

Part IV: Public Realm

Part IV offers general design guidance for private development and public investment as it relates to the spaces, places, and elements within Downtown Columbia's public realm.

Pedestrian Realm

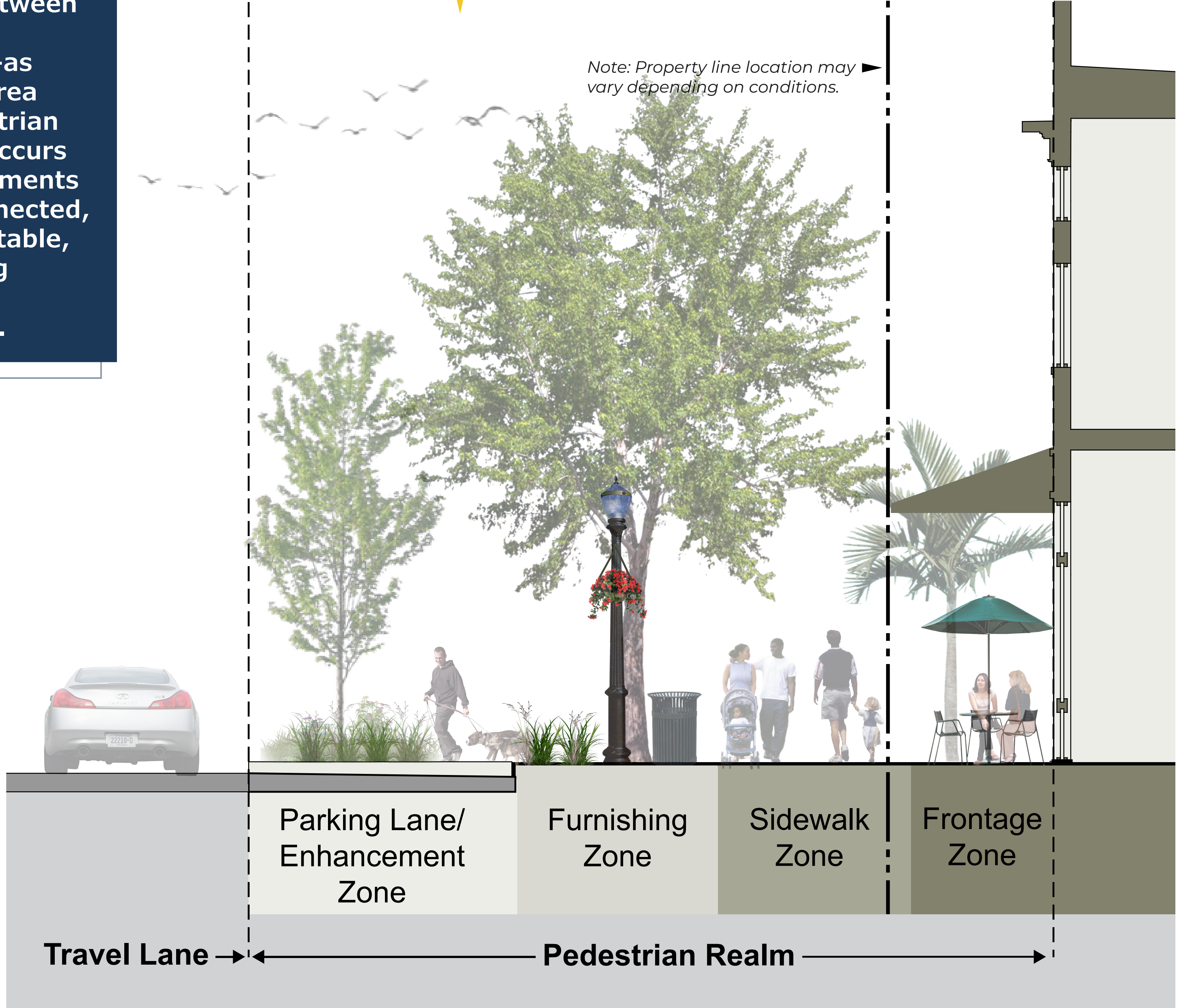
The Pedestrian Realm encompasses the frontage, sidewalk, furnishing, and parking lane/enhancement zones. Its configuration varies based on the area's character, existing street conditions, and surrounding built context.

Intent
 Prioritize the pedestrian realm—the space between the buildings and streets—as the critical area where pedestrian interaction occurs and enhancements create a connected, safe, comfortable, and engaging pedestrian environment.

Downtown Columbia's streets provide the fundamental framework for pedestrian activity and social interaction. The pedestrian realm is the network of open spaces where social exchanges naturally occur and where people interface directly with businesses, services, and amenities in Downtown Columbia.



Walk Bike Columbia, the City's bicycle and pedestrian master plan, established the framework of a well-defined "pedestrian zone" as the dedicated area for pedestrian travel and includes other amenities such as green infrastructure and outdoor dining areas. Building on this framework, the Design Guidelines specify the pedestrian realm as comprising the area from the travel lane to the front of the building. This pedestrian-focused network of spaces is essential to cultivating the desired urban atmosphere for Downtown Columbia.



