

City of Sierra Vista
Architectural and Design Guidelines



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A. Introduction

Although no dominant architectural or design theme has developed in Sierra Vista over the years, with the maturing of the community comes the desire for, and the expectation of, a higher visual and aesthetic standard.

Architectural and Design standards are one means of ensuring that commercial development patterns are formed that are congruent with both the natural, and the existing man-made, settings. The guidelines that follow offer opportunities to create diversity and beauty in the visual, physical, social and functional components of commercial site development in Sierra Vista.

B. City Council Strategic Plan Objective

The Mayor and City Council formally identified a need for Architectural and Design Standards with the adoption of their first Strategic Plan in May, 2007. An adoption date was targeted for May of 2009. The objective stated, “*Develop Architectural Design Standards for future commercial buildings*”. The objective has been further clarified to include existing commercial buildings in which the exterior of the structure is being remodeled, as well as associated site improvements.

C. Strategies

1. Encourage high-quality development through the establishment of guidelines and recommendations.
2. Factor traditional southwest building considerations into building and site design.
3. Provide general direction but do not constrain architectural creativity.
4. Define the intent of a given provision and provide possible means of achieving it, but encourage alternative approaches.

D. Guidelines

An “intent” statement precedes each of the guidelines. The guidelines are intended to provide examples and general direction. There may be alternative ways to achieve the stated intent and the City encourages consideration of those means.

The photographs are intended to provide building and site design examples that reinforce the intent of the guidelines. They are not intended to be models to be replicated.

Note: These guidelines supplement the provisions of the City of Sierra Vista Development Code and other applicable requirements. Please consult the Code for further information regarding site development requirements. Other applicable Codes include the International Building Codes, Fire Codes and applicable State and Federal requirements.

1. All Commercial Development

a. Overall Building Design

Intent: This section encourages buildings that are authentic and unique, with design interest and quality. Buildings should have a permanent appearance, should contain proportionate elements and consider energy efficiency. Corporate prototype appearance is discouraged. Pedestrian considerations should be factored in to the building design.

- Additions that are composed of “temporary-looking” materials or design are strongly discouraged. Such materials or design would include free-standing canopies, moveable structures, structures made out of cloth or plastic, or similar.
- Buildings should maintain a sense of proportionality, with no one part, such as an overly-large roof mass, dominating other parts.
- Buildings should respond to solar heat gain, reflectivity and glare through building orientation and the use of architectural shading devices such as pronounced eaves and covered walkways.
- Minor architectural embellishment features may be allowed to exceed the Development Code-allowed height limitations provided they are an enhancement to the overall appearance of the structure and do not exceed 3 feet in height.
- All buildings should provide porches, awnings or overhangs that provide meaningful pedestrian shade.

- Buildings that derive their image solely from applied treatments that express corporate identity are discouraged.

b. Context

Intent: Consideration of building context helps insure that new buildings fit in with existing buildings and the overall appearance of the area. There is no desire to require the duplication of buildings or materials, but consideration of and response to existing buildings and materials will lead to an overall improved appearance. Where existing development does not lend itself to contextual consideration, new buildings will provide the template for future contextual consideration.

- New buildings or additions to existing buildings in retail centers, malls or office complexes should be contextually compatible with the existing architecture of the overall complex. The use of building form, materials, fenestration patterns, structural rhythms, roofline and height, colors, lighting and pathways should exhibit a seamless transition between the existing and new construction.
- New buildings that are being constructed in areas of the city that consist of existing high-quality development should consider contextual congruity with those buildings in terms of building form, materials and colors.



- New development should respect the predominant scale of development in the surrounding area by

designing with elements of a similar scale and providing a gradual transition to any large-scaled masses proposed.

- Precise replication with existing adjoining or nearby building design is not necessary or desirable.

c. Color

Intent: Exterior building colors comprise a significant part of the visual impact of a building. Therefore, they should be aesthetically pleasing and compatible with colors used on adjoining buildings. All ranges of colors can be considered provided they work in harmony on a given building. Colors generally found in the desert will look appropriate in Sierra Vista but other colors can also work provided they are generally muted. Trim and accent areas may feature brighter colors.

