Lincoln
Downtown
Master
Plan
Lincoln
Downtown
Implementation
Program
Lincoln
Downtown
Design
Guidelines

Eroding the Investment
Environment

PARK

ONE WAY
Canon

IMPERIALE
PALAZZO RISTORANTE

EXIT

SPECIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES for the NORTH MACADAM DISTRICT of the CENTRAL CITY PLAN
1992
1991
1996
1990
CENTRAL CITY FUNDAMENTAL DESIGN GUIDELINES
2001
1983

Enhancing the
Investment Environment

ROADSIDE
1988

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MEIER
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ESTABLISHED 1857

ONE WAY
JACKSON TOWER

PLACE

BCBG
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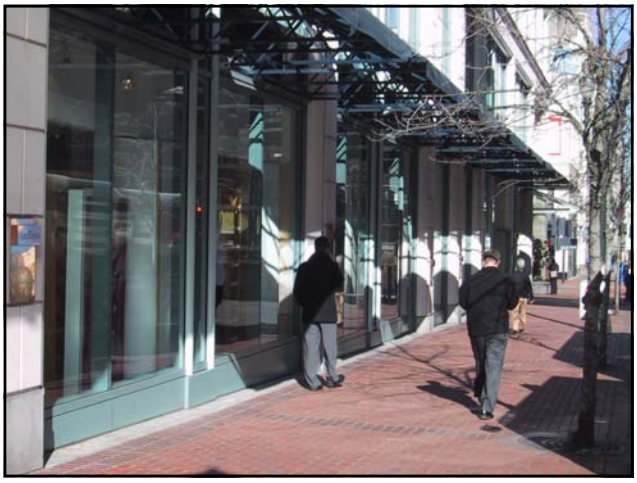
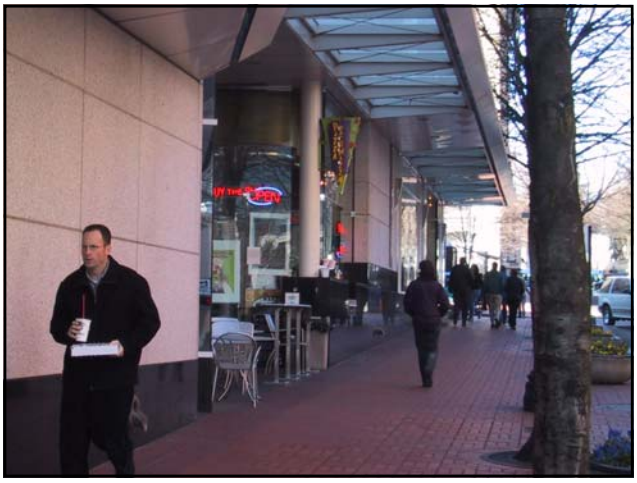


