

Ensure Great Urban Design

Downtown Dallas must embrace great urban design in order to become a premier city center. **The ways that the built fabric relates to streets, encourages interaction, and supports diverse economic health are all critical to ensuring the long-term success of city centers.**

In order for Downtown Dallas to further emerge as a thriving urban

core, future development projects and building renovations must contribute to an exciting, attractive and enjoyable urban form.

There are many challenges. Despite a historical development pattern of walkable streets, pedestrian-oriented ground floors, and a rich palette of architectural styles, much of the CBD's existing urban fabric is full of "holes," leaving few areas of consistent building frontages and block coverage.



The combination of a well-designed multi-modal public realm and consistent streetwall with contemporary and historic buildings helps create a vibrant urban environment.

In addition to unattractive surface parking lots and vacant properties and buildings, there are many building façades, sterile plazas and parking structures that adversely impact pedestrian comfort and walkability. To truly change the way pedestrians, bicyclists and transit users experience Downtown Dallas on a regular basis, buildings and property edges must become more hospitable, especially at the ground level.

Working in concert with the public realm guidelines outlined in the Create Vibrant Streets and Public Spaces Transformative Strategy discussion, private realm guidelines are a key priority of the 360 plan. The recommended urban design guidelines are instrumental in establishing an educated dialogue about urban design through a Peer Review Committee or other mechanism that directs developers, the design community and City leaders toward appropriate, preferred and innovative ways of achieving the vision of a vibrant Downtown. Design guidelines provide direction on the treatment of ground floor uses, pedestrian interaction and access, building massing and articulation, and integrating sustainability as a key component of building design, helping to transform the design and development process to maximize public benefit and boost urban vitality. They also aim to enhance desirable qualities that are unique to the history and context of Downtown Dallas.

DESIGN GUIDELINES

The guidelines on subsequent pages are intended to guide development and investment within the whole of the CBD, ensuring that buildings respect each other and contribute positively to the overall Downtown experience while expressing individuality. As properties are developed or redeveloped, these guidelines will help complete the picture of complementary, balanced and lively public and private realms throughout Downtown.

These guidelines comprise strong recommendations for how individual property owners and developers should develop their land and buildings so that they are supportive of the Downtown vision. They should be used as the basis for voluntary design review of all Downtown development projects, either through a Peer Review Committee or similar mechanism. However, to begin to establish and support strong pedestrian-oriented transit nodes, corridors as distinct, high-quality places, the guidelines should be made mandatory (and further detailed as a set of standards) for properties that:

- Are within 300 feet of an existing or planned fixed-rail transit station (see the Expand Transit and Realize TOD Potential section for additional information);
- Face an existing or proposed park, plaza or other open space;
- Are located along a Streetcar Boulevard, regardless of station location;
- Are located in the Zones addressed in the Main Street District Retail Activation Strategy; and
- Receive public funds for development or redevelopment.

OVERALL PRINCIPLES

As a foundation for the design guidelines, several basic urban design principles outline desirable characteristics that all Downtown buildings should possess and provide overall direction for the specific design guidelines. Buildings and other private realm improvements must:

1. Reinforce the relationship between the street and building edge

Buildings need to respect the way that people best interact with and feel most at ease around them. Meaning, they should be designed for pedestrians – not for automobiles passing by – who should be able to experience an attractive and comfortable realm in which to walk, sit, eat or socialize. The design of this environment should pay particular attention to the pedestrian at the street level, but should also ensure that the first several stories of the structure engage people with appropriate massing and detail.



2. Respect surroundings with context-sensitive designs

Developments should reflect and contribute to individual District identity and character by respecting specific historic, cultural and ecological contexts. Buildings should also respond to the function and role/responsibility of public spaces and the adjacent streets on which they are located. Similarly, buildings must engage with and promote transit use, particularly at or near rail transit stations.



