6 urban design

OVERVIEW

Downtown Anchorage is the urban hub of not only Anchorage, but the entire state of Alaska. Its unique history, natural setting, cultural events, and architectural and streetscape design all combine to create an **urban design environment like no other in the world**.

Recognizing both the strengths and function of the built environment and the physical impacts of existing zoning—and determining what new regulations and guidelines are necessary to enhance these characteristics—is critical during this phase in Downtown's development. By doing so, Downtown Anchorage can celebrate its past, embrace its unique northern climate conditions and become America's best example of a Winter City— designed to be a great place for its residents, workers and visitors.

This chapter reviews the existing conditions of Downtown's urban design; identifies the goals for maintaining and improving the design of the urban environment; and articulates the guidelines needed to enhance the special qualities of the Downtown experience.

Ground floor uses that spill onto wide, well-designed sidewalks combine to make the Downtown environment a place where people want to be.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Downtown faces a number of environmental and physical constraints that affect how people experience the city center. The most pressing constraints that should be addressed with the design guidelines fall into two categories: Pedestrian Environment and Climate-Sensitive Design.

Pedestrian Environment

- Many sidewalks are of insufficient width for pedestrian mobility and comfort.
- There are limited opportunities to stop, sit and relax.
- Icy sidewalks limit pedestrian mobility in the winter.
- The ground level of many buildings does not open onto the sidewalk or provide visual access between the sidewalk and interior spaces. Long blank walls, mirrored glass and a lack of entry ways oriented to the sidewalk affect the pedestrian environment.
- Pedestrian lighting is often poor and inconsistent from one street to the next.
- The prevalence of surface parking lots takes away from an interesting and safe pedestrian experience.
- Parking garages often lack active uses on the first several stories facing the street, creating dead spaces. Garages should be underground or wrapped with mixed-use space.

Climate and Setting

- Existing structures have not maximized sun penetration and wind protection in the public realm. Taller building designs have failed to incorporate canopies, step-backs or other architectural elements to create a more comfortable ground level pedestrian environment. This has resulted in many windy, dark entry plazas, sidewalks and open spaces.
- Many buildings lack appropriately designed pedestrian shelters. Awnings and canopies often block sunlight and shed rain, snow and ice onto the sidewalk.
- The use of heavy equipment and salt to remove snow reduces the lifespan and impacts the aesthetics of the streetscape.
- The streetscape lacks amenities and visual attractions during winter.
- Certain scenic view corridors are impacted by building massing or projections such as skywalks.
- References to local culture or the natural setting are often absent from the design of streets, open spaces and buildings. Downtown does have a significant collection of historic buildings which give the city center a distinctive character along portions of 4th Avenue as well as other locations.

URBAN DESIGN GOALS

Downtown's livability is largely dependent on the design of its public and private realms. The urban design goals aim to strengthen Downtown's uniquely urban experience.

Design for people

Build attractive, well-designed buildings and streetscapes that foster a walkable city center and have an urban design aesthetic and pedestrian scale that makes people want to live, work and play Downtown.

- Provide walkable, safe, easily accessed connections throughout Downtown and to adjacent districts.
- Activate the ground floor environment by orienting buildings towards the street and requiring façade articulation, building step-backs, and other pedestrian-scale design elements.
- Design roadways to reduce and minimize motor vehicle traffic impacts on adjoining outdoor and indoor spaces.

Design for density

Use sensitive design to assemble a high concentration of commercial, civic, cultural and residential uses. Design each development to be compatible with its neighbors, allowing a mix of uses to coexist. Integrate the variety of uses and activities around shared public streets and spaces, and make buildings open and inviting to this shared public realm.

- Sensitive building design can minimize shadow and wind effects, noise, traffic and light trespass on nearby mixed-use residences.
- Orienting building windows and entrances to the sidewalk helps each development to interact with and contribute to the shared public realm.
- Access to open spaces can ameliorate higher densities.

Design for the northern climate

Create a great northern city center for all seasons. Make Downtown a comfortable, attractive place to be throughout the year. Extend the warmth, comfort and vibrancy of the peak summer season further into the spring and fall by responding to Alaska's climate in the design of buildings, street environment and public spaces.

- Utilize building design that is optimal for a northern climate.
- Coordinate winter maintenance needs and winter pedestrian access in the design of Downtown's streetscape.

Design elements such as this outdoor heater in Kiruna, Sweden (above top) or this open air atrium in Downtown Denver, CO (above) create more hospitable public spaces throughout the year.

Design Guidelines

As the density of Downtown Anchorage increases, it is especially important to develop guidelines that foster urban development that is compatible with existing uses; are respectful of the natural environment and views; and support creation of an exciting and vibrant northern climate city environment. The guidelines are intended to uphold the vision for Downtown Anchorage and realize its urban design goals.

These guidelines are for both public and private development, ranging from district-wide improvements to individual building design, providing the Municipality, architects and developers with guidance as to community's expectations for the quality and compatibility of design in the city center. They also provide general guidance for the preparation of the Downtown land use and development code, which will establish specific requirements and incentives for future development. In certain cases the design guidelines may also be used to supplement the land use code during discretionary design reviews, such as by a board or commission. In such cases, the guidelines would be recommendations and subject to discretionary review.

The design guidelines for Downtown are divided into two categories:

- Enhance the Public Realm
- Improve the Quality of Building Design

Downtown Land Use and Development Code

In conjunction with the Title 21 Rewrite, the Downtown Comprehensive Plan is accompanied by a separate land use and development code for Downtown. These regulations will be used to implement the Downtown Comprehensive Plan and fit within the framework of the Title 21 Rewrite. The new Downtown development code will:

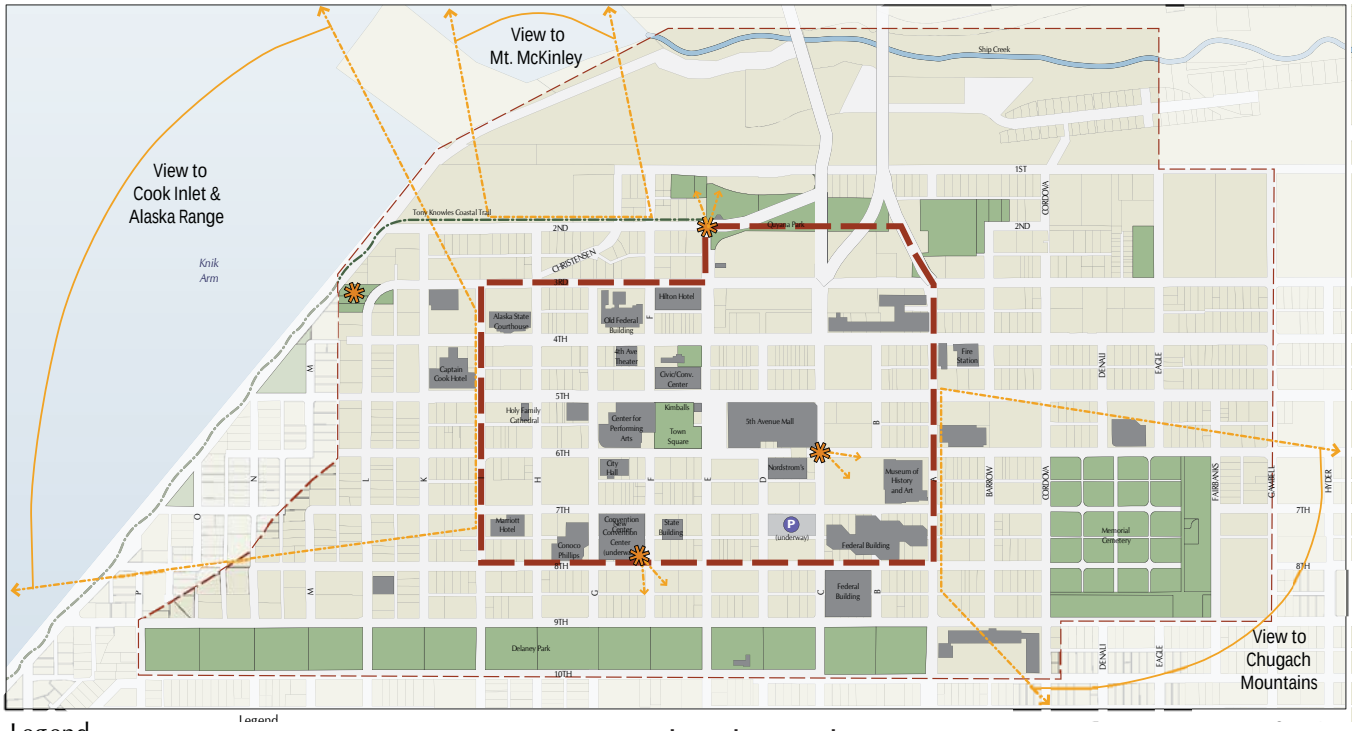
- Set form-based contextual rules for building type and form.
- Be clear and unambiguous.
- Address areas with high seismic risk with a seismic overlay zone. Land use or design standards may be appropriate in areas with greatest potential for ground failure.
- Define three distinct districts within Downtown, and provide different treatments for the different districts in the Downtown.
- Encourage compatible mixed-uses.
- Encourage multi-family and attached residential uses.
- Use graphics as needed to improve understanding.
- Streamline review processes.

