

DOWNTOWN URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES

CITY OF ST. CATHARINES 2012

ABOUT THE GUIDELINES

The Downtown Urban Design Guidelines establish site, building and streetscape design expectations for both private and public sector development within the Downtown St. Catharines. The guidelines detail expectations for the arrangement, shape and appearance of new development to help manage the Downtown's evolving built environment and to direct these changes in a positive, sensitive manner.

These guidelines have been prepared in consultation with community stakeholder groups and are reflective of the Downtown design objectives described in both the Garden City Plan and the Creative Cluster Master Plan.

These Urban Design Guidelines are not intended to substantially restrict the creativity of designers in responding to the challenges of a given site. Rather they provide a framework for helping to ensure that design solutions are compatible with the character of Downtown St. Catharines and support revitalization objectives. These guidelines are intended to be flexible enough in intent, interpretation, and application to allow for and encourage creative solutions.

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

The Downtown Urban Design Guidelines have generally been developed to help implement the following key design and development objectives:

1. Create a beautiful, comfortable, accessible, and safe pedestrian environment that promotes walking as the principal means of transportation.
2. Create a desirable built environment to live, work and do business by improving livability and enhancing investments.
3. Support Downtown's role as a dominant retail centre and as the civic and cultural heart of the City.
4. Preserve and build upon Downtown's significant human-scaled built and cultural heritage resources.
5. Maximize the use of the public realm as a venue for civic life by creating a more attractive, vibrant and diverse environment.
6. Promote lush and interesting greening opportunities which support the Garden City image.

Application of the Design Guidelines

The Downtown Urban Design Guidelines will be utilized as follows:

Review of Development Applications

The guidelines will outline minimum site layout and building design expectations for all developments which require planning approvals. This includes new building construction, major additions and new parking lots (via site plan control), as well as applications for minor variances. Development projects will be required to implement the guidelines prior to or as conditions of approval.

Major development projects may be required to submit an Urban Design Brief which outlines how the development proposal reflects the provisions on these guidelines and provides justification for any proposed deviations.

Review of CIP Grant Applications

Through the Community Improvement Plan program, City may provide façade improvement grant funding. These guidelines outline façade design requirements and will be used to review the merits of these, or similar, CIP applications.

Applications for facade improvement grants will be reviewed relative to the design principles described in Part 1 of these guidelines.

Design and Approval of Municipal Works

The guidelines provide direction for the design and management of the public realm, including streets, sidewalks and public spaces, with a focus on creating a comfortable, beautiful, and pedestrian-oriented environment. These guidelines will be considered in the design and management of future public works within Downtown St. Catharines.

Interpretation

Area-Specific Guidelines

The guidelines document contains both general provisions that apply across the Downtown, as well as additional targeted provisions for key clusters and distinctive character areas. When dealing with sites located in one of these “character areas”, the applicant should implement both the general and the site specific guideline requirements. If there are any conflicts between the general and the area-specific guidelines, the area-specific guidelines should prevail.

By-law Conflict

Where there is a conflict between any of the design guidelines and the provisions of the zoning by-law, the zoning by-law shall prevail. The same applies to the sign by-law, or other relevant municipal by-law. These guidelines may however be used to help justify a minor variance application if required.

Weight of Provisions

The text of each guideline provision will generally include one of three weighted qualifiers. These qualifiers indicate priority and level of flexibility as follows:

Shall: The “shall” guidelines are mandatory and generally reflect policies taken directly from the Garden City Plan or that will be included in the zoning by-law. These guidelines are the least flexible and will require justification from the applicant to vary. As these provisions are generally tied to zoning requirements, approval from the Committee of Adjustment or Council would be required to deviate.

e.g. “Building **shall** have a minimum height of two stories at the street edge”

Should: The “should” guidelines represent expected outcomes, but some flexibility and trade-offs may be appropriate on a case-by-case basis where a superior design may result. The “should” guidelines represent required elements for approval, unless good cause can be demonstrated to deviate.

e.g. “The height of a retail storefront **should** be at least 4.0 metres, but not greater than 5.5 metres”

Encouraged: The “encouraged” guidelines do not need to be satisfied to obtain development approvals. These guidelines describe desirable outcomes which will be supported, but may not be appropriate or feasible on all sites.

e.g. “The installation of awnings or canopies is **encouraged** to provide shelter and create more vibrant streetscapes”

Study Area

The area subject to the Downtown Urban Design Guidelines is identified on Figure 1. This area is limited to the core-area of the Downtown bound by St. Paul Street, Ontario Street, Church Street, and Geneva Street, as well and the lands which frame these edges.

The Downtown district as described in the Garden City Plan is much larger, extending northward to the Welland Avenue and eastward to Tasker Street. The Yates and Queen Street heritage conservation districts have been excluded as they already feature strict design controls. Remaining lands outside the study area such as along Welland Avenue and Queenston Street, which reflect a different function and character, will be addressed through future urban design guidelines for Mixed Use Corridors.

Figure 1
Lands subject to the Downtown
Urban Design Guidelines



PART 1 BUILDING DESIGN

Part 1 Design Themes:

1.1 Form Guidelines

- Building Height
- Street Wall
- Building Massing
- Corner Buildings
- Adverse Building Impacts

1.2 Detailing & Character Guidelines

- Architectural Detailing & Character
- Storefront Design
- Windows & Doors
- Exterior Finishes
- Colour Usage
- Balconies
- Rooflines and Rooftops
- Built Heritage Resources

SECTION 1.1 BUILDING FORM

Buildings within the Downtown will contribute to the district's urban character through appropriate scale and massing.

The size and shape of buildings are key factors in creating a community that functions as a dynamic, pedestrian-oriented downtown. The style of buildings and their relationship to the street must work harmoniously with the public realm to create an attractive, liveable environment. Development should be human-scaled, with buildings framing and orientated towards the street and public spaces. Buildings will also be used to frame key intersections and gateways to the community.

Development in close proximity to neighbouring residential areas will need to provide an appropriate transition into these low-rise forms and more intensive development within the central core should communicate this location's prominence within the community.

The following policies deal directly with built form and how the thoughtful siting and massing of new structures will complement existing buildings and the public realm.



BUILDING HEIGHT

1.1.1 Minimum Height

Buildings shall have a minimum height of two storeys at the street front to help ensure the creation of cohesive streetscapes and a consistent minimum level of street enclosure. The second floor will be finished, usable floor space. The use of false upper storeys with or without faux windows is not acceptable.

1.1.2 Height at Street Edge

To maintain a comfortable pedestrian scale buildings will generally be two to six storeys in height along the street edge, with taller elements stepping back into the property.

1.1.3 Angular Plane Height Limit

Additional building height may be provided where upper floors are setback and terraced so as to fall within a 1:1 (45 degree) angular plane, to be measured from the opposite street line.

1.1.4 Height Transitions

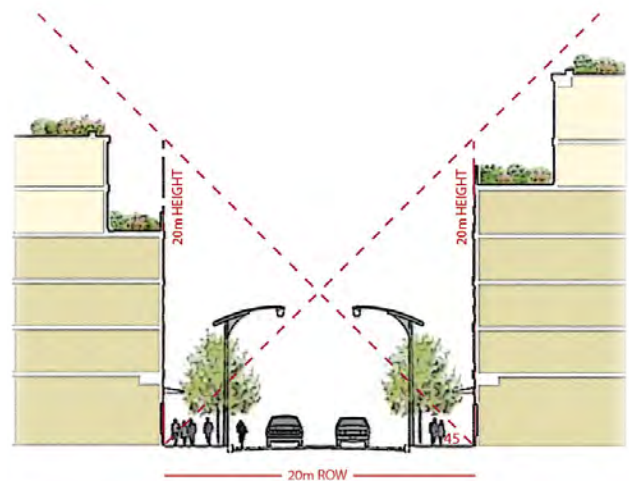
Provide transitions in building heights between shorter and taller buildings through appropriate massing and avoid abrupt significant height changes.

Taller buildings should transition downwards where they abut low-rise development through the use of terracing or stepped building heights.

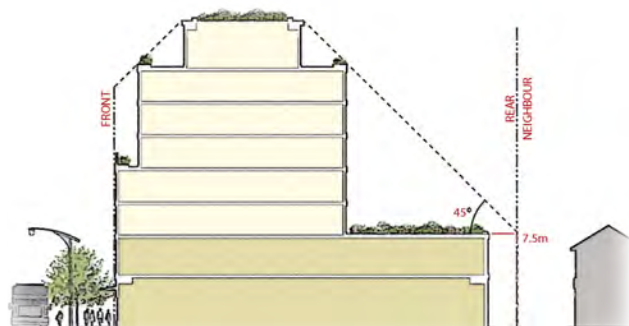
Where a development site abuts lands outside of the Downtown Urban Design Guidelines area, the maximum building height shall fall within a 45 degree angular plane, to be established at a height of 7.5 metres above the abutting side or rear yard.



Buildings should be two to six storeys in height at the street edge, with taller elements setback.



Building mass should be contained ROW within 1:1 (45 degree) angular plane height limit.



Provide height transitions between Downtown and adjacent residential neighbourhoods.

STREET WALL

1.1.5 Building Orientation

Buildings shall be aligned parallel to the street edge with main entrances facing and directly connected to the public sidewalk.

1.1.6 Building Frontage

Buildings will be used to fully frame the street edge and to create cohesive, enclosed, street corridors. New buildings should be placed along the maximum extent of both the front and flankage property lines. Gaps between buildings should be avoided, except those used for laneways, walkways, and/or public space.

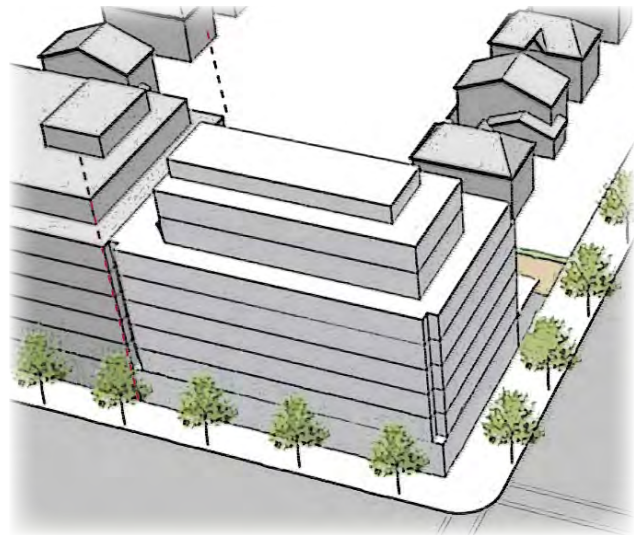
1.1.7 Building Setbacks

Buildings will generally be located close to the street, reflecting the setbacks of adjacent buildings.

