

BURLINGTON CORRIDOR DESIGN GUIDELINES

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01. INTRODUCTION – UNDERSTANDING THE CORRIDOR

The Burlington Corridor Study (2008) identified several recommendations to further the vision for development along Burlington Street and adjacent areas within the study boundary. This study and these guidelines should be used to better understand the potential of any single project, and identify how it can best fit into the envisioned future for the corridor.

The vision of the Burlington Corridor Study is:

Transform Burlington Street to serve as an entry, a destination and a mixed-use center that represents the safe, amiable, walkable character of greater North Kansas City.

Key elements of the study include:

- Maintain Burlington as a critical and major north-south transportation route, but strengthen the multi-modal aspects of the corridor. Particularly improve on the pedestrian and transit accommodations at key sections of the corridor.
- Improve on the mix of uses in the corridor, so that they compliment both the multi-modal urban environment and other uses. Particular attention should be paid to the central area and how it can become an extension of downtown.
- Incorporate “green” solutions into buildings and sites, but recognize that compact, walkable urban environments should be a priority and provide “big picture green solutions.”

An approach urban design and development strategies in the study used 3 plan areas along Burlington Street: The North Plan Area; The Central Plan Area, and: The South Plan Area. In addition, a Transition Zone was identified that engaged both the Central and South Planning Areas.

Each of the plan areas builds upon one another and upon the existing context and opportunities presented by the distinctive characteristics offered by each of the plan areas.

North Plan Area

Recommendations for the North Plan Area are intended to create a more pedestrian friendly area and support the Northgate residential project. Development projects are envisioned to be pursued towards creating a strong connection between this area of the Burlington corridor and the Northgate development. Ultimately this area is envisioned as an extension of Northgate and provides urban amenities for the residents.

Central Plan Area

Recommendations for the Central Plan Area are intended to cultivate an environment that will serve as a gateway to downtown North Kansas City. A high density, 24-hour activity center is envisioned to flourish within this area. As the gateway to downtown North Kansas City, the area should be further emphasized by an increased allowable height and mixed-use density. Surface parking should be expressly prohibited on land adjacent to Burlington Street. Instead, parking should be strategically located in shared lots or parking structures managed by a Parking Management District.

South Plan Area

The south area represents the most dramatic differences in built form and land use. Large industrial warehouses are adjacent to small commercial structures. Building setbacks and side yards vary from zero to extensive. There is immense opportunity to redefine this area in a way that promotes a more consistent, attractive area and leverages the connection to downtown Kansas City. In the long-term, the southern area is likely to become an important gateway to North Kansas City and could potentially take on a dramatically different form.

02. BUILDING FORM

The outer form of a building establishes the scale in relation to public spaces and in relation to other buildings. Cumulatively the forms of buildings along a block shape the public streetscape. The primary elements of building form are:


- building setback; and
- height and massing; and
- building orientation.



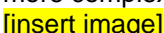
Setback. Setback refers to the position of a building on a lot. Often it is described as an outward limit, beyond which buildings cannot be placed and within which buildings can be placed anywhere. However, in framing quality public realms it is more important that building forms create a consistent street wall to shape public spaces. When lots are defined by “build to” lines rather than setback lines, a more consistent street wall results and public spaces are more defined.


- All setback guidelines should be based on shaping positive public space in the Burlington Corridor, including planned and anticipated streetscape arrangements. Consult the Street Design concepts in the Burlington Corridor Study for potential street sections on particular segments of the corridor. **[insert image]**
- Per the Burlington Corridor Study, recommended setbacks are:
 - 0-60 feet in the **North Plan Area**.
 - 0-10 feet in the **Central Plan Area**. Any development set back more than 5 feet should use this space to contribute public amenity as an extension of the public streetscape.
 - 0-10 feet in the **South Plan Area**. Any setback area may be designed with a public amenity as an extension of the public streetscape, or provide a landscape area that supports a boulevard feel to the streetscape.
- New development should reinforce the “build to” above and form a more consistent street wall along Burlington. **[insert image]**
- Rehabilitation of existing buildings should aim to bring sites more in conformance with the setbacks and orientation by contributing a street wall to greater portions of the site. **[insert image]**
- Initial investments on any one block face should establish a precedent for future sites with respect to the street wall and streetscape.
- Where portions of a lot are not fronted by building facades, such as an open space or parking area, the disruption in the street wall should be minimized to the greatest extent practical by a continuation of the substitute street wall extended from the façade. Examples of substitute street walls include small "courtyard walls" constructed of the same material as the principle building, ornamental fencing, or year-round evergreen landscape materials forming a vertical wall-like element 2.5' to 4' high. **[insert image]**
- The street wall to void ratio on any segment of a block face should be:
 - 40% - 80% in the **North Plan Area**;
 - 80% - 100% in the **Central Plan Area**;
 - 65% - 100% in the **South Plan Area**. **[insert image]**

Height and Massing. Height and massing combined determine the physical size of a building based on two components: the actual measured height; and the perceived size achieved by varying the massing of a building's outer form. Significant departures in height, scale, and massing can often be visually disruptive within the greater context of the Burlington Corridor environment. Large, unrefined masses can be overwhelming to the pedestrian and detract from the public streetscape.