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Sidewalk Zone

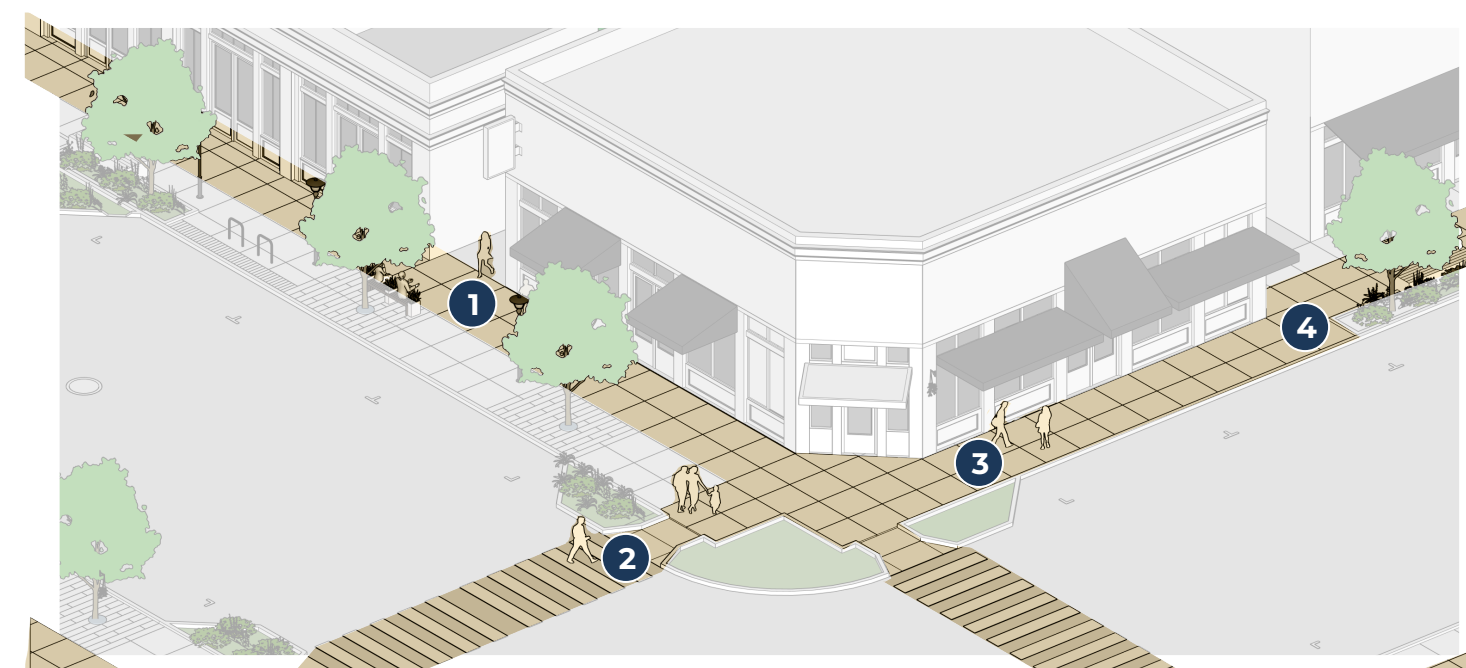
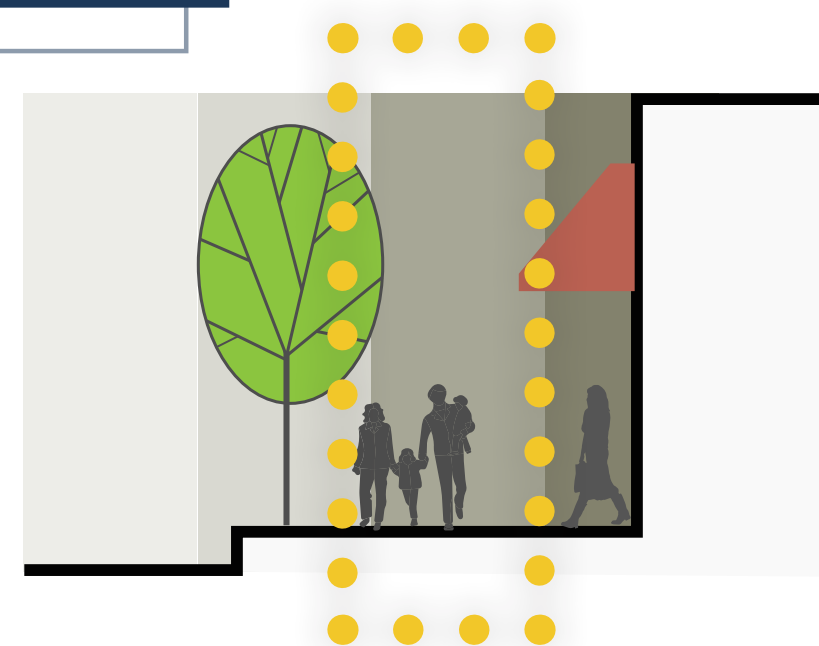
What is the Sidewalk Zone?

