

# BRANDING THE CITY

*STREETSCAPE DESIGN STANDARDS*

*FALLS CHURCH, VA*

*Adopted XXX Draft v16*

## **Acknowledgements**

### **City Council**

David Tarter, Mayor  
Marybeth Connelly, Vice Mayor  
Phil Duncan  
Letty Hardi  
Karen Oliver  
David F. Snyder  
Dan Sze

### **Streetscape Taskforce**

Mike Novotny, Economic Development Authority (Co-Chair)  
Keith Thurston, Village Preservation and Improvement Society (Co-Chair)  
Dave Tarter, City Council  
Dan Sze, City Council  
Kwafo Djan, Planning Commission  
Ruth Rodgers, Planning Commission  
Bob Young, Economic Development Authority  
Steve Knight, Citizens Advisory Committee on Transportation  
Bill Ackerman, Citizens Advisory Committee on Transportation  
Dennis Szymanski, Tree Commission  
Kathy Philpott Costa, Tree Commission  
Tim Stevens, Village Preservation and Improvement Society  
Rachelle Barimany, Chamber of Commerce  
Andrew Painter, Chamber of Commerce  
Cory Firestone Weiss, Environmental Services Council  
Barb Cram, Arts and Humanities Council  
Anne Norloff, Human Services Advisory Council  
Chris Norloff, Human Services Advisory Council  
Diane Duggan, Architectural Advisory Board

### **City Manager's Office**

Wyatt Shields, City Manager  
Cindy Mester, Assistant City Manager

### **Department of Development Services**

James Snyder, Director  
Gary Fuller, Principal Planner  
Paul Stoddard, Principal Planner  
John Boyle, Zoning Administrator  
Debra Gee, Planning Specialist  
Jeff Sikes, Transportation Planner  
Loren Bruce, Senior Planner  
Akida Rouzi, Senior Planner  
Carly Aubrey, Senior Planner  
Garrison Kitt, Senior Planner

### **Department of Public Works**

Michael J. Whitfield, CCM, Interim Director  
Jason Widstrom, P.E.  
Kate Reich, Arborist  
James Mak, CIP Engineer/Manager  
Stephanie Rogers, Transportation Engineering Supervisor

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City Boards & Commissions

### **Others...**

## Introduction

Streetscape expresses the character of a community. It advertises what the City cares about and how it sees itself.

The term “streetscape” encompasses many different design elements in the City. As a minimum, it includes the design and spacing of street furniture and street trees. Streetscape extends to public art and the selection of sidewalk and building materials.

“Streetscapes and their visual experience largely influences public places where people interact, and it ultimately helps define a community’s aesthetic quality, economic activity, health, and sustainability” (Complete Communities, University of Delaware).

## The Value of Streetscape

Quality streetscape enhances the visual appearance of the City and improves the pedestrian environment. More than that, streetscape improves economic performance, environmental quality, and public health of communities.



Figure 1: Attractive signs, consistent lighting, and hanging flower baskets create an inviting atmosphere in Staunton, VA.

## Building the City’s Brand

The City of Falls Church is a unique and special place. These streetscape standards serve to highlight and build upon the City’s special characteristics. The City’s streetscape is part of the City’s brand. Streetscape advertises the City’s to visitors and serves as a point of pride for residents.

Things that make the City special include the following:

- The City’s unique **history**
- High use of street **trees** and other **greenery**
- **Progressive transportation**, including alternatives to automobile transportation
- A **family friendly** place



Figure 2: The 100 block of W Broad Street shows the City's classic streetscape look – brick sidewalks, raised planter edges, and large canopy trees.

## Streetscape Goals

The City's streetscape is part of the public realm and serves many purposes. In particular, the design and implementation of the City's streetscape should accomplish the following goals:

- Use streetscape elements to **brand the City**;
- **Create an identity** that is different from the rest of the region;
- **Promote tree canopy** and environmental sustainability
- **Promote economic activity** in the City's commercial areas;
- Provide **accessibility and safety** for street users.



Figure 3: The Great Streets program in San Francisco, CA, creates streetscapes that build the City's brand as an attractive, outdoor, walkable place.

## How to Use These Standards

These standards should be used for the design of all public and private projects in the City's commercial areas. These standards should be referenced by Advisory Boards and Commissions, City staff, and the private sector throughout a project's development, delivery, and maintenance.

### Flexibility

These standards are a tool for developing good urban design. They are not a restriction on creativity. In many urban places, it is the unique elements that people enjoy most.

Standards on street cross sections should be adhered to unless conditions dictate otherwise. Standards on street furniture and materials should generally be adhered to. Exceptions will be considered to the extent they are needed for local conditions or the exceptions enhance the City's brand and support the goals of these standards.



Figure 4: The Tinner Hill streetscape along South Washington Street, a variation from the standard, highlights the City's cultural heritage

### Relationship to Other Plans

These streetscape standards are part of a larger family of plans that inform development in the City of Falls Church. This family begins with the Comprehensive Plan and then branches out to include Small Area Plans, Master Plans, and Design Guidelines.

This document serves as the principal policy guide for streetscape design. When this document is silent on a particular issue, other plans should be referenced as needed.



Figure 5: Creative design applied to a leftover space in Culpeper, VA, create a special place.



Figure 6: Repurposed parallel parking spaces in Philadelphia, PA, create a multiuse space for residents and visitors.

