



PLANNING DIVISION
STAFF REPORT

City Council

December 2, 2019

CASE No.: **DESIGN GUIDELINES**
Guidelines

PROJECT NAME: **Quality Development Design**

Request:	Make a Recommendation to the City Council on Quality Development Design Guidelines for the City
P&Z Hearing Date(s):	October 23, 2019 / 4:00 p.m.
Report Date:	October 10, 2019
Staff Planner:	Veronica Gonzalez, Development Services Project Manager
Staff Recommendation:	ADOPTION
Planning and Zoning Board Recommendation: Adoption	

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Background

In the past year, the City Council directed staff to review the City's development design standards and recommend likely revisions to clearly define high quality development standards in the City. The intent of this direction was to assist the development community, property and business owners, and City staff to have specific guidance of expected development standards in the City.

Over the years, the City Council also adopted the following definition as a general description of the desired and expected quality development in the City:

"Quality development" *is development of structures, buildings, sites, subdivisions, and neighborhoods in a manner that results in a built environment that will endure as an asset to the community for future generations. High quality development is achieved through:*

- *developing in a manner that is appropriate for our climate, incorporates low impact development techniques, and utilizes options for water and energy conservation;*
- *an integrated pattern of development that facilitates connectivity, multi-modal transportation options, and mixed-use development;*

- *creating places that are safe, attractive, interesting and inviting, and which fit within the context of the surrounding neighborhood;*
- *using architecture and site design that is appropriate in scale, massing and articulation to the setting and purpose of the development;*
- *using a variety of landscape materials and durable, high-quality building materials that work together to provide visual interest through a compatible palette of colors, materials and textures.*

Using the above definition of quality development for the City of Mesa as a framework, staff began working with a consultant, the development community, and residents to review and create development standards that align with the established operational definition of a “quality development” in the City.

General Plan Vision and Goals

One of the goals of the Mesa 2040 General Plan is that the City will be a recognizable City with a great sense of place with a quality, built environment that will be the envy of other communities. To achieve this vision, the General Plan set forth the following goals:

- Create and maintain a variety of great neighborhoods.
- Grow and maintain diverse and stable jobs.
- Develop rich, high quality public spaces.

As part of the implementation tools to achieve the aforementioned vision, the General Plan recommended reviewing and updating the City’s design standards and guidelines. Also, among the implementation tools noted in the General Plan is to create a set of design guidelines that clearly provides a framework for evaluating new development proposals on the basis of design and architectural elements, compatibility of the development to its surroundings, landscaping and other important factors.

Currently, the City has inadequate design guidelines to aid in producing the level of quality desired. To resolve the inefficiency, City staff has created a set of standards and guidelines that aim to: establish clear expectations for quality development; create a common vision and standards for quality development; encourage innovation and flexibility in development designs; and establish consistency in the application of quality design standards. The approval and implementation of the proposed quality development design guidelines and standards will also help fulfill the General Plan vision of making Mesa a high quality and recognizable city with a strong sense of place and built environment.

Public Outreach and Feedback

Staff embarked on numerous public outreach processes to solicit stakeholders’ input in developing the standards and guidelines for the “Quality Development Design Guidelines”. Overall, there were six public outreach meetings. Specifically, three community workshops, one developer workshop, and two development advisory forums. Staff also conducted two online surveys that resulted in more than 520 participants and responses. The draft design guidelines were also posted on the City’s website for public comments.

Through the various public outreach efforts, staff received several comments from residents, local business owners, the Arizona Multihousing Association, Arizona Solar Center, the Home Builders Association of Central Arizona, Valley Partnership, and City Advisory Board Members. The key identified recommendations from the respondents included addressing the following elements:

- Architectural variety and diversity in building types and elements;
- The use of quality building materials and paint colors;
- Landscaped and shaded outdoor spaces;
- Walkability and pedestrian connectivity;
- Consider a variety of design options;
- Allow for flexibility;
- Consider site context; and
- Establish consistent and predictable review conditions.

The proposed design guidelines incorporated the aforementioned recommendations and provides standards that will promote consistency in administering the quality design standards and guidelines as well as allow innovation and flexibility in development proposals needed for the level of quality desired in the City of Mesa.

