



DESIGN GUIDELINES

This section identifies Plan Area-wide design guidelines for private development projects, including for building and site design. The guidelines outline objectives for design in Spenard, but flexibility in meeting these objectives should be afforded for each individual project. Site considerations and context matter, so the application of the guidelines may differ from one site to another. A project should meet the intent of the guidelines, but does not need to adhere to a single solution.

Applicability

The guidelines convey best practices and fundamental design principles for all development projects in Spenard. For private, by-right development, including private projects that are subject to administrative site plan review, these guidelines are informational, regardless of their type or location in the Plan Area. For development projects that are subject to major site plan review, conditional use review, or that receive public incentives, these guidelines may be used in the MOA's review and approval process, where applicable. Public projects should follow these guidelines.

The design guidelines are also intended to inform the development of a Spenard Overlay Zone with design guidelines and a design review process. This future project is listed as an implementation action in Chapter 7, Table 7.1, Action Plan, under the Regulatory Actions. The development of the Spenard Overlay and its development regulations and guidelines would occur through a public process involving all stakeholders.



Incorporate social gathering space in new development.



Employ an activity-generating mix of uses.



Provide pedestrian access through a site. Consider how a site can be designed to permit public access between streets.

A. Contribute to a Vibrant Spenard

One of the key objectives for Spenard is that it be a lively and active place with enjoyable outdoor spaces and development that activates the street. Key design guidelines include:

- » Create an Activity-Generating Variety of Uses – New development should include land uses that promote activity year round and throughout the day and night. Office uses, customer-service retail, cafes, housing, lodging and production uses with multiple employees contribute more activity to the Corridor than large storage, warehouse or vehicle sales uses. Creating mixed-use developments that combine housing, commercial, hospitality and office activities can help fuel an active Spenard. A rich mix of active land uses can create a symbiotic relationship between different developments.
- » Incorporate Social Gathering Space – New development should consider opportunities to create great outdoor spaces that help enliven the public realm. Such spaces should be located so they are highly visible from the street to promote active use. These outdoor spaces should also be designed to encourage year round use using shelters or lighting.
- » Create “Eyes on the Street” – Creating “eyes on the street” enhances a feeling of safety in environments like Spenard. Maximizing facade transparency and providing occupied upper floor uses like residential space creates a feeling of safety and contributes to overall vibrancy and activity.

B. Contribute to Connectivity

Wherever possible, private development should enhance Spenard’s multi-modal transportation network by creating streets, street-like private drives or publicly accessible active transportation connections. Allowing public access through a private development will require coordination between the Municipality and private property owners. Design guidelines for connectivity include:

- » Enhance the Roadway Network – Create new public roadways or private drives through a larger site or block.
- » Provide Pedestrian and Bike Access Through a Site – Consider how a site can be designed to permit public access between streets. Access from the primary and secondary active network, as shown in Figure 3.5, should also be prioritized.

C. Activate the Public Realm

The public realm contained within Spenard's streets, the Fish Creek Greenbelt, parks and plazas will be maximized as social spaces and placemaking opportunities when they are activated by a feature or use that keeps them vibrant and animated. Buildings should be designed to activate public spaces throughout Spenard. Design guidelines to activate the public realm include:

- » Orient a Development Toward the Public Realm – Buildings should be sited to maximize their visual and physical connection to the public realm. Orient a building to face a street, plaza, park or the trail system, such as the Fish Creek Trail. This is achieved by designing doors to open directly toward the public realm and locating active uses, such as restaurants and shops, adjacent to a public space. Residential entries and balconies can also help to activate the public realm.
- » Create Street Level Pedestrian Interest - The ground floor of a building is critical to the pedestrian experience within the public realm. Since a ground floor feature frames and helps to define a pedestrian's experience, it is important that it is designed to create visual interest. A blank, featureless wall adjacent to a public street or space should be avoided wherever possible. Doors, windows, storefronts, outdoor dining spaces, design details, landscaping, public art and other features all help create visual interest adjacent to the public realm in Spenard.



Create street level pedestrian interest.



Use art and landscaping features to create street level pedestrian interest.



Use outdoor seating areas and landscaping to create street level pedestrian interest.



