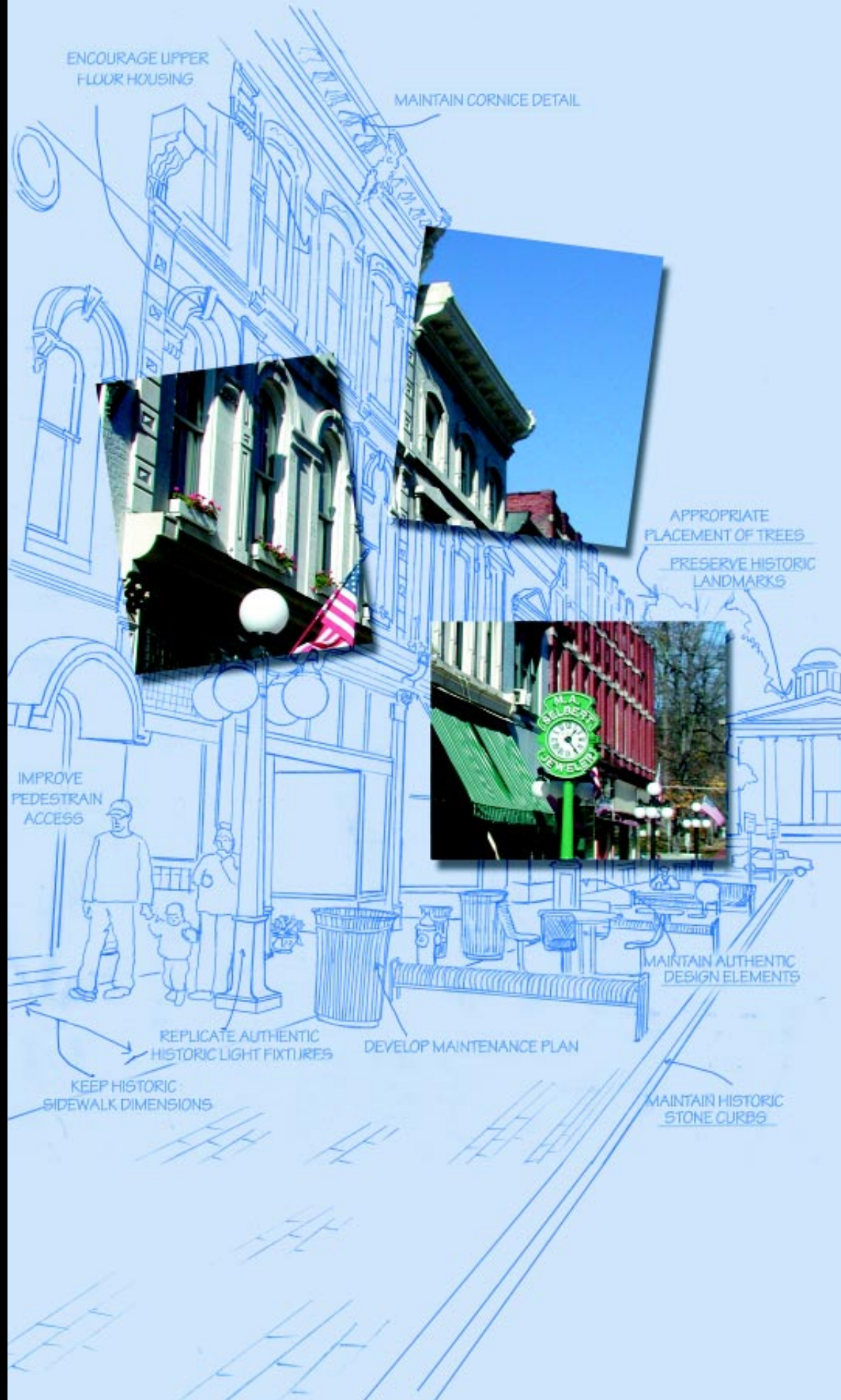
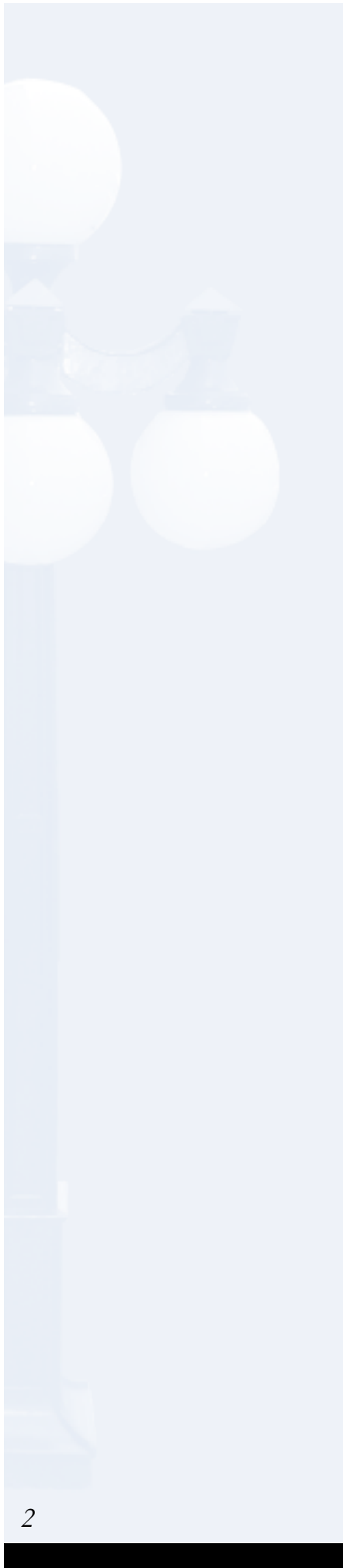


**KENTUCKY
STREETSCAPE
DESIGN
GUIDELINES
FOR
HISTORIC
COMMERCIAL
DISTRICTS**



Sponsored by the
Kentucky
Heritage Council
and the Kentucky
Transportation
Cabinet



Foreword

FOREWORD

The publishing of *Kentucky Streetscape Design Guidelines for Historic Commercial Districts* is a collaborative effort of the Kentucky Heritage Council and the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet. These guidelines are intended to assist local communities as they plan for and coordinate public and private improvements in their historic downtowns. There are many stakeholders in every community. All should be in communication with each other and in agreement towards the goals of downtown revitalization, improved safety, and aesthetic considerations. It is our hope these guidelines will serve as a catalyst for discussing and planning your community's downtown.

We were pleased to have had the opportunity to work with Ned Crankshaw, the author of this publication. His professional expertise and careful research on Kentucky's historic communities have provided a sound base for these guidelines. He has demonstrated strong listening skills and has carefully sorted through a multitude of various resource materials to provide you with an understandable document which will be useful to community leaders and professional designers.

The Renaissance Kentucky program, initiated by Governor Paul E. Patton, has raised awareness throughout the Commonwealth on the importance of downtown revitalization. Since 1999, as part of the Renaissance Kentucky program, Governor Patton has directed \$5 million of Kentucky's federal Transportation Enhancement funding for streetscape improvements in communities designated at the Gold and Silver levels. Both of our agencies are pleased to be partners with Kentucky's communities as they plan their revitalization efforts. This opportunity to work with them to enhance the safety and appearance of the streetscape, in a way that is compatible with the historic character of the downtown, has proven to be a rewarding one.

To all the users of these guidelines, thank you for your continuing work on behalf of improving Kentucky's downtowns. We hope these guidelines assist your efforts in a significant way.



