

Downtown Columbia

STRATEGIC PLAN & DESIGN GUIDELINES

Downtown Columbia Design Guidelines

Final Draft for Adoption | April 15, 2025

Downtown Columbia Design District Boundary

The Downtown Columbia Design District study area boundary is provided below for illustrative and informational purposes only. The extents of the map boundary are subject to change. Applicants should defer to the City of Columbia's official Zoning Map, which is administered and maintained by City staff.

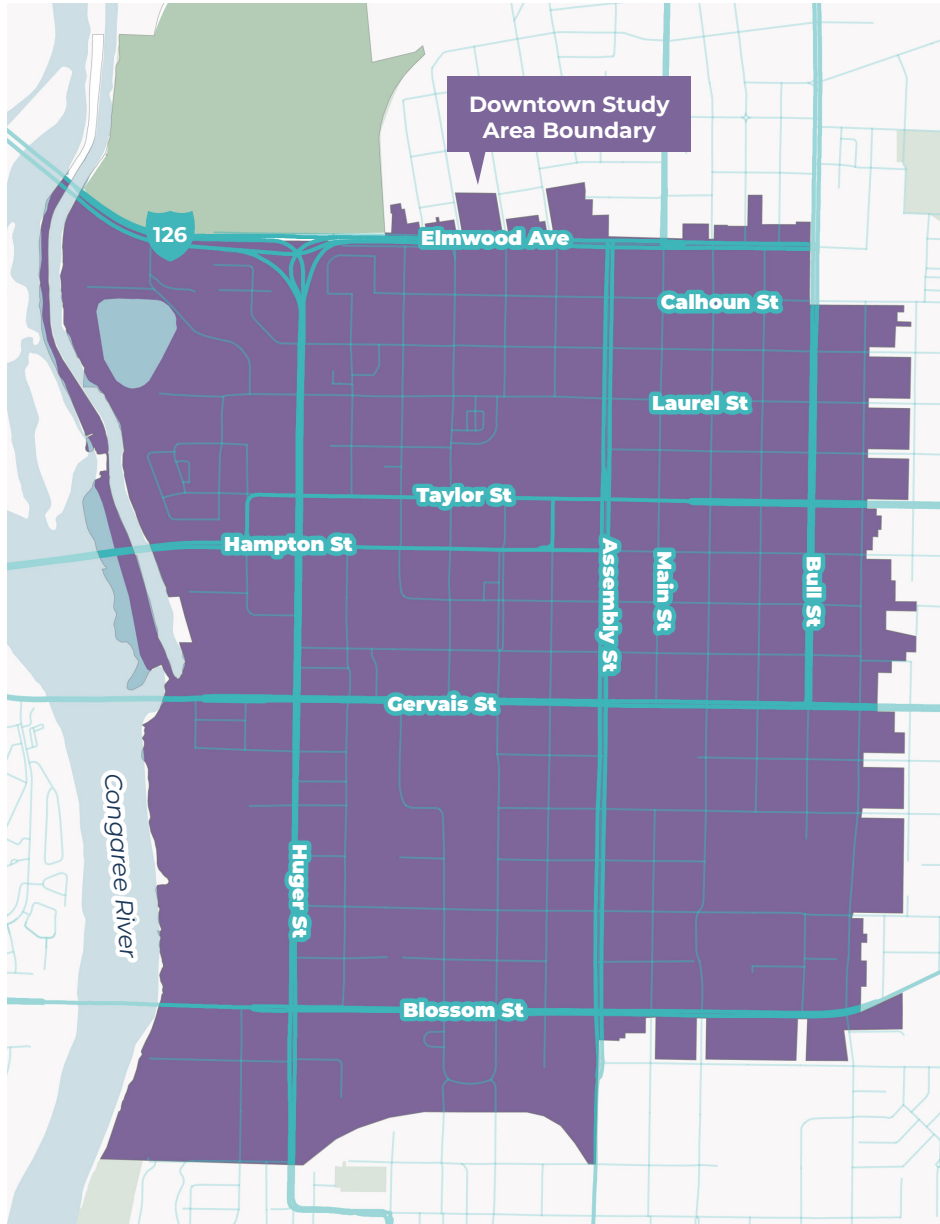


Table of Contents

PART I Introduction

Overview	6
Guiding Principles	7

PART II Site Planning

Open Space	10
Open Space Guidelines	12
Parking Facilities	14
Structured Parking Facilities	16
Fences & Walls	18

PART III Private Realm

Urban Design	26
Development Frontages	27
Overall Building Design	32
Pedestrian Entry	34

PART IV Public Realm

Pedestrian Realm	38
Sidewalk Zone	40
Frontage Zone	42
Furnishing Zone	44
Parking Lane/Enhancement Zone	46
Streetscape Elements	48
Street Trees	52

PART V Signs

All Signs	58
Sign Types	61

Part I

Introduction

Part I introduces the general purpose and objectives of the Downtown Columbia Design Guidelines and outlines guiding principles for development.





Overview

The Downtown Columbia Design Guidelines at a Glance

The Downtown Columbia Design Guidelines serve as an implementation tool that establishes design-based guidance and standards for development activity within the Downtown Columbia Overlay District.

Specifically, the purpose of this document is to guide new construction, conversion, adaptive reuse, enhancement, and conservation of buildings and streetscapes within Downtown Columbia.

These guidelines contain supplemental development standards incorporated by reference in the Downtown Columbia Overlay District and thereby apply to properties within the mapped area.

The primary objectives of these guidelines are to:

- ▶ Emphasize the development's relationship with the public realm;
- ▶ Prioritize design and promote design excellence in order to enhance existing and future character of Downtown Columbia's many neighborhood districts;
- ▶ Provide flexibility and generate a variety of potential design solutions and outcomes;
- ▶ Improve the communication and participation among the development community, City staff, elected/appointed officials, and the public; and
- ▶ Express and convey the interests of the community through well-written, clearly understood development and design guidelines.

In general, applicants should refer to the City's Unified Development Ordinance for applicability information.

Additionally, any proposed work in the rights-of-way will require encroachments from the City and potentially the SCDOT. Coordinate with City staff for more information.

Guiding Principles

These design guidelines are not meant to restrict creative design, but rather guide development and redevelopment to ensure it supports the vision for Downtown Columbia's future success and economic vitality. To this end, the design guidelines are not exhaustive or formulaic but are intended to help development and redevelopment organize around the following guiding principles, which align with the Downtown Strategic Plan's "Big Ideas" for Downtown.

Be Uniquely Columbia

Developments should reflect Columbia's uniqueness in some way, whether through building typology, using local building materials, responding to nearby historic building context, incorporating local public art, or by incorporating input gathered from stakeholders.



Create Comfortable Streets & Spaces

Developments should incorporate shade trees along sidewalks, in private open spaces, and in parking areas as much as possible to mitigate the urban heat island and provide comfortable spaces for pedestrians.



Reclaim Space for Pedestrians

Developments should reclaim space along streets to strengthen business vitality and pedestrian safety, and design buildings and adjacent spaces to engage pedestrians and encourage activity.



Connect People & Places

Developments should prioritize connectivity for pedestrians, bicyclists, and other vulnerable users by designing spaces that are safe, comfortable, and easy to navigate.



Part II

Site Planning

Part II addresses site planning components, offering guidance on essential qualities of open space, parking facilities, and fences and walls.

Image of Boyd Plaza
Source: Columbia Museum of Art





Open Space

Downtown's network of urban open spaces take on various forms to provide essential areas for retreat, relaxation, recreation, and activity.

From sidewalks and alleys to pedestrian pathways and public plazas, the exterior spaces within Downtown Columbia facilitate pedestrian movement between destinations or offer spaces to gather and linger. These spaces should align with the following open space guidelines.

Public Open Space: *This category of open space is dedicated area set aside or reserved in a private development as space fully open to the public, which may include alleys, parks, and urban plazas.*



This Section offers design guidance for Downtown open spaces in conjunction with Section 17-5.5: Open Space of the City's Unified Development Ordinance.

Provisions for privately owned public space are commonly established to ensure these spaces operate and maintain as if they are a fully public space (e.g., like a park or a street), and public easement may be required in accordance with the City's Unified Development Ordinance.

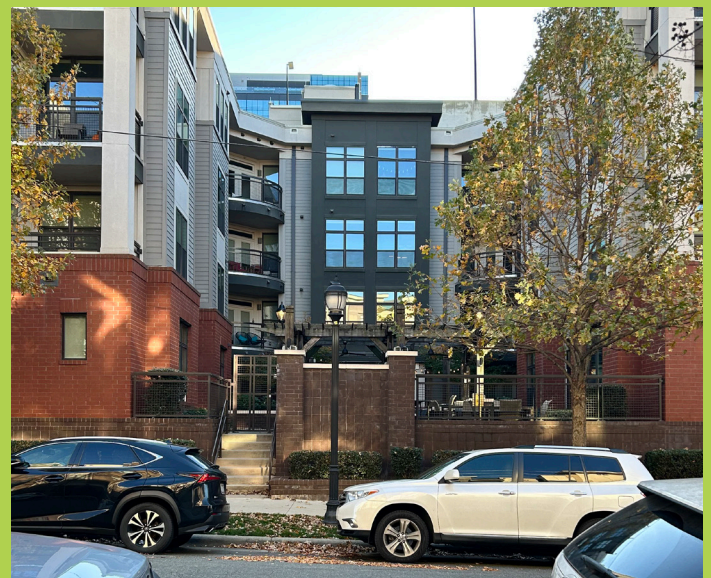
Intent

Ensure public and semi-public spaces within developments and in-between buildings serve as extensions of Downtown's public realm and are accessible, flexible, durable, comfortable, attractive, and lively spaces.

Privately Owned Public Space: *This category of open space, also known as POPS, is an amenity space provided within a private development but accessible from and connected to the public realm and open to the public. All POPS must be in conformance with these design guidelines.*



Semi-Public Open Space: *This category of open space applies to spaces in private development that may be visually accessible to the public but may not be physically accessible to the public. Such spaces may include perimeter bufferyards, private patios and yards, and other such areas not available for general public use.*



Open Space Guidelines

Connection with the Public Realm

- 1 ▶ Configure open space so that it is visible from and directly connects to the public sidewalk.
- 2 ▶ Place focal points of interest, such as art, sculpture, and fountains, at prominent locations to draw the attention and movement of pedestrians.

Active Frontage

- 3 ▶ Activate at least one side of open space with one or more of the following activities or uses:
 - ▶ *Residential*: a residential use with a porch, stoop, balcony, or similar frontage overlooking the space;
 - ▶ *Retail or Personal Service*: a retail or personal service use with a storefront featuring a majority of storefront windows;
 - ▶ *Eating or Drinking Establishment*: a restaurant or bar with outdoor seating area;
 - ▶ *Office*: an office use with a primary or secondary entry facing the open space; or
 - ▶ *Recreation/Entertainment or Public/Civic/Institutional*: a recreational, entertainment, public, civic, or institutional use with a primary entry facing the open space.



Courtyards

- 4 ▶ *Residential Courtyards*: Orient residential windows, balconies, and ground-floor level stoops and/or patios to overlook the courtyard space.
- 5 ▶ *Commercial Courtyards*: Utilize commercial courtyards as areas for secondary frontage for retail and restaurant uses, outdoor seating, and display areas.



Furnishings and Amenities

- 6 ▶ Provide at least three (3) of the following elements in open space areas:
 - ▷ Plantings (either along the building perimeter or within a centralized planting area);
 - ▷ Surface treatments other than concrete;
 - ▷ Public art (either on the surface of vertical objects, interactive, or independent piece);
 - ▷ Water feature (either still or animated); and/or
 - ▷ Food service or other permanent vending or kiosk.
- ▶ *Site Furnishings:* Ensure site furniture and/or outdoor seating is of sturdy, commercial-grade construction designed for outdoor use.
- ▶ *Outdoor Seating:* Include varying types of site furniture and/or outdoor seating arrangements accommodating a range of users.

Landscape Design

- 7 ▶ *Shade Trees:* Incorporate shade or canopy trees into open space where feasible.
- ▶ *Plant Selection:*
 - ▷ Integrate plantings as part of the site design to enhance the overall aesthetic.
 - ▷ Select plant varieties for their suitability to the local climate and soil conditions; resistance to pests, diseases, and drought; and durable qualities to be long-lasting and low maintenance.
- ▶ *Soft Landscaping:* Prioritize greenery, such as lawns, over handscaping to create soft, inviting spaces that can be used for gatherings, events, and activities throughout the day and evening; encourage water infiltration; and mitigate heat effects.
- ▶ *Maintenance Considerations:* Consider ease of maintenance in landscape design and avoid complex designs unless adequate maintenance resources are available.

Lighting Conditions

- ▶ *Night-time Illumination:* Ensure safety and functionality during evening hours by adequately illuminating open space.
- ▶ *Building and Site Accentuation:* Illuminate sidewalks, pedestrian areas, entryways, display windows, signs, and distinctive features of the building and site with pedestrian-scaled lighting.
- ▶ *Low Light Pollution:*
 - ▷ Minimize light pollution and glare by directing light downward and shielding all lighting fixtures to prevent light intrusion onto neighboring properties.
 - ▷ Limit LED fixtures to a maximum color temperature of 3000K.
- ▶ *Environmental Sensitivity:* Design and implement low-level lighting conditions to minimize impacts of properties abutting adjacent properties that include environmentally sensitive areas such as, but not limited to, observatories, wildlife habitats, and natural ecosystems.

Detached Structures and Enclosures

- Pergolas, shade structures, and other enclosed structures may be used to cover an open space.
- ▶ Ensure such structures are visually:
 - ▷ Subordinate but of a similar architectural style to the main building;
 - ▷ Compatible with surrounding context of buildings and site features; and
 - ▷ Maximize transparency and visibility between interior and exterior of the enclosed space.

