

DESIGN REQUIREMENTS

Compatibility with existing development is the cornerstone of successful infill projects and a prudent infill strategy. The design guidelines are intended to promote compatibility with existing residential development and to promote pedestrian oriented design in mixed use and commercial projects. All infill development projects should be designed to appropriately address these main components:

Maintain compatibility with existing and surrounding development

- Design with consistent street setbacks and building orientation in a manner that contributes positively to existing neighborhoods
- Utilize architectural features and landscaping that follows existing neighborhood patterns
- Provide appropriate buffers and design elements to minimize the potential negative impacts of higher density projects on traditional neighborhoods

Promote pedestrian-oriented environment

- Orient buildings toward street with direct access from the sidewalk
- Locate parking behind buildings when possible
- Avoid site layouts in which blank building walls face streets
- Provide retail or neighborhood scale commercial activity that addresses the street in the form of a patio café or appropriate curbside retail

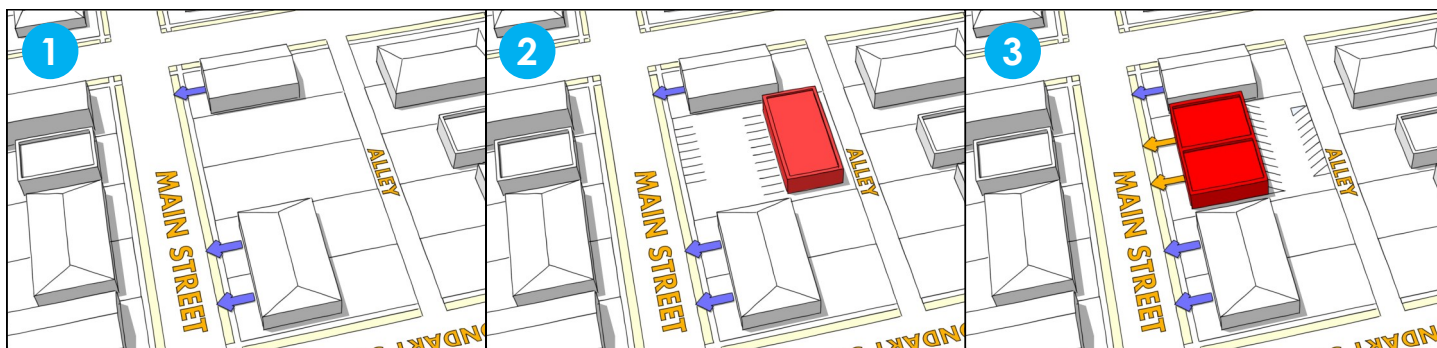
The design requirements and guidelines in this policy guide and the adopted ordinance are closely tied to the goals and policies of *Plan El Paso*. The relevant goals and policies are referenced herein.

1. Parking Strategies

Rear alleys are a design characteristic of most older neighborhoods in El Paso. When available, alleys provide easy access to rear parking and contribute to a more pedestrian oriented design at the front of the lot. These design standards mitigate the negative effects of interrupting a street-oriented or pedestrian-oriented blockface with a large surface parking lot.

The images below show two alternatives for the development of a vacant lot in a commercial area. Image 2 shows a building separated from the street by a parking lot, which fails to follow the existing neighborhood pattern of buildings facing the street with a direct entrance from the sidewalk (as depicted by arrows). Image 3 shows a street-oriented building that takes access from the sidewalk. Parking in the rear is easily accessible from the alley. Image 3 follows existing neighborhood patterns and is an appropriate proposal for infill development.

The addition of on-street angled parking is another strategy that improves the perception of parking availability for street-oriented shopfronts, while also acting as a traffic calming measure. The Streets & Maintenance Department can determine whether angled parking is appropriate for a street on a case-by-case basis.



1. Parking Strategies (continued)

The adopted goals and policies of *Plan El Paso* establish standards for parking.

