

VIBRANT

BLOCKS FOR BUSINESS

A Main Street Design Guide for
More Beautiful Commercial Districts

APRIL 2023



City Of Detroit
Planning and Development Department

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Prepared for:

The City of Detroit
Planning and Development Department

Prepared by:

_Interface Studio	City Planning & Urban Design
Smithgroup	Architecture
Sidewalk Detroit	Community Engagement

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more just
more beautiful
more vibrant
main streets +
commercial
districts

The text is presented in a bold, sans-serif font. The words 'more just', 'more beautiful', and 'more vibrant' are filled with a multi-colored geometric pattern of triangles and squares in shades of red, yellow, green, and purple. Small, stylized human figures are integrated into the text: one figure is positioned between the 't' of 'just' and the 'b' of 'beautiful', another is between the 'e' of 'beautiful' and the 'v' of 'vibrant', and a third is between the 't' of 'vibrant' and the 's' of 'streets'. The words 'main streets +', 'commercial', and 'districts' are a solid teal color.

A commercial main street or district that's designed well can,

- support local businesses;
- incubate new ones;
- stimulate hyper-local economies and keep money in the community;
- provide access to needed jobs, goods and services;
- encourage walking and alternative transportation;
- and be the center of cultural and social activity

... all in one place!

But all that activity presents many design challenges and calls for extraordinary collaboration, including the small business community, developers, residents, community development organizations, and City decision makers.

These design guidelines align desired uses with high-quality design to providing a tool for both the City's coordinated design review and be a go-to guide for redevelopment. The goal is to streamline the design process while helping to support local businesses, to create places for community building and socializing, greening the environment, and more walkable communities.

This document strives to restore commercial corridors as the backbone of neighborhoods, where people take **pride** in the unique **beauty** where they live and work. Where business owners and community members have a sense of ownership and invest to create a better place to be. And above all, where each corridor **honors and respects** our past and acknowledges the present communities and businesses that are there today.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT?

The purpose of this document is to illustrate for owners and developers the intersection of several City of Detroit plans/codes in a user-friendly way to inspire stronger, cohesive and engaging design on commercial streets.

This Design Guide is a supplement to the Zoning Code that articulates more specific physical and material requirements and building standards that will shape the look and feel of new construction or major renovation projects. The goal is to streamline the design process for new construction and redevelopment, support local businesses in creating places for community building and socializing, enhance greening within the environment, and encourage walkability along Detroit's commercial corridors and main streets.

WHO SHOULD USE THIS GUIDE?

Anyone interested in the major renovation or new construction of a building or parcel along one of Detroit's commercial corridors or main streets.

WHEN SHOULD YOU USE THESE GUIDELINES?

This guide should be referenced while building new development on a commercial street, but also any major renovation or updates, including:

- When you're making changes to your building or site
- When you're updating your facade
- When you are looking to build a new structure
- When you're adding outdoor dining
- When you're redoing your parking lot
- At conceptual review meetings

WHERE CAN THIS GUIDE BE APPLIED?

This document is not geographically specific. It's meant to provide guidance for the design or development of any property in commercial districts or along commercial corridors.

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

As you utilize this document, keep in mind:

- **At a minimum, corridors need to be clean and safe**

We recognize that the challenges that many of Detroit's commercial corridors face are related to maintenance or physical deterioration of aging structures and small storefront businesses. It is our hope, that by partnering with BSEED and GSD in this effort, this guide will create new avenues for communication with area property owners and promotion of available resources to support additional upkeep and improvements by private property owners.

- **Positive first impressions create a welcoming and inviting customer experience**

The look and feel of a commercial street or district impacts a business's bottom line. This guide is not meant to be prescriptive, or dictate the character of a corridor. The guidance in this document is flexible *on purpose*, to allow for and support unique community identities and character in the public realm. It is paramount to create positive first impressions and welcoming corridors that attract and retain customers, and in turn more businesses.

- **These commercial districts not only support local businesses, they build community**

Integrating places for community to come together and socialize is also of top importance for this document. Historically, these commercial streets would act as the center of civic life. This document provides ideas that go beyond individual properties to create opportunities and spaces for community to come together.

COMPANION DOCUMENTS

- City Code: [Detroit Code of Ordinances](#)
- City of Detroit streets design manual and guidance: [Streets for People](#)
- City of Detroit signage design manual and guidance: [Advertising and Sign Ordinance](#)

DEFINITIONS & ACRONYMS

- **PDD:** Planning & Development Department
- **GSD:** General Services Department
- **BSEED:** Buildings, Safety Engineering, and Environmental Department
- **DON:** Department of Neighborhoods
- **DEGC:** Detroit Economic Growth Corporation
- **DBL:** District Business Liaison
- **PPR:** Preliminary Plan Review



**what makes
a great
commercial
main street
or district?**

one



The following pages outline the vision for Detroit's Commercial Districts and Main Streets. The guidance in this document aims to work together to create commercial districts that are:

- **SAFE & COMFORTABLE**
- **CLEAN & MAINTAINED**
- **GREEN & RESILIENT**
- **WALKABLE & HUMAN-SCALE**
- **UNIQUE & AUTHENTIC**
- **LIVELY & ACTIVATED**
- **INCLUSIVE & DIVERSE**

SAFE & COMFORTABLE

Regardless of age, race, gender or background, the corridor looks and feels **SAFE**, day or night.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR:

- Property is well-lit
- Litter is removed
- Vacant lots are secured
- Buildings are easy for people to see into and out of, creating a sense of transparency and “eyes on the street”
- Building security measures do not detract from a welcoming and inviting atmosphere
 - Security grates, if used, are mostly transparent
 - Cameras, if used, are clearly marked
 - Bulletproof glass, if used, is inconspicuous
- Fencing does not contain razor wire
- Where needed, emergency call boxes are provided

How to... Get security cameras

Project Greenlight the Detroit Police Department (DPD) partnered with gas stations that have installed real-time camera connections with police headquarters as part of a groundbreaking crime-fighting partnership between local businesses, the City of Detroit and community groups called “Project Green Light Detroit.”

[CLICK HERE FOR MORE INFORMATION](#)



FACADE TRANSPARENCY

3rd man records on Canfield
Source: <https://www.seenthemagazine.com/>



Fern boutique storefront on Woodward (New Center)
Source: <https://www.facebook.com/ferneboutique>



VACANT LOTS ARE SECURED
pg. 76

PROPERTY IS WELL LIT
pg. 79

FENCING & SCREENING
pg. 92

SECURITY GRILLS
pg. 75

COMFORTABLE SIDEWALKS
pg. 98

CLEAN & MAINTAINED

The corridor is **CLEAN** and **WELL MAINTAINED.**

THINGS TO LOOK FOR:

- Sidewalks and streets are cleaned, swept, and clear of obstructions
- Parking lots and sidewalks are free of weeds and overgrowth
- Building exteriors are well-maintained, and free of graffiti and unnecessary excess signage
- Sidewalks are level and not cracked
- Healthy trees and plantings provide shade and beauty
- Vacant lots are secured, mowed, or landscaped, and, if possible, beautified
- Litter and dumping are addressed in a timely manner
- Trash bins are regularly emptied
- Vacant buildings are secured and upkept

How to... Address Dumping + Poor Maintenance

Property owners and tenants are responsible for litter and debris that exist on their property, including in the alleys. For solid waste that exceeds regular weekly pickup, DPW trucks can be scheduled for a special pickup of correctly sorted bulk waste or illegal dumping. Prices vary depending on volume and weight, property owners must call for a quote (313 876-0004).

For litter and debris not on your property, download the [Improve Detroit](#) app and click to report trash and property maintenance issues to the city.



Detroit barbers on Michigan Ave
Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mm8r_jMOUKU



Call 911 to report illegal dumping in progress!

VACANT LOTS
pg. 76

SIDEWALK MAINTENANCE
pg. 95

TRASH CANS
pg. 103

STREET TREES
pg. 93

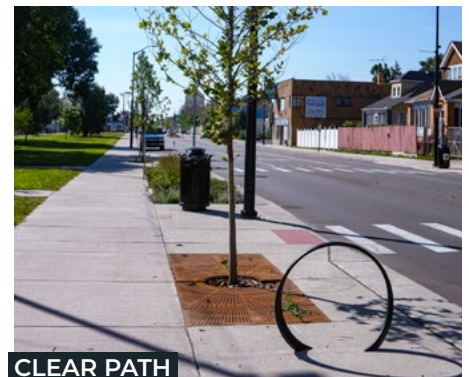


WALKABLE & HUMAN-SCALE

The district is designed to serve **PEOPLE FIRST** and is **COMFORTABLE** to walk around.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR:

- It feels comfortable to walk around
- Crossing the street feels safe
- Pushing a stroller feels safe
- Pedestrian-friendly amenities are located on the property
- The front door looks welcoming
- The building has appropriate signage
- Walkways are free of obstructions

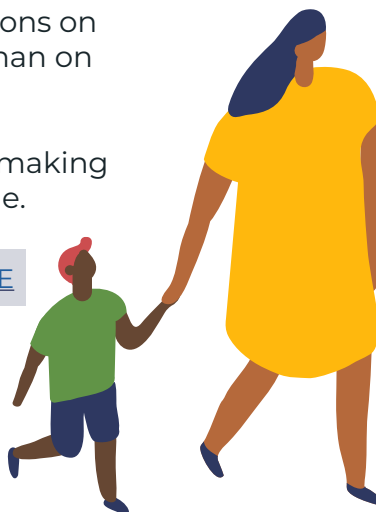


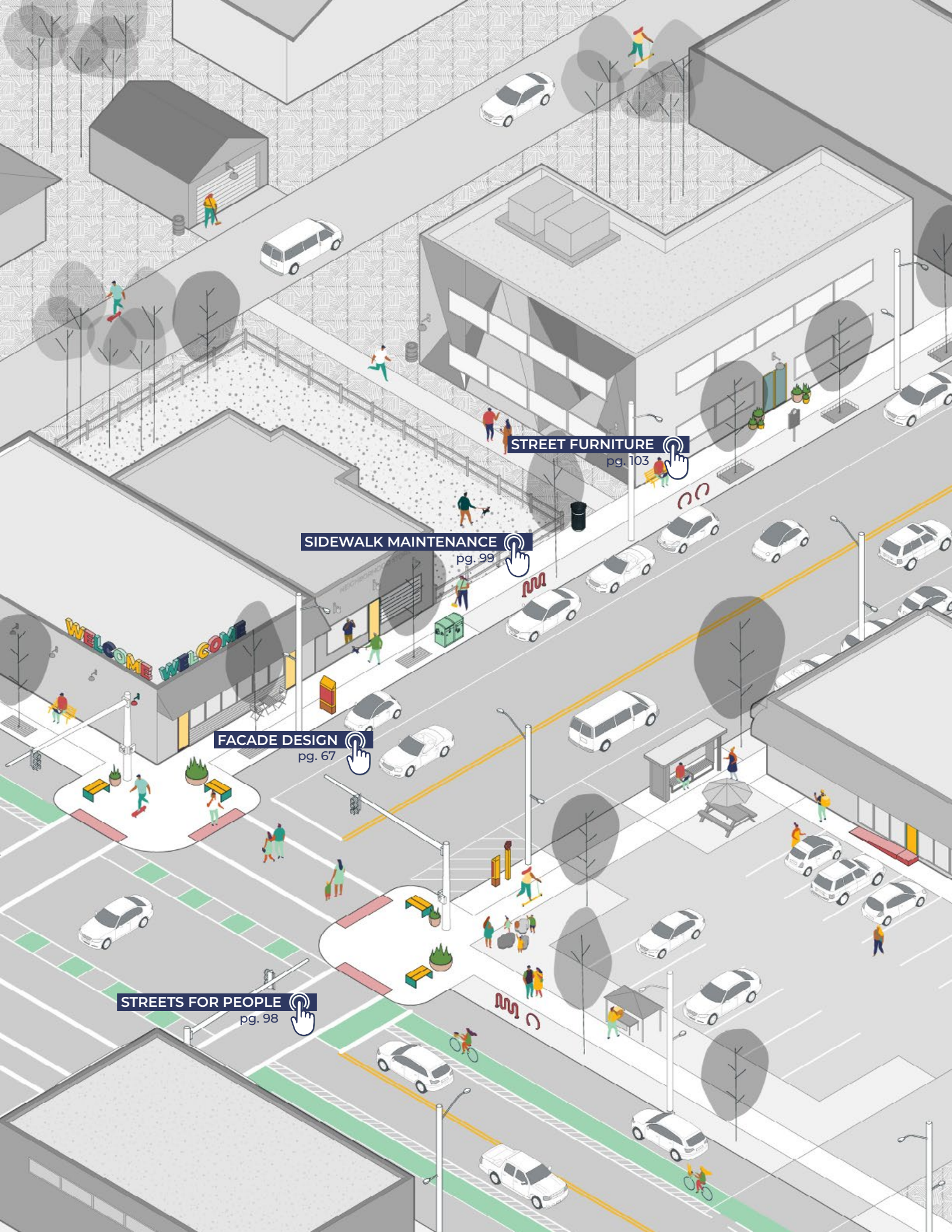
How to... Slow Down Traffic

Traffic calming measures need to be discussed with DPW, as interventions on major streets are more complex than on residential streets.

To learn how the City of Detroit is making streets safer, visit Streets for People.

[CLICK HERE FOR MORE INFORMATION](#)





STREET FURNITURE
pg. 103

SIDEWALK MAINTENANCE
pg. 99

FACADE DESIGN
pg. 67

STREETS FOR PEOPLE
pg. 98

LIVELY & ACTIVATED

The corridor offers a welcoming and vibrant **EXPERIENCE.**

THINGS TO LOOK FOR:

- Outdoor elements encourage people to sit and linger
- Space outside business is activated or beautified
- Public spaces are activated with events and programming
- Outdoor dining opportunities are provided in appropriate places
- Alleys are clean, safe, and creatively lit
- Vacant lots are beautified and used for art and gathering



How to... Install Outdoor Dining

You'll need to get approval from the City to provide outdoor dining on a sidewalk or publicly owned lot. All of the steps required can be found in the Outdoor Cafe Guidebook provided by the City.

[CLICK HERE FOR MORE INFORMATION](#)

ALLEYS
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VACANT LOTS
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OUTDOOR DINING
pg. 105

STREET FURNITURE
pg. 103



GREEN & RESILIENT

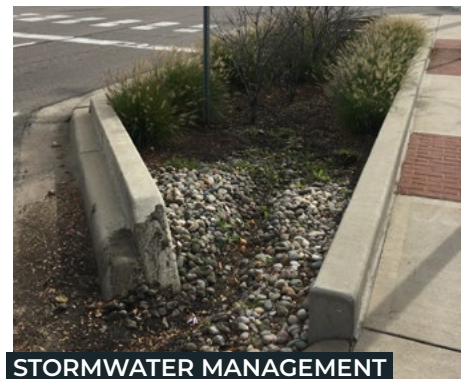
The corridor is an environment that provides beauty, shade and resilience.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR:

- Plants are used to enhance the landscape
- Well-maintained trees of various sizes are present, providing shade and cooling
- Green stormwater infrastructure is incorporated where feasible to improve water quality and prevent runoff and flooding
- Planters have been added
- Rain gardens and rain barrels are installed
- Green roofs and porous pavement are included
- Green buffers are used instead of fencing where possible
- Locally sourced native plant species are used whenever possible



STREET TREES



STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

How to... Install Green Stormwater Infrastructure

Visit the Detroit Stormwater Hub to help reduce flooding, receive technical guidance or find help with funding resources.

[CLICK HERE FOR MORE INFORMATION](#)



**STORMWATER
MANAGEMENT**

pg. 95

STREET TREES

pg. 93

PLANTERS

pg. 103

**PARKING LOT
SCREENING**

pg. 86

UNIQUE & AUTHENTIC

The district has a strong **IDENTITY** that supports and attracts business.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR:

- The building façade is attractive
- The signage helps illustrate what is sold inside
- Cultural heritage is uplifted through public art and building design
- Temporary signage is tasteful and uncluttered
- A shared sense of place is created through design elements
- Community assets and historic places are maintained and preserved
- Chain signage is appropriately scaled and does not dominate the corridor



ART

Neighborhood signage as art



EXAMPLE

Source: <https://www.deadlinedetroit.com/articles/>

MURALS
pg. 108

SIGNAGE
pg. 73

FACADES
pg. 66

EVENTS + PROGRAMMING
pg. 109



INCLUSIVE & DIVERSE

The corridor is home to diverse, local businesses that are **RESPONSIVE TO THE NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY.**

THINGS TO LOOK FOR:

- Gateway signage welcomes people to the area
- Public spaces feel inviting and open
- Access and circulation requirements are met, with an aspiration towards Universal Design*
- Benches and resting areas are provided
- Child-sized furniture and opportunities for play are provided
- Interpretive signage is included that celebrates the area's heritage and history
- Bike racks are available at convenient locations
- Bus stops are well-maintained and strategically located
- Audio prompts and tactile paving are provided for people with vision impairment



PARKLET

Parklet in D.C.
Source: <https://scs.georgetown.edu/news-and-events/article/>



ACCESSIBILITY

Traffic calming and ADA improvements in St. Louis
Source: <https://www.stlouis-mo.gov/>



INTERPRETIVE SIGNAGE
pg. 72

BIKE RACKS
pg. 92

ADA FEATURES
pg. 90

BUS STOPS
pg. 107

STREETS FOR PEOPLE
pg. 98

bringing it all together

Vibrant blocks for business incorporate the above principles to create corridors that are:

- Safe & Comfortable
- Clean & Maintained
- Green & Resilient
- Walkable & Human-Scale
- Unique & Authentic
- Lively & Activated
- Inclusive & Diverse

The following sections in this guide help to achieve these goals, to create Vibrant Blocks for Business that restore our commercial streets to the centers of community life, and support local businesses to build generational wealth.



Source: <https://visitdetroit.com/mid-town-detroit-neighborhood/>





Development Resource Guide



This chapter of the Commercial Design Guidelines provides tips and resources to help you with the development process.

KEY RESOURCES

Detroit Development Resource Center

The Detroit Development Resource Center (DRC) is a division of the Buildings, Safety, Engineering and Environment Department (BSEED) designed to help you get your project to the finish line. The DRC website offers a variety of resources to help you, including Quick Start Guides for [Starting your New Business](#) or [Starting your Business Renovation, a Quick Start Permitting Guide](#), and [Open Up Shop Guide](#).

Already feeling overwhelmed? The DRC, together with other departments, offers a variety of meetings to answer all your development questions. During these meetings you will talk with real people who can help you understand your property's zoning, the requirements your project must meet to get permitted, and much more. The two main meetings offered are **Preliminary Plan Reviews (PPR)** to help you navigate zoning and permitting procedures specific to your project idea and what you will need at each step of your journey, and **Pre-Plan Consultations** to answer your code related questions for your permit application's construction drawings.

Open for Business Guide

The "Open for Business Guide" provides a step-by-step overview of the development process as well as relevant contact information. This guide walks through 5 phases of opening a business in the City of Detroit:

PHASE 1: *I'm considering signing a lease or purchasing a building*

PHASE 2: *I have purchased a building or signed a lease for my business*

PHASE 3: *I have construction drawings for my space*

PHASE 4: *I began construction on my business*

PHASE 5: *I am ready to open my business*

Start here!



The DRC can answer your development questions and provide you with resources & direction to accomplish your projects.



Provides a step-by-step overview of the development process as well as relevant contact information.

1. Do your research

Before you begin, get educated and thoroughly investigate the property and it's neighborhood context.

There are many factors that can influence whether you are allowed to establish your business on a given property. Before you commit to a property you should confirm that your intended business is allowed on that plot of land and within the building as it is currently classified by the City of Detroit. This requires checking to see if your building or location is properly zoned for your planned business, and if the last legal use matches the intended use of your business. You'll want to look into existing plan for the adjacent street and surrounding neighborhood, and talk to local representatives to help you navigate City processes. Additionally, take some time to research the licensing requirements for your type of business with the State of Michigan and City of Detroit.

Understand your community & neighborhood

FIND YOUR

BUSINESS

LIAISON



- **Consider contacting your District Business Liaison!**

Your DBL can support your small business in a lot of ways through this process! The Detroit Economic Growth Corporation (DEGC) provides business liaisons that help small businesses navigate City processes and connect entrepreneurs with resources.

Find your District Business Liaison (DBL) at degc.org/district-business-liaisons or call (313) 963-2940

FIND YOUR DON

REPRESENTATIVE



- **Consider talking to your Department of Neighborhoods [DON] representative**

Talking early on in the process will help to ensure that your development is responsive to the needs of the existing community. Connect first with your district's representative, they'll be able to provide insights on the neighborhood, and if there are other community groups or local leaders you should consider talking to.

EXPLORE THE

PERMITTING PORTAL



See which permits you need to start or expand your business.

Did you know?

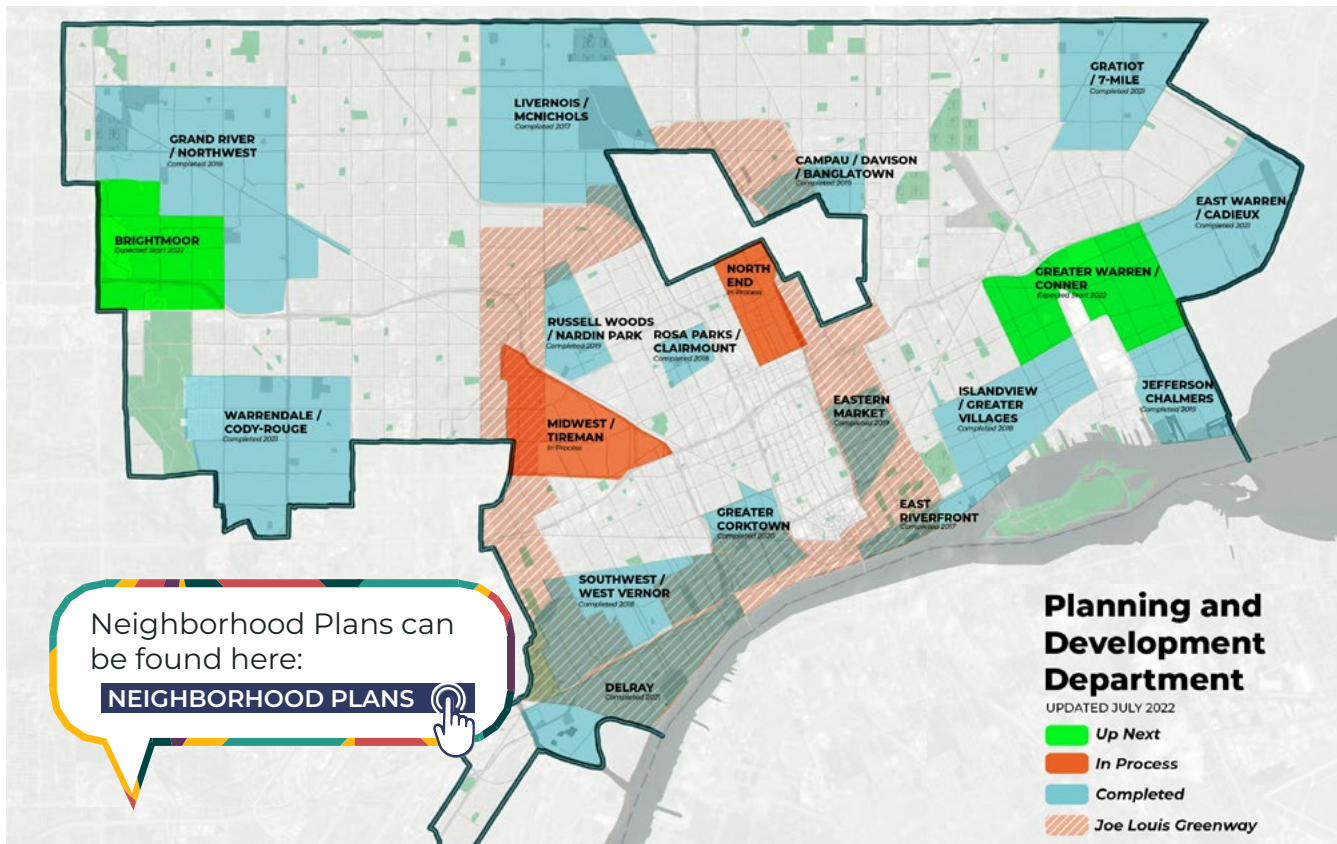
Different businesses types have different licensing requirements and processes.

