

# DOWNTOWN CODE DESIGN GUIDELINES



Nashville, TN

Spring 2024 • Draft



NASHVILLE  
**PLANNING**

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# BACKGROUND

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The **Downtown Code (DTC)** is a form-based zoning code that applies to much of the Downtown Nashville Community Plan area. Since its adoption in 2010, the DTC has shaped the growth and development in Downtown Nashville. The DTC has been amended from time-to-time over the ensuing decade, as downtown neighborhoods have continued to grow and evolve.

The **Downtown Code Design Review Committee (DTC DRC)** is a body made up of design professionals with experience in architecture, landscape

architecture, planning, or urban design. The DTC DRC's current responsibilities include: reviewing and approving concept plans, major modifications, and revisions to previously approved plans. Additionally, the DTC DRC makes recommendations to the Planning Commission regarding modifications to height.

In late 2022, an amendment to the DTC was adopted that requires that the DTC DRC review and approve a 'DTC Concept Plan' prior to the approval of a 'DTC Final Site Plan' (an application which is reviewed and approved at the Staff level).



Nashville, Tennessee. USA. February 13, 2023 (vecteezy.com via Marianne Pfeil)

# PURPOSE AND APPLICATION

The purpose of the **Downtown Code Design**

**Guidelines (DTC DG)** is:

- to aid design review of development proposals in Downtown Nashville.
- to provide property owners, developers, and designers with predictable and implementable design guidance based on existing planning and design policies and best practices.
- to encourage and emphasize best-in-class site and architectural design, raising the bar for design quality across the board.
- to outline what is necessary to design and build a Downtown Nashville that works for everyone.

Each of the design guidelines in this document support one of four key goals that are critical to the success of a development proposal in Downtown Nashville.

**Future-Focused Ecological Design**

**Human-Oriented Design**

**Contextual and Connected Design**

**High-Caliber Architectural Design**

Generally, the guidelines are applied by Metro Nashville Staff and by relevant discretionary bodies in their evaluation of the design merits of development proposals with Downtown Code (DTC) zoning.

## Use by Metro Nashville Staff:

Metro Nashville Staff may use these guidelines to assess development proposals for properties zoned DTC, in the following contexts:

- To provide design-based feedback for pre-application and application discussions.
- To provide a discretionary design-based decision (such as minor modification requests).
- To provide a recommendation towards a design-based decision (such as concept plan approval requests or major modification requests) to a discretionary body.

## Use by Discretionary Bodies:

Discretionary bodies (including but not limited to the Downtown Code Design Review Committee and the Metropolitan Planning Commission) may use these guidelines to assess development proposals for properties zoned DTC, in the following contexts:

- To provide a discretionary design-based decision (such as concept plan approval requests or major modification requests).
- To provide a recommendation towards a design-based decision (such as an Overall Height Modification request) to another discretionary body.

# DOCUMENT STRUCTURE

Nashville's **Downtown Code Design Guidelines (DTC DG)** are organized into goals, guidelines, and strategies, as illustrated by photos, diagrams, and other visual representations. Project teams are encouraged to think creatively and critically about how their specific proposals can fulfill these goals and guidelines.

## Goals:

These are the overarching design objectives for development proposals within Downtown Nashville.

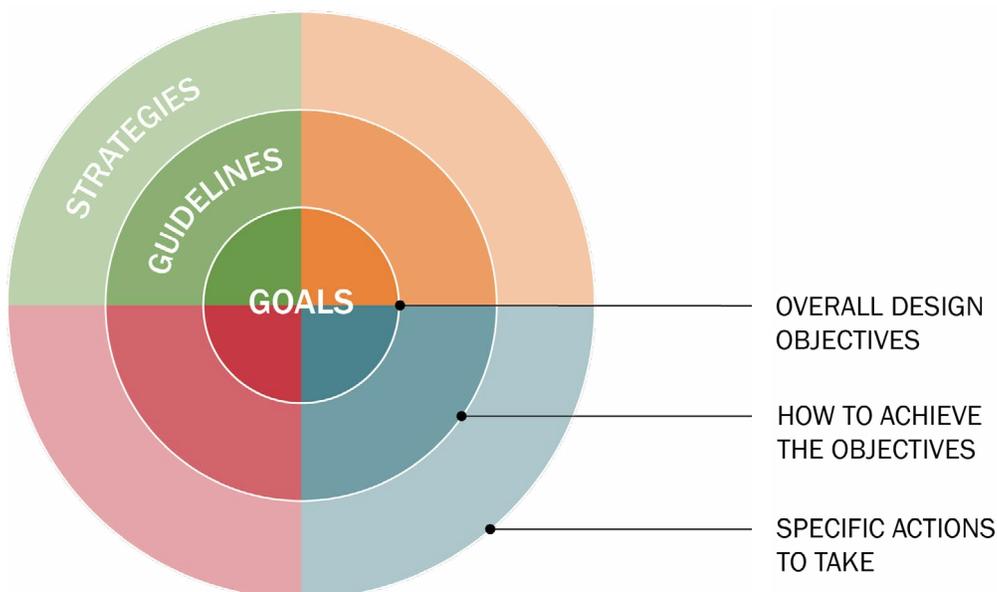
These are the 'headline' version of what should be evidently clear in project proposals.

## Guidelines:

These are the key directives to achieve the overarching goal and design objectives.

## Strategies:

These are listed out under each guideline and outline possible actions that a property owner, developer, or designer could take to implement that given guideline. The strategies listed describe a starting set of possible ideas and are not meant to be exhaustive. Rather, they are intended to create a well-rounded understanding of how a guideline could be best implemented.



## **GOAL 1** Future-Focused Ecological Design

- Guideline 01 Bolster natural features and ecosystem services.
- Guideline 02 Incorporate sustainable site and building design technologies, materials, and systems.

## **GOAL 2** Human-Oriented Design

- Guideline 03 Provide safe, inclusive, and accessible experiences.
- Guideline 04 Minimize the impacts of parking and building services.
- Guideline 05 Create an active and dynamic streetscape and public realm.

## **GOAL 3** Contextual and Connected Design

- Guideline 06 Recognize and enhance the site context.
- Guideline 07 Prioritize multimodal transportation.

## **GOAL 4** High-Caliber Architectural Design

- Guideline 08 Demonstrate a clear and coherent organizing design concept in the project massing and site layout.
- Guideline 09 Support the project's design intent through considered architectural expression at different scales.



# FUTURE- FOCUSED ECOLOGICAL DESIGN

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Future-Focused Ecological Design encompasses an approach to designing Downtown Nashville with careful consideration to the environmental impact of built projects. This section outlines strategies for climate mitigation and adaptation, including efforts to supplement our stormwater infrastructure in order to help reduce flash flooding events, and planting shade trees to help mitigate increasing climate temperatures.

Nashville can play this key role in prioritizing a climate-aware and proactive design approach while also embracing resiliency and the protection of natural resources, including the Cumberland River and the topographical landscape hills of downtown.

**GUIDELINE 01**

**Bolster natural features and ecosystem services.**

**GUIDELINE 02**

**Incorporate sustainable site and building design technologies, materials, and systems.**

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## BOLSTER NATURAL FEATURES AND ECOSYSTEM SERVICES.

