

VILLAGE OF SKOKIE

Design Guidelines for Mixed-Use Districts

NX Neighborhood Mixed-Use

TX Transit Mixed-Use

CX Core Mixed-Use

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Purpose

Consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, *Design Guidelines for Mixed-Use Districts* promote a pattern of development that encourages places to shop, dine, live, and work by incorporating a vertical and horizontal mix of uses, pedestrian orientation, and storefront-style shopping streets. Guidelines assist the development community in preparing applications for review by Village staff and the Appearance Commission. These guidelines should be referenced during the initial phases of mixed-use project design, but are not intended to discourage creativity, restrict development, or excuse any development from other Village requirements.

Guidelines apply to new construction and building renovations in mixed-use districts and should be interpreted as minimum standards. Key elements of these design guidelines include:

Site Design:

- Locate buildings at the street edge
- Locate vehicle parking, access, and service areas away from the street
- Provide pedestrian oriented amenities
- Separate vehicle and pedestrian traffic

Building Design:

- Locate main entrances at the street with a direct route from the public sidewalk
- Provide visual interest
- Provide pedestrian orientation

Prior to Appearance Commission review, the Village's Community Development Department staff will review your project at no cost and make recommendations to improve projects for compliance with Village codes and ordinances.

To the extent that any other Village document or plan addresses the same or similar issues and are inconsistent with these guidelines, the Appearance Commission will determine which regulations apply.

Site Design

The following site design guidelines include streetscape, circulation, building orientation, and pedestrian oriented plazas. These guidelines serve as the foundation for creating vibrant mixed-use districts by physically and functionally integrating developments in a way that encourages pedestrian activity and storefront-style shopping streets.

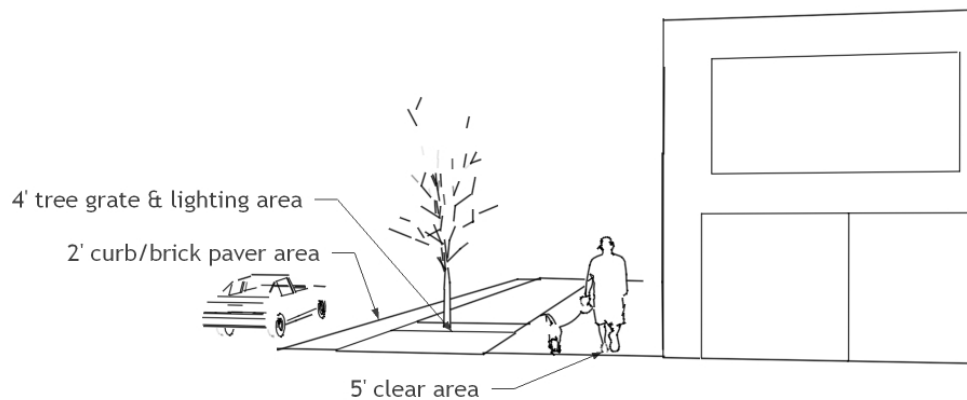
1. Streetscape

The purpose of streetscape guidelines is to organize public space in a way that allows pedestrians to safely and efficiently connect with their environment. Streetscape guidelines provide a construction guide for sidewalk activities that encourage walkability.

a. Curb/brick paver area

Streetscapes should contain a buffer between the sidewalk and the street. The curb area acts as a buffer since it is the closest area to the roadway. The curb area is a minimum of 2 feet wide and begins at the back of the curb. This area contains brick pavers to enhance the visual transition between the street and sidewalk. Parking meters and street lighting are often located in this area.

Generally, there are two streetscape standards in Skokie, Type A and Type B. A determination whether either of the types should be implemented is made by the Village Engineering Division. The Division's decision is based on corridor plans and available right-of-way.



