Downtown Design Guidelines

Russellville, Alabama

Version 1.0 September 6, 2016

Russellville, Alabama

Downtown Design Guidelines

Acknowledgements

Russellville Downtown Redevelopment Committee

Matt Cooper
Cassie Medley
Charlie Canida
Heather Willis
Chase Sparks
Jamie Harris
Kim Perdue

City Council

Mayor David Grissom
David Palmer, Council District 1
William Nale, Council District 2
Gary Cummings, Council District 3
Lanny Hubbard, Council District 4
Jamie Harris, Council District 5

Planning Commission

Mayor David Grissom
Councilman Jamie Harris
Milford “Mousey” Brown
Terry Bolton
Joe Hamilton
Bois Porter

Table of Contents

I. Introduction

- Background and Purpose
- How to Use This Document

Background and Purpose

The City of Russellville, Alabama is located in northwest Alabama and serves as the county seat of Franklin County in northwest Alabama. The historic downtown area of Russellville has suffered from decline and disinvestment in recent decades as a result of common pressures faced by downtowns across the nation: changing traffic patterns, competition with other retailers, cost of ownership and rehabilitation, and other factors which have contributed to a loss of character and value in the central business district of Russellville. Recognizing that the downtown serves as the civic and cultural heart of the community, as well as its traditional commercial center, the City of Russellville initiated and completed a downtown redevelopment planning process in 2016. Among other recommendations for downtown, the plan recommended creating a design standard to apply to new construction and renovation of buildings in the downtown development district. These guidelines serve the purpose of preserving the character of development in downtown Russellville in order to promote a healthy and vibrant downtown area.

How to Use This Document

The information in this document illustrates the general character of the architectural setting for the City of Russellville, to establish and regulate an architectural quality and character for the town. For this character we draw from the simple charm of rural Alabama towns of the 19th and early 20th Century.

This architecture has a simplicity and clarity of construction that renders it durable and economical to build. Relying on clear volumes, good proportions, sensible details, and solid materials, we strive to create a place that reflects the memorable, fresh charm of a traditional town.

Note that the boundaries of the design district and the provisions of appearing in III. Buildings and Lots and VI. Signs have been adopted by ordinance (Ord. # 2016-017, Sept. 6, 2016). Remaining sections and photographs included in these guidelines are illustrative best practices and should not be construed as being strictly enforceable.

II. District

- Boundaries
- Uses
- Map

Boundaries

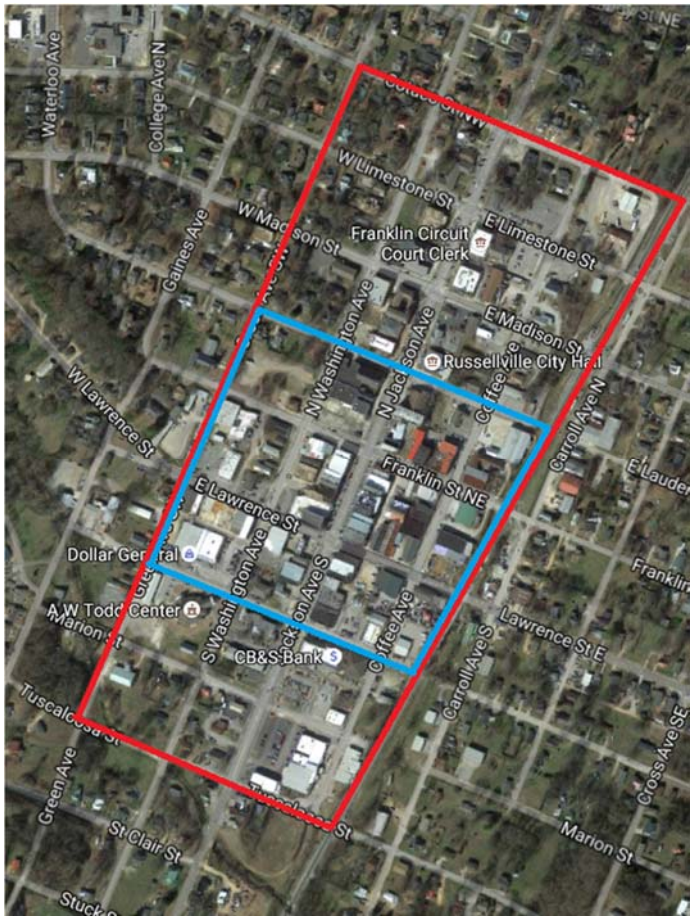
The area of downtown Russellville falling under these guidelines incorporates the historic commercial center of the community. This is a primarily commercial, institutional, and civic area, with some residential properties adjacent. The area shall be divided into a Downtown Overlay District in which only the provisions related to color schemes shall be enforced and a Focused Development District in which all provisions shall be enforced.

Boundaries are described as follows: Begin at the intersection of Green Avenue and Tuscaloosa Street; thence east along Tuscaloosa Street to the Norfolk southern Railroad; thence north along the railroad to Cotaco Street; thence west along Cotaco Street to Green Avenue; thence south along Green Avenue to Tuscaloosa Street and the point of beginning. This area shall be known as the Downtown Overlay District.

Begin at the intersection of Green Avenue and Montgomery Street; thence east along Montgomery Street to the Norfolk southern Railroad; thence north along the railroad to Lauderdale Street; thence west along Lauderdale Street to Green Avenue; thence south along Green Avenue to Montgomery Street and the point of beginning. This area shall be known as the Focused Development District.

Uses

A full range of uses is assumed for the downtown district, as directed by the zoning ordinance. This includes but is not limited to retail, office, restaurants, civic, and institutional activities. Refer to the adopted zoning ordinance for specific uses and prohibitions.



III. Buildings and Lots

- Architectural Styles
- Materials
- Commercial Buildings
- Civic Buildings
- Residential
- Historic Building Treatment

Architectural Styles

The essential architectural pattern of downtown Russellville was set prior to World War II. Buildings tend to be simple brick boxes, one or two stories in height, front directly onto the sidewalk, on lots as narrow as 20 feet and oriented perpendicular to the street. This is a pattern and look that is repeated in small towns across Alabama, Mississippi, and Georgia.

New construction should respect this historic look, and take design cues from it, including materials, proportion, scale, and detail. There are a few architectural design features to be avoided. These include blank walls more than 30 feet long; signs that are out of scale with facades; barred windows; and windows that are painted or papered over.

