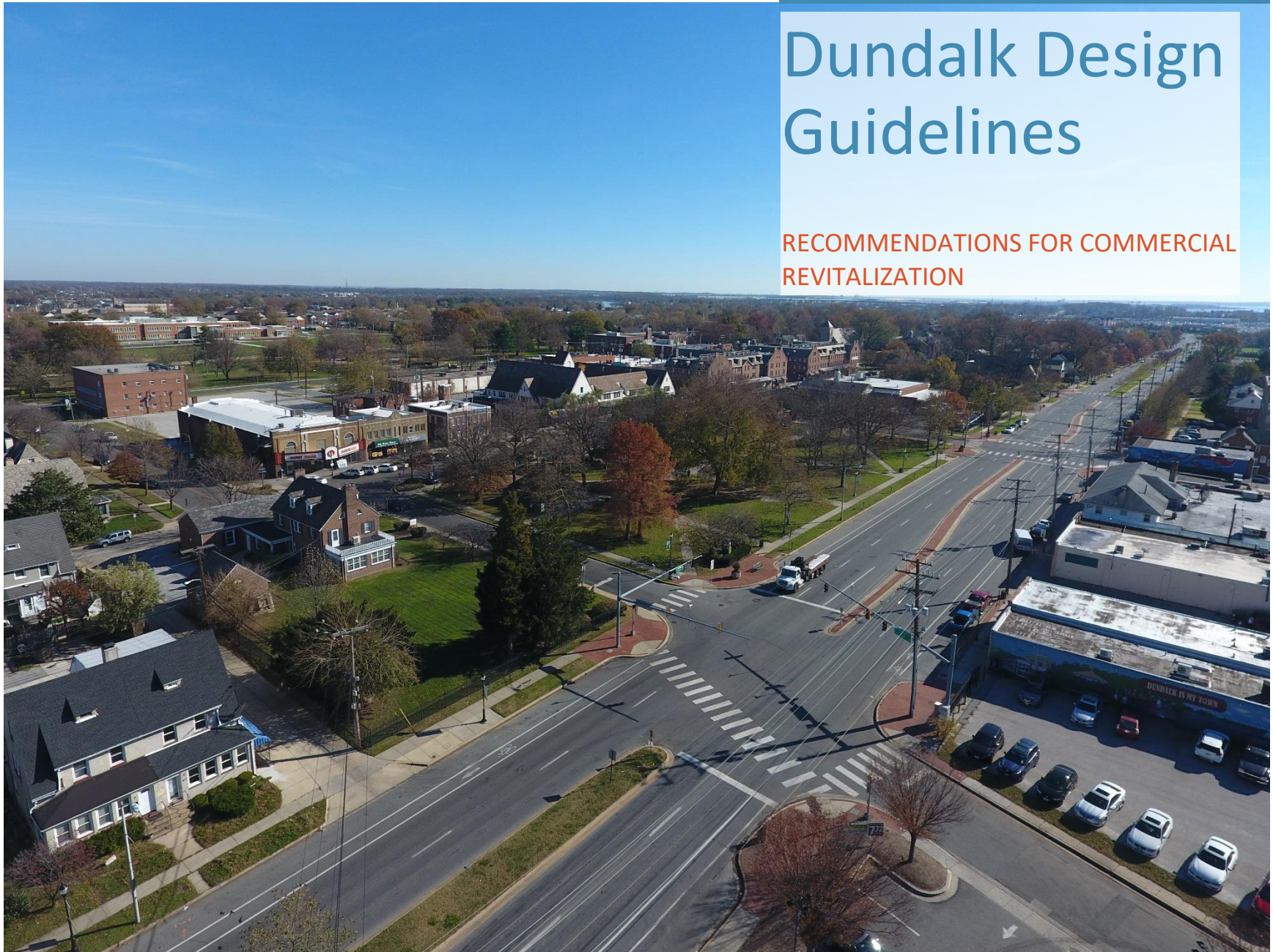


April, 2021

Dundalk Design Guidelines

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COMMERCIAL
REVITALIZATION



Adopted by the Baltimore County Council on September 7, 2021. Bill 82-21, Resolution 126-21

