



## Chapter 8

### Urban Design and Historic Preservation



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## 8.1 INTRODUCTION

As long ago as the early 1900s and the emergence of the ideals of the City Beautiful Movement, there has been recognition that a city's design and character play a significant role in its ability to function, meet the needs of its citizens, and foster quality of life.

The City of Spokane has a great foundation to stand on in this respect. Its design and character come from a landscape that offered the resources to allow the city to grow and prosper. Chief among these is the Spokane River and Falls, which have influenced every phase of its history, beginning in prehistoric times as an important center of trade and fishing and up through the rise of industry and commerce. Through periods of rapid growth and the fire of 1889, the city retains an impressive legacy of historic structures that tell the story of Spokane's social, economic and architectural history. Growth and development in more recent times have resulted in a city that has been recognized for its success in urban revitalization and historic preservation.



The following goals and policies are intended to protect and enhance Spokane's unique, authentic character 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. These include the importance of public input, design review, and planning that honors authentic character.



## 8.2 VISION AND VALUES

Spokane volunteers working on the comprehensive plan identified important themes in relation to Spokane's current and future growth. A series of visions and values was crafted for each element of the Comprehensive Plan that describes specific performance objectives. From the Visions and Values document, adopted in 1996 by the City Council, the Comprehensive Plan's goals and policies were generated.

Urban design and historic preservation involves the city's form and function, subdivision design, street character, and identification and preservation of historic resources, including buildings, sites, and districts.

### Vision

"The qualities that make Spokane unique, including the historic and cultural fabric, neighborhoods, downtown area, parks and green spaces, and tree-lined streets, will be maintained and improved."

### Values

"The things that are important to Spokane's future include:

- Maintaining Spokane's "comfortable feel," size, neighborhoods, and friendliness;
- Maintaining the downtown area as the center of the region in order to ensure the city's economic and cultural health;
- Having downtown Spokane be distinctive and urban by using its architectural heritage and splendor;
- Maintaining the natural beauty that makes Spokane distinctive, including the parks, waterways, tree-lined streets, and green areas;
- Preserving the historic buildings, historic fabric, and cultural heritage that provide Spokane with its character;
- Ensuring that new buildings in historic areas complement their surroundings;
- Developing Spokane to be an attractive, clean city in which people take pride; and
- Supporting neighborhoods and their associated business districts."



## 8.3 GOALS AND POLICIES

Goals and policies provide specificity for planning and decision-making. Overall, they indicate desired directions, accomplishments, or aims in relation to the growth and development of Spokane. Additional materials for this chapter are located in the Draft Comprehensive Plan/EIS Volume 2, Chapter 22, Urban Design and Historic Preservation.

### DP 1 PRIDE AND IDENTITY

**Goal: Enhance and improve Spokane's visual identity and community pride.**

#### Policies

#### DP 1.1 Landmark Structures, Buildings, and Sites

*Recognize and preserve unique or outstanding landmark structures, buildings, and sites.*

**Discussion:** Landmarks are structures or sites that provide focal points of historic or cultural interest. Preservation of them, even when not located within historic districts, celebrates the uniqueness of the particular area. Development that is compatible with and respects these landmarks enhances the richness and diversity of the built and natural environments while reinforcing the landmark structures and sites.



#### DP 1.2 New Development in Established Neighborhoods

*Encourage new development that is of a type, scale, orientation, and design that maintains or improves the character, aesthetic quality, and livability of the neighborhood.*

**Discussion:** New development should be compatible with the context of the area and result in an improvement to the surrounding neighborhood.



#### DP 1.3 Significant Views and Vistas

*Identify and maintain significant views, vistas, and viewpoints, and protect them by establishing appropriate development regulations for nearby undeveloped properties.*

**Discussion:** The protection of identified important views and vistas of both natural and man-made features of the



environment, and improving and making safe the actual viewpoints are important for preserving the character of the city. The preservation of these features provides the citizens with orientation, visual relief, and a sense of uniqueness and place, helps create a city identity, and instills a sense of pride in its citizens.

### DP 1.4 Gateway Identification

*Establish and maintain gateways to Spokane and individual neighborhoods consisting of physical elements and landscaping that create a sense of place, identity, and belonging.*



**Discussion:** Special gateways to neighborhoods or sub-areas are a cost-effective means to instill pride in an area. This can be the “seed” that causes increased investment and overall revitalization of an area.