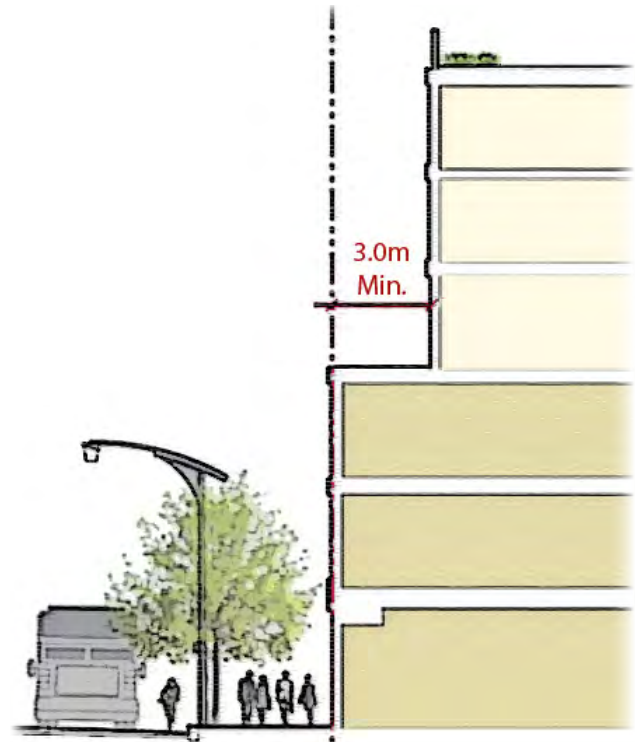
Buildings setbacks may vary slightly from neighbouring properties but should fall within a limited range in order to create a visually cohesive streetscape. Deeper setbacks may be permitted for increased pedestrian access or active outdoor use, such as a courtyard at-grade or patio space.

1.1.8 Building Podium

Buildings taller than six storeys should include a well-defined podium section along the street frontage. Floors above the podium should be setback at least 3.0 metres from the front edge of the podium.



Buildings should be positioned to fully line the street, with minimal gaps in the streetwall and generally consistent buildings heights and setbacks.



Floors that project above the traditional street wall should be setback at least 3.0 metres from the front building edge.

BUILDING MASSING

1.1.9 Building Components

Buildings will be visually divided into smaller, identifiable parts to reflect a more human scale and the traditional development pattern. Each building should contain distinctive base, middle and top sections. The construction of large flat walls will be avoided through appropriate vertical and horizontal articulation. This principle applies to both small and large structures.

1.1.10 Vertical Articulation

- a. **BASE SECTION:** The base building section will establish scale and character at street level. The base section should be visually distinguishable from upper floors through the use of appropriate detailing (refer to 1.2.7).

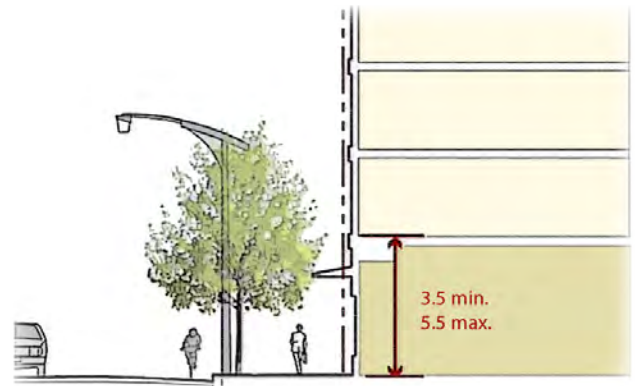
Active uses should be located within the base section to enhance the building's relationship to the public realm. Active uses include, but are not limited to storefronts, cafes/restaurants, lobbies and community uses.

Larger residential or office buildings may have taller base sections that form a building podium, with sections of its own.

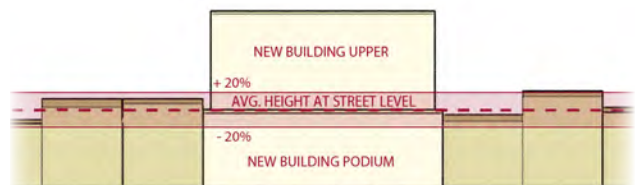
- b. **MIDDLE SECTION:** The middle building section typically houses the upper residential or office uses which are only accessed internally via a street-level lobby or gallery.
- c. **TOP SECTION:** The top building section is typically the smallest and includes the building's top cornice and roof structure and/or architectural cap. This section may also include penthouse space and/or tower elements.
- d. **GROUND FLOOR:** Provide higher ground floor heights for flexibility to accommodate a range of uses. The ceiling height on the ground floor should be at least 3.5 metres, but should not exceed 5.5 metres.
- e. **PODIUM HEIGHT:** Building height at the street edge should generally be within 20% of the average height of neighbouring buildings on the block.



Each building should include a distinct base (storefront), middle (apartments or offices) and top (roof and penthouse) section.



Provide higher ground floor heights (3.5 to 5.5m) to provide consistent scale and to allow usage flexibility.



Provide building heights along the street edge that reflect those of other existing or planned buildings on the block.

1.1.11 Horizontal Articulation

- a. BUILDING WIDTHS: New buildings should reflect the pattern and rhythm of traditional narrow Downtown lot widths. Wider buildings should be visually broken into smaller building modules. The maximum width of a building module should not exceed 10.0 metres.
- b. BUILDING MODULES: Appropriate techniques to divide larger buildings into smaller, pedestrian-scaled modules include but may not be limited to:
 - i. Using vertical architectural elements such as pilasters or columns to break up the building frontage into smaller sections;
 - ii. Varying the height of building modules, including cornices and roof lines;
 - iii. Varying building materials and/or colours between modules;
 - iv. Slightly varying building setbacks; and/or
 - v. Incorporating multiple storefronts at grade.

1.1.12 Façade Relief

Variation in three-dimensional building elements such as thick mouldings, cornices, recessed windows, balconies, bay windows, porches, prominent entrances, and other elements should be used to provide depth and variation to the building mass. Large, flat street-facing walls should be avoided.

1.1.13 Bulkiness

Where taller buildings are proposed (generally those greater than six stories), the floor plate above the podium (mid and top sections) should be restricted to reduce bulkiness. Slender towers are preferred over large block buildings of similar floor area. Slender buildings will reduce shadow impacts and support the creation of a more vibrant skyline.



Vertical Articulation: Use cornices, window designs, materials, colours, sign bands, or other techniques to divide the building into base, middle and top sections.



Horizontal Articulation: Use pilasters, columns, storefronts, varied heights, or other techniques to break-up wide buildings into smaller modules.



Example of one long building which has been visually broken down into smaller components through facade articulation, relief, and multiple storefronts.

CORNER BUILDINGS

1.1.15 Corner Massing

On corner properties, the building mass should be positioned close to the intersection. This positioning will help to frame and anchor the corner. Massing and articulation principles described in Section 1.1.10 shall apply to all street frontages on corner lots.

1.1.16 Corner Elements

The use of prominent vertical architectural features such as tower elements is particularly encouraged at corner lot locations in order to better frame the intersection and serve as visual landmarks. These building elements should be placed close to the intersection. Beveled or recessed building corners may also be appropriate as a means to create small public spaces.



Wrap corner buildings around both street frontages with consistent massing, openings, and detailing.

ADVERSE BUILDING IMPACTS

1.1.17 Sun Access

The design and orientation of buildings to maximize opportunity for attractive views and passive solar gain is encouraged, however buildings should first be designed to support the character of their surroundings.

1.1.18 Shadow Impacts

Buildings should be sculpted to minimize adverse shadow impacts on adjacent buildings, streets and parks through sensitive massing techniques.

Building should be designed so as not to cast shadows on any one public space or private amenity space for more than four consecutive hours in the spring, summer or fall months.

1.1.19 Wind Impacts

Tall buildings should be designed to minimize adverse wind impacts on the public realm. Wind studies may be required for specific projects to identify potential wind impacts and appropriate mitigation techniques.



Sculpt and align buildings to permit substantial sun access to streets and public spaces.

SECTION 1.2

BUILDING DETAILING & DESIGN CHARACTER

Place character is best expressed through the public realm and the buildings that frame it. This section of the design guidelines focuses on the later.

Downtown St. Catharines' rich history is reflected through its evolved built form and should be reflected in new development patterns as well. New construction should have an identifiable character that is distinguishable from the historic buildings, but that embraces the area's traditional patterns.

Smaller clusters within the Downtown should also be visually distinguishable from one another, but should contribute to the creation of a harmonious Downtown identity. A strong place character will be supported through the design policies outlined in this section.



ARCHITECTURAL DETAILING & BUILDING CHARACTER

1.2.1 Building Character

Building facades should be designed to support a strong sense of place by utilizing architectural patterns, colours, textures, and materials that create interest and a sense of identity.

Buildings should invite pedestrian activity, portray an image of permanence, and support the traditional character and function of the area.

Downtown is an evolving landscape and will include a mix of both traditional and modern architectural styles. Buildings will be distinct, but should relate to one another in terms of scale and relationship to the street. Use the past to help inform approaches to design, reinterpreting the local vernacular in a contemporary way.

1.2.2 Façade Components

Detailing and variation will be used to visually break-up walls that are visible from the street, public spaces or other buildings.

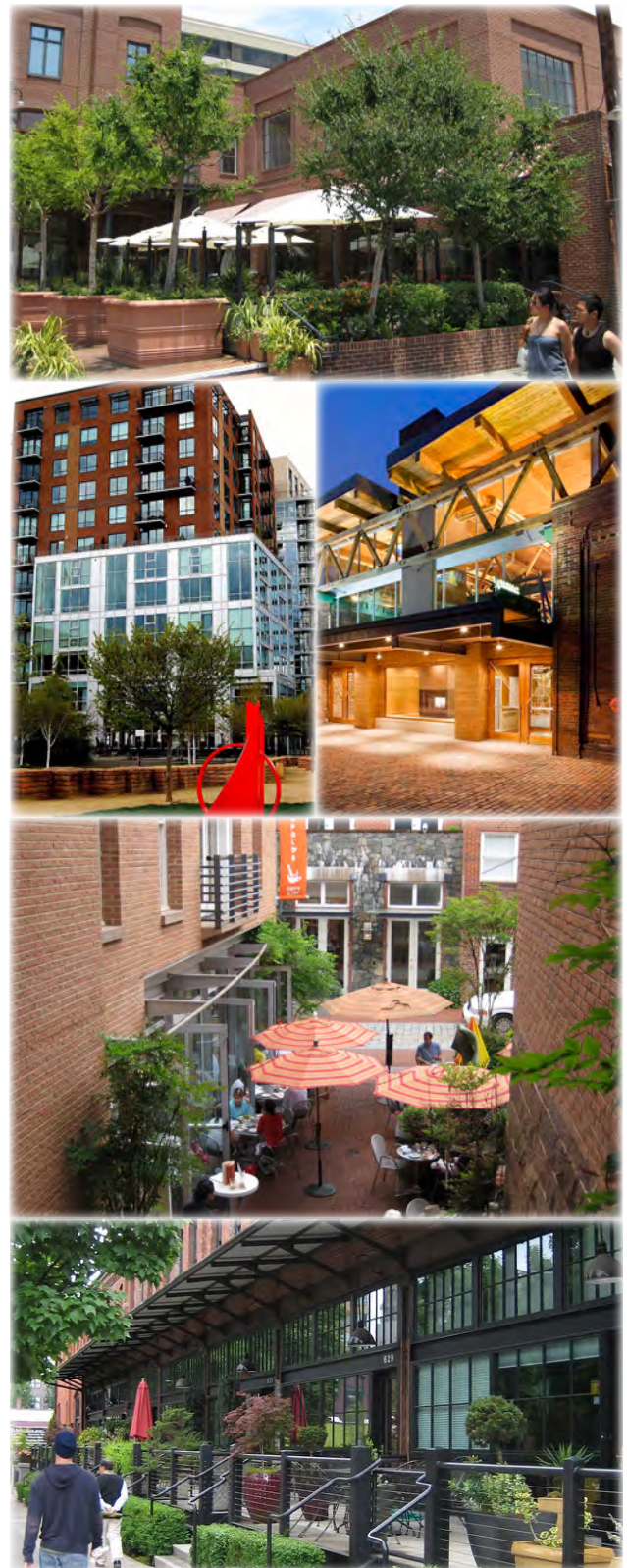
- a) **BASE SECTION:** The base section should feature storefronts, lobbies or reception areas, with prominent building entrances that face the street.