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Introduction

Background

In December of 2020, the Baltimore County Department of Planning launched a series of stakeholder advisory meetings to develop comprehensive design guidelines for Dundalk's Commercial Revitalization District. As part of this initiative, the Department proposed adding the Commercial Revitalization District to the County's list of Design Review Panel areas. The Design Review Panel provides a layer of technical review for new projects and alterations to ensure developments meet the quality and design criteria set by the Dundalk community. The Panel is comprised of architects, landscape architects, engineers and planners. They meet every month to review development proposals and make recommendations that encourage design excellence through the lens of the County Master Plan and community guidelines like these.

The Dundalk advisory committee was composed of the following stakeholders: Dundalk Chamber of Commerce, Blue Ocean, St. Helena Civic Association, State Farm, Old Dundalk Neighborhood Association, Dundalk Renaissance Corporation, Turner Station Conservation Teams, and Little Crystal Bijoux. Baltimore County Government participants included representatives from the 7th County Council District, the Department of Economic and Workforce Development, the Office of Community Engagement, the Baltimore County Design Review Panel and the Department of Planning.

The advisory committee met several times over the course of five months to 1) define design guidelines for Dundalk's Commercial Revitalization District; 2) reassess the geographic boundaries of the Commercial Revitalization District and; 3) establish a shared understanding of the Design Review Panel's value and process. The input provided at those meetings resulted in a proposed expansion of the Commercial Revitalization District to include larger and more contemporary properties further south along Dundalk Avenue. Advisory committee feedback and the revised boundary informed the content and scope of these design guidelines.

Purpose and Goals

Dundalk is a unique community with a rich history tied to the Patapsco Neck region, the 1814 Battle of North Point, the Port of Baltimore, and Bethlehem Steel. Its heritage has earned it a place on the National Register of Historic Places for being one of the first retail centers built in America. The purpose of the Dundalk Design Guidelines is to celebrate that history and culture while also reflecting contemporary needs and tastes of the community.

This document builds upon the excellence of storefront façade guidelines Dundalk Renaissance Corporation developed for their façade improvement program; adding criteria for new construction, sustainability, cultural display and streetscape design. The guidelines pertain to an expanded Commercial Revitalization District boundary that moves south of the Historic Main Street to include additional properties along Dundalk Avenue.

- ## Proposed Commercial Revitalization District and Design Review Panel Map



Design Guidelines

Storefront Façade

These design guidelines incorporate the Dundalk Main Street Façade Design Guidelines originally produced by the Dundalk Renaissance Corporation (DRC) in 2015. Business owners within the Main Street boundaries who are seeking façade improvement funding should refer to these guidelines in coordination with DRC.

The storefront should engage and visually connect the street and other businesses together while providing opportunity for advertising and branding. It allows for owners to express the character of their own store and building while maintaining cohesion with the surrounding environment.



Seen in 1950, Dundalk's Shipping Place is the commercial heart of the historic neighborhood. The pair of brick commercial buildings, the Dunkirk (left) and the Dunleer, were built in 1929 and 1930. (Frank P. Kalita / The Baltimore Sun)



Dundalk's Shipping Place, now part of the National Register of Historic Places, continues to be used as street level storefronts with apartments above. (Kim Hairston / The Baltimore Sun)

Entrance

Storefront entrances provide a welcoming environment to customers and allow for easy movement inside and out. They aid in establishing the style and unique character of a building.

Recommended

- Fit scale of entrance within the architectural framework of historic buildings
- Take care to maintain original, historic doorways
- Locate the door prominently and make it accessible to people of all abilities
- Allow for easy viewing into the store
- Locate loading and services entrances to the rear or side of building
- Locate side entrances as close to the street front as possible



Do allow for easy viewing into the store.
Photo by Davis and Blevins Main Street

Discouraged

- Blocking entrances with merchandise
- Locating entrances at the rear or side of the building
- Installing doors of opaque materials such as metal or wood that prevent viewing inside



Do not block entrance with merchandise.
Photo by Pinterest

Display windows

Display windows enhance the business and make products more appealing to costumers. A well designed display highlights a business's unique personality and draws the attention of passersby.

