

# Central Business District (CBD) Design Standards



TOWN OF GRAND LAKE

COLORADO

2026

## INTRODUCTION

This document supplements the design guidelines that appear in the Town of Grand Lake Municipal Code and applies specifically to the Central Business District (CBD) that is defined in the Town Code Section 12-7-3. The intent of the CBD is to establish standards that protect and enhance the downtown area as a viable commercial district while preserving the historic aesthetic and architectural character of the Town of Grand Lake. The following shall apply:

- A. The CBD Design Standards shall apply to all development on parcels within the CBD, regardless of the proposed use (e.g., commercial, mixed-use, and residential).
- B. Wherever there is a conflict or inconsistency between the CBD Design Standards and other regulations of the land development code, the regulations set forth in these standards shall control and govern the development and redevelopment within the CBD.
- C. Where the CBD Design Standards are silent, the underlying zone district regulations come into effect.

## THE CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT



*The CBD Boundaries*

Photos of historic buildings from Grand Lake and the surrounding area:



Spider House (Grand County)



Engel's Ski Shop (Grand County)



Cozens Ranch (Grand County)



Nowata Cottage

## DEFINING WESTERN CHARACTER

This document provides design standards that further define the concept of historic western character to guide the design of new infill buildings, additions, and other improvements within the Central Business District (CBD). These standards build upon the language in the Town Code Design Standards and aim to clarify how historic western character should be interpreted in the context of Grand Lake's unique identity.

Historic western character is not a specific architectural style, but rather an approach to design rooted in the community's historical and cultural traditions. It encompasses building forms, materials, and details commonly found in historic structures throughout Grand Lake and the surrounding area. The intent is to promote authentic design that reflects the town's heritage, distinguishing genuine historical influences from imitations.

### **HISTORICAL CONTEXT (FROM THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN)**

- Prior to settlement in the late 1860s, the area was used by Native American tribes—including the Ute, Northern Cheyenne, and Arapaho—for hunting.
- The mining boom of the 1870s brought outfitters to supply nearby mining towns.
- The Grand Lake Townsite was officially platted in 1881.
- By 1900, Grand Lake had become a popular summer destination, attracting over 1,000 seasonal visitors annually.
- The Grand Lake Yacht Club was established in 1902.
- Rocky Mountain National Park was designated in 1915.
- Trail Ridge Road was completed in 1939, solidifying Grand Lake's role as a gateway community.

Photos of historic buildings from Grand Lake and the surrounding area:



Grand Lake Community House



Grand Lake Lodge



Kauffman House



Smith Eslick Cottage Court

## **BUILDINGS LISTED ON THE COLORADO HISTORIC REGISTER**

- **Grand Lake Community House (1922):** Located in the historic town square, hosts a variety of public and private events.
- **Grand Lake Lodge (1920):** Continues to serve visitors to Rocky Mountain National Park and Grand Lake.
- **Kauffman House (1892):** Originally a hotel for summer tourists, now operates as a museum.
- **Smith Eslick Cottage Court (1915):** An early example of a motor court.

## **COMMON ARCHITECTURAL ELEMENTS DEFINING THE CHARACTER OF GRAND LAKE**

The following architectural elements are encouraged and should be incorporated into developments proposed in the CBD.

- **Building Forms**  
Simple and functional structures with gabled or pitched roofs. Many feature false fronts with stepped parapets to create a more prominent street presence. Dormers are often used to break up rooflines.
- **Covered Walkways and Porches**  
Commercial buildings commonly include covered walkways and overhanging roofs that slope toward the right-of-way, enhancing pedestrian comfort and supporting a walkable downtown. Covered porches are a recurring feature in historic buildings.
- **Materials**  
Natural materials such as wood and log construction dominate, typically in muted tones. Accent colors and occasional white-painted buildings are acceptable if provided in a historical context.