Policy 2.4.5: *The careless placement of off-street surface parking lots can blight surrounding properties and public spaces. This blight can be avoided by using the following principles:*

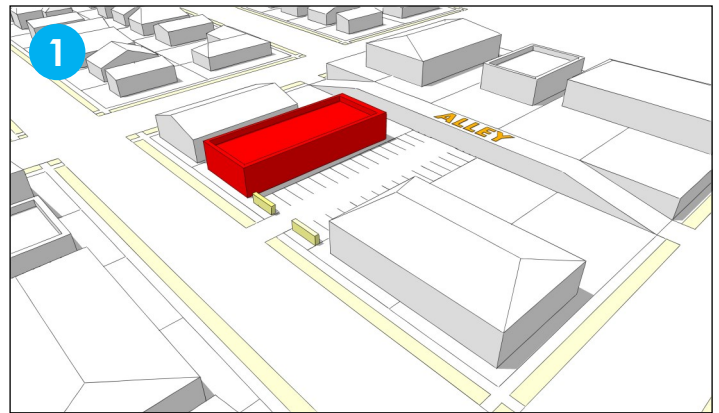
- a. *Non-residential and multi-family buildings should have their surface parking lots placed at the side or rear of buildings.*
- b. *Buildings should have no more than 20% of their lots devoted to surface parking lots, with no individual lot larger than 2 acres.*
- c. *Parking lots should be designed for pedestrians as well as cars with pathways with double allees of trees.*

2. Exemptions to Rear Parking Requirement

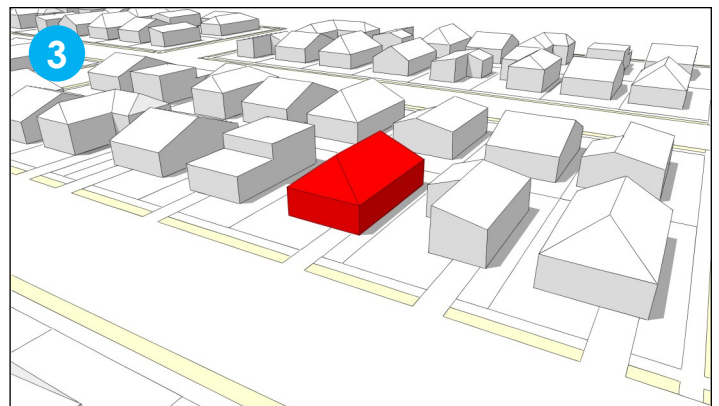
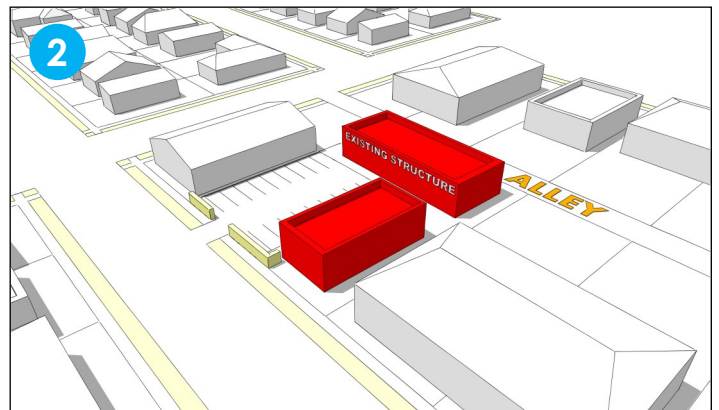
Rear parking is a common characteristic of traditional commercial development, however rear parking may not always be appropriate or feasible for certain developments. The adopted ordinance provides a number of relief mechanisms to the rear parking requirement for certain development proposals.

- Parcels where a rear alley is below or above the grade of the project site (Image 1). Per the adopted building code access drives shall not exceed 14% grade. If accessing the site from the rear alley would result in a percent grade greater than 14% the design requirement may be waived. Percent grade is calculated as follows:

$$\left[\frac{\text{Rise (Vertical Grade Change)}}{\text{Run (Horizontal Distance of Drive)}} \right] \times 100$$



- Lots with existing structures in the rear of the property may be exempt from the requirement for rear parking when those structures make it impossible to meet the dimensional requirements for parking (Image 2).
- Unimproved or unpaved alleys may not be considered adequate for primary vehicle access. Concurrence from the Streets & Maintenance Department on the condition of the alley should accompany any request for an exemption.
- Areas identified in *Plan El Paso* as G-3 Post War and G-4 Suburban may not be compatible with side and rear parking. In areas where the majority of homes along a block face have parking in front of the main building, the rear parking requirement may be waived (Image 3). This exemption does not apply to commercial districts where parking in the rear and street-oriented design is to be encouraged.