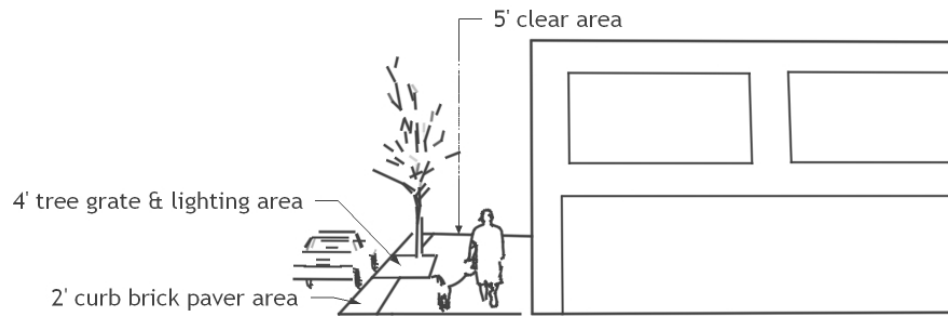
Type A streetscape pattern illustration

b. Tree grate and lighting area

The tree grate and lighting area may include brick pavers, parking meters, bicycle racks, and benches where adequate width exists as determined by the Village. At times it may be necessary for the curb and tree grate and lighting areas to overlap.

c. Clear area

The clear area consists of a sidewalk with a minimum paved width of 5 feet; it provides an adequate width for two people to comfortably pass one another. The clear area should be free of elements that impede traffic flow to encourage walkability and safety.



Type B streetscape pattern illustration

2. Circulation

All mixed-use developments are encouraged to incorporate circulation planning that provides clear pedestrian connections and efficient vehicular movement.

a. Curb cut design

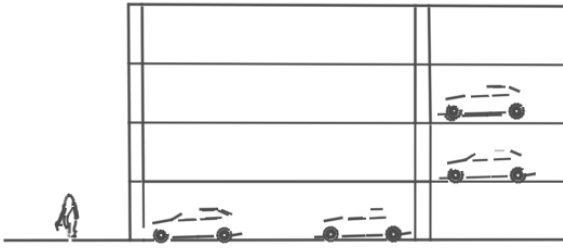
Minimizing vehicle curb cuts can contribute to an inviting pedestrian environment. Circulation design should be sensitive to the number, width, and spacing of curb cuts along sidewalks. When curb cuts are provided, it should be made clear to drivers that they are entering a pedestrian zone. The use of varied paving materials and visual cues can help achieve this objective. Similar approaches should be provided when pedestrian paths cross vehicular routes. This treatment emphasizes points of potential conflict while improving safety for all users.

b. Parking design

The location of parking and its appearance can have a strong influence on a development's image. Streets lined by buildings instead of parking lots are more interesting and safe for pedestrians. It is preferable that circulation design positions vehicle parking, access, and service areas in locations that minimize their visual impact. For example, locating parking behind buildings rather than across a building's frontage is an appropriate

The Zoning Ordinance provides a zoning bonus for removing 12 feet of retail street curb cut.

Providing excess commercial parking for non-restricted public use in the TX or CX district is eligible for a zoning bonus.



Inappropriate design:
A blank façade is located at the ground level of a parking garage.

option. However, the preservation of on street parking is encouraged and should not be confused with this regulation.

When a development includes a parking structure, any ground level frontage should be wrapped with an alternate use. Depending on the context, an appropriate way to address this guideline includes wrapping a parking garage façade with townhomes or storefronts. Under no circumstance are blank façades appropriate for major portions of a parking garage.

c. Site design

On large sites or developments, circulation systems should provide pedestrian connections between adjoining building entrances. They should be designed to avoid conflicts between vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrian traffic. The use of unified wayfinding signs is encouraged.

3. Building Orientation

Building orientation can contribute to vibrant streetscapes by meeting the combined needs of occupants, visitors, and pedestrians.

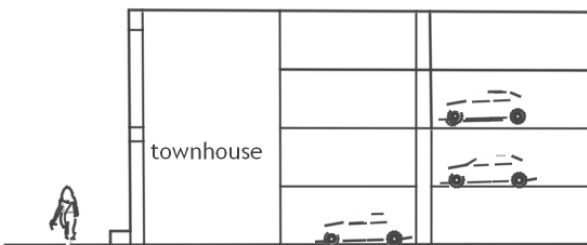
a. Pedestrian oriented location

Buildings should be located close to the street and designed to maximize their presence along street frontages. This allows individual buildings to work with adjacent buildings and create a clearly defined street edge and a sense of spatial containment.

