

4 Community Design

4.1 Introduction

Designing a Vibrant Community

The way our community looks and feels affects how we experience it and interact with each other. Good design invites us to engage, sparks curiosity, and fosters connections. Unfortunately, recent development trends have prioritized private spaces over communal ones, leading to a lack of character and community spirit.

The Importance of Community Design

When design is neglected, city planning becomes a piecemeal process, overlooking how developments fit together and impacts the community. This can result in:

- Towns without central gathering spaces.
- Downtowns without vitality.
- Cities without unique identities.
- Communities without a sense of belonging.

Gig Harbor's Strengths and Opportunities

Luckily, Gig Harbor has retained much of its small-town charm. In 1992, we asked residents what they loved about our community and what they'd like to change. They valued our town's scale, historic architecture, and natural beauty. We've adopted goals and policies to ensure future development will enhance these qualities.

Guidance for Community Design

The following goals and policies serve as guidelines for development, aiming to preserve and enhance Gig Harbor's character. While specific guidelines and zoning code updates will follow, these goals and policies will help shape our community's future.

4.2 Goals and Policies

► CD-1 Strengthen connectivity between people and places.

- CD-1.1 Require new commercial development to incorporate outdoor people-oriented common spaces for public use.

- CD-1.2 Encourage structures, entry ways, landscaping, and common areas to be oriented to the public right-of-way with parking uses to the side or rear.
- CD-1.3 Encourage facades that face the neighborhood and provide engagement with public rights-of-way and public spaces.
- CD-1.4 Promote people-centered building and streetscape design that minimizes the impacts of parking.
- CD-1.5 Encourage outdoor vending in common areas to provide color, activity, and a sense of vibrancy to commercial areas.
- CD-1.6 Provide for displays of public art and space for temporary uses as part of common areas.

► **CD-2 Provide for pedestrian and non-motorized transportation connections in the city.**

- CD-2.1 Mandate wherever possible connections between new developments and existing uses with connecting paths and sidewalks.
- CD-2.2 Promote pedestrian access through corridors and gateways that address barriers to movement.
- CD-2.3 Minimize impervious areas designed exclusively for motor vehicles.
- CD-2.4 Coordinate with Pierce Transit on providing user-friendly bus stops in the city with regular service, supporting amenities, and consistent wayfinding.
- CD-2.5 Develop a master trails plan for the City to support a pedestrian and non-motorized transportation network between recreational, commercial, and residential areas.

► **CD-3 Enhance the local sense of place by maintaining and enhancing historically significant structures, views, and cultural resources.**

- CD-3.1 Identify significant vistas, view corridors, and view termination points.
- CD-3.2 Preserve the visual quality of corner lots and view terminal points by discouraging asphalt-intensive uses on these parcels without screening or landscaping.
- CD-3.3 Designate visually sensitive areas for highly visible or prominent sites that would require increased landscaping and screening of visually distracting.
- CD-3.4 Encourage larger areas of greenery to provide a greater visual impact.

► **CD-4 Encourage a sense of arrival into the city and specific neighborhoods.**

- CD-4.1 Limit freeway exposure and visibility of development and encourage WSDOT to plant trees as a visual buffer along Highway 16.
- CD-4.2 Develop city gateways with formal landscaping, information kiosks, public art or civic structures at intersections near freeway off-ramps and arterials entering the city.

CD-4.3 Identify and develop gateways for neighborhoods to distinguish and highlight these areas.

► **CD-5 Promote architectural styles that reflect the city's historical and natural context and human-scale design.**

CD-5.1 Encourage pitched, varied roof lines for new structures and discourage boxy, single-mass buildings in lower-density neighborhoods.

CD-5.2 Encourage building designs with a visual and functional distinction between the ground floor and higher levels.

CD-5.3 Encourage mixed-use structures that provide good form, neighborhood character, and public benefits.

CD-5.4 Promote the use of primary structures as focal points on a site through distinctive design and higher building heights.

► **CD-6 Encourage distinctive building and site designs to distinguish and enhance neighborhoods.**

CD-6.1 Develop neighborhood design standards and guidelines that reflect the existing characteristics of these neighborhoods and enhance local neighborhood quality.