Buildings should be placed and oriented such that they frame the street, providing a sense of closure for pedestrians.

D. Design for Walkability

Enhancing walkability is a key objective of the Plan to improve the pedestrian experience in Spenard. Buildings and sites should be designed to maximize pedestrian connectivity and create a pleasant and comfortable walking experience on adjacent sidewalks. Please see Chapter Four for a tailored vision for “street edge character” outlined for each transit-supportive development (TSD) District for more information on the desired placement of buildings relative to the street. Design guidelines for walkability include:

- » Provide Visual Interest – Buildings and sites should be designed to provide interest to those walking by on adjacent sidewalks and other public spaces.
- » Frame the Public Realm – Buildings should be placed and oriented such that they frame the street, providing a sense of enclosure for pedestrians. This helps add comfort for pedestrians. Street edge character for each of the three districts is described in more detail in Chapter 4 of the Plan.
- » Facilitate a Safe Walking Experience – Where public right-of-way is inadequate for a quality sidewalk, incorporate additional space between the front facade of the building and the public sidewalk as part of the pedestrian interface. Buildings should not encroach on the public sidewalk or other public spaces in a manner that restricts the flow of pedestrians. Where outdoor seating is used, it must allow adequate space on the sidewalk for people to safely and comfortably pass one another. Private development should strategically use low, downward facing lighting to enhance pedestrian safety and comfort.



Facilitate a safe walking experience.



Facilitate a safe walking experience.

E. Express a Human Scale

“Human scale” is used to describe how a person perceives a building element or a group of building elements in relation to themselves. A person relates better to building features that are of a size and scale similar to that of a human. For example, a blank wall that spans multiple stories does not properly exhibit human scale. The same wall can begin to express human scale by demarcating floors and adding appropriately sized windows and doors. Expressing human scale is critical for new buildings in Spenard, and particularly for those that are larger and taller. Building articulation methods include vertical and horizontal changes in materials, color, wall plane or other elements that reduce the real and/or perceived mass of a structure. The following design guidelines for building articulation should be utilized in Spenard:

- » Facade Articulation – Physical design elements that break down a building into human scale components and express a sense of horizontal and vertical scale. These methods typically do not significantly affect the overall square footage of a floor or building. Typical facade articulation approaches include:
 - Windows and fenestration – detailing and arrangement of windows on a building wall
 - Color changes – significant vertical or horizontal changes in color on a building wall
 - Material changes – significant vertical or horizontal changes in material on a building wall
 - Horizontal and vertical expression lines – vertical and horizontal expression lines on a building wall
 - Minor wall offsets – vertical expression line created by notching a building wall for its full height (typically less than 5 feet)
 - Door recesses – an arcade or inset entryway
- » Mass Variation – Design elements that vary the building mass significantly enough that they reduce the actual mass and scale of the building. These include the modulation of a building floor or wall in a manner that creates a physical relief in the architectural form. Mass variation techniques include:
 - Stepbacks – an upper floor setback is created by setting back an upper story relative to those on a lower story
 - Increased setbacks – a greater setback on a portion of a wall for its full height
 - Major wall offsets – notching a building wall for its full height (greater than 5 feet)



Use color changes, material changes and minor wall offsets to articulate a facade.



Use color changes, material changes and minor wall offsets to articulate a facade.



Use upper floor stepbacks, increased setbacks and wall offsets to vary a building's massing.



Sites and buildings should be designed to promote walkability and bicycling while still safely accommodating vehicles.

F. Accommodate Access for All Modes

Sites and buildings in Spenard should be designed to promote walkability and bicycling while still safely accommodating vehicle access, including freight. Designs should be sensitive to the needs of all transportation modes. Key design guidelines for access include:

- » Minimize Conflicts – Design site access and circulation to minimize potential conflicts between automobiles, freight, bicycles and pedestrians. Carefully locate access drives and utilize signage, striping and paving creatively to help address conflicts.
- » Minimize Vehicular Access Points Along Pedestrian Routes – Provide the fewest number of vehicular access points needed for the functionality of a site so that pedestrian interactions with vehicles are minimized. Where access points are provided, minimize the width of the driveway. Promote shared access for multiple properties.
- » Avoid Vehicular Access Off of Primary Pedestrian Streets – Provide vehicular access to a site from a side street wherever possible. Avoid vehicle access from Spenard Road wherever possible.
- » Provide Bicycle Amenities – Include bicycle amenities to encourage bicycling as a means of accessing the development. Amenities can include secure short-term and sheltered long-term bicycle parking, shower facilities for larger employment uses, and on-site bicycle connections to the Future Bicycle Network (Figure 5.17).



