

# DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR SITE DESIGN

This chapter presents design guidelines for site design. The design guidelines are organized into a series of relevant design topics. Within each category, individual policies and design guidelines are presented, which the City will use in determining the appropriateness of the work proposed. Note that other standards set forth in the Unified Development Code shall also apply.

## Public Streetscape

Fundamentally, streetscape designs should help to establish a sense of visual continuity in an area and they should be compatible with any historic resources found there.

## Building and Street Lighting

The character of lighting design and level of intensity of the resulting illumination are key considerations. Traditionally, lights were simple in character and were used to highlight entrances, walkways, and signs. Most fixtures had incandescent lamps that cast a color similar to daylight, were relatively low in intensity, and were shielded with simple shade devices. Although new lamp types may be considered, the overall effect of modest, focused light should be continued.

## Historic Landscape Features

In the commercial core, landscape designs were historically simple, while a variety of site features appeared in the residential parts of downtown. Wood and metal fences often defined property boundaries. Concrete sidewalks were popular and lined many streets. A variety of plantings, including trees, lawns, and shrubbery also occurred. Each of these elements, along with paths, trails, and streams contributed to the historic character of the city. They also added variety in scale, texture, and materials to the street scene, providing interest and shade to pedestrians.

### In This Chapter:

Public streetscape	82
Lighting	89
Landscape features	91
Mechanical equipment	93
Parking	94

## Mechanical Equipment, Service Areas, and Other Equipment

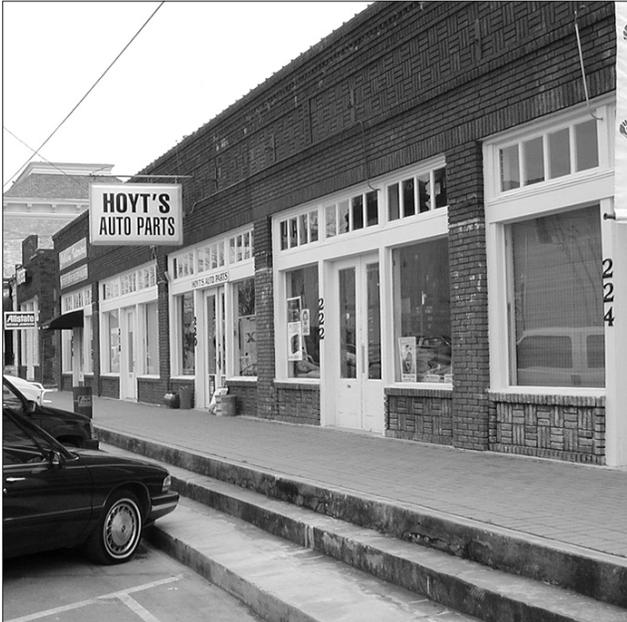
Utilities that serve properties may include telephone and electrical lines, ventilation systems, gas meters, air conditioners, fire protection, telecommunication, and alarm systems. Adequate space for these utilities should be planned in a project from the outset and they should be designed such that their visual impacts are minimized. Service areas for trash and recycling containers and loading facilities should be carefully planned as an integral part of a site. At the same time, the visual impacts of service areas should be minimized. While solar energy collecting devices might not always be considered as mechanical or service equipment, for the purposes of these Design Guidelines they shall be.

## Parking

Public parking lots and garages were not a part of Georgetown's early history. However, cars are a fact of life in the downtown today, and the visual impacts associated with their storage should be carefully planned.

See also the Downtown Master Plan, City of Georgetown, TX - Streetscape requirements for furniture, sidewalk and intersection types, street furniture, street lights, etc. Compliance with these standards shall also be considered in determining the appropriateness of specific elements. See the Unified Development Code Chapter 11 related to the impervious cover and stormwater detention requirements for properties located in the Overlay Districts

**Policy: The public streetscape in Area 1 should enhance the pedestrian experience without being an obstacle to traffic or commerce.**



*Preserve significant sidewalk features. This stepped curb, for example, may have historic significance.*



*When new sidewalks are to be installed, they shall be of the same design, character, and installation as that already in use by the City.*

The sidewalks, lights, landscaping, and street furnishings all contribute to the pedestrian-friendly environment in downtown Georgetown. These elements should be preserved, enhanced, and expanded. Sidewalks vary in construction and quality. While many sidewalks are concrete, some include brick as an accent element, or are completely brick themselves. Curb ramps have also been installed at some corners to facilitate access. Also, while several areas already have amenities in place that enhance the pedestrian experience, additional furnishings should be considered to enhance the area.