### NATURAL RESOURCES

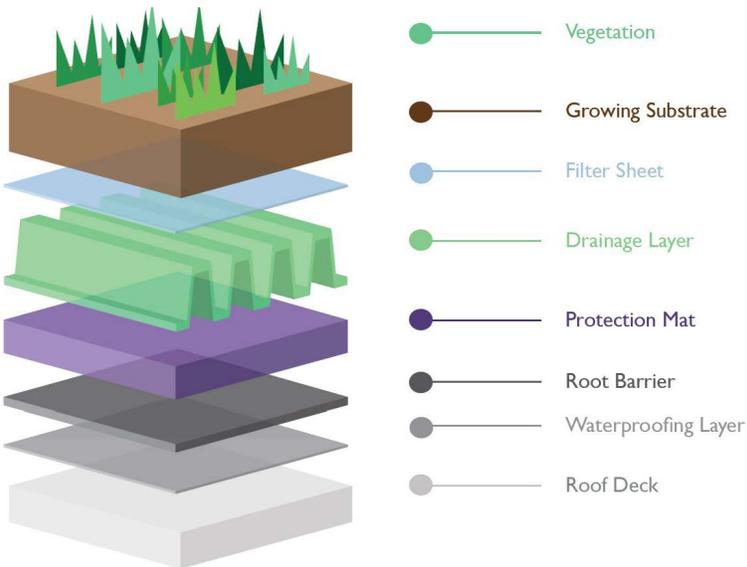
- Respond to topographical conditions and the ground plane in a sensitive manner.
- Respect and frame visual connections to natural features such as waterways and hilltops.
- Embrace a performative design approach that highlights environmental systems and functionality within the design intent.
- Preserve and protect healthy, mature trees, especially native species. Contribute to a contiguous tree canopy where mature trees do not exist. Limit use of columnar/fastigiata tree varieties.

### ECOSYSTEM SERVICES

- Integrate stormwater management and flood mitigation into the site design.
  - » Utilize stormwater modeling inclusive of climate change projections.
  - » Increase stormwater capture and pollutant removal with bioswales and bioretention areas, permeable pavers, cisterns, water recycling, and green roofs and walls.
  - » Minimize stormwater run-off via green roofs, pervious surfaces, intentional grading, and planting.
  - » Reduce water consumption with xeriscaping (utilizing native, drought-tolerant plants).
- Promote biodiversity, preserve native habitats, and support functional ecosystems with year round interest.
- Utilize landscape design strategies that optimize micro-climatic conditions and extend seasonal comfort.
- Minimize the urban heat island effect by planting canopy trees, incorporating green roofs, providing water features, and/or optimizing pervious surface coverage.
- Contribute shade and shelter by providing canopy trees, furnishings, or building elements like awnings or loggias.
- Minimize surface areas comprised of turf grasses, sod, and mulch, in favor of more permeable groundcovers such as native grasses and perennials.
- Protect against light and noise pollution.



01A: The Peabody Union residential tower (Rolling Mill Hill) takes advantage of its site directly adjacent to Nashville's Cumberland River by orienting its façade parallel to the riverbank.



01B: High-quality green roof systems can help with stormwater management, mitigate the heat island effect, create habitats, filter pollutants, sequester carbon and even increase agricultural and amenity space.

01C: Green roofs, like the one at The Pinnacle at Symphony Place (SoBro), can double as outdoor spaces for building occupants.



01D: Native plantings occupy a bioswale that is integrated into public open space.



01E: Noble Park (Gulch South) is a pocket park lined with active uses that features places to sit and quality landscaping materials.



## INCORPORATE SUSTAINABLE SITE AND BUILDING DESIGN TECHNOLOGIES, MATERIALS, AND SYSTEMS.

### SUSTAINABLE DESIGN

- Strive for green building and/or sustainable site certification, a minimum of LEED Silver or equivalent, for all new buildings.
- Employ sustainable operations and maintenance strategies for buildings and landscape areas.
- Use building materials that are made from recycled or renewable resources, and prioritize the specification of locally sourced materials.
- Reuse existing, viable structures to reduce the unnecessary use of additional resources when possible.

### BUILDING ENVELOPE

- Design fenestration to maximize on natural daylighting for inhabitable spaces.
- Design roofs and/or walls to generate renewable energy.
- Design roofs and/or walls to provide habitat-supportive vegetation, along with a clear maintenance plan for those planted areas.
- Design façades with attention paid to light reflectivity, glare, and bird-friendly glazing when possible.
- Design roofs with white or reflective paint and light-colored paving materials to reflect heat away from buildings and reduce the loads on building mechanical systems.



02A, above right / 02B, above : The Neuhoff District (Germantown) provides many ways of integrating reused structures and materials within a new development – for example, concrete columns from a portion of a rehabilitated structure have been repurposed as a sculptural element within the atrium space of an office building.

02C, below left: Glazing with contrasting patterns can help prevent bird mortality and with energy efficiency in buildings.

## BUILDING SYSTEMS

- Provide building and landscape irrigation systems that reduce water use.
- Exceed energy performance requirements by employing passive solar design strategies, high-performing envelope assemblies, and energy efficient heating, cooling, and lighting systems.
- Where provided, parking spaces should be prioritized for carpool groups and electric vehicles. EV parking spaces and EV-ready spaces should be installed at the time of construction so that capacity can expand as demand grows.



02D: Plantings are used as a material on a building's façade (SoBro).



02E: Music City Center's (SoBro) four-acre green roof protects the expansive roof from harsh UV rays, wind, and stormwater runoff.



# HUMAN- ORIENTED DESIGN

Human-Oriented Design focuses on design strategies that prioritize creating spaces for people in the urban context. Through activation along street frontages and the integration of accessible ways to move through, around and between projects, people are empowered to actively engage with their environment, making the city feel safer and more inclusive for all of its users.

**GUIDELINE 03**

**Provide safe, inclusive, and accessible experiences.**

**GUIDELINE 04**

**Minimize the impacts of parking and building services.**

**GUIDELINE 05**

**Create an active and dynamic streetscape and public realm.**

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## PROVIDE SAFE, INCLUSIVE, AND ACCESSIBLE EXPERIENCES.

### SAFE

- Incorporate elements that enhance perception of safety and security in building design, open space and site design, and streetscape design. Successful elements may include pedestrian-scaled lighting, active uses on the ground floor with transparent glazing, outdoor gathering spaces, well-demarcated pedestrian areas, considered exterior lighting, etc.
- Buffer pedestrian spaces from vehicular traffic with landscaping, street trees, stormwater management, parked vehicles, or bicycle lanes.
- Emphasize safety in the design of spaces for multimodal transportation and outdoor space users.



03A: Integrating well-designed wayfinding signage can help guide the user experience within a development.

### ACCESSIBLE

- Projects should comply with all applicable ADA guidelines and requirements.
- Limit barriers that create a perceived privatization of public open or outdoor spaces. For example: retaining walls, fences, screens, steps/ramps over three feet in height, etc.
- Create accessible vertical connections where there are viaducts, bridges, or other difficult-to-navigate changes in grade.
- Within the pedestrian realm, maintain a clear path of movement, between the frontage zone and the furnishing zone, so that pedestrians can pass each other comfortably,
- Locate publicly accessible open spaces so they are physically and visually accessible from the sidewalk.