*See Policy LU 6.1 in Chapter 3, Land Use, for more information on Public Lands as they relate to this Goal.*

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## DP 2 URBAN DESIGN

**Goal: Design new construction to support desirable behaviors and create a positive perception of Spokane.**

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### Policies

#### DP 2.1 Definition of Urban Design

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

**Discussion:** It is generally recognized that good urban design includes the following: a quality that makes a place distinct, recognizable, and memorable; visual cues that help people get oriented quickly and navigate easily; enclosure or definition of streets, sidewalks, and other public spaces that are visually defined by buildings, walls, trees and other elements; human scale; transparency so people can recognize what lies beyond the edge of a street or other public space; linkage, or continuity of form between buildings and streets; complexity; coherence, or complimentary visual elements that help bind the area; and a clean, well-maintained appearance.

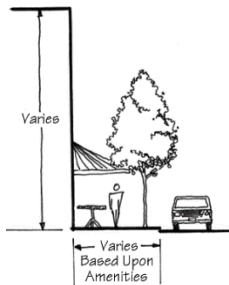
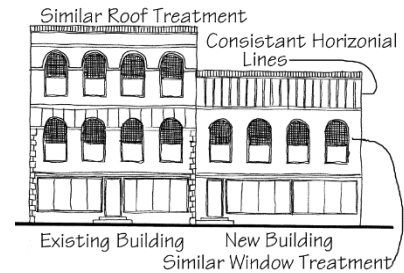




## DP 2.2 Design Guidelines and Regulations

*Adopt regulations and design guidelines consistent with current definitions of good urban design.*

**Discussion:** The city should use development standards that encourage creativity while ensuring compatibility with the surrounding area and enhancing local character. Maintaining or enhancing the neighborhood's character, livability, and property value is a benefit to the residents of an area and provides business owners with some assurance of community stability. Adopted standards that are adhered to, even when some flexibility is included, offer protection and instill confidence in established and prospective residents and business owners.



Design guidelines should be understandable, enforceable, predictable, and consistent in order to measure and evaluate proposed development. Effective design guidelines include graphic depiction and written text that are clear, understandable, and unambiguous. They function specifically to guide the physical development of projects that require design review. The desire is to create and maintain an attractive and efficient city.

Options such as form based codes and a design review process should be utilized to ensure that new development is compatible with its neighbors and will meet the city's urban design goals.

## DP 2.3 Design Standards for Public Projects and Structures

*Design all public projects and structures to uphold the highest design standards and neighborhood compatibility.*

**Discussion:** The development of public projects and structures can have an impact on surrounding areas. The perception that this has not been considered has resulted in neighborhood opposition to projects, in spite of potential benefits. In order to mitigate the perceived negative impacts on a neighborhood, the city must serve as an example by building its facilities to make a positive visual and functional contribution to the neighborhood, rather than just trying to mitigate negative impacts.

## 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.*

**Discussion:** Neighborhood public facilities are often developed to serve a particular purpose. This can be the result of code requirements that preclude the ability to utilize the facilities for other purposes. Enabling flexibility in the application of the





standards could better maximize the utility and cost effectiveness of neighborhood public facilities.

### **DP 2.5 Character of the Public Realm**

*Enhance the livability of Spokane by preserving the city's historic character and building a legacy of quality new public and private development that further enriches the public realm.*

### **DP 2.6 Building and Site Design**

*Ensure that a particular development is thoughtful in design, improves the quality and characteristics of the immediate neighborhood, responds to the site's unique features - including topography, hydrology, and microclimate - and considers intensity of use.*

**Discussion:** New and remodeled projects can have a major impact on a specific area. Site placement, setbacks, landscaping, intensity of use, and other design considerations should be compatible with the visual character of the surrounding environment. This applies to all new commercial, public, multifamily structures, high density single-family projects, and exterior remodels of existing commercial structures. An accessory structure should be of a lesser square footage and volume and should utilize materials and colors less dominant than the principal structure.

