

# CHAPTER THREE

## DEVELOPMENT CHARACTER

### 3. DEVELOPMENT CHARACTER

Old Town falls within the purview of the City Center Design Standards (CCDS). However, building and site design guidelines that are specific to Old Town should be developed to ensure new development has a strong pedestrian focus.



#### 3.1. DEVELOPMENT CHARACTER POLICIES

##### 3.1.1 *Land Use Policies*

1. Allow a mix of residential and commercial uses in Old Town to make the district a desirable place to live, work and play.
2. Require ground floor commercial uses along Holly Street, Bay Street, Prospect Street, and Champion Street.
3. Encourage the development of below grade and under building structured parking.
4. Allow for small handicraft, marine, and manufacturing uses, but discourage large industrial uses that are incompatible with residential and pedestrian dominated environments.
5. Preserve and highlight landmark buildings to the greatest extent possible.

## Landmark buildings

Significant evidence of Bellingham's early history survives in several landmark buildings located in Old Town. In regards to the Old Town Sub-area Plan, a "Landmark" building is defined as a building, structure, or site identified through a public visioning process as having historical, aesthetic, or cultural significance to the character of Old Town. There are a number of historically significant or potentially eligible historic properties within Old Town that are not shown here.



*Lottie Roth Block*



*Pickett House*



*Territorial Courthouse*



*Great Northern Passenger Station*



*Old City Hall*



*Oakland Block*



*Granary Building*

**Financial incentives for historic buildings:** Some of the Landmark buildings that were identified through the public process are listed in the National Register of Historic Places (administered by the National Park Service). National Register listing may make properties eligible for State and federal grants, federal tax credits, and building code relief.

A few of the Old Town Landmark buildings have additional designation of being listed in the Bellingham Historic Register (administered by the City of Bellingham). This listing offers incentives to owners through Special Tax Valuation, Adaptive Use Permits and building code relief.

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### 3.1.2 Building Design Policies

1. The City Center Design Standards and design review process should be employed.
2. Buildings heights should be lower in priority view corridors and when adjacent to certain landmark buildings and Whatcom Creek.
3. Design buildings to allow light to the street and create a human scale at the street edge by requiring an upper story setback.
4. Stoops and porches should be incorporated into buildings with ground floor residential uses.
5. Include modulation on the face of buildings and in rooflines to break up building bulk and long walls and rooflines.
6. Celebrate building corners with unique design features at Prospect, Central, Whatcom Creek, and F Streets where they intersect with Holly Street.
7. Merge modern materials of the present with traditional building forms from the past to reference the historic Old Town.
8. Create an active edge along Old Village Trail, Maritime Heritage Park and public plazas by



incorporating access, activity areas and interesting design features into new and redeveloped buildings.

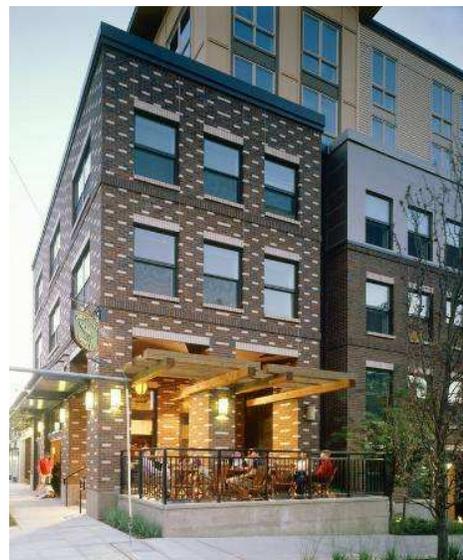
9. Establish building heights such that:
  - Priority public views to the water are identified and maintained.
  - New construction does not overpower landmark buildings.
  - Redevelopment opportunities become feasible and more desirable.
  - The scale of buildings creates a comfortable pedestrian environment.
  - Quality new construction and structured parking are feasible.
  - Buildings step down as they approach Whatcom Creek estuary.
  - A clear unobstructed view of Whatcom Museum along Astor Street is maintained.