3. Contribute to a positive, memorable urban experience

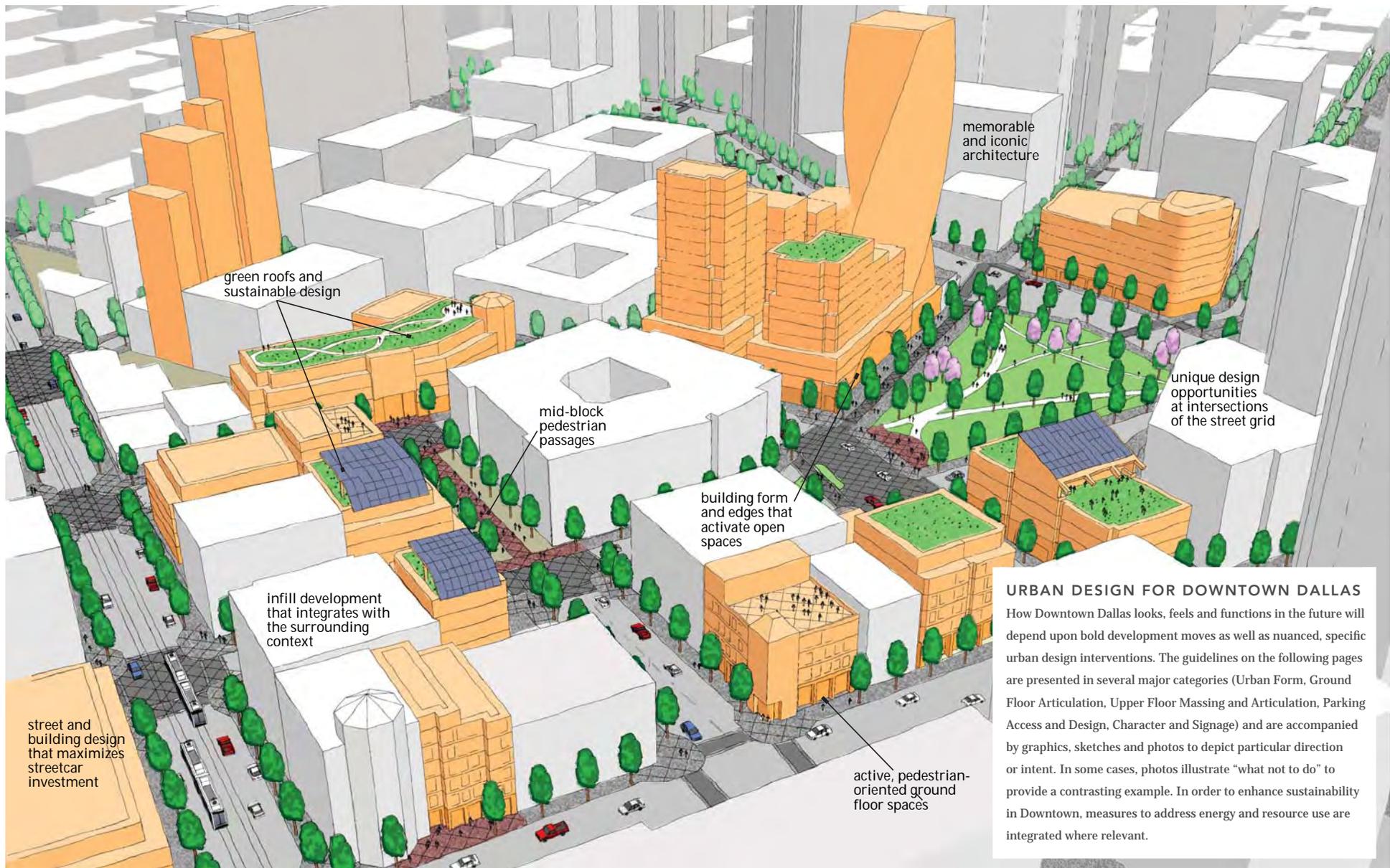
Since buildings have a long life span, new developments have the opportunity to contribute to a memorable urban fabric. Dense urban environments like Downtown Dallas must include buildings that create an identifiable skyline as well as an engaging pedestrian experience. Buildings should also plan for future flexibility, allowing for adaptability to new trends of street-level animation and upper-floor uses.



4. Support a sustainable built environment

The built form should strongly embrace sustainable design and development by responding to Dallas's climate conditions. New developments and renovations to existing built fabric must create public and private environments that maximize all opportunities for people to live, work or visit Downtown via multiple transportation options. Buildings should also plan for future flexibility, allowing for adaptability to new trends, including street-level animation, as well as incorporate the latest technologies to place less burden on existing infrastructure systems and reduce resource consumption.