Recommended

- Preserve original windows of historic buildings to the greatest extent practicable
- Preserve original size, division and shape of historic windows
- Maintain clean and highly transparent glass



Do preserve the original window & use creative displays. Photo by Prima Seller

Discouraged

- Using dark, tinted or textured glass
- Using small-paned windows
- Blocking windows with lowered ceilings
- Leaving display windows empty or undesigned



Do not use opaque or reflective glass preventing people from seeing in the store. Photo by Huntington Glass & Mirrors

Transom Windows

Transom windows are the horizontal windows above the display windows. Originally, these windows would provide ventilation and allow for light to enter the building.

Recommended

- Maintain similar design and materials to the display windows
- Retain original pattern and size, even if they cannot be seen due to awnings
- If transom windows are covered at time of acquisition, consider restoring them to their original transparent state



Do maintain cohesion between transom windows and display windows Photo by Forgotten NY

Discouraged

- Painting over or filling in transom windows with opaque materials
- Preventing light from entering the store through these windows due to lowered ceilings



Do not cover transom windows with paint or other opaque materials. Photo by Buffalo Rising

Signs

A sign is one of the most important elements of a storefront. It can successfully express the personality of a business while publically displaying information. Additionally, signs are powerful graphic tools that can market a business through quick impact. Signs add to the visual interest of the commercial corridor.

Recommended

- Take style and scale of storefront and neighboring buildings into consideration when determining the scale of the sign
- Restore historic signs
- Design lettering and graphics to complement the character of the storefront
- Place signs in clear, architecturally defined areas, such as windows, awnings and sign bands
- Use blade signs wherever appropriate
- Make signs of durable, high quality materials
- Illuminate signs from an external light source
- Maintain changeable copy signs with up-to-date information
- Coordinate any signage in the public right-of-way with Department of Public Works-Transportation



Do keep the signage simple and use high quality materials. Photo by Sign Talk

Discouraged

- Leaving signs dilapidated and/or nonfunctional
- Covering windows with signs that take up more than 15% of available space
- Obscuring key architectural features with signs
- Installing internally illuminated or backlit plastic sign boxes
- Posting excessive temporary signage
- Leaving temporary signs or posters up for prolonged periods of time



Do not cover display windows with signs. Photo by News Times

Awnings

Awnings protect and shelter pedestrians and display windows from precipitation and the sun. They add depth to the storefront, highlight entrances and display windows, and provide a canvas to emphasize the store's unique character.

Recommended

- Install awning made of canvas and fire-resistant acrylic materials
- If utilizing the awning for signage, locate it on the valance. The valance is the curtain that hangs down from the edge of the awning.
- Install awning that is permanent and fixed in place
- Maintain consistency among awnings on a single building in terms of size, profile and location
- Ensure awnings on multiple storefront buildings in the same strip or block are located within each storefront bay and are consistent in character, scale and location



Do have an awning that fits with the character of the store and location. Photo by Pinterest

Discouraged

- Using vinyl or plastic materials for awnings
- Obscuring important architectural features or other signage with awnings
- Locating signage or lettering anywhere other than the transom.
- Posting excessive signage or lettering on awning
- Installing retractable or temporary awnings



Do not have excessive signage on an awning. Photo by Lost New York City

Storefront Lighting

Lighting illuminates the business and creates an evening ambiance. It provides a sense of security for pedestrians and owners by allowing others to see activity both inside and outside of stores.

Recommended

- Install lighting and that highlights building elements, signs and other distinctive features
- Install lighting that is consistent with the architectural style and scale of the storefront
- Install seasonal, festive lighting
- Use indirect lighting as much as possible
- Use Gooseneck lighting
- Consider lighting that also illuminates the sidewalk and street for enhanced security



Do highlight signage and architectural features.
Photo by Pinterest.