3. Building Orientation

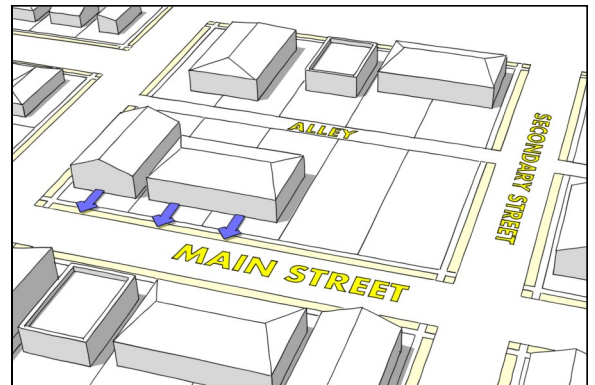
Building orientation contributes substantially to the character of older neighborhoods. Traditional development patterns orient buildings toward more heavily trafficked streets. This maintains a sense of enclosure along the main street and enhances the urban experience.

Policy 2.4.1: *The relationships between the fronts and backs of buildings are encouraged to ensure that public spaces have natural surveillance from buildings and to avoid the blighting influence created when the backs of buildings face public spaces.*

- a. *Fronts of buildings should face the fronts of other buildings, or the sides where necessary; fronts should never face the backs of other buildings.*
- b. *Residences may face minor and major arterials to avoid presenting blank walls to streets. Alleys may be provided to create a vehicular entry to the lots instead of vehicular access directly from the arterial.*

Infill proposals should comply with the design guidelines of *Plan El Paso* regarding building orientation.

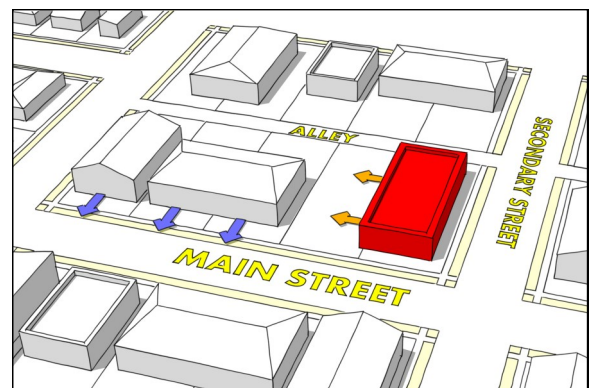
Policy 2.4.7: *90% of the principal entries to buildings should face public spaces such as streets, squares, parks, or plazas instead of facing parking lots.*



The image above shows a block with existing structures built up to the street. This is common in older parts of the city.



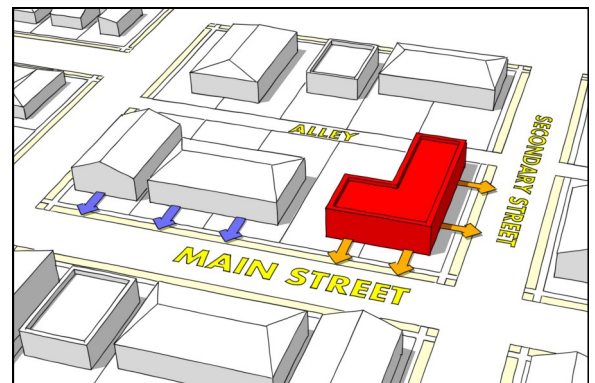
The building depicted above provides no visual interest or contributing design elements for the street, even though it is located at the edge of the parcel.



The new corner building is placed to match existing setbacks, but the entrances face the interior of the lot, with blank walls facing the street. Since existing buildings have entrances directly to the sidewalk, the new building is not compatible with its district.