Visit the Detroit Permitting Portal to find out if your business type requires a Business License Certificate and information about the appropriate zoning. To open and operate a business in the City of Detroit, you may need a business license. A Business License ensures that your business is operating lawfully under the City of Detroit & State of Michigan ordinances & codes. The first step in obtaining a business license is to establish your business, use, & location. The process you follow to develop new or improve an existing property depends entirely on what you're trying to do and where.



- **Check for your Neighborhood Framework Plan**

Neighborhood Plans provide information about the community's vision for the commercial street or district, planned zoning changes, historic district designations, and areas identified as priorities for public investment in streetscape and infrastructure projects. Framework Plans are being developed for many of Detroit's neighborhoods, as depicted in the map below. If your neighborhood does not yet have a Framework Plan, the current Zoning and Historic District designations can be checked through the City's zoning portal, linked in Step 2.



- **Identify who owns the commercial street fronting your business location**

Street ownership can influence what's possible for a private developer to do in or adjacent to the street. "Public right-of-way" is a term used to describe the streets and alleys of the City that the public uses by various modes of transportation to traverse the City. Each street is owned by either the City of Detroit, the County or the State of Michigan (MDOT). A property owner may request an easement, encroachment, outright vacation, or temporary closing of a street in association with the development. These actions require permitting by the entity that owns the street. Ownership of the right-of-way can also influence the type of permits or regulations you must follow during the period of construction, the potential to modify parking regulations or the feasibility of outdoor dining in the area.



Research your property zoning & history

CHECK THE ZONING PORTAL

Learn where you can locate your business in the City of Detroit.



- **Check your zoning**

Zoning will confirm whether your proposed use is permitted, conditional, or not permitted. If your proposed use is not permitted, you may need Zoning Reviews or Change of Use or Change of Occupancy. Verify with BSEED Zoning that the established Legal Use matches the proposed use before you sign anything.

Explore what reviews or permits you may need at the Detroit Permitting Portal, links to the left.

PARCEL TAX INFORMATION



BLIGHT CLEARANCE PROCESS



CHECK IMPERVIOUS SURFACE REQUIREMENTS



- **Learn more about the history of your property and potential impacts to your development cost and timeline**

Other information to gather on your property is whether or not there have been previous property violations, if there are any delinquent bills, or conditions that might impact your plans. This may include:

- **Outstanding blight violations** must be cleared in order to obtain a building permit
- **“Dangerous buildings” violations** may indicate extent of rehabilitation that may be needed
- **Delinquent Property Taxes** must be cleared during transfer of property
- Determine if the property has **utilities** that are in working order and are current on bills
- Understand what your potential **stormwater charges** may be by estimating the amount of impervious surface area on the parcel. This is the basis for the parcel drainage charge, and you may be able to save on this charge if you design your landscaping differently.

HISTORIC DISTRICT MAP



- **Check for a local historic district**

If your property is located in a local historic district, there may be implications for your project. Any changes you might make to the exterior have to be reviewed and approved by the city’s Historic District Commission.

2. Understand the guidelines and expectations for redevelopment or improvement of your property

Development standards are regulations for the physical form of new developments, such as the placement and size of the building structure in relation to the property. Before you develop, consult existing plans and standards established for your area.

Understand development & design standards for your project

- **Review Vibrant Blocks for Business**

The guidelines outlined in this document establish guiding principles and design elements that you should consider when developing a vision for your site.

- **Check for existing design guidelines**

While this document provides general design guidance for all properties on commercial streets, some commercial corridors have additional architectural and site design standards outlined in the Detroit Zoning Ordinance (2016) for the following developments:

- Traditional Main Street Overlay Areas
- Major Corridor Overlay Areas
- Large Retail Centers

If your property is located in a local historic district, you may need to follow the Historic Commission's design guidelines. These districts help to ensure that the neighborhood character of a building and neighborhood are maintained, but they do require extra steps, time, and potentially money. If you don't follow the requirements, you may be issued a fine or asked to remove your improvement entirely.

ARE YOU IN A
SPECIAL
OVERLAY ZONE 

HISTORIC
DISTRICT
COMMISSION
DESIGN
GUIDELINES 

Did you know?

The zoning portal will inform you if your property is within a Special Overlay District. These districts, like a Traditional Main Street Overlay (TMSO) have additional and specific design guidelines that MUST be followed.



3. Develop a draft plan

Once you've gathered all of the information that you need, it's time to plan and execute any necessary construction

- **Consider hiring a professional to develop your preliminary plans**

For many commercial projects, the City of Detroit department requires that site and/or building plans for your project must be produced or reviewed by - sometimes referred to as "stamped" - an architect or engineer that is licensed to work in the State of Michigan. These design professionals will bring knowledge of local building standards and codes and the technical know-how to get your project through the City permitting process efficiently - even if you plan to do some of the construction yourself.

Your DEGC Business Liaison is a great place to start your search for a design professional, architect, or engineer to assist you with your project. If you need advice on who to work with, reach back out to your DEGC Business Liaison for recommendations.

There are many existing resources that can narrow your search for a registered architect or engineer to assist you with your building plans. Explore the following agencies and professional organizations for a list of licensed professionals:

- *American Institute of Architects (AIA)*
- *American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA)*
- *Michigan Society of Professional Engineers (NSPE - MI)*
- *The Detroit Chapter of National Organization of Minority Architects (NOMA Detroit)*

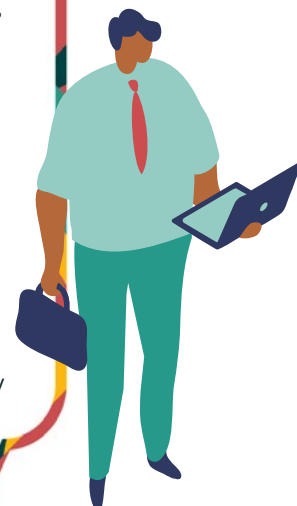
Did you know?

Hiring a professional to create "stamped" plans for your project might save you time and headaches.

Are you a design professional? Do you have some drawing skills? Surprised by the cost of a design professional or architect? You may be tempted to draw your project ideas yourself...

For some very simple projects (like a sidewalk cafe) producing drawings yourself or without a licensed professional may be sufficient! For most rehab, renovation, or construction projects, "stamped" drawings are a requirement. Without drawings produced by a licensed professional that provide measured and technical information the City needs to fully understand your project, it will not be eligible to move through City Design Review and permitting approvals.

DETERMINE IF MY
PROJECT REQUIRES
"STAMPED" DRAWINGS



- **Consider requesting a Preliminary Plan Review (PPR) meeting with the Development Resource Center**

A [Preliminary Plan Review \(PPR\)](#) meeting is free and voluntary. The City will create a map for what you will need at each step of your journey. This can include: ordinance interpretation/zoning requirements; Site Plan Review, Special Land Use hearings, Board of Zoning Appeals, Plan Review; and create connections to other departments you need to work with. After the PPR meeting, you will receive a meeting summary with all City comments. Also provided is the contact information for a Project Manager to ask any further questions of and who will act as a point person between you & the City.

What to prepare for PPR meeting:

- Project description and narrative
- Details and drawings
- List of specific questions or issues
- Any City departments that you request to attend the meeting.

- **Determine if your project is subject to Design Review**

The Planning and Development Department (PDD) conducts Design Review of development projects if your project involves a public land sale, is receiving public incentives, or is in a special zoning or historic district. Not all projects are subject to this step before applying for permits. If your project doesn't require a Design Review, you'll continue through permitting.

Projects that may require PDD Design Review:

ZONING REVIEW	HISTORIC REVIEW	LAND SALES	PUBLIC INCENTIVES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Public Center Adjacent (PCA) □ Planned Development (PD) □ Traditional Main Street Overlay (TMSO) □ Rezoning/ Master Plan Amendments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ The property is located within a Historic District 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Detroit Land Bank Authority (DLBA) □ Detroit Building Authority (DBA) □ Community Outreach Ordinance (COO) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ PA 198 District □ Brownfield TIF □ Community Benefits Ordinance (CBO) - Tier 1 OR Tier 2)

Submit plans for PDD Design Review, if required

Refer to the chart on Page 10 for a list of projects that may require PDD Design Review.

- **Prepare for your Design Review**

Work with your design professional to prepare the following:

It's recommended you have as much of this information ready when submitting it for your initial Design Review. However, each of the items should be prepared for the Follow up Review.

- Site location map
- Existing site aerial
- Conceptual site plan, landscape, floor & roof plans
- Zoning analysis
- Conceptual exterior elevations
- Conceptual building section
- Conceptual 3D massing view
- Conceptual 3D rendered view

PDD Design Review

If your project is subject to PDD Design Review, you will be informed during your PPR meeting. The PPR then counts as the first of the 3 meetings required to pass through Design Review! Typically this process takes three meetings. Some projects may receive approval in fewer than 3 meetings, while others may require additional meetings.

Each step of Design Review is described below:

ONE: Initial Review

If you completed a PPR and BSEED confirmed that your project requires Design Review, you already completed your Initial Review! If you did not have a PPR, you will need to schedule an Initial Review directly with PDD.

TWO: Follow up Review

Concept Plan Review (CPR) is one step of PDD Design Review. This meeting is a pre-development review service offered by PDD, in partnership with regulatory review & approval authority. During Follow-Up Review PDD Reviews changes and provides additional comments. Once we receive the required materials for each meeting, PDD review takes about one week.

THREE: Final Review

After passing Design Review, PDD will issue approval in the form of a letter.

How long will it take?

A typical Design Review process includes 3 meetings with PDD. Some projects may receive approval in fewer than 3 meetings, while others may require additional meetings prior to permitting to ensure compliance with PDD's Guiding Principles. Once we receive the required materials for each meeting, PDD review takes about one week.

Did you know?

Proposals for development should follow basic urban design principles and established neighborhood development strategies as described by the PDD Guiding Principles

The City of Detroit is committed to advancing equity, sustainability, resilience, and healthy living for those who live, work and play within and around project areas. Proposals for development should follow basic urban design principles and established neighborhood development strategies as described by the PDD Guiding Principles below. During Design Review, the Planning and Development Department will evaluate all new residential, commercial, and mixed-use projects against these principles and provide feedback on each.



HISTORIC PRESERVATION

The intent of development is to preserve existing structures and compliment the urban fabric through a thoughtful and intentional approach to design.



ACTIVATE THE PUBLIC REALM

All projects shall build upon the walkable environment, providing a transparent and interactive building frontage and ground level meant to intrigue pedestrians through design and active uses.



MAINTAIN/INTEGRATE THE STREET GRID

Many city blocks have been combined into superblocks or developments built facing inwards. The goal is for new development to be directly integrated into the existing street grid – not to



APPROPRIATE DENSITY

Any new building shall be appropriate in scale with surroundings.



BUILDING FORM AND MATERIAL

The site shall incorporate sound urban design and established development principles. The built environment shall provide interesting building typologies of varied architectural styles and compliment, not mimic, the nature of the existing urban fabric.



PEDESTRIAN EXPERIENCE

Where appropriate, alleyways will serve as the main point of automotive ingress and egress. Curb cuts onto public right of way will be minimized or obsolete in order to provide a safe, walkable, pedestrian oriented street design.



PARKING AND ACCESS

All on-site parking shall be appropriately landscaped or be screened from view, preferably developing parking lot edges of the site with new construction in order to shield the parking from view.



SUSTAINABLE DESIGN

All developments should strive to embrace sustainable practices that create healthier living environments while aiming to minimize the negative impacts of the built environment and achieving long-term energy and resource efficiency as well as universal design.



STREET FRONTAGE

All new construction shall be designed along the front lot line of the property adjacent to the public right of way. Parking shall not be provided between the building frontage and the street edge.



BUFFERING & SCREENING

Expand the use of green belts and natural buffer zones to protect residential areas from commercial and industrial areas which are environmentally detrimental to nearby residential neighborhoods. Minimize and screen outdoor storage and work areas.



Permitting

BSEED
GUIDE TO
SUBMITTING
FOR A
PERMIT 

BUILDING
PERMIT
CHECKLIST 

- **Submit your plans for Permits**

In order to obtain your building permits, you'll need submit your plans for review to the Buildings & Safety Engineering and Environmental Department [BSEED]. They will be looking at your drawings to ensure your project complies with the Michigan State Construction codes and the City of Detroit Zoning Ordinance. Your application and plans should be submitted online.

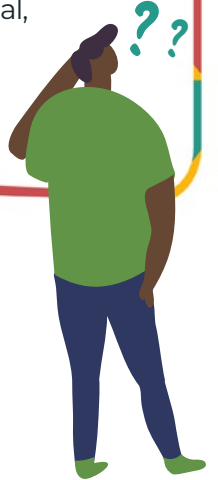
The types of drawings you may need depends upon the complexity of your project, generally you'll need to submit:

- Building Permit Application
- Site plan
- Architectural plan
- Plumbing and mechanical plan
- Electrical plan
- Structural drawings
- Detail drawings

Did you know?

Still unsure of the permit requirements for your project?

Pre-Plan Consultations are available through the Development Resource Center to answer specific code related questions for your permit application's construction drawings. Specialists from Mechanical, Structural, Electrical, Plumbing and Elevator are available to attend these meetings. There is a \$250 fee for this service.



Make any necessary changes until you are approved. Once you've secured a building permit from BSEED, you may start any necessary construction.

Get ready to build and operate!

- **Begin construction and inspections**

During construction, please post your permits on the exterior of your property. You may request an inspection by applying online or calling BSEED Construction Inspection division. Inspections are required for all trades (electrical, plumbing, etc). When approved you will be provided your Certificate of Acceptance.

- **Apply for a Certificate of Occupancy**

After approved final inspections for all trades, you can submit for your Certificate of Occupancy or Certificate of Compliance. These will be required to open your business and begin operation.

- **Apply for a Business License**

You must have a Detroit business license to operate certain types of businesses in the city. For a list of businesses that require a license and steps to obtaining a license, visit the [BSEED Licensing & Permits website](#).

LICENSING &
PERMITS 



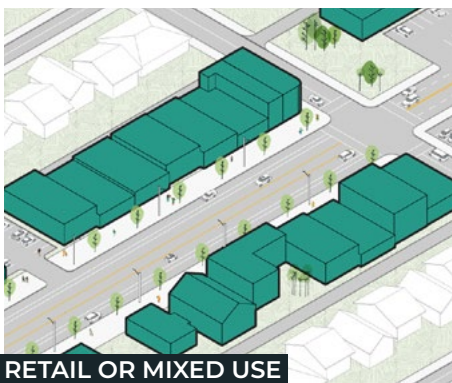
**building
blocks for
vibrant
blocks:
property type**

three

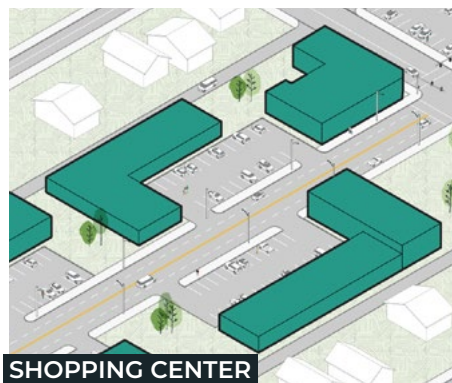
PROPERTY TYPES

What type of site do you have?

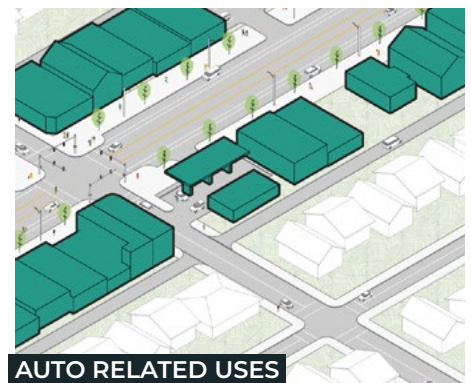
The design of your site is impacted by what type of business or property you have. There are many types of properties that front on commercial corridors. This section is meant to provide guidance on best practices for your type of property, including:



Buildings containing more traditional retail storefronts. Mixed use buildings typically have a commercial store on the first floor with residential apartments above.



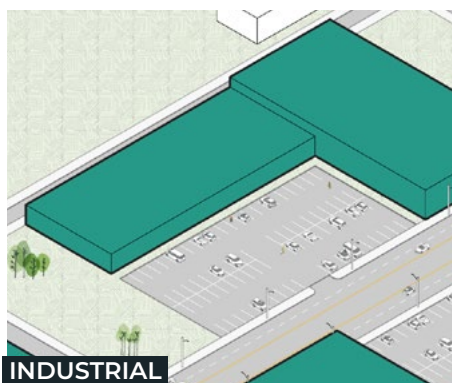
Traditionally these buildings support larger amounts of parking, such as grocery stores or big box stores.



These uses include auto service centers, gas stations, car washes, and auto sales.



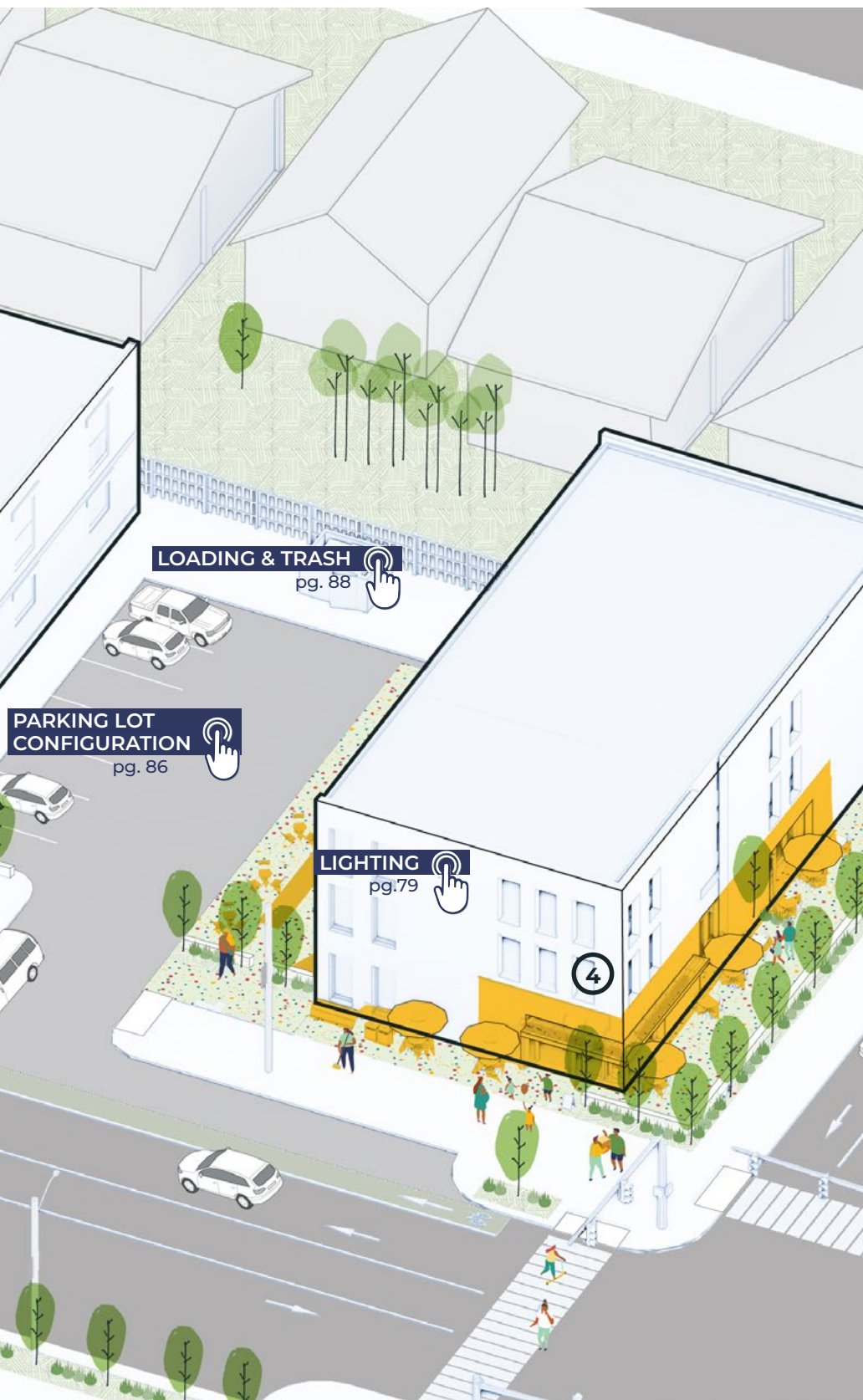
Infill residential buildings that may include two- to four-story townhouses, condominiums, or apartments.



Buildings such as manufacturing, warehousing, distribution facilities. These uses differ from commercial in that they typically do not serve customers directly and have greater needs for loading docks.

STOREFRONTS





Development on retail streets should prioritize improvements that encourage customers to walk between stores and spend time on the street. Encourage a mix of ground-floor retail and upper-floor residential units where feasible to create a lively street with activity at all times of the day.

DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

- ① Orient your building and entryways to the sidewalk
- ② Incorporate visual interest at the ground level including frequent windows, awnings, indentations, outdoor dining, etc.
- ③ Incorporate loading zones for both deliveries and customer pick up/drop off
- ④ For projects located at intersections, continue the design treatments around the corner
- ⑤ Screen parking and loading areas

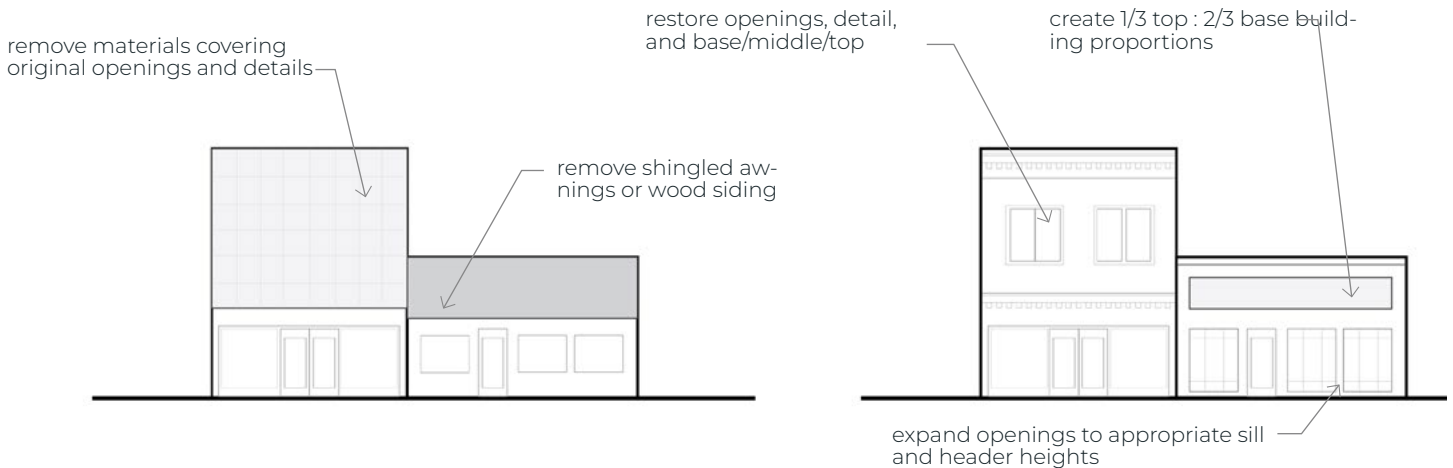
AVOID

- Placing your parking lot in front of your building
- Entrances that are on the sides of buildings or difficult to find
- Creating excessive parking spaces or multiple curb cuts

STOREFRONTS

STOREFRONT REHAB CONSIDERATIONS

- Uncover, retain, rehabilitate, or restore existing building features such as openings, window and door trim, columns, piers, ornament, or cornices
- Lower window sills to no more than 2-feet above the interior finished floor
- Extend storefront windows and doors up to the horizontal expression line. Use spandrel panels as necessary above ceiling height
- Design new additions to be compatible with existing materials and facade proportions
- Strive for a 1/3 : 2/3 proportion for single story buildings to emphasize verticality
- Repair to damage should also address the root causes such as water leaks or deterioration.
- Do not introduce new building elements or features that are incompatible with the size, scale, or material of the existing building or prevailing patterns on the block.
- Engage in preventative maintenance to extend the life of the building and ensure longevity of restoration work

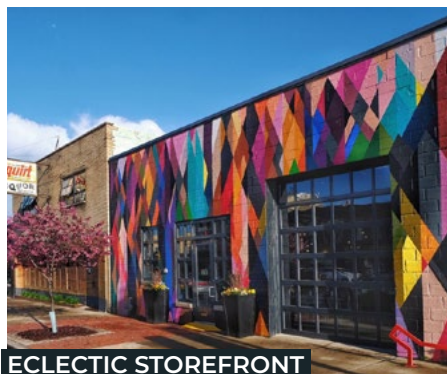


Traditional, eclectic, or modern, all these storefronts meet these guidelines:



TRADITIONAL STOREFRONT

Marrow Restaurant
Source: <https://www.marrowsdetroit.com/restaurant>



ECLECTIC STOREFRONT

Grandma Bob's Handmade Pizza
Source: <https://www.grandmabobs.com/contact>



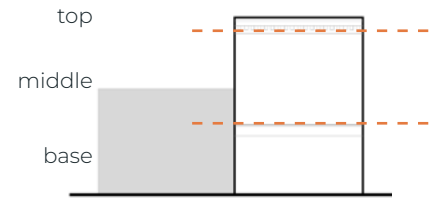
MODERN STOREFRONT

Liv7
<https://www.crainsdetroit.com/>

NEW STOREFRONT CONSIDERATIONS

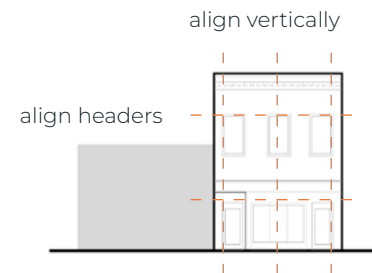
1. Define the Base/Middle/Top

- The base of the building can be defined by an accent line, cornice, frieze, or change in material.
- Where a pattern of alignment exists along the street, align with the prevailing organizing elements.
- Continue the base across the entire building.
- Keep a consistent parapet or cornice line. Like the base, the top should be continuous across the length of the building.
- Don't be afraid to go big. Cornices, friezes, and other horizontal articulation on traditional buildings are larger than they appear from the ground.