1. Enhance the Public Realm

Public View Protection

- Preserve visual connections to surrounding natural scenery from street corridors and public spaces.
- Encourage the creation of new vantage points, such as public viewing areas at the top of buildings.
- Protect the view corridors on the east-west oriented avenues by designing buildings, skywalks and awnings to minimize view obstructions.
- Identify specific vantage points and the priority viewsheds for protection. These viewsheds and vantage points include (as shown in the Viewshed and Vantage point Diagram below):
  - Views of Denali and the waterfront to the north and the Alaska Range and Inlet to the west , especially from streets ending near the bluffs or the water.
  - Views south and east to the Chugach Mountain Range.
  - Views of landmark buildings, art work or major public spaces or activities.
  - Vantage points overlooking the Port and Ship Creek.

The views from Delaney Park (top photo) and the Downtown Core (bottom photo) showcase the Chugach Mountains. Viewshed impacts should be strongly considered for the location and design of new development in Downtown.

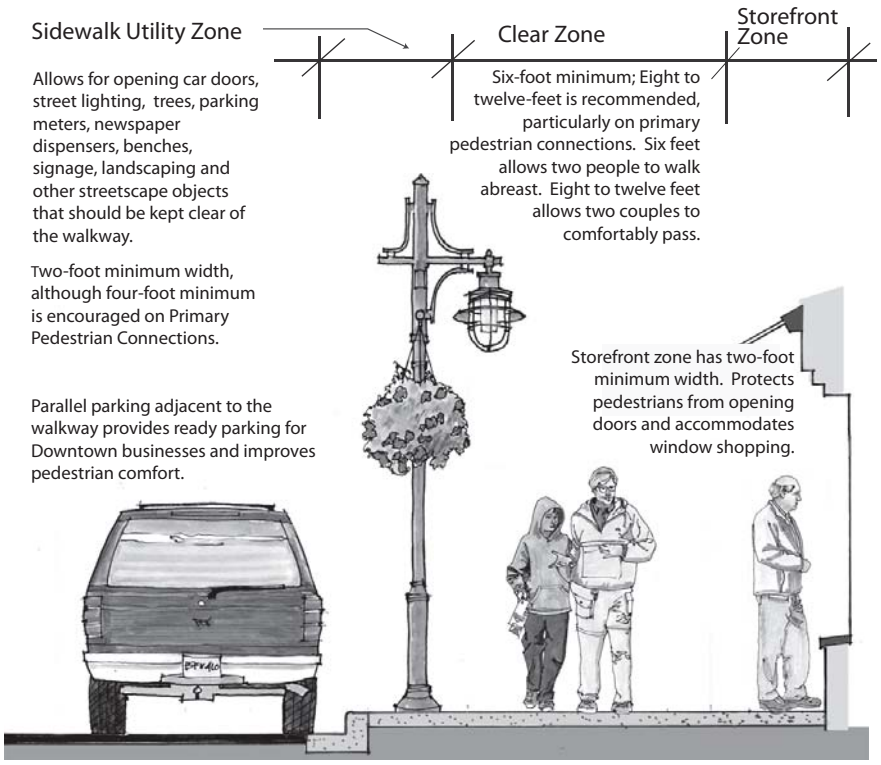


Legend

- Downtown Core Area
- Downtown Study Area
- Coastal Trail
- Viewshed
- "Notable" Building Footprint
- Park/Cemetery
- Notable Vantage Point

Viewshed and Vantage Point Diagram

Sidewalk Section



This sidewalk maintains a clear pedestrian clear zone and is extended into the parking lane for additional tree planting beds. The sidewalk width also accommodates outdoor seating.

Sidewalk Widths

- Maintain a pedestrian clear zone of a minimum width of six feet on all sidewalks (left). Increase the width to between eight and twelve feet wherever possible, especially on Primary Pedestrian Connections.
- Provide a two-foot wide sidewalk storefront zone and a sidewalk utility zone as shown in the diagram (left).
- Include parking lanes on all streets. If sidewalk width is less than six feet, consider converting one on-street space into a bulb-out with a tree planting bed.
- Inventory street rights-of-way to determine where sidewalk widening can occur. Where excess travel capacity exists, widen sidewalks to accommodate at least the minimum clear zone.
- Wherever street conversions or reconstructions occur, give priority to extending sidewalk widths.

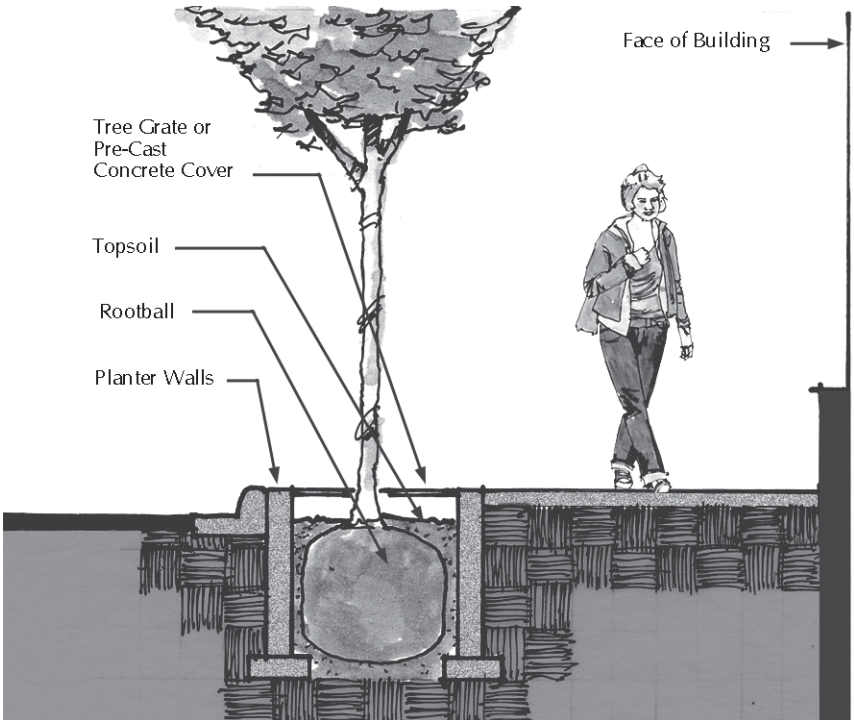
Maintaining a minimum six-foot wide sidewalk clear zone width is especially important in ensuring Anchorage is a universally accessible city that accommodates a range of abilities.