David L. Morgan, Director
Kentucky Heritage Council and
State Historic Preservation Officer



James C. Codell, III
Secretary
Kentucky Transportation Cabinet

Kentucky Streetscape Design Guidelines for Historic Commercial Districts

by Ned Crankshaw ASLA

This publication was sponsored by the Kentucky Heritage Council in collaboration with the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet and the Renaissance Kentucky Alliance.

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Introduction

INTRODUCTION

The *Kentucky Streetscape Design Guidelines for Historic Commercial Districts* have been developed to provide guidance for projects in Main Street, Renaissance Kentucky, and other communities. The intent of the guidelines is to encourage conservation of historic resources, target financial assistance where it is needed, and create useful and lasting downtown improvements.



The *Design Goals* section of the guidelines provides a framework for defining the scope of projects during preliminary planning. The goals direct attention to pragmatic issues that appear in most towns and that are often ignored. Most downtown streetscape projects should be designed to achieve some or all of the *Design Goals*.

The *Design Guidelines* section offers specific recommendations for the design and placement of downtown design elements.

Every project will present different circumstances and should result in different design solutions. The guidelines do not dictate design decisions, but they address functional standards, preservation principles, and parameters for design. The design guidelines provide criteria to evaluate the appropriateness of specific design decisions involved in a project.

The design guidelines make many references to other information sources. Many of these sources are on file with the Kentucky Heritage Council at 300 Washington Street, Frankfort, KY 40601 and at the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet at State Office Building, Frankfort, KY 40622.

Three terms appear often in the design guidelines. These terms are appropriate, compatible, and contemporary. Webster's II defines each word in the following way:

Appropriate: suitable, fitting

Compatible: harmonious or agreeable association

Contemporary: belonging to the same period of time

The guidelines build on those definitions and use them to express a design ethic that emphasizes authenticity, yet encourages genuine improvement.

Appropriate design in a historic environment is **compatible** with existing scale, forms, and materials. Appropriate design of elements may be historically authentic, as in the use of the same light standard that was historically used, or the repair of building facades to retain the structure of the building as constructed.

Appropriate design may also be **contemporary**, rather than historic. Contemporary design is appropriate if it is compatible in scale, form, and material, and also is suitable and fitting for its purpose. Suitability can be defined by these elements: It accomplishes a particular purpose effectively, it will have longevity of material and style, and it is pleasing in its appearance. There is obvious subjectivity involved in making choices of this nature. The most important consideration is careful deliberation in making style and design choices.

The physical material of downtowns will always need to be adaptable to helpful changes such as increased safety or accessibility. Our downtowns already reflect a continuum of change, and their continued vitality will depend on a preservation focus that integrates contemporary improvements into historic patterns.



Downtown Design Goals

DOWNTOWN DESIGN GOALS

Design for People

Correct Infrastructure Pathologies

Maintain or Improve Mass and Space Relationships

Enhance Pedestrian Experience

Coordinate Public and Private Improvements

Enhance Individuality

Downtown Design Goals

DESIGN FOR PEOPLE

Fascination with downtowns does not begin with buildings, landscapes, light fixtures, or streets. Their ability to gather people together for diverse activities is the reason that we devote so much effort to their preservation and revitalization. That ability makes them civic places. If they are to be more than a setting for historic buildings and artifacts - if their underlying purpose is to be a setting in which people interact - then design for people must be the primary goal. Design for people in a downtown will make it a place that provides for small social opportunities and larger gatherings, that allows people to move about using various modes of transportation, that has a pleasant sense of congestion resulting from its popularity, and that provides a safe environment.

Downtowns as Gathering Places

Along with parks, downtowns are one of the few places that citizens feel belong to everyone. Farmers' markets, parades, musical events, and other social gatherings are logical and beneficial uses of downtown districts. Streetscape and public space design should create the flexibility to easily allow these types of events. Design decisions that affect the ability to host events include the following:

- designing public spaces to accommodate crowds, but function on normal days
- providing space for trucks, awnings, and pedestrian traffic during farmers' markets or other sales events
- providing utility service to public spaces



Design for people in a downtown will make it a place for social gatherings that allows various modes of transportation.

Three small towns in England have a long tradition of weekly markets. In Salisbury, a combination town square and parking area becomes a market place two mornings a week.



Other than courthouse squares, most downtown parks are contemporary elements without historic precedent. As such, they should receive contemporary design treatment and should not incorporate a false historic character. Gazebos have become a stock solution

to downtown open spaces and often have no functional purpose. When attention is given to the design of downtown open space that accommodates organized activities and casual sociability, gazebos will probably be found to be inadequate.

New park spaces should be designed for contemporary function and with contemporary design elements.



Most gazebos and other historically-themed structures have limited utility in downtown parks.



Utility service is essential to hosting many public events, and utility hardware can be designed to be unobtrusive.



Parks were historically uncommon in Kentucky downtowns. Fountain Square in Bowling Green is a notable exception.



Alternative Transportation Modes

Accommodating forms of transportation other than personal automobiles is important where there is potential to expand the methods that are used to arrive downtown. Public transportation, whether it is a regular bus service or an agency van service, should be provided with waiting areas and designated places to pull over. Design should focus on avoiding disruptions in traffic, on the safety of riders, on preserving parking spaces, and on design coordination with other street elements. Bicycle transportation should be encouraged with bicycle lanes where appropriate and bicycle racks in convenient places. Research has shown that a major detriment to bicycle transportation is the absence of secure bicycle parking. Providing bicycle racks in desirable locations is an important way to encourage non-motorized access to town centers. Bicycle racks should not impede pedestrian movement, and their location should not cause conflicts between bicycles and walkers. Design of bicycle parking areas should be coordinated with the design of surrounding areas.

Congestion and Safety

A downtown is a place whose goals are to bring large numbers of pedestrians into close proximity with large numbers of moving automobiles. This makes design for safety a primary issue. Sight triangles at intersections should not be impeded by trees, lights, signs, or street furniture so that pedestrians are clearly seen. Pedestrian and bicycle zones should be clearly delineated. Light standards and other elements should be placed so that they maximize the width available for



Bike racks are most useful when located near businesses and activity areas. They should be set into clearly designated areas away from pedestrian circulation paths.



A well-designed intersection includes clearly-defined pedestrian crosswalks.



Furnishings on sidewalks should be placed so that there is a continuous clear zone for pedestrians.

pedestrians. Regulatory signs should be placed appropriately. Street furniture and other elements should be appropriately set back from the curb. All streetscape elements should be designed for stability, longevity, and appropriateness to their use.

Downtown Design Goals

CORRECT INFRASTRUCTURE PATHOLOGIES

A streetscape project often targets correcting visible problems with the infrastructure and expectations are high that once corrected, the downtown will be healthy and whole. Pathology is a word not commonly applied to downtowns. Like people, however, the basic health of a downtown has more to do with function and utility than it does with cosmetic issues.

Most Main Street and Renaissance Kentucky downtowns have a reasonably sound building stock paired with an infrastructure whose physical pathologies limit function. These pathologies should be diagnosed and dealt with to continue on a process of improvement. A facelift on a person won't fix a broken leg, and banners in a downtown won't fix poorly organized parking. There are many types of downtown pathologies; the following are some categories that should be considered:

Poorly designed or maintained drainage systems negatively affect pedestrian space.



Replacing storm and sanitary sewers is expensive and temporarily destructive. The need for subsurface improvements should be considered before investing in above-ground improvements that might be destroyed later.



A Pathology is a physical manifestation of the dysfunctional process. Pathologies require accurate diagnosis before they can be corrected.

Drainage

Storm drainage systems were primitive when most downtowns were constructed. Many need serious investment in improvements. Cosmetic and accessibility issues with pavements are often caused by repairs to poorly constructed drainage systems. Standing water and drainage structures both can be major impediments to pedestrian and bicycle travel. Street drainage and inadequate conduction of roof drainage away from buildings cause destructive water infiltration into building fabric.

