

Create Vibrant Streets and Public Spaces

To be a truly great center city, Downtown Dallas must have exciting, walkable streets and lively public spaces.

A key distinction between downtown and the suburbs is in how streets and public spaces are used. Much more than arteries for moving cars, urban streets are the lifeblood of the city – pedestrian and bicycle movement,

commerce and social interaction take place on its streets. Similarly, public spaces are respites from the hustle and bustle and provide gathering spaces for a multitude of activities. For Downtown Dallas to reflect its place as the focal point of a vast, diverse and energetic region, its streets and public spaces must be transformed.

This Transformative Strategy emphasizes the importance of vibrant streets and public spaces through a completely new public realm framework worthy of a great downtown. With a focus on creating streets and spaces for people, the framework sets forth a bold new approach for circulation in Downtown, as well as for the design and placement of parks, plazas and open spaces.



Michigan Avenue's wide sidewalks, pedestrian-oriented storefronts, and generous landscaping help make Chicago's "Magnificent Mile" one of the world's premier urban destinations.

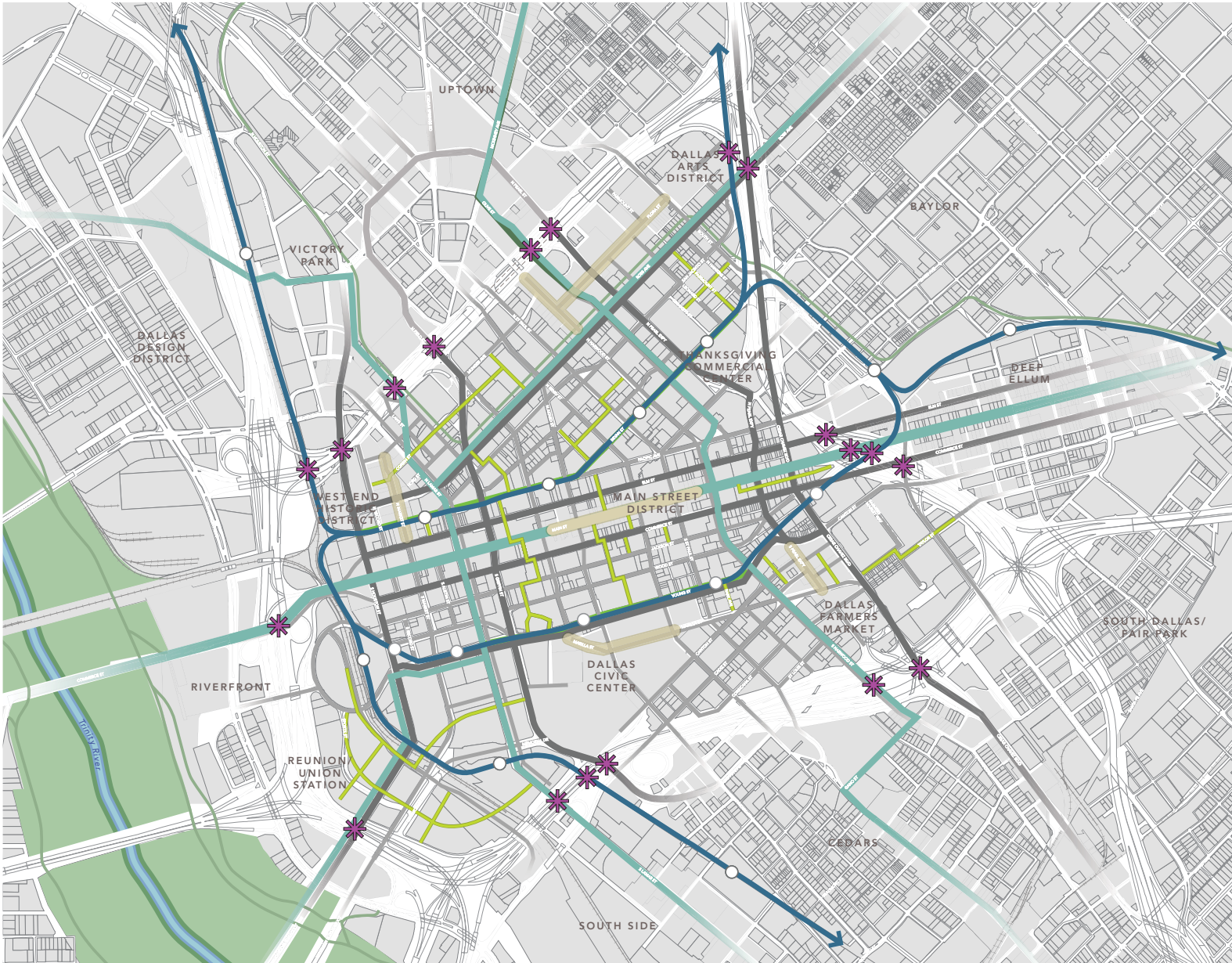
CIRCULATION FRAMEWORK

The most "transformative" initiative for Downtown Dallas may be in improving the functionality and desirability of walking and biking on Downtown streets. Combined with careful attention to how the street-facing ground floors of buildings are treated (discussed in detail later in this chapter), the way a street is designed can transform the everyday urban experience for workers, shoppers, residents and visitors. The Circulation Framework (see figure on page 48) sets forth a new hierarchy of streets and new street classifications (or types), focused on accommodating multiple modes of transportation and enriching the human experience. When implemented, the recommended street types and designs will change peoples' perceptions of the area, helping to create a sense of safety, activity and vibrancy.

Street Classifications

