

# Central Mixed Use Character Area

Encompassing portions of the Mixed Use and Commercial Lodge Zone Districts.

## Design Objectives and Guidelines

### Location

This area includes two sections of the Mixed Use Zone District, comprising one and a half street blocks to the south of the Main Street Historic District on the immediate west side of the Commercial Core, and a group of three street blocks to the east of the Commercial Area, east of the core. A single parcel zoned Commercial Lodge also exists in this area. This area lies on Highway 82 and forms the eastern approach and 'gateway' into the city center from Independence Pass during the summer months. (See the Character Area Map in the appendix.)

### Existing Character

This area is primarily multi-family residential buildings of two and three stories. The form of development is varied, but has a pattern of individual buildings on sites of two and often three lots in width. Building height is residential in scale and consequently lower than is found within the Commercial Core Historic District.

### Street Pattern

A street block is a combination of individual buildings and street trees, with many corners being defined by landscaping as often as they are a building.

Shallow front and side yard setbacks are typical, with the perception of each building standing individually in a site. The sidewalks are often detached with a planting strip at the street edge. This streetscape is appropriate in areas that serve as a transition from the commercial center to residential areas.

### Building Character

Buildings tend to be freestanding and framed by yards. Buildings are articulated with varied

massing and architectural details, and therefore convey a human scale. Front and side open spaces are well defined and landscaped.

These characteristics create a sense of visual cohesion within a range of architectural form and styles. Roof forms vary between pitched and flat roof profiles. Building materials are relatively urban with a predominance of brick. External woodwork is also evident.

The area is primarily of multi-family form, although defined as Mixed Use in zone designation. Future development pressure, from both the commercial center and lodge directions, is likely.



The Central Mixed Use area is located to the east and west of the Commercial Areas.



## Design Objectives

These are key design objectives for the Central Mixed Use area. The City must find that any new work will help to meet them.

The overall goal for the mixed-use area is to encourage office and supporting commercial uses as redevelopment occurs in a density somewhat higher than traditional residential uses, while retaining the residential character.

Future development should maintain both the present range of building height and modulation both of building form and lot pattern. The human scale of the area should be retained, with public access and circulation enhanced where the opportunity arises. Further commercial use, especially offices, should be accommodated here within a less urban framework, retaining characteristic setbacks, and in many cases landscaping and the 'softer' street wall. Materials can readily combine masonry and woodwork within this future character direction.

The residential heritage of the streetscape should be maintained. The sidewalks are often detached with landscaping. This streetscape is appropriate in areas that serve as a transition from the



*This area is currently comprised of primarily multi-family residential buildings of two or three stories.*

commercial center to residential areas. The intent is to reflect the traditional residential character at the street while accommodating new uses. The importance of the area, as the eastern 'gateway' into the city from Independence Pass, should be a prime consideration in the architectural and landscape quality of any new development.

Any on-site parking should be subordinate to the character of the street. Therefore, it should be located in a structure with a 'wrap' of commercial or residential uses or located at the rear of the site, buffered from view.

In sum, these are the objectives:

**1. Reflect a transition in character between the Commercial Core and the outlying residential neighborhoods.**

This should occur as a mix of uses, as well as in building scale and landscape design.

**2. Maintain a sense of front yards with landscaping.**

In general, building setbacks should be similar, to those seen traditionally. However, some variation may be appropriate to create variety in scale and interest along the street.

**3. Provide a sense of human scale.**

Use architectural detail and articulated building mass to convey human scale.

**4. Maintain a visually interesting street edge.**

Landscape, including plant materials and decorative paving will enhance the street edge.

**5. Encourage outdoor use areas.**

Patios and courtyards that are positioned to enrich street activity are encouraged. Those that make good use of solar access and highlight views of scenic features and landmarks should be encouraged.

**6. Minimize visual impacts of parking.**

On-site parking, if it is provided, should be screened from street view.



