

Urban Design Guidelines for Neighbourhoods and Streets

Mainstreets (Narrower than 30m)



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Glossary: See the urban design guideline page on Ottawa.ca for definition of terminologies (search “urban design guidelines glossary”).

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INTRODUCTION

This section outlines:

- The objectives of this guideline document
- The applicable Official Plan and By-law directions
- Key issues related to different context
- Responsibilities related to sustainable design
- When and how the guidelines are to be used

INTRODUCTION

Definitions

Mainstreet Corridor (or Mainstreet) is a land use designation of the Official Plan. The designation applies to bands of land along specified streets (shown on Schedule B Series) whose planned function combines medium to high density development, a mix of land uses, often with retail at grade level, and high frequency street transit service.

For the purposes of these Urban Design Guidelines, the Mainstreet Corridors are broken up into two types: those narrower than 30 metres, and those wider than 30 metres to reflect the historic Traditional and Arterial Mainstreet Designations under the former City of Ottawa Official Plan.

Use and Application

These guidelines are to be used during the preparation and review of development proposals along Mainstreet Corridors narrower than 30 metres shown on the Schedule B Series.

These are general guidelines. They are a tool kit and not intended to be used as a checklist for evaluating a proposal and not all of the guidelines are applicable to every site. The context of each development proposal will inform the application of, and the emphasis on, the particular guidelines that are relevant.

Where specific policies are provided in an area-specific policy document, such as a Secondary Plan or a Community Design Plan (CDP), the area-specific policies will take precedent. Guidelines in this document may augment such area-specific policies. The guidelines will also be a resource for the preparation of CDPs.

Objectives

The objectives of these guidelines are to highlight ways to:

- promote development that will enhance and reinforce the recognized or planned scale and character of the street.
- support development that is compatible with and complements its surroundings.
- achieve high-quality built form and strengthen building continuity along Mainstreet Corridors narrower than 30 metres
- foster compact, pedestrian-oriented development linked to street level amenities.
- accommodate a broad range of uses including retail, services, commercial uses, offices, residential and institutional uses where one can live, shop and access amenities.

Official Plan and By-Law Direction

The Mainstreets, along with the Hubs, are expected to see significant growth and to accommodate the majority of the services, amenities, and employment. Mainstreets are the centre of the 15 minute neighbourhoods and support the economic vitality of the community. Mainstreet Corridors provide safe and convenient pedestrian and cycling facilities and are conveniently accessible by transit. The Official Plan permits a mix of uses throughout the building in the Mainstreet designation. The Zoning By-law may require active commercial or service uses on the ground floor, which include those that support cultural development in order to maintain, extend, or create a continuous stretch of active frontages along a Mainstreet.

For Mainstreet Corridors narrower than 30 metres, the Official Plan supports a more compact, mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented development pattern, within a mid-rise built form up to 9 storeys in the Downtown Core, Inner Urban, Outer Urban Transects. Mid-rise buildings are also permitted up to 9 storeys subject to specific criteria outlined in 5.4.3 within the Suburban Transect. The Plan calls for development to respect the character of the street, the heritage and requires sensitive integration with the surrounding low-rise neighbourhoods. The Official Plan stipulates that built form transition should occur within the Corridors.

All other policies of the Official Plan, applicable regulations, the Private Approach By-Law, Signs By-law and Zoning By-laws must be met. In addition, respect the municipal and provincial policies specifically related to additions and infill associated with heritage buildings and areas, including heritage conservation district plans and guidelines.

Context and Issues

Mainstreet Corridors narrower than 30 metres are generally found within the older parts of the City, often pre-dating requirements to provide individual on-site parking. They serve as the main shopping street for the immediately adjoining community and, by virtue of unique specialty stores, often attract customers from beyond the local area. Vacant lots, aging retail strip malls, single storey developments, automobile sales lots, parking lots, and gas stations along these Mainstreet Corridors provide significant potential for intensification and redevelopment. To remain competitive with outlying commercial shopping areas, Mainstreet Corridors must continue to respond to market trends. At the same time, to retain their role as an integral part of their surrounding community, new development must be of a type and scale that is compatible in form and considers the context of the street. These guidelines seek to sustain and enhance the spatial and design qualities of the streetscape and foster a pedestrian-oriented environment on Mainstreet Corridors.