The base section should be capped with ornate sculpted banding (cornice) and should feature a substantial bulkhead or base panel along the foot of the building, below the storefront windows. This will visually anchor the building to the street.

The use of front porches or stoops is encouraged for private ground-oriented residential uses such as rowhouses.

- b) **MIDDLE SECTION:** The middle section will generally constitute the bulk of the building and include residential or office space. The middle façade section should include numerous windows that are typically grouped with a symmetrical rhythm relating to the major ground floor openings below.

- c) **TOP SECTION:** The top building section is where the front building wall meets the roof. The top section should be articulated with a substantial cornice or other appropriate technique fashioned of a different but complimentary material and/or colour as the main façade.



Mix traditional and modern architectural elements/styles in creative ways that build upon Downtown's existing character and promotes sense of place.

STOREFRONT DESIGN

1.2.3 Storefront Locations

Storefronts will line the traditional main streets within the Downtown and will also be integrated into the ground floor of larger commercial and residential structures throughout the core to maintain an active and interesting streetscape.

1.2.4 Storefront Entrances

Storefronts should include a barrier-free entrance at or near grade which is either recessed or covered by a cantilevered roof or awning. Each retail use should have independent street-level entrances.

Storefronts should be recessed no greater than 3.0 metres from the front building wall, except where this space is used for patio seating or outdoor merchandise display.

1.2.5 Storefront Height

The height of a retail storefront should be at least 3.5 metres, but not greater than 5.5 metres. This will help to facilitate a long term range of uses, while maintaining pedestrian scale.

1.2.6 Storefront Openings

Each storefront unit shall consist of no less than 60% openings (windows and doors) along the street frontage. This does not include opaque or reflective glazing.

1.2.7 Vacant Storefronts

Turnover, vacancy or renovation may result in the boarding-up of some storefronts. This practice is discouraged, but often inevitable. Creative methods of "dressing-up" these storefronts is encouraged which could include temporary display space for public art.



Example Downtown storefronts with large clear display windows, recessed entrances, cornice, sign band, and base panels.

WINDOWS AND DOORS

1.2.8 Building Entrances

Buildings should feature a prominent transitional space between the public realm and the front door. This can be achieved through raised and/or recessed entrances. The principal door should face and be visible from the street. Buildings located on the street line should include recessed entries.

The provision of barrier-free building entrances will be provided in accordance with applicable Provincial regulations and are encouraged for all uses.

1.2.9 Window Patterns

Windows should generally be largest on the ground floor. Ground level facades for all non-retail commercial uses should include at least 60% clear glazing that opens views from the street into active uses. The use of reflective glazing and window coverings (including window signs) is discouraged on the ground floor.

Upper floors will typically feature smaller windows, arranged in a consistent, often symmetrical pattern, with vertical orientation.

1.2.10 Window Types

The use of multi-paned window types on upper floors is encouraged, as is the use of arched windows.

The use of large single glass plates on upper floors should generally be avoided (except for curtain walls). Large glass sheets should be divided into smaller panes to better reflect established window patterns.

Window obstructions including air conditioner units and satellite dishes should be avoided.

1.2.11 Window Trim

Architectural treatments should be provided which may include but is not limited to the use of prominent sills, mouldings, flower boxes, soldier courses, key stones, recessing and/or shutters.

1.2.12 Planting Boxes

The use of projecting window flower boxes and/or planters along the storefront base panel (below the storefront windows) is encouraged. These elements provide both facade depth and greening.



Upper floor windows should have a vertical orientation, with smaller panes. They should be arranged symmetrically and reflect the location of ground floor openings.



Use mouldings, brickwork, sills and other details to add depth and character to windows.

EXTERIOR FINISHES & MATERIALS

1.2.13 Exterior Finish

Use quality, long lasting building materials and detailing for building faces.

For taller buildings, the podium section should be primarily constructed of “heavy” materials such as brick, stone, or metal, while the upper floors or tower portion should be primarily “lighter” materials such as glazing. This approach will help to visually anchor the building and support a more coherent streetscape.

1.2.14 Existing Buildings

Existing traditional building materials such as brick or stone should be cleaned and/or restored rather than covered over with paint or stucco where possible.

1.2.15 Materials to be Avoided

The following façade materials do not contribute to Downtown’s established place character and are generally discouraged:

- Cast concrete (except as accent or base)
- Concrete or similar masonry units
- Vertical or horizontal siding
- EIFS panels (limited use, above the podium, may be appropriate for residential projects)
- Board and baton



The use of light colours and/or materials on the upper floors of tall buildings can help to reduce their visual impact.



COLOUR USE

1.2.16 Colour Tones

Building colours should be selected that contribute to and enhance place character.

The strategic use of bold and lively colour accents is generally encouraged to support an image of vibrancy and to create visual interest.

1.2.17 Accent Colours

Buildings should utilize at least one contrasting accent colour or material for architectural features such as window frames, door frames, shutters, cornice and other mouldings, as appropriate.

The use of colour is encouraged as a means of promoting an image of vibrancy and creating sense of place.

BALCONIES

1.2.18 Balcony Styles

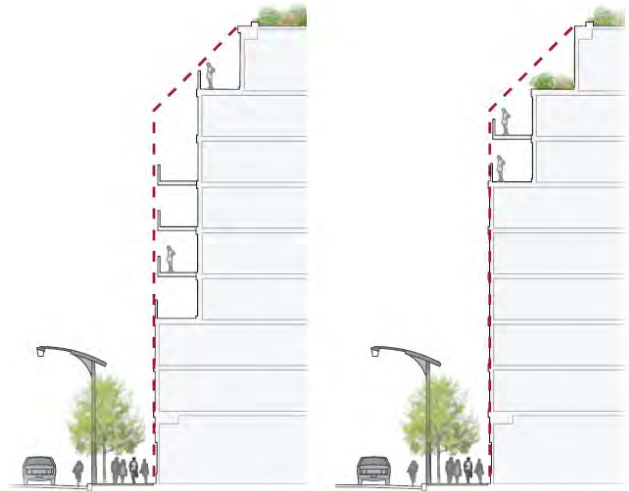
Within the podium section of any building, balconies should be integrated within the building façade through recessing or terraces.

Above the podium, balconies may project from the building wall. Any projecting balconies should however be contained within the angular planes described in section 1.1.

Where balconies are used on abutting tall buildings, balconies should be placed on opposite building orientations to improve privacy.

1.2.19 Balcony Materials

Where balconies project from an exterior building wall, they should be designed to minimize visual impact through the use of predominantly clear glazing. Shallow wrought iron or “juliette” balconies may also be appropriate on low rise buildings or sections.



Balconies should be contained within the 1:1 angular plane height limit described in sections 1.3 and 1.4.

ROOFLINES & ROOFTOPS

1.2.20 Roofing Design

Avoid the creation of large expanses of flat rooftops and create architecturally distinctive rooflines that contribute to place character.

For tall buildings, the use of varied and prominent roof designs is encouraged to contribute to the creation of a distinctive skyline.

1.2.21 Rooftop Equipment

Rooftop mechanical and communications equipment should be hidden from view at street level through screening or strategic positioning. The same approach should be taken with respect to any wind or solar collectors. Rooftop mechanical equipment should also be contained within any applicable angular plane.

1.2.22 Rooftop Uses

The use of rooftops for landscaping, amenity space, or urban agriculture is encouraged. This may include greenroofs, gardens and greenhouses.



Balconies should be recessed/integrated into the facade of low-rise buildings. Projecting balconies should use clear glazing.



Create distinctive and varied rooflines which also serve to screen views of any rooftop mechanical equipment.

BUILT HERITAGE RESOURCES

1.2.23 Traditional Character

The Downtown contains a number of historic buildings that express the area's development traditions and support sense of place. Historic buildings should be conserved and should remain visually distinguishable from new construction. The use of existing building stock may evolve, but these heritage resources will continue to define the Downtown's special character and the cultural identity of the City.

Traditional building forms rather than traditional materials and finishes can be used as an effective mechanism to balance new with old. Colours and materials should be selected that enhance or harmonize with the historic buildings.

1.2.24 Alterations

The distinctive qualities of existing building stock should be retained wherever possible. This includes architectural details such as windows, doors, bulkheads, cornices, parapets, mouldings, decorative masonry, and various other façade accessories. The removal of steps may however be appropriate as a means of improving accessibility.

Historic facade materials, particularly brick and stone, should also be preserved and exposed where possible.

1.2.25 Additions

New construction adjacent to or atop heritage buildings should be visually distinguishable from and subordinate to the heritage resource. The heritage building should be identifiable as a landmark, with new construction forming the background.

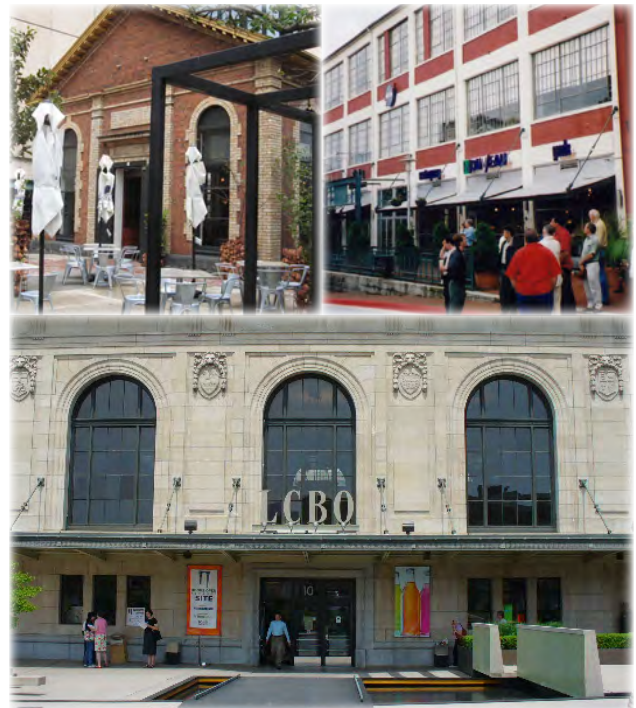
Modifications or additions to historic buildings should not diminish the building's cultural value.

1.2.26 Demolition & Salvage

Where demolition occurs, the use of salvaged building materials for use in landscaping, public art and/or new building construction is encouraged, where appropriate.