## Conceptual Review Design Guidelines

The following design guidelines shall apply at the conceptual review stage.

### *Street & Alley System*

The street pattern is essential 'infrastructure' to the character of the mixed-use area. The network of streets and alleys should be retained for maximum public access. They should not be enclosed by gating and they should not be spanned by development above. Wherever possible pedestrian access should be enhanced. The creation of additional public walkways to rear alleys and other public spaces enhances the attraction, permeability, intricacy and interest of the area and is encouraged. In the mixed-use area, there are opportunities to add walkways to provide access to courtyards and buildings that face them.

#### **2.1 Development on a site of two or more traditional lot widths may accommodate additional public walkways and through courts. These should:**

- Respect the setting of and avoid conflict with an adjacent historic building
- Design the frontage of any walkway or through court with similar attention to articulation, detail and materials accorded the primary street façade(s).

#### **2.2 Public walkways and through courts shall be designed to facilitate access to uses within the link and/or to the rear of the site.**

- Locate walkways at the sidewalk level.
- Locate retail frontage along walkways.
- Use architectural detailing to enhance the pedestrian experience.
- Design lighting, signage and landscapes to create a human scale and to enhance the pedestrian experience.



*The network of streets, alleys and existing pedestrian passageways enhances access in the Central Mixed Use areas.*



*Public walkways and through courts shall be designed to facilitate access to uses within the link and/or to the rear of the site.*



*Where surface parking must be provided, it shall be located to the rear or the interior of the property.*

## **Parking**

The character of Aspen is one which is most appreciated on foot, and this is true of the mixed-use area. The human scale, and concentration of walkable streets is a key attraction. Therefore it is important that the visual impact of parking shall be minimized. Whenever possible parking should be placed underground where the scale and setting of the site affords this opportunity. Where a parking structure might be considered this should be within a 'wrap' of commercial and/or residential accommodation. Surface parking should be placed away from the street within the site, and effectively buffered and subdivided with landscaping.

### **2.3 Parking shall not be positioned between the building and the street and visual impacts shall be minimized in one or more of the following ways:**

- Parking shall be placed underground wherever possible.
- Where surface parking must be provided, it shall be located to the rear or the interior of the property.
- Surface parking shall be externally buffered with landscaping, and internally planted and landscaped.

### **2.4 Structured parking access shall not have a negative impact on the character of the street. The access shall be:**

- Located on a secondary street where feasible
- Designed with the same attention to detail and materials as the primary building façade
- Integrated into the building design



## ***Public Amenity Space***

The provision of public amenity space is a long-standing objective within the city and is a requirement in the Central Mixed Use Character Area. The objectives within this area include the creation of well designed public gathering space adjacent to the street edge and the creation of public links between street and alley. With the future objective of greater mixed use within this area, additional public access and circulation opportunities enhance the future attraction and character of the area.

The Planning and Zoning Commission and/or the Historic Preservation Commission will decide whether, where and in what form Public Amenity Space will be required.

### **Location of Public Amenity Space**

#### **2.5 Public Amenity Space should take the form of:**

- Public space adjacent to the street edge
- Public links through the site



*Public Amenity Space should be provide additional public access and enhance the character of the area.*



Public Amenity Space may be provided in front of a structure, when it conveys the tradition of front yards seen in the Mixed Use Area.



Providing a passageway through a property to access other activities may be considered as Public Amenity Space.

## Street Facing Amenity Space

**2.6 A street facing amenity space located on a corner or within the street block may be considered.**

**2.7 A street facing amenity space shall meet all of the following requirements:**

- Abut the public sidewalk
- Be level with the sidewalk
- Be open to the sky
- Be directly accessible to the public
- Be paved or otherwise landscaped

**2.8 Street facing amenity space shall contain features to promote and enhance its use. These may include one or more of the following:**

- Street furniture
- Public art
- Historical/interpretive marker

The detailed design of Public Amenity Space, with regard to guideline 2.8, will be a matter for approval at the Final Review Stage, although it may be discussed at the Conceptual Stage.

