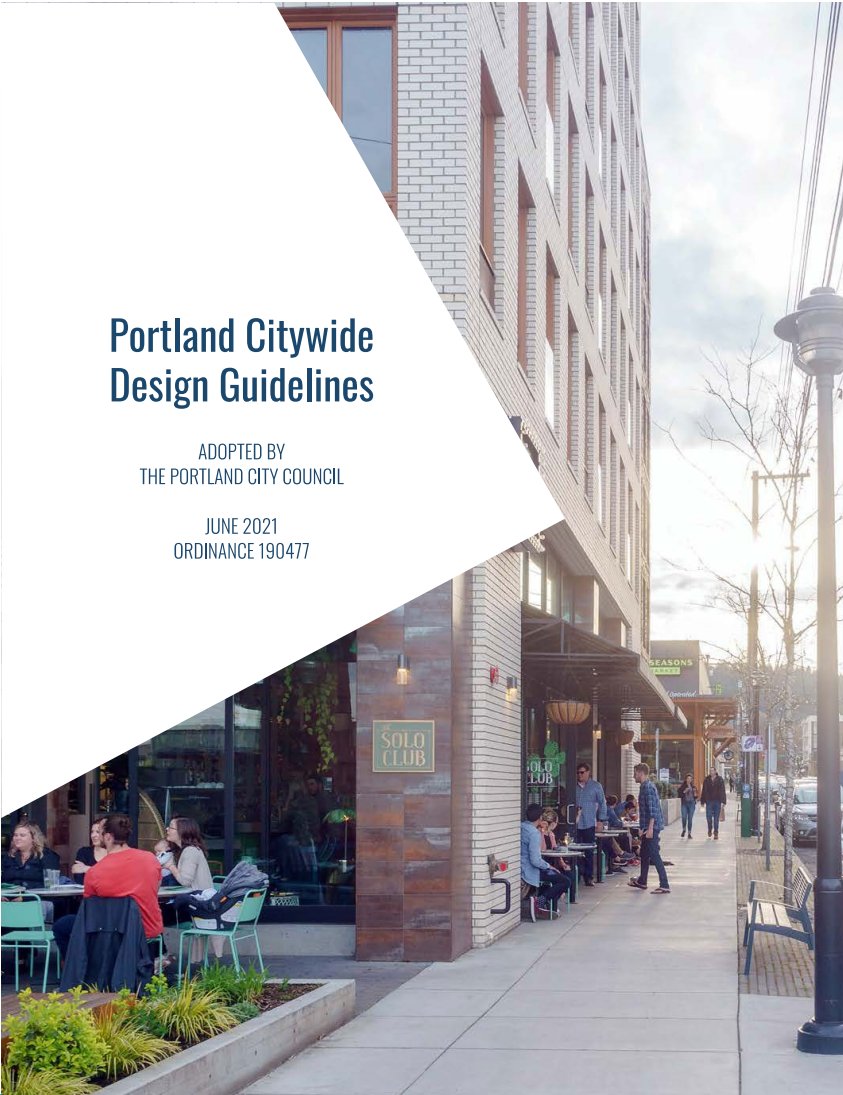
Our tools are these two sets of Design Guidelines. They are organized around three major tenets of design: Context, Public Realm and Quality and Permanence/Resilience.



# Portland Citywide Design Guidelines

ADOPTED BY  
THE PORTLAND CITY COUNCIL

JUNE 2021  
ORDINANCE 190477



## Objective Track/Design Standards or Discretionary Track/Design Guidelines

Over the last 4 years, BPS, BDS and DC worked collaboratively to revamp, simplify and consolidate the Citywide Design Guidelines. We now have a two-track approval process. Applicants can choose, based on the particulars of their project, to follow a 'cookbook' approach using finite design standards; or they can choose the Design Guidelines path. That's where we come in. By the authority you grant us, we can use discretion to go beyond simple code requirements and find exceptional design solutions. Both tracks use the three major tenets.