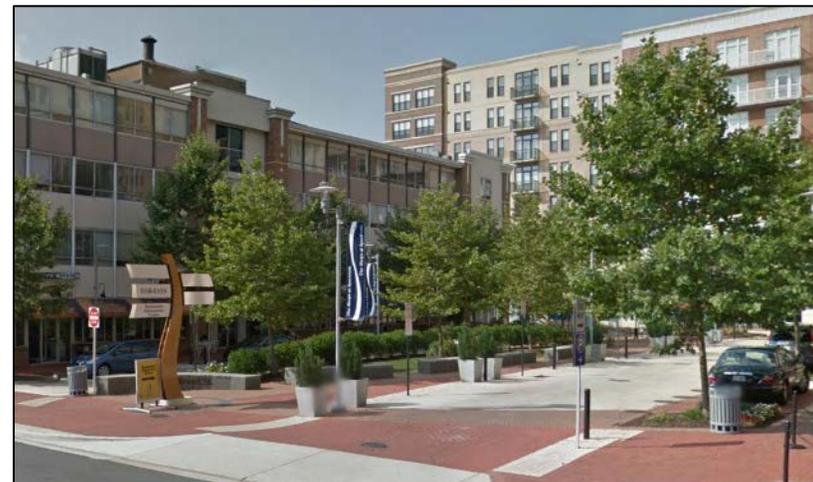
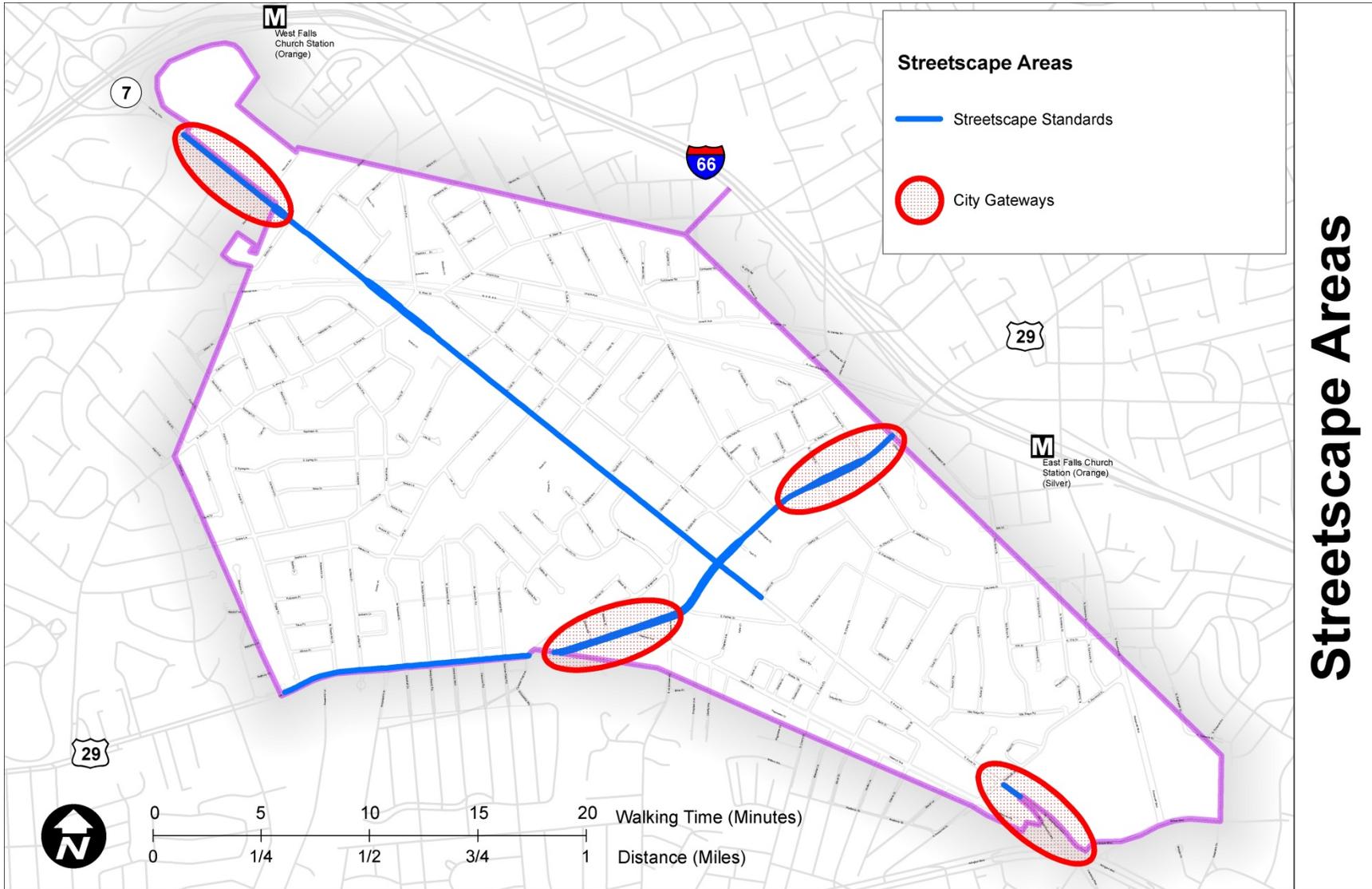
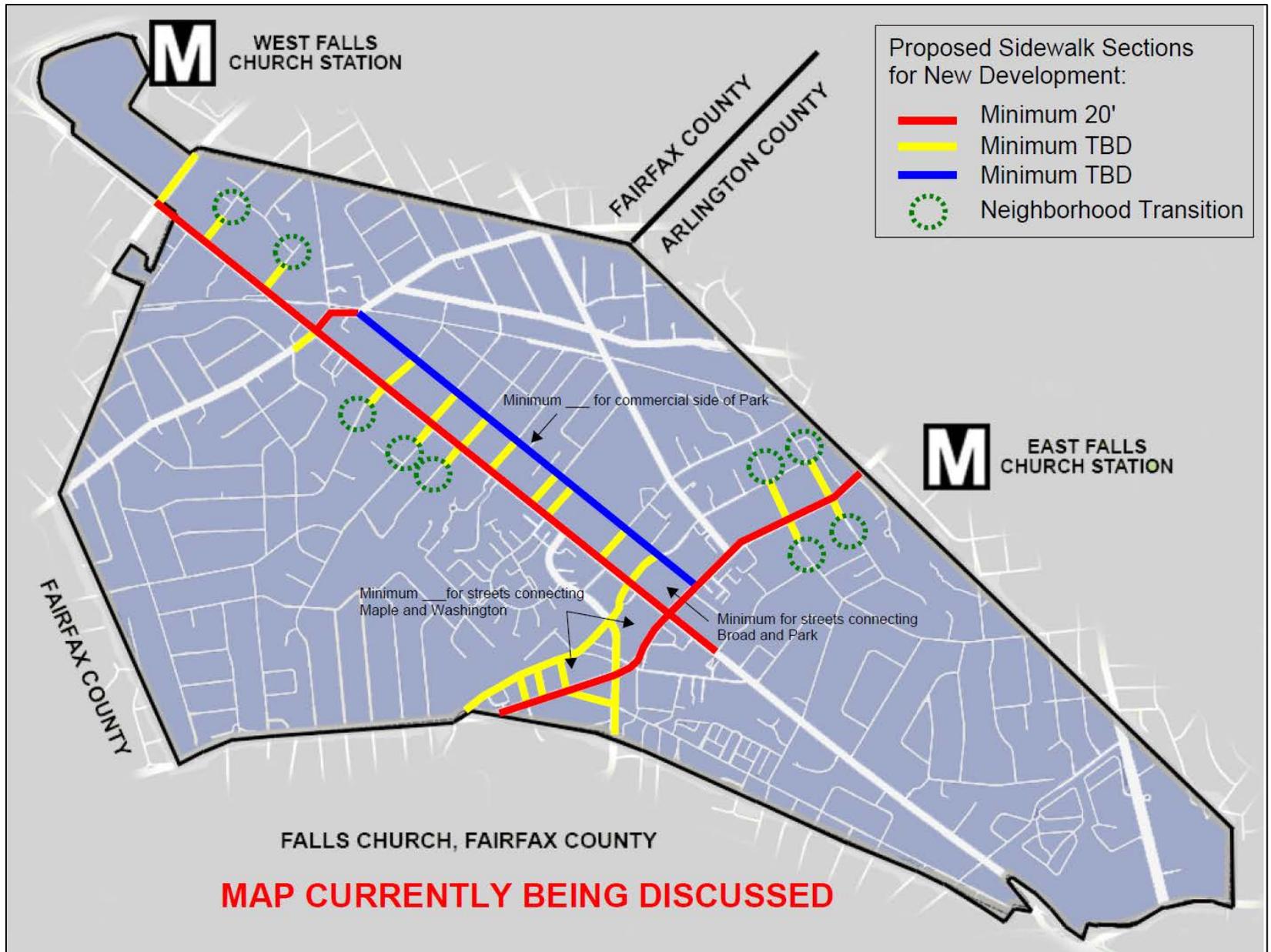


