

# City of Spearfish Residential Design Guidelines for Multi-Family / Apartment Housing

For use in the Infill,  
Development Review District (DRD), and rezoning applications.

## INTRODUCTION

Quality exterior design is important in maintaining the overall vitality and viability of any community. This is especially true in multi-family housing where designing for the size of the building can be a significant challenge. Walls are taller and longer than detached single family homes. Repeated entry door locations often appear motel-like.

A well-thought design does not have to be expensive. Simple choices that require no additional cost include creative use of:

- One or more exterior colors
- Subtle changes in building material types
- Balanced variety in window and door patterns

Going beyond these basic principles, the following can add even more richness to the design:

- Projected wall sections around windows and doors
- Individual entries defined by small patios and porches
- A variety of roof forms to break up a long roof
- Accent exterior veneers such as brick, masonry, rock and wood

## APPLICATION OF THESE GUIDELINES

These design guidelines are tools to assist in the decision making process for all that seek City Council approval for infill, rezoning, or the ongoing administration of the DRD zoning district. For properties already zoned DRD, before building permits are issued for any residential structure containing more than three units, the builder must submit for City of Spearfish City Council approval and demonstrate they have met the intent of these guidelines. These guidelines are not intended to be all-inclusive, but are intended to direct the design of the community in a departure from the customary “box” that is prevalent in our multi-family neighborhoods.

## Building Massing and Design

All buildings need three clearly identifiable sections, regardless of their height:



Each of these sections should be distinguished from each other represented by change in building material and colors, horizontal and vertical changes in exterior wall alignment, size and placement of windows, projected roof sections, etc. At the ground floor, patios and porches serve as a focal point on this building, and create a transition from the taller upper floors to the ground level. The first two levels of the building are accented with brick to visually ‘ground’ the building. The top level has varying roof forms. On the ground level, the exterior roof over the patio reduces the apparent height. The three story building above would seem much taller without this feature.

The example to the right illustrates a variation of the “Top, Middle, Base” concept by changing colors on the end units and providing two different styles of entry designs. Still, this design retains the Top, Middle, Base concept by creating interesting entry ways on the ground floor, varying window types on the second floor, and varying roof lines at the top of the structure.



Another way to deal with massing of structure in multi-family design is to consider the building exterior as if it were one large home. This home in Telluride, CO is three individual dwelling units, yet it appears as one primary structure. Think of the building as a large, stately home. Mixing window sizes and types for each

unit helps reduce the predictability and uniformity that causes most multi-family architectural building design to read more as a hotel than a residence.

### **Community Design Questionnaire**

In 2014, the City of Spearfish asked for input from developers and citizens regarding what the minimum standards for multi-family housing design should include. The following design attributes were determined to be the most important:

- Change in exterior materials and colors of any type. (note lower level brick, upper level siding)
- Shifts in exterior wall planes both horizontally and vertically
- Accent features on windows, or variety in window types
- Entry areas identified by porches, or other architectural feature
- Breaks in roofline to avoid long stretches of exterior walls



Example of change in direction and material choice (left).

## **Window Details**

Window placement is an important design element that can add creativity to an otherwise plain roofline. In this example, the design choice was a transomed extension of the windows in order to add more interest to the roof line and the exterior wall. This type of solution is between \$5,000 and \$6,000. Considering the average price of a new multi-family building can reach near one million dollars, investing in two or three of these details are a cost effective way of enhancing the project.



Other methods such as framing the windows with shutters, lower lintels or small French balconies provide additional variety in window design (below).

Window proportion and placement is an important consideration and needs to be in harmony and, if relevant, as historically accurate as possible with the overall design of the building. Windows on this structure are balanced in size to the exterior wall.



## **Conclusion**

This represents a basic design expectation that the City of Spearfish encourages. Specific design solutions should be proposed by the applicant and reviewed by the Planning Commission and City Council. The surrounding neighborhood context is an important design factor and if a style prevails, then that should be incorporated into the design in some fashion.