## CONTEMPORARY CONTEXT



MIXED-USE



RESIDENTIAL



MIXED-USE



MIXED-USE



RESIDENTIAL



MIXED-USE



## Citywide Guidelines applied: 92 H Lents - Site and neighborhood

Our review and approval process are defined by a firm set of bylaws. Depending on the ambitions of the applicant and the familiarity with the guidelines by the architect, approval can take several steps or be finished quickly. This 2022 project is a great example of how an applicant and their design team crafted their proposal to meet the new Citywide Guidelines in a direct manner and were approved **unanimously in one hearing**. Lents Town Center is a re-emerging from older car-centric commercial strip to a new, pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use center. This project sits at the interface between the new center and the existing residential neighborhood. Here is how its design responded to the guidelines:



01 character, local identity, and aspiration of the place

- Adds affordable housing options adjacent to light rail station
- Reinforces the new Lents TC as a pedestrian district



02 positive relationships with surroundings

- Reinforces Town Center building orientation on 92<sup>nd</sup> Avenue
- Parking kept to side and rear

## CONTEXT

This project extends a new CONTEXT but also makes the transition to single family homes in Lents to the north; its main wall and entry face 92<sup>nd</sup> Avenue for pedestrians; parking is tucked to the side and back; and height is held to five stories.



### 03 enhance on-site features and opportunities

- Establishes residential courtyard with great solar access and security
- Complements Lents Farmers Market
- Provides community garden facilities for residents



## CONTEXT

The north and south building wings wrap around a lush, south facing courtyard with great solar access; it also frames the Lents Farmers Market on the south; the project has active edges on all sides.



## 05 opportunities to pause, sit and interact

- Seating, art
- Enclosure
- Street trees and landscaping



## 04 sidewalk level of buildings to be active and human-scaled

- Taller ground floor
- Multiple entries and windows
- Ground floor residential setbacks - with stoops, stairs, landscaping
- Weather protection, integrated lighting
- Urban sidewalks