The Sidewalk Zone is the preferred means of access for pedestrians that generally runs continuously and parallel to the street. Sidewalks make up the basic framework of the Pedestrian Realm and are an essential component of complete streets. A consistent paved area ensures pedestrians have a clear, comfortable, and safe route in which to walk.

Design Criteria for the Sidewalk Zone

- Maintain a predictable and continuous walking route without deviating from the predominant path of travel. Where slight deviations from the path of travel must occur, walking routes should be legible for easy navigation with the path of least resistance. A continuous sidewalk may not be desired in some unusual conditions, such as:
 - Adjacency to a restrictive land use, such as a freeway or cemetery; or
 - Severe topographical constraints that make installing a sidewalk prohibitively challenging.
- Account for the diverse needs of sidewalk users ranging in age, ability, speed, and spatial needs.
- Provide adequate sidewalk width, a minimum of six (6) feet, for all sidewalks to allow pedestrians to walk side-by-side and pass by a third person comfortably in an urban setting.
 - Provide adequate sidewalk width to reflect the immediate context, including the type of street and adjacent land use according to the table on the next page.
 - Provide wider sidewalks in areas of intense pedestrian use to accommodate the greater volume of walkers.
- Use the required minimum clearance width for segments of the sidewalk that are deemed "pinch points" where narrowing of the sidewalk is necessary due to existing right-of-way constraints or to avoid conflicting elements that cannot be relocated elsewhere. However, this constrained width should not be used as the predominant sidewalk width for the entire length of the sidewalk.
 - Where sidewalks are less than five (5) feet, additional consideration should be given to:
 - Placing additional passing space at reasonable intervals to allow users to pass one another or to turn around.
 - Prioritizing a clear sidewalk over other streetscape elements.

Intent
Ensure a continuous, unobstructed path of travel that provides physical and visual access to building storefronts and entrances as well as to streetscape amenities.



Optimal Sidewalk Zone Dimensions	
Street Context	Minimum Clear Dimension
Required minimum clearance for all streets (only to be used at "pinch points")	4 feet
Low-density residential and mixed office-residential areas	6 feet
Mixed use, retail, restaurants, and/or multi-family areas	8 to 12 feet
High-density residential and uses with high concentrations of pedestrian activity	12 feet or greater

Frontage Zone

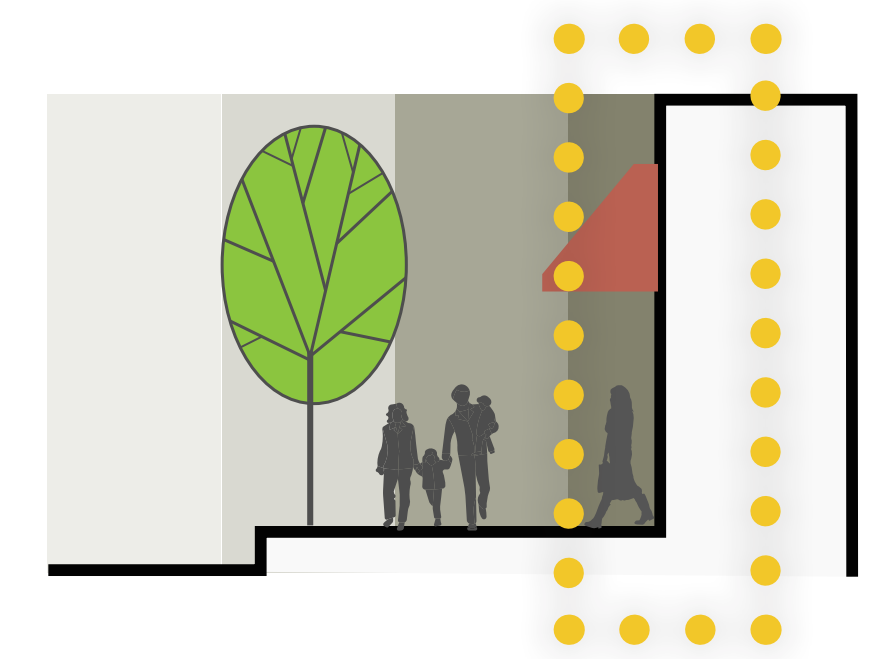
What is the Frontage Zone?

The Frontage Zone is the portion of the pedestrian realm immediately adjacent to the sidewalk zone that functions as an extension of the building. It is separate from the clear sidewalk through-way so as not to create obstacles for the normal path of travel within the sidewalk zone. The Frontage Zone includes both the structure and facade of the building fronting the street as well as the space immediately adjacent to the building.

The Frontage Zone may consist of various uses and activities directly related to the adjacent building including but not limited to entryways, outdoor dining areas, retail displays, planters and landscaping with seasonal colors, sandwich board signs, light fixtures, semi-public space, and other such features that make the public realm more engaging and attractive.

