

MISSOULA DESIGN EXCELLENCE STRATEGY REPORT COMMENTS

What an excellent, comprehensive, beautifully organized draft by Winter & Company!

Here are some additions to augment the great work thus far:

A NOTE ABOUT THE PHOTOS:

The Missoula Design Excellence Strategy Report is our tool to help Missoula grow in a direction that both beautifies and is in architectural harmony with our city — the booklet therefore needs to visually demonstrate that — to inspire! The creators of the Report are located in Colorado so had limited opportunities to take photos of Missoula. The draft could use images from excellent Missoula projects to enhance and demonstrate — giving developers ideas on how to move forward in a manner that reflects and enhances the best of Missoula. (If the budget does not allow for this, I've been creating a photo library of Missoula's quality architecture that the city is welcome use.)

SUGGEST

As Missoula develops the code — additional illustrations for specific design concepts may help developers and community members navigate through the material easily. PlaceCode is creating open-source illustrations that might be useful — https://calendar.google.com/calendar/render?tab=wc#main_7

SUGGESTIONS FOR SPECIFIC PAGES:

p 7

"Link design review to size thresholds in some overlays. In some corridors, the guidelines may apply only when a project exceeds a defined threshold in size or impact."

SUGGEST: This implementation recommendation will limit the influence of the Standards and Guidelines — so we may want to consider it's use carefully. (p 106 shows how this might apply)

p 71

Type 4 (E and W Broadway Street, Russell Street, Brooks Street)

SUGGEST wording change for clarity

*Type 4 (E. and W. Broadway Street, Russell Street, Brooks Street (**south**)).*

p 71

Type 4 (**Missoula's Gateway locations**)

SUGGEST adding

Reserve North of Broadway, and Reserve / Brooks intersection

p 75

TABLE 1: CORRIDOR TYPOLOGIES

type 4

SUGGEST Because Broadway, Russell, Brooks, Orange, and Reserve all serve as gateways to Missoula — providing a first impression to visitors — **we may want to increase architectural continuity and landscaping features for these areas.**

Many communities use their gateway areas as an opportunity to establish *sense of place*. (This is what the University of Montana planners did by planting the colonnade of trees leading to the Oval.) A long-range plan for our corridors might include complete streets, behind building and on-street slanted parking, limited setbacks from street with a landscape program that extends through the length of the gateway area, inclusion of liner buildings where large parking lots require screening/buffer, and buildings oriented to the street.

We might also consider landscaped traffic circles to serve as part of our gateway design — creating a welcoming entrance to the city at Orange / N 3rd St W, Reserve/ Brooks, and Russell / Broadway.

p 75

TABLE 1: CORRIDOR TYPOLOGIES

Because Vertical Mixed-Use projects improve neighborhoods (unless maintaining low density is preferred):

SUGGEST Corridors 1- 5 include an option for Vertical Mixed-Use.

Vertical Mixed-Use (or SBMUs) refers to single buildings with shops, eateries and services on the ground floor, and housing or office space above. SBMUs help remedy multiple corridor issues because they transform boulevard blight into mini-neighborhoods. — by combining housing and amenities under one roof, a hub of customers, services and activity is created. SBMU development also offers the potential for more affordable housing opportunities.

(Affordable housing is incentivized by combining SBMUs with:

- density bonuses, streamlined approval process, reduced parking requirements*
- withhold or include infrastructure, TIF and BID financing*
- offer property tax exemptions)*

p 79

SUGGEST photo change

Mid-rise Mixed Use photo — suggest image that illustrates a 5 or 6 story vertical mixed-use with shops on ground level, and upper-story setbacks.