Figure 7: Pedestrian-scale design creates an inviting space in the Spectrum Building at 444 West Broad Street.



# Streetscape Areas



## Streetscape Districts

To build the City's brand, a single set of streetscape standards is used for streets throughout the City. This single set of standards builds on previous planning efforts in the City, including the West Broad Street Streetscape Plan (1987), the North Washington Streetscape Design Guidelines (2010), the Comprehensive Plan, and the City's small area plans. For more information on these and other efforts, see Appendix B: Related Documents.

## Street Hierarchy

This section is still under development. The Taskforce has reviewed options for Broad Street and Washington Street, but has not yet developed recommendations for other streets, like Park Ave, Maple Ave, and connecting streets.

## City Gateways

The City's Comprehensive Plan identifies gateways into the City. The gateways are places to welcome travelers to "The Little City" of Falls Church. As City gateways, special features may be incorporated into the streetscape design to highlight specific aspects of the City. Any variations from the standards should be consistent with the goals of these standards.

## Geography

The gateways are located near the City borders where major highways cross jurisdictional lines.



Figure 8: Streetscape in front of the Pearson Square building at 410 South Maple Avenue provides a more open feel and uses pink brick paver sidewalks.

## Street Furniture

Well-designed street furniture contributes to a functioning streetscape. First, street furniture provides functionality, comfort, and convenience. Second, attractive furniture enhances branding efforts. Lastly, standard furniture design creates continuity.

## Street Lights and Traffic Signals Mast Arms

Street lights provide adequate, even lighting along streets and sidewalks. This provides safety and an inviting feel. Traffic signal mast arms provide an attractive support for traffic signals; as opposed to overhead wires spanning the intersection. Both elements provide opportunities to hang banners and flower baskets to add character to the street.

To provide even lighting, street lights have approximately 60 foot spacing.

Street lights will be the same style historically used along W Broad Street and painted black.



## Benches

Benches provide respite for traveling pedestrians. More generally, they also provide places sit, relax, and enjoy the City.

To provide frequent sitting opportunities and to create an inviting atmosphere, benches will be placed approximately every 90 feet.

Benches will be the following type: **(note – only one bench will be included in final standards)**

Victor Stanley, black color



“Pearson Square,” brown and grey color



## Trash and Recycling Cans

Trash and recycling cans help reduce litter and solid waste pollution.

Cans will be placed according to the City's existing standards, which generally call for cans on street corners and in areas where additional capacity is needed. The City services street cans weekly.

Street cans will match the City standard, which is produced by Victory Stanley in black.



## Bicycle Racks

Bicycle racks promote transportation mode choice by providing a safe place to secure bicycles. Bicycle rack design also provides branding opportunities.

Bike racks will be placed near bus shelters and heavily traveled areas. To keep bicycles upright, racks should have two points of contact with the frame.

Bike racks can either be a "post and loop" otherwise known as "hitch" design in black or a bicycle style in green.



## Bus Shelters

Bus shelters provide transit riders a place to sit and rest while waiting for the bus. They also provide protection from inclement weather.

Preferred bus stop locations and siting principles are identified in the City's Bus Stop and Bus Shelter Master Plan.

Bus stops will match the City's standards, which is the Duo-Gard 5'x9' Colonial Series shelter.



Figure 9: The City's new standard shelter design highlights the City's Little City charm and helps to distinguish the City from surrounding areas.

## Street Signs

Street signs provide orientation information include street names and block numbers. They also present opportunities for branding.

Street signs are placed at intersection. Sign sizes are based on street size.



Figure 10: Street signs in Ogden City and Chicago include graphics that reflect the uniqueness of the area. The existing street sign for James Thurber Court in the City of Falls Church is shown for comparison.

## Tree Planters

Street trees provide numerous benefits. Street trees stimulate downtown business, provide cleaner air, prevent erosion and runoff, calm automobile traffic, and encourage walking. Tree species selection and planter design should balance these interests.

## Tree Size and Shape

Trees come in different sizes and shapes. For street trees, critical species features include (1) enough spread to provide consistent canopy and (2) minimum branch heights to allow visibility to shops and provide clearance for pedestrians and other forms of traffic. These needs lead to the selection of larger canopy style trees. New street trees should have a minimum 2.5 inch caliper. The City Arborist, with the review of the Tree Commissions, will review tree species selection for work in the City's defined streetscape corridors.

## Tree Health and Planter Dimensions

To survive and thrive, trees require access to non-compacted soil and adequate amounts of water. These needs can be quantified by soil volume and open surface area. In order to accommodate canopy tree, planters should provide a minimum soil volume of 1,000 ft<sup>3</sup> feet per tree, a minimum open surface area of 60 ft<sup>2</sup> per tree, and have a soil width of 6 feet.

Cantilevered concrete and pavers can support multiple goals – increasing functional space on the sidewalk and increasing available soil volume for trees. To maximize soil volume, a 5 foot deep soil “trench” will be used down the length of the street. To balance rain water infiltration and functional space, surface tree planter areas

will be 5 feet wide by 14 feet wide, with oval ends, and one tree per planter.

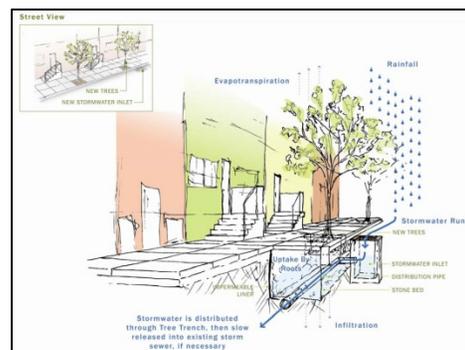


Figure 11: Continuous soil trenches under the sidewalk provide soil for trees and space for amenities.

## Irrigation

Urban environments are not natural settings for trees and plantings. The urban environment restricts access to rain water. To provide sufficient water, permanent irrigation systems must be installed. Permanent irrigation systems should be used, not drip hoses.