Utility Lines

Downtown utility systems can be chaotic. Simplifying and organizing the layout of utilities can be beneficial to maintenance as well as a visual improvement.



Above-ground utilities can be visually intrusive, and can also obstruct walkways.

Relocating above-ground utilities underground or into alleys should be considered, but the financial impact of new hookups on property owners should be taken into account.

Pedestrian Access

Poorly designed and maintained routes of pedestrian access can significantly affect both perceptions and physical accessibility of downtowns.

Parking

Everyone who works with downtowns would place parking as a primary issue. A viable parking system involves factors beyond simple quantity calculations. Physical organization, distribution, pedestrian links, and screening are issues that should be addressed.

Service Areas

One of the roles of the street and alley system is to provide service access. Problems with gaining access to adequate service and loading areas can discourage potential uses of downtown buildings. In addition, garbage containers on sidewalks and service vehicle conflicts with traffic and parking negatively impact the experience of downtown. Where service is provided from the front only, consideration should be given to developing useful service areas in the rear.



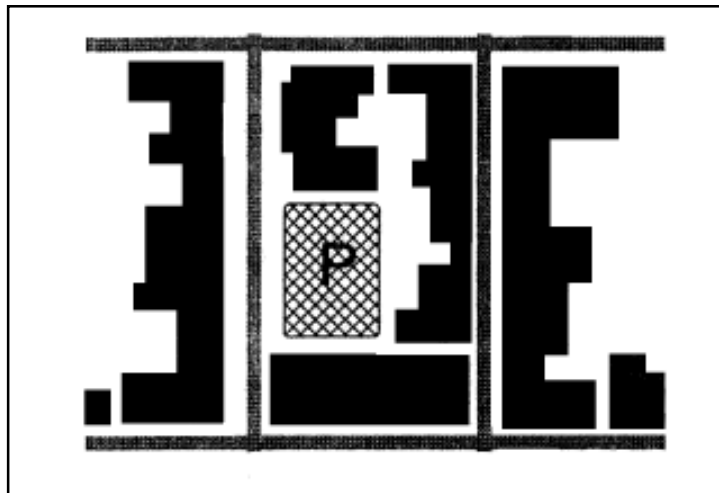
Parking quantity should not be the only issue considered in parking area design. Quality of design is an equally important issue.

Downtown Design Goals

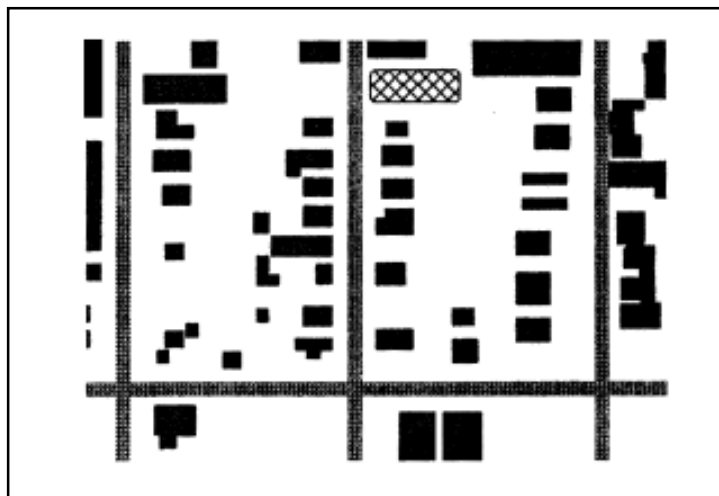
MAINTAIN OR IMPROVE MASS AND SPACE RELATIONSHIPS

In the large view, blocks of buildings are the mass or solid in downtowns. Streets are the primary spaces. Other areas not occupied by buildings or significant vegetation join streets as part of the space in a downtown. The mass-space relationship in a downtown is the most important characteristic differentiating it from other areas. Only in downtowns is mass predominant over space.

Historic commercial districts include a large proportion of space occupied by buildings. This diagram illustrates building coverage in a commercial area.



Historic residential districts adjacent to commercial areas have a much lower ratio of building mass to surrounding space.



Building demolition changes the mass-space relationship and makes the experience of downtown much less significant as the space of the street leaks away into parking lots and vacant areas. Demolition also has a severe negative effect on remaining buildings. Unless they are on a corner, downtown buildings are designed with only one public facade. Loss of neighboring buildings exposes walls that were never meant to be seen, and in some cases not expected to be exposed to weather. Weather exposure

can cause mild to severe deterioration, which can lead to structural damage. Protective measures should be considered if a wall is to be left exposed.

The width of downtown buildings occurs in multiples of original lot widths. For example, in a given downtown, buildings may be 25, 50, or 75 feet wide. Demolition of some of the buildings destroys the rhythmic repetition of dimension.



Building widths establish rhythmic patterns.

Demolition of buildings interrupts the pattern along a street.

New construction modeled on suburban shopping centers will erode the mass-space pattern of downtown commercial districts.



Restoration of dense mass-space relationships is dependent on construction of new buildings on vacant or underutilized space rather than on the sites of existing buildings. When new construction occurs, it should have the same setback from the street as historic buildings, and it should use the same options for width dimensions.

reason for downtown building demolition. Maximizing the amount of on-street parking will reduce, but not eliminate this cause of demolition. The other important action is to utilize suitably located vacant space to develop parking. Many towns have located new parking areas in the interiors of blocks, so that the edge of the street is not affected.

Creation of parking lots on former building sites is probably the primary

New construction that has the same setback and building width as surrounding buildings remains compatible with historic patterns.



Downtown Design Goals

ENHANCE PEDESTRIAN EXPERIENCE

If one were to survey an entire downtown to evaluate the quality of pedestrian paths, the results might be disappointing. One would be likely to find many unpleasant, dirty, unsafe, inaccessible, or even threatening paths. The best place for pedestrians would most often be on the main commercial street. The improvements targeted by most grant applications are also on the main commercial streets. When it comes to pedestrians, many towns are neglecting the worst problems and investing in areas that may not need substantial improvement.

Investments in improving pedestrian paths should be focused on correcting negative impacts on pedestrian locations and paths. These may include inaccessible interruptions in pathways, poorly maintained or intrusive private properties, and side streets and alleys that serve as major pedestrian routes but that have never been designed with pedestrians' experiences in mind.

Parking location has a direct effect on the quality of pedestrians' experiences. Parking that is well located and organized will take care of two aspects of downtown experience. First, it will be conveniently accessible for a person driving a car and finding a parking space. Second, it will be at one end of a convenient and comfortable walking route when that person is walking on to a destination. The second part tends to be forgotten and pedestrians who have just parked a car find themselves walking in poorly maintained alleys, alongside trash containers, and in other undesirable situations. Negative walking experiences are valid reasons not to return downtown on a subsequent shopping trip. Parking location should be partly determined by the quality of the environment between

the potential parking area and the assumed destinations. When parking locations have been determined, then commitment should be made to implement necessary pedestrian path improvements leading from those locations. These improvements may include pedestrian path paving, landscaping, lighting, and building facade improvements.



Side streets, even those in the center of a downtown, are often neglected pedestrian environments.

A goal of every town should be to constantly improve physical accessibility for its population, including the elderly, the very young, disabled people, and those in wheelchairs or pushing strollers. Some improvements, such as curb ramps at every street corner and ramps at steps, are obvious. Others are more subtle and must be discovered by surveying the routes that are taken by downtown pedestrians, and then analyzing the obstacles to a completely accessible route.

