4.0 PEDESTRIAN REALM

4.1 SIDEWALK ZONES 4.2 STREETSCAPES

4.1. SIDEWALK ZONES

Provide adequate space between the front of the building and adjacent street curbs to safely and comfortably accommodate pedestrian movement, streetscape elements, and activities related to the uses at grade.

- a. Along the primary street frontages of a mid-rise building site, sidewalk zones should be at least 6 metres wide or greater where larger setbacks are established by the existing context or required by the Zoning By-law. The pedestrian clearway must be within public property. The broader sidewalk zone may be entirely public or a combination of public and private property.
- b. The pedestrian clearway should have a minimum dimension of 2.1 metres and should be free of obstructions and ideally located away from the curb to ensure the safety and comfort of pedestrians.
- c. The sidewalk zone should incorporate a landscape/tree planting zone, with a minimum planter width of 1.9 metres to support a continuous row of trees along the street. Ensure trees are placed to maintain sufficient separation from the built edge as per Urban Forestry standards to allow for mature canopy growth. Where utilities permit, trees should be located along the curb.
- d. Mid-rise buildings at corners, transit nodes, or other locations with significant pedestrian use, or where there is a substantial change in grade, may require additional setbacks for all or portions of the building frontage to accommodate pedestrian flow.
- e. Exceptions to the minimum 6-metre width may be considered when the extent of the midrise building frontage or potential for future redevelopment on abutting sites does not support establishing a new setback pattern. In such cases, creative solutions, such as eroding the first floor to achieve the sidewalk width at grade, or setting back a portion of the building to expand the landscape and furnishing zone, may be appropriate.



Figure 4.1.1: Illustration of commercial frontage with a generous sidewalk zone to support an active frontage and vibrant pedestrian environment.



Figure 4.1.2: Sample illustration of an exception to the 6.0-metre sidewalk zone where a cantilever is appropriate.



Figure 4.1.3: Illustration of a residential frontage with a generous sidewalk zone and landscaping to reinforce the character of the streetscape.

f. Exceptions to the minimum 6-metre width may be considered for mid-rise buildings adjacent to heritage properties. Locate and align the building face with the adjacent buildings, for a minimum of one building bay (5-8m) to avoid blank sidewalls that would otherwise remain visible on adjacent buildings.

Rationale

Sidewalks are a vital part of the public realm, and play a crucial role in dense urban areas, particularly when characterized by limited open space or parkland deficiencies. Since many streets in Toronto were not designed with mid-rise buildings and the associated density in mind, the width of the existing public sidewalk is frequently too narrow. A wider sidewalk zone, which may include a building setback, is often necessary to properly resolve competing demands for space from pedestrians, street furniture, trees, utilities, and commercial uses. Wider sidewalks can also provide space for grouped bicycle parking, boulevard cafés, public art installations, and other valuable street activities and amenities. New development, especially when at the scale of an entire block, offers the opportunity to improve sidewalk amenity by providing an edge zone, a generous furnishing and planting zone, a continuous, universally accessible pedestrian clearway, and an appropriate frontage or marketing zone depending upon the uses at grade. In order to achieve an appropriate sidewalk width, a midrise building may need to be set back further from the property line than the distance required by the Zoning By-law.

The sidewalk zone is the entire area accessible by pedestrians along the frontage of the building. While perceived as continuous, this area comprises two distinct parts: the public boulevard and the private setback zone within the property line. The public boulevard is the area between the edge of the curb and the property line, consisting of:

- Edge Zone the space behind the curb that acts as a buffer between moving/parked vehicles and the other sidewalk/boulevard functions. May accommodate sign posts, parking machines, decorative pavers, soft landscape, solid waste set out and snow storage.
- Furnishing and Planting Zone this zone in the boulevard provides space for a wide range of street elements such as trees, other plantings, litter and recycling bins, benches, street lights, and bicycle racks.
- **Pedestrian Clearway** the area of sidewalk that is free and clear of any obstacles so that people of all ages and abilities can travel in a direct, continuous path. This zone is dedicated for pedestrian movement and the amount of space required will depend on the volume and intensity of pedestrian activity on the street.
- Furnishing and Marketing Zone The area adjacent to properties, such as building entrances, front yards, stoops, window shopping area, vending, café seating, and building-related utilities. This area may be part of the public right-of-way, or private, if a building setback is present.