- Muted colors are generally encouraged.
- Allow a range of colors but mute them to blend with the desert environment.



- Bright colors are generally discouraged with the exception of small-scale trim areas.
- The color white, or lighter shades in general, should not be used for extremely large wall expanses or as the sole building color.
- Wall and roof colors that detract from, or strongly contrast with, a building's primary color are discouraged.

- Paint schemes incorporating stripes or alternating colors are strongly discouraged.
- Building coloration should not change except at wall breaks or other logical points.
- The use of murals is acceptable provided other applicable code provisions, such as signage, are met.

d. Walls

Intent: Building walls define the building. Materials and the interrelationship of elements can make or break a building's appearance. Of particular importance are building walls visible from streets and public areas. The myriad materials available for wall construction should function integrally and consist of a high quality.

- Building walls visible from a public area, such as a roadway, a public parking lot, a park or a residential area should have wall treatments on all such sides of the building of similar character and quality to that provided on the front of the building.
- All building walls need some degree or form of articulation on the sides facing public streets or public areas. Treatments that achieve the same result are acceptable (such as vertical design elements).



- Entryways should be well-defined through the use of recessed doorways, porticos, porches or similar treatment.



- Entryway porticos and similar structures should be in scale with the building itself.
- The use of split-face block as an accent material is acceptable, but split-face block should not be used for entire buildings or building walls.
- Metal walls must have supplemental building materials, forms and detailing on the exterior elevations that are visible from all roadways, public parking lots, parks or residential areas. Stucco or similar material is encouraged as a veneer.
- Front facades or facades visible from public streets or public parking lots should not include smooth-faced concrete block, smooth-faced pre-fabricated steel panels or tilt-up concrete panels that are not covered by a higher quality veneer.
- Rounded design elements are an encouraged wall treatment that can be used to soften rectangular building shapes.





- The use of native stone, or stone veneer resembling native stone, is strongly encouraged as an accent material or to define a building entrance.



- The use of reflective or bright building materials is discouraged unless they consist of materials generally expected to fade in a reasonable period of time (such as copper) or are used as accents.
- Exceptions to this section will be considered for "retro" types of facilities, such as historical or culturally-oriented structures that provide exceptional visual interest.

e. Roofs

Intent: As with wall materials and designs, roofs are a major component of the definition of a building. Framed against a skyline, roof design should provide interest and variability. Materials used can augment wall design, provide energy efficiency and incorporate necessary screening.

- Variations in rooflines should be used to add interest to, and reduce the scale of, large buildings.



- Roof features, when possible, should utilize sources of natural light (i.e. skylights) to increase energy efficiency.
- Metal roofs are an acceptable roof treatment but should consist of muted earth tones, or should fade to such within a reasonable period of time.
- Tile roofs are an acceptable roof treatment but should consist of muted earth tones.
- Flat roofs are acceptable provided a wall cap or cornice is included in the design. Wall caps with offsetting colors from the wall colors are encouraged. (“Santa Fe” type wall design excluded.)



- Parapets should be used to conceal flat roofs and can also screen mechanical equipment.
- Rooftop mechanical equipment should be screened in a manner that enhances rather than detracts from the roof appearance. Individual-unit screens may be appropriate for small buildings while all-inclusive-unit screens are more effective for larger buildings.

- Materials intended to resemble wood shake roofs are acceptable, but the use of wood itself is discouraged.
- Large, visible, unbroken expanses of roof area are discouraged.
- Drain spouts should be integrated into the building design through the use of screening or architectural elements.
- Rooftop antenna arrays visible from a public street should incorporate measures to reduce their visibility.
- Solar panels are exempt from screening requirements but should be incorporated into the design of the building and not appear as an “add-on”, to the extent feasible.

f. Windows and Awnings

Intent. Windows offer opportunity for the enhancement of otherwise blank walls. Plain windows can themselves be enhanced with simple embellishments, such as awnings. Windows help enable window-shopping in retail areas and conversely contribute to security by providing eyes on sidewalks and parking lots. They can also provide passive solar heating in the winter months.