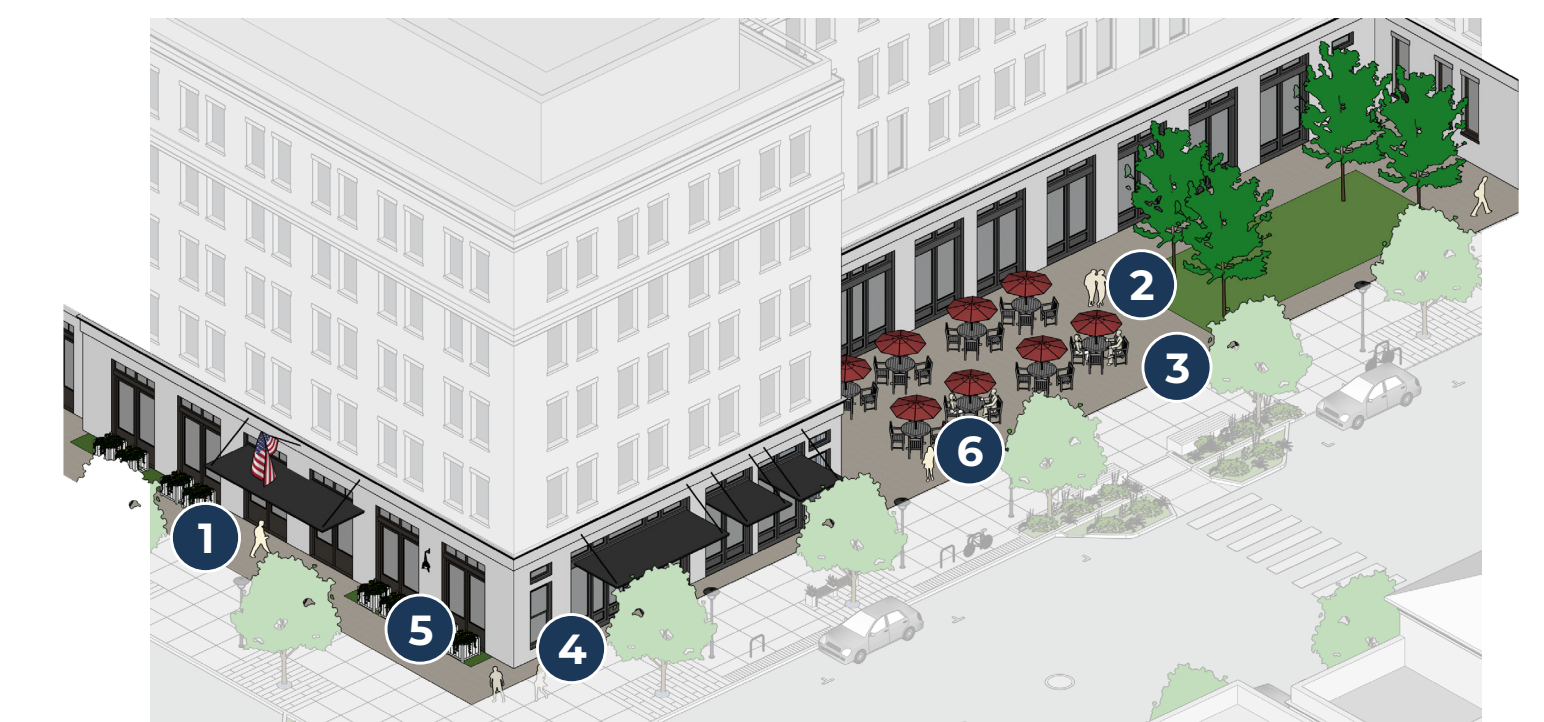
Design Criteria for the Frontage Zone

- Provide a narrow frontage zone dimension to accommodate objects protruding from the wall of the building, such as but not limited to signs, window-mounted planters, wall-mounted flags, and elements that aid in articulation of the building.
- Provide a deeper frontage zone dimension to support larger functions such as arcades, outdoor dining, retail displays, landscaping, and other such features that make the public realm more engaging and attractive.
 - Employ design strategies, such as recessed entryways, to mitigate impacts on pedestrian flow of traffic in the Frontage Zone from private entryways, stairs, and ramps. Railings and other features of stairways and ramps shall not extend into the Sidewalk Zone but should be accommodated in the Frontage Zone.
- Use high-contrast colors, surface material, textures, or other similar means to delineate paved areas within the Frontage Zone from the normal path of travel in the Sidewalk Zone.



Intent
Establish a relationship between the building and the public realm through consistent application of features that engage the pedestrian.

Optimal Frontage Zone Dimensions	
Streetscape Element	Minimum Dimension
Storefronts and Commercial Areas	2 feet
Building Perimeter Landscaping	3 feet
Outdoor Dining Areas	6 feet
Development Frontage	Building frontages and setbacks vary based on development type. Refer to Development Frontages.



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Furnishing Zone

What is the Furnishing Zone?

