

with building details, commercial window displays and entries at street level. In recent years, buildings have increased in size and scale, with taller buildings covering larger areas, including entire blocks.

- Newer buildings can maintain a pedestrian scale through window openings, ornamentation, cornice lines, signage, awnings and canopies, and articulated wall surfaces that are sized to be proportional to the human body.
- Avoid uninviting and unattractive blank walls on the ground floor of street frontages. Commercial and office building frontages should feature display windows and entries.
- High-quality materials and architectural ornamentation at the street level of buildings accent buildings and provide visual interest.
- If the form and mass of existing buildings are rectangular, avoid adding curving, undulating or diagonal building forms.

Building Styles

Downtowns usually have buildings representing several historical periods and many different architectural styles. New buildings don't need to replicate one specific architectural style, if the overall design objective of creating an urban,

pedestrian-friendly setting is met. Buildings should draw on the materials and details reminiscent of the styles that are already present in order to support continuity in downtown architecture. Evaluating site context, architectural styles and the character of adjacent buildings can help determine the appropriate style for a new building. The architectural styles described in the table on the following page are represented in many downtowns across America.

Roof Forms

Roof shapes should reflect the urban character of a downtown. Taller buildings also contribute to an attractive and interesting skyline. While flat roofs with parapets are typical of urban commercial buildings, some buildings have unique elements such as towers, spires and special cornice designs.

- Special roof shapes on corner locations can help accent corners of blocks.
- Articulated and varied roof shapes on taller office and residential towers add interest and serve as reference points. Stepped building setbacks, unique rooftops and varying building materials also contribute to light penetration and interest.
- Pitched roofs, especially on one-story buildings are more typically suburban

styles and not appropriate for downtowns. Other inappropriate roofs may include slope shapes on one-story buildings, gable-end, single pitch (shed), false mansard and curving roofs.

TRANSPORTATION AND CIRCULATION

Streets

A major difference between urban and suburban streets is the quality of the pedestrian environment. Downtown streets should accommodate the movement of people and goods by all modes of travel (foot, car, bus, bicycle and light rail); provide orientation, safety and comfort; encourage a sense of community and place; foster a sense of neighborly ownership and responsibility; avoid disturbing nuisances; and enhance the economic value of adjacent properties. Urban streets should also be designed to support social interaction and enhance the pedestrian experience between buildings and travel lanes. They should be well-landscaped corridors for both vehicles and pedestrians.

Pedestrian-Oriented Streets

These streets encourage walking and shopping at the street level and provide pedestrian connections within the