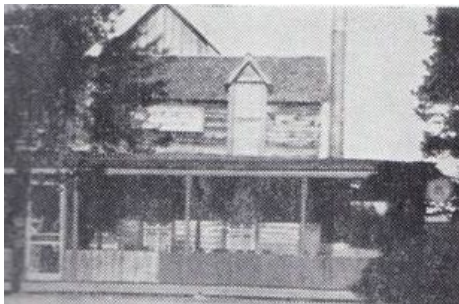
Photos of historic buildings from Grand Lake and the surrounding area:



Pine Cone Inn



Rapids Lodge



Rustic Hotel



Zick's Grocery and Café

- **Street Orientation**  
Buildings are oriented toward the street, maintaining a consistent street wall and contributing to the Town's cohesive visual identity.
- **Signage**  
Overhanging signs are prevalent, often featuring western-style fonts that reinforce the Town's character.
- **Second-Floor Railings**  
Found on buildings like the Spider House, Grand Lake Lodge, and Nowata Cottage, these add vertical interest and support multi-level design.
- **False Parapets**  
Used to conceal pitched roofs, as seen in Zick's Grocery and Café, contributing to the traditional western storefront aesthetic.
- **Gabled Roofs with Dormers**  
A defining roof form across historic structures, adding depth and character.
- **Boardwalk Precedents**  
Covered boardwalks are inspired by buildings such as Pine Cone Inn, Rapids Lodge, Grand Lake Lodge, Kauffman House, and Rustic Hotel.

## APPLICABLE DESIGN STANDARDS

### 1. Color and Material Selections

#### DESIGN INTENT:

Cultivate a cohesive visual identity throughout the CBD that reflects the historical and rustic character of Grand Lake as a mountain town. Primary building materials should be authentic, be durable, and evoke a western aesthetic. Colors and finishes should be muted and convey high-quality design and detailing.



Tonal monochromatic primary and accent color.

#### DESIGN STANDARD:

- 1.1 The primary color of a building shall be a neutral earth tone. Muted and warm shades of neutral colors are appropriate. Bright, pastel, or true primary hues are not permitted. Reference Chart 1 – Exterior Color Comparison for acceptable primary building colors.
- 1.2 Trim, fascia, window panes, and doors are considered accent elements. Accent colors for accent elements shall be limited to the following:
  - a. Monochromatic (same as the primary color).
  - b. Tonal monochromatic (a lighter or darker shade of the primary color).
  - c. A contrasting color that complements the primary color. Intense colors are discouraged.
- 1.3 Limited accent materials, such as natural stone, may be permitted to enhance the visual interest and reflect the rustic character of Grand Lake.
  - a. Corrugated metal shall not be used as a primary or accent exterior building material.



Too colorful: more than just a single primary and accent color, non-earth tones.



Corrugated metal as accent material.

Corrugated metal is defined as a building material made from flat sheets of steel or aluminum that are passed through rollers to create a wavy, ridged pattern. Other metal materials, as defined in Town Code Section 12-7-4, are permitted for use as accent materials.

- b. Accent materials are limited to the amount defined in Town Code Section 12-7-3.
- c. When proposed, accent materials shall be provided around the base of the structure and architectural features, such as a chimney.
- d. Excessive change in accent materials is discouraged to avoid an overly busy appearance.



Bright, high-contrast accent color.

- 1.4 Metal, stucco, and stone shall not be used as primary exterior building materials.
- 1.5 A material sample board must be presented to the Planning Commission and Board of Trustees for review prior to approval of a development application. Paint colors must be applied to desired materials (rather than a color swatch) to accurately show what the final color and material combination will look like.
- 1.6 If a variance is requested for building color or material, documentation demonstrating historical use of the proposed color or material within Grand Lake is required.