The composition of the private setback zone is flexible and context-dependent, potentially incorporating elements of the marketing furnishing zone, soft landscaping and tree planting areas, extended walkways that link to the pedestrian clearway, and other pedestrian amenities.

Official Plan Reference:

3.1.1 The Public Realm | 3.1.3 Built Form | 3.4 The Natural Environment | 5.1.3 Site Plan Control



Related Standards, Guidelines & Studies:

4.2. STREETSCAPES

Mid-rise buildings should provide vibrant pedestrian-oriented streetscapes with the highest level of urban design treatment, to create beautiful comfortable, sustainable, safe, and accessible pedestrian environments and great places to shop, work, and live for all.



Figure 4.2.1: Examples of streetscape treatments.

- The design of streetscapes should follow the Complete Streets Guidelines, and design details in the Toronto Urban Design Streetscape Manual.
- Integrate and prioritize sustainability and climate resilience into every streetscape design decision, such as incorporating green infrastructure, permeable surfaces, and energy efficient and biobased materials.
- c. Preserve existing mature trees where possible.
- d. Maximize tree planting opportunities and understory planting to support wildlife including pollinators, in the design of the public realm and minimize utility conflicts by coordinating and relocating (as needed) above and below grade (existing and/or proposed) utilities to accommodate tree planting opportunities to achieve the complete street objectives, meet the City's target of 40% tree canopy cover by 2050, and align with the TransformTO NetZero Strategy.

- e. Provide a 3 to 5 metres clearance between trees and buildings or canopies to the satisfaction of Urban Forestry, to ensure healthy growth and proper maintenance.
- f. Provide unencumbered soil in front yard setbacks and along site boundaries, where feasible, to support healthy tree planting, landscaping and water infiltration.
- g. Where applicable, developments should incorporate design elements into the streetscape that reinforce a sense of place, contributing to the unique character and identity of the surrounding area, in consultation with the community and/or BIA. Such elements may include, but are not limited to, lighting fixtures and treatments, public art, gateway features, storefront features, murals, and whimsical elements that appeal to children.
- h. Where applicable, honour and celebrate the history of community and Indigenous heritage through streetscape design.

- Where residential units are proposed at grade, the following additional streetscaping guidelines apply to provide adequate public/ private transition:
 - Mid-rise buildings should be set back a minimum of 3 metres from the property line to support soft landscaping and provide privacy for residential units (see Figure 4.2.3).
 - ii. In contexts where existing landscaped setbacks exceed 3 metres, such as in Apartment Neighbourhoods, the setback should be increased to be consistent with the existing setback to support enhanced soft landscaping and provide opportunity for tree planting and mature tree retention.
 - iii. Landscaping and tree planting within the setback area should complement the public realm, not replace it.

Rationale

A well-designed and vibrant streetscape is vital to the character and quality of the mid-rise building site and the surrounding public realm, as well as to the livability of the City. All building frontages facing public streets, parks, and open space must safely and comfortably accommodate pedestrian movement, street furnishings, lighting, bicycle parking, and landscaping. The space in front of buildings may also contain cafés, grocery stands, canopies, awnings, signage, public art, fountains, landscape structures, and other built or landscape features, which further animate the street, beautify the City and enhance pedestrian amenity.

Not only does the streetscape contribute to animating the pedestrian realm, but it also directly contributes to the livability of the City by preserving and reintroducing trees, plants and important ecological features that improve air and water quality, enhance the urban forest, increase biodiversity and minimize urban heat island effects. Trees and other vegetation offer numerous benefits to our city, including improved air quality, noise and dust reduction, minimized stormwater runoff, and increased shade which in turn reduced the need for heating and cooling. Ensuring that trees are given an environment in which they can thrive, with sufficient space and with unencumbered soil to support their mature growth and longevity, is critical to ensuring we have a resilient city. Streetscapes offer a significant opportunity to enhance sustainability and climate resilience within the city. Well-designed streetscapes not only provide ecological benefits but also create more vibrant, beautiful, healthy and accessible public spaces for all.