## Planter Styles

Tree planter design must be context sensitive. Planter design needs to consider available sidewalk and right-of-way widths, proximity to bus stops/shelters, and emergency services access. Three types of planters are described in this plan. Each is appropriate in different settings.

For any planter style selected, the planter should meet the cross section standards and not interfere with pedestrian access or emergency services access.

### Planter Type



### Why Use

**Flush planter** beds are used to maximize functional pedestrian space and to provide unobstructed access.

**Edged planters** help protect trees and vegetation by guarding against soil compaction and winter salt runoff.

**Raised planters** can be used to provide seating areas and to create or add to other points of interest.

### When to Use

Flush planters should be the predominant planter type used in all areas. They are especially important when there is limited sidewalk width. They are also important to when providing access for emergency services, such as fire and medical.

Edged planters should be used when adequate pedestrian space and building spaces can otherwise be provided.

Raised planters should be used to provide secondary seating near plazas, pocket parks, restaurants, and other gathering spaces.

## Cross Sections

These standards break the sidewalk into three spaces – the building space, the pedestrian space, and the amenity space. The cross section defines the amount of space allocated to each space.



## Building Zone

The building zone blends the public and private realms. The building zone provides activity spaces and provides a connection between activity inside of buildings and public uses along the sidewalk. The building zone is the area between the building face and the pedestrian zone. The building zone includes outdoor dining, furnishings, accent plantings, art, and merchandise displays.

## Pedestrian Zone

The pedestrian zone provides a space for pedestrian and bicycle travel. The pedestrian zone extends from the building zone to the amenity zone. The pedestrian zone should be clear of obstacles and encroachments.

## Amenity Zone

The amenity zone provides a space for street infrastructure and serves as a buffer between pedestrian and automobile traffic. The amenity zone provides space for street trees, street lights, benches, trash and recycling cans, bike racks, bus stops, and public art.

## Spacing

Research into streetscape design shows good streetscapes blend functionality and vibrancy. This means providing spaces to walk as well as spaces for activity and amenities.

By City Ordinance, new buildings along Broad Street and Washington Street must have a 20 foot setback. To allow for canopy trees, a **size TBD, see options** amenity space should be provided. The remaining space should be split between building space (**size TBD**) and pedestrian clear space (**size TBD**).

When more than 20 feet is available, the additional space should be used to increase the pedestrian clear space to 10 feet and the building space to **size TBD** (Raised Planters) or **size TBD** (Flush Planters). This will increase vibrancy and accessibility.

Because of existing buildings, 20 feet is not available in some spaces. When this is the case, the following minimum spaces should be provided: amenity space **size TBD** – to allow for canopy trees; clear space minimum of 5 feet – to allow two people to walk side by side; and building space 2' feet – to allow for opening doors.

## Passable and Impassable Spaces

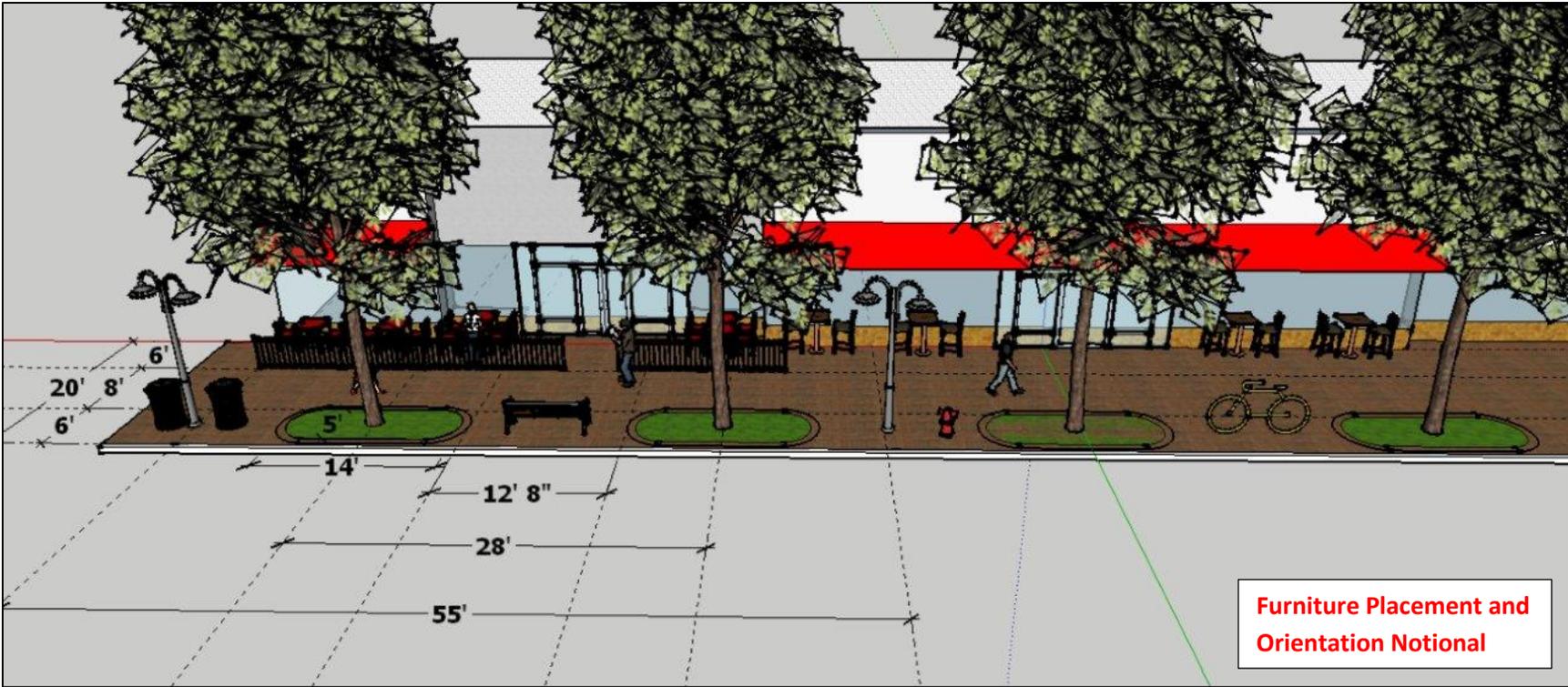
Streetscape elements can be passable, like the pedestrian zone and areas between amenities. Or they can be impassable, like tree

planters, dining areas, and bus shelters. When the pedestrian space is relatively narrow, then the other areas of the street must be more passable to allow for easier passage. When the pedestrian space is relatively wide, then the other areas of the street can be less passable. As a rule of thumb, half of the amenity area between tree planters should be kept clear to provide pedestrian passing and waiting spaces.



