

Chapter and Policy Update

The City has completed the first round of review and edits to several Comprehensive Plan chapters. The following document provides the updated goals and policies meant to guide growth and development in the City of Spokane through the lens of the **Urban Design and Historic Preservation** element.

As part of the [PlanSpokane 2046 Periodic Update](#), drafts of the non-technical chapters of the Comprehensive Plan are now available for public review and comment. **Please send all comments and recommendations to PlanSpokane@spokanecity.org**. We encourage the public to include the Chapter name and Goal/Policy number(s) as applicable for ease of comment consideration.

Each of the available chapters have been updated from the [current Comprehensive Plan](#) to reflect recent plans and studies, updated state legislation, and extensive community feedback, seeking to create a streamlined plan that will be easier to read and implement.

Updates throughout the draft chapters include the removal of unnecessary text as well as new, moved, or removed policies. Also included are minor edits to the language to ensure clarity and consistency throughout the Plan. Not all minor edits have been marked, but icons and notes (shown in the sidebar on the right) provide additional insight into larger changes. Any policies removed from the chapter are highlighted at the end.

Additional changes to each chapter are likely to occur based on continued [Climate Planning](#) and [Racially Disparate Impacts Analysis](#) as well as public feedback and the selection of a preferred alternative for the final Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). See PlanSpokane.org for more information on all the ongoing work for PlanSpokane 2046.

In summary, to date, this chapter has seen the following changes:

Urban Design and Historic Preservation REPORT CARD

Action	Number of Policies
New Goals & Policies	8
Removed Goals & Policies	3
Changed Goals & Policies (Moved, Change in Direction)	8

To help track where changes have been made, the following icons will appear where:



General information or notation is provided, clarifying changes to the existing text.



Language was streamlined or condensed. Minor changes won't be marked.



New text or policy was added, not sourced from the current plan.



Two or more policies in the existing plan were combined into one.



A policy or language was added because of a change in state law requirements.



Climate and Resiliency work might impact this language in the future.



Racially Disparate Impacts or Displacement work may impact this language in the future.



Text, goals, or policies were removed—a reason will be provided.

Urban Design & Historic Preservation

Introduction

Buildings and public spaces play a significant role in creating a sense of place, supporting a city's ability to meet the needs of its residents, and establishing the general quality of life. To that end, the City of Spokane has a great foundation on which to stand, being informed by a landscape that offers the resources and inspiration to allow the city to grow and prosper. Spokane's history began as an important center of trade and fishing for local indigenous communities, continued through settlement and changing industry and commerce, on to the present. Through periods of rapid growth, and even the fire of 1889, which destroyed a large portion of the city, Spokane retained an impressive legacy of historic structures that tell the story of Spokane's social, economic, and architectural history. More recent growth and development resulted in a city recognized for its success in urban revitalization and innovation.

The following goals and policies are intended to enhance Spokane's unique and authentic sense of place with the tools of Urban Design and Historic Preservation. It is significant that this Chapter combines Urban Design and Historic Preservation, drawing on principles that support good planning in both areas, recognizing the importance of both the past and the future.

Goals and Policies

The following goals and policies provide specificity for planning and decision-making. Overall, they indicate the desired direction, of growth and development of Spokane.

Goal: DP-1, Community Identity

Enhance Spokane's community identity through the preservation and improvement of historic structures and features while designing new structures and public spaces that enhance quality of life and create a unique sense of place.

Policy: DP-1.1, Landmark Structures, Buildings, and Sites

Recognize and preserve significant landmark structures, buildings, and sites providing focal points of historic, aesthetic, or cultural interest, celebrating the distinctiveness of Spokane.

Policy: DP-1.2, New Development in Established Neighborhoods

Encourage new development that adapts to the evolving needs of neighborhoods while recognizing the existing built environment and the context of the site.



The original introduction has been replaced with a broader discussion of the setting for this chapter, avoiding outdated terms and concepts.



Goals 1 and 2 were very close in intent and effect, so they have been combined here and all design policies moved below it.

Note that policies have been reordered throughout for readability and flow.



Policy 1.2 has been updated to avoid preservation from deterring all improvement or change over time, in line with discussion had during Building Opportunity for Housing.

Policy: DP-1.3, Significant Views and Vistas

Preserve views, vistas, and viewpoints identified by the City as having historic and cultural value by establishing viewsheds and view corridors, providing protection from encroachment or adverse impacts.