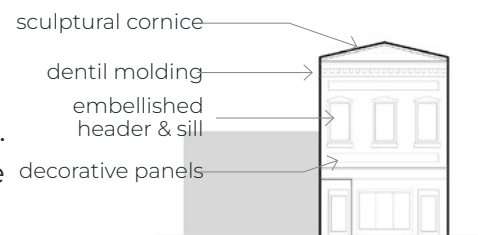
2. Organize the Openings

- Align openings vertically and horizontally.
- Maintain consistent sizes as much as possible.
- Use consistent window types (double hung, picture, etc) for uniformity.
- Create shadow lines in the building wall with opening depth or articulation around openings, such as headers, sills, and trim elements.



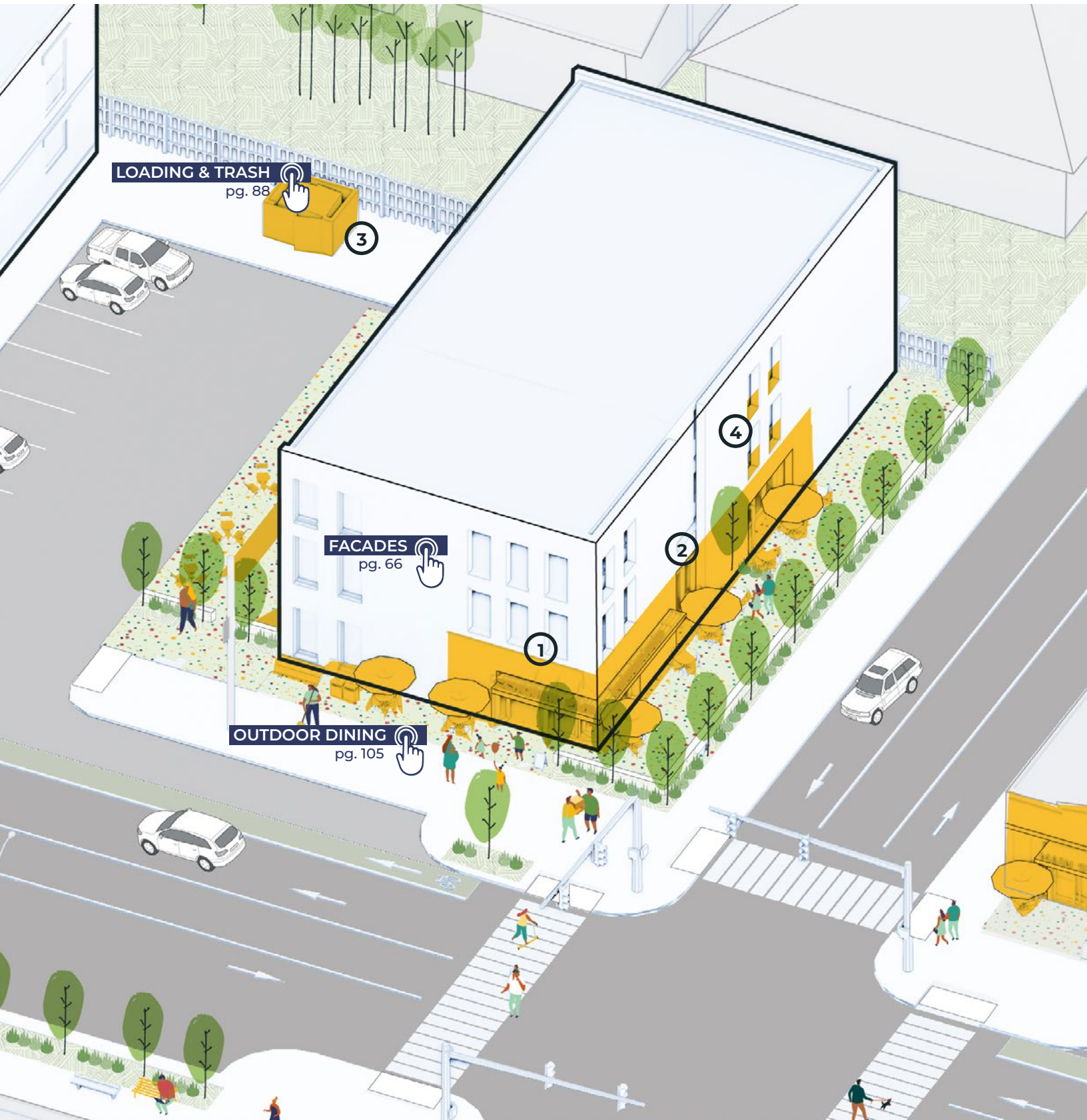
3. Add Architectural Details

- Design architectural details to compliment the design of facade.
- Use ornament around windows, trims around openings, and to help distinguish the ground floor from upper floors.
- Use craftsmanship in the building materials to add texture and ornament, particularly in concrete, stone, and brick.
- Salvage, preserve, or restore existing ornament as much as possible.
- Add a cornice or parapet.



MIXED-USE

Mixed-Use buildings should address adjacent streets and sidewalks, accommodating on-street retail, amenities and services with clear delineation between active storefronts and residential units above





DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

- ① Offer engaging ground floor storefronts and uses, with visible and identifiable multifamily or office windows and balconies above
- ② Clearly identify and distinguish multifamily residential entries with well-lighted access and entry vestibules visible from the street
- ③ Place support service, trash and resident loading access at the rear of the property with easy access, out of sight of pedestrians, customers and residents
- ④ Consider discrete residential balconies and rooftop access, while also minimizing on-street sight lines into residential units

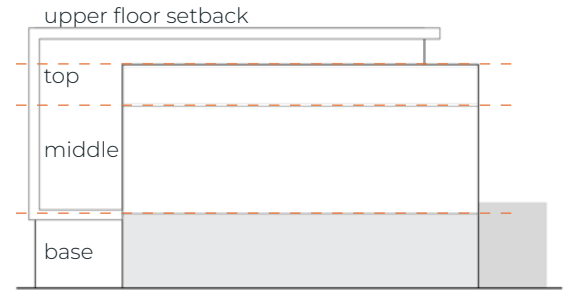
AVOID

- Building and program placement that conflicts with common service and maintenance access points
- On-site parking between the building and street

NEW MIXED-USE BUILDINGS

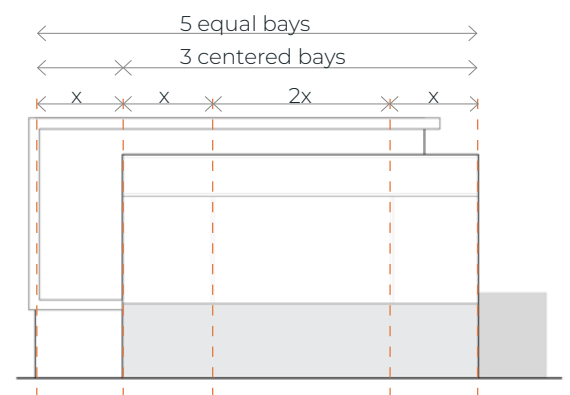
1. Define the Base/Middle/Top

- The base of the building can be defined by an accent line, cornice, frieze, or change in material.
- Where a pattern of alignment exists along the street, align with the prevailing organizing elements.
- Continue the base across the entire building.
- Keep a consistent parapet or cornice line. Like the base, the top should be continuous across the length of the building.
- Don't be afraid to go big. Cornices, friezes, and other horizontal articulation on traditional buildings are larger than they appear from the ground.
- For larger buildings, include the second floor in the base for a more proportional breakdown of the building mass.
- Include the entire top story as the top of the building.



2. Create Vertical Bays

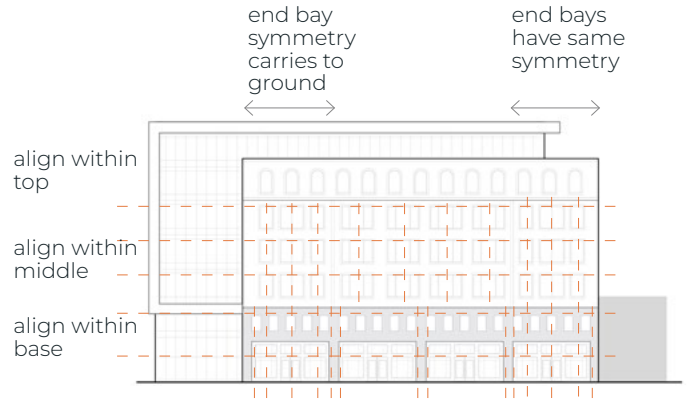
- Create bays in odd numbers to be proportionally balanced.
- Vertical bays can be all equal or asymmetrical to create a larger center bay or a larger end bay at the corner lot.
- Vertical articulation can continue to the ground or stop at the base.
- Vertical bays should stop at the building top and not continue through.
- Bay width should be loosely $\frac{1}{3}$ of the overall building height.
- Use vertical bays to introduce a change in materials or building style, creating a hybrid traditional-contemporary building style.



NEW MIXED-USE BUILDINGS

3. Organize the Openings

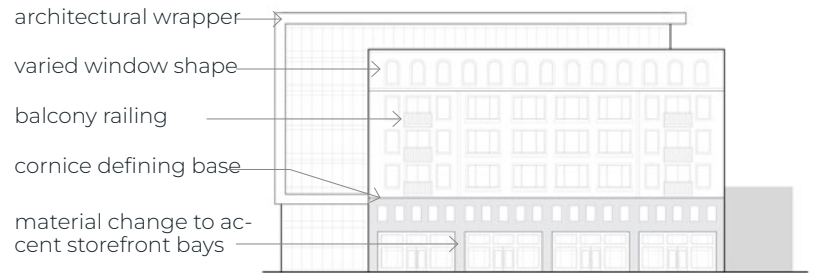
- Align openings vertically and horizontally.
- Maintain consistent sizes as much as possible.
- Use consistent window types (double hung, picture, etc) for uniformity.
- Create shadow lines in the building wall with opening depth or articulation around openings, such as headers, sills, and trim elements.



For more information on facade design, go to page 66.

4. Add Architectural Details

- Design architectural details to compliment the design of facade.
- Use ornament around windows, trims around openings, and to help distinguish the ground floor from upper floors.
- Use craftsmanship in the building materials to add texture and ornament, particularly in concrete, stone, and brick.
- Introduce a sculptural cornice or parapet.



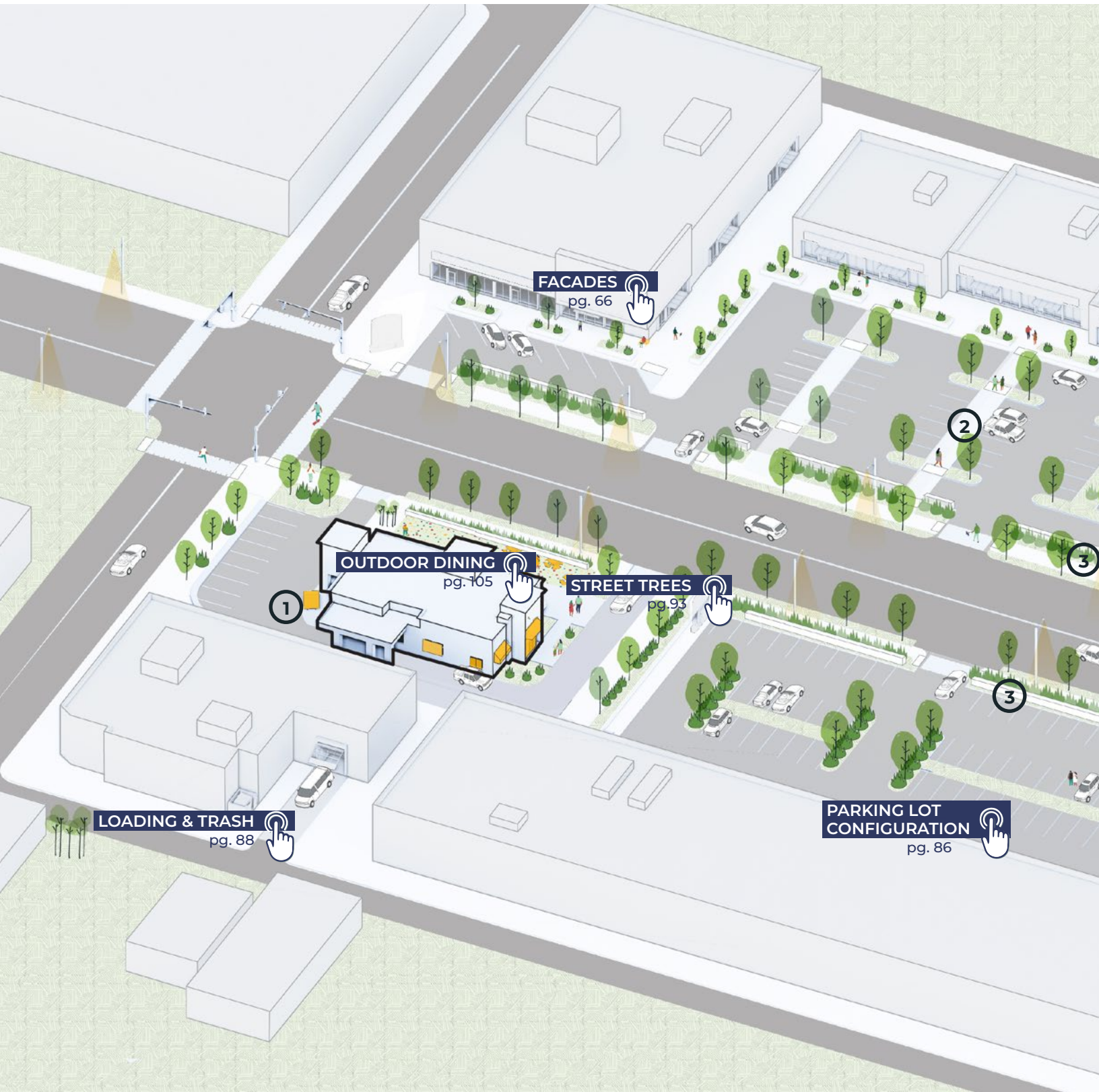
For more information on materials, go to page 70.

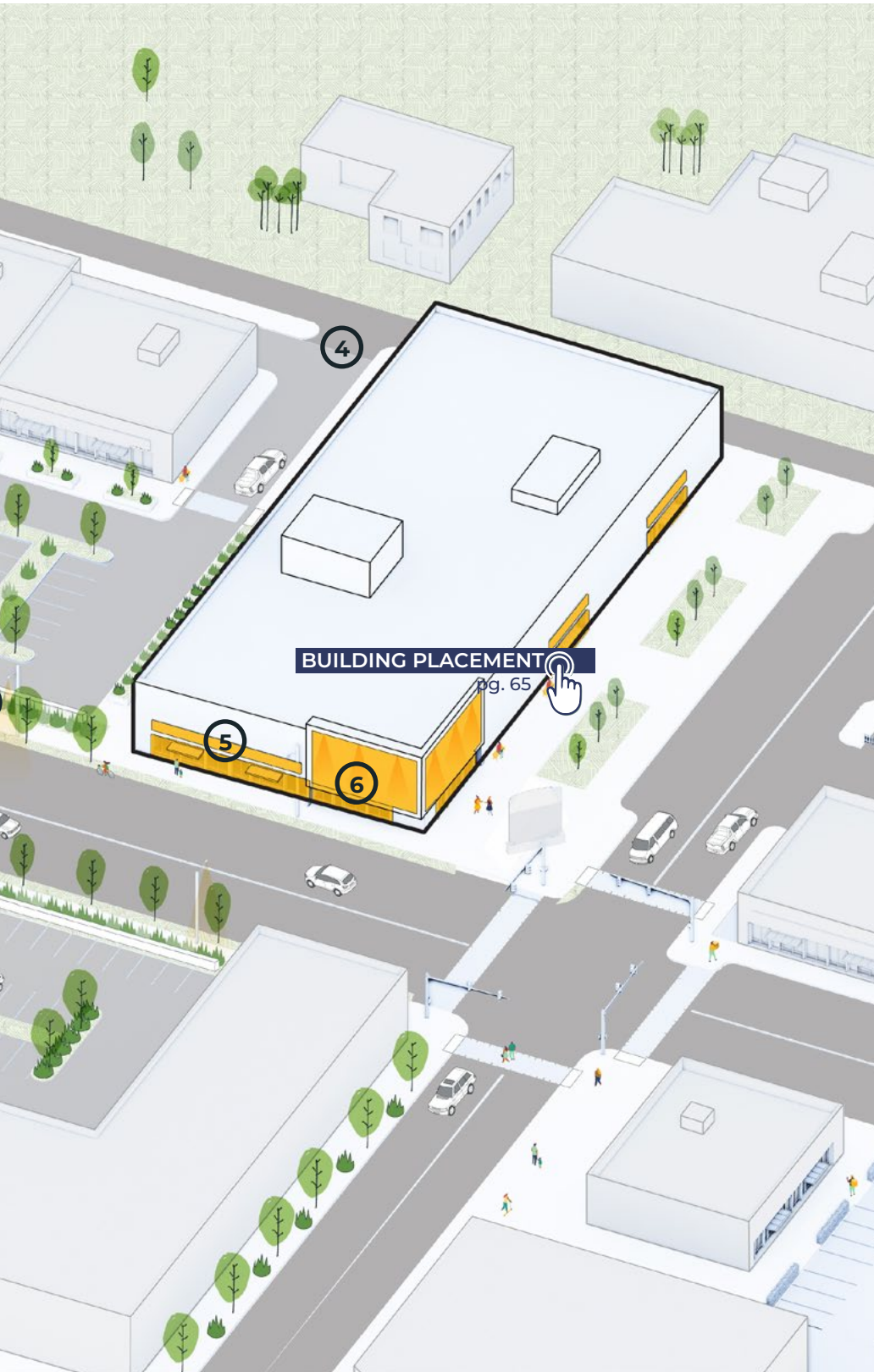


For more information on awnings, go to page 74.

SHOPPING CENTER

Reduce impacts of parking lots on streetscape and move towards a less auto-centric design





DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

- ① Locate drive-thru windows and loading bays for deliveries at the rear of buildings
- ② Prioritize pedestrians amenities and walkways throughout the site should be prioritized in the siteplan
- ③ Screen parking areas, add landscaping, street furniture, and human scale architectural details, and align curb cuts with parking aisles
- ④ Provide secondary entrances off alleys when appropriate
- ⑤ Place new buildings at the street to reduce conflict points with vehicles and pedestrians
- ⑥ Emphasize building entrances and keep windows clear to show activity inside

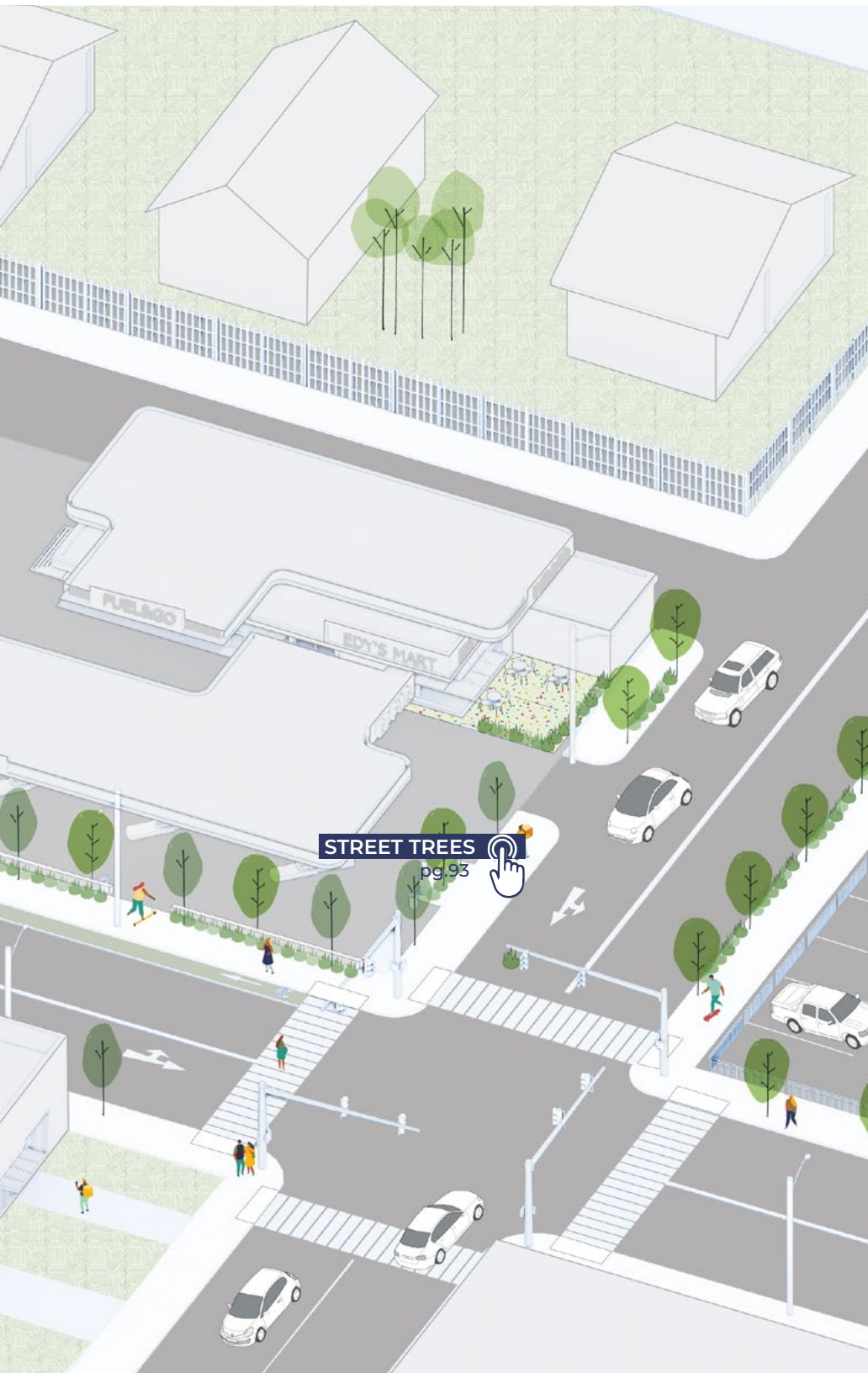
AVOID

- Placing your parking lot in front of your building for new buildings
- Creating excessive parking spaces or multiple curb cuts
- Parking lots that do not have pedestrian circulation or screening
- Locating blank facades along the street or in highly visible locations

AUTO-RELATED USES

Reduce impacts of autos (fuel, sales, service, and washes) on the pedestrian experience.





DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

- ① Limit the number of driveways as much as possible. Maximum curb cut width should not exceed 24 feet.
- ② Screen parking areas, add landscaping, street furniture, and human scale architectural details, and align curb cuts with parking aisles.
- ③ Screen storage areas, including storage of materials, tires and cars
- ④ Utilize alleys and side streets for circulation if possible
- ⑤ Simplify auto access, consolidate driveway entrances where possible
- ⑥ Emphasize building entrances and keep windows clear to show activity inside. Place new buildings at the street.