1.2.27 Designated Buildings

Where a building located with the Downtown is designated under the Ontario Heritage Act, the provisions of the Act and any associated reasons for designation shall prevail over any contrary provisions within this guideline document.



Find creative new uses for distinctive or significant old buildings.



Additions or significant alterations to historic building should be visually distinguishable from the original structure.

PART 2 SITE DESIGN

Part 2 Design Themes:

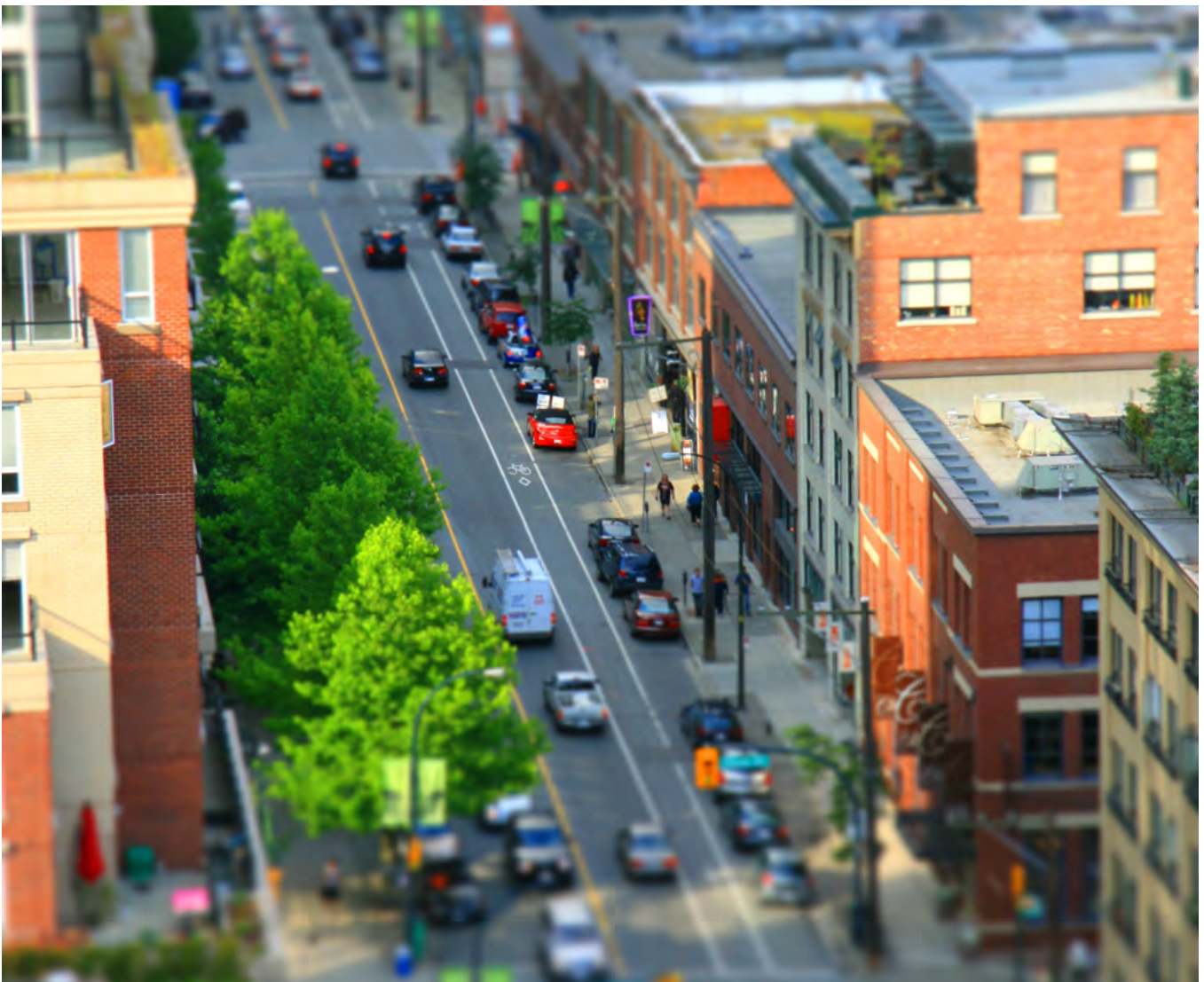
- Building Frontage & Setbacks
- Pedestrian Access & Walkways
- Amenity Space
- Bicycle Facilities
- Parking & Driveway Locations
- Parking Lot Screening
- Refuse & Utility Areas
- Fencing & Noise Walls
- Sustainable Development Practices

SITE DESIGN

The following provisions address the arrangement and functionality of building elements and supporting infrastructure on individual sites.

This includes how the building is placed on the site, its relationship to the street and neighbouring structures, the provision of greening and other surface elements, and appropriate locations for parking, driveways and services.

The thoughtful arrangement of buildings, parking and amenity spaces on each property is a critical aspect of supporting the Downtown's character and function.



BUILDING FRONTAGE & SETBACKS

2.1 Minimum Frontage

To establish consistent street wall and sense of enclosure for the public realm, buildings should be positioned close to the street and occupy a significant proportion of the property frontage.

To minimize gaps in the streetwall, buildings should occupy at least 80% of their respective lot frontage and 60% of the exterior side yard (flank) frontage on corner lots

2.2 Building Setbacks

Front yard setbacks for new buildings should generally reflect abutting properties; however minor variations or staggering may be desirable.

Buildings should be setback no greater than 5.0 metres, from the street line, except where the front yard is used as public space.

2.3 Side Yards

While side yard setbacks are not generally required for low buildings/sections (under six storeys), taller buildings should be setback at least 6.0 metres from the interior side yard. Where no side facing windows exist on the abutting or the new building, this setback may be reduced to 3.0 metres.

Large side yards should be avoided as they can create undesirable gaps in the streetscape.



Minimize building setbacks and gaps between buildings to create a consistent, enclosed, comfortable streetscape.

PEDESTRIAN ACCESS & AMENITIES

2.4 Pedestrian Access

Direct pedestrian access shall be provided between the building entrance and the public sidewalk. This connection will most commonly be provided via recessed entry, stoop, porch, or plaza. These entrances should be made barrier-free.

2.5 Walkways

Where buildings are set back from the street line, a pedestrian connection shall be provided via a concrete or pavestone walkway at least 2.0 metres in width. These walkways will provide an unobstructed path of travel and provide curb ramps at grade changes, with minimal cross-slope.

2.6 Open Space

For developments larger than 0.25 hectares in size, a portion of the property should be utilized as a public square, plaza, forecourt, courtyard, or other formal pedestrian space which is both visually and physically accessible from the sidewalk.

The depth of this public space should be no less than 4.0 metres. Large sites may utilize a single, large scale public space or of network of smaller spaces.

2.7 Private Amenity Areas

Within the Downtown, the public realm which includes the parks, plazas and streetscape will form the principal venue for outdoor activity and amenity space for Downtown residents, employees and users. The provision of substantial private yard space is generally not anticipated within the Downtown.

Private amenity space will generally be provided above grade (ie. balconies). The creative use of rooftops and building terraces as amenity space is encouraged. This may or may not include permanent landscaping.



If buildings/entrances are setback from the sidewalk, provide wide, barrier-free walkway links.

PARKING & DRIVEWAYS

2.8 Surface Parking Location

Surface parking lots represent an inefficient and unattractive land use and are discouraged within the Downtown.

Where surface parking is provided, it should be located to the rear of the building. Parking shall not be provided in the yards between the building and any street (except for laneways).

Residential buildings should utilize communal parking facilities (at grade and/or structured). Individual garages and driveways are discouraged, except where accessed via a laneway.

2.9 Driveway Locations

Driveway access should be limited to laneways or side streets where possible. Driveway access to arterial roads and primary pedestrian corridors within the Downtown should be avoided wherever possible to minimize interruptions to continual sidewalks and the streetscape.

No driveways, including drop-offs and drive-through aisles, shall be located between the building and any street (except for laneways).

2.10 Parking Lot Screening

Landscape buffers and/or screening shall be provided between any parking lot and the sidewalk, as well as adjacent sensitive uses.

Screening along the street edge should be decorative and support the street's character. This screening may be provided via dense landscaping, a low decorative wall, raised planting beds, and/or other technique, as appropriate.

2.11 Structured Parking Access

Access to parking garages should be provided via side streets or laneways where possible.

2.12 Structured Parking Ground Level

The street-facing façade of above-grade parking garages should contain active ground floor uses. The building design will incorporate architectural design elements and articulation that breaks up the mass of the structure and reflects the character of the surrounding streetscape including colour and materials.



Screen surface parking lots along the street edge through dense landscaping, decorative fencing, or low walls.



The ground floor of parking structures should contain active uses along the street edge.

2.13 Alternative Parking Facilities

The inclusion of a proportion of small or micro-car parking stalls with preferential placement is encouraged. This will aid in the more efficient use of Downtown land.

Preferential placement for car-pool vehicles and/or car share organizations is also encouraged.

2.14 Loading Docks

Locate loading areas to the rear of buildings and screened from public view. Where possible, loading areas should be accessed via rear laneways.

REFUSE & UTILITIES

2.15 Waste & Recycling Bins

Garbage and recycling should be stored internally wherever possible. Any outdoor garbage or recycling bins shall be fully contained within a garbage enclosure.

Garbage enclosures should be located exclusively to the rear of buildings and screened from public view.

2.16 Utilities

Servicing elements including hydro transformers, utility meters, HVAC equipment, and satellite dishes should be located inside the building or in inconspicuous locations that do not detract from the aesthetic appeal of the streetscape. Appropriate locations may include rear yards or rooftops.

Where utilities must be located in a front or flank yard, these elements should be screened with landscaping and/or ornate fencing, where feasible.



Locate loading areas to the rear of buildings, to be accessed via laneways. Loading docks should be screened from the street.

ON-SITE BICYCLE FACILITIES

2.17 Bike Racks

On-site bike racks should be provided on-site for larger developments. These racks should be placed in a highly visible location, close the main building entrance. Smaller retail and office uses can typically rely on the City's shared on-street bike racks.

Bike rack designs should be selected which reflect the character of the associated building/landscaping.

The provision of bicycle lockers is also encouraged where they can be placed so as not to obstruct pedestrian movements.

2.18 Indoor Bicycle Storage

Buildings are encouraged to incorporate indoor secure bicycle storage rooms to serve residents or employees.

FENCING

2.19 Fencing

Fencing construction of all types should generally be avoided within the Downtown. Exceptions include low ornate fencing that may be used to screen parking lots and utility equipment, or to enclose patios or landscaped areas.

Where fencing is required for public safety, such as along Highway 406, these fences should be designed to fit within the adjacent streetscape or park design. Noise walls should be avoided where possible or hidden with dense plantings.



The provision of bike lockers and/or secure indoor bike storage facilities is encouraged.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PRACTICES

Sustainability is a broad concept that encompasses environmental, economic and social objectives. Downtown St. Catharines, by virtue of its compact, walkable development pattern and diverse range of land uses and transportation choices already exhibits many of the underlying principles of sustainable development. Sustainability within the Downtown can and should however be improved through building and site design practices which contribute to the creation of more healthy communities.