Parking Facilities

What are Parking Facilities?

A parking facility includes surface parking lots, structured parking, and other spaces or enclosures dedicated to temporary storage of vehicles.

The goal of these guidelines is to provide an adequate amount of convenient parking without allowing parking structures and surface lots to dominate the urban setting of Downtown Columbia. The location and design treatment of parking facilities serving downtown development has significant influence on visual quality and character of Downtown.

Location of Parking Facilities

- 1 ▶ In general, contain parking facilities within the interior of the block.
- 2 ▶ Locate parking facility access points to minimize conflict with pedestrians and bicycle activity.
 - ▶ Include pedestrian safety measure(s) at locations where parking access points intersecting sidewalks is unavoidable. Safety measures may include 'yield to pedestrians' and 'car approaching' signs, mirrors, and/or other best practices designed to mitigate conflicts between pedestrians and moving vehicles.
- 3 ▶ Avoid locating parking facilities on corners of street intersections. Rather, place buildings or public amenities at intersections.

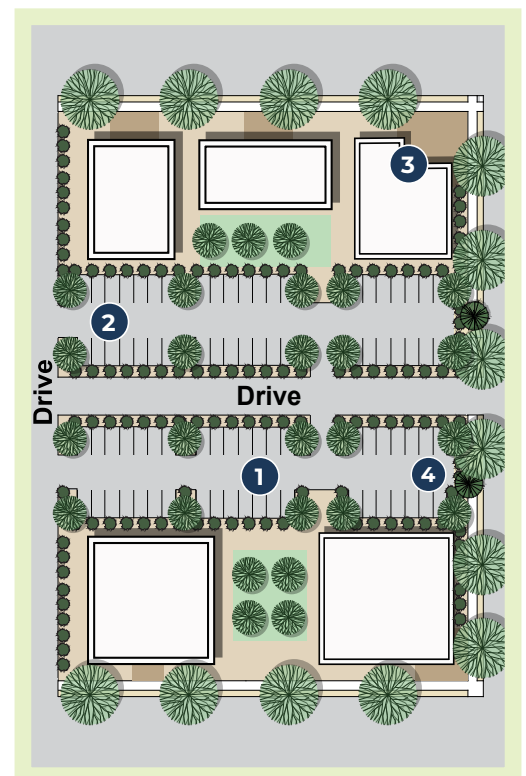
Screening of Surface Parking Areas

- 4 ▶ Provide a street protective yard with a minimum width of five (5) feet providing adequate planting areas for the healthy growth of required trees to maturity. Exceptions to the required street protective yard include areas designated for pedestrian pathways and vehicular ingress/egress points that intersect perpendicular to the street protective yard.

Intent

Minimize the diminishing effects that parking facilities have on the built environment through placement, design, and screening.

A street protective yard is defined in the City's Unified Development Ordinance (UDO). Trees within the street protective yard shall conform to the landscaping standards (Section 17-5.3: Landscaping) of the UDO.

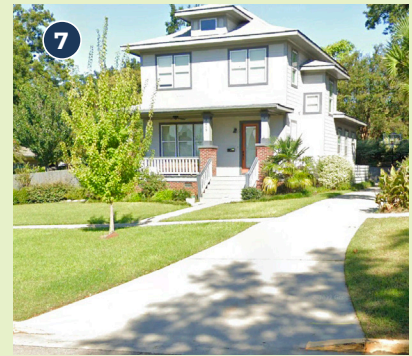
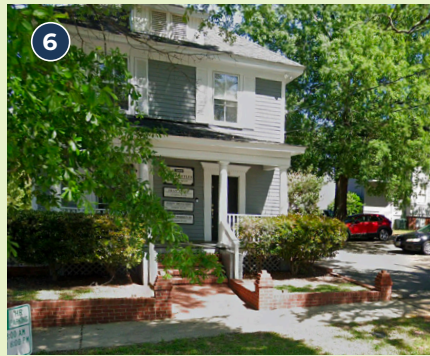
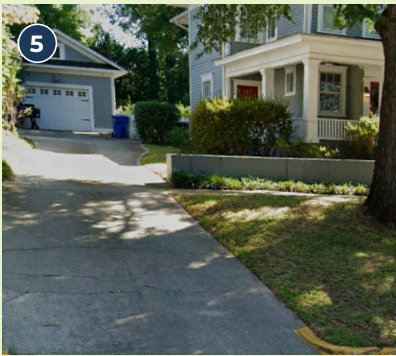


Mixed Office-Residential Areas

This type of frontage applies to mixed office-residential development (like single-family structures or similar buildings commonly found in Arsenal Hill).

Coordinate with Mixed Office-Residential Development Frontages, beginning on p 27.

- 5 ▶ Locate garages at least ten (10) feet behind the front face of the principal structure.
- 6 ▶ Locate parking pads dedicated for vehicles to the side or rear of the principal structure.
- 7 ▶ Extend driveways along the side of the principal structure.
 - ▶ Avoid locating areas designated for vehicular parking in front of the principal structure.



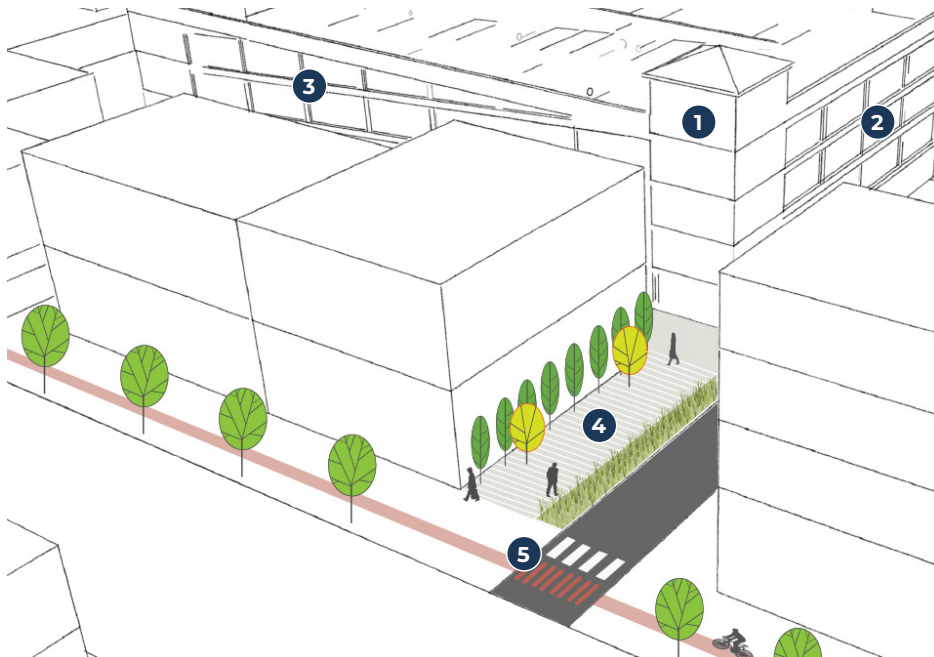
Structured Parking Facilities

Location & Configuration

- 1 ▶ Place structured parking away from the public right-of-way and internal to the block either in an underground structure, integrated with and wrapped by a principal-use building, or set behind the principal-use building. Where placement of structured parking in accordance with the above is not possible, use design strategies to mitigate visual impacts of structured parking facilities to the public realm according to the design guidelines of this section.
- 2 ▶ Orient the short dimension of the parking structure to public streets and open spaces to reduce frontage length and exposure, where possible.
- 3 ▶ Configure ramping so that it occurs within the core of the parking structure or along the rear of the structure where it is not visible from the public realm.

Pedestrian Access

- 4 ▶ Provide clear, convenient, and safe routes for pedestrians from the public sidewalk to the entrance of the structured parking facility.
- 5 ▶ Include pedestrian safety measure(s) at locations where parking access points intersecting sidewalks is unavoidable. Safety measures may include 'yield to pedestrians' and 'car approaching' signs, mirrors, and/or other best practices designed to mitigate conflicts between pedestrians and moving vehicles.

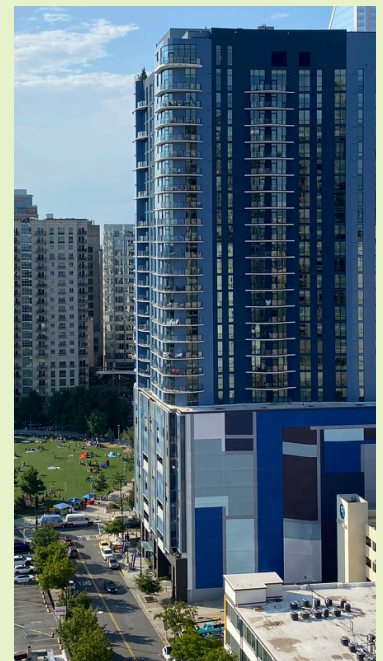
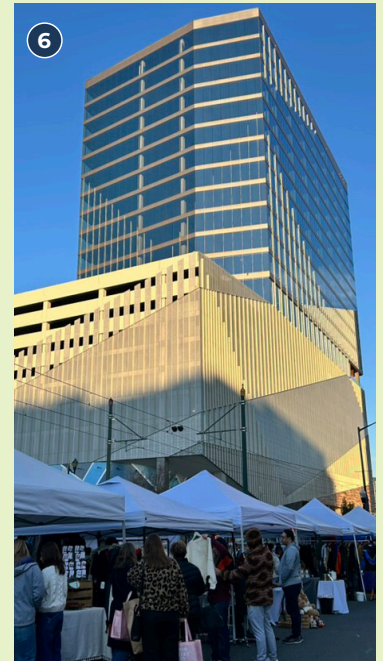


Open Space Frontage

- 6 ▶ Employ comprehensive wall design strategies where parking structures abut a public or private open space to mitigate visual impacts of structured parking facilities and improve its relationship with open space. Use one of the following design strategies:
- ▶ Line the ground level of the structured parking facility with small retail spaces, cafes, small businesses, or a similar use that activates the open space with pedestrian activity throughout the day;
 - ▶ Enhance portions of the facade using artistic treatment(s), such as but not limited to, commissioned murals or dynamic/kinetic wall art—preferably the work of local artists—that changes based on conditions to create a unique and interactive experience; or architectural treatment(s), such as but not limited to, decorative screens, metal mesh, vertical green facade systems, or perforated facade systems.

Visual Impacts

- ▶ Avoid excessive expanses of frontage along the public realm where possible, except frontage dedicated to general wayfinding, public access, and egress/ingress points.
- ▶ Employ compatible architectural treatment of parking structures along public streets consistent in the quality, form, materials, colors, and textures with the principal-use building being served.
- ▶ Screen openings to avoid visibility of vehicle headlights seen from outside the parking facility, reduce light spill-over of overhead lights, and mitigate the utilitarian aesthetic of open-air garages and lighting.



Fences & Walls

What are Fences & Walls?

For the purposes of these design guidelines, a fence or wall is a barrier erected for security, privacy, and/or screening, to define a space, or simply as a decorative feature. The design and placement of these features can have a significant impact on the urban environment, both functionally and aesthetically.

Enhance the Pedestrian Experience

- ▶ Utilize one of the following design strategies in instances where a fence and/or wall are adjacent to the pedestrian realm:
 - ▶ Use at least two materials, one as the predominant material and the other as an accent;
 - ▶ Incorporate seating opportunities with low walls at appropriate height;
 - ▶ Soften the wall with terraces, planters, and/or vegetative cover with native plant species well-adapted to Columbia's climate;
 - ▶ Integrate art or crafted design into the wall such as mosaic tiles or ironwork;
 - ▶ Use natural material or adaptively reused material to add historical reference and meaning; or
 - ▶ Alternate the height of fence components at regular intervals.

Reinforce Context-Sensitive Design

- ▶ Ensure design, material, location, and scale of fences and walls are compatible with adjacent structures on the property and existing walls and fences commonly found along the streetscape.

Minimize Visual Impact of Parking & Service Areas

- ▶ Utilize fences and walls complimentary to buildings and the streetscape for screening in instances where parking and service areas cannot be located behind buildings and away from pedestrian/public spaces.

Intent

Treat fences and walls as features that enhance the pedestrian experience, reinforce an area's character, and complement the scale and patterns of Downtown.

Refer to the City's Unified Development Ordinance for a comprehensive definition of a Fence or Wall.

Fence & Wall Types and Materials

Steel or Aluminum Picket or Rail Fence

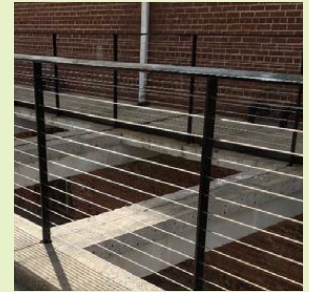
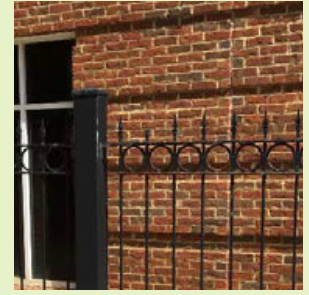
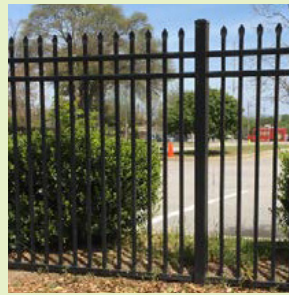
- ▶ Metal fences shall be transparent, and made of commercial grade materials, powder-coated or stainless steel for weather resilience.
- ▶ Style of fence shall be consistent with the style of the building, i.e., traditional decorative fences with lots of detail are more appropriate for historic or traditional buildings, whereas modern or simple building designs call for a more streamlined fence design.

Masonry Fences or Walls

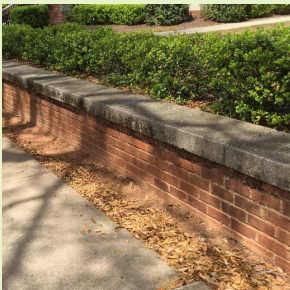
- ▶ Solid masonry or stucco walls should relate to the structure(s) on the property.