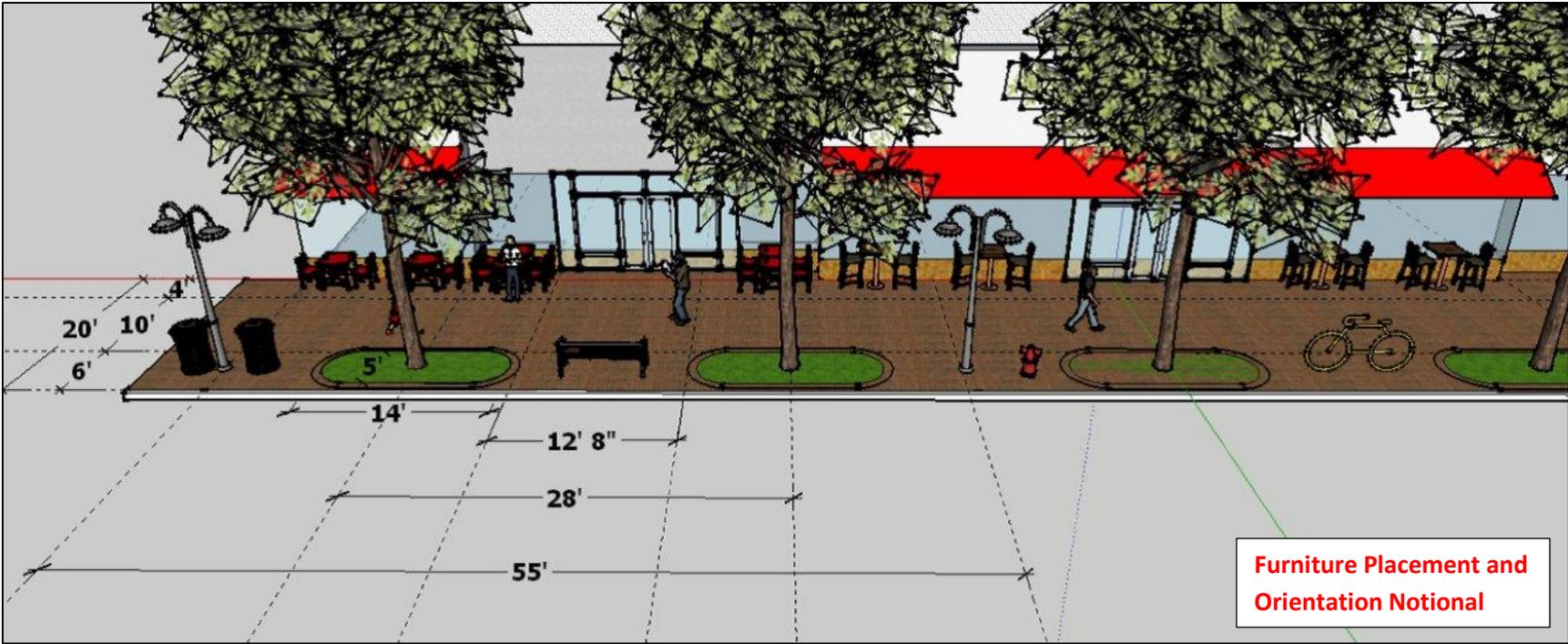
### Twenty Foot Option 1: Out Door Dining with Barrier and Flush Tree Planters