Discouraged

- Installing flashing, pulsating, dynamic or moving lights
- Installing lights that glare onto streets, public ways or onto adjacent properties
- Leaving seasonal lighting up for prolonged periods
- Relying on street lighting for store display



Do not rely on street lighting for store display.
Photo by St. Louis Outdoor Lighting

Security

Security is a major concern for most in the retail environment. Some security elements can give the perception that there is problem with crime – whether or not that is true - which can actually make an area feel less safe. The following security guidelines are intended to be protective without sacrificing a welcoming ambience.

Recommended

- Utilize large, transparent windows and doors to allow for others to visually monitor business safety
- Install discrete solutions such as quality locks, internal alarms and notification systems, and laminated safety glass
- If roll-down grates are deemed necessary, build them in the interior of the storefront ceiling to conceal them during the day if possible. Decorate the grates to reflect the business or identity of Dundalk



Do install discrete security solutions, like internal alarms.
Photo by Shutterstock

Discouraged

- Installing fixed, solid grates over doors and/or windows
- Installing exterior, roll-down grates outside the store



Do not install solid grates. Photo by Quantum Security Gates

Materials and Techniques for Renovation and New Construction

High quality materials and sustainable building strategies support the built and natural environment. Quality materials are not only more durable than cheaper alternatives, they create visual interest and support a cohesive mercantile environment. Similarly, renovations and new construction projects that prioritize energy and resource conservation are sound investments in the long term vitality of the commercial corridor and beyond.

Recommended

- Incorporate the energy and resource conservation strategies like those included in the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards
- Use brick masonry, wood, glass, metal and stone. Other materials like clay, stone or porcelain tiles are encouraged accents
- Utilize appropriate repair and restoration techniques to ensure quality and durability of historic materials
- Keep original material of historic buildings to the greatest extent practicable. Otherwise, use materials that are complementary to a building's original makeup and to adjacent buildings
- Use materials near sidewalks and entrances that are highly durable and easily maintained



Do utilize materials like wood, glass and masonry.
Photo by Brick and Mortar

Discouraged

- Failing to properly insulate buildings for energy conservation
- Installing plywood, concrete block, false brick veneer, vinyl or aluminum siding
- Using materials made to mimic exterior finish materials or to cover original architectural details
- Building with brick that clashes with the color and type of original brickwork



Do not utilize cheap materials like aluminum siding. Photo by Nevada Preservation Foundation

New Construction

Site Planning

The site planning of new construction commercial buildings contributes to the evolving sense of place in Dundalk. Site planning guidelines consider how the building and landscape interface with the street and engage residents and patrons. These site planning guidelines pertain to larger commercial properties (>1 acre); not the historic and denser commercial area at the north end of the Commercial Revitalization District.

Recommended

- Develop for high-quality mixed use comprised of commercial, residential, office, and entertainment uses
- Plan community plazas, courtyards, patios and pedestrian walkways on the property wherever appropriate. These spaces should be accessible to members of the community physically and visually
- When a commercial property is located far back from the street, encourage small freestanding establishments (ie: food truck, coffee stand) to provide a street front presence. If a bus stop along the subject property is present, incorporate it with the proposed freestanding establishment.
- Accommodate pedestrians and bicyclists with new commercial site layouts
- Construct new buildings on or near front property lines
- Incorporate electric vehicle charging stations, solar panels and native landscaping



Do incorporate community plazas and walkways on large newly developed commercial properties. Photo by SEH

Discouraged

- Planning on-site surface parking between the front property line and the building
- Developing in an auto-centric way that detracts from pedestrian engagement
- Developing with a large setback distance between storefront and public right-of-way



Do not plan sites that emphasize vehicles over people. Photo by Restaurant Business Magazine

Infill

Infill is the process of developing vacant or underutilized properties in a denser urban area. New buildings developed within existing infrastructure can affect the appearance and functionality of neighboring properties. The following criteria is designed to ensure the setback, scale and height of new construction is compatible with the surrounding commercial environment. These infill guidelines apply to the historic, more established northern section of Dundalk's Commercial Revitalization District.

