

Guideline vs. Standard

What is a Design Guideline?

The simple answer can be found in the city's Unified Development Code.

Design Guidelines: A set of design parameters for development which apply within a design district, sub-district, or overlay zone. The guidelines are adopted public statements of intent and are used to evaluate the acceptability of a project's design. (Spokane Municipal Code 17A.020.040.L)

In practice, since design review is an advisory process only, the adopted Design Guidelines help guide conversations that Urban Design staff and the Design Review Board have with a design review applicant.

... ensure that projects subject to design review under the Spokane Municipal Code are consistent with adopted design guidelines and help implement the City's comprehensive plan. (Spokane Municipal Code 04.13.015.B)

The guidelines help ensure that these conversations, and the advice rendered, stays focused on the community's set of aesthetic expectations for the public realm elements of a project or plan.

How is this different than a Design Standard?

A Design Standard is an obligatory design requirement for any project. These standards are not advisory, they must be followed – just like the requirements in the building code, fire code, or electrical code. The design review process cannot waive compliance with these standards.

While Design Standards and Design Guidelines are similar in that they are both about a project's design, they differ mostly in that the standards are mandatory obligations applied to that project – while guidelines are a list of relevant subjects, and examples, intended to improve the design of any project subject to design review.

The standards were adopted to ensure that all development in the city achieve a minimum quality of design. The guidelines are used in order to improve the quality of design above bare minimums, for a select set of projects. Those projects have already been identified by the community for special consideration.

