

Mountain Base Character Area

Encompassing portions of the Lodge Zone District

Design Objectives and Guidelines

Location

The Mountain Base Character Area consists of the majority of the extensively developed Lodge Zone District, and is isolated between the commercial center and the base of the mountain. It is roughly bounded by Dean Street to the south. (See the Character Area Map in the appendix.)

Existing Character

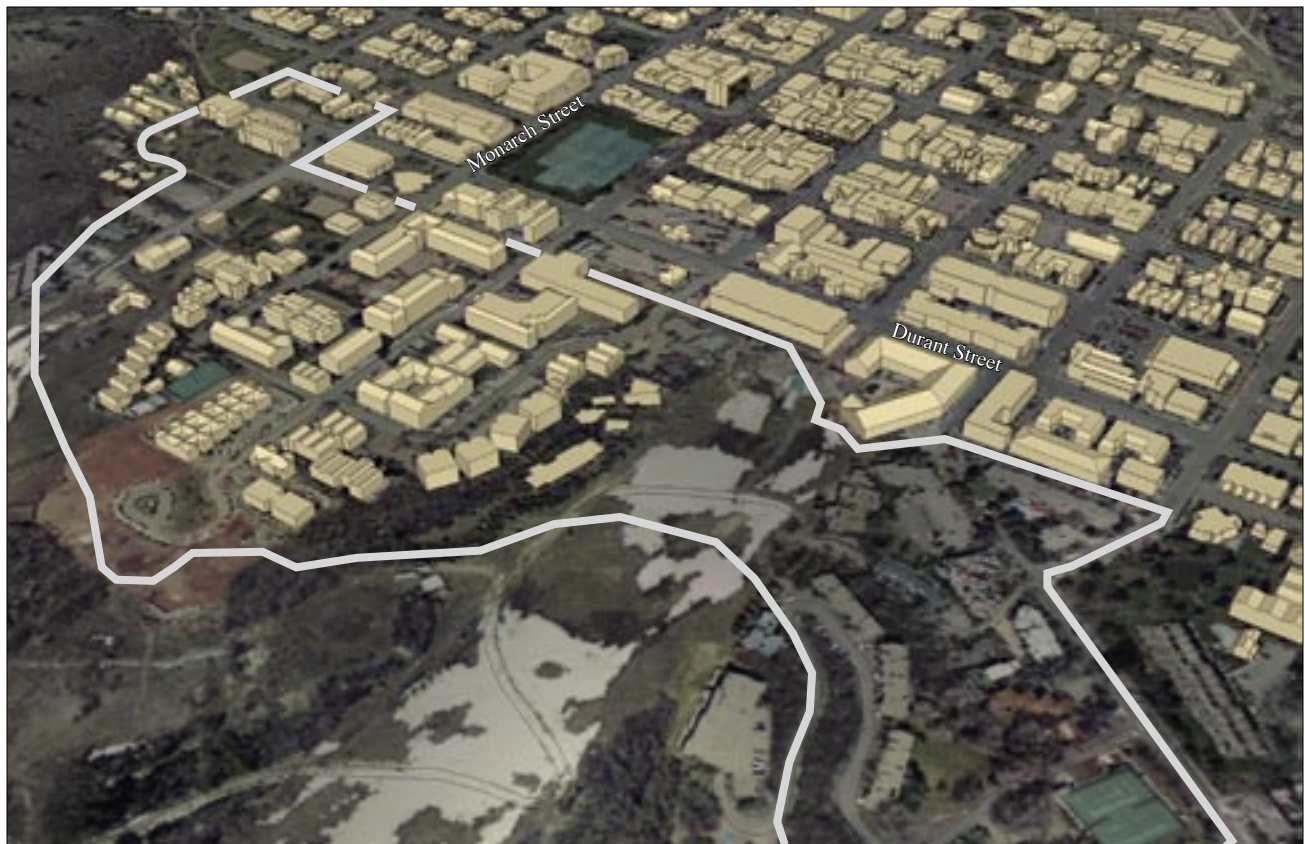
The Mountain Base, originally the site of early mining operations, was the basis of much of the early wealth of the city. It has since become the concentrated focus of lodge development for the ski resort economy.

Street Pattern

The steeply rising terrain and its edge-of-city location produced a street network which departs from the grid. Although elements of the street pattern are initially evident, this is replaced first by an extended rectilinear form, and then by a more 'organic', curvilinear pattern. Block sizes also increase before the pattern is no longer evident approaching the base of the mountain.

