

# CHAPTER 1

## THE DOWNTOWN DESIGN REVIEW SYSTEM



### Introduction

This book presents design review guidelines for the downtown historic overlay in Truckee. These guidelines apply in addition to design standards and development regulations that are found in the Town's Development Code.

Design Review Guidelines, administered by the Community Development Director, are the primary regulatory tool the Town has chosen to protect its historical heritage and resources.

This publication includes guidelines that will be used by the Town in determining the appropriateness of proposals for improvements that involve alterations to historic buildings as well as new construction. Site work and improvements to existing, non-historic structures are also addressed.



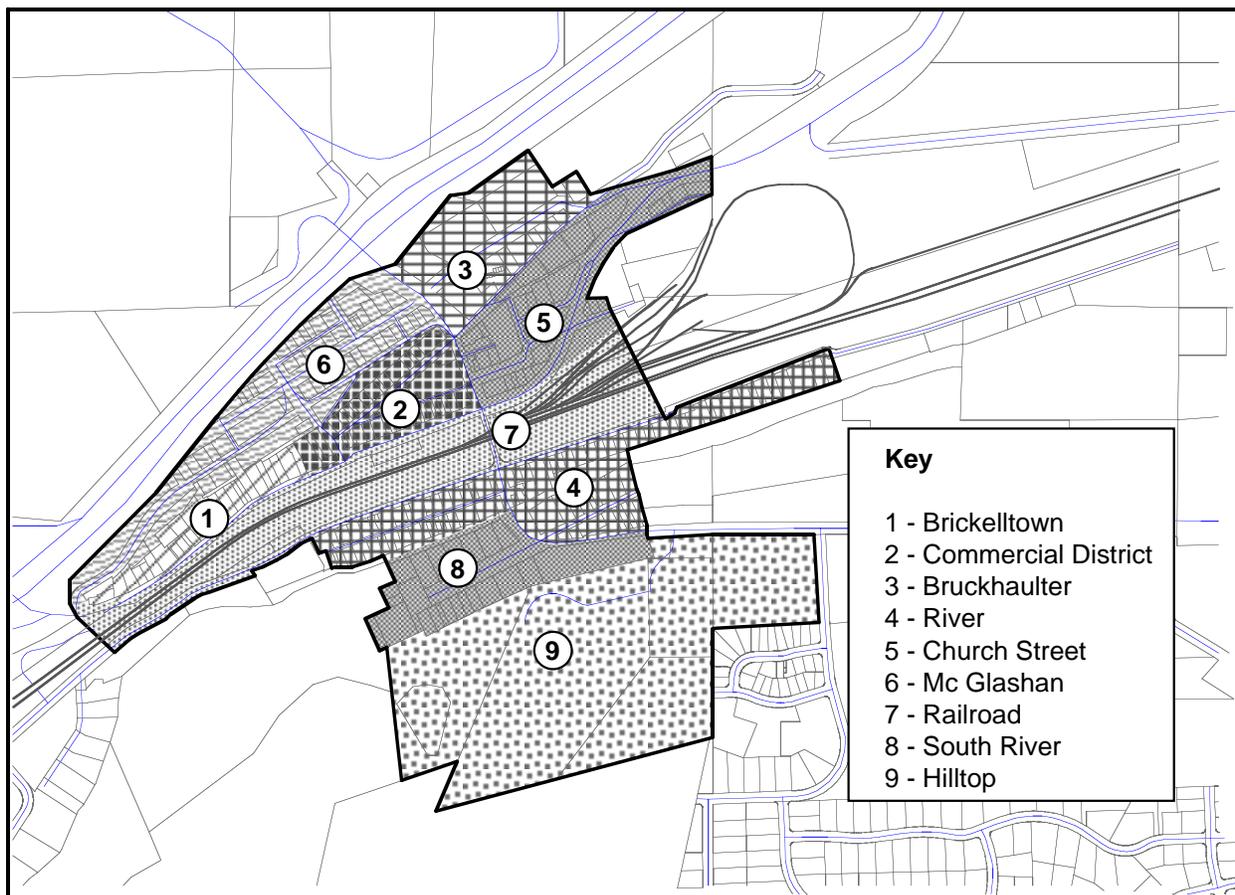
### Design Guideline definition:

"Several sections of the Development Code in various chapters are called 'design guidelines.' General design guidelines for multi-family and commercial uses appear in Article II, guidelines for landscaping, parking, and signs appear in Article III, and guidelines for residential subdivision design appear in Article V. Unlike zoning 'standards,' design 'guidelines' express Town preferences for development, but may be applied to projects with greater flexibility than other zoning standards. The design guidelines will be used during the land use/development permit review process as additional criteria for project review.

Design guidelines may be applied to specific projects with flexibility, because not all design criteria may be workable or appropriate for each project. In some circumstances, a guideline may be relaxed in order to accomplish another guideline that the project review body determines is more important in the specific case. The overall objective is to ensure that the intent and spirit of the design guidelines are followed, and to attain the best possible design within reason." *from Truckee Development Code - User's Guide, VII. Development Code Definitions*

## Design Districts and Character Areas

In addition to general guidelines for preservation and new development, special guidelines are included that relate to differing design contexts of individual neighborhoods. As a result, the historic area of Downtown Truckee is divided into nine geographic "Character Areas." The boundaries of the Character Areas are shown on the following map.



See in the above map, the historic area of Downtown Truckee is divided into nine geographic "Character Areas." Specific Design Guidelines for each character area are presented later in this document.

## Types of Projects Reviewed

Public and private entities proposing to do work within the historic overlay are subject to design review. The following are among the types of work reviewed:

- Alteration to the exterior of an existing structure
- Repair of exterior features on an existing structure
- New construction
- Addition to the exterior of an existing structure
- Moving an existing structure
- Demolition of an existing structure
- Erection of a fence or wall
- Erection or alteration of a sign
- Erection or alteration to an awning or canopy
- Site work, including landscaping
- Excavation and fill

The design review process is “reactive,” in that it only applies to proposed actions initiated by the property owner. While it guides an approach to certain design problems by offering alternative solutions, it does not dictate a specific outcome and it does not require a property owner to instigate improvements that are not contemplated. For example, if an owner plans to repair a deteriorated porch, the guidelines indicate appropriate methods for such work. If porch repair is the only work proposed by the property owner, the process does not require that other building features that may be deteriorated, such as a roof that is in poor condition, be repaired.

## A Basic Approach

Each project has unique attributes, which relate to the type of work involved, the use associated with it and its location within the district and the guidelines anticipate these variations in circumstances. In all cases, however, the following basic principles apply:

### 1. Keep it Simple.

The image of Downtown Truckee is that of a simpler time. Much of the built environment is composed of simple forms which reflect the climate, a “western” attitude, and the town’s remoteness as well as the limitations of early transportation systems.

### 2. Keep It in Scale.

Another aspect of Downtown Truckee is its sense of scale. Much of the old town is perceived from a variety of viewpoints. This overall scale is reflected in the street layout and in the buildings which enhance a pedestrian environment.

### 3. Respect All Historic Resources.

Truckee’s historic resources are very important. The sense of history is evident through the integrity of the town’s many historic buildings. Typically, old buildings should significantly outnumber new structures in an intact historic district. The *sense of time and place* on the street is also important. One should be able to perceive the character of the neighborhood as it was historically.

### 4. Make All New Design Compatible with its Existing Context.

The town is not frozen in time. For this reason, new construction should draw upon the design elements of the historic buildings, while not directly imitating them. New interpretations of traditional building types in the Historic District are encouraged, such that they are seen as products of their own time yet compatible with the history.

### 5. Read All Applicable Design Guidelines.

Applicants must demonstrate how their proposed project will comply with the design guidelines.