Sites and buildings should be designed to promote walkability and bicycling while still safely accommodating vehicles.

G. Mitigate Surface Parking Lots through Design

Surface parking lots should not be a visually prominent feature of sites in Spenard, especially in locations intended for strong pedestrian orientation. On-site parking in commercial areas should be subordinate to other uses on the site and parking areas directly adjacent to the street should be avoided where possible. Where a portion of a lot will be exposed, it should be buffered with landscaping. Key design guidelines for parking lots include:

- » Minimize the Visual Impact of Surface Parking – Surface parking areas should be located to the interior of a site whenever feasible. Where parking areas are visible from the street, they should be buffered using landscaping or a low wall constructed from materials compatible with the surrounding context and street frontage. Large parking areas should be broken up into smaller pods that maintain the sense of smaller parking areas and fine grain development along Spenard.
- » Minimize Conflicts with Pedestrians – Parking areas should provide landscaped islands with paths to promote safe pedestrian circulation across larger parking lots. Additionally, parking areas should not be located directly in front of a primary pedestrian entry to a building. Minimize interruptions to sidewalks by consolidating access drives and reducing the number of curb cuts.
- » Create More Efficient Parking Lots that Take Less Space – Design more efficient small parking lots that meet parking demand through shared parking facilities, parking demand management strategies, and dedicated car-sharing and carpool spaces, passenger drop-offs, bicycle parking and other techniques.
- » Design Parking Lots to Accommodate Future Infill Development – Configure buildings and parking lots on the site so that they can later accommodate additional infill development as some of the parking demand transitions to parking structures or more active modes of travel.



Where a portion of a parking lot is exposed, it should be buffered with landscaping.



Parking areas should provide landscaped islands with paths to promote safe pedestrian circulation.

H. Design Structured Parking to Fit In

Where structured parking occurs, the street level should ideally have an active use at the sidewalk edge in order to maintain a pedestrian-friendly streetscape. On some secondary streets, it may be acceptable to screen the street level and not have an active use. Key design guidelines for parking structures include:

- » Provide an Active Use Ground Floor Wrap – When a parking structure occurs adjacent to a street, the ground-floor should be wrapped with an active use, such as retail or office space. On a secondary street, other methods of providing visual interest may be used. In these locations, architectural details, murals, wall sculpture, public art, display cases or landscaping are alternatives.
- » Screen Upper Levels of Parking – Upper floors of parking that face a street should be screened from view of the street. This can be accomplished with an architectural screen, landscaping or sculptural treatments.



Architectural screen



Sculptural element screen



Commercial ground-floor wrap and screened upper floors



Commercial ground-floor wrap and screened upper floors

I. Design in Context

Development in Spenard should consider context. This means understanding the relationship of a building to its built and natural surrounding and being sensitive to that surrounding, if necessary. Key guidelines for context-sensitive design in Spenard include:

- » Transition to Sensitive Neighboring Properties – Where a new development occurs adjacent to a sensitive neighboring property, such as one that is zoned single-family residential, consider employing design features that help provide a transition at the interface between the two properties. Different types of transition interfaces may require different types of transition treatments. Some of these potential interfaces are identified in Figure A.I. Chapter 4 of the Plan provides more specific recommendations for transitions in each of the three districts.
- Step-Downs in Scale – Where a taller building is developed adjacent to an area zoned for lower-scale, consider stepping down the scale of the building adjacent to the lower-scaled area. Where the new building is at a lower grade than the lower-scaled area, this may not be needed as the natural terrain will provide a natural transition.

Note

Winter City design principles also should be applied to design of infrastructure. This includes components of the transportation network, such as streets, sidewalks and intersection crossings. For example, when a street section includes a sidewalk on only one side, locating it to be in the sunniest position is preferred (when other circulation planning and design criteria are consistent with this approach).