Building Character

The drama of the terrain and a more natural open landscape introduce both constraint and opportunity in the form and design of future development.



The majority of the Lodge Zone District at the base of Aspen Mountain is included in Character Area 3.



Vary the roof profile in a mountain setting.



Visual and physical access is important in maintaining views and circulation.

The Mountain Base Area includes the greatest concentration of the most intensively developed sites within the city, with some buildings rising to four stories.

The steep topography creates the opportunity for visual presence but, concomitantly, increases the challenge of reducing the apparent scale of a building. Building scale is much greater than elsewhere, but is also extremely varied, with smaller and often older development within close proximity to more recent and much more extensive hotel buildings. The relationship between building and street is adversely affected where the lodge is excavated into the slope and set back and below the adjacent street level.

Building setbacks are generally well landscaped and help to soften site edges and integrate some of the area with its natural setting. Building materials cover a wide spectrum, from brickwork and natural stonework through other masonry to increasing use of woodwork.

Outdoor Spaces

Several developments have private open spaces, which are set internal to the site. This sometimes increases the bulk of the building and removes open space from the semi-public realm. In addition to largely private and semi private spaces in this area, there are limited points of access to the open lands at the base of the mountain and to mountain trails.



Design Objectives

These are key design objectives for the Mountain Base area. The City must find that any new work will help to meet them:

1. Provide a pedestrian-friendly street edge.

Detached sidewalks with street landscaping are characteristic and should be encouraged. Where development abuts a street it should address the street, provide architectural interest and convey a human scale. The intent is to provide compatible transitions to the natural edges of these areas while creating pedestrian-friendly walkways along the more urban streets.

2. Provide a sense of human scale.

New development should establish a close relationship with the street frontage. Buildings should be articulated to reduce the apparent scale of larger development. This should be the case for all street façades and also for the buildings profile as viewed against the mountain side.

3. Encourage pedestrian serving uses at the street level.

Cafes, bars and other pedestrian and public serving uses should be located at the street level to help encourage pedestrian activity and animate the area.

4. Reflect the natural topography.

This area is one where topography and a more natural setting increasingly influence the form and location of development. It is important that new development step in height in accordance with the natural topography. Within this area a building should also respect natural contours and scenic vistas.

5. Provide an interconnected pedestrian circulation system.

New development should make provision for access through and between sites. This ensures an adequate balance between public and private realm as to avoid excessive privatization. Additional public access to mountain side and public trails should be provided. Visual access through and between sites is a priority to maintain direct visual and physical connection with the setting.

6. Maintain views to the mountain and other natural features.

The area will continue to experience pressure for increased and enhanced hotel and lodging accommodation space and facilities. As this occurs, views through properties should be provided.



Conceptual Review Design Guidelines

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



A varied network of streets and pedestrian passageways is a feature of the Mountain Base Area.

Street & Alley Systems

The street pattern is essential 'infrastructure' to the creation and maintenance of the character of Aspen. The circulation pattern provided by the network of streets, alleys and courts should be retained for maximum public access. It should not be enclosed by gating and it should not be spanned by development above to maintain public access and allow maximum sun and light penetration. Wherever possible, pedestrian access should be enhanced. The creation of additional public walkways, trails and open spaces enhances the attraction, permeability, intricacy and interest of the area. Pedestrian ways should be interconnected within the Mountain Base Area to the extent feasible.

4.1 Provide pedestrian ways through a property that will connect to public sidewalks and trails.

- The design and layout of a building on a large site should accommodate additional pedestrian circulation links, including walkways to other parts of the street network and to open lands and the public trail system.



Parking

The character of the Mountain Base is one which is most appreciated on foot, and the human scale walkable concentration of streets and spaces lies at the heart of its attraction. Therefore, 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, lodge and / or residential use. Surface parking, if it is permitted, shall be placed away from the street within the site, and effectively buffered and subdivided with landscaping.

4.2 Minimize the visual impacts of parking.

- 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, behind the structure.
- Surface parking shall be externally buffered with landscaping, and internally planted and landscaped to soften design of parking areas.