According to the zoning ordinance, buildings located on retail streets are required to be a minimum of 25 feet in height and contain at least two useable floors. This requirement emphasizes a sense of spatial containment.



Preferred design:
Attaching a storefront as facing to a parking garage.



Preferred design:
Attaching a townhouse as facing to a parking garage.

The Zoning Ordinance requires:

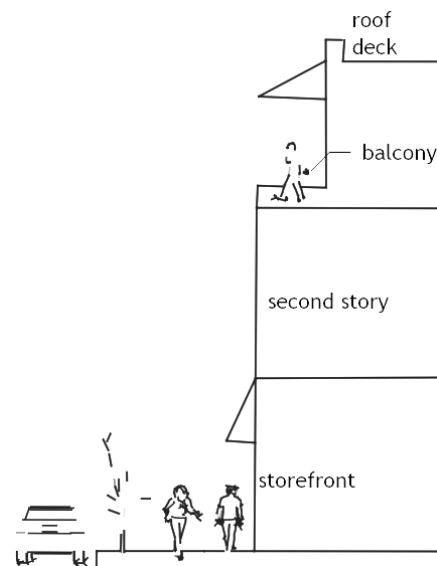
A minimum of 50% of all first floor façades to abut the public sidewalk.

On retail streets 60% of the first floor linear frontage of total lot frontage along the public sidewalk shall be devoted to permitted and special uses.

b. Pedestrian oriented elements

Buildings are encouraged to accommodate outdoor activity through the use of balconies, roof decks, awnings, and other amenities. These elements provide opportunities for lively street edges and layers of natural surveillance.

The ground level of a building should offer pedestrian interest along the sidewalk. Providing windows for visual access, frequently spaced entrances, and architectural details that differentiate individual storefronts help to achieve this objective.



Buildings are encouraged to use elements that bring life to street edges by encouraging activity.

Buildings are encouraged to include active commercial uses such as shops, cafés, and restaurants at the street level to promote pedestrian activity.

4. Pedestrian Oriented Plazas

The purpose of pedestrian oriented plazas is to provide a focal point and place for recreational, meeting, dining, and performance activities to occur. Although there is no formula for creating well designed plazas, these guidelines can assist in preventing empty plazas.

a. Location

It is preferable to locate plazas on major streets adjacent to transit stops and accessible from sidewalks with major pedestrian flow.

The perimeter of plazas should contain uses such as transit stops, cafés, and restaurants that provide pedestrian traffic. At least 50 percent of the total building frontage facing pedestrian oriented plazas should be occupied by retail uses.

For the comfort of users, plazas should be oriented to capture the best possible environmental conditions. An example of a condition that discourages use is locating plazas in areas that receive unusual amounts of shade caused by adjacent buildings.

b. Design

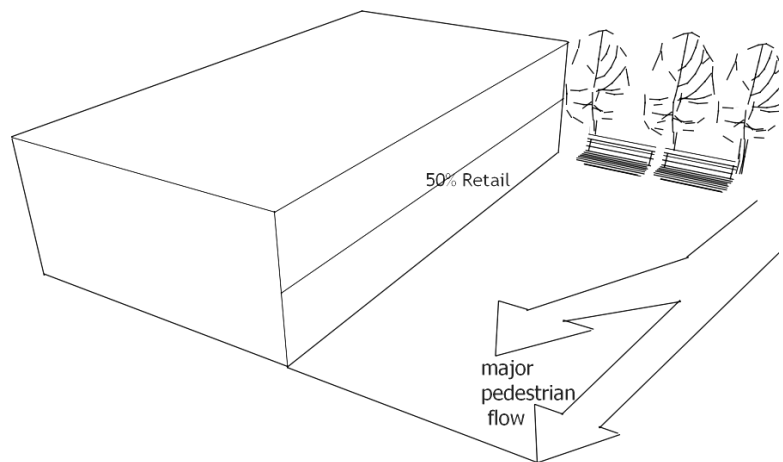
Plazas should be no more than 3 feet above or below the sidewalk to allow for maximum visibility and easy access. Plazas not located at the sidewalk level should include access points that are highly visible.

