

Chapter 3.76

LINCOLN DOWNTOWN DESIGN STANDARDS

*The Planning Department is assigned responsibility for
administration of these design standards.*

Section 1. INTRODUCTION

Downtown Lincoln is the mixed-use center of the Lincoln community, offering employment, residences, education, recreation, and retailing. From the adoption of the Original Plat in 1867 through the present day, Downtown has developed as the community's most urban, most mixed, highest density neighborhood, with wide streets and sidewalks, buildings typically constructed from property-line to property-line, and relatively few but very important urban open spaces. For the purposes of these Lincoln Downtown Design Standards, "Downtown Lincoln" consists of those areas within the corporate limits zoned B-4 Lincoln Center Business District or O-1 Office District, as shown on the Lincoln Zoning District Map adopted pursuant to Section 27.05.020 of the Lincoln Municipal Code.

The purpose of the Lincoln Downtown Design Standards ("Design Standards") is to recognize and build upon the substantial private and public investment in Downtown Lincoln, and to strengthen the best qualities of its urban form, while encouraging compatible new construction.

The Design Standards focus on a limited number of basic design elements which have significant effect on how Downtown Lincoln looks and even more importantly, on how it is experienced by residents, employees, and visitors. These standards do not guarantee good design -- only the talents and efforts of owners, designers, and builders do that. But they will ensure the best practices and discourage certain negative design features, thereby strengthening Downtown Lincoln's essential center. These Design Standards are derived from and consistent with the Downtown Master Plan and the Antelope Valley Redevelopment Plan.

The Design Standards shall apply to building permit applications filed on or after the adoption of the Request for Resolution designated as Misc. No. 08007.

Section 2. WORK REQUIRING REVIEW

2.1 Exterior Features

The Design Standards apply to exterior features of projects requiring building permits in the B-4 Lincoln Center Business District or O-1 Office District, whether the project is new construction, exterior remodeling of existing buildings, or site development that does not include buildings (such as parking lots). **Interior aspects** of new or existing construction do **NOT** require review under the Design Standards (although other building and zoning codes may apply).

- a. Minor Remodeling Projects (investing 50% or less of a property's assessed valuation). Exterior features of the project shall not cause greater deviation from these Design Standards than currently exists.
- b. Major Remodeling Projects (investing more than 50% of a property's assessed valuation). Exterior features of the project shall meet the applicable Design Standards that are feasible given existing site conditions.
- c. Review of Minor and Major Remodeling Projects. Review of minor and major remodeling projects should begin with a conference with staff to seek consensus on which are the applicable standards.

It is intended that both private and public property owners will comply with these Design Standards, including voluntary cooperation by the University of Nebraska at Lincoln, City of Lincoln, State of Nebraska, and U. S. Government and any other government or agency that is not legally bound by local zoning requirements.

Section 3. APPLICATION AND REVIEW PROCESS

Planning staff will review projects and administratively approve those which meet the requirements of the Design Standards.

Efforts will be made to avoid increased time for review and approval. To facilitate this review process, the applicant shall submit the following items, as applicable, with the building permit application:

1. At least one black or blue line print to scale showing the street elevations and the site plan of the proposed project.
2. For new construction and major remodeling projects, samples or photographs of proposed major materials shall also be submitted.
3. For minor remodeling projects, a photograph of the existing building and sufficient written or drawn description to understand the proposed changes may be substituted.

Section 4. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

4.1 Site Development

- a. Downtown Lincoln buildings west of 19th Street and on North 21st Street from O to Q Streets shall be “built-to” their front property lines (and on corner lots, shall be built-to both front property lines).
- b. Pedestrian plazas and forecourts at street level shall be permitted except on P Street from 9th to 19th Street and on North 21st Street from O to Q Streets.
- c. Any on-site surface parking shall be paved and must be screened with plant materials, masonry walls, or masonry and wrought iron (not chain-link) fences, or some combination thereof, to provide at least a 90% screen from grade to three feet above the grade.
- d. Parking shall be set back six feet from the property line if only plant materials are used for screening or set back three feet if fence or wall are used.
- e. Parking and driveways between a building and the street are prohibited with two exceptions:
 1. hotels may offer drop-off lanes at their principal entrance; and
 2. buildings situated on a parcel occupying an entire blockface may be built to one corner (fronting two streets) and may offer screened parking behind and/or beside the building.
- f. Drive-through lanes, if used, must be located behind or beside buildings, and are prohibited between the building and streets.
- g. Drive-through facilities (in which the customer is served directly in the car including, but not limited to, drive-in teller windows and ATMs, drive-in restaurants, motorized vehicle fuel sales facilities, motorized vehicle repair/service, or motorized vehicle wash facilities) are prohibited in the area of the B-4 Lincoln Center Business District bounded by 10th Street, 150 feet north of P Street, 14th Street, and N Street.

