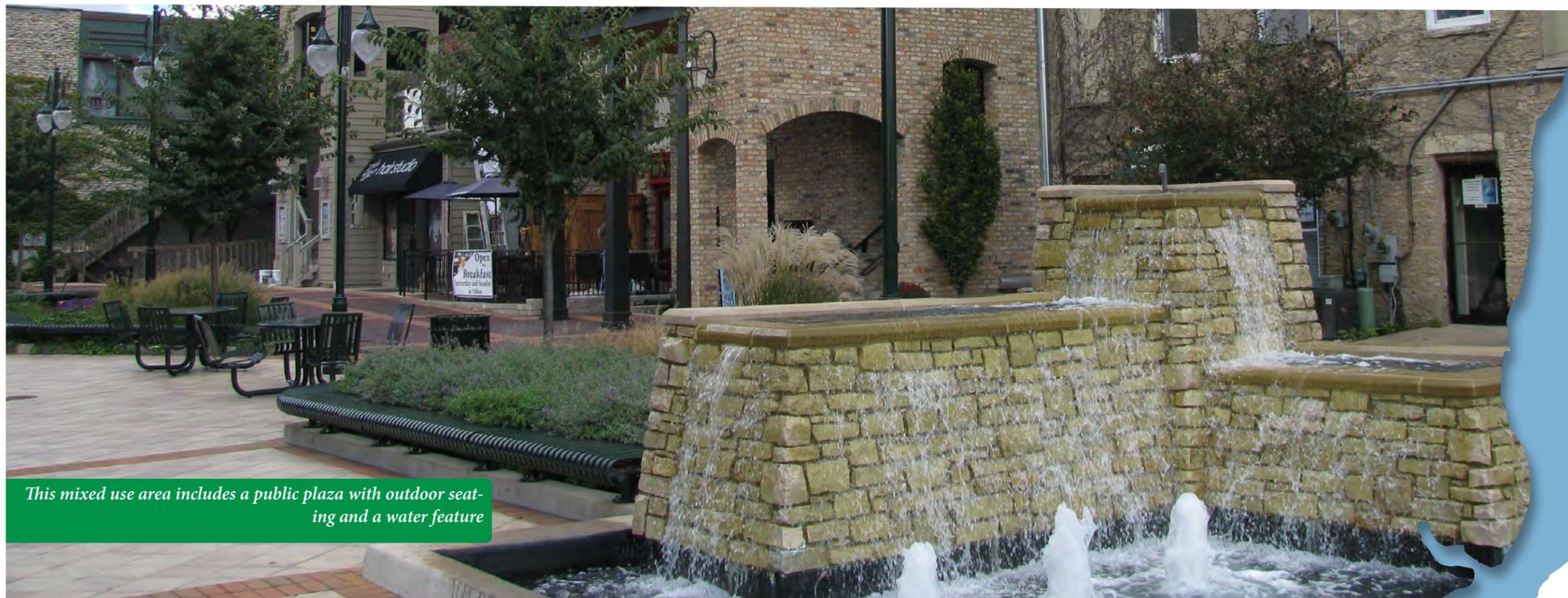


10 Design Guidelines

St. Charles is a community of unique character, starting with the Fox River and carrying through its neighborhoods, civic spaces, and commercial areas. The commercial areas collectively represent the area of the City that most frequently establishes the “first impression” for residents, visitors, and potential investors. This chapter establishes a series of development guidelines aimed at enhancing the aesthetic character, functionality and competitiveness of St. Charles’ commercial areas.

The guidelines included in this chapter can be used to guide commercial development throughout the City. The Gateway and Corridor Design Guidelines are appropriate for the West Gateway, East Gateway, and Main Street subareas, and the Downtown Design Guidelines are appropriate for the Downtown Subarea. (All subarea plans are included in Chapter 8 of this Plan.) Principles of either set of guidelines could be applied to smaller local commercial areas, depending on the established and desired character for each.

Each set of guidelines addresses the critical components of development that define character and image. These include site planning and design, building massing and architecture, materials and details, site access and circulation, landscaping, signage, and others. While these guidelines are not regulatory from a zoning perspective, they should be referenced during the evaluation of development proposals.



This mixed use area includes a public plaza with outdoor seating and a water feature

Today, St. Charles is a truly great community, the Pride of the Fox, located in the Beauty Spot of the Fox River Valley.

-Legend of the Fours Sons of Charlemagne

Downtown Design Guidelines

Downtown St. Charles is a unique place that has successfully blended historic architecture and contemporary development in order to create a generally cohesive pedestrian-oriented environment. Regardless of the era of development, the Fox River has always been and will continue to be a major influence in how people perceive and use the downtown area. The following guidelines aim to strengthen parts of the downtown that are valued, and transform those that don't necessarily fit within their context, whether it be mixed use, commercial, open space or residential development.