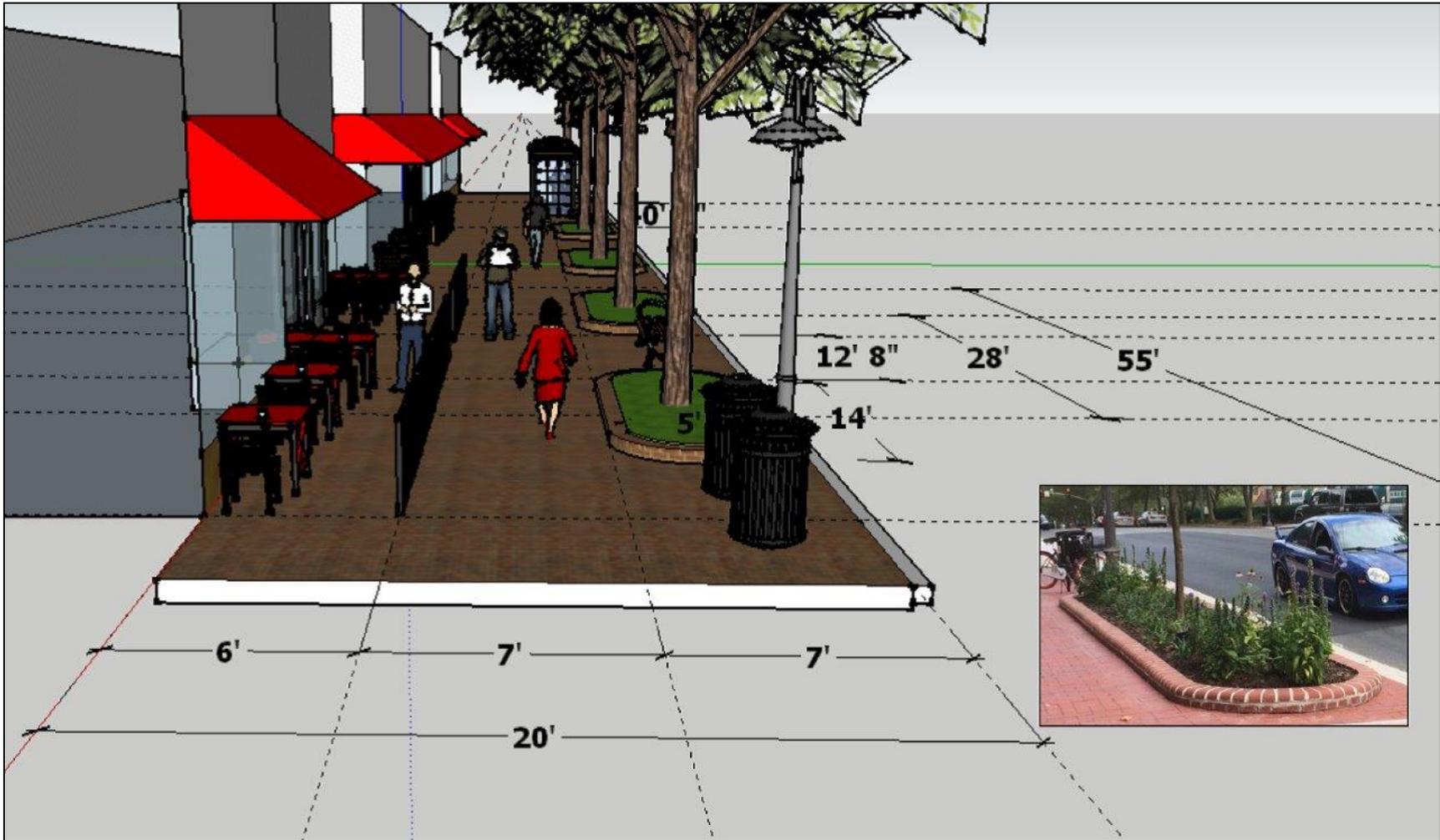


### Twenty Foot Option 2: Out Door Dining without Barrier and Flush Tree Planters



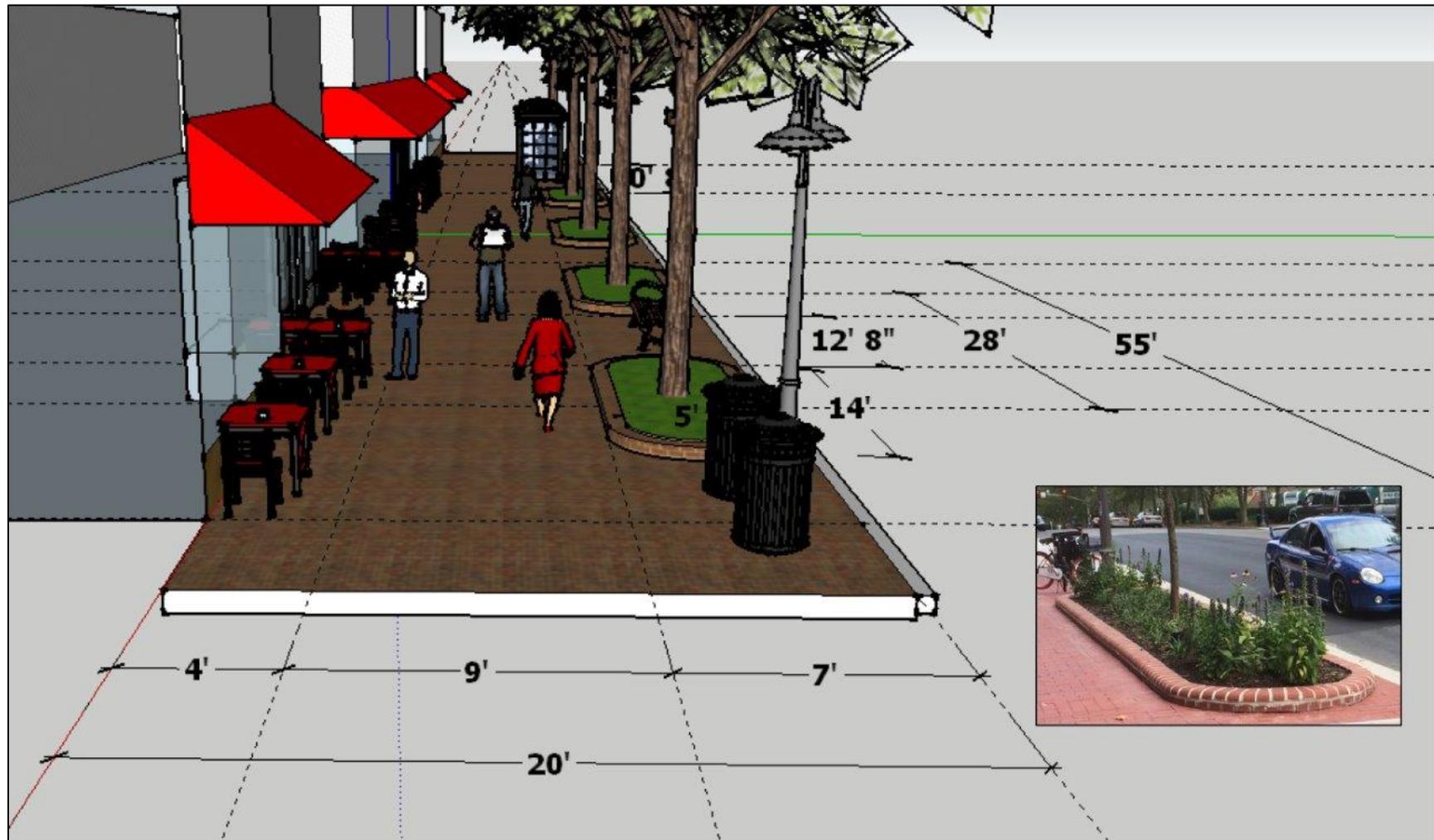


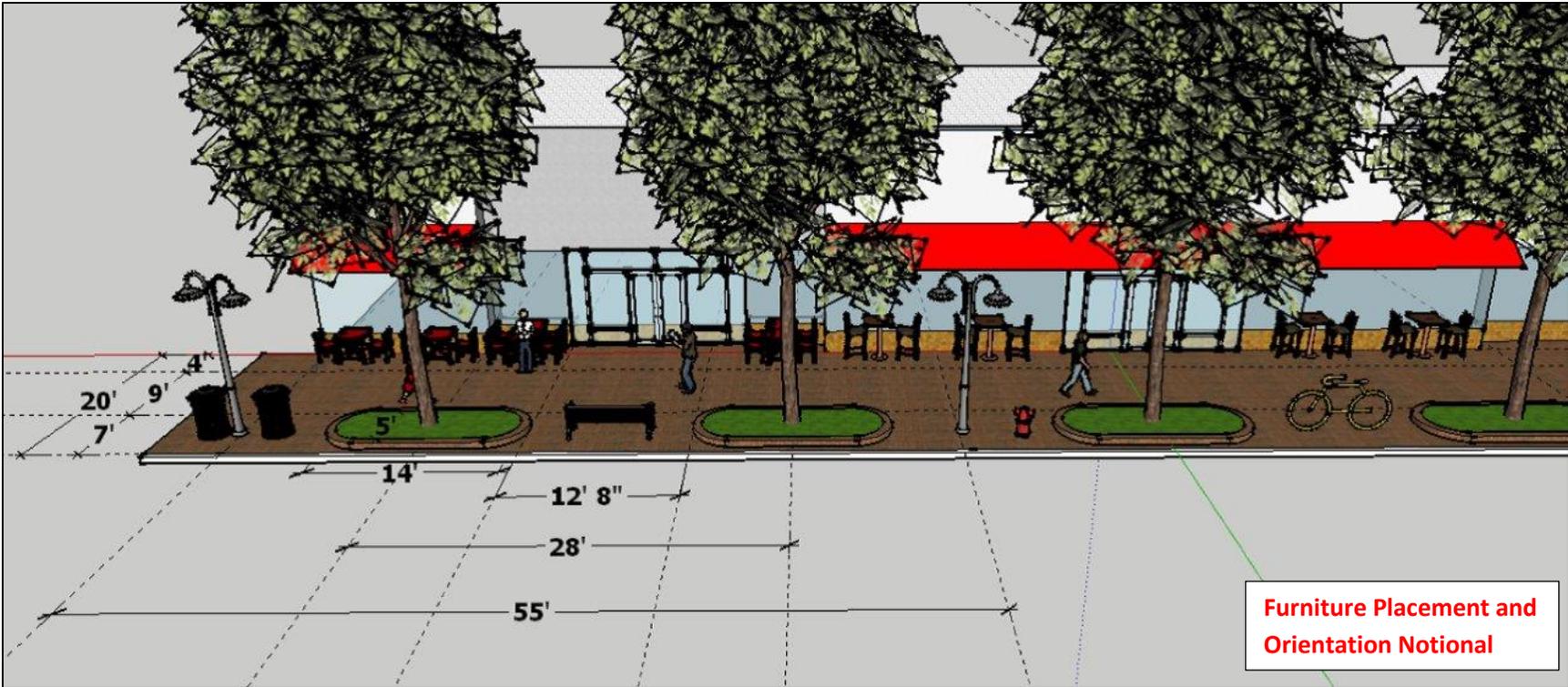
### Twenty Foot Option 3: Out Door Dining with Barrier and Raised Tree Planters