INTRODUCTION

Sustainable Design

One of the objectives of the Official Plan is to build a city that is energy conscious, mitigates emissions and is more resilient to the impacts of climate change. All development should consider opportunities to reduce resource consumption during construction and provide buildings that conserve energy, reduce peak demand and provide resilience to power disruptions throughout their lifecycle. All buildings should consider using efficient mechanical and electrical systems as well as incorporating renewable energy generation features. The design of buildings should prevent thermal bridging and providing appropriate wall thickness and window to wall ratios to insulate the building.

Building resiliency to flooding and future climate risks is an objective of the Official Plan. Proponents are encouraged to design stormwater infrastructure to be durable, adaptive and resilient to future climate events. Low-impact development or nature-based solutions should be considered where possible.

The City of Ottawa encourages proponents of any development to explore and apply best sustainable practices for the full life cycle of the site and buildings. The City encourages the use of sustainable design standards, such as the Canadian Green Building Council (CaGBC) Zero Carbon Building Standards rating system and the International WELL Building Institute WELL Building Standard in the planning, design, construction and operation stages of a development.

Development along Mainstreet Corridors narrower than 30 metres carries the responsibility to achieve this objective. The design guidelines included in this document support sustainable design by promoting a more compact, inclusive, transit-supportive, pedestrian-friendly, and attractive urban environment, in addition to a building of higher energy efficiency and greater climate resilience.



1.0 SITE ORGANIZATION

The narrow Mainstreet Corridors are historically the centre of the local neighbourhood and sometimes a designation of the broader community. These Mainstreets are intended to be a pedestrian place that supports business and other socio-economic and cultural activities. The Official Plan requires development along the Mainstreet Corridors to respond to context, to frame, activate, and be well connected to adjacent streets, parks, and open spaces. The site organization should strive to achieve these overarching objectives. The guidelines in this section highlight the following key considerations:

- Building placement
- Pedestrians and Cyclists
- Vehicles and Parking
- Services and Utilities

1 SITE ORGANIZATION

Building Placement

1.1 Building Placement

- 1 Align new buildings with the existing or intended street-wall, or with the average setback of the adjacent buildings, in order to create a visually continuous streetscape (Figure 1).
- 2 Locate mixed-use development of greatest height and mass at nodes and gateways (Figure 2)



Figure 1: Similar building setbacks create a strong street edge.



Figure 2: Major intersections are good locations for taller buildings.

1.2 Pedestrians and Cyclists

- 1 Locate front doors to face the mainstreet and be directly accessible from the public sidewalk (Figure 3).
- 2 Create inviting, well-lit pedestrian walkways to link rear parking areas to the public sidewalk/street (Figure 4).
- 3 Provide sheltered bicycle parking in visible locations near building entrances and pedestrian walkways. Ensure that these locations minimize conflict with pedestrians (Figure 5).



Figure 3: Accessible entrances of the commercial units that are recessed to ensure the sidewalk is unobstructed.



Figure 4: Pedestrian walkways link the mainstreet to parking behind and provide room for tree planting.



Figure 5: Sheltered bicycle parking located by the front door.

1 SITE ORGANIZATION

Vehicles and |Parking

1.3 Vehicles and Parking

- 1 Share vehicular access to parking areas between adjacent properties in order to reduce the extent of interruption along the public realm. (Diagram 1).
- 2 Locate surface parking in the rear yard with vehicular access off side streets and laneways (Diagram 1).
- 3 Preserve the rear, existing vehicular public laneway system wherever possible. Re-activate laneways where they have become dormant (Figure 6).
- 4 Where properties are situated in the interior of the block without a rear lane or other right-of-way, vehicular driveways can connect directly to the Corridor, provided the width and frequency of curb cuts is minimized.

- 5 Minimize the number of car parking spaces. Consider on-street parking.