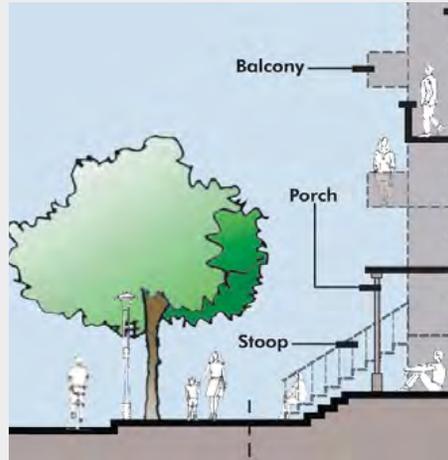




URBAN FORM

A. Setbacks

- A1.** Setbacks should relate to the ground floor context (e.g. 3-5' for restaurants), are consistent to support a particular land use (e.g. for a row of townhouses), and support public realm objectives (e.g. wider sidewalks or street tree canopy)
- A2.** Allow setback exceptions on a case-by-case basis when one or more of the following conditions is present:
- Prominent civic building such as a museum, institution or performance venue
 - Public plaza is desired (e.g. at a key gateway location)
 - Adjacent to an historic landmark
 - Noise-sensitive or incompatible contexts (e.g. next to freeway)
 - Dedicated easements for outdoor dining or other enhancements to the pedestrian experience.
- A3.** Respect historic contexts to provide a continuous streetwall with limited or no ground-floor setbacks
- A4.** Encourage buildings to occupy a minimum of 90% of the entire property width along the sidewalk at ground level



Residential setbacks should be used to engage buildings with the public realm through porches, stoops and balconies.



Setbacks and dense landscaping are effective ways of mitigating the impacts of freeway adjacencies, especially for residential uses.



Setbacks and/or easements should be utilized to foster lively outdoor dining areas.



Setbacks for prominent civic or institutional buildings are appropriate and can often times create new civic space.



New infill development should help knit together the urban fabric by seamlessly fitting in with existing buildings and creating a continuous streetwall.

URBAN FORM

B. Height and Orientation

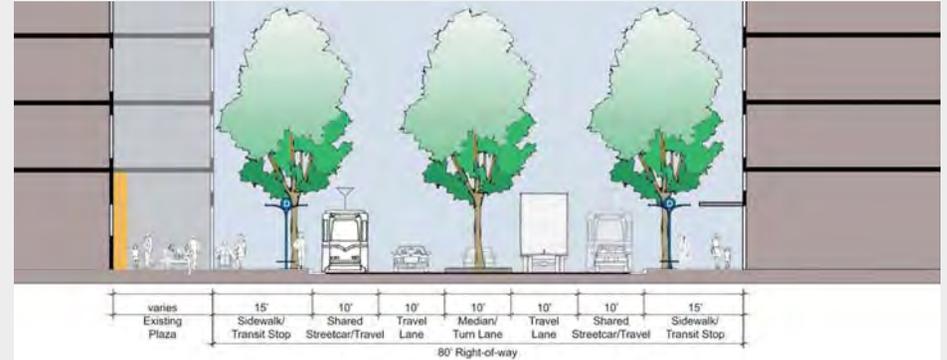
- B1.** Ensure building heights from the back of the sidewalk define the street relative to the street classification width to ensure a strong sense of enclosure and urban experience for street users. For example, Neighborhood Streets in the Dallas Farmers Market district should utilize an ideal height-to-width ratio of 1:1.5 to reinforce the lower-scale residential character; Ross Avenue in the Arts District might utilize a ratio of 2:1 or greater to better frame the wide street and support the activity of a potential streetcar
- B2.** Ensure minimum ground-floor height of 15'
- B3.** Respect changing grids by orienting building placement to respond to intersecting streets, view corridors (from or to the site), and unique parcel shapes
- B4.** Require buildings within 300' of rail transit stations to present primary entrances and active uses (e.g. ground-floor retail/restaurants or residential stoops, upper-floor offices or residential balconies) along primary street or passage frontages
- B5.** Require buildings fronting a public plaza, park or open space to embrace the site with primary entrances and active ground- and upper-floor uses



Orienting buildings at the intersection of Downtown's changing grids creates opportunities for special views and iconic architecture.



Rail transit corridors and stops are where buildings must have primary entrances and active uses.



District Connectors and Streetcar Boulevards should have appropriate proportions and design to frame the wide street and support a range of modes.