**8.1 Preserve significant sidewalk features.**

- The alignment with other original sidewalks, the street and overall town grid is of primary importance.
- Replace only those portions that are deteriorated beyond repair. Any replacement materials should match the original in color, texture, size, and finish.

**8.2 When new sidewalks are to be installed, they shall be compatible with the traditional character of the streetscape.**

- A new sidewalk should align with those that already exist along a block.
- Decorative paving should be used throughout the Downtown Overlay as noted in the Downtown Master Plan. Such paving shall be of the same design, character, and installation as that already in use by the City in and around the County Courthouse Historic District.
- Sidewalks and crosswalks should be consistent with the sidewalk, intersection, and crosswalk designs in the Downtown Master Plan.

**8.3 Street furniture should be simple in design and match those already established around the square.**

- Benches, bike racks, planters or pots, statues, trash receptacles and, in the event of a sidewalk sale, merchandise displays are examples of street furnishings that are appropriate.
- Where utilized, benches should be the same as those already in use in the downtown. See the Downtown Master Plan for the streetscape design and location criteria.
- The Area 1 wooden benches are constructed of solid teak wood. See the Planning Department for the specifics of the bench style. Alternative design and/or materials may be considered by HARC.
- In Area 2, the benches and waste receptacles should be black metal slat design. Alternative design and/or materials may be considered by HARC.
- Advertising promotions on benches is not allowed under any circumstance.
- Individual furnishings should be of designs such that they may be combined with other street furniture in a coherent composition.



*Benches, bike racks, and trash receptacles are examples of street furnishings that are appropriate.*

**8.4 Avoid materials that are incompatible with the character of the district.**

- Concrete, exposed aggregate, plastic, unfinished wood, and polished metal are inappropriate.



*Maintain a clear pathway along the sidewalk.*

**8.5 Street furniture should be located in areas of high pedestrian activity.**

- Locate furniture at pedestrian route intersections and major building entrances and near outdoor gathering places.

**8.6 Street furnishings should be clustered in “groupings,” when feasible.**

- Street furnishings and sidewalk displays should not interfere with pedestrian traffic.
- For example, use planters and covered or enclosed waste receptacles to frame spaces for benches.
- Install benches in high pedestrian traffic areas and/or areas of interest.



*Street furnishings and sidewalk displays should not interfere with pedestrian traffic.*



*Design site furnishings and waste receptacles to be compatible with one another.*

**8.7 Position a bench to provide a sense of comfort.**

- Buffer the bench from traffic; for example, position a planter between the bench and the curb.
- Avoid locating a bench close to the curb.

**8.8 Cluster waste receptacles with other furnishings.**

- The design of the receptacles should be compatible with other existing furnishings.

**8.9 When feasible, cluster planters with other furnishings.**

- Install freestanding planters on either side of a store entrance, at seating areas, along edges of parking lots, in pedestrian plazas, and in clustered furnishing areas.
- A planter should be large enough to be easily seen, but not so large as to cause an obstruction to pedestrian traffic.
- Conventional home-style planters, such as those constructed of redwood or ordinary terracotta pottery, as well as over-sized concrete plant tubs are not appropriate.

**8.10 Outdoor dining and seating areas should be simple in design and compatible with the approved street furniture as detailed in the Downtown Master Plan.**

- Furniture and fixtures must not be secured to trees, lampposts, street signs, hydrants, or any other street infrastructure by means of ropes, chains, or any other such devices, whether during restaurant operating hours or at times when the restaurant is closed.
- All furniture and fixtures must be maintained in good visual appearance and in a clean condition at all times.
- All furniture and fixtures must be durable and of sufficiently sturdy construction as not to blow over with normal winds.
- All furniture and fixtures must contribute to the overall atmosphere of the Overlay District and must be complementary in both appearance and quality.