This restaurant is placed at the corner of the lot, with entrances facing the street. Parking is provided on-site, but it is located to the site and rear of the lot. The building is the most prominent feature of the lot, and its entrances, windows and landscaping contribute to the streetscape.



This building matches existing setback on both the main and secondary streets, and also places its entrances toward the street. This building is compatible with its district.

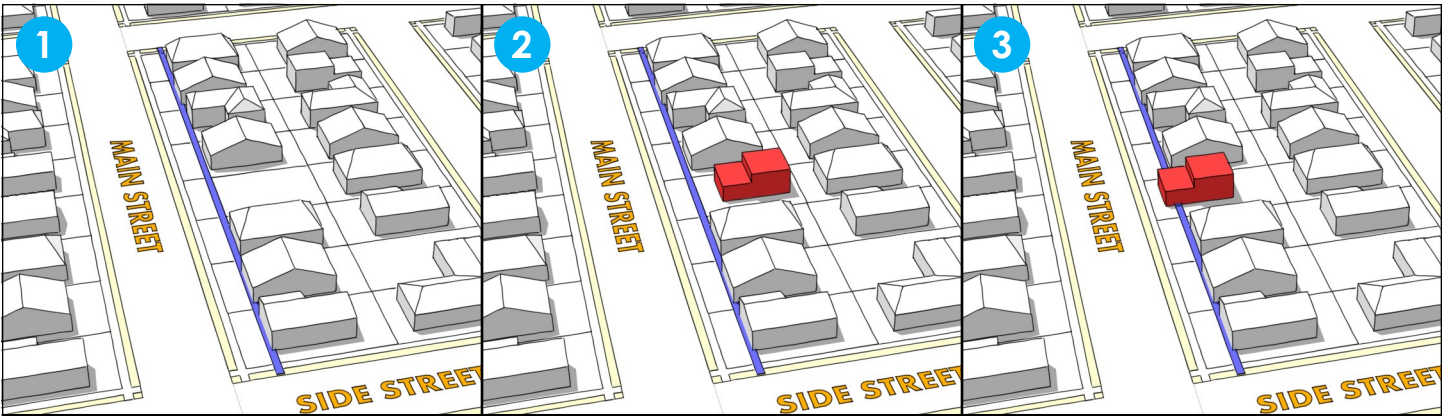


Image 1 shows a residential area with consistent front setbacks. Infill development on the vacant lot should not be built to deviate from the established setback on the block face with either a larger (Image 2) or smaller (Image 3) front setback.

4. Front Setbacks for Residential Projects

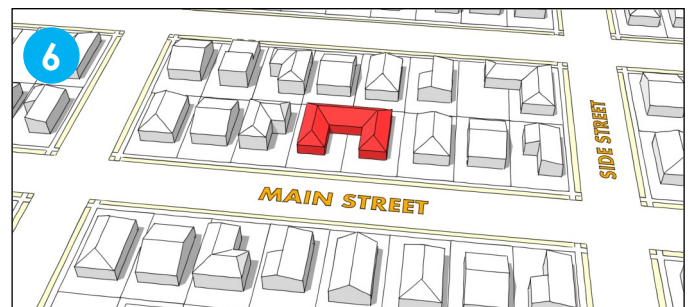
The front building line in residential areas is important in maintaining the visual character and massing of existing development. Proposed infill developments should respect existing building setbacks in residential areas. Increasing density can still be accomplished while respecting existing neighborhood patterns through courtyard style development, accessory structures in rear yards and attached accessory dwelling units.

Applicants shall demonstrate through an exhibit attached to the application the existing front setbacks of all lots along the block face of the proposed development. The proposal may vary no more than 15% from the average front setback. Existing lots that deviate greatly from the average setback along the block face should not serve as a justification for new proposals to violate existing neighborhood patterns.

5. Scale and Character

The adopted ordinance establishes design requirements and guidelines related to scale and character that are easily measurable and can be demonstrated on a site plan. Effective infill development must be considerate of the details that give each neighborhood its distinct character.