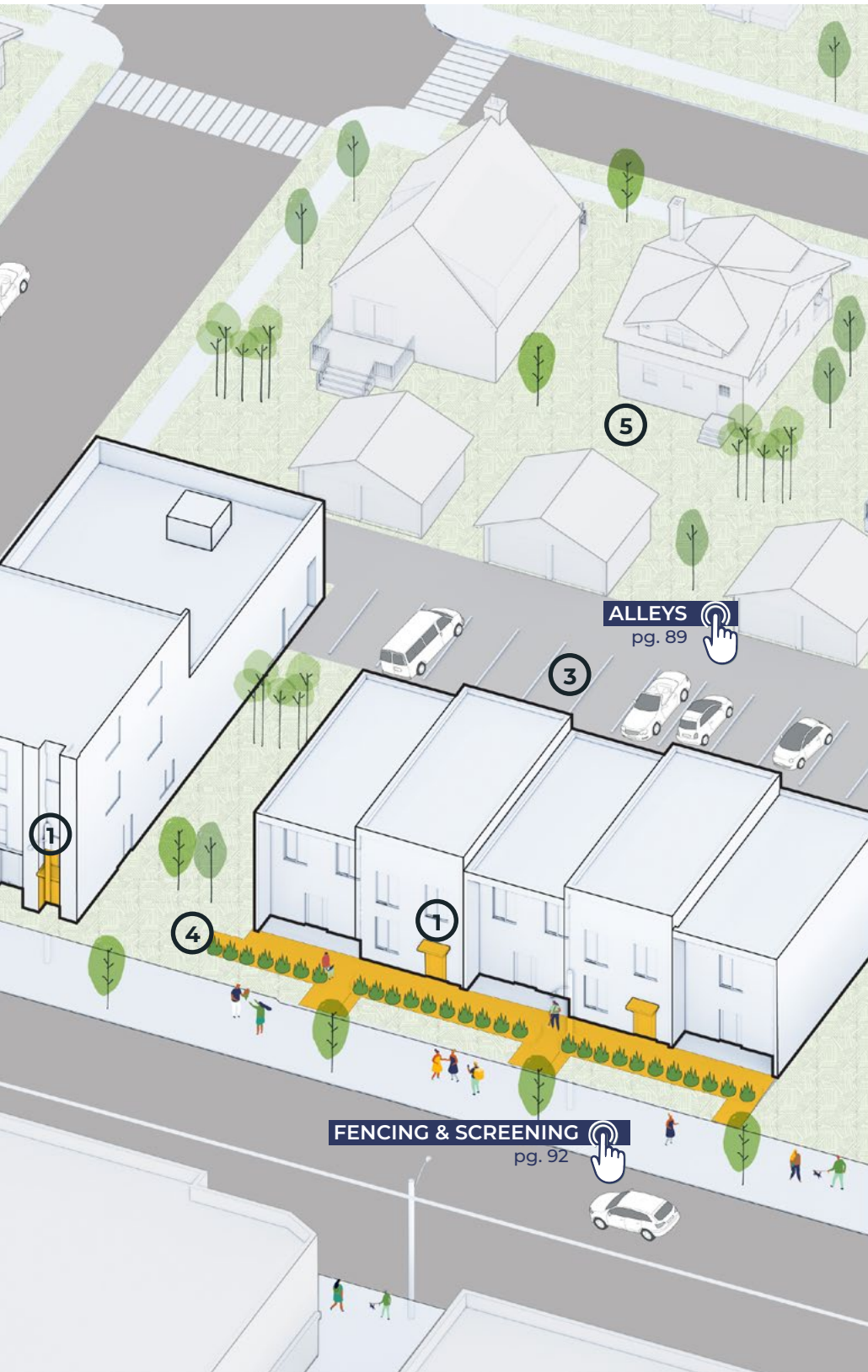
AVOID

- Placing your parking lot in front of your building for new buildings
- Creating excessive parking spaces or multiple curb cuts
- Parking lots that do not have pedestrian circulation or screening

RESIDENTIAL

GOAL: Effectively integrate residential uses into vibrant commercial corridors.





DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

- ① Residential entrances should front the street to promote a sense of community, safety, and encourage eyes on the street
- ② Open spaces should be incorporated in residential blocks with pedestrian access to provide recreation amenities
- ③ Place parking in the rear and locate garages and storage in the rear yard via alley access
- ④ Activate front entrances with landscaping, pathways, and human scale design.
- ⑤ Keep in mind privacy, noise, light, and traffic impacts on existing neighborhoods

AVOID

- Placing your parking lot or garages in front of your building

INDUSTRIAL

Industrial facilities should be clean and secure, supporting ease of access for employees and suppliers while maintaining appealing, well-maintained street-facing facades.

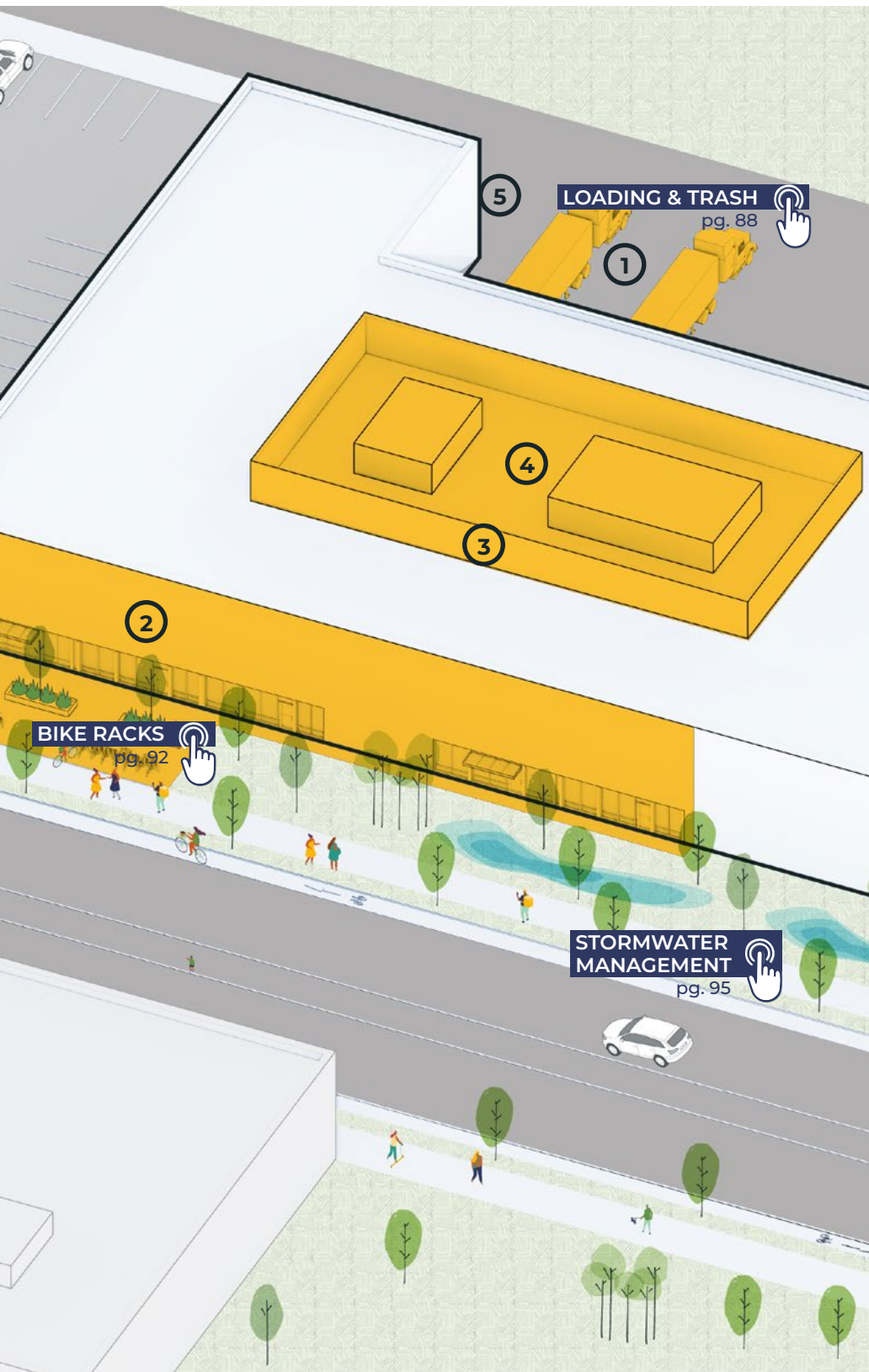


FACADE DESIGN
pg. 67

PARKING LOT SCREENING
pg. 86

Did you know?
The City of Detroit provides more detailed design guidelines specifically for industrial properties. Click the link below to review them.

INDUSTRIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES



DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

- ① Orient loading and service docks away from adjacent streets, sidewalks and open spaces, while providing sufficient space for truck loading and access
- ② Maintain a consistent street frontage facing sidewalks with façade storefronts where feasible, as well as visible entries for access
- ③ Ensure rooftop mechanical systems are screened or remain below the line of sight from adjacent sidewalks
- ④ Reduce or isolate any mechanical system noise or noxious fumes
- ⑤ Maintain discrete locations for dumpsters and other frequent services

AVOID

- On-street or curbside loading
- Street facing parking lots
- Fully opaque facades
- Overly bright on-street security lighting and signage



**building
blocks for
vibrant
blocks:
elements**

four

buildings

BUILDING PLACEMENT

VIBRANT BLOCKS HAVE BUILDINGS THAT...

- Create a feel of a continuous, active edge along the whole block
- Position the front door facing the street with little to no setback to reinforce the street wall
- Use setbacks, sideyards, and gaps to enhance the block by designing plazas, landscaping, or outdoor dining areas and plazas
- Prioritize pedestrian access to the commercial corridor frontage, sidewalk, and building entry

REQUIREMENTS

- Primary entrance must face the street
- Building needs to be accessible by pedestrian pathways from the sidewalk and parking lot.
- No greater than a 10-foot setback in TMSO districts

AVOID

- Buildings set too far back from the property line without activation of the setback

City Code Links

[NON-RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT / SECTION 50-14-411 THROUGH 50-14-419](#)

[TRADITIONAL MAIN STREET OVERLAY AREAS / SECTION 50-14-421 THROUGH 50-14-450](#)



LITTLE OR NO SETBACK

Contiguous facades create a sense of enclosure as you walk along the block.



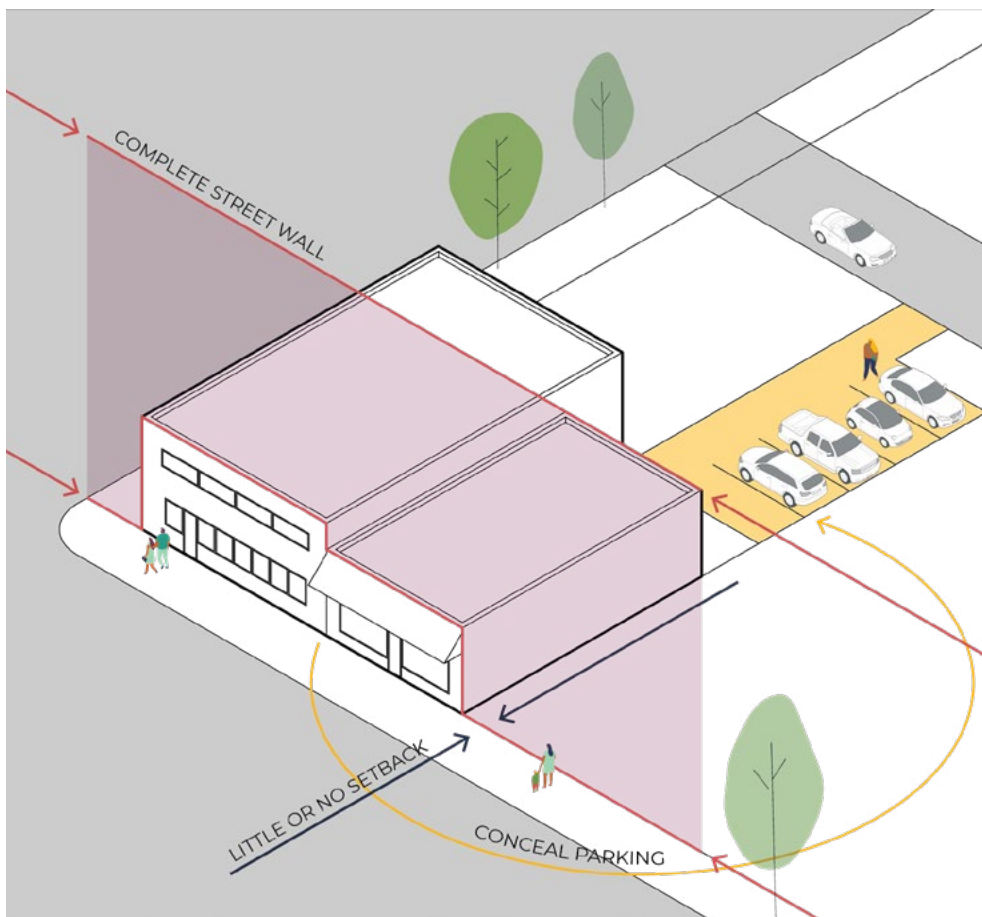
SPACE FOR PLAZAS & CAFES

Use setbacks to create public amenities or outdoor dining.



SCREEN PARKING

Where parking does exist, activate the edge closest to the sidewalk with landscaping and conceal parking where possible.



FAÇADE DESIGN

What's a "façade" anyway?

The façade is the portion of the building facing the street. High-quality facades enhance the pedestrian experience and overall liveliness of a corridor. A building's facade has many components that contribute to the look and feel, such as building material, window size, organization, signage, awnings, and architectural details. Even the design of lighting and security grills can impact the quality of the facade.



VIBRANT BLOCKS HAVE FAÇADES THAT ARE...

- Balanced in shape and composition, with well-organized openings
- Visually interesting and have minimal blank wall space
- Complementary in style to neighboring buildings with appropriate and unifying architectural features
- Perceived as human-scale due to window and material patterns and ground floor details
- Sufficiently transparent to allow a passerby to see indoor activity and feel part of an activated space

REQUIREMENTS

- Build with high-quality materials
- Orient new buildings toward public streets, with a direct pedestrian connection
- Screen all mechanical, electrical, and telecommunications equipment
- Use content-appropriate materials, finishes, and colors, preferably neutral colors with the exception of trim
- Additional requirements apply if the property is in a Traditional Main Street Overlay (TMSO) area.

AVOID

- Blank walls. Street-facing facades should have visual interest
- Blocking windows with signage or other features
- Concrete panels, corrugated metal panels, and an excess of mirrored glass
- Exterior Insulation and Finish Systems (EIFS)

Resources

[Signage Design Guide](#)



City Code Links

[NON-RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT /](#)

[SECTION 50-14-411 THROUGH 50-14-419](#)

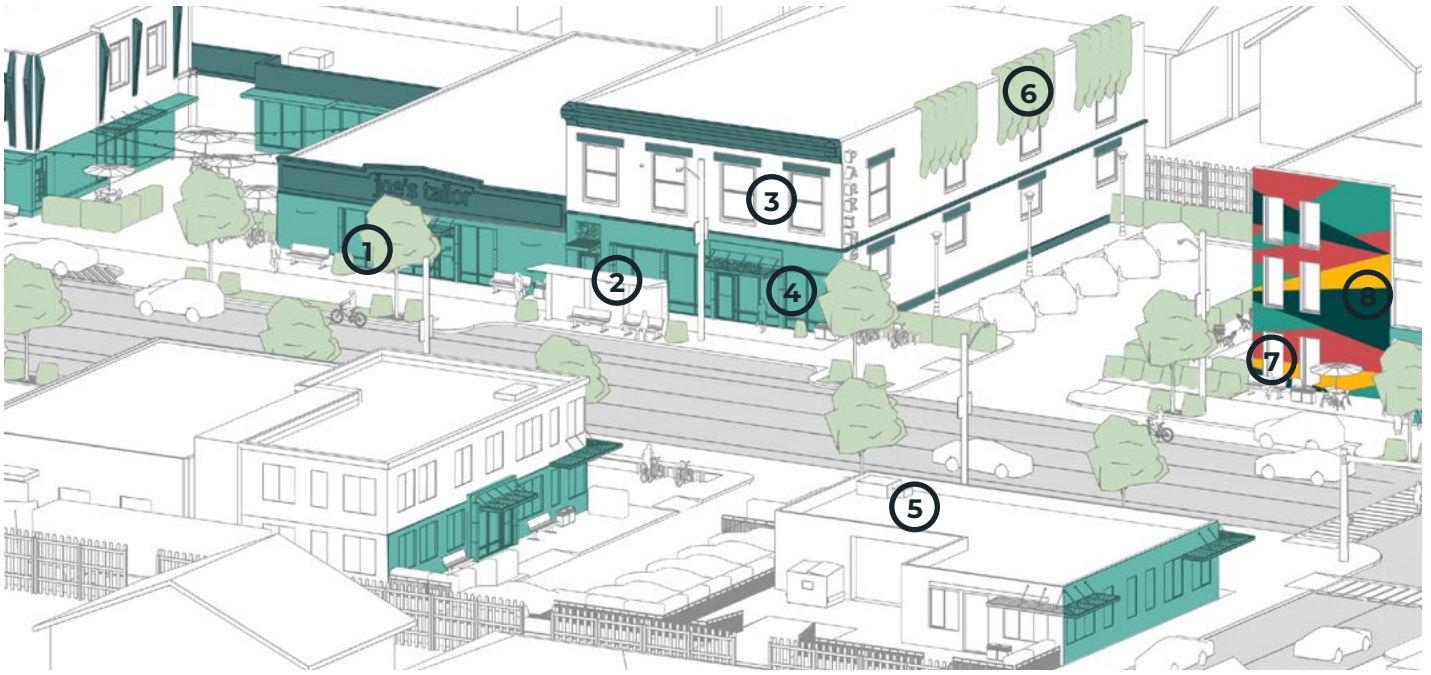


[TRADITIONAL MAIN STREET OVERLAY AREAS /](#)

[SECTION 50-14-431 THROUGH 50-14-450](#)



Elements to consider to enhance your building's facade...



1 WELCOMING STOREFRONTS

The use of windows, lighting, and architectural details clearly define entrances and make a welcoming space.



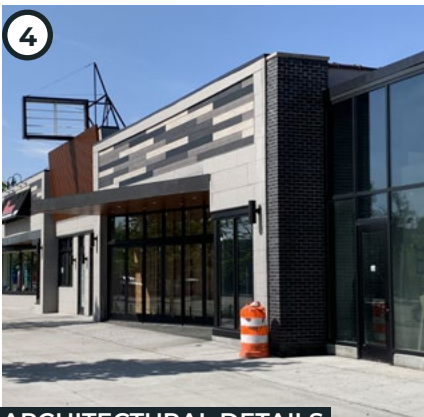
2 GROUND FLOOR DETAILS

Design focuses on the experience at the pedestrian level. Human scale façade details can help bring a larger building down to earth.



3 ORDERLY WINDOWS & OPENINGS

Create a sense of order and unity in your building's openings. Consistent scaling of windows and patterns should be compatible with neighboring buildings.



4 ARCHITECTURAL DETAILS

Maintaining and creating buildings with details such as cornices, parapets, grouped bays make an appealing design.



5 MECHANICAL SCREENING

Extend facade material beyond the building structure or add elements to hide mechanical equipment from view.



6 INTEGRATED GREENERY

Adding living walls and integrated planters can soften the edges and add visual interest to your building.

HOW TO...

Give your storefront a face lift

- There is funding available to support facade improvement projects! DEGC offers 50% matching grants to neighborhood businesses to improve their storefronts. They can help connect you with design professionals, architects and even contractors. If you're a new business, check out Motor City Match, or if you're an existing business, check out Motor City Restore.

Consider talking to your neighbors! *Businesses that apply together with three of their neighboring business on the same block are eligible for 75% match each.*

- Remember to select materials and designs that follow zoning regulations and contribute to the overall character of your corridor.
- If your site is in a TMSO, or your project triggers the design review process, see this GUIDE.



TRANSPARENCY TO INTERIOR

Creates a sense of vibrancy and security both by making activity inside and outside visible and allowing light to illuminate the sidewalk in the evening.



ACTIVATE BLANK WALLS

Think of every surface as an opportunity to add visual interest.

Looking for more guidance on a specific element?

Click the elements below to jump to more information about the facade design element.



EXTERIOR MATERIALS

VIBRANT BLOCKS HAVE MATERIALS THAT ARE...

- High-quality, durable building materials such as stone, steel, masonry, high-grade wood, and concrete for all visible facades
- Detailed consistently on all sides of a structure that are visible from streets or an adjacent residential district
- Complementary to one another in terms of color, texture, scale, and orientation. Variation in materials should be intentional as a part of the building and facade design
- Harmonious in hue, texture, tone, and intensity with the existing building, adjacent buildings and surrounding area.
- Preserved when a building is renovated.



Vibrant Blocks have a variety of high-quality building materials



REQUIREMENTS

- Select durable exterior materials.
- Use context-appropriate colors, that are low reflective, or neutral colors with the exception of trim
- Additional requirements apply if the property is in a Traditional Main Street Overlay (TMSO) area.

City Code Links

[QUALITY OF MATERIALS](#)
[SEC. 50-14-414.](#)

AVOID

- More than four (4) unique materials, defined by a change in color, pattern, or profile.
- Large scale exterior concrete panels and exterior concrete masonry units (CMU) or “cinder block”
- Sandblasting or pressure washing without consulting a professional. These methods may damage a building in irreversible and expensive ways.
- Painting natural materials such as stone or brick.
- The use of highly reflective materials
- Corrugated metal panels and siding, except as a method of screening mechanical roof top equipment

Which materials is best for my project?

PRIMARY MATERIALS

Primary materials define the look and feel of a building. They are the first thing customers will notice about the physical character of a business. For this reason, materials including brick and stone are recommended for their durability and flexibility in how they are used for a building's design.

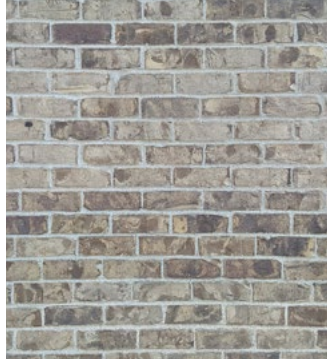


BRICK MASONRY

Brick is a common building material in Detroit. It is known for its durability, quality brick can last hundreds of years and can hold up against everything from insects to storms to high winds and heat. While many have the impression that brick can be limited in its color palette, these days, brick comes in a variety of colors. Brick veneer is a thin brick used to give a surface the appearance of brick, but the structural support comes from the concrete, steel, or wood behind. Synthetic bricks, such as concrete, should be in scale similar to genuine brick. Ceramic tiles are acceptable, especially in historic Art Deco facades.

WHAT'S IT BEST FOR?

Brick, including veneer, is a preferred primary material.

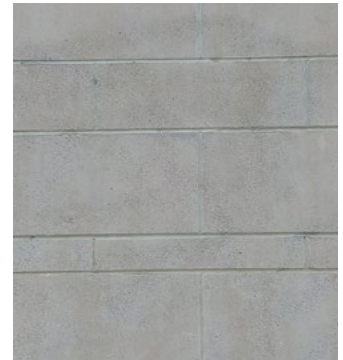


STONE MASONRY

Stone masonry is a type of building masonry construction that uses stones and mortar. The stones used for masonry construction are typically natural rocks. Stone masonry is very strong and weather resistant and has a very long life, even compared to brick.

WHAT'S IT BEST FOR?

Stone masonry is a preferred primary material.



SECONDARY MATERIALS

Secondary materials including siding and metal are commonly used to augment and support the use of a building's primary materials. This may include using them on side or rear facades or to emphasize key facade design elements.

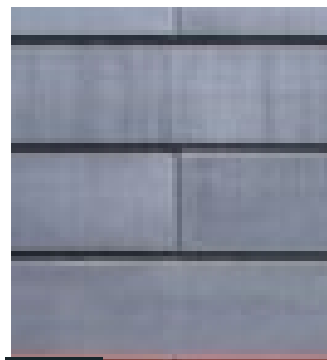


SIDING

Siding is a common material in residential construction. Siding products include natural or composite wood or cement fiber board such as Hardie Panel. While cheaper than masonry materials, they often require more maintenance over time.

WHAT'S IT BEST FOR?

Use of siding is not recommended outside of residential applications and usually is most appropriate as a secondary building material.