2.20 Green Building Practices

The adoption of 'green' building technologies and construction materials is encouraged. Individual new buildings are encouraged to achieve LEED certification or similar standard. Any larger (multiple building) redevelopment plans should endeavour to achieve LEED Neighbourhood Development certification or reflect these design principles.

Choose quality buildings materials that are durable and selected for their high levels of energy conservation. The selection of low toxicity, locally-sourced, and/or recycled materials is as encouraged.

2.21 Renewable Energy Systems

The introduction of alternative energy sources is encouraged including solar and wind collectors. Any such technologies should be sensitively incorporated into building and community design and without unreasonable adverse impact on neighbouring uses or the public realm.

2.22 Sun Exposure

Where appropriate, buildings should be oriented to maximize opportunity for passive solar gain.

The use of reflective roof surface materials with high solar and thermal reflectivity is encouraged to help reduce "heat island" effects.

2.23 Surface and Roof Greening

Maximize the use landscaped areas such as gardens, living walls, and/or green roofs on buildings and structures. These soft surface areas improve local environmental conditions including reducing the urban heat-island effect, improving air quality, moderating sun and wind, and improving ground water infiltration. They may also provide habitat for urban wildlife.

2.24 Urban Agriculture

The incorporation of food production opportunities is encouraged throughout the Downtown. This includes but is not limited to community gardens, private gardens, greenhouses, roof-top gardens and edible landscaping programs. The infusion of urban agriculture throughout the community not only improves sustainability and aesthetics, but can also help build community.

2.25 Stormwater Management

The adoption of innovative and more sustainable stormwater management solutions for streets, roofs and parking areas should be investigated. Stormwater management strategies should be selected which provide an appropriate balance of performance, greening, and space efficiency.



Stormwater management techniques such as boulevard infiltration trenches can also provide greening.



Green roofs can also provide attractive outdoor amenity space.



Urban agriculture can provide substantial greening and build community.

PART 3 STREETSCAPE DESIGN

Part 3 Design Themes:

- Mobility in the Downtown
- Walkability & Pedestrian Priority
- Sidewalks and Crosswalks
- Barrier-Free Accessibility
- Street Trees and Landscaping
- Street Furniture & Lighting
- Overhead Wires and Utility Equipment
- Urban Parks & Open Spaces
- Street Retailing & Patios
- Awnings & Canopies
- Public Art
- Business Signage

STREETSCAPE DESIGN

Streets and the park/open space network form the two key components of the public realm which is the primary venue for outdoor amenity and public life in the Downtown. The streetscape can be most generally defined as the space between buildings. This includes elements such as sidewalks, lighting, furniture, signage, the road surface and trees.

While streets will continue to accommodate various levels of vehicular traffic, design priority should be on the pedestrian experience and should seek to create inviting, human-scaled environments that function as community living spaces rather than simply transportation corridors.

Trees, wide sidewalks, bike lanes, barrier-free pedestrian accessibility, and high quality of paving materials and street furniture all contribute to the creation of great streets.

The fine-grained street network will be a unifying element within the community. The public realm should be managed in a coordinated manner, and designed to complement and unify the built form as a cohesive space. The key objective of these guidelines is the creation of a beautiful, liveable urban environment.



MOBILITY IN THE DOWNTOWN

The approach to mobility and transportation planning in the Downtown should be based on creating and maintaining a network of context-sensitive streets that respond to and create a positive environment for pedestrians. While many users will arrive downtown via car, at some point they will each become pedestrians and will need to move safely and comfortably to their destination.

Conventional wide streets and free-flowing roads can be uninviting for pedestrians and cyclists due to auto-oriented scale and design speeds. In contrast, narrower enclosed streets can offer a more comfortable, pedestrian-oriented experience.

By balancing the needs of all street users, enhancing the public realm, and creating a vibrant community experience on the street, the City can promote more inclusive street design.

3.1 Pedestrian Priority

The safety, comfort, experience and speed of movement should be prioritized as follows, with all users sharing the limited right-of-way:

- 1) Pedestrian movement
- 2) Cycling movement
- 3) Transit movement
- 4) Car movement
- 5) Goods Movement

3.2 Vehicle Speeds

Speeds within Downtown and particularly along St Paul Street are encouraged to be kept low through both posted limits and calming techniques, as appropriate. Low average vehicle speeds help to create a non-threatening environment for both cyclist and pedestrians.

Providing a safe and comfortable environment for cyclists on the street, should also aid in deterring cycling on the sidewalk.

3.3 On-Street Parking

On-street parking should be promoted throughout the Downtown. On-street parking is considered an integral component of the Downtown's function and character.

Strategic gaps in on-street parking areas should be provided, as warranted, to facilitate loading zones, transit stops, pedestrian crossings, and/or traffic calming measures.



Hierarchy of transportation priorities in the Downtown, with pedestrian mobility, safety and comfort as the primary concern.

3.4 Movement Conflicts

Minimize the frequency and size of driveway crossings to reduce conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles. Street widths and turning radii should also be kept minimal to reduce vehicle speeds and crossing distance.

3.5 Sidewalks

Sidewalks should be provided throughout the downtown which maintain a wide, clear pedestrian path. Sidewalks will generally be constructed of concrete, however the use of pavers to add character and delineate edges is encouraged.

All sidewalks and associated street crossings should be made barrier-free through the use of appropriate curb ramps, tactile elements, and slope.

Where sidewalk repairs are required, care should be taken to select and install matching pavers/materials. The use of asphalt is discouraged on sidewalks, except where required as a temporary measure to address public safety.

3.6 Crosswalks

Enhanced pedestrian street crossings and traffic calming are encouraged as appropriate. These street crossings should be barrier-free and incorporate curb ramps and appropriate tactile and demarcation features. The extension of sidewalk surface materials and paving bands through intersections is encouraged.

3.7 Accessibility

The streetscape and all public buildings should be accessible as described in the City's Facility Accessibility Design Standards (FADS) manual. All other uses are also encouraged to incorporate accessible design principles such as the provision of mechanical personal door operators.

The strategic use of mid-block curb-cuts is also encouraged to provide improved barrier-free paths of travel to on-street parking spaces.

When improving accessibility of existing historic buildings, innovative/alternative design solutions should be considered which retain prominent architectural features and respect the character of the building. Building ramps should generally not encroach onto the sidewalk.

3.8 Transit Facilities

Transit facilities should be integrated within the design of sidewalks and/or abutting public spaces through the incorporation of shelters, canopies, seating such as benches or planter ledges, bike racks, and refuse containers.



Provide wide sidewalks, lined with active uses, shade trees and pedestrian amenities such as seating.



Varied surface treatments, including crosswalks, can suggest pedestrian movement priority.

STREETSCAPE DESIGN

3.9 Character and Sense of Place

Pavements, landscaping, street furniture and other means should be used to establish distinctive and memorable streetscapes. Through the creative and coordinated use of colour, materials, signage and streetscape elements, the City should support an image of vibrancy throughout the Downtown with a focus on the pedestrian experience.

Streetscape design solutions and landscaping programs should also support the branding initiatives of the Niagara Wine route.

3.10 Street Width

Travelled portions of roads within the downtown should be kept lean, utilizing minimum practical pavement widths for each thoroughfare. The maximum practical proportion of roadway width should be assigned to wide sidewalks and associated landscaping.

These guidelines support the adoption of alternative, non-standard, design solutions for managing traffic in the Downtown. Low vehicular speeds within the Downtown support the sharing of lanes among cars, cyclists and buses.

3.11 Landscape Design

Landscape design for any individual property or portion of street should not be considered in isolation from its surroundings.

Landscape design should be undertaken in a comprehensive manner to ensure the coordination of character-defining elements such as street trees, sidewalks, street furniture and boulevard treatments.

Where provided, front yard landscaping should complement surrounding landscaping patterns to help establish a sense of continuity and significant green presence. Intensive landscaping, sculpted hardscapes, and alternatives to sod are encouraged.

3.12 Public Art

Public art should be deployed throughout the Downtown streetscape to add vibrancy, interest, and contrast. This should include a variety of works in the form of sculpture, frieze, mural, canopy, surface treatment, or other means, which reinforce urban design objectives for the area.

Public art installations should reflect and build upon the area's built and cultural environment and sense of place. Interactive and accessible works are encouraged, as is the use of light, water and colour.

The commissioning of artists to create street furnishings should also be considered.



The combination of streetscape elements including pavements, lighting, furnishings, trees and signage all contribute significantly to creating a distinct sense of place.



Public art should be deployed strategically throughout the Downtown. Public art adds vibrancy, promotes identity, and fosters further creativity.

3.13 Street Trees

- a) **CANOPY & SHADE:** Provide street trees with close regular spacing to create a continuous tree canopy. Large gaps in the street tree canopy should be avoided where possible.
- b) **PLANTING TECHNIQUES:** Use planting techniques that mitigate the effects of soil compaction and road salt. Provide adequate soil space for root growth to maximize long-term tree health.
- c) **TREE PLACEMENT:** Street trees should be placed between the sidewalk and the travelled road to serve as both a visual and physical buffer for pedestrians and to provide a greater sense of street enclosure. The use of “bump-outs” for tree plantings and landscaping is also encouraged.

Tree locations and planting techniques should be selected which will not obstruct barrier-free pedestrian travel on the sidewalk.
- d) **TREE RETENTION:** Where possible, healthy existing trees should be retained and be integrated as part of any reconstructed streetscape.
- e) **TREE SPECIES:** Utilize native, high-branching deciduous tree species where feasible. Utilize a variety of species that create visual harmony, while avoiding monocultures.



Plant street trees with close regular spacing to maximize canopy and shade, with adequate room for root growth.

3.14 Street Furniture

Street furniture plays a significant role in establishing place character and should be both visually interesting, functional and durable.

When selecting new street furniture, priority should be given to choosing distinctive works that reflect the Downtown’s character and vibrancy. The commissioning of works that combine street furnishing and public art objectives is encouraged. This may include elements such as custom bike racks, bus shelters or benches.

3.15 Cycling Facilities

- a) **BICYCLE RACKS:** Bike racks are encouraged in public spaces and in front of commercial businesses. These racks should be positioned in highly visible areas, preferably close to the principle building entrance.

To minimize sidewalk clutter, bike rack functions can be combined with other streetscape elements such as parking metres or bollards.
- b) **BICYCLE STORAGE:** Large buildings are encouraged to provide both outdoor bike racks for short-term use, as well as secure indoor bicycle storage facilities for employees/residents.
- c) **BICYCLE PATHS:** Off-street bike paths should be hard-surfaced and provide linkages to the broader trails system where feasible.



Street furniture, including bike racks, should be coordinated to promote place identity. These elements can also be a venue for public art.

3.16 Lighting

- a) **STREET LIGHTS:** Provide attractive, coordinated lighting fixtures that deliver safe and comfortable lighting levels. Street lights should be of a pedestrian scale and should generally not exceed 6.0 metres in height, with close regular spacing.
- b) **ACCENT LIGHTS:** The provision of accent lighting such as illuminated bollards or the illumination of landmark buildings as appropriate is also encouraged.

Decorative accent/seasonal lighting on trees and/or street lamps is also encouraged along retail streets such as St Paul and James, and gateways to the Downtown.