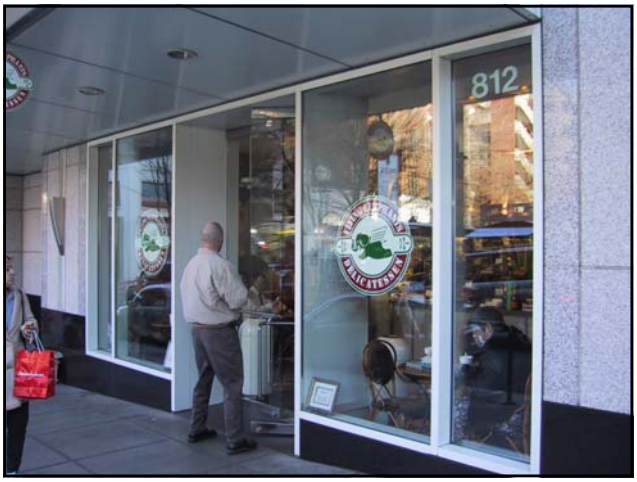
PIONEER PLACE

PIONEER PLACE

Romano's
Macaroni
GRILL

YAMHILL
BANANA REPUBLIC

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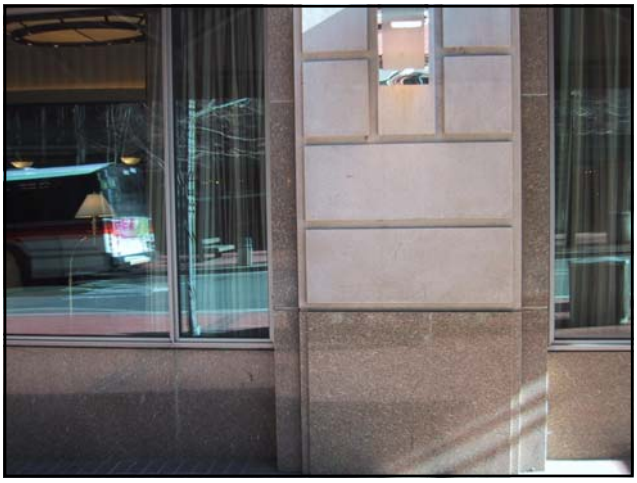


Lincoln Downtown **Design Guidelines**

May 19, 2005 (Draft)

Design Review

All new building and exterior renovation projects within the Downtown Master Plan area are subject to design review – that is, whenever a building permit is required, the project will also go through some version of the design review process illustrated in the diagram below.

The exact steps of the review process followed is generally based on the nature of interior work proposed, with more extensive projects typically reviewed by Design Commission and less extensive projects by planning staff.

- Major Modification – Design Commission review
- Minor Modification – planning staff review or Design Commission review
- Maintenance and Repair – planning commission staff review

Starting at a "pre-application" conference with planning staff, the design review checklist is used to determine which (if any) guidelines apply to the project.

Once the formal application is submitted, a decision is made to approve, to approve with conditions, or to deny a proposal. For instance, when a project is found to be not consistent with the design guidelines, specific conditions of approval may be required, or it may be decided that design details or other site factors warrant finding for approval of the project without meeting the particular design guidelines.

For those applications that are substantially inconsistent with the guidelines, staff to the Design Commission also have the option to deny the development request.

The Design Review process takes into account only whether the project complies with the applicable design guidelines. A project's consistency with the Master Plan or any other relevant documents is determined separately by the planning commission and planning department staff.

Character Guidelines

Intent

The Character Guidelines address the qualities that give Lincoln its uniqueness and personality. They consider what makes downtown a special, distinct "place," not simply a group of individual buildings and streets.

Downtown Lincoln began as the small village of Lancaster – a few log cabins located near a salt basin in the 1850s, when salt was a precious commodity and the Nebraska Territory was new.

Changes in the 1860s made lasting marks on the Lincoln of today: statehood came in 1867, and the village became the state capital under a new name; Lincoln. It was platted with the wide streets we see today, as well as ample space for the State yet to be and university campus.

By 1870, regional agriculture had spawned an open air Market Square in what is now the Haymarket District. The Burlington Northern District, the first Lincoln rolled through town that same year, and the primary city grew into a well secure throughout the latter decades of the Nineteenth Century.

Lincoln's unique role as government and educational center has continued throughout the Twentieth Century and into the present. Today downtown Lincoln offers an a legacy of carefully designed, distinctive buildings ranging from Norman Goodhue's 1902 Beaux Arts Capitol to UNL Pulitzer Media Prize-winner.

Lincoln, ca. 1900

Elements

These guidelines are divided into the following elements:

- Reinforce Lincoln's Sense of Place
- Preserve Historic Buildings
- Promote Linkages to Lincoln's Heritage
- Establish or Strengthen Gateways
- Promote Architectural Compatibility
- Integrate the Environment
- Integrate Art

Visual examples are included as a tool for design and review purposes. They are intended to provide designers and the Design Commission a means to identify appropriate and inappropriate character elements.

11th and O Streets, Downtown, 1908

Reinforce Lincoln's Sense of Place

Guideline

Strengthen the qualities and characteristics that reflect downtown Lincoln's history, geography, climate and people.

Description

Downtown Lincoln has long been the heart of the southeastern Nebraska region and endeavored to role as the most-more desirable destination in which to work, live, study and play.

The street grid of the original town plat, dating from the 1860s, emphasized the prominence of downtown Lincoln as state capital and center of the Salt Basin. And it is appropriate that the mid-rise buildings of Lincoln downtown are significant not as single structures but rather as a collection, of well-constructed buildings that give prominence to a signature building, the monumental state capitol.