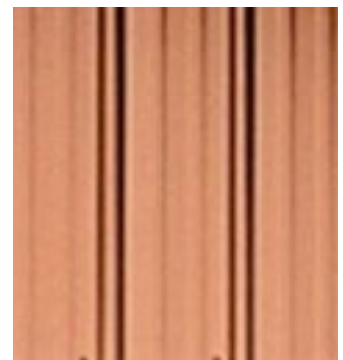


METAL

Metal panel is a common contemporary building material. Lower quality panels can be subject to scratching, denting, rust and corrosion. Color metal siding can also fade over time. Metal can also have the disadvantage of being non-insulating, compared to higher quality masonry materials. Corrugated (ribbed) metal panels and siding are prohibited on all exterior walls, except as a method of screening mechanical roof top equipment in the City Code.

WHAT'S IT BEST FOR?

Metal panels should be used as a secondary or accent material.



VIBRANT BLOCKS FOR BUSINESS

SPECIAL USE OR LIMITED USE MATERIALS

In some cases a material is only appropriate for a certain type of construction. Limited Use materials should be used sparingly on a building's exterior or facade.

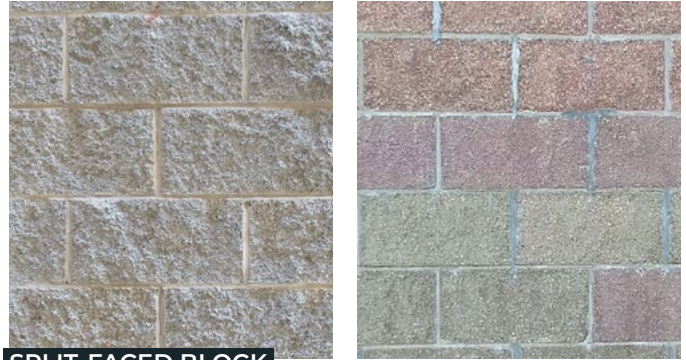


STUCCO

Traditional stucco is a cement-based plaster for exterior application. Synthetic stucco and exterior insulation and finish system (EIFS) mimic the look of plaster with contemporary building products.

WHAT'S IT BEST FOR?

Neither traditional nor synthetic stucco have the durability or quality for use beyond residential construction or in upper floor accents.



SPLIT-FACED BLOCK

Split-faced block is a concrete building block which appears to have been hand-chiseled (or "split") to give it a very textured look. In reality, the concrete slurry is poured into a form with the texture already built into it. It is a very durable material, but aren't very attractive. Although they look similar, split-faced block is not the same material as CMU or "cinder block".

WHAT'S IT BEST FOR?

Split-faced concrete block should only be used as a functional trim on piers, foundation walls, or chimney.

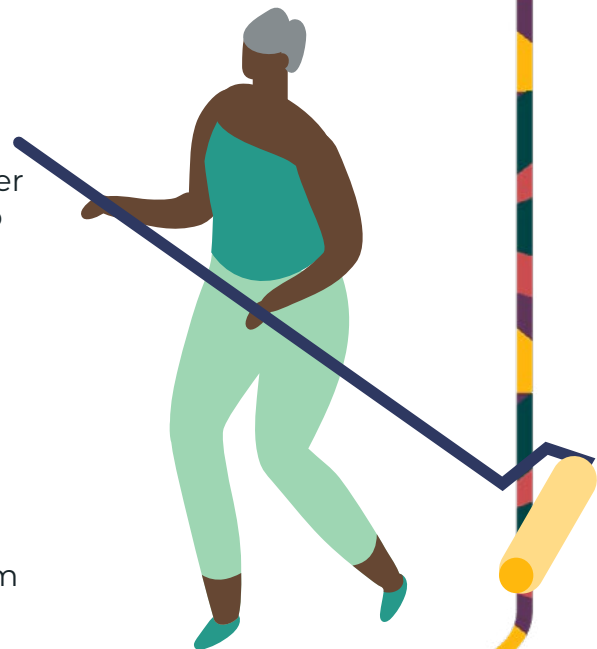
Did you know?

The City strongly discourages painted brick on commercial corridors

Although it is not banned by ordinance, the City strongly discourages painted brick on commercial corridors. Natural material qualities are preferred to painted exterior brick or stone. Painted stone or brick will show wear over time quicker and will require additional or more frequent maintenance to keep it looking fresh and new.

Want to use a new or unconventional material?

Consult a registered architect or reach out to PDD before investing in an unconventional exterior material. This is especially important that if you are in a TMSO or historic district. Also, be sure to consider durability and the long term maintenance of the material before installing it.



SIGNS

VIBRANT BLOCKS HAVE SIGNAGE THAT...

- Complements and enhances the character of the corridor
- Is visible and legible to passersby on foot, bike, or in vehicles
- Is inviting and unique
- Is designed to celebrate the business

REQUIREMENTS

- Sign size and placement in compliance with regulations
- Licensed & permitted installation

AVOID

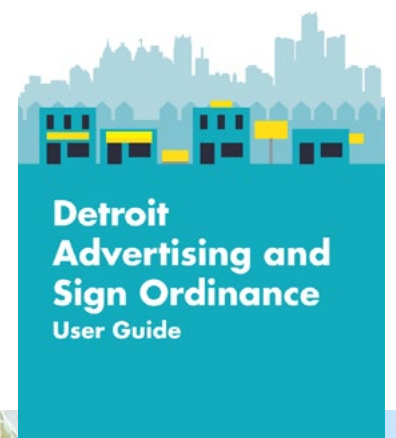
- Obstructing windows, architectural details, or pedestrian movement
- Signs that move or flash, except in designated districts
- Exceeding sign size outlined in code
- Filling windows with signage
- Excessive numbers of signs

City Code Links

[REGULATION OF BUSINESS AND ADVERTISING SIGNS / SECTION 4-4-1 THROUGH 4-4-186](#)

Resources

[Detroit Advertising and Sign Ordinance User Guide](#)



How can your sign make the biggest impact?



INTEGRATE FACADE ELEMENTS

Signs should spark interest and draw customers in.



COORDINATE SIGNAGE TO BUILD A MORE COHESIVE CORRIDOR

Good signage complements and enhances the character of the corridor.

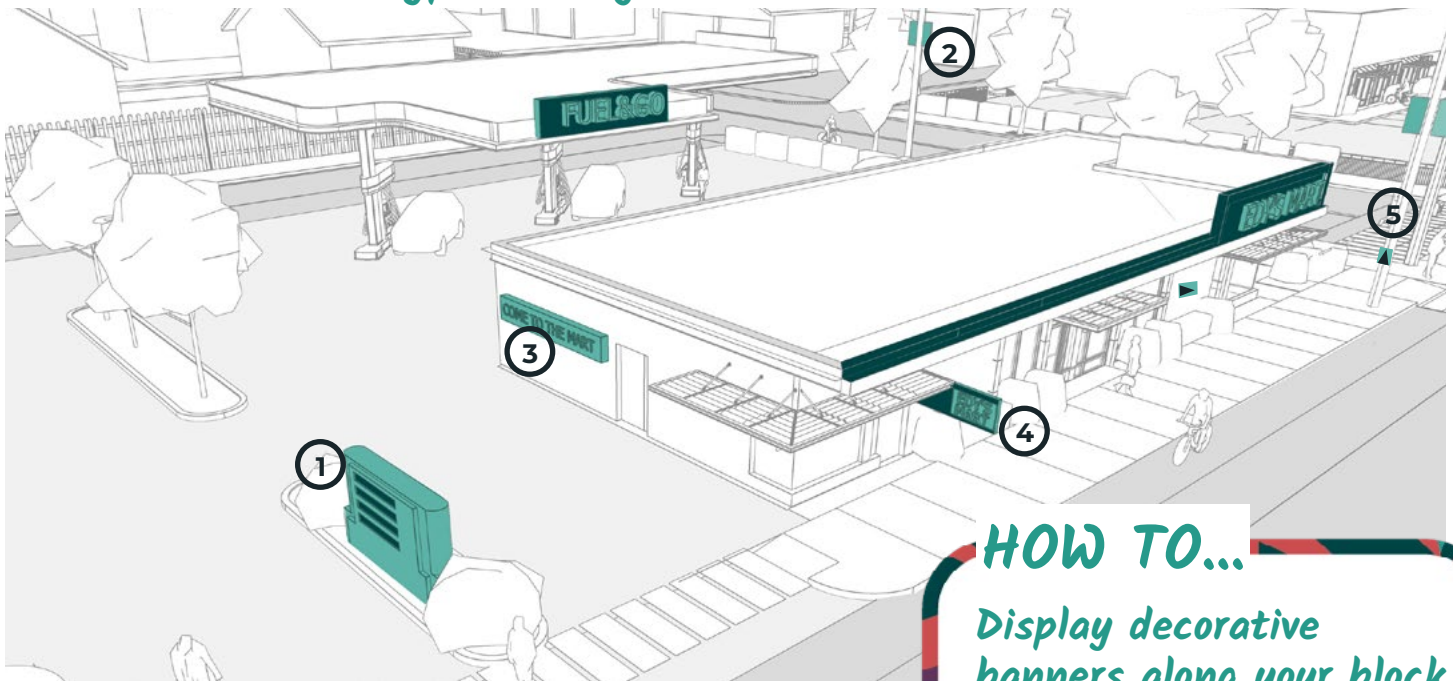
HOW TO...

Make sure your sign is permit compliant

Your sign must be installed by a professional licensed by the City of Detroit. Once your sign's design is approved, you will be issued a Sign License which must be renewed every two years. Click [this link](#) to read through the City's comprehensive signage guide.

VIBRANT BLOCKS FOR BUSINESS

There are lots of types of signs

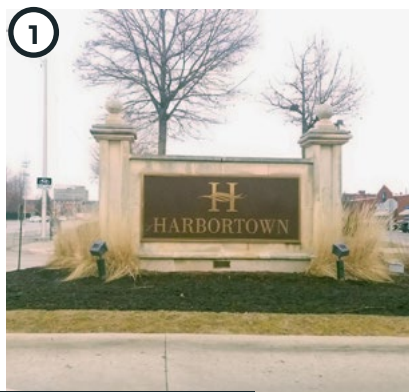


HOW TO...

Display decorative banners along your block

Complete the banner permit application and accompanying items, found at this link: **[BANNER APPLICATION](#)**

Permission to display banners is given for six months, then requires renewal. Applications must be submitted 60 days ahead of installation or 180 days ahead of installation for State and County roads.



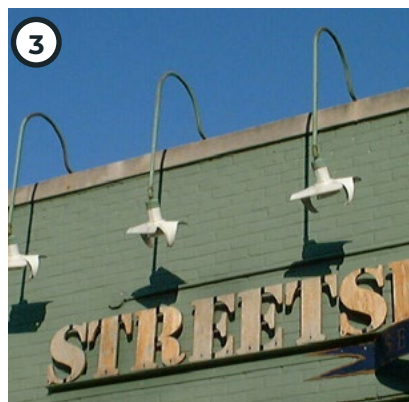
MONUMENT SIGNS

A freestanding sign that sits at ground level, typically made from brick, stone, stainless steel or other durable materials.



POLE SIGNS

Blade signs hung 90 degrees perpendicular to poles.



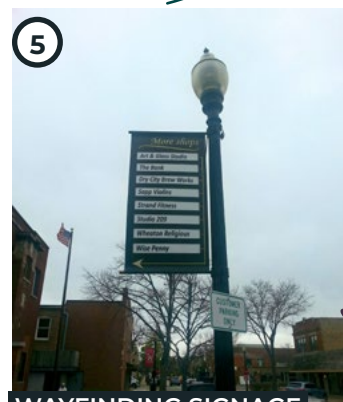
WALL SIGNS

Wall Signs are attached to, supported by, or painted on the exterior wall of a building, with the display of the sign parallel to the facade of the building. Aligning signs with lighting or building openings can keep the facade looking orderly and uncluttered. An entire sign could be lit from above or letters could be lit individually.



PROJECTING SIGNS

Blade signs hung 90 degrees perpendicular to the facade from ornamental brackets.



WAYFINDING SIGNAGE

Wayfinding signage directs visitors to shared parking lots, key points of interest, cultural assets. Signage installed in the public right-of-way must obtain approval from City of Detroit DPW prior to installation.



four

AWNINGS & CANOPIES

VIBRANT BLOCKS MIGHT HAVE AWNINGS THAT...

- Define the street level and provide shelter
- Highlight entrances and are visually contained within the building framework
- Are retractable where possible and appropriate
- Designed to line up with adjacent awnings

REQUIREMENTS

- Canvas awnings must be positioned at 45 degrees
- Glass, metal, or wood canopies must be horizontal
- Utilize straight-shed awnings rather than curved

AVOID

- Damaged or dirty awnings
- Using awnings as primary business signage
- Blocking too much of the window
- Internally-illuminated awnings

City Code Links

[SECTION 3105 OF 2015 MICHIGAN BUILDING CODE](#)

[SECTION 8-2-19](#)

AWNING SIGNS

[SECTION 4-4-33](#)

[TMSO BUILDING DESIGN STANDARDS](#)

[SECTION 50-14-442](#)

Resources

[Detroit Advertising and Sign Ordinance User Guide](#)



DEFINE STREET LEVEL

Good signage complements and enhances the character of the corridor.



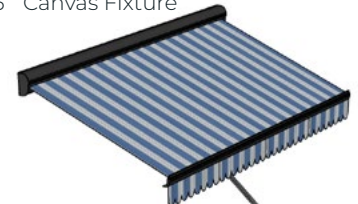
PROVIDE SHELTER

Signage should be geared to the pedestrian scale for walkable streetscapes.

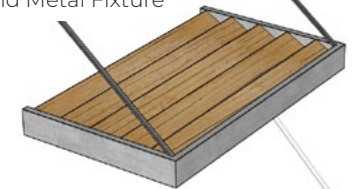


TYPES OF FIXTURES

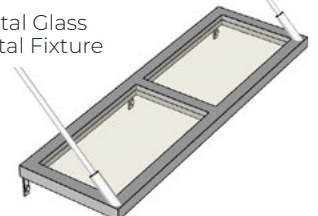
45° Canvas Fixture



Horizontal Wood and Metal Fixture



Horizontal Glass and Metal Fixture



VIBRANT BLOCKS FOR BUSINESS

SECURITY DOORS & GRILLES

VIBRANT BLOCKS MIGHT HAVE SECURITY DOORS & GRILLES THAT...

- Are aesthetically congruent and fit within the design. Security doors should be fully discreet when open
- Are installed in the interior of the window system when possible (already required in TMSO districts)
- Conceals the security grill box with an awning when installed in the exterior (already required in TMSO districts)
- Are designed for transparency where a minimum of 30% of the exterior area is decorative, open-slat, and transparent (already required in TMSO districts)
- Promote a sense of pride and positive perception about the location as a safe commercial corridor
- Provide crime deterrence as an additional layer to a security system
- Are regularly cleaned and maintained to promote a sense of pride and safety

THE MINIMUM

- Only TMSO districts include minimum standards for security grilles

AVOID

- Placing grilles on the exterior whenever possible
- Grilles that have little to no transparency



ROLLING SECURITY DOORS

Rolling doors can be easily removed and hidden. These should be used for entrances and exits.



DECORATIVE GRILLES

While standard grilles are permitted, some decorative grilles that match the surrounding character may be a better fit.



FRONT ENTRANCE SECURITY DOORS



ARTISTIC GRILLES



COLORFUL GRILLES

City Code Links

[Building design standards—Security roll-down doors and grilles](#)

[Sec. 50-14-445.](#)

VACANT BUILDINGS

The oversupply of commercial space in Detroit and beyond means that even the strongest corridors will experience some level of vacancy. Unsecured vacant buildings take away from a sense of security and liveliness on a corridor. Vibrant Blocks manage vacant properties through basic security, utilizing creative placemaking to help reactivate specific locations.

VIBRANT BLOCKS MIGHT RESPOND TO VACANCY WITH...

- Murals highlighting corridor history and character. Ensure activating strategies are tuned to both community interest and need, and aligned with prospective funding
- Temporary window displays
- Attractive and inviting lighting

REQUIREMENTS

- All vacant buildings must be registered on the Vacant Property Registration
- Secure all entrances, buildings must still have an operating door or means of ingress/egress
- Board any broken windows
- Ensure materials are structurally sound and durable
- Comply with the City's façade design standards

AVOID

- Blank walls when possible
- Accumulating trash and weeds
- Leaving buildings unsecured

Resources

[VACANT PROPERTY REGISTRATION](#)

[REPORT A NUISANCE VACANT BUILDING](#)

City Code Links

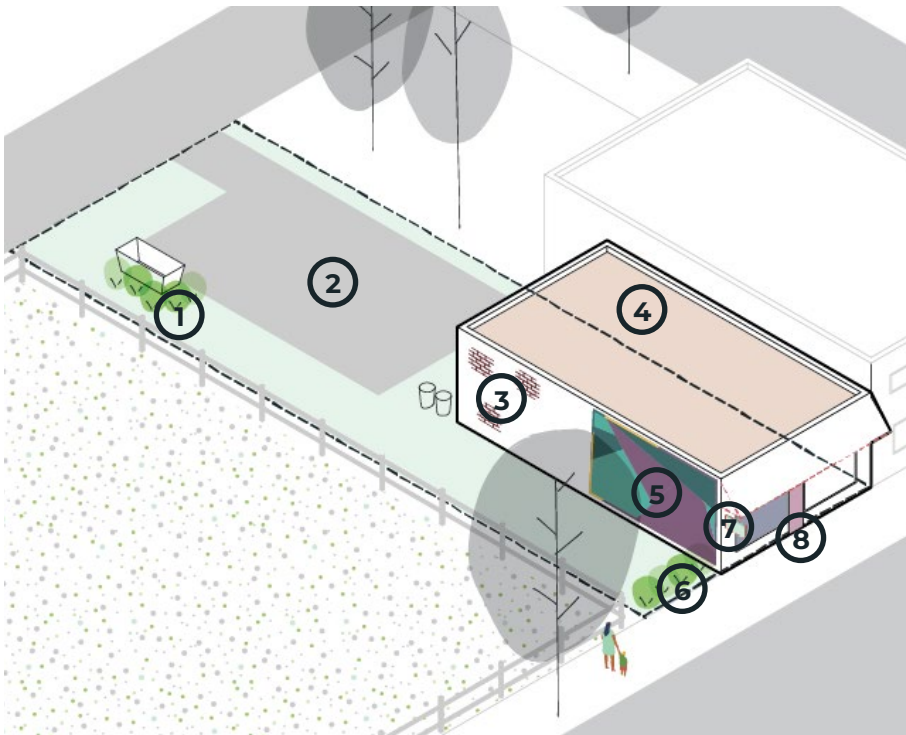
[PROPERTY MAINTENANCE REQUIREMENTS](#)

[SECTION 8-15-101 THROUGH 8-15-503](#)

[ADMINISTRATION AND ENFORCEMENT](#)

[SECTION 8-15-31 THROUGH 8-15-49](#)

Vibrant blocks with vacant buildings follow best practices such as...



- ① Trash is removed/stored properly
- ② Abandoned vehicles are removed
- ③ Building materials are secured
- ④ Roof is good condition and preventing leaks
- ⑤ Graffiti is removed (murals may help to prevent graffiti)
- ⑥ Landscape is maintained and free of weeds
- ⑦ Former signage and awnings are removed
- ⑧ Doors and windows are secure

Empty buildings need love too!



WEATHER-TIGHT ENCLOSURE

Use materials over windows and doors that protect against weather and critters.



FRESH PAINT

Use of similar color or materials across all openings. Maintain exterior paint over time.



CLEAN + CLUTTER-FREE

Clear windows of clutter, posters, or advertisements. Clear interior spaces visible from the street or cover windows to obscure storage from view.

Find creative ways to activate vacant buildings!

Click on the ideas below to explore building blocks related to vacant lot activation, murals, public art, events and programming.



WINDOW DISPLAYS

Use art and display space to maintain the street edge even if a building is vacant.



TEMPORARY EVENTS OR POP-UPS

Temporarily activate the space with events, movable seating, food trucks, or other deconstructable structures.



ACTIVATE BLANK WALLS

Turn blank walls into art celebrating neighborhood pride and history.

Did you know?

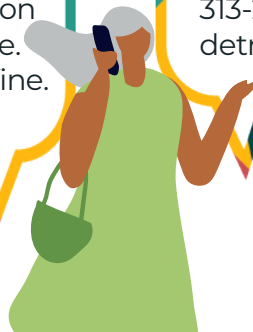
Awnings must be removed from vacant properties!

The City requires that awnings and signage be installed by a licensed contractor and inspected to ensure safe installation and every 2 years thereafter. Owners of vacant properties are required to maintain license inspection or remove signage from the structure. Failure may result in a violation and fine.

HOW TO...

Address a vacant building if you don't own it

Vacant buildings present a big challenge for vibrant corridors. All vacant properties must be registered. To report vacant & open, vacant & not maintained, fire damaged, or collapsing structures call 313-224-3215 or email BSEDDemo@detroitmi.gov.



lighting

LIGHTING

Lighting is an important element of building signage, windows, entrances, and in parking lots and pedestrian routes.

VIBRANT BLOCKS HAVE LIGHTING THAT IS...

- Decorative and fitting with the corridor style
- Highlighting products in interior displays
- Providing atmosphere through lighted trees and cafe/patio lights
- Paired with decorative banners to promote district character

REQUIREMENTS

- Provide sufficient light for safe pedestrian and vehicle circulation
- Make sure light fixtures are downward-facing and shielded to minimize spillover onto streets, sidewalks, or adjacent properties, especially residential neighbors
- Provide context-appropriate fixtures that complement the building and corridor design

AVOID

- LED rope lighting
- Backlit awnings
- Moving or blinking lights
- Neon tubing, except in designated districts
- Lighting that moves or flashes, except in designated districts
- Lighting that obstructs vision

City Code Links

[PUBLIC LIGHTING SECTION 9-7-902](#)

Resources

[USGBC Responsible Lighting Practices](#)

[Dark Sky Association Manual](#)

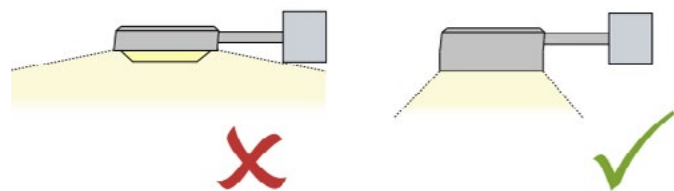
Types of lights and critical characteristics...

From Draft Zone Detroit

DOWNWARD-FACING AND SHIELDED



REDUCED SPILLOVER

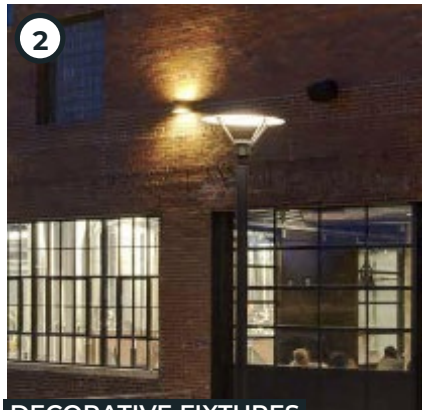


Property owners can integrate lighting in lots of ways...



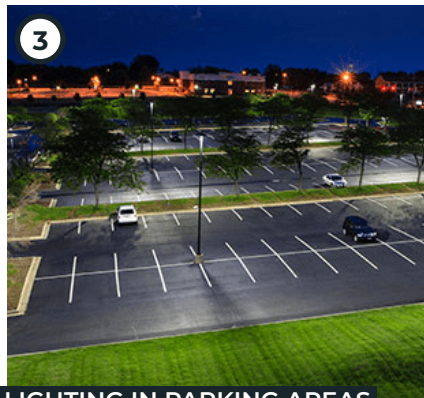
INTERIOR LIGHTING

Interior lighting should create a sense of transparency that enhances the feeling of safety on the street and welcomes pedestrians in.



DECORATIVE FIXTURES

Decorative fixtures should enhance the building and business while also adding light to the sidewalk.



LIGHTING IN PARKING AREAS

Parking lot lighting should be sufficient for the area and not compete with the brighter luminescence focused on the street wall. Source: <https://americansignandlighting.com/parking-lot-lights/>



PATIO LIGHTING

Creative lighting can be used to enhance patios and plazas at night.



ILLUMINATED SIGNAGE

Fixtures above signage can work to advertise your business at night. These fixtures should always point down onto your signage.

Additional guidance related to the lighting of signage in the Detroit Advertising and Sign Ordinance User Guide





HOW TO...