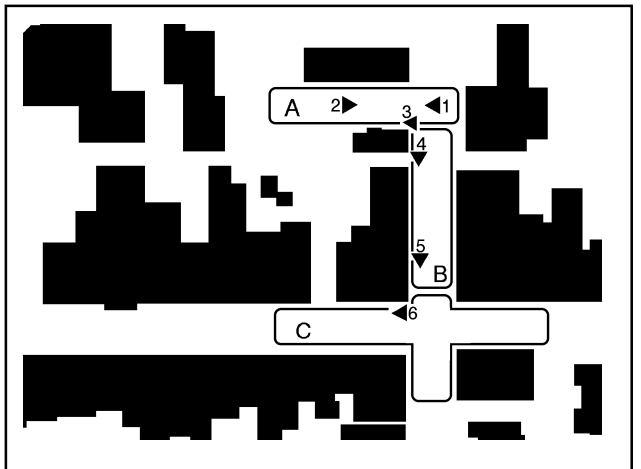
The obstacles to an accessible route can be so simple that they may be overlooked, such as a poor paving surface in an alley, or inadequate directional signage coming out of a parking lot. Physical changes, such as creating mid-block crosswalks with highly visible sidewalk extensions or widening the

sidewalk at street corners, will increase the safety of all pedestrians. Improvements in signaling, such as installing pedestrian-activated walk lights and ensuring adequate walk signal time, can also improve the ability to negotiate downtown streets.

The following brief analysis of a walking route from a parking area to a town center demonstrates a simple process for evaluation and includes some recommendations for improvements. The plan drawing has numbers to indicate the direction of each photograph view.



A few selected streets typically receive most of the funding and design attention in historic commercial districts.



1: Turn into the parking lot off of Broadway. The view is of a metal building on the right, sheds on the left, and a barn straight ahead. Parking is in a double-loaded aisle. There are an appropriate number of parking spaces for the disabled. The parking lot is easily accessed, but has no shade trees, and without any planting or other screening next to the sidewalk, it has a negative effect on the visual quality of the street.



2: After parking the car, walk down the parking aisle toward Broadway. The view is of a one-story retail building across the street. There are technically no accessibility problems in the parking area, but a shaded walk that separates pedestrians from autos would be a safety and visual improvement.



3 and 4:

View up Broadway toward Main, of a low-intensity commercial space on Broadway. Because of its width and undeveloped retail facades, the street would benefit from landscape and building facade improvements. There are appropriate curb ramps but there is no crosswalk or painted stop line for autos on Church Alley. Adding these, along with walk extensions that would allow pedestrians to be seen before they step into the alley, would improve safety at this crossing.



5: After crossing Church Alley, the sidewalk widens to 10 feet with a clear width of about 6 feet. Businesses on this side of the street have more active retail facades than on the other side of the street. Businesses keep trash containers on the sidewalk, negatively affecting visual quality and creating more obstacles. A shared trash area accessed from the alley would improve the situation. The old parking meter posts with two-hour signs add some clutter, but simplify understanding of the parking rules. A traffic light control box further up the walk intrudes into the walk space, making a dangerous situation. Approaching the intersection with Main Street, effective sidewalk width is also narrowed by a fire escape.



6: Arrive at Main Street and turn right. The view down Main includes the higher intensity commercial space on the first floor of two- to four- story buildings, a wide sidewalk, a few trees, a barbecue grill, and historically authentic light fixtures. The sidewalk width is about fifteen feet, with a generous clear zone.



Downtown Design Goals

COORDINATE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE IMPROVEMENTS

There are three major issues related to coordination of public and private improvements that affect public space. One is that the relative level of investment in improvements should be at a similar

Downtowns are a focus of community, and many organizations and individuals have input and assistance to contribute. This requires more than a cursory effort by local government to work with local non-profit organizations - such as Main Street boards and staff - as well as individual property owners to coordinate and enhance projects.

Flamboyant improvements were made to this historically non-significant concrete block building, while the streetscape remained rather plain. This put an appropriate emphasis on commercial activity and has had a positive effect on the street.



pace. A second is that the public infrastructure should be designed to meet the technological needs and financial capabilities of private enterprises. The third is that public and private elements on the street should have limited design coordination.

Investment Coordination

When public streetscape investment drastically outstrips private building investment, no one is fooled into believing that they are experiencing a healthy downtown. The expense and quality of public improvements can dramatically point out the lack of economic activity and investment in the private sector. The process of re-growing a downtown economy and restoring its physical appearance should be paced with each other. Pacing public improvements may mean rebuilding sidewalks and curbs, but not investing in new lighting at the same time. It may mean improving and landscaping a single parking lot in conjunction with property owners who develop rear entrances and clean up the rear facades of adjacent buildings.

Streetscape design and investment that drastically outpaces private efforts serves to point out weakness in the commercial economy.



Infrastructure Coordination

Downtown properties have high ratios of building coverage, leaving little private land available to accommodate parking, service, and storm water handling. These needs require coordination between properties and with the public sector. New technological needs are developing in a similar manner. Fiber optic lines required for efficient Internet access and to increase business competitiveness are an example of a developing part of the public infrastructure. Their placement should be planned in conjunction with downtown streetscape improvements.



Streetscape construction projects are temporarily destructive and attracting shoppers may require innovative marketing.



Maintaining accessibility requires extra attention during construction.

Other kinds of infrastructure facilities could have design impacts on downtowns, and downtown organizations should be actively involved in the decisions surrounding them. Facility types that have recently affected downtowns include cellular telephone towers and network facilities for Internet service providers.

Changes to public infrastructure have financial impacts on owners of private properties. Private connections to replacement storm and sanitary sewers typically require private expenditure. Relocation of electric lines from the street to the alley usually involves new electric feed locations into buildings. Relocation of the feeds, in turn, leads to substantial

rewiring and expense. Placing utility lines underground could result in the relocation of meters and the installation of conduit on building facades. These and other costs should be considered when infrastructure changes are proposed.

Streetscape construction projects can make it difficult to access downtown businesses. Construction should be organized so that a given area is affected for as short a time as possible. A marketing program during the construction period should be used to mitigate the impact of temporarily inconvenient access.

Design Coordination

Design coordination of accessibility improvements would mean that when the public invests in accessible street crossings and sidewalks, that property owners make accessible connections from their buildings to the walk. Design coordination of signs might involve a sign ordinance that enforces compatibility between advertising signs and the individual architectural patterns of the buildings on which they are placed, but that does not specify particular design elements or styles. Awnings may be encouraged, but with no expectation that they will be the same color, size, or pattern.

Providing incentive funds for building rehabilitation, and using a design review process to achieve the best possible results, is perhaps the best way to encourage private improvements that will be compatible with the rest of a downtown. The Renaissance Kentucky facade grants are a successful example of a program that combines financial incentives with design review. No Kentucky town possesses the design purity of a single time period. The level of design restriction applied to a historic museum village like Colonial Williamsburg is inappropriate in the context of a commercial downtown. Restrictions on incentive funds should focus on individual situations and not sap vitality by over-regulation.

When a large number of private businesses express their own character, there is no need for a town-wide design treatment.



A downtown can project visual order through the rhythm of buildings and the repetition of elements. In this case, awnings of different designs appear on several buildings.



Downtown Design Goals

ENHANCE INDIVIDUALITY

An ironic truth about historic downtowns is that the process of highlighting their own historic values can inadvertently lead them to look more and more like other places. Some reasons for this are unavoidable. Architecture of a particular period will look similar. Town forms may be homogenous within regions. But there is also a 'revitalization look.' This look usually results from excessive self-consciousness on the part of a town. Idiosyncracies are removed in order to make way for a more sanitized and stereotypical version of downtown streets. Two principles for design can work to maintain individuality. One principle is to remain focused on maintaining historic fabric and authentic design elements. The other principle is to use high quality contemporary design for new elements.