The Circulation Framework establishes a new cohesive system for Downtown's streets. This system, or hierarchy, is designed to achieve circulation objectives while redefining the expectations for the function and character of each street. Our roadways have been designed over recent decades to primarily accommodate automobile traffic, parking garage access and loading activities. These are all important functions for the city center. However, Downtown's future liveliness also depends on the ability to re-craft the streets as places where pedestrian activity is promoted and all kinds of other functions – from transit use and bicycle riding to daily commerce and special events – can take place. It is also dependent on the ability for each street to be designed in a context-sensitive manner; that is, to allow for the street design to best respond to the surrounding environment of buildings, sidewalks and open spaces, not to just facilitate cars passing through. In a bustling urban environment, this concept is key.

In response to this shift in thinking about Downtown's circulation framework, each roadway is designated with a new classification, emphasizing the unique activity and relative importance or prominence of the street. Each street type presents a balanced approach to the design and function of the public realm, emphasizing various modes depending on context and street purpose. For example, while bicycles are envisioned to be an integral part of all street design and function, several larger street types (such as District Connectors) are most likely to be redesigned with bike lanes or other facilities. And although the illustrations for the street classifications recommended here may not reflect specific bicycle facilities, the 360 plan supports and echoes the recommendations of the 2011 Dallas Bike Plan. The new street classifications are described on the following pages.



Circulation Framework

- Freeway/Ramp
- Heavy Rail
- DART Rail and Station
- Study Area
- Trinity River Corridor
- Regional Bicycle/Pedestrian Trail
- Gateway

PROPOSED STREET CLASSIFICATIONS

- District Connector
- Streetcar Boulevard
- Neighborhood Street
- Special Use Street Overlay
- Passage



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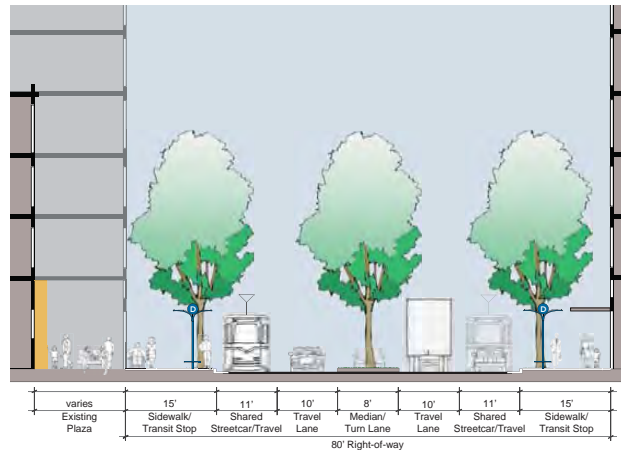
1. Streetcar Boulevard (Main; portions of Ross, Lamar, Olive, Harwood, Houston and Young)

Applied to existing streets where future streetcar lines would run, these streets vary in their rights-of-way but share the unique objective of accommodating streetcars along with other modes of travel. Streetcar Boulevards should:

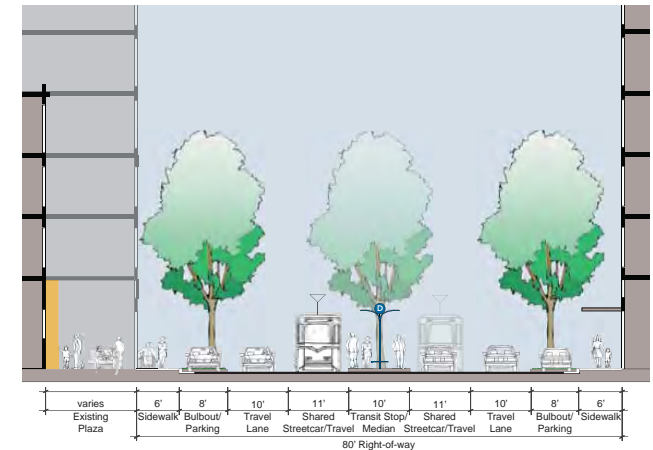
- Serve as primary transit connections between districts inside the loop and extend linkages outside the loop;
- Emphasize streetcar usage while accommodating shared-lane capacity for buses and bicycles where appropriate; and
- Provide generous landscaping and street tree canopies to complement parks, plazas and open spaces along their routes, becoming an integral part of the Open Space Framework (discussed later in this section).

The cross-section illustrations for Streetcar Boulevards show recommended ways of accommodating streetcars depending on the existing right-of-way width, volume of automobile traffic carried, adjacent land uses and additional desired modes.

Because of the area's significance, several alternatives were developed for Main Street and the adjacent Elm/Commerce couplet system. Options examining streetscape, traffic calming and streetcar alignments for these specific streets are presented in Chapter V: Focus Areas in the section for the Main Street District Retail Activation Area.



Alternative 1 introduces a landscaped median, places transit stations at sidewalk curbs, and includes narrowed travel lanes.



Alternative 2 places streetcar stops in the central median and allows for on-street parking with bulbouts at intersections and at intervals along the block.



Curb boarding for streetcars can help activate sidewalks and places transit riders immediately at their destination.



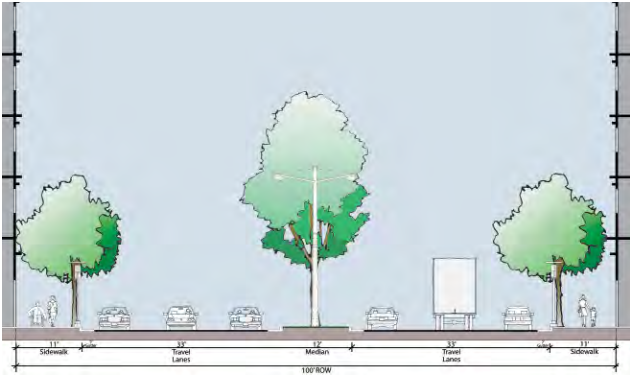
Median boarding provides for greater flexibility for curb lanes, which could be used for bike lanes, parking, additional landscaping, or for flex space activities such as outdoor dining.

2. District Connector (Griffin, Elm, Commerce, Pearl, Central/Cesar Chavez; portions of Field, Houston, Ross, Young)

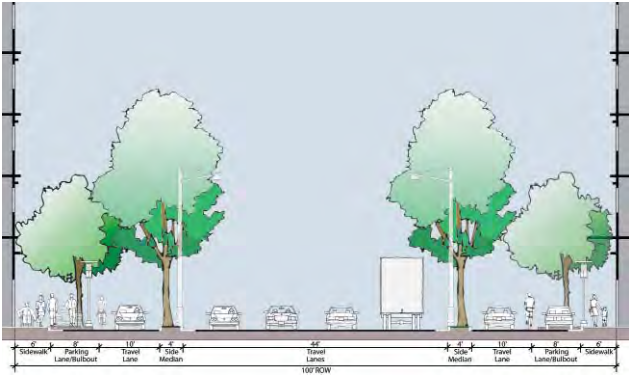
This designation applies to streets that generally function as the primary gateways into the loop. They form the backbone of the automobile circulation system and are essential for facilitating movement into, out of and within the loop. District Connectors should:

- Provide primary automobile connections between districts inside the loop and extend linkages outside the loop and to the freeway system;
- Improve physical and psychological connections between districts on either side of the street through consistent treatment, enhanced design, and public art installations;
- Carry vehicular through-traffic to access freeways and adjacent districts and neighborhoods;
- Accommodate multiple modes including bus, streetcar, bike lane, pedestrian and automobile as needed; and
- Incorporate innovative treatments to accommodate alternative modes at key intersections.

The cross-section illustrations for District Connectors show recommended ways of maintaining vehicle capacity while calming traffic, enhancing the pedestrian realm and better addressing transit needs.



Alternative 1 introduces a central landscaped median while retaining three through-lanes in each direction, suitable for areas with lower pedestrian volumes.