**8.11 Tables and chairs are allowed without approval of a CDC if they meet the following guidelines; otherwise HARC approval is required based upon the intent of the guidelines.**

- Tables and chairs may be colored or of a natural unpainted material (i.e. wood, metal (treated to prevent rust), etc.). Tables and chairs are not permitted to be plastic or of any fluorescent or other strikingly bright or vivid color.
- Upholstered chairs suitable for outdoor use are permitted, but the upholstery may not be any fluorescent or other strikingly bright or vivid color.
- All chairs used within a particular establishment's outdoor seating area must match each other by being of visually similar design, construction, and color.
- Other furniture such as serving stations, bar counters, shelves, racks, sofas, televisions, trash receptacles, heaters, and torches are not permitted, unless HARC determines that these items are sufficiently setback or screened from view of the public.



*High quality tables and chairs contribute to the overall atmosphere of the Overlay District.*



*Umbrellas provide shade and contribute to the ambiance of outdoor seating and dining areas.*

**8.12 Umbrellas are allowed without approval of a CDC if they meet the following guidelines. Any proposed umbrella that does not meet the guidelines maybe approved by HARC if they determine the intent of the guidelines has been met.**

- Umbrellas shall be appropriately designed and sized for the location where they will be utilized.
- Umbrellas must be free of advertisements and all elements contained within the outdoor dining area, and at the lowest dimension of an extended umbrella must be at least 7 feet above the sidewalk surface and not block the main walking path or create a hazard. Any proposed umbrella signage will need CDC approval and to be included with the overall sign package for the property.
- Any part of an umbrella used in an outdoor seating area may not exceed a height of 120” (10 feet) above the level of the sidewalk.
- Umbrellas must blend appropriately with the surrounding built environment; therefore, umbrella fabric may not be fluorescent or other strikingly bright or vivid color. In addition, only one fabric color is allowed.
- Umbrella fabric must be of a material suitable for outdoor use, and must be canvas-type. No plastic fabrics, plastic/vinyl-laminated fabrics, grass, or rigid materials of any type are permitted for use as umbrellas within an outdoor seating area.
- Umbrellas should not block views of building signs or windows, especially those of adjacent properties.
- A 4 foot clear area must be maintained on all sidewalks to allow pedestrian traffic. So, smaller tables and chairs are generally preferred to meet this requirement.
- No sidewalk coverings or raised platforms are allowed, unless the outdoor seating area is not located on the sidewalk.
- No extra or additional signage is permitted solely as a result of an outdoor seating area. If any signage is proposed it should be included as part of the overall sign package for the property.
- Any proposed fence related to an outside eating or sitting area for a nonresidential use is required to have HARC approval.

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## **Policy: Using trees and flowering plants is strongly encouraged.**

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Trees and flowering plants help provide interest to pedestrians, as well as shaded protection from the summer sun. Therefore, the use of street trees and planters is strongly encouraged.

### **8.13 Use indigenous, native, and drought-tolerant plant materials when feasible.**

- Locate street trees along edges of sidewalks, maintaining a clearly defined pedestrian travel zone.
- Locate street trees in larger planting areas, such as buffer strips adjacent to parking lots and/or pocket parks.
- Provide underground irrigation systems where long-term growth will not impact the irrigation system.
- Use flowers to provide seasonal colors.

### **8.14 Install new street trees to enhance the pedestrian experience.**

- Install new trees where walkway widths permit.
- Replace trees that are diseased or have passed their life cycle.
- The height of a street tree should be minimized, however, to avoid blocking views of storefronts and interesting details.



*Trees and flowering plants help provide interest to pedestrians, as well as shaded protection from the summer sun.*



*Highlighting a building's architecture may be appropriate and effective.*



*String lights add a festive touch to the area.*

**8.15 In Area 1, provide electrical service for string lights in trees.**

- Use of string lights should generally be limited to the traditional end of year and new year holidays and other special occasions where there is a multi-business lighting event scheduled that includes the Downtown Overlay District.
- String lights in trees shall not be left in the trees year round, to protect the health of the tree.
- String lights shall be maintained in appearance and installation.
- Unless an approved project by the City, property owners are discouraged from plugging into City owned outlets for personal use of lights.
- The use of lights to highlight a building's architecture, canopies, and windows may be appropriate and effective.
- Properties outside of Area 1 are encouraged to provide electrical service for string lights in trees, especially those properties along Austin Avenue, Main Street, and University Avenue.