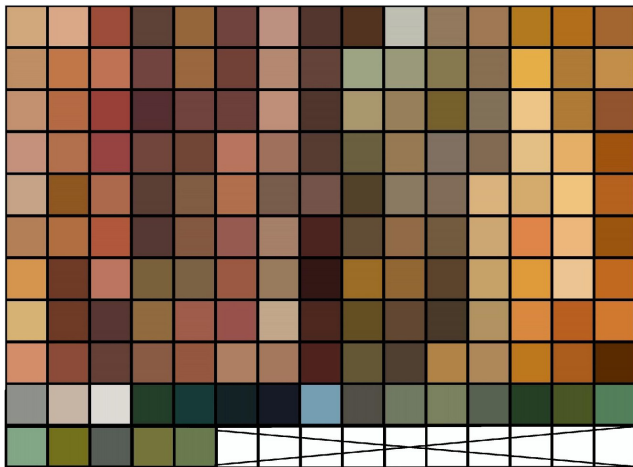


Chart 1 – Exterior Color Comparison

## 2. Ground Level Interest

### DESIGN INTENT:

The CBD serves as the Town’s central commercial and visitor destination. As such, building design at the street and ground level should prioritize the pedestrian experience by offering visual interest, weather protection, and a welcoming environment that encourages foot traffic. The goal is to create a comfortable and engaging streetscape through a consistent street wall and clean, visually appealing commercial façades.

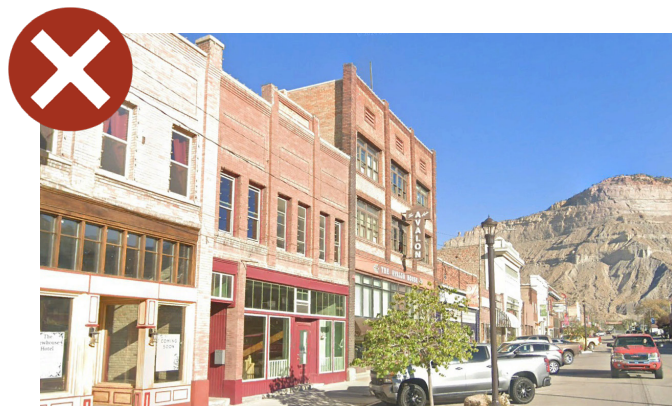
Buildings should be perceived as two stories in height, supported by a required stepback above the second story. This stepback helps reduce the visual bulk and mass of buildings and ensures new development remains compatible with the traditional scale and character of the area.



Commercial use on ground floor. Consistent streetwall.



0' setback with building footprint touching the public right-of-way.

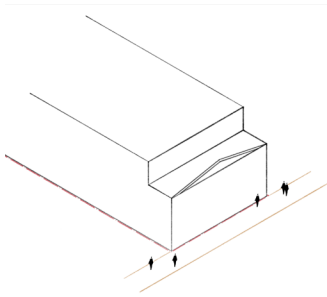


Three-story building without a third-story stepback.

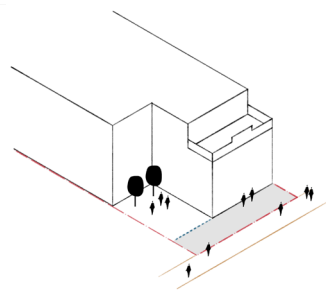
### DESIGN STANDARD:

- 2.1 Commercial uses are required on the ground floor for the first 50 feet of depth from the property line along all street-facing frontages (does not apply to alleys).
  - a. Residential uses may be permitted on the ground floor beyond the initial 50 feet.
  - b. Mixed-use developments where residential use occupies more than 50% of the total building square footage are exempt from the Conditional Use requirements outlined in Town Code Section 12-2-18 – Regulations for Commercial District-C.
  
- 2.2 All development within the CBD Overlay Zone shall maintain a maximum front setback of 10 feet from Grand Avenue, measured from the property line to the building wall.
  - a. Structured overhangs or covered patios are not considered part of the building wall for setback measurement.

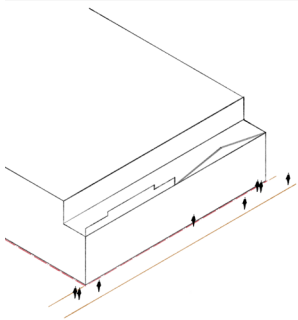
Allowed Setback Scenarios:



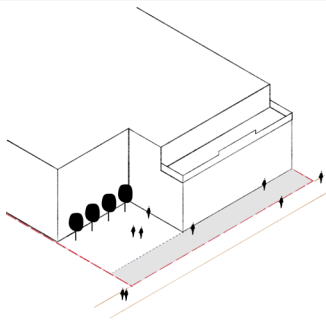
**50' building width:** 100% of the street-facing façade set at the 0' minimum setback.