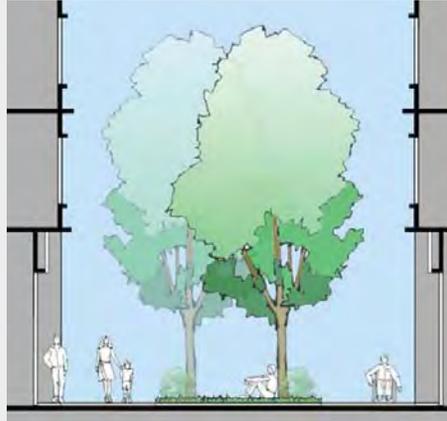


Buildings should frame public plazas and parks, as well as primary entrances and active ground floor uses to activate the open space.

URBAN FORM

C. Access and Circulation

- C1.** Encourage multiple public sidewalk entrances to buildings (i.e. limit single-entrance lobbies or retail courts wherever appropriate and possible)
- C2.** Avoid walled or gate access-controlled entries onto sidewalks wherever possible (other than primary building entrance lobbies/courtyards)
- C3.** New tunnels, skybridges and other grade-separated circulation systems are not allowed
- C4.** Provide appropriate site access based on street classification (e.g. require primary pedestrian entrances and strictly limit driveway cuts along Streetcar Boulevards)
- C5.** Encourage parking access via alleys or service lanes where existing; for new developments, require alley-loaded parking wherever possible
- C6.** For blocks longer than 300', design and integrate multi-use mid-block pedestrian and bicycle connections including passages (mews, paseos) wherever possible to improve overall connectivity (see the Create Vibrant Streets and Public Spaces Transformative Strategy discussion regarding the Circulation and Open Space frameworks: Passages)
- C7.** Design access to visitor-oriented uses (e.g. hotels and "destination" restaurants/retailers) to minimize pedestrian/vehicle conflicts. Loading valet parking at the curb is recommended for the Main Street, Thanksgiving Commercial Center and West End Historic districts to facilitate access



Mid-block passages should be well-designed, comfortable and attractive to encourage walkability.



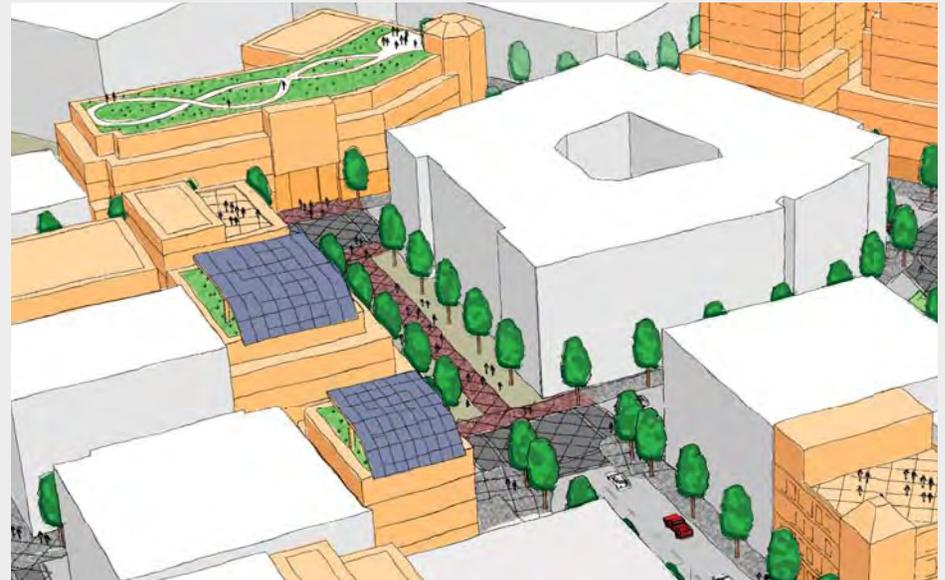
Skybridges and tunnels drain pedestrian activity from the street and should not be allowed as part of any new Downtown development.



Buildings should have multiple doorways and entries to encourage interaction with the sidewalk and street environment.



Alleys should be attractive places that allow for service access, parking where appropriate, and pedestrian passage.



Mid-block passages should break up large blocks and link with the overall street system to boost connectivity throughout Downtown.