- The height of buildings should establish a ratio of building height to distance between street walls on opposite sides of the block between 1:1 or 1:3, with the ideal goal being a 1:2 relationship.


This will typically require between be 2-story and 4-story buildings. Where larger heights are permitted, upper portions of buildings should step back to maintain these proportions. 

- Building heights should be consistent along a single block face.
- Minor deviations in building heights between 5% to 15% along a single block face are acceptable to add depth and texture to the street wall. 
- Significant deviations are acceptable at limited locations on a block provided they are at key intersections to emphasize a focal point within the streetscape. Smaller footprint buildings, or smaller, ornamental portions of large footprint buildings may be taller at corner locations to anchor important intersections. 
- Larger buildings – more than 3 stories or occupying more than 1/3 of the block face should use more complex massing to break up to form of the building and create a more pedestrian scale. 



Orientation. Orientation refers to the directional relationship between a building and the spaces around it. The orientation of a building determines how activities associated with the building and site animate the streetscape or other public spaces. When a series of buildings share the same orientation along a block face, each can thrive of the activity generated by the others.

- All buildings should have its primary façade and primary entrance oriented towards the street.
- Pedestrian activity should be directed towards Burlington
- Vehicle activity should be directed towards side streets and rear alley systems, or limited in extent when it is necessary for them to be oriented towards Burlington.
- Emphasize architectural details and ornamentation on facades that face Burlington.
- Buildings along a single block face should be aligned to form a consistent street wall.
- Areas of the street edge that are not occupied by buildings should be designed as active spaces, either as extensions of the public streetscape (“activity zones” in the Burlington Corridor Study) or as Civic Spaces associated with the use of the building (see Section 5 of the Design Guidelines).



03. BUILDING DESIGN

The design of a building's façade creates the relationship with the streetscape, and in particular the relationship to pedestrians along the streetscape. Façade designs with greater "permeability" can support a more active public realm as the activities within buildings and activities beyond the building connect. Permeable buildings also make a more interesting streetscape. Three basic details are critical to designing facades that support the streetscape and pedestrian activity:

- Articulation / Modulation;
- Transparency; and
- Building Entrances.

Articulation / Modulation. Articulation or modulation refers to the pattern and arrangement of details on a façade. Elements such as windows / window gangs, entrance features, architectural bays can be used to emphasize and enhance massing elements of a building. *This* further breaks down the massing elements of a building form to a scale that relates to a person. A repetition of similar patterns within forms creates a rhythm along the streetscape that fosters pedestrian activity.

- Facades that extend more than 100' along the block face should be broken down into architectural bays, between 25' and 50' each. Bays should be consistent dimension on any single building. They may be formed by gangs of windows, groupings of architectural ornamentation, or pilasters associated with structural elements of a building. [insert image]
- Retail uses should use architectural bays of 25' to 50' that coordinate with differentiated storefronts on the street level.
- Expansive areas of blank facades on Burlington should be broken up by windows, building entrances, or ornamental features. No more than 30' of horizontal blank wall space should exist along Burlington without creating greater transparency through a combination of these elements. [insert image]

Transparency. Transparency of a façade creates the relationship and transition from the outside spaces to inside spaces. It can be actual visibility – as in storefront windows that are open to viewing; perceived visibility – as in a shuttered or louvered opening that could be opened or permit some degree of more discrete visibility; or physical connections – as in frequent entrances to buildings or areas of sites where people congregate.

- Street level facades for retail areas should include significant proportions of transparent display windows. Generally, between 60% and 90% of all street-level facades between 2 and 10 feet above grade shall be transparent with views to the interior of the building. No window starting at a level of greater than 3.5 feet above the street level should be included in the calculation. [insert image]
- Where the internal operations of the use are such that there is no practical way for the transparency guidelines to be met, a limited alternate of boxed display windows or enhanced building ornamentation may be used. Boxed display windows should meet all other transparency guidelines, but may be closed off at a depth of no less than 3 feet. Enhanced ornamentation should complement the materials and architectural style of the building and create interest for pedestrians.
- Upper level openings should exist so that each architectural bay of each upper story has a separate openings between 25% and 60% of the façade area. Banded windows or glass curtains disrupt the scale and permeability of a building and should not be used. [insert image]

- Glazing or heavy tints, reflective treatment, or simulated openings should not be used on any façade.