### **DP 2.7 Historic District and Sub-Area Design Guidelines**

*Utilize design guidelines and criteria for sub-areas and historic districts that are based on local community participation and the particular character and development issues of each sub-area or historic district.*

**Discussion:** Designated historic districts are unique areas that play a special role in preserving Spokane's character. Each tells a particular story which is illustrated by a set of identified, contributing historic resources. These areas are often catalysts for redevelopment and revitalization. The character of historic districts is fragile and can be lost through large scale change or the cumulative effects of smaller changes. The relationship between historic buildings, streetscapes, and landscape features within historic districts helps define the historic character and should be considered when planning or permitting development or infill. Those areas that have been designated as local historical districts and sub-areas or special areas, such as centers and corridors and downtown Spokane, may need specific guidelines that supplement and augment the citywide general guidelines if it is determined that this is feasible or desired. Local input and the existing characteristics of an historic district or sub-area are the basis for design guidelines used for the evaluation of specific projects in that particular area.



## DP 2.8 Design Review Process

*Apply design guidelines through a review process that relies on the expertise of design professionals and other community representatives to achieve design performance that meets or exceeds citizens' quality of life expectations.*

**Discussion:** The Design Review process is an opportunity for board members, citizens and staff to identify the valued features of the surrounding district or neighborhood. Board discussion and recommendations should help ensure that new developments will be sensitively designed to protect these characteristics. In addition, the Design Review process should reference any adopted district plans in order to help ensure that new development can be designed to benefit from, and contribute to, the district's potential. Design guidelines provide the direction needed to reach design solutions that meet the intent of the Comprehensive Plan, adopted plans, and adopted codes.

## DP 2.9 Permit Process

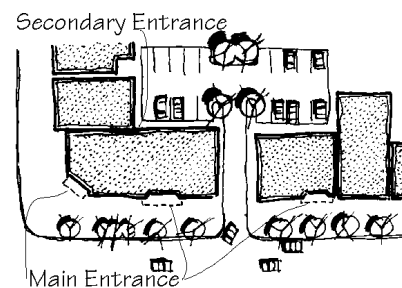
*Integrate the design review process with other permitting processes to increase efficiency and create a better outcome.*

**Discussion:** Reducing the time involved in the permit process not only saves investment time and money but may result in better cooperation between the public and city government.

## DP 2.10 Business Entrance Orientation

*Orient commercial building entrances and building facades toward the pedestrian sidewalks and pathways that lead to adjoining residential neighborhoods.*

**Discussion:** Orienting the business entrance toward sidewalks and pathways and placing parking lots in a location other than between the entrance and the sidewalk demonstrates the business owner's commitment to the pedestrians instead of only to the motoring public.



### DP 2.11 Improvements Program

*Facilitate improvements such as sidewalks, street improvements, street trees, sewers, and parks in neighborhoods and commercial areas designated for higher density development.*

**Discussion:** Increased density in established areas should be commensurate with upgrading and/or provision of the necessary public facilities and improvements in order to avoid a detrimental impact on the character of and investment in the area. The provision of these necessary facilities and improvements is in the public interest of maintaining a high quality of life.

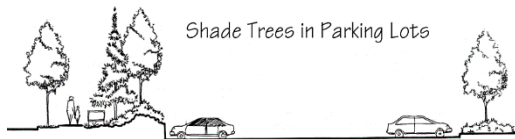


### DP 2.12 Infill Development

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

**Discussion:** Infill construction can benefit the community when done in a manner that improves and does not detract from the livability of the neighborhood and the desirable design character of the area.

### DP 2.13 Parking Facilities Design



*Minimize the impacts of surface parking on the neighborhood fabric by encouraging the use of structured parking with active commercial storefronts containing retail, service, or office uses, and improve the pedestrian experience in less intensive areas through the use of street trees, screen walls, and landscaping.*

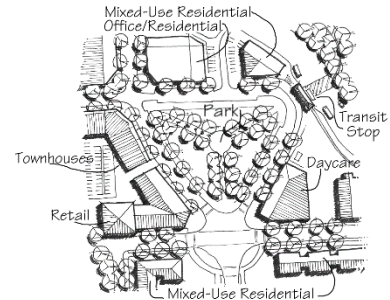
**Discussion:** Walkability is a key element for neighborhood and especially downtown vitality. Active and dynamic building fronts and attractive streetscapes contribute to that environment. Thus, the development of alternatives, such as parking within buildings with active storefronts and/or increased landscaping and screening of surface lots, creates a more pleasant atmosphere for both visitors to and neighbors of commercial centers. Landscape standards for parking lots could include incentives such as reduced parking requirements. .