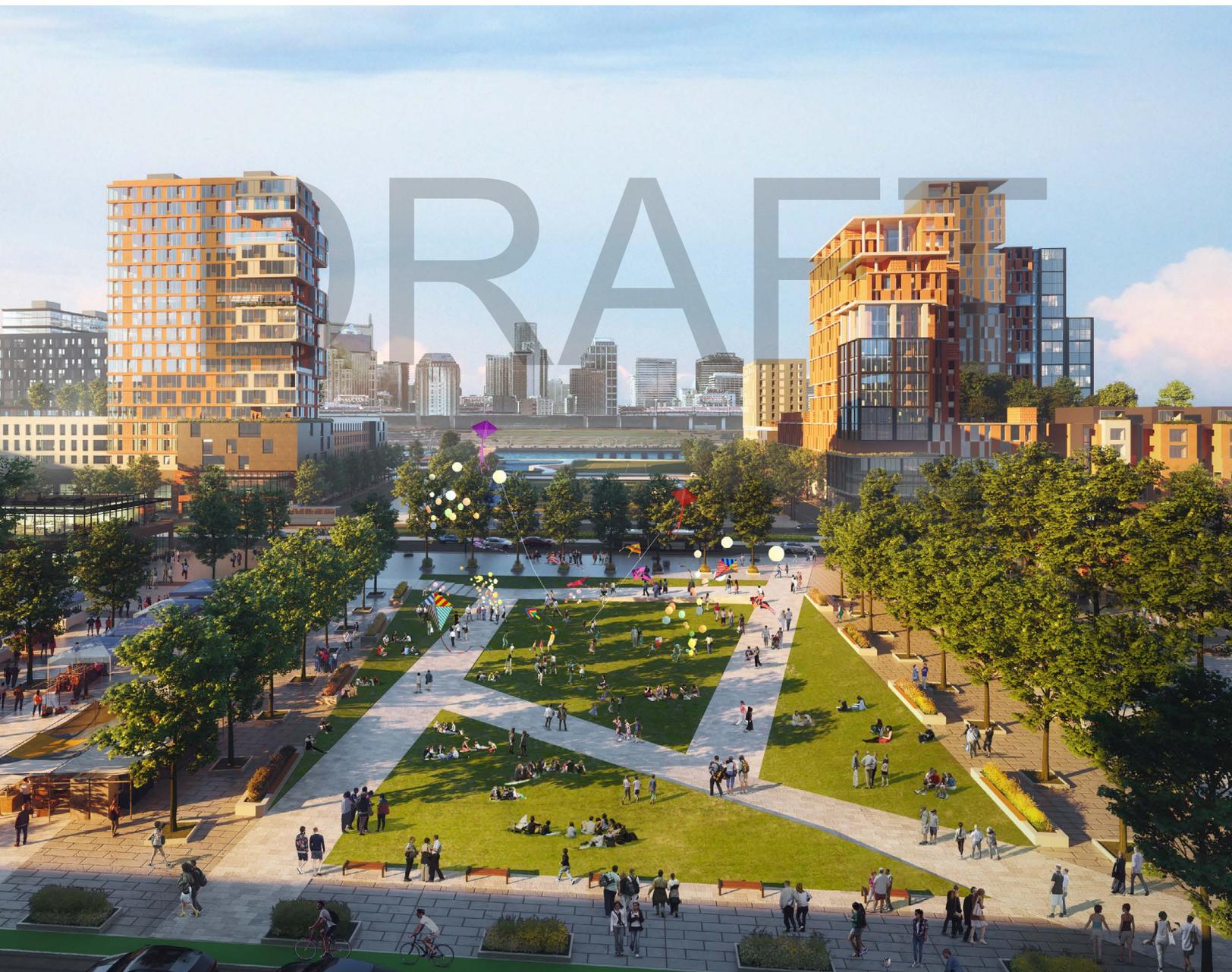
03B: Circulation design should encourage a variety of means to move through spaces in a development.

## INCLUSIVE

- Ensure the design of spaces is equitable, flexible, comfortable, and intuitive to accommodate people with different abilities, preferences, cultural backgrounds, and levels of understanding.
- Provide essential wayfinding information for all modes of transportation to and from key landmarks or access points in various formats, such as written and verbal (in multiple languages), pictorial, and tactile. Informative signage should be designed with strategic use of layout and color to maximize legibility.



03C: Promise Park (Nashville Zoo) is an example of an outdoor public space designed to be accessible and inclusive for all users.



03D: The Imagine East Bank Vision Plan includes conceptual renderings of a safe, inclusive, and accessible central park adjacent to the Cumberland River.



## MINIMIZE THE IMPACTS OF PARKING AND BUILDING SERVICES.

### VEHICULAR PARKING

- Limit the inclusion of vehicular parking within the program of a project as much as possible.
- Where vehicular parking is provided, it is strongly encouraged that all parking should be located below-grade in order to prioritize active uses in above-grade building spaces.
- Below-grade parking should not encroach into the public right-of-way.
- Above-grade vehicular parking should only be proposed when:
  - » There are significant infrastructural impediments to placing parking below grade, such as, for example, the presence of district-wide infrastructure within 20' of the ground surface.
  - » It is lined with habitable space with active uses.
  - » The massing plus lining/screening of the above-grade vehicular parking is meaningfully integrated into the overall project.



04A, above / 04B, below right: Upper-level habitable liner buildings with residential uses – such as The Harlowe (Gulch South), and office uses – such as Prima (Gulch South) line above-grade structured parking garages. The massing and materiality of these building's bases relate to the massing and materiality of the tower forms that sit above



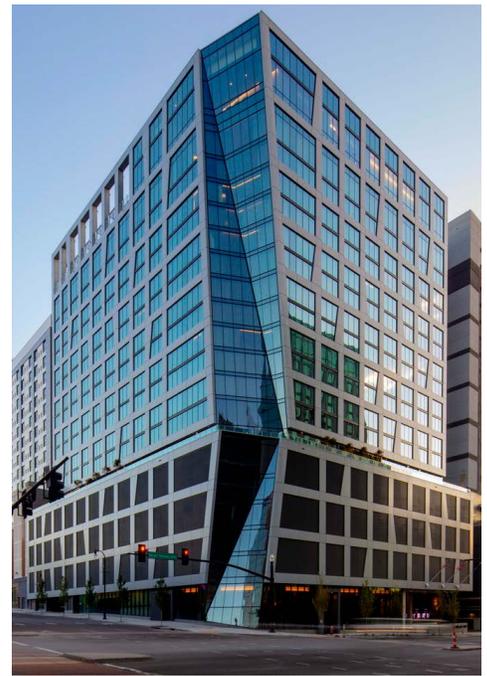
04C, below middle / 04D, below left: Buildings that provide no parking – such as Alcove (Downtown Core), or entirely underground parking – such as Peabody Plaza (Rolling Mill Hill) create opportunities for more compact or unique towers, and designed outdoor spaces.



04E: A screening element at the Hyatt Centric (SoBro) features a low percentage of openings.



04F: Parking levels, at the Bridgestone Tower (SoBro) are screened from view with materials that fit seamlessly into the tower design.

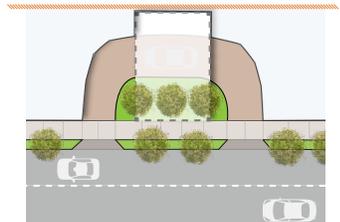
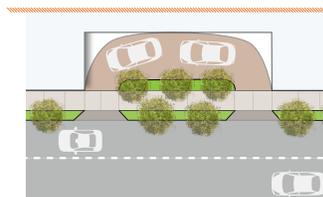
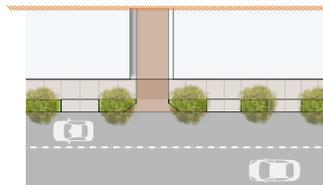


04G: A screening element featuring a similar repetition and pattern to the glazing of the habitable levels at The Joseph (SoBro).

- Un-lined above-grade parking is discouraged and should only be proposed when:
  - » An aesthetically considered, high-quality screening on the exposed parking façade area(s) is included. The screening should fit with the design of the rest of the building to create visual interest and enhance the overall pedestrian and streetscape experience.
  - » Parking level floor plates shall be level except to the minimum extent required for drainage and access between levels; Parking level structure shall be constructed to accommodate occupant loads associated with uses consistent with the program above the parking levels; Parking level floor-to-floor heights shall be a minimum of ten feet.