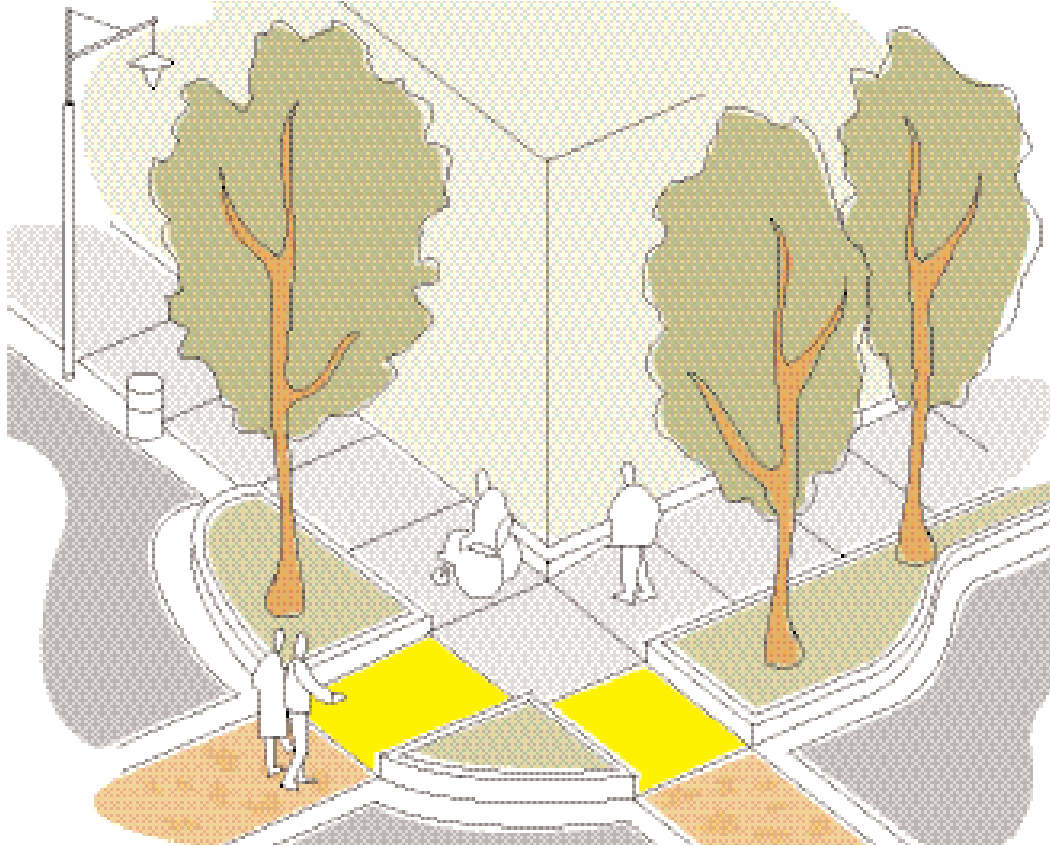


Figure 60. Bulb-outs at corners slow traffic and help pedestrians cross streets safely. Decorative crosswalks extend the sidewalk experience into the street.

downtown and surrounding neighborhoods. They are typically two-way streets with wide, well-maintained sidewalks and pedestrian amenities. Traffic should flow slowly.

- Bulb-outs at corners slow traffic and encourage safe pedestrian street crossing
- Enhance street activity by creating “active street edges” with windows and entrances opening onto the street, outdoor retail activity, street cafés and restaurants.
- Invite pedestrians to pause by providing street furniture such as fountains, benches and art.

- Use decorative crosswalks to extend the sidewalk experience into the street.
- Streets can be made into “places” through strong spatial definition and distinctive design. To maintain a human scale, street width should be sized in proportion to the height of buildings—wider streets with taller buildings and narrower streets with smaller buildings.
- Improve interface between buildings and sidewalks with awnings and outdoor displays.

Pedestrian and Vehicle Streets

These streets are boulevards and avenues that move both pedestrians and

vehicles into and around downtown. They can also provide major pedestrian connections to surrounding neighborhoods, districts, parks and open space.

- Create an appropriate width of sidewalk and buffering from traffic. A continuous row of trees close to the edge of the sidewalk offers a sense of safety and comfort to pedestrians.
- Provide convenient connections to public transit.
- Orient land uses to the street to increase pedestrian activities and create visually interesting sites for car users.

Vehicle-Oriented Boulevards

Designed to move vehicles through the downtown, these streets should nevertheless project a distinctive urban character. They provide vehicle connections to parking and adjoining uses. They can also be improved with street trees and landscaping.

- Simplify street circulation and access and improve traffic flow by consolidating driveways and parking entries whenever possible and by using shared entry and exit points.
- Reduce the number of signs on buildings and the site, creating a more attractive and consistent image along the boulevard; reduce clutter.

- Install landscaping and trees along sidewalks—between the on-street parking and moving lanes and the building edge—to help define the pedestrian zone and create a safer pedestrian walkway along the boulevard.
- Use attractive street lighting and pedestrian amenities along the street (such as benches, trash cans, newspaper boxes, etc.) with a similar design to create a coherent and consistent character.

Pedestrian Circulation

Pedestrians need the same type of continuous travel corridors linking major destinations as do vehicles. Good pedestrian circulation serves local land uses by providing access to commercial and residential buildings, transit and transit facilities, open space and public outdoor activity space. The system requires attention to safety, as well as comfort and ease of access. Adjacent buildings also form the pedestrian environment, so providing strong spatial definition through building fronts and tree canopies adds to a distinct urban character and helps create a “sense of place” that also enhances property values.

