Bethesda Downtown Plan Design Guidelines



Planning Board Briefing June 1, 2017

MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL

Design Guidelines Schedule

May - Ongoing : Stakeholder Working Groups

June 1 : Planning Board Briefing

July : Release of the Working Draft

July 13 + 27 : Planning Board Work Sessions

Bethesda Tomorrow

economic competitive + innovative

A truly sustainable Downtown...

environmental social unique + affordable

greener + connected



Community Identity

Reflect and enhance the distinct character of Bethesda's existing neighborhoods and centers of activity, while providing opportunities for innovation.



Equity

Create an inviting public realm and provide a mix of inclusive housing options to improve quality of life for residents of all incomes, ages and abilities.



Habitat + Health

Improve community health and environmental quality through increased public green spaces and landscapes designed to enhance habitat connectivity.



Access + Mobility

Develop a well-connected network of walkable and bikeable streets, trails and open spaces accessible to all users.



Water

Incorporate water conservation and stormwater treatment measures throughout the design of the public and private realm.



Energy

Integrate energy efficient design to address climate change and create healthier living and working environments.

...with strengthened Centers of Activity



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C/R Zone Development Standards

All Standard Method and Optional Method projects must:

- Meet Compatibility Requirements when abutting or confronting an Agricultural, Rural Residential, Residential Detached, or Residential Townhouse zone that is vacant or improved with an agricultural or residential use
- Provide required open space as indicated in the Zoning Ordinance based on tract size, frontages and/or building type



C/R Zone Development Standards

Standard Method projects must (unless required to submit Site Plan):

- Meet Development Standards outlined in the Zoning Ordinance which address similar issues as the design guidelines such as:
 - Setbacks
 - Build-to Area
 - Massing
 - Building Orientation
 - Transparency and Blank Walls

Building Placement



Transparency



Blank Wall



C/R Zone Development Standards

All Optional Method projects and Standard Method projects under Site Plan review must:

- Substantially conform with the Sector Plan and Design Guidelines.
 - The Zoning Ordinance allows flexibility in development standards for Optional Method projects based on discretionary review.
 - Plan recommendations and guidelines help to ensure consistent and predictable regulatory review of projects in a specific area to achieve the Sector Plan vision.



How to Use the Guidelines

- Show how to meet requirements of master plan and zoning.
- Property owners or prospective purchasers should look at design guidelines early to evaluate project potential.
- Important everywhere, but crucial in Bethesda due to:
 - Building scale and need to ensure appropriate relationships between buildings
 - Importance of the pedestrian realm
 - Proximity of residential development
 - Emphasis on design excellence
- In the Sector Plan it is expected that the design guidelines would perform heavy lifting.
- Given the availability of bonus density from the Bethesda Overlay Zone and density averaging, zoning height limits and design guidelines were cited as the primary controls on building design.
- Intent of the guidelines is to be met unless a proposal better meets the urban form goals of the Sector Plan and the guidelines or makes such a compelling contribution to the public realm as to justify departure from the guidelines.
- To be updated as necessary.

Parks and Open Space Guidelines

Site and Building Design Guidelines

Guidelines for Key Sites

Imposing building massing and bulk







Blank ground floor walls with poor relationship to the sidewalk



Sector Plan

Urban Form Goal 2.6.2 C:

- Create a walkable environment where buildings frame a vibrant public realm and relate to the human scale.
- Limit the impacts of imposing building massing and bulk particularly in the design of tall buildings.
- Design with sensitivity for access to sunlight, air and shadows.
- Contribute to the character and visual identity of Downtown Bethesda.

locations and with significant height, consider creating a Separation: special top that contributes to Bulk: Limit tower floor Separate towers to the quality of the skyline plates, vary geometry allow access to light and air, and reduce and articulate facades **Tower Step-back:** impact of shadows to reduce building Step back upper on the public realm bulk floors along streets, open spaces and midblock connections + Innovation: in a way that distinctly Encourage differentiates the tower innovative building from the building base form and allow flexibility for design Base: Provide a lowthat meets the to mid-rise building intent of the base that frames the recommendations street with fine-grain facade articulation + Variation: Vary tower heights, setbacks, orientation, and building materials Setback: Allow sufficient setback from the curb for a clear pedestrian walkway Mid-block lined by plantings and **Connection:** Provide furnishings per the public connections Bethesda Streetscape for people to walk Standards and bike through large blocks

Top: For buildings in prominent





Sidewalk Zones

- A. Planting/Furnishing Zone: The buffer from vehicular traffic. Can accommodate street trees, furnishings, stormwater management and on some street types activities like outdoor dining and seating.
- B. Pedestrian Through Zone: Provides unobstructed passage and should be designed to be accessible for people of all abilities.
- C. Frontage Zone: Adjacent to the building and can accommodate elements such as retail display, café seating and plantings for ground-floor residential uses. On some streets this zone can also serve as part of the Pedestrian Through Zone.