The preservation of historic resources, and enhancement of the pedestrian-friendly environment in downtown are well-established policies. The *Town of Truckee General Plan* includes several references to historic preservation in the Downtown Study Area (DSA). Key policies are included on this page.

## POLICIES

### ***DSA Policy 1:***

Preserve and enhance the historic mountain character of the Downtown Area.

### ***DSA Policy 7:***

Enhance the desirability of the downtown as a "destination attraction."

### ***Conservation and Open Space Goal 9:***

Protect cultural and historic resources and accommodate public access as appropriate.

### ***Conservation and Open Space Policy 9.1:***

Require evaluation of impacts to cultural resources for projects which involve substantial site disturbance.

### ***Conservation and Open Space Policy 9.2:***

Encourage appropriate reuse of historic structures for housing, public recreation, and commercial uses without compromising their historic character.

### ***Land Use Guiding Policy 1:***

Encourage a mix of residential, office, and commercial uses to enhance the pedestrian orientation of downtown, reduce traffic, and provide an environment that fosters street level activity and social interaction.

### ***Land Use Guiding Policy 2:***

Enhance the desirability of downtown as a destination attraction for locals and tourists by creating a variety of reasons for people to come downtown.

### ***Downtown Commercial Core Policy 2:***

Emphasize the commercial core of downtown as a pedestrian-oriented area.

### ***Downtown Commercial Core Policy 7:***

Protect the architectural character of existing historic buildings. Encourage renovations to upgrade the architectural character of historic buildings ... to provide continuity with Commercial Row.

### ***Residential Area Policy 2:***

New residential development shall be designed at a scale and character which is consistent with existing maintained historical residential structures.

### ***Truckee River Corridor Policy 3:***

Link the Downtown Commercial Core and the river through a combination of mini-parks, pedestrian and bicycle bridges, access paths, and a public signage program.

### ***Truckee River Corridor Policy 9:***

New residential development adjacent to the Truckee River corridor shall be clustered to protect sensitive riparian areas and scenic views to the river.

### ***Historic Resources Guiding Policy 1:***

Promote the preservation, rehabilitation and renovation of historic buildings.

### ***Historic Resources Guiding Policy 2:***

Discourage alterations to historic buildings which are not compatible with the building's historic and architectural character.

### ***Historic Resources Guiding Policy 3:***

Safeguard historic buildings from unnecessary removal and demolition.

### ***Historic Resources Guiding Policy 4:***

Ensure new structures and development are congruous with their historic surroundings and do not detract from or harm, but complement the historic and architectural character of historic neighborhoods or surrounding historic buildings.

## 6. Residential Parking/Garages/Driveways

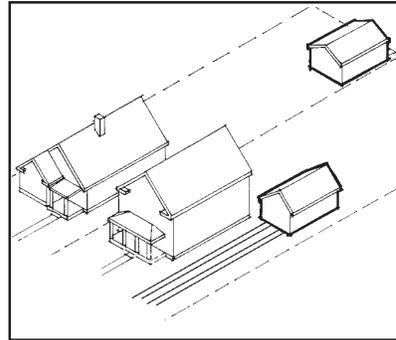
The visual impacts of parking—which includes driveways, garages and garage doors—should be minimized.

### A. Avoid parking in the front yard.

- 1) Traditionally, front yards were not used as paved parking lots, and instead, yards provided views to facades and open space.

### B. A garage should not dominate the street scene.

- 1) A garage should be subordinate to the primary structure on the site.



*In order to minimize the impact of a garage on the street scene, it should be detached and located to the rear of a building.*

*A typical design guideline format as used in this document.*

## A Typical Guideline

A typical design guideline may contain five parts:

- The first is the design element category under which the design guideline falls.
- Second is an introductory discussion of the design element and why it is important. Included in this discussion is a policy statement that describes a desired state or condition of the design element being discussed.
- Third is the design guideline statement itself, which is typically performance-oriented, describing a desired design treatment.
- The design guideline statement is followed by supplementary information that is treated as sub-points of the guideline. These sub-points are listed as arabic numbers under each design guideline.
- Additionally, a photograph or illustration may be provided, to clarify the intent of the guideline.