Proposals should be considerate of the scale and design features of the existing neighborhood, and make every attempt to mimic common elements. If surrounding houses have lush front yards and large street trees, the proposal should place specific emphasis on landscaping. If surrounding houses have large windows and front porches raised above grade, the proposal should integrate similar features. A successful infill project will blend into the existing neighborhood such that individual passing through on foot or by car cannot easily distinguish an infill development from its surroundings.



Vacant mid-block lots provide good opportunities to provide higher density housing options (Image 4). A traditional low-rise apartment building is out of scale with this neighborhood (Image 5). Courtyard style multifamily development preserves the street side experience and maintains the scale and massing as observed from the street.

DESIGN GUIDELINES

In addition to meeting all the design requirements of the previous section, infill proposals must meet a minimum of three of the following design guidelines.

1. 50% First Floor Façade Transparency

Building and site elements that address the street are a common theme in the requirements of the ordinance. The façade of a building should contribute to the pedestrian experience and visual interest of the street. For projects proposing a ground floor commercial use, transparent surfaces help create a vibrant sidewalk environment and allows passers-by both driving and walking to interact visually with the interior of buildings.

To meet this guideline, applicants shall call out the total square footage of proposed transparent surface on the elevations included with the site plan. No less than 50% transparent surface along all streets is required to meet the design guideline. For buildings with more than one wall facing the street, the percentage of transparent surface will be calculated individually for each wall. Glass doors should be included in the calculation. Applicants should take care to ensure that tenants avoid covering or otherwise obscuring windows at the sidewalk level.

2. Propose a mix of land use categories

While infill development can include a wide variety of uses, projects that mix use categories (residential, commercial, office, light manufacturing, et cetera) are considered especially valuable because they encourage interaction and can result in significantly higher property values through location advantages. To meet this guideline, the proposed use categories should be indicated for particular locations on the site plan.



This building utilizes large first floor windows to help advertise its businesses.



To calculate percentage of transparent surfaces, determine the total area of the first floor façade. Any transparent glass surfaces within that total area can be counted toward the requirement.

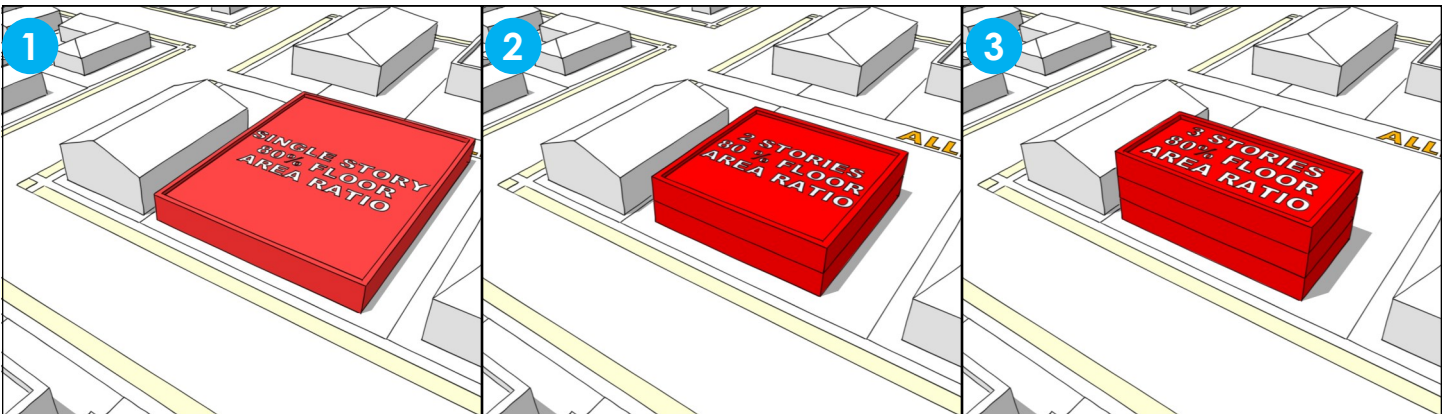


Windows that are mirrored, have opaque graphics, or a visible light transmittance lower than 60% cannot be counted toward the transparent façade area.