Masonry with Metal Picket Fencing

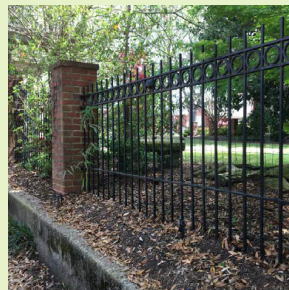
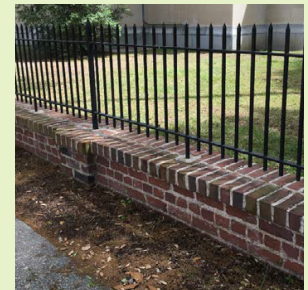
- ▶ Fences may have masonry columns with fencing between or knee walls with fencing on top, or some combination thereof.
- ▶ Columns may be brick, stone, concrete, or stucco, but should have some relationship to the building(s) on the site. Picket style shall also be consistent with the style of the property.



The above images depict examples of metal picket or rail fencing.



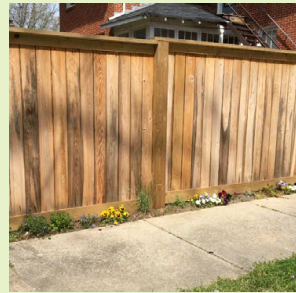
The above images depict various configurations of fencing composed of masonry or stucco material.



The above images depict various configurations of fencing composed of masonry columns or knee walls with metal picket fencing.

Privacy Fence Materials

- ▶ Wood or bamboo privacy fences shall be of pressure treated wood and stained or painted to resist weather conditions.
- ▶ Composite materials may be used in some cases if cut sheets are approved by staff.
- ▶ Vinyl fences are not allowed.
- ▶ Fences shall have a solid frame to prevent sagging.
- ▶ Structural members must be on the inside, or private property-facing, and the “finished” side must be on the outside, facing the public right-of-way.
- ▶ *Single-Family Residential:* Wood privacy fencing may be used.
- ▶ *All other uses:* Privacy fencing must be one of the following materials:
 - ▷ Solid masonry;
 - ▷ Commercial grade, decorative metal panel fencing;
 - ▷ Evergreen hedges with metal pickets; or
 - ▷ Living fence.

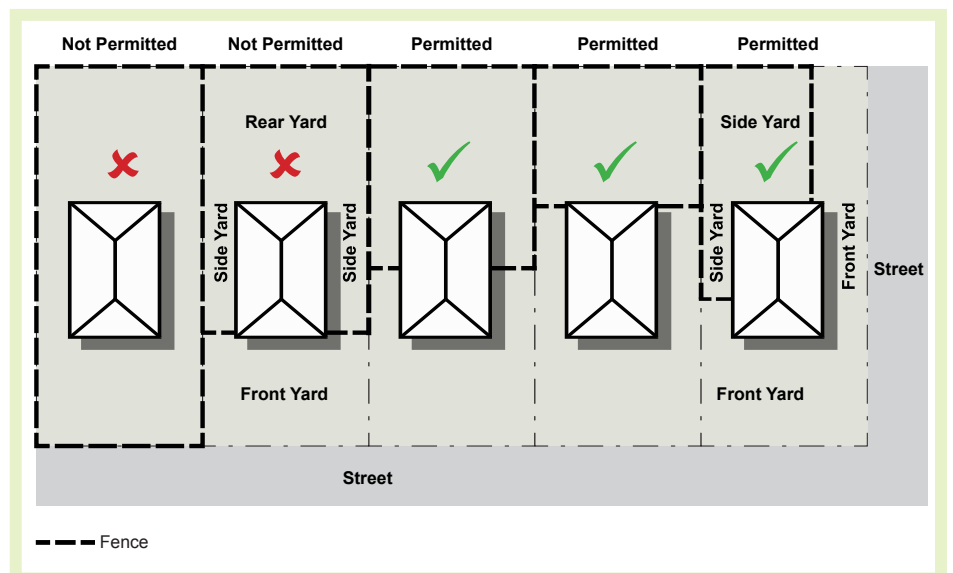


The above images depict examples of privacy fencing with acceptable configurations and materials commonly used to screen areas for privacy.

Privacy Fence Placement

Privacy fencing shall only be used at the rear or side property lines.

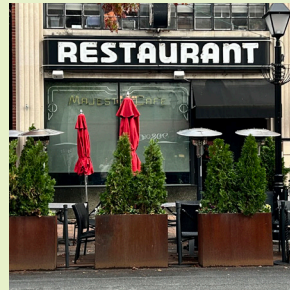
Appropriate Placement of Privacy Fences



Decorative Fence

Decorative fencing is used to delineate a space such as outdoor dining area, or around a park or plaza. These fences are the most prominent as they often occur at the front property line, along a sidewalk, or adjacent to a public space.

- ▶ *Height:* Decorative fences shall be no taller than four (4) feet in height. Columns or other secondary features may extend above four (4) feet.
- ▶ *Transparency:* The fence or any portion thereof above two (2) feet shall be transparent (such as metal picket) and must include metal picket, or other high-quality, commercial-grade structure that is compatible with the building and/or the streetscape. A masonry knee-wall base with metal pickets may be appropriate for certain properties.



The above images depict examples of decorative fencing, which is commonly used in highly visible areas adjacent to public space.

Wood Picket Fencing

- ▶ Wood picket fences are most appropriate for single-family residential properties, as a decorative feature and to define the private property line.
- ▶ They shall be of pressure treated wood, be painted or stained, and shall not exceed four (4) feet in height.
- ▶ These fences should relate to the primary structure on the property with the use of materials, color, and/or style and not be in stark contrast to the primary structure.

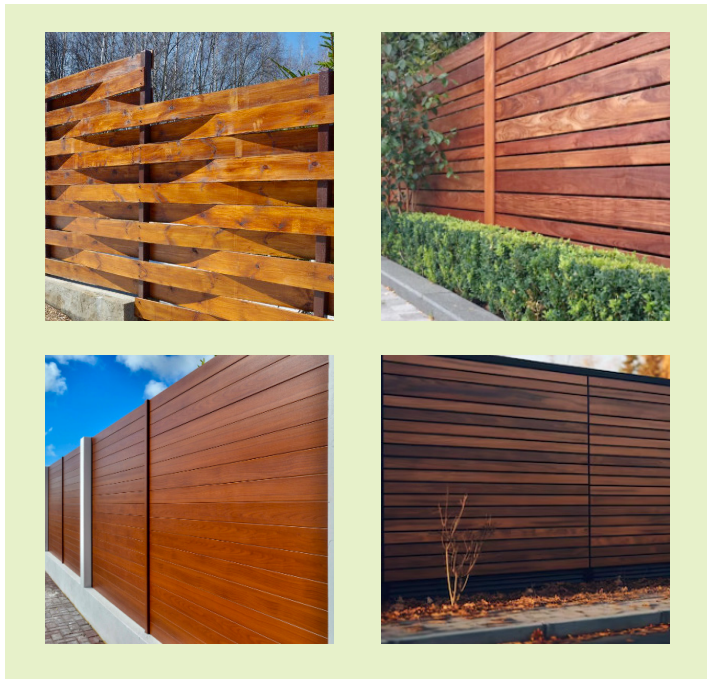


The above images depict examples of wood picket fencing, which is typically associated with single-family residential properties.

Screening Fence

Fences and walls may be required to screen parking areas, utility equipment, service areas, and dumpsters. Appropriate fences and walls may be used for screening in accordance with the following guidelines.

- ▶ *Height:* Screening for enclosed service areas and dumpsters should be at least as tall as the equipment or container they are screening.
- ▶ *Materials:* Fence and wall styles and materials shall be compatible with the building and property. Vinyl fencing is not permitted. Appropriate materials include:
 - ▷ Solid masonry;
 - ▷ Living fence, or combination of evergreen hedges and metal pickets;
 - ▷ Commercial grade, decorative, perforated metal panel fencing;
 - ▷ Wood fences (only in the rear of a property and with minimum visibility from the public right-of-way); and
 - ▷ Composite materials, such as but not limited to, Trex™ or similar technology.



The above images depict examples with various configurations of a screening fence, which is commonly used to screen parking, utility, and service areas.

Security Fence

Security fencing may be necessary around parking lots, or to secure alleys or private courtyards. Security fencing should be limited to rear or side yards and be designed and constructed in accordance with the following guidelines.

- ▶ *Height:* Security fencing shall meet all zoning requirements for height.
- ▶ *Materials:* Visually prominent security fencing shall be compatible with the architectural features of the building and/or property. Barbed/razor wire, bent top, and electric fencing are not permitted. Appropriate materials include:
 - ▷ Solid masonry;
 - ▷ Metal picket;
 - ▷ Combination of solid masonry and metal picket; or
 - ▷ Wood or black vinyl-coated chain-link, only to be used along the rear of a property and where minimally visible from the public right-of-way. See “chain link fencing” for details.
 - ▷ Where security fencing is deemed necessary in front of buildings, design should complement the material and/or design of the building.

Chain Link Fencing

- ▶ Chain link fencing is generally not allowed in urban design districts.
- ▶ In certain cases where security fences are permitted in rear or minimally visible side yards, chain link fencing may be allowed but must be black vinyl-coated, 9-gauge wire with a top rail.



The above images depict examples of chain link fencing, which is generally not permitted and undesired in Downtown Columbia.

Living Fence

Living, or vegetative, fences may be used to shield certain uses such as parking or service areas from public view while adding variety and lushness to the public realm.

- ▶ *Irrigation:* Living fence systems must be irrigated.
- ▶ *Plant Specifications:* Plants must be evergreen and plant species and spacing must be specified and reviewed by staff.
- ▶ *Materials:*
 - ▶ Posts and frames may be pressure treated wood, PVC-coated steel, or PVC-coated aluminum.
 - ▶ Grids may be galvanized or PVC-coated welded wire mesh, stainless steel cable not less than 11-gauge wire.

Retaining Walls

Retaining walls visible from the public right-of-way shall conform to all the fence and wall design guidelines described in this section.

Other Fences & Walls

All other fences and walls not described in this Section shall meet the intent of this Section and conform to the zoning, landscaping, and building standards within the City of Columbia's Unified Development Ordinance.

Buffer Yard Fence

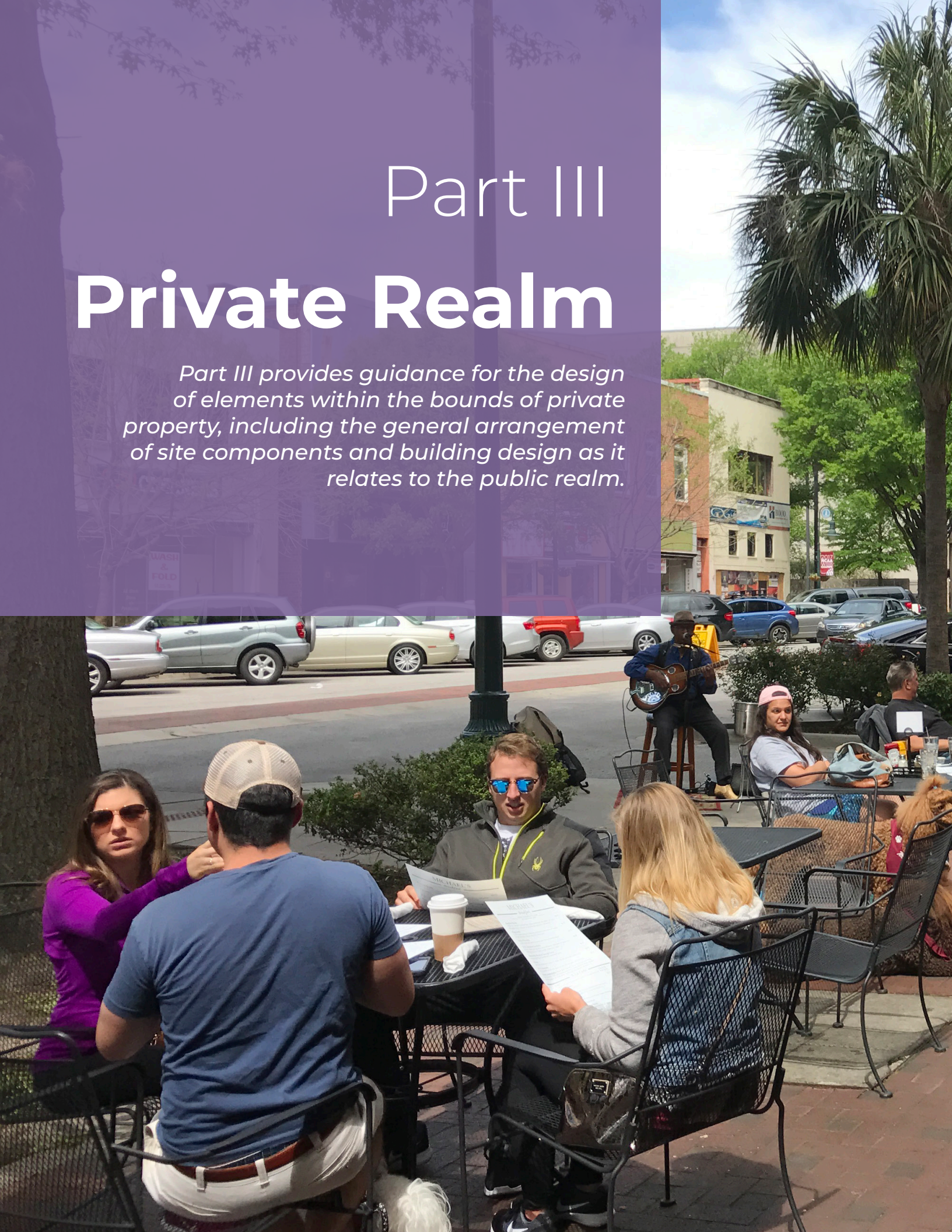
Fences and walls constructed to reduce required buffer transition yards must meet the design standards found in these guidelines, including height, appearance, and material.