- Divide sidewalks into functional zones. The minimum sidewalk width should

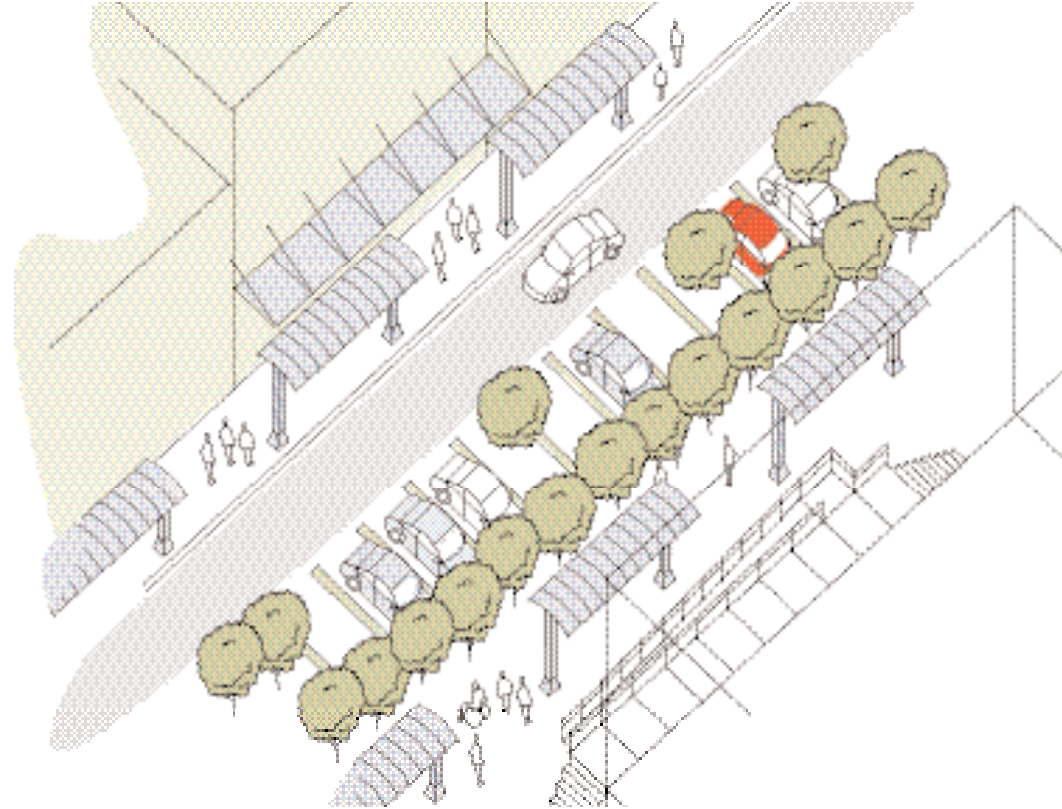


Figure 61. Pedestrian-oriented streets can accommodate one lane of traffic with parking areas that can be used for outdoor events on the weekends and evenings, such as farmers markets and community festivals.

be 12'. Widths of 15'–20' along major commercial streets are preferred so two people walking together can pass others without making abrupt changes in direction. Wider sidewalks can accommodate intensive pedestrian traffic along with retail uses. For example, areas of the sidewalk should accommodate persons walking, window shopping, bicycle parking and street furniture, as well as outdoor eating and displays.

- Mid-block pedestrian crosswalks can be added where blocks are too long to reasonably expect pedestrians to use corner sidewalks. They should only be added where traffic speed and sight lines allow for safe crossings.
- Decorative paving treatments can help separate the pedestrian zone from the street travelways at intersection crossings.

- Wherever possible, new projects and renovations of existing sites should close the gaps between pedestrian connections by providing sidewalk improvements along major arterial streets.
- Bulb-outs at street corners help reduce pedestrian travel time and increase safety. They also provide additional space for street furniture, landscaping and signage.
- Street furniture, utility poles, trees and signage should be positioned to not obstruct movement from a street parking space to a building entry or prevent car doors from opening at the sidewalk edge.
- In general, sidewalks and bikeways should be separate unless they are designed as a multi-use path separated from the street.
- Create universal access pathways on both sides of the street, at least 5' wide. Provide a 2'3" wide detectable warning strip of yellow truncated domes between the ADA pathway and the rest of the roadway and before all street crosswalks and mid-block crossings.