- c) **LIGHT POLLUTION:** Provide sufficient lighting to illuminate the public realm and ensure public safety, without causing excessive glare nuisance on abutting lands and buildings. Utilize shielding and full cut-offs to minimize the effects of sky-glow.
- d) **EFFICIENCY:** The use of energy-efficient lighting solutions is encouraged.
- e) **COLOUR:** The colour/tone output of street light bulbs should be coordinated on a street-by-street basis. Colour changes mid-block should be avoided.

3.17 Overhead Wires & Utility Boxes

- a) **CABLES & WIRES:** Cable and wire utilities should be buried wherever feasible. Overhead wires crowd the streetscape and can limit opportunities for street tree canopy.
- b) **UTILITY EQUIPMENT:** Where utility equipment must be provided above ground, they should be positioned to the rear or side of buildings. If utility equipment must be placed within the right-of way, these utilities should be grouped to minimize clutter and screened with landscaping.

Utility providers are encouraged to choose innovative methods of containing utility services on or within streetscape features such as gateways, lamp posts, transit shelters, etc, when selecting locations for utility equipment and utility cluster sites.

- c) **HYDRO METRES:** Hydro metres should be placed only on rear or side building walls. These metres should not be visible from the street.



Street lights should be decorative and of a pedestrian scale. Lights should include mounts for hanging baskets or banners.



Accent lighting can be used to illuminate distinct buildings and create a more attractive evening environment.



Surface utility equipment can be screened with dense landscaping or decorative casings.

URBAN PARKS & OPEN SPACE DESIGN

3.18 Open Spaces Types

Create public and semi-public (on private land) small outdoor amenity spaces throughout the Downtown such as pocket parks, courtyards, atriums, outdoor cafés, and seating clusters. These spaces will serve as the communal venues for public life within the Downtown.

The provision of winter outdoor recreational uses is also encouraged such as skating rinks.

The creation of public spaces is specifically encouraged around gateway locations, prominent intersections and major landmarks.

3.19 Open Space Uses

The design of small urban spaces should generally favour passive uses such as seating and conversation.

The establishment of larger urban spaces such as squares and plazas is also encouraged; however the design of these spaces should also accommodate larger gatherings and special events such as festivals and performances.

3.20 Coverings and Shelter

Open spaces should strategically integrate coverings such as shade trees, awnings, umbrellas, trellis, or other elements, which provide shelter from inclement weather and maximize pedestrian comfort

3.21 Landscaping

Open spaces of all scales will be primarily hard-surfaced though the use of concrete or pavers, but should also integrate “soft” landscaping elements including shade trees, planters, ornamental gardens, hanging plants or other methods of greening.

The selection and maintenance of lush and colourful seasonal landscaping programs is encouraged. This will help to support the Garden City image.

The use of movable planters or similar flexible streetscape elements is specifically encouraged. These elements can provide substantial greening, support place character, buffer traffic, and can be used to temporarily block street or demarcate special areas.

3.22 Alleys

Alleys should be designed and managed as multi-purpose zones that serve as parking and loading areas for downtown business, but also as integral pedestrian connections.

The transformation of alleyways into active elements of the public realm should be supported by the introduction of landscaping, active land uses, and pedestrian-scaled lighting.

Laneways should function as shared space zones for all forms of transportation, with a focus on pedestrian comfort and accessibility.

3.23 Walkway Connections

Pedestrian circulation within the Downtown will primarily occur via streets and laneways. Separated walkways should however be provided which transect wide blocks and/or to provide direct connections between the Lower Level Valley and St. Paul Street.

These off-street walkways should be hard-surfaced and have a minimum width of 2.0 metres. The walkways should be lined with shade trees and/or other landscaping elements, as well as pedestrian-scaled lighting. The inclusion of pedestrian amenities such as benches, water fountains, and works of public art is also encouraged.



Urban public spaces are the venues for city’s civic and social life. These spaces can take the form of pocket parks, plazas, squares, walkways and street closures.

ENCROACHMENTS & STREET USES

3.24 Encroachment Agreements

These guidelines support the issuance of encroachment agreements or permits within the Downtown for the installation of dynamic, pedestrian-friendly building elements such as awnings, sidewalk cafés, small projecting signs, and street retailing.

3.25 Retailing & Commercial Patios

The use of sidewalks for street-related retailing including sidewalk sales and displays, outdoor seating areas, and food vendors is encouraged as a means to enliven and animate the public realm

- a) **MINIMUM AISLE:** Where a portion of the street is used for sales or seating, a minimum 2.0 metre clear aisle should be retained at all times to allow unobstructed pedestrian movement across the storefront.
- b) **LOCATIONS:** Provide areas adjacent to storefronts for outdoor patios or special merchant displays. Wider sidewalks may be required in areas with high pedestrian volumes to minimize bottlenecks.
- c) **FURNISHINGS:** Outdoor furnishings including tables, chairs, shelving, signage and heaters shall be portable and will not be affixed or mounted to the sidewalk. Furnishings, especially tables and chairs should be easily movable to provide layout flexibility.
- d) **PERMITS:** Merchants shall acquire necessary permissions to utilize the public sidewalk and comply with any associated design, layout and operation conditions.
- e) **MOBILE VENDORS:** Mobile vending units such as push carts and food trucks help to enliven the public realm and support animated streetscapes. Mobile vendors may also represent desirable interim uses (where permitted) for vacant lands or surface parking lots. When located on parking lots, vendors should be positioned along the front perimeter of the lot to both animate the sidewalk and screen parking areas.
- f) **PATIO FENCING:** Fencing around commercial patios is generally discouraged, except where required for the purpose of liquor licensing. Where fencing is provided, it should be decorative open-type construction or glass panels (does not include chain link). Signage should not be affixed to the fence.

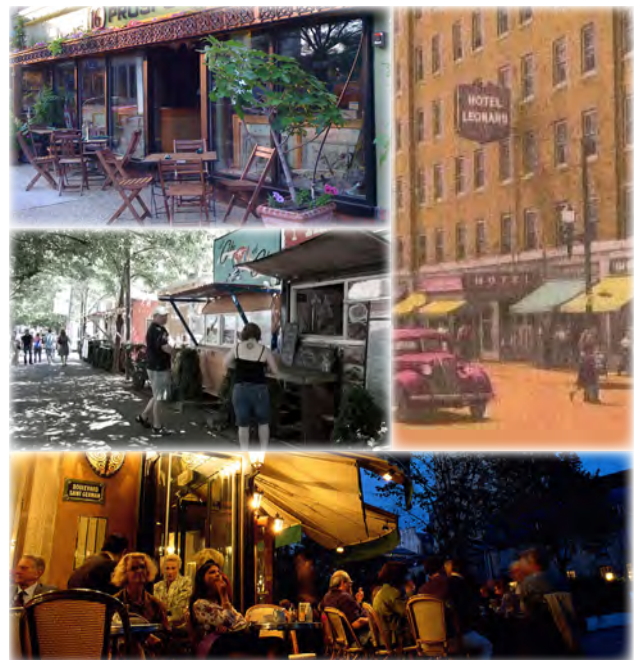
3.26 Awnings/Canopies

The installation of awnings or canopies is encouraged to provide shelter and create more vibrant streetscapes. These elements may project over the sidewalk subject to approval from the City.

- a) **CLEARANCE:** Canopies should provide safe clearance and not obstruct pedestrians.
- b) **LOCATION:** Awnings and canopies should cover storefronts and related openings. Awnings on upper floors are discouraged but may be appropriate for smaller residential-type buildings.
- c) **ENCROACHMENT:** Agreements may be required where an awning extends over a right-of-way. Awnings should provide adequate clearance light posts and street tree.
- d) **AWNING TYPE:** Retractable awnings are encouraged as they provide greater sun/shadow control for business and to allow awnings to be retracted in major storm events or heavy snow falls.

Where canopies require ground supports (ie. verandah-style), these supports will be positioned so as not to impede pedestrian flow.

- e) **DRAINAGE:** Canopies should be designed to avoid rainwater dropping directly on the travelled portion of the sidewalk. This also helps to prevent icicle accumulation in winter months.



Building encroachments including awnings, canopies and projecting signs have long been part of Downtown's character and are encouraged. On-street commercial activity including patios, cafes, and sidewalk displays are also encouraged.

BUSINESS SIGNAGE

3.27 Commercial Signage

Buildings should be designed to include dedicated spaces to accommodate signage which respects building scale, architectural features and established streetscape design objectives. Signage should complement, not clutter the streetscape and should be sympathetic to the heritage character of the Downtown.

- a) **RETAIL SIGN BANDS:** Storefront signage should generally be accommodated within a signage band located between the top of the storefront windows or awnings and the storefront cornice. This area is also known as the entablature.
- b) **AWNING SIGNS:** Awning or canopy signs may be used where permitted; however marketing messages should be limited to text or small graphics printed on the side or front edge of the awning.
- c) **WALL SIGNS:** Wall signs are permitted but should not cover more than 15% of the surface area of the wall to which the sign is attached.

Painted signs may exceed this maximum coverage where located on a side or rear wall.

- d) **ARCHITECTURE:** Signs placed on a building shall not cover any window or door openings, or any prominent architectural features/detailing.
- e) **ILLUMINATED SIGNS:** The use of internally lit sign boxes is discouraged. External sign illumination is generally preferred, however the use of other illumination techniques such as back-lighting may also be appropriate.
- f) **PORTABLE SIGNS:** The use of portable signs (ie. sandwich boards or menu boards) may be appropriate. These signs should not exceed 1.2 square metres in size and will be located to maintain a minimum 2.0 metre clear walkway path.

- g) **WINDOW SIGNS:** The use of ground floor window signs, including posters, is discouraged. These signs block views between the street and active interior uses. Limited use of window lettering may be appropriate where it doesn't substantially block views of the interior. In no instance should a window sign cover more than 25% of any ground floor window. This also applies to glass doors.

- h) **PROJECTING & HANGING SIGNS:** Projecting and hanging signs are encouraged where permitted. These signs should be placed at right angles to the building from either the first or second floor. The sign should feature only plain text or iconic imagery. Both the sign and the mounting arm will be designed to complement the character of the storefront.
- i) **SIGN TYPES TO AVOID:** The following sign types are generally considered inappropriate within the Downtown setting and should be avoided. Limited use of small ground signs may be appropriate through sensitive context-appropriate design.
 - i. Pole signs
 - ii. Ground signs
 - iii. Third party signage including billboards
 - iv. Wrap-around signs
 - v. Inflatable signs
 - vi. Trailer/mobile signs



Retail Sign Band



Awning Sign



Wall Sign



Painted Sign



Window Sign



Projecting Sign

PART 4 AREA-SPECIFIC GUIDELINES

	4.1 The Traditional Main Street
	4.2 The Urban Village
	4.3 The Civic Cluster
	4.4 The Lower Level Valley
	4.5 Gateways



Figure 2
Locations subject to
additional area-specific
design guidelines.

SECTION 4.1 THE TRADITIONAL MAIN STREET

The Traditional Main Street cluster stretches along St. Paul Street, from Ontario to Carlisle Streets, and extends up James Street to King. The cluster is defined by a mix of boutique retail stores, restaurants, and night clubs, with offices and apartments on the upper floors.