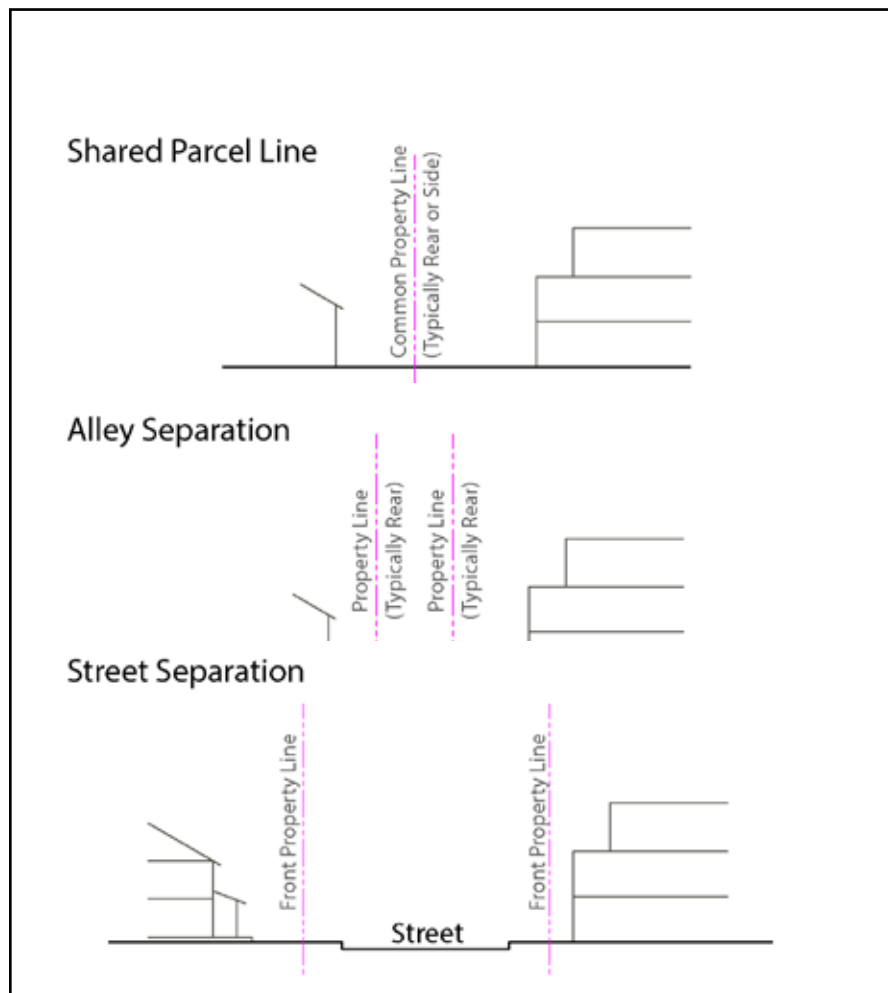


Figure A.I Transition Interface Types.

- Increased Setbacks – Where a larger building is located adjacent to an area zoned for lower scale, consider increasing the setback of the larger building beyond the required minimum to reduce looming effects on the sensitive property.
 - Strategic Location of Compatible Land Uses - Where a commercial or mixed-use building is located adjacent to a residentially-zoned area, consider locating compatible uses and activities adjacent to the residential areas. In a mixed-use project containing residential and commercial uses, this may mean locating the residential component at the transition interface. For a purely commercial building, a development should strategically avoid placing odor- or noise-emitting operations at an interface with a sensitive residential use.
 - Landscape Buffers – In some cases, a sensitive transition can be established by simply setting a building further back from a sensitive interface or by providing a landscape buffer (trees, shrubs, etc.) between the two properties.
- » Respect the Fine Grain Building Patterns along the Spenard Corridor – When designing a project, particularly in Central Spenard, respond to the fine-grained pattern of development. This is accomplished by providing significant articulation that breaks down a larger building into smaller horizontal modules that reflect the smaller building massing that is common along Spenard Road. This can also be accomplished using a variety of materials, colors and design treatments to appropriately respond to Spenard's eclectic architectural diversity.