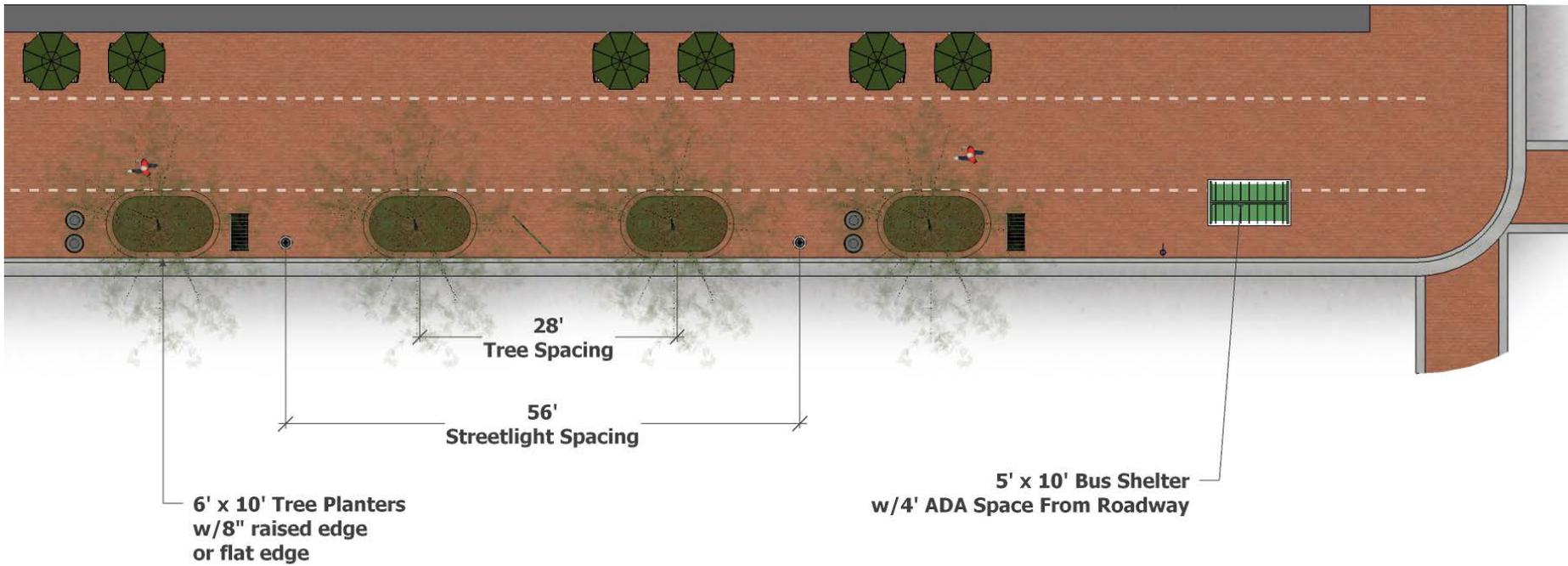


## Twenty Foot Option 4: Out Door Dining without Barrier and Raised Tree Planters

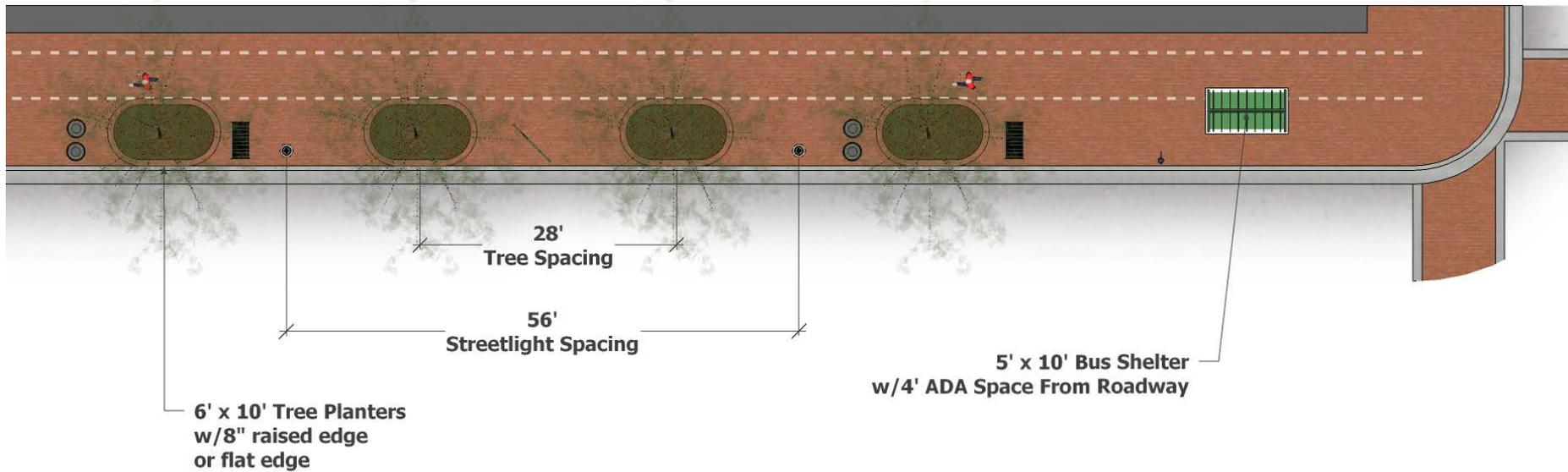




# Notional Twenty-Five Foot Cross Section



## Notional Fifteen Foot Cross Section



## Materials

### Brick Pavers

Brick pavers are an attractive, durable material. They have been the traditional material of choice for commercial sidewalks in the City. Brick and concrete banding patterns can be used on side streets to transition to residential areas, where concrete is the typical sidewalk material.