### DP 2.14 Town Squares and Plazas

*Require redevelopment areas and new development to provide appropriately scaled open space such as town squares, plazas, or other public or private spaces that can be used as the focus of commercial and civic buildings.*



**Discussion:** The inclusion of open space improves the appearance of and gives identity to a particular area. Open spaces should be located with consideration for Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles, surrounding uses that ensure natural surveillance, and opportunities to positively activate these spaces for extended hours.



## DP 2.15 Urban Trees and Landscape Areas

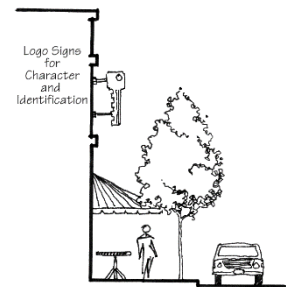
*Maintain, improve, and increase the number of street trees and planted areas in the urban environment.*

**Discussion:** Street trees and planted landscape areas are important urban design elements. Studies have shown that tree lined streets support strong retail environments and increase the value of residential neighborhoods. Located between the curb and sidewalk, street trees provide enclosure and shade that help create comfortable, walkable sidewalks that have a sense of place. Landscape standards should be designed to save large trees in newly developed or redeveloped areas. The city could establish incentives, such as reduced building setback deviations for tree planting and replacement.

## DP 2.16 On-Premises Advertising

*Ensure that on-premises business signs are of a size, number, quality, and style to provide identification of the business they support while contributing a positive visual character to the community.*

**Discussion:** On-premises signs provide an important public function by identifying sources of desired goods and services. Cities where business signs provide identification of on-premises businesses without degrading the visual environment are noted for their high quality community character. Collectively, the effectiveness of business signs is enhanced when they are not too large, too numerous, or too distracting in visual character.



On-premises signs should be of high quality and managed in all urban environments to reduce visual clutter, which contributes to a distracting and unsafe experience for motorists and visual blight for citizens, especially in proximity to living environments. Business signs in residential settings should relate to the smaller scale and lower-intensity activity of these environments. Sign area and design guidelines should reflect the relative intensity of commercial arterials as well as any unique district character, such as an historic neighborhood. Exclusively residential areas should be



free of business signs entirely, except for small, unobtrusive signs to identify legal home occupations.

### DP 2.17 Billboards

*Prohibit new construction of billboards and eliminate existing billboards over time.*

**Discussion:** Visual quality of the urban environment is one of the distinguishing characteristics of communities. The reputation of some cities is based largely on their good or bad visual image. Because of its scale or location, off-premises advertising, including billboards, can be among the biggest contributors to negative imagery. This advertising detracts from the surrounding setting and distracts the attention of motorists. To avoid extreme financial hardship to owners of existing billboard structures, eventual elimination by amortization is encouraged.

### DP 2.18 Bus Benches and Shelters Advertising

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

**Discussion:** Bus benches and shelters at the more heavily used transit stops provide a valuable service to bus riders because they provide a place to sit while waiting for the bus. Advertising such as scrolling displays on bus shelter walls or other forms of electronic advertising or printed media can be tastefully integrated into bus shelter design.

### DP 2.19 Off-Premises Advertising

*Identify and implement ways to control various forms of off-premises advertising.*

**Discussion:** Off-premises signs that are often located in the public right-of-way also add visual clutter to streetscapes in all environments and are particularly intrusive in residential settings. Signboards placed “temporarily” at the street edge shall comply with the City of Spokane adopted sign regulations.

### DP 2.20 Telecommunication Facilities

*Control the visual impact of telecommunication facilities.*

**Discussion:** Telecommunication facilities, including wireless communication support towers, can be visually obtrusive. For this reason, efforts should be made to place them as efficiently and as effectively as possible, thus minimizing the total number of such sites. For example, maximum use should be made of existing structures that can support unobtrusive co-located telecommunication facilities before new stand-alone facilities are constructed for this purpose. Also, the city should require



telecommunication sites to utilize visually unobtrusive technology, landscaping and screening techniques whenever possible.