HISTORIC FABRIC

Documentation is the key activity that leads to preservation of historic design. All downtown commercial districts have been photographed through time. Collections of historic photographs can be assembled and organized into time periods to chart the evolution of design and materials. Lights, signs, utilities, paving materials, public art, and parking patterns are frequently revealed in historic photographs. Other sources for historic documentation may be found in purchase records for materials and design elements. Sanborn Company fire insurance maps and older Soil Conservation Service aerial photographs reveal public space and building configurations for different time periods.

Downtown preservation organizations are accustomed to standards for preservation of building fabric. The doctrine of repair rather than replace, replace in kind if necessary, and select new elements compatible but not imitative is well-established. Street environments and other landscapes are subject to the same ideas.

If a town has existing stone curbs, they should be salvaged and re-used if removed for construction work. If a street has brick paving, maintain it with



Standardized design work in revitalization projects can result in homogenization. This photograph was taken in Dover, England. The 1970s downtown look crossed the Atlantic, as did the more Victorian look of the 1990s.



Historic photographs are useful tools for documenting historic materials and features. A light fixture and standard appear clearly in this view.

accessibility in mind. Extant historic light standards or other functional elements should be maintained, even when they don't all fit with a comprehensive new pattern. Reference: Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

Conserving historic fabric in street environments and public spaces will not only help separate one town from

another, it will maintain diversity of construction materials and design elements within a single town. One block may have light standards that are different from another, or paving materials may be inconsistent. A downtown environment rich in material variety will be more interesting and less likely to become dated to one period.

Historic paving, curbing or other construction materials contribute to the identity of places within a commercial district.



Authentic features do not have to be beautiful or large to be memorable.



CONTEMPORARY DESIGN

Contemporary design by definition is constantly changing. If two towns developed streetscape improvement projects ten years apart and both used well-designed contemporary elements, they would look different from each other. If the same two towns used pseudo-Victorian elements, they would resemble each other and each town would have weakened its sense of authenticity.

If good design is the standard by which streetscape elements are selected, they will be in harmony with well-designed historic buildings. Choose elements that are compatible in scale, color, and material with surrounding buildings and seek the visual liveliness that inspired the original builders.



Distinctive design elements on individual properties contribute to the liveliness of the entire downtown.



Historic design themes can be interpreted in contemporary materials to create distinctive street furnishings.



Design Guidelines

DESIGN GUIDELINES

Pedestrian Paths

Lighting

Trees

Parking

Street Furniture

Signs and Information

Design Guidelines

PEDESTRIAN PATHS

Principles

Accessibility is the most important aspect of pedestrian paths. Investing in decorative paving surfaces before correcting problems with accessibility would be inappropriate.

All paving surfaces require eventual replacement or, in the case of unit paving materials, resetting. In addition, pavements are frequently cut and patched for utility repairs. Pavement choices should be made with this in mind so that they can be matched or replaced in the future.

Paving has a primarily utilitarian function. Decorative features in paving historically focused more on individual properties, rather than on repeated unifying features. Allowing differences in pavement type and detail to occur may aid in avoiding a “revitalization look.”

Detailed Guidelines

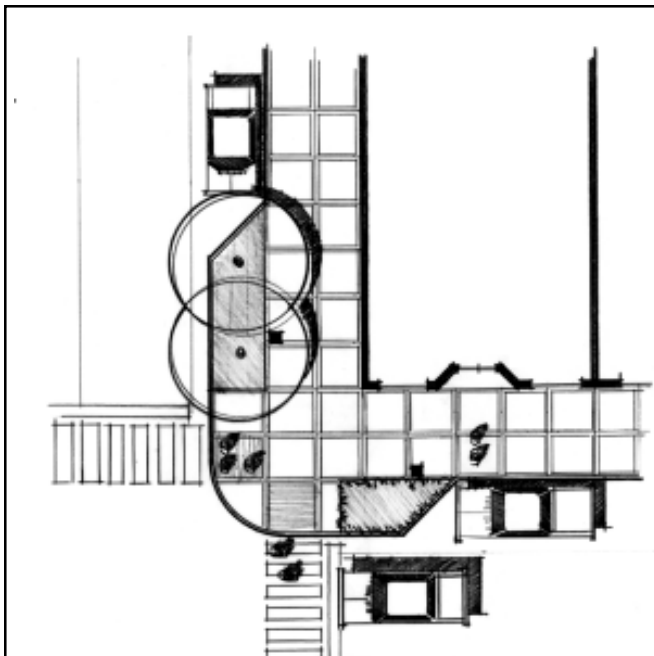
ACCESSIBILITY

Reference: United States Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board, *Accessibility Guidelines for Buildings and Facilities*

Reference: U.S. Department of Transportation, *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices*

Curbs at all intersections and crosswalks should be dropped to make them accessible to wheelchairs. Curb ramps should connect directly to the crosswalks; a diagonal ramp should not be built to give access to two perpendicular crosswalks.

All ramp slopes, cross-slopes on walks, widths, and other critical dimensions must meet the United States Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board, *Accessibility Guidelines for Buildings and Facilities*



Pedestrians are given a shorter crossing distance and an increased visual presence when intersections are designed for pedestrian safety. This diagram illustrates a typical corner sidewalk

Public entrances into downtown buildings should be accessible.

Accessible routes from parking areas to downtown destinations and between destinations should meet dimensional requirements for accessibility.

Elements that increase pedestrian safety and convenience should be considered wherever possible.

Examples include:

- walks that are widened at intersections to create shorter crosswalks
- mid-block crosswalks on longer blocks, where safe crosswalks can be built
- paving strips that emphasize the pedestrian crosswalk
- low, visually non-obstructive plantings near the ends of crosswalks to bring attention to pedestrian crossings.

Well designed curb ramps lead directly onto crosswalks.



Curb ramps that do not align with crosswalks place pedestrians in dangerous situations.





Mid-block crosswalks must be designed with sidewalk extensions or parking restrictions so that pedestrians are clearly visible to drivers, and so that the crossing distance is as narrow as possible.



Mid-block crossings that conceal pedestrians behind parked cars create dangerous conflicts.

BICYCLE ROUTES

Utilitarian bicycle travel offers mobility, autonomy, and door-to-door service in urban settings. Connectivity of bicycle facilities in downtown areas is important. Bike lanes, shared use paths, and wide curb lanes accommodating bicycle travel should be planned with community destinations in mind.

Bicycle racks should be built in locations that are convenient for cyclists and safe for pedestrians

All bicycle facilities should be designed according to the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet's Bicycle and Pedestrian Policy and the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, *Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities*.

MATERIALS

Historic paving materials should be documented in downtown before paving choices are made. The historic paving material should be used as a model for contemporary paving, if it is of a material suitable to contemporary construction and accessibility standards. Special existing paving features which may include street numbers, steps, building name inlays, or decorative details should be retained if sidewalks or other pathways are rebuilt. The same details should be considered as a local model for other similar features on downtown walks.

Contemporary decorative paving materials should be avoided if they are incompatible in color or design with existing buildings. The expense of maintaining paving materials should be a primary consideration in their selection. Paving materials should be chosen that can be relaid or duplicated in the future when inevitable utility repairs are made.

Paving inlays and other features specific to a building or location provide detail without an obligation to maintain a paving pattern throughout a commercial district.



Design Guidelines

LIGHTING

Principles

The first objective in lighting downtown streets is to evenly light travel lanes with the minimum illumination required by the Transportation Cabinet or by local ordinance. Pedestrian walks should then be provided with pools of light at a higher level of illumination than the road surface. Lighting from storefront displays should be used as an adjunct to pedestrian-scale pole lighting to provide pedestrian illumination.