P 80

KEY CONDITIONAL DESIGN TOPICS

SUGGEST adding remedies for the angled streets / triangle blocks

Missoula laid the groundwork to address the business dead zones and inconsistencies created by the angled streets along our corridors with a 2016 strategy charrette. Spearheaded by business owners on Brooks working in conjunction with Community Builders Organization and PUMA, the study and recommendations are here:

https://communitybuilders.org/uploads/BrooksStreetCorridor_Final_Report12-20-16_HighRes.pdf

To Integrate those efforts with this phase of planning for this draft

SUGGEST adding:

Angled Commercially-Zoned Properties:

Where angled streets and buildings do not conform to a consistent street wall configuration (via the placement of buildings flush to corridors), a block plan adjustment incorporating liner buildings, plazas, pocket parks, pop-up buildings, transit hubs, and re-absorption of key shorter avenues may be used to correct the layout and create a walkable streetscape.

p 86

"Diversity in architectural design should be celebrated and encouraged in Downtown. Projects should not be directed to be designed in a specific architectural style. Downtown is a major cultural hub for the region and, as such, architectural creativity and experimentation are positive, provided that a building is fundamentally compatible with the design qualities of Downtown's traditional buildings."

SUGGEST add:

In addition to harmonizing mass and articulation, the use of brick and other cladding materials that are in prominent use in Historic Downtown will create visual continuity throughout the city — enhancing *sense of place*.

p 87

"Downtown Gateways ... buildings at a greater scale (up to 8 - 12 stories) should be encouraged provided that they are well articulated, detailed and respectfully transition to sensitive areas."

SUGGEST:

Up to 8 stories with upper-story setbacks above the third floor.

(The allowance of 12 story buildings could be integrated into the standards in the future as density and development Downtown facilitates a need, at that time the doubled height will fit our skyline well.)

p 90

"Street Level Interest

Creating active and vibrant streets, sidewalks and public outdoor spaces in Downtown is critically important. Entries, windows, outdoor seating, retail spill into the public realm and other design features should all contribute to a lively Downtown environment ... Retail storefront indicates a desire for retail ground floor uses that are active and pedestrian oriented."

NOTE:

This designation for Downtown Primary Streets could protect us from development projects with no direct interface with the community — like blank walls and parking garage enclosures on ground floor levels — which diminish downtown shopping and vibrancy — **SUGGEST** specifics on street-level walls be included in standards.

p 100

Options For Applying Prescriptive Standards

Re: deciding which design review and regulatory path to take.

Currently the Design Review Board consists of interested individuals — board members are not required to have any design training.

Once we adopt a design ordinance, we'll either need to bring in a more savvy group to review documents or train the board. It's relatively easy to educate board members on successful architectural design principals. For example, on a single page, one can see an overview of good signage characteristics / standards.

SUGGEST: A revamped Design Review Board with training / knowledge of best practices — with training based on how best to assist City Planning.

p113

Building Orientation:

Tool Recommendation: Design Guidelines

SUGGEST:

Building Orientation:

Tool Recommendation: Design Standards

p120

Setback Area Character

Tool Recommendation: Design Guidelines

SUGGEST:

Setback Area Character

Tool Recommendation: Design Standards

*(NOTE: Correcting the odd angles on Broadway and Brooks is key to transforming those haphazard, pedestrian-averse core arteries into welcoming, walkable and vibrant commercial hubs. We can create a consistent street wall via the extra structure of standards. I think we'll benefit from taking a stronger stance on the **two best practices** of setbacks and building orientation, but would like to hear from City Planning if one would make their workload easier.)*

p 131

Building Design Potential Standards

In response to the Missoula community's request for protections regarding formula retail (**generic franchise designs**) and local development that is visually unappealing and out of sync with the character of Missoula, **SUGGEST** the following protections as design standards and guidelines:

Remedies For Franchise and Commercial Building Trends

(This list also could be placed in Architectural Character/Community Identity p 136)