Variations in color and pattern should be used to highlight building entrances and driveways.



Figure 12: Truncated dome pavers at 301 West Broad Street alert pedestrians with and without visual impairments to the building's driveway.

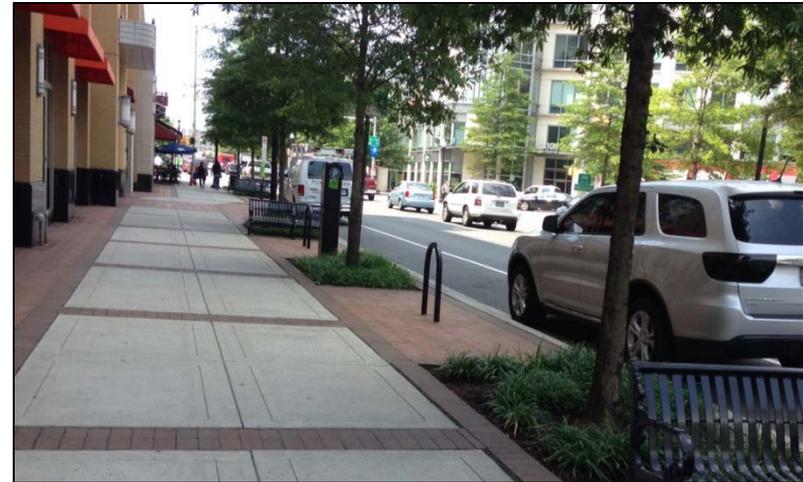


Figure 13: Brick banding surrounds concrete panels to create a decorative sidewalk and can be used to transition the streetscape design from all brick in commercial areas to all concrete in residential areas.

District	Paver Location	Paver Specification
W Broad Street	Sidewalk	Yankee Hill Brick Paver 4" x 8" x 2.25" Medium Red Velour
	Crosswalk or Driveway	Hanover Concrete Paver, Prest Brick 4" x 8" x 3-1/8" Quarry Red, Natural Finish

## Utilities

Utilities should be designed to blend functionality and design.

### **Backflow Preventers**

Backflow preventers protect against contaminants flowing from irrigated areas and ground water back into the residential plumbing system. To protect against hazards, the devices must be installed above ground.

To reduce visual impacts on the City's streetscape, backflow preventers should be installed inside of buildings or new irrigation systems should connect to existing backflow preventers. If new backflow preventers must be installed outside, the smallest possible cases should be used and the devices should be positioned behind other furniture. Any new cases can be used as canvases for public art.

Insert photo of a good example

### **Utility Access**

Manholes provide access points to service infrastructure. Manholes must be placed as required by infrastructure servicing needs.

Manhole covers should be treated to blend with surrounding materials.



## Electrical Transformers

Electricity is transmitted at relatively high voltages. Before being transmitted for use inside a building, electrical transformers step down the voltage. Electrical transformers are placed near the buildings they serve.

To reduce the visual impact on streetscape, transformers should be placed inside of buildings or in underground vaults. If this is not possible, the transformers should be fully screened from view. Any visible transformers can be used for public art.



Figure 14: Public art on a transformer adds interest and whimsy to the streetscape.

## Fire Hydrants

Fire hydrants provide firefighters access to water. Hydrants must be easy to access and free of obstructions.

Fire Hydrants should be placed in the streetscape amenity panel (near the curb).



Figure 15: A Fire hydrant near the curb provides emergency access and leaves the pedestrian path clear.

## **Public Art**

Public Art occupies a prominent place in the development of communities. Public Art helps people associate with the themes and values of a community. The City is working on a public art policy. Once completed, that policy will guide public art in the City. The information and examples here are intended to show how public art is part of and enhances streetscapes.

## **Murals**

Murals are artworks on walls, ceilings, or other large permanent surface. The artwork is painted or directly applied to the surface. Murals enhance the local area by adding color and highlighting historical messages.



## **Sculptures and Statuary**

Sculpture and Statuary are three dimensional art forms. Statues are recognizable images of persons or animals. Sculptures express ideas. Both can express themes of nature, cities, wildlife, tradition, history, or fun.



## **Intersection Treatments**

Public streets account for 20 to 30 percent of the land area in the City. Special treatments highlight that streets are public spaces and that they are for people.



## **Maintenance**

The City of Falls Church takes pride in its streetscape and expects it to be maintained to a high standard. Financial pressures and competing interests make it difficult to maintain the streetscape through the use of general government resources alone.

Public/private partnerships can be effective tools for maintaining the City's streetscape.

To balance cost, speed of service delivery, and consistency of design, building ownership will maintain the streetscape and plantings along their frontage and also be responsible for tree replacement. The City Arborist will retain responsibility for pruning and trimming trees.

## **Planting Rehabilitation**

With the adoption of the West Broad Street Small Area Plan in 2016, the City recognized that partnerships with adjacent business and property owners could be an effective way to maintain plantings. The City should move forward with the directives in the adopted small area plan to develop maintenance agreements with adjacent owners for planting areas. These maintenance agreements would establish expectations for maintenance and provide protections for long term tree health.

## **Litter Control**

The City has long had an adopt-a-park program to help control litter and clean out invasive vegetation. A broader adopt-a-spot program could be stood up to encourage people to sign up for litter control along stretches of the City's commercial streets. City-provided signs

would recognize the contributions of individuals and groups to the City's beautification efforts.

<<photo of a landscaping crew replanting a bed>>

<<photo of volunteer litter pickup and an adopt a spot sign>>

## **Appendix A: Public Engagement**

Work on these streetscape standards was guided by a citizen taskforce. The Taskforce met \_\_\_ times over a \_\_\_ month period. See the inside cover for a list of Taskforce members.

Throughout the process, meeting materials were made available on the project webpage, <http://www.fallschurchva.gov/Streetscape>.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Group</b>	<b>Event</b>
June 14, 2016	Streetscape Taskforce	
July 12, 2016	Streetscape Taskforce	
July 30, 2016	Streetscape Taskforce	
August 16, 2016	Streetscape Taskforce	
August 23, 2016	Streetscape Taskforce	
September 13, 2016	Streetscape Taskforce	Referral to Boards and Commissions
October 11, 2016	Streetscape Taskforce	
November 8, 2016	Streetscape Taskforce	
December 13, 2016	Streetscape Taskforce	Recommendation to Council
January 16, 2017	City Council	Work Session
February 20, 2016	City Council	Work Session
February 27, 2017	City Council	Meeting, Action

## Appendix B: Related Documents

Add list of related documents

- Comp Plan
- Small Area Plans
- Master Plans
- Design Guidelines
- Streetscape Standards