Alternative 2 creates a multi-way boulevard with higher-speed through traffic in the middle four lanes and access or "slip" streets in either direction closest to buildings and sidewalks. Access streets could have any combination of mixed-flow travel lanes, on-street parking or additional bulbouts with landscaping and flex space.



Mature trees help define traditional boulevards.



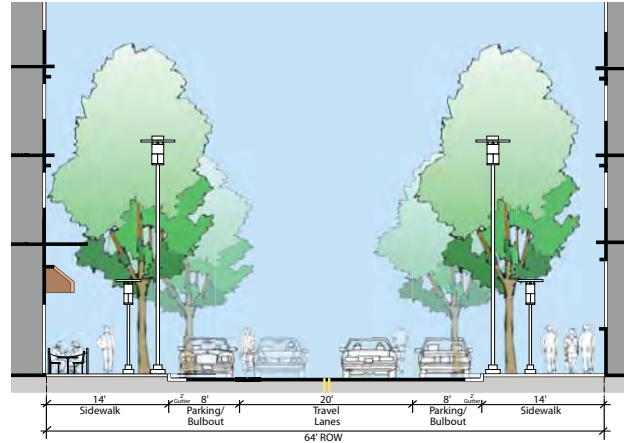
Side access streets allow for slow-moving and local destination-bound traffic to access buildings and properties between intersections.

3. Neighborhood Street (all other streets such as Akard, St. Paul, Ervay, etc.)

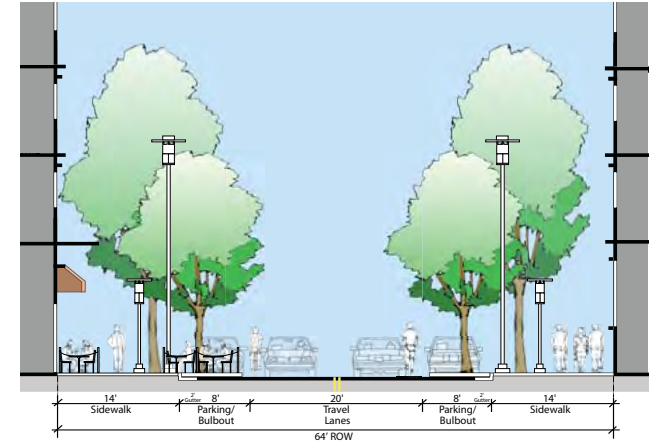
All streets not classified as a Streetcar Boulevard or District Connector within the loop are designated as Neighborhood Streets. These form the vast majority of streets and should:

- Emphasize pedestrian and bicycle mobility;
- Prioritize pedestrian safety and comfort; and
- Support neighborhood residential and commercial uses through on-street parking, landscape variation, and active sidewalks.

The cross-section illustrations for Neighborhood Streets show alternatives for providing enhanced pedestrian realm with variations in street trees and bulbout configuration.



The prototypical section illustrates widened sidewalks, 10' travel lanes and on-street parking.



Within the on-street parking areas, intermittent bulbouts provide opportunities for additional street trees, furniture or flex space outdoor dining.



Permanent on-street parking on Neighborhood Streets will enhance the viability of retail spaces and improve pedestrian comfort.



New flex space/bulbout areas will expand the appeal and economic viability of seasonal outdoor dining.

4. Special Use Street Overlay (Flora; portions of Harwood, Lamar, Main, Marilla, Market)

This designation applies to a few select streets or segments within Downtown that reflect a specific design or district identity. The Special Use Street Overlay can be applied to any street classification but should maintain the predominant objectives of the “parent” street (e.g. not reducing capacity). Special Use Street Overlays should:

- Incorporate special design characteristics (e.g. sidewalk width, parking arrangement) to support increased activation;
- Be completely unique – no two are alike in Downtown;
- Reflect character and intent of immediate surroundings; and
- Accommodate flexibility and option for closure for events, festivals and parades.



Flora Street's special design - with interesting pavement textures, curbless roadway, lights and banners - knits together Arts District destinations.



Special Use Streets can incorporate large, central promenades while traffic or transit flows on either side.



The design and use of Special Use Streets should reflect local culture and reinforce the character and identity of the surrounding district.