GROUND FLOOR ARTICULATION

A. General Guidelines

A1. Locate ground floor uses along the building edge to actively engage the pedestrian realm in the street right-of-way

- Retail storefronts, cafés and restaurants (including outdoor dining) where appropriate
- Common areas (e.g. entrance lobbies)
- Minimize private ground floor uses or uses that require privacy
- Minimize passive uses fronting the street façade such as parking, utilities, etc

A2. Maximize use of transparent, non-colored, non-reflective glass windows

A3. Provide generously-sized awnings, metal awning screens and other vertical screens to provide shade for glass windows/doors while preserving transparency

A4. Discourage uninterrupted blank walls or façades. Where such blank walls are necessary, apply landscape screens, display boxes/merchandise displays, light patterns, material variations or other mitigation measures to enhance visual interest and minimize heat gain/reflectivity to sidewalk

A5. Animate existing blank façades and ground floors of parking structures with pedestrian friendly uses:

- Cafés and kiosks (flowers, produce, books, magazine, etc) food carts
- Changing art exhibitions
- Interactive “light and sound” shows
- Green walls

A6. Activate edges of existing surface parking lots with:

- Cafés, food carts or kiosks
- Pergolas or trellises (ensuring that ground landscaping such as hedges and seasonal plantings is below 30” in height)



Ground floors should have awnings, pedestrian-oriented signage, and tall, clear windows, doorways and entryways.



Landscaped walls make use of rainwater and soften harsh building edges.



Innovative display and lighting techniques create nighttime activity and enhance safety.



Display windows, kiosks and casual seating are effective ways to activate blank building façades.



Avoid building designs that result in uninterrupted blank walls or façades facing the pedestrian realm.

GROUND FLOOR ARTICULATION

B. Commercial and Institutional

- B1.** Incorporate covered arcades or walkways into buildings along the street frontage to afford climate protection to pedestrians
- B2.** Encourage customer service, classroom or retail oriented functions on the ground floor to engage the public and activate the pedestrian realm
- B3.** Design building façades to allow private uses while maintaining eyes on the street
- B4.** In multi-tenant situations, encourage tenant information as well as elevators/stairwells to be visible from the street level



Spacious, well-lit covered arcades or colonnades provide shelter from the elements for strolling, dining and displays.



Commercial and institutional buildings should incorporate public-oriented uses and spaces to encourage pedestrian activity.



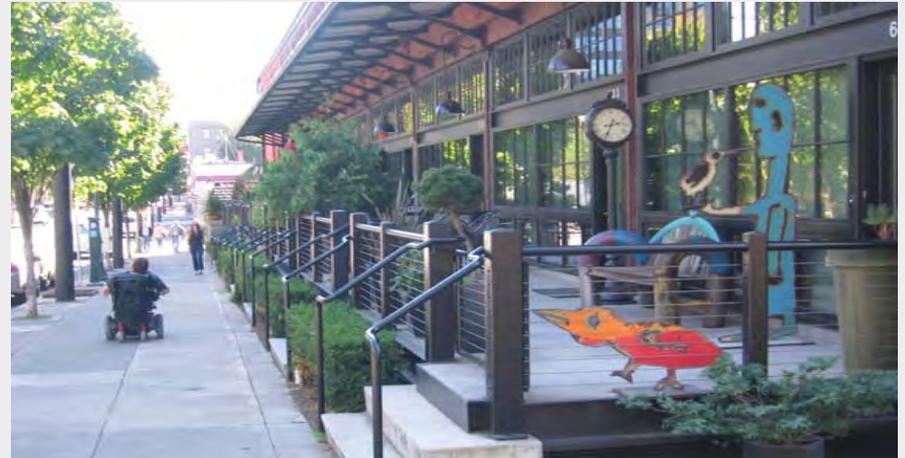
Large windows add transparency and activate the building façade while maintaining eyes on the street.

C. Residential

- C1.** Encourage raised/set back entrances with stoops, urban porches, balconies, small forecourts, etc. to maintain privacy
- C2.** Encourage planting of landscaping within residential building front setback to soften the building edge
- C3.** Limit the use of fences that face the public realm to no more than 3' high and avoid privacy screens
- C4.** Locate more "public" uses (e.g. living room or entrance lobbies) fronting sidewalk on ground floor



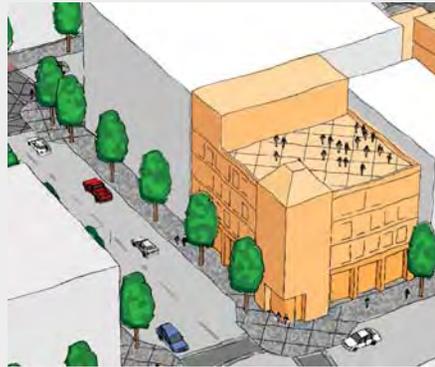
Designing residential units so that active uses face the street can ensure eyes on the street and enhance the pedestrian experience.