Official Plan Reference:

3.1.1 The Public Realm | 3.1.3 Built Form | 3.4 The Natural Environment | 5.1.3 Site Plan Control



Related Standards, Guidelines & Studies:

Complete Streets Guidelines | Streetscape Manual | Toronto Green Standard











Figure 4.2.2: Examples of streetscape treatments.



Figure 4.2.3: Examples of streetscape treatments for grade-related residential units that respond to the character of the surrounding context.

5.0 GLOSSARY

Glossary

Above-grade: over the level of the ground, not sunken or below ground.

Active Uses: at-grade uses within a building that support pedestrian activity and promote a high degree of visual and physical interaction between the building interior and adjacent public realm. Grand entrance lobbies, private indoor amenity space, guest suites, and large-format retail or commercial facilities are typically not considered active uses.

Address: The front door of a building or unit that faces the public street or mews.

Amenity: a space or element which provides additional practical and/or leisure functions to any users.

Articulation: the layout or pattern, expression and material character of building elements, including walls, doors, roofs, windows and decorative elements such as cornices and belt courses.

At-grade: at the level of the ground.

Back of House Activities: activities, essential to the efficient function of the development, that are commonly situated at the rear of the buildings (eg. solid waste storage and vehicle access).

Balcony: an outdoor elevated platform projected from or integrated into a building, enclosed by a parapet or railing.

Bay: in architecture, any division of a building between vertical lines or planes, especially the entire space included between two adjacent supports.

Below-grade: lower or beneath the level of the ground.

Context (Existing and Planned): the existing context of any given area refers to what is there now. The planned context refers to what is intended by City policies in the future.

Context Analysis: the study of how new development will fit with and respond to existing and planned patterns, opportunities, and challenges identified within the surrounding area.

Courtyard: a landscaped open space, located in the centre of a single or consolidated block with no direct street frontage.

Daylighting: access to natural light – direct or diffuse sunlight – within the building interior.

Façade: the exterior wall of a building visible from the public realm.

Driveway: a paved vehicular access that typically leads from the street to a private or shared garage or service area.

Facing Distance: distance between the face of a building and the face of another building or property line.

Façade: the exterior of the building visible to the public.

Front Façade: the predominant exterior vertical wall face of a building.

Forecourt: landscaped open space between the public sidewalk and the main entrance of a building.

Frontage: the portion of a development parcel or lot facing a street, park or other publicly accessible open space.

Harmonious: having the elements arranged in a proportionate, orderly and pleasing way.

Heritage Conservation District (HCD): an area of the city that is protected by policies and guidelines to ensure its conservation and careful management. HCDs are designated based on their historic or cultural significance.

Human Scale: the quality of the physical environment which reflects a sympathetic proportional relationship to human dimensions, and which contributes to the citizen's perception and comprehension of buildings or other features of the built environment

Landscaped Open Space: outdoor area characterized by hard and/or soft landscape treatment but excluding driveways and vehicular parking areas. On-site landscaped open space may be publicly accessible or privately shared common outdoor space at-grade or above-grade.

Landscaped Setback: the space between the public sidewalk and building face characterized by hard or soft landscape treatment.

Low-Rise Building: a building that is generally up to four storeys in height.

Massing: the size and shape of a building above grade.

Master Plan: a planning and design framework to guide the incremental development of a large or complex area with multiple buildings, new streets, and/or parks.

Pattern of Alignment: the repeated location of the front face of buildings in relationship to the property line

Pattern of Building: the repeated physical characteristics of buildings within an area, on a street or block, including the building footprint, organization and massing.

Pavilion: the opposite of a streetwall building a building that stands distinctly on its own surrounded by landscaping.

Pedestrian Amenity: architectural and landscape elements, including lighting, trees, four season landscaping, decorative paving, seating, public art, water features, etc., that promote the safe and comfortable use of streets and open spaces.

Pedestrian Scale: the quality of the physical environment which reflects a sympathetic proportional relationship to human dimensions and which contributes to a person's perception and comprehension of buildings and or other features in the built environment.

Plaza: an animated gathering place with predominantly hard surfaced landscape features flanking a public street.

Privately Owned Publicly Accessible Open Space (**POPS**): privately owned and maintained outdoor space that is designed to promote public access and use.