Transition in scale to address a sensitive edge.



Provide a buffer to address a sensitive edge.

J. Reinforce Spenard's Eclectic Architectural Character

Spenard is a unique area in Anchorage, and is well known for its eclectic nature. This eclecticism is expressed in part through architecture and the presence of art. New development should contribute to Spenard's unique character. Key design guidelines include:

- » Encourage Variety in Style – No single architectural style should be assigned for buildings in Spenard. Instead, architects and designers should be encouraged to incorporate variety in design, materials and the use of color in Spenard, and “outside the box” creativity should be supported.
- » Promote Creative Use of Materials – Designers should be encouraged to use a variety of materials in their designs.
- » Utilize Art – Incorporate public art into the design of a building. This may include reserving space for public art or incorporating artistic elements into the building itself.
- » Avoid a Monotonous Aesthetic – Spenard's eclectic character should be reinforced by its architecture. Design of individual buildings should be unique and add to the variety that defines the corridor.
- » Support revitalization of historic resources, including Church of Love, neon signage and other historic or iconic resources.



Promote creative use of materials.



Promote creative use of materials.



Encourage variety in architectural style.



Encourage private development to provide public access to natural features, such as Fish Creek.

K. Preserve and Celebrate Spenard’s Natural Resources

Spenard possesses numerous environmental assets, including a variety of parks and opens spaces as well as natural features like Fish Creek. Development should embrace and respond to these natural features where possible. Key design guidelines include:

- » Provide Access to Natural Features – Encourage a private development to provide public access to and along Fish Creek and other natural features in Spenard wherever possible. This could include a public path connecting a public street to a creek through a private development site.
- » Preserve and Create View Opportunities – Consider how a development can preserve and enhance the visual connection to nature that occurs in Spenard. This could include modulating the form of a building to preserve public viewsheds to the extent feasible or designing private outdoor spaces and rooftop decks such that scenic views from these features are maximized.



Development in Spenard should embrace and respond to natural features.



Preserve and create view opportunities.

L. Employ Winter City Design Principles

In Anchorage, winter is a part of life. However, development can work with the realities of the long winters to cope with the elements. Furthermore, development should take advantage of opportunities created by seasonal changes. Key design guidelines include:

- » Maximize Solar Exposure – When designing a site and building, carefully locate and design critical features to maximize solar exposure. During winter months, this can help facilitate solar heating, making a space more comfortable. Designing the form of a building to permit solar access to key walking areas can also be critical to prevent ice buildup that can detract users and potentially cause an accident.
- » Accommodate Snow Storage – Consider how necessary snow storage areas can be creatively integrated into a site design to save space, and how snow storage areas can be used as amenities in the summer months.
- » Design a Site to Promote Year Round Use – Consider how a site can be arranged in order to shelter people from the elements. Awnings and canopies should be used to shelter people as they come and go from buildings. Structures should also be arranged in a way that helps block prevailing winter winds.
- » Utilize Site Lighting to Activate Outdoor Spaces – Site lighting should be used to activate outdoor spaces and plazas in the winter months when the hours of natural lighting are limited.
- » Apply Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles to enhance safety in Winter City Design strategies.



Design a site to promote year round use.



Awnings and covered entry ways should be used to shelter people as they come and go from buildings.



Utilize site lighting to activate outdoor spaces and plazas in the winter months when the hours of natural light are limited.



Utilize site lighting to activate outdoor spaces and plazas in the winter months when the hours of natural light are limited. This plaza has pop-jet fountains in the summer time, but is transformed with a lighted sculpture in the winter.





Incorporate social gathering space in new development.



Employ an activity-generating mix of uses.



