

Central Business District (CBD) Overlay Zone

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) Overlay Zone that is identified in the Official Zoning Map. The intent of the CBD Overlay Zone 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. These standards shall apply to the following:

- (A) The standards of the CBD Overlay Zone shall apply to all development on parcels within the CBD Overlay Zone.
- (B) Wherever there is a conflict or inconsistency between the CBD Overlay Zone regulations and other regulations of the land development code, the regulations set forth in this section shall control and govern the development and redevelopment within the CBD Overlay Zone.
- (C) Where the CBD Overlay Zone standards are silent, the underlying zone district regulations come into effect.

Background Policy Related to the CBD Overlay Zone

Code sections that reference “historic western” feel.

- Section 12-7-2 – Purpose and Application. “A historical perspective is extremely important to the Town, therefore it is the intent that new materials and innovations will strengthen and be harmonious with the “historic western” feel of Town....The Town of Grand Lake seeks to preserve the historical, rustic, and unique western small-town character of Grand Lake while also integrating its preservation with new and pioneering creative design.”
- Section 12-7-4 – Design Standards for Structures.
 - (A) “The intent of the color palate selection is to compliment rather than stand out against the Town’s western historic mountain setting.”
 - (B) “Material selection shall take into account the historical perspective of the Town.”
 - (C) (2) (c) (3) (iii) “Reaching a balance between the old and the new is a major goal of the Grand Lake Design Guidelines, particularly retaining the historic sawtooth character while encouraging compatible and respectful new buildings and design.”

Defining Western Character

This document provides design guidelines 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) Overlay Zone. These guidelines 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. 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.

Buildings Listed on the Colorado Historic Register

- Grand Lake Community House (1922): Located in the historic town square, it 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 Camp (1915): An early example of a motor court.

Common Architectural Elements Defining the Character of Grand Lake

- 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 is standard, typically in muted tones. Accent colors and occasional white-painted buildings are acceptable if provided in a historical context.
- **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.
- **Boardwalk Precedents**
Covered boardwalks are inspired by buildings such as Pine Cone Inn, Rapids Lodge, Grand Lake Lodge, Kauffman House, and Rustin Inn.

Applicable Design Guidelines

1. Color and Material Selections

Design Intent:

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

Design Guideline:

- 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.
- 1.2 Trim, fascia, and doors are considered accent elements. Accent colors 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 around the base of the building to enhance the visual interest and reflect the rustic character of Grand Lake.
 - a. Metal materials shall not be used as a primary or accent element within the CBD Overlay Zone.
 - b. Accent materials are limited to 33% of each building façade.
- 1.4 A material sample board must be presented to the Planning Commission and Board of Trustees for review prior to approval of a development application.
- 1.5 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 as precedent.

2. Ground Level Interest

Design Intent:

The CBD Overlay Zone 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 facades.

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

Design Guideline:

- 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.
- 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.
 - a. The maximum setback may be measured from a covered overhang. For example, a covered outdoor patio located 10 feet from the property line would meet the requirement.
 - b. The maximum setback applies to the entire length of the property frontage along Grand Avenue.
- 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.
 - b. The step back shall be a minimum of 12 feet, measured from the face of the building, including any covered structural elements.
- 2.4 The street wall, as defined in the Town Code, shall be maintained.
 - a. The maximum setback reinforces the street wall edge.
 - b. Development is encouraged to incorporate creative public seating and open space within the maximum setback area if applicable or along street-facing frontages other than Grand Avenue.

3. Connectivity

Design Intent:

The CBD Overlay Zone 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.

Design Guideline:

- 3.1 In accordance with the Town Code, development shall incorporate a covered walkway that connects commercial elements to the public realm. This requirement applies to all street-facing facades.

- a. If a building is set back to the maximum allowable distance along Grand Avenue, at minimum, a portion of the development must extend to the public boardwalk to establish a connection to the public realm.
- b. The design of boardwalks and covered walkways shall comply with Town Code Section 12-7-4(C)(3)(c).
- c. Construction of the boardwalk and covered walkways shall be the responsibility of the applicant.

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

- a. If open space is proposed, it shall not be located along the Grand Avenue frontage.
- b. For buildings set back to the maximum allowable distance along Grand Avenue, it is encouraged that public seating, art installations, or landscaping elements be incorporated to enhance the pedestrian experience.

4. Parking

Design Intent:

The CBD Overlay Zone 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 overlay zone includes existing or potential right-of-way (ROW) parking. Parking requirement reductions are intended to support this walkable urban character.

Design Guideline:

- 4.1 Development within the CBD Overlay Zone is exempt from the commercial parking requirements outlined in the Town Code, with the following exceptions and conditions:
 - a. Hotels, motels, and other commercial uses that involve overnight accommodation are not exempt. These uses must provide the adequate parking either on-site or through an off-site parking plan approved by the Board of Trustees.
 - b. If public parking spaces have not been constructed within the right-of-way (ROW) directly adjacent to the subject property, the applicant shall be responsible for constructing the necessary parking spaces to support their proposed development.
- 4.2 Residential development within the CBD Overlay Zone is eligible for reduced parking requirements as follows:

- a. Studio, one-bedroom, and two-bedroom units shall require a minimum of one (1) parking space per unit.
- b. Units with three (3) or more bedrooms shall require a minimum of two (2) parking spaces per unit.
- c. All required residential parking spaces shall be provided on-site.
- d. Where residential parking is required, it shall be accessed from alleys when feasible and designed to avoid detracting from the commercial frontage and pedestrian realm.

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 or articulated 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 facades.

Design Guideline:

- 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 either gabled or, if flat, include a false parapet.
 - a. For buildings with three stories, any stepback applied to the design shall be secondary to the second-story roofline. The second-story roofline should maintain the traditional sawtooth or ziggurat profile.
- 5.3 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 should 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.
- d. Excessive variation that results in a visually busy or disjointed design is discouraged.

6. Windows

Design Intent:

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

Design Guideline:

- 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.
- 6.2 Windows shall be separated from the ground or foundation by a defined material base. Mullions shall be incorporated into window designs to reinforce the historic character of the district.