A number of prominent historical buildings contribute to the “main street” feel of the area which features narrow storefronts with large window displays, integrated signage, durable building materials such a brick and stone, and recessed entrances. Buildings are located on the property line and provide a comfortable and consistent sense of street enclosure. The bend in St. Paul Street creates varied view experiences as one travels along the street and supports this area’s distinctive identity.



Figure 3: Lands subject to the Traditional Main Street guideline provisions

Design guidelines for development along the Traditional Main Streets:

4.1.1 Building Height

Buildings will generally be between two and four storeys in height along the street edge. Additional height may be appropriate where upper floors are setback and terraced (see section 1.1.3).

Buildings taller than three storeys should include a well-defined podium or base section along the street frontage, with upper floors set back at least 3.0 metres.

4.1.2 Building Frontage

Gaps in the street wall should be avoided. Buildings should be positioned along their entire frontage and placed close to the street.

4.1.3 Materials

New buildings should be finished in durable traditional materials such as brick or stone. Wood and concrete may also be used for detailing and accents. The strategic use of modern materials including steel and glazing may be appropriate for upper levels, entrances, or for strategic visual contrast.

The use of siding, metal cladding, cement board, masonry units or similar products should be avoided.

4.1.4 Colour

The use of colours that visually harmonize with traditional warm brick tones is encouraged. Colours should be used as a key tool in promoting vibrancy and sense of place.

The use of black, grey and beige paint tones as the primary facade colour is generally discouraged,

4.1.5 Storefront Design

Buildings should have an identifiable storefront at grade which extends along the majority of the frontage. The storefront should include large clear display windows.

4.1.6 Storefront Width

Storefronts will be narrow, generally ranging in width from 6.0 to 10.0 metres. Each storefront width should be within 20% of the width of neighbouring storefronts. Where wider building/uses are proposed, the façade shall be visually broken-up into smaller storefront sections through appropriate horizontal articulation (see section 1.1.11).

4.1.7 Storefront Glazing

No less than 75% of the ground floor surface area should be dedicated to window and door openings.

Storefront windows should be transparent. Reflective glass, spandrel glazing, large window signs, or any other device/treatment which blocks views from the street into the ground floor use should be avoided.

4.1.8 Upper Floor Delineation

Buildings should generally include a prominent band or cornice line which visually separates the open and active ground level commercial uses from the upper floors.

4.1.9 Upper Floor Access

Access doors to upper floor uses should be recessed and visually subordinate to the building's commercial entrances.

4.1.10 Upper Floor Windows

Upper floor windows should generally be smaller and arranged symmetrically, with equal spacing and a vertical orientation. The use of multi-paned windows is encouraged on upper floors over large single sheets.

Windows should be detailed with arches, prominent sills, flowerboxes, soldier courses, key stones, decorative mouldings, recessing, or other details. Alternatives may be appropriate which suit the character of the building and the streetscape.

4.1.11 Business Signage

Signage should be accommodated within a sign banner that sits between the storefront windows and cornice. Projecting signs and awning signs are also appropriate. Awnings will generally be affixed below the sign band. In no instance shall any signage cover architectural features or details including windows, mouldings or decorative stonework.

4.1.12 Rooflines

Buildings should be capped with parapets, prominent cornices, mansard roofs, dormers, and/or other elements that reflect the traditional character of the streetscape.



SECTION 4.2 THE URBAN VILLAGE

The Urban Village cluster stretches along St. Paul Street, from Carlisle to Geneva Street. The cluster is similar in function and character to the traditional main street, but is lower-scaled and features a broader range of uses, with angled on-street parking. The cluster includes a variety of retail stores and restaurants, as well as office and community uses including the Silver Spire Church and old theatres.

Buildings are located close to the street, with varied storefront design and architectural styling. Buildings are generally two storeys in height with few exceptions. New development and alterations with the Urban Village cluster should be designed to support the eclectic, mixed-use nature of these blocks.



Figure 4: Lands subject to the Urban Village guideline provisions

Design guidelines for development in the Urban Village cluster:

4.2.1 Building Height

Buildings should be between two and three storeys in height along the street edge. Additional height may be appropriate where upper floors are setback and terraced (see section 1.1.3).

Buildings taller than three storeys should include a well-defined podium or base section along the street frontage, with upper floors set back at least 3.0 metres.

4.2.2 Building Frontage

Gaps in the street wall should be avoided. Buildings should be positioned along their entire frontage and placed close to the street.

4.2.3 Storefront Width

Storefronts should generally be narrow, ranging in width from 5.0 to 10.0 metres. Where wider building/uses are proposed, the façade should be visually broken-up into smaller storefront sections through appropriate horizontal articulation (see section 1.1.11).

4.2.4 Materials

Building facades will be primarily finished in quality materials including stucco/plaster and brick. The use of siding should be avoided.

4.2.5 Colours

The strategic use of bold façade and accent colours is encouraged throughout the urban village cluster to reflect the eclectic nature of these blocks and support an image of vibrancy.

The use of black, grey and beige paint tones as the primary facade colour is generally discouraged.

4.2.6 Storefront Design

Buildings should have an identifiable storefront, lobby and/or reception area at grade which extends along the majority of the frontage. No less than 60% of the ground floor surface area should be dedicated to windows and doors.

Reflective glass, spandrel glazing, large window signs, or any other devise/treatment which blocks views from the street into the ground floor use should be avoided.

4.2.7 Upper Floor Windows

Upper floor windows should generally be smaller and arranged symmetrically, with equal spacing and a vertical orientation. The use of multi-paned windows is encouraged on upper floors over large single sheets.

Windows should be detailed with arches, prominent sills, flower boxes, soldier courses, key stones, decorative mouldings, recessing, or other details. Alternatives may be appropriate which suit the character of the building and the streetscape.

4.2.8 Business Signage

Signage should be accommodated within a sign banner that sits between the storefront windows and cornice. Projecting signs and awning signs are also appropriate. Awnings will generally be affixed below the sign band. In no instance shall any signage cover architectural features or details including windows, mouldings or decorative stonework.

4.2.9 Rooflines

Buildings should be capped with parapets, prominent cornices, mansard roofs, dormers, and/or other elements that add character and interest the streetscape.



SECTION 4.3 THE CIVIC CLUSTER

The Civic Cluster is focused around the intersection of James and Church Streets and includes prominent institutions such as City Hall, the library, the old courthouse, and Market Square. The cluster also contains a number of historic churches and small public gathering spaces.

Buildings within the Civic Cluster stand apart from one another as individual distinct landmarks. These buildings typically feature landscaped foregrounds and tend to be more monumental in both scale and character.

This cluster is the centre for government offices and community facilities in the City and should be designed and managed to support a more formal, landscaped setting. The Civic Cluster will feature a contrasting mix of both traditional and modern architectural forms.

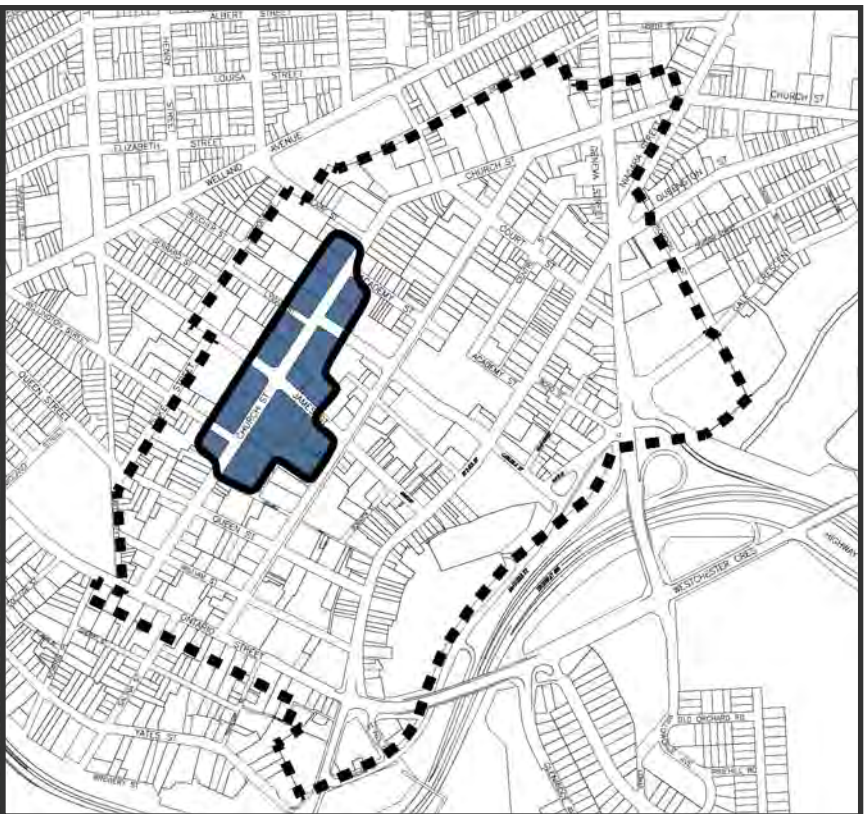


Figure 5: Lands subject to the Civic Cluster guideline provisions

Design guidelines for development in the Civic Cluster:

4.3.1 Building Heights

Buildings should generally be between two and six storeys in height along the street edge to maintain a pedestrian scale. Additional height may be appropriate where upper floors are setback and terraced (see section 1.1.3).

4.3.2 Building Entrances

Buildings will generally feature prominent raised and/or covered entrances that are oriented towards the street and connected to the public sidewalk such as a grand stair case.

Barrier-free means of access should also be provided in a manner that is sympathetic to these iconic buildings.

4.3.3 Building Materials

New buildings should be finished in durable modern materials such as metal, concrete or glazing. The strategic use traditional materials including brick and stone may also be appropriate.

The use of vinyl siding, metal cladding, masonry units, stucco, EIFS or similar products should be avoided.

4.3.4 Signage

Signage within the Civic Cluster should be kept minimal. Where wall signs are proposed they should cover no more than 10% of the façade.

4.3.5 Public Spaces

Sites should be designed to support the creation of a connected network of outdoor gathering places. These gathering places should include ornate plantings, seating, and pedestrian-scaled lighting.

All large sites should incorporate an urban square or other formal pedestrian space.

Public spaces surrounding institutions can also serve as desirable locations for public art installations or monuments.

4.3.6 Landscaping

Landscaped boulevards with consistent shade tree plantings should be provided along both James and Church Streets. Strategic gaps in street tree plantings may be appropriate to frame views of significant landmarks.

Front yards should feature ornamental landscaping, as well as pedestrian amenities such as benches or fountains.



SECTION 4.4 THE LOWER LEVEL VALLEY

The valley lands located between St Paul Street and Highway 406 form the southern edge of the Downtown. The second Welland Canal once flowed through this valley which was later filled. The Lower Level Valley serves as the foreground over which the Downtown is viewed by passers-by both along Highway 406 and Westchester Crescent.

The Lower Level Valley is framed by the rear facades of buildings along St Paul Street, many of which feature an eclectic mix of materials and additions with cantilevered sections jutting out into the valley and supported by a network of steel trusses. A number of modest staircases provide pedestrian connections up to the commercial core.