Get decorative lights on your block

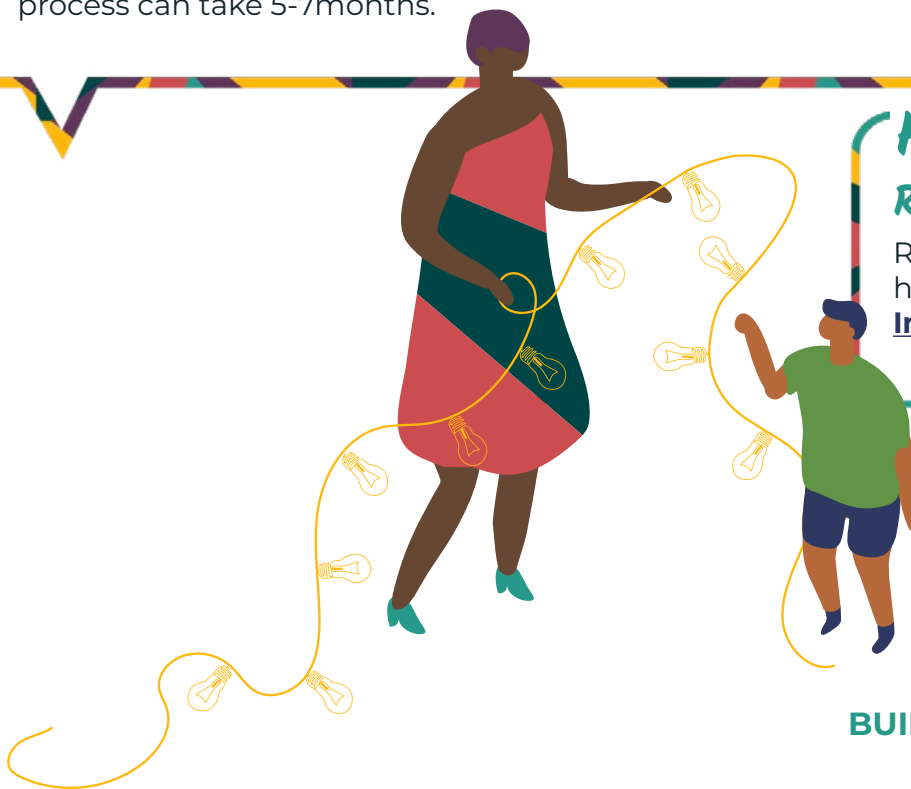
Guidance on decorative or string lighting depends upon where you wish to install it

- **On private buildings/fencing/poles:** Obtain permission from the owner of the property. No additional permits required.
- **On street trees:** Obtain permission from DPW, review street tree guidelines. Provide contact info and a signed agreement of understanding regarding how hardware maintenance / tree protection.
- **On City of Detroit light poles:** Obtain permission from DPW and pay for any and all costs associated with the supply and delivery of lights. Note this process can take 5-7months.
- **Between Buildings/Poles to another parcel or over a right-of way:** Obtain permission from Property Owners, for any building where attachments may be made to secure lighting, and obtain DPW permission if any attachments are made to City light poles. Review designs and obtain relevant permits. Note this process can take 5-7months.

HOW TO...

Request streetlight repair

Report streetlights that have gone dark by using the **Improve Detroit** app.



Sites

PARKING LOCATION + LAYOUT

VIBRANT BLOCKS HAVE PARKING THAT IS...

- Located to the rear of the building and well-screened
- Minimized to efficiently serve the site and shared among multiple buildings wherever possible
- Well-organized with safe, connected pedestrian pathways
- Enhanced with landscaping, stormwater infrastructure, and/or public art

REQUIREMENTS

- Ensure parking stall and circulation layout and striping are in compliance with code
- Keep lot and surrounding sidewalks free from dirt, ice, litter, sleet, and snow
- Enclose lot with 3-foot barrier along all street or alley frontages
- Provide a smooth and durable surface with proper drainage
- Provide appropriate lighting
- Create one common entrance and one common exit
- Minimize instances where vehicles cross pedestrian pathways
- Conform to accessible parking regulations
- Conform to any additional standards specific to zoning district

AVOID

- Expanses of parking lot lining the street
- Parking lots without screening or enclosures
- Trash or weeds accumulating in pavement or along curbs and sidewalks
- Parking lot surfaces that are not ADA compliant
- Inadequate lighting
- Multiple entrance and exit driveways

City Code Links

[OFF-STREET PARKING SECTION 32-1-1 THROUGH 32-3-82](#)

[PARKING LOTS OR PARKING AREAS SECTION 50-12-299](#)

[OFF-STREET PARKING, LOADING, AND ACCESS SECTION 50-14-1 THROUGH 50-14-288](#)

[TMSO PARKING DESIGN STANDARDS AND REDUCTIONS SECTION 50-14-449](#)

[OFF-STREET PARKING EXEMPTIONS, REDUCTIONS, AND ALLOWANCES SEC. 50-14-7\(2\)](#)

Well-designed parking areas have...



PARKING IN REAR

Ideally, parking should be located behind the building with side street or alley access. This reduces potential conflicts between people walking and turning vehicles, and reinforces that the front of the block is for people.



LIGHTING & SIGNAGE

If your parking lot is visible from the commercial corridor, treat it like you would the front of your business. Be sure to consider signage, lighting, and aesthetic upgrades. Image Source: <https://newimagecreative.com/services/custom-business-signs/>



SCREENING & LANDSCAPING

A buffer is required along parking lots that front commercial corridors. Improve the buffer by adding variety in the landscape elements.

VIBRANT BLOCKS FOR BUSINESS

HOW TO...

Minimize your parking footprint

In many cases, transportation and access needs can be met by means other than the required parking ratios. This helps create dense, pedestrian-oriented blocks where space is used efficiently. Here are some exceptions you can request to the parking ratios:

WAIVERS

Minimally deficient: If the building or use can provide 80% of required spaces, you can petition BSEED for a waiver to lower your parking spaces by up to 20 percent of the required parking

TMSO and SD1/SD2: If the property is located in a TMSO, SD1, or SD2 district, a waiver may be granted for the first 3,000 square feet of pedestrian-oriented use

ALTERNATIVE PARKING PLAN

Shared parking: Nearby businesses with different peak parking demands or operating hours can submit a shared parking analysis

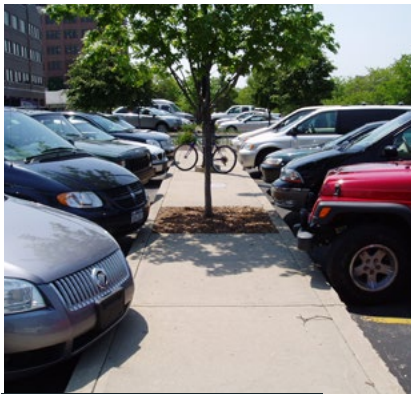
Remote parking: Parking may be located beyond the required distance when a van or shuttle is provided

Parking assessment districts: Public parking facilities in special assessment districts may count towards ratios

Valet parking: May be proposed as an alternative even if beyond the required distance or not meeting lot design standards

Credit for public parking: City parking lots may count towards ratio when within 100 feet of the site, or within 1320 feet in SD1 and SD2 districts

Transportation Demand Management Plan: Measures may be proposed such as posting information about alternative transportation, appointing a transportation coordinator, instituting off-peak work hours, providing car and van pool spaces, and providing financial incentives for alternative transportation



PEDESTRIAN PATHWAYS

Allow for safe pedestrian and vehicular movement within and around the parking stalls. Be sure to design crosswalks and ADA compliant ramps between curbed islands.



LANDSCAPED ISLANDS

Larger landscaped islands can hold larger plants and trees. Guidance for soil volume, recommended tree varieties, and Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI) can be found in the Landscape section of the Building Blocks chapter.

PARKING LOT SCREENING + BUFFERS

VIBRANT BLOCKS MIGHT HAVE/USE PARKING SCREENING THAT HAS...

- Continuous street tree plantings on both sides of the street in the amenity zone with at least one tree every 30 feet
- A thoughtfully designed vertical element that offers visual interest along the sidewalk edge
- Vertical elements that are made of standard building materials such as brick, stone, concrete masonry, stucco, concrete, or wood
- Appropriate scale and design to fit the context of surrounding buildings

REQUIREMENTS

- Enclose lot with 3-foot barrier along all street or alley frontages
- Create one common entrance and one common exit
- All new development should incorporate street tree plantings
- Refer to Fencing section (pg. 92) for preferred materials for fencing and screening elements
- Keep lot and surrounding sidewalks free from dirt, ice, litter, sleet, and snow

City Code Links

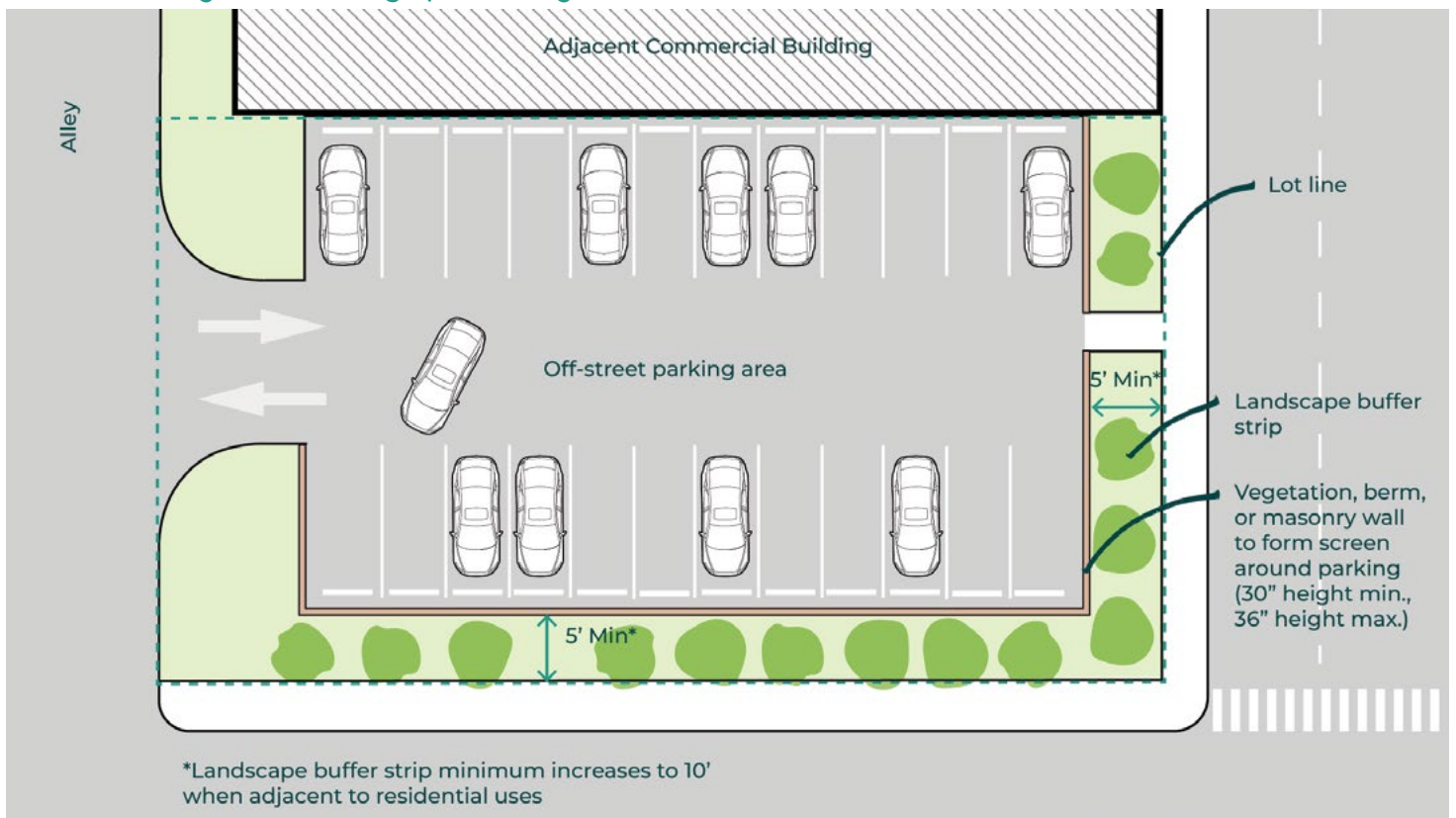
[LANDSCAPING AND SCREENING OF OFF-STREET PARKING AREAS](#)

[SECTION 50-14-341 THROUGH 50-14-345](#)

AVOID

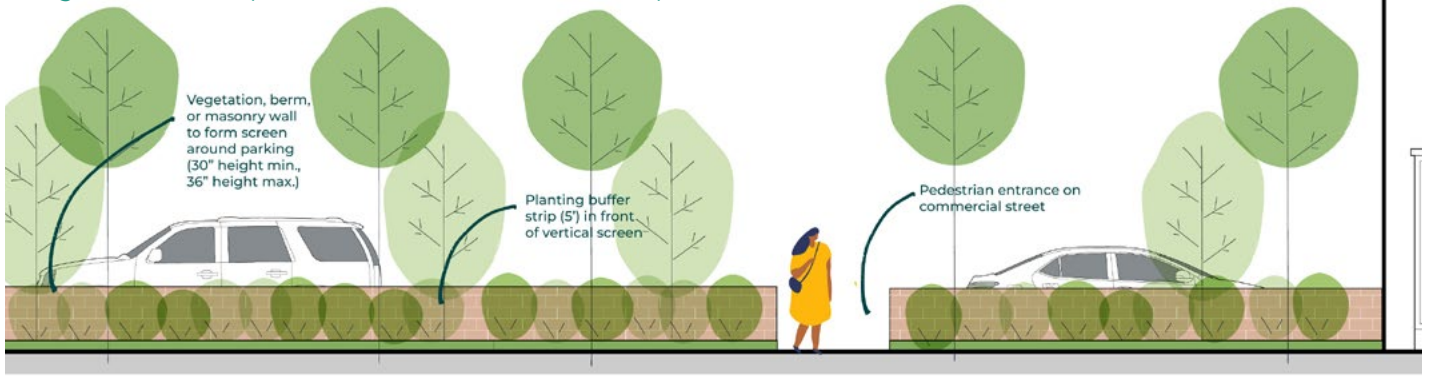
- Refer to Fencing section (pg. 92) in this Design Guide for materials to avoid and height limitations for fences and screening elements.

Which edges of my parking lot should be screened?



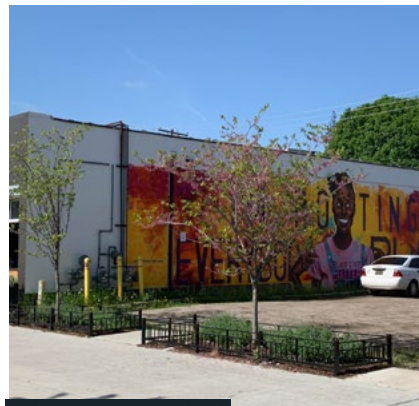
VIBRANT BLOCKS FOR BUSINESS

Layer multiple elements to improve aesthetics



SCREENING & LANDSCAPING

A buffer is required along parking lots that front commercial corridors. Improve the buffer by adding variety in the landscape elements.



ACTIVATE EDGES

Activate the edge closest to the sidewalk with landscaping and conceal parking where possible.



MINIMIZE DISRUPTION OF SIDEWALKS

Design parking lots with main entry/exit from side streets or alleys. Minimize the width of entrances to preserve continuous sidewalks.

LOADING + TRASH

VIBRANT BLOCKS HAVE LOADING AREAS AND WASTE RECEPTACLES THAT...

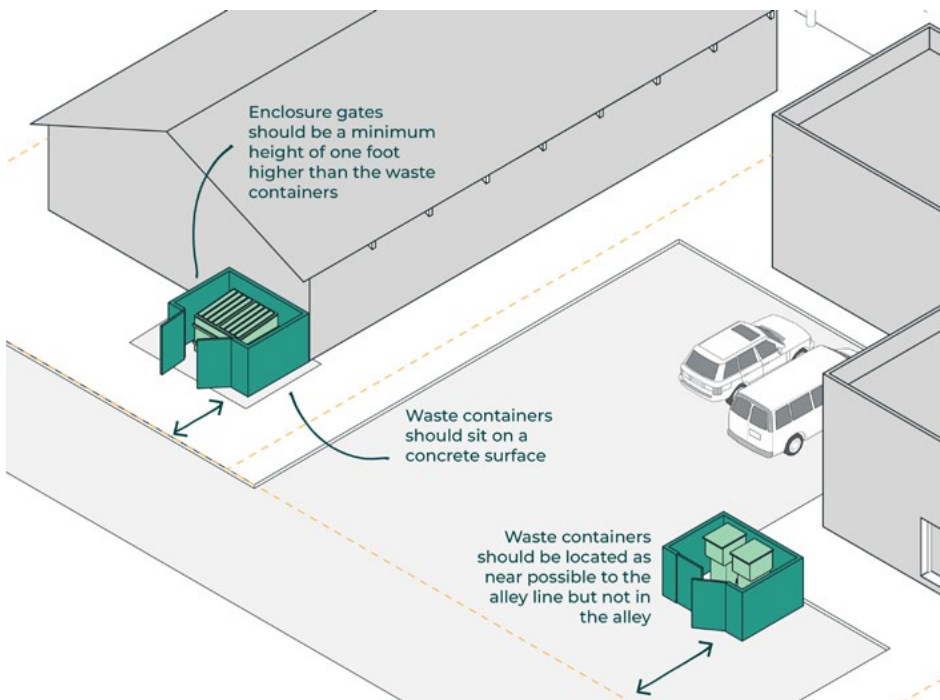
- Are thoroughly and attractively screened from view
- Fit with the design and context of surrounding buildings
- Are clean and well-maintained

REQUIREMENTS

- Number and size of loading spaces must comply with requirements for commercial uses
- Loading areas must provide vehicular access with minimal traffic interference. This includes providing adequate turning radius so that vehicles don't have to back onto a public street
- Loading areas should have a durable, all-weather, dustless surface
- Loading areas need to be appropriately landscaped and screened
- Waste receptacles must be screened by a masonry wall enclosure with an opaque gate and located to the rear of the building if possible
- Refuse storage areas must be surfaced with concrete of at least 6 inches

AVOID

- Unscreened waste removal and loading areas
- Waste removal and loading areas accumulated with debris or in disrepair



City Code Links

[OFF-STREET LOADING](#)

[SECTION 50-14-111 THROUGH 50-14-117](#)

[LANDSCAPING AND SCREENING OF OFF-STREET PARKING AREAS](#)

[SECTION 50-14-341 THROUGH 50-14-345](#)

[SCREENING OF REFUSE RECEPTACLES AND WASTE REMOVAL AREAS](#)

[SECTION 50-14-364](#)



MASONRY ENCLOSURE OR SCREEN

Allow for safe pedestrian and vehicular movement around a dumpster enclosure and opening door.



CONCRETE PAD

A 6 inch concrete pad should be poured below a waste receptacle

ALLEYS

VIBRANT BLOCKS HAVE ALLEYS THAT...

- Are clean, well-maintained, and free of debris and dumping
- Use art, lighting, seating, and landscaping to activate the space and encourage community use

REQUIREMENTS

- Property owners are responsible for the cleanliness and upkeep of the alley extending from their property line. This includes cleaning up trash, mowing, removing snow, removing any animal feces, and removing inoperable vehicles
- Property owners must request a [Right of Way permit](#) for use of alleys for outdoor cafes, valet staging, barricades, dumpsters, vehicle displays, and other uses that restrict access
- The city will address downed trees, power lines, and potholes, which can be reported through the [Improve Detroit app](#)

AVOID

- Trash, debris, or weeds accumulating in the alley
- Obstructions in the alley unless you have applied for a Right of Way permit or gone through the vacation process.

City Code Links

[PERMIT REQUIREMENT FOR ANY ALLEY PROJECT](#)

[SECTION 43-9-2](#)



CLEAN & WELL-MAINTAINED

Alleys are inviting and safe for users beyond utility vehicles



ACTIVATED ALLEYS

Alleys can be flexible opportunities for outdoor gathering and pedestrian use when enlivened by lighting, seating, and people.

HOW TO...

Improve an alley near you

- Registered block clubs may fill out a [request form](#) to the General Services Department (GSD)
- In designated neighborhoods, the [Arts Alleys pilot program](#) will use American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to beautify an alley through community-oriented design



ACCESSIBILITY

VIBRANT BLOCKS HAVE ACCESSIBILITY FEATURES THAT...

- Incorporate universal design techniques to provide equal access by all ages and abilities, such as wider sidewalks that are clear of obstructions, no step entryways and ramps.
- Are included into both exterior and interior elements of a design.
- Accommodate pedestrian oriented, walkable and wheelchair accessible designs, as car-centric developments do not support those who are deaf or hard of hearing, blind or have low vision, or older adult populations.

REQUIREMENTS

- All developments must comply with the [2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design](#).
- Sidewalks must keep a minimum width of 6ft. clear of all obstructions, including planters, sandwich boards, future, etc. and are not cracked.
- Snow and debris is cleared from sidewalks, parking spaces, access aisles and curb ramps.
- Surfaces, including the sidewalk and parking area, are smooth and free of large cracks and broken or raised areas.
- On the interior, all aisles are a minimum of 3ft. wide and clear of any objects and trip hazards.
- All signage is legible and has a minimum 18 pt. size font.

[ADA ACCESSIBILITY GUIDELINES](#)

[Section 4.3, 4.7 and 4.8 pertain to sidewalks and sidewalk curb ramps](#)

[CITY OF DETROIT SIDEWALK RAMP DETAILS](#)

AVOID

- Sidewalk obstructions of any kind
- Cracked surfaces, uplifted sidewalk slabs or other trip hazards
- Public access only via stairs into a commercial space

HOW TO...

Bring your business into ADA compliance

If the exterior of your building does not meet compliance standards, consider applying for a Motor City Restore grant, which can provide 50% of your total project costs for your renovation.



Landscape

FENCING

VIBRANT BLOCKS HAVE FENCING THAT...

- Is opaque and finished, made of standard building materials such as brick, stone, concrete masonry, stucco, or concrete
- Screens incompatible uses, trash receptacles, and equipment
- Fits with the design and context of surrounding buildings

REQUIREMENTS

- All fences must be structurally sound and maintained in good repair
- Non-screening fences must be made of iron pipe and angle irons, four-inch wood posts, or four-inch reinforced concrete posts, with woven wire, boards, or metal
- Fences enclosing commercial properties may be up to 6 feet tall

City Code Links

[FENCES / SECTION 50-14-381](#)

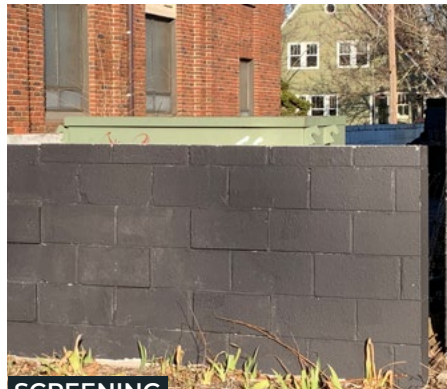
AVOID

- Barbed wire in TMSO districts
- Razor wire and electrified fencing in commercial zoning districts

HOW TO...

Design a high-quality fence for your business

When selecting the right fence product or design, consider the following design elements and guidance...



SCREENING

Use opaque materials such as brick or metal when covering incompatible uses or outdoor storage..



PEDESTRIAN PROTECTION

Fencing can be used to denote public spaces. When it is used in the public realm, there should be a degree of transparency.



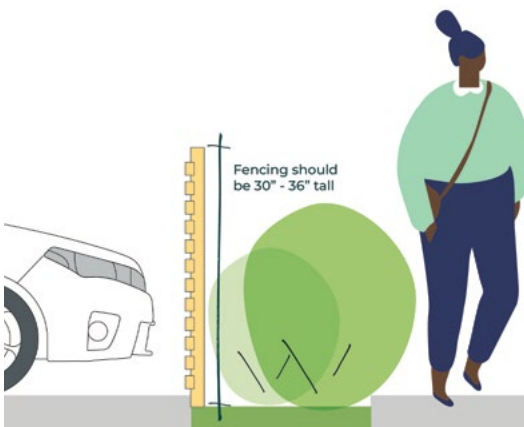
MATERIALITY

Use materials which best match the surroundings and enhance pedestrian safety.



AVOID RAZOR WIRE

Avoid razor or barbed wire atop fencing. These types of security measures are not allowed in commercial zoning districts.



STREET TREES

VIBRANT BLOCKS MIGHT HAVE/USE...