Building Placement

D. Build-to Line: Creates a consistent building edge along the public realm, helps to define public spaces and delineate the pedestrian sidewalk environment. In some cases, greater building setbacks from the property line may be required to achieve a recommended sidewalk width.



Building Form

- **Base Height:** Base heights vary by street type to align with typical existing building heights or create a human-scaled environment for pedestrians on streets with predominantly high-rise development.
- Step-Back: Upper floor step-backs provide a human-scaled building edge along the street that enhances pedestrian comfort and access to sky views.



Urban Boulevard

Intent: Ensure efficient pedestrian flow and comfort in an environment dominated by large-scale buildings and streets.





Downtown Mixed-Use Street

Intent: Create vibrant settings that accommodate the diverse needs of businesses, residents and visitors, and provide ease of walkability.





Neighborhood Main Street

Intent: Provide sidewalks that act as outdoor rooms with areas for socializing, vending and seating while also ensuring ample space for pedestrians to stroll.



Shared Street

Intent: Provide a linear public open space that is flexible to accommodate all modes of transportation, street activities and occasional large events.



Neighborhood Connector Street

Intent: Ensure pedestrian comfort in relation to through traffic and vehicle access on these connector streets.



Neighborhood Local Street

Intent: Provide efficient and comfortable local access from the urban core to neighborhoods of mid-rise and low-scale buildings.





Neighborhood Residential Street

Intent: Provide landscaped local access to residential uses that creates a casual walking experience within a garden environment.





Public Through-Block Connections and Trails

Intent: Improve connectivity for people to walk and bike throughout Downtown Bethesda and create additional outdoor public spaces for residents and visitors to enjoy.



Parks and Open Space Guidelines Site and Building Design Guidelines

Guidelines for Key Sites

Park and Open Space Themes

Support Centers with Civic Gathering Spaces

Provide Linkages and Gateways to Major Trail Systems

Create Livable Communities by Greening the Edges

Create green neighborhood Parks

Add to Existing Parks, Open Spaces and Trails









Urban Park Types

Before

Urban Parks – parks on the edges of central business districts

<u>Now</u>

Civic Greens Plazas Countywide Urban Recreational Parks Urban Greenways Neighborhood Greens Pocket Parks Urban Buffer Parks Urban Recreational Parklets





Eastern Greenway -Civic Greens, Neighborhood Greens and Urban Greenway

Vision - These parks are envisioned as destinations and pockets of larger green space along the edge of the downtown.



Park and Open Space Design Guidelines

For each public open spaces, the following design guidelines should be considered:

- Intent
- Key Features
- Size
- Experiences /Mix of Uses Active, Contemplative, Social Gathering/Community Building
- Relationship to Adjacent Uses (context)
- Site Access/Connectivity
- Special Features
- Frequency of Use



Urban Park Types

Civic Green Urban Parks

Intent

Formally planned, flexible, programmable for:

- informal gathering
- large gatherings, markets, concerts, festivals

Key Features

- Large central lawn
- Surrounded by activating uses
- Optional: gardens, water features and shade structures.

Size – ½ acre minimum, 1 ½ acre ideal



Civic Greens

- Experiences ensure a mix of uses with a focus on Social Gathering
 - Active
 - Contemplative
 - Social gathering/community building
- Relationship to Adjacent Uses (context)
 - Located at the center of activating uses
 - Building entrances should front on civic green
- Site Accessibility/Connectivity
 - Ensure physical and visual connections from street
 - Ensure a connection to transit systems
 - Ensure safe pedestrian crossings
- Special Features
 - Capitalize on unique views
 - Incorporate identity creating features or artwork
 - Incorporate streetscape enhancements along open space edge
- Frequency of Use
 - Special Events
 - Seasonal Events
 - Monthly Functions
 - Weekly Functions
 - Daily Functions





Urban Park Types

Neighborhood Greens

Intent

Formally planned, flexible open spaces for:

- informal gathering
- lunchtime relaxation
- small special event gatherings
- walk-to recreation

Key Features

- Lawn area
- shaded seating
- play area
- Optional: a skate spot, a community garden, or similar neighborhood serving amenities

Size – ¼ acre minimum, ½ acre ideal



Neighborhood Greens

- **Experiences** ensure a mix of uses
 - Active
 - Contemplative
 - Social gathering/community building
- Relationship to Adjacent Uses (context)
 - Located in the center of residential developments
 - Within walking distance of residents
- Site Accessibility/Connectivity
 - Ensure physical and visual connections from street
 - Ensure safe pedestrian crossings
- Special Features
 - Picnic areas
 - Play features and small game spaces
 - Open lawns
 - Neighborhood serving amenities, neighborhood identity features
- Frequency of Use
 - Seasonal Events
 - Monthly Functions
 - Daily Functions



Urban Park Types

Urban Greenways

Intent

Linear parks that provide:

- trails
- wide landscaped walkways and bikeways
- other recreational and natural amenities
- A more intimate, slower experience for recreating than a bikeway
- small areas for gathering

Key Features

- Trails, walkways and bikeways
- vegetative ground cover and trees
- links other green spaces and trails
- Gathering pods
- Artwork and interpretive displays
- natural systems

Size the width should accommodate a ten foot trail plus the buffer vegetation



Urban Greenways

- Experiences ensure a mix of uses with a focus on active and contemplative
 - Active
 - Contemplative
 - Social gathering/community building
- Relationship to Adjacent Uses (context)
 - Location is defined by filling the gaps of access to the open space system
 - May occur along road right of ways or paper streets
- Site Accessibility/Connectivity
 - Ensure physical and visual connections to the bike and trail network
 - Ensure safe pedestrian crossings
- Special Features
 - Enhanced natural systems such as streams
 - Unique lighting
 - Artful wayfinding elements
- Frequency of Use
 - Special Events Daily Functions







Urban Park Types

Countywide Urban Recreational Parks

Intent

Oriented to the recreational needs of a densely populated neighborhood and business district, They provide space for:

- active recreation
- recreational programming
- community gatherings

Key features

- athletic fields, playing courts, picnicking, dog parks, sitting areas and flexible grassy open space
- Programming can include farmer's markets, outdoor exercise classes, and community yard sales.

Size – minimum 2.5 acres



Countywide Urban Recreational Parks

- Experiences ensure a mix of uses with a focus on active uses
 - Active
 - Contemplative
 - Social gathering/Community building
- Relationship to Adjacent Uses (context)
 - Located within walking distance of high density residential and commercial developments
 - Compatible with other community serving uses such as recreation centers, libraries, etc.
 - Located near transit sytem
- Site Accessibility/Connectivity
 - Ensure physical and visual connections from street
 - Ensure a connection to transit systems
 - Ensure safe pedestrian crossings
- Special Features
 - Unique recreational amenity
 - Artwork as recreational feature
 - Unique lighting
- Frequency of Use

Special Events Weekly Functions Daily Functions







Urban Park Types

Urban Buffer Parks

Intent

Green transitions at the edges of urban, high density development for:

- Contemplation
- Relaxation
- Picnicking
- Quiet play

Key Features

- sitting/picnic areas
- play areas
- courts
- shelters

Size – ¼ acre minimum


Urban Buffer Parks

- Experiences ensure a mix of uses with a focus on contemplative
 - Active
 - Contemplative
 - Social gathering/community building
- Relationship to Adjacent Uses (context)
 - Located at the edges of low density residential to higher density developments
- Site Accessibility/Connectivity
 - Ensure physical and visual connections from street
 - Ensure safe pedestrian crossings
- Special Features
 - Protected forest areas
 - Unique natural features
 - Protected habitat
- Frequency of Use
 - Daily Functions







Urban Park Types

Pocket Greens

Intent

Nearby spaces to residents and workers for:

- contemplative recreation
- places of relaxation
- outdoor eating
- Small games and play

Key Features

- Sunlit small gathering areas
- Small scale green areas
- shaded seating
- play areas.
- Optional: movable furniture, focal point public art

Size $- 1/10 - \frac{1}{4}$ acre average size



Pocket Parks

Experiences – ensure a mix of uses

- Active
- Contemplative
- Social gathering/community building
- Relationship to Adjacent Uses (context)
 - Located in spaces between buildings
 - Located on at least one street
- Site Accessibility/Connectivity
 - Ensure physical and visual connections from street
 - Ensure safe pedestrian crossings
- Special Features
 - Picnic areas
 - Play features
 - Open lawns
 - Small games spaces
 - Neighborhood serving amenities
 - Neighborhood identity features
- Frequency of Use
 - Daily Functions



Urban Park Types

Urban Recreational Parklet

Intent

Nearby small spaces to residents and workers for

- more active recreation than an urban buffer park or a neighborhood green
- Park-Schools facilities

Key Features

- sport courts
- skate spots
- playgrounds
- similar neighborhood recreation facilities.