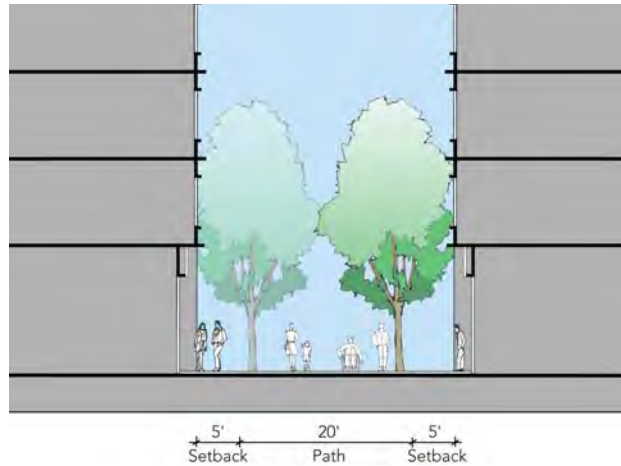


Special Use Streets can host a range of special events and activities.

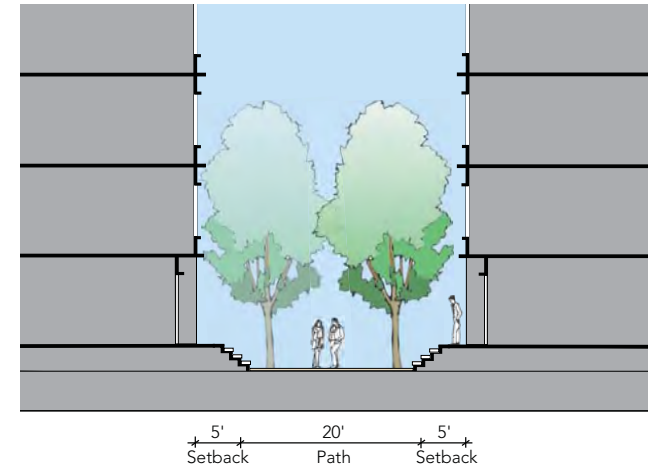
5. Passage (multiple locations including Browder, Stone, etc.)

Passages apply to the existing and proposed network of pedestrian passages throughout Downtown. Although not a street, these public and private passages function as a core part of the circulation system. They are also an integral part of the Open Space Framework (see discussion later in this section). Passages should:

- Facilitate mid-block pedestrian and bicycle circulation, reducing the length of blocks that are 300 feet long or greater;
- Prioritize pedestrians and bicycles while providing for some shared loading/service alleys with intermittent vehicles where necessary or desired; and
- Be designed with special pavement, lighting, façade treatments and landscaping.



Alternative 1



Alternative 2



Mixed-use contexts: Passages should embrace pedestrian traffic with building entrances, dining opportunities, and landscaping.



Residential contexts: Passages should be central features to break up massive developments and provide additional pedestrian connectivity to adjacent blocks and land uses.

CREATING GREAT DOWNTOWN STREETS

While the street classifications provide for the overall roles and functionality of Downtown roadways, several basic parameters should be applied when designing new streets or redesigning existing ones. These include:

Roadway

- Ensure more than 4 lanes of traffic are mitigated by one or more well landscaped median(s)
- Maintain 10' travel lanes on all neighborhood streets except where transit needs warrant 11' lane widths
- Explore 11' travel lanes if right-of-way permits for District Connectors
- Ensure flexibility in use of roadway right-of-way:
 - Private automobile
 - Transit
 - Bicycle
- Maximize shared use of travel lanes to accommodate multiple modes where feasible
- Provide on-street parking on all streets wherever possible to slow traffic, enhance economic vibrancy of storefronts, and increase pedestrian comfort
- Ensure flexibility for incorporating different uses and functions in non-travel lanes:
 - Parking (private automobile, bus and valet)
 - Service (loading and unloading)
 - Outdoor dining
 - Vendor carts
 - Retail kiosks

Sidewalks

- Ensure contiguous sidewalks on both sides of street
- Provide a minimum of 8' wide pedestrian corridors in high volume pedestrian streets
- Require a clear contiguous 5'-wide unobstructed zone for ADA access
- Reserve building-adjacent sidewalk space in excess of the 5'-wide unobstructed zone for sidewalk dining where desired

- Design sidewalks, medians and parking lanes to accommodate pedestrian friendly uses:
 - Vendor carts
 - Retail kiosks
 - Outdoor dining
- Incorporate District-specific design treatments to create consistency and support identity

Landscaping

- Ensure adequate planting area for mature trees, planted at an average 25' on-center
- Provide structural soil in constrained rights-of-way to assist in tree growth
- Encourage regenerative landscapes
- Integrate sustainable elements to create "living" streets:
 - Integrated storm water planters
 - Energy and food generators



Narrow travel lanes on larger boulevards can still accommodate high traffic volumes at reasonable speeds suitable to an urban environment.



