Non-Western Architecture and the Sellwood-Moreland Design Guidelines

A report by the Sellwood-Moreland Improvement League (SMILE) Land Use Committee

February 2021

"The house is also divided into the underworld, human world, and spiritual world."

-Lisa McGalliard and Natalie Whitney
Traditional Models of the Indonesian House[1]

This report was motivated by a comment at a Portland Planning and Sustainability Commission (PSC) meeting. At the July 14, 2020, PSC work session on the Design Overlay Zone Amendments (DOZA), Senior Planner Lora Lillard stated *"many of the more traditional architectural based solutions promote a western architectural style that has been removed in these standards through DOZA: vertical windows, cornices, base-middle-top … We opened up the types of architecture to support people… and forwards our equity goals"*[2]. We were concerned that the *Sellwood-Moreland Main Street Design Guidelines* we and the community had written unintentionally advocated Western architecture.

In this report, we describe that, while present day Sellwood and Westmoreland were built primarily by European immigrants and their descendants, many of the 'main street' design elements described in the *Sellwood-Moreland Main Street Design Guidelines* allow and encourage non-western architecture.

We sought examples of non-western architecture to educate ourselves and readers, evaluate the Main Street Design Guidelines, and answer the question 'Do the Main Street guidelines exclude or fail to encourage non-Western architecture?' We started with online student research projects completed for a class in Non-Western Architecture at the University of Idaho[3]. We augmented the list with examples from pre-colonial America, Morocco, and China. For each example, we note the main street design elements present. The following pages contain 21 examples.

[1] https://www.webpages.uidaho.edu/arch499/nonwest/indonesia/INDEX.HTM
[2] https://youtu.be/DuwC4Vb-XSs, time 43:30.
[3] https://www.webpages.uidaho.edu/arch499/nonwest/research.htm

The *Sellwood-Moreland Main Street Design Guidelines*[4] highlight local design and building patterns, identify community design preferences, and document a vision for an evolving community with vibrant main streets and an enhanced streetscape. The guidelines were developed by representatives from the Sellwood-Moreland Improvement League (SMILE) Land Use Committee, the Sellwood-Moreland Business Alliance (SMBA), donated support from PDX Main Streets and technical support from design consultants Forage Design, and Qamar Architecture & Town Planning. The year-and-a-half-long public process included public workshops and walking tours, community surveys, outreach at local markets, studying local design patterns, outreach by SMILE list serves, Nextdoor postings, participant lists, Facebook and Instagram, articles in the news, and through SMBA outreach lists. The SMILE Board of Directors approved the guidelines on May 20, 2020. The 'at-a-glance' section of the guidelines is included in this report.

Many of the main street design elements are found in nonwestern architecture. Especially common elements are base-middle-top, stepbacks, and human-scaled vertical windows. Most examples we found contained at least one main street design element. In our testimony to the PSC on DOZA, we asked that main street design elements be included as options in the Community Design Standards and that one element be required in the Main Street overlay. With the exception of the winter houses of the Cowlitz and Clackamas Nations, all of the examples presented in the following pages would satisfy our proposed requirement in the Main Street Overlay, but perhaps not existing zoning or building codes.

[4] http://www.sellwood.org/2020/08/01/sellwood-main-street-design-initiative/

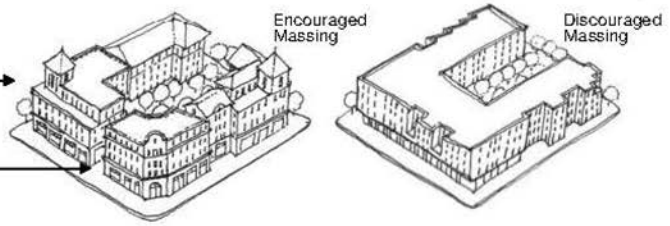
SELLWOOD-MORELAND "GUIDELINES AT A GLANCE"

Encouraged Mixed Use Design Patterns + Building Form

- **Upper Level Stepbacks** (maintain density and minimize scale contrasts)
- **Base-Middle-Top**
  Articulated rooflines
  Horizontal bands/cornices
  Storefronts
- **Main Street Storefronts**
  Recessed Entries, raised sills, display windows with clerestory windows above
- **Cost Efficient Design**
  Stacked floorplates (no cantilevers)
  Vertically + horizontally aligned windows/doors
  Avoid arbitrary and abstract Form articulation
- **Windows**
  Human-scale proportioning
  Tall vertical inset windows
  Divided panes in larger windows
  Symmetrical window patterns
  Avoid excessive material framing
- **Harmonious Design on All Sides**
  No blank walls, consistent materials
- **Corner Treatments**
  Chamfers, Entries, Arches, Balconies, Simple Ornament or Artistic Details
- **Balconies + Bays**

Images above and below demonstrate main street patterns, harmonious design on all sides, and tall vertical inset windows that reflect human scale proportions. (Illustrations by Laurence Qamar) These illustrations are intended to show all the features described on this page. It is not expected that all features would be included in one new development.