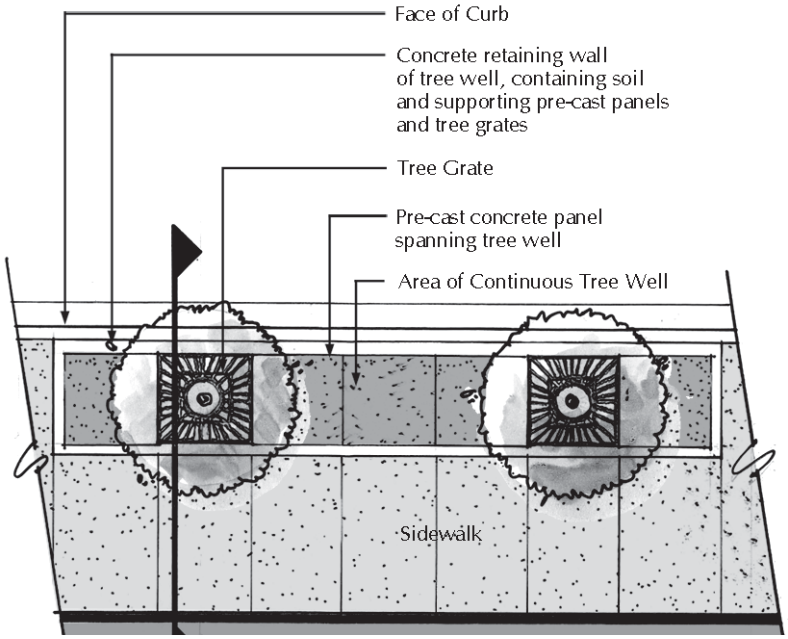
Public Streetscape Amenities

- Provide public seating opportunities clustered with other amenities, such as lighting, shelter, trash receptacles, public art and landscaping. Every street block within the Downtown Core should include at least one seating opportunity.
- Encourage dining areas outside restaurants and cafes wherever sidewalk width accommodates. Dining areas should not interfere with the clear zone for pedestrian movement.
- Provide places for stopping, such as something to lean on (e.g., bollards or short fences) or edge spaces along building facades (e.g., niches in the façade, slightly recessed entrances, window bays, porches or verandas).
- Create "secondary seating opportunities" such as steps, pedestals, low walls or edges of monuments or fountains.
- Encourage stopping places that are sunlit, wind-protected spaces, or "sun pockets".
- Encourage small pedestrian amenities that help make the winter walking environment more hospitable—by creating comfort, convenience and interest–such as gas stoves that provide light decoration and warmth, self-cleaning public restrooms, winter lighting, and heated benches.
- Promote street-level spaces for vendors to sell hot food or drinks.

An 18-foot wide sidewalk, pedestrian lighting, annuals planting, and interesting storefronts combine to make a lively streetscape on 4th Avenue (above). Even with wide sidewalks (below), care should be taken to maintain a direct pedestrian travel way suitable for at least two people walking abreast.

Tree Well (Section)

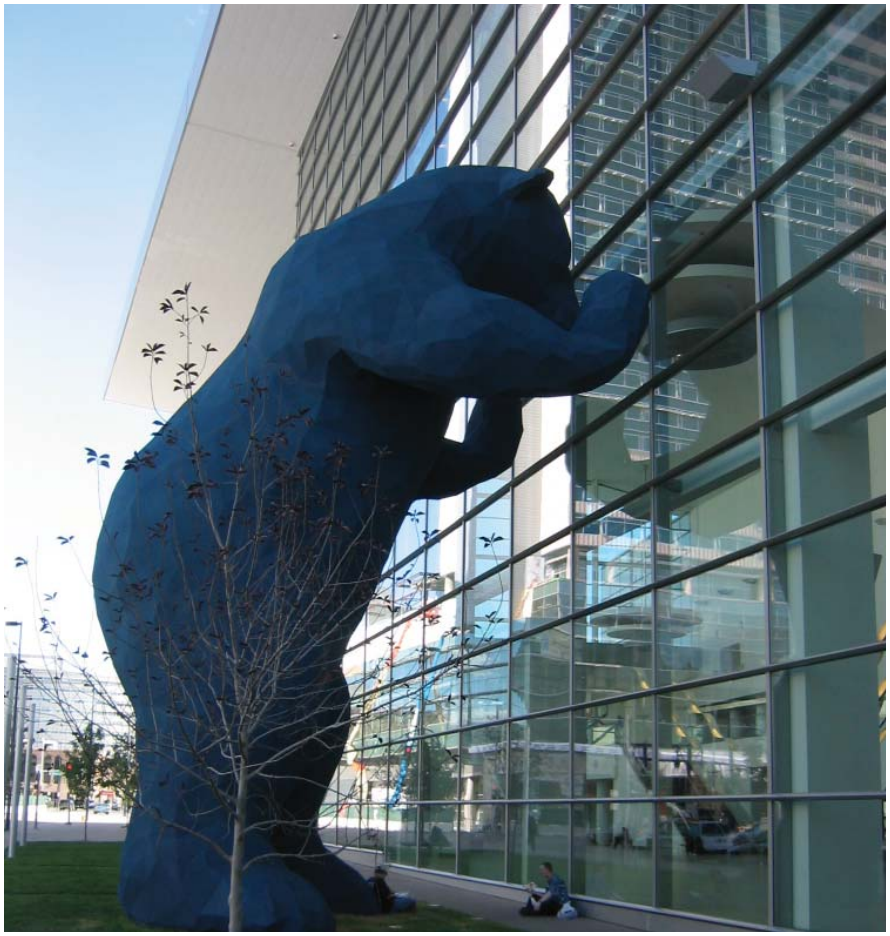




Tree Well (Plan View)

Landscaping and Art Palette

- Encourage the use of landscaping where appropriate for pedestrian safety and aesthetic benefits.
- Plant and maintain street trees where sidewalk width is sufficient for a minimum of five-foot planting bed.
- Use suspended slabs or trench planters to provide more protection to tree roots.
- Where sidewalk widths do not accommodate street tree planting, construct areas for clustered planting and/or public art.
- Preserve mature trees wherever possible.
- Ensure that power outlets for lighting displays are installed at regular intervals and maintained.
- Plant annuals throughout the Downtown Core.
- Encourage integration of public art into public areas, including parks, plazas and sidewalks. Use art to foster a sense of place and promote understanding of the local culture, heritage and natural setting.
- Ensure minimum pedestrian clear zone is maintained. Cluster art features with other streetscape amenities, including seating, lighting, trash receptacles and shelter.
- Introduce seasonal art that celebrates winter, such as water features that become ice sculptures in winter.

