U

SAN FRANCISCO

URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES

San Francisco
Planning

The beauty of the world derives not only from unity in variety, but also from variety in unity.

Umberto Eco

The American dream starts with the neighborhoods.

Harvey Milk

Built Environment Values

Environment: Health and Sustainability
Preservation
Economy: Parity and Diversity
Culture: Social Well-Being
Individual: High Quality of Life

General principles of design excellence and neighborhood compatibility

Good urban design is characterized by orchestration of buildings, landscape, open space, and streets. Such qualities rely on a deep understanding and response to site specific conditions.

Architecture

Open space

Public realm

During the design review process prior to seeking Commission approval

Design review procedurally occurs during project authorizations and building and site permit review within Sections 309, 311, 312, and 329 along with a variety of smaller designations. This work is done prior to Planning Commission approval but can also follow after through conditions of approval, Discretionary Review process, post–entitlement revision, or addendum approvals.

GUIDELINE DOCUMENTS — matrix of design attributes

Column categories and attributes:

- **GENERAL ATTRIBUTES:** CONTEXTUAL COMPATIBILITY · COMPOSITIONAL INTEGRITY · SUSTAINABLE EFFORTS · VIEWS
- **BUILDING ORIENTATION:** ORIENT BUILDING ELEMENTS TO FACE PUBLIC
- **MASSING & ARTICULATION:** TALL BUILDINGS CLEARLY DEFINED BASE, MIDDLE, TOP · ROOF, CORNICE, & PARAPET WELL INTEGRATED · CONSISTENT BUILDING FAÇADE RHYTHM · BUILDING SHOULD FOLLOW NATURAL SLOPE · BUILDING SHOULD CELEBRATE CORNER · RESPECT ADJACENT ROOFLINE PATTERNS
- **GROUND FLOOR:** ACTIVE PEDESTRIAN USE · STOOPS, PORCHES, LANDSCAPE ENCOURAGED · NEIGHBORHOOD SETBACKS SHOULD BE MAINTAINED · ENTRYWAYS ADD CHARACTER BY BEING INVITING · UPPER STORY UNIT ACCESS IN PUBLIC WAY · GROUND FLOOR COMMERCIAL VERY TRANSPARENT
- **FAÇADE TREATMENT:** HIGH QUALITY OF MATERIALS · INTEGRATE COLORS, MATERIALS, AND DESIGN ELEMENTS · WINDOWS, CORNICES, REVEALS FOR SHADOWS & INTEREST · WINDOWS SHOULD RELATE TO ADJACENT BUILDINGS · INTEGRATE NEW BUSINESS SIGNS
- **PARKING & ACCESS:** MINIMAL PHYSICAL & VISUAL DISRUPTION · SCREENING OF PARKING AREAS · GREEN PARKING LOTS WITH TREES AND PERMEABILITY
- **OPEN SPACE:** PROVIDE AMPLE SEATING FOR PUBLIC · COMMON SPACE VISIBLE FROM STREET · COMMON SPACE WITH LANDSCAPE & HARDSCAPE · ROOFTOP TERRACES, GARDENS · FRONT YARD 50% PERMEABLE · HEALTHY STREET TREE REQUIREMENTS · CLIMATE & NEIGHBORHOOD PLANTS
- **TOWERS:** HORIZONTAL ARTICULATION AT STREET WALL · DESIGNED TO AVOID A HEAVY TOP APPEARANCE
- **HISTORIC BUILDINGS:** ARCHITECTURAL & HISTORIC CHARACTER PRESERVED

Guideline documents (rows):