Materials

Two rules of thumb are useful to keep in mind, on the issue of materials and their substitutes. The *Arm's Length Rule* tells us that substitute materials are allowed if they are indistinguishable when viewed within a couple of feet. This is because people often touch a building, and it must feel solid and heavy. The *Eyes Only Rule* is similar; substitute materials are acceptable if they are indistinguishable from a distance of ten feet or more. Some materials may function perfectly, with detail that cannot be discerned from a distance.

In general, the front building façade should be of one dominant material. Occasionally, one or two others may be used as accent treatments. The preferred building materials include:

- brick
- cement composite board material, such as Hardy- plank
- stone
- pre– cast stone

Vinyl and aluminum siding should not be allowed on front facades, but are acceptable on rear and side elevations which when they are not visible from the street. Cinderblock masonry may not be visible as a finish material. Similarly, wood siding is discouraged due to its low quality. Trim details may be either wood or high- quality vinyl material. Columns, railings, and other exterior trim may be of wood, wood composites, fiber cement board, cast iron, or other material as approved by the Design Review Committee.

Building Construction

Composition: All buildings should adhere to the three basic divisions of a commercial façade: a roof which is typically flat with a parapet and decorative cornice; a middle area defined by upper story windows which are vertical and regularly spaced; and a first floor with elements of a storefront, including a bulkhead, display windows, and a transom.

New construction and rehabilitation should avoid long unrelieved expanses of wall along the street. Window openings should be vertically proportioned and placed symmetrically on the façade. They should be slightly recessed from the surface, and be defined by sills, lintels, or decorative surrounds. Window frames, moldings, and cornices provide most of the detail. The basic principle of historic storefronts is to make it as transparent as possible by using as much glass as possible. The use of transom windows above the display windows increases daylight inside the store. Entrances are usually recessed. A lintel or cornice is used to separate the storefront from upper floors.

Materials: Brick is the historical and preferred exterior treatment. New materials should relate to the historic materials in terms of texture, scale, color, and composition. Buildings should utilize the same materials as those on former and existing buildings. Inappropriate materials include plywood, com- position panel, plastic, imitation brick or stone, vinyl or synthetic siding, sheet metal, and stone veneer. Neither stucco nor concrete block impart the same scale or texture as brick.

Storefront Design Guidelines

General Principle: The design of a storefront shall be compatible with the character of existing and former buildings

Dimensions: The storefront shall be built to the dimensions of the original frame. Two stories are preferred.

Cornice or Lintel: A cornice or lintel shall be provided above the storefront in order to separate it from the upper façade, and to provide a signboard for the business.

Viewing Zone: The "viewing zone" of the storefront shall have a minimum of 50% clear glass (excluding entries) for commercial uses, and no more than 30% may be reflective or tinted glass. Storefronts shall be glazed up to the lintel or cornice, and shall be safety glass.

Entrances: The Main Entrance shall be recessed at least three feet from the front plane of the building, in order to emphasize the entryway, accommodate the swing of the door, and provide protection from the elements. The floor of the recessed entrance shall be ceramic tile or terrazzo.

Doors: The main entry door shall be wood or metal with a panel of clear safety glass.

Storefront Design Guidelines (Cont.)

Materials: Storefronts shall be constructed of high quality, durable materials, such as wood, cast iron, structural metal, and glass. The bulkhead panels below the display windows should be made of wood panels, stone slabs, or ceramic tile. Brick may be used for narrow vertical piers if appropriate to the design. Corrugated metal, panels, aluminum or vinyl siding, synthetic stucco, plywood siding, glass block, and concrete block shall not be used in storefronts. Storefronts shall not be decorated with half-timbering, shingles, pent roofs, or other pseudo-historic materials or treatments.

Colors: Colors shall adhere to historical color palettes and coordinate with building materials and features. Unpainted brick should remain unpainted. Painted brick should be painted. Colors should blend and complement other features of the building and along the street. Sample color palettes encouraged are Sherwin Williams Arts & Crafts Exterior Palette, Sherwin Williams Classical/Colonial, and Sherwin Williams Victorian Exterior Palette.

Orientation / Alignment: Orientation of new construction should match that of existing adjacent buildings. Facades should face the same direction as neighboring buildings. The similar heights of buildings should be emphasized by the alignment of cornices and/or horizontal bands.

New buildings should conform to setbacks of surrounding buildings. New buildings should create a continuously walled frontage parallel to the street. New designs should creatively draw on important characteristics of former and surrounding buildings.

The design of new buildings should complement existing architecture. Replicate original canopies and balconies. Original materials, detail, shape, outline, and roof height should be retained. Enclosed canopies are not appropriate.

A distinctive feature of commercial buildings is their roofline. In downtown most commercial buildings have flat roofs and parapets which often display corbelled brick work or other ornate detail. The ornamental cornice at the top of the façade gives the building a “finished” look. The repetition of cornices along the street creates a horizontal line which visually unifies the block. Reconstruction of a cornice should be based on documentation of the historic treatment.