Recommended

- Develop in vacant or abandoned properties
- Maintain the same setback with new buildings as existing adjacent buildings. If adjacent buildings have different setbacks from each other, the new building will align with the storefront situated closest to the front of the property line. This will ensure blank side facades are not visible to the public.
- Ensure the height and scale of new buildings relate to the height and scale of surrounding buildings. This includes the scale of building elements such as the relative size of windows and doors.
- Allow mixed use in buildings with multiple stories, such as office or residential on the second and third story.
- Complement neighboring architectural styles



Do infill vacant properties. Photo by Raimond Spekking

Discouraged

- Allowing side facades to be visible to main street pedestrians.
- Disregarding the height and scale of surrounding buildings with a new building



Do not build at a height and scale that is incompatible with existing buildings. Photo Ephemeral New York

Identity and Culture

Dundalk's commercial corridor is a source of important history and pride. Public art and murals can serve as an ongoing educational tool and foster a sense of local identity. It strengthens the connection between people and the places they share, and creates a unique and memorable shopping experience.

Recommended

- Accommodate approved murals on blank side and rear walls
- Design new construction buildings with architectural details that add distinction, texture and character to the façade.
- Renovate buildings in a way that maintains existing architectural details.
- Host approved welcome signage and/or public art in gateways, or public right-of-ways that serve as the entry/ exit to the Dundalk commercial corridor. This will foster a sense of place.



Do accommodate murals and gateway signage. Photo by Pigtown Main Street.

Discouraged

- Prohibiting a mural or artistic distinction on a blank, highly visible wall
- Installing public art in the right-of-way that is vulnerable to damage from vehicles
- Installing murals and public art that have not gone through a community approval process



Do not install public art in right-of-way that is unprotected. Photo by WISH-TV

Streetscape

The streetscape refers to the transportation corridor that includes the street, sidewalk and parking areas. These spaces accommodate pedestrian, cycling and vehicular traffic. They also serve as a venue for many other functions such as social gatherings, landscaping, outdoor dining, and window shopping. The main objective of these streetscape guidelines is to foster a public realm that is inviting, enjoyable and safe for all people.



Rendering of streetscape improvements in Fort Worth, TX. Photo by Fort Worth Planning Department

Traffic Calming

Reducing vehicular traffic speeds makes the pedestrian environment feel safer and more inviting. Slower traffic speeds also enable increased driver awareness of retail offerings in the commercial corridor.

Recommended

- Locate crosswalks at all intersections and areas where increased pedestrian convenience is warranted, in coordination with Department of Public Works-Transportation
- Utilize accent paving such as brick or earth-tone colored concrete as well as crosswalk signage to increase visibility of the crosswalks. Crosswalk markings must meet federal guidelines.
- Use bumpouts at intersections and in areas where more pedestrian traffic is desirable. Bumpouts are extensions of the curb that narrow the street to reduce traffic speeds and the distance pedestrians have to walk to cross the street
- Develop protected bicycle lanes to reduce the need for local vehicular use and slow traffic by narrowing vehicular lanes. Bicycle lanes should be protected with spacing from traffic, curbs, bollards, landscaping or flex flags



Do install protected bike lanes. Photo by Curbed San Francisco

Discouraged

- Planning oversized vehicular lanes
- Maintaining streets with no sidewalk or bicycle lane
- Leaving crosswalks that are difficult to see



Do not neglect crosswalks with lacking signage and faded markings. Photo by Main Street Eden Prairie

Green Infrastructure and Landscaping

Green infrastructure refers to landscaping and other tools used to absorb and filter stormwater runoff from hardscape like streets, sidewalks and parking lots. In addition to reducing pollution leading to Dundalk's waterfront, green infrastructure like rain gardens and street trees have many other benefits like improving air quality, reducing urban heat and calming traffic. Well-maintained green infrastructure in combination with decorative landscaping like flower pots make a commercial main street more resilient and inviting.