Size – 1/10 acre minimum



Urban Recreational Parklet

Experiences – ensure a mix of uses with a focus on active recreation

- Active
- Contemplative
- Social gathering/community building
- Relationship to Adjacent Uses (context)
 - Located near residential developments with scarce recreational resources
 - Located in small underutilized open spaces
- Site Accessibility/Connectivity
 - Ensure physical and visual connections from street
 - Ensure safe pedestrian crossings
- Special Features
 - Active recreation desired by the community
- Frequency of Use
 - Daily Functions



Urban Park Types

Plazas

Intent

Formally planned, predominantly hardscaped spaces for:

- areas of high pedestrian traffic
- open air markets, concerts, festivals, and special events

Key Features

- Central hardscaped gathering area
- public art/water feature as focal point
- Inclusion of the temporary closure of local streets to enlarge the size of the plaza for special events should be an important element in the design of its boundaries and edges
- Optional: special lighting, shaded areas, and benches and tables

Size – ½ acre minimum, 1.0 acre ideal



Plazas

- Experiences ensure a mix of uses
 - Active
 - Contemplative
 - Social gathering/community building
- Relationship to Adjacent Uses (context)
 - Located at the center of activating uses
 - Building entrances should front on plaza
 - Located in high pedestrian traffic areas
- Site Accessibility/Connectivity
 - Ensure physical and visual connections from street
 - Ensure a connection to transit systems
 - Ensure safe pedestrian crossings
- Special Features
- Frequency of Use





Guidelines by Street Type

Parks and Open Space Guidelines

Site and Building Design Guidelines

Guidelines for Key Sites Site Design Guidelines

Stormwater

Environmental Site Design Toolkit

These site strategies are an opportunity to contribute to the quality of life and place while providing: open space; parks/ recreation/ play; increased biodiversity; urban greening; improved air and water quality.

Achieve treatment through a variety of tools and combinations. Examples include:

- Bioretention
- Vaults and chambers
- Rainwater harvesting
- Vegetated roofs

Designs should be:

- Artful
- Educational
- Placemaking



Green Cover

Intent: To increase overall tree canopy cover, expand green corridors, reduce heat island effect, improve air quality and carbon sequestration capacity and improve ecological biodiversity.

Provide a minimum of 35%* green cover

- 6-inches or deeper on 35% of roof
- Tree canopy cover on 35% of landscape

<u>or</u>

• A combination of tree canopy and intensive green roof for a total green cover of 35% or greater.

* If onsite energy generation requires the use of the roof or open space, accommodations for these features may alter the 35 percent minimum green cover requirement.



Servicing, Access and Parking

Intent: To minimize conflicts between vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists and reduce the visual impacts of vehicle access and parking on the Public Realm.



Building Form Guidelines

Compatibility

Intent: Most new projects in Bethesda will be infill development, therefore design should respect the existing character and scale of the downtown's diverse districts, neighborhoods and public spaces.







Building Form

Тор

Apply to buildings in prominent locations and with significant height.

• Tower Top

Tower

Apply to the portion of buildings taller than the base height designated by Street Type.

- Separation Distance
- Step-back
- Methods to Reduce Bulk

Base

Apply to all building types.

- Building Placement
- Street Activation
- Variation and Articulation
- Corner Treatment









Base: Building Placement

Intent: To create a continuous street wall that frames the sidewalk, creates a more comfortable outdoor room for pedestrians and encourages walking throughout the downtown.



Base: Street Activation

Intent: Provide ground-floor and base design elements that engage with the sidewalk environment to encourage pedestrian activity.



Base: Variation and Articulation

Intent: Articulate large building bases to ensure that facades are not exceedingly long, uninterrupted and rigidly uniform. These variations break up the mass of large buildings and add visual interest for pedestrians.