Commercial Buildings

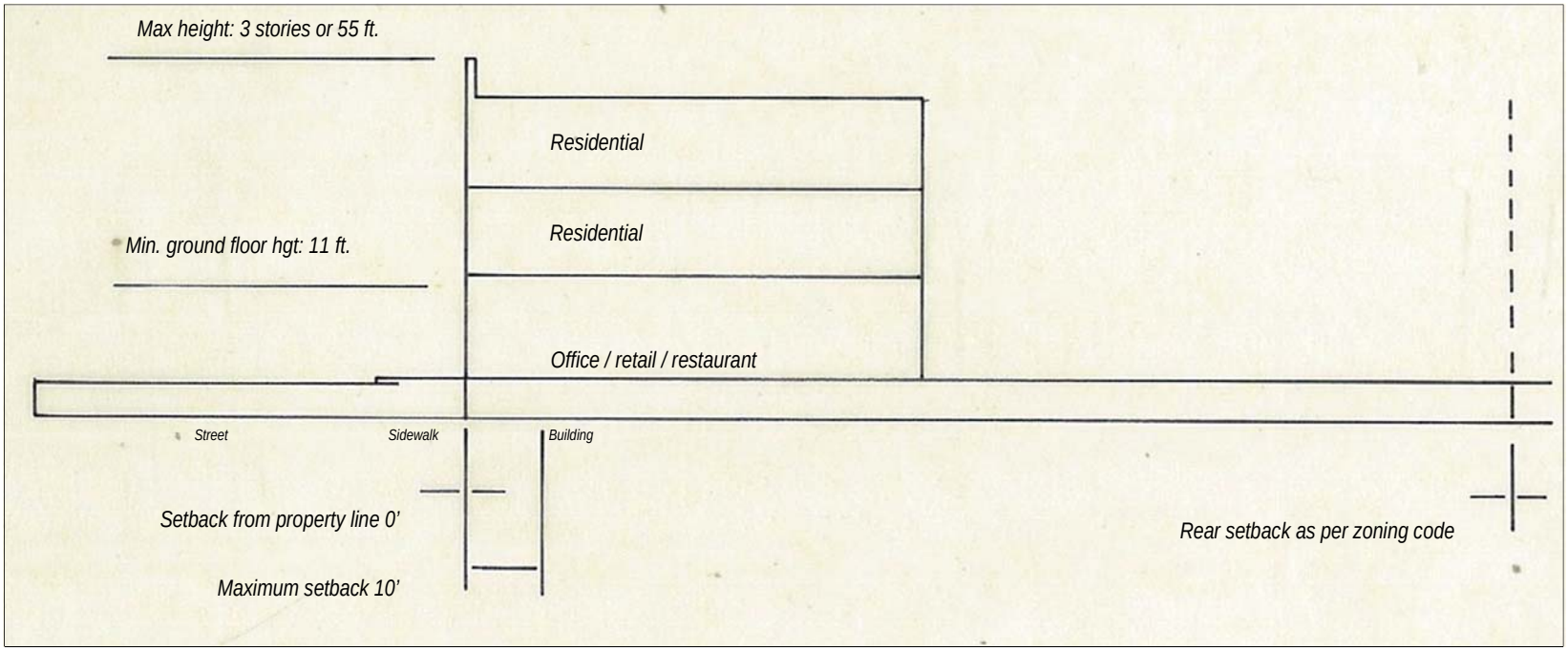
Maintaining a healthy downtown commercial component is critical. Determining the right amount, mix, and location for retail is always a difficult challenge facing a community. Some general principles to keep in mind:

- Always integrate residential use within commercial areas.
- It is focused and mixed with, or adjacent to, civic space.
- Street– level shop fronts should be at least 50% glazing, with a floor to ceiling height of at least 11 feet.
- Buildings should always include a functional second story of either office or residential use, or be at least 18 feet high, to create a good streetscape.
- Sidewalks should be wider than in purely residential areas; at least 10 feet wide, up to an additional 10 feet for outdoor dining.
- Chain and big-box retailers will conform to architectural, urban design, and streetscape standards if they truly want to be in a location, even when they fight for their conventional suburban formats; stand your ground, don't give in!

Commercial Buildings, cont..

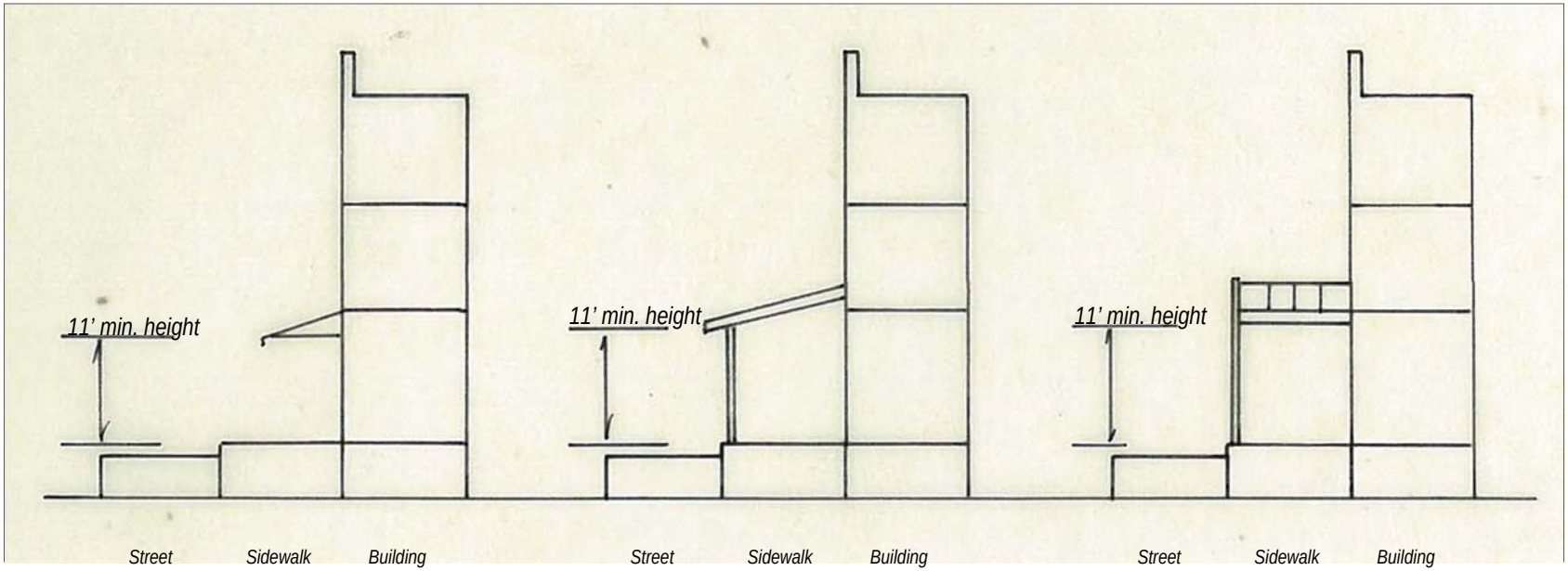
Building placement and orientation should emphasize the relationship to the street. That is, the primary entrance and most elaborate architectural details should face front. Corner buildings should front the larger street, but both street– facing facades should be given design attention.

A maximum building height of 3 stories or 55 feet should not be exceeded. Towers, belfries, cupolas, and other non-habitable architectural features may exceed height limits. Of more importance is a minimum height; one story buildings should have a front facade at least 18 feet high, which may be achieved with a parapet wall. The ground floor should be at least 11 feet tall, of which 9 feet should be glazing. Buildings should be placed on the front property line/ sidewalk, but may recede as much as ten feet to make room for outdoor dining along the sidewalk.



Commercial Buildings, cont..

Awnings, colonnades, and balconies may extend out from the front façade, to create a shelter over the sidewalk. Awnings are typically canvas over a metal framework. They may ex- tend four feet out from the building façade. A colonnade is metal or wooden awning supported by columns, and may extend to within one foot the width of the sidewalk. Balconies are similar to column– supported colonnades but are flat, functioning as outdoor space for the upper story. They are a minimum of 6 feet deep but are recommended to extend to one foot of the sidewalk edge. They shall have a railing 4 feet high, and may be partially protected with an awning.