### DP 2.21 Lighting

*Maximize the potential for lighting to create the desired character in individual areas while controlling display, flood and direct lighting installations so as to not directly and unintentionally illuminate, or create glare visible from adjacent properties, residential zones or public right-of-way.*

**Discussion:** Lighting is an often overlooked design element that can have a dramatic positive effect on the form, mood, quality, and character of an area. Lighting contributes to the convenience of the user and increases the safety and security of a site, the street, and surrounding properties during night hours. It can highlight structural details and enhance the visual character of the urban form. However, careless use of outdoor lighting damages the aesthetics of the night and the nighttime environment, decreasing security and safety or creating hazards through reduced contrast or increased glare and distraction. While lighting can help establish an attractive, distinctive and safe environment, care should be taken to ensure that it does not detract from the character of an area.

*Additional policies related to this goal are found in Chapter 3, Land Use and Chapter 4, Transportation.*

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## DP 3 PRESERVATION

**Goal: Preserve and protect Spokane’s historic districts, sites, structures, and objects.**

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### Policies

#### DP 3.1 Historic Preservation

*Establish historic preservation as a high priority within city programs.*

**Discussion:** Historic preservation has traditionally received less funding and fewer resources than any other city department. An increase in funding and an accompanying increase in connecting preservation with city functions of economic development and planning ensures that these policies are enacted. Well-funded and staffed historic preservation programs result in measurable economic development and community revitalization.

#### DP 3.2 Historic Preservation Plan

*Encourage public understanding and support of Spokane’s historic heritage by educating the public of the goals of the Historic Preservation Plan.*



**Discussion:** The plan promotes public understanding and support of the diversity of Spokane's heritage. It continues to be an effective historic and cultural resource management tool as a supporting document to the Comprehensive Plan.

### **DP 3.3 Identification and Protection of Resources**

*Identify historic resources to guide decision making in planning.*

**Discussion:** Historic inventories and registers are the foundation of good community planning. Maintain an inventory of historic properties and the Spokane Register of Historic Places and continue to nominate historic properties to the local, state, and national historic registers.

### **DP 3.4 Reflect Spokane's Diversity**

*Encourage awareness and recognition of the many cultures that are an important and integral aspect of Spokane's heritage.*

**Discussion:** Historic preservation must reflect the diversity of Spokane's past. The city must be proactive in including the many cultures and traditions of Spokane's heritage in historic preservation planning and activities.

### **DP 3.5 Landmarks Commission**

*Maintain and utilize the expertise of the Landmarks Commission in decision making by the City Council, City Plan Commission, City Parks Board, and other city agencies in matters of historic preservation.*

**Discussion:** The City of Spokane and Spokane County established the Landmarks Commission in 1981 to advise them in matters of historic preservation. Their link with other government processes needs to be strengthened. More effort is needed to seek the counsel of the Landmarks Commission before decisions are made.

### **DP 3.6 Publicly-Owned Historic Structures and Infrastructure**

*Require a critical review of a project prior to the removal or destruction of any publicly-owned building, structure, or site that is listed on, or is eligible for listing on the local, state, or national historic registers.*

**Discussion:** Spokane County and the City of Spokane are major owners of local cultural and historic resources. Many of these resources are public buildings or elements of the public infrastructure, such as bridges, streets, street features (granite curbs and brick gutters), and park landscapes. The city and county should demonstrate the importance of historic preservation by critically evaluating any public projects for their impacts to historic resources, including archaeology.



### DP 3.7 Protection of Archaeological and Historic Sites

*Ensure that archaeological and historic sites are identified and protected.*

**Discussion:** Significant archaeological and historic sites must first be identified and designated historic if established criteria are met, and then protected through the city and state permit processes. Identification and designation distinguishes the properties that meet criteria for historic significance from all other older properties. When new sites are discovered, the city will attempt to ensure they are appropriately preserved, as required by state law.



Compatible Structure in Vacated Alleyway

### DP 3.8 Legislative Reform

*Support city legislative priorities that promote historic preservation wherever possible.*

**Discussion:** Because historic preservation is important and provides significant benefits to the City of Spokane, city legislative priorities should support historic preservation. The City of Spokane has especially benefited from, and should support, continued authorization of the federal Investment Tax Credit Program, and the state-enabled, locally administered Special Valuation Program. These programs assist a wide range of property owners, attract millions of dollars in private investment each year, and help raise the property tax base in a permanent and sustainable way.

### DP 3.9 Redevelopment Incentives

*Provide incentives to property owners to encourage historic preservation.*

**Discussion:** Incentives play an important role in encouraging the preservation and reuse of historic buildings, and maximizing substantial economic and quality of life benefits. The city should retain existing local incentives (historic designation, specialized technical Design Review assistance, Special Valuation, a historic marker program, conditional use permits, and fee waivers) and look for new ways to encourage preservation with incentives.

