

APPENDIX C: SUBURBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES

DRAFT

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PHOTOGRAPHY CREDITS

River Heim, [Maritime River Photography](#)
TJ Maguire
Hannah Peters



TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0	INTRODUCTION	4
2.1	SITE CONTEXT	7
	SC1: Community Identities	8
	SC2: Complete Communities	10
	SC3: Transit-oriented Communities	12
	SC4: Neighbourhood Character	14
2.2	SITE PLANNING AND DESIGN	17
	SD1: Active Streetwalls and Prominent Sites	18
	SD2: Pedestrian-Friendly Mobility Network	20
	SD3: Open Space Network	22
	SD4: Pedestrian Comfort	24
	SD5: Site Impacts	26
	SD6: Established Residential Areas	28
	SD7: Natural Environment	30
2.3	OPEN SPACE DESIGN	33
	OD1: Neighbourhood Aesthetic Themes	34
	OD2: Open Space Accessibility	36
	OD3: Pedestrian Comfort and Interaction	38
	OD4: Sustainable Landscape Practices	40
	OD5: Open Space Materials	42
2.4	BUILDING DESIGN	45
	BD1: Fine-Grained Streetwalls	46
	BD2: Animated Streetwalls	48
	BD3: Building Entrances	50
	BD4: Building Accessibility	52
	BD5: Building Materials	54
	BD6: Building Impacts	56



(Photo by Sheri Lecker)

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE

The Suburban Design Guidelines is an Appendix to the Regional Municipal Planning Strategy (the Plan) and is intended to encourage excellence in urban design. Their purpose is to inspire and direct designers and decision makers, and to facilitate the evaluation of discretionary planning applications in the Suburban Area of the Plan. Their secondary purpose is to help guide the development of more detailed land use policies and regulations in the Suburban Area.



1.2 COMMUNITY DESIGN GOALS

The community design goals represent best practices for urban design that prioritizes pedestrians and transit oriented development.

1.3 COMMUNITY DESIGN CRITERIA

The community design criteria contained in these guidelines outline how a project's design should support the Municipality's goals. Each community design criteria is supported by a rationale and examples of best practices to ensure the criteria are clear and that the measure of success is well understood. When developing secondary planning policy or reviewing applicable development agreement proposals, the community design criteria that are relevant to the proposal must be reviewed, with the supporting rationale and examples used only when needed for additional explanation and context.

The document is structured as follows:

- | | |
|------------------------|--|
| Criterion: | An objective used to evaluate certain development proposals within the Halifax Regional Municipality. |
| Rationale: | An explanation of the criteria (what), the reason the criterion is important for good design (why), and the manner in which success is measured (how). |
| Representation: | Pictures and diagrams of the criteria for illustrative purposes only. |



2.1 SITE CONTEXT

Site Context is the starting point for successful community design for a site and informs each section of the guidelines: Site Context, Site Planning and Design, Open Space Design, and Building Design.

Examples provided of the successful application of each criterion represent best practices but may not be appropriate for every site. The most appropriate methods can be established through a site and context analysis.



(Photo by Harrison Jardine)

SITE CONTEXT - 1

Criteria 1: The proposed development supports natural and cultural context

RATIONALE

What: Halifax Regional Municipality is located on the traditional lands of the Mi'kmaq people. The region is home to many naturally and culturally significant elements. This includes biophysical features (e.g. topography, vegetation, waterways) and community identities (physical and intangible).

Natural context refers to the landscapes that have shaped and formed both the region's environment and identity. With such significant growth occurring it is vital to consider and protect the natural environment and the value it provides both physically and intangibly. The natural environment can be supported and enhanced through design choices. Cultural context describes people's shared or common relationships such as history, backgrounds, knowledge, or preferences. These relationships can be supported through design choices. This is often about the historic function or use of a space and its relationship to current or past users. It is not limited to elements associated with a registered heritage property or cultural landscape, but it may include living heritage such as the traditions, events, objects, and places with significant meaning to one or more communities.

Why: Developments that support natural and cultural context reflects and respects past and present community relationships, integrates with existing context, and supports sense of place. The natural environment and its features are an integral part of the region and its past and present identity. Our society is diverse, and there is a limitless array of intersectional identity factors between and among all of us. Intersectionality creates diverse needs that require inclusive design solutions. A person may be impacted by design in complex and compounding ways, depending on their unique identity factors.



Example 1: Community events shape the design and use of open spaces and buildings

How: Supporting natural and cultural context for a site requires detailed analysis through primary and secondary research methods. Primary research involves the collection of data not previously gathered, rather than the analysis of that which is already available. Secondary research is performed through the summary, collation or synthesis of the results of existing research.

Successful analysis includes documentation of common relationships between the site and associated communities. These efforts acknowledge and carry forward community identity as part of the new development.

Examples of the successful application of this criterion include identifying and supporting the following:

- past, seasonal, or ongoing events specific to the site or context;
- working to preserve or enhance pre-existing natural features;
- preserve the natural environment, such as the topography, to contribute to the site's overall experience;
- emphasize a site's natural processes or features;



Example 2: Open spaces are opportunities to reflect and celebrate the history and culture of local communities



Example 3: Sackville library integrate public art with building design



Example 4: Community gathering in Dartmouth

SITE CONTEXT - 2

Criteria 2: The proposed development supports complete communities

RATIONALE

What: Supporting a community is about determining community assets and filling in gaps in housing, employment services, amenities and activities that enhance how complete a community is for residents or visitors. The meaning of complete community can vary greatly depending on the community's demographic needs and aspirations.

Why: Complete communities are essential to the success and sustainability of a neighbourhood. Identifying gaps in housing, services, amenities, transit service, activities, and the needs of a particular community provides opportunities to design development to fill these gaps and ensure each community is more complete and offers social, economic, active, and environmental quality of life.



How: Supporting complete communities requires detailed analysis through primary and secondary research methods. Successful analysis includes documentation of the relationships between communities in an area and supporting services, transit options, and amenities.

Examples of the successful application of this criterion include identifying and supporting all of the following:

- a variety of shops and services;
- institutional uses (daycares, schools, and so on);
- flexible uses that can change with seasons or market conditions;
- parks and community facilities;
- proximity to employment and business areas;
- a variety of housing choices (multi-unit dwellings, grade-related units, and so on).



Example 1: Flexible use of a parking lot that is used as a farmers' market space



Example 2: Community facilities such as libraries, parks, and community gardens support complete communities



Example 3: Amenities that support access to transit and accessible transportation are important parts of a complete community

SITE CONTEXT - 3

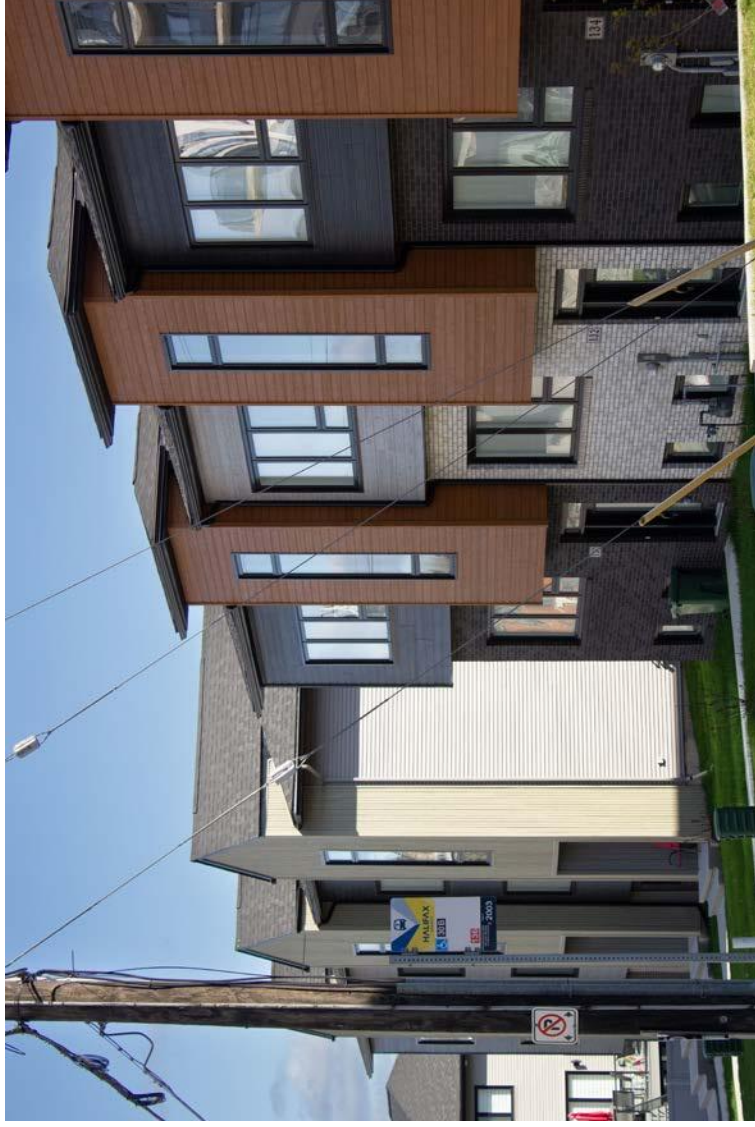
Criteria 3: The proposed development supports transit-oriented complete communities

RATIONALE

What: Transit Oriented Development (TOD) is an approach that integrates land-use planning and transit, encouraging the development of compact, complete communities around a transit terminal or transit corridor. This approach supports population growth, builds fast and efficient transit system, and more sustainable, affordable, and equitable communities.

Transit oriented communities are highly walkable and bicycle-friendly. They have a higher density of residential and commercial land uses that allow people to work, shop and play close to where they live. Aligning growth centres with key transit hubs and corridors increases transit ridership and supports other transportation modes. Providing for mid-rise and gentle infill within transit walksheds can further support accessible and affordable mobility. As Halifax moves to develop a Rapid Transit, densities can be aligned with the various levels of existing or planned transit service.

Why: Transit Oriented Developments can promote regional values such as effective infrastructure, healthy lifestyles, and sustainability. As HRM continues to grow, the development of new and existing communities based on transit oriented development principles will support healthier mobility options in areas that may traditionally have resulted in greater dependence on personal vehicles.



How: Supporting transit oriented developments requires detailed analysis through primary and secondary research methods. Successful analysis includes documentation of the network of amenities, residences, and transit service.

Examples of the successful application of this criterion include identifying and supporting all of the following:

- use walking distance targets of 400 m – 1200 m from transit to shops, employment, and higher density residences;
- ensure that paths to transit stops and stations are well connected through grid like connections and shorter blocks by (1) providing 65- to 90-metres mid-block pedestrian connections, and (2) making crosswalks frequently available for transit users to easily access both sides of the route;
- provide a mix of land uses through individual uses clustered or within buildings;
- encourage public spaces and public interactions through open and useable space near transit access, and minimize surface parking;
- align common entrances to developments with transit stops, and routes;
- prioritize higher density developments nearby transit stops and terminals by providing (1) higher density of residential within the first 400 m walking distance of rapid transit terminal or enhanced station, (2) mid-rise residential within 800 m walking distance of rapid or priority transit corridor, and (3) other mixed density housing within 1200 m of transit corridor;
- design buildings to abut sidewalks and be orientated to street frontage;
- accommodate a mix of different housing types and employment options and choice near transit access to create more inclusive communities and maximize transit use;
- plan for complete streets that complement the mix and density of land uses to encourage walking, rolling, cycling, use of transit, and to shop, stroll, and socialize.



Example 1: Bus stop with multiple routes located near high density residential use



Example 2: Bike lockers located in a shopping plaza to promote active transportation

SITE CONTEXT - 4

Criteria 4: The proposed development supports the neighbourhood character

RATIONALE

What: Neighbourhood character describes the physical attributes that establish a sense of place at the neighbourhood level. This includes past and existing built and natural environments often evident in architectural styles, massing, siting, materials, and themes. Neighbourhood character is not limited to registered heritage properties or cultural landscapes. Any neighbourhood can support or establish a sense of place through design choices that build upon elements that define the character of the neighbourhood, be they historical or contemporary based on site or context analysis.