Civic Buildings

A hallmark of traditional towns is mixed use, but the often forgotten side of this is civic use. Far beyond the inclusion of public open space, civic uses can be a true unifying factor in a community.

Architectural design need not be elaborate, but these buildings should be located in a prominent location, typically fronting onto a public square, green, or other open space; or alternatively, at a prominent intersection or terminated vista. Civic uses are generally given greater flexibility regarding setback requirements, height limitations, and so forth.

Such uses include town halls, schools, churches, fire and police facilities, post offices, libraries, and the like

Residential

Including living options is critical to keeping a downtown active throughout the day. Successful downtowns include multiple housing options. Allowing numerous housing formats, plans, and price points makes development more secure by expanding the market, and serves the community by meeting the needs of all residents. Typical arrangements include:

- Active adult and retirement communities are very appropriate; they should be physically well integrated into the street fabric, not set apart and isolated.

- Outbuildings are secondary structures on a lot at the rear along an alley, they create versatility by providing space not only for parking, but affordable rental apartments.

- Live/ work buildings are a residential configuration in which the first floor is designed and built to commercial standards, giving the owner the possibility of converting the space to office or shop use. It is an excellent way to transition from downtown to a quiet residential area. They are not raised above street level, but are built flush to the side- walk to meet commercial access standards.

- Apartments above commercial helps ensure a lively and safe downtown even at night. It is affordable and convenient, and helps diversity the income of property owners.

Historic Building Treatment

The standards below are the foundation for historic downtowns across the nation. Russellville may seek a historic district in which these guidelines will be requirements for preservation, rehabilitation, restoration, and reconstruction in conjunction with additional incentives.

The Secretary of the Interior Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties

1. A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.
2. The historic character of a property shall be retained. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.
3. Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.
4. Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.
5. Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques, or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a historic property shall be preserved.
6. Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities.
7. Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.
8. Significant archeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.
9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.
10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

IV. Streets and Circulation

- Streets
- Traffic Calming
- Pedestrian Circulation
- Bicycles
- Street Furniture
- Parking
- Lighting

Streets

One feature of traditional towns that is immediately obvious is the pattern of streets. Older town planning does not make use of cul-de-sacs and collector streets, but reverts back to a traditional modified grid pattern. A rigid grid is not necessary; streets should respond to topography and natural features, but unless needed environmentally, there is no reason to demand curvy streets. The concern about long dull streets can be easily avoided by T– intersections and other design tricks. The advantage of the traditional grid is that it offers choice to drivers and pedestrians. If one street is blocked for some reason, other options are available. In contrast, conventional suburban streets funnel all traffic onto few roads, causing congestion.

Streets must be understood to play several roles; moving cars as quickly and smoothly as possible is only one of many. Pedestrians, bicycles and transit must also be accommodated to make downtowns and neighborhoods function well. Streets must also be viewed as more than simply the travel car way; including the parking lanes and sidewalks is essential. Matching the adjacent land uses with street types is also critical to success.

Transportation engineers often insist on wide streets to accommodate cars, but the standard reference work (the "Green Book" of the American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials or AASHTO) calls for tight dimensions in urban settings. AASHTO also has parameters specifically for Traditional Neighborhood Developments (TND's). On– street parking lanes are 7-8 feet wide. Travel lanes may range from 9 to 11 feet wide. More commercially oriented streets which can anticipated truck traffic may increase lane width to 10– 12 feet. Intersection radii should range from 10 to 25 feet.

Several street types can be found in and are appropriate for downtown Russellville:

- Main Street
- Residential Street
- Alley
- Traffic Calming

These are distinct in their configuration and purpose, and are described on the following pages.

Streets—Main Street

A Main Street is a limited distance thoroughfare, providing frontage for mixed– use commercial and civic uses, primarily in a town center area. Sidewalks are wide, at least 10 feet, with trees planted in individual wells.

Streets—Residential Street

A local, slow movement thoroughfare found throughout a neighborhood. It provides frontage essentially for residences, but also a few offices and shops, and is more formal in character than rural roads, having curbs and gutters, wider sidewalks, and aligned plantings.

Streets—Alley

A narrow passageway between buildings located at the rear of structures and designed for service and delivery access and not intended to convey traffic. It provides additional access off of main corridors designed for vehicle, bicycle and pedestrian access.

Traffic Calming

Streets must be thought of as more than simply for cars. Pedestrians and bicycles, among other transportation modes, make use of streets. In order to emphasize pedestrian needs, communities often include methods of traffic calming, in order to "tame" the car. The simplistic and most effective method is to reduce dimensions of streets and intersections. Narrow streets, stop signs, and stop lights and the most standard traffic calming measures, but beyond these, a variety of policy and design measures are used, often to retrofit existing oversized streets. These include:

- Bump– outs
- Roundabout/ traffic circles
- Speed table/ raised intersections
- Textured crosswalks
- Raised medians
- Street closures and diversions

Roundabout in a residential neighborhood

Bump– outs narrow the street

A chicane is a short diversion, forcing cars to slow

Pedestrian Circulation

An active pedestrian life is essential to a vibrant downtown. A good rule of thumb is to give pedestrians choices and connections. This means an emphasis on "destination walking," not merely walking as recreation. Consider sidewalks to be part of the street system, and design streets with pedestrians in mind, not just autos. A few other simple rules help as well:

- Sidewalks should be wide enough to walk side by side; in residential areas, a minimum of 5 feet is sufficient.
- Downtown sidewalks should be wider, at least 10 feet, to accommodate pedestrians and other activities such as outdoor dining
- Crosswalks should be considered an extension of the sidewalk; color and pave them in the same style to emphasize this
- Hiking and bicycle pathways should be connected to and integrated with the sidewalk system

Sidewalk in a residential area

Downtown sidewalk

Crosswalk

Pathways

Bicycles

Accommodating bicycles in a community can take three distinct forms: routes, lanes, and paths.

Bicycle routes are distinguished only by signage; bicycles are integrated into automobile traffic.

Bicycle lanes share the road with vehicular traffic, but are dedicated to non– motorized bike travel. They are designated by paint stripes and pavement markings

Bicycle paths are not a part of a street or other motorway, and are dedicated solely to non– vehicular travel. They are often shared with joggers and skaters.