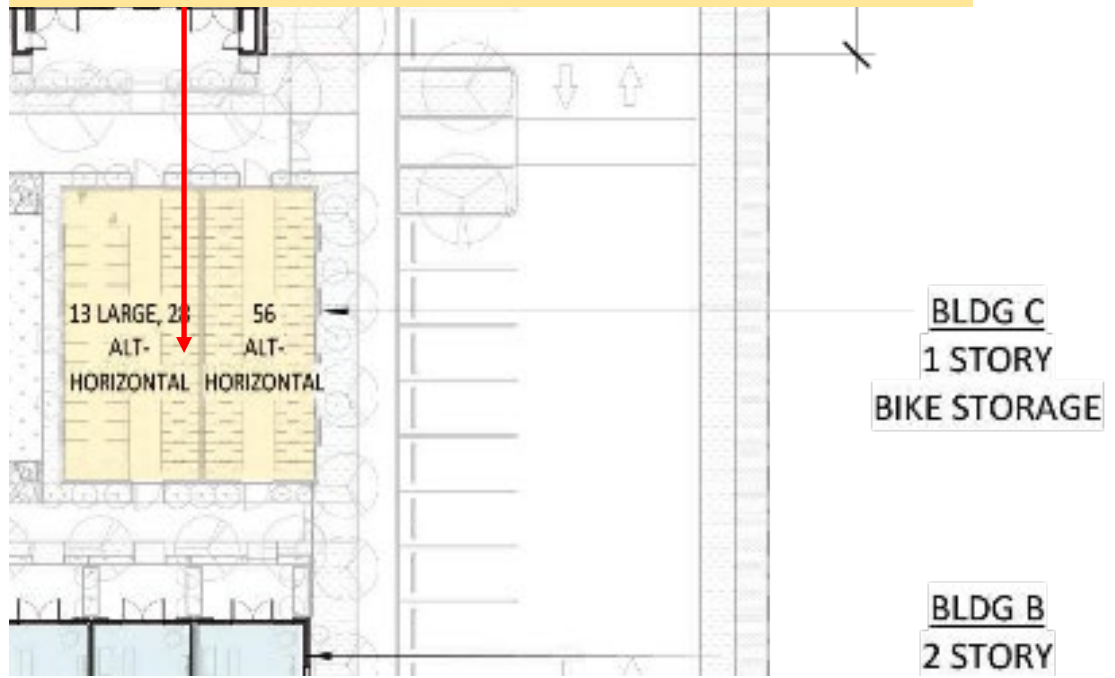
## PUBLIC REALM

As part of the transition, this project employs ground floor residential units with setback porches, stairs, gates, and privacy landscaping to create a successful transition from private to public space. Limited retail brackets the corners where it's convenient for pedestrians arriving from 92<sup>nd</sup> Avenue.



06 integrate and minimize impact of parking and building services

- Screening, buffering of parking areas
- Utilities away from public realm
- Long term bicycle parking



## PUBLIC REALM

Car parking, utilities and bike parking are located well away from public realm areas.



09 resilience, health, and stewardship... adaptability to climate change...

- Shading, tree canopy
- On-site stormwater



07 thoughtful site and building design

- Adaptable buildings
- Daylight and air to all units
- Entry canopies
- Layered landscaping at all street and parking frontages



## QUALITY AND RESILIENCE

Site landscaping is layered and consistent, extending pedestrian streetscape along 92<sup>nd</sup> Avenue with consistent tree canopy and understory plantings throughout all areas.



08 quality...enduring materials...coherent approach

- Limited palette of proven materials
- Simple elevations – materials reinforce podium, tower and roof cap
- Ground floor units framed by projecting walls and recessed stoops



## QUALITY AND RESILIENCE

Finally, the building's design features simple, consistent use of metal and concrete panels, brick and cast-in-place concrete in a way that differentiates residential porches, recessed entrances, setback upper floors, daylighted hallways and roof caps to provide an outstanding architecture for the neighborhood.





## BEFORE DESIGN REVIEW

So how has Design Review served Portland since its inception in 1982? Prior to Design Review, several new stand-alone high-rises were built on raised platforms with blank walls that gave them a fortress like character and ignored the public sidewalk level of the city. The local design & planning community felt these projects were taking the city in the wrong direction. Design Review and Design Guidelines were born as a reaction to this threat and a means of re-directing Portland architecture back to a pedestrian-friendly city. These became the Central City Fundamental Design Guidelines and have served Portland well for the last 40 years by encouraging quality urban design and architecture in all new private developments and new public infrastructure. A Design Commission was established in 1982 to help designers navigate through the process and ensure that the Guidelines are being met.





## DESIGN REVIEW - 1980s

After that, Portland's buildings took on a very different design. One of the office buildings from the early Design Review era - PacWest - demonstrates how a contemporary building can reach out to the public sidewalk level with inviting retail spaces, outdoor seating areas and high-quality materials.