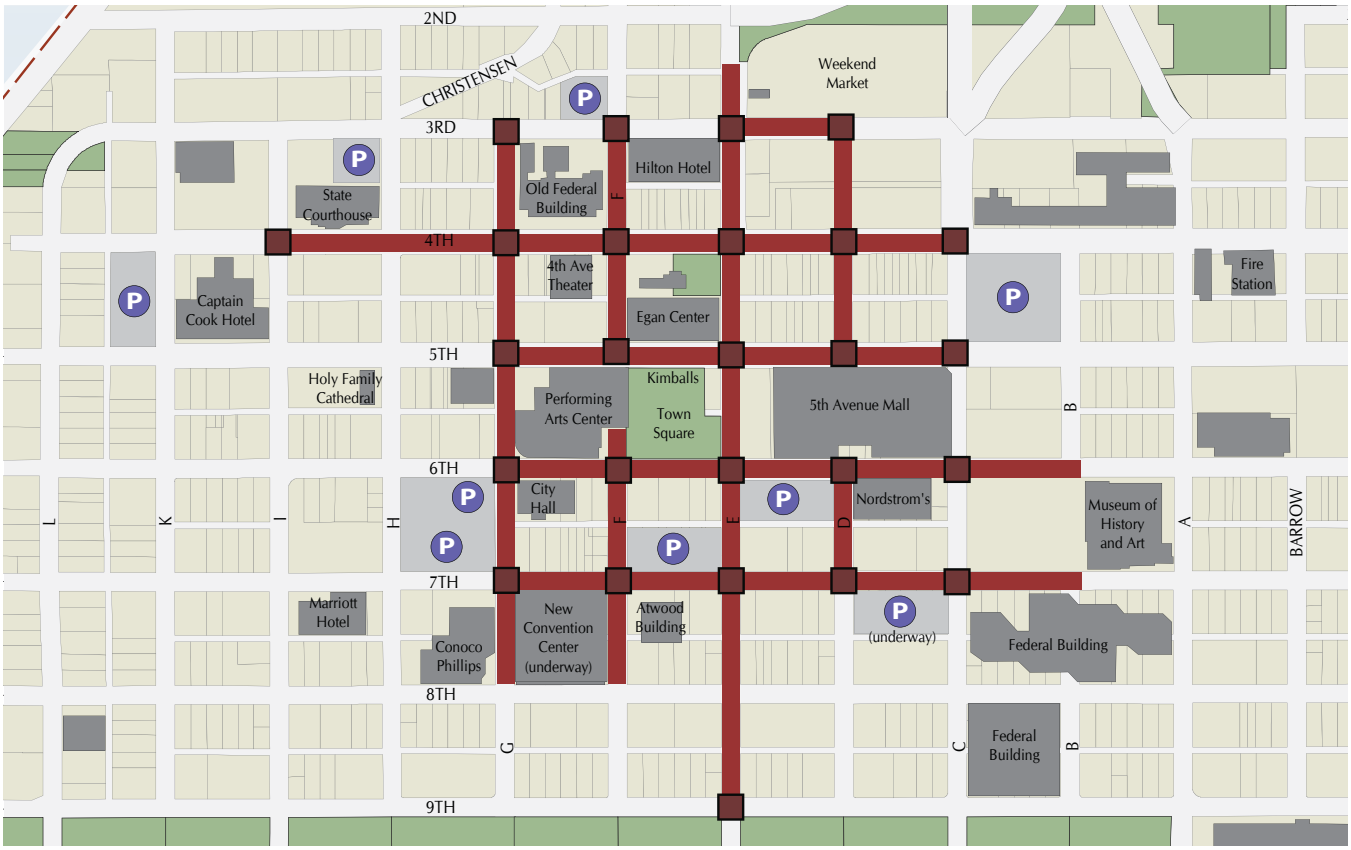


Sculptural elements can take on a functional nature. This urban fence (above top) separates pedestrians from adjacent surface parking. Sculpture that integrates art, cultural and natural references and water or lighting elements can be used for small gathering areas (above) or to make a big statement (upper and lower right).

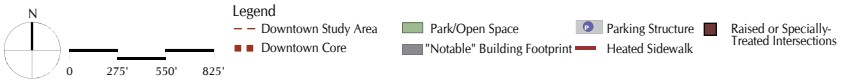
Heated sidewalks in Trondheim, Norway make pedestrian access safe and easy.

Heated Sidewalks

- Phase I (shown in red on map below): the Downtown Plan process has identified priority streets for an ice-free sidewalks system. Refinement of these priorities should be conducted through an ice-free (heated) sidewalk cost/feasibility/ implementation study.
- Phase II: Work with property owners to determine distribution and responsibility of infrastructure costs and operating costs.
- Require new public investment projects to heat selective adjacent sidewalks.
- Provide incentives for property owners and developers:
  - Develop a cost strategy for public/private partnership.
  - Develop a maintenance strategy for public/private partnership.
  - Offer incentives for existing building owners to upgrade access to their properties; consider focusing tax incentives to heated sidewalk construction.

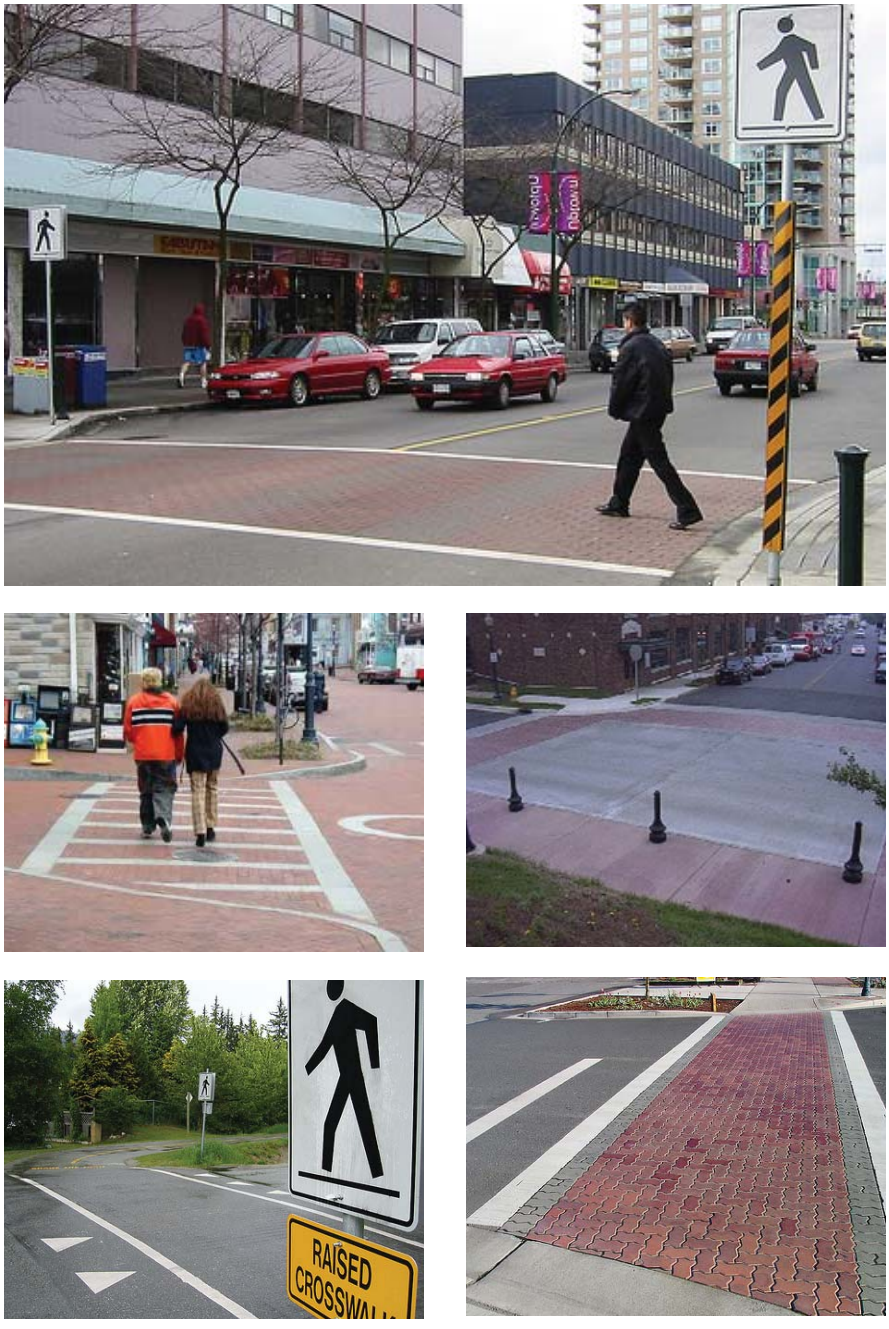


Sidewalk Improvements Diagram



Pedestrian Crossings

- Street crossings are integral to a pedestrian network that provides continuous access throughout Downtown year-round. Make street intersections safe and convenient for pedestrians to cross.
- All intersections with high levels of pedestrian traffic (identified on the Sidewalk Improvements Diagram, opposite page) should be raised or considered for specially-treated crosswalks, through the use of special materials or signage.
- Give preference to raised intersections and crossings because they give pedestrians a continuous, at-grade walking surface while eliminating icy curb cut ramps and standing water. They can also calm traffic and make pedestrians more visible to approaching drivers.
- Ensure that raised crosswalks and intersections are sloped up gradually to minimize impacts on traffic movement and snow removal.
- Incorporate curb bulb-outs at intersections to reduce crossing distances and increase space for sidewalk amenities.
- Minimize vehicular driveways across sidewalks to reduce the impact on pedestrians from cars entering and exiting parking areas.
- Mitigate drainage issues during street reconstructions. Consider relocating drainage catch basins to mid-block to prevent puddling at crosswalks.