CD-6.2 Consider the following individual neighborhood design areas for detailed design standards or guidelines, as designated on the Neighborhood Design Areas Map:

- a) View Basin.
- b) Soundview.
- c) Gig Harbor North.
- d) Peacock Hill.
- e) Rosedale/Hunt.
- f) Westside.
- g) Bujacich Road / NW Industrial.

CD-6.3 Consider the following elements as part of neighborhood design standards and guidelines:

- a) Natural Vegetation and Topography
- b) Trails, Parks and Open Space
- c) Sidewalks and Circulation
- d) Parking and Building Orientation
- e) Historical Buildings and Uses

- f) Building to Building Relationships
- g) Housing Patterns
- h) Architectural Quality and Character
- i) Site Amenities

► **CD-7 Maintain and incorporate local natural conditions into design.**

- CD-7.1 Incorporate existing vegetation into new residential developments and encourage site designs that preserve high-quality vegetation currently on the site.
- CD-7.2 Retain high-quality native trees and understory where feasible.
- CD-7.3 Encourage native and drought resistant vegetation plantings.
- CD-7.4 Provide for buffers and clustered open spaces that are consistent with the scale of development and needs for screening.
- CD-7.5 Encourage property owners, builders, and developers to preserve native forest communities and tree canopies and maintain the health of trees and vegetation on their land.
- CD-7.6 Maximize opportunities for creating usable, attractive, and well-integrated open space in new developments.
- CD-7.7 Respect existing topography and minimize visual impacts of site grading.

► **CD-8 Residential developments should be designed to support and enhance local quality of life in Gig Harbor.**

- CD-8.1 Provide for the parking necessary for residents and visitors while minimizing impacts to safety, aesthetics, and the environment.
- CD-8.2 Consider changes to lot and building orientation, yard size, and setbacks in areas with increasing residential density to support existing character and maintain high quality in the local built environment.
- CD-8.3 Encourage sustainable land development and building practices in new residential projects.

► **CD-9 Preserve views to the waterfront.**

- CD-9.1 Identify associated visual points of interest and their point of reference from prominent public places and from individual parcels.
- CD-9.2 Incorporate points of interest associated with waterfront views into building and landscape design.

► **CD-10 Establish design standards for the waterfront to ensure compatible land uses, architecture, and neighborhood design.**

- CD-10.1 Preserve historical structures along the waterfront related to the city's rich history in the fishing industry.
- CD-10.2 Encourage modern interpretations of historical building designs in new construction.
- CD-10.3 Ensure compatibility in form and scale with historical structures and landmarks along the waterfront.
- CD-10.4 Encourage building materials that complement Gig Harbor's historical structures.

► **CD-11 Preserve structures with important historical, architectural, and/or cultural significance.**

- CD-11.1 Encourage retention and adaptive reuse of older buildings with development incentives.
- CD-11.2 Provide financial incentives such as low-interest loans, tax credits or grants for historical preservation.
- CD-11.3 Provide design assistance and resources to support historical preservation and restoration projects.
- CD-11.4 Recognize outstanding preservation efforts through public awareness programs.

► **CD-12 Preserve neighborhood character in areas that include building styles reflective of historical development.**

- CD-12.1 Establish a Historic Conservation Area to encourage local preservation and maintain the character of historical areas of the city.
- CD-12.2 Provide design assistance for restoration, renovation or expansion of historic structures.
- CD-12.3 Incorporate considerations of historical preservation and reuse into administrative design review processes.
- CD-12.4 Minimize impacts of city projects on the integrity and use of historical structures and neighborhoods.

► **CD-13 Consider historical preservation and reuse in the development of zoning regulations.**

- CD-13.1 Adopt setback standards which reflect historic development patterns. CD-14.2 Allow housing clusters consistent with historical densities.
- CD-13.2 Encourage building forms, designs, and materials that are consistent with historical buildings.
- CD-13.3 Retain desirable design characteristics of historical districts.
- CD-13.4 Provide parking design standards to address needs while avoiding significant aesthetic and environmental impacts.
- CD-13.5 Explore the use of facade and/or streetscape improvement programs.