Entrances for residential and live/work units that are raised and set back from the street can help enliven the sidewalk and public areas in the front, while maintaining privacy for those living inside.

A. General Guidelines

- A1.** Encourage active uses on upper floors fronting the street to focus energy, visibility and activity toward the public realm
- A2.** Articulate façades with elements that break up the vertical surface of buildings:
 - Fenestration (windows and doors)
 - Lighting
 - Cornices, lintels and sills
 - Vertical fins or other shading devices
 - Varied material treatments
 - Balconies and awnings
- A3.** Locate building elements such as balconies on the first five floors above street level to engage the street; ensure that balconies/terraces are appropriately sized to be actively used by residents
- A4.** Encourage landscaped terraces, pool/recreation decks and other activity spaces for upper floors of buildings to activate upper floors, especially those six stories or above
- A5.** Step back upper floors with site-specific articulation to address the street type, open space visibility, and to maximize building access to light and fresh air
- A6.** Incorporate screens, solar-capture technology, energy-efficient and/or ventilated windows especially for south- and west-facing tower façades to minimize heat gain and capitalize on sun and wind exposure for reduction in energy costs
- A7.** Encourage roof gardens or other green roof designs to minimize heat gain and improve access to fresh food



Rooftop decks should be utilized to enhance livability and allow for a range of activities for residents and office workers.



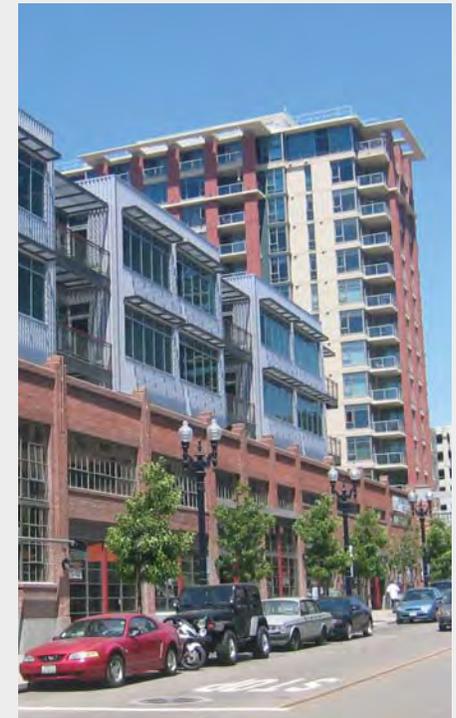
Green roofs capture rainwater, reduce heat gain, and serve as laboratories for education and gardens for food and plant growth.



Upper-floor step-backs are appropriate to respect nearby contexts and enhance access to light and air at both upper and lower levels.



Avoid blank upper floors without windows or other articulation or activation.



Fenestration, shading devices, balconies and the use of varied façade materials help break up the vertical surfaces of new and adaptively re-used buildings.

PARKING ACCESS AND DESIGN

A. Innovative Parking Alternatives

- A1.** Explore innovative parking solutions such as stacked parking, tandem parking and shared parking to optimize building space and/or minimize construction and housing costs (see the Reform the Approach to Parking Transformative Strategy discussion)
- A2.** Provide highly visible and conveniently located bicycle parking as part of new office, residential and mixed-use developments (on-site or in sidewalk/setback where feasible; otherwise located within designated on-or off-site parking facility)



Innovative parking solutions such as stacked parking reduce the amount of land dedicated to parking.

