



Staff Report

Write legislation/ordinance number here.	UDC Design Guidelines Update	Meeting Date: 5/14/2026
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UDC Guidelines Update – Building and Architecture

High-Level Details:

The UDC is updating its Design Guidelines, reviewing one section at a time throughout the year.

This report will consider the “Buildings and Architecture” Section.



Staff Contact

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Additional Departmental Input

Historic Staff and Arts Staff reviewed respective sections.

UDC Action

Staff is looking for input, edits, and revisions from the Committee.

The Committee has the option of

- approving the section as Staff has provided,
- approving with recommended edits, or
- request edits and to see the section again at the following meeting for approval.

If approved, the UDC will review an entire finalized Guideline document consisting of all approved sections at the end of the process for a FINAL approval. (its possible additional items may come up as other sections are reviewed)

Buildings and Architecture Section

Proposed Revision:

The proposed document includes statements from the RVA300 Master Plan in *blue italics* for reference. The proposed document attempts to offer priorities and strategies in reaching the Master Plan's goals. The document tries to balance specificity with flexibility, while also keeping document length in mind. Emphasis is also placed on items specifically relevant to the UDC and items that have come up previously in UDC reviews.

Sections in **GREEN** are new sections, sections in standard BLACK script are from the existing guidelines and proposed to remain.

The proposed title headings are: Site Selection, Building Placement, Architecture, Building Materials Selection, Resilient Uses, Modular Units, and Additional Requirements.

1. Site Selection

The Master Plan speaks to co-location and modernization of City facilities, while preserving significant structures and authenticity. The Guidelines detail the UDC's and Planning Commission's role in site selection as it relates to the Master Plan and Location, Character, Extent review. The Guidelines place emphasis on maximizing positive while minimizing negative externalities, especially for historically underinvested areas.

2. Building Placement

The Guidelines place importance on surrounding context while ensuring a proposed building adequately addresses the surrounding public space and street.

3. Architecture

The Master Plan places emphasis on maintaining and enhancing the City's unique character while allowing a variety of architectural styles. The Guidelines seeks to balance the need to "fit in" versus opportunities for interesting architecture that encourage civic pride.

Architecture should be interesting and balanced, while facilitating vitality at street level. Buildings should be welcoming to users and universally accessible. Buildings should follow zoning code requirements. Opportunities for building based art are encouraged. The Guidelines provide additional details for historic structures.

4. Building Materials Selection

The Richmond Sustainable Design Standards detail green material use, including durability of materials.

5. Resilient Uses

The Master Plan encourages co-location of facilities and increasing resiliency of such facilities. The Guidelines encourage flexible space design and community input.

6. Modular Units

The Urban Design Committee does not review modular school buildings. Modular school buildings will be directly reviewed by the City Planning Commission in accordance with City Planning Commission Resolution 2016-76 (CPCR – 2016-76).

All other uses of modular units on City property that will remain stationary beyond two years should be reviewed by the Urban Design Committee as a permanent building.

Even though modular units are technically temporary, landscaping should still be proposed adjacent to the structure. Shade should be prioritized, especially for educational uses, for both users and to reduce the heat load of buildings.