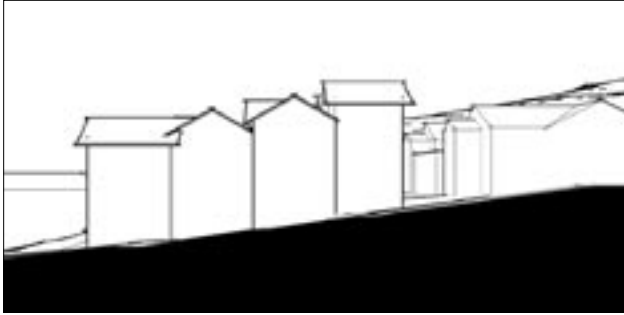
4.3 Structured parking access shall not have a negative impact on the character of the street.

The access shall be:

- Located primarily off an alley when present or secondly on a secondary street when feasible.
- Designed with the same attention to detail and materials as the primary building façade
- Integrated into the building design



Structured parking access shall not have a negative impact on the character of the street.



Stepping building forms to reflect site contours is preferred.



A building should be designed to reflect the change in the elevation of the site through stepped and articulated sections of the street façades.

Topography

The development of the city has been directly associated with the mountain base since its mining origins. The prominence of a building on a steeply rising site is accentuated here in forming the southern district edge of the city. With the visibility from the city and from the immediate mountain side, the definition of scale and articulation of the building modules, façades, roof profiles and roofscape are of particular importance. A building should be designed to reflect the change in the elevation of the site through stepped and articulated sections of the street façades.

Within a natural, scenic setting a building is most successful when it integrates as closely as possible with the terrain of the site and its context. Excavation of natural terrain should be minimized when placing and arranging a building within the site. Natural features help integrate the building and site and should be retained where possible.

Within more steeply sloping fringe areas, the traditional street network dissolves, no longer ensuring the same discipline in circulation and access. A development should maintain and/or create public access ways to other parts of the street network and to open land or trails where possible.

The setting towards the mountain base becomes much less urban in character than the commercial center. The design of a building should recognize this and be integrated into its more natural and open setting.

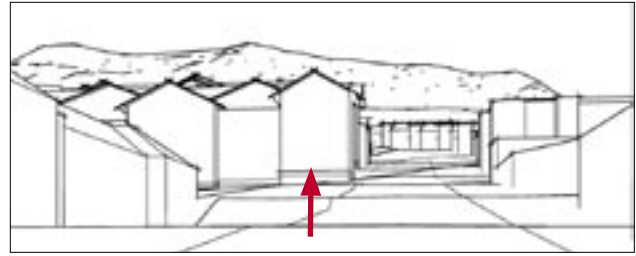


4.4 A building on a sloping site should be designed to reduce the perceived mass and scale and reflect the natural slope of the site. This should be achieved in all of the following ways:

- Design the building to ensure that sections of the street façade(s) step in relation to the slope.
- Vary the height of the building modules to maintain a human scale and to integrate with the scale of adjacent buildings.
- Vary the plane and height of the street façade to express the slope of the site and continue the varied form in the roof profile(s).
- Use the roof form and profile to reduce the perceived scale of the street façade(s) and roof.
- Include a range of materials to express the modulation of the façade.

4.5 Design a building to integrate with the natural landscape. This shall be achieved in three or more of the these ways:

- Face the building(s) toward the open landscape as well as the primary street.
- Create public access through and adjacent to the site.
- Reduce the height and scale of the building modules.
- Reduce the building footprint and/or use smaller buildings adjacent to the open area.
- Use materials which are compatible with an open or natural setting.



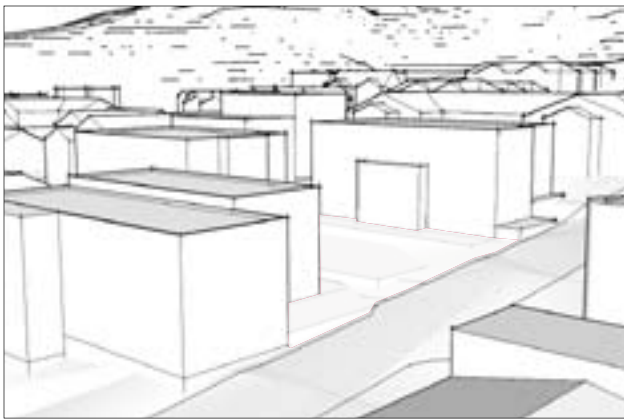
Use the roof form and profile to reduce the perceived scale of the street façade. Pitched roof forms are effective and characteristic for buildings towards the base of the mountain.



Design a building to integrate with the natural landscape.



Position Public Amenity Space to take advantage of solar access and views.



Located public amenity space so that it is visible from the public way.