## ALL VEHICULAR ACCESS

- Drive-t establishments and surface parking lots are discouraged.
- Minimize the number of curb cuts and their widths. Cross and Joint Access may be appropriate and encouraged in some scenarios.
- In a scenario where alley access is unavailable, vehicular access should be taken from the lowest classified street frontage.
- Utilize a site's topography, when possible, to facilitate below-grade vehicular access.
- Carefully consider rideshare, delivery, and other pick-up/drop-off locations and sequencing.
- Use materiality (such as pavement patterns or colors) or changes in elevation (such as raised pedestrian crossings) to distinguish vehicular and pedestrian spaces.
- Avoid vehicular access points that conflict with existing or planned bikeways and transit priority corridors.



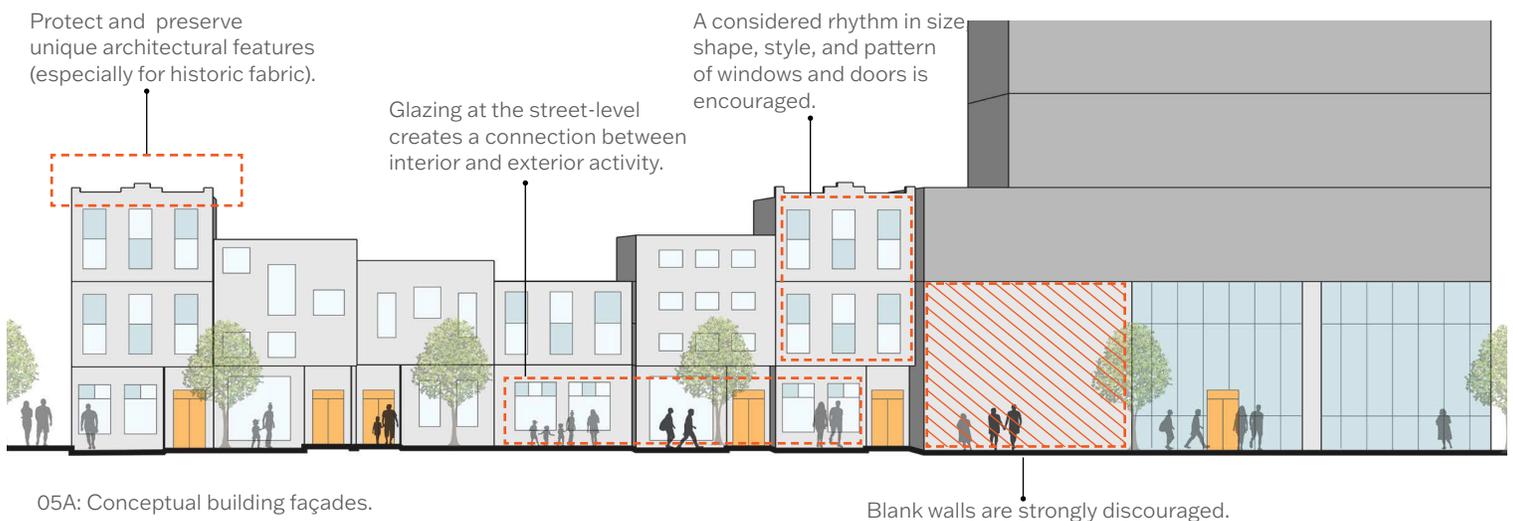
04H: Means of access for vehicles may be different depending on the specific site and frontage conditions. The above diagrams show alley access, a lay-by-lane, a drop-off lane, and porte cochère options.



## CREATE AN ACTIVE AND DYNAMIC STREETScape AND PUBLIC REALM.

### BUILDING DESIGN

- Provide pedestrian entrances at the ground level that are inviting and appropriate for the scale of the interior use and its street frontage.
  - » More prominent public uses should feature celebrated pedestrian entrances – this could include wide, set back, landscaped spaces with taller ground floor heights and overhead projections.
  - » Non-residential pedestrian entrances should be located at grade or slightly above (accessed by steps or ramps) and visible from the sidewalk. Entrances below street level are discouraged.
  - » Residential pedestrian entrances at the ground level (such as walk-up units) should be distinguished by changes in materials and colors, and by slightly elevating, lowering, and/or setting back the entry from the primary façade.
- Employ active ground floor uses, such as storefronts and lobbies, and design these to be open to the public.
- Feature glazing at street-level façades that is highly transparent to allow for visibility and a connection between the interior and exterior activity. Where possible, include operable windows to help animate a building.
- Avoid blank walls uninterrupted by pedestrian entrances or glazing at the sidewalk.
- Maintain and shape a streetwall on street-fronting projects. Incorporate an appropriately-scaled rhythm of elements, such as entrances to active uses, inset reliefs, ground level glazing, and human-scaled materiality to maintain a dynamic street edge that helps shape and define the pedestrian realm.
- Maintaining one finished floor elevation for the entire ground floor of a large site that navigates topographical changes is discouraged.



05A: Conceptual building façades.

### Frontage Zone

Entrances to residential units are raised slightly over the sidewalk, but still visible to pedestrians.

Glazing is present, but could be to a lesser degree as that of a commercial setting.

Façade articulation, landscaping, balconies, and terraces help to activate the building façade.

### Furnishing Zone

Furnishings serve primarily aesthetic and performative purposes – stormwater management and landscaping.



Frontage Zone

Sidewalk and Bicycle Lane

Furnishing Zone

05B, above / 05C, below: The Imagine East Bank Vision Plan includes conceptual renderings of active and dynamic streetscapes for frontages of both residential (above) and commercial (below) buildings.

## STREETSCAPE AND PUBLIC REALM DESIGN

- Plan for utilities such that they do not interfere with the pedestrian right-of-way – bury overhead utility lines and place utility elements outside of the pedestrian zone.
- Activate the furnishing zone with landscaping, street trees, and other street furniture (such as lighting, seating, planters, wayfinding, transit stops, bicycle racks, pedestrian scaled public art, etc.). Elements within the furnishing zone should be scaled appropriately for their context.
- Consider how a project's use and street frontage can best play a role in maximizing efficient use of the curb.
- Grade changes should be navigated gracefully with attention to the creation of inhabitable outdoor spaces using seatwalls, water features, and other vegetation to shape outdoor rooms and pathways. Vegetation and lighting should be layered and the ground, mid, and canopy levels to create these human-scaled outdoor spaces.
- Outdoor spaces in the public realm should be designed to respond to micro climatic conditions - such as sunlight, heat, wind, and noise - to optimize human comfort throughout the seasons.

### Frontage Zone

Active storefronts with high levels of glazing directly front the sidewalk.

Outdoor dining areas, pocket parks, or other reliefs/extrusions of the building façade may be appropriate.

Towers are “stepped-back” from the more human-scaled bases of buildings.

### Sidewalk

Unique paving patterns can increase visual interest in an otherwise expansive urban sidewalk.

### Furnishing Zone

Furnishing serve aesthetic, performative, and functional purposes – seating, bicycle storage, trash cans, and more.



Frontage Zone

Sidewalk

Furnishing Zone



# CONTEXTUAL AND CONNECTED DESIGN

Contextual and Connected Design emphasizes the important role a project in the city center plays in shaping the urban fabric. The placement and orchestration of built context with open spaces and paths of movement help define the urban layers and lay the groundwork that will continue to support growth across the distinct neighborhoods of Nashville.

Facilitating multimodal transportation is a priority for our growing city, in order to best support the growing population and density in Nashville's urban core.

