

# Form & Character Development Permit Areas

## 1.1. Overview

### 1.1.1. AREAS

Lands designated as **Downtown Smithers, Multi-family Residential, and Highway 16 Commercial** and identified on Schedule: C.

### 1.1.2. PURPOSE

The Form and Character Development Permit Area (DPA) regulates the form and character of commercial and multi-family residential development in Smithers.

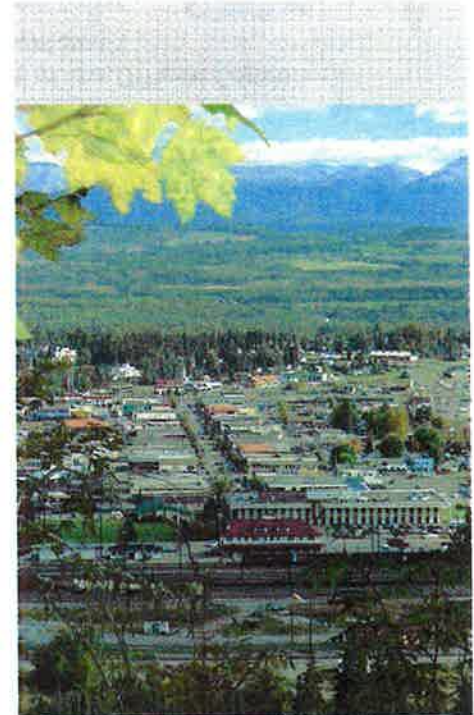
Objectives are to:

1. Ensure that the commercial core remains the focal point of the community;
2. Contribute to the existing character and identity of Smithers;
3. Ensure new developments fit appropriately into the context of existing neighbourhoods.

### 1.1.3. EXEMPTIONS

A Development Permit is not required for the construction, addition, or alteration of a building, provided the following:

1. The total value of the proposed construction is less than **\$75,000** as long as it adheres to the design guidelines. Only one of these exemptions will be granted to one property in a two-year period.
2. Single-family dwellings, duplexes, and semi-detached dwellings.
3. Construction that amounts to **less than 20%** increase in total floor area or a maximum of **28m<sup>2</sup> (300ft<sup>2</sup>)** of new floor area provided that the appearance of the building from the street on which the development fronts are not altered, and required parking and landscaping are provided.



role as the commercial, arts, and cultural heart of the community. The Charrette developed a range of urban design and policy strategies to build on the existing downtown form and character. Participants expressed a desire for a more contemporary interpretation and expression of the Alpine Theme broadened to include the rich cultural heritage, including First Nations history, as well as the natural and resource history of Bulkley Valley that have shaped the community.

The implementation of the Development Permit Areas ensures a continuity of work already completed as well as incorporates the vision that resulted from the OCP process.

## 1.2. General Guidelines

The following guidelines apply to all the Form and Character DPA's, both designated by land use and as shown on Schedule C. In this section, both general and specific guidelines are given for downtown commercial, Highway 16, and multi-family residential developments.

### 1.2.1. BASIC DESIGN APPROACH - SMITHERS ALPINE THEME

Developments shall be in accordance with the "Architectural Design Guidelines Alpine Theme" prepared for the Town of Smithers in 1997. These design guidelines have been applied successfully to the majority of new and renovated buildings in the downtown, resulting in the unique building character and streetscape. Although not required, elements of the design guidelines have also been successfully incorporated into development in other areas of Town.

The guidelines presented below are intended to supplement the existing Alpine Theme to encourage a broader, more contemporary interpretation of the alpine theme.

### 1.2.2. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

All design proposals should consider the design and construction requirements posed by the area's climate.

*Wind* - Hanging signs, parapet extensions, awnings and canopies should be constructed with sufficient bracing to withstand strong winds such as might be typical of the area.



example, provide safe and convenient walkways between the public street system and building entrance. Shared access is encouraged.

3. **Buffers.** Screen parking areas from sidewalks and other active open spaces using materials that provide a visual buffer while still allowing clear visibility into the parking areas to promote personal safety. Screening examples include landscaping, a trellis, or grillwork with climbing vines.

#### 1.2.4. BUILDING ORIENTATION & FORM

New development should ensure a good fit within existing or new neighbourhoods through architectural features and building proportions. Guidelines include:

- a. **Entrances.** Entrances should be reinforced architecturally to provide building identity and address. Commercial entries tend to be public, and residential entries tend to be private, and should therefore be designed accordingly. Where possible, locate entrances with access from public streets and sidewalks. Ground floor entries should be weather protected to provide comfort for pedestrians. Examples include awnings, covered entrances, or recessed entrances.
- b. **Orientation.** New projects should ensure that their siting, form, and scale does not block significant views and solar access from existing or anticipated development, and that shadowing impacts on adjacent buildings and useable open spaces are minimized.
- c. **Scale.** Building design elements, details, and materials should create a proportional and pedestrian scale building form. Where new development is taller than existing adjacent development, buildings and groups of buildings should transition in scale from larger to smaller developments.



