



Design Commission Briefing

SUMMARY MEMO

Date: May 13, 2025
To: Portland Design Commission
From: Tim Heron, Design / Historic Review Team
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Re: May 1, 2025 PBOT Briefing - Updating the Oriel Windows Projection Standards

This summary memo is regarding the May 1, 2025 Briefing - Updating the Oriel Windows Projection Standards. All documents may be found here: [Efiles - BRIEFING – Window Projections into the Public Right-of-Way](#) and includes presentation slides, Staff Memo and Zoom Webinar recording.

Commissioners in attendance on May 1, 2025: Zari Santner, Tina Bue, Sarah Vaz, Joe Swank, Thomas Eldridge. *Absent:* Brian McCarter, Chandra Robinson.

The standards for window projections over the right-of-way provides the city with an opportunity to review 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 proposed revisions to the *April 2015 Code Guide for Window Projections* are intended to support the development of a high-quality pedestrian environment along the public ROW and may be implemented individually or collectively.

Design Commission Summary of Advice on four proposal areas:

General Summary

- The Design Commission was unanimous that oriel window projections and balconies should be encouraged.
- Commission also agreed that more balconies than oriel window projections should be encouraged by the new standards.

1. Link projection distance to the sidewalk frontage zone width

- Commissioners all agreed that depth of the projection into the ROW could relate to the sidewalk corridor frontage zone. A maximum 4' projection was also encouraged.
- Commissioners also agreed that flexibility should be provided to meet the Zoning Code required 4'x6' outdoor area requirement.
- Commissioners agreed that the same standards that apply to oriel window projections into the ROW should apply to balconies.

2. Increase minimum height for oriel windows, but not balconies

- Commissioners agreed that the same standards that apply to oriel window projections into the ROW should apply to balconies.
- Commissioners agreed that tying both oriel window projections and balconies restrictions for height also appropriate.
- Commissioners suggested that tying the minimum clearance from the sidewalk to the Zoning Code minimum ground floor height clearance would be appropriate.
- Commissioners noted that a 12' minimum clearance would be ideal, 10' minimum.

3. Increase proportion of projections that must be windows

- Commissioners all agreed with the increase in window area improves eyes on the street and improves the oriel window projection contribution to the public realm.
- One Commissioner noted that having flexibility to not provide window area on the side of an oriel window projection if facing a balcony of the adjacent unit.

4. Address adjacent balconies and oriel window projections

- Commissioners generally agreed that some separation at the property line/ street-facing building façade is desirable.
- Commissioners encouraged working on a formula for some percentage of oriel window projections and balcony projections should be developed to avoid a looming projecting presence over the ROW and public realm.
- Some Commissioners suggested to not allow oriel window projections at the top of the building to be connected by an architectural feature to help reduce the looming presence of oriels window projections over the ROW.
- Some Commissioner were also concerned by fully recessed balcony conditions and/ or balconies that are flanked by oriel window projections.