Building Height, Bulk & Proportion

- » Downtown buildings should create a “streetwall” by limiting or eliminating gaps between buildings, and should create a sense of enclosure by constructing buildings to the front lot line with an adequate scale to create a defined public realm.
- » New development within the Downtown should avoid extreme differences in building height. Consideration should be given to the height of adjacent buildings.
- » Design elements that extend beyond the typical building height could be acceptable in select locations, provided they are in character with the surrounding area. Vertical architectural elements could include clock towers, spires or bell towers. These elements should be considered as design “highlights” at key locations.
- » Upper stories of buildings within the Downtown should be set back to soften the bulk and visual scale of the building.
- » Townhomes and other multi-unit buildings within the Downtown should be of a similar scale to mixed use buildings and also utilize upper floor setbacks. Where townhomes or multi-unit buildings directly border or face single-family uses, the height of these buildings should be compatible with the single-family homes.



A continuous streetwall and controlled building heights create a comfortable pedestrian environment

Building Placement and Orientation

- » Buildings within the Downtown, especially on Main Street, should be positioned at the front property line. Buildings located on corner lots should be built out to both fronting property lines.
- » In other areas of the Downtown, buildings can be set back from the sidewalk, where appropriate for the site and in keeping with adjacent uses in the district and consistent throughout each block front.
- » On Main Street, new construction should occupy the entire width of the lot to avoid gaps between buildings and discontinuities in the streetwall, except where pedestrian access to rear parking is designed and planned for.
- » In other areas of Downtown, spaces may be left between buildings to provide pedestrian access to rear parking areas. Where neither a building façade nor pedestrian access is provided, the “streetwall” should be maintained through the use of landscaping, pedestrian amenities or decorative fencing.
- » Buildings throughout the Downtown should face the street, with strong pedestrian orientation.
- » The placement of buildings at odd or irregular angles to the street should be avoided. However, corner buildings might take advantage of their prominent locations with angled, rounded or recessed corner entrances or other small setbacks.
- » Buildings located along the Fox River should incorporate elements that enhance physical and visual access to the waterfront, such as plazas, patios, seasonal spaces, and facades with a high level of transparency.

Architectural Style

- » Development within the Downtown should consist of traditional architectural styles. Modern architectural styles are discouraged.
- » New buildings need not be historic replicas, but should offer high quality and compatible interpretations of the traditional styles present within the historic and traditional downtown and within the residential areas of St. Charles.
- » Regardless of style, new buildings should reflect the predominant scale, height, massing, and proportions of the traditional downtown.
- » New buildings should incorporate decorative cornices, columns, reliefs, terra cotta tiles, and other significant façade detailing.

Building Materials

- » New buildings should be constructed of traditional masonry building materials such as brick or stone; these materials should be used on all sides of the building. Stucco, siding of all types, and any other exterior wall coverings are discouraged and should be minimized.
- » Recommended accent materials include stone, simulated stone, terra cotta, and wood and metal trim.
- » Since parking will be promoted in the rear of the buildings, new construction within Downtown St. Charles should have “360 degree” appearance, with design and detail consideration for all visible sides.
- » Rough sawed wood, aluminum panels and siding, and plastic or metal panels should be discouraged within the Downtown.
- » Exterior insulation finish systems (EIFS) or Dryvit should be discouraged within the Downtown.
- » Buildings along the Fox River should use high-quality building materials on all sides in order to maintain appropriate character from both the public street and riverfront views.

Doors, Entrances & Windows

- » The front doors of new buildings should reflect the scale, placement, and proportions of the existing downtown; recessed entrances are encouraged.
- » Main entrances should be at the front of the building and face the sidewalk. Buildings situated on corner lots may take advantage of their prominent locations with angled, or rounded corner entrances.
- » Doors and entryways of buildings should be compatible with the original style and character of the façade.
- » Large ground-floor display windows and bays are strongly encouraged for retail and entertainment uses within the Downtown and should be consistent with historic downtowns.
- » Windows on the upper floors of new buildings should appear to be “punched” openings within a solid wall, rather than as continuous rows of windows separated only by their frames. Curtain-wall window treatments are not appropriate within the Downtown area. Upper floor windows should be recessed, not flush with the surface of the building.
- » Windows should complement the architectural style of the building.
- » Window glazing should be clear or slightly tinted; dark, mirrored, or reflective glass should be discouraged.
- » Where existing windows are important architectural features in a building’s façade, window size and configuration should be maintained; window openings should never be covered over or boarded up.
- » Ground floor windows can be used for displays, however business owners are encouraged to allow full and unobstructed views into their businesses. Obstructing windows from the interior of a building with shelving, display cases, signage or other objects is discouraged.