Refer to the City's Unified Development Ordinance Transitional Buffer Yard standards.

Part III

Private Realm

Part III provides guidance for the design of elements within the bounds of private property, including the general arrangement of site components and building design as it relates to the public realm.





CONGRATS
NATIONAL

CONGRATS
NATIONAL

Menu
KAY LXXXI

Urban Design

Ensure Downtown development addresses the public realm through consistent frontage conditions, street level activity, and strong design elements that engage with pedestrians and create visual interest.

The most intensely developed areas of cities typically have uniform frontages, with edges of development very near to or abutting the lot line, or back of sidewalk.



Development Frontage

Intent

Establish consistency in how buildings front onto the right-of-way with predictable frontage conditions based on frontage typologies.

What is Development Frontage?

A development's frontage refers to the portion of the site and building that directly abuts a street, establishing a relationship with the public realm.

Allowable Frontage Zone

When the right-of-way between the curb and the property line is less than fifteen (15) feet, additional frontage up to a maximum setback of fifteen (15) feet may be necessary to provide adequate public realm dimensions as required by these design guidelines. The table below and subsequent guidelines establish standard development frontage type setbacks. Setback dimensions are determined based on space needed for pedestrian zone amenities with additional setbacks required.

The City's Unified Development Ordinance establishes minimum and maximum setbacks for various zoning districts throughout Downtown Columbia, ranging between zero (0) feet and fifteen (15) feet in most districts, and a minimum of twenty-five (25) feet for institutional zoning districts. These design guidelines establish flexible frontage conditions by development type that are uniform in their application throughout Downtown Columbia regardless of the base zoning district. This approach offers consistency in development patterns with optimized flexibility relating to existing conditions and context.

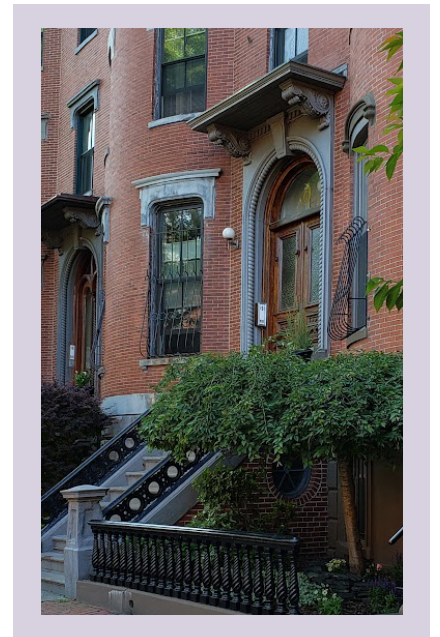
Allowable Frontage by Development Type

Development Type	Min-Max Frontage Yard (feet)
Townhouse	6-15
Multi-Family	0-15
Mixed Office-Residential	15-20
Commercial	0-15
Mixed-Use	0-15
Institutional	10-25
Civic	varies

Townhouse & Multi-Family Development Frontages

This type of frontage applies to townhouse development frontages abutting a public right-of-way.

- 1 ▶ Set the face of the building a minimum of six (6) feet from the back of sidewalk to create a usable frontage yard to include a porch, stoop, or patio serving as a transition area between the street and individual units.
- 2 ▶ Raise porches and/or elevate entry ways to:
 - ▶ Enhance privacy and refuge for residents;
 - ▶ Define and enhance the identity of individual units through architectural treatments at the ground level; and
 - ▶ Provide a buffer between the public and private realms.
- 3 ▶ Delineate frontage yards from the public realm by either a low fence, knee wall, hedge, landscaping, or other similar means to create defensible space and a layered buffer between the public and private realms.
- 4 ▶ Express individual units with repeated patterns or motifs such as, but not limited to, inset or projecting entry ways, window bays, balconies, stoops, railings, and architectural features.
- 5 ▶ Modulate the wall plane of multi-family residential developments using common entry areas, courtyards, recessed areas and projections.



Refer to Fences & Walls beginning on p. 18 for design guidelines pertaining to fences and walls in the frontage yard.

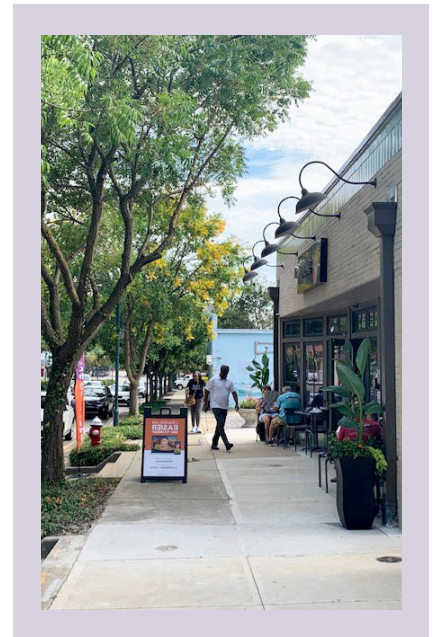


Commercial Development Frontages

This section applies to the frontage(s) of a commercial development that abuts a public right-of-way.

- ▶ Align the building flush with the back of sidewalk. However, a portion of the frontage not to exceed 50% of the width of the building, may be recessed to allow for the following frontage enhancements:
 - 1 ▶ Outdoor dining or seating areas;
 - 2 ▶ Building foundation landscaping used intentionally to:
 - ▼ Frame and enhance outdoor public space (such as event-friendly areas, landscaped gardens, etc.);
 - ▼ Enhance entryways and wayfinding areas;
 - ▼ Integrate with other site features (art, sculpture, signs, and water features) or building features (green roofs and terraces);
 - ▼ Support on-site stormwater systems; and
 - ▼ Screen service and utility areas.
 - 3 ▶ Expanded sidewalk area that offers protection from the elements through the use of awnings, canopies, or overhangs; and/or
 - ▶ Recesses in the ground level that produce a gallery or arcade.
 - 4 ▶ Design building elements, such as signs, awnings and canopies, exterior lighting, and windows to support commercial frontage zone and enhance the pedestrian realm.

Refer to Frontage Zone on p. 42 for intent of frontage zone and dimensions pertaining to elements within the frontage zone.





Mixed Office-Residential Development Frontage

This type of frontage applies to mixed office-residential development frontages (like buildings commonly found in Arsenal Hill) abutting a public right-of-way.

- ▶ Locate new buildings on the site so that the distance of the structure from the right-of-way is similar and complementary to adjacent structures.
- ▶ Provide a porch, portico, or stoop, and other design features commonly found within the frontage yard, such as hedges, or physical structures, such as knee walls or fencing lining the back of sidewalks.

Adaptively Reused Building Frontage

Building frontages that are part of adaptive reuse either through renovation, restoration, refurbishment, or rehabilitation of an existing structure for a purpose other than that in which it was originally built should:

- ▶ Minimize the impact on the existing structure;
- ▶ Enhance the pedestrian experience and improve frontage characteristics;
- ▶ Reinforce the characteristics of the area, district, or Downtown; and
- ▶ Complement the existing scale and pattern.



Much of the redevelopment in The Vista draws upon its industrial roots, with modern elements that complement the historic character.



Areas in Charlotte, NC offer successful examples of adaptive reuse. Optimist Hall, shown here, occupies a historic textile mill. The redesigned space includes modern structures juxtaposed against traditional materials to accommodate a food hall and outdoor dining spaces.

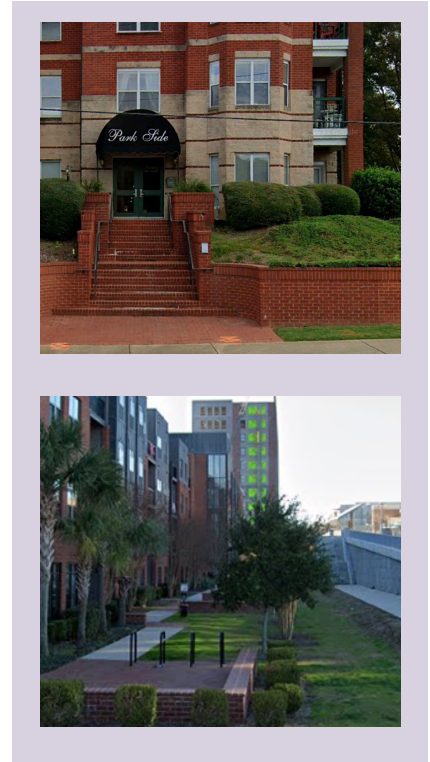


Atlanta offers successful examples of adaptive reuse. StudioPLEX, in Atlanta's Inman Park, offers an example of a redevelopment of a former industrial warehouse into a live-work condominium, where residents operate business out of their urban lofts.

Frontages with Sloped Terrain

Buildings must maintain a consistent first floor elevation where feasible. However, certain sites may present significant changes in topography. The design of sloped sites along the public sidewalk should respond to the terrain with building and site elements that offer to enhance the pedestrian experience, walkability, and accessibility by using of the following design strategies, or a similar method meeting the intent of this section.

- ▶ Terrace or step down using knee walls in spaced intervals at the edge of the sidewalk and integrate seating for pedestrians.
- ▶ Provide a means of integrating accessible entrances with raised stoops.



Frontages with Sensitive Environments

Where development abuts a floodplain, sensitive soils, or steep terrain, general restoration and/or enhancement of the natural conditions is preferred. Walkability and accessibility must be considered by utilizing effective design strategies such as but not limited to the following:

- ▶ Provide pathways with gentle slopes and integrated hardscaped and landscaped areas along natural edges.



Columbia's Canalside Lofts offers an example of downtown living set close to the Columbia Canal and Congaree River. The development offers a public promenade defining the edge of the Congaree River and Canal.

Building Design

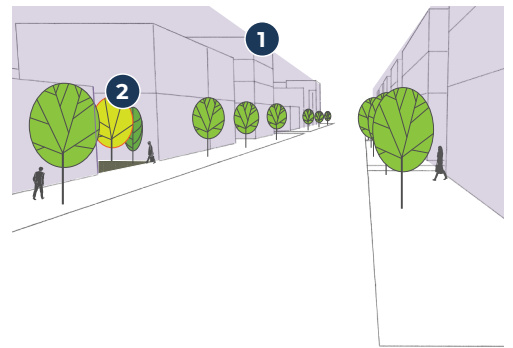
Street Wall

Consistent development frontage maintains a well-defined edge, or a Street Wall, which provides a sense of enclosure, security, and comfort to pedestrians.

- 1 ▶ Line the edge of streets to frame the public realm and align the face of buildings parallel to the back of sidewalk to create a uniform and consistent edge to create a strong and well-defined street wall.
- 2 ▶ Utilize voids and small gaps in the street wall for relief and variation. For example, a void can be used to allow vehicular access through the development while still maintaining a continuous street wall in the upper levels.
 - ▶ Avoid excessive distances between the building, adjacent buildings, and the public sidewalk.
 - ▶ Locate habitable portions or active uses of the development close to corners of intersections or near public open space.
 - ▶ Place non-habitable portions of the development mid-block or otherwise internal to the block.

Intent

Maintain predictable overall building design through consistent application of upper level and street level design elements.



Building Massing

A building's massing refers to its overall organization, configuration, and arrangement of volume and form.

- ▶ Emphasize street corners with building massing and/or architectural elements.
- 3 ▶ Utilize modulations of the wall plane to break up large or building mass or lengthy walls.
- 4 ▶ Provide definition between the lower and upper levels of buildings to emphasize the pedestrian realm.
- 5 ▶ Use one or more of the following features to break up the massing and bulk of the building:
 - ▶ Windows and entry areas;
 - ▶ High quality public art such as a mosaic, mural, sculpted elements, or relief;
 - ▶ Small setbacks, indentations, or modulation of the facade;
 - ▶ Design features, such as balconies, lighting fixtures, canopies and/or awnings, a horizontal trellis, or decorative pattern in the materials used;
 - ▶ Seating ledges; and/or
 - ▶ Landscaped area or raised planter.



Street Level Facade

- 6 ▶ Break up the wall plane into divisions or bays to establish a rhythm at the street.
- 7 ▶ Use one or more of the following methods to distinguish the ground floor(s) from the upper floor(s):
 - ▷ Projections, such as canopies;
 - ▷ A change in materials;
 - ▷ Architectural features such as coping or reveal;
 - ▷ An expression line that generates a physical design separation; and/or
 - ▷ Differentiating spacing and type of openings.
- 8 ▶ Avoid lengthy, unbroken wall planes, especially at the storefront level. The applicant may achieve this either by:
 - ▷ Dividing the facade into a series of display windows with smaller panes of glass;
 - ▷ Constructing the facade with small human-scale materials such as brick or decorative tile along bulkheads;
 - ▷ Providing recessed entries;
 - ▷ Carefully sizing and integrating signage; and
 - ▷ Providing consistent door and window reveals.



Window and Door Visibility & Transparency

- 9 ▶ Maintain a high degree of visibility at the street level with clear sight lines for pedestrians between the interior of the building and the sidewalk area.
 - ▶ Provide clear and fully transparent exterior windows. Note, modifications to this guideline may be permitted insofar as it is determined by the DDRC that tinting or spandrel glass does not substantially diminish the effect of the building wall or the pedestrian experience of the street. Refer to Glass Transparency & Non-Reflective Specifications below.
 - ▶ Avoid excessive displays on windows and doors so as to not obscure more than 50% of window and door area. Note: for window signs, refer to Sign design guidelines.
 - ▶ Avoid mirrored glass at the street level.