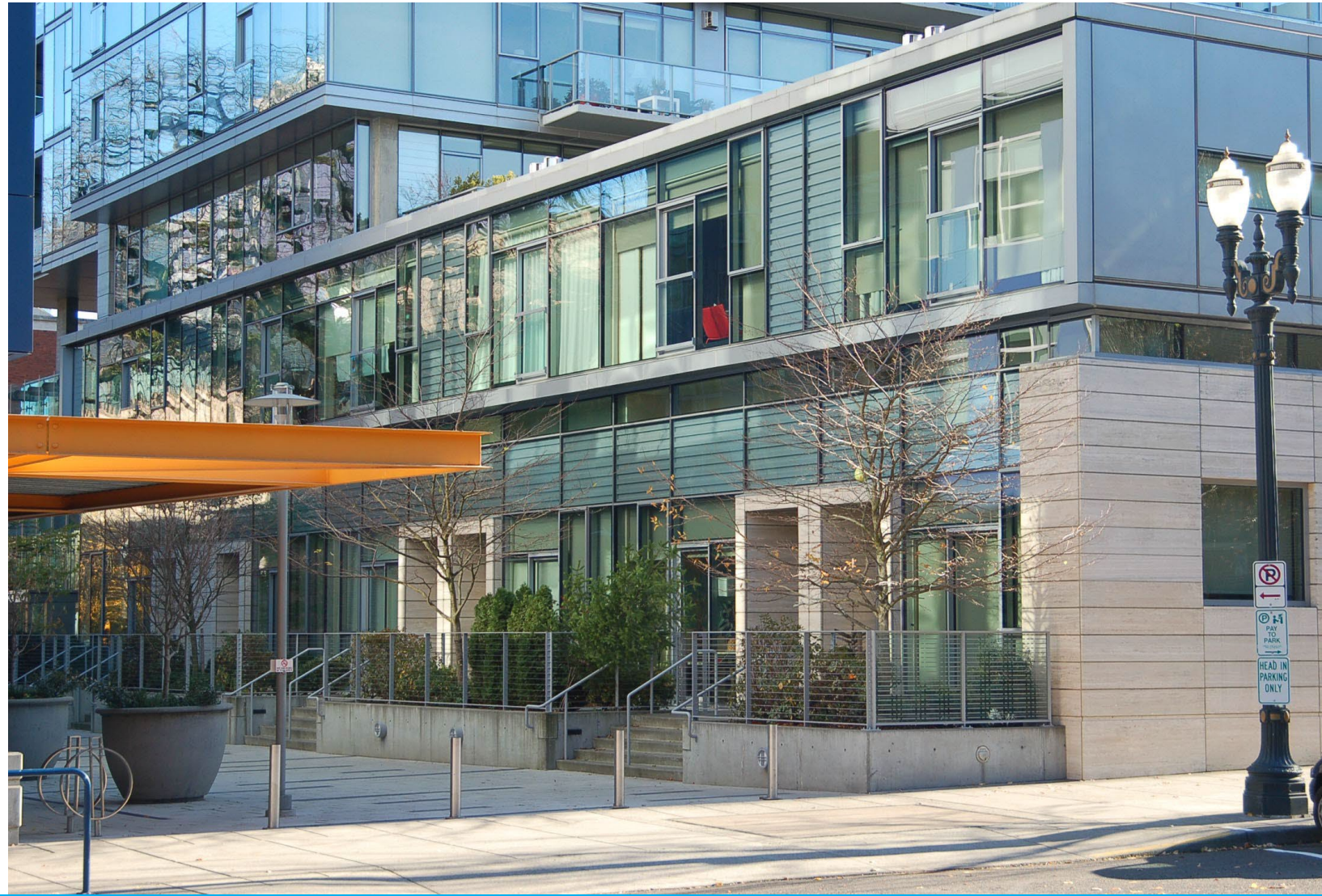




## DESIGN REVIEW - 1990s

Pioneer Place picked up on the street-friendly orientation and light-colored materials of Downtown Portland's best historic buildings to anchor our retail core.





## DESIGN REVIEW - 2000s

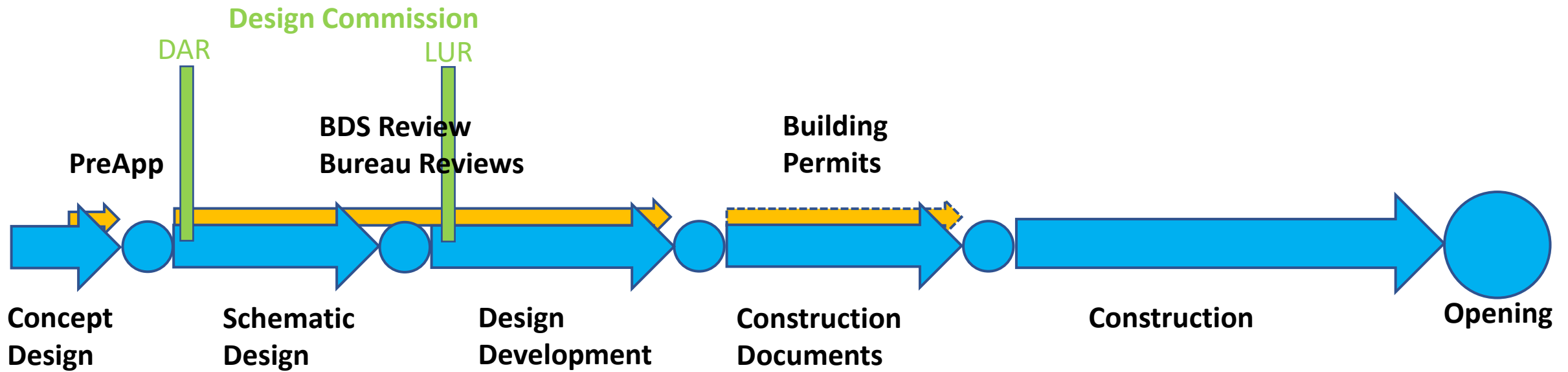
The Eliot marked a new wave of contemporary urban living with new amenities like roof gardens, courtyard, residential stoop-entries and high transparency. It also opened up Madison Street to pedestrian traffic after being closed for nearly 50 years by a suburban grocery store that was removed and replaced one block to the south.