A five-foot minimum clear path of travel on sidewalks ensures a comfortable and accessible environment for all users.



Landscape zones should support tree canopy growth and incorporate ground plantings and seasonal flowers where possible.



Crosswalks should be clearly marked and detailed with district-specific paving, colors or textures.



The furnishing zone, at right, provides space for trees and plantings, signage, light standards, furniture, and other amenities.

Crosswalks

- Ensure marked crosswalks at all controlled intersections
- Provide bulbouts at intersections on wide streets (e.g. Pearl, Griffin, Young) to reduce crossing distance
- Use colored paving, texture and/or District-specific materials to highlight key intersections or significant streets
- Provide widest crosswalks (up to 20') in high pedestrian traffic areas or major destinations (e.g. Main Street, Lamar/West End, adjacent to parks/open space)



Consolidated parking meters help reduce sidewalk clutter and provide easier payment options for Downtown visitors.

Street Lighting and Furniture

- Illuminate streets with two types of lighting: pedestrian-scaled standards and vehicle-oriented standards
- Locate street furniture in a sidewalk furnishing zone, within 3'-5' (depending on street type and overall sidewalk width) from the back edge of curb where on-street parking exists. Where parking does not exist, the building frontage area should be used for benches and other street furniture if/when sidewalk dining is not being utilized.
- Ensure installation of lighting or street furniture does not impact clear, comfortable pedestrian path of travel in sidewalks
- Street furniture provided by adjacent property owners should not be subject to any ROW license fees

Signage and Utilities

- Encourage consolidation of existing and limit future individual pole signs (e.g. parking restrictions, etc.) in the sidewalks/furnishing zones
- Prohibit new utility poles from sidewalks/furnishing zones and remove existing poles as areas redevelop
- New and existing parking meters should be consolidated into pay stations

OPEN SPACE FRAMEWORK

A complementary component to reshaping streets in Downtown Dallas is a comprehensive framework that addresses and adds clarity of purpose to the area’s myriad parks, plazas and open spaces.

Dallas is fortunate to have a wide range of urban plazas, larger parks, and historical and cultural sites. The existing Downtown Parks Master Plan outlines an ambitious agenda for creating new park space. The city’s commitment to expanding the parks system in Downtown is also reflected in recent additions such as Main Street Garden and Belo Garden. While these plans and additions are lauded, the 360 plan takes a fresh approach to the role, location and purpose of each park or open space. More and bigger spaces are not necessarily better and the ability to maintain, manage and program spaces of any size should always be considered at the design stage. As the Open Space Framework figure on page 57 illustrates, a network of interconnected, appropriately-sized spaces in the right locations with the right activities – and with the right buildings nearby to frame the spaces – is what is needed to achieve the vision of a dynamic, lively public realm. Open spaces should also enhance District identity and character and serve as focal points to specific areas of the city center. The Open Space Framework sets forth a new overall structure and hierarchy for Downtown’s range of public spaces to reflect these concepts.

Open Space Classifications

With this new hierarchy and approach comes the recognition that open spaces in urban environments should first and foremost be designed as “people spaces.” Many of the area’s parks and plazas currently serve as little more than misguided (though well-intended) design experiments, creating spaces that disregard their contexts and are oftentimes empty and inactive. When parks and plazas are programmed to serve their intended users – and designed to be outward facing and welcoming – people immediately activate these spaces by sitting, eating, recreating and relaxing. The Open Space Framework, therefore, sets forth new classifications and design principles (described on the following pages) that are essential to transforming the public perception of parks, plazas and open spaces, making them a truly integrated part of the urban experience.



The Open Space Framework addresses the importance of Downtown’s many public and private plazas, each providing an important role in the open space network.



Historically- and culturally-significant sites such as Dallas Heritage Village are important to Downtown’s health, offering serene, educational and contemplative environments.