- Reflective glass should not be allowed for retail uses.
- Retail stores should incorporate a minimum of 50 percent of the building frontage in window area adjacent to all pedestrian walkway areas between a height of 3 and 7 feet above the grade of the walkway (unless the function of the building does not allow use of window treatment).



- Window awnings are encouraged, particularly where smaller-size windows are used.



- Windows should incorporate trim elements that enhance the basic appearance. The use of divided panes where appropriate is encouraged.
- Architectural embellishment of otherwise plain windows through use of framing or decorative elements is encouraged.



g. Signage

Intent: Signage is important, both for identification and advertising purposes, but can detract from an otherwise architecturally sound building. Appropriate signage

integrates lettering and design with the architectural design of the building or buildings. Sign lighting too should compliment the buildings as well as the signage and provide only the illumination necessary.

- Monument signage should include architectural elements consistent with the building architecture.



- Internally illuminated monument signage is discouraged when adjacent to residential areas but where used should have an opaque or dark-colored background and lighter text and symbols.
- Down-lighting of signage is strongly encouraged.



- Multiple-tenant wall signage should be planned so as to avoid incongruent lettering by matching fonts and/or letter coloration.
- Multiple-tenant wall signage may use corporate-type identifiers, but should otherwise match lettering fonts and/or letter coloration.
- Time and temperature displays should only be used if they compliment the overall appearance of the monument sign on which they're placed.

h. Lighting

Intent: Good lighting is appropriately located and shielded from adjoining properties. It can contribute architecturally to the appearance of a site. Good lighting enhances site and building development and encourages pedestrian activity.

- Where building mounted accent-lighting is utilized, down-lighting of building walls is preferred over up-lighting.
- Pedestrian-scale light standards are encouraged in areas of high pedestrian use such as patios, outdoor dining areas, connecting pathways, etc.



- Areas of neon lighting on walls and roofs are not encouraged.
- Decorative, non-purpose serving roof or wall-mounted lighting is strongly discouraged.
- Neon or LED tubing may be used to highlight building trim or accent areas, but overuse should be avoided.

i. Site Design

Intent: Include consideration of pedestrians foremost in the relationship of buildings to site. Consider the connection of pedestrian routes to future development. Design sites and orient buildings to benefit from solar exposure and to provide other green benefits. When the rear of a building faces a public street, incorporate measures to provide a front-side appearance to the extent feasible. Install landscaping that will beautify the site and provide necessary screening.

- When feasible, buildings should be located toward the street side of a given site with parking areas located away from the street, screened by the buildings. To achieve the best results, windows and other architectural features should be provided on the street-side of the buildings.
- Sidewalks should be provided adjacent to buildings at all points where such sidewalks provide access to parking stalls.
- Opportunities should be sought to improve pedestrian circulation both within sites and to adjoining sites and public routes. Pedestrian walkways and stairways should be safe, apparent, and welcoming.
- All sites should have logical, safe and complete pedestrian access to adjoining sites. Such access should be provided even when existing development does not provide the link, with the idea being to encourage that link at some point in the future.
- Covered walkways that connect buildings on a site are strongly encouraged. The architecture of such walkways should blend in with the building architecture.



- Textured or raised pavement areas for pedestrian connections within a given site are strongly encouraged. Such materials should be designed to minimize the transition between differing surfaces and should themselves avoid excessive indentation or texturing.



- The use of courtyards and pedestrian gathering areas is strongly encouraged. Such areas should include benches and/or tables and landscaping. Low walls or split-rail fences, or similar, to define such areas, are encouraged. Where such areas are used at night appropriate pedestrian-scale lighting should be provided.



- The use of outdoor benches and elements that can be built to include seating, such as raised landscape planters, is strongly encouraged.



- Landscaping should be provided to the sidewalk or curb, as applicable, to include the adjoining right-of-way area. At a minimum, groundcover material should be provided. Appropriate City license agreement provisions are required.
- Tree-wells within pedestrian walkway areas are encouraged provided there is no impact to general pedestrian or ADA access.
- Raised planter areas toward the front of buildings are encouraged.
- The use of large boulders (greater than 2 foot diameter) in landscape design is encouraged.



