

MEMORANDUM

TO: City Council
FROM: Steve Westbay
DATE: August 18, 2015
RE: Commercial Building Design Standards Discussion

INTRODUCTION

The Council has directed staff to schedule a discussion of commercial building design standards, which will occur on August 18th. Retail development activity during the past 10 years has included five permits for new commercial construction and six for commercial building additions. Additionally, several policy and code revisions have been adopted during the past 10 years that address, to some degree, the provisions for commercial development. These provisions include the adoption of Large Scale Retail Development Standards, approval of the *Gunnison Rising Planned Unit Development (PUD) Standards*, and the update to the *Land Development Code*. A starting point in the discussion could be a discussion and understanding of the City's existing code provisions. This memorandum provides an overview of the existing standards established in the *City of Gunnison Land Development Code (LDC)* and the Gunnison Rising PUD.

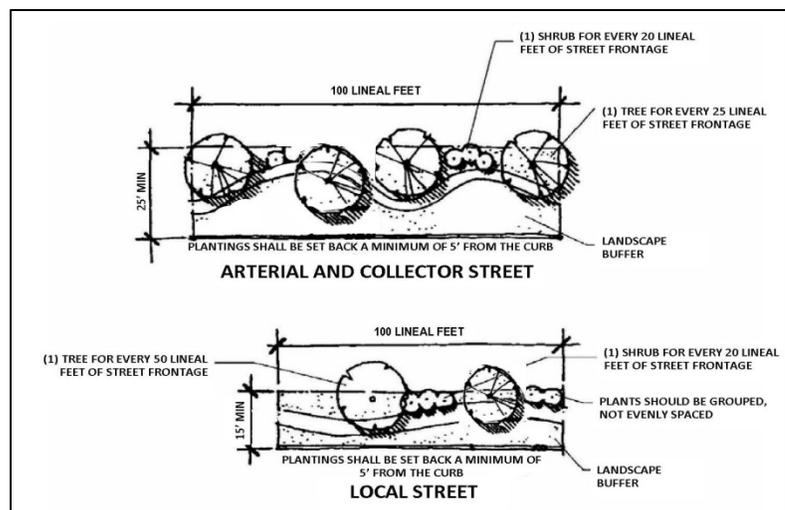
LDC STANDARDS

New commercial design standards could address a number of different development components including but not limited to architectural elements, landscaping, and parking and access functions. The *LDC* update contains standards for many site design factors, but it does not mandate architectural design standards.

LDC Section 4. General Development Standards (*LDC* Section 4) contains nearly all of the City standards that apply to development. Factors addressed in Section 4 of the *LDC* include transportation and site access; landscaping; buffers; exterior lighting to protect dark skies; a modern sign code; and screening standards for outdoor display and storage areas. All of these development related components are critical to address for any type of development. However, landscaping, buffering and screening may be the most important factors that promote quality development.

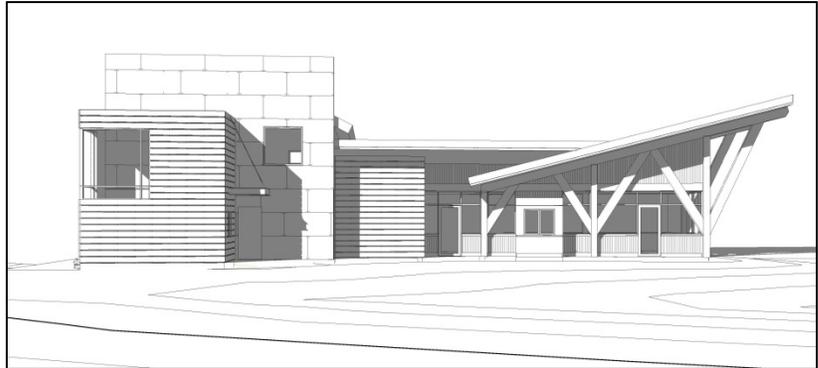
Landscaping Buffer and Screening. Good site design is partly predicated on the treatment of property edges and landscaping. Section 4.6 of the 2014 *LDC* contains the standards that address these factors. The buffer standards replaced the Highway Entrance Overlay zone district, which was adopted by the City in the late 1990's. The Highway Entrance Overlay zone was cumbersome to administer and ineffective in cases where lots are being redeveloped.

The Family Dollar store permitted prior the 2014 *LDC* adoption, exemplified some of the issues with the previous code and the entrance overlay zone standards. In fact, the entrance overlay zone did not apply to development in the Central Business District. The only landscape related mandate in the old code was a vague standard requiring landscaping for parking lots.



The 2014 *LDC* applies specific buffer standards for all streets frontages and their focus is to create appealing streetscape areas in the city. Generally, the buffer area is established from the street edge to the front yard setback. They have planting standards for trees and ground cover, but are also intended to be flexible so constraints associated with redevelopment can be appropriately addressed.

For example, the owner of the Sportsman's Liquor store proposed a major remodel and addition to the existing building located on the corner of Tomichi Avenue and 11th Street. Due to a combination of factors including the lot dimensions, existing building footprint, parking and other site factors, the 25' buffer standard made the proposed project impractical. Gary Hartman (Sunlit Architecture) and City staff conducted a pre-application meeting and reviewed potential site plan alternatives that could be applied to the project. Mr. Hartman submitted a proposed site plan alternative (see illustration) with a Buffer Waiver request, which was reviewed by the Planning and Zoning Commission.



Existing Retail Development Standards. In 2005 the City adopted the Large Scale Retail Development Standards which apply to retail development exceeding 50,000 square feet in size. These standards address a variety of design components to include building material types, wall plane articulation, roofline details, glazing and many other site design development standards. The existing *LDC* includes the identical provisions adopted in 2005. To date, there have been no development applications falling under the provision of the big-box codes.

GUNNISON RISING PUD

Gunnison Rising is referred to as a master planned community, meaning future development will occur in accordance with the PUD Development Standards and the Annexation Agreement. The PUD Development Standards contain general provisions for common development needs and specific design standards are established for each land use district. Commercial development contemplated in the PUD is regulated by architectural design standards. These Architectural Design Standards address a variety of topics to include façade and roofline factors that affect building mass, first floor façade requirements, material composition and other building related elements.

CONCLUSION

During the past 10 years the Community Development Department has strived to provide an efficient and personalize service commitment to businesses development. Previous to that time the community was very critical of the City's development review process. Please note that administering design standards is a technical exercise, and the approval process is best handled through a formal review by a planning department staff and oversight and approval provided by the Planning and Zoning Commission or other appointed board. Also note that design standards will add time and expense to the development review process.