- Continuous street tree plantings on both sides of the street in the amenity zone
- Trees in continuous **tree trenches** that provide adequate room for tree roots to grow and space to store and infiltrate stormwater runoff

REQUIREMENTS

- All new development should provide street trees, either by preserving existing healthy trees or installing new street tree plantings.

When preserving **existing trees:**

- Indicate on your site plan which trees will be protected during construction with a special symbol
- Protect trees during construction by fencing off the area around the drip line of the tree

When installing **new trees:**

- Provide appropriate soil volume for desired tree size
- Select tree species consistent with the planting standards that are maintained by the Recreation Department based on regional hardiness (USDA Zone 6a and 6b) and micro climate conditions (e.g., soil contamination, soil drainage)
- Consider irrigation requirements, new trees need to be watered to get established
- Consider tree grates, staking, and other planting details and heavily travelled commercial corridors
- Plant your tree during the spring or fall to improve survival chances

AVOID

- Trees within 10' of bus stop landing pads
- Tree canopy overhanging into bike facilities or blocking views of arriving transit vehicles
- Planting trees on the prohibited tree species list

City Code Links

[STREET TREES / SECTION 50-14-376](#)

[RIGHT OF WAY SCREENING / SECTION 50-14-341](#)

[PROHIBITED TREE SPECIES / SECTION 50-14-324](#)

List of Preferred Trees*

COMMON NAME	SIZE
Crabapple	Small
Ivory Silky Tree Lilac	Small
Eastern Hop-Hornbeam	Medium
Frontier Elm	Medium
Ginkgo (male)	Medium
Inermis Hawthorn	Medium
Hackberry	Large
Kentucky Coffee Tree	Large

*Species selection depends on soil conditions, existing species selection, salt tolerance, and other considerations.

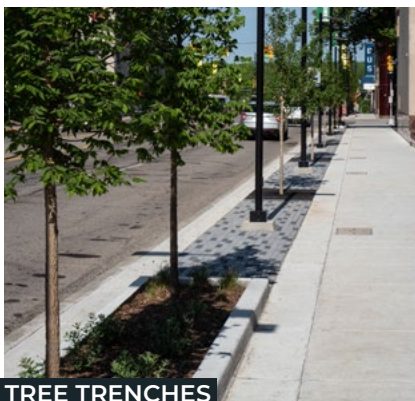
TYPICAL TREE SPACING





STORMWATER PLANTERS

Tree plantings can be designed to help mitigate street or sidewalk flooding during heavy rains or snow melt. Explore the Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI) section to learn more about stormwater planters.



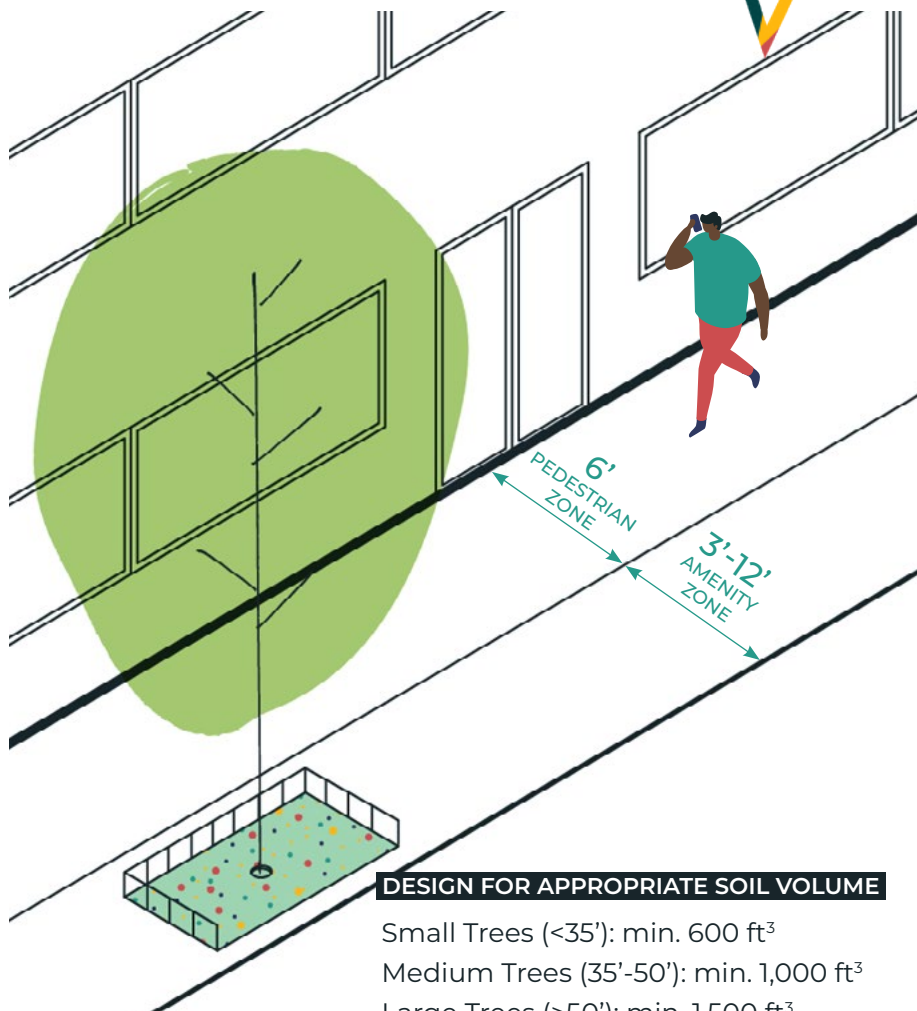
TREE TRENCHES

Although common, typical square planting pits don't offer sufficient soil volume for street trees to fully mature and live happily in the streetscape. Best practice is moving toward larger, continuous planters that offer more room for roots to stretch in the soil.

HOW TO...

Apply for a free street tree!

Request a free tree planting next to your home by visiting detroitmi.gov/treeservices, or by calling 313-871-5461.



DESIGN FOR APPROPRIATE SOIL VOLUME

Small Trees (<35'): min. 600 ft³

Medium Trees (35'-50'): min. 1,000 ft³

Large Trees (>50'): min. 1,500 ft³

HOW TO...

Address fallen trees or broken sidewalks uprooted by trees on your block

If a fallen tree is located between the curb and the sidewalk, it is the City's responsibility, call 313-628-0900. If a fallen tree is located on your property or back yard, it is your responsibility.

For sidewalks that have been uplifted by a City tree, you can report a broken sidewalk to the City.

CLICK HERE TO ACCESS THE SIDEWALK DAMAGE REPORTER



LANDSCAPING

VIBRANT BLOCKS MIGHT HAVE/USE...

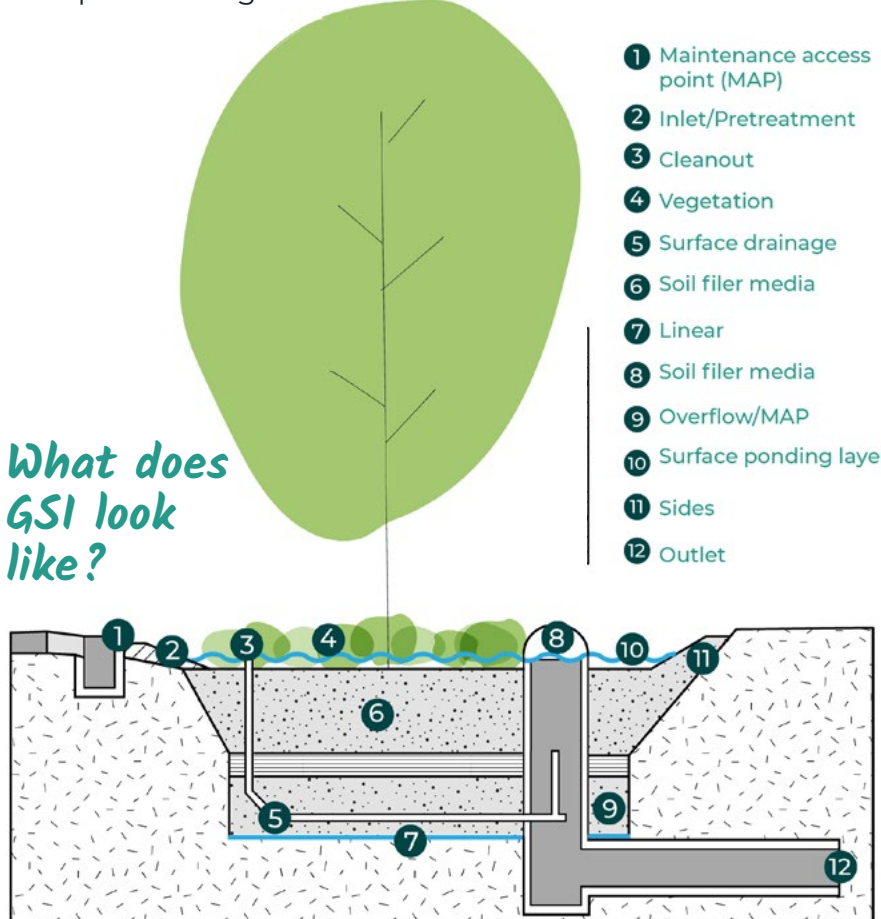
- Plantings and planters that provide that beautify the street throughout the year within Amenity Zone of a sidewalk, in curb extensions or raised medians.
- Native Plants that require less maintenance or irrigation than traditional plantings.
- Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI) to capture stormwater that may fall during a heavy rain or snow melt

REQUIREMENTS

- Select plant species based on benefits for native wildlife and pollinators, regional hardiness (USDA Zone 6a and 6b), soil conditions and drainage, progeny, tolerance of urban conditions, seasonal color, biodiversity, and root structure
- Select plants that are tolerant of short periods of inundation and long dry periods, as well as salt-tolerant if capturing runoff from streets or sidewalks
- Use low-growing plants (under 30") where sight distance must be preserved (e.g. crosswalk locations and locations where personal safety is a concern)
- Understand and plan for maintenance and snow removal when considering plantings in any part of a sidewalk

AVOID

- Plantings that require a lot of water if you do not have a plan for irrigation



Resources

[Department of Water and Sewerage's Stormwater Management Design Manual](#)



RAIN GARDENS

Rain gardens are recessed planting beds that appear like conventional landscaped areas but collect and slow water drainage.



STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

GSI within enclosed planters use structural elements such as curbs, overflow pipes, and underdrains to funnel rainwater into stormdrains underground.

VACANT LOTS

VIBRANT BLOCKS MIGHT HAVE...

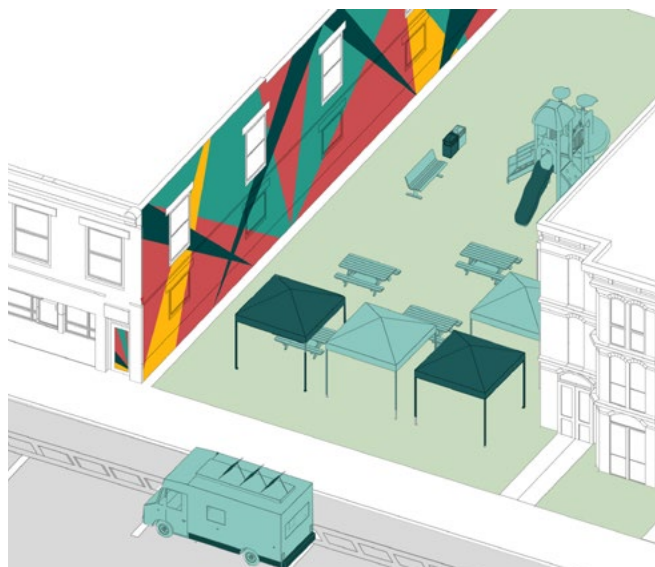
- Regular maintenance and trash removal
- Native plantings and grasses or landscaping that can help to remediate the soil
- Community members participating in cleanup and activation of vacant lots with the appropriate permits & approvals from the City.

REQUIREMENTS

- Vacant lots, adjacent sidewalks and alleys must be free of solid waste, medical waste, and hazardous waste at all times.
- There is a requirement to register vacant buildings and structures
- Vacant or unimproved property, shall be ratproofed, be maintained in a ratproof condition, and be kept free from rodent harborage and infestation
- Protruding structures such as signage or awnings must maintain appropriate sign license (renewed every 2 years) or should be removed from the vacant structure

AVOID

- Dangerous or hazardous conditions on site
- Overgrown grasses or weeds
- Solid waste accumulation
- Unpermitted protruding exterior signage, sign structure, or awnings
- Parking vehicles on vacant properties without appropriate permits



TEMPORARY ACTIVATION FOR COMMERCIAL USE

If a business or community group is interested in hosting an event on a vacant city-owned property, the City can issue a Special Event. A link to Special Event Permits is listed on Page 109 of this Design Guide.

Resources

[Report illegal dumping using the Improve Detroit App](#)

[Detroit Blight to Beauty Program](#)

City Code Links

[BLIGHT VIOLATIONS -](#)

[SECTION 42-2-97 Owner responsibility to clean & maintain](#)

[SECTION 8-5 - Notice & Fines](#)

HOW TO...

Fix up a vacant lot or building on your commercial block...

The City encourages Community groups to get involved in beautification and neighborhood cleanup. Visit explore the Blight to Beauty program and Keep Detroit Clean initiative, which encompass the various City of Detroit programs to improve neighborhoods by focusing on cleanup and beautification efforts, addressing blight and informing residents of the many options available to help keep the city clean.

[CLICK HERE TO EXPLORE THE KEEP DETROIT CLEAN SITE](#)



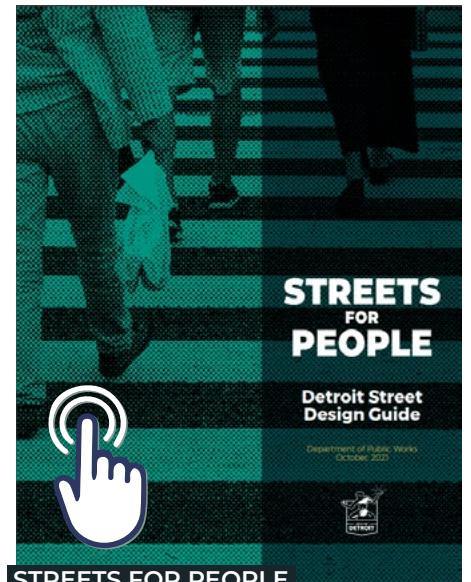
Streets, Sidewalks & Public Spaces

STREETS FOR PEOPLE

The City of Detroit created the [Streets For People: Detroit Street Design Guide](#) to support decision-making for street planning, design, and engineering. *Streets For People* provides guidance for commercial streets based on street typology, and includes best practices from everything from sidewalk design to street furniture.

Designing streets that prioritize people walking, biking and taking transit requires that attention and resources be devoted to sidewalk space, bike facilities, and accommodations for transit users. More flexibility can also be built into the curbside zone so it serves multiple users.

KEY RESOURCE:



The City of Detroit now has a Streets for People Plan to make it easier and safer for all Detroiters to be mobile throughout the city. The transportation plan prioritizes improving safety for all Detroiters, especially our most vulnerable residents, and identifies clear implementation and design strategies for street improvements.

HOW TO...

Slow down traffic through design!

Detroit's streets are often wide, and many of the participants in this study asked for resources to calm traffic. Traditional traffic calming measures on commercial streets can be challenging due to varying street ownership. Reach out to your District Manager to see if the Department of Public Works can provide traffic calming measures.

There are also ways to slow down traffic through design tactics. By creating a more pedestrian and bike friendly environment, you can help to reduce the number of cars on the road. Planting street trees, providing bike parking stalls on your sidewalk, and minimizing your parking footprint can all help to create a safer, slower street for all.



SIDEWALKS

VIBRANT BLOCKS HAVE SIDEWALKS THAT ARE...

- **Comfortable** for all to walk on, are clear from obstructions, and contain elements such as shade trees and plantings to improve the pedestrian experience
- **Activated** with storefronts that are transparent and lively, there are places to sit and gather outside

REQUIREMENTS

- Maintain a minimum 6ft pedestrian zone (8ft Downtown). Provide a continuous pedestrian zone, without obstructions and with clear sightlines
Note that in many places in Detroit, sidewalks that exist are 4ft wide with a planting strip in the amenity zone. If this condition (or others) exist in front of your business and they are in a state of good repair, they do not need to be widened or expanded. The 6ft minimum is for new sidewalk rebuilds. Maintain a 4ft clear pedestrian zone in front of your building.
- Sidewalks should be accessible for all users, which includes but is not limited to people with mobility impairments, people using mobility aids, and people with hearing loss/deafness, low vision, or who are blind
- Construction, repair or replacement of sidewalks should adhere to Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements that pertain to public sidewalks and sidewalk curb ramps
- Provide a smooth, stable, and slip-resistant surface with minimal gaps, rough surfaces, and vibration-causing features
- Pick up loose trash and litter, and sweep the sidewalk
- Clean between pavement sections and along the curb, removing grass, weeds, trash and dirt

AVOID

- Obstacles and overhangs obstructing the Pedestrian Zone including sidewalk amenities, utility access boxes, and wayfinding

Resources

[Detroit Streets for People](#)

[ADA STANDARDS: Sections 4.3, 4.7, and 4.8 pertain to sidewalks and sidewalk curb ramps.](#)

[DPW provides the “Standard Specifications for Paving and Related Construction” and the “Street and Alley Standard Plans” on the City’s website](#)

[Public Rights-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines \(PROWAG\) 2011 \(Proposed\)](#)



Vibrant sidewalks might look like these...



PEDESTRIAN ZONE IS CLEAR, ORGANIZED, AND SHADED

Vibrant blocks off sidewalks where people of all abilities can access businesses safely and comfortably. A vibrant block for business also offers shade, amenities, plantings and other visual interest that makes the pedestrian environment active and exciting.



What's my responsibility to keep clean and repair?

Property owners are responsible to clean and maintain safe passage for pedestrian along the sidewalk segment, curbs, and parking lanes in front of their property.



Some areas in need of repair...



BROKEN, OBSTRUCTED SIDEWALKS

Curbs, planting strips, and ground material changes help us differentiate between the street and the sidewalk. Lack of curbs and irregular or broken sidewalks blur the distinction between street and sidewalk and create unsafe conditions for people walking by creating the potential conflicts between people and cars.

VIBRANT BLOCKS FOR BUSINESS



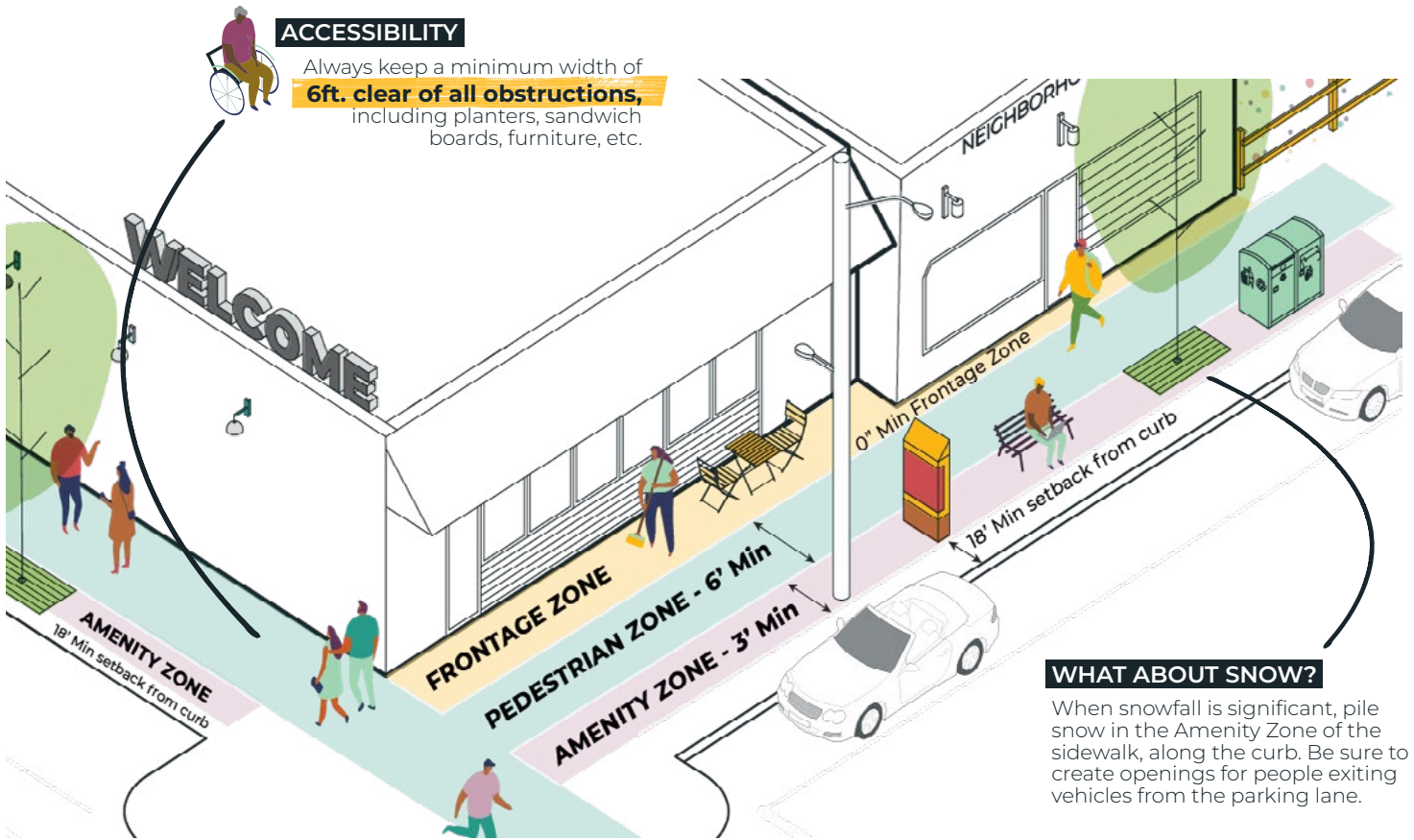
OVERGROWTH OF GRASS OR MISSING CURBS

Sidewalks uplifted by root growth, or overgrowth of weeds create tripping hazards

Report an unsafe sidewalk?

Use the [Improve Detroit](#) mobile app to report the issue to City Hall.

What's the right sidewalk width for my corridor?



ACCESSIBILITY

Always keep a minimum width of **6ft. clear of all obstructions**, including planters, sandwich boards, furniture, etc.

WHAT ABOUT SNOW?

When snowfall is significant, pile snow in the Amenity Zone of the sidewalk, along the curb. Be sure to create openings for people exiting vehicles from the parking lane.

FRONTAGE ZONE

Portion of the sidewalk that abuts and provides a transition to private property or building frontage that would typically be used for sidewalk cafés, outdoor retail displays, display boards, and/or small planters.

PEDESTRIAN ZONE

Portion of the sidewalk that is used for active travel. The width depends - streets with lots of people walking will need more space to comfortably pass by and between elements in the other sidewalk zones.

AMENITY ZONE

Portion of the sidewalk that buffers pedestrians from the roadway and provides shade, seating, lighting, bike parking, other amenities and snow storage during winter months.

What if my sidewalk is less than 6 ft?

In many places in Detroit, sidewalks that exist are 4ft wide with a planting strip in the amenity zone. If this condition (or others) exist in front of your business and they are in a state of good repair, they do not need to be widened or expanded. The 6ft minimum is for new sidewalk rebuilds. Maintain a 4ft clear pedestrian zone in front of your building.



HOW TO...

Repair or replace a portion of sidewalk in front of your business

- Property owners are responsible for constructing, repairing, and maintaining sidewalks located on private property, including repair of damaged sidewalk, service walk (the walkway between the curb and the sidewalk) and driveway approach.
- In some cases, the City will include sidewalk repair or replacement as part of a major streetscape project. To find out if a project is planned for your corridor, visit DPW's project information site.
- If a sidewalk is significantly damaged, broken or deteriorated, and no City improvement project is planned for that location, it is the responsibility of the property owner to repair the issue.
- The city will make exceptions if the sidewalk has been uplifted by root growth from trees located between the sidewalk and the street under the "Tree Guarantee Policy". If a sidewalk cracks or buckles significantly due to tree root, the property owner should use City's Sidewalk Damage Map.
- To repair a sidewalk or drive approach, you can hire a contractor or elect to do the work yourself. In either case, make sure the necessary permits are obtained.