Entrances. Entrances animate the streetscape with people. Entrances can include building entrances, entry ways associated with civic space that relates to the building, or pedestrian passages that lead to parking areas, alleys or internal pedestrian circulation of a site. Well designed buildings will not complete a streetscape unless more frequent building and entrances establish the physical and functional relationship with the street.

- All buildings shall have a primary building entrance feature that faces the street.
- Buildings that are set back from the street wall should use well designed civic space to create the transition from the streetscape to the interior of the building (see Section 05 of the Design Guidelines.) **[insert image]**
- Entrance features of large buildings (more than 100' along the street wall) should be associated with a defined architectural bay, and may project or recess from the street wall slightly. **[insert image]**
- For retail use, building entrances should be located at least every 75' along the streetscape.
- Areas of the façade immediately associated with the entrance should be reserved for the most ornamental or dynamic elements of the building design.
- Entrance features should be designed at a pedestrian scale – primarily single story and no wider than the smallest architectural bay of the building.

04. STREETScape, SITE ACCESS AND CIRCULATION

The design of streetscapes, site access and circulation for a site must account for vehicle traffic in a manner that least disrupts pedestrian activity to and immediately surrounding a building. In a sense, every trip begins and ends with a pedestrian, so this element of site design is critical regardless of a buildings context. Appropriate site design requires attention to four details of site access and circulation:

- streetscapes
- curb cuts;
- parking location; and
- pedestrian paths.

Streetscapes. One of the primary design recommendations of the Burlington Corridor Study is the creation of a shared-use zone. There is a desire to simultaneously slow traffic on Burlington (for the purpose of pedestrian safety) and maintain current traffic counts. This slow moving shared-use zone accomplishes these two (often competing) objectives by allowing three lanes of faster moving traffic to coexist with the slow moving zone shared by pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles.

Shared-use zones are recommended in both the Central and South areas. The shared-use zone on the east side of Burlington serves as the unifying theme throughout the Central and South Areas and should connect fluidly with the eastern pedestrian zone in the North area. The conceptual designs for street improvements are described in more detail in the recommendations for each Plan Area.

North Plan Area Street Design Scenario: The goal is to allow businesses to keep their front-door parking, but incorporate an amenity easement that allows room for pedestrian improvements. As with the other scenarios, six drive lanes are provided to ensure traffic volumes and traffic flow are maintained, and the BRT or LRT share two of the six drive lanes.




Central Area Street Design Scenario: An extensive shared-use zone which combines parallel parking and a drive lane that is intended for pedestrians, bikes and vehicles. This scenario satisfies the largest pedestrian amenity zone of the three by providing the shared-use zone on both the east and west sides of Burlington. With approximately 145 feet of designed space the realization of this scenario would require additional right of way or collaboration with private land owners. A total of 6 traffic lanes (3 north and 3 south bound) will allow current traffic counts to be accommodated. Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) is designed to share right-of-way with on-street traffic and is preferred in the outside lanes.

South Area Street Design Scenario: The Scenario for the South area is approximately 128 feet, but could still require obtaining new ROW in some areas. Like the other areas, this scenario includes 6 traffic lanes (3 north and 3 south bound) allowing current traffic counts to be accommodated. This scenario is unique in that it lacks the shared-use zone and the parallel parking on the west side of the street. Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) is designed to share right-of-way with on-street traffic and is preferred in the outside lanes. When light rail (LRT) becomes a reality, it could move to the inside lanes, but would also need to share right-of-way with on-street traffic throughout this zone.

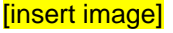

- Individual projects should preserve the potential for these concepts to be done, and include site designs that reinforce these concepts.
- Larger or block-scale projects should implement these concepts on critical segments of the streetscape.

- Projects that conflict with these concepts should only be approved on a finding by the city that they will not pursue long-term capital projects for that segment of the street, and that incremental implementation through a series of private projects is not possible

Curb cuts. Curb cuts provide vehicle access to the interior of building sites. This access interrupts the aesthetics and the pedestrian function of the public streetscape, but may be necessary for adequate access and function of a site. Curb cuts on any single site should be balanced with other transportation interests and with a view of the entire function of the surrounding block and corridor.

- Curb cuts should be limited on Burlington. Sites that have access by side streets or rear alley systems should use these access points for vehicles.
- Curb cuts on Burlington should be consolidated within blocks. A single central curb cut that provides access to a shared easement circulation system is preferred. 
- Curb cuts on Burlington should be as narrow as possible to avoid disruption the streetscape and pedestrian flow. No more than 24' width should be used for two lane access. In areas planned for higher pedestrian traffic slower turning movements off Burlington are desired and more narrow curb cuts should be used.
- Single-lane, one-way entry ways with access to more remote portions of the site are preferred over wide access to prominent portions of the site. 
- Vehicle access points should maintain the grade and surface of the pedestrian area to emphasize the priority of pedestrian movements along the streetscape. 
- Where contiguous pedestrian areas along the streetscape are not possible or desired, pedestrian areas crossing vehicle access points should be identified by textured, painted or some other surface treatment that identifies pedestrian flow. For unusually wide access points (more than 36'), pedestrian refuge areas should be considered to break up vehicle flow.