**GUIDELINE 06**

**Recognize and enhance the site context.**

**GUIDELINE 07**

**Prioritize multimodal transportation.**

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## RECOGNIZE AND ENHANCE THE SITE CONTEXT.

### URBAN NETWORKS

- Extend and enhance the fabric of streets, alleys, sidewalks, paths, and open spaces to create walkable neighborhoods.
- Seize design opportunities to celebrate and reinforce unique conditions in the urban fabric as points to shape and support neighborhood identity.
- Place and shape outdoor space to respond to and connect with nearby existing parks and open space areas.
- Consider proximities to multi-modal transportation routes when considering site selection and layout.

### SCALE AND FORM

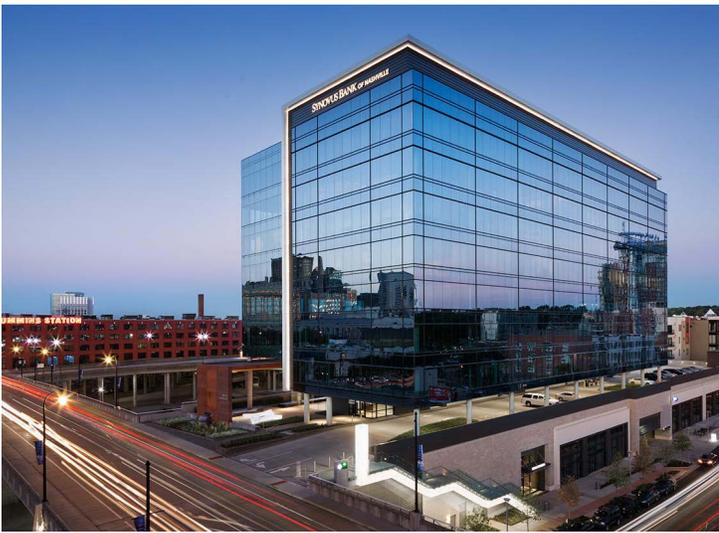
- Align building scale and mass with neighborhood structures, employing setbacks and side terracing as needed to minimize impact on light, air and the aesthetic continuity, especially when transitioning to smaller residential neighborhoods.
- Protect and re-purpose historic and culturally significant structures and thoughtfully incorporate their significant elements into new project proposals.

### NATURAL CONDITIONS

- Integrate the site design and placement of structures harmoniously with existing topographic conditions.
- Provide sun/shade studies (for solstice/equinox dates) to demonstrate the impact of any proposed site and building design on the surrounding context.
- Actively engage the Cumberland River and other waterways in site design.

### PLACEMAKING

- Foster civic pride through the strategic integration of art, murals, and local artifacts as essential public amenities, thoughtfully positioned to enhance visibility, offer educational value and align with surrounding urban context.
- Engage the community to identify and address their needs (through the contribution of infrastructure, publicly accessible open spaces, or specific uses or programming) within a project proposal that serves the greater community.
- Refer to a site's history and cultural context and weave this into the project approach and site planning, when applicable.



06A: Gulch Crossing (Gulch South) responds to its site context by providing a publicly-accessible stair that connects the Demonbreun Street viaduct to 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue South.



06B: Along the Cumberland River in Downtown Nashville, development scale and intensity increases as it gets further inland.



06C: An infill building under construction matches the existing architectural contexts (street wall, glazing pattern, and step-back) of its surroundings.

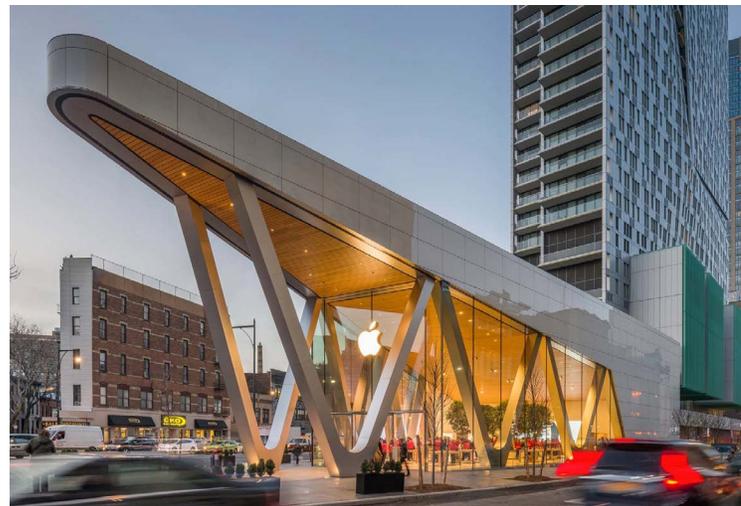
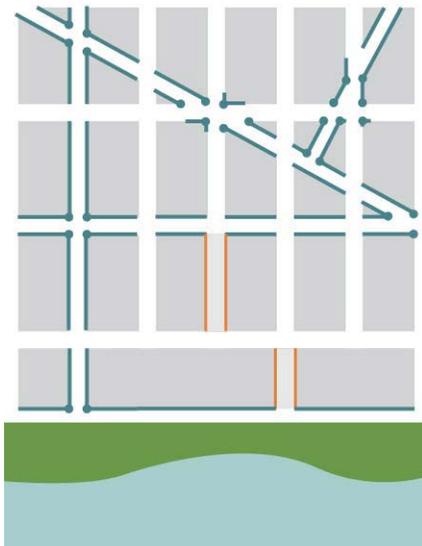


06D: At the South Boston Waterfront in Boston, MA, site design provides opportunities for engaging and observing the waterfront context through massing, height, and outdoor spaces.

06E (right):  
Conceptual street  
and block network.

Design responses at the intersection of prominent or irregular streets, or along prominent frontages (such as streets or open spaces) are encouraged.

Design responses to existing and planned urban networks are encouraged. Here, several large blocks were broken into smaller sites to match context.



06F: An architectural design gesture, at the ground level of this development, is provided at the intersection of two streets that create an irregular block shape and size.



## PRIORITIZE MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION.

### MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION

- Incorporate specific recommendations from the most recent and relevant transportation studies completed by Metro and NDOT.
- Connect existing and planned multimodal networks.
- Minimize opportunities for vehicular conflicts with pedestrians and cyclists.
- Prioritize multimodal transportation options through wayfinding signage.

### PEDESTRIAN-SPECIFIC

- Design public open spaces to complement and connect with the streetscape design.
- Incorporate mid-block pedestrian crossings and plaza areas adjacent to the right-of-way where suitable, particularly along lengthy street blocks.

### TRANSIT-SPECIFIC

- Establish intermodal transit centers that facilitate the smooth interchange between various transportation nodes, encompassing elements such as bus terminals, railway stations and transit centers.
- Upgrade transit stops adjacent to project proposals to be compliant with WeGo's Transit Design Guidelines.

### GREENWAY-SPECIFIC

- Extend and make clear, robust, connections to the greenway network, activating these greenways by connecting them to open spaces and mixed-use projects.

### BICYCLE-SPECIFIC

- Provide ample amounts of both short-term and long-term bicycle parking. Ensure that a portion of the bicycle parking is publicly accessible. Ensure that a portion of the bicycle parking can accommodate e-bikes and larger cargo bikes.
- Utilize intuitive bicycle racks, such as an “Inverted U,” that allows for multiple points of contact between the rack and the bicycle.
- Incorporate amenities for bicycling users of a proposed project. Amenities may include showers, changing rooms, bicycle parking, lockers, and/or bicycle repair tools and should be easily accessible from the ground level of the building.



07A: The underside of a viaduct has been used as a connection to a greenway, activated with murals and seating (Gulch South).