Glass Transparency & Non-Reflective Specifications

For first floor glass in new construction and new storefront applications in renovation projects:

- ▶ Low-iron glass shall be used to maximize clarity.
- ▶ Any factory applied coatings shall be applied to the #2 surface.
- ▶ Overall visible light transmission (VLT) shall be at least 61%.

For film applications to existing glass::

- ▶ Visible light transmission shall be at least 45%.
- ▶ Exterior reflectance shall not exceed 15%.

Pedestrian Entry

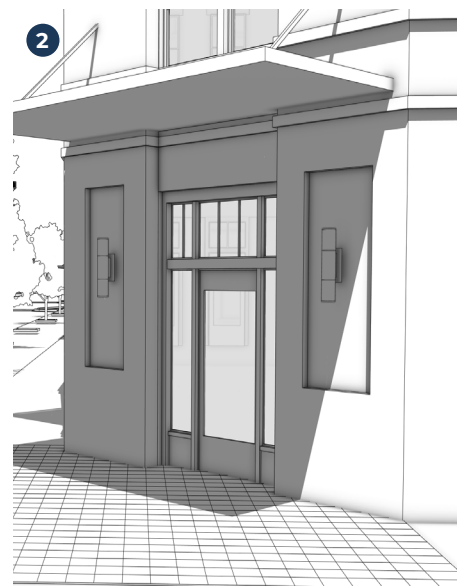
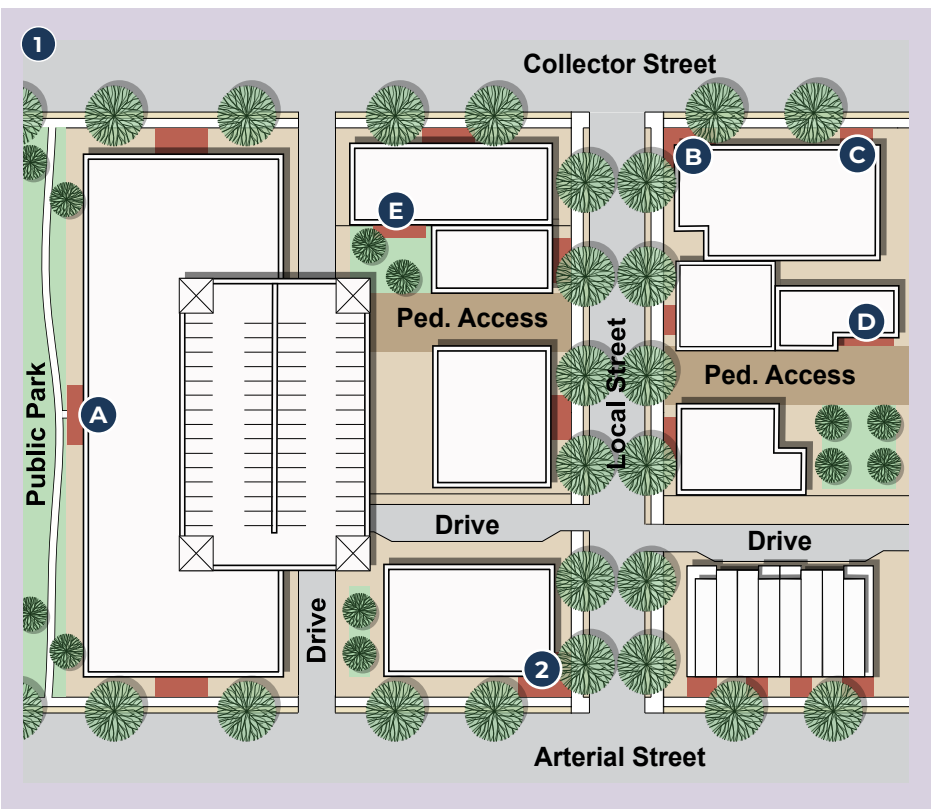
The pedestrian entry is the primary or secondary entrance to a building that serves as a visual cue to identify the building and protects pedestrians from the elements, shielding from rain, wind, and sun as they enter and exit the building.

Location of Pedestrian Entry

- 1 ▶ Orient the building's primary entrance to the public realm according to the following hierarchy to provide convenient access for pedestrians.
 - A ▶ Public plaza or park
 - B ▶ Primary addressing street
 - C ▶ Secondary addressing street
 - D ▶ Pedestrian passageway
 - E ▶ Other open space frontage or other street
- 2 ▶ Provide corner entrances at the intersection of two streets to increase visibility of the entryway and anchor the corner.

Pedestrian Entry

Ensure primary and secondary entrances to buildings are pronounced, identifiable, highly accessible, protected, and inviting to pedestrians.



Design of Pedestrian Entry

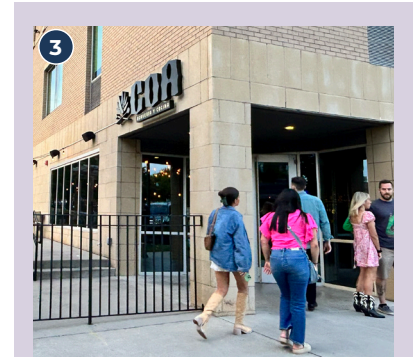
- ▶ Use at least two of the following commonly found features to augment and identify entry areas:
 - ▶ Recessed, projecting, or pronounced entry bay;
 - ▶ Extra-high or wide lobby/entry area;
 - ▶ Distinctive doors, windows, architectural features, or artwork integrated into the front face of entry area;
 - ▶ Light fixtures flanking the entry;
 - ▶ Distinctive paving materials, texture, or color used at the entry way; or
 - ▶ Landscaping, year-round or seasonal container plantings, water features, and/or seating.
- ▶ Include a pedestrian pathway that directly connects the primary and secondary entrances to the public sidewalk and employ universal design principles to account for the diverse needs of sidewalk users ranging in age, ability, speed, and spatial needs.
- ▶ Include overhangs, awnings and/or canopies, wall insets, or other means for providing refuge and all-weather protection for pedestrians.

Visibility & Transparency

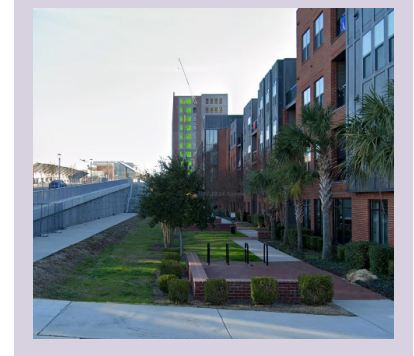
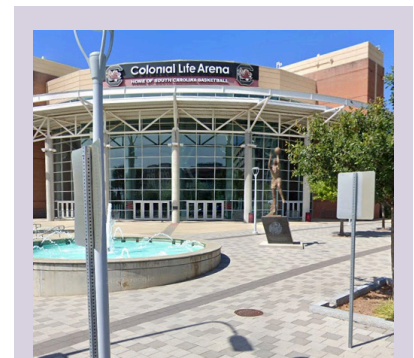
- ▶ Provide night-time exterior lighting at building entrances.
- ▶ Use highly transparent glass that is non-reflective and minimally tinted.
- ▶ Locate the primary pedestrian entry of a building so that it is visible to pedestrians with direct sight lines from the sidewalk and avoid isolated areas.

Special Entry Conditions

- ▶ Where civic, institutional, and/or recreational frontages occur, this type of frontage applies to uses such as entertainment venues, places of worship, and cultural and institutional spaces that anticipate large assembly of people and/or queuing lines for events.
 - ▶ Provide ample open area to avoid pedestrian congestion.
 - ▶ Design open area as pedestrian plazas clear of the sidewalk area and physically delineate through design elements such as, but not limited to, knee walls, bollards, planters or landscaped areas, or ground surface treatments.
- ▶ Where frontage contain sloped terrain, ensure entrances are accessible from the public sidewalk.



Refer to Glass Transparency & Non-Reflective Specifications on p. 33.

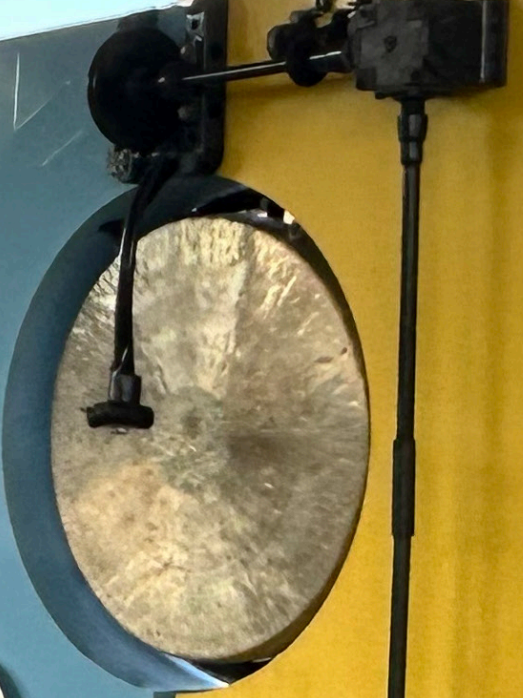


Part IV

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.





FOR 25 YEARS
MAINTAINING CREATIVITY AND A
COMMITTED COMMITMENT TO
ADVERTISING SERVICE JOINTLY
A GIFT TO CELEBRATE CREATIVE
EXCELLENCE AND HARD WORK
FROM THE HANDEL BROS
PHOTO AND DESIGN TEAM
FOR CRESTLE

SICK UP

JAYS

JAYS

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.



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.

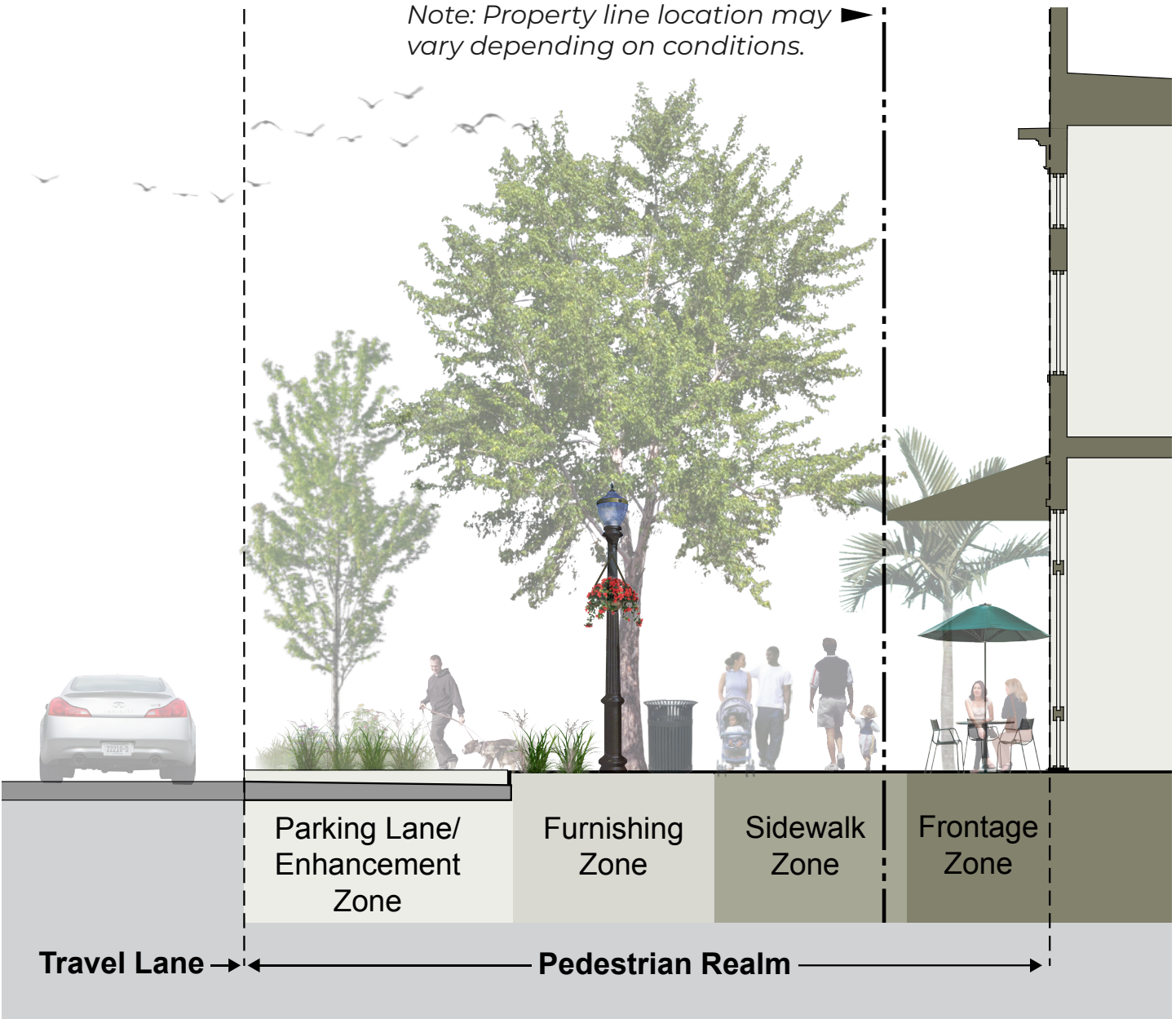


Walk Bike Columbia, the City's bicycle and pedestrian master plan, established the framework of a well-defined "pedestrian zone" as the dedicated area for pedestrian travel and includes other amenities such as green infrastructure and outdoor dining areas. Building on this framework, the design guidelines 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.

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.

Note: Property line location may vary depending on conditions.



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.