Bike routes share the pavement with autos

Bike lanes provide a dedicated lane within the street

Bike paths separate bikes from other traffic

Street Furniture

Benches, trash cans, bike racks, planting boxes, and informational kiosks are encouraged; these should be reviewed and approved prior to installation by an appointed design re- view committee

Parking

Think of parking as a necessary piece of infrastructure just as the electrical and ductwork in a home. In our homes, this equipment is hidden from view behind walls and ceiling tiles. While developers of commercial space need adequate parking to meet demand, most regulations require far more parking than is needed. Keep the following points in mind:

- Parking lots should never be placed directly fronting on a street; if unavoidable, it must be screened by a low wall.
- The majority of parking should be hidden behind the buildings it is intended to serve, in the center of the block.
- On-street parking is essential, and protects pedestrians on sidewalk, both physically and psychologically.
- On– street parking in commercial areas can be angled, either head-in or reverse– angle.
- Shared parking among uses should be encouraged.
- On-street parking should always count toward any mini-mum requirements.
- Landscaping in parking design negates heat effects and acts as a stormwater facility.

Place most parking to the rear of buildings

Parking Lots should be set back from the street and must be screened with a low wall

Head– in parking with shade trees to define spaces

Lighting

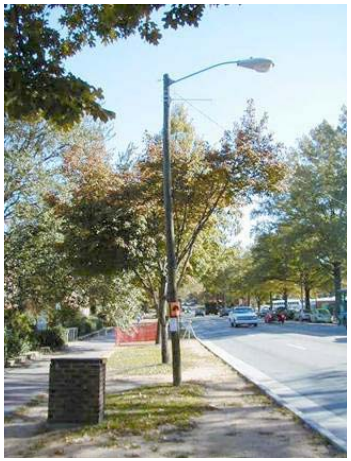
Street lights should have a height of 10 to 14 feet. Their design should always focus light downward so as to reduce night sky light pollution.

Metal halide lamps are preferred, to reduce glare and emphasize good night color perception.

Cobra head lights and unfinished metal poles should always be avoided. They are intended for highway use, and are out of scale for intimate, pedestrian oriented downtowns.

Always choose downward– oriented lamps

The classic acorn street light



Cobra lamps should not be used

V. Landscaping

- Materials
- Street Trees

Materials

Planting materials should be selected for durability, ease of maintenance, and beauty. Above all, native species should be emphasized, as they are most suited to the local climate.

The following trees are recommended to be planted within parks and other open spaces, and parking lots (not as street trees):

Magnolia
Willow Oak
Liberty Elm
Pin Oak
Dogwood
Ironwood
Crepe Myrtle
Other native species as identified

Shrubbery

Witch Alder
Witch Hazel
Mountain Laurel
Azalea
Staghorn Sumac
Arrowood
Buttonwood
Other native species as identified

Groundcover

Text
Other native species as identified

Street Trees

In a downtown setting, street trees are to be located in planting strips 5 feet in width, or planting wells 4 by 4 feet, according to street type. They should be planted at regular intervals no more than 50 feet apart, and have a caliper of at least 2.5 inches measured 4 feet above ground, at the time of planting. Allowed species shall be primarily native to the region, and vary according to location within the City of Russellville, as follows:

- Neighborhood Residential: Red oak, White Oak, Sycamore, Ash, Red Maple, Liberty Elm

- Downtown Core: Honey Locust, Black Locust, Dogwood, Pear, Linden, Crepe Myrtle, Red Maple, Ironwood, Eastern Redbud

Street trees located in a continuous plating strip,

Street trees in a downtown setting are appropriately planted in individual tree wells

VI. Signs

- Address
- Awning
- Band
- Nameplate
- Outdoor Display
- Sandwich
- Window

General Intent

The intent of regulating signs that are visible from public frontage is to ensure proper dimensioning and placement with respect to existing or planned architectural features, to maintain or improve public safety, to maintain or improve the aesthetic character of the context in which they are located, and to provide legible information for pedestrians, not just drivers. The intent of the following guidelines is to give a sense of the style of signage to be found in Russellville.

I. Prohibited Signs
No sign shall be erected which makes use of flashing lights or exposed light bulbs, projection, movement of either the lettering or the sign itself, or any other animation.

II. Illumination
Signs may be lit externally with a shielded light source directed solely at the sign, or with internal halo lighting

III. Temporary Signs
Temporary signs of all types may be approved for a 30-day period only.

Sign Type: Address

a. Address Sign numerals applied to Retail, Office, Residential, or Institutional, or industrial buildings shall be between four (4) and six (6) inches tall.

b. Address signs shall be easily visible by using colors or materials that contrast with their background.

c. Address signs shall be constructed of durable materials.

d. The address sign shall be attached to the front of the building in proximity to the Principal Entrance or at a mail - box.

Quantity	1 per address
Area	2 s.f. max.
Width	24” max.
Height	12” max.
Depth/ projection	3” max.
Clearance	4.5 ft. min.
Letter height	6 inches max.

Sign Type: Awning

a. The following variations of awnings, with or without Sign bands, are permitted: Fixed or retractable awnings, Shed Awnings, Dome awnings

b. Other awning types may be permitted by Warrant.

c. Signage shall be limited to the Valance of the awning or the vertical portion of a dome awning.

d. No portion of an awning shall be lower than eight (8) feet clearance, or seven (7) feet by Warrant.

e. Awnings shall be a minimum of 4 feet in depth. Awnings approved by Warrant for seven (7) feet Clearance may be a minimum of 3 feet in depth.

f. Awnings shall not extend beyond the width of the building, nor encroach above the roof line or the Story above.

g. The Valance height shall not exceed 12 inches.

h. Awning Signs shall contain only the business name, logo, and/or street address.

i. Letters, numbers, and graphics s hall cover no more than seventy percent (70%) of the Valance area.

j. Awning Signs shall not be internally lit or backlit.

Quantity	1 per window
Width	Width of façade
Depth/ projection	4 ft. min.
Clearance	8 ft. min.
Letter height	5” min.– 10” max.
Valance height	12 “ max.
Distance from curb	2 ft. min.