## Mid-Block Walkway Amenity Space

**2.9 New buildings on a site occupying more than two traditional lot widths may provide a walkway or through court within a single development or between two developments. This may also extend only part way through the parcel.**

**2.10 Mid-block walkways shall remain subordinate in scale to traditional lot widths.**

- Mid-block public walkways shall be between 8 ft. and 10 ft. in width.



## Building Placement

### Street Façades & Building Alignment

The predominant pattern of building units, of two to three stories situated within two and three lot widths, is well defined and effectively framed by setbacks and open space. This establishes the precedent for the form of future development within the area.

Buildings create a varied rhythm of individual street façades, set within their own open spaces and landscaping. The traditional building scale should be retained and individual buildings should continue to be defined by side setbacks, every two or three traditional lot widths.

In the Central Mixed-Use Character Area, corner sites are "softer" than in the Commercial Core Historic District, because landscaped yards are typical. Building alignment should acknowledge this existing development pattern.



*The existing setback pattern within this area should be maintained.*

### Setbacks

#### 2.11 The existing setback pattern within this area should be maintained.

- A front yard should be provided.
- Position a new building to be within the established range of front yard set-backs.
- Side yard setbacks should frame the perimeter of a development.

#### 2.12 Maintain a sense of open space around a building.

### Orientation

#### 2.13 A building should be oriented perpendicular to the street frontage within the traditional lot arrangement.





*Subdivide the mass of a building into smaller “modules” that convey a human scale.*



*A new building or addition should reflect the existing range of two to three stories.*

## ***Building Height, Mass & Scale***

The current pattern of building spacing, scale, and height creates a design discipline for the form of new development within this area. The building height maximum and range of two to three stories should be maintained in future development. The characteristic scale of the area, defined by an individual building on two or three traditional lot widths, should form the basis for the scale of future development. Building modulation and roof profile contributes considerably to the sense of human scale of the area and the visual vitality of the street scene.

### **2.14 A new building or addition should reflect the existing range of two to three stories.**

- Refer to the zone district regulations to determine the maximum height on the subject property.
- Step back upper levels to reduce the perceived scale at the street edge.
- Additional height, as permitted in the zone district, may be added for one or more of the following reasons:
  - In order to achieve at least a two-foot variation in height with an adjacent building.
  - The primary function of the building is civic. (i.e. the building is a Museum, Civic Building, Performance Hall, Fire Station, etc.)



- Some portion of the property is affected by a height restriction due to its proximity to a historic resource, or location within a View Plane, therefore relief in another area may be appropriate.
- To benefit the livability of Affordable Housing units.
- To make a demonstrable (to be verified by the Building Department) contribution to the building's overall energy efficiency, for instance by providing improved day-lighting.

**2.15 The width of a building should convey a human scale.**

- A new building should step down in height next to a single story historic building.
- Maximum building width should be limited to three traditional lot widths (90 ft.).

**2.16 Subdivide the mass into smaller "modules" that convey a human scale.**

- Multiple modules can be connected to create a larger building.



*In some cases, stepping back a building will help reduce perceived scale at the street edge. This may also create an opportunity for Public Amenity Space at the second floor level.*



## Final Review Design Guidelines

The following design guidelines shall apply at the final review stage.



*Dividing a larger building into "modules" reduces the perceived scale of the development and contributes to a human scale.*

### ***Building Design & Articulation***

Buildings within this area have a varied individuality within a distinct sense of relatively cohesive scale. Set within a series of defined sites building form is articulated in a range of different ways, contributing to the sense of human scale and architectural variety comprising the street facade. Maintaining this building scale within discreet sites, and dividing a building into "modules" is therefore encouraged. The distinction between the first floor and the upper floors of the building also plays a key role in creating a sense of human scale and is therefore an important consideration.