- Urban Design Guidelines for the City of San Francisco
- Historic Design Guidelines
- Better Streets Plan
- Upper Market Development Design Guidelines
- Design Guidelines for Executive Park
- Market & Octavia Area Plan: Fundamental Design Principles
- Industrial Area Design Guidelines
- Bayshore Boulevard Home Improvement District
- Central Corridor
- Residential Design Guidelines
- Guide to the San Francisco Green Landscaping Ordinance
- Guidelines for Ground Floor Residential Design
- The Elsie Street Plan
- Cow Hollow Neighborhood Design Guidelines
- Bernal Heights East Slope Building Guidelines
- Dolores Heights Residential Design Guidelines
- Miraloma Park Residential Design Guidelines
- Westwood Park Association Specific Area Residential Design Guidelines
- Design Standards for Signage & Awnings in the KMMS Conservation District
- Downtown Commercial Design Standard
- Design Standards for Storefronts in the KMMS Conservation District
- Guidelines for Adding Garages and Curb Cut
- Standards for Window Replacement
- Arch Design Guide for Ext Treatments of Unreinforced Masonry Building
- Single Room Occupancy Guidelines
- Design Guide- Standards for Bird-Safe Building
- Fine Art Guidelines

Nearly 30 sets of design guidelines exist making many redundant and hard to use.

- Principles found in City Plans may be relatively unknown and inconsistently applied.
- Guidelines span the range from extremely prescriptive to indirect, vague, or simply outdated.
- Guidelines may lack relevant illustrative examples or do not articulate their basis, intent, and objectives.
- Guidelines may lack organizational consistency and a clear regulatory role or authority.

GUIDELINE DOCUMENTS	CONTEXTURAL COMPATIBILITY	COMPOSITIONAL INTEGRITY	SUSTAINABLE EFFORTS	VIEWS	ORIENT BUILDING ELEMENTS TO FACE PUBLIC	TALL BUILDINGS CLEARLY DEFINED BASE, MIDDLE, TOP	ROOF, CORNICE, &/ PARAPET WELL INTEGRATED	CONSISTENT BUILDING FAÇADE RHYTHM	BUILDING SHOULD FOLLOW NATURAL SLOPE	BUILDING SHOULD CELEBRATE CORNER	RESPECT ADJACENT ROOFLINE PATTERNS	ACTIVE PEDESTRIAN USE	STOOPS, PORCHES, LANDSCAPE ENCOURAGED	NEIGHBORHOOD SETBACKS SHOULD BE MAINTAINED	ENTRYWAYS ADD CHARACTER BY BEING INVITING	UPPER STORY UNIT ACCESS IN PUBLIC WAY
GENERAL ATTRIBUTES					**BUILDING ORIENTATION**	**MASSING & ARTICULATION**						**GROUND FLOOR**				
Urban Design Guidelines for the City of San Francisco	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Historic Design Guidelines																
Better Streets Plan			■													
Upper Market Development Design Guidelines	■		■					■		■		■				
Design Guidelines for Executive Park		■	■			■		■		■		■			■	■
Market & Octavia Area Plan: Fundamental Design Principles	■				■	■		■			■				■	
Industrial Area Design Guidelines	■	■		■	■			■				■				
Bayshore Boulevard Home Improvement District		■			■		■			■						
Central Corridor																
Residential Design Guidelines	■	■	■	■				■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	
Guide to the San Francisco Green Landscaping Ordinance			■													
Guidelines for Ground Floor Residential Design	■	■										■	■	■	■	
The Elsie Street Plan	■														■	
Cow Hollow Neighborhood Design Guidelines	■	■		■	■			■		■			■	■		
Bernal Heights East Slope Building Guidelines	■	■		■			■		■					■		
Dolores Heights Residential Design Guidelines	■	■		■				■	■		■			■		
Miraloma Park Residential Design Guidelines	■	■	■					■	■	■				■		
Westwood Park Association Specific Area Residential Design Guidelines	■	■						■	■	■						
Design Standards for Signage & Awnings in the KMMS Conservation District	■	■										■				
Downtown Commercial Design Standard		■														
Design Standards for Storefronts in the KMMS Conservation District								■		■		■				
Guidelines for Adding Garages and Curb Cut	■	■						■								
Standards for Window Replacement	■	■						■								
Arch Design Guide for Ext Treatments of Unreinforced Masonry Building	■				■			■		■		■				
Single Room Occupancy Guidelines	■				■			■				■				
Design Guide- Standards for Bird-Safe Building	■			■												
…Guidelines																

Improving guidelines will create a common language and enhance their usability.