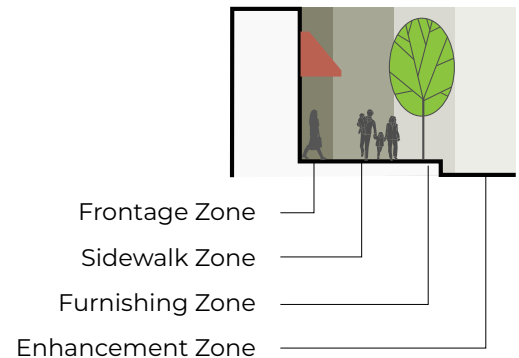
Design Criteria for the Sidewalk Zone

- 1 ▶ 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.
- 2 ▶ Account for the diverse needs of sidewalk users ranging in age, ability, speed, and spatial needs.
- 3 ▶ Provide adequate sidewalk width in accordance with the Optimal Sidewalk Zone Dimensions table on the next page for all sidewalks and design pathways 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 (coordinate with staff to determine appropriate widths).
- 4 ▶ 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 six (6) 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

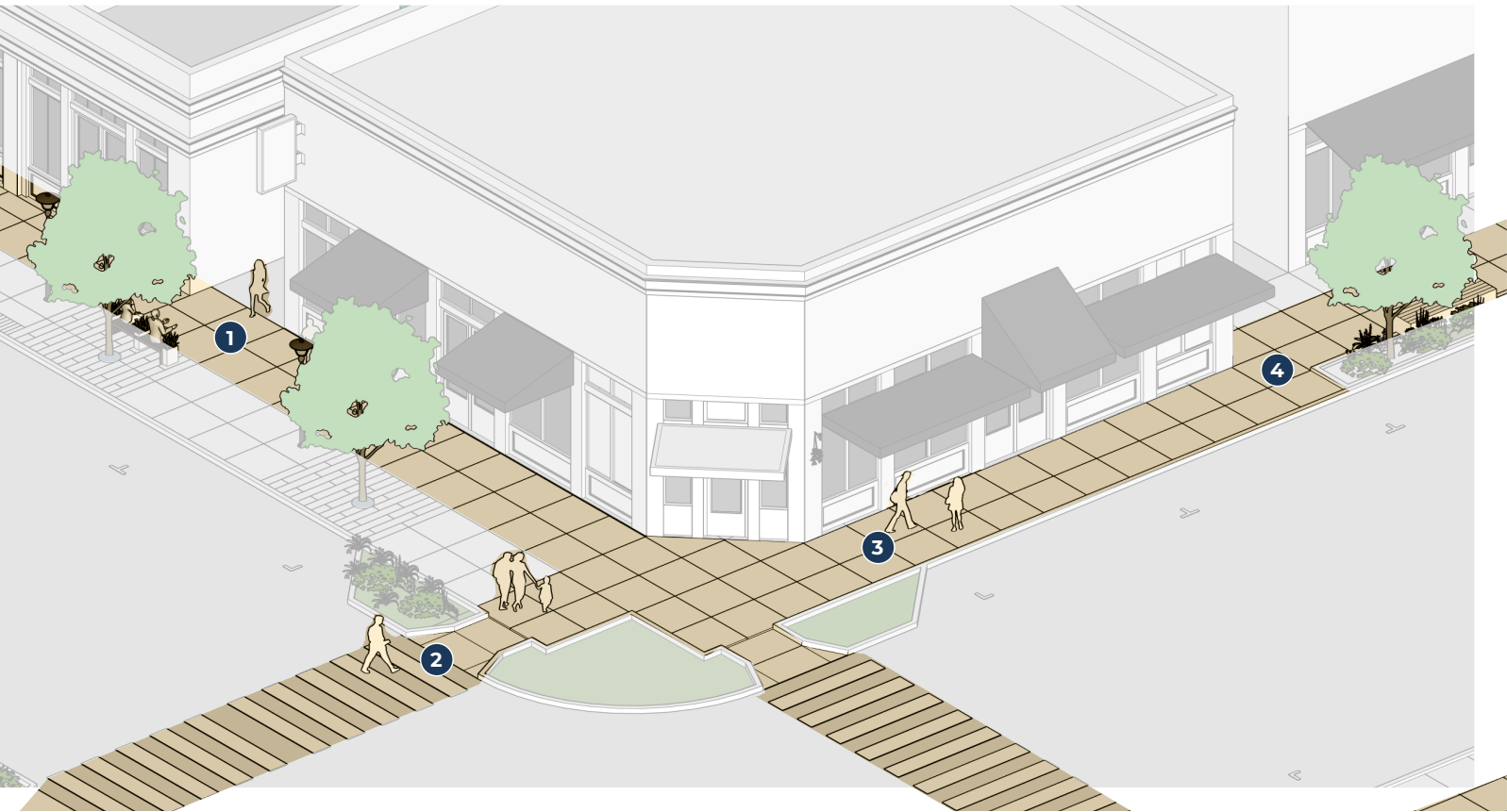
Ensure a continuous, unobstructed path of travel that provides physical and visual access to building storefronts and entrances as well as to streetscape amenities.

Zone Reference Diagram



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

Minimum dimensions shown indicate the clear path of travel and do not include space for other amenities such as outdoor dining. Refer to Streetscape Elements beginning on p. 48 for preferred placement of all Streetscape Elements.



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

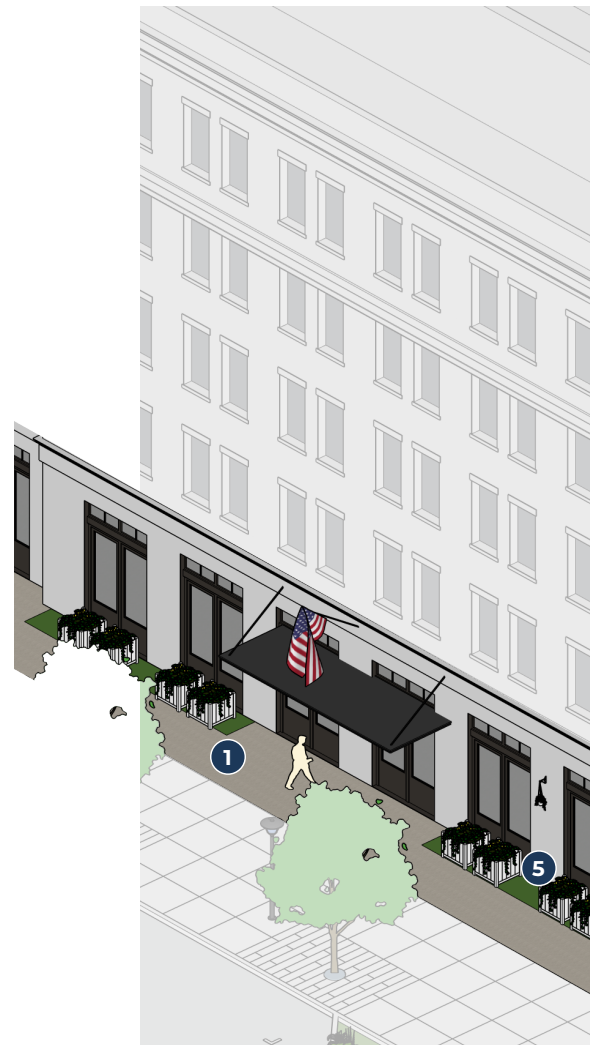
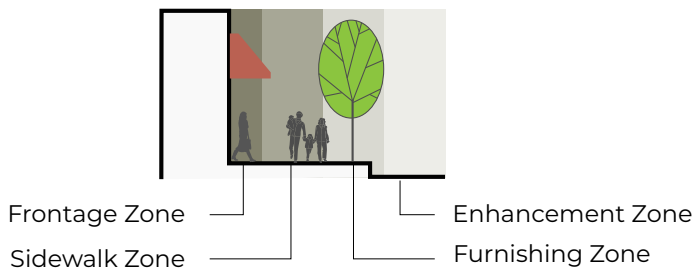
- 1 ▶ Provide a narrow frontage zone dimension to accommodate objects protruding from the wall of the building, such as but not limited to signs, window-mounted planters, wall-mounted flags, and elements that aid in articulation of the building.
- 2 ▶ Provide a deeper frontage zone dimension to support 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.
- 3 ▶ 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.

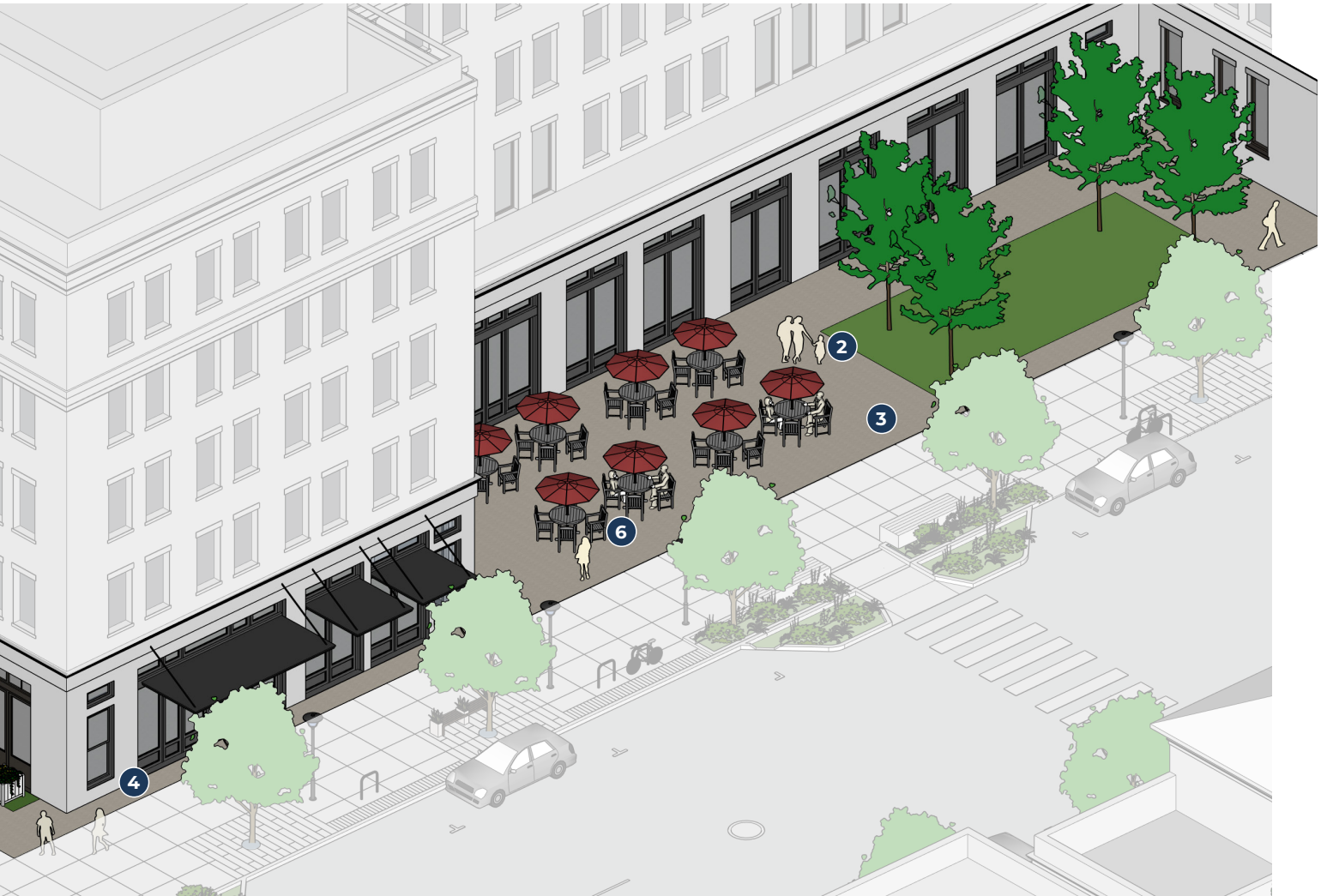
Coordinate appropriate location of utilities with relevant agencies. Locations may depend on several criteria, including the condition and location of existing utility lines, available width within the existing right-of-way, and the long-term vision of the street.

Zone Reference Diagram



Optimal Frontage Zone Dimensions

Streetscape Element	Minimum Dimension
4 Storefronts and Commercial Areas	2 feet
5 Building Perimeter Landscaping	3 feet
6 Outdoor Dining Areas	6 feet
Development Frontage	Building frontages and setbacks vary based on development type (See Development Frontages on page 27).



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.

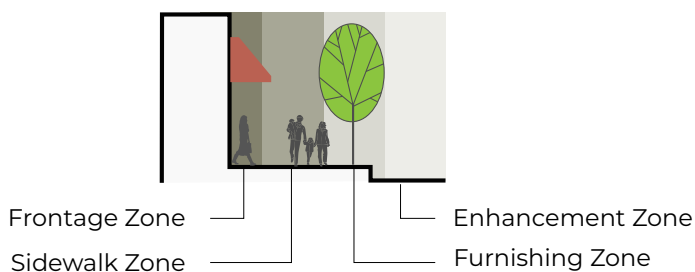
Character-Defining Furnishings

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

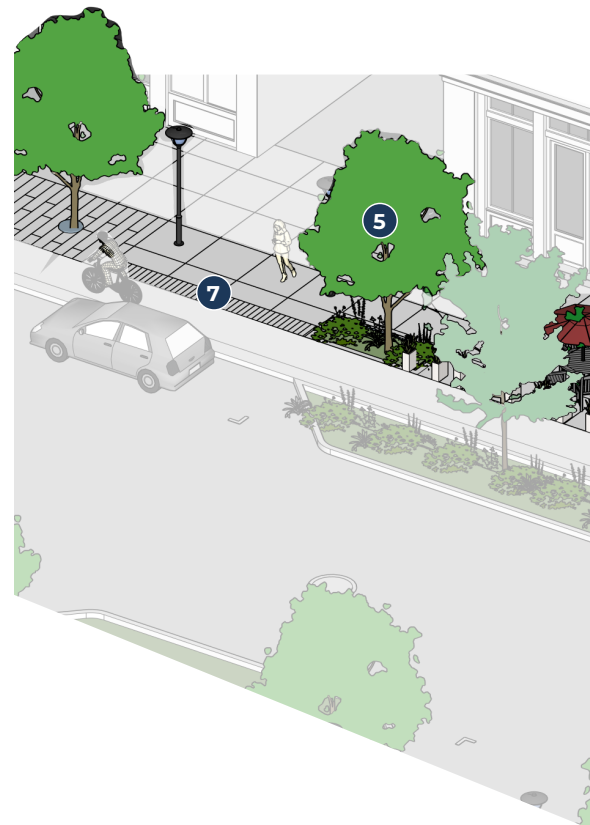
- 1 ▶ Design streetscape furnishings and amenities of long-lasting or otherwise durable construction to reduce long-term maintenance and stockpiling of spare parts.
 - ▶ Locate elements so as to maintain unobstructed visibility between pedestrians and motorists at crosswalks.
- 2 ▶ Use high-contrast 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.