Raised intersections (middle left and right) or raised crosswalks (bottom left), or special material treatment (top and bottom right) at key pedestrian crossings will help distinguish the pedestrian zone, improve walking conditions and slow down through-traffic.

Downtown Denver's 16th Street Mall (above) lights up at night and attracts pedestrians with a combination of storefront lighting, street lamps, and decorative tree lighting.

Lighting from building interiors and sculptural elements can bring warmth to the street, improve safety and create intimate spaces in the outdoor environment.

Lighting

- Enhance visibility, public safety and the attractiveness of Downtown in the evenings and during winter with high quality lighting.
- Establish base-level illumination standards for adequate, uniform lighting for sidewalks, streets and open spaces.
- Illuminate sidewalks with pedestrian-scale fixtures to promote comfort, security and safety. Intensify lighting levels at key crossings.
- Area lighting should use white light for its aesthetic benefits and its clear rendering of colors and objects.
- Area lighting should be directed generally downward and use cut-off fixtures to minimize glare and trespass light.
- Illuminate front doors on residential streets.
- Encourage decorative seasonal lighting.
- Lighting fixture styles should provide a unifying urban design element to Downtown while allowing for variety and fostering a sense of place in Downtown's individual sub-districts. The new lighting palette should complement existing Downtown lighting and reflect the distinct sub-district in which it is located.
- Design light poles to accommodate banners and hanging flower baskets.
- Bring indoor illumination to the sidewalk with lighting from building interiors through the windows.

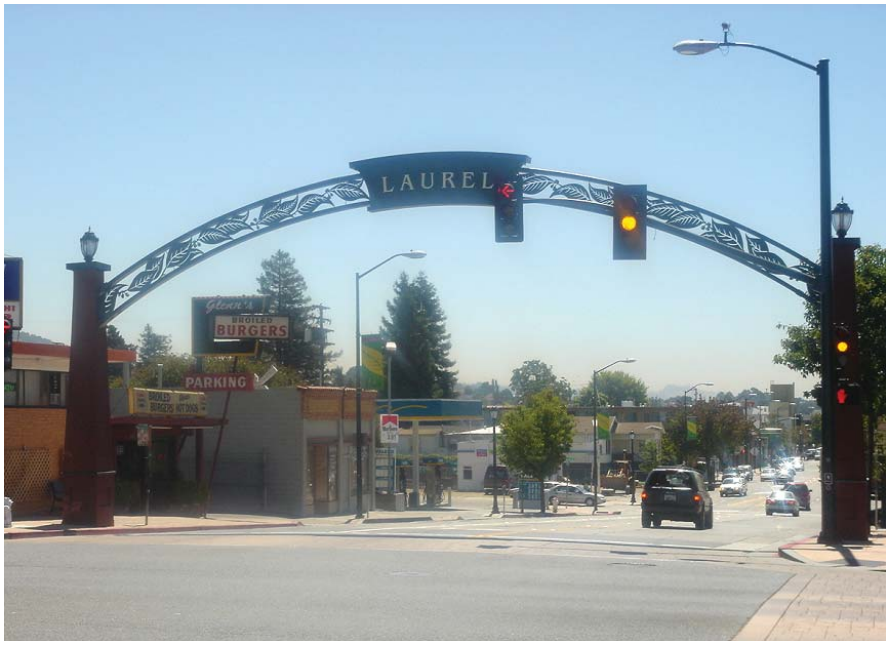
Wayfinding Signage

- Install comprehensive signage for multiple users, including:
  - Signage viewable by drivers and pedestrians.
  - Consistent, attractive signage and wayfinding stations with "You are here" maps to direct Downtown pedestrians and bicyclists.
  - Wayfinding elements along major arterials (including the A/C couplet) so links are made with other areas of the city.
- Confirm locations and phasing for wayfinding signage per the Signage and Wayfinding program (See Chapter 7: Program Strategies)
- Signage should incorporate Alaska Native art and history to enhance Downtown Anchorage's unique identity.
- At key locations such as the Gateways on the Strategy Diagram (page 33), mark the gateways to Downtown in the form of archways, sculptural elements and/or plantings.
- Create a gateway feature marking the entrance to the Downtown Core at 9th Avenue and E Street.

Public Events Facilitation

- Coordinate with E and F Street corridor improvements.
- Consider installing removable bollards to prevent vehicular traffic at key public areas.

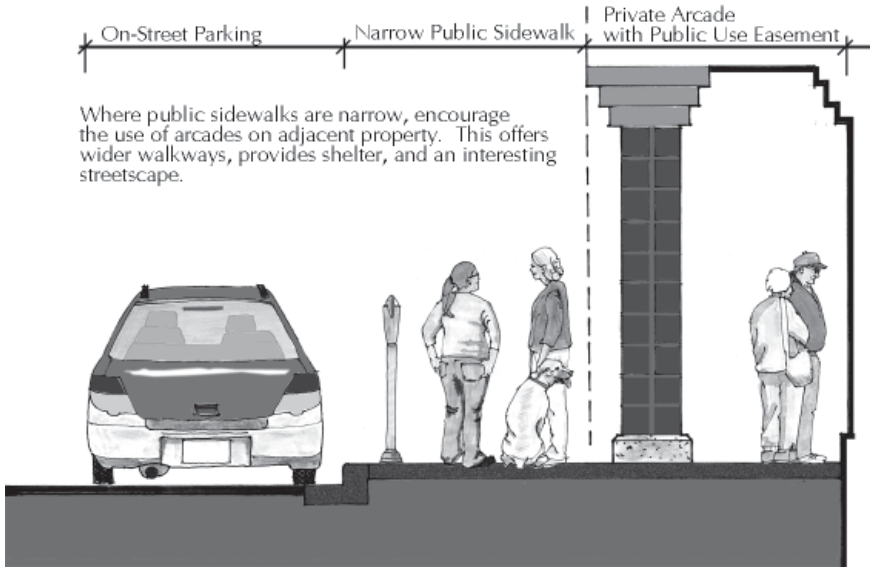
The interpretive wayfinding sign (above) is an example of a small, pedestrian-oriented sign that should be updated on a regular basis with upcoming events.



A gateway design element could be used at significant entry points to Downtown to announce the entrance into the unique city center.

Pedestrian Shelter

- Provide overhead protection that promotes year round comfort and adds color and visual interest.
- Create building arcades along streets with narrow sidewalks. An arcade is indented into the ground floor building wall and creates a sheltered walkway adjacent to the public sidewalk (see top illustration at right and photographs on the next page). Arcades are preferable to awnings or canopies because they permit an extension of sidewalk width, avoid obstructing sunlight or views along the existing sidewalk and can provide a more comfortable, sheltered transition space between the indoors and outdoors.
- The interior of arcades should be wide enough for two couples to pass comfortably, have high enough ceilings to provide ventilation and openness and be illuminated.
- Design awnings and canopies to avoid shedding snow and icy drip lines on the sidewalk.
- Canopies should have transparent roofs that allow sunlight to reach the sidewalk.