Policy: DP-1.4, Gateway Identity and Physical Elements

Establish and maintain gateway features into Spokane and individual neighborhoods, consisting of physical elements and landscaping that create a sense of place, identity, and belonging as well as signage and wayfinding that directing visitors towards points of interest.

Policy DP-1.5, Urban Design Principles

Utilize urban design principles and elements that make places distinct, recognizable, and memorable by implementing clear and consistent design requirements that provide for a continuity of form, community interaction, and coherent visual elements throughout.

Policy: DP-1.6, Design Review Process

Apply design guidelines to significant projects through a review process, such as the Design Review Board, that relies on community input and the expertise of design professionals to achieve design performance that meets or exceeds citizens' quality of life expectations.

Policy: DP-1.7, Balance Requirements with Need

Craft development regulations and design requirements that recognize the influence design regulations have on meeting the needs and wants of Spokane's residents, while ensuring appropriate flexibility to avoid unnecessary and negative effects on overall development feasibility and creativity.

Policy: DP-1.8, Design Review as Part of the Permit Process

Integrate the design review process and design standards throughout the entire permitting process, considering the design needs of the City at the same time as other permitting concepts, thereby reducing the time and effort required by all.

Policy DP-1.9, Design Principles for Public Projects and Structures

Design and construct public facilities and structures using the highest design principles to maximize public benefit and encourage similar improvements to the built environment.



Original policies 2.1 and 2.2 were combined into this policy (1.5).



Policy 1.6 has been updated to make it clear not all projects need or should go through the design review process.



This new policy was suggested by the Chapter Review Subcommittee as an important consideration when adopting standards. A cross-reference to the Land Use chapter is likely.

Policy DP-1.10, The Public Realm

Enhance the livability of Spokane by preserving the City's unique mix of modern and historic structures and supporting access and usability of the public realm.

Policy DP-1.11, Building and Site Design

Ensure that development is thoughtful in design and improves the quality of the immediate neighborhood while responding to the site's unique features and environmental conditions.

Policy DP-1.12, Sub-Area Plans and Design Consideration

Include consideration of design and the built environment when conducting sub-area planning, seeking to preserve and enhance the design and development of an area while allowing for a vibrant, evolving community.

Policy: DP-1.13, People-Oriented Design

Orient building entrances and building facades toward sidewalks, pathways, and public rights-of-way rather than towards parking lots or internal spaces, prioritizing the human experience of structures rather than cars. Likewise, orient elements serving drivers, such as driveways and garages, away from the public realm when possible or minimize their impacts when unavoidable.

Policy: DP-1.14, Constant Improvement in Design of Public Spaces

Facilitate improvements to sidewalks, streetscapes, street trees, sewers and drains, and parks in all neighborhoods and commercial areas designated for higher density development on an ongoing basis, including upgrades to the City's oldest infrastructure.

Policy: DP-1.15, Diversity of Design in the Built Environment

Respect and encourage diversity in scale and design of commercial development throughout the city, recognizing the context and style of different areas of the city and the needs of different uses.

Policy: DP-1.16, Parking Facility Design Standard

Enhance and improve the interaction between parking facilities and the community by requiring people-centered design features such as trees and other landscaping, structured parking and parking lots wrapped with active uses and storefronts where abutting the public realm and features such as public plazas to soften impacts to people using and viewing the facility.

Policy: DP-1.17, Town Squares and Plazas

Incentivize inclusion of people-centered open spaces and public plazas as part of new development that are accessible and enjoyable for all, including



Sub-Area plans are likely to be covered in depth in Land Use. It's likely this policy will move there when work begins on that chapter.



People-Oriented ideals have been strengthened throughout and will likely be highlighted in other chapters as well.



This new policy was added following discussion with the Subcommittee, paying homage to the idea that different parts of the City have different contexts.

town squares, plazas, or other public spaces that also provide a focus for commercial and civic buildings.

Policy: DP-1.18, Urban Trees and Landscaping in All Development

Maintain, improve, and increase the number of street trees and planted areas in the urban environment by requiring that new development incorporate natural elements where appropriate, while providing incentives towards increased landscaping and trees.

Policy: DP-1.19, On-Premises Advertising

Ensure that on-premises signs are of a size, number, quality, and style to provide identification of the business they support while contributing to the visual interest of the community and enhancing the style of development in Spokane.