In some historic districts, there may be no sidewalks. The pedestrian pathway then needs to be clearly marked so bicyclists and vehicles remain separated. Pathways should be a minimum of 15' to 20' wide.

On-Street Parking

On-street parking helps create an active street life, offering additional parking and access to commercial and residential uses and a buffer zone between the pedestrian sidewalk and travel lanes in the street. It also decreases the capacity of adjacent travel lanes by up to 30 percent, depending on the number and width of travel lanes and the frequency of parking.

- Through traffic and local access requirements should be balanced when deciding where to provide on-street parking.
- On slower, pedestrian-oriented streets, angled on-street parking can increase the number of parking spaces while maintaining a functional level of vehicle circulation. On major arterials, parallel parking will likely work better.
- On-street parking areas on pedestrian-oriented streets can also serve as outdoor eating and retail display areas during special events or special evening hours.
- Entire pedestrian-oriented streets can be blocked off to vehicles for special events, such as farmers markets or street fairs.

Bicycles

Bicyclists also need continuous travel corridors providing connections to major commercial and residential destinations, transit, open space and parks. Bicycle circulation can be provided through bike lanes and bike paths. A lane is a portion of a roadway designated for exclusive or preferential bicycle use. A path is generally separated from the roadway and may be shared with pedestrians.

- Provide secure bicycle parking on development sites and at transit stops. Bicycle parking can also be on sidewalks or on the street instead of auto parking.
- Bike lanes should be well-signed and well-maintained. Pavement conditions should ensure a smooth, clean travelway by eliminating height differences between gutter pans and asphalt and between driveway curb cuts and the travel lane.
- Bike lanes should be one-way in the same direction of travel as vehicles. One-way streets can allow for opposite direction lanes separated from vehicle traffic by a barrier or other separation.
- Bike lanes should avoid streets with diagonal parking.

Gateways

Gateways tell visitors they have entered the downtown. They serve as landmarks and should be visible to vehicular, bicycle and pedestrian traffic. They should be designed to create a high-quality visual experience; they can provide an opportunity for architectural features, monuments, public art, signage and landscaping.

- Gateways should be located at major access routes.
- Signage should be civic; no commercial or tenant names should be printed.
- Illuminate gateways at night and ensure that they are visible to passing vehicles.

LANDSCAPING

Street Trees

Street trees are one of the least expensive ways to create a more pedestrian-oriented street. Trees also improve air quality, reduce water runoff and improve property values. A continuous canopy of trees defines the pedestrian space along sidewalks, provides shade and generally improves a street's appearance.

- Select urban street trees carefully according to geography and climate.

- Provide large, wide canopy trees about 10'–25' apart along the street.
- Provide adequate growing conditions.
- Select trees that are easy to maintain, with roots that minimize sidewalk damage.
- Consider using structural soil. Designed to be load-bearing for use under pavements, structural soil allows deep root penetration.
- Prune trees to maintain a clear space between the lower branches and the sidewalk to provide clear views of building signage, maintain street-level displays and activities and provide accessible routes.
- Use special treatments such as a double row of trees to differentiate areas of emphasis.

Landscape Elements

Planters, shrubs, ground cover and water elements create soft, colorful pedestrian settings that contrast with the hard physical elements of an urban environment.

- Select plant materials with low water consumption to lower costs.
- Use relatively high-maintenance annuals and perennials selectively and only as landscape accents.

Hardscape Elements

Well-designed and lighted pedestrian kiosks, benches, bus shelters, newspaper racks, trash cans and café tables increase opportunities for people to socialize and spend time outdoors along public streets. However, large front lawns and landscaped front setbacks are not in keeping with a high-intensity urban character.

- Consider adding small entry plazas, seating alcove areas and other pedestrian amenities in the design of buildings.
- Fit the pattern and texture of ground paving materials into the existing context.
- Ensure that hardscape materials are high-quality, functional and able to endure weather conditions and vandals.
- Provide public art such as wall murals and sculptures where appropriate. These elements can also serve as interpretive elements that describe the history of the area.

GATHERING SPACES

Public gathering spaces add to the social quality of the downtown. Parks, plazas and promenades can preserve historic character and increase the amount of usable open space.