**Policy: Site lighting should be used to enhance the pedestrian experience at night by providing a well-lit environment.**

Lighting on a site is important for aesthetics and safety, and, on commercial properties for customer awareness. Traditionally, lights were simple in character and were used to highlight buildings, signs, entrances, first floor details, walkways, and buildings. Today, the lights are also used to light parking lots. Most fixtures had incandescent lamps that cast a warm color, were relatively low in intensity and were shielded with simple shade devices. Site lighting should reinforce the visual continuity of downtown. The light fixtures (luminaires) and poles (standards) should be unifying design elements that promote visual interest and variety.

**8.16 Use lighting for the following:**

- To accent architectural details
- To accent building entrances
- To accent signs
- To illuminate sidewalks and pedestrian routes
- To illuminate parking and service areas, for safety concerns
- To illuminate a state or national flag

**8.17 Provide low-scale lighting for pedestrian routes.**

- Lighting along the right-of-way should be a combination of pedestrian-scaled street lights and spillover from lights on adjacent buildings. Lighting in this location should be designed to be comfortable to pedestrians.
- The position of a lamp in a light fixture on a pedestrian way should not exceed fifteen feet in height.



*Provide lighting for pedestrian routes that is low scaled for walking.*



*Streetscape lighting in Area 1 should match that adopted for use by the City.*

Note that sidewalk lighting may be supplemented with shielded lighting in canopies that project from building fronts. See the section on canopies in Chapter 10.

**8.18 Streetscape lighting in the Downtown Overlay District should be the same as that adopted for use by the City.**

- Note that while these design guidelines encourage the use of “shielded” light sources, the luminaires in use by the City in Area 1 are not. This is appropriate only in Area 1.
- *See the Downtown Master Plan for street lighting requirements.*
- Note that sidewalk lighting may be supplemented with shielded lighting in canopies that project from building fronts. See the section on canopies in Chapter 10.

**8.19 Lighting for parking areas, service areas, buildings, pedestrian routes, and public ways in Area 2 shall be shielded to prevent any off-site glare.**

- Note that this also applies to parking and service areas in Area 1.
- Light sources that use the equivalent of 1,200 lumens per bulb or less shall be housed in fixtures and installed in a manner that will shield the lights from public view and avoid glare and light spill.
- The light source shall not emit a significant amount of the fixture’s total output above a vertical cutoff angle of 90 degrees directly visible from neighboring properties. Any structural part of the fixture providing this cutoff angle shall be permanently attached.
- Keep parking area lighting at a human scale. The maximum height of parking lot luminaires shall be fifteen feet. This height restriction may be exceeded to twenty-four feet if it is demonstrated that the overall visual impact of lighting is less.

**8.20 The light pole, or standard, should be designed to accommodate special decorative accessories.**

- In Area 1, mounts for hanging planter baskets and banners, for example, should be included.
- In Area 2, the historic acorn street light design should remain simple without hanging baskets.
- Mounts for seasonal lighting schemes also should be considered.

**8.21 Minimize the visual impacts of architectural lighting.**

- All exterior light sources should have a low level of luminescence.
- Wall-mounted floodlamps shall be shielded so that the light source is not visible off-site. Spotlights without shielding devices are not allowed.
- A lamp that conveys the color spectrum similar to daylight is preferred. For example, metal halide and color-corrected sodium are appropriate.
- Lighting fixtures should be appropriate to the building and its surroundings in terms of style, scale, and intensity of illumination.
- Wall-mounted light fixtures should not extend above the height of the wall to which they are mounted.

**8.22 Minimize the use of rope/icicle lighting Downtown.**

- The use of rope/icicle lighting shall not be used outside of the winter holiday season.
- Window/door border lighting inside a building is inappropriate