Primary Street: a street with high pedestrian priority, determined by the street and sidewalk widths, character of uses at grade, level of transit service, traffic volumes, number of vehicular and cycling lanes, and the overall level of civic importance within the structure of the city. A site can have more than one primary street frontage.

Private Shared Amenity Space: common spaces or facilities that are owned, maintained, and accessed privately by building occupants.

Private Shared Driveway: a paved vehicular access under private ownership, from a street and used as a circulation route through a development either with or without parking; for services and access to garages; does not provide pedestrian access or address for buildings.

Public Art: site specific artwork created to enhance publicly accessible space through artistic interpretations that range from independent sculpture to integrated architectural treatment and landscape design.

Public Realm: streets, lanes and walkways, parks and other open spaces and the accessible parts of public buildings.

Public Street: a public way or thoroughfare in a City or town, usually with sidewalks.

Separation Distance: the horizontal distance between buildings or building components measured from the exterior wall of the building or building component, but excluding balconies.

Setback: a horizontal distance measured at a right angle from any lot line to the nearest part of the main wall of a building or structure.

Shared Indoor Amenity: an indoor space in a building that is communal and for use by the occupants of the building for recreational and social activities.

Shared Outdoor Amenity: an outdoor space on a lot that is communal and available for use by the occupants of a building for recreational or social activities.

Sidewalk Zone: the space between the roadway curb and property line. The sidewalk zone may be expanded when a building is setback from the property line. **Siting / Building Orientation:** the location, positioning and orientation of a building on its site, generally taking into account its relationship to adjoining properties, building and street boundaries.

Sky View: the measurable amount of sky seen from a street, park, or other open space above and in between building masses.

Soft Landscaping: open, unobstructed area that supports the growth of vegetation such as grass, trees, shrubs, flowers or other plants, and that permits water infiltration into the ground.

Step-back: the setting back of the upper storeys of a building. Step-backs help articulate buildings, create a transition between built form of varying heights, and provide appropriate separation between adjacent buildings and/or open spaces.

Street: a significant part of the City's open space system. In their role as connective linear open spaces, streets provide vehicular, pedestrian, cycling, transit and utility access, address and light to individual lots and blocks within the urban fabric. In addition they are landscaped and lit in the evening and provide a setting for social interaction and neighbourhood activities.

Streetwall: the condition of enclosure along a street whereby the fronts of buildings align and the façades visually and physically join together to create a continuous defining edge for the street.

Streetscape: the distinguishing elements and character of a particular street as created by its width, degree of curvature, paving materials, design and placement of street furniture, trees, landscaping, lighting and other pedestrian amenities, as well as the setback and form of surrounding buildings.

Street Proportion: the ratio of the height of buildings along the edges of the street and the width of the space between the building faces on each side of the street (includes setbacks).

Tall Building: a building that is generally taller than the width of the adjacent street right-of-way, or the wider of two streets if located at an intersection.

Terrace: an outdoor sitting area which extends the interior living space and is either adjacent to or on top of a building.

Universal Access: built environments, buildings, facilities, accommodation, services and products that are inherently accessible to all people regardless of their abilities. Incorporating universal access and accessible facilities into the design and site layout of new development contributes to making Toronto's built environment "barrier free," enabling people of all abilities to move about freely and safely, participate fully in society and experience a better quality of life.

Urban Design: the analysis and design of the city's physical form.

Urban Garden: a landscaped open space of intimate scale providing a tranquil setting adjacent to a city street.

Urban Tree Canopy: the layer of leaves, branches, and stems of trees that cover the ground when viewed from above.

Walkability: the extent to which the built environment promotes safe, comfortable and convenient conditions for pedestrian travel. Generally measured and evaluated within a 500 metre radius (10 minute walk) of a site.

Walkway: a street level exterior publicly accessible pedestrian way through the middle of or part of a city block.

Weather Protection: continuous canopies, overhangs, or other permanent building features which are sized and positioned to effectively shield pedestrians from inclement weather at-grade.

APPENDIX

Appendix A

SAMPLE SUN/SHADOW STUDIES

Queen Street East (between Beech Avenue and Neville Park Boulevard)

March 21st



Kingston Road (between McCowan Road and Bellamy Road South)

March 21st



Dundas Street West (between Roncesvalles Avenue and Howard Park Avenue)

March 21st



Yonge Street (south of Heath Street)

March 21st