It is important to note that all of the elements of the design guidelines (i.e., including the introductory and informational sections, the policy statement, and the sub-points) constitute the material upon which the Town will make its determination of the appropriateness of a proposed project.

The numerical ordering of the guidelines does not imply a ranking of importance. The emphasis placed on individual guidelines varies on a case-by-case basis, depending upon the context of the proposed project.

## Truckee's Local Rating System

The following subcategories are used for classifying properties within Truckee's Historic Preservation Overlay District. They are explained in more detail in the definitions on pages 8 - 9:

### Category A. Essential

Buildings that are individually eligible for the National Register are considered "Essential" structures in the local survey rating. These are buildings that retain the highest degree of integrity.

### Category B. Contributing

Historic buildings that have experienced some alterations, yet still retain a relatively high degree of integrity.

### Category C. Supporting

Older buildings that have had substantial alterations but retain their overall form and scale, and which have the potential to be restored.

### Category D. Nonessential

These structures have been altered so radically that the historic information is no longer interpretable and they no longer retain sufficient integrity to have historic significance.

### *Applying the Ratings When Considering Property Improvements*

The historic survey criteria have implications with regard to the role of the Design Standards and Guidelines. For example, for properties rated "Category A. Essential," preservation of the property to the highest degree is the Town's goal and the guidelines that address preservation of existing historic features in place will be applied rigorously.

For properties rated "Category B. Contributing" on the local form, preservation of those original features that survive is also a goal and, in addition, removal of non-historic alterations and reconstruction of historic features are objectives. Those guidelines that address repair and replacement of historic elements therefore are particularly relevant to these proper-

ties. With respect to a demolition request the full list of criteria which are specified within the Development Code must be met in order to substantiate an economic hardship. Finally, in order to discourage speculative demolition of structures within the historic core, replacement plans are required prior to approval of any demolition application for a "contributing" property. These properties also receive a high priority for use of any incentives for preservation that may be offered.

For "Category C. Supporting" properties, preservation of those historic features that do survive remains a goal as well. In addition, special encouragement will be provided for property owners to restore their properties and the guidelines for removing non-historic alterations and reconstruction of missing elements will be emphasized. Owners of properties in this category are strongly encouraged to restore their buildings to their historic condition, but greater flexibility in treatment of more recent alterations and in repair of historic materials will be available. Emphasis is placed on using preservation incentives. As well, the economic hardship criteria will be less extensive and replacement plans are not required prior to demolition application approval. Also, demolition applications for structures in this category may be approved without going through the certificate of economic hardship process if the structure will be reconstructed in accordance with the Secretary of Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.

Finally, for properties in the "Category D. Nonessential" category, preservation is not an objective. In these cases, the guidelines for new construction apply. Alterations to the properties may occur that are compatible with the overall character of the district. Demolition applications for structures in this category are handled through normal city permitting procedures for non-historic properties.

## Which Chapters to Use

Depending upon the type of proposed development and its location in the Downtown, property owners and developers should use the following matrix to determine which chapters contain relevant information. This will assist in understanding how this document will be used during the design review process.