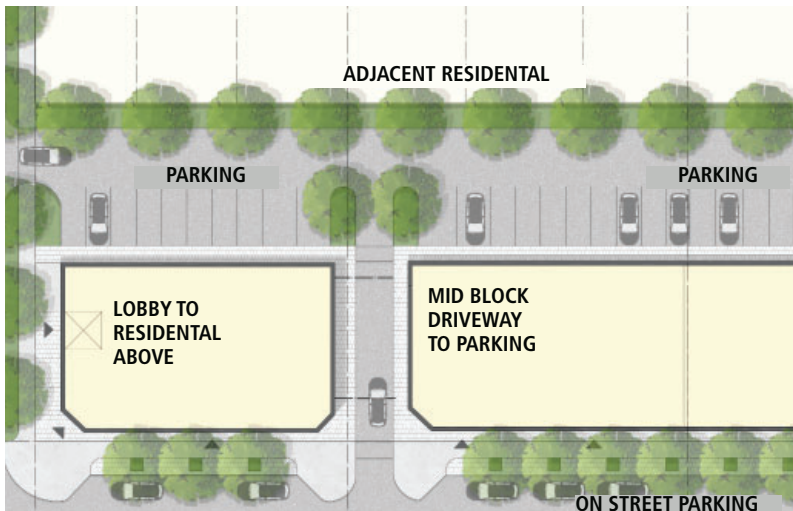


Diagram 1: Rear parking lots provide continuous streetscapes for pedestrians in front and more parking on the mainstreet.



Figure 6: Access to parking of this development is provided in the rear lane. The amenity space and the residential entrance of the development also activates the rear lane.

1.4 Services and Utilities

- 1 Share service and utility areas between different users within a single building or among different buildings (Figure 7).
- 2 Enclose all utility equipment within buildings or screen them from both the corridor and private properties to the rear. These include utility boxes, garbage and recycling container storage, loading docks, ramps, air conditioner compressors, utility meters and transformers (Figures 8 and 9).

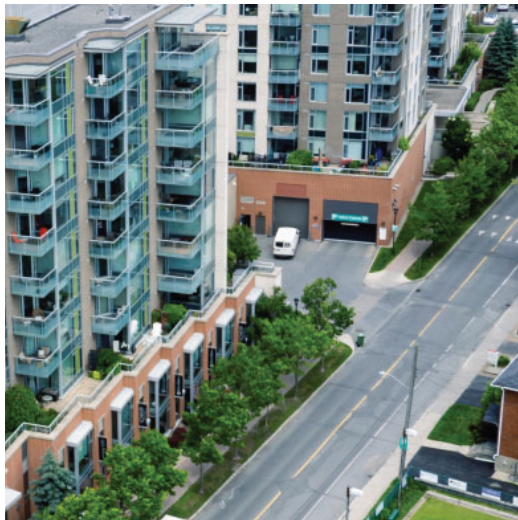


Figure 7: This phased development includes multiple buildings that share parking entrance and loading facility.



Figure 8: This development internalizes loading and garbage collection facilities.



Figure 9: Parking ramps and loading facilities are screened from the abutting residential area.



2.0 BUILT FORM

The Official Plan requires that development along Mainstreet Corridors should locate the maximum permitted heights and densities close to the Corridor, and incorporate appropriate building setbacks and built form transition. The Official Plan further directs that a Mainstreet building should frame the street, provide active frontage at grade, establish a scale that relates to the context, avoid street canyon effect, and minimize microclimate impacts on the public realm and private amenity areas. The following guidelines are meant to implement these policies and are organized under the following themes:

- Height and Massing
- Animation and Articulation
- Signage on facade

2.1 Height and Massing

- 1 Design street sections with a ratio of building height to road corridor width of between 1:1 and 1:3. A ratio of 1:1 is appropriate for urban core areas, while a ratio of 1:2 to 1:3 is ideal for other mainstreets (Diagrams 2 and 3). Ensure adequate sunlight for sidewalks.

