

Design Glossary

accessible — public spaces, buildings, and facilities which accommodate people with special needs or disabilities.

accessory use — a use incidental to, and on the same lot as, a principal use, such as a detached garage apartment on a residential lot.

adaptive use (or adaptive reuse)— conversion of a building into a use other than that for which it was designed, such as changing a warehouse into a gallery space or housing.

amenity — design features which are valued by the users of a building, public space, or community. Examples of amenities include open space, landscaping, seating, an outdoor amphitheater, and public art.

architectural drawings — used by architects and other design professionals during the design process.

- An **axonometric** drawing appears three-dimensional and is generally an overhead view.
- An **elevation** is a two-dimensional drawing which shows a facade or side-view of a design.
- A **perspective** also creates the illusion of three-dimensionality, but with reference to relative depth or distance.
- A **plan** illustrates the room or spatial layout from above, as well as the placement of various design elements (walls, trees, buildings).
- A **section** cuts through the design, illustrating wall heights, grade changes, and the relationship between different adjacent spaces.

average daily traffic (ADT) — the average numbers of vehicles passing a fixed point in a 24-hour period; a conventional measurement of traffic volume.

bikeway (or bike path or bike trail)—a facility intended to accommodate bicycle travel for recreational or commuting purposes.

buffer — a strip of land identified on a site plan or by a zoning ordinance, established to protect one type of land use that is incompatible with another adjacent use or occupant. Normally, the area is planted and/or left natural and kept in open space.

charrette (or charrette) — a French term used to describe an intensive, collaborative design exercise that generates ideas for a project or plan.

circulation — movement patterns of pedestrians and vehicular traffic.

complete streets — streets that are designed and operated to enable safe access for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit riders of all ages and abilities.

comprehensive plan — (see masterplan) a broad-reaching general plan for a large area such as a state, county or municipality.

creative placemaking — a field that emphasizes the role of the arts, in addition to traditional planning and design tools, in shaping successful community development projects.

density — measurement of the number of units, e.g. housing, or persons per acre, which may indicate the level of activity in an area.

design competition — a way to select design professionals, not merely on the basis of reputation, but on the basis of a specific response to a project at hand. A competition may take a variety of forms, but should always include a program, which defines the project, and a jury of design professionals and local residents or people who will be impacted by the design program.

design guidelines — design criteria established to direct development. Good guidelines offer options without restricting design and reflect community image and character.

design review board — a public body, generally made up of designers and laymen, appointed to administer design guidelines and review proposed developments or modifications to existing developments, generally within a specified area such as a historic district or downtown

designer — person who is trained as an architect, landscape architect, planner or other related profession, who often leads the process of creating spaces, furnishings, or products for a community project.

district — an area which has a distinct character or purpose, such as an area with predominantly historic buildings, arts facilities, ethnic residents, or unique topography

easement - a nonpossessory right to use and/or enter onto the real property of another without possessing it. It is "best typified in the right of way which one landowner, A, may enjoy over the land of another, B".

edges — delineation of districts or areas which could be physical in nature (e.g. medieval walls or greenbelts) or physiological (e.g. major street joining residential and commercial districts); hard edges create a break between areas; freeways and busy thoroughfares are generally disruptive hard edges, which create a physical or psychological barrier; soft edges create a subtle break or transition between areas or uses and, unlike hard edges, are not particularly difficult to cross; for instance, a plaza, park, or non-offensive change in land use is considered a soft edge.

enclosure — the state when a pedestrian feels sheltered within a semi-private space; trees, narrow streets, awnings and canopies, and articulated edges create a sense of enclosure.

environmental impact— influence of a development project on the natural or built environment; Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) are designed to measure the impact of a proposal and recommend appropriate mitigation strategies.

facade — the exterior wall of a building exposed to public view or that wall viewed by persons not within the building.

focal point — a prominent visual feature in the landscape, often designed to attract and draw people to a particular location or space.

gentrification — the phenomenon of middle to upper income people moving to less affluent or deteriorated urban neighborhoods or small rural towns. Resulting problems sometimes include inflating real estate values, social tensions, and displacing existing lower income residents.

historic district — a geographically definable area with a significant concentration of buildings, structures, sites, spaces, or objects unified by past events, physical development, design, setting, materials, workmanship, sense of cohesiveness, or related historical and aesthetic associations; the significance of a district may be recognized through listing in a local, state, or national landmarks register and may be protected legally through enactment of a local historic district ordinance administered by a historic district board or commission.