Parking Location. Parking areas are important elements for the functioning of viable building sites, but they are typically not sites where people spend time. When repeated across sites or build on a large scale, they have a cumulative negative effect on the corridor. Parking areas should be located on discrete portions of sites, consolidated into smaller concentrated areas, and otherwise screened from the public streetscape.

- On-street parking should be prioritized and permeated to contribute to site parking requirements.
- Any area where a district parking requirement is employed should have parking requirements waived.
- Sites with access to frequent transit service, and where the nature of the use of the building is frequented by transit patrons, should consider a reduced parking count.
- Parking should be located on remote portions of the site, ideally to the rear of the building and accessible to the streetscape from pedestrian passages. 
- Where parking is permitted to the site or front of the building, it should be screened from the streetscape by a 2.5' to 4' screen at the extension of the street wall. This screen may be a small "courtyard wall" constructed of the same material as the principle building, ornamental fencing, or year-round evergreen landscape materials. 
- Smaller compact parking lots are preferred, except where multiple uses on a block share parking. Smaller lots need not be landscaped in order to make more efficient use of the space. However all parking lots of any size should use natural landscape elements to infiltrate any run-off. Larger parking areas (more than 15 spaces) that are visible from the streetscape should use perimeter landscape elements to minimize the visual impact of parking.

- Parking areas should be designed as shared space wherever possible. For example parking that can serve as a courtyard or similar outdoor space when not in use or for special events are encouraged. **[insert image]**
- Parking over the minimum required parking should be discouraged unless part of a shared parking program or it is otherwise mitigated by some improved design features beyond the standards of these guidelines.

[insert image of new construction and image of rehabilitation]

Pedestrian Paths. Pedestrian paths enhance the circulation provided by the public streetscape. These paths can include more direct connections to building entrances, connections to parking areas or useable open spaces, or through-block connections and connections to adjacent sites when these connections are lacking in adjacent streetscape design.

- All buildings shall have a direct entrance from the streetscape, or where buildings are setback from the street wall and direct pedestrian path from the streetscape to the building entrance should be provided.
- Larger buildings with continuous street walls along the streetscape should provide pedestrian passages between the streetscape and any rear parking areas. **[insert image]**
- Where a series of buildings are setback from the street wall for any reason, they should be oriented around a common civic space that contains direct pedestrian paths from the streetscape. **[insert image]**
- All pedestrian paths providing circulation within the site should be at least 6' wide. Where higher pedestrian traffic is expected, paths should be at least 10' wide.

05. OPEN SPACE DESIGN

Open space design maximizes the utility and aesthetic contributions for un-built portions of the site. For urban corridors open space design should focus primarily on strengthening the relationship of sites to the public streetscape. Therefore, the design and not necessarily the quantity of space is most important. Open space design should include attention to the following elements:

- open civic spaces; and
- site screening and landscape design

Open Civic Spaces. Open civic spaces are an extension of the public streetscape. They should be designed to provide space for people to congregate, transition from public areas of the streetscape, and emphasize important elements of the building as it relates to the streetscape.

- Areas of the street edge that are not occupied by buildings should be designed as active spaces, either as extensions of the public streetscape (“activity zones” in the Burlington Corridor Study) or as Civic Spaces associated with the use of the building.
- Open civic spaces should be provide space for people to congregate, transition from the public streetscape, and emphasize important elements of the building or site. **[insert image]**
- A balance of landscape and hardscape elements for more formal open spaces should be used for these areas.

Site Screening and Landscape Design. Site screening and landscape design uses building orientation, landscape, and open areas to minimize the aesthetic or environmental impacts of utility areas of the site on public spaces. These areas should be designed in the most efficient manner possible to maximize development opportunities in the corridor.

- Un-built portions of the site that are not used as Open Civic Spaces should be used to screen aesthetic impacts of built portions of the site from adjacent property or designed to mitigate environmental impacts.
- Landscape areas should prioritize infiltration of site storm water. Locations that accept site runoff should be planted with deep root plants and ground cover. Ground cover that slows surface flow should be used.
- Native and drought resistant turf should be use for all site landscaping.
- In areas planned for high pedestrian activity, adding seasonal plantings in window boxes or hanging planters can add charm, texture, and color to a building. All treatments should be constructed of durable materials and not present an obstruction to the pedestrian.
- All other planting associate with the site should benefit the environmental performance of the site and building according to LEED criteria SS 7.1 and SS 7.2.

06. [TO BE DEVELOPED – INTERFACE WITH ZONING AND LAND USES]