Sign Type: Band

a. One Band Sign permitted on each facade.

b. Band Signs shall include only letters, background, lighting, and an optional logo. Information shall consist only of the name and/or logo of the business. Band Signs shall not list products, sales, promotional or contact information.

c. The following construction types are permitted:

i. Cut-out Letters. Letters shall be individually attached to the wall or on a separate background panel, and shall be externally illuminated

ii. Flat Panel. Letters shall be printed or etched on same surface as the background, and affixed to the wall.

iii. Channel Letters. Each letter shall have its own internal lighting element, individually attached to the wall or separate background panel. The letter shall be translucent, or solid to create a backlit halo effect.

d. Band Signs shall not project above the roof line.

e. Band Signs may be illuminated from dusk to dawn.

f. Electrical raceways, conduits and wiring shall not be exposed. Internal elements shall be contained within the sign assembly or inside the wall.

Quantity	1 (2 for corner bldgs)
Area	1.5 s.f./ linear ft. max.
Width	90% of façade
Height	3 ft. max.
Depth/ projection	7 in. max.
Clearance	7 ft. min.
Letter height	18 in. max.

Sign Type: Blade

a. Blade Signs may be double-sided.

b. Businesses shall be permitted one (1) Blade Sign Businesses that have a Secondary Frontage shall be permitted one additional Blade Sign on that Facade.

e. Blade Signs shall not encroach above the roof line nor above the bottom of a second story window.

f. Text and graphics on the Blade Sign shall be limited to the name and/or logo of the business. Slogans, address labels, operating hour s and contact information are not permitted

Quantity	1 per facade
Area	6 square feet
Width	4 ft. max
Height	4 ft. max.
Depth/ projection	4 ft. max.
Clearance	8 ft. min.
Letter height	8 inches max.

Sign Type: Nameplates

a. Nameplates shall consist of either a panel or individual letters applied to a building wall within ten (10) feet of an entrance to the building.

b. One Nameplate shall be permitted per address.

c. Nameplates shall not exceed three (3) square feet.

d. Nameplates shall be constructed of durable materials.

Quantity	1
Area	3 s.f. max.
Width	18 in. max.
Height	2 ft. max.
Depth/ projection	3 in. max
Clearance	4 ft. min.

Sign Type: Outdoor Display Case

a. Each outdoor display case shall not exceed 6 square feet.

b.

b. Outdoor display cases may be externally or internally illuminated.

c. Outdoor display cases shall not be attached to shop front windows.

Quantity	1
Area	3 s.f. max.
Width	18 in. max.
Height	2 ft. max.
Clearance	4 ft. min.
Apex	7 ft. max.

Sign Type: Sidewalk/ Sandwich

a. Sidewalk Signs s hall consist of freestanding, double-sided temporary signs placed at the entrance to a business in a primarily pedestrian environment.

b. Sidewalk Signs shall be removed at the close of business each day.

c. One (Sidewalk Sign shall be permitted for each business.

d. Sidewalk Signs shall not exceed 42 inches in height or 26 inches in width.

e. Sidewalk Signs shall be moved inside during high winds or other weather conditions that might pose a hazard to public safety.

Quantity	1 per business
Area	8 ft. max
Width	26 in. max.
Height	42 in. max

Sign Type: Window

a. Only the following Window Sign types shall be permitted:

i. Vinyl appliqué letters applied to the window. Appliqués shall consist of individual letters or graphics with no visible background.

ii. Letters painted directly on the window.

iii. Hanging signs from the ceiling behind the window. iv. Neon signs.

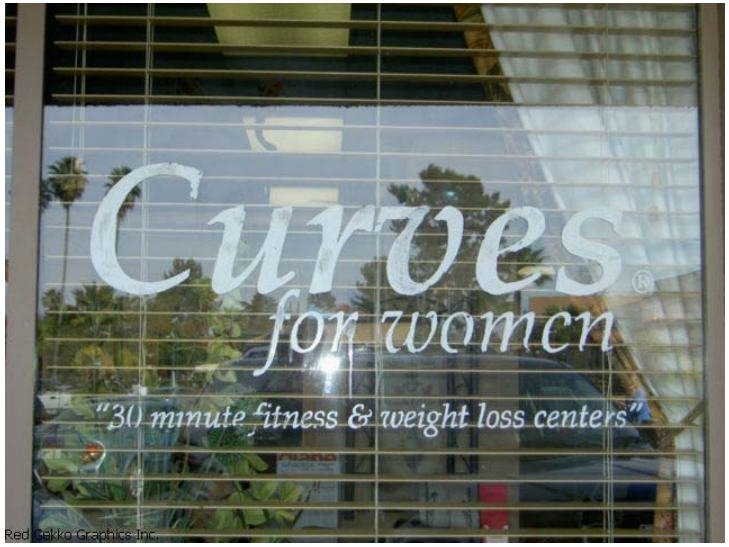
v. Door signs applied to or hanging inside the glass portion of an entrance doorway.

b. Window signs shall not interfere with the primary function of windows, which is to enable passersby and public safety personnel to see through windows into premises and view product displays.

c. Window signs shall be no larger than 25% of the total area of the window onto which they are applied.

d. Window signs may list services and/or products sold on the premises, or provide phone numbers, operating hours or other messages, provided that the total aggregate area of these messages not exceed the limit provided above.

Quantity	1 per business
Area	8 ft. max
Width	26 in. max.
Height	42 in. max



VII. Fences, Walls, and Hedges

Low fences, walls, and hedges of 18-36” in height along front lot lines are useful in several conditions. Whenever there is a disruption in the building setback from the front property line, the setback can be maintained by such a wall.

Also, whenever a large parking lot for a commercial area cannot be fully hidden from a street view, a wall or hedge is a useful alternative.

Utility equipment and trash dumpsters which cannot be otherwise hidden from street view should be enclosed by a wall or planting.

Brick and wood are desirable as materials; plastic, PVC, and chain link is prohibited along front lot lines and facing a street. Such materials are encouraged alongside and rear lot lines, for fences up to 6 feet in height.

A low brick wall hiding a parking lot

VIII. Gateways and Edge Transitions

Gateways

Text
Arrival and identity
Welcome
memorable

Edge Transitions

Towns and cities are understood to have a gradient of intensity, from the periphery to the center. That is, at the downtown heart of a community, building types and activity are more in- tense, and tend to change as they move outward. Downtown commercial buildings are normally built up to the sidewalk with no side setback; neighborhood residences have front and side yards, while homes at the edge of town tend to have larger lots.

The point of transition between these levels of intensity can make a big difference in the look and feel of a community. Building types should transition from one level of intensity to another at two places; rear alleys or lot lines, and at street intersections. In this way, similar building types face each other across the street, creating a consistent look. Different uses tend to stay clustered as a result as well.