This greater initial clarity and expectations will result in more compliant projects at project initiation, fewer design iterations, shorter approval time, and higher quality projects overall.

GUIDELINES BY PROJECT TYPE

Guidelines for Ground Floor Residential Design

INDUSTRIAL AREA DESIGN GUIDELINES

Guide to the San Francisco Green Landscaping Ordinance

Standards for Window Replacement

Guidelines for Adding Garages and Curb Cuts

San Francisco

Standards for Bird-Safe Buildings

Standards for Storefront Transparency

GUIDELINES BY AREA

MARKET & OCTAVIA

Western SoMa Design Standards

Design Guidelines for Executive Park

Bayshore Boulevard Home Improvement District Design Guidelines

TRANSIT CENTER DISTRICT PLAN

2014 DOWNTOWN PLAN MONITORING REPORT

CITYWIDE

SAN FRANCISCO GENERAL PLAN

SAN FRANCISCO BETTER STREETS PLAN — FINAL PLAN

Design Guidelines for all sites in all districts, and establish a citywide set of aspirations, goals, and values.

Inspire great design

Establish a baseline of what's acceptable and, more importantly, promote design excellence.

WHAT WILL THEY DO ?

Encourage good neighbors

Explain how projects can better support existing neighborhood patterns and context.

WHAT WILL THEY DO ?

Contribute positively to the human experience

Demonstrate how buildings, open space, and streets work together to promote personal and social well–being.

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Create effective process

Help San Francisco's design values be accessible to Commission, staff, and the public to foster a coordinated and consistent system of review.

WHAT WILL THEY DO ?

The Urban Design Guidelines consists of three topics

Site Design

Architecture

Public Realm

Each topic contains a set of individual guidelines

Site Design

S1 Recognize and Respond to Urban Patterns

S2 Harmonize the Visual and Physical Relationships between Existing Buildings, Streets, and Open Spaces

S3 Intentionally Define and Integrate Open Space

S4 Respect Natural Systems and Features

S5 Create or Support View Corridors

S6 Recognize and Enhance Local Variations

S7 Create a Defined and Active Streetwall

S8 Connect Landscape and Architecture

S9 Design Site to Enhance the Pedestrian Environment

Architecture

A1 Express a Clear Organizing Architectural Idea

A2 Modulate Buildings Vertically and Horizontally

A3 Render Building Facades with Texture and Depth

A4 Harmonize Building Designs with Neighboring Scale and Materials

A5 Design Buildings from Multiple Vantage Points

A6 Finish the Roofs of Buildings

A7 Design Active Building Fronts

A8 Coordinate Building Elements into a Cohesive Design and Palette

Public Realm

P1 Design Open Spaces to Complement Surrounding Streets and Buildings

P2 Connect Open Spaces to the Public Realm

P3 Program Public Open Spaces to Encourage Activity and Rest

P4 Express Neighborhood Personalities in the Design of Open Space

P5 Design Sidewalks to Enhance the Pedestrian and Transit Environment

P6 Integrate Trees and Plants into the Public Realm

A2 Modulate Buildings Vertically and Horizontally

Site Design

Architecture

Public Realm

GUIDELINE STRUCTURE

A2 Modulate Buildings Vertically and Horizontally

Urban Design Element

"Human scale can be retained if new buildings, even large ones, avoid the appearance of massiveness by maintaining established building lines"

Western SoMa SUD

"Provide strong, repeating vertical articulation on new buildings to achieve visual harmony and sustain pedestrian interest and activity. "

Downtown Plan

"As a general rule, facades composed of both vertical and horizontal elements fit better with older as well as most new facades"

Market-Octavia Area Plan

"Building façades that face the public realm should be articulated with a strong rhythm of regular vertical elements."

Residential Design Guidelines

"Design the building's facade width to be compatible with those found on surrounding buildings."