human-centered design - an approach to problem solving, commonly used in design and management frameworks that develops solutions to problems by involving the human perspective in all steps of the problem-solving process. Human involvement typically takes place in observing the problem within context, brainstorming, conceptualizing, developing, and implementing the solution. (see also inclusive design and universal design)

inclusive design – a design process (not restricted to interfaces or technologies) in which a product, service or environment is optimized with user diversity in mind. User diversity covers variation in capabilities, needs and aspirations. (see also human-centered design and universal design)

infill — housing or other development in a town or village that is designed to fill a void left by vacant or abandoned property. Generally, the purpose of infill is to revitalize the surrounding area.

infrastructure — public utilities, roads, and physical or social support systems in a community including water, gas, electricity, and schools.

inventory of resources (also called survey) — a list or matrix of identified resources within a community or area. The inventory is a valuable tool for analyzing the use of existing features and assessing needs.

landmark — 1. a structure or feature of historical, cultural, or architectural significance (see National Historic Landmark). 2. an object that is useful for orientation. This term is used without regard to historic value and can describe a maple tree or church steeple as well as a monument

landmarks register — a list of buildings, districts, and objects designated for historical, architectural, and other special significance that may carry protection for listed properties

landscape patterns — the natural or cultural composition of forms in the landscape, such as topography, road systems, agricultural practices, and settlement/development practices.

mapping — technique used for communicating information about the physical environment; maps may represent physical features such as land and climate conditions or abstract concepts such as view corridors and pedestrian areas.

mass — a term used to describe the three dimensional form or bulk of an object or building.

masterplan — an overall plan for a specific area such as a downtown, main street, neighborhood, or waterfront that reflects community vision. A masterplan is more specific and detailed than a comprehensive plan.

mixed-use — a project or limited area of development which combines different uses, such as housing, retail, and offices, within one building, project, or site.

National Historic Landmark (NHL) — buildings, historic districts, structures, sites, landscapes, and objects that possess exceptional values or quality in illustrating or interpreting the heritage of the United States. The NHL program is run by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior.

National Register of Historic Places — the nation's official list of historic, architectural, archeological, and cultural resources. It is maintained by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior.

node — a hub of activity

ordinance — a legally codified mechanism for regulating the actions of the public, i.e. a zoning "ordinance" or a subdivision "ordinance."

Open space — undeveloped natural or agricultural land which has no buildings or other built structures. Can include green space (land that is partly or completely covered with grass, trees, shrubs, or other vegetation), parks, community gardens, cemeteries, schoolyards, playgrounds, public seating areas, public plazas, and vacant lots.

overlay mapping — a series of maps drawn to the same scale on transparent media, each representing a specific resource (i.e. soils, topography, wetlands, buildings, or historic sites). Analyses may be made by combining maps to see the spatial interrelation of various resources.

overlay zoning — a type of specialized land use regulation utilizing an existing zoning ordinance as an enabling legal structure. A single type of special resource or feature (i.e. properties of historic or environmental significance) may be designated within an "overlay zone," in addendum to its existing zoning designation, thereby adding regulations in use without requiring a change in zone.

parklet — a repurposed part of the street (usually 1-2 parking spaces) that provides seating area or other amenities for people; can either be temporary or permanent structure

pedestrian flow — the direction, rate, and frequency of pedestrian movement in an area.

perspective (see architectural drawings)

plan (see architectural drawings)

preservation — providing for the continued use of old and historic buildings, sites, structures, and objects. The means for preservation include restoration, rehabilitation, reconstruction, and adaptive use. According to the Secretary of the Interior, it is the act or process of applying measures to sustain the existing form, integrity, and material of a building or structure and the existing form and vegetative cover of the site. It may include stabilization work, where necessary, as well as ongoing maintenance of the historic building materials.

public art — works of art that are located in public space; public art may exist in a variety of forms, from freestanding sculpture to well-crafted street lights and benches

public space — an open area within a village or urbanized area used by local residents and visitors and maintained as a public facility, e.g. parks or squares; also “public realm.”

reconstruction — the act or process of reproducing by new construction the exact form and detail of a vanished building, structure, or object, or a part thereof, as it appeared at a specific period of time.

rehabilitation — the act or process of returning a property to a state of utility through repair or alteration which makes possible an efficient contemporary use while preserving those portions or features of the property which are significant to its historical, architectural, and cultural values.

renovation — modernization of an old or historic structure. Unlike restoration or rehabilitation, renovation may not be consistent