The original plat of Lincoln also laid out a minimum 100 foot-wide right-of-way for the typical downtown street, providing ample room for activities and landscaping. These wide streets funnel into the downtown urban grid the lush colors and textures of the surrounding tallgrass prairie, farmlands, and university campus.

Appropriate

- Background buildings whose identity comes from contributing positively to the downtown as a whole.
- Quality long-lasting, durable materials appropriate to Lincoln climate.
- Development of downtown cultural facilities celebrating Lincoln history.
- Preservation and restoration of buildings and sites significant to Lincoln heritage.

Inappropriate

- Historic "theme park" developments not authentic to specific to downtown Lincoln heritage.
- Design that is corporate-brand-inspired.
- Generic developments that could be anywhere – such as what one might see at a typical shopping center.
- Signature buildings that visually compete with the capitol or other Lincoln landmarks.

Appropriate

Inappropriate

Promote Architectural Compatibility

Guideline

New buildings should be "good neighbors" and contribute to the quality and character of their architectural context.

Description

Buildings should "fit" with their architectural surroundings—relating to nearby buildings rather than calling attention to themselves through disruptive design elements or novel variations. Material, color, mortar, scale, form, silhouette, height, rhythm and proportion all influence a structure's compatibility with its surroundings. Architectural elements should enhance not detract from the street overall character.

Appropriate

- Traditional architectural elements (for example, dormers) consistent in a scale and level of detailing proportionate to the size of the building.
- Forms, proportions, rhythms, materials, colors and architectural motifs that are suggested by and complement adjacent buildings.

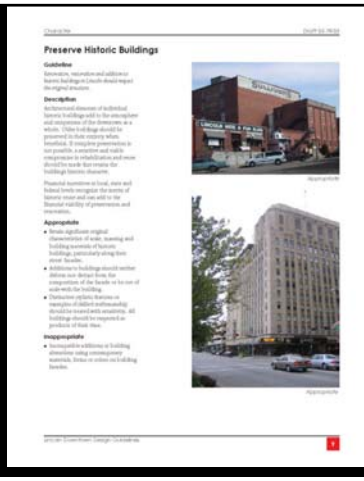
Inappropriate

- Out-of-scale, over-simplified, cartoon-like, cartoon, or other traditional architectural elements applied without regard to size or use of the elements.
- Building elements that do not respect the scale, materials, proportions and heights of adjacent historic or significantly high-quality buildings.

Appropriate

Inappropriate

Inappropriate



Preserve Historic Buildings

Guideline

Renovation, restoration and addition to historic buildings in Lincoln should respect the original structure.

Description

Architectural elements of individual historic buildings add to the atmosphere and uniqueness of the downtown as a whole. Older buildings should be preserved in their uniqueness when feasible. If complete preservation is not possible, a sensitive and viable compromise in rehabilitation and reuse should be made that retains the buildings historic character.

Financial incentives at local, state and federal levels recognize the merits of historic estate and can add to the financial viability of preservation and restoration.

Appropriate

- Retain significant original characteristics of scale, massing and building materials of historic buildings, particularly along their street facades.
- Additions to buildings should neither detract nor distract from the composition of the facade or be out of scale with the building.
- Distinctive stylistic features or examples of skilled craftsmanship should be treated with sensitivity. All buildings should be respected as products of their time.

Inappropriate

- Incompatible additions or building alterations using contemporary materials, forms or colors on building facades.

Appropriate

Appropriate

Pedestrian Emphasis Guidelines

Pedestrian Amenities

Reinforce and Enhance Pedestrian System

Guideline

Maintain the pedestrian as the priority in downtown, eliminating pedestrian barriers and ensuring that walking routes are safe, direct and pleasant.

Description

Pedestrian routes should be attractive, easy to use and encourage walking and activity downtown. Sidewalks should be continuous, avoiding interruptions such as vehicle exclusions or changes in direction or grade. Walkways should be free of barriers such as utility poles, newspaper boxes, cafe tables and chairs, permanent planters, tree grates or other obstructions and clutter.