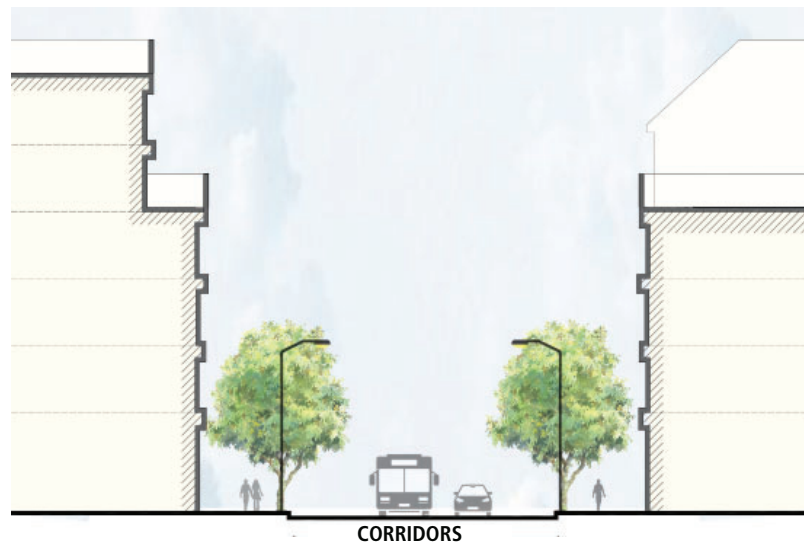
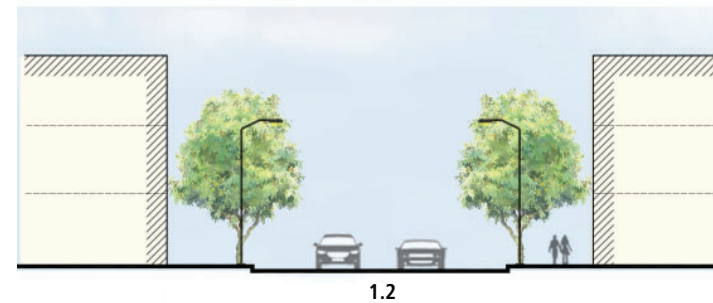
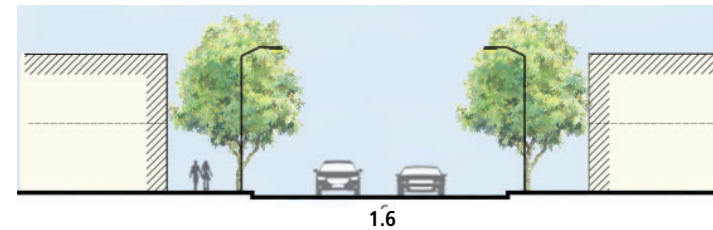


Diagram 2: Ratio of 1:1 for building height to right-of-way width produces a comfortable sense of enclosure.

Diagram 3: Street section ratios evolve from 1:3 to 1:1 as a street intensifies.

2 BUILT FORM

Height and Massing

- 2 Set back the upper floors of taller buildings to help achieve a human scale and more light on the public realm.
- 3 Use periodic breaks in the street wall or minor variations in building setback and alignment to add interest to the streetscape, and to provide space for activities adjacent to the sidewalk.
- 4 Ensure sufficient light and privacy for abutting residential and institutional properties to the rear by ensuring that new development is compatible and sensitive with adjacent uses with regard to maximizing light and minimizing overlook.



Figure 10: Buildings set back above 3-4 storeys preserve a human scale and allow more light to reach the sidewalk.



Figure 11: Small variations in building alignment add interest to the street.



Figure 12: Appropriate building height and separation ensures access to natural light and protects privacy .

2.2 Animation and Articulation

- 1 Locate active pedestrian-oriented uses at-grade, and use clear windows and doors, to make the pedestrian level façade of walls facing the street highly transparent while respecting the birds-safe guidelines and optimizing energy conservation (Figure 16).
- 2 Provide pedestrian weather protection such as colonnades, individual canopies, awnings and balconies (Figure 17).
- 3 Locate residential units above the ground floor in a mixed-use building and provide shared entrances to residential units, clearly accessible from the street. (For these units, consider triple glazed windows and bedrooms located away from the mainstreet for noise and ventilation concerns).



Figure 13: A highly visible street-level storefront animates the streetscape. The recessed commercial unit entrances protects pedestrian from elements.



Figure 14: Individual canopies provide weather protection and animate the streetscape.

2 BUILT FORM

Animation and Articulation

- 4 Design quality buildings that are rich in architectural detail and respect the rhythm and pattern of the existing or planned buildings on the street, through the alignment of elements such as windows, front doors, cornice lines, and fascias etc., and the use of high-quality local materials where possible.
- 5 Buildings on a corner should be highlighted and articulated to address both public streets with special treatment at the corner, such as a corner entrance (Figures 19 and 20).