Rear Yards & Rear Facades

- » The backs of existing commercial buildings should be well kept, with rear facades being “comparable” to front facades.
- » Secondary rear entrances to stores and shops are encouraged in blocks where public parking or pedestrian walkways are located behind the buildings.
- » Trash receptacles, dumpsters and service areas should be located inside the primary building or be fully enclosed in small masonry structures.
- » Outdoor storage and service facilities should be screened from view along sidewalks and roadways through the use of low masonry walls or evergreen plantings.



Well designed rear yards can both maintain necessary functionality and ease activity on the main corridor.

Parking Areas

- » Parking lots should be located behind buildings. Parking lots in front of buildings should be discouraged within the Downtown.
- » Vehicular access to parking lots should be provided from alleys or side streets. Curb cuts and access drives are discouraged along pedestrian shopping streets.
- » Pedestrian access to parking lots should be provided through planned walkways located in gaps between buildings.
- » Parking lots should have curbed perimeters; landscaped islands and clearly marked pedestrian pathways are encouraged within the interior of parking areas.
- » Parking lots should be screened from view along sidewalks and roadways through the use of low masonry walls or evergreen plantings and decorative fencing.
- » All parking lots should be paved, well marked, sufficiently lit, and provided with proper drainage in concert with integrated green infrastructure strategies. Permeable pavement, bio-retention, shade trees, dark-sky compliance lighting, and low-input native/adapted landscape features are encouraged to provide long-term benefits and savings.
- » Parking lot lighting should consist of vehicular scale lighting and pedestrian scale lighting. Excessive lighting and light pollution should be avoided.
- » Parking lots should include appropriate landscape elements and materials to shade/cool surfaces and minimize the impact of large expanses of pavement. Landscaped canopy tree islands, integrated with bioretention, should be located at a sufficient density and spacing in parking lots. Plantings should be low-input, ornamental, and contribute to the local St. Charles aesthetic, i.e. perennial grasses and flowers, and be tolerant of year round maintenance implications, i.e. snow/salt accumulation if required.
- » Landscape islands should consist of canopy trees, attractive groundcover, and/or decorative bushes.

Rooflines & Parapets

- » The roofs of most commercial buildings should be flat, although sloped roofs can be used if masked by decorative parapets.
- » Roof parapets should be utilized to create an interesting building profile and to hide vents and other rooftop equipment.
- » Cornices and other decorative detail are encouraged along the rooflines of buildings.
- » Sloped mansard style (shake or shingle) roofs should be discouraged within the Downtown.
- » Rooflines and architectural details should complement the building’s architectural style, and contribute to the Downtown’s character, image and appeal.

Color

- » The predominant colors for Downtown buildings should consist of earth tones. The natural brick and stone colors should predominate. Darker or lighter hues could be used as accent trim.
- » Ceramic tile, terra-cotta, brick, stone, and glass surfaces should not be painted, unless it is appropriate to the architectural style.



Front yard parking and building styles found elsewhere in the City would not be appropriate in Downtown.

Lighting

- » Lighting should be used to illuminate entries into the Downtown, signage, displays, pedestrian and parking areas, and significant architectural elements.
- » Building lighting should be subtle and understated; light fixtures should be designed and oriented to produce minimal glare and spillover onto nearby properties.
- » Most exterior lighting sources should be concealed to provide direct illumination; where concealment is not practical, light fixtures should be compatible with overall storefront design. Spot lighting is not encouraged for commercial buildings within the Downtown.
- » Incandescent lighting creates a warm atmosphere and is encouraged; if neon lighting is used, colors should be compatible with and complement the façade of the building. High pressure sodium (orange lighting), or a diffused, soft white light is encouraged; Extensive lighting should also be avoided to reduce light pollution.
- » Street lighting within the Downtown should be at a pedestrian scale. Light standards should be between 12'-15'. Parking areas within the Downtown should contain both pedestrian and vehicular scale lighting.
- » A common style of pedestrian-scale light fixtures should be used throughout the Downtown. The style of light fixture should enhance the desired atmosphere of the Downtown and complement the architecture of buildings.



Pedestrian lighting should be warm, attractive, and human scaled.