IX. Mechanicals, Utilities, and Equipment

To the greatest extent possible, utility boxes, meters, mechanical equipment, and trash dumpsters should be located to the rear of buildings and along alleys, hidden from sidewalk view.

Likewise with heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) compressors. If placed atop a roof, they shall be hidden from sidewalk view.

Avoid placing equipment on visible locations such as street corners

X. Sustainability

- General Concepts
- Stormwater Management
- Paving Materials
- LEED
- Solar/ Wind Energy

General Concepts of Sustainability

What do we mean by the term “sustainability” regarding the design and development of a downtown? There are uncounted numbers of definitions. In general, they all point to the same basic concepts of meeting human needs for the long term, while not compromising the natural environment. The most common definition states that sustainable development “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.”

In the context of urban design and development, sustainability most often points to issues of infrastructure, construction materials, and energy use. Traditional downtowns are by their very nature filled with various aspects of sustainability. Two are fundamental in their structure: walkability (the ability of people to walk to various destinations without the need to drive everywhere) and historic buildings. In the larger sense, the most energy efficient building is one that already exists. Typical features of older historic buildings may be as simple as having operable windows, so that reliance on air conditioning is not required except in the hottest months.

Greensburg Kansas provides an excellent example of community– wide sustainability practices. In May 2007, an E-5 tornado destroyed more than 90% of Greensburg. Using its name as inspiration, rebuilding efforts have focused on creating a model green community, based on sustainable building practices. Such practices include wind turbines to provide electricity, solar hot water, community gardens, geothermal heating and cooling, and steel re-enforced concrete construction. Numerous civic buildings, including city hall and the schools, have been built to LEED standards. More information can be found at http:// www.greensburggreentown.org

These various physical aspects of a sustainable community can lead to a more sustainable local economy, by reducing maintenance costs and easing the local tax burden. The following pages describe some basic concepts of sustainability as applied to buildings and infrastructure.

Stormwater Management

Conventional thinking regarding storm sewer systems is to view rain water as a problem to be dealt with. While it must of course be managed, water is a resource as well. Treat storm-water as an opportunity and an amenity, not simply as an engineering problem to be solved. Using natural vegetative methods to capture, slow down, and detain/ retain stormwater, rather than directing it into underground pipes, may provide significant cost savings over time.

Sustainable methods of stormwater management can be divided into four general categories, with a number of options within each.

- Paving: compacted earth, plastic mesh, pea gravel, pervious asphalt, paving blocks (see the following page for more)
- Channeling: drainage ditch, vegetative swale, soak away trench, French drain, canal, concrete trough,
- Storage: pond, retention basin, landscaped tree well, underground cistern, pool/ fountain
- Filtration: constructed wetland, roof garden, rain garden, bio-retention pond, green finger

More information is available in the reference work, *The Light Imprint Handbook*, by Tom Low

Stormwater is channeled into a sculpted watercourse instead of conventional pipes

Stormwater directed into a central collection pond, well designed, can become a beautiful and popular public gathering place

Rain barrels capture stormwater for re-use

A green roof will absorb rainwater for slow release

Paving Materials

The fundamental goal of pervious pavement is to allow storm-water to filter into the ground, while still supporting vehicles of all types. A variety of new paving materials and methods have been developed, well beyond simple pea gravel. As more water is enabled to drain into the ground, the need for extensive drain pipes, retention ponds, and other costly infrastructure is reduced, and water quality is enhanced by the natural process of filtration.

Various types of open concrete have been designed to allow water to flow, with grass planted within the open pores, such as “grasscrete.” More recently, plastic webbing has been developed which is strong enough to support even the largest emergency vehicles.

Pervious concrete is a Best Management Practice (BMP) recommended by the EPA. It is an aggregate material, with significant voids (15-25%) within the concrete itself, allowing water to drain through to the ground.

Grasscrete

Plastic mesh

Pervious concrete block during a storm

LEED

Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) is a building construction rating system developed by the US Green Building Council. It is a voluntary, consensus based national standard for developing high performance, sustainable buildings. It was created to establish a common standard of measurement, promote integrated design principles, raise public and industry awareness, and transform the building industry. Several rating systems have actually been developed, for new construction, rehabilitation of existing buildings, commercial buildings, residential, etc.

Building and project developers may apply for LEED rating at several levels of sustainability, including silver, gold, and platinum. Points are given in a series of categories, including materials, sourcing, energy consumption, and water usage. The use of recycled or locally sourced materials is encouraged for instance, along with management methods such as recycling of greywater and the use of low– flow toilets and showers.

Communities wishing to encourage energy efficient and sustainable building practices may choose to encourage development of LEED buildings. This may be done in various ways, such as waiving building permit fees or granting density bonuses for LEED certified projects.

More information on LEED may be found at www.usgbc.org

Solar, Wind, and Energy

The production and use of energy is fundamental to sustainability.

Regarding wind energy, horizontal turbines are more suited to rural areas or rooftops because of their size, but smaller versions are available as seen to the right. The vertical axis wind turbine is suited for more urban settings. It is smaller, quieter, function no matter the wind direction, and are more aesthetically pleasing. More information can be found at www.quietrevolution.com

Solar (photovoltaic) cells have made enormous improvements in efficiency in recent years and this is anticipated to continue. Improvements include not only efficiency but format; panels now typically mimic the look and size of conventional shingles. Rooftop installations are most efficient on buildings which have been oriented for maximum sun exposure.

XI. Process

Design Review Committee

Within the Downtown Overlay District, prior to the issuance of any permit for exterior construction or renovation, the design of building facades and signage shall be reviewed by a Design Review Committee (DRC). The purpose of the DRC is to review new development and redevelopment of buildings to ensure continued quality and character of downtown buildings in Russellville. The DRC shall ensure that new construction or renovation occurs in accordance with the specifications of these Downtown Design Review Guidelines and shall issue a certificate of appropriateness for all exterior features of buildings and signs that are visible from the public right-of-way.

The Design Review Committee shall consist of five members appointed by the Mayor. Three members shall represent staff of the City of Russellville with expertise in local codes and ordinances related to building construction and renovation. Staff members shall serve in an ex-officio capacity. Two members shall be appointed from residents of Russellville with knowledge of the district, its history and architecture, or other expertise appropriate for the review of proposed development in the Overlay District. Each of the 2 resident members shall serve a four year term, except that the initial terms of the first appointed members shall be staggered such that no individual term expires in the same year.