07B: Bicycle and transit facilities are integrated into the streetscape and design of adjacent development.



07C, above / 07D, below: The Imagine East Bank Vision Plan includes conceptual renderings of safe and connected multimodal transportation networks for pedestrians, cyclists, and transit.



07E, above / 07F, below: "Inverted U" bicycle racks are located on the sidewalk for short-term bicycle parking, while an interior bicycle storage room allows for more secure, long-term parking.





# HIGH-CALIBER ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN

High-Caliber Architectural Design highlights the goal of achieving excellence in Nashville's architecture. A considered site design sets the foundation for any built project, and the intention is that the design of both site and architecture be thoughtfully and reciprocally symbiotic.

Each architectural proposal should demonstrate a clear design concept and intent through its massing, materiality, and articulation across scales - from that of the material unit to the greater city skyline.

**GUIDELINE 08**

**Demonstrate a clear and coherent organizing design concept in the project massing and site layout.**

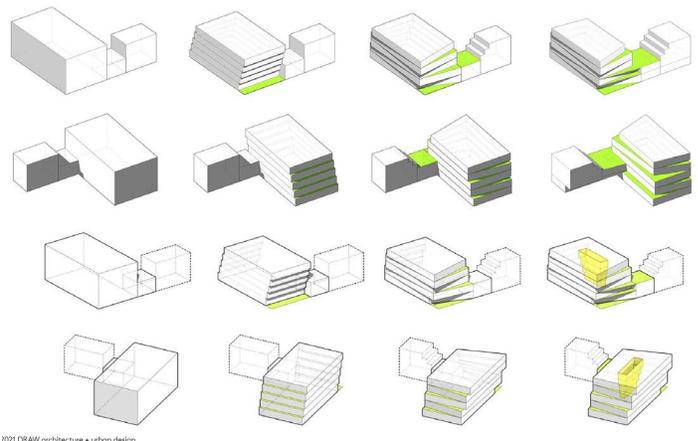
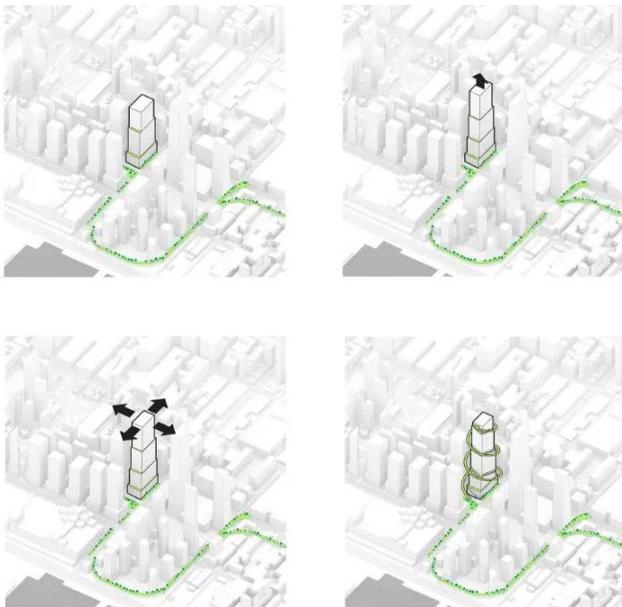
**GUIDELINE 09**

**Support the project's design intent through considered architectural expression at different scales.**



## DEMONSTRATE A CLEAR AND COHERENT ORGANIZING DESIGN CONCEPT IN THE PROJECT MASSING AND SITE LAYOUT.

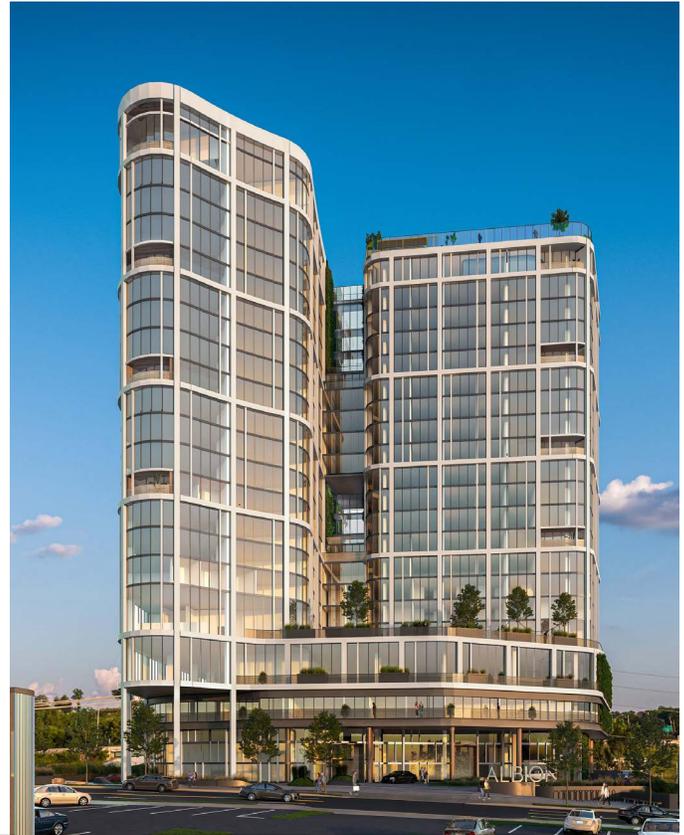
- Make architectural concepts clear, compelling, and consistent to their own guiding logic. Consider and design building massings with attention to solar orientation, access to open spaces, street adjacencies, and existing fabric. Shape buildings to respond to the surrounding context, through setbacks, fenestration patterns, horizontal datums, and other key visual relationships.
- Design sites, building massing, pathways, and the approach to sites to respect existing view corridors and create new viewpoints from public streets and spaces where feasible. Take note of which elevations are visible from different vantage points and design with those in mind, including from major corridors, open spaces, and interstates.
- Create a complementary relationship between structures (new, existing, and approved) with clear attention to views from all sides and approaches. Buildings should be appropriately spaced apart and footprints shaped and laid out on site to support these views and access to light on all frontages.
- Design buildings that relate to the human scale – carefully consider the proportions of the base of the building in relation to the pedestrian and creating an active pedestrian realm. Refer to Guidelines under Goal 2 – Human-Oriented Design.
- Consider the transition between the design of the base and the design of upper floors to be visually cohesive and compatible, through material and façade separation, treatment, and proportions.



08A, left / 08B, right: Diagrams can help graphically translate the conceptual intent for a project – highlighting derivation of form, organization of program and circulation, and the logic behind interior and exterior organizing principles.



08C: The Virgin Hotel (Music Row) features a design that responds to its context at a major intersection. It presents a unified aesthetic between its lower levels and their relationship to the human scale and the upper floors, through clear massing, articulation, and fenestration.



08D: The Albion (Gulch South) features a design that reflects its prominence and visibility in the downtown skyline, a consistent material treatment between the base and tower, and effective articulation to break down of large expanses of glazing.



08E: Contrasting a tower from the base of a building in a complementary way is an appropriate way to consider transitions in scale.



08F: Fifth + Broadway (Upper Broadway) presents a unified concept of dining and shopping district at the base of high-rise towers.