Signs

- » Raised, individual letters mounted directly on the building, as well as signs that use light colors for lettering and darker colors for backgrounds, are encouraged throughout the Downtown.
- » Wall-mounted signs should be designed as an integrated component of the building façade, and should not cover important architectural details.
- » Exterior signs should be limited to business identification and description. Signs for special promotions, sales, products, and advertising signs are discouraged.
- » The size, material, color, and shape of signs should complement the architectural style and scale of the building.
- » When a building contains multiple storefronts, signage for all businesses should be compatible in design and consistent in placement.
- » Pole signs and internally illuminated box signs should be discouraged in the Downtown.
- » Street numbers should be prominently displayed at the main entrance to every home or business and be clearly visible from the street. Consideration should be given to a consistent style and placement of street numbers within the Downtown.
- » The City should expand its wayfinding signage system to direct visitors to the Downtown. Directories and signage located in parking lots, prominent public spaces, or areas of historic significance should also guide visitors and provide information about important destinations, sites or buildings.

Residential Areas

- » The height of new multi-family buildings that directly border or face single-family uses should be compatible with adjacent single-family houses.
- » New housing construction should reflect the traditional scale and character of a traditional Downtown, particularly in terms of masonry building materials, colors, mass and proportion, and fenestration.
- » New housing should also reflect the appearance and design of established residential areas in the community.
- » Rowhouse buildings are encouraged to be located at or near the sidewalk and aligned with and “face” the street.
- » Multi-family sites should be attractively landscaped, particularly front setbacks and the perimeter of parking and service areas.
- » Where possible, parking to serve multi-family uses should be located inside the primary buildings; if garages are provided, they should be located behind the residential buildings and should have access via alleys or side streets.
- » Conservation design and development concepts are encouraged for all residential development within the Downtown. Porous brick driveways, naturalized drainage swales, and narrower roadways are examples of some techniques that could be promoted.

Awnings & Canopies

- » Awnings should be properly placed above entrances and may extend over storefront windows.
- » The color of awnings and canopies should complement and enhance the overall color scheme of the building façade.
- » Awnings and canopies should be positioned at least eight feet above the sidewalk.
- » Awnings should be made of a canvas or durable fabric material that can be easily cleaned. Hard plastic, or other materials that could be cracked or broken are not encouraged. Awnings and canopies that become windblown or torn should be repaired immediately.
- » Back lit awnings and canopies, shingle and mansard canopies, and metal and plastic awnings should be discouraged within the Downtown.
- » Awnings and canopies should be used only when they are compatible with or complement the architectural style of the building. Awnings should not appear out of place, “forced”, or as an afterthought.



Context and subtlety are important for awnings and other accessory embellishments.

Landscaping and Site Improvements

- » A local Fox Valley aesthetic should be reinforced through the use of native/adapted trees, shrubs, vines, perennial grasses, and forbs as appropriate for the context, habitat, and conditions of a particular site. The use of these plants, along with adapted cultivars and non-native companion plants is encouraged for all ornamentally planted spaces within the downtown. Low-input turf should be used and maintained with minimal water and chemical use where appropriate for use and context.
- » Planters and landscaped areas should buffer parking and service areas from adjacent uses. Plantings should consist of low evergreen and/or deciduous shrubs planted in conjunction with low-growing annual or perennial plants and groundcover. Large expanses of exposed mulch should be avoided.
- » In conjunction with landscaping, decorative fencing is encouraged to delineate and screen parking and service facilities, outdoor storage areas, etc. Low-profile, decorative wrought iron fencing or masonry walls are recommended. Chain link fencing is not encouraged within the Downtown.
- » All landscaping should be maintained in a healthy and attractive condition. Maintenance programs should be established as part of new development approvals to ensure that private landscaping is adequately cared for and that its value is retained over time. Internal irrigation systems should be required.
- » Locations of high visibility such as entrances, signage locations, etc. are good opportunities to integrate naturalistic, ornamental perennial plantings that reinforce the local St. Charles character.
- » The existing Streetscape Improvement Program should be expanded to further “visually unify” the Downtown. The City should refine and implement the Streetscape Improvement Plan for the entire Downtown to establish a visual identity for the streets, and to link together the diverse land uses. Streetscape improvements to the Downtown should include coordinated landscaping on both sides of the street; pedestrian lighting; distinctive signage and banners; coordinated street furniture including benches, bike racks and trash receptacles; accent landscaping at key locations; and gateway signage.
- » Regularly spaced street trees should be planted in rows along both sides of all streets within the Downtown. Trees should be located within the sidewalk through the use of iron tree grates. Trees should be planted at an appropriate spacing to provide consistent greenery and accommodate other decorative streetscape elements. Tree grates should be located adjacent to the back of the curb.
- » Along commercial area streets, sidewalks should be at least 10’ wide in order to accommodate an adequate walking zone and streetscape area. In residential areas in the Downtown, sidewalks should be at least 5’ wide and separated from the curb by a parkway.
- » Parkway landscaping should consist of salt-tolerant street trees, shrubs, groundcover and perennials.
- » Within the shopping areas, plantings in raised beds, planters, urns, or other containers should be promoted along the curb line in selected locations and to highlight key entrances and activity areas. Plantings need to be attractively maintained throughout all seasons. Consideration should also be given to an appropriate mix of plant materials to ensure screening and greening still occurs during winter months.
- » All landscaping within and adjacent to the public right-of-way should be compatible with existing plant materials in the area and be composed of native and salt tolerant species.
- » Street trees and other landscaping along the public rights-of-way should be protected from motorized traffic.