Streets should not be over-illuminated to the point that building interiors are negatively affected. Pole height, luminaire type, and luminaire power will all affect light levels in buildings. False historicism in lighting style should be avoided.

Detailed Guidelines

STYLE

If historic light fixtures specific to a downtown can be accurately documented and duplicated, the historic fixture should be used in a manner similar to its original purposes, locations, and quantities.

If no documentation is available, or a historic fixture cannot be duplicated, then a contemporary pedestrian lighting fixture should be used. Contemporary fixtures should be selected that are compatible in scale and color with the existing architectural features, but should not be selected to imitate a period.

In situations such as parking lots, where lighting was not historically present, contemporary fixtures should be selected. When historic light fixtures or contemporary pedestrian lighting cannot provide adequate illumination for road surfaces, unobtrusive contemporary fixtures should be selected to provide supplemental street surface lighting.



Historic light fixtures should be used when they can be accurately documented and reproduced.



Lighting from storefronts can provide much of the illumination needed for pedestrians, but requires coordination for consistency.

Contemporary lights that are compatible with historic environments may be chosen because they interpret historic design ideas, they are in keeping with the character of other elements, or they are unobtrusively simple.



PLACEMENT AND HEIGHT

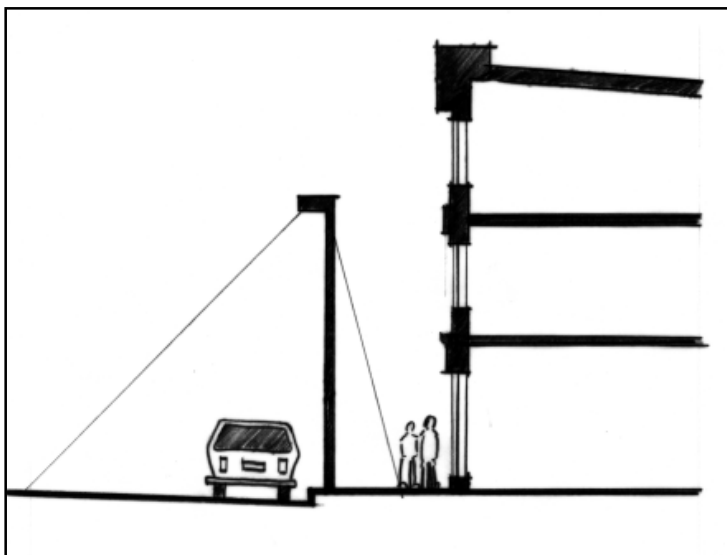
If a historic fixture is used, the original pole height should be duplicated. If a contemporary fixture is used, the height should be set so that light does not shine into second floor windows and so that the fixture does not interfere with the view of the building sign band at the top of the first floor.

If taller fixtures are used to supplement street surface lighting, their height, placement, and cut-off angle should be designed to prevent directing light into building windows on either side of the street.

Traffic signals should not be placed on poles and arms which are designed in historic styles pre-dating the use of traffic lights. Traffic signals must be placed according to the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices*.



Contemporary light fixtures should be used for higher-level street lighting.



Street lights should not shine into upper story windows.

Design Guidelines

TREES

Principles

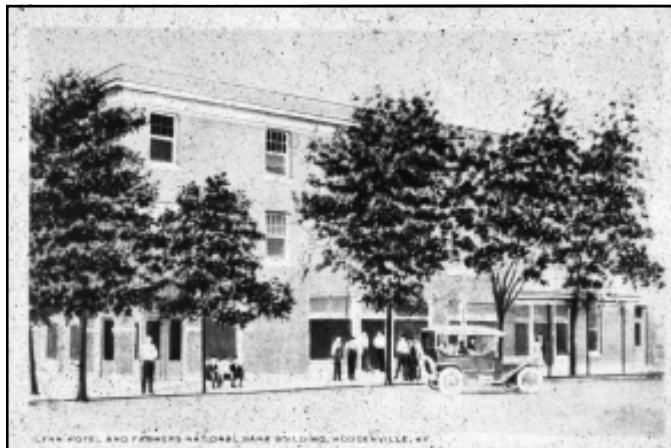
Trees have important functional and spatial roles in downtowns. Trees should be planted in front of parking lots or other areas without street-edge building facades, to maintain the traditional mass-space pattern along downtown streets. They should be used in a similar manner where tree-shaded residential zones at the edges of downtowns have been converted into business uses. Parking lots and downtown parks benefit from shade tree plantings, and trees and shrubs can also be used to screen parking areas. Most towns have places that were historically landscaped, such as courthouse squares.

These areas should be well-landscaped and maintained.

In larger downtowns, where residential areas with street trees may be distant, trees planted in restricted “islands” can bring the benefits of trees into the downtown without the conflicts associated with rows of street trees.

The period of significance for downtown historic districts should be used as a guide for documenting the history of the downtown landscape and for assessing the appropriateness of proposed plant material types and locations.

Street trees and other plantings were a historic part of many commercial centers, but usually were restricted to particular buildings or spaces.



Trees grouped in islands have better survival rates and can create greater positive impacts on specific areas than can trees dispersed along a street.



Detailed Guidelines

Historic documentation should be used to determine if there were tree plantings associated with particular buildings or areas of the downtown.

Trees should be planted only where it is possible to provide the soil volumes necessary to support the intended tree size. A commonly used recommendation in Kentucky is to provide 25 square feet of soil area that has been dug approximately four feet deep (100 cubic feet) for a small tree. Trees expected to grow larger need more soil volume. Urban tree authority James Urban recommends a 100-square-foot area dug four feet deep (400 cubic feet) for medium and large trees expected to reach maturity. Volumes of this size are available only with continuous tree lawns that may be found in areas on downtown perimeters. This high volume is mentioned to point out the unlikelihood that most downtown street trees will reach a mature size. Reference: James Urban, "Bringing Order to the Technical Dysfunction within the Urban Forest"

The use of trees should be primarily for environmental improvement, for example, to shade parking lots or to create spatial structure in downtown parks. Reference: Ned Crankshaw, "Integrating Street Trees into the Historic Small Downtown"

Trees should be planted in groups or islands of vegetation, when possible. Trees thrive in the larger soil volumes provided for a group and together they shade the soil. Islands in suitable locations

can support greater numbers of trees without the conflicts created by rhythmically spaced rows of street trees. Reference: Nina Bassuk and Peter Trowbridge, "Urban Islands"



Most tree roots grow very close to the surface and spread out over fairly large areas.



Trees are most useful when they are used for a positive environmental reason, such as shading large paved areas.

Evenly spaced rows of trees obscure signs and architectural features, destroying the historic spatial relationship of building and street.



Side streets and other areas with unarticulated building facades may be enhanced by street trees.



The branching structure of many small trees is so dense that they fill space, rather than create space. These tree forms are also favored nesting sites for birds.



Rows of trees should not be planted in front of commercial facades because they obscure architectural features and signs.

Side streets with unarticulated building facades may be an appropriate place to plant street trees for visual improvement and for shade, if adequate planting sites can be developed.

Major crosswalks may be appropriate places to widen sidewalks and create planting sites for shrubs; however, shrubs should not obscure the ability of pedestrians to be seen by motorists.

Several different tree species should be used in a single downtown. Monocultural plantings are subject to the same pests and diseases, and one popular species can become repetitive from town to town.

Tree species should be chosen with thought given to their mature size and the amount of space available on the site. In most cases, trees should be chosen whose mature size will fit within the volume constraints of a site. Tree species that are chosen strictly on this standard, however, may sometimes be the wrong choice. There are situations where the form of a larger tree species is best suited for a particular site and purpose; in cases, planned removal and replacement must take place at the appropriate time.