## DESIGN REVIEW - 2010s

Design Review demands the same compliance with the guidelines whether market-rate or affordable. The Ramona in the Pearl District provides a pleasant public realm at street level, ground floor amenity spaces for young families, a private courtyard, balconies, green roof and a high-quality brick façade - all as an affordable housing project.



 City of Portland Review and Permitting Process  
 Applicant Design Process

## PERMITTING AND DESIGN SCHEDULES

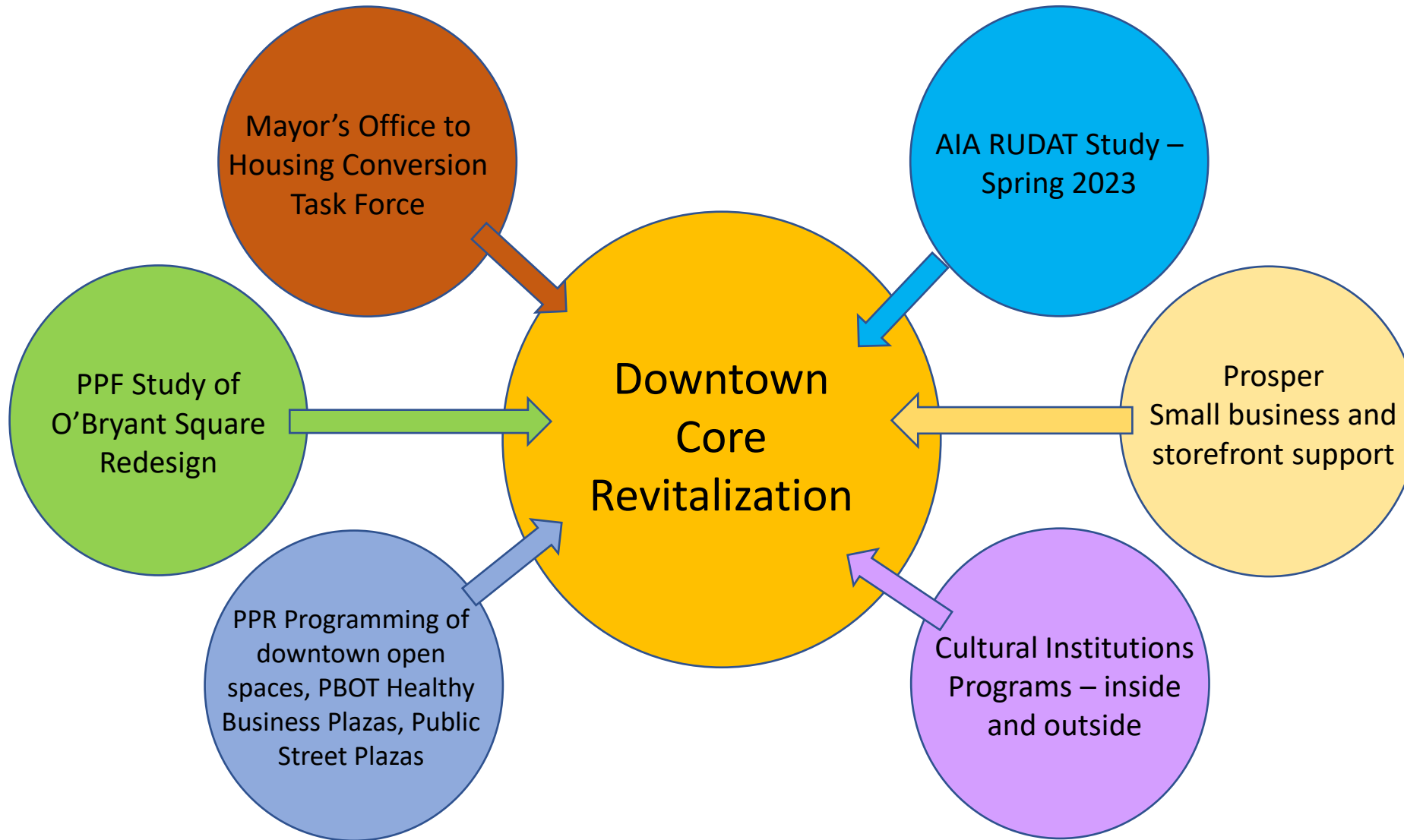
How does Design Review relate to the larger processes of detailed design documents and permitting for construction? We are a part of the City's overall review and permitting process that is running parallel with project design. We interface with BDS and the applicant at DR hearings along these timelines. We always encourage applicants to come early for a Design Advice Request so the direction of the project can be steered towards guideline compliance. In some cases, like Lents, the applicant understood the guidelines so well, they were approved in one Land Use Review hearing.