Provide pedestrian ways that accommodate convenient access to natural features adjacent to or on the site. Orient a building to face both the street and an amenity space.

Public Amenity Space

Providing on-site open space is a long-standing priority and characteristic of the city. The form, orientation, quality and use of such open space is important, particularly in the Mountain Base. Within the sites around the mountain base there will be the need to ensure adequate permeability and connections through a site to link with adjacent streets, open space and public trails.

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

Public Amenity Space is a requirement in the Mountain Base character area. It should take the form of :

- Public links through the site
- Open space within the site that is visible from the public way
- Open space used for outdoor dining adjacent to or directly visible from the public way.

Within an area highly regarded for its pedestrian character and ‘walkability,’ enhancing public circulation patterns has distinct advantages and is a priority.

Within the Mountain Base Character Area the development sites are potentially large and street network less complete. Providing walkways to link with the street network, open land and public trail system is therefore important. Such links may be within or at the boundary of a site, depending upon particular site constraints, adjacent street network or trails and development design.

Opportunities to create public amenity space adjacent or close to and directly visible from the street for outdoor dining should be considered. This has distinct advantages in enhancing street vitality and the public attraction of the area.



4.6 Locate Public Amenity Space such that it is conveniently accessible.

- Provide a walkway from the street to assure public access.

4.7 Locate Public Amenity Space such that it is visible from the public way and takes advantage of solar potential for outdoor activities related to hotels.

- Positioning the space to abut a public sidewalk is preferred. If a space is located more internal to the site, it should be clearly visible.

4.8 Provide pedestrian ways that accommodate convenient access.

- Walkway links should be a minimum of 12 ft. wide to provide a comfortable sense of space.

4.9 Provide Public Amenity Space which accommodates outdoor dining space adjacent or close to and directly visible from the public way.



Provide Public Amenity Space which accommodates outdoor dining space adjacent or close to and directly visible from the public way.



Pedestrian connections through the property that connect to natural features beyond are appropriate.



Within an area highly regarded for its pedestrian character and 'walkability,' enhancing public circulation patterns has distinct advantages and is a priority.





Buildings should be placed so that primary entrances are oriented toward the street.



Orient a primary entrance to face the street or an area of open space adjacent to the street.



Articulating a building façade with a change in setbacks and materials helps to reduce perceived scale and convey traditional lot patterns.

Building Placement

Street Façades & Corners

A building facade should respond to the topography of the site. On sloping sites, both the street corner and often upper sections of the street façades become a part of the foreground to either mountain or city setting and views. This creates the urban grain and scale identified with the Mountain Base, as defined by the roofline or roof profiles, and the articulation and design of the street façade.

The Mountain Base becomes less urban in character and prompts consideration of how buildings should integrate more effectively with increasingly natural and open background or foreground. Reducing the scale of larger development through the creation of a series of building modules or separate buildings is important. The use of setbacks, open space and landscaping help blend the building with the natural landscape.

Building Setbacks

4.10 Use setbacks to reduce building scale, enhance public access and accommodate landscaping where appropriate. All of the following will apply:

- Front setbacks should provide for an additional or widened sidewalk and landscaping of the front yard space.
- Sidesetbacks should provide the opportunity to create walkways or through courts to adjacent streets and public trails.

Building Orientation

4.11 Orient a primary entrance to face the street or an area of open space adjacent to the street.



Building Height, Mass & Scale

The character of this area is strongly influenced by the natural setting and site topography, creating a prominent situation for any development site or building. Consequently, building height, mass and scale should be modulated and articulated to vary the building profiles and to create a diverse street wall.

Height Variation

Building height variation is a key characteristic in this area. This helps to reduce the perceived mass of a structure as well as to promote visual interest.

4.12 A new building or addition should reflect the range and variation in building height of the Mountain Base Area.

- Refer to the zone district regulations to determine the maximum height on the subject property.
- A minimum 9 ft. floor to ceiling height is to be maintained on second stories and higher.
- 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 daylighting.



Large buildings should be designed with a base, middle and cap to reduce the perceived scale of the building.



A building should vary in height and roof profile across the site.

4.13 Incorporate varied heights of building components in a development.

- On a corner site, both street façades are defined as building frontage.
- Height variation and variation in profile should be expressed across the width and depth of the site.

4.14 Provide variation in building height and roof profile through one or more of the following:

- Vary the heights for different sections of the development.
- Vary the setbacks and wall planes of different building components.