3. 80% Floor Area Ratio

Infill development means adding density or functional space to an existing property to the extent it is permitted. When existing properties are fully built out, there is less demand for new development in untouched areas on the edge of the city. Build out of existing land also results in more efficient use of existing utility infrastructure.

Floor Area Ratio is a measurement used to determine how intensely a parcel is being used. Floor area ratio is calculated by dividing the total usable area of the building (typically is square feet), by the total area of the parcel, and multiplying by 100. To meet this guideline, applicants shall demonstrate on a site plan a proposed building that meets a floor area ratio of at least 80%.



Since Floor Area Ratio uses the total usable square footage of a building in its calculation, it is a more flexible measurement of development intensity than lot coverage. Images 1-3 show how a project can meet the 80% floor area ratio guideline in different ways.

4. Street-Side Commercial Activity

To meet this guideline, applicants can utilize a variety of strategies, including installation of sidewalk furniture, stands for the sale of goods, play equipment for children, among other options. These amenities should be adjacent to and accessible from the sidewalk on the public right-of-way.

Policy 2.4.3: Outdoor dining should be allowed on City sidewalks provided that chairs and tables are placed in a manner that allows a minimum 5 foot clear path for pedestrian movement.

Policy 2.4.11: Awnings, balconies, arcades, galleries, and colonnades should be allowed to extend into the right-of-way of City streets provided that adequate clearances are provided for pedestrian movement and for right-of-way maintenance.



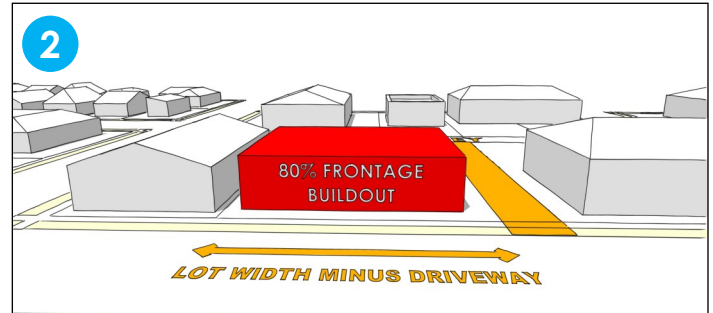
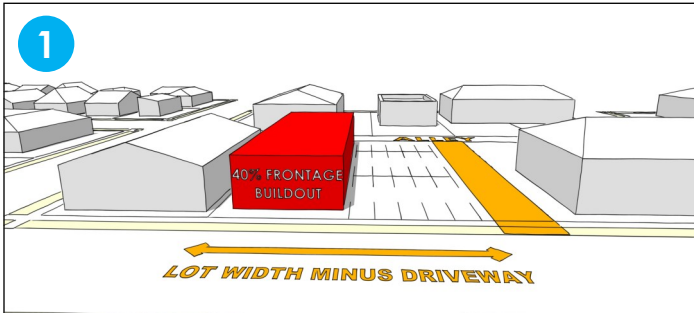
Sidewalk-adjacent commercial activity can include patio seating for restaurants or cafés, or sidewalk seating that is available to any passer-by. Projects that do not include space for commercial uses (e.g., residential or office use only) will not be eligible for this guideline.



While the patio seating in this image provides shade and creates an inviting setting to encourage use, it would not qualify for the sidewalk-adjacent commercial activity guideline because it is neither accessible nor visible from the sidewalk.