Official design review, in addition to standard zoning procedures, takes place only upon adoption by the Council of these Guidelines as official municipal policy. Design review is then only applicable to property owners within the district who plan on making alterations to their property that would be visible from the street. Such property owners would take the following steps:

1. Pre– application meeting

Meet with the city– appointed design review committee to discuss the proposed project prior to formulating detailed plans. The meeting is intended to formulate a checklist of application issues to inform and confirm both applicant and the committee of expectations.

2. Submission of a complete application

Based upon information developed in the pre-application meeting, the applicant will submit an application. Depending upon

the particular project, examples of required information might include photographs, architectural plans, and material samples.

3. Review by Committee

Once a complete application has been submitted, the review committee will review the application for adherence with these design guidelines. The committee will then provide a memorandum of their findings.

4. Issuance of permit

For applications deemed in agreement with these guidelines, permission to proceed will be granted. Such permission may be granted based on conditions, reflecting the committee's interpretation of the design guidelines.

XII. Definitions

Alley – A narrow vehicular service way providing access to the rear of lots, and easements for utilities. See also “Lane.”

Avenue – A limited distance thoroughfare, equivalent to a collector street in capacity, connecting civic locations within an urban area. It is limited in length, typically using civic or semipublic buildings as terminated vistas.

Boulevard – A long-distance thoroughfare, equivalent in capacity to an arterial street. A boulevard is flanked by parking, sidewalks and planters, which buffer the buildings along the sides.

Bumpout – A curb extension at a street intersection, resulting in a wider sidewalk and narrower travel lanes, intended to increase pedestrian safety.

Charette - A multi– day, collaborative design session, involving professionals, municipal leaders, and citizens, resulting in specific drawings, plans, and/ or codes.

Close – A small green area surrounded by a narrow cart way, providing frontage and access to several buildings, thus performing the same function as a cul-de-sac. A close must be of a minimum width to accommodate standard turning radius requirements.

Court – A wide landscaped passage, giving frontage to buildings that have no direct frontage onto a thoroughfare. Also known as a “walk.”

Drive – A thoroughfare along the boundary between urbanized and natural areas, as between a regional park and a residential neighborhood. One side has a formal, urban arrangement with curb and gutter, sidewalk and buildings, while the other is swaled and has natural planning and rural details.

Green – An informally landscaped open civic space of moderate size, surrounded by buildings.

Lane– A narrow vehicular service way providing access to the rear of lots, and easements for utilities. It is similar to an alley but may be narrower or more rural in character, and is occasionally unpaved.

Median Island – Narrow, often landscaped, islands between travel lanes, which give refuge to pedestrians crossing a street, and calm traffic.

Outbuilding – A secondary structure, usually located at the rear of a lot, behind the principle structure, providing space for off-street parking, a workshop, home office, or rental apartment.

Park – A large open space used for recreation, typically located at the neighborhood edge. It includes trails and paths, open lawns, playing fields, and trees.

Path – A pedestrian way traversing a park or countryside, and connected to the urban sidewalk system.

Plaza – A open civic space, similar to a square but paved with either cobble, block, brick or other material, rather than planted with a groundcover, and surrounded by buildings.

Road – A local, slow-movement thoroughfare providing frontage for low-density residences. Typically located toward the low -density edge of a development, it is more rural and informal in character than a street.

Roundabout – Similar to a traffic circle, but larger and intended for more heavily trafficked intersections. The island of a traffic circle is smaller than the cart way width, while the island of a roundabout exceeds the cart way width. Roundabouts employ yield rather than stop signs, and are often supplemented by “right turn only” islands. See also Traffic Circle.

Square – A public open space, public and formal, no larger than a typical block, and located at the intersection of important streets.

Street – A local, slow-movement thoroughfare found throughout a TND. It provides frontage for higher density buildings, including residences, offices and shops, and is formal in character than a road, having curb and gutter, wider sidewalks, and aligned plantings.

Terminated Vista – The visual closure of a thoroughfare, either by a T- or Y- intersection, or by deflecting it.

Traffic Circle – A raised island located in the center of an un-signalized intersection. Traffic circulates in a counterclockwise direction, with entering traffic yielding to vehicles within the circle. See also Roundabout.

Transect - For the purposes of TND and land planning, it can be understood as a gradient of intensity of development across the landscape.

Walk— An arrangement in which houses front onto a wide pedestrian walkway and open space, rather than onto a street.

XIII. Resources

- Organizations and Websites
- Books

Organizations and Websites

- Alabama League of Municipalities
  P. 334.262.2566
  www.alalm.org

- Alabama APA
  www.alaapa.org

- EPA Office of Smart Growth
  P. 202.566.2878
  www.epa.gov/dced

- National Trust Main Street Center P.
  202.588.6219
  www.preservationnation.org/main-street

- Congress for the New Urbanism
  P.312.551.7300
  www.cnu.org

- Planning Commissioners Journal
  P.802.864.9083
  pcj.typepad.com

- USDA Rural Information Center P.800.633.7701
  www.nal.usda.gov/ric/ricpubs.downtown.html

Books

- Downtown Planning for Small and Midsized Communities
  American Planning Association

- Great Streets
  Allan B. Jacobs

- Sustainable Urbanism
  Doug Farr

- Retrofitting Suburbia
  Ellen Dunham– Jones

- Place Making
  Charles Bohl

- The Smart Growth Manual
  Andres Duany et al

- The Architectural Pattern Book
  Urban Design Associates

- A Pattern Language: Towns, Buildings, Construction
  Christopher Alexander

- The Light Imprint Handbook
  Tom Low

25 Tips to Improve Your Community

1. Give people a place to hang-out
2. Give people something to see
3. Give people something to do
4. Give people a place to sit down
5. Give people a safe, comfortable place to walk
6. Give people a safe, comfortable place to bike
7. Give people reliable, comfortable public transportation
8. Make the streets safe
9. Make the streets safe—not just from crime but from traffic
10. Remember, streets belong to everyone—not just motorists
11. Don't forget about the needs of older neighbors
12. Don't forget about the needs of kids
13. Make pets a part of the community
14. Reclaim front yards as social spaces
15. Remember the best neighborhoods, feel like villages
16. Plan for winter weather as well as sunny, warm days
17. Don't fear density—people enjoy being around others
18. Don't give up hope—change is possible when neighbors work together
19. Build on what's good to make things even better
20. Remember the power of the commons: people working together for the benefit of everyone
21. Remember that shared meals motivate people to action
22. Start with small steps—like planting flowers
23. Become a community booster, watchdog, patriot
24. Learn from other communities
25. Take time to have fun and enjoy what's already great