

SECTION 17.25.050 DESIGN REVIEW GUIDELINES



Section 1.

1. Purpose and Intent

The purpose of the design review process is to promote orderly and harmonious growth within the City. The intent of the design review process is to establish discretionary review of development projects that require additional site and design considerations beyond conformance with minimum standards of the Zoning Code. This Chapter also includes "Guiding Principles" and "Design Concepts" to be used by the designated Approving Authority in reviewing proposed projects for design consistency the City's standards.

2. Design Review Applicability

These regulations shall apply to lands designated with the Design Review Combining Zone "D" on the Zoning Maps. In addition, except as otherwise exempt pursuant to **Section 17.250.050(3)** Design Review is required for the following:

- (a) Major Subdivisions;
- (b) Multi-family residential developments;
- (c) Commercial development;
- (d) Industrial development; and
- (e) Public/quasi-public developments (e.g. public safety facilities, library, City facilities).

3. Design Review Exemptions

The following structures and improvements are generally exempt from Design Review. A ministerial review subject to the currently adopted fee schedule is required to determine if the proposed improvements are subject to Design Review. However, such structures may require additional permits, such as a ministerial building permit to ensure compliance with adopted Building Code standards and applicable Zoning Code provisions.

- (a) Additions to structures less than 10% of its existing size provided the improvements employ the same materials, colors and design as the original or existing construction and compliments and is compatible with the character of the surrounding area, is not detrimental to the value of properties in the area and does not reduce the visual appearance of the area;
- (b) Repairs and maintenance of site improvements or structures that do not add to, enlarge, or expand the area occupied by the land use, or the floor area of the structure. Exterior repairs that employ the same materials and design as the original construction are also exempt from Design Review;
- (c) Interior alterations that do not increase the gross floor area within the structure, or change/expand the permitted use of the structure;
- (d) Construction, alteration, or maintenance by a public utility or public agency of underground or overhead utilities intended to service existing or nearby approved developments (e.g., water, gas, electric or telecommunication supply or disposal

systems, including wires, mains, drains, sewers, pipes, conduits, cables, fire-alarm boxes, police call boxes, traffic signals, hydrants, and similar facilities **and** equipment);

- (e) Work or improvements that do not require building permits provided the improvements employ the same materials, colors and design as the original or existing construction and compliments and is compatible with the character of the surrounding area, is not detrimental to the value of properties in the area and does not reduce the visual appearance of the area.

4. Approving Authority

The Approving Authority for Design Review shall be the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission shall review and approve, conditionally approve, or deny Design Review applications using the guiding principles and design concepts, application review process, and findings identified herein. At any point in the future, the City Council may delegate the Approving Authority for Design Review to the City Council, a Design Review Committee, the Community Development Director and/or the City Manager. Subsequent delegation of Approving Authority shall be adopted by Resolution, identifying the City's designated Approving Authority, along with any special regulations for review and action on Design Review applications.

Design Review approval is required prior to issuance of any ministerial building permits or site improvement plans and prior to or in conjunction with discretionary action of corresponding development applications (e.g., Maps, Conditional Use Permit, Variance), except as otherwise exempted pursuant to **Section 17.250.050(3)** of this Chapter.

5. Guiding Principles and Design Concepts

This Chapter provides a set of "Guiding Principles" and "Design Concepts" setting forth various aesthetic and functional provisions to guide residential, commercial, office, industrial and public/quasi public development in the City. The "Guiding Principles" are listed below. Over time, the City may, by ordinance amending this section, refine or expand these principles and concepts to reflect the changing desires of the community.

- To encourage high quality land/site planning, architecture and landscape design;
- To ensure physical, visual, and functional compatibility between uses: and
- To ensure proper attention is paid to site and architectural design, thereby protecting land values.

The designated Approving Authority under this Chapter shall have the authority to apply the "Guiding Principles" flexibly to account for circumstances relating to the site, provided the required findings in **Section 17.250.050(8)** are made and using the following Design Concepts:

(a) Residential Subdivisions. The following Design Concepts generally apply to major subdivisions (e.g. five or more parcels) of land for residential purposes. Some of the Design Concepts will not apply, to certain projects due to the size of the development. However, these concepts will be applied whenever possible in the design of residential and mixed use projects. The City encourages:

- (1) A balanced mix of land uses, including housing, schooling, and parks/open space, to meet the needs of residents as appropriate based on project scale. Large scale development proposals should also provide for employment, commercial/retail, recreational and entertainment needs of community residents.
- (2) Pedestrian friendly neighborhoods, which are walkable in size with an obvious center. The neighborhood center should be a place of social interaction with a combination of commercial, civic, cultural and recreational uses.
- (3) Housing diversity with a variety of housing types, sizes, and densities.
- (4) Vehicle, bicycle, and pedestrian, and transit connectivity throughout the neighborhood and with the surrounding neighborhoods and uses. More specifically, neighborhoods should be designed with an interconnected street system that will blend well into the existing street system, diffuse traffic within the neighborhood, and minimize barriers within and between neighborhoods.
- (5) Where feasible, joint-use of open space facilities such as drainage facilities, detention basins, utility corridors etc. for trails, bikeways and Parks.
- (6) Maintaining significant natural features (e.g., terrain, drainage, vegetation).
- (7) Minimization of urban runoff through the use of retention and detention facilities and the use of open bio-swale drainage channels
- (8) Pedestrian friendly streetscapes that may include orientation of homes to common areas, parks, or other open space areas.
- (9) Where feasible, design streets with separated sidewalks that incorporate a planter strip between the back of curb and sidewalk.

(b) Residential Multi Family. The following Design Concepts apply to the review of residential multi-family development. The City encourages:

- (1) Mass, scale and architecture which is compatible with existing and adjacent neighborhoods. The intent is to encourage appropriate transitions between uses and structures of varying residential density and a general compatibility of architectural styles.
- (2) Original designs that are tailored to the site and discourage monotonous or institutional type buildings and site design.
- (3) Site designs that preserve, enhance and incorporate the significant natural features of a site as an element within the overall design.
- (4) High quality building designs that consist of durable and maintainable materials for the exterior treatment of the buildings that complement the building mass and articulation.
- (5) The establishment of a streetscape presence and appearance through setbacks, landscaping, building placement, and architecture that defines the pedestrian and vehicular corridor and presents an appealing and continuous theme along a sidewalk, street or trail.

(6) Landscaping that softens the appearance of pavement and structures, and provides an eventual tree canopy along the street and pedestrian walkways.

(7) Ensure that design provisions do not preclude the development of multi-family housing affordable to all income levels.

(c) Non-Residential Site Planning. The following Design Concepts apply to site planning and design for non-residential (commercial, office, industrial, and public/quasi-public) development. The City encourages:

(1) Design of new development with particular attention to compatibility between non-residential and adjacent residential uses/properties within the project vicinity.

(2) A unified design theme for integrated developments. All buildings within an integrated development shall be designed consistent with the approved design theme.

(3) Pedestrian-friendly design which incorporates pedestrian amenities and outdoor gathering places into the project design with consideration given to the climate and planned use of space.

(4) A streetscape appearance that defines the pedestrian and vehicle corridor and presents an appealing and continuous theme along a sidewalk or street.

(5) Office and light industrial parks and integrated employment campuses that provide outdoor areas for eating and sitting, retail and service venues as appropriate, and other amenities for project employees.

(6) Design flexibility for mixed-use development that ensures compatibility of use types and promotes beneficial relationships among uses.

(7) Where feasible, design streets with separated sidewalks that incorporate a planter strip between the back of curb and sidewalk.

(d) Non-Residential Architecture. The following Design Concepts apply to non-residential (commercial, office, industrial, and public/quasi-public) development. The City encourages:

(1) High quality building designs that consist of durable and maintainable materials and that provide visual interest and diversity to the community.

(2) Use of an architectural style and or/theme for new non-residential development that is consistent for building elevations of a single structure or consistent among all buildings within an integrated development.

(3) Design of buildings or structures that are sensitive to the neighborhood character with regard to scale, architectural style, use of materials and bulk.

(4) Interesting and attractive architecture which includes varied relief of the facade elements and detailed articulation of the building features.

(5) Incorporate quality site design, including landscaping, signage and other elements of site design.

6. Scope of Design Review

To implement the principles and concepts in **Section 17.250.050(5)** the scope of Design Review is listed below by land use type. Applications for Design Review shall include adequate information to evaluate the project. Specific application submittal requirements shall be listed on the application form distributed by the Planning Department.

(a) Neighborhood Design - Major Subdivisions:

Relationship of land uses and density
Lot configuration **and** orientation
Street design/relationship to existing street network
Orientation to open space and significant natural features
Bikeways, trails and pedestrian facilities and connectivity with other development

(b) Multi-family Developments:

Architecture- style, mass and scale, articulation, materials, and relationship to surrounding use and style
Site plan- unit placement, garage location
Landscaping and lighting for Multi-Family developments
Streetscape design
Fences and walls
Solar access and shading

(c) Non-residential Development (commercial, office, industrial, and public/quasi-public)

Architecture- style or theme, mass and scale, articulation, materials, relationship to surrounding use and style
Site plan- building location/orientation to street, parking, grading, relationship to surrounding property
Access- vehicular and pedestrian
Pedestrian amenities
Landscaping and lighting
Edge treatment between uses and different zones
Loading and services (trash and recycling)
Mechanical screening
Signs