5. 80% Building Width at Frontage

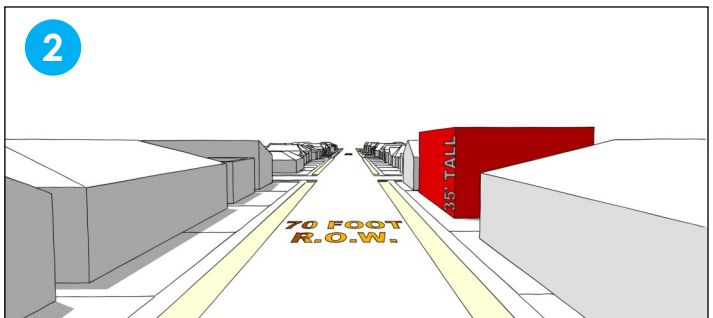
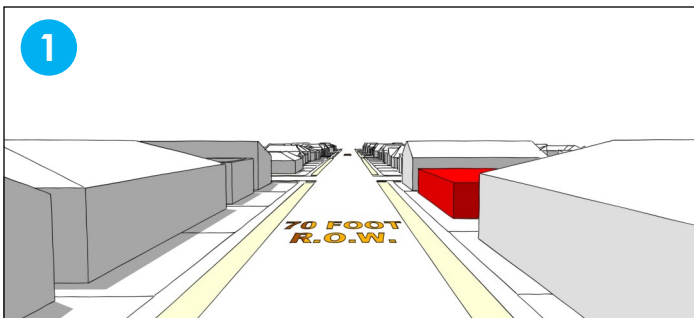
One of the most important elements of an attractive streetscape is the persistent presence of buildings along the entire block face. This helps to create a comforting sense of enclosure and ensures that visual interest is maintained. These benefits disappear when there are too many vacant lots or parking lots along the sidewalk. To meet this guideline, an applicant shall show on the site plan that the width of the building at the front setback is at least 80% of the lot width, excluding the width of any necessary driveway or parking entrances.



A building that occupies 40% of lot width at the frontage results in a large gap devoid of activity or visual interest (Image 1). When built to occupy 80% or more of the lot width at the frontage (Image 2), those gaps are minimized, and the potential for automobile/pedestrian conflict is reduced.

6. Building Height 1/2 Width of Main Street

Infill development encourages property owners to build out their lot, both horizontally and vertically. To meet this guideline, an applicant shall propose a building whose height is at least one-half the width of the right-of-way of the main street abutting the property. Many local and collector streets in El Paso have a right-of-way width of 70 feet; in such cases, a building 35 feet in height would qualify for this guideline.



The single story building in Image 1 would not meet criteria to qualify for the building height guideline. The 35-foot tall building in Image 2 would meet the criteria because its height is one-half the width of the main street right-of-way that the parcel abuts.

7. Utilize Plan El Paso Architectural Style

The Community Design Manual is a component of *Plan El Paso* that contains guidelines for how new development throughout the city can be built in a way that is compatible with the existing built environment. It identifies ten architectural styles common to El Paso: Mission, Spanish Revival, Pueblo, Italianate, Victorian, Neoclassical, Craftsman, Prairie, Contemporary and Eclectic (the architectural styles component of the Community Design Manual is attached to this guide as an appendix).

To meet this guideline, an applicant shall show, through elevation plans provided with the application, compliance with one of these architectural styles. Utilization of the architectural styles of existing buildings in the vicinity of the project should be prioritized over styles not already present in the area. A proposal will not qualify for this guideline if it takes elements from multiple architectural styles, even if they are all in the Community Design Manual; a building should consistently use elements of a single architectural style exclusively. Additionally, the applicant should reference the Building Type Compatibility Chart that accompanies every architectural style; a proposal that does not comply with this chart will not qualify for this guideline.

8. Stormwater Management

A benefit of infill projects is the utilization of existing capital infrastructure. In terms of stormwater runoff, infill projects on previously developed lots should not create a great deal of increased strain on the City's existing stormwater infrastructure. Nevertheless, infill projects should strive to limit the amount of impervious surface resulting from development.

Policy 4.3.5 of the city's comprehensive plan specifically calls for green infrastructure in street projects:

Policy 4.3.5: The City will incorporate "green infrastructure design" and similar light-imprint and low-impact principles for stormwater management and landscaping in streets that it builds and requires others to build.

To meet this guideline applicants may demonstrate compliance with Chapter 19 - Green Infrastructure of the City's adopted Drainage Design Manual. For proposals with on-site stormwater management not accounted for in the drainage design manual, a positive written recommendation from the flood plain administrator at the time of site plan review will qualify the proposal.