**CENTRAL CITY – 2023?**  
Now we find ourselves in new territory. Most of Portland’s neighborhood urban districts have come out of the pandemic and work-from-home intact and thriving.  
But the downtown core (between Burnside, the River and the 405) has the greatest public assets and investment in our region, yet it has suffered disproportionately and continues to struggle.





## DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION

However, leadership is now actively trying to determine how to bring Downtown vitality back. With that in mind, DC members have been meeting with private and public leaders informally over the last few months to get up to speed on a variety of efforts currently underway with the goal of identifying what DC and BDS can do to facilitate and encourage new short- and long-term efforts.

Director Park -  
pre-Pandemic



PUBLIC STREETPLAZA



PBOT

Director Park -  
2023



HEALTHY BUSINESS PERMIT



PBOT

## SHORT TERM STRATEGIES - PPR, PBOT Downtown Open Space & Street Space Programs

It is sobering to remember pre-Pandemic activity in downtown's parks and plazas compared to today. However, discussions are underway regarding how to begin the process of programming events that can begin to bring the public back to downtown. This can and should be coordinated with PBOT's newest program of activating certain streets as temporary open spaces. Design Commission will support these efforts in an advisory capacity in whatever manner is helpful.





## SHORT TERM STRATEGIES - O'Bryant Square Redesign

The redesign of O'Bryant Square is prime example of downtown park space in need of a new life. We encourage PPR and PPF to coordinate this effort with re-programming of other downtown core parks and plazas as this closure has had social consequences for other downtown parks.





## SHORT TERM STRATEGIES - Storefront Activation

1. Could we refresh Prosper Portland's Block By Block Storefront Program where there is interest (these efforts were done as a BDS staff review, not a Design Commission hearing or workshop)
2. Support efforts by building owner's and cultural institutions to infill temporary activation - these are efforts that shouldn't require onerous permitting or Design Review.