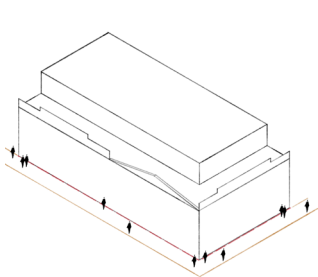
**50' building width:** 60% of the street-facing façade set at the 10' maximum setback, 40% devoted to outdoor pedestrian space.



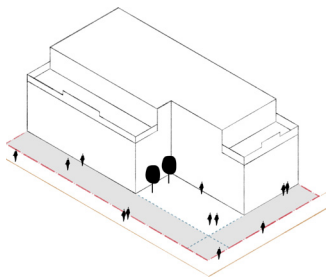
**100' building width:** 100% of the street-facing façade set at the 0' minimum setback.



**100' building width:** 60% of the street-facing façade set at the 10' maximum setback, 40% devoted to outdoor pedestrian space.



**Corner Lot:** 100% of both street-facing façades set at a 0' setback.



**Corner Lot:** The 60-40 ratio applies specifically to Grand Avenue. Developments can exercise flexibility on other street-facing frontages to add open space, if desired. This image shows 60% of both street-facing façades set at a 10' setback with 40% receded for outdoor pedestrian space.

- b. The maximum setback applies to 60% of the lot frontage. The remaining 40% of the lot frontage does not have a maximum setback requirement.

2.3 A third-story stepback is required on all street frontages after the first two stories.

- a. On corner lots, the stepback is required on both street-facing frontages (excluding alleys).
- b. The stepback shall be a minimum of 12 feet, measured from the building wall.

2.4 The street wall, as defined in the Town Code, shall be maintained.

- a. The maximum setback reinforces the street wall edge.
- b. Where open space is used, development shall incorporate creative public seating or amenities.

### 3. Connectivity

**DESIGN INTENT:**

The CBD is intended to prioritize pedestrian experience. As such, developments shall ensure safe, year-round pedestrian access and connectivity for all users, including the elderly and those requiring ADA accessibility. Pedestrian connectivity refers to the movement of people from the public realm to and through a site, as well as connections to adjacent sites. Internal pedestrian access should enhance walkability and provide clear, intuitive links to the public realm.



*Development incorporates structured cover over the boardwalk.*

**DESIGN STANDARD:**

- 3.1 Developments shall construct the boardwalk in the adjacent right-of-way. This requirement applies to all street-facing façades, excluding alleys.
  
- 3.2 Developments must incorporate at least one of the following design features:
  - a. A structured cover over the boardwalk.
  
  - b. A covered entrance.
  
  - c. A recessed entrance.



*Maximum building setback of 10' allows for outdoor landscaping and pedestrian elements.*

3.3 Open space requirements are waived for mixed-use buildings.

- a. Where open space is proposed, it is encouraged to be along frontages other than Grand Avenue.
- b. For buildings set back to the maximum allowable distance along Grand Avenue, public seating, art installations, or landscaping elements shall be incorporated to enhance the pedestrian experience.



*Maximum setback allows for outdoor landscaping and pedestrian elements. Up to 40% of the building façade may be set back further than 10' for street-facing open space.*

## 4. Parking

### DESIGN INTENT:

The CBD is intended to foster a compact, pedestrian-oriented environment where development is not centered around vehicle access. The emphasis is on creating a high-quality pedestrian experience, with the expectation that visitors and residents will park once and access multiple destinations on foot. Much of the CBD includes existing or potential right-of-way (ROW) parking. Parking requirement reductions are intended to support this walkable downtown character.



*Parking spaces constructed within the ROW directly adjacent to the subject property.*

### DESIGN STANDARD:

4.1 Development within the CBD is exempt from the commercial parking requirements outlined in the Town Code when the subject property is adjacent to existing and constructed public parking spaces located within the ROW.

- a. If public parking spaces are not currently constructed within the ROW directly adjacent to the subject property, the applicant shall be responsible for constructing the necessary parking spaces or pay a fee in lieu to meet the commercial parking requirement.
- b. If the Town does not permit parking within the ROW adjacent to the subject property, the developer is not required to construct the commercial parking spaces or pay the fee in lieu. Residential parking requirements shall apply.