This private arcade with public-use easement on 4th Avenue (above) provides a small dining area, pedestrian shelter and a much wider sidewalk than would be provided within the public right-of-way.

The canopy on the south-facing side of the Egan Center is an example of good northern climate design. Its transparency allows sunlight access, while sheltering pedestrians and preventing the build up of ice and snow.

Pedestrian Shelter cont'd

- Awnings and canopies should be designed to complement the architectural design of their buildings.
- Primary building entrances along major pedestrian routes, pick-up/drop-off zones and next to transit stops should incorporate overhead protection.
- Encourage publicly accessible indoor spaces and indoor/outdoor transition spaces with seating and amenities for public use. These spaces should be located in areas that have a high level of public use, be directly connected to public streets and open spaces, be visually interesting and afford views and sunlight access.

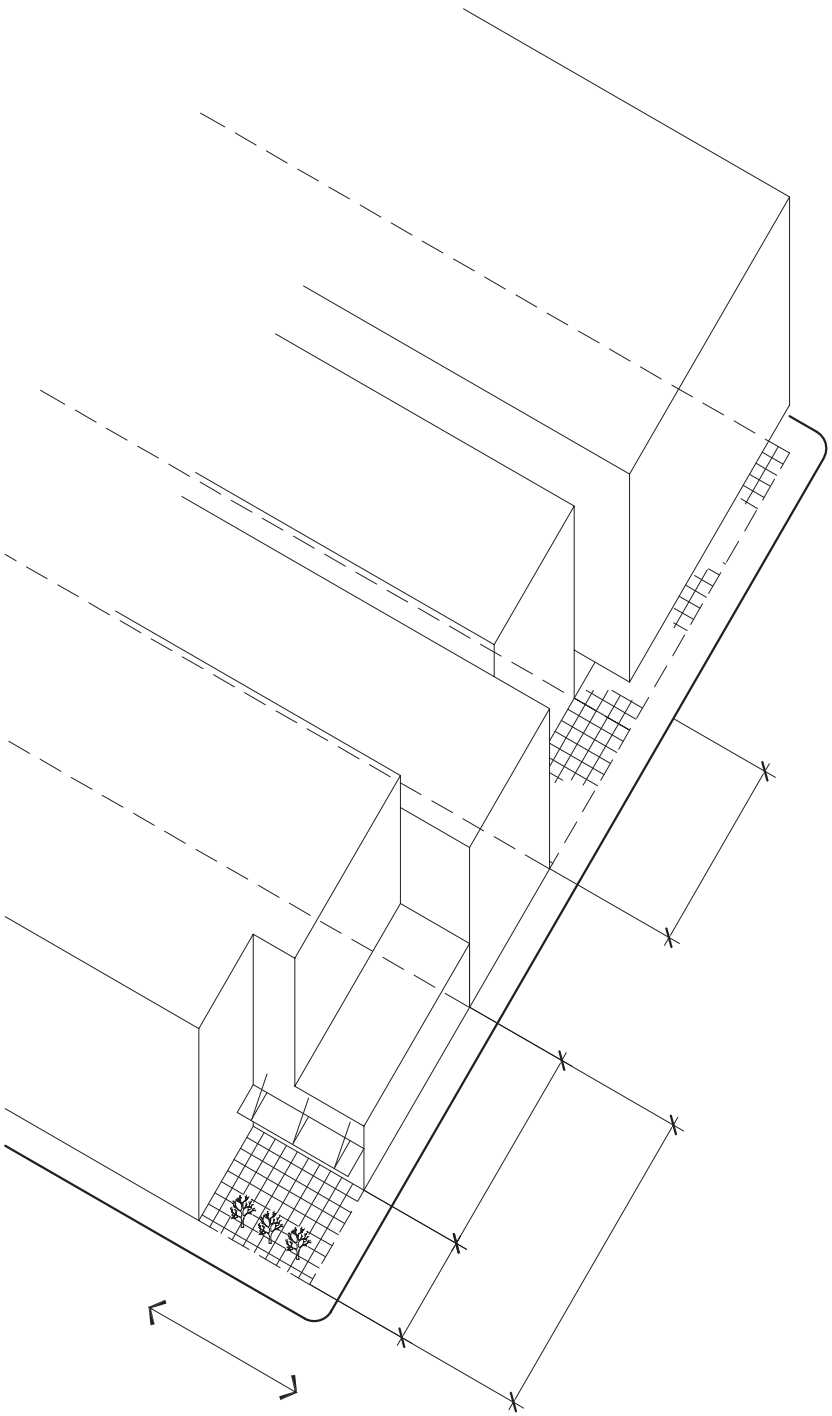
The indoor/outdoor transition space above provides sheltered seating along the building wall. Outdoor sun pockets or glass-enclosed seating shown on page 56 illustrate ways to respond to winter climates.

The arcades at right and above right feature high ceilings for openness, daylighting and ventilation. They are designed with aesthetically attractive colonnade forms and warm, light colors. Ceiling lighting and transparent storefronts provide evening illumination. Arcades can also include climate control features–such as fans in hot climates or heaters in northern climates.

The retractable awning below right shelters a shop entrance in Scandinavia during rainy, snowy or cold periods. High quality, durable materials are essential for awnings and other forms of moveable, retractable or seasonal shelter.

The recessed ground floor on Downtown's Fire Station 1 below provides a wider sidewalk and overhead shelter. The transparent, illuminated storefront interior increases the sense of activity, visibility and safety.

Building Setbacks



2. Improve the Quality of Building Design

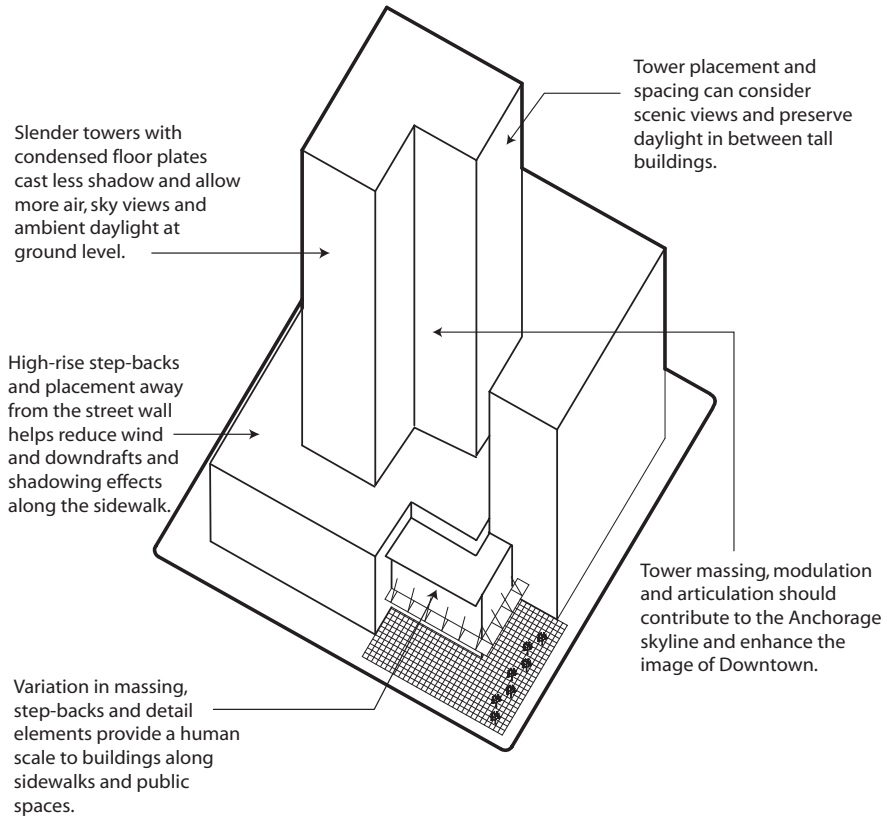
Building Setbacks

- Buildings should have a strong relationship to the street, with setbacks no wider than necessary to accommodate sidewalk widths recommended in the *Sidewalk Widths* design guidelines of this chapter.
- Provide minor building setbacks from the property line if they permit additional public sidewalk width on streets with insufficient right-of-way.
- Encourage a building setback of up to 12 or more feet where it can deliver significant sunlight access benefits in addition to a wider pedestrian area.
- A limited portion of a building's ground level façade may be set back a greater distance if the additional set back offers:
  - Variety and "relief" from the uniform street wall
  - Pedestrian-scale façade articulation
  - Sunlit "sun pocket" spaces for stopping and relaxing
  - Protection from wind tunnel effects on north-south streets
- Locate building arcades adjacent to, but outside of, the sidewalk area needed for the walkway clear zone.