Why: Supporting or establishing neighbourhood character can add to the uniqueness of the site and define or perpetuate its sense of place. This form of recognition is important for celebrating the history of the place and providing its residents or visitors with a sense of appreciation, ownership, and inclusion. This can also promote navigation, support a place as a destination or a landmark, and introduce or preserve cultural assets.



Example 1: Establishing a sense of place through design choices and materials used (Photo from DORA Construction)

How: Supporting the existing neighbourhood character associated with a site requires detailed analysis through primary and secondary research methods. Successful analysis includes documentation of built and natural characteristics of the site, and associated neighbourhood along with determination of which characteristics best support the sense of place, and arranging design sites to suit both the existing surrounding context.

Examples of the successful application of this criterion include identifying and supporting all of the following:

- heritage assets and cultural resources;
- natural areas and elements, such as trees or green spaces that complement the network of open spaces;
- built form patterns, such as street layout, sidewalks, pathways, bike routes, transit routes, block structure, massing, and architectural style;
- patterns in the movement of people related to walking and active transportation;
- patterns in material use, colour palettes, and building and site elements;
- physical landmarks;
- the retention of sensitive environmental open spaces.



Example 2: Physical elements representing historical events support a sense of place



Example 3: Supporting neighbourhood character in Fishermen's Cove



2.2 SITE PLANNING AND DESIGN

Site Planning and Design is generally concerned with the location and orientation of components or elements of a site, such as building massing, open spaces, land uses, prominent sites, pathways, services, utilities, parking, and driveways.

Criteria contained in this section are intended to guide site planning and design to result in positive experiences between people and the components or elements of a development site. Thoughtful site planning and design is informed by a contextual analysis and is the foundation for successful open space and building design.



SITE PLANNING AND DESIGN - 1

Criteria 1: The proposed development organizes building massing, open spaces, and uses to create and emphasize active streetwalls and prominent sites

RATIONALE

What: This pattern establishes streetwalls and building massing that acts to enclose the sidewalk or street, like a wall. Active streetwalls are those that are highly animated with human-scaled elements and active uses. Typically, private open spaces that support active streetwalls are in the form of small front and side yards that emphasize the streetwall. Prominent sites are sites that are part of the built and natural environment that stand out from the community fabric and act as landmarks. They include view terminus sites, corner sites, and sites that about significant civic spaces or buildings.

Why: Comfortable, safe, pedestrian-first streets depend on active and animated streetwalls. Organizing massing, open space, and uses to support active and animated streetwalls encourages two-way interaction between buildings, open spaces, and people. People on the sidewalk can window shop, while people in a café or apartment can look out over the streets. In a predominantly residential environment, a desire for privacy can easily compromise an active streetscape, so a balance in this context is needed to achieve both goals. Prominent sites provide greater opportunity to animate streetscapes and create unique places.

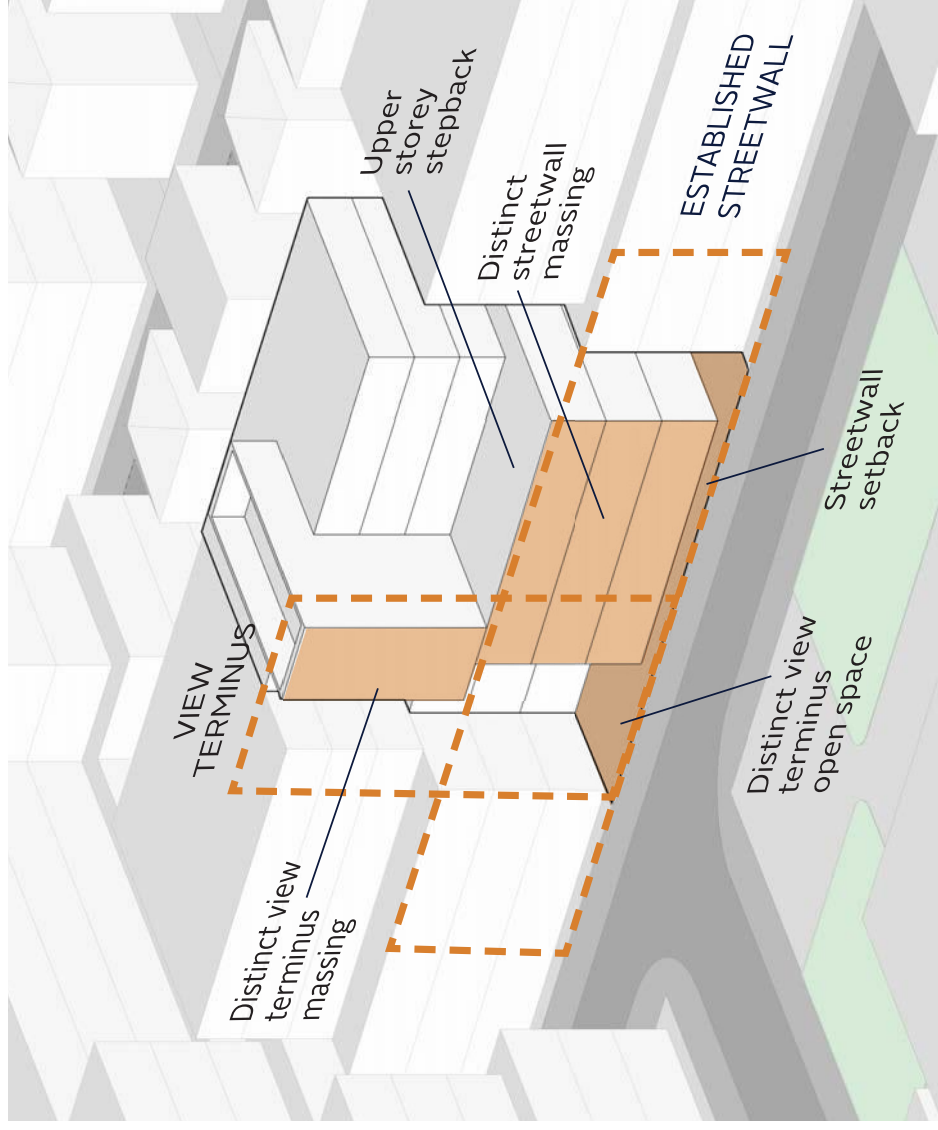


Figure 1: Representation of Site Planning and Design - 1

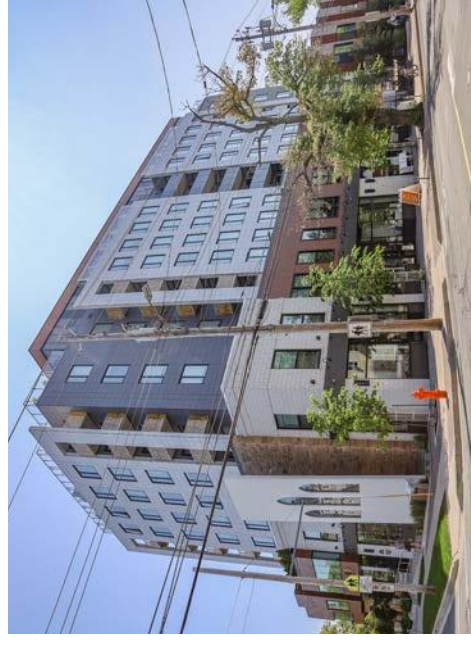
How: Where there are clearly established streetwalls located close to the streetline, use abutting buildings and open spaces to inform the siting and orientation of buildings and open spaces.

Examples of the successful application of this criterion include:

- locating buildings at or close to the streetline;
- occupying the majority of any street frontage with a human-scaled streetwall of 2-4 storeys;
- scaling and locating the streetwall consistent with abutting or adjacent heritage buildings;
- emphasizing view terminus sites with an at-grade open space or variations in massing and streetwall height aligning with the view terminus;
- using small open spaces to break up large lots to be consistent with fine-grained street, block, and lot patterns;
- where residential uses are proposed at grade, setting buildings back far enough to provide for privacy, but close enough to the streetline to perceive building details and support an animated streetscape;
- framing all public spaces and private open spaces with a human-scaled streetwall or podium between 2-4 storeys;
- varying streetwall height to emphasize prominent sites;
- where there is a fine-grained context with adjacent or abutting buildings, located close to the streetline, scaling and locating the streetwall consistent with that context;
- in areas where there is a narrow public sidewalk, providing open spaces in the front yard that can act as a small extension of the sidewalk;
- locating the most active uses in a development at-grade and close to the streetline;
- avoiding locating services, utilities, and parking in-line with the terminus line of a view terminus site; and
- minimizing the width of driveways and walkways in front yards to prioritize landscaping and pedestrian oriented architectural features such as entrances and porches.



Example 1: Locating building close to the streetline with human-scaled streetwall



Example 2: Streetwall established with corner design element reflecting past use of the site

SITE PLANNING AND DESIGN - 2

Criteria 2: The proposed development retains and introduces connections that support a pedestrian-friendly and transit oriented mobility network

RATIONALE

What: The region's mobility network consists of all the routes that people can take by various means of transportation including walking, cycling, transit, mobility devices, other forms of active transportation, and automobiles. Reducing single-occupant vehicles to increase the use of sustainable transportation through pedestrian-friendly and transit oriented mobility networks. These patterns offer multiple route and mobility options, breaking-up large areas with small blocks and frequent intersections.

Why: A highly integrated mobility network of overlapping, fine-grained, linear routes provide a range of beneficial options from which people can choose their preferred route. Ideally, this means encouraging walking and active transportation over automobile use, as well as reducing walking times to access transportation options like transit. Large coarse-grained and indirect curvilinear routes reduce mobility options for many individuals and prioritize the use of the automobile over other transportation modes.

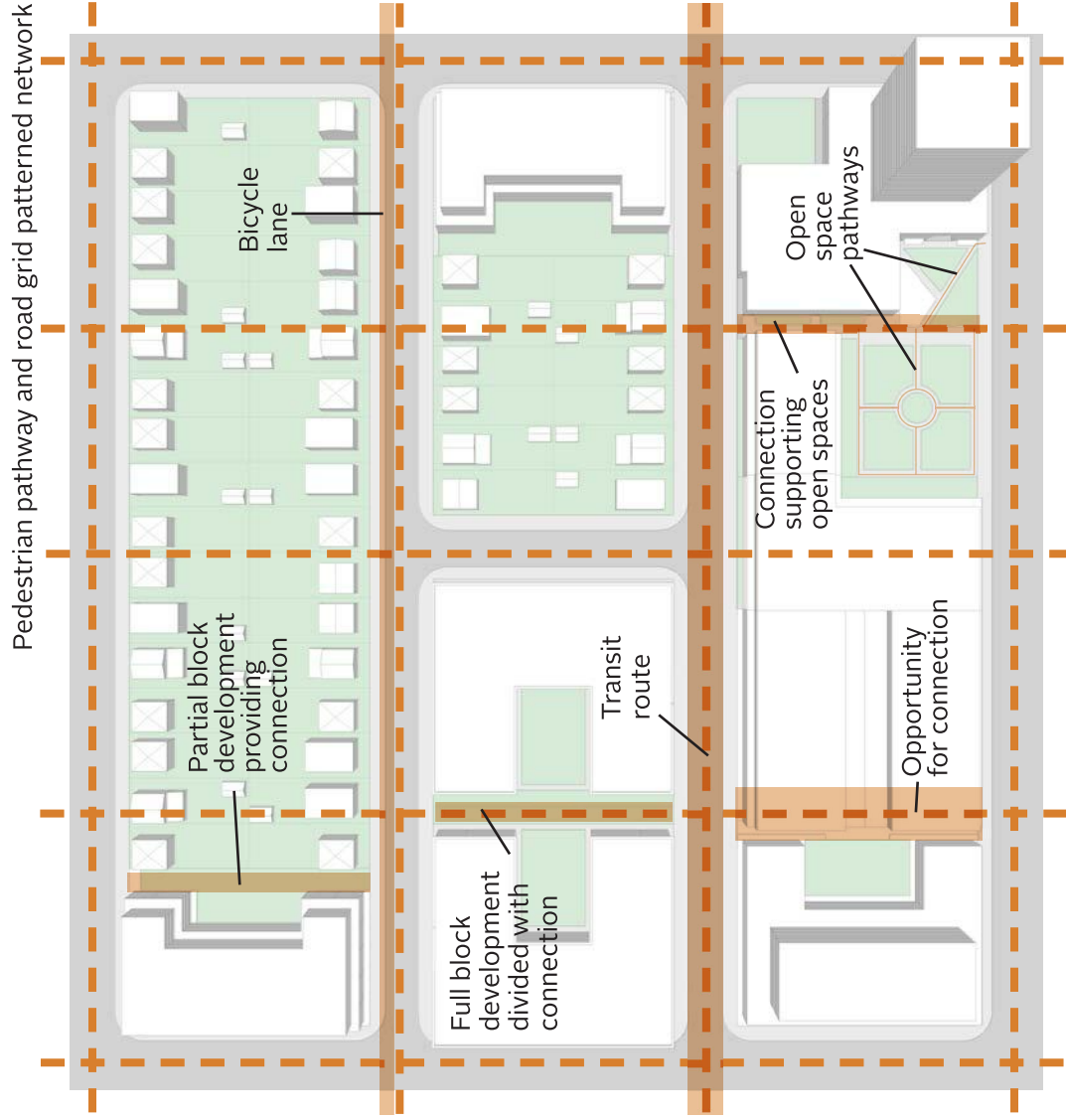


Figure 2: Representation of Site Planning and Design - 2

How: Where there are clearly established fine-grained mobility routes, use them to inform new routes and connections by continuing them on or through proposed development sites. Where these do not yet exist, direction for patterns and connections can be found in this Plan, and through a context analysis.

