

# New design guidelines to better reflect growing Uptown City council to consider revisions in 2019



By Brandon Macz  
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Uptown has changed a lot in 10 years, but its neighborhood design guidelines have not. Developer Maria Barrientos is excited for that to change next year, when the city council considers adopting revised guidelines spearheaded by the Uptown Alliance Land Use Review Committee.

The Uptown Alliance LURC formed in spring 2017 to participate in the planned upzoning of the neighborhood's urban

center. After reviewing proposed new projects, the group realized the 2009 design guidelines did not reflect the changes occurring in Uptown.

Barrientos said the old guidelines focus on Roy and Mercer streets, as well as the west side of Queen Anne Avenue North, but there has been significant growth south of Mercer and east of Queen Anne Avenue North in the last decade.

The West Design Review Board has had to rely on those 2009 guidelines, which don't reflect what the community wants to see in new developments, said Barrientos, who co-chairs the Uptown Alliance LURC.

"There are designs that we want to see in Uptown that the review board hasn't embraced," she said, "because they're looking at old guidelines that just are no longer relevant."

The new draft guidelines acknowledge that construction east of Queen Anne Avenue North will be "bigger, bolder and more contemporary," Barrientos said, and acknowledges the importance of the pedestrian realm and a new Uptown Arts & Culture District overlay and the Uptown Arts and Cultural Coalition.

"We added a lot of language in there of encouraging more eclectic and funky designs on the storefront side," Barrientos said. "We really encourage murals and bigger signs and bright signs."

The Uptown Urban Design Framework Document developed in 2016 provided a lot of guidance for the revisions, as did the citywide design guidelines update in early 2018. From there, the Uptown Alliance LURC focused on just the differences they saw that worked best for the neighborhood, which included a focus on growth and more density, Barrientos said. The draft guidelines also acknowledge the future addition of two light rail stations as part of the West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions.

All of Uptown should be designed as a walking district, according to the updated priority design issues, and development adjacent to the Seattle Center "should invite visitors into the neighborhood."

The guidelines also discourage corner retail entrances, instead encouraging using those spaces for plazas, art and other special features that are accessible to the public. Smaller storefront shops are preferred along Class 1-2 Pedestrian Streets, such as First Avenue North, to accommodate smaller local retailers.

The revised guidelines also address tall building designs, such as those southeast of the Seattle Center, where base heights up to 165 feet are allowed.

"Avoid long slabs and big, unmodulated boxy forms, which cast bigger shadows and lack scale or visual interest, the guidelines state. "Consider curved, angled, shifting and/or carved yet coherent forms."

The Seattle City Council is set to consider approving the updated Uptown Neighborhood Design Guidelines in January.

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# Uptown

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