C. Consider variation in materials or color B. Provide plane changes in the facade A. Vary base height

Tower: Separation Distance

Intent: Separation of the building's upper floors allows access to light and air, limits the impact of shadows on the public realm and reduces the extent of large blank walls as new buildings develop at or near the property line. The building base should remain a continuous street wall.

Tower: Step-Back

Intent: Upper floor step-backs provide a human-scaled building edge along the street that enhances pedestrian comfort and access to sky views.





Tower: Methods to Reduce Bulk

Intent: Collectively, buildings at taller heights can be an imposing presence on the public realm by casting large shadows, limiting sky views and creating an uncomfortable scale for pedestrians. There are several ways to reduce the actual bulk of a building's upper floors or to creatively reduce the perceived bulk of the building.







Use Unique Geometry Varied geometry adds visual interest and helps to reduce the perceived bulk of a building's upper floors. Angled and curved facades allow a building to be viewed dynamically from different vantage points.

Vary Tower Heights

Variation in building height can reduce the imposing massing of several large structures built adjacent to each other.



Tower: Methods to Reduce Bulk

Intent: Collectively, buildings at taller heights can be an imposing presence on the public realm by casting large shadows, limiting sky views and creating an uncomfortable scale for pedestrians. There are several ways to reduce the actual bulk of a building's upper floors or to creatively reduce the perceived bulk of the building.







Vary Tower Placement and Orientation

Increases perceived separation between towers, reduce the perceived imposing massing of several adjacent towers and increase privacy by orienting views in different directions.



F. Limit Apparent Face

The apparent face is the length of a facade plane that is unbroken by vertical changes in depth. Limiting this length reduces the perceived bulk of a long building facade.

Top: Tower Top

Intent: The building top or cap contributes to the skyline, adding visual interest and shaping the image of Bethesda from afar. Tower tops should be carefully considered on prominent sites, including those with the tallest building heights, locations adjacent to major public open spaces and those that terminate views.



7272 Wisconsin Avenue





Retrofitting Existing Buildings

Intent: Retrofits of existing buildings are encouraged because they maintain the existing scale and character of established districts while breathing new life into older building stock.



High Performance Design Elements

Intent: To encourage the design and construction of energy-efficient buildings that meet the Sector Plan recommendations and aim to accelerate progress towards the county's greenhouse gas reduction targets.

Bird Safety

Intent: Glass buildings can be designed to protect local and migratory birds from deadly strikes. Screens, latticework, louvers, and other devices outside buildings, or patterns and colors integrated into the glass, warn birds before they collide.



Guidelines by Street Type

Parks and Open Space Guidelines

Site and Building Design Guidelines

Guidelines for Key Sites

Metro Center Plaza

As the first impression for visitors exiting the Metro station, this plaza and surrounding development should be enhanced as a gateway into Downtown Bethesda and a destination for those who live and work in the area.



Veteran's Park Civic Green

Veteran's Park Civic Green is envisioned as a green extension of the successful Veteran's Park public open space. This new park would serve as a linkage between the established center of the Woodmont Triangle District and the Wisconsin Avenue Corridor District.









Farm Women's Market Civic Green

This Civic Green is envisioned as a green open space next to the Farm Women's Cooperative Market. This space would act as both a destination and a local gathering spot, providing a space for market customers to eat and relax. It serves as an extension of Elm Street Park and the proposed Eastern Greenway.



Capital Crescent Civic Green

Envisioned as the civic green for the Bethesda Row District and the western gateway of the Capital Crescent Trail. It will build on the success of the existing small plaza at the corner of Bethesda Avenue and act as an outdoor civic center for the Bethesda Row District.



Norfolk Avenue

Norfolk Avenue is the main street for the Woodmont Triangle District and is primarily framed by 1- to 2-story retail structures. Design guidelines for this street are intended to balance large-scale residential infill development with existing context and character.



Eastern Greenway Districts

These parks are envisioned as destinations and pockets of larger green space along the edge of the downtown. Height limits and greenway setbacks will ensure compatibility, provide public open space, improve connections and enhance environmental benefits.

The required building setback is equal to the amount of building height proposed.





Creative Placemaking

What is Creative Placemaking?

"In creative placemaking, partners from public, private, nonprofit and community sectors strategically shape the physical and social character of a neighborhood, town, tribe, city or region around arts and cultural activities. Creative placemaking animates public and private spaces, rejuvenates structures and streetscapes, improves local business viability and public safety, and brings diverse people together to celebrate, inspire and be inspired."

- National Endowment for the Arts



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