Examples of the successful application of this criterion include:

- where there is an existing pedestrian connection or a street that terminates at the site, continuing the connection(s) through the site using open spaces, pedestrian paths, or driveways with sidewalks;
- introducing new pedestrian connections through large sites to support the fine-grained mobility network;
- providing multiple accessible points through open spaces and to buildings;
- locating active uses adjacent to or abutting connections to animate the spaces and support their safe use;
- framing sidewalks with distinct and active human-scaled streetwalls;
- aligning common entrances with transit stops and routes;
- providing connections and spaces for bicycles on site and abutting active transportation routes;
- in areas where there is a narrow sidewalk, providing open spaces in the front yard that can act as a small extension of the sidewalk;
- avoiding cul-de-sacs and curvilinear roads and pathway patterns; and
- avoiding the creation of driveways that act as private roads that do not meet or compromise pedestrian comfort and a fine-grained mobility network.



Example 1: Providing spaces for bikes on site of transit terminals



Example 2: Continuing pedestrian connections from existing walkways

SITE PLANNING AND DESIGN - 3

The proposed development retains and introduces open spaces that support the existing network of open spaces

RATIONALE

What: The region's network of open spaces is a key defining component of the Halifax Regional Municipality. This network is comprised of and renowned for its wealth of green spaces, tree canopy, historic landscapes and natural areas including: parks, plazas, yards, mid-block open spaces, sidewalks, pathways, boulevards, watercourses and waterfronts.

Why: As a whole, this network plays and fulfills essential ecological, social, and economic roles. In isolation, some spaces may falsely appear to have minimal value and be dispensable. However, it is vital to the success of the region and the well-being of its residents, that all new development support the network of open spaces.

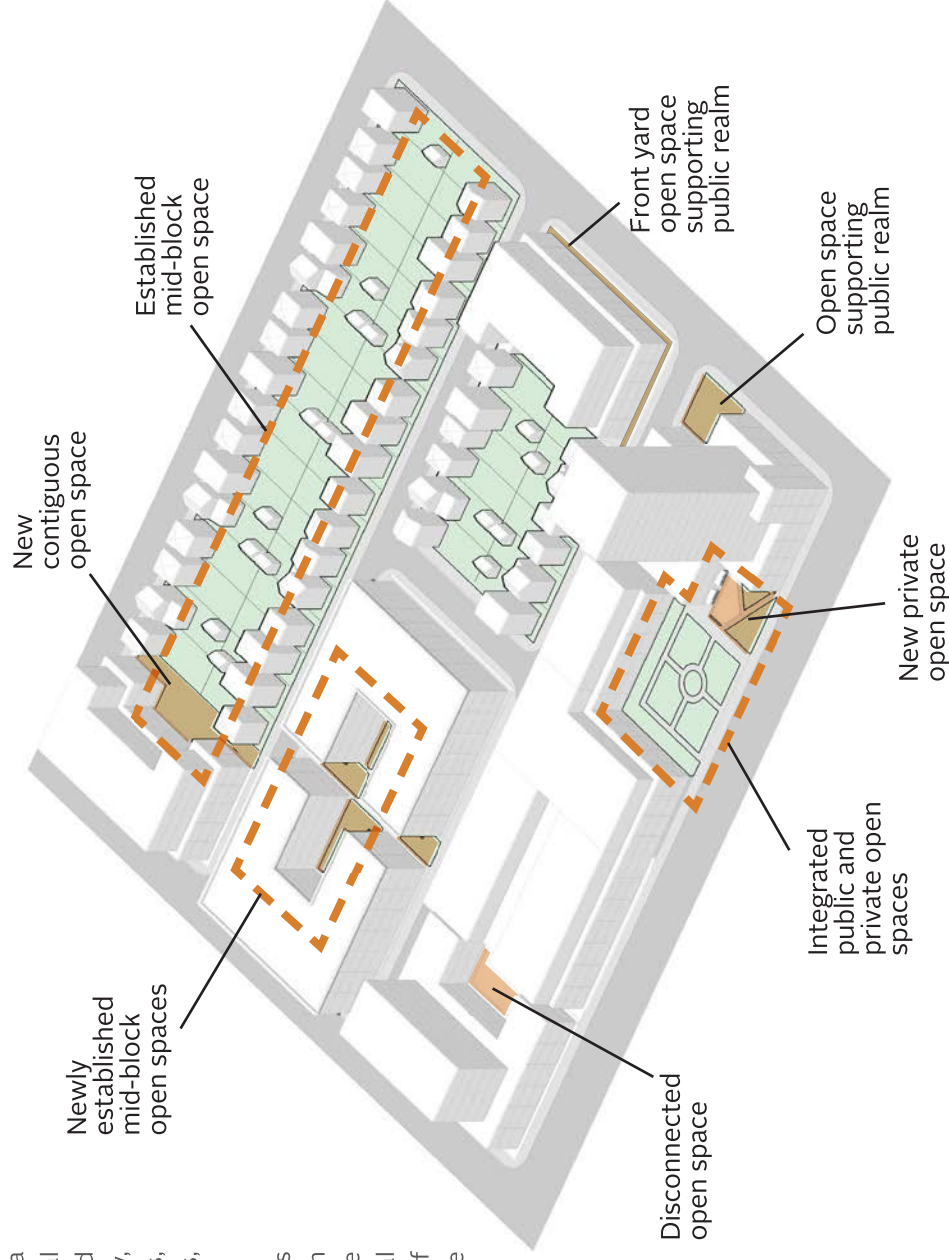
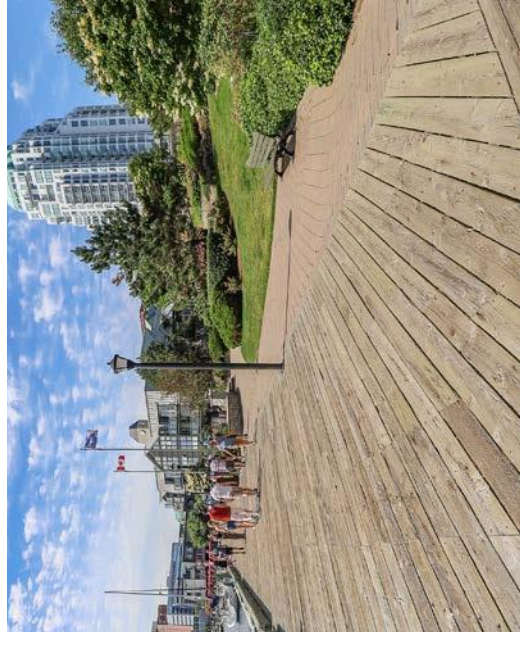


Figure 3: Representation of Site Planning and Design - 3

How: The siting and design of open spaces and buildings has a significant impact on how well a development supports the open space network, and its vital roles. Every site has an opportunity to support the network of open spaces by introducing new open spaces that integrate with existing spaces, by retaining established open spaces, or minimizing impacts on existing open spaces.

Examples of the successful application of this criterion include:

- physically connecting the proposed open spaces with existing open spaces;
- retaining or introducing mid-block open spaces between residential uses;
- where a clear pattern of front or side yards exist, retaining or introducing the same pattern of yards;
- connecting proposed open spaces with pedestrian pathways and sidewalks;
- framing or enclosing open spaces with human-scaled building massing and elements;
- introducing new open spaces on large sites to expand and support the open space network;
- locating active uses along the edges of open spaces; and
- locating indoor or rooftop amenity spaces to be visually connected to, or overlook existing open spaces.



Example 1: Connecting proposed open spaces with existing open spaces in new developments



Example 2: Connecting proposed open spaces with existing open spaces in new developments



Example 3: Private open space visually connected to sidewalk reflecting traditional context

SITE PLANNING AND DESIGN - 4

Criteria 4: The proposed development locates buildings and open spaces to optimize pedestrian comfort related to weather on, abutting, and adjacent to the development

RATIONALE

What: Pedestrian comfort is about how buildings and open spaces are organized on a site, their relationship to each other, and how they can make people more likely to interact with a building or use a space. Weather includes precipitation, heat, cold, shadowing, and wind. For the purposes of this criterion, it also includes general climate conditions.

Why: To be pedestrian friendly and welcoming to a wide range of people, places need to be comfortable in various circumstances and at different times of the year. Where spaces are not designed with weather in mind, they are sometimes rendered impractical or otherwise undesirable for large periods of the year. This compromises pedestrian comfort and goals related to active streetscapes and spaces.

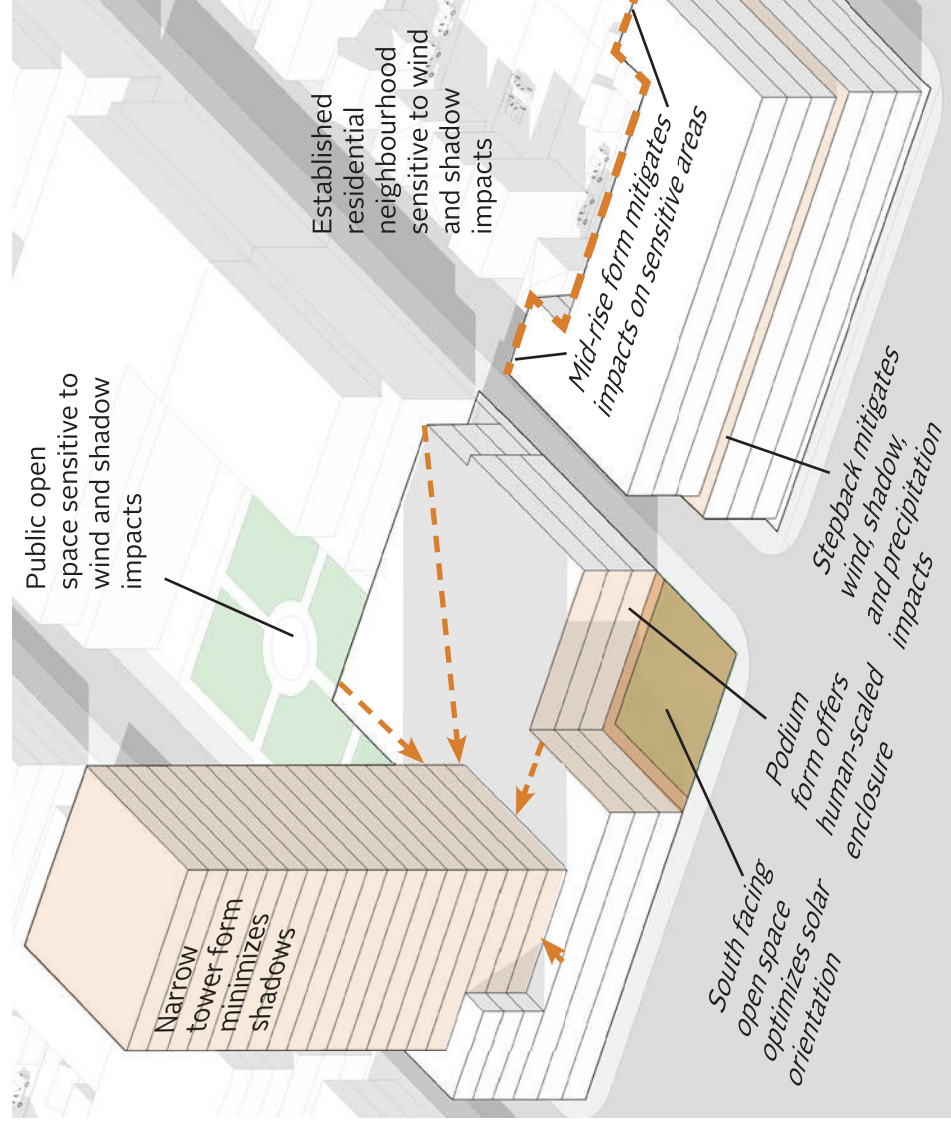
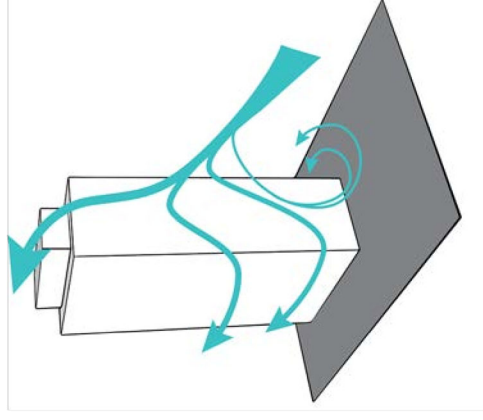