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Architectural screen



Sculptural element screen



Commercial ground-floor wrap and screened upper floors



Commercial ground-floor wrap and screened upper floors

I. Design in Context

Development in Spenard should consider context. This means understanding the relationship of a building to its built and natural surrounding and being sensitive to that surrounding, if necessary. Key guidelines for context-sensitive design in Spenard include:

- » Transition to Sensitive Neighboring Properties – Where a new development occurs adjacent to a sensitive neighboring property, such as one that is zoned single-family residential, consider employing design features that help provide a transition at the interface between the two properties. Different types of transition interfaces may require different types of transition treatments. Some of these potential interfaces are identified in Figure A.I. Chapter 4 of the Plan provides more specific recommendations for transitions in each of the three districts.
- Step-Downs in Scale – Where a taller building is developed adjacent to an area zoned for lower-scale, consider stepping down the scale of the building adjacent to the lower-scaled area. Where the new building is at a lower grade than the lower-scaled area, this may not be needed as the natural terrain will provide a natural transition.

Note

Winter City design principles also should be applied to design of infrastructure. This includes components of the transportation network, such as streets, sidewalks and intersection crossings. For example, when a street section includes a sidewalk on only one side, locating it to be in the sunniest position is preferred (when other circulation planning and design criteria are consistent with this approach).

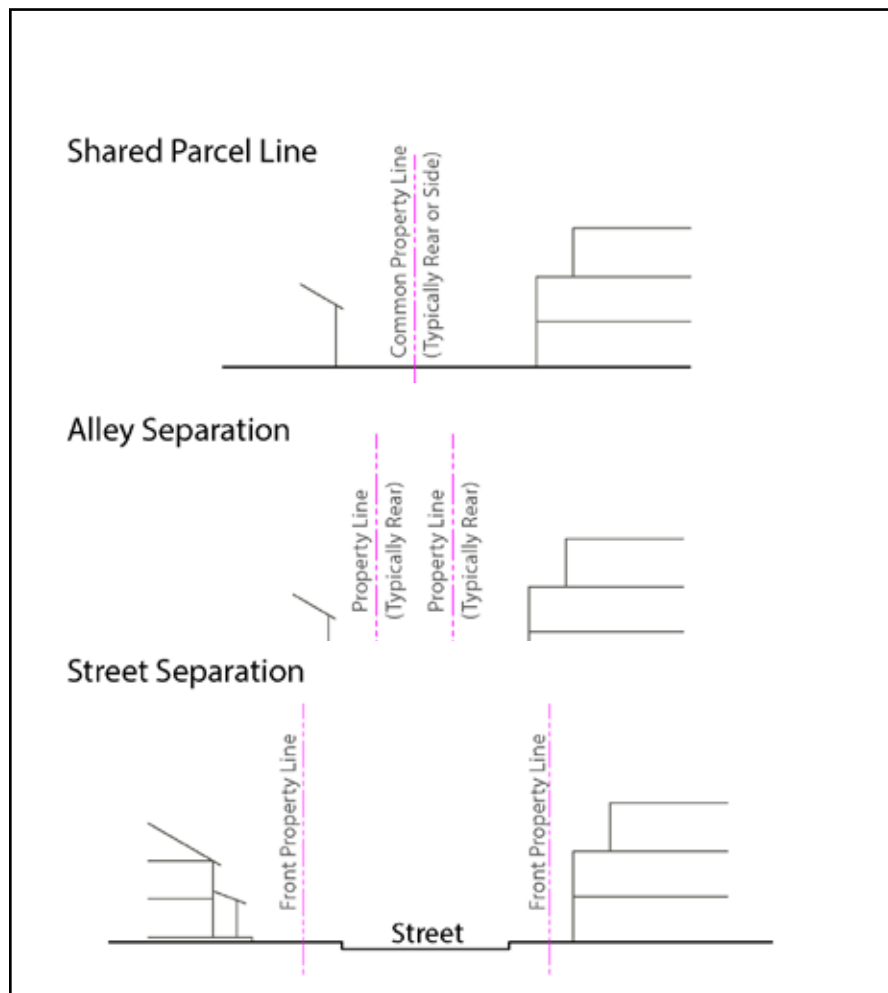


Figure A.I Transition Interface Types.