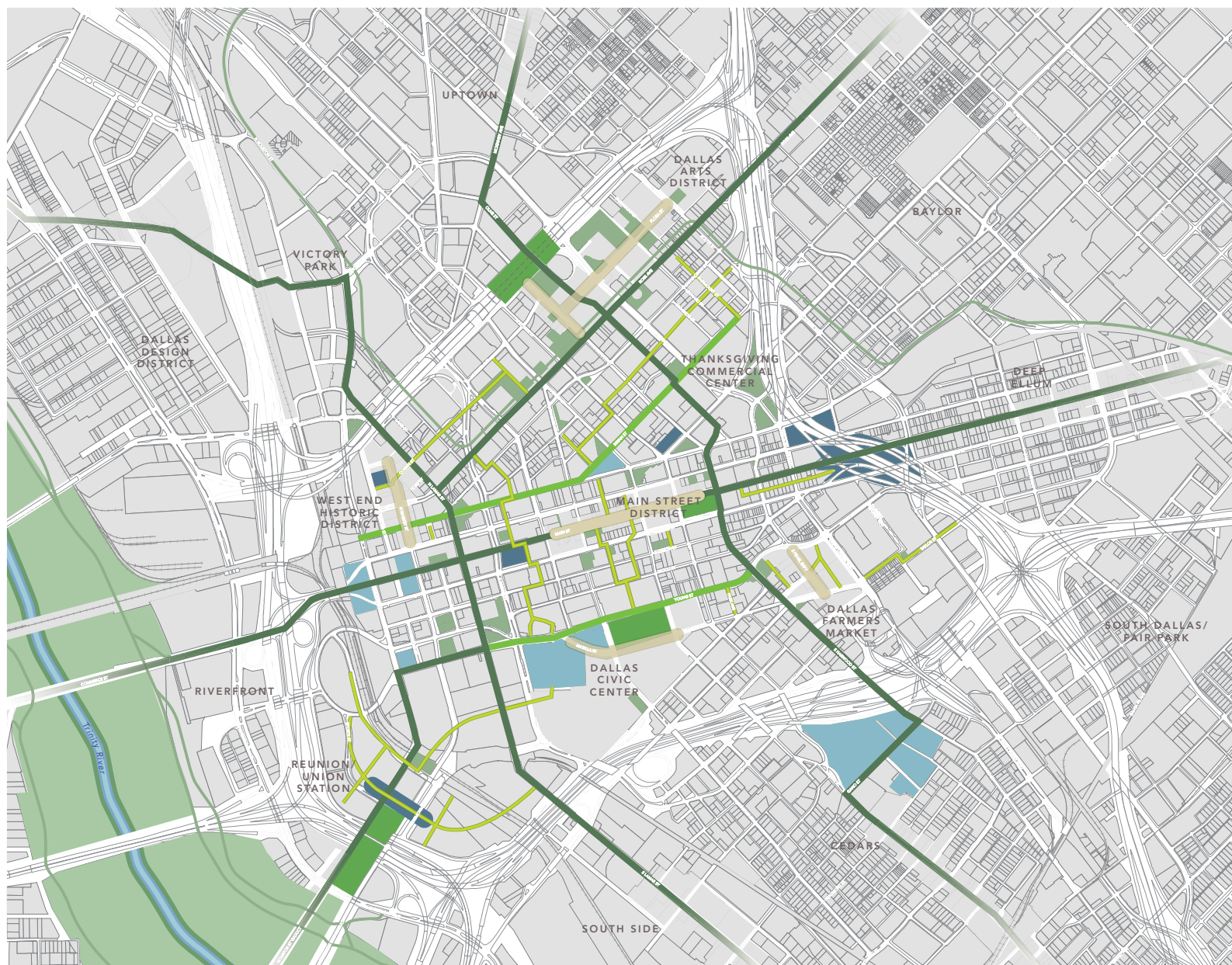


Open Space Framework

- Freeway/Ramp
- Heavy Rail
- Study Area
- Trinity River Corridor
- Special Use Street Overlay
- Streetcar Boulevard
- Light Rail Transit Boulevard
- Regional Bicycle/Pedestrian Trail

PROPOSED PARK AND OPEN SPACE CLASSIFICATIONS

- District Park
- Neighborhood Park
- Historic/Cultural Park
- Plaza or Pocket Park
- Existing or Proposed Passage



0 .12 .25 .5 miles

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1. District Park (Main Street Garden, City Hall Plaza, etc.)

These are typically the largest of Downtown's parks and are few in number, serving a wide audience for a wide range of activities. District Parks typically:

- Serve a more "regional" function to host large events and attract users from a wider distance
- Have multiple programs/functions and are most animated during special events
- Are located in the heart of or at a significant place within a District
- Are of substantial size – 2 acres or more



The Woodall Rodgers Deck Park, or "The Park", will knit two districts together with its collection of active and passive spaces. Major events will also be a significant component of the park's future programming.