- **Building Massing/Building Form**
  Divide large building projects into smaller multiple buildings
- **Create Mid-block Passthroughs, Courtyards + Gathering Spaces**
  where possible



- **Relate to Neighborhood Patterns**
  Minimize appearance of scale contrasts with newer larger buildings through main street base-middle-top, storefront design, etc

- **Materials & Craftsmanship**
  Limit number of materials and use natural materials (brick, stucco, concrete, wood, clapboard)
- **Arches at Entries, Upper Windows & Ground Level**
- **Streetscape Design & Pedestrian Amenities**
  Landscaping, street seats and benches, public art, bike racks, tree grates, sidewalk awnings.
- **Pedestrian Oriented Signage**
  Neon and Portland marquee blade signs
- **Facade Lighting**
- **Utilities Screening**

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Mayan Architecture - Pyramids

SMILE Guidelines:

Stepbacks

Bottom, middle, top

Use of natural materials

Harmonious design on all sides

Mayan Architecture- Labna

Labna was a minor ceremonial center built around 850 A.D. At least 60 chultunes (cisterns) were found within the Labna area, leading archeologists to believe that up to 3000 people might have lived within the city limits. The Arch is located at the end of a ceremonial road. It formed one side of a quadrangle with other structures that have since fallen down.

SMILE Guidelines:

Arches at entries

Simple ornaments or artistic details

Use of natural materials

Taos Pueblo

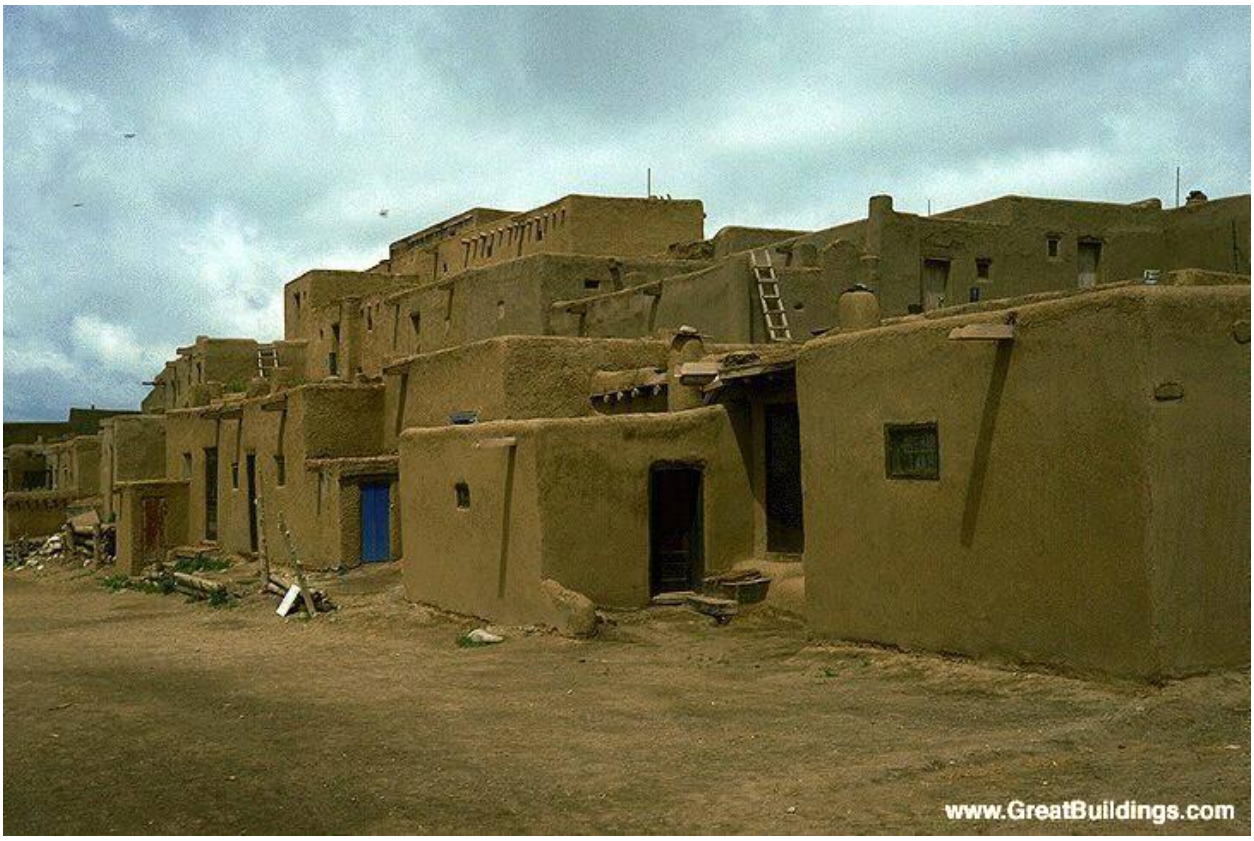


Photo by Howard Davis. © Howard Davis. Trademark of Taos Pueblo

SMILE Guidelines:

Use of natural materials

Upper level stepbacks

Harmonious design on all sides

Pueblo dwellings and modern pueblo architecture

SMILE Guidelines:

Upper level stepbacks

Human scaled inset windows

Arched windows

Natural materials

Clackamas and Cowlitz Nations

Sellwood-Moreland is located in the traditional territory of the Clackamas and Cowlitz Nations[5] . Their single-story winter houses were built of planks and bark, using natural materials that were abundant[6]. These buildings could house many families and were often built partially underground to provide thermal insulation.

Cowlitz Plank House, drawing by James Swan[6]

Clackamas Chinook Plank house at Willamette Falls[6]

Cathlapotle Plankhouse, Chinook Indian Nation, Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge[7]

SMILE Guidelines: Materials & Craftsmanship

[5] https://native-land.ca/
[6] https://ndnhistoryresearch.com/2016/12/31/houses-of-the-oregon-tribes/
[7] https://www.fws.gov/refuge/Ridgefield/visit/Cathlapotle_Plankhouse.html

Japanese Castles

Windows: Human scale, symmetric, vertical, inset

Stepbacks

Base/ middle/ top

Courtyard

Corner treatments

Himeji Castle
Japan-guide.com

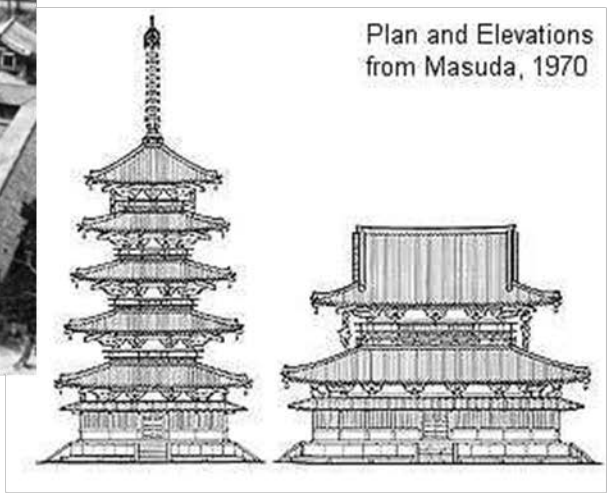
Paul Long
https://www.webpages.uidaho.edu/arch499/nonwest/japan2/castles.htm

Japanese Temples

Courtyard

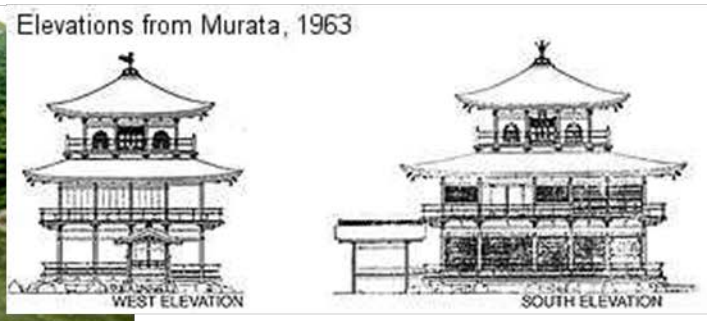
Horyu-ji

Base/ middle/ top



Corner treatments

Stepbacks



Kinkaku-ji, or Golden Pavilion

Balcony

Arches

Tets Takemoto
https://www.webpages.uidaho.edu/arch499/nonwest/japan3/INDEX.HTM

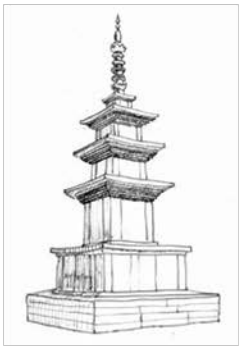
Korean Temples

Corner treatments

Balconies

Base/ middle/ top

Pul-guk-sa Temple
http://eng.bulguksa.or.kr/bbs/board.php?bo_table=relic&wr_id=75