- Increased Setbacks – Where a larger building is located adjacent to an area zoned for lower scale, consider increasing the setback of the larger building beyond the required minimum to reduce looming effects on the sensitive property.
 - Strategic Location of Compatible Land Uses - Where a commercial or mixed-use building is located adjacent to a residentially-zoned area, consider locating compatible uses and activities adjacent to the residential areas. In a mixed-use project containing residential and commercial uses, this may mean locating the residential component at the transition interface. For a purely commercial building, a development should strategically avoid placing odor- or noise-emitting operations at an interface with a sensitive residential use.
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- » Respect the Fine Grain Building Patterns along the Spenard Corridor – When designing a project, particularly in Central Spenard, respond to the fine-grained pattern of development. This is accomplished by providing significant articulation that breaks down a larger building into smaller horizontal modules that reflect the smaller building massing that is common along Spenard Road. This can also be accomplished using a variety of materials, colors and design treatments to appropriately respond to Spenard's eclectic architectural diversity.



Transition in scale to address a sensitive edge.



Provide a buffer to address a sensitive edge.

J. Reinforce Spenard's Eclectic Architectural Character

Spenard is a unique area in Anchorage, and is well known for its eclectic nature. This eclecticism is expressed in part through architecture and the presence of art. New development should contribute to Spenard's unique character. Key design guidelines include:

- » Encourage Variety in Style – No single architectural style should be assigned for buildings in Spenard. Instead, architects and designers should be encouraged to incorporate variety in design, materials and the use of color in Spenard, and “outside the box” creativity should be supported.
- » Promote Creative Use of Materials – Designers should be encouraged to use a variety of materials in their designs.
- » Utilize Art – Incorporate public art into the design of a building. This may include reserving space for public art or incorporating artistic elements into the building itself.
- » Avoid a Monotonous Aesthetic – Spenard's eclectic character should be reinforced by its architecture. Design of individual buildings should be unique and add to the variety that defines the corridor.
- » Support revitalization of historic resources, including Church of Love, neon signage and other historic or iconic resources.



Promote creative use of materials.



Promote creative use of materials.



Encourage variety in architectural style.



Encourage private development to provide public access to natural features, such as Fish Creek.

K. Preserve and Celebrate Spenard’s Natural Resources

Spenard possesses numerous environmental assets, including a variety of parks and opens spaces as well as natural features like Fish Creek. Development should embrace and respond to these natural features where possible. Key design guidelines include:

- » Provide Access to Natural Features – Encourage a private development to provide public access to and along Fish Creek and other natural features in Spenard wherever possible. This could include a public path connecting a public street to a creek through a private development site.
- » Preserve and Create View Opportunities – Consider how a development can preserve and enhance the visual connection to nature that occurs in Spenard. This could include modulating the form of a building to preserve public viewsheds to the extent feasible or designing private outdoor spaces and rooftop decks such that scenic views from these features are maximized.



Development in Spenard should embrace and respond to natural features.



Preserve and create view opportunities.

L. Employ Winter City Design Principles

In Anchorage, winter is a part of life. However, development can work with the realities of the long winters to cope with the elements. Furthermore, development should take advantage of opportunities created by seasonal changes. Key design guidelines include:

- » Maximize Solar Exposure – When designing a site and building, carefully locate and design critical features to maximize solar exposure. During winter months, this can help facilitate solar heating, making a space more comfortable. Designing the form of a building to permit solar access to key walking areas can also be critical to prevent ice buildup that can detract users and potentially cause an accident.
- » Accommodate Snow Storage – Consider how necessary snow storage areas can be creatively integrated into a site design to save space, and how snow storage areas can be used as amenities in the summer months.
- » Design a Site to Promote Year Round Use – Consider how a site can be arranged in order to shelter people from the elements. Awnings and canopies should be used to shelter people as they come and go from buildings. Structures should also be arranged in a way that helps block prevailing winter winds.
- » Utilize Site Lighting to Activate Outdoor Spaces – Site lighting should be used to activate outdoor spaces and plazas in the winter months when the hours of natural lighting are limited.
- » Apply Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles to enhance safety in Winter City Design strategies.



Design a site to promote year round use.



Awnings and covered entry ways should be used to shelter people as they come and go from buildings.



Utilize site lighting to activate outdoor spaces and plazas in the winter months when the hours of natural light are limited.



Utilize site lighting to activate outdoor spaces and plazas in the winter months when the hours of natural light are limited. This plaza has pop-jet fountains in the summer time, but is transformed with a lighted sculpture in the winter.