Figure 4: Representation of Site Planning and Design - 4

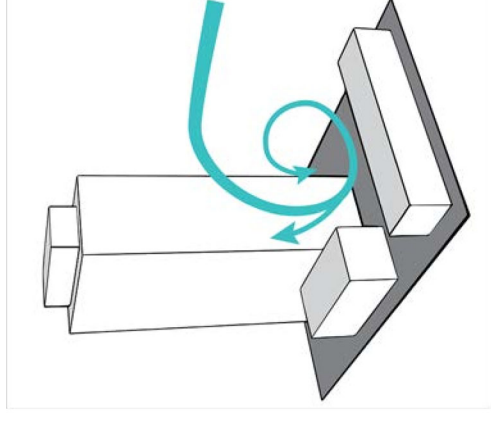
How: Active and animated spaces, such as streetwalls and publicly accessible open spaces, are most successful when their design has been informed by optimal solar orientation, wind impact mitigation, and opportunities for protection from precipitation. Generally, mitigating the impact of wind also mitigates negative impacts of precipitation.

Examples of the successful application of this criterion include:

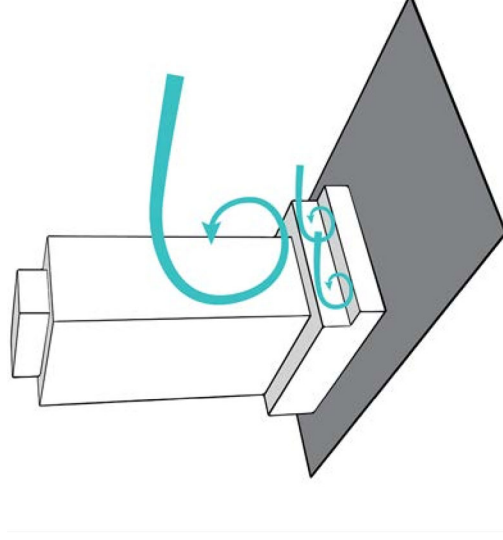
- designing building and locating towers to minimize shadow impacts on abutting open spaces, particularly public open spaces and sidewalks;
- maximizing streetwall setbacks to mitigate shadow and wind impacts on sidewalks;
- maximizing all setbacks to upper storeys to mitigate impacts of shadow and wind on residents, the public realm, and abutting residential uses; and
- designing front yards and patios to provide clear access to weather protection directly from the sidewalk.



Example 1: Large sheer walls multiply wind impact



Example 2: Small abutting buildings can mitigate wind impact off site



Examples 3 and 4: Building setbacks and projections such as canopies mitigate wind impacts on and off site

SITE PLANNING AND DESIGN - 5

Criteria 5: The proposed development locates and scales utilities, services, and parking to mitigate negative impacts on the public realm and neighbouring properties

RATIONALE

What: Most developments require places for utilities, services, and parking. The scale, location, and orientation of these elements typically affect pedestrians negatively.

Why: People will avoid open spaces with high volumes of vehicle traffic, that are unsightly or have bad odours. Back-of-house services are not typically conducive to pedestrian-friendly places. Such open spaces compromise principles and goals related to animation in the streetwall. Yards abutting public spaces and publicly accessible open spaces, are most successful when services, utilities, and parking areas are not a part of the spaces. Where they must be a part of the space, thoughtful design decisions can mitigate their impact on the public realm and existing residential areas.

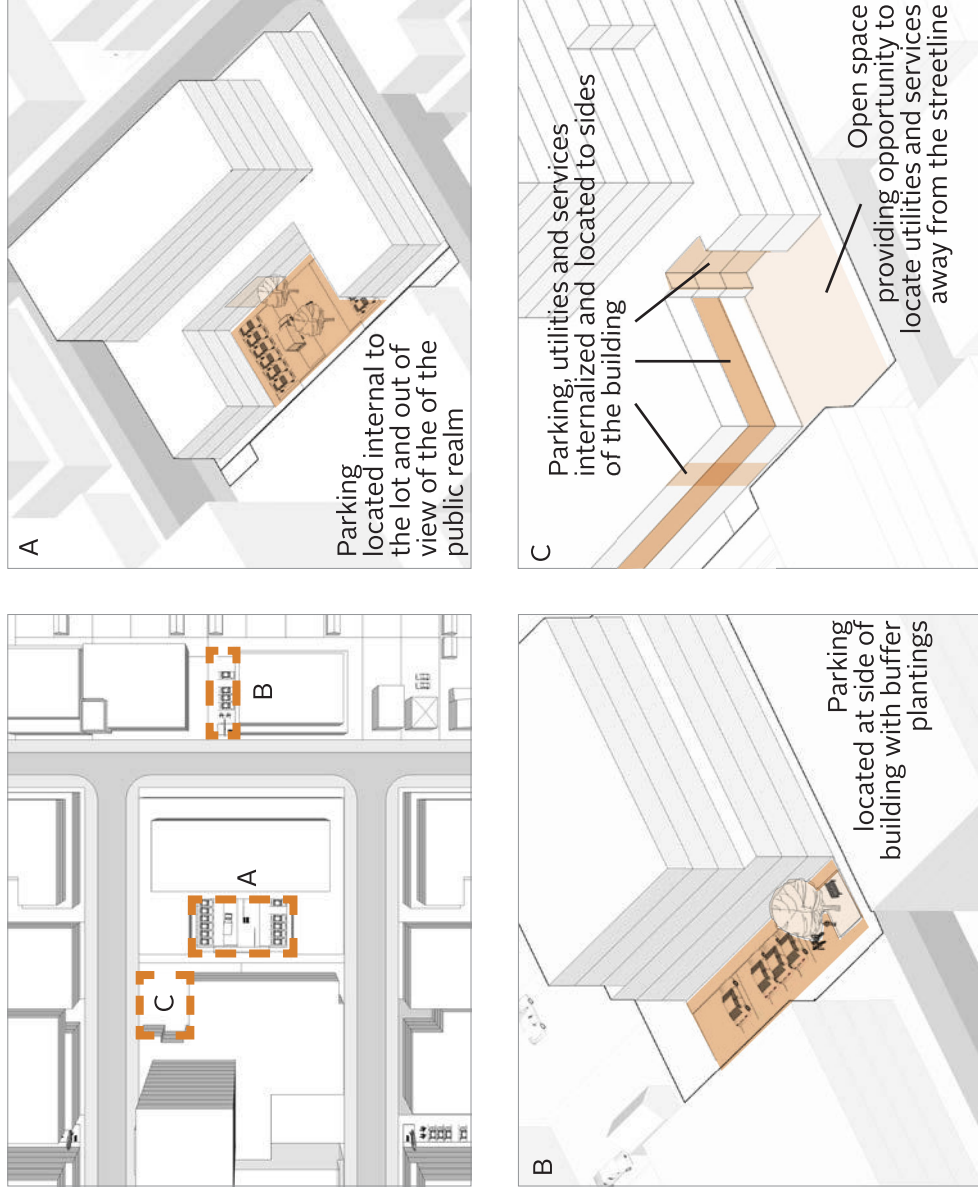


Figure 5: Representation of Site Planning and Design - 5

How: Integrating utilities, services, and parking into building and open space design, along with buffering techniques, can minimize their impact on the public realm and neighbouring properties.

Examples of the successful application of this criterion include:

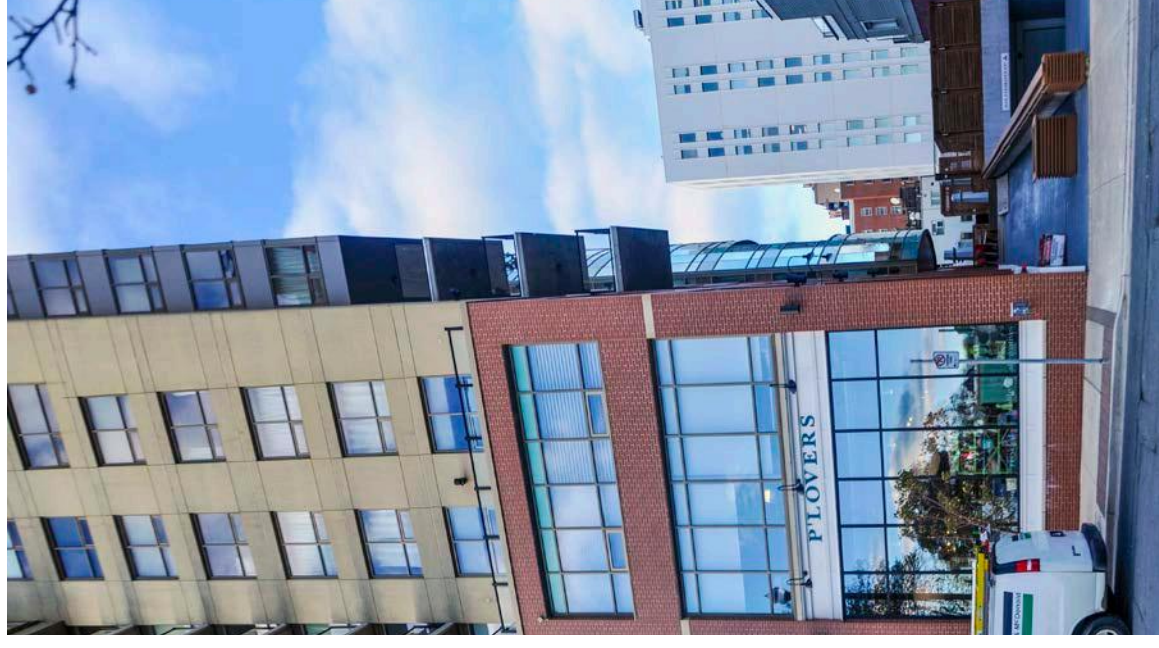
- internalizing services, utilities, and parking areas;
- locating services, utilities, and parking areas out of view of the streetline;
- locating access points and parking out of view of the streetline;
- creating shared parking for different peak times
- minimizing the scale of utilities;
- locating utilities and garbage collection areas internal to buildings when possible, and screened from public view with landscaping or enclosures when they must be located externally;
- locating shared parking so users can park once for multiple stops and encourage visits to surrounding shops and;
- Designing shared parking to consider pedestrian safety, including lighting and pedestrian pathways.