Temple pagodas

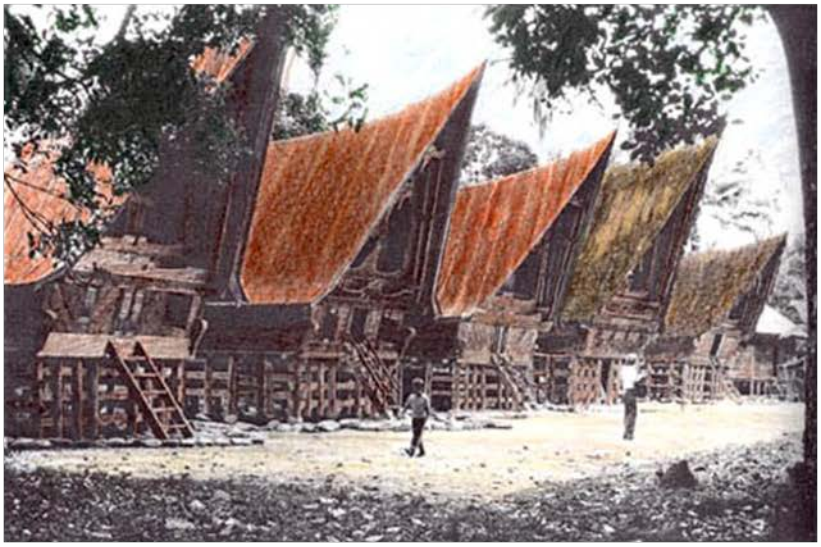
Morgan Barry
https://www.webpages.uidaho.edu/arch499/nonwest/korea/index.htm

Traditional Indonesian Houses

Base/middle/top

"The house is also divided into the underworld, human world, and spiritual world."

Minangkabau house and rice barns at Lima Kaum



Toba Batak village, Ambarita, Samosir Island

Lisa McGalliard and Natalie Whitney
https://www.webpages.uidaho.edu/arch499/nonwest/indonesia/INDEX.HTM

Pagodas in Katmandu

Stepbacks

Base/ middle/ top

Durbur Square

Windows: Human scale, symmetric, vertical

Bay windows (not shown)

Anju Thapa
https://www.webpages.uidaho.edu/arch499/nonwest/nepal/index.htm

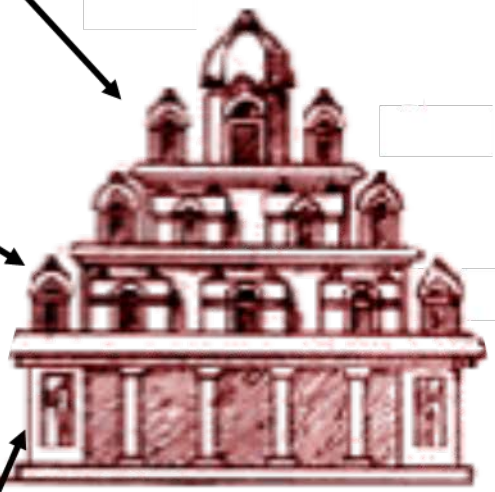
Indian Buddhist Vihara

(religious building that houses Buddha images, generally built in the center of a courtyard)

Stepbacks

Courtyard

Arches



Base/ middle/ top

Windows: Human scale, symmetric, vertical

Miranda Anderson
https://www.webpages.uidaho.edu/arch499/nonwest/thaiweb/wat.htm

Mahabodhi Temple, India
Wikipedia

Houses in Jaisalmer, India

Balconies

Base/ middle/ top

A typical cobbled street in Jaisalmer

Windows: Human scale, Vertical, divided

Arches (not shown)

Balmiki Bhattacharya
https://www.webpages.uidaho.edu/arch499/Jaisalmer/jaisalmercover.htm