9. Green Building Certification

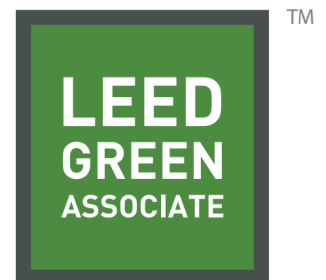
Infill development helps to build strong sustainable communities. The goals and policies of *Plan El Paso* support many of the same guiding principles and objectives of green building at the building/design scale and for new neighborhoods and communities:

Policy 6.1.6: Encourage green practices in housing construction and rehabilitation that support durable, healthy, and energy-efficient homes.

- a. *The City should explore the use of a rating system, such as LEED-ND, to evaluate new housing projects and determine which projects should receive incentives such as fee waivers, density bonuses, expedited permitting, and other public-private partnerships.*
- b. *The City of El Paso will strongly consider the adoption of a rating system for neighborhoods that draws from LEED-ND or other neighborhood rating systems when they become available. This system will be used by the City, not the applicant, and will not have any bearing on the approval of an applicant's request. The full LEED-ND rating system may be a tool for neighborhood design in the future, but in the short-term a subset rating criteria will be developed in a collaborative process with multiple public and private stakeholders.*

To meet this guideline, applicants shall demonstrate, or provide documentation attesting to, any of the following:

- Registration of projects with the U.S Green Building Council, or equivalent
- Architect/Engineer or design professional of record on the project is LEED accredited
- Participation in the cities' green building grant program



Additional Provisions for Residential Projects

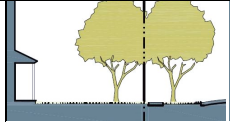
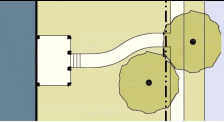
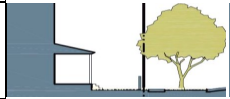
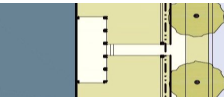


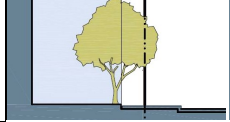
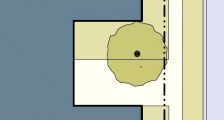


The final two guidelines serve to assist residential projects in meeting the guideline minimum and are in keeping with the intent of promoting and encouraging the development of vacant parcels in residential areas.

10. Vacant or underdeveloped for 15 years

Proposals within developed areas shall show through aerial imagery that the parcel has been vacant or underdeveloped for at least 15 years. Underdeveloped parcels are parcels that do not meet the maximum density of the base zoning district. For example, a single family home in a district which permits duplexes, a duplex within a district that permits quadruplexes, et cetera.

11. Private Frontage Types

The private frontage types in Title 21 - Table 7 (a) through (e) provide basic design guidance for frontages appropriate for residential buildings in traditional neighborhoods. To meet this guideline, the detailed site plan elevations shall show the use of one of the available frontage types as well as any proposed fence, wall or terrace.

Common Yard			A planted frontage wherein the façade is set back substantially from the frontage line. The front yard created remains unfenced and is visually continuous with adjacent yards, supporting a common landscape. The deep setback provides a buffer from the higher speed thoroughfares
Porch & Fence			A planted frontage wherein the façade is set back from the frontage line with an attached porch permitted to encroach. A fence at the frontage line maintains street spatial definition. Porches shall be no less than 8 feet deep.
Terrace or Lightwell			A frontage wherein the façade is set back from the frontage line by an elevated terrace or a sunken lightwell. This type buffers residential use from urban sidewalks and removes the private yard from public encroachment. Terraces are suitable for conversion to outdoor café.
Forecourt			A frontage wherein a portion of the façade is close to the frontage line and the central portion is set back. The forecourt created is suitable for vehicular drop-offs. This type should be allocated in conjunction with other frontage types. Large trees within the forecourts may overhang the sidewalks
Stoop			A frontage wherein the façade is aligned close to the frontage line with the first story elevated from the sidewalk sufficiently to secure privacy for the windows. The entrance is usually an exterior stair and landing. This type is recommended for ground-floor residential use