### DP 3.10 Zoning Provisions and Building Regulations

*Utilize zoning provisions, building regulations, and design standards that are appropriate for historic districts, sites, and structures.*

**Discussion:** Regulations are tools that can and should be used to promote preservation and renovation rather than demolition. City Departments such as Building, Planning and Development, Engineering, Parks and Recreation, and Streets should include Historic Preservation in their plans, policies, regulations and





operations. Examples include retaining favorable zoning options (Historic Conditional Use Permits and Historic District Overlay Zones), and encouraging the use of form-based codes and special building codes like the historic building sections of the International Building Code (IBC) and International Existing Building Code (IEBC) in development projects involving historic properties and historic districts.

### DP 3.11 Rehabilitation of Historic Properties

*Assist and cooperate with owners of historic properties to identify, recognize, and plan for the use of their property to ensure compatibility with preservation objectives.*

**Discussion:** Assisting owners to identify and designate historic properties and publicly recognizing the owners of historic properties are steps that serve to stimulate and reinforce historic preservation. Public agencies can cooperate with owners to provide for the preservation and maintenance of historic and cultural resources.

### DP 3.12 Reuse of Historic Materials and Features

*Encourage the deconstruction and reuse of historic materials and features when historic buildings are demolished.*

**Discussion:** When a historic building is demolished, many materials and architectural features (such as doors, fixtures, corbels, flooring, tile, or moldings) can be salvaged and reused through careful deconstruction, rather than full demolition. As such, the rehabilitation and reuse of a building is strongly encouraged over the demolition of the historic building and the construction of a new structure.

### DP 3.13 Historic Districts and Neighborhoods

*Assist neighborhoods and other potential historic districts to identify, recognize, and highlight their social and economic origins and promote the preservation of their historic heritage, cultural resources, and built environment.*

**Discussion:** Identifying the social and cultural resources of an area is necessary for protection and guides decision-making in resource planning and management, and environmental review. The conservation of neighborhoods of historic character, preservation of historically significant resources, and their inclusion into historic districts are encouraged. Outstanding historic structures should be preserved when neighborhoods are redeveloped and rehabilitated.



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## DP 4 DOWNTOWN CENTER VIABILITY

**Goal:** 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.

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### Policies

#### DP 4.1 Downtown Residents and Workers

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

**Discussion:** Increasing the number of residents and workers in the downtown area provides the necessary number of patrons to maintain a healthy business climate, which increases the tax base, making more funds available for the provision of public facilities and services. More people in downtown Spokane can increase street level activity and can lessen crime by having more "eyes-on-the-street." Supporting investments and opportunities is not only a benefit to developers and property owners, but to the general public as well, which can enjoy a safer, thriving business district.

#### 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.*

**Discussion:** Providing activities and reasons for people to be on the street heightens the sense of excitement, improves a sense of safety, encourages diversity, and increases social interaction essential to healthy community life.

#### DP 4.3 Downtown Services

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

**Discussion:** The availability of services and facilities, such as dry cleaners, health clubs, grocery stores, restaurants, and pharmacies make living downtown more convenient, lessens dependence on automobile transportation, and helps support the critical mass of residents necessary to create a vibrant downtown.



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## DP 5 LOCAL DETERMINATION

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

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### Policies

#### 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.*

**Discussion:** It is in the best interest of the broader community to maximize the desirability and stability of the city's individual neighborhoods. Neighborhood residents are the best equipped to determine what neighborhood design details and elements represent the particular characteristics of their specific area. As an example, residents are able to identify neighborhood features that are valued so they can be protected or enhanced as changes occur. This might include new development subject to review by the Design Review Board or updates to codes and policies that may affect a neighborhood.

#### DP 5.2 Neighborhood Involvement in the City Design Review Process

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

**Discussion:** The design review process should be accessible to neighborhoods to allow involvement and input into the deliberations. For projects subject to the design review process, neighborhoods can provide input to the Design Review Board and project proponents regarding a specific development project's design issues. To enable neighborhood participation, city staff will endeavor to ensure that the neighborhood councils or steering committees are adequately informed of upcoming design review meetings regarding projects that are being proposed to be developed within their particular neighborhood.