Except in open park spaces, most street trees will never reach ultimate mature size before they die or are removed. Trees in urban environments require periodic replacement.

The branching structure and foliage density of tree species should be carefully

considered. Many commonly used urban trees are small in size but are so dense that, instead of framing space, they fill space and obscure views. Denser trees are also more likely to support bird nesting.

Trees that are planted should meet the guidelines of the *American Standard for Nursery Stock*. Reference: American Association of Nurserymen, *American Standard for Nursery Stock*

Pruning of trees should be done according to the National Arborist Association Standards. Reference: National Arborist Association, *Standards for Pruning Shade Trees, Guying of Shade Trees, Fertilizing Shade and Ornamental Trees, and Lightning Protection Installation for Shade Trees*



Plants in containers can be a choice in areas where plants are desired but space is limited. In this case, plant material serves to punctuate important places along the sidewalk, such as curb ramps. Containers should be chosen for durability and compatibility, and plant material should be chosen for four-season attractiveness.



Areas with generous open space should be well planted with shade trees to create cool oases in commercial districts.

Design Guidelines

PARKING

Principles

Parking is paired with building preservation as the most important consideration in downtown design. Parking quantity receives a great amount of attention, but parking organization and management are equally important. Assessing parking quantities and developing parking management strategies are well addressed in the book *The Parking Handbook for Small Communities*. Goals and guidelines for parking organization will be addressed here. The way parking is arranged and designed determines the perception of availability and convenience. Reference: John Edwards, *The Parking Handbook for Small Communities*

Considerations for parking arrangement include:

- providing maximum on-street parking for downtown visitors
- sequencing parking areas so that if one area is full, a driver can easily get to the next area
- ensuring that all parking is within 450 feet of the most trafficked and commercially viable areas

Reference: Ned Crankshaw, "Spatial Models for Parking and Pedestrian Access in Historic Downtowns: a Preservation and Design Perspective"

Considerations for design include:

- making parking areas well lit, landscaped, and attractive destinations
- developing strong pedestrian connections between parking areas and the destinations of downtown visitors
- providing adequate numbers of handicapped parking spaces
- placing bicycle racks where appropriate

Reference: United States Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board, *Accessibility Guidelines for Buildings and Facilities*

Detailed Guidelines

On-street parking should be maximized. Research has shown that on-street parking is desired enough by shoppers and others that even some traffic constriction is worth having more on-street parking.

Parking meters should not be prematurely removed for aesthetic reasons. Parking management studies have shown that meters are a useful method for regulating parking times. Before removing an available parking management tool, a professional evaluation of downtown parking should be made.

Parking should be neither under nor over supplied. Problems with under supply are well known. Over supply is also detrimental because of the negative impact on building stock and the appearance of an under-used downtown.

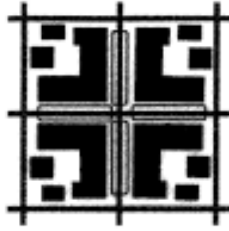
Buildings should not be demolished to create parking.

The continuity of street edges should be minimally impacted by parking location and design.

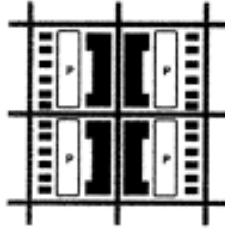
Parking areas that adjoin street edges without any screening will negatively affect the street corridor.



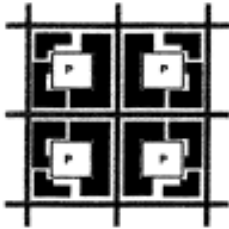
Parking Patterns



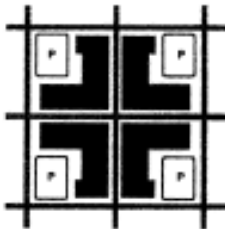
On-Street



Alley



Block Interior



Quadrant

Organize parking so that it follows a pattern logical for a particular town. Patterns may include expanded diagonal parking on side streets, parking lots in the interiors of all downtown blocks, parking areas lining alleys in the downtown, or parking in a predictable location in every block surrounding the center of the downtown.

The walking experience after leaving a car in a parking lot should be as convenient as the auto access to the parking. Avoid creating paths through undesirable or threatening areas. Design parking and paths so that destinations are visible early in the walk. Link paths and downtown park spaces, if possible, to create a lively pedestrian environment.

If parking is located behind commercial buildings, coordinate private improvements so that they have a positive impact on the visual quality of the parking area. Building owners should consider creating rear entrances where appropriate.

Landscape parking areas appropriately. Emphasize pedestrian areas with planting, paving, or other elements. Provide shade, especially in waiting and drop-off areas. Where parking abuts a street, develop plantings or structures between the parking area to continue the street wall.



Parking behind commercial buildings can be coordinated with other improvements to create good pedestrian connections.

Organizational patterns for downtown parking include on-street parking, block interior parking, parking arranged along alleys, and parking in a consistent pattern of quadrants in several downtown blocks.

PARKING DESIGN

Parking lots should be designed to fit the needs of automobile drivers and pedestrians, instead of becoming the simple paving over of available land. Good parking design requires careful consideration of a given site. The following are some basic guidelines for design.

Two-way travel is generally preferred in aisles.

Spaces should be between 8 to 9 feet wide by 18 to 20 feet long. The travel aisles should be between 20' to 22' wide.

Continuous circulation is preferred over lot design that requires drivers to back out when no spaces are available.

Islands for shade trees and other landscaping should be developed in the interior of all but the smallest (20 or fewer cars) parking lots. Islands can take the form of many small areas parallel with the parking spaces, or long strips perpendicular to the parking spaces. Islands should be used at the ends of rows of parking spaces to separate parked cars from moving cars.

All parking areas should use architectural or planted edge treatments to avoid interrupting the street edge.

The leftover areas created between the parallel edges of the parking layout and the irregular edges of a property should not be paved, but should be used for landscaping, pedestrian space, or other creative uses.

Accessible pedestrian connections should be designed into parking lots. Pedestrians should not be forced to compete with cars at the entrance of a larger parking lot.

Multiple pedestrian outlets allow more efficient foot travel between a parking lot and various destinations.

All parking areas should be landscaped appropriately to screen the parking areas, and to create a suitable pedestrian environment.



Design Guidelines

STREET FURNITURE

Principles

Street furniture includes elements such as benches, trash containers, tree guards, bike racks and above-ground planters. Street furniture serves functional purposes, and as such, is not primarily decorative. The goal in selecting and placing street furniture is for it to serve its purpose as effectively as possible. Effective placement of elements should be based on an understanding of existing and future patterns of use. Good quality furnishings are expensive and should be carefully targeted to those places where they are most needed.

