

The Design Process

is an iterative series of actions that involves feedback loops from all stakeholders. Throughout this process, designers work collaboratively to generate ideas, negotiate design decisions, and explore new possibilities for a site, often using hand drawings, interactive tools, and public visioning sessions. **So how do we make good urban design decisions?**

1. Get to know the place

Get to know the area by researching its history, visiting and experiencing the place first hand, sketching, measuring, mapping, and talking with people who live and work there.



2. Engage through visualization

Make drawings, models and other visual materials that explain urban design ideas and planning concepts. Use these materials to engage in a conversation and to solicit ideas and feedback.



3. Think across scales

Look at all the issues and opportunities both broadly and specifically. Consider how a building or public space will be experienced from nearby and perceived from a distance. Think about how changes to a site can impact a block, a neighborhood, but also the city and even the region.



4. Anticipate short and long-term

Test a variety of possible scenarios to prompt questions about phasing, implementation and funding, and how changes to the local context can help shape the City's long-term policies on global issues, such as climate change, housing, transportation and public health.



5. Always strive to innovate

Think outside the box! Don't get stuck on old practices and don't be afraid to explore new solutions, these may produce a more innovative and improved outcome.



Urban Design Principles

for Planning New York City

At the Department of City Planning, the practice of urban design is concerned with the policies that shape our experiences of the built environment. The goal of these policies is to create a sense of civic pride and foster the enjoyment of the city for people of all ages, abilities and background. To do so, urban designers aim to create a well-knit fabric of buildings and public spaces and to improve people's experience through the city by crafting policies that serve the public good. By thinking across scales – from the bench to the building, to the block to the neighborhood, the borough to the city – we promote quality of the built environment in support of good quality of life. The principles are intended to be a resource internally for department staff and externally for those who are working to improve the livability of New York City's neighborhoods and those who share our commitment to expand, protect and promote our public realm.

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Good Urban Design:

Both reinforces and creates a *sense of place*.

New Yorkers love neighborhoods with a sense of identity and authenticity. Great urban design incorporates and celebrates a neighborhood's history, the culture of those who call it home, and the natural systems that underlie and surround it. Iconic buildings, vibrant public spaces, and natural areas can generate a powerful and unique sense of place. Those elements of urban design that are familiar throughout the city—recognizable building types, well-ordered streets, and waterfront esplanades—create a rich and welcoming urban environment.



Is open, accessible to everyone and *inclusive*.

The City uses policy and zoning tools to improve New Yorker's access to housing, open space, healthy food, and other essential neighborhood services. For instance, quality public space can be defined as balancing the needs of its users, pedestrian, bicyclists and motor vehicles, on any given street. By ensuring that privately owned public spaces and waterfronts are both visible and welcoming to passersby, and that affordable housing construction enjoys the same standard of design as its neighbors, our city will feel more inclusive to all.



Pays attention to *details*.

Good urban design spans multiple scales, from benches to planters, to large-scale planning and large-term initiatives. It requires attention to detail at every step in the planning and design process. With urban design leadership and vision, an abandoned rail line can become a world class park and a dilapidated street can emerge as a village commons. Good design does not have to cost more or take more time, it is rather about making strategic decisions at the initial stages of a proposal.



Provides a *sense of comfort*.

In 1916 New York City's first zoning regulations were established to address quality of life concerns, from appropriate separation of land uses to access to light and air. These core ideas remain integral to every urban design decision, more so as we now address a broader set of questions regarding public health, greater inclusion, and enjoyment across public spaces. Urban design supports the creation of vital street life by promoting a diverse range of uses to activate the ground floor of buildings that give each neighborhood a unique identity. People feel a sense of security and comfort walking through a well-knit network of buildings and public realm.