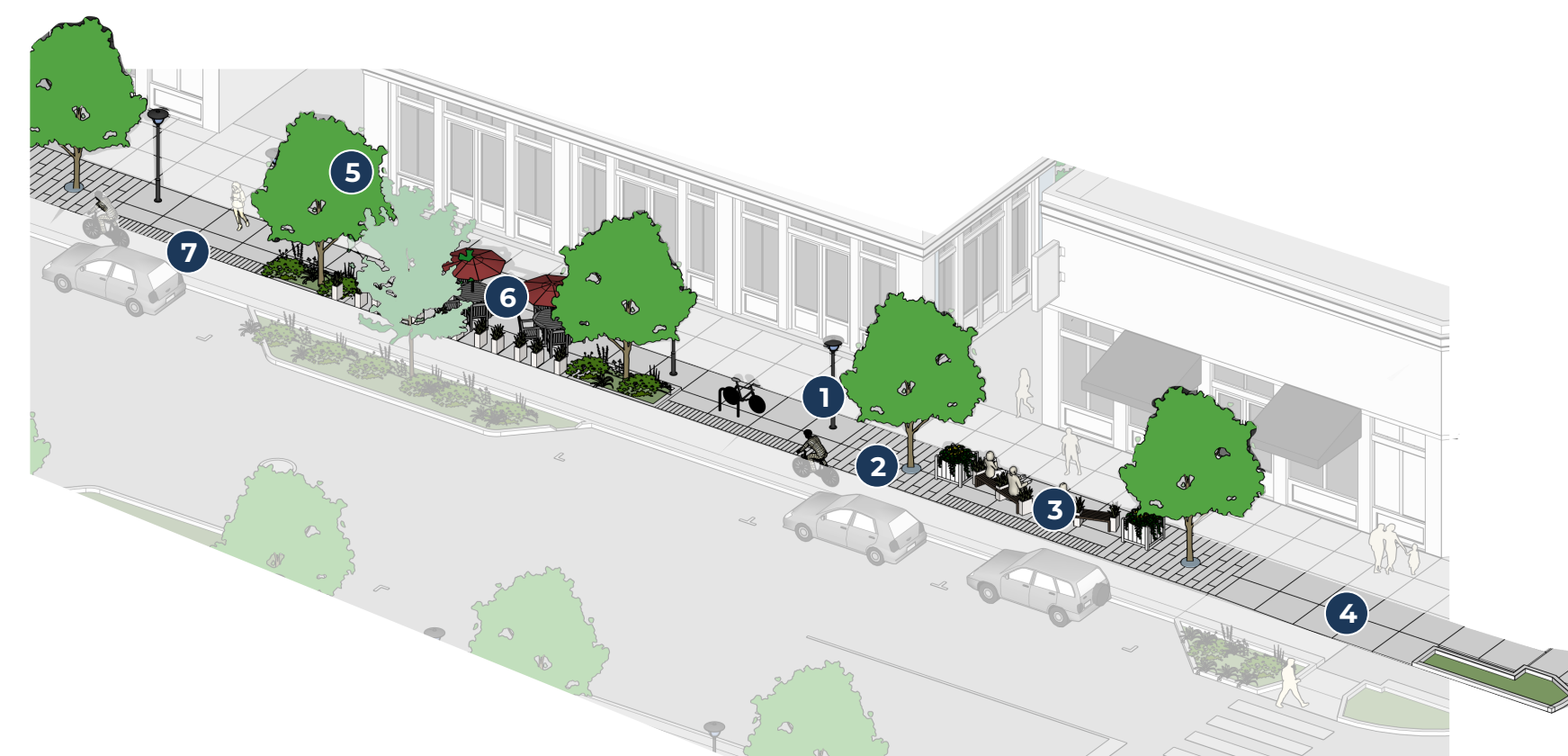
The Furnishing Zone is the area between the curb and clear sidewalk that functions as a curb-side buffer separating pedestrian movement from vehicles within the roadway. Furnishings and amenities commonly found in the Furnishing Zone include, but are not limited to, street light fixtures, parking meters, bus stops, outdoor seating, bicycle racks, micromobility facilities, utility fixtures and traffic signalization, public wayfinding, and street trees, as well as green infrastructure components, such as rain gardens or flow-through planters.

Character-Defining Furnishings

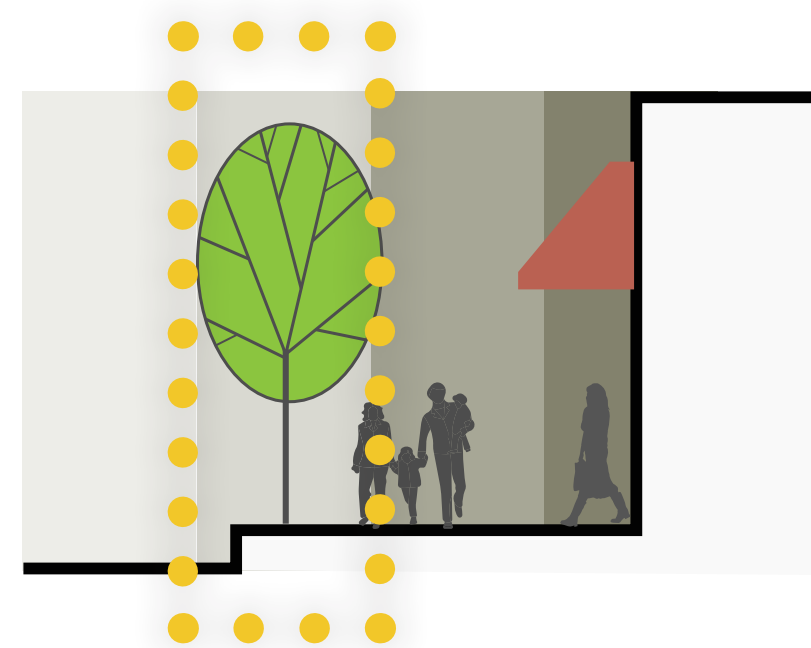
Elements within the furnishing zone may define the character of an area with particular street and pedestrian lighting, banners, wayfinding, and other street furnishings. Appropriate street furnishings may vary depending on the surrounding character setting of the district. The City will determine dimensions of furnishing zone and provide specifications for street furnishings, such as trash receptacles or benches, that are standard for the location.