7. Design Review Process

(a) Application Submittal. Design Review applications shall be submitted to the Planning Department on a City application form. All plans shall be professionally drawn by qualified individuals, drawn at a reasonable scale to clearly identify the improvements and shall be on 18" x 24" or 24" x 36" and shall conform to the following requirements:

- **Building Plans and Elevations** shall identify the materials, colors, textures, etc.
- **Landscaping Plans** shall include common name, botanical name, size of plants/trees at planting and maturity, location, spacing, lawns, hardscape, walkways, streetscape furniture (i.e. benches, bicycle racks, art, water features, kiosks, bus shelters, etc.), ground cover, weed treatment, finished contours, parking areas, curbs, gutters, sidewalks and the edge of pavement.

- **Irrigation Plans** shall include location of sprinkler heads, and/or drip irrigation, location and size of irrigation pipe, water meters, backflow prevention devices, control valves, etc.
- **Photometric Plans** shall include the type, location, height, style and limits of the predicted maintained lighting levels of the proposed lighting fixtures.
- **Sign Plans** shall include the location, type (e.g. wall mounted, monument, pylon), size, color, font styles and lighting details.

(b) Application Review. Design Review shall generally occur within the framework of other project reviews/approvals associated with a given project. In such cases, the Planning Department shall circulate the project for review and comment by appropriate departments, entities, and agencies prior to public hearing by the designated Approving Authority. Where no other discretionary action is associated with a project that is subject to Design Review, the Planning Director shall, within 15 working days of application submittal, determine whether or not the application is complete. The applicant is encouraged to contact staff prior to submitting the application for a preliminary review of the project. The applicant shall be notified in writing of the determination of application completeness. Once any required review by related departments, entities, and agencies has been completed, the Planning staff shall prepare a report to the designated Approving Authority on the project with a recommendation for approval, conditional approval or denial of the Design Review application. Planning staff shall be responsible for assimilating the comments and recommendations of related departments and agencies into project modifications or Conditions of Approval, as well as to ensure conformance with applicable provisions of the Municipal Code, and any subsequently adopted standards, guidelines, or area plans.

(c) Environmental Review. The project shall be reviewed in accordance with the environmental review procedures of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Design Review shall generally not result in the need for CEQA evaluation for a project that is otherwise exempt.

(d) Notice and Hearing/Determination. Public notice and hearings for Design Review applications under consideration by the designated Approving Authority shall be conducted in accordance with Chapter 17.35 of the Rio Dell Municipal Code (RDMC). The notice shall identify the subject parcel, describe the request, and identify the date of the meeting. The notice shall also identify the opportunity to provide input prior to the determination and the right to appeal the determination in accordance with this Chapter.

(e) Appeals. Appeals shall be conducted in accordance with **Section 17.35.050** of the Rio Dell Municipal Code (RDMC).

8. Design Review Determination

(a) Findings for Design Review Approvals. Design Review approvals shall be granted only when the designated Approving Authority makes all of the following findings:

- (1) The proposed project is consistent with the objectives of the General Plan, complies with applicable Zoning regulations, Specific Plan provisions, Special Planning Area provisions, and is consistent with the applicable "Guiding Principles" and "Design Concepts" in **Section 17.250.050(5)** Rio Dell Municipal Code (RDMC).

(2) The proposed architecture, site design, and landscape are suitable for the purposes of the building and the site and will enhance the character of the neighborhood and community.

(3) The architecture, including the character, scale and quality of the design, relationship with the site and other buildings, building materials, screening of exterior appurtenances, exterior lighting and signing and similar elements establishes a clear design concept and is compatible with the character of existing or anticipated buildings on adjoining and nearby properties.

(4) The proposed project will not create conflicts with vehicular, bicycle, or pedestrian transportation modes of circulation.

(b) Additional Findings for Residential Design Review Applications. Design Review applications for single-family residential subdivision maps shall be granted only when the designated Approving Authority makes the additional finding that the residential subdivision is well integrated with the City's street network, creates desirable neighborhood environments, reflects traditional architectural styles, and establishes a pedestrian friendly environment.

(c) Conditions. The designated Approving Authority may require modifications to plans in whole or in part and may condition the Design Review application to ensure specific design features, construction materials, and conformance with all applicable provisions of this chapter.

(d) Permit Issuance. Approval of the Design Review application shall only become valid upon completion of the designated ten-day appeal period.

(e) Permit Term. Where Design Review is approved in conjunction with a related action, the Design Review approval shall remain valid for a period consistent with related review/approval. Where no other discretionary review/approval is required, the Design Review approval shall be valid for a period of three (3) years from the date of final approval.