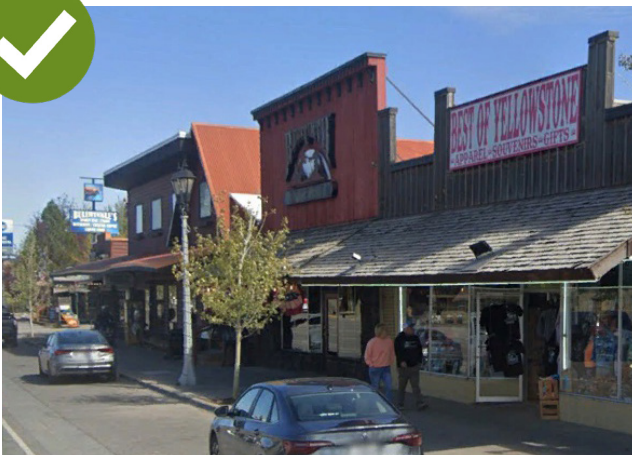


*Parking constructed within the ROW allows pedestrians to park once and access multiple destinations on foot.*

## 5. Roofline

### DESIGN INTENT:

Buildings should reflect the simple forms and traditional character of Grand Lake's historic architecture. Roof forms should be either flat with stepped parapets (commonly referred to as "false fronts") or sloped in gable or hipped configurations. New buildings should maintain the scale of traditional structures, which includes not only overall height and width, but also the proportions and relationships of architectural features. These features should use simple vertical and horizontal articulation to establish human scale, add visual interest, and avoid monotonous façades.



*Flat and sloped roofs are appropriate.*

### DESIGN STANDARD:

- 5.1 Roof forms shall be simple in design.
  - a. Flat roofs are appropriate, especially on larger buildings, and should include variation in the cornice line.
  - b. Sloped roofs are appropriate and should reflect the pitch and proportions of traditional buildings.
  - c. A combination of flat and sloped roofs is acceptable but should remain visually simple and not overly complex.
- 5.2 The second story roofline shall be pitched or flat with a false parapet.
  - a. For buildings with three stories that include a setback, the second-story roofline should keep a traditional stepped or sawtooth profile, since this is the roofline most prominent to pedestrians.

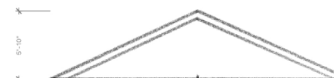
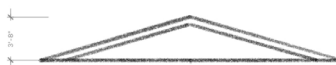
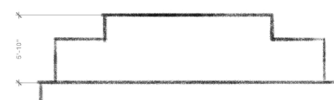
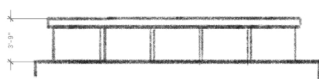


*Flat roofs feature a false parapet.*



Larger buildings should be divided into smaller modules that reflect the scale and lot widths of traditional Town structures.

- 5.3 Building designs shall incorporate pitched roof elements, either as part of the overall roof design, as an accent feature, or as a covering for doors and windows.
- 5.4 A basic building form is preferred. Any variation should be subordinate to the overall massing and contribute to a cohesive design.
  - a. Varying building heights may be used to reflect different modules.
  - b. Larger buildings shall be divided into smaller modules that reflect the scale and lot widths of traditional Town structures.
  - c. Moderate wall plane offsets, such as notches or projections, may be used to add interest.



Examples of parapet designs.

## 6. Windows

### DESIGN INTENT:

The arrangement, rhythm, and proportions of windows and doors play a key role in shaping the character of the CBD. Building façades should maintain a transparency-to-wall ratio that supports the commercial vibrancy and pedestrian engagement typical of traditional downtown environments.



*Windows occupy at least 50% of the first story façade.*

### DESIGN STANDARD:

- 6.1 Windows shall occupy at least 50% of the first-story façade to support pedestrian interaction and commercial visibility.
  - a. Upper stories are not required to meet the 50% transparency standard.
  - b. On corner lots, this requirement shall apply to both street-facing frontages (excluding alleys).
  
- 6.2 Storefront windows shall be designed with sills at least 10 inches but no more than 36 inches above the boardwalk to maintain building base treatments.



*No defined material base at the bottom of the first-story windows.*

CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT (CBD) DESIGN STANDARDS, 2026