[CLICK HERE TO VIEW DPW STREETScape PROJECT INFO](#)

[CLICK HERE FOR HELP WITH THE PERMITTING PROCESS](#)

[Report Sidewalk Damage](#)



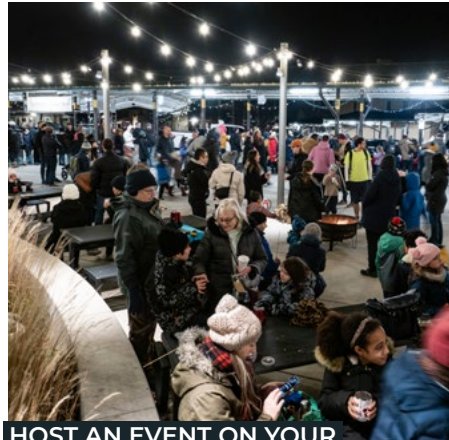
Explore other ways to activate your sidewalk!



ADD COLOR TO YOUR SIDEWALK

If you would like to add a mural to your sidewalk, you'll need permission from the Department of Public Works. For guidance, review the Paint the Street Guidebook linked below.

[Paint the Street Guidebook](#)



HOST AN EVENT ON YOUR SIDEWALK

You'll need to obtain a Special Events Permit from the Detroit City Council to conduct any event in the public right-of-way or outdoors on private property where the general public is invited. For more information, visit the link below.

[Special Event Information](#)



ADD SEATING OR A PLANTER TO YOUR SIDEWALK

Flip to the next page for more information about Street Furniture.



STREET FURNITURE

VIBRANT BLOCKS HAVE STREET FURNISHINGS THAT ARE...

- Coordinated furniture styles to uphold streetscape or neighborhood character.
- Consider adjacent businesses, land uses and sidewalk features, such as restaurants, cafés and bus stops to determine locations for furniture.
- Install benches with armrests and backs for comfort and accessibility.
- Where space allows, provide seating that allows people in groups to face one another.
- Select durable, low-maintenance materials that will hold up over time.
- The City recommends that waste receptacles are available every 300' along commercial corridors.

REQUIREMENTS

- All benches and seating areas placed in the public right of way require a permit.
- Maintain a minimum 6' Pedestrian Zone (8' Downtown) clear width must be maintained to allow people to pass around any planters, tree pits or street furniture in the Amenity or Frontage zones of the sidewalk. *All dimensional standards for sidewalks can be found on page 101 of the Streets for people design guidelines.*
- Locate seating and waste receptacles in the Amenity Zone. Seating may also be placed in the Frontage Zone.

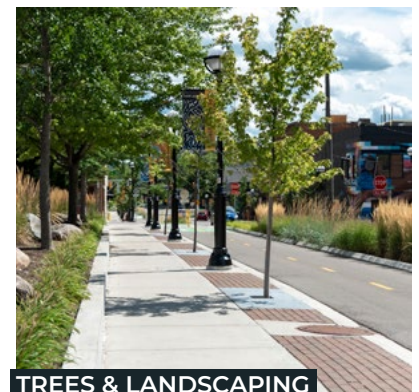
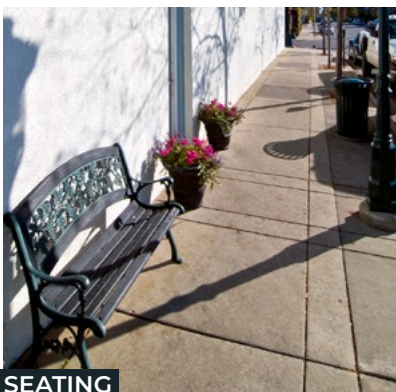
Resources

[Right of Way Permits and Standards](#)

[Detroit Streets For People](#)

AVOID

- Elements within Frontage Zone to obstruct Pedestrian Zone.
- Obstructing bus landing pads, doorways, or access to utilities/manholes.



OUTDOOR DINING

VIBRANT BLOCKS MIGHT HAVE/USE...

- Furniture that is colorful, weather resistant, and attractive
- Shade structures or umbrellas to add shade for cover from weather
- Durable and weatherproof materials that will last over time

REQUIREMENTS

- Entry to the business is clear and a minimum of 6' sidewalk is clear for people to walk
- Outdoor dining café furniture must be constructed of durable materials, made for commercial use and regularly cleaned and maintained
- Enclosure (fencing, surround) is required if alcohol is being served
- Maintain the designated minimum clear path between the outer limit of the café, the curb, and any permanent object in the amenity zone (tree pits, ADA ramps, light poles, etc)
- Barriers around the sidewalk cafe must be removed during the off-season (the first Monday in November through April 1)
- Apply for a **patio permit** and install a public bench or seating area. Table and chair colors are subject to DPW approval

City Code Links

[Outdoor Cafe Design Guidelines](#)

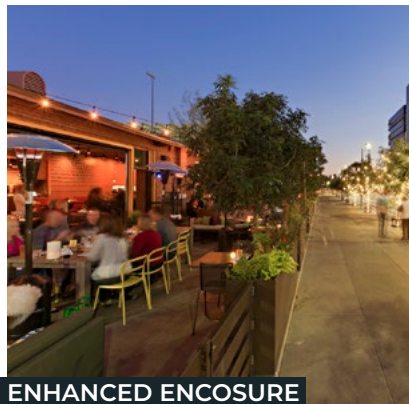
AVOID

- Litter collecting along the inside or outside of cafe barriers
- Discouraged table/chair materials including breakable plastics, and unfinished lumber
- Planters that exceed 3 feet in height
- Live plants that exceed 6 feet in height
- Umbrellas that project outside or overhang the sidewalk beyond the approved outdoor dining café area



LONGLASTING MATERIALS

Encouraged table/chair materials include metals, finish grade woods, sturdy recycled materials. Chairs may incorporate fabric elements or may be upholstered

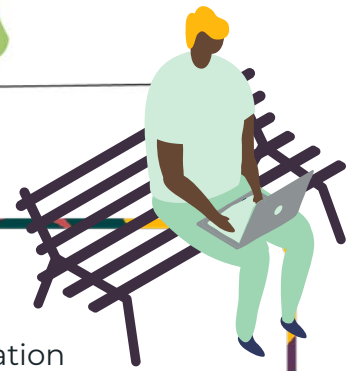
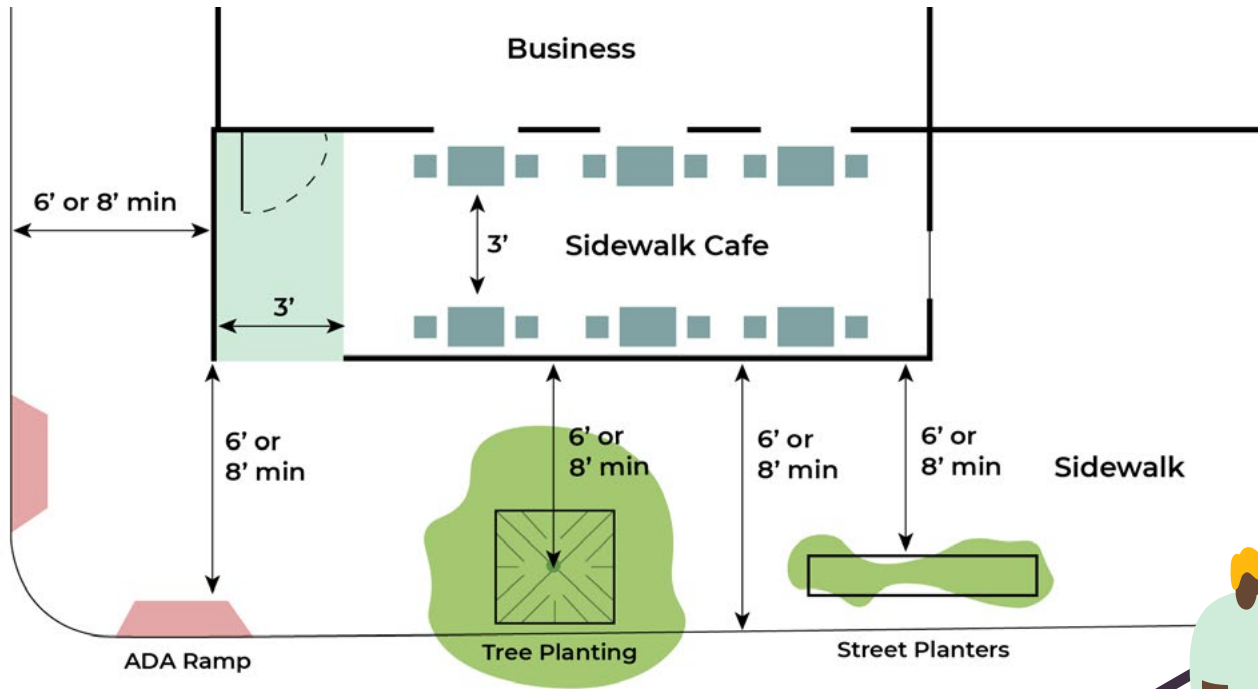


ENHANCED ENCLOSURE

Add planter elements or integrate color to enhance the enclosure around outdoor seating.

VIBRANT BLOCKS FOR BUSINESS

Do you have enough room for outdoor patio seating?



HOW TO...

Apply for a patio permit

Call 313 - 224-3260 to have an application emailed to you, or visit this [LINK](#). If your business is on a State of Michigan or Wayne County jurisdiction road, you may need extra approval from the State of Michigan or Wayne County Ex: Gratiot Ave, Grand River, Woodward Ave, Michigan Ave, Greenfield Rd and W Warren Ave.

Note: you'll need a site plan to scale to submit for approval.

OUTDOOR DINING APPROVAL PROCESS



BIKE + TRANSIT AMENITIES

VIBRANT BLOCKS MIGHT HAVE...

- Amenities supporting alternative modes of transportation, including biking and public transit.

REQUIREMENTS

- All bike parking and bus shelters must be installed within the Amenity or Curbside Zone.
- For bike parking:
 - Allow 2'x6' for parking spaces, and set racks 2'-3' back from the curb and at least 3' away from another rack.
 - Place racks at least 8' from fire hydrants and 4' from other streetscape elements.
- For bus shelters:
 - Bus shelters should be 5'x 12' and follow City specifications for design and installation.
 - Provide a 4' minimum accessible path between the edge of the shelter and the curb.
 - Maintain 15' between the edge of shelters at near-side bus stops and crosswalks for adequate visibility.
 - Place bus shelters at least 10' from fire hydrants and 6' away from other vertical design elements, such as trees and other amenities.

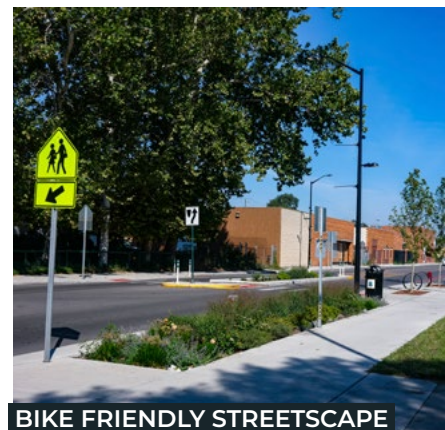
AVOID

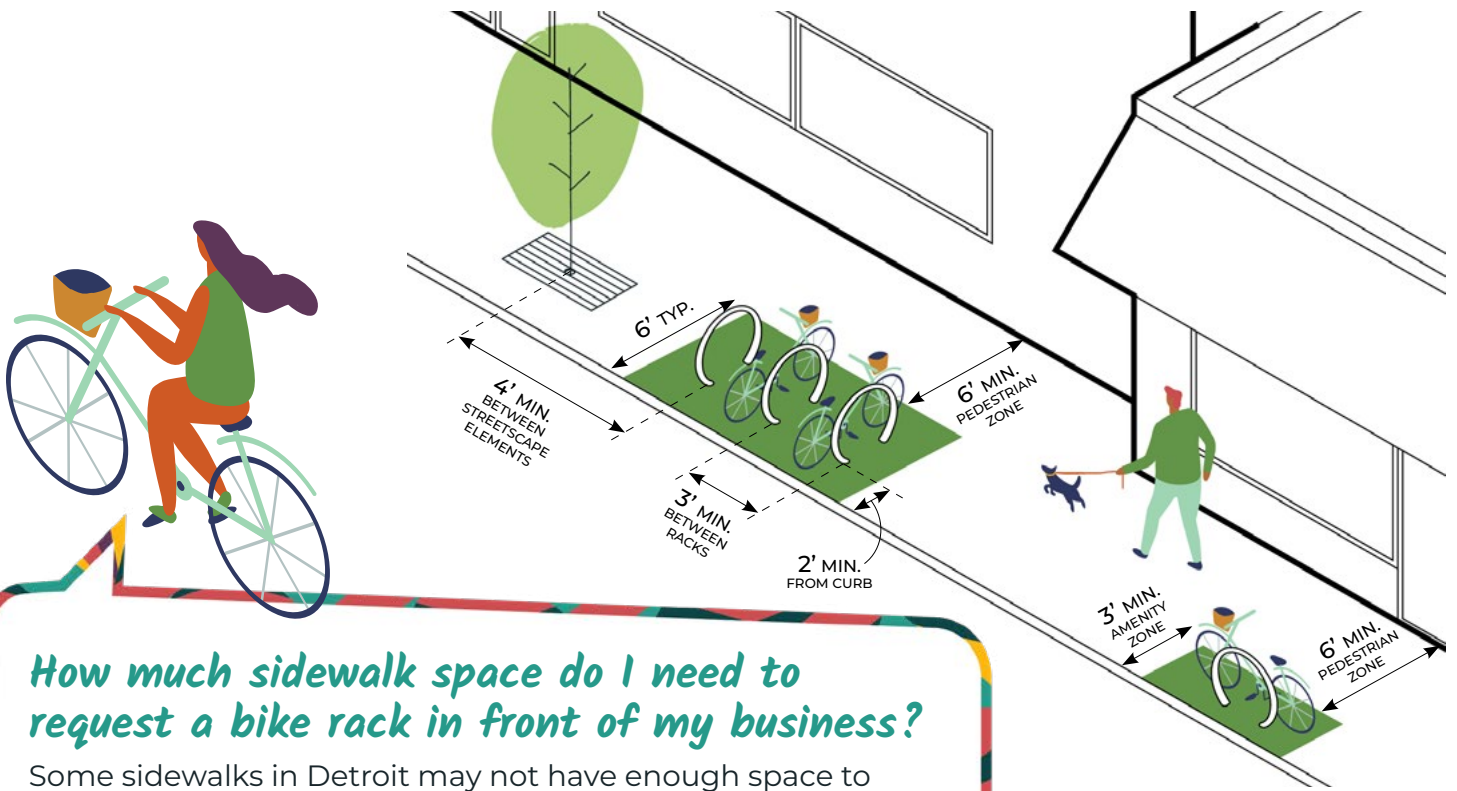
- Bike parking and bus shelters cannot obstruct the clear width of the pedestrian zone (6' minimum).

Resources

[Right of Way Permits and Standards](#)

[Detroit Streets For People](#)



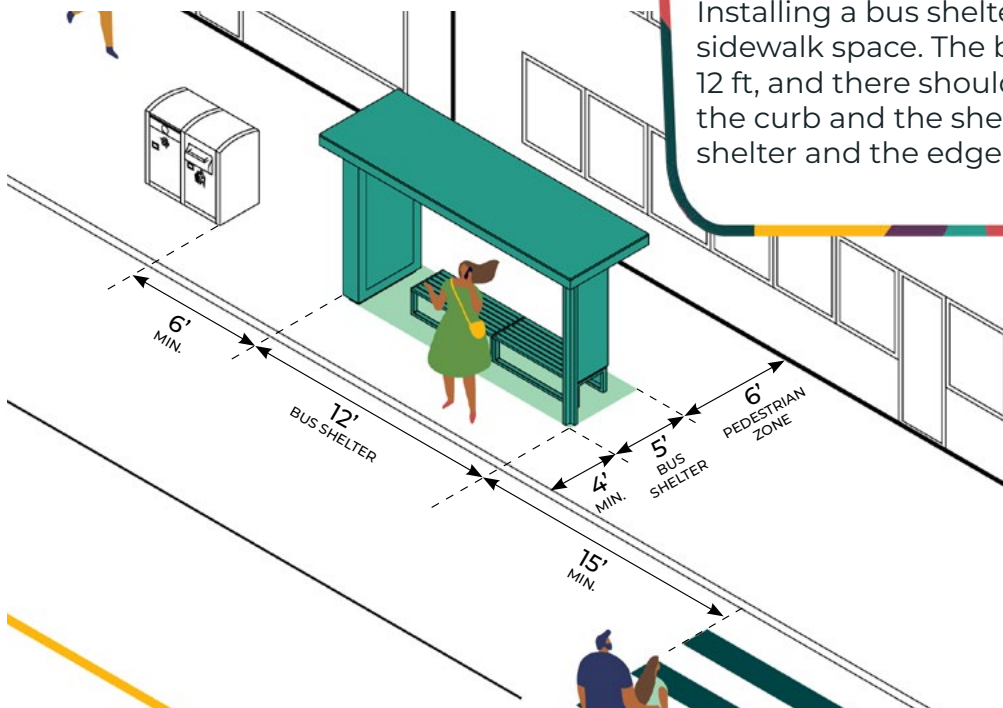


How much sidewalk space do I need to request a bike rack in front of my business?

Some sidewalks in Detroit may not have enough space to install a bike rack. For narrower sidewalks, installing bike racks parallel to the street will save sidewalk space, requiring only 9 ft. of sidewalk space to install a bike rack (3 ft. for the Amenity Zone and 6 ft. for the Pedestrian Zone.) For wider sidewalks, you will need 12 ft. of sidewalk space to install racks perpendicular to the street (6 ft. for the Amenity Zone and 6 ft. for the Pedestrian Zone).

How much space do you need if there is a bus shelter?

Installing a bus shelter requires at least 15 ft. of sidewalk space. The bus shelter should be 5 ft by 12 ft, and there should be at least 4 ft between the curb and the shelter and 6 ft between the shelter and the edge of the closest building.



PUBLIC ART + MURALS

VIBRANT BLOCKS MIGHT HAVE/USE...

- Art that highlights the values and the identity of the community
- Art that develops organically and holistically within the community by the community.

Initiate a public art piece or mural on your commercial block!

The City of Detroit wants to encourage public art and has established a registry for murals and public artworks that enhance public spaces and empower Detroit artists while also helping reduce blight.

Follow the link below to find out how to register public art on your property, how you might be able to have a mural painted to help you resolve a graffiti ticket, and learn more about the City Walls program.

Resources

[City Walls Program](#)



Find out if you can paint the pavement along your block!

The City of Detroit has a program for installing artistically painted streets and crosswalks to support the strong arts and culture community and to provide opportunities to strengthen community identity. **Proposals on streets with higher traffic volumes will be considered on a case-by-case basis.** Your design must be approved by the Department of Public Works, the Office of Arts & Culture, and the District Manager.

The City of Detroit will not maintain the street painting and the applicant is responsible for maintaining and re-painting the mural as needed. The community will need to reapply for a Block Party or Special Events permit in the years following to touch up the painting.

Resources

[Paint the Street Program](#)



VIBRANT BLOCKS FOR BUSINESS

EVENTS + PROGRAMMING

VIBRANT BLOCKS MIGHT HAVE/USE...

- Events that highlight local businesses, restaurants and retailers. In some cases, you may want to bring in outside vendors, but try to design an event that will benefit the businesses on your street.
- Events that bring out customers to support businesses during slow times, for example during winter months.
- Events that showcase local artists for entertainment, music or performances.

REQUIREMENTS

- You must obtain a Special Events Permit from the Detroit City Council to conduct any event in the public right-of-way or outdoors on private property where the general public is invited. This applies to any outdoor festival, street fair, carnival, circus, walkathon, bike race/ride, fireworks, parade, concert/performance, political ceremony, run/marathon, sports/recreation, rally/demonstration etc. Events that do not need to follow this process are: Residential Block Parties and Private Invitation Only events held inside a private facility.
- Applications must be submitted **60 days** prior the event. Application must be completed in its entirety.
- Food vendors must be licensed if serving or selling food
- Liquor vendors must be licensed. Issuance of a Special Event permit does not ensure issuance of liquor licenses. Approval of a special event does not include approval of a liquor license.
- If merchandise other than food or liquor is sold at an event, the event organizer must obtain a business license.
- Adequate sidewalk passage and fire lanes must be open at all times.

AVOID

- Last minute planning. If you miss the 60 day application deadline, it is subject to denial, no exceptions. Successful events are the result of advance planning.
- Investing in the elements of your event until you have approval from the City. You may be asked to make some changes to your plan based on safety, the availability of services and scheduling of other events.
- Not obtaining the proper permit, it will result in citations being issued and/or the event being shut down.
- Changes to your event that differ from your approved application as written, this can also result in penalties and the event being shut down.

Resources

[City of Detroit Special Events and Film Office](#)

[Special Events Guidelines](#)

Related City Codes:

[SIDEWALK ENTERTAINERS SECTION 43-1-14](#)



vibrant blocks checklist

five

The word 'five' is rendered in a bold, lowercase font. Each letter is filled with a different color and features a geometric pattern of triangles and squares. The 'f' is purple, the 'i' is dark teal, the 'v' is dark teal with a yellow triangle, the 'e' is dark teal with a yellow triangle, and the 'e' is dark teal with a yellow triangle.

PROPERTY OWNERS

Use this checklist to ensure your plan for development is achieving the goals set forth in this document.



SAFE & COMFORTABLE

Property is well-lit

Vacant lots are secured

Buildings are easy for people to see into and out of, creating transparency between the street and the building's ground floor

Security grates, if used, are mostly transparent

Cameras, if used, are clearly marked

Bulletproof glass, if used, is inconspicuous

Fencing does not contain razor wire



CLEAN & MAINTAINED

Parking lots and sidewalks are free of weeds and overgrowth

Exterior building materials are well-maintained, and free of graffiti and unnecessary excess signage

Trash bins are regularly emptied

Vacant buildings are secured and upkeep



WALKABLE & HUMAN-SCALE

Pedestrian-friendly amenities are located on the property

The front door looks welcoming

The building frontage has appropriate signage

Walkways are free of obstructions



LIVELY & ACTIVATED

- Space outside the business is maintained and includes seating, planters and/or other amenities for customers
- Outdoor dining opportunities are provided in appropriate places



GREEN & RESILIENT

- Rain gardens and rain barrels are installed
- Green roofs and porous pavement are included
- Green buffers are used instead of fencing where possible



UNIQUE & AUTHENTIC

- The building façade is attractive and unique
- The signage helps illustrate what is sold inside
- Cultural heritage is uplifted through public art and building design
- Temporary signage is tasteful and uncluttered
- Chain signage is appropriately scaled and does not dominate the corridor



INCLUSIVE & DIVERSE

- Access and circulation requirements are met, with an aspiration towards Universal Design

COMMUNITY GROUPS

Use this checklist to ensure your commercial street or district is achieving the goals set forth in this document.



SAFE & COMFORTABLE

- Lighting is provided along sidewalks and parking areas
- Litter is removed
- Where needed, emergency call boxes are provided



CLEAN & MAINTAINED

- Sidewalks and streets are regularly maintained, cleaned, swept, and clear of obstructions
- Parking lots and sidewalks are free of weeds and overgrowth
- Sidewalks are level and uncracked
- Healthy trees and plantings provide shade and beauty
- Vacant lots are secured, mowed, or landscaped, and, if possible, beautified
- Litter and dumping are addressed in a timely manner
- Trash bins are regularly emptied



WALKABLE & HUMAN-SCALE

- Crosswalks are appropriately striped
- Curb cuts and sidewalks are passable by strollers and wheelchairs



LIVELY & ACTIVATED

- Space outside the businesses is maintained and includes seating, planters and/or other amenities for customers
- Public spaces are activated with events and programming
- Alleys are clean, safe, and creatively lit
- Vacant lots are beautified and used for art and gathering



GREEN & RESILIENT

- Plants are used to enhance the landscape
- Well-maintained trees or various sizes are present, providing shade and cooling
- Green stormwater infrastructure* is incorporated where feasible to improve water quality and prevent runoff and flooding
- Planters have been added
- Locally sourced native plant species are used whenever possible



UNIQUE & AUTHENTIC

- Cultural heritage is uplifted through public art and building design
- There is space available for community events and activities
- Community assets and historic places are maintained and preserved



INCLUSIVE & DIVERSE

- Gateway signage welcomes people to the area
- Public spaces feel inviting and open
- Benches and resting areas are provided
- Child-sized furniture and opportunities for play are provided
- Interpretive signage is included that celebrates the area's heritage and history
- Bike racks are available at convenient locations
- Bus stops are well-maintained and strategically located
- Audio prompts are provided at crosswalks for people with vision impairment