- **Visibility Requirements:** frontages with active uses should maintain visibility allowing pedestrians to see inside stores with at least 75% open to perpendicular view with a 4-foot by 4-foot “visibility zone” at pedestrian eye level (the space between 4 feet and 8 feet in height above the side walk). 60% of all street frontages (including display windows) should be transparent windows.
- **Entrances:** recommend entrances recessed two to six feet from the sidewalk, allowing for protection from the weather, providing additional display frontage, and creating a rhythm of defined commercial spaces.
- **Building Placement:** aligned to the street, creating a cohesive built fabric. Parking in rear or with side entrance — minimizing sight lines to parking areas.
- No setbacks.
- **Single-Building-Mixed-Use zoning** offers franchises a location with potentially cheaper acquisition costs — where the aesthetic compatibility of the larger building can be ensured by design standards. Zoning to attract Formula Retail to use SBMU locations would include: SBMU at prime locations such as corners on main thoroughfares, frontage of 250 linear feet, 600 - 4000 sqft available space, and excellent visibility. (**NOTE:** *this incentive could be built into our Corridor zoning.*)
- **Design:** faux architectural features (tacked-on architectural design elements) should be avoided. Articulation and details should spring from a rationale based on function.
- **Facade Materials:** Cladding with natural materials — warm red brick, stone and wood shingle and slat can bring continuity with our local architectural style to new development. (**NOTE:** *Using these materials will also protect the community from generic and unattractive color and design choices.*) Suggest a minimum 60% of wall surface areas.
- **Color:** Colorwashing a building facade in a branded color serves as oversized signage and should not be permitted. Large areas of color should be similar in profile to the surrounding buildings, and limited to different tones of one color. Suggest use of the Missoula colorway via natural materials: reds, greens, whites, browns & grays. Commercial buildings should limit the use of large areas of high intensity colors and black to areas under 200 sqft.
- **Commercial Signage:** Signage should be scaled and placed primarily for pedestrian legibility, and secondarily for vehicular visibility. Blade signs (perpendicular to building) boost foot traffic and beautify — are standard for businesses that abut the street/sidewalk. Cabinet signs, dynamic display signs, and LED lights for contour outlines on buildings should not be permitted. Internally illuminated signs should be strongly discouraged. Freestanding signs should be no taller than the buildings to which they relate. Ground Sign area: 1 sqft. per linear foot of building street frontage, or 200 sq. ft., whichever is less. Projecting Sign area (blade signs): 10% of the building face or 150 sqft, whichever is less. Wall Sign area: 15% of building face, or 150 sqft, whichever is less.

- **NOTE:** An annual signage fee based on square footage is assessed by some communities —this fee generates income for the city that can be applied to improvement projects. Some municipalities like Jackson, Wyo., Stowe, Vt., and Hilton Head, S.C., prohibit plastic, internally lit signs. They require all businesses, whether locally, regionally, or nationally owned, to use hand-crafted signs constructed of wood, stone, or other natural materials.
- **Existing buildings:** A designation of Buildings of Value, requires that such buildings and structures may be altered or demolished only in accordance with municipal preservation standards and protocols.
- **Lighting:** LED strips and other faux-neon should not be permitted except with lumens of 344 or less, in white, for use illuminating walkways. All lighting brightness should be in accordance with our Dark Skies Ordinance.

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*Architectural Character/Community Identity — Materials Tool Recommendation
Design Standard with Guidelines*

SUGGEST: because the choice of materials and color that developers use can have an outsized impact on our built environment, here are some additional suggestions on specifics for the Standards and Guidelines:



New architecture projects can nest harmoniously between older Missoula buildings when the materials, cladding and colorway relate to our historical roots.