	Sect. I - Background Information	Sect. II - Treatment of Historic Properties	Chapter 4: Preservation Principles	Chapter 5: Architectural Features	Chapter 6: Historic Building Materials	Chapter 7: Individual Building Components	Chapter 8: Adaptive Reuse	Chapter 9: Additions	Sect. III - Special Guidelines	Chapter 10: Site Features	Chapter 11: Signs	Chapter 12: Public Improvements	Sect. IV - New Const. & Character Areas
Renovate or alter a Category A, B or C historic building or structure. *	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓							
Renovate or alter a non-historic, Category D building or structure. *	✓												✓
Convert a non-commercial structure (e.g., a house or church) to a commercial use.	✓						✓						
Add onto an historic building or structure.	✓							✓					
Add onto a non-historic building or structure	✓							✓					
Install new, or modify existing landscaping or site features.	✓									✓			
Install new, or modify existing public streetscape elements or public buildings.												✓	
Construct a new building or structure in a Character Area.	✓									✓			✓
Construct or alter a sign.	✓										✓		

\* These categories relate to the rating assigned in the Town's Historic Resources and Architectural Inventory. The Town of Truckee classifies older buildings that have been evaluated for the historic significance into four categories. Of these, the first three categories (A, B, and C) are considered historically significant. The fourth category (Category D) is for buildings that are not considered historic. See the preceding page for further definitions.

## Definitions of Key Terms

The degree to which a property owner must comply with design guidelines varies from project to project. The following terms related to compliance are used in the design guidelines contained in this document.

**Appropriate** - In some cases, a stated action or design choice is defined as being "appropriate" in the text. In such cases, by choosing that design approach, the applicant will be in compliance with the guideline. However, in other cases, there may be another approach that is not expressly mentioned in the text which also may be deemed "appropriate."

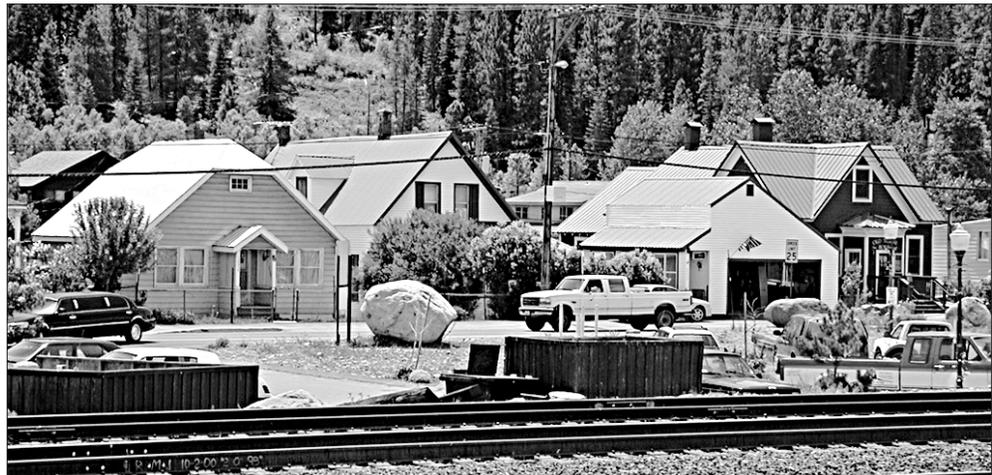
**Consider** - When the term "consider" is used, a design suggestion is offered to the applicant as an example of one method of how the design guideline at hand could be met. Applicants may elect to follow the suggestion, but may also seek alternative means of complying.

**Context** - In many cases, the applicant is instructed to relate to the context of the project area. The "context" relates to those properties and structures adjacent to, and within the same block, as the proposed project.

**Contributing** - Buildings within the historic district boundaries that were built within the period of significance and, although they have experienced some alterations, still convey a sense of history and retain their historic form are categorized "Contributing." These buildings would more strongly contribute to the historic district if they were returned to their original appearance through appropriate restoration. These also meet criteria for "contributing" properties for the National Register. Contributing buildings are designated as Category B in the Town's Historic Resources and Architectural Inventory.

**Encourage** - In some cases a particular design approach is "encouraged." In such cases, that method should be employed, unless an alternative would meet the intent of the guideline. For example, a guideline addressing the design of new buildings states that "New interpretations of traditional building styles are encouraged." In such a case, a new building should not directly imitate a historic style. However, a specific condition may arise in which an imitation, accurately executed, could be determined to be appropriate. Reconstruction of a building that once stood on a site that conveys a particularly significant part of the community's history is an example.