Example 1: Parking located to the rear of a building



Example 2: Shared parking for users to park once for multiple stops



Example 3: Parking entrance located away from the streetwall, to the side of a building

SITE PLANNING AND DESIGN - 6

Criteria 6: Established residential areas support complete communities, connectivity, and transit use

RATIONALE

What: The Regional Municipal Planning Strategy directs the majority of new development in transit corridors and growth centres. However, even lower-density neighbourhoods should be complete communities. Active transportation should be well integrated from the beginning in new communities to maximize connectivity. New and existing lower-density developments should make access to transit both convenient and attractive for residents to require a less dependence on automobiles. Incorporating different housing options and local commercial uses can support the daily needs of residents and the creation of complete communities.

Why: The Municipality aims to improve mobility options for all areas of the region, ideally encouraging high degrees of walkability and connectivity within all neighbourhoods. Establishing and enhancing pre-existing connections can help to increase overall connectivity for established residential areas, which are also important for the safety of residential areas in the event of an emergency. New lower-density developments should establish street and active transportation connections early on in the process and consider transitions to the neighbouring buildings and land uses.



Example 1: Emphasizing dwelling front doors and landscaping to contribute to streetscaping

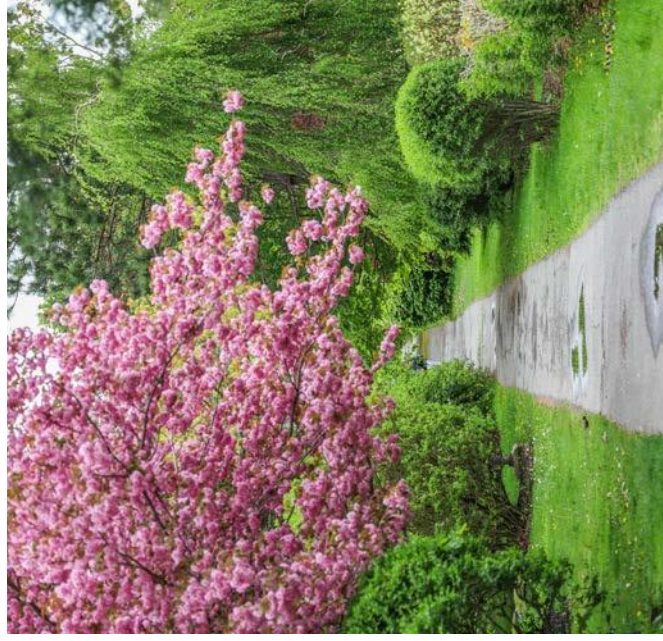
How: The design of lower-density developments has a significant impact on surrounding areas and future comprehensive growth of the community. Every development can advance connections, minimize impacts on ecological features, and have a pedestrian-friendly and transit-supportive focus from the beginning.

Examples of the successful application of low-density development criterion include:

- allow for a range of lower-density housing options, including multi-plexes, townhouses and low-rise apartments to support “missing middle” housing;
- incorporate local commercial uses to support daily needs of residents, including around transit bus stops and terminals;
- create or enhance streets and sidewalks to bus stops, transit terminals, community facilities and to the surrounding communities;
- avoid discontinuous streets and introduce new connections where they are already present based on a grid or modified grid framework;
- provide a gradual transition from higher-density development to existing lower-density neighbourhoods;
- allow attached dwellings to share driveways to maximize greenspace;
- use landscape buffers between abutting residential and commercial uses;
- emphasize dwelling front doors over windows and garages; and
- locate community amenities adjacent to high activity areas such as parks, walkways, transit stops, and so on.



Example 2: Range of lower-density housing options



Example 3: Neighbourhood pedestrian connection to promote connectivity



Example 4: Introducing gentle density that supports neighborhood character (Photo from Kelly Clark)

SITE PLANNING AND DESIGN - 7

Criteria 7: The proposed development supports and respects the natural environment

RATIONALE

What: The Municipality is home to a rich and geographically diverse natural environment. New developments, particularly when expanding into more ecologically sensitive areas, must take this into account. The natural environment should be incorporated into new developments and supported through various features. Choices in design should aim to mitigate and prevent impacts to the natural environment, but also avoid or mitigate natural hazards on development such as flooding, erosion, climate change impacts and the potential for wildfires.

Why: The Municipality's natural environment plays an integral part in many natural physical systems that are important for everyone. In addition, the natural environment is an integral part of the region's identity. With growth and development pressures continuing to heighten it is vital to consider the role of the natural environment amongst developments. All developments have a role in preserving, promoting, and enhancing the natural environment.



How: Developments will always have varying degrees on the natural environment. By working with and not against, developments can preserve and protect critical features of the natural environment.

Examples of the successful application of low-density development criterion include:

- allow for a range of lower-density housing options, including multi-plexes, townhouses and low-rise apartments to support “missing middle” housing;
- conserve natural topography, watercourse buffers and features that support connected greenspaces and ecological functions;
- avoid areas that may be hazardous to development, such as steep slopes and wet areas;
- use forms of vegetation to both transition to and support the built form;
- use different forms of vegetation to support different types of habitats;
- when the preservation of existing vegetation is not possible introduce new forms to support local ecosystems;
- maintain landscape buffers around natural features for enhanced protection;
- use landscaping as a means of achieving other design purposes such as streetscaping;
- design stormwater management to contribute to greenspace and pedestrian infrastructure; and
- maintain a landscape buffer to natural greenspaces to protect ecological character and mitigate risk of wildfires.



Example 3: Vegetation introduced in the development to support the natural environment



Example 1: Integrating design elements with the landscape



Example 2: Use of landscaping to contribute to streetscaping



2.3

OPEN SPACE DESIGN

Open Space Design is generally concerned with the design of spaces that are not occupied by buildings, parking, or driveways. This includes the design and organization of those spaces, such as landscaping, materials, furniture, small structures, weather protection, monuments, and cultural artifacts.

Criteria contained in the Open Space Design section are intended to guide the design of open space that provides positive experiences for people and support a transit oriented, pedestrian friendly, and human-scaled public realm throughout the region.



OPEN SPACE DESIGN - 1

Criteria 1: Open spaces in the proposed development are designed to reflect existing neighbourhood aesthetic themes and enhance the public realm

RATIONALE

What: A neighbourhood theme can be apparent in open space design through the use of materials, plantings, and patterns. An aesthetic theme refers to a collection of such details in an area. This occurs when multiple sites use the same or similar materials and finishing, colours, landscaping and other details, often reflecting a specific era, style, or design intent.

Why: Within the region many areas contain distinct or subtle aesthetic themes that contribute to the sense of place for the area. Incorporating elements from a theme into the design of open spaces reinforces the character of an area. Landscaping or open space design that dramatically contrasts a designed or inherent theme, can negatively impact the look, feel, and desirability of the area, and be seen to have a lack of regard for the context.

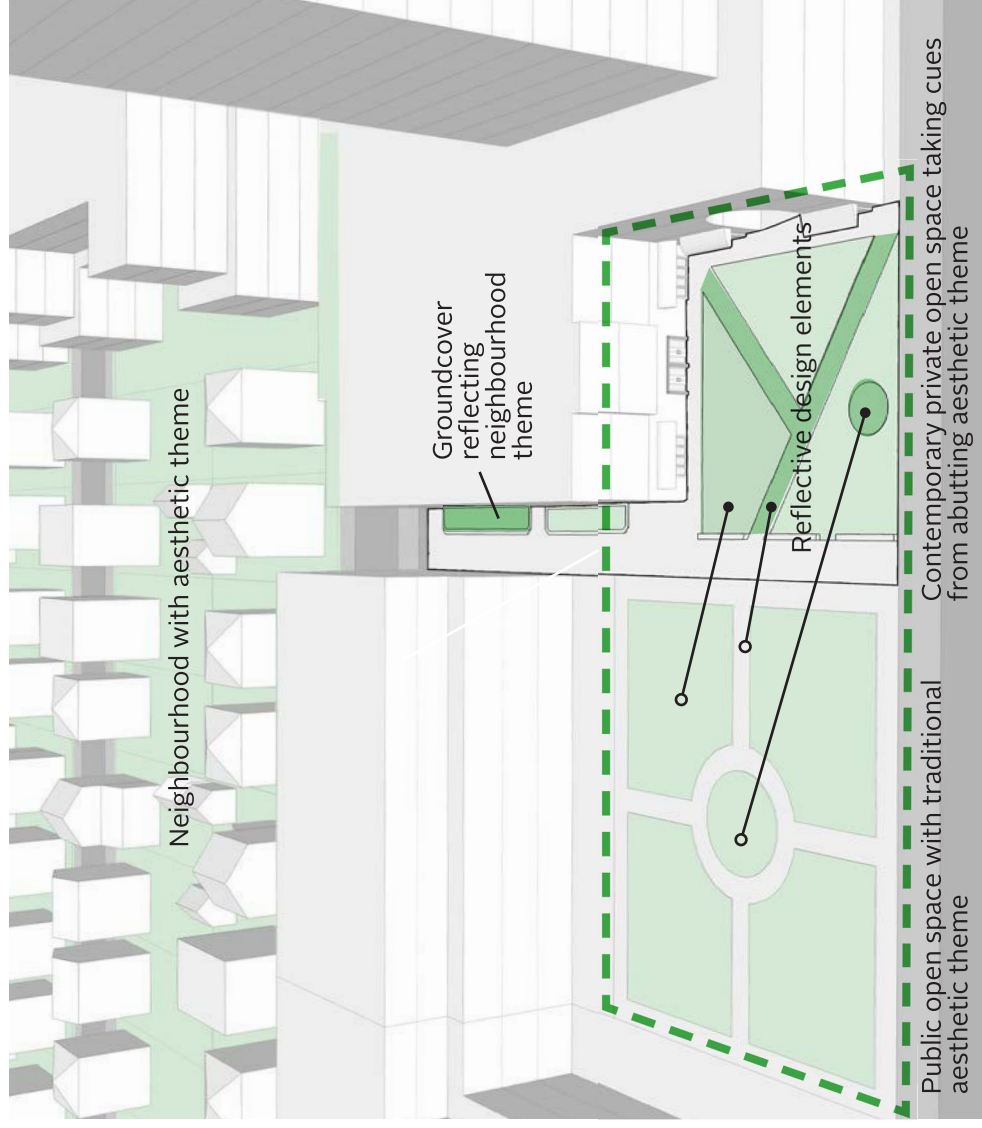


Figure 6: Representation of Open Space Design - 1

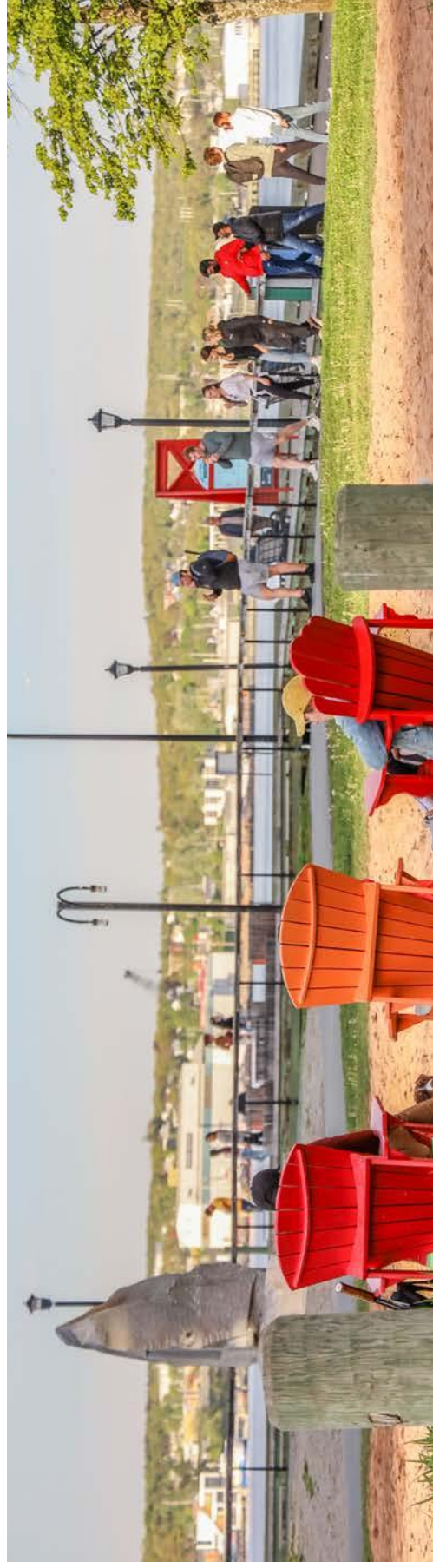
How: Where an area has an existing aesthetic theme(s), successful developments use that context to inform design decisions. Where there is no clear theme, or the theme conflicts with the community design goals and policies, the design of open spaces should be informed the Land Use By-law.