(Res. A-86830, 5-21-2012).

4.2 Building Features

- a. Materials:

(5-21-12)

1. For the first 20 (twenty) feet above street level, durable masonry materials, such as stone, brick, or tile, or similar materials such as pre-cast concrete, or poured-in-place concrete are required as the primary exterior material facing streets for Downtown Lincoln buildings. Ample windows are allowed but glass curtain wall structures are allowed only in the area more than 20 feet above street level. Decorative accents of durable materials including metal architectural panels, architectural tile, and metalwork are allowed. Other high-quality, durable materials as accents or primary materials may be proposed to and approved by the appropriate design review board.
 2. Faux brick products (not made of fired clay) are prohibited.
 3. Use of lap or shingle siding of any material including wood, vinyl, cementitious, or painted or corrugated metal is prohibited for Downtown Lincoln buildings.
 4. Plain or painted concrete block is prohibited as the primary material on street facades in Downtown Lincoln; other concrete masonry units may be proposed to and approved by the appropriate design review board.
 5. Stucco or synthetic stucco is prohibited below the 12 (twelve) foot level but may be substituted above that level for the durable masonry materials described in section 4.2.a.1.
- b. Parking structures and lots:
1. Parking structures shall be designed with usable floor area on the ground floor between parking areas and public sidewalks if built between (and including) N and Q Streets, and between 9th and 19th Streets, and along North 21st Street between O and Q Streets and along Canopy Drive.
 2. Any ground-floor parking in structures must be screened from public sidewalks.
 3. Entrances and exits shall be located and grouped to minimize curb cuts and other interruptions of pedestrian movement on sidewalks.
 4. Parking structures shall be designed with the appearance of horizontal floors, concealing sloped floors or ramps visible on street facades. (Entrance and exit ramps may be visible through openings on the ground floor.)
- c. Roofs:

1. Downtown Lincoln buildings shall conceal low pitched or nearly flat roofs behind parapet walls. Visible roofs are acceptable only on penthouses providing habitable space, set back at least ten feet from parapet walls.
 2. Mechanical equipment on rooftops shall be architecturally screened with materials compatible with the main walls of the building so they are not visible from adjacent streets.
- d. Entrances and first floor windows:
1. Buildings shall have at least one principal entrance that faces the street. Buildings on corners or with multiple street frontages may have a single principal entrance, which must face a street.
 2. The ground floor of buildings with frontages between (and including) N and Q Streets, and between 9th and 19th Streets and on North 21st Street from O to Q Streets and on Canopy Drive shall have transparent glazing in at least 70% of the area between four feet and nine feet above the sidewalk, except in the case of residential buildings. Building in other areas shall have transparent glazing in at least 50% of the area between four and nine feet above the sidewalk, except in the case of buildings with first-floor residential uses.
 - 3 Ramps for accessibility added to existing buildings, shall employ materials and design features drawn from the main structure. New buildings shall not include exterior ramps along street frontages.

(Res. A-86830, 5-21-2012).

4.3 Additional Pedestrian Considerations

- a. To minimize interruptions of and conflicts with the pedestrian routes across adjacent sidewalks, garage doors and service bays shall not open directly onto sidewalks, but instead shall be oriented toward alleys or toward the interior of the lot. One service bay shall be permitted facing a sidewalk if a building has no alley access.
- b. Sidewalk cafes and other high-quality amenities including street furniture are encouraged in Downtown Lincoln and shall be designed and located to minimize interruption of clear, direct pedestrian routes.
- c. Dumpsters, service docks, transformers, and other necessary fixtures shall be located and screened so as not to be visible from adjacent sidewalks.