Public Improvements

- » Where feasible, streets within the Downtown should be designed to support vehicles, bicyclists, and pedestrians on a relatively equal basis. While accommodating vehicular traffic, streets should also promote walking, cycling, and an overall sense of place.
- » Streets within the Downtown should be designed and controlled to reduce the speed of traffic, particularly along streets with shopping and storefronts. Streets should be no larger than 4 lanes wide (2 lanes for parallel parking and 2 lanes for the movement of vehicles).
- » To improve visibility and safety, pedestrian crosswalks within the Downtown should be made prominent and noticeable by using paving materials, texture and color. Striping, small pylons and special bollard lighting fixtures might also be used to highlight crosswalks.
- » Sidewalks should be provided along both sides of all streets within the Downtown.
- » All public and private sidewalks within the Downtown area should be accessible to the disabled and comply with appropriate ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) standards.
- » Pylons and bollard lighting should be considered as accents and for ornamental purposes. These fixtures could be used to highlight crosswalks, open spaces, seating areas, and major pedestrian ways.
- » “Gateway” signs should be developed along Main Street, as it serves as one of the primary entry ways into the Downtown. Gateway features might include special landscaping, lighting and paving.
- » Banners attached to street light standards help to distinguish Downtown and can be used to commemorate special events. Banners should be changed periodically during the year.
- » Improvement and development of Downtown should include a unified system of “street furnishings,” such as seating areas, trash receptacles, drinking fountains, bike racks, and other pedestrian amenities. Street furnishings should be consistent with the materials, colors and architectural styles.
- » Trash receptacles should be placed at key locations within the Downtown. Benches, fountains and other pedestrian amenities should be located at key intersections and high activity areas. Bike parking should be provided in visible areas and near main parking areas.
- » Whenever possible, utility lines within the Downtown should be placed underground or located discretely in rear alleys.
- » Integrated green infrastructure as described elsewhere is encouraged in new and retrofit/replacement of existing Downtown streets, sidewalks, parkways, parking facilities, and other public spaces. Permeable pavement, bio-retention, shade trees, and other strategies provide multiple benefits.



Public rights-of-way should accommodate pedestrians and motorists while integrating landscaping, street furniture, and other streetscaping features. Transparent building facades can blend private spaces seamlessly into the public realm.

Gateway & Corridor Design Guidelines

These guidelines and development policies apply to all primary gateway areas and all major commercial corridors. They are intended to foster attractive and appropriate commercial development and redevelopment that is mindful of the fact that these areas were primarily designed with a vehicular orientation. Today, however, it is recognized that this approach is deficient and that even auto-oriented corridors should provide a safe and attractive pedestrian and bicycle circulation network with appropriate amenities. Commercial development within the commercial corridors will contribute significantly to the overall image and character of the City as perceived by motorists passing through the City as well as those shopping, dining, or visiting the area.

Building Scale & Design

- » A multiple-story architectural element, such as a clock tower, spire, or bell tower, may be appropriate as a design “highlight” at key locations along the corridor.
- » Distinguishing architectural features are encouraged, such as decorative cornices, columns, reliefs, and other façade ornamentation and detailing.
- » Covered walkways and colonnades are encouraged along the fronts of the buildings to create a pedestrian orientation.
- » Architectural details should be visible from the street. Buildings should not be setback so far as to diminish the aesthetic impact of the building on passing pedestrians and motorists. Buildings should be attractive at both a pedestrian and vehicular scale.
- » Buildings can have either a pitched or flat roof, but rooflines should complement the overall design and architecture of the building. Rooflines and parapets should look complete when viewed from all sides of the building.
- » Rooftop-mounted equipment and vents should be screened from view along all sides of a building. Rooftop screening should be incorporated into the overall design of the building and be an integral part of the architecture.
- » Dumpster enclosures should be of materials and incorporate design elements that complement the primary structure. Dumpster enclosures should be well landscaped and located at the rear or sides of buildings so as to be unseen from the public street or primary building entry.



Attractive buildings close to Randall Road provide a sense of scale and enhanced character to the corridor, however sidewalks should extend along both sides of all streets and connect to local businesses.