### 3.1.3 Site Design Policies

1. Design sites to create an interesting pedestrian environment.
2. Discourage surface parking lots, but when required they should be located behind the building.
3. Locate buildings adjacent to sidewalks except where setback to accommodate plazas, outdoor dining, wider sidewalks or to

highlight building entrances. Building setbacks may be particularly desirable along Holly Street to accommodate these amenities.

4. Locate eateries, outdoor cafes and plazas on the southwest to maximize light, warmth and comfort.

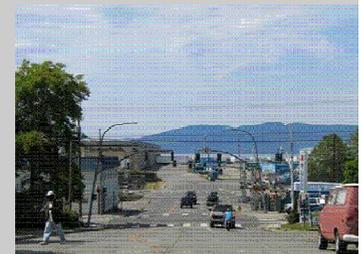


### Height Sensitive Areas

Noteworthy vistas and view corridors contribute to Old Town's character. Preservation of these views was identified as a priority by the public. Priority public view corridors include:

- F Street View to Bellingham Bay and Islands
- Astor Street View Corridor to Whatcom Museum
- D Street View to Great Northern Passenger Depot
- Dupont Street Overlook view out Whatcom Waterway to Bellingham Bay
- Maritime Heritage Park Overlook view out Whatcom Waterway to Bellingham Bay and Islands
- Museum Overlook view to Bellingham Bay and Islands
- Holly Street view Corridor to St. Paul's Church

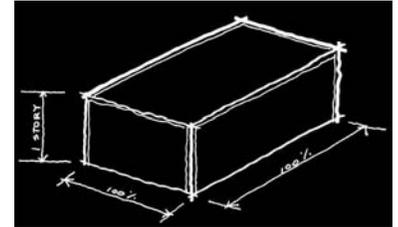
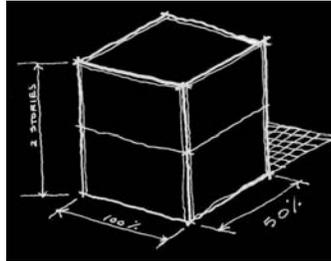
Height limits should be reduced adjacent to the one story Territorial Courthouse and Great Northern Passenger Depot.



### 3.2. DEVELOPMENT CHARACTER

#### IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

1. Develop a Floor Area Ratio (FAR) system with maximum height limits.
2. Incorporate a FAR bonus system to allow increases in FAR in exchange for the creation or preservation of public amenities such as affordable housing, and construction of LEED™/Built Green certified buildings.
3. Restrict height limits within identified view corridors.
4. Investigate the possibility of forming a public/private partnership to preserve the Great Northern Railroad Passenger Depot and make it accessible to the public. The timber framed freight house, adjacent to the train station, could convert to affordable artist studios or work places.
5. Solicit redevelopment proposals for residential and commercial opportunities at the City owned property (600 W Holly) in an effort to activate Maritime Heritage Park and promote redevelopment.
6. Adopt development regulations and design standards that are consistent with and implement the policy recommendations of this sub-area plan.



*Floor Area Ratio Definition: The gross floor area of a building (s) on a site divided by the site area.*

*For example, if the building above has a total of 10,000 SF and the site area is 10,000 SF, then the FAR would be 1.0.*

*If you know the FAR and you want to calculate how much gross floor area one could build, multiply the FAR (1.0) by the site area (10,000 SF).*



### **Astor Street View Corridor**

*The Old City Hall, Whatcom Museum, is an important landmark building in Old Town. Clear unobstructed views of it should be preserved from the west sidewalk as redevelopment occurs along Astor Street by stepping buildings back and selecting appropriate street trees.*



# Holly Street Landfill Boundary

The 13-acre Holly Street Landfill is regulated by the Department of Ecology under a Consent Decree with the City and other property owners. Restrictive covenants on all the properties within the landfill boundary require certain measures be followed to protect human health and the environment.