Examples of the successful application of this criterion include:

- designing all open spaces with material and colour patterns that
 - are traditionally found within the neighbourhood,
 - reflect or complement abutting public spaces, and
 - reflect or complement abutting heritage assets and cultural resources;
- designing open spaces with plantings and greenery that reflect or complement plantings or greenery on abutting properties;
- designing publicly accessible open spaces with surface materials that link with and expand upon the design of abutting open spaces; and
- using lighting options that complement the site as well as abutting open spaces or building design.



Example 1: Open space and building reflect the historic grainery context (Photo by Geoffrey Creighton)



Example 2: Open space material and colour patterns reflect Halifax Waterfront character

OPEN SPACE DESIGN - 2

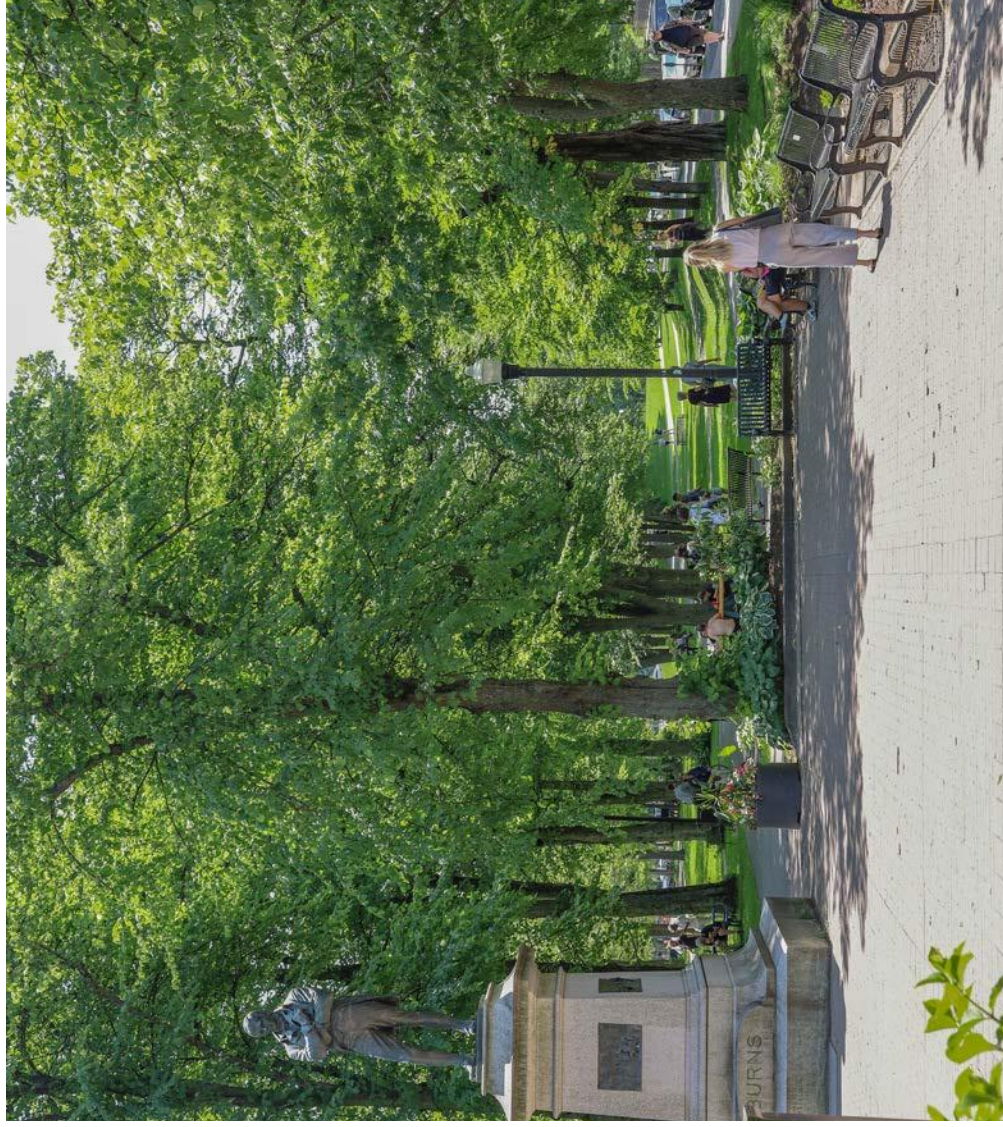
Criteria 2: Open spaces in the proposed development are designed to be accessible to all

RATIONALE

What: Designing an open space to be accessible is about design choices that encourages active transportation and enable pedestrians, including people using mobility devices such as wheelchairs, to easily access and interact with the space. This includes built components of the space as well as other elements that do not specifically relate to physical access.

Why: Traditional open spaces have many access issues and are not accessible or receptive to a wide range of people. Some places are hard to access for many people for all or most of the year, particularly in the winter. This is often a reflection of the materials chosen for ground cover and pathways, a lack of accessibility tools or technology, or a lack of appreciation of what it means to be accessible for all ages and abilities.

Welcoming people of all ages and abilities is important because everyone should feel comfortable and free to move throughout their communities and neighbourhoods. This supports complete communities as it pertains to accessing housing, services, amenities, and activities. Open spaces that relegate accessibility infrastructure and segregate a particular group, such as ramps away from common entrances, contradict the principles of complete communities.

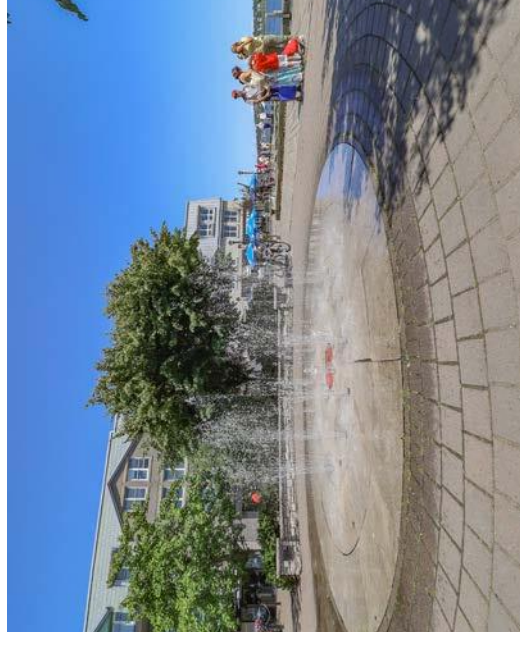


Example 1: Robert Burns Plaza, Halifax

How: Successful open space design incorporates accessibility measures and, specifically responds to the needs of the development site's associated communities and neighbourhoods. Open spaces that integrate accessible features are most successful when they complement urban design and do not draw overt attention to any particular mobility challenge.

Examples of the successful application of this criterion include:

- designing open spaces with
 - both passive and active spaces that consider diverse users,
 - clearly defined barrier free access points,
 - a variety of accessibility tools to help users navigate the space such as signs, tactile strips, audible features, and landmarks,
 - flat, smooth, and slip-resistant surfaces as to not act as a barrier to any means of mobility,
 - clearly lit pathways and gathering spaces, and
 - Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) practices; and
- where there is a narrow sidewalk, designing open spaces in the front yard that act to extend the hard landscaping treatment of the sidewalk.



Example 2: Barrier free open space and amenity on the Halifax Waterfront



Example 3: Barrier free open space and amenity in Fishermens Cove

Criteria 3: Open spaces used as amenity space are designed to optimize pedestrian comfort and interaction

RATIONALE

What: Pedestrian safety, comfort and interaction are highly dependent on the purpose of the space and designing human-scaled spaces to mitigate the intensity and scale of the surrounding or abutting community environments, providing respite when needed or desirable. For example, gathering places need relatively large open areas, various seating options, and opportunities for social interaction.

Why: Open spaces designed for pedestrian comfort show concern for both physical comfort from weather, and the social well-being of the users. Various degrees of flexibility are generally desirable for most spaces. Consideration must also be given to the experience of people with diverse characteristics and intersectionality, such as age and gender, or gender and ethnic status.

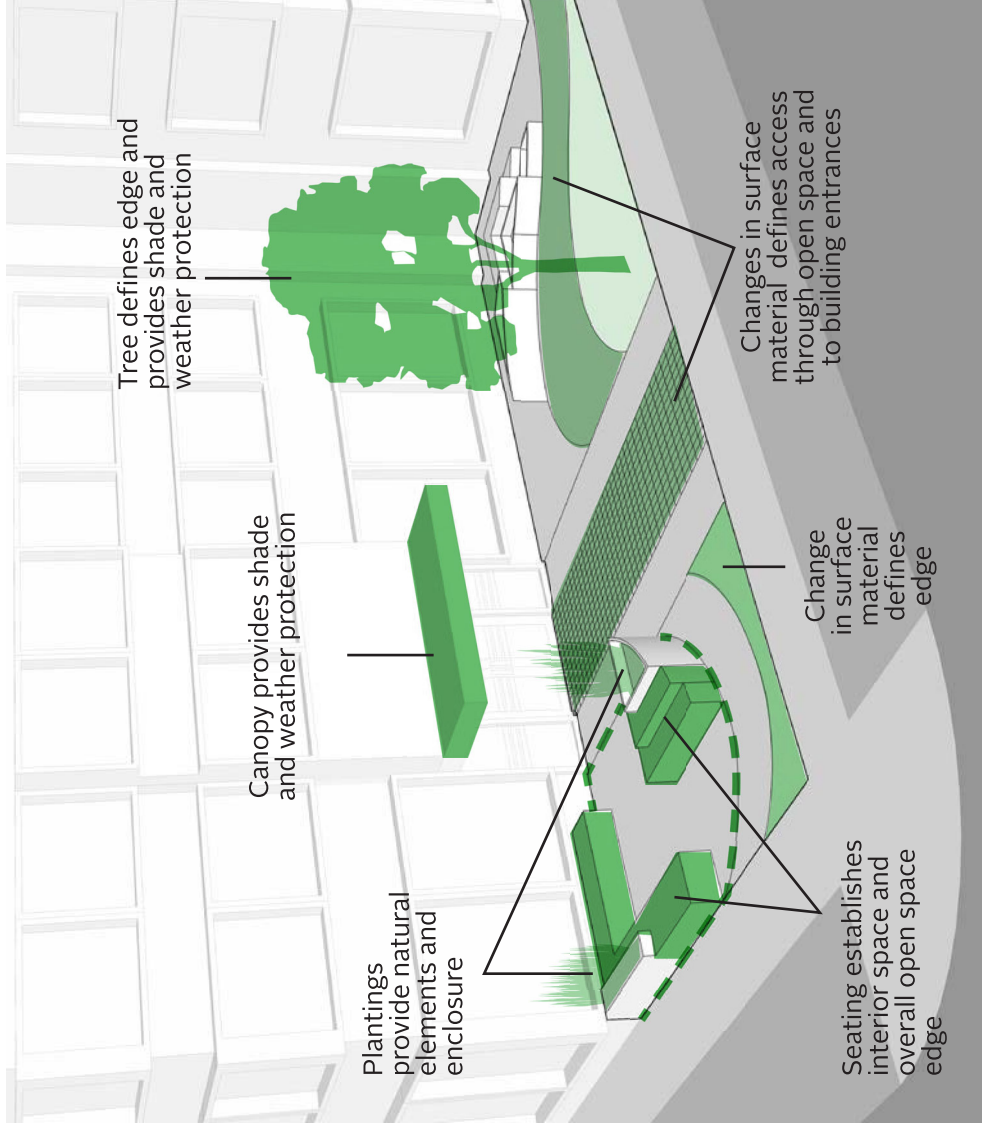


Figure 7: Representation of Open Space Design - 3

How: Active and animated open spaces, such as streetwalls and publicly accessible open spaces, are most successful when their design has been informed by minimizing shadow, minimizing wind impacts, and providing protection from precipitation. Successful open spaces are designed with the purpose of helping to complete communities in the area. Design can reflect physical and non-physical aspirations.