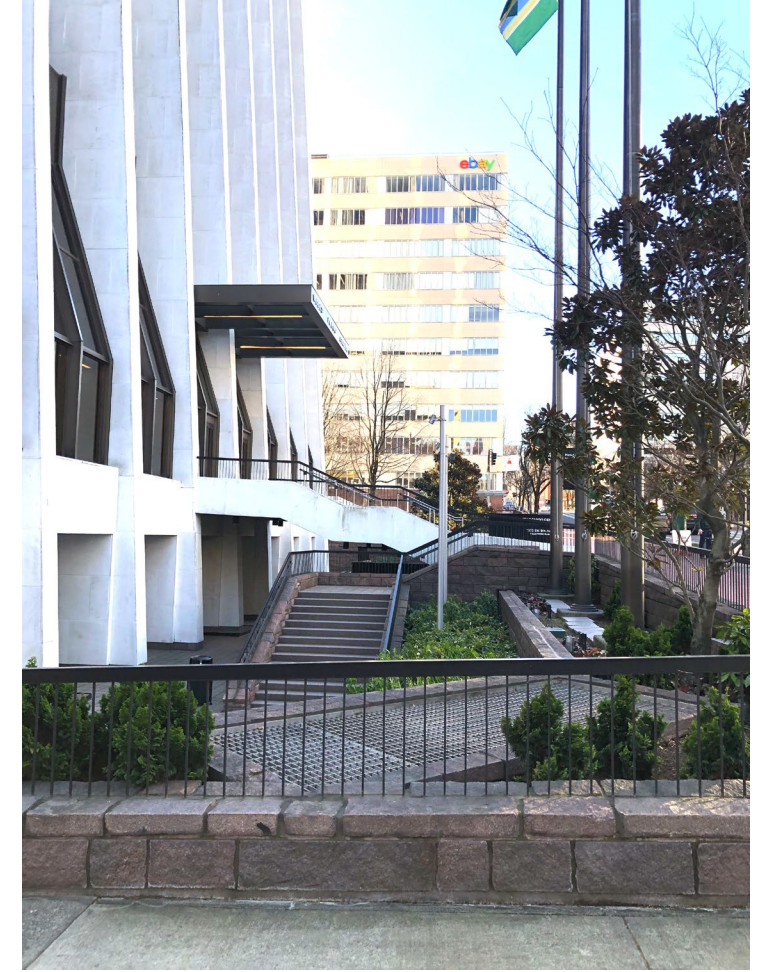
## SHORT TERM STRATEGIES - Storefront Security

Under a related program - 'Storefront Security' - DC + BDS staff can develop a catalogue of best practices for securing storefront glass and store merchandise. Here is a successful example that meets the CONTEXT, PUBLIC REALM and QUALITY AND PERMANENCE guidelines nicely while securing the store interior after hours. This could allow tenants who seek financial assistance, to protect the investment. This can be a BDS staff review not a Design Commission hearing.





**Historic one-quarter to one-half block office buildings:**



**Full block office buildings, 50+ years old:**

**LONGER TERM STRATEGIES - OFFICE TO RESIDENTIAL CONVERSION**  
Every downtown in the country is talking about converting office to residential. We recognize there are significant financial and code constraints to this concept. From the limited data available to-date, it appears the cities who have produced these types of projects have used major public subsidies to close the feasibility gap. From the permitting and approval standpoint - we show two building type examples of downtown office space - historic and 20<sup>th</sup> century tower. If these were proposed for conversion, BDS and BPS along with DC and HLC in advisory review, could modify code language to facilitate shorter BDS staff level reviews.



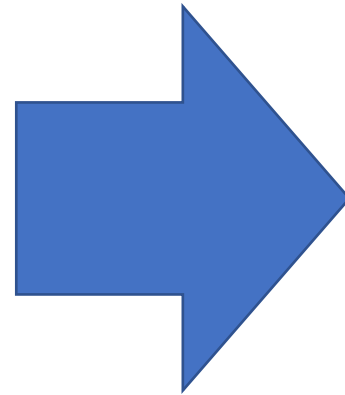
## Current CCFDGS

CONTEXT - 9

PUBLIC REALM - 7

QUALITY AND  
PERMANENCE – 13

29  
guidelines



## Revised CCFDGS 2023-24

10-12 potential  
guidelines

### UPDATE - CENTRAL CITY FUNDAMENTAL DESIGN GUIDELINES

Back to our tools. Our Central City Fundamental Design Guidelines are about 35 years old with the latest revision in 2000. They are long, sometimes redundant and now out of step with current code and the Central City 2035 Plan.