Design Criteria for the Furnishing Zone

- 1 ▶ Design streetscape furnishings and amenities of long-lasting or otherwise durable construction to reduce long-term maintenance and stockpiling of spare parts.
 - ▶ Locate elements so as to maintain unobstructed visibility between pedestrians and motorists at crosswalks.
- 2 ▶ Use high-contrast colors and textures, or other similar means to delineate paved area in the Furnishing Zone from the normal path of travel in the Sidewalk Zone.
- 3 ▶ Organize areas within the Furnishing Zone to be inviting to the pedestrian with a sense of space and enclosure.



Intent
Provide a consistent buffer between pedestrians and travel or parking lanes as well as a space for streetscape elements that define the character of the corridor or district.



Optimal Furnishing Zone Dimensions	
Street Context	Minimum Dimension
Low-density residential and mixed office-residential areas	2 to 8 feet
Mixed use, retail, restaurants, and/or multi-family areas	4 to 8 feet
4 High-density residential and uses with high concentrations of pedestrian activity	4 to 8 feet
Streetscape Element	Minimum Dimension
5 Street tree	5 feet
6 Outdoor dining area	6 feet
7 Curbside door swing clearance adjacent to on-street parking	2.5 feet

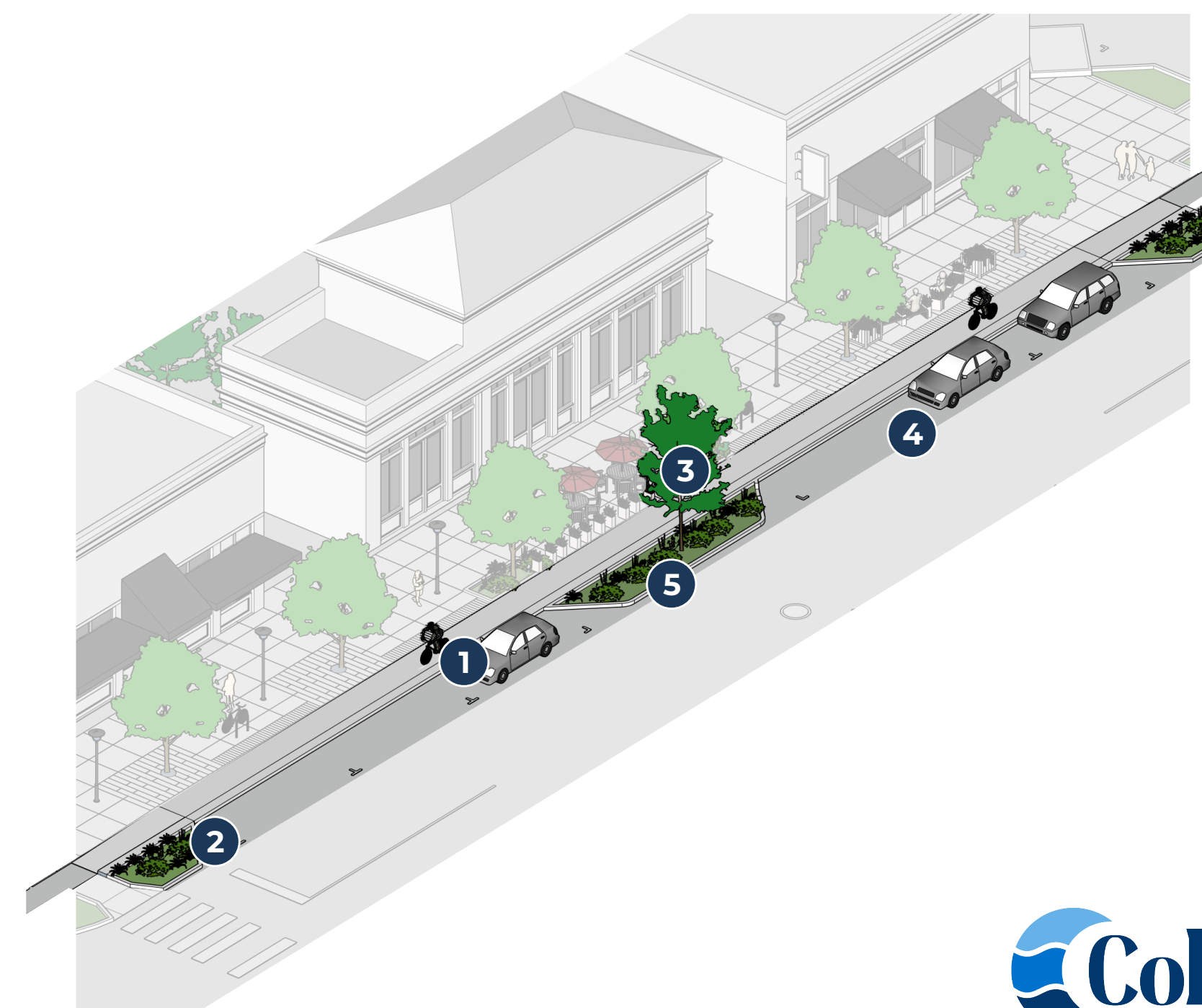
Parking Lane & Enhancement Zone

What is the Parking Lane/Enhancement Zone?

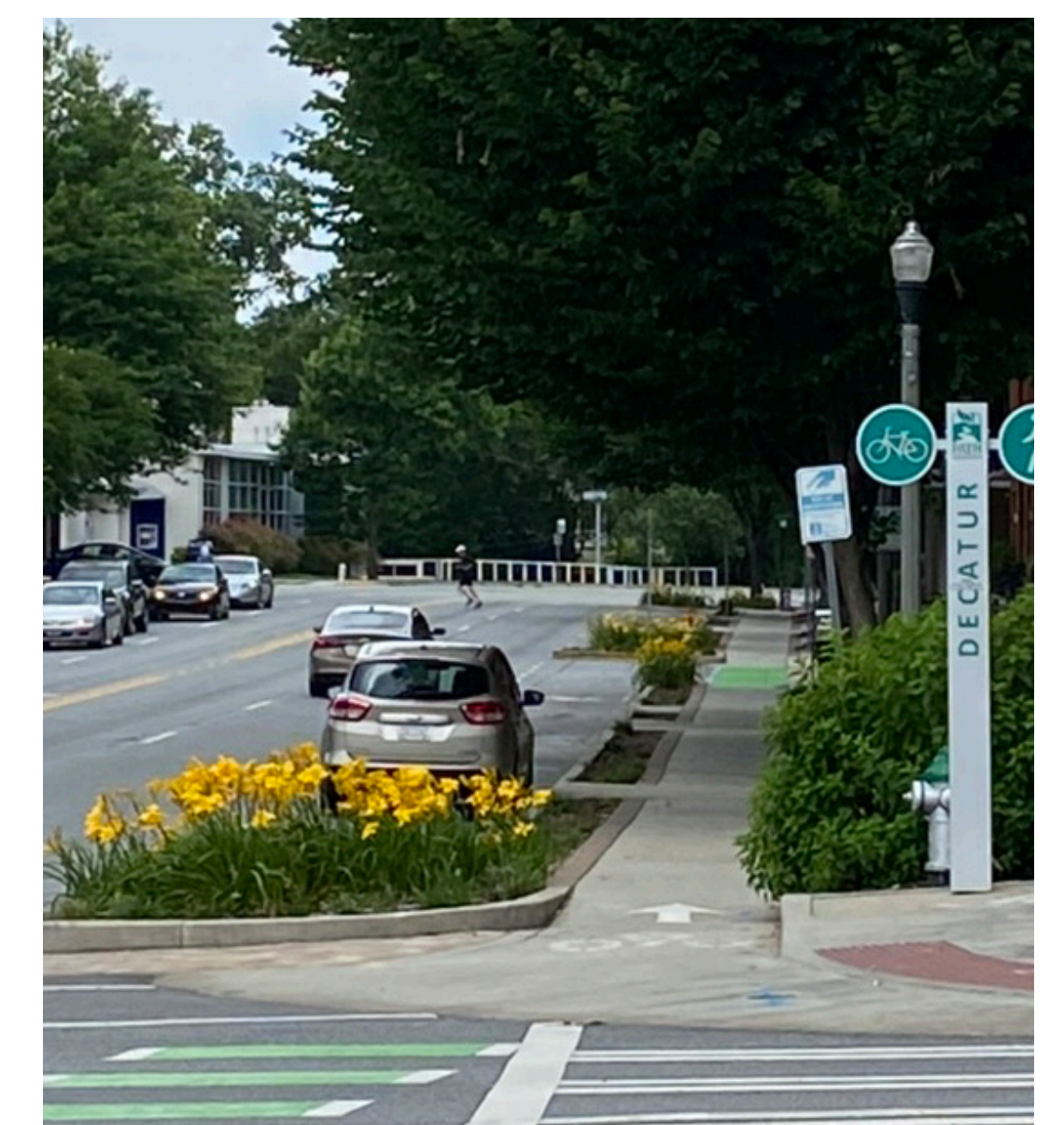
The Parking Lane & Enhancement Zone is a negotiable extension of the Furnishing Zone where adequate right-of-way allows. The Parking Lane & Enhancement Zone is located immediately adjacent to the Furnishing Zone and is a flexible space for amenities such as but not limited to curb extensions, parklets, green infrastructure, bicycle and/or micromobility facilities, as well as multiple other amenities typical of urban settings.