Zone Reference Diagram



Intent

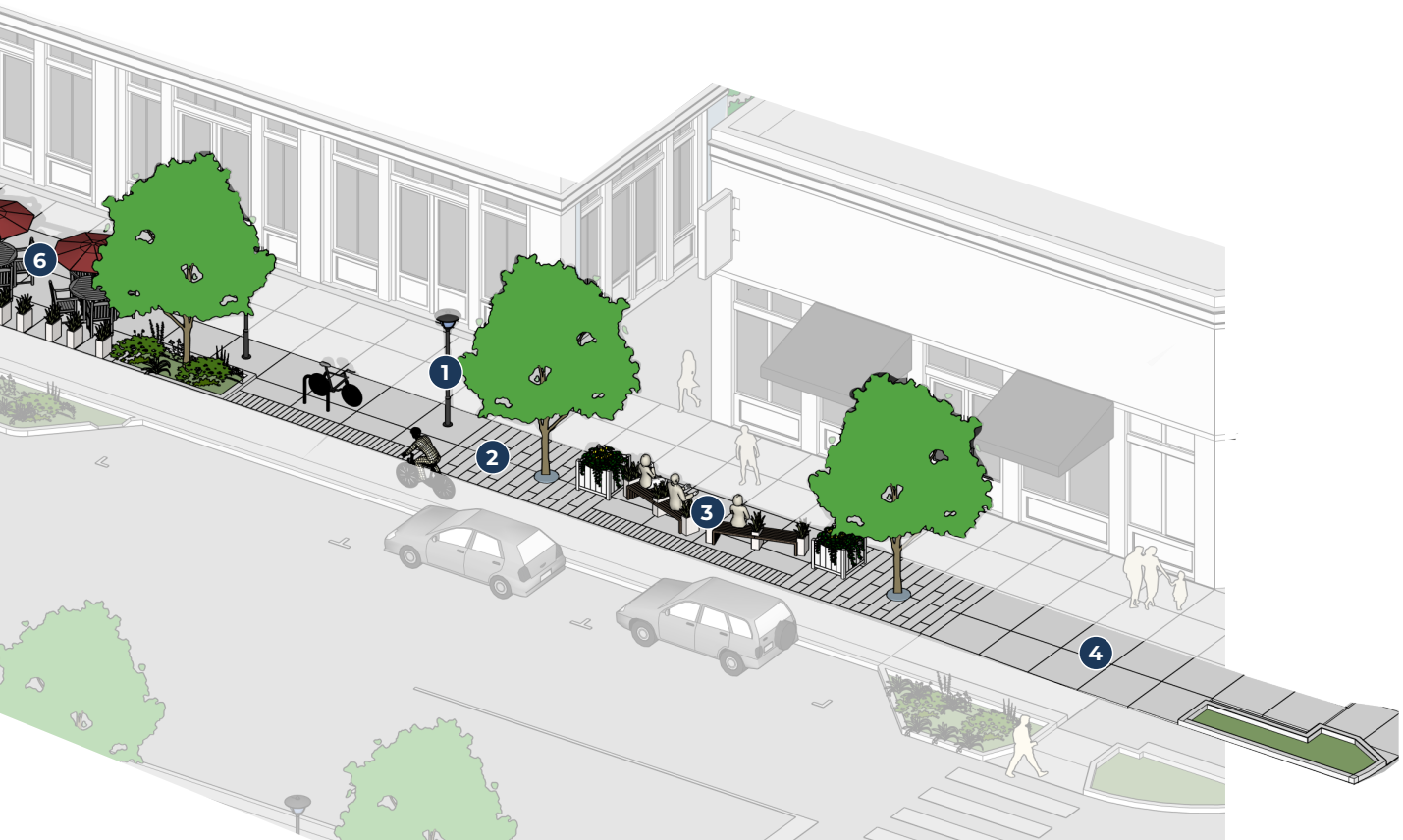
Provide a consistent buffer between pedestrians and travel or parking lanes as well as a space for streetscape elements that define the character of the corridor or district.



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

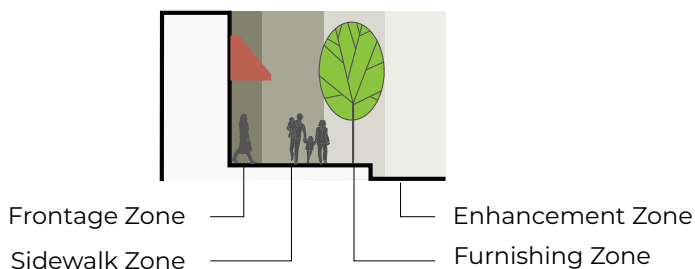
What is the Parking Lane/Enhancement Zone?

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;
 - ▶ Transit stops;
 - 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.

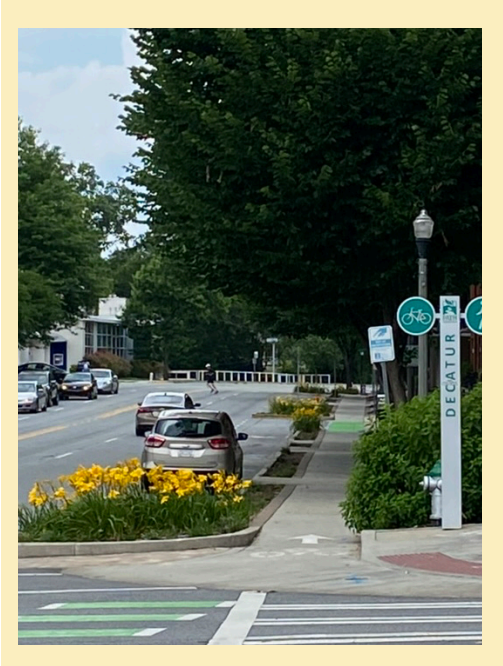
Zone Reference Diagram



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.





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.

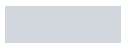
The streetscape plan can be a plan, cross-section, and/or detailed drawings to scale illustrating proposed conditions with general spatial composition and organization.



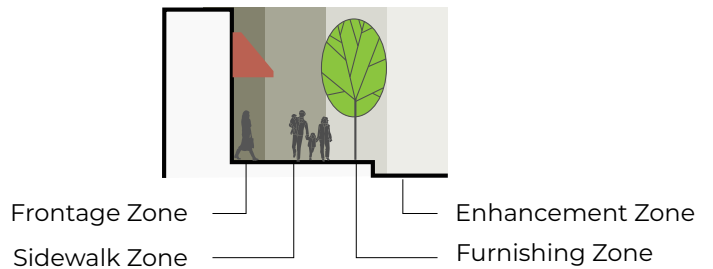
Preferred Placement of Streetscape Elements				
Streetscape Element	Frontage Zone	Sidewalk Zone	Furnishing Zone	Enhancement Zone
Benches	Acceptable Alternative Placement		Preferred Priority Placement	Acceptable Alternative Placement
Bicycle Rack	Preferred Priority Placement		Preferred Priority Placement	
Curb Extension				Preferred Priority Placement
Green Infrastructure	Preferred Priority Placement		Preferred Priority Placement	Preferred Priority Placement
Kiosks & Corrals			Preferred Priority Placement	Acceptable Alternative Placement
Outdoor Dining	Preferred Priority Placement		Acceptable Alternative Placement	
On-Street Parking				Preferred Priority Placement
Parking Meters & Pay Stations			Preferred Priority Placement	
Parklets				Preferred Priority Placement
Public Art	Preferred Priority Placement		Preferred Priority Placement	Preferred Priority Placement
Signs	Preferred Priority Placement	Acceptable Alternative Placement 1		
Street Trees	Acceptable Alternative Placement		Preferred Priority Placement	Acceptable Alternative Placement
Trash Receptacle			Preferred Priority Placement	Acceptable Alternative Placement
Wayfinding			Preferred Priority Placement	Preferred Priority Placement
Above-Ground Utilities			Preferred Priority Placement 2	

- 1** Signs may overhang into the sidewalk zone in accordance with the City's Unified Development Ordinance.
- 2** Where utilities are already buried, no new overhead utilities are permitted.

 Preferred Priority Placement

 Acceptable Alternative Placement

Zone Reference Diagram



Coordinate appropriate location of utilities with relevant agencies. Locations may depend on several criteria, including the condition and location of existing utility lines, available width within the existing right-of-way, and the long-term vision of the street.



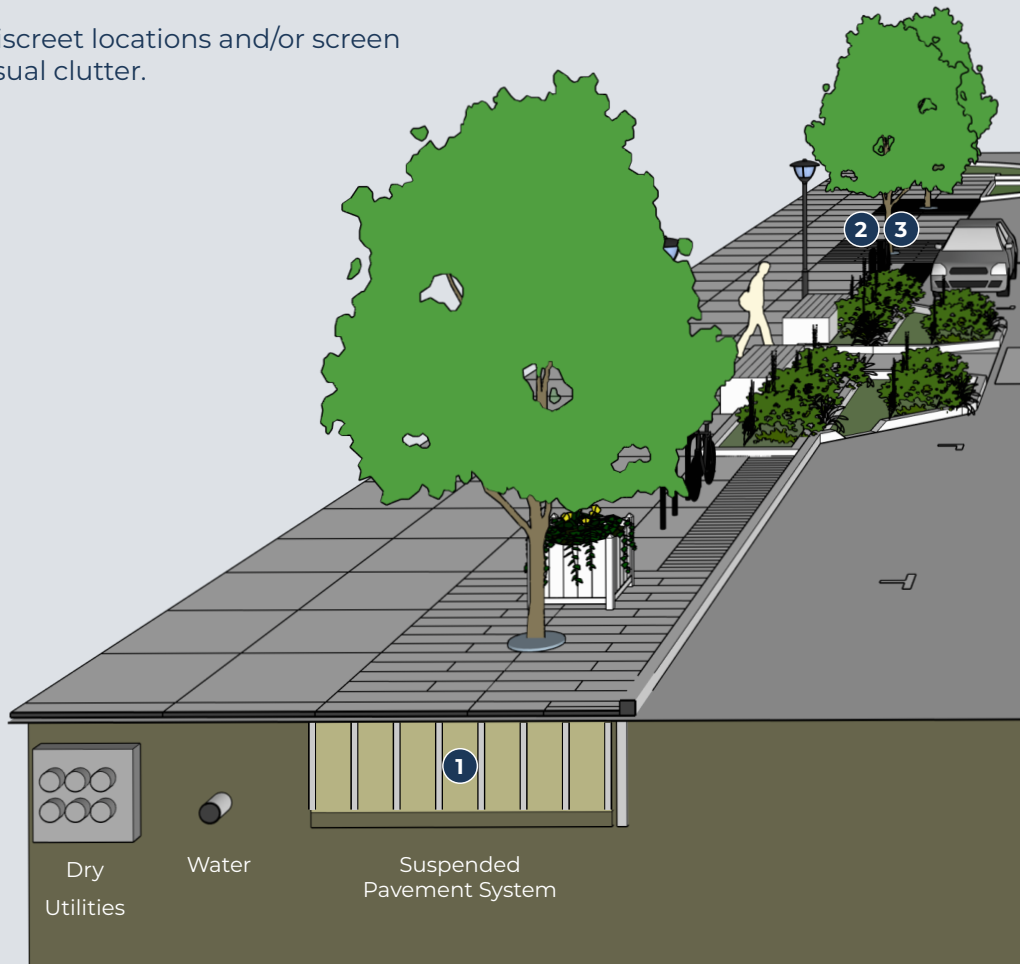
Public Utilities

The location of utilities often creates conflict with proposed street trees and other streetscape elements. As utilities are buried and relocated underground, it is recommended that utilities be placed consistently in locations that minimize the opportunity for conflicts with street trees.

- 1 ▶ Minimize conflicts between utility location and street trees. Where possible, coordinate utility placement with Public Works to be located underground either:
 - ▶ In the street; or
 - ▶ Between 7 to 12 feet back from the curb face to avoid conflicts with street trees.
- ▶ Integrate utility cabinets, vaults, and meters into the site and building design.
- ▶ Collocate utilities and place in discreet locations and/or screen from public view to minimize visual clutter.

Active Transportation Facilities

- 2 ▶ Ensure adequate space to navigate bicycle on/off racks without impeding pedestrian movement or backing into parking lane or roadway.
- 3 ▶ Locate and cluster bicycle racks and other micromobility facilities nearest to the highest level of pedestrian activity.



Note: This utility coordination graphic is shown for illustrative purpose only.



Green Infrastructure

Green infrastructure may include stormwater management strategies treated as amenities such as bioretention devices, rain gardens, tree box filters, and pervious pavement (concrete, asphalt, pavers, or similar material).

- 4 ▶ Coordinate all stormwater systems, landscaping, and planting with City Engineering and Public Works.

On-Street Parking Areas

- 5 ▶ Provide a minimum 30 to 36 inches of space between the curb and other streetscape elements to allow for passenger door swing clearance.
- ▶ Provide paved access points at regular intervals to facilitate exiting and entering of vehicles from the parking lane between the curb and sidewalk where continuous planting area occurs.