Policy: DP-1.20, Billboards and Off-Premises Advertising

Prohibit construction of new advertising billboards and develop rules to phase out existing billboards over time. Regulate off-premises advertising overall, with the intent of reducing visual clutter and distraction, and enhancing safety throughout the city.

Policy: DP-1.21, Telecommunication Facilities

Minimize the visual impact of telecommunication facilities such as cell and microwave towers by encouraging their placement on existing structures in a manner that reduces facility visibility without impacting signal strength and coverage.

Policy: DP-1.22, Lighting

Support human-scaled lighting that increases visibility and safety while regulating display, flood, and light direction to minimize off-site impacts, including controls against signage and lighting that distracts drivers.

Goal: DP-2, Historic Preservation

Preserve and protect Spokane's historic districts, sites, structures, and features by recognizing Spokane's diverse cultures and communities and their contributions to the City.

Policy: DP-2.1, Historic Preservation as a High Priority

Establish historic preservation as a high priority and vital economic development tool within City programs through incentives and tax abatement programs providing essential reinvestment in Spokane's historic properties.



The relationship between distracting lighted signs, etc. along roadways and safety has been strengthened in Policy 1.22. A cross-reference to Transportation is likely as well.



This goal and its policies have been evaluated by the City's Historic Preservation Office in addition to work by Planning staff.

Policy: DP-2.2, Historic Preservation Education

Raise community awareness and support of Spokane's historic value by educating the public about the Historic Preservation program, including the value of the Spokane Register of Historic Places, local historic districts, incentives and regulatory framework for historic preservation, and other important aspects of the program.

Policy: DP-2.3, Historic Preservation Plan

Establish a citywide historic preservation plan that identifies goals, strategies, and priorities to achieve balance between the social and economic benefits of preservation and enhancement with the importance of accommodating growth and investment within Spokane's historic built environment.

Policy: DP-2.4, Zoning Provisions and Building Regulations

Utilize zoning provisions, building regulations, and design standards that foster preservation, rehabilitation, and enhancement appropriate for historic districts, sites, and structures.

Policy: DP-2.5, Identification and Protection of Resources

Identify historic resources to inform decision making in City departments through the maintenance of an inventory of historic properties, including in the Spokane Register of Historic Places and National Register. Nominate historic properties and districts to the Spokane Register of Historic Places based on priorities and considerations identified in a Historic Preservation Plan.

Policy: DP-2.6, Reflecting Spokane's Diverse History

Encourage awareness, recognition, and preservation of the many diverse cultures and communities that are important and integral aspects of Spokane's past through listing properties and districts important to underrepresented communities and groups on the Spokane Register of Historic Places.

Policy: DP-2.7, Equitable Communities

Harness the economic and cultural benefits of preservation to intentionally respond to historic and current inequities to ensure historic preservation resources benefit the entire community and avoid exclusionary impacts.

Policy: DP-2.8, Landmarks Commission and Citizen Consultation

Utilize and consider the expertise and recommendations of community members and preservation experts on the City Landmarks Commission in decision making by the City Council, City Plan Commission, City Parks Board, and other city agencies in matters of historic preservation.



This is a new policy created to highlight the need for coordinated planning for historic preservation in Spokane.



This policy was moved here for readability and flow purposes.



Policy 2.5 has been updated to better support and implement the plan called for in Policy 2.3 above.



This new policy may be updated as Racially Disparate Impacts work is completed, but for now a new policy is suggested.



This policy has been broadened to allow for more than just one solution (Landmarks Commission) while not diminishing the original effect.

Policy: DP-2.9, Preservation Through Tribal Coordination

Collaborate with local Tribal governments to identify, preserve, and protect significant cultural resources through the development of planning and permitting processes, as well as development regulations.

Policy: DP-2.10, Publicly Owned Historic Structures and Infrastructure

Adopt regulations that ensure review and consultation with the Historic Preservation Office prior to the removal or destruction of any publicly owned building, structure, or site that is listed, or is eligible for listing, on the local, state, or national historic registers.

Policy: DP-2.11, Protection of Archeological Sites

Ensure that archaeological sites are identified through consultation with State agencies and protected locally by encouraging and incentivizing projects that include ground-disturbing activities or significant new construction to conduct cultural surveys prior to commencing work.

Policy: DP-2.12, Legislative Priorities for Preserving Historic Buildings

Support City, State, and Federal legislative priorities that promote and expand access to historic preservation wherever possible and provide enhancements to economic incentives for the preservation of historic buildings.