Section 5. WAIVERS AND APPEAL

(5-21-12)

*Lincoln Downtown Design Standards
Chapter 3.76 - 5*

The applicant may request the Planning Director, [the Appeals Board, or the City Council](#) to waive strict conformance with the Lincoln Downtown Design Standards (“Design Standards”) [as provided in Chapter 1.00](#). ~~The Planning Director~~ [Waivers of the Design Standards](#) may be granted ~~the request upon written finding if it is determined~~ that the design enhances its setting and meets the overall intent and spirit of the Design Standards.

~~A copy of the Planning Director’s decision granting or denying the requested waiver shall be sent by the Planning Director by first class mail to the applicant, the City Council, the Downtown Neighborhood Association, the Downtown Lincoln Association, and to the record owners of property located within 200 feet of the subject property upon which the waiver was granted or denied (collectively “Potentially Aggrieved Parties”). Any Potentially Aggrieved Party may appeal the Planning Director’s decision granting or denying the requested waiver to the Design Standards. The appeal shall be to the Urban Design Committee (or if the subject property is already under the jurisdiction of the Capitol Environs Commission or Historic Preservation Commission, to the Commission having such jurisdiction). The applicable body having jurisdiction over the appeal shall hereinafter be referred to as the Appeals Board. The required Notice of Appeal shall be filed with the Planning Director within 14 days of the mailing (postmark) date of the Planning Director’s notification mailing to the Potentially Aggrieved Parties.~~

~~Upon receipt of the appeal, the Planning Director shall cause the appeal to be scheduled for hearing and action on the Appeals Board’s agenda within 30 days from the date of the appeal. Notice of the hearing before the Appeals Board shall be sent to the Potentially Aggrieved Parties at least 10 days prior to the hearing. The Appeals Board shall review the proposed design, the Planning Director’s decision, and any additional information provided, and shall make a written finding granting or denying the requested waiver. The Appeals Board shall grant the requested waiver if it finds that the design enhances its settings and meets the overall intent and spirit of the Design Standards. If the decision is not made by the Appeals Board within 30 days of the date of appeal, the waiver shall be deemed to have been approved by the Appeals Board. If the Appeals Board denies the waiver, the Appeals Board may approve the waiver conditioned upon the applicant making changes to the design in order for the application to meet the overall intent and spirit of the Design Standards. If the applicant agrees to make the recommended design changes, the building permit application shall be approved as being in compliance with the Design Standards, subject to appeal to the City Council as provided below.~~

~~Notice of the Appeals Board decision granting, conditionally granting, or denying the requested waiver shall be sent by the Planning Director by first class mail to the Potentially Aggrieved Parties. Any Potentially Aggrieved Party may appeal the decision of the Appeals Board to the City Council. Notice of Appeal shall be filed with the City Clerk within 10 days of the mailing (postmark) date of the Planning Director’s notification mailing of the Appeals Board’s decision. If a Notice of Appeal is timely received, the City Clerk shall cause the appeal to be scheduled for~~

~~hearing and action on the City Council agenda not less than 15 days nor more than 30 days after the date of the appeal.~~

~~As an alternative, any Potentially Aggrieved Party may appeal the Planning Director's decision granting or denying the requested waiver to the Design Standards directly to the City Council. The required Notice of Appeal shall be filed with the Planning Director within 14 days of the mailing (postmark) date of the Planning Director's notification mailing to the Potentially Aggrieved Parties. Upon receipt of the appeal, the Planning Director shall cause the appeal to be scheduled for hearing and action on the City Council's agenda within 30 days from the date of the appeal. Notice of the hearing before the City Council shall be sent to the Potentially Aggrieved Parties at least 10 days prior to the hearing. The Planning Director will also schedule a meeting of the Appeals Board, if possible, prior to the City Council hearing, so that the Appeals Board may review and comment on the appeal to the City Council.~~

~~Any final action of the Planning Director, Appeals Board, or City Council approving a requested waiver shall be deemed to be consistent with the Design Standards for purposes of issuing a building permit.~~

*(Chapter 3.76 adopted by Resolution No. A-85010, 9-8-08;
amended by Resolution No. A-86830, 5-21-12).*

Comment [slh1]: The alternate appeal, directly to City Council, which is currently an option for the waivers to the Downtown Design Standards, would be eliminated.

Comment [slh2]: This section was removed because it was consolidated with the Neighborhood Design Standards and Commercial Design Standards appeal process and moved to Chapter 1.00.