- The locations of all mechanical equipment should be identified on the plans so that appropriate screening is provided.
- In sites where shopping carts are used, appropriate storage areas shall be provided that prevent interference with pedestrian routes or ADA parking or access.

- Designing parking lots to include water harvesting should be considered, provided Development Code-mandated stormwater requirements are also achieved.

2. **Restaurants** (In addition to the applicable elements in #1 “All Commercial Development” above)

Intent: Restaurants should take pedestrian considerations into account and make provisions for outdoor spaces that include waiting and dining areas.

- a. All drive-thru restaurants should provide screening of the drive-thru lane area in the form of landscaping and/or wall screening, or should orient the drive-thru area away from the street side(s) of the site.
- b. Outdoor pedestrian waiting areas and benches are encouraged.
- c. Outdoor dining areas are strongly encouraged and should be located in areas with minimal adjacent vehicular traffic. Appropriate lighting, patio-type walls and landscaping should be provided.



- d. Shading for outdoor dining is encouraged and should be architecturally integrated with the main structure, or should compliment the building. Table umbrellas are acceptable.
- e. The use of wood doorways with glass is encouraged.



3. Gas Station/Convenience Store (In addition to the applicable elements in #1 “All Commercial Development” above)

Intent: Work to achieve consistency in the design of the various functional elements typically found at gas stations, and integrate those elements with the appearance of any primary structures on the site.

- a. Drive through elements, screen walls and pump island canopies should architecturally compliment the building design.
- b. All elements of the pump island that are not operational should be architecturally integrated by use of color, material, and architectural detailing.
- c. Landscaping should primarily be focused on the street sides of the site.

4. Multi-Family Development (In addition to the applicable elements in #1 “All Commercial Development” above)

For the purpose of Design Review, “Multi-Family Development” is defined as more than four units.

Intent: Apartment building design should consider the architectural elements of single-family residential design. Pedestrian access through the site should be functional and safe and designed to encourage walking.



- a. The front sides of buildings should face streets, where applicable, and should have varied setbacks from the street.
 - b. Street oriented facades should have porches, balconies, stoops or other architectural detailing that allow passive viewing of the street on at least the majority of street-facing units.
 - c. Parking areas should be located away from the street side of the development.
 - d. Ground-floor unit privacy walls, if utilized, should have a maximum solid wall or fence height of 4 feet.
 - e. A minimum of two different building materials should be used on each building elevation.
 - f. Internal walkways should interconnect all buildings one to another and with the clubhouse areas. Connections should be logical and direct, to the extent feasible, and should meet applicable Americans with Disabilities Act requirements.
5. **Large Retail Buildings** (In addition to the elements in #1 “All Commercial Development” above)

“Large Retail Buildings” are defined as any retail structure of 50,000 square feet or more.

Intent: Reduce the apparent scale of large buildings by incorporating multiple design elements. Encourage pedestrian access routes to and from large buildings and within the various buildings on the overall site.

- a. Each principal building on the site should have clearly defined, highly visible customer entrances featuring overhangs, recesses/projections, peaked roof forms, arches, etc.

- b. An area containing a large amount of window surface should not be flush with the plane of the principle façade. The amount of off-set should be commensurate with the amount of window surface (the more window surface the greater the off-set).
- c. Building facades should include a repeating pattern that includes at least three elements such as color change, texture change, material change, element change, etc.
- d. Facades should be articulated to reduce the massive scale and the uniform appearance of large retail buildings. Facades greater than 100 feet in length should exhibit a prominent shift(s) in the façade of the structure so that no greater than 75 percent of the length of the façade appears linear. The shift should be in the form of at least a 10 foot change in façade alignment. A series of shifts may be appropriate provided that the cumulative off-set is at least 10 feet. A combination of both a roofline and façade change is encouraged, particularly when they occur at the same point.
- e. Facades between 50 and 100 feet in length should exhibit a prominent shift(s) in the façade of the structure so that no greater than 75 percent of the length of the façade appears linear. The shift should be in the form of at least a 5 foot change in façade alignment. A series of shifts may be appropriate provided that the cumulative off-set is at least 5 feet. A combination of both a roofline and façade change is encouraged, particularly when they occur at the same point.
- f. Any long horizontal building should include vertical design elements to break up the building mass. The number and scale of such elements should be commensurate with the length of the façade. Paint alone should not be used to achieve the intent.