GUIDELINE

A2 MODULATE BUILDINGS VERTICALLY AND HORIZONTALLY

WAYS OF ACHIEVING

San Francisco is predominantly a vertically oriented city, with houses on narrow lots composed of bays and recesses. A vertically proportioned streetscape has the important visual effect of making distances feel shorter and therefore more comfortable to walk and supports a consistent but varied street frontage. In many cases buildings are horizontally composed of strongly defined and differentiated bases, bodies, and tops. Buildings that relate to the city fabric, to their immediate context, and the human activity that occurs within and around them help unify and connect with the existing neighborhood experience and character.

» Express and reinforce the sense that a city is made of individual people. Design buildings to appear as larger collections of individual units by breaking the building massing volumetrically vertically or horizontally.

» Use the rhythm of the immediate context: prevailing lot widths, building modules, and the proportion and size of architectural elements to order and modulate the building vertically and horizontally.

» Sculpt massing to create a strong and clear vertically and horizontally articulated façade to harmonize with the rhythm of the adjacent buildings and the character of the area.

» Employ vertical massing breaks in a way that adds functionality of building.

» If there is no consistent pattern, align with the one that best expresses a similar use or propose one that meets the overall values established in these guidelines.

» Design a hierarchy of scales evident in the modulation of a building.

» Setback upper floors to establish and appropriate streetwal, reduce mass, and allow light on streets.

» Proportion the scale at the ground floor to the type of use and street interaction. Reflect the type, proportions, and scales of windows and entrances found in the neighborhood in the design of ground-level facades.

» Contemporary architectural language is encouraged. Avoid false historicism and facade elements that mimic neighbors.

INTENT AND PURPOSE

EXAMPLES
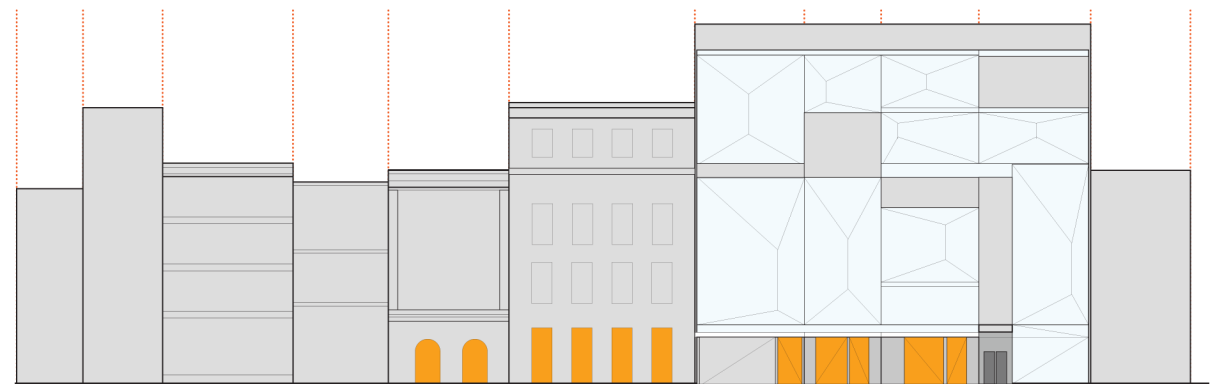
Contemporary language can express neighborhood geometries, proportions, and rhythms.

ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES

PHOTOS

GUIDELINE STRUCTURE

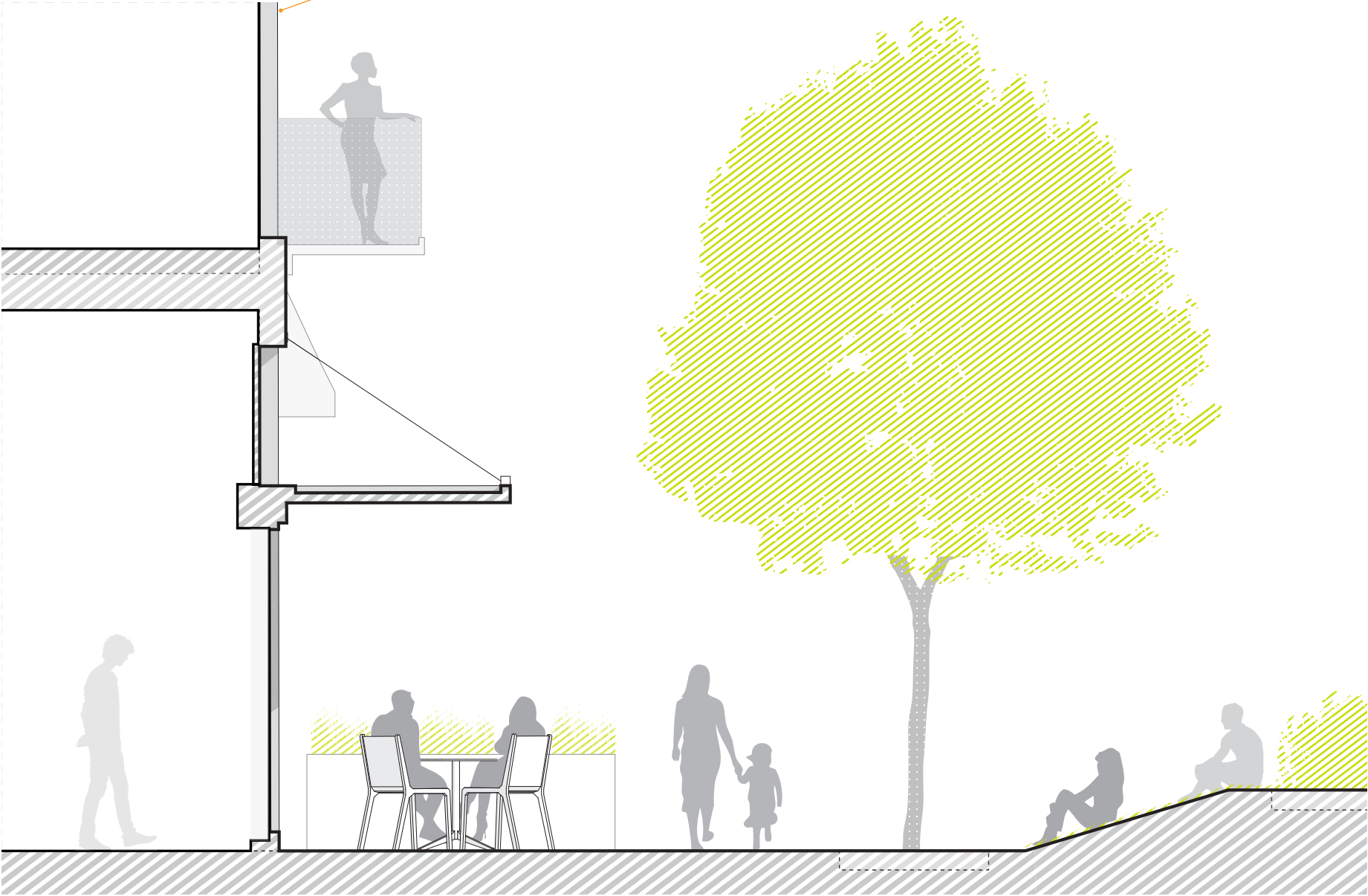Buildings should reflect the vertical cadence of the neighborhood.

Geometry should be flexible but responsive to nearby heights and widths.

ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES

DIAGRAMS

The Urban Design Guidelines intend to clarify process, refine consistency, and enhance application.

- Establish a well–defined mandatory review path for projects.

- Ensure applications specifically address how projects address each applicable guideline.

- Formalize interdepartmental coordination.

- Educate and train planning staff.

- Require design review findings in Planning Commission case reports.

- Establish interagency design review and coordination for large or public projects.

Urban Design Guidelines are currently in draft form and undergoing internal review.

January 2016	**Planning Commission Informational** & **Completion of Internal Review**
Feb – June 2016	**Public process** & **Urban Design Guidelines Advisory Group review**
	Experts with a range of scale and type in landscape architecture, architecture, development, planning, & historic preservation
	Representation from the Planning Commission, Preservation Commission, & Community groups
July 2016	**Adoption**

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