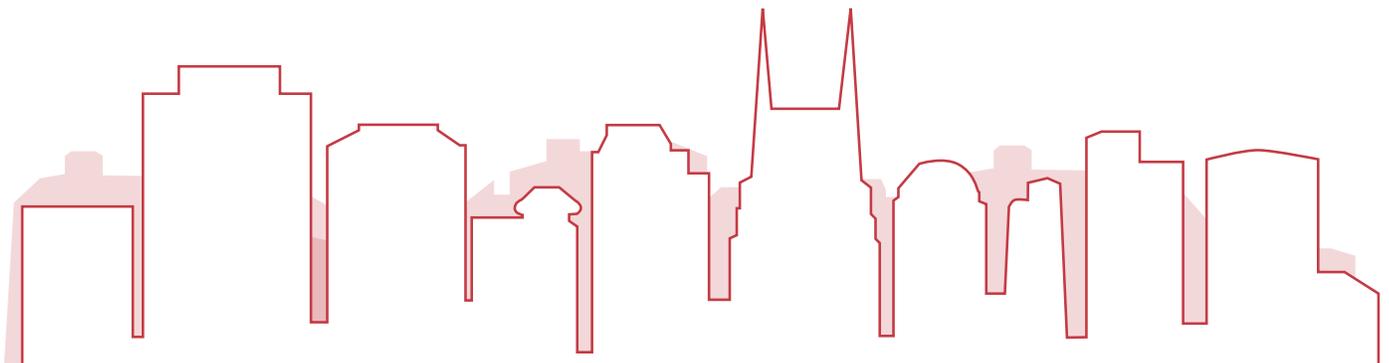


08G: Paseo South Gulch (Gulch South) presents a unified design concept in its relationship between the lower levels of new towers to the scale of surrounding historic buildings and outdoor spaces.

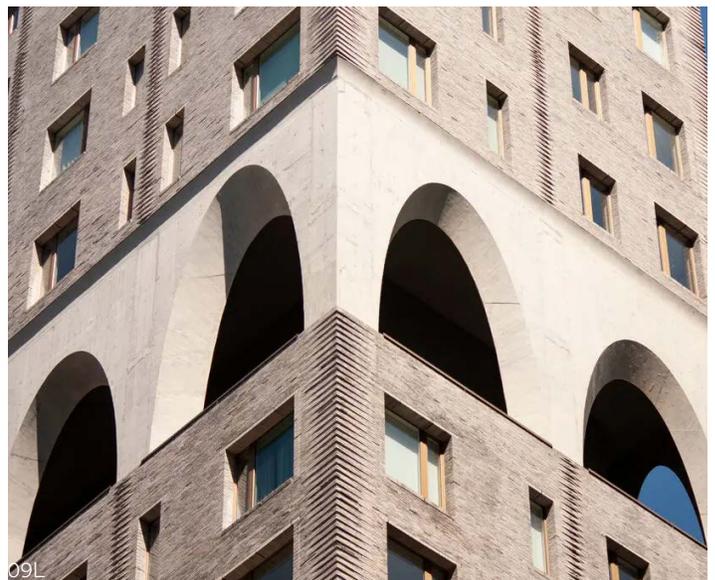
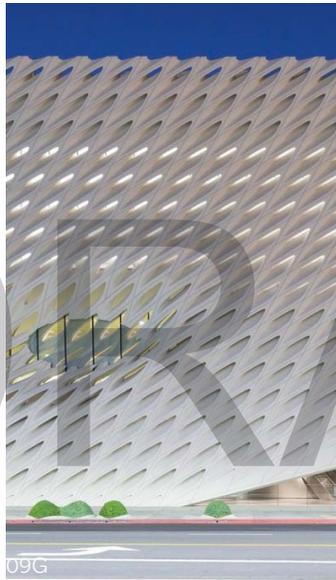


## SUPPORT THE PROJECT'S DESIGN INTENT THROUGH CONSIDERED ARCHITECTURAL EXPRESSION AT DIFFERENT SCALES.

- Buildings should have dynamic forms and meaningful architectural expression.
- Design all visible façades with the same level of deliberate and thoughtful consideration as that given to primary façades.
- Design façades and elevations to have texture, depth, and variation through the use of elements such as relief, inset areas, and shadow lines. Vary the heights and widths of façade features, and articulate forms with materiality. Have the façade express cues from the internal building program, if applicable.
- Use performative materials and construction techniques to minimize a building's internal energy usage, as well as to mitigate any urban heat island effects to its surrounding context.
- Design fenestration with a rhythm that relates to the base building form, achieving a harmonious balance between solid and glazed areas. Take into account neighboring window patterns and proportions when appropriate.
- Decorative building components should clearly relate to the overall concept, form, and massing of the building.
- Avoid large expanses of undifferentiated, blank surfaces. Add depth and articulation to façades; avoid relying on simple, coplanar changes of color or material as a means of adding variation.
- Shape the roof lines of buildings. Consider the effect of the form and placement of new structures on the greater urban skyline.



09A: The design of each project can help shape space at multiple scales; the impact of skyline forms should be considered in the greater urban context.



09B-L: Façade articulation can be implemented with different scales of granularity, responding to and maximizing on the inherent nature of the selected materials, and adding aesthetics and texture to the street wall. Performative systems that help reduce energy loads should be considered whenever possible.

# GLOSSARY

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## **Biodiversity**

The variety of life forms present in a particular habitat or ecosystem, encompassing plants, animals, and microorganisms, and the ecological roles they perform.

## **Bioretention**

A sustainable stormwater management practice that involves the use of vegetation, soils, and natural processes to capture, treat, and infiltrate runoff from impervious surfaces.

## **Bioswales**

Channels designed to concentrate and convey stormwater runoff while removing debris and pollution. Bioswales can also be beneficial in recharging groundwater.

## **Building Envelope**

The physical layers of enclosure between the interior and exterior environments of a building.

## **Coplanar**

Being in the same plane or level, often used to describe surfaces or features that are aligned or parallel.

## **Curb Cuts**

A solid (usually concrete) ramp graded down from the top surface of a sidewalk to the surface of an adjoining street.

## **Drive-Thru**

A type of take-out service provided by a business that allows customers to purchase products without leaving their cars.

## **E-Bike**

A bicycle equipped with an integrated electric motor for propulsion, providing assistance to the rider's pedaling efforts.

## **Ecological Design**

The practice of designing structures, landscapes, and systems with consideration for environmental sustainability and ecological principles. It aims to minimize negative impacts on ecosystems and maximize benefits to both humans and the environment.

## **Facade**

An exterior face of a building.

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### **Fenestration**

The design, arrangement, and proportion of windows and other openings in a building, influencing natural light, ventilation, and aesthetic appeal.

### **Footprint**

The area of ground covered by a building or structure.

### **Green Roof**

A roof of a building that is partially or completely covered with vegetation and a growing medium, planted over a waterproofing membrane.

### **Loggia**

A covered exterior gallery or corridor, usually on an upper level, but sometimes on the ground level of a building. The corridor is open to the elements because its outer wall is only partial, with the upper part usually supported by a series of columns or arches.

### **Mass or Massing**

The overall form, shape, and arrangement of buildings or structures within a site or area. It involves considerations such as building height, bulk, and orientation.

### **Multimodal Transportation**

Transportation systems that accommodate various modes of travel, (including walking, cycling, and public transit), promote accessibility and reduce reliance on single-occupancy vehicles.

### **Native Plant Palettes**

A collection or selection of plant species that are native to a specific region or ecosystem. These palettes are curated based on the indigenous plants that naturally occur in a particular area without human intervention.

### **Natural Resources**

Elements of the natural environment, such as waterways and vegetation, that contribute to ecological health and sustainability.

### **Operable Windows**

Windows that can be opened and closed manually to allow for ventilation and airflow within a building.

### **Passive Design**

Design that utilizes natural elements such as sunlight, shade, and airflow to maintain comfortable indoor environments, reducing the need for mechanical heating or cooling.