**2.17 To reduce the perceived mass of a building, the design should respect the design character of the area and reflect the human scale and character of the city. This shall be achieved through all of the following:**

- The massing of building forms
- The articulation of the façade(s) through a varied roof profile
- The use of a variation in architectural materials, and detailing

**2.18 Any new building shall be designed to maintain a minimum of 9 feet from floor to ceiling on all floors.**



## Street Level Character

The Central Mixed Use Area comprises part of the periphery of the central commercial area of the city. New development within the Central Mixed Use Character Area should be designed to reflect the vibrant and attractive street character typical of Aspen. The quality of the design of the first floor is essential to the success of the street experience.

The distinction between the first floor and the upper floors of the building also plays a key role in creating a sense of human scale and is therefore an important consideration. The design of a new building should respect the stature of the first floor, and its visual role as the tallest floor of the building.

**2.19 The first floor façade should be designed to concentrate interest at the street level, using the highest quality of design, detailing and materials.**

**2.20 A new building should be designed to maintain the stature of traditional street level retail frontage.**

- This should be a minimum of 11 ft. in floor to floor height on the first floor.

**2.21 Minimize the appearance of a third floor.**

- Where a third floor's floor to ceiling height is in excess of 10 ft., it should be set back a minimum of 15 ft. from the street façade to reduce the apparent height.
- Increase the parapet height to screen the visual impact of a tall top floor.
- The design of a set back third floor shall be simpler in form, more subdued in modeling, detail and color than the primary façade.

**2.22 The retail entrance should be at the sidewalk level.**

- All entrances shall be ADA compliant.
- On sloping sites the retail frontage should be as close to a level entrance as possible.



*Set back a third floor to minimize its appearance.*

**2.23 Incorporate an airlock entry into the plan for all new structures.**

- An airlock entry that projects forward of the primary façade at the sidewalk edge is inappropriate.
- Adding temporary entries during the winter season detracts from the character of the historic district.
- Using a temporary vinyl or fabric "airlock" to provide protection from winter weather is not permitted.





*Position, articulate and design the rooftop to reflect the modulation and character of the building.*

## Roofscape

A building's roofscape should be regarded as an architectural 'elevation', given its visibility from nearby buildings and mountain slopes. Specific attention should be paid to creating a varied and interesting roofscape. The form seen from above should reinforce the rhythm and scale of the street façade.

### **2.24 The roofscape should be designed with the same design attention as the secondary elevations of the building.**

- Group and screen mechanical units from view.
- Locate mechanical equipment to the rear of the roof area.
- Position, articulate and design rooftop enclosures or structures to reflect the modulation and character of the building.
- Use materials which complement the design of the building façades.
- Design roof garden areas to be unobtrusive from the street.
- Use 'green roof' design best practice, where feasible.



## ***Architectural Materials***

The existing palette of building materials is an integral part of the character of this area. The range directly complements the adjacent commercial areas. As further development occurs the use of brick, stone and wood should be central to the palette to ensure future quality and character consistent with the adjacent central area and historic Main Street. In addition, materials should convey a sense of human scale.

### **2.25 High quality, durable materials should be employed.**

- The palette of materials proposed for all development should be specified and approved as part of the general and detailed development approvals process, including samples of materials as required.

### **2.26 Building materials should have these features:**

- Convey the quality and range of materials seen historically.
- Reduce the perceived scale of the building and enhance visual interest of the facade.
- Convey a human scale.
- Have proven durability and weathering characteristics within this climate.

## ***Paving & Landscaping***

Paving and landscaping is a significant element in the present character of this area, and should be designed as an integral part of building and its immediate setting.

### **2.27 Landscaping and paving should have the following characteristics:**

- Enhance the street scene.
- Integrate the development with its setting.
- Reflect the quality of the architectural materials.

### **2.28 Landscaping should be provided in all projects.**



*As further development occurs the use of brick, stone and wood should be considered. In addition, materials should convey a sense of human scale.*



*Landscaping and paving should integrate the development with its setting.*