B. Parking Structures

- B1.** Prohibit parking structure entrances or exits (other than pedestrian doors) from active retail streets or special overlay streets such as Market in the West End Historic District of the Main Street District Retail Activation area; major tenant improvements or construction permits for existing structures should similarly prompt an examination of the removal/relocation of any existing garage access points not in compliance with this guideline
- B2.** Ensure new parking structures and those seeking improvements incorporate as many of the following as possible:
 - Engaging, well-lit entrances and exits with state-of-the-art pedestrian warning lights and sounds
 - Provisions for signage with parking information visible from the street
 - Attractive ground floors using interactive art, creative displays, vegetative screens, and/or new technology (e.g. dynamic parking space availability displays)
 - Animated upper-floor façades using variations in textures, colors, materials, lighting and/or vegetation
 - Active ground-floor uses such as retail
 - Rooftop solar-capture/shade structures and light-reflective surfaces or green roofs to minimize urban heat island
- B3.** Limit curb cuts for parking structure access to the minimum number required to adequately service the intended users
- B4.** Prohibit access ramps that run parallel to the street or sidewalk



Façade art, varying textures and colors are effective ways to mask the upper floors of parking garages.



Solar shade structures are desirable on parking garage roofs.

C. Surface Parking Lots

- C1.** Require a specific use permit for surface parking in residential developments; surface parking lots should cover no more than 25% of the property frontage facing a street
- C2.** Encourage landscape screens, trellises, low walls and other mitigation for existing and future surface parking lots to minimize the negative effects to active pedestrian-oriented sidewalk environments



Landscape screens can minimize the negative impact of surface parking lots on active pedestrian-oriented sidewalks.



Conveniently located bicycle parking amenities should be incorporated into streetscape designs and new development.

CHARACTER

A. Identity and Character

- A1.** Embrace contemporary architecture and interpretations of styles where context-appropriate to add to Downtown's diverse architectural palette
- A2.** Encourage creativity in the design of landmark towers to add to the Dallas skyline while respecting and strengthening existing views of and from significant structures and natural features
- A3.** Strengthen the unique identity and character of individual districts by continuing the use of materials and building forms that define the district
- A4.** Encourage building development that integrates passive and active sustainable design elements and responds to the Dallas climate
- A5.** Announce and celebrate individual districts in the design and strategic location of signature/iconic buildings through innovative façade design and site programming (e.g. emphasize the entry to the West End Historic District at the northwest corner of Lamar and Ross with a signature development that reinforces district identity)
- A6.** Celebrate key nodes with plazas, art and noteworthy architectural features (e.g. respond to the intersection treatment at Marilla and Harwood in the Dallas Farmers Market district with buildings that curve to create a consistent fabric at this key node)



Contemporary architecture should continue to be integrated into Downtown's historic fabric wherever appropriate to complement existing buildings and add to the sense of vibrancy and momentum.



Key gateway nodes should be emphasized with plazas, kiosks and landscaping.

SIGNAGE

A. Signage

- A1.** Refer to specific signage regulations for Zones A, B and C of the Main Street District Retail Activation area
- A2.** Encourage master sign plans for large projects (e.g. buildings greater than 50,000 square feet) to ensure compatibility with broad Downtown objectives and district-specific needs
- A3.** Do not allow property and building signs to dominate the sidewalk, plaza or façade and ensure that they reflect the overall design and architectural scheme for a project or site
- A4.** Use quality, durable materials such as metal, wood and channel letter styles
- A5.** Encourage blade signs especially in retail areas or where multiple tenants occupy a single building; materials should be metal or wood (applied or painted letters/graphics are acceptable)
- A6.** Scale signs appropriately to the particular building context (i.e. signs should fit on the flat face of awnings, in the clerestory above entrances)
- A7.** Illuminate signs by discreet lighting technologies (e.g. rear uplighting, internal illumination, or projected light); illuminated awning signs are discouraged
- A8.** Prohibit plastic box or formed/molded signs
- A9.** Prohibit window screen and mural signs that block or reduce window or door transparency (except where desired as an advertisement/art display as defined in the Main Street District Retail Activation Strategy or where used to mitigate otherwise opaque windows or inactive façades)

B. Other Signs

- B1.** Judiciously apply building supergraphics to support specific district character or street animation to avoid visual clutter and undesirable emphasis on advertising
- B2.** Encourage construction fencing to incorporate well-designed, engaging signage and/or artwork or announcements to enliven street-level frontages
- B3.** Complement existing wayfinding signage with updated, pedestrian-oriented signs, especially at key district nodes (e.g. Main and Akard, Ross and Lamar)



Innovative signage is an effective way to enliven large, expansive surfaces at street level.



Tenant signs should be simple and made of quality materials, utilizing discreet yet effective lighting.