Examples of the successful application of this criterion include:

- designing open spaces with:
 - trees and a variety of human-scaled elements such as vegetation, planters, chairs, and short stone walls,
 - multiple seating options,
 - pedestrian weather protection from wind, sun and precipitation,
 - design open spaces with interactive elements such as, public art, cultural artifacts, monuments, memorial pieces, picnic areas, and so on, and
 - multiple access points, well-lit pathways, and gathering spaces;
- designing large open spaces with a variety of smaller spaces that reflect different purposes;
- defining the boundaries of open space using treatments such as changes in materials, seating, and plantings;
- integrating abutting facades with canopies and awnings into open space programming;
- maintaining sightlines into open spaces;
- using awnings, canopies, plantings, or moveable furniture;
- avoiding blank walls abutting open spaces;
- integrating the architecture of the building into the open space;
- retaining existing trees which enhance the open space; and
- in areas where there is a narrow sidewalk, designing open spaces in the front yard to extend the same hard landscaping treatment as the sidewalk.



Example 1: Open space with seating options and well defined spaces integrated into the existing pedestrian network



Example 2: Commercial set-back containing seating, tables and providing weather protection

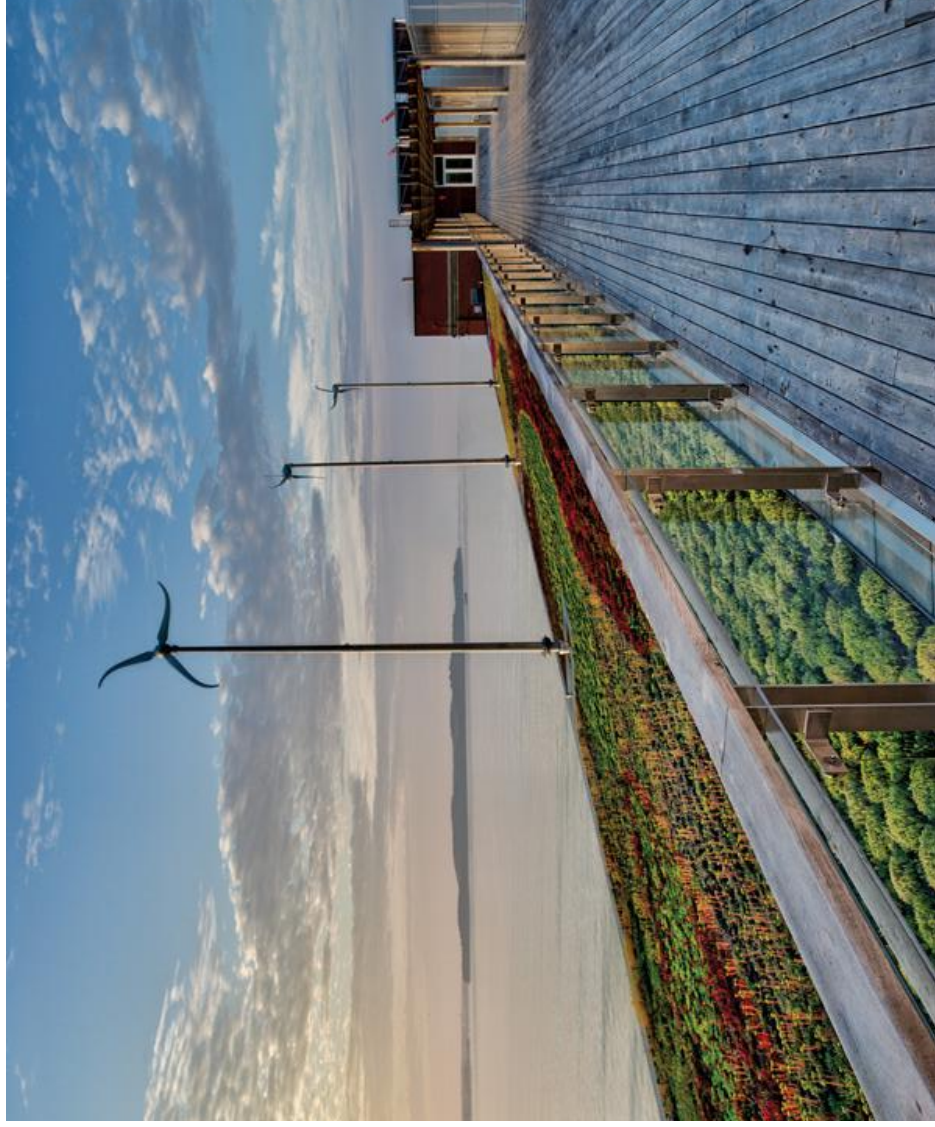
OPEN SPACE DESIGN - 4

Criteria 4: Open spaces are designed to incorporate sustainable landscape practices

RATIONALE

What: Sustainable landscape practices are design solutions that positively impact the environment and raise public awareness of sustainable practices.

Why: Planting native plant species and trees diversifies and strengthens the native vegetation in the region. New innovations in landscaping technology and materials can be used to push creativity in design solutions. A public realm that is designed with regard for sustainable landscape practices is responsive to the environment and actively contributes to the health of the immediate area, its users, and ultimately the region.



Example 1: Roof of a building in Downtown Halifax

How: Sustainable landscape practices use the benefits of natural systems to:

- manage stormwater capture, infiltration, and water filtration;
- reduce urban heat island effects through different landscaping materials; and
- create habitats for urban wildlife by planting trees and vegetation.

Examples of the successful application of this criterion include:

- using salt-tolerant plant and tree species that can withstand the local environment and climate;
- using native and non-invasive species;
- providing space for gardens for the residents of the development;
- protecting the required landscaping at time of installation;
- using light-coloured and other hard surfaces to manage the urban heat island effect and slow stormwater discharge;
- reducing light pollution with full cut-off light fixtures, automatic shut-off devices and illuminating features with multiple directed lights rather than one broad coverage light;
- using edible plantings, such as fruit trees, to support food security;
- using green walls into the design of open spaces;
- using street furniture constructed from sustainable or recycled materials;
- providing protection for existing natural features and trees; and
- maximizing on-site stormwater capture, infiltration, and reuse through rain gardens, dry-wells, and so on.



Example 2: Gardens help support food security and active lifestyles (Photo by Andi Lo)



Example 3: Soil cells support healthy trees

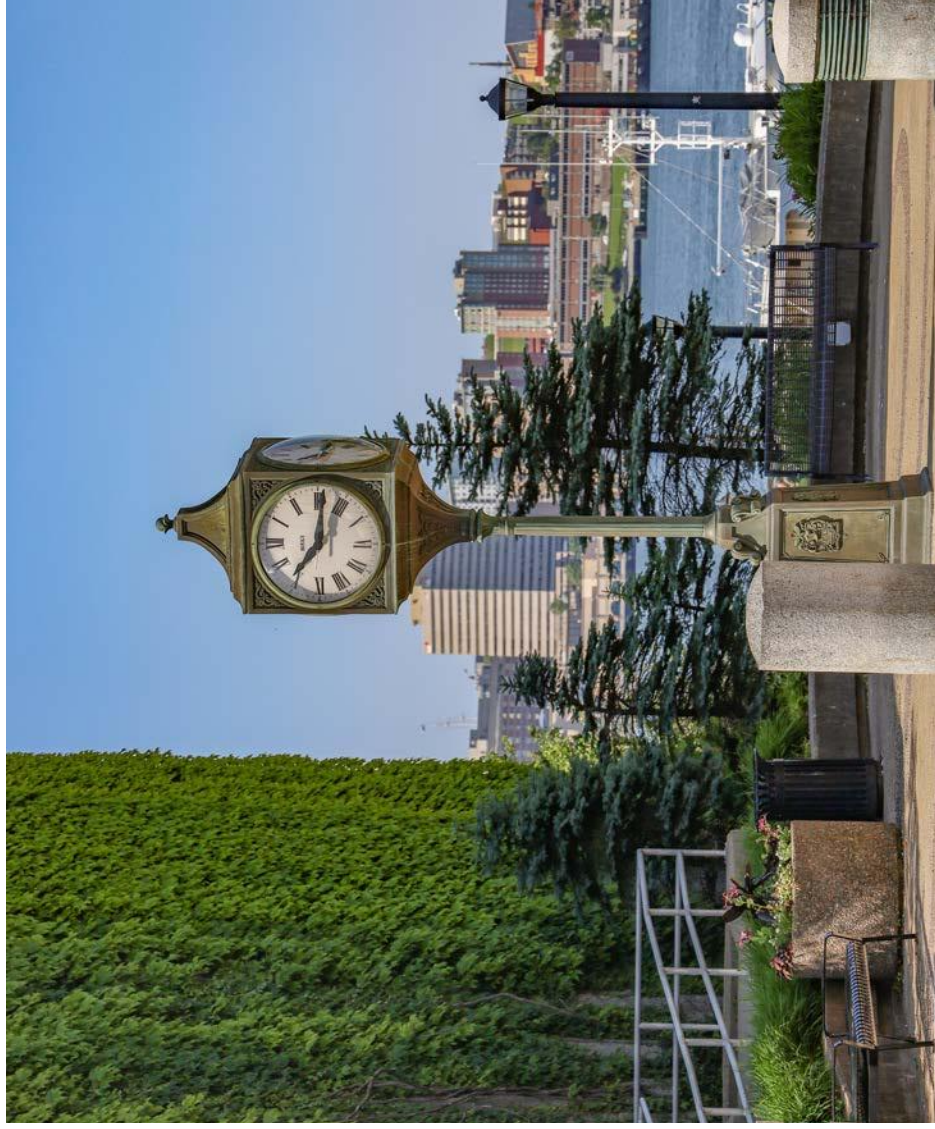
OPEN SPACE DESIGN - 5

Criteria 5: Open spaces are designed with durable, high quality materials

RATIONALE

What: Durable, high-quality materials are those that reflect a thoughtful design process and result in permanence and stability. In this regard, a thoughtful design process determines what durability and high-quality means for the site and its context, including climate. Materials include vegetation.

Why: Material selection for open space elements and surfaces can greatly influence the use of the space. Open spaces that offer interesting elements such as trees, places to sit and places to gather, without the benefit of inviting and human-scaled materials, can result in underutilized and unattractive spaces. The exclusive use of hardscaping can be a deterrent for those seeking out natural or naturalized areas, whereas using all softscaping, can be a deterrent for those with mobility challenges or anyone visiting the space following recent precipitation. Materials that are not suited to their context and deteriorate easily generally represent poor design decisions, low quality development, and lack of investment.



Example 1: Open space on Alderney Drive, Dartmouth

How: Success occurs when open spaces use a range of lasting, quality materials, that can withstand the local environment and climate, and provide multiple attractive and inviting sub spaces. This promotes the full and consistent use of an open space, for all users in different seasons and weather conditions.

Examples of the successful application of this criterion include:

- using materials with a proven track record of durability in the local climate or with evidence that it can withstand the local climate;
- using a range of vegetation adapted to the local environments such as grass and groundcover plantings for softscaping;
- using stone, masonry, or wood as the primary materials for hardscaping and built elements of proposed open spaces;
- using wood or a combination of wood, masonry, and stone for site furniture and related elements;
- avoiding the use of asphalt; and
- avoiding the exclusive use of hard or softscaping materials.



Example 2: Patios and setbacks contain materials requiring minimal maintenance



Example 3: Surface materials, public art, lighting, seating and vegetation chosen for durability in harsh climate, and reflect character of context.



2.4 BUILDING DESIGN

Building Design is generally concerned with the design and organization of buildings and accessory structures. This includes the design and organization of the elements of a building such as streetwalls, podiums, the upper storeys, building materials, lighting, signage, parking, services, and utilities.

Criteria contained in the Building Design section are intended to guide the design of buildings that provides positive experiences for people and support a transit oriented, pedestrian-friendly, and human-scaled public realm throughout the region.