Recommended

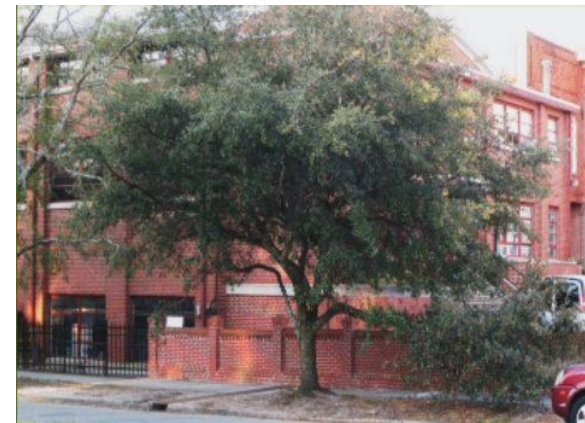
- Incorporate stormwater treatment or decorative landscaping into traffic calming measures. For example, bumpouts can also be rain gardens
- Use native plants and trees for decorative and functional landscaping
- Plant regularly pruned street trees in sidewalks and parking lots with tree pits adequately sized for healthy growth



Do incorporate green infrastructure into traffic calming measures, like this stormwater bumpout. Photo by Natl. Assoc. of City Transportation Officials

Discouraged

- Leaving trees unpruned, allowing for low-lying branches that obscure storefront visibility and/or pedestrian passage
- Using exotic or invasive plants for decorative and green infrastructure landscaping
- Failing to properly maintain any landscaping



Do not let trees become overgrown with low-lying branches. Photo by Port City Daily of Wilmington , NC

Street Furniture

Street furniture describes a range of equipment in the public right-of-way including café seating, street lighting, benches, bike racks, planters and public trashcans. Quality and conformity guidelines for street furniture help maintain a cohesive commercial environment that accommodates different community activities.

Recommended

- Install street furniture made of high quality materials that convey a sense of permanence and security. Creative design qualities are encouraged.
- Allow for pedestrian through traffic with café seating arrangements in the right of way. If café seating is not permanently installed, neatly stack and store chairs and tables inside or next to the building when the restaurant is closed
- Secure stationary furniture like street lights, public benches and trashcans to the ground. Ensure uniformity in color palette and material
- Group street furniture together for place-making and to accommodate pedestrian traffic. If a bus stop is present along the subject property, incorporate street furniture with it
- Install lighting (e.g., street lamps, tree lights) that will create an active evening environment and enhance safety in the commercial environment, in coordination with Department of Public Works - Transportation
- Install street furniture on wide sidewalks
- Install bike racks, especially at establishments that have parking lots



Do group street furniture as appropriate. Photo by Spacing Magazine

Discouraged

- Using plastic folding furniture that is non-durable and appears cheap
- Having street furniture that clashes with surrounding furniture and storefronts
- Utilizing street lighting that renders an unnatural color, such as sodium-vapor lamps



Do not use street lighting that casts an unnatural color. Preferred LED lighting shown on right. Photo by Plan Charlotte

Parking Lot

Although parking lots are sometimes an essential part of the commercial environment, they can also create “dead space” that is underutilized and uninviting. Parking lot design should be aesthetically inviting and promote safe interaction between vehicles, bikes and pedestrians. In addition, measures should be taken whenever possible to address the environmental degradation caused by the large impervious footprint of parking lots.

Recommended

- Incorporate green infrastructure like pervious pavement, canopy tree islands and rain gardens
- Install solar arrays and electric vehicle charging stations
- Include pedestrian pathways for safe and easy access from sidewalk and parked vehicles to the storefront
- Make existing oversized parking lots available for community events and festivities (e.g., farmers markets, food truck festivals, etc.)
- Install bike racks
- Ensure there is appropriate lighting for nighttime security
- Add bumpers or bollards in front of store to people and buildings from vehicles



Do incorporate green infrastructure and trees in parking lots. Photo by Tree Fund Pottstown, PA

Discouraged

- Prohibiting public use of unutilized or underutilized parking lots
- Maintaining parking lots devoid of landscaping, environmental considerations and pedestrian pathways
- Failing to properly light parking lots for nighttime security



Do not maintain parking lots devoid of landscaping and/or pedestrian pathways. Photo by Jason Koxvold



Baltimore County Executive John Olszewski, Jr.

September, 2021