Figure 15: Infill development respects its context. Alignment of datum lines creates harmony.



Figure 16: Architectural detail enhances the streetscape on the public sides of a corner building.



Figure 17: Massing articulation anchors the building at the corner. The low-rise base is compatible with the existing context.

2.3 Signage on Facade

- 1 Design buildings to include defined spaces to accommodate signs that respect building scale, architectural features, signage uniformity and established streetscape design objectives (Figure 21).
- 2 Design sign illumination to be task oriented and avoid glare/light spillover toward adjacent land uses.



Figure 18: Compact signs fit in with the design of the building.



Figure 19: Task oriented sign illumination avoids glare.



3.0 PEDESTRIAN REALM

Creating quality public and private spaces that are safe, accessible, easy to get to and move through and attractive is the direction of the Official Plan. Mainstreet Corridors are often the centre of the communities and meant to be a people places that support pedestrian activities. These Mainstreet Corridors are often the City's Design Priority Areas and require higher design, construction, and maintenance standards. The guidelines in this section highlights the following:

- Streetscape elements
- Lighting
- Landscaping

3.1 Streetscape Elements

- 1 The public realm should evolve to continuously meet AODA standards, and contribute to greening and beautifying the City of Ottawa.
- 2 Provide or restore a minimum 2.0 metre wide concrete sidewalk and locate to match approved streetscape design plans for the area or guidance from policies of a local plan. Where there is no approved streetscape plan, match the existing context (Diagram 4).
- 3 Provide a boulevard for street furniture, trees, and utilities; next to the sidewalk where possible (Diagram 4).
- 4 Provide an area adjacent to storefronts for canopies, outdoor patios or special merchant displays (the frontage zone, Diagram 4).



Diagram 4: Streetscape section and plan showing the boulevard, sidewalk and area for retail amenity (frontage zone).

3 Streetscape Elements

PEDESTRIAN REALM

- 5 Create wider sidewalks for locations with high pedestrian volumes in Downtown Core Transects.
- 6 Plant clusters of trees and create additional green space on the flanking residential streets, where they meet the mainstreet (Figure 24).
- 7 Create attractive public and privately-owned publicly-accessible spaces (POPS) such as green spaces with trees, pocket parks, courtyards, outdoor cafés, seating and decorative pools or fountains (Figures 25, 26, and 27).



Figure 20: Provide unobstructed pedestrian clear zone and a boulevard for street furniture and trees.



Figure 21: Plant additional trees at the intersection, where the residential street meets the mainstreet, to add green and help buffer the neighbourhood.



Figure 22: POPS and outdoor patios provide amenity and open the mainstreet corner.

- 8 Cluster or group streetscape elements and utilities where possible to minimize clutter (Figure 28).
- 9 Coordinate tree and street light locations with above and below-grade utilities (Figure 29).
- 10 Place temporary signs where they are clear of pedestrian travel.



Figure 23: Group elements to create an organized and uncluttered streetscape.



Figure 24: Coordination with light fixtures to ensure adequate conditions for the healthy growth of trees.

3.2 Lighting

- 1 Provide public and private lighting that is appropriate to the street character and mainstreet ground-floor use, with a focus on pedestrian areas (Figure 30).
- 2 Design street lighting so that there is no glare or light spilling onto surrounding uses.
- 3 Supplement street lighting where necessary with lighting affixed to the buildings in order to accentuate and animate buildings and spaces (Figure 31).



Figure 25: Simple and elegant street furniture can be appropriate in transitional context.