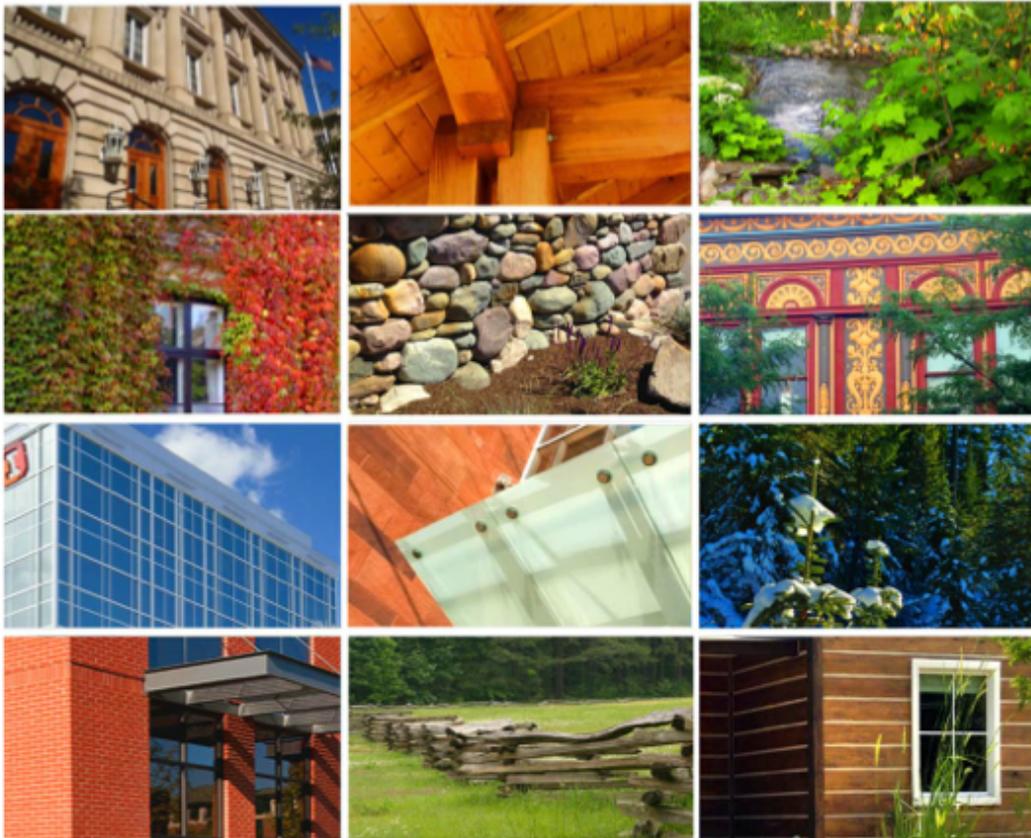
Materials:

- Materials and details should be consistent throughout.
- Ideally commercial buildings under 4,000 square feet (including Formula Retail — chain stores) should be clad in natural materials such as wood, stone or brick on at least 60% of frontage and street-view wall surfaces.
- The exterior use of warm brick, wood shingle, wooden slat siding, and stone is preferable to stucco.
- Use of cladding materials along with glazing and the logical articulation of massing, can help to mitigate the monolithic effect of larger buildings like box stores, warehouses, and hotels.
- Whenever possible, retain and repair existing original materials that contribute to the character of buildings built pre-1950.

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Architectural Character/Community Identity — Tool Recommendation

SUGGEST: example of Missoula Colorway Guidelines:



Color

Over the years Missoula has developed a color palette of reds, greens, whites, browns and grays through the use of regional materials. The traditional use of warm red brick from local foundries and the abiding presence of evergreen trees and shrub plantings

across the valley have served to add cheer and brightness even into the winter months. Browns are found in the availability of timber, whites and grays are seen in historical use of masonry in civic buildings. Use of these materials, especially brick, will harmonize new projects with existing architecture.

- In general, select a color scheme that will visually link the building to Missoula's colorway as well as to the built environment near the project site.
- Rain gutters should be painted to blend in with surrounding materials.
- Colorwashing a commercial building facade in branded color serves as oversized signage and is not permitted. Commercial buildings should avoid the use of large areas of high intensity colors and black in areas of over 200 sqft.
- When using brick — choose warm, red tones.
- Masonry should be left in it's natural state — not painted. If brick is already painted, paint removal is preferred.
- Softer muted colors, or shades of one color establish a uniform background.