- g. Buildings should provide protection for pedestrians and should utilize overhangs and awnings at entrances and along pedestrian routes.
- h. Parcels smaller than 40 acres should have a perimeter landscaped buffer area of 20 feet. Parcels 40 acres and larger, or aggregates of smaller parcels that total 40 acres or larger, should have a perimeter landscaped buffer area of 40 feet.
- i. Pedestrian walkways, no less than 6 feet in width, should be provided from the public sidewalk to the customer entrance of all buildings on the site.
- j. Walkways, no less than 8 feet in width, should be provided along the full length of the building featuring a customer entrance, and along any façade abutting public parking areas.

6. Renovations

Intent: Ensure that the design of additions is consistent with the existing design or further enhances the existing design.

- a. When a new addition is proposed onto or adjacent to an existing commercial building, the newly constructed portion of the building should appear as an originally conceived part of the design. The new building or addition should match the scale and reflect the proportions of the original structure where they adjoin or are adjacent. New construction of a different height and bulk than that of the original structure should not occur abruptly.

7. West End Considerations

Intent: As a targeted infill area, the West End benefits from some leniency in the City's Development Code provisions. However, as an area also targeted for revitalization, architectural and site design quality needs to be high to continue improving the appearance of the commercial areas.

- a. The requirements and provisions contained in these guidelines shall generally apply to development within the West End Infill Incentive District. Provided the overall intent of the guidelines is achieved, certain leniency to these guidelines may be granted

pursuant to the policy. Such modifications shall be formally approved by development agreement or other means as determined by the City.

8. City Facilities

Intent: City facilities need to be functional and cost efficient, but should also reflect the community's desire for building excellence.

- a. City facilities should meet all applicable Architectural and Design guidelines to the extent feasible.
- b. While there is no need for a city-building “theme”, there should be a resemblance of architectural styling to facilitate the public’s awareness of their location.
- c. Monument signage should be consistent between buildings to facilitate the public’s awareness of their location and to minimize confusion.



Glossary of Terms

Architectural Feature – A prominent or significant part or element of a building or site. Architectural features may include special lines, massing, projections, recesses, and texture.

Articulation – Describes the degree or manner in which a building wall or roofline is made up of distinct parts or elements. A highly articulated wall will appear to be composed of a number of different planes, usually made distinct by their change in direction (projections and recesses) and/or changes in materials, colors or textures.

Canopy – A roof-like structure, generally of a permanent nature, which projects from the wall of a building.

Context – Factoring the existing built environment into the design of a building.

Corporate Prototype – Design that reflects standardized materials, treatments and building design for all buildings within that chain.

Eave – The horizontal or downward projecting overhang at the lower edge of a roof.

Elevation – The horizontal view and measurement of a side of a building.

Façade – An exterior face or elevation of a building.

Muted Color – Subdued or softened color.

Opaque – Impervious to light.

Parapet – The portion of the wall or a façade that extends above the roofline.

Portico – An exterior porch or walkway with a roof typically supported by columns, often leading to the entrance of a building.

Screening – The use of walls or landscaping to hide undesirable elements.

Split-Face Block -- Concrete masonry unit with one or more faces having a fractured or roughened surface. Used in masonry wall construction.

Textured Pavement – The application of imprinted or applied roughened or altered materials that serve to emphasize a change of treatment from regular surfacing.

Tree-Wells – Openings in sidewalks or other pedestrian routes allowing for the placement of landscaping. Typically include a covering open-mesh grate that is level with the adjoining surfaces.

Veneer -- *A thin surface layer, as of finely grained wood, or a decorative facing such as brick, applied to a base of inferior material.*