Building Placement & Orientation

- » Buildings should have a strong visual and physical relationship to the corridor to enhance the identity and pedestrian orientation of the corridor. Buildings should be attractive at both a pedestrian and vehicular scale.
- » Although the corridor is primarily oriented to the automobile, commercial buildings should have a strong pedestrian orientation with display windows, attractive detailing, and convenient and “hospitable” entrances.
- » The East and West Gateway areas are characterized by large building setbacks, side yards, and surface parking lots. Where this exists a street frontage should be maintained through the use of low-profile landscaping and decorative walls or fencing.
- » All buildings should “front” the corridor wherever possible. When front doors do not face these primary streets, display windows or distinctive facade treatments should be provided along the visible public road frontages.
- » Long, blank facades along the corridor should be avoided. Articulation and covered walkways, such as arcades, are encouraged along the fronts of multi-tenant commercial buildings to create interest and a “pedestrian-friendly” orientation.
- » All service entrances, dumpsters, loading facilities, and outdoor storage should be located at the rear of buildings. They should be screened from view along sidewalks and roadways through the use of decorative screening, masonry walls, and/or evergreen plantings.

- » Any business permitted to have a “drive-thru” facility should be sited so that drive-thru lanes and pickup windows are not prominently featured. Any canopies over drive-thru windows or lanes should match the material and architectural character of the primary building.
- » Any outdoor seating areas, such as those provided by restaurants or cafés, should be well landscaped and incorporated into the overall site design. Outdoor seating areas should be set back and screened from parking areas and driving aisles.
- » Awnings and canopies could be used to provide weather protection and to add visual interest at the street level. They should be integrated into the façade and be in character with the architectural style of the building. Arched or rounded awnings should be discouraged, unless they are compatible with and appropriate to the architectural style of a building. Internally illuminated or back lit awnings and canopies, shingle and mansard canopies, and plastic awnings should not be permitted.
- » Buildings should be used to frame outdoor plaza or seating areas in order to create attractive and pedestrian-oriented seasonal spaces.
- » Architectural massing elements, such as turrets, chamfered corners, or articulated facades, should be used to define important public spaces or prominent locations throughout gateway areas, such as pedestrian shopping areas or gateway intersections.

Building Materials & Colors

- » The use of appropriate building materials is a key to compatible new development and rehabilitation of existing structures. Quality materials should be used on all sides of the building, providing an attractive “360 degree” appearance.
- » New commercial and industrial buildings should be constructed primarily of traditional masonry building materials such as brick or stone. These materials should be used on all sides of the building. Recommended accent materials include stone, simulated stone, terra cotta, and wood or metal trim.
- » “Exterior insulation finish systems” (EIFS) should not be permitted as a primary building material. Stucco, consisting of 3-coat Portland Cement, should be used instead. Rough sawed wood, aluminum siding, and plastic or metal panels are discouraged within the gateway commercial areas.
- » The predominant colors for new buildings should consist of earth tones. While the natural brick and stone colors should predominate, contrasting and complementary colors should also be used to accent building components, highlight architectural elements and to help distinguish St. Charles’ gateways.
- » Damaged and deteriorated exterior building materials should be repaired or replaced.



Recent facade enhancements should be emulated in order to foster a more contemporary image for Randall Road.

Transit, Bike & Pedestrian Mobility

- » Development sites should provide a continuous sidewalk and/or bike path along both sides of the street.
- » Development should provide a clearly marked and continuous pedestrian path from public sidewalks within the right-of-way to building entrances.
- » Sidewalks and multi-use paths should be sited and designed so that they provide adequate buffering from vehicular traffic on roadways.
- » Circulation plans should minimize conflict points between pedestrian and vehicles and ensure visible and accessible cross walks are installed where conflicts occur.
- » Development should provide on-site bicycle parking and/or storage at an appropriate ratio to vehicular parking.
- » Where appropriate, development should integrate on-site transit facilities and amenities, and account for and designate on-site circulation routes for transit vehicles or private shuttles.



Pedestrian networks should be made more comprehensive and safer by reducing crossing distances, installing missing segments, and creating buffers against traffic in both the public and private realms.

Lighting

- » Lighting helps promote safe and secure parking and pedestrian areas, and it can also serve to enhance the appearance of a property.
- » Lighting should be used to illuminate entries, signage, displays, and pedestrian and parking areas, as well as to highlight significant architectural elements.
- » Front and rear building entries should be adequately lit for overall security and visibility.
- » Building lighting should be subtle and understated. Light fixtures should be designed and oriented to produce minimal glare and spillover onto nearby properties.
- » Down-lighting should be encouraged on all commercial buildings; spot-lighting should be limited to major features and key landmarks, including gateway entry features.
- » Incandescent lighting creates a warm atmosphere and should be encouraged. If neon lighting is used, colors should be compatible with and complement the façade of the building. High pressure sodium (orange lighting), or a diffused, soft white light is also encouraged. Metal halide lighting should be avoided. Excessive lighting should be avoided to reduce light pollution.
- » Most exterior lighting should be concealed to provide indirect illumination. Where concealment is not practical, light fixtures should be compatible with building architecture.
- » Parking lots should be retrofitted to create a more pedestrian scale and minimize light pollution and glare. This can be accomplished by using shorter lighting standards (12'-18') to help establish pedestrian environments within individual developments. Taller light standards (25'-40') and flood lighting should be avoided.
- » Light poles and standards with an historic or traditional design should be used for all parking lots, walkways and pedestrian areas.
- » Bollard lighting can be appropriate as accent lighting and could be used in pedestrian seating areas and to highlight pedestrian walkways and crossings in parking lots.