Outdoor Furniture

- 6 ▶ Locate seating areas at natural areas of rest or at key view points.
- 7 ▶ Select seating that is at least 20 inches above grade to accommodate elderly pedestrians comfortably and encourage use by all ages.



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.

Refer to the City's Unified Development Ordinance for all definitions related to tree terminology used throughout these design guidelines.

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 (Refer to Development Frontage on page 27) or a designated open space (Refer to Open Space Guidelines on page 12).





Design Criteria for Placement of Street Trees .

- ▶ Locate street trees at regular intervals within the Furnishing Zone to avoid visual and physical obstructions in relation to other furnishings and amenities, such as:
 - ▷ Views to and from traffic signals and signs;
 - ▷ Casting of light from light fixtures onto the sidewalk;
 - ▷ Access to light poles, utilities, fire hydrants, and other areas that require emergency or service vehicle access;
 - ▷ Clearance needed for bicycle racks, kiosks, trash receptacles, parking meters, and other streetscape elements.
- ▶ Substitute understory trees for canopy trees where overhead utility lines cannot be buried underground.
- ▶ Use palm trees as ornamental trees, not as canopy trees.
- ▶ Place street trees away from other streetscape elements in accordance with the table provided below.

Optimal Distance between Street Trees and Streetscape Elements	
Streetscape Element	Optimal Distance
Other canopy trees	40 feet
Other understory trees	25 feet
Intersections and transit stops	25 feet
Streetlights and electrical transformers	10 feet
Public water & sewer utilities	8 feet

Note: The optimal separation between street trees and other streetscape elements may be adjusted up to 20% with approval by the Zoning Administrator in coordination with relevant City agencies.

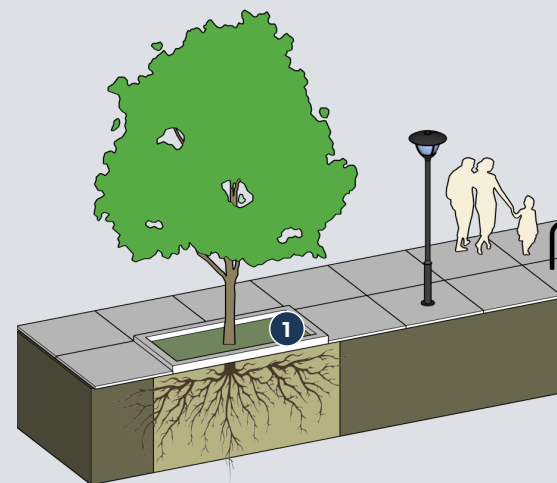
Soil

- 1 ▶ Install tree pit in accordance with the following table, with a minimum width of five (5) feet, a minimum volume of 275 square feet of adequate soils, and follow the latest best practices for urban tree health.

Optimal Soil Volumes for Street Trees	
Planting Element	Minimum Soil Volume
Canopy trees (tree mature height above 50 ft)	1,000 cubic feet
Canopy trees (tree mature height of 30 to 50 ft)	650 cubic feet
Understory trees (tree mature height up to 30 ft)	300 cubic feet

Tree Wells

- 2 ▶ Maintain a continuous tree well, or tree pit, where possible to connect and share soil space for optimal root growth.
 - ▶ Equip all in-ground tree wells with irrigation and electrical access.
- 3 ▶ Utilize design strategies to discourage pedestrians from walking through planting areas such as but not limited to:
 - ▶ Elevated planters with a coping edge or curb edge;
 - ▶ Ground covers or low shrub masses, up to a maximum of one (1) foot high; and/or
 - ▶ Integrated seating areas.
- ▶ In constrained situations, use alternative surface covers, such as:
 - ▶ Flexible permeable pavement; or
 - ▶ Tree grates (although discouraged, tree grate substitutions may be used where all other options are exhausted. All tree grate substitutions shall be ADA compliant and installed level with the running grade of the sidewalk. Permeable systems, such as but not limited to Terrawalks™, or rubber modular sidewalk panels are preferred.



Suspended Pavement

Otherwise known as cantilevered sidewalks, a suspended pavement system is a technology designed to support pavement weight while creating a subsurface void filled with soil to promote healthy root growth of trees.

Suspended Pavement Systems

Soil cells, such as but not limited to DeepRoot Silva Cells™, Citygreen StrataCells™, RootSpace™, and StrataVault™ systems, are structural and stackable modular cells designed to be filled between the voids with soil and covered with sidewalks, bike lanes, parking lots, and other hardscape above to increase the available rooting space underneath.

A suspended pavement system, otherwise known as a cantilevered sidewalk, is a proven technology that provides lightly compacted, high-quality rooting conditions for urban tree roots. Such systems provide a form of low-impact development, help integrate street trees among other competing streetscape elements, and are well-suited for areas such as parking areas, rooftops, plazas, sidewalks, and other areas dominated by pavement.

- 4 ▶ Utilize suspended pavement systems where soil volumes are restrictive.
- ▶ Coordinate with SCDOT where necessary on state-owned right-of-way.
- ▶ Ensure at least 60% of the required soil volume of structural soil systems can be obtained with uncompacted root space at grade opening, as an alternate method for extending available rooting space under pavement.



Part V

Signs

Part V is intended to improve the pedestrian experience in Downtown Columbia by providing design strategies that support creative, pedestrian-scaled, and appropriately placed signs that relate to the public realm.



ORMWATER STUDIOS



Signs

Communicate information in attractive and creative ways that visually enhances the pedestrian experience.

While signs attract the attention of pedestrians and motorists by conveying messaging and information, the cumulative effects of signs create an overall visual aesthetic for the public realm.



All Signs

Intent

Improve the pedestrian experience in Downtown Columbia by supporting creative, pedestrian-scaled signs.

Refer to Section 17-5.10 of the City's Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) for number allowances and size of all signs. These guidelines do not authorize any sign that the UDO prohibits.



Legibility

An effective sign should do more than attract attention; it should be legible to communicate its message.

- ▶ Use contrasting coloring and simple, large typefaces to increase legibility.
- ▶ Limit the number of typefaces to increase legibility.

Materials

- ▶ Use one of the following permitted materials in Downtown Columbia:
 - ▶ Wood (carved, sandblasted, etched, and properly sealed, primed, and painted, or stained);
 - ▶ Metal (formed, etched, cast, engraved, and properly primed and painted or factory coated to protect against corrosion);
 - ▶ High-density pre-formed urethane or similar material;
 - ▶ Custom neon tubing or LED neon tubing, in the form of graphics or lettering, may be incorporated into signs; and
 - ▶ Plastic facing used in channel letters or dimensional signs.
- ▶ The following materials are prohibited for permanent signs in Downtown Columbia:
 - ▶ Plastic facing when used in flat panels in cabinet signs;
 - ▶ Paper and cloth (except on awnings and banners); and
 - ▶ Balloons or inflatable material signs.
- ▶ Use cabinet (box construction) and monument signs with opaque, non-internally illuminated face panels. Only individual letters and logos may be back-lit, not the entire surface of the sign.
- ▶ Avoid glossy reflective surfaces for face panels, but plastic for internally illuminated letters (routed/stenciled/embossed) with an opaque matte background is allowed.
- ▶ Complement the color and architecture of the wall when attaching building-mounted wall signs and/or raceway cabinets.
- ▶ Do not paint directly on brick facades in historic districts. However, historic painted signs may be preserved.



Refer to Section 17-5.10: Signs, of the City's Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) for number allowances and size of all signs.

Illumination

The most appropriate type of sign illumination in Downtown Columbia is indirect lighting.

- ▶ Indirect lighting causes a sign to appear better integrated with the facade, not something that was added later.
- ▶ Indirect lighting is also more appropriate for historic districts and produces a more intimate ambiance on the street.

Illuminate signs only to the minimum level required for nighttime readability. The light source in indirect lighting fixtures (LED, fluorescent, or incandescent) requires shielding to prevent glare from spilling over into residential areas and any public right-of-way.

Halo illumination of opaque letters is preferred to internally illuminated channel letter signs. Signs comprised of opaque individually cut letters mounted directly on a structure can often use a distinctive element of the structure's facade as a backdrop that provides better integration of the sign with the structure.

Changeable Copy Signs

Where allowed by Section 17-5.10: Signs, of the Unified Development Ordinance, signs featuring changeable copy that is produced by light emitting diodes (LEDs), incandescent or low-voltage lamps or bulbs, or cathode ray tubes (CRTs), the following additional standards apply:

- ▶ Cabinets or frames for changeable copy signs shall complement the color and architecture of the building for attached signs and shall match the color of the sign support structure for freestanding signs.
- ▶ The background color of the display panel for changeable copy signs must be dark (black is preferred) but may not be white, yellow, orange, green, or red. Lettering may be displayed in lighter colors that contrast with the dark background.
- ▶ Changeable copy signs must include an automatic shut-off that turns off the sign in the event of a malfunction.
- ▶ In the case of a malfunction, a changeable copy sign must be turned off until repaired.

Sign Types

Wall Signs

Place signs in a consistent manner with the proportions and scale of the elements within the structure's facade. For example, a particular sign may fit well on a plain wall area but might overpower the finer scale and proportion of a lower storefront. A sign that is appropriate near an entry may look tiny and out of place above the ground level.

- ▶ Locate signs where architectural features or details suggest a location, size, or shape for the sign. The best location for a wall sign continues to be a band or blank area between the first and second floors of a building.
- ▶ Avoid removing or altering permanent architectural features of the building to accommodate signage.
- ▶ Place signs on buildings consistent with sign locations on adjacent buildings. This approach can establish visual continuity among storefronts.

Avoid placing signs above the roof or cornice line of a building.

In pedestrian-oriented areas, relate signs to pedestrians on the sidewalk instead of motorists. In this case, small projecting signs under awnings are most appropriate. Place signs in close proximity to the store entrance.



Window Signs

Do not cover more than 50% of each window with permanent and/or temporary window signs to ensure visual transparency in and out of windows.

Window signs may consist of individual letters, characters, and graphics but may not include solid backgrounds to preserve visibility through the window.

Coordinate with transparency and visibility design guidelines under Building Design on pp. 32-33.



Projecting Signs

Hang projecting signs at a 90° angle from the face of the building. It should be pinned at least six (6) inches away from the wall for optimal visibility and should not project beyond a vertical plane set two (2) feet inside the curb line.

Locate projecting signs at least fifty (50) feet from the nearest projecting sign for maximum visibility.

- ▶ Decorative iron and wood brackets that support projecting signs are encouraged.
- ▶ Harmonize the lines of brackets with the shape of the sign. However, the most important feature of a bracket should be its ability to hold up the sign.
- ▶ Avoid damaging brick and stonework by designing brackets so that they can be bolted into masonry joints when possible.

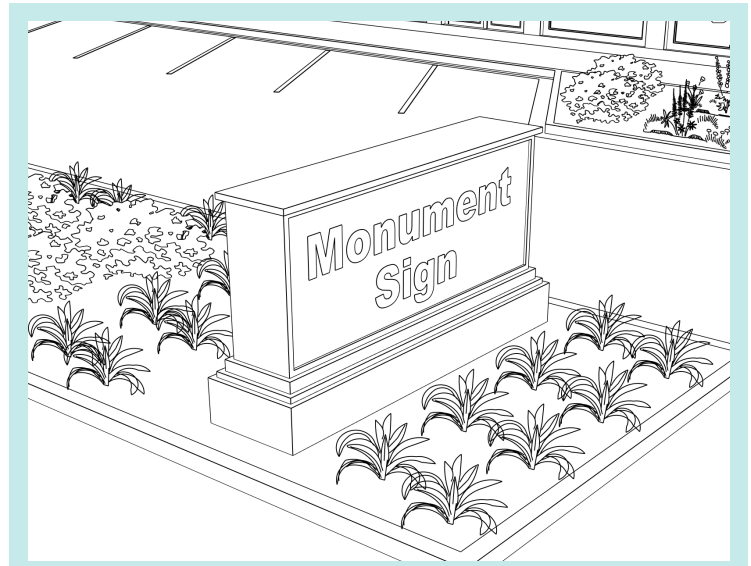
On a multi-storied building, suspend the sign between the bottom of the second-story windowsills and the top of the doors or windows of the first story. On a one-story building, suspend the top of the sign no higher than the lowest point of the roof.



Freestanding Signs

While wall signs and projecting signs are the preferred sign types for Downtown Columbia, monument and pylon signs are suitable in some locations.

- ▶ Monument signs are allowed in locations where the building includes an entry courtyard set back from the right-of-way at least twenty (20) feet.
- ▶ Pylon signs are limited to street frontages where the entire building is set back at least twenty-five (25) feet from the street right-of-way.
- ▶ On parcels where buildings are set back from the sidewalk by more than ten (10) feet, post signs are also an allowed type sign type. This sign type is most appropriate for the adaptive reuse of structures and mixed office-residential areas to promote cottage businesses, not-for-profit or professional uses, creative arts studios, and similar uses. Suspend the sign panel from one or two wooden or metal posts.
- ▶ Relate freestanding signs to the architecture or design of the building using similar materials and colors.



Freestanding Sign Allowances

Where they are allowed, freestanding signs must comply with the height and area limitations in the table to the right.

Freestanding Sign Allowances		
Speed Limit of Adjacent Street	Height (Max.)	Area (Max.)
0 - 30 MPH	4 feet	20 square feet
> 30 MPH	7 feet	40 square feet

Awning Signs

Construct awnings with removable fabric, valances, and end panels when initially installed to accommodate future changes in sign copy.

Replace awning fabric when it is faded, frayed, or damaged.



Figurative Signs

Signs shaped like symbols or figures, such as shoes, keys, glasses, books, etc., are encouraged. Figurative signs may be incorporated into any of the allowable sign types.