Shared driveways reduces impacts on street orientation



THIS



NOT THIS



Roof lines, windows and entrances should reflect a vertical pattern rather than a horizontal pattern

- Natural and cut stone (i.e. granite);
- Natural wood including substantial timbers both milled and not;
- Unfinished concrete;
- Colours that harmonize with these materials;
- Red tiles, cedar shakes or shingles, or organic coloured metal roofs.
- Use transparent guardrails that allow sun penetration into the building.

b. **Architectural Styles.** Reflect the cultural history of Smithers, including First Nations, through tasteful building styles and materials that are reflective of the local history.

### 1.2.7. SIGNAGE

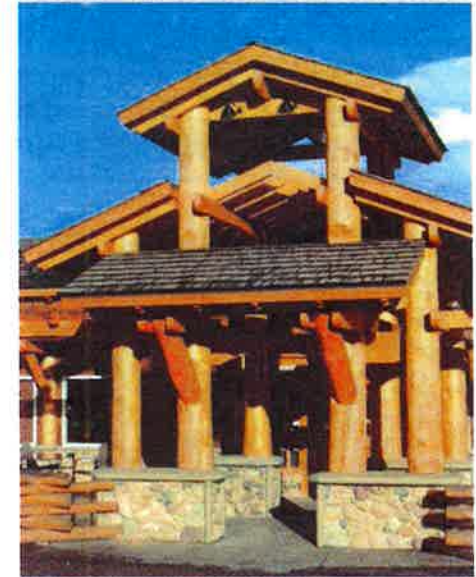
Regulation of sign size and type is necessary to set upper limits on business sign competition and to prevent an escalation in sign size, animation and flash at the expense of pedestrian scale, architectural character and streetscape. Guidelines include:

1. **Branding.** New developments should be creative in incorporating the intent of these guidelines into corporate logos, brands and identities as expressed in the design and materials of signage.
2. **Scale & Presence.** Commercial buildings should provide signage that identifies the business and is appropriately scaled. When new signage is applied to an existing building, it should provide the appearance that the signage was part of the original building design. Signage should be in proportion to the look of the entire building.

### 1.2.8. LIGHTING

Lighting has a powerful effect on the overall ambience, safety and security of a building. Guidelines include:

- a. **Location.** Directed lighting should be provided on the face of commercial buildings and at main entries to multi-family buildings.



- b. **Cluster Units.** Larger residential developments should be separated into smaller groups or clusters to maintain a residential scale and image. Dwelling units in smaller groups facilitate residential interaction and neighbor surveillance.
- c. **Scale and massing.** The scale and massing of buildings should be broken up to reduce the visual impact of buildings and to create variation and visual interest.
- d. **Maintain a ground orientation.** Where possible, provide for direct access from the fronting street to individual ground floor units.
- e. **Facade.** Minor visual breaks in the façade should be used to further break up building mass, to accentuate individual entrances and units, and to create variation and enhance visual interest from public and private open spaces.



Maintain physical and visual access to building entrances



Entrance to these townhouses orient towards the street

- Providing art (such as a mosaic, mural, decorative masonry pattern, sculpture, relief, etc.) over a substantial portion of the wall surface.
- Employing different texture, colours, and materials to articulate and break up the wall's surface and make it visually more interesting.
- Providing special lighting, a canopy, awning, horizontal trellis or other pedestrian oriented features that break up the size of the blank wall's surface and add visual interest.
- Incorporating them into a patio or sidewalk café.

d. **Sensitively integrate large retailers.** Large scale commercial developments are encouraged to locate within the downtown provided they sensitively integrate into the existing streetscape and established urban fabric by:

- Incorporating small shops into facades fronting public streets and open spaces;
- Incorporating frequent entrances and display windows to be consistent with the existing building and façade rhythm in the downtown;
- Locating off-street surface parking to the side or rear of the building.

#### 1.4. Specific Guidelines: Highway 16 Commercial

Highway 16 is a key transportation corridor through the community and gateway into the downtown. A standard of design is important for this area as it provides the initial impression presented to travelers as they pass through Smithers as well as a local transportation network.