Images above depict two types of parking lot lighting. The image on right (discouraged) is flood lighting, where fixtures flood areas, requiring fewer fixtures but contributing to light pollution. The image on the left (encouraged) directs light downward minimizing spillover lighting.

Vehicular Access and Storage

- » Development should create logical linkages to surrounding areas by extending existing street grid patterns and incorporating on-site streets wherever possible.
- » Adequate parking is essential within gateway areas, however, excessive parking can be detrimental to its aesthetic. Within St. Charles' gateways, parking lots should be designed and located so that they are safe, attractive and efficient.
- » Parking areas of no more than 60 feet in depth should be located between the building and the public rights-of-way. This depth will be sufficient to accommodate a single driving aisle with 90° parking on both sides. Additional parking areas can be provided adjacent to the building on interior portions of the lot.
- » The number of curb cuts along corridors should be minimized, adjacent parking lots should be connected, and access points should be unified. Development should either create new internal streets or take advantage of existing ones, and all parking areas should be accessible from cross streets whenever possible to prevent cars from having to use primary streets to access adjacent lots.
- » All parking areas should be paved or bricked, striped and have surfaces in good condition. The use of pervious brick paver systems is encouraged.
- » Parking lots should be screened from view along sidewalks and roadways through the combined use of free forming berms, low masonry walls, hedge plantings, and shrubs.
- » Parking lots should have curbed perimeters and curbed landscaped islands. Clearly marked pedestrian pathways should be provided within the interior of parking areas to avoid large expanses of asphalt and to enhance pedestrian safety.
- » Parking lot landscaping should include "landscape islands" at a suitable ratio to provide visual relief from large fields of parking. Landscape islands should consist of canopy trees, attractive groundcover, and/or decorative bushes.
- » All parking lots should be designed for proper drainage and should consider the use of best management practices, including bioswales, to store and filter runoff.
- » Parking lots that are used during evening hours should be adequately illuminated.
- » Whenever possible, parking lots should be shared between multiple stores and businesses to allow for a more efficient lot layout and to minimize curb cuts. Cross access between adjacent parking lots should also be encouraged.



Large development lots should incorporate well streetscaped street networks in order to create more efficient and attractive linkages between uses.

Landscaping and Site Improvements

- » A local Fox Valley aesthetic should be reinforced through the use of native/adapted trees, shrubs, vines, perennial grasses and forbs as appropriate for the context, habitat, and conditions of a particular site. The use of these plants, along with adapted cultivars and non-native companion plants is encouraged for all ornamentally planted spaces. Low-input turf should be used and maintained with minimal water and chemical use where appropriate for use and context.
- » Planters and landscaped areas should buffer parking and service areas. Plantings should consist of low evergreen and/or deciduous shrubs planted in conjunction with low-growing annual or perennial plants and groundcover. Large expanses of exposed mulch are to be avoided.
- » A landscaped buffer at least five to eight feet in width should be provided around the perimeter of surface parking lots. Perimeter landscape plantings will include a continuous hedge accented by trees and ground cover but should not obstruct tenant signage and views to buildings and site features.
- » In conjunction with landscaping, decorative fencing is encouraged to delineate and screen parking and service facilities, outdoor storage areas, etc. Low-profile, decorative wrought iron fencing or masonry walls are recommended. Chain link fencing should not be permitted.
- » All landscaping should be maintained in a healthy and attractive condition. Maintenance programs should be established as part of new development approvals to ensure that private landscaping is adequately cared for and that its value is retained over time. Internal irrigation systems are preferred and encouraged.
- » Where site size or configuration does not allow for the minimum five-foot perimeter landscaping, vertical landscaping elements should be employed to provide an effective screen between parking lots and the public right-of-way.
- » Locations of high visibility such as entrances, signage locations, etc. are good opportunities to integrate naturalistic, ornamental perennial plantings that reinforce the local St. Charles character.