Massing and Stepping

- Provide human scale to buildings along sidewalks and public spaces, in part through variation in the massing of large buildings and stepping back the height of tall buildings.
- Medium- to high-rise buildings should feature slender towers with condensed floor plates. Slender towers stepped back from the street cast less shadow during summer, spring and fall and allow more air, ambient daylight and warm temperatures at the ground level.
- Step back medium- to high-rise buildings at the third or fourth floor and above, toward the middle of the city block, to minimize the shadows they cast and any undesirable wind impacts at the ground level.
- Tower placement, spacing and dimensions should strive to preserve views and daylight in between tall buildings.
- Tower design should be of the highest quality and contribute to the Anchorage skyline. Massing, stepping, modulation, tapering, façade materials, colors and articulation of prominent towers should enhance the image of Downtown.
- Encourage roofs that are attractive and that can be used as outdoor spaces.

Building Massing and Stepping



Buildings with upper floors stepped back can incorporate rooftop balconies and provide relief to the streetscape.

This high-rise construction in Vancouver, BC steps back from the street edge above the second floor.

This building in San Francisco, CA gradually steps back from the street edge to ensure sunlight access to all units.

This building in Lulea, Sweden has a narrow east-west profile, a roof that slopes down toward the north, and a stepped façade that allows sunlight to reach neighbors for more of the year. Numerous facade elements break up the downward wind flow, lessening wind impacts at the street level.

Sunlight Access

- The lifeblood of a downtown is the pedestrians who enjoy and enliven its public spaces. Pedestrians feed businesses and cultural venues, bringing vitality and reducing crime. An important factor for a comfortable and attractive outdoor environment is access to sunlight. New buildings should minimize shadows cast on opposing sidewalks or nearby open spaces, particularly in the spring and fall to extend the warmth, comfort and activity level of the summer peak season.
- Minimize mid-day shadows on public open spaces between the Spring and Fall equinoxes.
- Preserve sunlight access to the following sites in Downtown:
  - Public parks and plazas, such as Town Square Park and Delaney Park Strip. Meet or exceed existing sunlight access protections for Town Square Park including the height limitations established by municipal ordinance (AO 85-173)
  - North side of east-west streets designated as Primary Pedestrian Connections
  - Important civic buildings with large numbers of visitors (e.g., Old Federal Building)
- Evaluate the impact of medium- and high-rise development proposals on sun and shade conditions to determine the appropriate design measures needed to reduce or mitigate any undesirable shadow conditions.
- Private developments should:
  - Optimize sunlight access and sky views, particularly for civic buildings, schools, private open spaces and residential districts.
  - Locate open spaces (private and semi-public) to capture as much sun as possible during hours of peak use.

Wind Protection

- Medium- to high-rise buildings should be designed to reduce or mitigate undesirable wind impacts on streets, open spaces and other pedestrian activity areas. Buildings which are substantially higher than the surrounding buildings in the area should be designed with regard to wind conditions.
- Evaluate the impact of medium- and high-rise development proposals on wind conditions to determine the appropriate design measures needed to reduce or mitigate any undesirable ground floor wind conditions and down drafts.
- Step towers back from the property line and from the lower level building wall on all designated pedestrian connections and on streets within the residential mixed-use districts.
- Promote pedestrian arcades, sheltered transition areas or overhead projections such as awnings/canopies to lessen wind impacts at the ground level.
- Promote consideration for adverse wind conditions in the location and orientation of street furniture and pedestrian amenities.

Ground-Level Treatment

- Provide visually interesting human-scale design elements such as façade articulation and detailing at the ground floor level.
- Design buildings with individual façade characteristics that distinguish each from neighboring buildings.
- Use building wall modulation and facade articulation to bring visual interest and a human scale to building frontages.
- Design ground level residential units to face the street with windows, front stoops and street access.
- Design the ground level of non-residential buildings to be transparent and physically and visually oriented toward the sidewalk.
- Design retail storefronts to be comprised mostly of windows, doors and other openings. Windows should provide visual access to interior retail spaces and displays within the building.
- Bays with visual and/or physical access should be created at frequent intervals to avoid long blank walls.
- Design buildings to contribute to the streetscape and open space network (bottom right).

The facades of this mixed-use building (above) and residential building (below) are articulated with individual bays, each with its own window treatment or entry way.

The built environment adjacent to the sidewalk can be as important as the walkway itself. In spite of a narrow walkway and adjacent travel lane (left), an eclectic mix of storefronts increases pedestrian interest.

These images represent the variety of building materials and lighting techniques that can be used to convey warmth and activate the street in winter months. The commercial and mixed-use buildings in Germany (above), Finland (below left), Norway (below middle) and Sweden (below right) use materials and lighting that illuminate the sidewalk and building facades and create usable, inviting spaces during cold, dark months.

Materials and Texture

- Utilize facade materials that create a warm, transparent building edge at the pedestrian level.
- Incorporate lighter colors and reflective materials on upper floors for aesthetic benefits and to redirect sunlight radiation to public spaces below. Avoid reflective glass near the ground level as it limits pedestrians' ability to see into buildings and inhibits streetscape activity.
- Create light/shadow effects using minor recesses or projections in the façade.
- Encourage the use of lighter colored building façade surfaces that can bring warm light to the sidewalk environment by refracting ambient light or low intensity façade illumination.

Building Lighting

- Design building lighting to help with wayfinding (i.e., accentuating entry ways and exits) and/or enhance architectural distinction.
- Minimize glare, light trespass and light pollution from building lighting. Light fixtures should in general be located, aimed and shielded so that light is directed downward rather than upward, or directed only onto the building façade.

Skywalks

- Minimize the use of skywalks. Special exceptions may be conditionally allowed where:
  - Proposals demonstrate significant special need for a skywalk between related and important uses or functions
  - The area impacted by shadows and blocked views is not a primary pedestrian connection or a view corridor identified in the Downtown Plan
  - Street level alternatives for protecting pedestrians from the elements are explored and exhausted.
- Give preference to street level alternatives to skywalks. These might include: overhead canopies, arcades that can be climate-controlled and illuminated; raised and heated intersection crossings; overhead canopy extensions to the street corner curb or all the way across the street; wind protection; and active ground-floor uses and pedestrian amenities.
- Locate skywalks mid-block rather than at intersections to minimize impacts on views and sunlight access.
- Avoid skywalk crossings of north-south streets; the north-south street corridors are primary sources of winter sunlight into Downtown.
- Discourage skywalks across primary pedestrian connections and view corridors, such as 4th and 5th Avenues.

- Design skywalks with light colored and transparent façade materials to minimize their impacts on sunlight and views.
- Limit skywalks to one story.
- Discourage skywalk designs which accommodate retail uses that can be offered at street level.