**Essential** - Those buildings within the Truckee Historic District that are individually eligible for the National Register are considered "Essential" structures in



*In many cases, the applicant is instructed to relate to the context of the project area. The "context" relates to those properties and structures adjacent to, and within the same block, as the proposed project.*

the local survey rating. These buildings are in comparatively original condition, or have been appropriately restored. While the buildings might be improved by some further, relatively minor, restoration efforts, preservation is the primary goal. Essential buildings are designated as Category A in the Town's Historic Resources and Architectural Inventory.

**Guideline** - In the context of this document, a "guideline" is a design preference that should be met when appropriate for a project. On a case by case basis a guideline may be relaxed by the review authority in order to facilitate compliance with another guideline that has been deemed more important, without compromising the overall objectives of the document.

**Historic Structure** - In general, an historic structure is one that is at least 50 years old or older, or is associated with significant people or events. In the context of this document, an historic structure is one that dates from the town's historic period of significance (1863-1950) used for defining context and retains an adequate amount of its integrity. Buildings that have been designated as Category A, B, or C in the Town's Historic Resources and Architectural Inventory are considered historic structures.

**Imperative mood** - Throughout this document, many of the guidelines are written in the imperative mood. The applicant is often instructed to "maintain" or "preserve" an established characteristic. For example, one guideline states: "Maintain the original proportions of a door." In such cases, the user shall comply unless it is determined that the guideline should be relaxed in order to facilitate compliance with other guidelines. In any case, the overall objective of the Historic Design Guidelines shall not be compromised.

**Inappropriate** - Inappropriate means impermissible. When the term "inappropriate" is used, the relevant design approach shall not be allowed. For example, one guideline states: "A new addition that creates an appearance inconsistent with the historic character of the building is inappropriate." In this case, a design out of character with the historic building would not be approved.

**Non-Essential** - These structures are those that, although they date from the period of significance, have been altered so radically that the historic information is no longer interpretable and they no longer merit preservation or restoration. In many of these buildings, nearly all of the structure's historic fabric has been replaced with new materials. Other nonessential structures may lie outside the boundaries of the historic district, or may have been constructed outside the period of significance.

**Preferred** - In some cases, the applicant is instructed that a certain design approach is "preferred." In such a case, that approach should be employed, unless an alternative can be demonstrated to meet the intent of the guideline. For example, a guideline addressing design character for a new building states: "A new design that draws upon the fundamental similarities among historic buildings in the community (without copying them) is preferred." In such a case, a design

that imitates an historic style generally is inappropriate. However, a specific condition may arise in which an imitation, accurately executed, could be determined to be appropriate. Reconstruction of a building that once stood on a site and that conveys a particularly significant part of the community's history is an example.

**Should** - If the term "should" appears in a design guideline, compliance is expected, when the particular condition described applies to the project at hand. However, flexibility in applying the guideline may occur, when relaxing it would permit greater compliance with other guidelines and when the general intent is still met. For example, a guideline states: "A historic chimney should not be removed." In most cases, compliance would be expected.

**Supporting** - There are buildings that were built within the period of significance but have had substantial alterations. Typically, these buildings have been altered by the addition of non-historic siding, historic porch enclosures, and remodeled windows and doors. These buildings still convey a scale and character that supports the overall feeling and association of the Historic Preservation Overlay District. Many of these buildings could, through the removal of these inappropriate alterations and with substantial restoration efforts, contribute to the National Register District and then could be reclassified as a Category B (Contributing) resource. Preservation of these buildings, when feasible, also is a goal. As they stand, supporting buildings are designated as Category C in the Town's Historic Resources and Architectural Inventory.

**When physical conditions permit or when feasible** - In some design guidelines, the applicant is asked to comply with the statement "when feasible." In these cases, compliance is required, except when the applicant can demonstrate that it is not physically possible to do so.