Organization of the Quality Development Design Guidelines

The Quality Development Design Guidelines will be formatted into three main sections to address the main development types, which are Residential, Commercial and Industrial. Each section is also specifically divided into Site Design and Architectural Design standards. The primary design principles for each development type are outlined as follows:

1. **Residential**: Residential development should elevate the quality of existing neighborhoods, while creating walkable and resilient communities that will stand the test of time.
 - a. Site Design – To establish and enhance neighborhood character, residential developments should provide:
 - i. A sense of arrival to the neighborhood where elements such as decorative monument signs, upgraded landscaping, specialty paving, and enhanced fence and wall details are used.
 - ii. Open space and amenity areas should be centrally located and include a network of pedestrian connections that promote walkability within the neighborhood and to adjacent commercial uses.
 - b. Architectural Design – Elements that contribute to quality architectural design include:
 - i. Creating an interesting streetscape that emphasizes the primary entrance to the home and places the garage secondary to the livable areas of the home.
 - ii. Using massing, scale, and articulation to avoid a flat-front design of homes.
 - iii. Using quality, authentic building materials.
2. **Commercial**: Commercial developments should complement and strengthen the existing community and contribute to the creation of attractive, engaging and distinctive streetscapes and places.
 - a. Site Design – A well organized commercial development incorporates site design principles that:

- i. Place buildings close to the street to encourage pedestrian engagement.
 - ii. Locate parking areas to the rear or side of a building to create a building-focused streetscape.
 - iii. Orient buildings to mitigate solar exposure, maximize shade, and reduce energy consumption.
 - iv. Provide pedestrian-friendly gathering spaces and amenities that provide shade.
 - v. Use landscaping to enhance building design while screening less-desirable areas from public view.
 - a. Architectural Design – Commercial building design must be pleasant, engaging and should contain elements such as:
 - i. Pedestrian-scaled architecture that uses massing and articulation to break large facades and building elements into smaller spaces.
 - ii. Building entrances that face the street and provide shelter for pedestrians.
 - iii. Cohesive building design, rather than direct architectural replication, in group commercial developments.
 - iv. Corporate architecture that is secondary to the architectural style of the larger development, surrounding neighborhood, or community.
 - v. A variety of complementary and quality building materials and colors.
3. Industrial: Industrial developments should provide a pleasant and accessible work environment, contribute to the City’s overall image and identity, and be compatible with existing, adjacent developments.
- a. Site Design – Industrial developments can be designed to positively contribute to the overall character of the area through:
 - i. Building placement that creates a strong relationship to the street and includes primary entrances that serve as a visual focal point.
 - ii. Well-designed and shaded outdoor spaces that may be used by employees for sitting, eating, and gathering.
 - iii. Building orientation that maximizes shade, optimizes natural ventilation and reduces energy consumption.
 - iv. Placing loading and service areas internal to the site as to not be visible to the public.
 - v. The use of landscaping to enhance building design, provide natural shade, and screen less-desirable areas from public view.
 - b. Architectural Design – Industrial developments should establish an architectural style that contributes to the character of the area through the use of elements such as:
 - i. Intentional massing and scale to define building entrances and break up large, bulky buildings.
 - ii. Changing roof forms to punctuate the skyline and avoid long, monotonous roof lines.
 - iii. Combining material and color variation with massing and articulation to prevent flat, blank walls.

Implementation:

Staff recommends the proposed quality development design guidelines become effective on February 3, 2020, and any proposed development shall adhere to the requirements of Section 11-1-6 of the Mesa Zoning Ordinance, requirements for review of land use applications.

Staff Recommendations:

The Quality Development Design Guidelines will create a common vision for quality development, establish clear expectations and criteria for quality development design standards to help guide City staff and the development community, and aid in attracting quality development to the City of Mesa. The Design Guidelines will also help fulfill the vision and goals of the Mesa 2040 General Plan. Therefore, staff is recommending approval of the Quality Development Design Guidelines.

Exhibits:

Exhibit 1 – Quality Development Design Guidelines Introduction

Exhibit 2 – Residential Quality Development Design Guidelines

Exhibit 3 – Commercial Quality Development Design Guidelines

Exhibit 4 – Industrial Quality Development Design Guidelines