Chefchaouen, Morocco

Google Maps Street View

Windows: human scale, symmetric, vertical, inset

Upper level courtyard

Recessed entry

Arches

All buildings have an base, middle and top

No blank walls, consistent materials

Natural Materials: ceramic tiles, stucco, stone and brick

Chefchaouen, Morocco

Google Maps Street View

Arches

Windows:
human scale, inset, symmetric

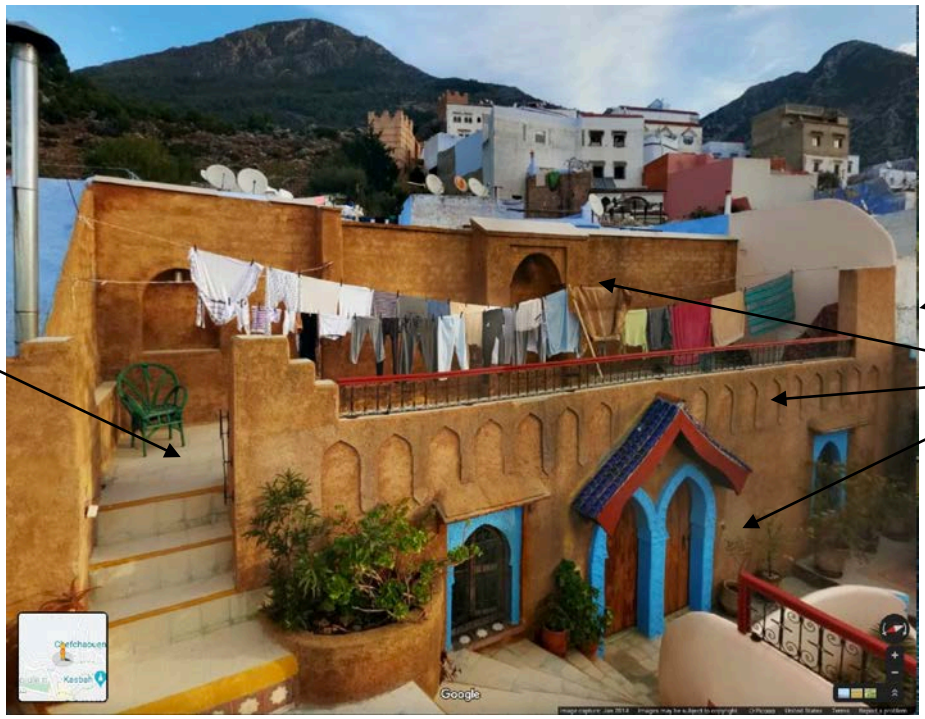
Buildings have an base, middle and top

Natural Materials: stucco, ceramic tile, stone and brick

No blank walls, consistent materials

Chefchaouen, Morocco

Google Maps Street View



Lijiang, China

Articulated rooflines

Balconies

Windows: inset, symmetric

Recessed entry

Benches

Courtyard, gathering place

No blank walls, consistent materials

Building has a base, middle, top

Artistic details throughout

Natural Materials: wood, ceramic tile, stone and brick

Beijing, China

Articulated rooflines

Balconies

Arches

Windows: human scale, symmetric

Recessed entry

Courtyard, gathering place

Building has a base, middle, top

Artistic details throughout

Natural Materials: wood, ceramic tile and brick

No blank walls, consistent materials

Lijiang, China

Balconies

Windows: human scale, symmetric

Buildings have base, middle, top and articulated rooflines

No blank walls, consistent materials

Natural Materials: wood, ceramic tile and brick

Artistic details throughout

Zhaoxing, China

Balconies

Windows: human scale, symmetric

Courtyard, gathering place

Buildings have base, middle, top, Stepbacks, and articulated rooflines

Village blends into the landscape and has a well defined gateway

Natural Materials: wood, ceramic tile and brick

No blank walls, consistent materials

Artistic details throughout

Beijing, China

Articulated rooflines

Windows: human scale, symmetric, vertical

Balconies

Courtyard, gathering place

Natural Materials: wood, ceramic tile and brick

No blank walls, consistent materials

Building has a base, middle, top

Artistic details throughout

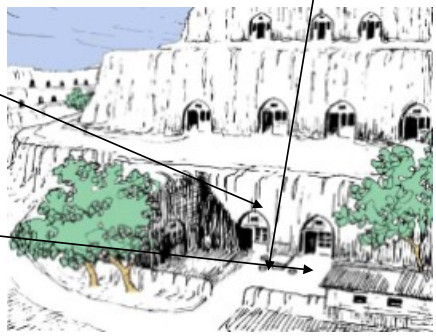
Chinese Earth Shelters or Cave Dwellings

Cliffside or Vaulted Cave Dwellings

Human scale windows

Large windows divided into smaller panes

Courtyards & gathering spaces



Arches at entries

Paul Long
https://www.webpages.uidaho.edu/arch499/nonwest/china/other.html