



**St. Louis Chapter
American Institute of Architects**

Guidelines

for the St. Louis AIA's Support of Design and Development Projects

The St. Louis Chapter of the American Institute of Architects believes that providing the support and promotion of good design is our responsibility to the people of the St. Louis region. Good design can and should be the norm, not the exception. Architecture, design and the quality of the built environment matters, and the citizens of St. Louis should have the best.

This document defines the guidelines and criteria by which the AIA may choose to publicly support projects that are being considered within the St. Louis region. We are specifically concerned with a value system that promotes good design and a high quality built environment. It is a system subject to interpretation but grounded in our craft, where special care is taken to make practical things that combine artistic excellence with technology.

The qualities of good design and a good built environment are complex, and in some cases, not fully understood; but decisions and judgments need to be made. By following these guidelines, we can objectively evaluate projects and plans, while allowing for the variety of architectural designs that make our environment so interesting.

Each of our members is free to speak independently, but in publicly supporting projects, by Chapter by-laws, the Board speaks for the Chapter.

In giving public support, we should:

- Always put the public good ahead of our interests.
- Take on important issues even if they are difficult and involve our members.
- Recognize that we may choose to support or oppose parts of a project or its concept but not its execution.
- Consider the opinions of the Chapter membership.
- Take the chance of being wrong in order to be timely and involved.
- If our position turns out to be incorrect, admit it, modify our position and apologize for the error.

Geographic Context

- 1 **Rivers** – This is a bi-state region that was established along our major rivers. Maintain that river focus aesthetically, economically and environmentally.
- 2 **Natural Systems** – Plan and design with our natural systems, not against them. Conserve natural areas, avoid flood plains, reduce impervious area and limit heat islands and light pollution.
- 3 **Central Focus** – Our region developed outward from the riverfront of Downtown St. Louis. Promote a focus on Downtown and the City of St. Louis as the regional core, the economic driver and the image of the St. Louis region. The health of the region depends on the health of St. Louis. Support the other established central business districts, cities, towns and neighborhoods in the region.
- 4 **People** – Support and educate our regional population, labor force, professionals, institutions and investors. Support diversity and inclusiveness.

Public Policy

- 5 **Regional Cooperation** – Support regional cooperation and the coordination of public policy. Encourage opportunities for good development and design.
- 6 **Sustainability** – Conserve energy and promote the use of renewable local materials of low energy content. Do more with less to be good stewards of our resources.
- 7 **Infrastructure** – Invest in our existing infrastructure before extending or duplicating it. Support density vs. sprawl. Support connections between existing centers. Promote pedestrian environments and mass transit.
- 8 **Existing Building Stock** – We have a stock of good quality structures that define our success and our identity as a region, including historic and landmark buildings. Support the preservation of significant historic structures and the renovation and conversion of existing buildings wherever feasible. Conserve our existing housing stock, neighborhoods and districts. Support demolition only when redevelopment is assured and the result is clearly a long term benefit.
- 9 **Institutions** – Respect the needs of our cultural and educational institutions. Support their programs and their outreach into the region, especially Downtown St. Louis.
- 10 **Organizations** – Respect and support the principles of our allied professional, environmental and artistic organizations as well as those who lead in educating and informing our region.

- 11 Codes and Regulations** – Promote zoning, building, energy and life safety codes and regulations that preserve the safety and quality of our built environment and that promote accessibility and sustainability.
- 12 Security** – Promote design principles that provide security such as Defensible Space and Community Policing Through Environmental Design (CPTED).

Building Projects

- 13 Process** – Good design does not occur by accident. It requires a process, a concerted effort and an informed client. The design effort should be apparent in the end result by concept, detail and uniqueness. Encourage public participation in important design processes, especially for public projects.
- 14 Context** – The design of most buildings should fit within their context and surroundings, whether built or natural. However, certain projects exist where there is value in standing out. Look for uniqueness that sets apart our institutions, public buildings and public spaces and creates a sense of place.
- 15 Function** – Evaluate a building for how well it supports its intended activities, perhaps the most basic criteria for good design. Its construction quality should be appropriate to its expected lifespan. Promote Universal Design principles to maximize accessibility.
- 16 Appeal** – Architecture, on both the exterior and interior, should appeal to the user as being correctly placed in the range from background structures to unique buildings. Look for an image that is appropriate to its function and its role in our society. Its appeal should come from external sculptural elements and internal space, light, materials and colors.
- 17 Composition** – A building’s organization and structure should be understandable to its users and should express its functions in its appearance. Its parts should fit together logically to create a whole.

Summary

The Chapter wishes to support good design in projects that reinforce the region's focus on the core City of St. Louis and other established centers; that invest in our existing infrastructure and building stock; and that use a sound design process leading to buildings that fit into their context, function well for their users, have an image appropriate to their function and role, and whose organization is understandable to the public.

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