Pedestrians should be separated and protected from visual and other nuisances. For instance, noise and odors should be mitigated by screening or enclosing loading docks, mechanical equipment, garbage dumpsters and other unsightly items. These components should be located away from areas where pedestrians congregate and, instead, be located in service areas or alleys whenever possible.

Appropriate

- Maintain pedestrian access where rights-of-way have traditionally been located.
- Mid-block landscaped pedestrian walkways within "superblocks."
- Parking for walkways.
- Enclosures screened trash dumpsters.
- Utility/mechanical enclosures.

Inappropriate

- Indirect or circuitous pedestrian routes.
- Permanent or temporary pedestrian route obstructions.
- Interrupted or discontinuous pedestrian routes.

Appropriate

Inappropriate

2012 Downtown Design Guidelines

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Pedestrian Amenities

Define the Pedestrian Environment

Guideline

A building should provide a continuous, visually rich pedestrian experience along its ground floor street front.

Description

The most important part of a building is its ground floor – the lowest 10 feet of the facade, which a person experiences walking past or entering the building. This "pedestrian experience zone" should extend horizontally across the sidewalk and provide an enclosed, continuous and comfortable street edge for the pedestrian. Building transparency at ground floor should foster interaction between the public and private realms.

Appropriate

- Windows – transparent or with displays at street level.
- Walls that create visual interest by providing a variety of forms, colors and compatible cladding materials.
- Facades that provide a rhythm by using bays, columns, pilasters or other articulation at street level.
- Signs and lighting at ground level that fit to the human scale.

Inappropriate

- Blank, flat, monolithic walls not articulated by any visual interest or detail at street level.

Appropriate

Inappropriate

2012 Downtown Design Guidelines

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Pedestrian Amenities

Protect the Pedestrian From the Elements

Guideline

Provide pedestrians with protection from wind, sun, rain, and snow.

Description

Awnings and canopies are encouraged along the ground floor of buildings to protect pedestrians from rain and snow during inclement weather and provide shade in summer.

The design of awnings and canopies should be an integral component of the building facade. Awnings should be in proportion to the building and sidewalk, and not so large or to impact street trees, light fixtures or other street furniture.

Appropriate

- Canvas fixed or retractable awnings.
- Horizontal metal canopies, especially if transom, or clerestory windows are above storefront glazing.

Inappropriate

- Vinyl or other synthetic fabrics.
- Backlit awnings.
- Oversized advertising or tenant signs on awnings.
- Oddly shaped forms.

Appropriate

Inappropriate

2012 Downtown Design Guidelines

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Architecture Guidelines

Provide Inviting Retail Doors

Guideline

Doors should create an open area for a fine dining experience.

Description

Primary business entry doors for retail and commercial establishments should be transparent, allowing passersby to see the activity within the building and bringing life and vitality to the street. Doors with extra large openings that blend the street activity with the buildings interior are appropriate for restaurants and cafes.

Appropriate

- Large cafe or restaurant doors that open the street to the interior by pivoting, sliding or rolling up overhead.
- Doors with a minimum of 50% window area.
- Building lighting emphasizing entrances.
- Transom, side line or other window installations.
- Doors combined with special architectural detailing.
- Double or multiple door entries.
- Well detailed or ornate door hardware.

Inappropriate

- Solid metal or wood doors with small or no windows.
- Primary entry doors raised more than three feet above sidewalk level.
- Doors flush with building facade.
- Clear anodized aluminum frames.
- Closing with anodized frameless.
- Reflective, opaque or tinted glazing.

Appropriate

Inappropriate

Encourage Retail Corner Doors

Guideline

Locate entry doors at corners of retail buildings whenever possible.

Description

Corner entries emphasize intersections as important places for pedestrian interaction and activity. Transparent doors and windows are strongly encouraged. Entries at 45 degree angles and free of visual obstructions are also encouraged.

Appropriate

- Doors with large glass areas.
- Primary building entrance should be at corners.
- Doors combined with roof or hood architectural elements such as bays or towers.
- Building wall lighting emphasizing entrances.