Final Review Design Guidelines

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



The form and articulation of both the façade and roofscape are important elements used to reduce the perceived scale of a development.

Building Design & Articulation

On elevated sites and in areas forming the interface between the city and open landscape the design and modulation of a larger building becomes a central consideration in the successful integration of the building and setting. Dividing a building into "modules" is therefore encouraged. However, this should not be interpreted as a series of "false fronts" of different imitated styles.

At the base of the mountain the use of pitched roof profiles has an immediate affinity with the lodging origins and heritage of the city, and presents one effective medium for the variation of roof form and apparent reduction in scale.

4.15 To reduce the perceived mass of a building, the design shall respect the natural setting 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



Street Level Character

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.

4.16 Develop the street edge to be visually interesting to pedestrians.

- Provide display windows, architectural details and landscaping to enhance the appeal of a street edge for dining and drinking opportunities.

4.17 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.
- The minimum required first floor height must be maintained for at least the first 50 foot depth of the lot, and may only be dropped to a lower height beyond that point for areas that are devoted to storage, circulation, offices, restaurant kitchens, alley commercial spaces, or similar secondary uses.

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

4.19 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.

4.20 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.





Variation in roof profile should be reflected in both the width and the depth of the roofscape of the building(s).

Roofscape

On a sloping site a building should be designed using a series of roof profiles which reflect variation in the natural topography of the setting.

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.

4.21 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.

4.22 Variation in roof profile should be reflected in both the width and the depth of the roofscape of the building(s).



Architectural Materials

Aspen has developed using a range of materials including wood for early mining residences and early lodge developments. Commercial structures demonstrate high quality and a sense of permanence through brick and stone. Although other materials have been used, this palette has become part of the essential character of the city.

Later development has, in certain cases, interpreted this range and quality successfully in both contemporary and more traditional ways. The prominence of the area accentuates the importance of this characteristic. The role played by the palette of materials and their detailing in establishing the character of the Mountain Base should be reflected in new development.

Building materials should establish a sense of human scale and convey a sense of connection with the natural features of the setting.

4.23 High quality, durable materials should be employed.

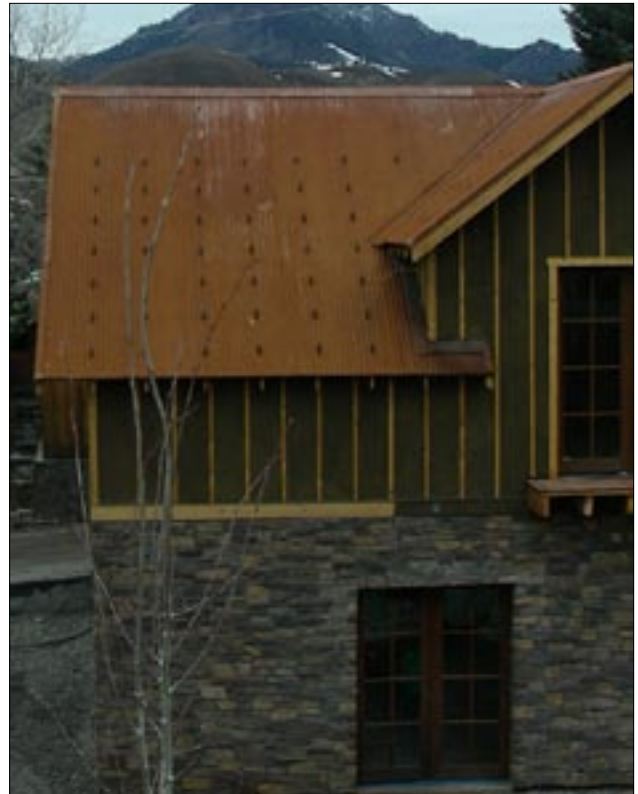
- The palette of materials proposed for all development should be specified and approved as part of the general and detailed development approvals process, including samples of materials as required.

4.24 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 human scale
- Have proven durability and weathering characteristics within this climate



High quality, durable materials should be employed.



Using high quality materials that convey a human scale is important to the success of a building in this area.



Landscaping adds visual interest and human scale to the streetscape.

Paving & Landscaping

Landscaping creates a welcoming and attractive character in city hotel development, and should continue to do so in a manner which enhances both building setting and street scene. Development in this area should include decorative paving, trees and shrubs, as enhancements to the streetscape and to integrate a buildings with its setting.

4.25 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

4.26 Landscaping should create a buffer between the street and sidewalk.