Brock University's Marilyn I. Walker School of Fine and Performing Arts will occupy the former Canada Haircloth building at the northern end of the Lower Level. Further redevelopment is anticipated for the balance of the lands which will include public realm improvements.

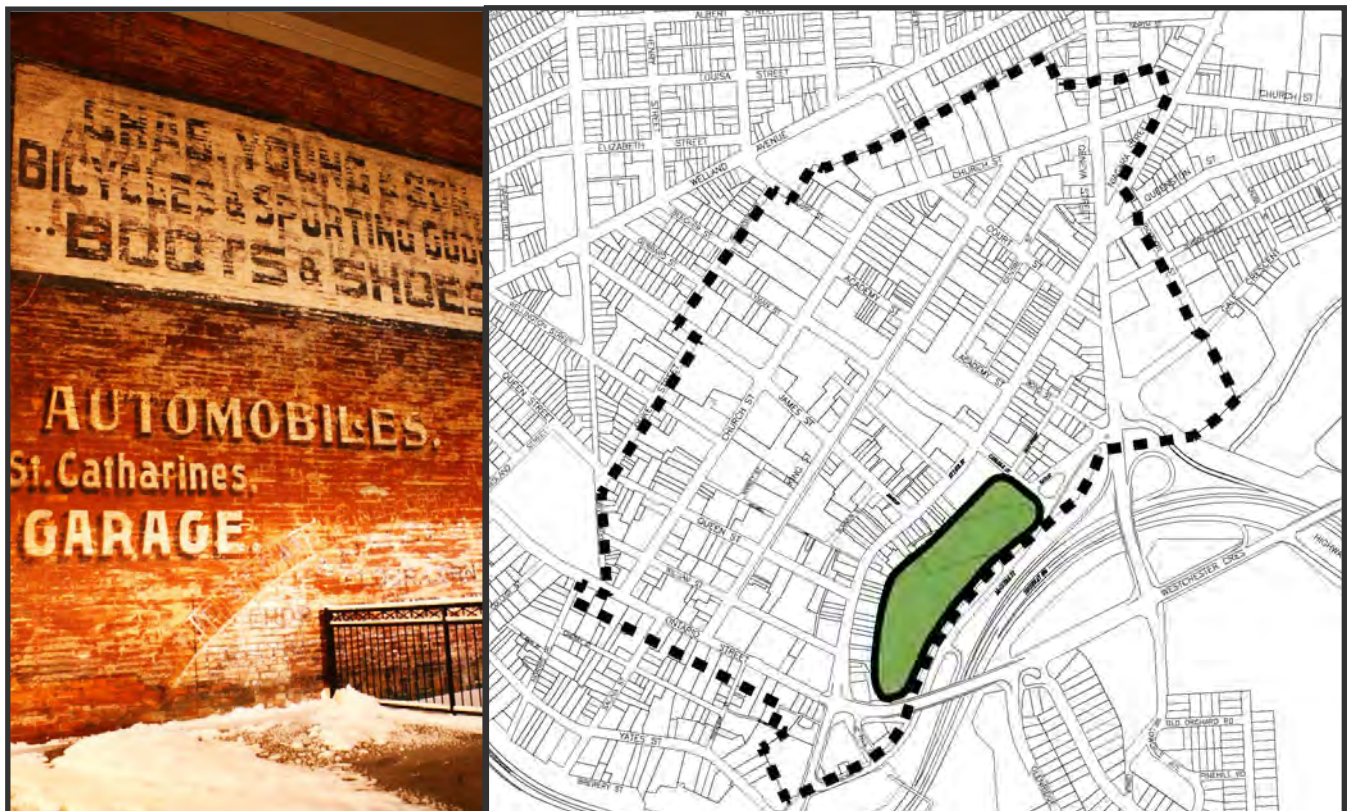


Figure 6: Lands subject to the Lower Level Valley guideline provisions

Design guidelines for development in the Lower Level:

4.4.1 Massing & Architectural Patterns

New buildings are encouraged to reflect traditional building patterns in the lower level through modern interpretation. This can include the thoughtful manipulation of building mass and architectural treatments to represent distinguishing lower level attributes such as distinct additions, contrasting materials, staggered or cantilevered building sections, tunnel walkways, and/or the use of pier/truss support systems.

4.4.2 Building Materials

New buildings should utilize a combination of building materials and/or colours to compartmentalize and visually break-up any large walls. The primary façade materials within the Lower Level Valley should be a combination of brick, stone and glazing.

4.4.3 Rear Facades

The rear facades of buildings along St. Paul Street which overlook the Lower Level should be improved through appropriate combinations of the following techniques:

- a) **MATERIALS:** Unveil and restore historic building materials. Natural exposed brick and stone is preferred.
- b) **CLADDING:** Where historic materials have significantly deteriorated and restoration is not feasible, stucco or plaster may be used for exterior refinishing. The use of siding, cladding, cement board, masonry units or similar products should be avoided.
- c) **COLOUR:** Where stucco/plaster products are employed, the use of colours tones that visually harmonize with traditional warm brick tones is encouraged. The strategic use of bold, vibrant colours is also encouraged to support the Downtown's role as a vibrant creative cluster. Murals may also be appropriate.
- d) **OPENINGS:** Window and door openings should be reinstated and/or introduced to open-up and activate the rear facades.
- e) **AMENITIES:** The addition of balconies, terraces, rooftop gardens and other forms of outdoor amenity spaces is encouraged.
- f) **WALL SIGNS:** Wall signs are generally discouraged; however limited use of small, pedestrian-scaled business signage may be appropriate.

- g) **MURALS:** The use of blank wall sections for traditional painted signs or mural art works is generally encouraged.

4.4.4 Pedestrian Corridor

A continuous pedestrian corridor along the back side of St. Paul Street should be established, with connections from new walkways within the Lower Level. This could include improved connections to the Twelve Mile Creek and Centennial Park trail networks.

Vertical pedestrian connections up to St. Paul Street should also be enhanced through landscaping, pedestrian-scaled lighting, public art and pedestrian amenities. Opportunities for mechanical lift access between the Lower Level and St. Paul street are also encouraged.

4.4.5 Views

Buildings and trees should be arranged to strategically frame views of landmarks including the performing arts centre and the former Canada Haircloth building, as well as views from St Paul Street out across the valley.

4.4.6 Water Feature

The incorporation of water features into public realm design is encouraged to recognize/celebrate the location of the former Welland Canal and the former industrial mill race.

4.4.7 Noise Attenuation

The use of noise walls along Highway 406 through the Downtown should be avoided where possible. The use of landscaping, berms or other "soft" mitigation measures is encouraged if/where noise attenuation is required.



SECTION 4.5 GATEWAYS

Primary gateways anchor the easterly and westerly approaches to the commercial core. These gateways signal arrival to the Downtown district and announce a change of urban form. The westerly gateway is located around the intersection of Ontario and St. Paul streets, while the easterly gateway is located around the intersection of St. Paul and Geneva streets.

Secondary, less prominent gateways are located at James and Church streets (northerly approach and centre of Civic Cluster); Race Street (southerly gateway from Highway 406); and at Church and Geneva Streets (secondary easterly access to the Downtown).

These gateways define the limits of the Downtown streetscape and serve to inform both first and last impressions for visitors. Increased design expectations around these key intersections are warranted due to their high visibility and character-defining role.

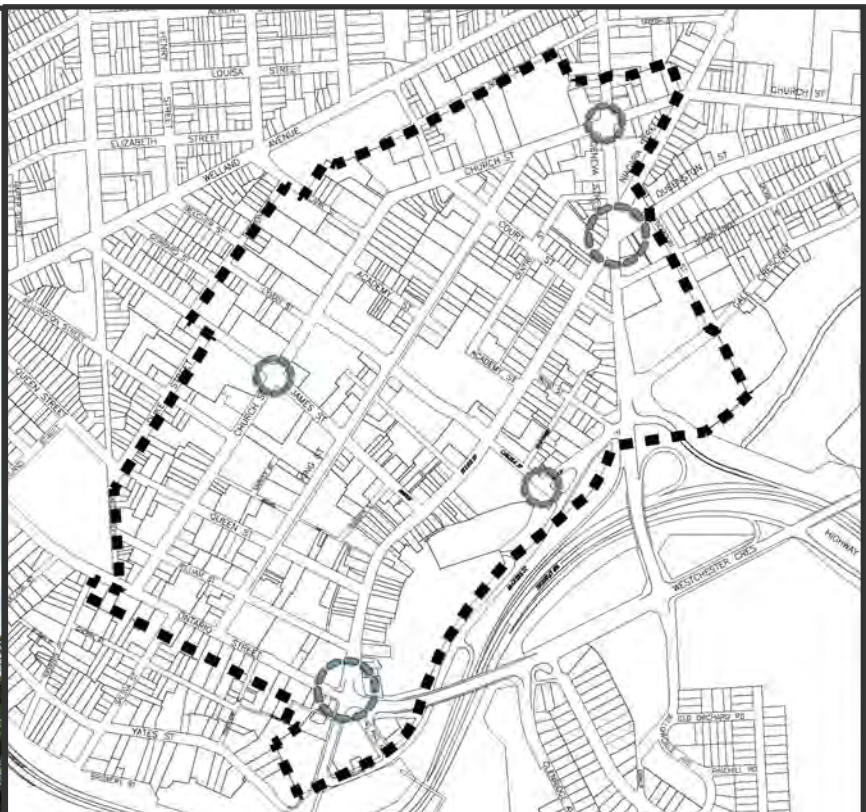


Figure 7: Lands subject to the Gateway guideline provisions

Buildings and site design guidelines for development in Gateway locations:

4.5.1 Building Height

Taller buildings are encouraged on properties surrounding gateway intersections which serve to frame and visually anchor the corner. These gateway buildings may be exempt from the terracing/setback requirements described elsewhere in this document, where appropriate.

4.5.2 Façade Articulation

Gateway buildings should feature highly articulated building facades along all street frontages with a high proportion of clear glazing on lower floors.

4.5.3 Corner Architectural Treatments

The incorporation of vertical building elements to accentuate the corner location is encouraged. This could include but is not limited to turret features, towers or bevelled corners.

4.5.4 Public Realm

Activate the building's foreground through the creation public gathering places such as a plaza and/or outdoor seating/dining areas in front of the building.

4.5.5 Public Art

The incorporation of public art installations within the design of buildings and streetscapes is encouraged at gateway locations due to the high visibility of these sites and the potential for public art to serve as landmarks.

4.5.6 Enhanced Pedestrian Crossings

The introduction of enhanced pedestrian crossings at gateway intersections is encouraged through the use of alternative pavements, landscaping, and/or road profiles. The street design should signal to motorists that they are entering a zone of lower speeds and pedestrian priority.

4.5.7 Gateway Features

At Primary Gateway locations, the installation of physical gateway markers/features on public lands is encouraged. Such a feature could come in the form of an arch, a trellis, a distinctive intersection treatment, or other element or combination of elements. The gateway should establish a sense of arrival to the Downtown, better define the area's limits, and could support branding initiatives. These elements may be illuminated.

Secondary Gateways will be enhanced primarily through architecture and landscaping design.



Example Gateway treatments.