BPS, BDS and DC are committed to applying the same simplification, consolidation and updating recently applied to Citywide DGs, to the CCFDGS. Our goals will be to consolidate from 29 current guidelines to 10-12 potential guidelines.



# City of Portland Design Commission

1900 SW Fourth Ave, Suite 5000  
Portland Oregon 97201  
Telephone: (503) 823-7300  
TDD: (503) 823-6868  
FAX: (503) 823-5630  
www.portlandonline.com/bds

01 Build on the **character local identity, and aspiration** of the place.

THIS GUIDELINE MAY BE ACCOMPLISHED BY...



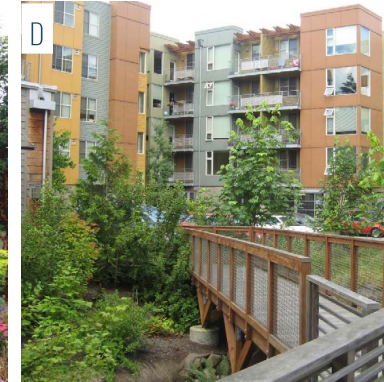
Orienting a building's mass and landscaping to enhance natural topography.  
*Terwilliger, SW Barbur and SW Hooker*



Transforming a Center Transit Station Area and linear superblock to provide a prominent street wall along the transit line, broken up with a series of outdoor spaces and ground floor retail.  
*Hazelwood, NE 122nd and E Burnside*



Utilizing landscaped setbacks and entry sequences that mimic nearby residential patterns.  
*Alberta, NE Alberta and NE 26th Ave*



Designing the site to respond to the ecology and beauty of the place. This project uncovered and restored Tryon Creek's headwaters, providing a connection to the area's natural landscape.  
*Multnomah Village, SW 30th and SW Marigold*

## A Guide to the City of Portland Design Review Process

Prepared by the members of the Portland Design Commission

Updated January 6, 2022

### PUBLIC REALM

#### Parking & Parking Garages

- Garage entrances and on-site loading spaces create dead space adjacent to public sidewalks in a city that strives to be walkable and pedestrian friendly. The Commission consistently seeks configurations that minimize or avoid these negative impacts.
- At-grade or above-grade parking should be entirely within the building structure and wrapped with active uses. Modifications that result in the reduction of active ground floor uses for parking, loading, or similar functions are not supported by the Commission.
- Above-grade parking expressed on a building's exterior is a poor response to all three tenets and is strongly discouraged. If it is proposed, it should be mechanically ventilated and given a façade treatment consistent with the building's overall design concept.

## INTERIM SUPPORT: REVISE - GUIDE TO DESIGN REVIEW

Another idea we've discussed recently is our "Guide to the City of Portland Design Review Process" which is given out to applicant's architects at pre-app to help them understand how the approval process and design guidelines work.

Under a few select topics, it lists cautions and encouragement for concepts that have either been difficult or straightforward in previous projects. But it is just text. We find words + pictures are the most helpful. While the Central City Fundamental Guidelines are being updated, this 'Guide' could be expanded visually to include a wider range of design review topics with best practice photo examples - similar to what's been done with the new Citywide Design Guidelines. This could be an immediate effort in the next few months.

# 92H LENTS

DESIGN REVIEW

LU 22-152764 DZ

Revised: July 29TH, 2022



## 2022 PROJECT OF THE YEAR - 92H Lents

We reviewed 11 major projects for 2022 and approved 9 (5 in one LUR hearing). For the reasons we presented earlier, DC has voted 92H Lents as our 2022 Project of the Year.

Congratulations to Palindrome Communities, YB-A Architects and their design team.





Our Design Commission members as well as BDS staff colleagues have spent much of their careers working in and some of us living in downtown and we are keenly interested in promoting its recovery.

**THANK YOU - DISCUSSION, QUESTIONS?**