Inappropriate

- Blank walls at corners of public streets.
- Visual and physical obstructions such as large columns.
- Primary entry doors made of clear anodized aluminum.
- Primary entry doors that are solid and windowless.
- Utility boxes, meters or mechanical units near the entrance doors.
- Glass areas with anodized frameless (internal or applied synthetic materials).
- Reflective, opaque or tinted glazing in the door.

Appropriate

Appropriate

Inappropriate

Promote Welcoming Residential Doors

Guideline

Residential (not an lobby, lane, alcove) *provide a friendly transition between the public and private realms.*

Description

Doors should be substantial enough to suggest privacy yet welcoming to those who approach and enter. The design of a door should respond to its setting. If a door faces an active street, it is appropriate to separate the door from the street with a comfortable change of grade – perhaps two or three feet. For low active areas, transitional design or entrance angles be used.

Appropriate

- Multi-panel painted doors.
- Doors combined with transom, windows or side lites.
- Durable, high quality metal door hardware.
- Wood solid core doors.
- Doors screened from canopy covered entries.
- Moderate, human-scaled change of grade from sidewalk level to townhouse door – up approximately three feet or water level, not above eye level.
- Lobby entries to multi-family buildings providing double or multiple doors.

Inappropriate

- Sliding glass doors.
- Unembedded, flush doors.
- Doors raised more than four feet above sidewalk level for townhouse-style housing.
- Doors accessed directly from parking lots.
- Door glazing with anodized divided lites.
- Doors not directly accessed from the street or courtyard.
- Doors glazed with reflective or tinted glazing.

Appropriate

Inappropriate

Promote Visually Interesting Upper Floor Windows

Guideline

Windows should create an open and inviting atmosphere that enhances the experience of the building both inside and out.

Description

The windows of a residential building should be pleasing and cohesive. Their size and detailing can add a human scale and visual interest to the building.

Appropriate

- Multiple lites or divisions.
- Operable windows.
- Trim around framed openings.
- Appropriately scaled stone sawtooth sills and lintels where installation is masonry wall.
- Regular spacing and rhythm of similarly shaped windows.
- "Punched" windows recessed from building facade not flush.

Inappropriate

- Anodized divided lites.
- "Strip" windows with more horizontal than vertical emphasis.
- Windows flush with building facade.
- New or replacement vinyl frames and sashes.

Appropriate

Inappropriate

Use Quality Wall Materials

Guideline

Use materials that create a sense of permanence.

Description

Quality wall materials can provide a sense of permanence and bring life and warmth to downtown. Articulation of wall materials should be bold, using materials that show depth, quality and durability. It should be apparent that the materials have substance and mass, and are not artificial, thin "image sets" applied only to the buildings surface.

Appropriate

- Richly articulated window and storefront trim.
- Natural or subdued building colors.
- Limited use of bright accent trim colors.
- Varied yet compatible cladding materials.
- Masonry materials – brick and stone or stone.

Appropriate

Inappropriate

Foster Attractive Rooftops

Guideline

Integrate rooftop elements into building design.

Description

Roof shape, surface materials, colors, mechanical equipment and other penthouse features should all be integrated into overall building design.

Roof mounted mechanical equipment should be hidden from view by parapets. If building parapets do not provide adequate screening, screening walls or enclosures installed as an integral part of the architectural design should be used.

Roof terraces and gardens are encouraged.

Appropriate

- Screened mechanical units.
- Rooftop penthouses occupied residential or office spaces.
- Rooftop gardens.
- "Green" roofs that reduce stormwater runoff.

Inappropriate

- Exposed rooftop mechanical or electrical units.
- Exposed telecommunications equipment, including satellite dishes, cell phone towers or antennae.

Appropriate

Inappropriate

Provide Interesting Building Massing

Guideline

Use scale-defining forms to break up the lengthwise dimension of buildings, creating small-scale elements of exterior by articulating an entire region above ship.

Description

The length and breadth of a building should be broken down and interesting to the pedestrian. Portions of a large building mass should be broken into smaller, appropriately scaled sections, with changes in plane indicated by bold projections and indentations. This allows an overly large building to appear as smaller, side by side buildings. Vertical and horizontal elements should be used to create human scale and form a coherent pattern providing visual interest to the pedestrian.

