

# PBOT

PORTLAND BUREAU OF TRANSPORTATION

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Date: April 17, 2025

To: Portland Design Commission

Cc: PP&D Design and Historic Review Staff

From: PBOT Planning Staff

Subject: Updating standards for oriel window projections into the public right-of-way

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**Background:** Windows that project into the public right-of-way (ROW) can provide visual interest and variety in building forms that can lend themselves to engaging, active streetscapes. Prior to March 2023, standards for window projections were found in a BDS (now PP&D) code guide. However, in March 2023, that [code guide](#) was rescinded because the State of Oregon elected not to adopt Chapter 32 of the International Building Code (IBC), upon which the city's standards relied, creating an authority gap. The city has since updated its code to adopt Chapter 32 of the IBC, resolving the authority issue. As part of the city's effort to re-instate the standards that developers and staff rely upon, staff recommended moving the requirements in the former code guide into an administrative rule. Code guides are not intended be the primary source for a regulation. PBOT and PP&D have been working to move the standards for window projections into administrative rule [TRN-8.08](#), commonly referred to as the "Encroachment Manual." The manual cover [building projections](#) and the application of the IBC in Portland.

**Proposal:** The situation outlined above provides an opportunity to assess how the former regulations were working and modify them to address any issues before adopting them into the encroachment administrative rule. In combination with building heights, street and sidewalk width, setbacks, and other regulations, window projections can contribute to a desirable feeling of enclosure that conveys a sense of safety and "here-ness" to pedestrians. However, when windows project over the public right-of-way, the sense of enclosure can become restricting or tunnel-like if projections are too imposing.

Staff have identified some developments with window projections that meet current standards but may be degrading to the sidewalk environment. Furthermore, when balconies are used in conjunction with oriel window projections, the result can be an entire building frontage (or large part of it) projecting into the right-of-way.



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The reinstatement of standards for window projections over the right-of-way provides the city with an opportunity to adjust the regulations to:

- Ensure window projections contribute to a comfortable public realm and positive pedestrian experience.
- Avoid continuous cavernous or tunnel-like streetscapes as redevelopment occurs.
- Prevent buildings from encroaching too far or heavily into the ROW, including the consideration of balconies in projections.

**Four proposals that follow** are intended to support the development of a high-quality pedestrian environment along the public ROW and may be implemented individually or collectively.

1. Link projection distance to the sidewalk frontage zone width
2. Increase minimum height for oriel windows, but not balconies
3. Increase proportion of projections that must be windows
4. Address adjacent balconies and oriel window projections

PBOT welcomes the Design Commissions advice on which of these proposals should be implemented.