The character of development within the Highway 16 corridor should reflect certain elements of the Alpine Theme; yet acknowledge that larger scale commercial buildings should realistically interpret the Alpine Theme more broadly. Specific objectives of the Highway 16 commercial corridor are to:

- Ensure that the form and character create a pleasant and welcoming experience for both visitors and community members;
- Reinforce the relationship of Hwy. 16 as a gateway to downtown Smithers;
- Encourage designs that respect and respond positively to the surrounding natural and built environment.



Blank walls should be screened using planters and trellises

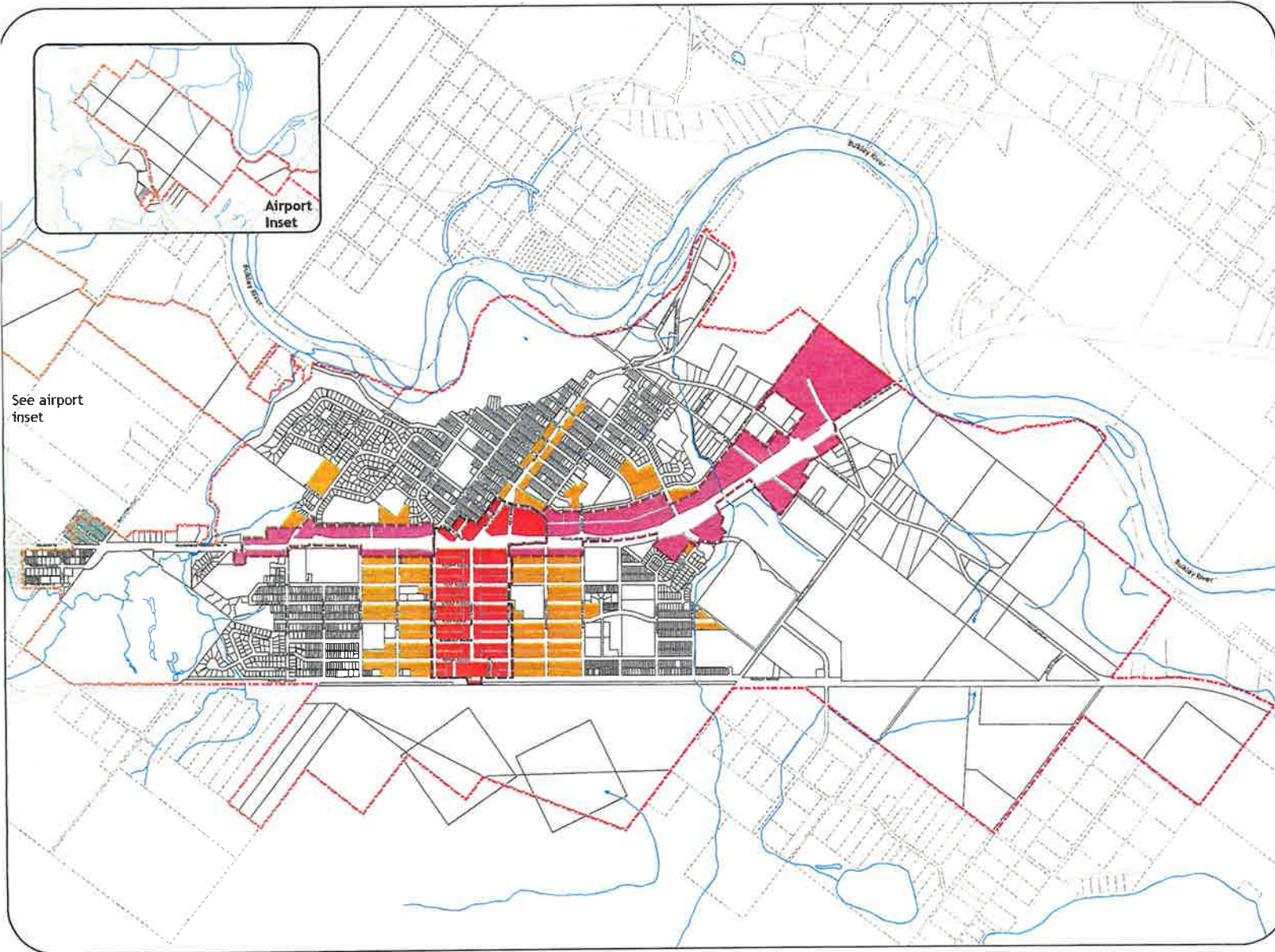


An example of integrating large-scale retailers into the downtown



Off-street parking should not be located between the front of a building and the sidewalk

# Schedule C: Form & Character Development Permit Areas



**Town of Smithers Official  
Community Plan**

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**Schedule C: Form & Character  
Development Permit Areas**

- Town Boundary
- Downtown
- Highway 16 Corridor
- Multi Family Residential

0 0.2 0.4 0.6 0.8 1  
Kilometres

**Smithers**