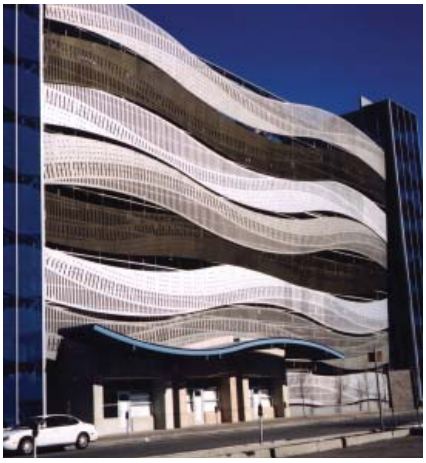
Concerns have been raised about skywalks because skywalks often take activity and investment away from the sidewalk, cast deep shadows, obstruct view corridors and disconnect people from the environment. Downtown Anchorage contains several skywalks, some of which do maximize transparency and avoid creating cavernous spaces below (above top). Other cities, such as Minneapolis, MN (above) have constructed too many skywalks and struggle to get life back on the streets and regain their views.

Traditionally, parking garages have been designed to do little else than store cars (above). Such single-use structures designed with little regard for the comfort of pedestrians and the ground floor are not allowed in Downtown Anchorage. In recent years, garage design has advanced to allow other uses to take place on the ground level, providing a more engaging streetfront.

Parking Treatment

- Promote the use of structured parking to accommodate the parking spaces needed for development projects.
- Encourage underground parking in order to minimize impacts on the public realm and reserve more above-ground space for activity-generating uses.
- Above-grade parking structures should be wrapped with active uses on the ground floor, and preferably the second floor as well, that open to the street and conceal parking from the sidewalk.
- The upper floors of the parking structure should be concealed with interesting façade treatment.
- Underground parking structures beneath residential uses can extend several feet above grade, as long as building entrances, front stoops, first floor living spaces with windows facing the street, streetscape amenities and planting beds are not impacted.
- Improve surface parking lots to accommodate landscaping, buffers and/or ornamental fencing. Improvements should include:
  - Planters, shrubs, other landscaping or fencing at least three feet in height
  - Benches for seating
  - Bicycle parking
  - Trash receptacles
  - Seat walls
  - Light fixtures
  - Public art

This parking structure in Downtown Boulder, CO takes the form of a typical mixed-use commercial/office building, with its entrance and exit set back from sidewalk (in the far right of the photo).



This example uses an artistic facade treatment and ground floor retail to transform the garage into an interesting addition to Downtown Albuquerque, NM.

This parking garage in Downtown Pasadena, CA (right) follows cues from adjacent historic architecture and maintains the same scale and rhythm of bays and window treatment.

Parking lot buffers can vary according to adjacent uses. This parking lot in Berkeley, CA (images below) integrates seatwalls, benches, planters, trees, shrubs and bicycle parking to create a friendly pedestrian environment. These amenities greatly enhance the popularity and use of adjacent shops.

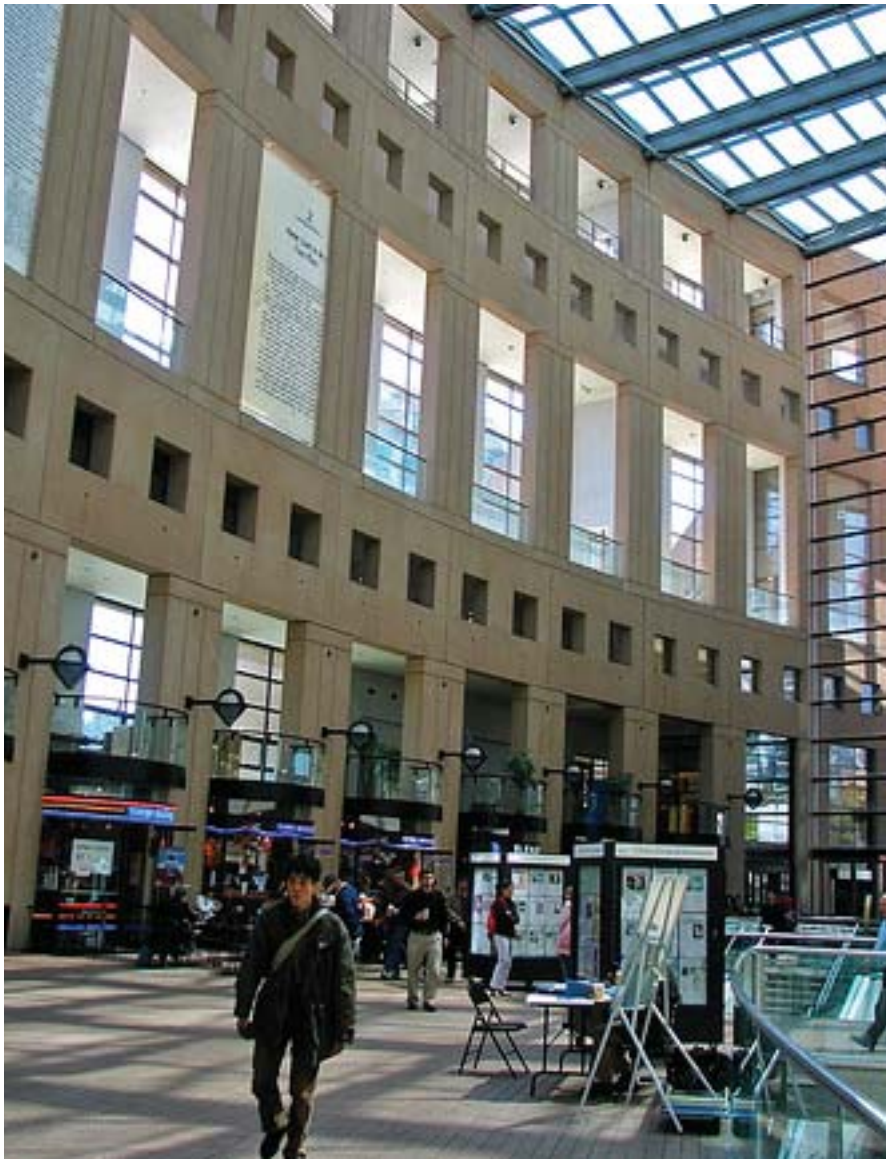
The stepped back, mid-density residential building (above top) and the duplexes and fourplexes facing onto a pedestrian pathway (above) exemplify how residential development can combine varying levels of density and maintain access to open space and sunlight.

Residential Treatment

- Design residential development to be varied in building form and include features such as front stoops, bay windows, façade articulation, balconies or sun rooms and upper level step-backs.
- Line residential streets with grass, landscaping and more street trees to soften the urban environment.
- Provide open spaces, gardens, pedestrian linkages through blocks or neighborhood parks as residential development occurs.
- Reduce noise and glare through design, lighting and materials that buffer or minimize the disturbance created by noise and trespass light.
- Provide multiple entrances to residential buildings along the street, such as individual front stoops and doorways for ground-floor residential units. Individual entrances should be raised several feet for privacy.

Interior Public/Semi-public Spaces

- Design interior publicly accessible spaces such as atria or winter gardens that include high ceilings with a major portion of the roof and/or walls transparent to the sky. They should be temperature controlled and furnished with features and amenities that encourage use by the public.
- Locate interior and semi-interior open spaces to maximize site attributes that enhance the quality and enjoyment of the space. For example, spaces should capture a view, allow sunlight access and be sheltered from wind effects.
- Integrate interior open spaces with Downtown's network of public sidewalks, especially the Primary Pedestrian Connections, in order to enhance the overall pedestrian environment:
  - Interior open spaces should be co-located with a high level of pedestrian activity or public use within or adjacent to the site, or
  - Interior open spaces should adjoin and directly connect to designated Primary Pedestrian Connections.



A well-lit, open atrium like this one in the Vancouver, B.C. Public Library can provide a public gathering space year-round.


WELCOME