

I.3 Streetscapes

There is more to the experience along our streets than just the street alone. This section includes guidelines for the other elements that create the public realm known as the streetscape. Included are: sidewalks and planter strips, street trees, bikeways, streetlights and street furniture.

I. GOALS

- A. To create a pleasing environment that encourages pedestrian activity along our streets.
- B. To provide a buffer between pedestrian and vehicular traffic (parked cars or planter strip with trees).
- C. To provide spatial definition along streets by strategic building placement and planting an overarching, continuous canopy of street trees at the edges of our streets.
- D. To use the largest appropriate street trees possible within the constraints of the available planter area.
- E. To develop a comprehensive pedestrian circulation system.
- F. To develop a comprehensive bicycle circulation system.
- G. To improve the visual quality of street furniture and enhance the pedestrian experience along the streetscape.



Fig. 1.3.1 Austin Way, with its mature trees and parkway landscaping encourages slower traffic providing a safe setting for cyclists and pedestrians.



Fig. 1.3.2 Mature street trees in planter strip.



Fig. 1.3.3 This very wide street in Berkeley, CA, has been reconstructed by replacing travel lanes with diagonal parking in front of commercial buildings to create a very successful streetscape.



Fig. 1.3.4 Planter strips provide space for street trees and furniture, driveway aprons, and separate pedestrians from traffic.



Fig. 1.3.5 This sidewalk Downtown places the street trees in tree wells with grates to protect the trees and bollards to protect pedestrians from vehicles.



Fig. 1.3.6 Sidewalks are generally not needed to serve five or less homes.

II. GUIDELINES

A. SIDEWALKS & PLANTER STRIPS

Attention to the pedestrian environment is a key to strengthening neighborhood interaction and livability. By designing pedestrian spaces to be walkable and pleasant, a project can contribute to encouraging alternate forms of transportation and lessen dependence on the automobile. To this end, neighborhood design should begin with the layout of public spaces and the development of convenient pedestrian routes between important locations within a neighborhood. Project designs should include provisions for pedestrian circulation that is convenient and, where applicable, integrated with the larger pedestrian network.

1. As a general rule, locate a planter strip with street trees between the sidewalk and the street. When a planter strip dimension is called for, it shall be the net dimension from back of curb to back of sidewalk or curb.
Separation of pedestrians from vehicular traffic must occur, except as approved by the Planning Commission.
2. Sidewalks contiguous with the street may be appropriate in certain circumstances (such as in the Core Area and adjacent to commercial establishments when on-street parking is provided). When a contiguous sidewalk is used, place the street trees within a tree well (4' sq. min.) adjacent to the curb.
3. On flag lots, very short cul-de-sacs, rural streets, hillside locations, and existing streets without sidewalks, placement of sidewalks on both sides of the street may not be necessary. This determination should be made on a case by case basis, as approved by the Planning Commission. As a general rule, up to five homes do not need a sidewalk, six to ten homes need sidewalk on at least one side, and sidewalks should be provided on both sides of the streets if serving more than ten homes.

4. In Planned Unit Development projects with common open space, provide pedestrian circulation through common areas.
5. When sidewalks are placed contiguous to curbs, a minimum pedestrian clearance of four feet around tree wells, mailboxes, street light poles, hydrants and other street furniture are required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

B. STREET TREES

Street trees are the backbone of Santa Rosa's urban landscape heritage. As an All-American Tree City Award recipient, the perpetuation of this heritage is a common responsibility.

Street trees are often the most visually dominant element of the streetscape. A canopy of large street trees paralleling streets can provide pleasant and protected pedestrian environments. As the dominant component of the streetscape, street trees can also serve as an important unifying urban design element and strengthen the vertical element of the street "structure". Street trees, as an urban design element, can provide important visual connections between diverse areas and help to distinguish particular districts or neighborhoods in the city. Streets are significant public open space corridors and should be landscaped in a manner to reinforce their continuity.

The use of street trees also serves to separate pedestrians from auto traffic and slows vehicular speed by narrowing the perceived width of the street.

1. Coordinate design of drainage, subsurface utilities, hydrant, electrical equipment, utility boxes and vaults, and ancillary facilities at the preliminary and final design level with placement of street trees. Design and locate utilities to work around preferred tree locations where feasible.
Too often street trees are located in spaces left over after street lights, fire hydrants, catch basins and other utility boxes are placed. As a result, the effect of the street tree canopy is significantly diminished.



Fig. 1.3.7 Large mature trees along Wild Rose Drive create a shaded canopy over the roadway.



Fig. 1.3.8 A double row of trees creates a canopy over the sidewalk on Northpoint Parkway in Santa Rosa.



Fig. 1.3.9 These large trees in planting islands and a median create a dramatic canopy over the street.

2. Use street trees that create a bold and sustained effect on Regional and Transitional streets. On Local streets, the street trees should provide summer shade, vertical structure and pattern in the winter, and scale appropriate for the area. Adequate growing space must be provided to accommodate both the above and below grade characteristics of the specified tree.
3. Place street trees to provide a canopy (leaves touching) at maturity. Actual tree spacing shall be based on tree species, but in no case shall be spaced more than 30 feet on center.
4. Select street trees from the City approved Street Tree Master Tree List which is available from the Recreation and Parks Division office, Steele Lane Community Center, 415 Steele Lane, Santa Rosa, CA 95403; (707) 543-3292. As a general rule, tree selection should have a size relationship with the street landscape, i.e., the wider the street, the larger the trees. Design consideration should be focused on space requirements of the selected trees at all phases of their life cycle. Scale, soils, underground obstruction, overhead constraints, mature tree size, and shadow patterns are examples of design consideration.
5. Use a minimum 15-gallon container size for street trees.
6. Utilize proper staking techniques and provide appropriate soil conditioning to maximize the trees long term health. Maintain trees for an adequate period of time after planting (one year minimum) to assure their healthy establishment. Planting standards are available at the Parks and Recreation Division office.
7. Provide bubble or drip irrigation for street trees in all project types, with the exception of single family residential.
In single family residential projects it is assumed the residents will care for the trees.