- » Trees, shrubs, walls/fences, “living” or green walls, and/or vining structures should be used to screen intense commercial or other potentially conflicting land uses from residential properties. Visual screening, sound attenuation, and locally authentic, aesthetic beauty are all important considerations.
- » All landscaping within and adjacent to the public right-of-way should be compatible with existing plant materials in the area and be composed of native and salt tolerant species.



Many areas of the corridor lack landscaping along the edge of parking areas. Appropriate amounts of perimeter landscaping would be needed to improve corridor character and clearly delineate automotive and pedestrian zones, however excessive landscaping can “hide” businesses and this should be avoided.

Business Signage

- » Exterior building signs should be limited to business identification and description; exterior advertising signs should not be permitted. The size, material, color, and shape of building signs should complement the architectural style and scale of the building.
- » Wall-mounted signs are encouraged, although signage should not project above the cornice line or be mounted on the roof of a building.
- » Raised, individual letters mounted directly on the building, as well as signs that use light colors for lettering and darker colors for backgrounds, are preferred. Box signs should be prohibited.
- » When a building contains multiple ground-floor tenants, signage for all businesses should be compatible in design and consistent in placement.
- » Street numbers should be prominently displayed at the main entrance to every business and be clearly visible from the street.
- » Free-standing signage within the corridors should be limited to low-profile monument signs for multi-tenant commercial properties. Monument signs should be attractively landscaped and constructed of traditional building materials similar to the primary building on the site.
- » The letters of a monument sign should be internally illuminated with a white light source. External illumination may be appropriate for a natural metal or engraved stone monument sign. Excessive light and light pollution should be avoided.
- » “Gateway” signage and design features at key locations along the corridors are encouraged. Gateway treatments may include special signage, landscaping, and/or lighting. Where necessary, private development sites should accommodate gateway elements or incorporate prominent architectural features that demonstrate the importance of a certain location.

- » The size of signs should complement façade proportions, and should be constructed from the appropriate scale of the building.
- » The design and color of the sign should complement the architectural style of the building, and be integrated as a component of the building’s facade.
- » Internal illumination is preferred for building mounted signs. Externally lighted signs may also be acceptable if they are compatible with other architectural components.
- » Pole signs, pylon signs, and billboards should be prohibited and the City should actively work towards amortizing and removing existing non-conforming signs.

Public Realm

- » All streets should be designed to accommodate all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, and vehicles.
- » Buffers should be provided between pedestrian and vehicular traffic, and may include on-street parking or landscaping and hardscaping elements.
- » Decorative streetscaping should be integrated into the right-of-way in order to establish a uniform character throughout a specific area. Streetscaping elements could include decorative paving materials for the roadway, parking lanes, furniture zone or sidewalks, amenities such as trash receptacles, bike racks and benches, decorative trees that provide a sense of scale and enclosure, landscaping that provides a buffer between pedestrians and vehicular traffic, decorative pedestrian or roadway lighting, and roadway landscaping or medians.
- » Streetscaping elements should incorporate native plants and hardscape materials, and should be resistant to salt and harsh climatic conditions in order to maintain high aesthetic value over time.
- » Comprehensive pedestrian systems, including safe sidewalks, clearly delineated crosswalks, information, and signalization, should be provided throughout gateway areas.
- » Private development should accommodate public uses or spaces that complement the function and character of an area, such as environmental or multi-modal transportation corridors, important pedestrian linkages, or pockets parks as a component of a larger redevelopment project.
- » Wherever possible, utilities should be buried or screened from view of the public street. This includes utility lines, substations, or stand-alone utility boxes.
- » Regional and local gateways should be installed to denote entries to or centers of the West Gateway, East Gateway, or other subareas. Gateways should reflect local character in terms of materials, design theme and aesthetic.
- » Regional wayfinding should be provided to direct travelers to various landmarks such as Downtown St. Charles, the Fox River, the Kane County Judicial Center, etc. Such wayfinding signage should be clear and informative, yet integrate decorative elements that are unique to St. Charles.
- » Local wayfinding should be used to direct travelers to destinations within the gateway area, such as the Kane County Fairgrounds, major retail centers, or prominent entertainment activities. The design of such wayfinding signage could vary between subareas, allowing different developments to strengthen their own unique local character.
- » Formal plazas should be integrated into significant redevelopment projects, and should have an active relationship with surrounding buildings in terms of physical and visual access, and the nature of activities that can occur in the plaza.
- » Parks and green space should be integrated into redevelopment projects. Such spaces can serve as stormwater detention areas when needed. They can also provide a passive open space that complements surrounding development.
- » Parks should include some significant amount of passive open space so that they are viewed as generally accessible to all and able to accommodate a variety of activities that support surrounding development and neighborhoods.



Public rights-of-way should do more to accommodate pedestrians and bicyclists.