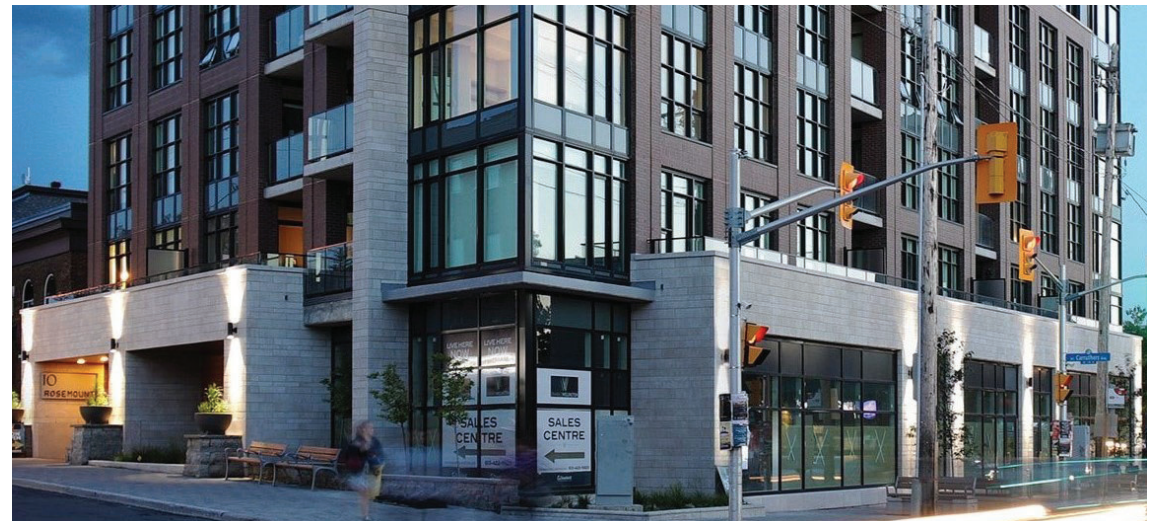


Figure 26: Wall-mounted lights accentuate and animate buildings and pedestrian realm.

3.3 Landscaping

- 1 Provide a minimum 3.0 metre wide landscape area along the edge of a site where parking areas, drive lanes or stacking lanes are adjacent to a public street. Use trees, shrubs and low walls to screen cars from view while allowing eye level visibility into the site (Figures 32 and 33).
- 2 Provide a minimum 3.0 metre wide landscape area, which may include a solid wall or fence in addition to planting, at the edges of sites adjacent to residential or institutional properties.



Figure 27: trees and shrubs in a sufficient landscape area along the sidewalk screen cars from public view.

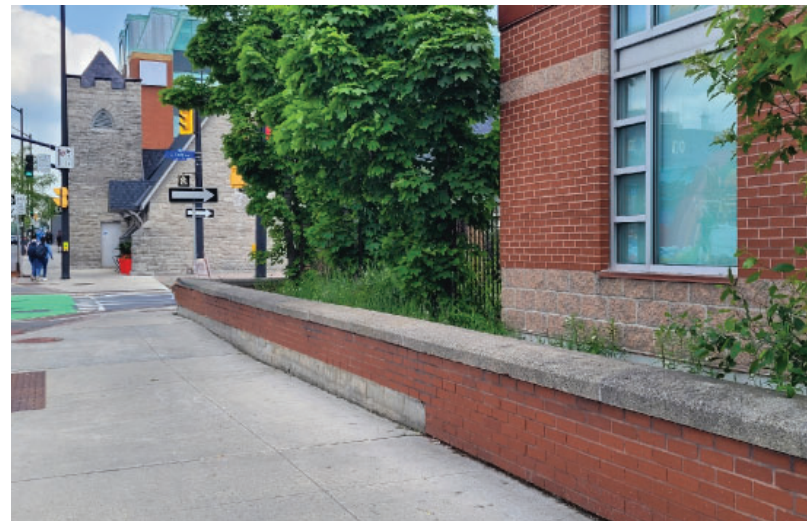


Figure 28: Low walls and planting visually screen parking from the public sidewalk.

3 Landscaping

PEDESTRIAN REALM

- 3 Select trees, shrubs and other vegetation considering their tolerance to urban conditions such as road salt or heat. Give preference to native species of the region that are of equal suitability.
- 4 Protect and feature heritage, specimen and mature trees on site by minimizing grade changes.
- 5 Enhance tree planting conditions within the public realm so that street trees can be planted in accordance with municipal best practices. In areas where there are utility constraints, Applicants may need to explore soil cells or other innovative methods to provide street trees (Figure 33).
- 6 Use technologies such as green roofs, drip irrigation and other approaches highlighted in sustainable design standards such as Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED).



Diagram 5: Silva Cell is one of the methods to plant trees in area of constraints. This design adapts from the general Silva Cell concept.



IMAGE CREDIT

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