Policy: DP-2.13, Incentives Towards Reuse, Renovation, and Preservation

Provide a range of financial and regulatory incentives to encourage the reuse, renovation, and preservation of historic structures while disincentivizing demolition.

Policy: DP-2.14, Reuse of Historic Materials and Features

Encourage the deconstruction and reuse of historic materials and features when historic buildings are demolished, preserving those materials and features for reuse in other historic renovations and reuse projects in the City and region.

Policy: DP-2.15, Community Resiliency

Conserve, reuse, and retrofit older buildings to reduce carbon emissions, conserve resources, reduce waste, and improve local resiliency of the built environment throughout the community.

Policy: DP-2.16, Rehabilitation Education and Assistance

Assist and educate owners of historic properties in identifying, recognizing, and planning for the use of their property while ensuring compatibility with



This policy was added to comply with HB1181.



Changes were made here to make it clear identification standards flow from the State, not the City.



Reuse of original structures, as opposed to demolition and reconstruction, is a topic of Climate and Resiliency work.



When the structure cannot be retained, deconstruction and reuse of materials can also benefit Climate and Resiliency concerns.



This is a new suggested policy that may be further informed by ongoing Climate and Resiliency work.

preservation objectives and optimizing use of available incentives, code relief, and conditional uses.

Policy: DP-2.17, Historic Districts

Collaborate with community members to identify and establish historic districts that preserve historic and cultural resources in the built environment and spark economic revitalization while providing opportunities for new construction in support of the needs of a growing, vibrant, and evolving community.

Policy: DP-2.18, Affordable Housing

Encourage the rehabilitation of historic housing units throughout the city to expand affordable housing choices, contributing to market-rate and workforce housing.

Policy: DP-2.19, Avoid Displacement

Investigate and implement tools and resources to support the ability of small businesses, renters, and homeowners to stay in their buildings and homes during and after rehabilitation or historic designation.

POLICIES REMOVED FROM THE TEXT:

The following policies have been removed from the text, largely due to redundancy, unclear goals/success, and similar factors.

Policy: DP-2.1, Definition of Urban Design

Recognize current research that defines urban design and identifies elements of a well-designed urban environment.

Policy: DP-2.4, Design Flexibility for Neighborhood Facilities

Incorporate flexibility into building design and zoning codes to enable neighborhood facilities to be used for multiple uses.



This policy has been updated to seek a balance between preservation and new development.



These last two policies have been added in response to the housing and displacement requirements of HB1220 as well as during discussions with the public during the Building Opportunity for Housing project.



Policy 2.1 was combined into the original policy 2.2 above.



Policy 2.4 was redundant with policies already in the Social Health chapter.



Policy 2.12 was not distinct enough from the new policies 1.2 and 1.14 above. As such, it's redundant.

Policy: DP-2.12, Infill Development

Encourage infill construction and area redevelopment that complement and reinforce positive commercial and residential character.

Policy: DP-2.18, Bus Benches and Shelters Advertising

Continue to identify and implement ways to provide bus benches and control transit stop advertising.

Goal: DP-4, Downtown Center Viability

Create a vital, livable downtown by maintaining it as the region's economic and cultural center and preserving and reinforcing its historic and distinctly urban character.

Policy: DP 4.1, Downtown Residents and Workers

Encourage investments and create opportunities that increase the number of residents and workers in downtown Spokane.

Policy: DP 4.2, Street Life

Promote actions designed to increase pedestrian use of streets, especially downtown, thereby creating a healthy street life in commercial areas.

Policy: DP 4.3, Downtown Services

Support development efforts that increase the availability of daily needed services in downtown Spokane.

Goal: DP-5, Local Determination

Make neighborhoods attractive, safe places by encouraging residents to express their design and development values.

Policy: DP 5.1 Neighborhood Participation

Encourage resident participation in planning and development processes that will shape or re-shape the physical character of their neighborhood.

Policy: DP 5.2 Neighborhood Involvement in the City Design Review Process

Encourage neighborhoods to participate in the city's design review process.



The intent of Policy 2.18 was not clear and was more focused on including these features, not really controlling advertising on them. As a result, this topic will be considered as part of the Transportation chapter instead.



Goal 4 and its policies will be topics covered by the Land Use chapter. They are redundant when included here, so instead these policies will be referred to that work.



Goal 5 and its two policies are entirely redundant with policies and goals in the Governance Through Civic Participation chapter. These will be considered when looking at refining that chapter instead.