Benches, ledges, and steps for seating should be provided. At least one seat for every 100 ft² plaza area is recommended. A

minimum seating depth of 16 inches provides a comfortable amenity. Sun exposed and shaded seating should be provided.

Public art is encouraged in all plazas. Artwork may be free-standing pieces such as a sculpture or water fountain or may be integrated into its surroundings as an architectural element such as a relief sculpture imbedded in pavement, or a wall, mosaic, or mural on a wall.

Just as artwork can provide visual interest to a plaza, landscaping can provide an attractive amenity. A minimum of 10 percent of plaza surface



The Village offers zoning bonuses for plazas.

Well used pedestrian oriented plazas are typically located along storefront-style shopping streets.

Public art is eligible for a zoning bonus.

area should be landscaped. Landscaping and other elements used in streetscaping are encouraged to be used in plaza design.

Building Design

The Zoning Ordinance contains prescriptive window and transparency regulations for buildings located on retail streets:

A minimum of 50% clear transparent glass is required between 2 and 12 feet above grade.

Upper story nonresidence uses are required to use a minimum of 25% clear transparent glass between 3 and 8 feet from the finished floor level.

The Zoning Ordinance requires at least 50% of all first floor façades to abut the public sidewalk.

The following building design guidelines include pedestrian friendly building façades, massing, screening, and building materials. These guidelines help to frame public space in a way that encourages pedestrian and commercial activity.

1. Pedestrian Friendly Building Façades

Generally people passing by or using a building come in contact with the ground level. The treatment of entrances and ground level façades are important to creating an inviting storefront-style shopping experience.

a. Windows and transparency

Façades should provide opportunities for visual connections and natural surveillance between indoor environments and outdoor pedestrian areas. Utilizing unobstructed transparent glass accomplishes this objective. Reflective or dark tinted glass does not meet this purpose. In order to provide visual access at the street level, the amount of glass must be extensive in both vertical and horizontal dimensions.

b. Building entrances

Primary building entrances should be oriented with the streets that border a site.

It is preferred that such entrances are located at grade and face a public sidewalk. However, buildings with multiple street frontages are encouraged to locate their entrances at corners to engage the interest of those traveling through the intersection.

If a building is located adjacent to a plaza, an entrance facing the plaza should be provided to engage the interest of people traveling through the plaza.

A primary entrance should be both architecturally and functionally designed. Such entrances should convey prominence on the fronting façade. The use of building massing, architectural features, and changes in the roof line to emphasize building entrances, are encouraged.

Rear entrance designs should incorporate safety and visibility features including the use of windows that provide visual access and lighting. Rear



Corner entrances create visual interest and place emphasis on prominent locations.

entrances should look inviting and be articulated much like sidewalk facing entrances.

c. Awnings and canopies

According to the sign code, the lowest part of the projecting frame of canopies and awnings shall not be less than 7 feet 6 inches above the ground. The lowest portion of the descending skirt shall not be less than 6 feet 8 inches above the ground.

Awnings and canopies should be designed to provide visual interest, protection from weather, and identification.

Awnings mounted in a way that hides architectural features are generally unacceptable. Such features should be visible above, below or along the side of an awning.



Acceptable design: awnings that frame each window and entrance but do not cover architectural features

Separate window groupings and doors should have separate awnings.

The use of plastic, vinyl or internally illuminated awnings are strongly discouraged. Acrylic, canvas, glass, or metal are appropriate materials for awnings or canopies.

Awnings and canopies should not create shade that obscures the visibility of storefront windows. The use of backlighting inside storefront windows is encouraged to avoid this condition.



Unacceptable design: a continuous awning blocking an architectural feature.

d. Side façades

Side façades exposed to public view should contribute to the character of a building.

Blank walls are discouraged, especially when a side yard is provided.

Decorative architectural elements such as cornices and moldings used in a front façade should also be incorporated into the exposed side façades.

To avoid creating a blank side façade, features such as art, vegetative covers, windows, or lighting, can be used.

e. Lighting

Exterior lighting along a building façade should highlight building design features, provide ambience, and offer security. A low intensity, high-quality light, that provides uniform illumination while avoiding light pollution is preferred (full cutoff design is required). Fixtures should be consistent with the architectural style of the building and take into consideration the streetscape lighting style.