Coordination Guidance

- ▶ Coordinate with relevant City and State agencies to determine prioritization and placement of elements within the enhancement zone, in consideration of:
 - 1 ▶ Bicycle and micromobility facilities;
 - 2 ▶ Stormwater management;
 - 3 ▶ Green infrastructure;
 - 4 ▶ On-street parking;
 - ▶ Loading and unloading areas;
 - ▶ Parklets; and
 - 5 ▶ Curb extensions to improve pedestrian safety and walkability and/or for street tree placement.



Intent
Provide a flexible space at street-grade, adjacent to the curb, that can accommodate various amenities, provide additional transition space between the travel lane and sidewalk, and further contribute to traffic calming.



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See complete guidelines document for additional guidance on Public Utilities and other amenities, and on the placement of street trees and proper planting techniques.

Streetscape Elements

Preferred Placement of Streetscape Elements

Streetscape elements, including all furnishings and amenities, must be properly located in accordance with the table provided on the next page. This table indicates preferred locations for typical streetscape elements. A dark rectangle indicates the preferred priority placement of a streetscape element. A light rectangle represents an acceptable alternative to the preferred priority placement.

Spatial Constraints

In many instances, the available space of the pedestrian realm is predetermined by existing conditions like distance between the curb and building, sidewalk width, property line location, and/or building setback. These constraints can limit the optimal design outcome, making prioritization of zones and streetscape elements crucial.

When physical, functional, or spatial constraints limit the applicant's ability to achieve any of the zones within the pedestrian realm, the applicant should provide a cross-section and/or plan demonstrating a proposed configuration with frontage, sidewalk, furnishing, and parking lane/enhancement zones that conform to these Design Guidelines.



Streetscape Plan

The purpose of the streetscape plan is to illustrate the envisioned street corridor. Applicants should coordinate with City staff to demonstrate the minimum requirements of the pedestrian realm, including frontage, sidewalk, furnishing, and parking/enhancement zones.

Streetscape Element	Preferred Placement of Streetscape Elements			
	Frontage Zone	Sidewalk Zone	Furnishing Zone	Enhancement Zone
Benches	Dark	Light	Light	Light
Bicycle Rack	Dark	Light	Dark	Light
Curb Extension	Light	Light	Light	Dark
Green Infrastructure	Dark	Light	Dark	Dark
Kiosks & Corrals	Light	Light	Light	Dark
Outdoor Dining	Dark	Light	Light	Light
On-Street Parking	Light	Light	Light	Dark
Parking Meters	Light	Light	Dark	Light
Parklets	Light	Light	Light	Dark
Public Art	Dark	Light	Dark	Dark
Signs	Dark	Light (1)	Light	Light
Street Trees	Light	Dark	Dark	Light
Trash Receptacle	Light	Light	Dark	Light
Wayfinding	Light	Light	Dark	Dark
Above-Ground Utilities	Light	Light	Dark	Dark

1 Signs may overhang into the sidewalk zone in accordance with the City's Unified Development Ordinance.

Legend: Preferred Priority Placement
 Acceptable Alternative Placement

Street Trees

Downtown Columbia's Street Trees

Street trees are one of the most critical elements of the public realm. In addition to their value for improving air quality, water quality, and community aesthetic, street trees can help mitigate traffic speeds, add visual interest, and improve the general comfort level for pedestrians. They include many benefits and serve multiple functions including the following net positive effects:

- ▶ Shade and reduced heat effects for the location;
- ▶ Character and scale;
- ▶ Enclosure and framing of space;
- ▶ Traffic calming; and
- ▶ Buffering between the sidewalk and travel lanes.

Prioritization of Street Trees

Street trees shall be prioritized for all Downtown streets within the Furnishing Zone and in the public right-of-way. If existing conditions prevent planting of street trees within the Furnishing Zone, then the applicant must follow the hierarchy of strategies outlined below to support the City's commitment to street trees.

- ▶ **Existing Trees:** Make every effort to preserve existing trees. When feasible, incorporate existing trees into new development and protect existing trees during construction.
- ▶ **Sidewalk Zone:** Utilize suspended paving systems in the Furnishing Zone and Sidewalk Zone to support healthy tree root growth if existing soil volume is insufficient.
- ▶ **Furnishing Zone:** Coordinate with the City to use smaller trees in planters at least four (4) feet wide if constraints limit the Furnishing Zone to less than five (5) feet.
- ▶ **Parking Lane/Enhancement Zone:** Coordinate with the City to remove on-street parking to accommodate a mid-block curb extension for additional tree planting area.
- ▶ **Frontage Zone or Open Space:** If all other options are exhausted, or conflicts prevent tree installation in the public-right-of-way, street trees are to be installed on private property parallel to the road, within the development's frontage yard (See Development Frontages) or a designated open space (See Open Space).