Detailed Guidelines

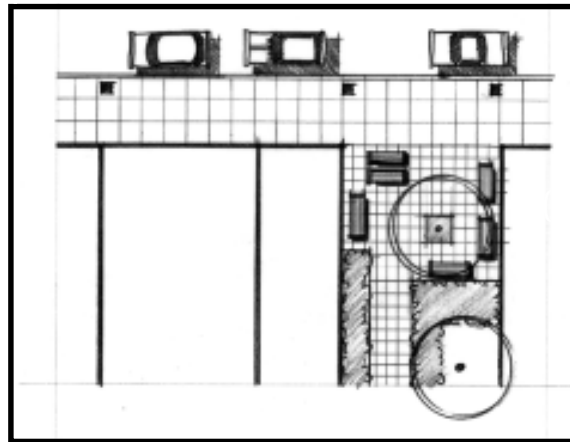
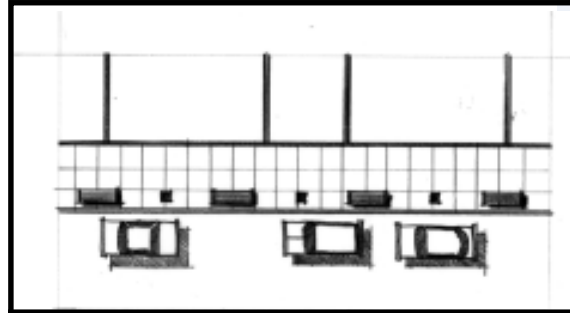
STYLE

Extant historic street furniture should be evaluated for its ability to remain serviceable. Individual elements, while they may not become part of a pattern of new street furnishings, give identity to individual downtowns. Repair of existing elements should receive a high priority.

If duplicates or reproductions of extant or accurately documented historic street furnishings can be produced, they should be considered rather than stock furnishings.

Period furnishings, such as “mock-Victorian” styles, should be avoided.

When reproductions of historic furnishings are not possible to document or produce, simple contemporary elements should be used. Contemporary furnishings should be compatible in scale and color with existing architectural and landscape features.



Street furnishings are commonly used to create pattern and repetition in street corridors. Elements placed in this manner rarely achieve their functional potential.

When benches and other street furnishings are placed in ways that facilitate use, they fulfill their functional purpose.

Good seating arrangements include angled configurations that encourage conversation.

Extant historic street furniture contributes to the identity of downtowns.

**Contemporary furnishings
may recall historic styles
without imitating them.**



**Period furnishings
create a false
emphasis on one
favored time period.**



PLACEMENT

Street furnishings should not obstruct pathways. Reference: United States Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board, *Accessibility Guidelines for Buildings and Facilities*

Functionalism in placement should receive a high priority. Placing furnishings primarily to create patterns of design elements should be avoided.

Benches should be grouped to create functional seating in downtown parks or other places that are desirable environments for sitting. Placing benches in inhospitable locations where they are unlikely to be used should be avoided.

Newsstands, mailboxes, and similar functional elements on sidewalks should be in consolidated locations wherever possible.

Express delivery service drop-offs and other similar structures should not cause the removal of parking spaces or substantially narrow the sidewalk. Their design and placement should involve both aesthetic and safety considerations.

Public art historic to a town should be preserved on its original site. New artwork, when proposed, should be used as focal points in public spaces and in areas with adequate pedestrian accessibility.

Public art, whether two- or three-dimensional, should be subject to broad review and consensus, should represent high standards of design and execution, and should consider issues of maintenance and longevity.



Newspaper boxes, mailboxes, express delivery drop-offs and other commercial elements on streets should be given careful placement so that they remain visible, but are not obtrusive.



Sculptural pieces may function for seating or other uses.



Relics, like this water trough, assume a sculptural role when retained in public spaces.

Art whose creation includes members of a community may be more deeply valued by the community. These hand prints enliven a pedestrian tunnel under a railway.



Public art, whether two- or three-dimensional, should be used as an organizing element in public spaces. The bell in the photograph above and the sign painted on a wall in the photograph below are important elements of pedestrian spaces.



Design Guidelines

SIGNS AND INFORMATION

Principles

There are two major categories of signs in downtowns: private advertising and identifying signs, and public informational, regulatory, and directional signs. Private signs should be compatible with architectural features. Their diversity should enliven the public environment of a downtown.

Public signs should be minimally intrusive in the downtown. Wherever it is possible to consolidate groups of signs or eliminate redundant signs, it should be done. Traffic signs must be placed in accordance with the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices*.

Detailed Guidelines

PRIVATE SECTOR SIGNS

Sign ordinances should be adaptable enough to allow creative use of design and materials and should not force uniformity of appearance. Most Kentucky downtowns are not representative of a single time period or style. Private signs, like the buildings, should be representative of a range of styles and periods. The most important issue in sign design is how an individual sign relates to the building on which it is placed.

Signs on commercial properties should be carefully considered to fit within architectural spaces and features. Sign bands should be utilized where available. If not, window signs may be more appropriate than a sign that intrudes on architectural features. Many sign ordinances include dimensional restrictions that would not require a sign to fit within the appropriate area on a specific building.

Unarticulated side walls of buildings have been used historically for painted advertising signs. Where these signs are extant, they should be preserved. There may be opportunities for the development of new signs in a similar manner through conditional use or variance provisions in sign ordinances. Allowances for historic signing techniques in downtown areas should be investigated for sign ordinances, but with due caution.

Sign materials should be of a quality and material type appropriate to the building fabric on which they will be placed.



Sign materials should relate to the building fabric on which they are placed. This sign is printed on a clear acetate sheet, giving it a sense of impermanence.

Functional fabric awnings are appropriate locations for business identification. Narrow-width plastic awning signs are incompatible with historic buildings.

Private signs should not be voluntarily coordinated into a uniform design system.

Functional fabric awnings were original features to many downtown buildings. Awnings provide an alternate space for business identification.



Narrow plastic awnings are incompatible with the materials of historic commercial buildings, and provide no weather protection benefit.



PUBLIC SECTOR SIGNS

All regulatory traffic signs and street name signs must be designed and placed in accordance with the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices*. Reference: U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices*

Consolidation of street signs or regulatory signs can be part of a streetscape plan; placement requires approval from the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet.

Banners should be carefully considered before being implemented. They require a continuing funding commitment, and the same amount of money spent on building facades may create as much visual improvement.

The scale of banners should be proportional to other streetscape elements.



Street signs and regulatory signs often can be consolidated and reorganized. In this case they are also removed from street level.



Public signs can become so cluttered that they become difficult to read and obscure views.



Banners scaled appropriately will become part of the pedestrian-level street entourage.

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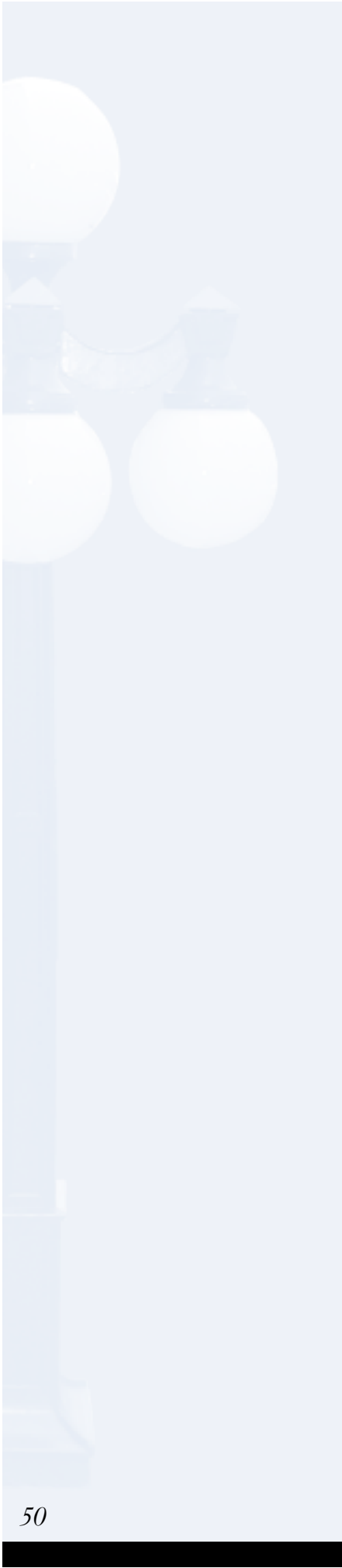
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