Fig. 1.3.10 Tree grate on Fourth Street in Santa Rosa.

8. Exceptions to street tree planting requirements may be granted for hillside and rural areas or where adequate natural or riparian growth exists.
9. Trees placed in tree wells in areas of high pedestrian traffic, such as Downtown, should be protected by tree grates and guards.

C. BIKEWAYS

1. Design new projects to interconnect with the system defined in the City's Bicycle Master Plan.
Consideration of existing bikeways in the design of new projects is required when implementing the Santa Rosa Bicycle Master Plan. Prospective developers are encouraged to obtain and review the City's Bicycle Master plan before preparation of project designs.
2. Separate bikeways and pedestrian paths.
An exception is a wide off-road paths as, for example, the bike/pedestrian path in the old railroad right-of-way between Santa Rosa and Sebastopol. See Figure 1.3.11.
3. On local and some transitional streets, bicycles will share the drive/ ride lane with cars. This is called a Class III bikeway.
4. On some transitional and regional streets, and where designated on the Bicycle Master Plan as bikeways, the bicycle lane shall be adjacent to, and striped to distinguish it from the vehicle travel lane. This is a Class II bikeway.
5. When a part of the roadway is dedicated as a Class II bikeway as indicated in Guideline 4 above, the bike lane shall be five feet wide whether it is adjacent to the curb or a parking lane. Combined bike lane/ parking lane may be considered.



Fig. 1.3.11 The Joe Rodota Trail between Santa Rosa and Sebastopol is a combination bicycle and pedestrian path.

6. Review the Bicycle Master Plan for location of Class I bikeways on specific flood control channels.



Fig. 1.3.12 Backflow preventers are often prominently placed at building entries. Consider alternative placement and screening of devices.



Fig. 1.3.13 In downtown settings, meters are commonly placed in vaults or boxes below grade. Consideration should be given to this approach in other locations.

D. STREET LIGHTS AND STREET FURNITURE

There are many elements that together constitute the urban streetscape and, treated in an uncoordinated way, can often contribute to a sense of visual clutter. These elements fall into two areas of design and installation; public and private.

The public elements include such things as: street lights, hydrants, utility poles, signs, bus shelters and benches, traffic signals, traffic control boxes, parking meters, water system vaults and pumping stations.

The private elements include such things as: mailboxes, bike racks, news stands, cable tv boxes & vaults, electrical transformers, telephone boxes and vaults.

Careful attention to these elements can greatly improve the pedestrian environment and the quality of a neighborhood. Attention to coordination of design, color and location combined with appropriately placed street trees can enhance pedestrian scale and neighborhood livability. All of these elements, when coordinated, can add distinctiveness and identity to a project and to the public realm.

1. Private street furniture should be considered during the design phase and reviewed during the City approval process.
2. The City's preference is to place utility structures underground in vaults, when permitted or screening when underground placement is not allowed.

3. When placing utility structures, the overall visual quality of the streetscape needs to be considered along with ease of maintenance.

4. Use street light standard 615 D in new residential subdivisions and in the Core Area unless the project is a smaller infill one surrounded by existing “Cobraheads”.

The 615D street light standard provides superior lighting than the 610 or 612 standard for pedestrian security and safety. This is due to a shorter light pole and more frequent spacing. The “cobrahead” fixture (Std. 610 - 612) which is taller and spread further apart provides bright pools of light under the fixture but dark spots between the fixtures. The cobrahead fixture is not conducive to an attractive building environment and renders pedestrian areas uninviting. See Figures 1.3.14 and 1.3.15.

5. Consider custom designed bus shelters.
Refer to Section 1.4- Transit for additional information on bus shelters.

6. Provide lighting for bus shelters that service bus routes running at night

7. Mailboxes - up to a maximum of four residences:



Fig. 1.3.14 615D Standard.



Fig. 1.3.15 610-612 “Cobrahead” Standard, with crow



Fig. 1.3.16 Mailboxes on attractive support structure.



Fig. 1.3.17 Cotati bus shelter

- a. Locate mailboxes in a support structure behind the curb.
 - b. Design the structure both for superior aesthetics and long term durability.
 - c. Coordinate the location of mailboxes with the Post Office. When mailbox locations are blocked by parked vehicles, the Post Office will not deliver mail.
8. Mailboxes - greater than four residences served:
- a. Provide a manufactured gang mailbox unit (GMU) shrouded in a structure that relates to the architecture of the homes or apartments being served.
 - b. Locate GMUs in a convenient and safe place. Provide adequate site lighting for evening mail pickup.
 - c. Coordinate the location of GMUs with the Post Office.
9. Mailboxes are frequented by residents on a daily basis. They provide the opportunity for neighborhood interaction. Consideration should be given to locating mailboxes within common facilities in town centers or under a sheltered area adjacent to common laundry facilities in multi-family developments (See Figure 3.2.24). When concentrated in this manner, lighting should be included for nighttime safety and security.
10. Hide or screen transformer and telephone terminal boxes with fencing or landscaping.
11. Follow the City's Public Works Department standards for street signing. Consideration should be given to coordinating signing where possible. Streets heavily cluttered with an unordered array of street/traffic signs of various sizes, shapes, heights and locations result in visual confusion rather than clearly conveyed information.