2. Neighborhood Park (Belo Garden, Bark Park, etc.)

These parks serve surrounding populations and sometimes have a particular programmatic function or area for specialized activity or use. Neighborhood Parks:

- Serve more immediate users such as residents and office workers
- Emphasize the needs of daily users – do not accommodate large-scale events
- Support families and pets with programmed areas such as tot lots or dog runs
- Offer a high level of regular animation with kiosks, cafés and vendors
- Are of modest size – 1 acre or less



Belo Garden will anchor the western end of the Main Street District, serving as a neighborhood destination for residents and office workers (Image: Hargreaves Associates).

3. Historic/Cultural Park (Dealey Plaza, JFK Memorial, etc.)

These sites make up much of Downtown's visitor experience, emphasizing past events, monuments or remembrances. They range in size and most often:

- Are a significant historic or cultural site – "sacred space" for the city
- Are contemplative and the least animated of Downtown parks; they are not expected to change much



Dealey Plaza anchors a group of historic and cultural destinations in the West End Historic District.

4. Plaza or Pocket Park (Pegasus Plaza, etc.)

Making up the majority of the total number of open spaces in Downtown, Plazas and Pocket Parks are essential in providing relief from buildings and creating intimate spaces for a range of activities. Plazas and Pocket Parks can be publicly or privately owned or operated and should:

- Serve immediate neighbors as a respite from the built environment
- Be individually programmed or purposed
- Have the highest level of animation with restaurants, vendors, newsstands and seating/tables
- Be small in size – less than .25 acre



The Gardens at Fountain Place is a large private plaza that both interacts with the street edge at Ross and provides quiet spaces along the office building.

5. Passage (multiple locations including Browder, Stone, etc.)

Also a component of the Circulation Framework, Passages provide critical linkages between parks, plazas and open spaces. Most often, they connect sites such as City Hall Plaza to Pegasus Plaza and Thanksgiving Square through a network of mid-block crossings and dedicated pedestrian ways alongside buildings. Passages are envisioned to be incorporated into the development of other areas of Downtown to expand this unique circulation system as a part of the open space system.



Stone Place is an example of animating a pedestrian passage between major destinations within Downtown Dallas.

CREATING GREAT DOWNTOWN OPEN SPACES

Like many cities developed during the same era, Downtown Dallas has a multitude of often empty, cold (or hot, depending on the season) public spaces, many of them plazas that are set at the base of large office buildings. Despite their intentions, most of these spaces are not inviting or desirable respites from the urban environment.

In supporting the new open space classifications, certain design criteria are essential to creating vibrant parks, plazas and open spaces. In short, designs for any public or semi-public space within Downtown should adhere to several basic principles. Spaces should be:

Functional

Rather than being seen as merely “required” or leftover space, public spaces should be first designed with their functionality in mind. Spaces should aim to:

- Serve the intended users and purpose with the most appropriate size
- An appropriate level of programming and management to maintain appearance and ensure adequate animation, human interaction and vibrancy
- Address the needs of a wide range of different users, to attract as many people as possible
- Offer flexibility in programming and activation to accommodate multiple users and activities
- Support and encourage economic vitality by creating environments that support and relate to surrounding uses

Comfortable

Public spaces must engender a safe, welcoming and enjoyable experience. They should:

- Be compatible with the scale and size of surrounding buildings
- Create a welcoming and inviting environment with landscaping, seating and lighting

- Foster a strong sense of comfort and enclosure without being “walled off” from streets
- Provide ample shade and vegetation, reflecting and respecting the Dallas climate
- Ensure a safe experience for all age ranges and user groups

Accessible

Urban parks, plazas and open spaces must be accessible and connected to their surroundings to ensure the best experience for users. They should:

- Be fully accessible to pedestrians and the physically disabled
- Connect to, enhance the character of and bolster the image of the District in which they are located
- Embrace adjacent streets with widened peripheral sidewalks, enhanced crosswalks at key park entrances, on-street parking adjacent to park edges/sidewalks, and active park/plaza edges with vendors, low walls and vegetation, lighting and other programming
- Reinforce the relationship and connection to the larger open space network

Memorable

As a part of an enhanced urban experience, public spaces must leave an impression on users. They should:

- Contribute to a “sense of place” – they should not be merely “leftover” undeveloped space
- Respect and build on the historic, cultural and ecological context of Downtown
- Emphasize interaction, exploration and chance encounters
- Strengthen neighborhood and district social dynamics by supporting diverse, enriching experiences
- Incorporate public art, lighting, sound and thought-provoking interactive features to stimulate the senses



Interactive art features encourage exploration and conversation, helping to animate urban plazas.



Buildings nicely frame this neighborhood square, which is programmed with diverse seating opportunities, shade trees, and café space.