# GLOSSARY

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## **Placemaking**

A collaborative process of creating public spaces that foster and promote community engagement, social interaction, and a sense of identity and belonging.

## **Recess**

A design strategy that sinks or sets back a portion of a plane from another, creating an indentation.

## **Screen**

To hide a specific element from view.

## **Streetwall**

The facade(s) of a building or multiple buildings that create a wall where they abut the sidewalk or an open space.

## **Sustainable Design**

Design practices that prioritize environmental sustainability by incorporating technologies, materials, and systems that minimize negative impacts on the environment.

## **Transit Center**

A facility that facilitates transfers between different modes of transportation.

## **Urban Fabric**

The physical elements and patterns that make up the built environment of a city, including streets, buildings, and open spaces.

## **Viaduct**

An elevated structure carrying a road or railway over a valley, road, or other obstacle.

## **View Corridor**

A protected line of sight that offers scenic or significant views.

## **Xeriscaping**

Landscaping method that utilizes drought-tolerant plants and efficient irrigation techniques to conserve water in arid or semi-arid climates.

## **Notes:**

This list of terms included in this glossary is not exhaustive. Additional terms may be defined or described in other resources including, but not limited to, the Metropolitan Code of Ordinances.

Definitions used in the glossary have been sourced, and in some cases adapted, from online resources.

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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In addition to the strategies described in the DTC DG, additional strategies that fulfill the goals and guidelines of this document may be outlined in the following resources. Designers are encouraged to discuss the ways in which strategies outlined in these resources may be applicable to their development proposals with Metro Staff.

[Downtown Code](#)

[Downtown Community Plan](#)

[Nashville Next](#)

[Community Character Manual](#)

[Nashville Connector](#)

[MDHA Redevelopment Districts](#)

[Major and Collector Street Plan](#)

[Urban Forestry Recommended and Prohibited Tree and Shrub List](#)

[NDOT's Access Management Guidelines](#)

[APBP Bicycle Parking Guidelines](#)

[WeGo Transit Design Guidelines](#)

[Connecting Housing to Infrastructure Program \(CHIP\)](#)

[Multimodal Transportation Analysis](#)

[Connect Downtown](#)

[Pie Town Mobility Study](#)

[11<sup>th</sup> Avenue Corridor Study](#)

[SoBro Strategic Master Plan](#)

[WalknBike Nashville](#)

[Complete and Green Streets](#)

[Low Impact Development Standards Manual](#)

# IMAGE CREDITS

## GOAL 1 Future-Focused Ecological Design

- 01A Peabody Union ([stiles.com](http://stiles.com))
- 01B An Architect's Guide To: Green Roofs ([architizer.com](http://architizer.com))
- 01C Sitephocus Archives courtesy of Brian Phelps
- 01D Water Conservation with Plants ([facilities.northeastern.edu](http://facilities.northeastern.edu))
- 01E Noble Park ([nashvilleguru.com](http://nashvilleguru.com))
- 02A/B Neuhoff Curve Building ([smithgeestudio.com](http://smithgeestudio.com))
- 02C Making Buildings Bird-Friendly with Safety Glass ([archdaily.com](http://archdaily.com))
- 02D 1 Hotel Nashville Green Wall Netting ([mgmclaren.com](http://mgmclaren.com))
- 02E Music City Center ([aerialsoutheast.com](http://aerialsoutheast.com))

## GOAL 2 Human-Oriented Design

- 03A Domino Park ([segd.org](http://segd.org))
- 03B Architecture & Design for the disabled people ([arch2o.com](http://arch2o.com))
- 03C Thisbe & Noah's Promise Park: A Playground for All ([promisepark.org](http://promisepark.org))
- 03D Imagine East Bank: A Vision Plan for Nashville's Next Great Neighborhoods ([nashville.gov](http://nashville.gov))
- 04A Harlowe ([apartments.com](http://apartments.com))
- 04B Prima at Paseo South Gulch ([primasouthgulch.com](http://primasouthgulch.com))
- 04C Alcove ([skyscrapercenter.com](http://skyscrapercenter.com) via James Steinkamp Photography)
- 04D Peabody Plaza / HASTINGS Arch. ([archdaily.com](http://archdaily.com) via Kendall McCaugherty at Hall + Merrick Photographers)
- 04E Hyatt Centric Downtown Nashville ([sleepifier.com](http://sleepifier.com))
- 04F Bridgestone Tower | 200 4th Ave S ([loopnet.com](http://loopnet.com))
- 04G The Joseph Hotel in Nashville... ([interiordesign.net](http://interiordesign.net))
- 04H Diagrams by Sarah Cook
- 05A Diagram by Yuqing Wang
- 05B/C Imagine East Bank: A Vision Plan for Nashville's Next Great Neighborhoods ([nashville.gov](http://nashville.gov))

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### GOAL 3 Contextual and Connected Design

- 06A Gulch Crossing ([esarch.com](https://www.esarch.com))
- 06B Nashville, Tennessee. USA. February 13, 2023 ([vecteezy.com](https://www.vecteezy.com) via Marianne Pfeil)
- 06C Warren Street Hotel's Exterior Nears Completion ([newyorkyimby.com](https://www.newyorkyimby.com) via Michael Young)
- 06D Welcome to Fan Pier ([fanpierboston.com](https://www.fanpierboston.com))
- 06E Diagram by Jared Islas
- 06F Apple Downtown Brooklyn ([fosterandpartners.com](https://www.fosterandpartners.com))
- 07A r/nashville ([reddit.com](https://www.reddit.com))
- 07B Downtown Seattle Corridor Gets Visioning Treatment ([planetizen.com](https://www.planetizen.com))
- 07C/D Imagine East Bank: A Vision Plan for Nashville's Next Great Neighborhoods ([nashville.gov](https://www.nashville.gov))
- 07E/F Making the case for bike rooms ([activetrans.org](https://www.activetrans.org))

### GOAL 4 High-Caliber Architectural Design

- 08A The Ultimate Guide to Mastering Architectural Diagrams ([firstinarchitecture.co.uk](https://www.firstinarchitecture.co.uk))
- 08B DRAW Architecture + Urban Design, LLC ([facebook.com](https://www.facebook.com))
- 08C Virgin Hotel ([hodgsondouglass.com](https://www.hodgsondouglass.com))
- 08D Albion in the Gulch ([albionresidential.com](https://www.albionresidential.com))
- 08E Hearst Headquarter ([stock.adobe.com](https://stock.adobe.com))
- 08F Assembly Food Hall ([gensler.com](https://www.gensler.com))
- 08G Paseo South Gulch ([someraroadinc.com](https://www.someraroadinc.com))
- 09A Diagram by Yuqing Wang
- 09B Originality and luxury Hotel in Berlin ([aasarchitecture.com](https://www.aasarchitecture.com))
- 09C/D 12 Simply Amazing Building Facades ([interiordesign.net](https://www.interiordesign.net))
- 09E Facade Panels - Portuguese Limestone ([archdaily.com](https://www.archdaily.com))
- 09F Solar Walls - eBLADE ([archdaily.com](https://www.archdaily.com))
- 09G The Broad Museum / Diller Scofidio + Renfro ([archdaily.com](https://www.archdaily.com))
- 09H Poly Corporation Headquarters ([som.com](https://www.som.com))
- 09I Redchurch Townhouse / 31|44 Architects ([archdaily.com](https://www.archdaily.com))
- 09J Properly Breathing House / H&P Architects ([archdaily.com](https://www.archdaily.com))
- 09K The Grand Mulberry ([archpaper.com](https://www.archpaper.com))

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NASHVILLE  
**PLANNING**

Downtown Code Design Guidelines  
for Nashville, TN