A substantial amount of lighting for pedestrians should be provided from storefronts using either indirect illumination from within the building or direct

All signage must be designed and installed in conformance with the Village regulations.

outdoor illumination.

f. Signage

Signage should not contribute to the visual clutter of the streetscape.

Signs should be architecturally integrated with their surroundings but should not obscure the architectural features of buildings or dominate a façade.

Design elements such as square or arched window patterns should help determine the sign shape suitable for a building.

Signs should be professionally designed and constructed using high quality materials such as metal, stone, or wood.

The design and alignment of signs on multiple use buildings should compliment each other such that a unified appearance is achieved.

Visible raceways and transformers for signage letters are prohibited.

2. Massing

Massing can be defined as a three dimensional form such as a cube or cylinder. The way a form is sized relates to the way building elements are highlighted. Voids in a form have the ability to change a building's appearance. This treatment can make a building less imposing which is paramount to creating a pedestrian friendly environment.

Recessed entries and articulation in storefront mass are encouraged.

Upper floor setbacks can be varied to accommodate balconies and other architectural treatments.

Generally, sites with more than 50 feet of street frontage should incorporate modulations to reduce their perceived mass. Dividing mass into smaller scale components creates a more pedestrian friendly environment. This can be accomplished by varying wall planes, wall height, and roof planes.

Building massing should be aligned with neighboring structures to form a cohesive street wall. However, alignment should conform to the Zoning Ordinance requirements and these guidelines.

3. Screening

Mechanical equipment and building support elements should be incorporated within the structure of the building or screened from public view in a manner consistent with a building's architecture.

All building-mounted, non-street utility meters and service equipment should be placed at the side or rear of a building that does not abut a street.

Screening should be designed in a manner that does not interfere with the safe and efficient operation of mechanical equipment or support elements.

The sign code regulates signable areas for mixed-use districts. Wall signs should be no greater than 1/3 of the commercial portion of the façade.

Trash collection areas should be screened from public view with the same material used in the primary building.

4. Building Materials

All building materials used should be durable, low maintenance, and give the appearance of permanency and enduring value. The use of exterior insulating finishing systems is strongly discouraged. Exterior building materials such as metal, glass, stone, and brick are encouraged, but may require extra pedestrian level details to create visual interest.

Glossary

Amenity A feature that increases a site's marketability, esthetics, or usability to the public.

Architectural Feature Prominent or significant parts or elements of a building or structure.

Architectural Style The characteristic form and detail of a structure from a historical period or a particular school of architecture.

Articulation The manner in which portions of a building are expressed and work to define a structure.

Awning/Canopy A covering over a public way or sidewalk.

Compatibility The size and character of a structure or its elements relative to its surroundings.

Exterior Insulating Finishing System An acrylic finish applied to a foam base that is anchored to a building façade.

Façade An exterior face or wall of a building.

Massing The organization of a building's volume or the three dimensional bulk of a structure including height, width, and depth.

Multiple Entrances Pedestrian entrances spaced at frequent intervals along the sidewalk contribute to variety, interest, and intensity. Providing numerous points of physical access reduces the possibility of monotonous façades. Combined with display windows, entrance points can greatly enhance pedestrian environment.

Plaza A continuous open space accessible to the public at all times that is predominately open to the sky and designed for the use of the people rather than a setting for a building.

Pedestrian Orientation The characteristics of an area which are based on the needs or desires of people traveling by foot.

Retail Street See Section 188-183 of the Zoning Ordinance for a list of retail street segments.

Scale The spatial relationship among structures along a street block, including height, bulk, and yard relationships and the proportional relationship of the size of parts to one another.

Setback The distance between the placement of a building and the property line.

Streetscape The visual character of a street including natural and man made components such as trees, buildings, paving, and street furniture.

Windows, Providing Visual Connections are transparent enough to permit the view of activities within a building from nearby streets and sidewalks. Reflective or dark tinted glass does not meet this purpose. In order to provide visual access at the street level, the amount of glass must be extensive in both vertical and horizontal dimensions.