Appropriate

- Break down long expanses of building frontage with horizontally and vertically.
- Tripartite facade division – base, middle and cap for taller buildings (over three stories).
- Stepped back upper levels.
- Vertical articulation of windows, columns and lines.

Inappropriate

- Long unbroken volumes along street facade.
- Smooth, undifferentiated facade.
- Suburban-styled horizontal orientation of building elements – walls, doors and windows.

Appropriate

Appropriate

Inappropriate

Promote Green Architecture

Guideline

Use sustainable design practices whenever possible as long as they do not detract from the pedestrian safety and aesthetic stability of downtown.

Description

Address the health of downtown in a holistic manner, considering environmental quality and long term benefits to downtown, society and vitality. Guidelines and directives, official environmental certification programs such as LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) may be helpful in determining sustainable practices.

Appropriate

- Consider how all of a building's systems work with each other and with the building envelope to maximize efficiency.
- Use highly durable local materials.
- Follow a maintenance strategy to run building systems at maximum efficiency over the long term.

Inappropriate

- "Green" practices that detract from high quality design.
- Application of "green" design for marketing hype alone.
- Application of "green" design where quality enhancement projects (projects that erode the urban character of downtown).

Appropriate Green Roof

Appropriate Green Roof

Build Compatible Parking Structures

Guideline

Parking structures should be designed so that they are consistent in form, massing and materials with most other buildings in the downtown.

Description

Parking garages play an important role in the vitality of any downtown. However, too often they are buildings that are designed for parking function without consideration of architectural quality.

Frequently the downtown architectural features of the garage are multiple bays of long, dark, horizontal ventilation openings and concrete structure at each parking level.

Parking garages should instead be designed to appear like any other occupied building in the downtown. To achieve this, their horizontal form must be broken down – for instance, adding more wall surface while reducing openings, providing adequate ventilation through a series of stacked, punched openings rather than the long horizontal gaps, and using detailing at corners or on window jambs. Active retail uses on the ground floor also help garages fit in with the rest of downtown.

Appropriate

- Ground floor retail or other active uses.
- Small openings that may be glazed to function as windows.
- Glass enclosed elevators along the building edge.
- Stairwell, elevator and parking entries and exits that occur preferably at mid-block but never at corners of retail streets.
- Single area operator control point to minimize driveways.
- Vertical expression of building structure.

Inappropriate

- Parked cars on the ground floor that are visible from adjacent sidewalks.
- Exposed sloped floors visible from the street.
- Stairwell, elevators and parking entries and exits occurring at the building's corners, where retail is a more appropriate use.
- Horizontal expression of building structure.

Appropriate

Inappropriate

Inappropriate

Use Skybridges Sparingly

Guideline

All weather upper floor connections between structures across public rights-of-way should be limited.

Description

While skybridges can create comfortable connections between buildings, they can greatly contribute to the loss of street activity and may have social implications of unwilling and separating citizens by income or ethnicity. Furthermore, they signal that streets are inhospitable and should be avoided. When used, skybridges should be transparent and subordinate visually to adjacent buildings.

Appropriate

- Connecting hospital buildings, jails and courthouses or similar building types where public safety and security concerns warrant separation of users.
- Connecting convention centers with headquarters hotels, when at-grade connections are not feasible.
- Construction at third floor or higher.
- Minimum width and height of structure relative to adjacent street and buildings.
- Glass window walls for transparency in and out.

Inappropriate

- Connecting office, retail, housing, educational or government uses.
- "Signature" architectural design elements – forms or features that call out for attention.

Appropriate

Inappropriate

Inappropriate

Lighting Guidelines

Integrate Building Lighting

Guideline

Exterior lighting of buildings should be an integral component of the facade composition.

Description

Architectural lighting may be used to articulate the particular building design, lighting of entries, uplighting and other effects may be used.

Lighting should not cast glare into residential units or onto adjacent lots or streets in any way that decreases the safety of pedestrians and vehicles. Lights may, however, be used to create effects of shadow, relief and outline that add visual interest and highlight aspects of the building.

Appropriate

- Wall washing lighting fixtures.
- Decorative wall sconces and similar architectural lighting fixtures.
- Recessed uplight fixtures on buildings or integrated with landscape.
- Lighting that provides natural color.

Inappropriate

- Street adjacent accent lighting.
- Bollard lighting lighting.
- Fluorescent tube lighting.
- Security spotlights.
- Low pressure sodium lamps.

Appropriate

Inappropriate

Sign Guidelines

Consider Size and Placement of Wall Signs

Lincoln Downtown Design Guidelines

Lincoln Downtown Master Plan
DESIGN GUIDELINES CHECKLIST

Project and Applicant Name: _____
Zoning: _____
Building Use: _____
Other : _____
Submission Date: _____

DESIGN GUIDELINES

	Applies Yes	Applies No	Complies Yes	Complies No
1). Character				
• Reinforce Lincoln's Sense of Place	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Integrate the Environment	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Establish and Strengthen Gateways	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Promote Architectural Compatibility	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Preserve Historic Buildings	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Integrate Art	☐	☐	☐	☐
2). Pedestrian Emphasis				
• Reinforce and Enhance the Pedestrian System	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Define the Pedestrian Environment	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Protect the Pedestrian from the Elements	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Provide Places for Stopping and Viewing	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Create Successful Outdoor Spaces	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Integrate Universal Design	☐	☐	☐	☐
3). Architecture				
• Provide Inviting Retail Doors	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Encourage Retail Corner Doors	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Promote Welcoming Residential Doors	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Encourage Inviting Ground Floor Retail Windows	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Promote Visually Interesting Upper Floor Windows	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Use Quality Wall Materials	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Create Attractive Silhouettes and Rooflines	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Foster Attractive Rooftops	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Provide Interesting Building Massing	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Promote Green Architecture	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Secure Buildings for Security	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Build Compatible Parking Structures	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Use Appropriate Openings	☐	☐	☐	☐
4). Lighting				
• Create Lighting for the Pedestrian	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Integrate Building Lighting	☐	☐	☐	☐
5). Signs				
• Consider Size and Placement of Wall Signs	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Orient Hanging Signs to the Pedestrian	☐	☐	☐	☐

Lincoln Downtown Master Plan
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Lincoln Downtown Master Plan

DESIGN GUIDELINES CHECKLIST

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• Promote Welcoming Residential Doors	☐	☐	☐	☐

Lincoln Scope of Work

2004 2005

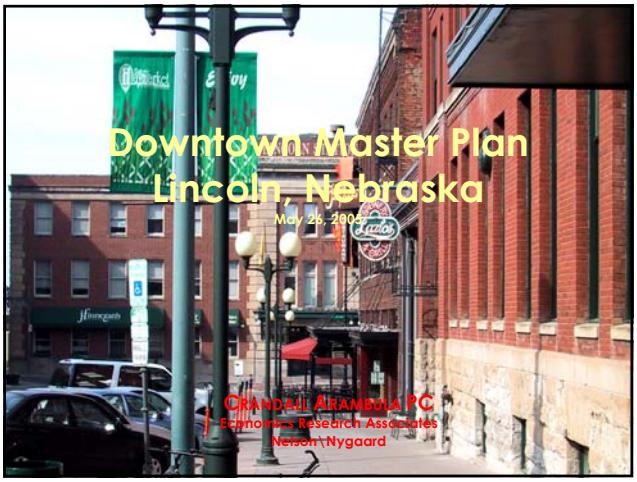
A S O N D J F M A M J J

1 STARTING

1) Establish Procedures
2) Review Information
3) Identify Opportunities & Constraints
4) Workshop #1 - Review Findings — 1 Aug. 10

2 DESIGNING

5) Develop Downtown Alternatives
6) Develop Bicycle Facilities Alternatives
7) Develop Transit Alternatives
8) Workshop #2 - Review Alternatives — 2 Oct. 12
9) Refine Best Downtown Alternatives
10) Refine Bicycle Facilities Plan
11) Refine Transit Services Plan
12) Workshop #3 - Review Refined Alt. — 3 Nov. 30
13) Prepare Final Master Plans

3 IMPLEMENTING

14) Prepare Implementation Program
15) Prepare Design Guidelines
16) Prepare Final Plan Documents
17) Workshop #4 – Final Plan — Mar 3, Apr 7, May 26, June 8 — 4