BUILDING DESIGN - 1

Criteria 1: Buildings are designed with clearly established streetwalls containing distinct, narrow sections that reflect neighbourhood character and fine-grained lot fabric

RATIONALE

What: The streetwall of a building is the wall or portion of a wall facing a streetline below the height of a specified setback. In stepped buildings, the streetwall is considered the building podium upon which a tower or successive elevations above the streetwall sit or land. The streetwall is below any significantly stepped portions of the façade. In the public realm, it is the most prominent and visible portion of a building.

Why: The two main components of a streetwall that impact pedestrians are height and articulation. The Municipality strives to have the predominant character of a fine-grained, pedestrian-friendly and human-scaled environment. This supports transit oriented design, and walkability, encourages a diversity of pedestrian experiences, promotes interactions with buildings, and helps to support complete communities. The fine-grained scale can vary to a limited degree between neighbourhoods, but becomes compromised with large expanses of homogeneous streetwalls, parking, or open spaces. Designing the entire streetwall, including the ground floor, to be fine-grained respects and reinforces the historic built form of fine-grained streetscapes. Establishing a specific streetwall height is important because height is directly linked to human scale and what pedestrians can comfortably observe and enjoy from the sidewalk.

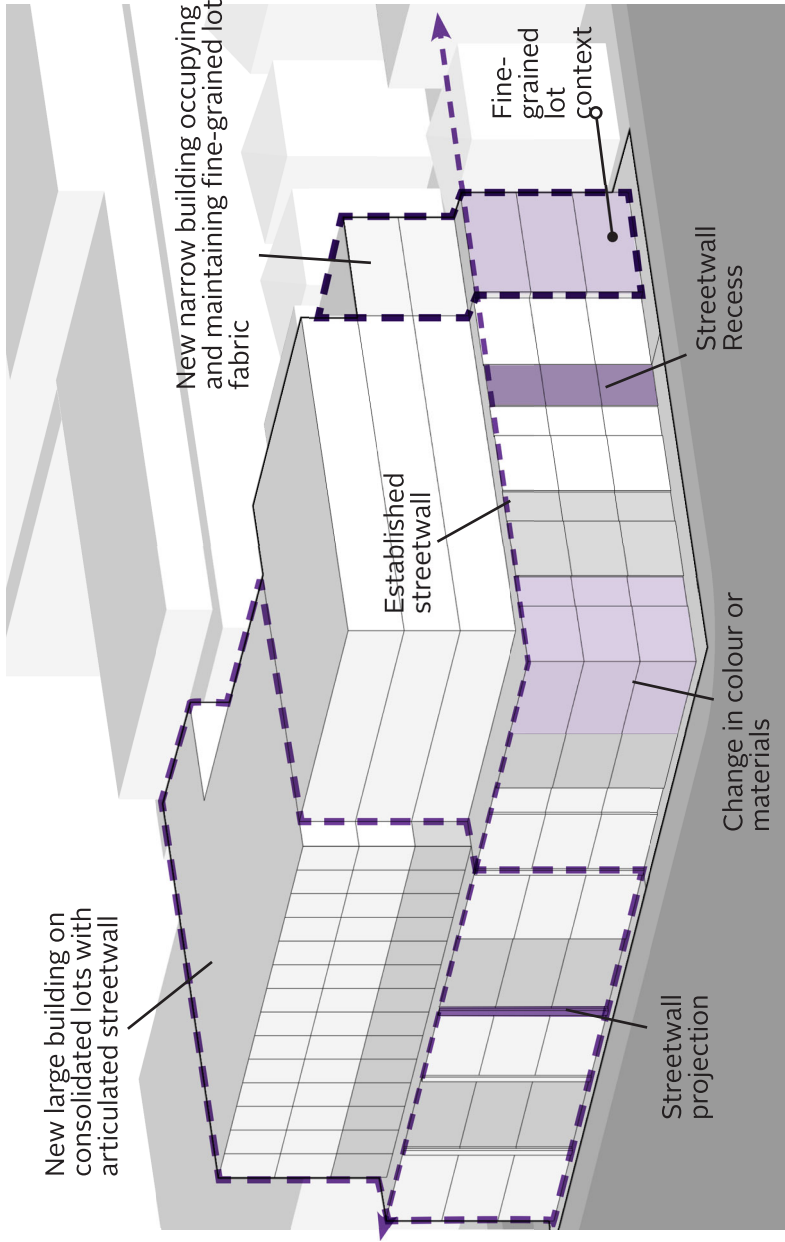


Figure 8: Representation of Building Design - 1

How: Where neighbourhood character is a fine-grained environment, successful developments use that context to inform design decisions. Success is generally achieved when the entire streetwall is articulated horizontally and vertically with an organized fine-grained rhythm.

Examples of the successful application of this criterion include:

- scaling building footprints to reflect the traditional lot fabric;
- designing buildings that are taller than wide, with narrow frontages;
- using combinations of projections, recesses, changes in materials, and variation in colour to identify distinct sections of the streetwall;
- designing buildings with dimensions that reflect those of abutting heritage buildings and streetscapes;
- retaining existing fine-grained lot fabric;
- minimizing scale of consolidated lots; and
- providing gaps in the streetwall when consistent with a fine-grained neighbourhood character.



Example 1: Narrow building reflecting traditional lot fabric



Example 2: Large building on consolidated lots with fine-grained streetwall



Example 3: Narrow building reflecting traditional lot fabric

BUILDING DESIGN - 2

Streetwalls are designed with a high level of transparency, and a variety of coordinated human-scaled elements that reflect existing neighbourhood aesthetic themes

RATIONALE

What: Human-scaled elements are the details of a building that reflect the scale of people such as materials, colours, doors, windows, projections, recesses, and other architectural features. Transparent elements are those that allow people to see from the public realm to the interior of a building. An aesthetic theme is a collection of those details coordinated in a specific pattern. Such a theme is easily recognized in a streetwall, when alternate bays or vertical sections of the streetwall, use the same grouping or arrangement of materials, colours and other design techniques. The result can be a design intent that is unique to the building or representative of a specific architectural era, style or other consideration.

Why: Many areas have established aesthetic themes that have been preserved and celebrated through diligent upkeep and maintenance. Incorporating elements from an inherent theme into the design of new buildings reinforces the character of an area. Built form that dramatically contrasts a designed or inherent theme, can negatively impact the look or feel of the area.

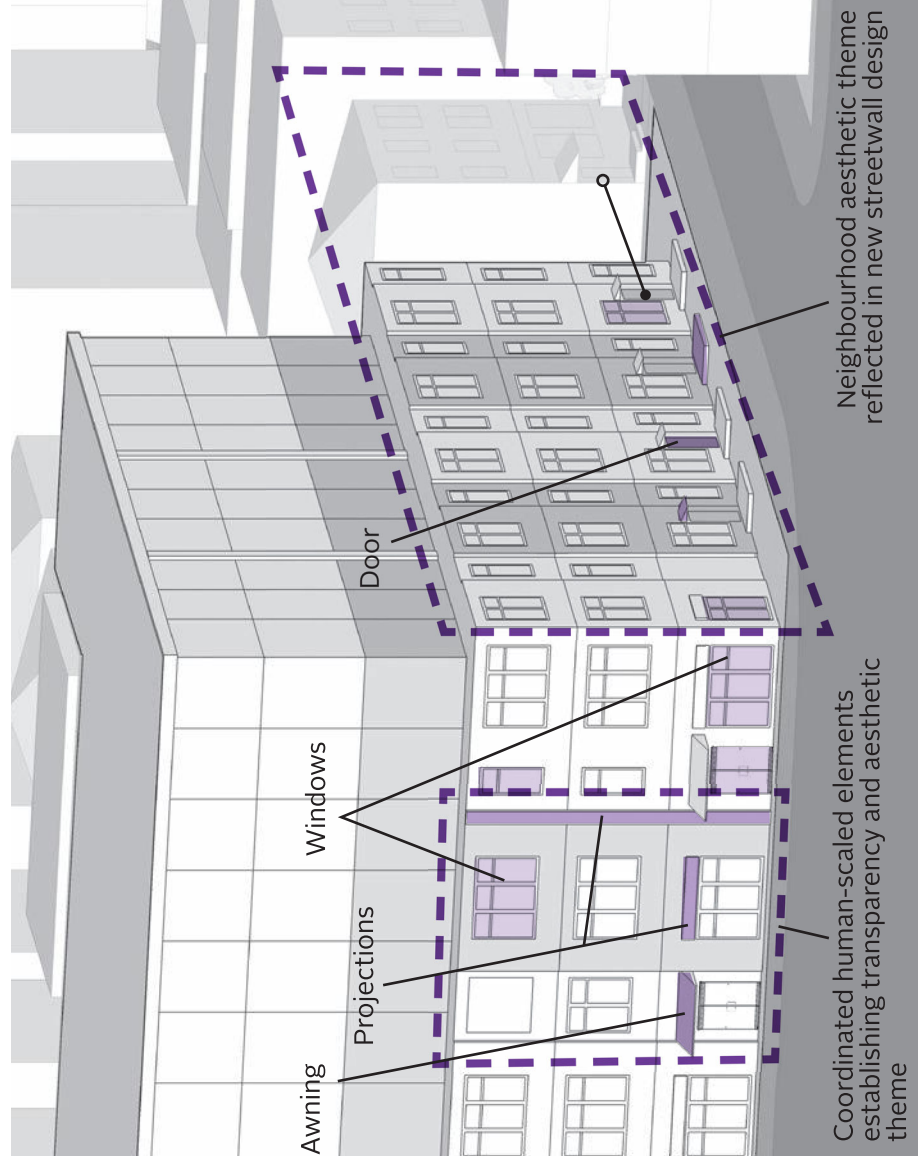


Figure 9: Representation of Building Design - 2

How: Where an area has a clear aesthetic theme, successful developments are those that use that context to inform design decisions. Where there is no clear aesthetic theme, buildings should be designed as outlined within the Land Use By-law and supporting policies.

Examples of the successful application of this criterion include:

- for each section of the streetwall, providing consistent architectural treatment and materials from grade to the top of the streetwall;
- articulating the vertical and horizontal internal functions of the building through façade elements such as doors and windows;
- where there is a heritage context or a traditional streetwall theme, mirroring those themes;
- using retail bays or grade-related units to articulate streetwalls vertically;
- aligning entrances with each distinct section of the streetwall;
- using operable windows to allow for interaction between building residents and the street;
- continuing the use of high-quality materials around building corners and onto facades fronting open spaces;
- avoiding blank walls, opaque glazing, and long frontages without active entrances;
- avoiding homogeneity of building materials on the ground floor such as curtain wall glazing;
- providing seats, short walls, or other elements that can be used for seating;
- designing porches to be located close to the street to provide opportunities for interaction between residents and pedestrians; and
- emulating established patterns of fenestration, doors and entryways using high quality materials which complement the neighbourhood character, while avoiding imitations.



Example 1: Building reflecting traditional container pier context (Photo by Julian Parkinson)



Example 2: Fishermens Cove in Eastern Passage retains its traditional character

BUILDING DESIGN - 3

Criteria 3: Streetwalls are designed with frequent and clearly distinguished entrances

RATIONALE

What: Clearly distinguishable entrances are openings in the streetwall that are designed to stand out as distinct access points to the interior of the building or site. Distinguishable entrances are clearly visible and accessible from the public realm. Frequency of entrances is about providing a diversity of opportunities for pedestrians to interact with uses internal to the building, and access large sites of buildings at multiple points.

Why: Well designed pedestrian entrances are distinct and act as more than simply a point of access. Pedestrian entrances to a building are sometimes designed strictly for functionality with little emphasis on the entrance as a prominent design element. These limited entrances often blend in with the surrounding cladding material and do little to define or emphasize the entrance point. Regardless of sloping conditions or grade, designing a building with frequent, legible, and emphasized pedestrian entrances reinforces fine-grained articulation, creates additional visual interest, enhances walkability, and welcomes people into the building. Clearly identified entrances also help improve wayfinding by allowing first time visitors, emergency responders, and delivery people to quickly and easily locate the building's entrances.

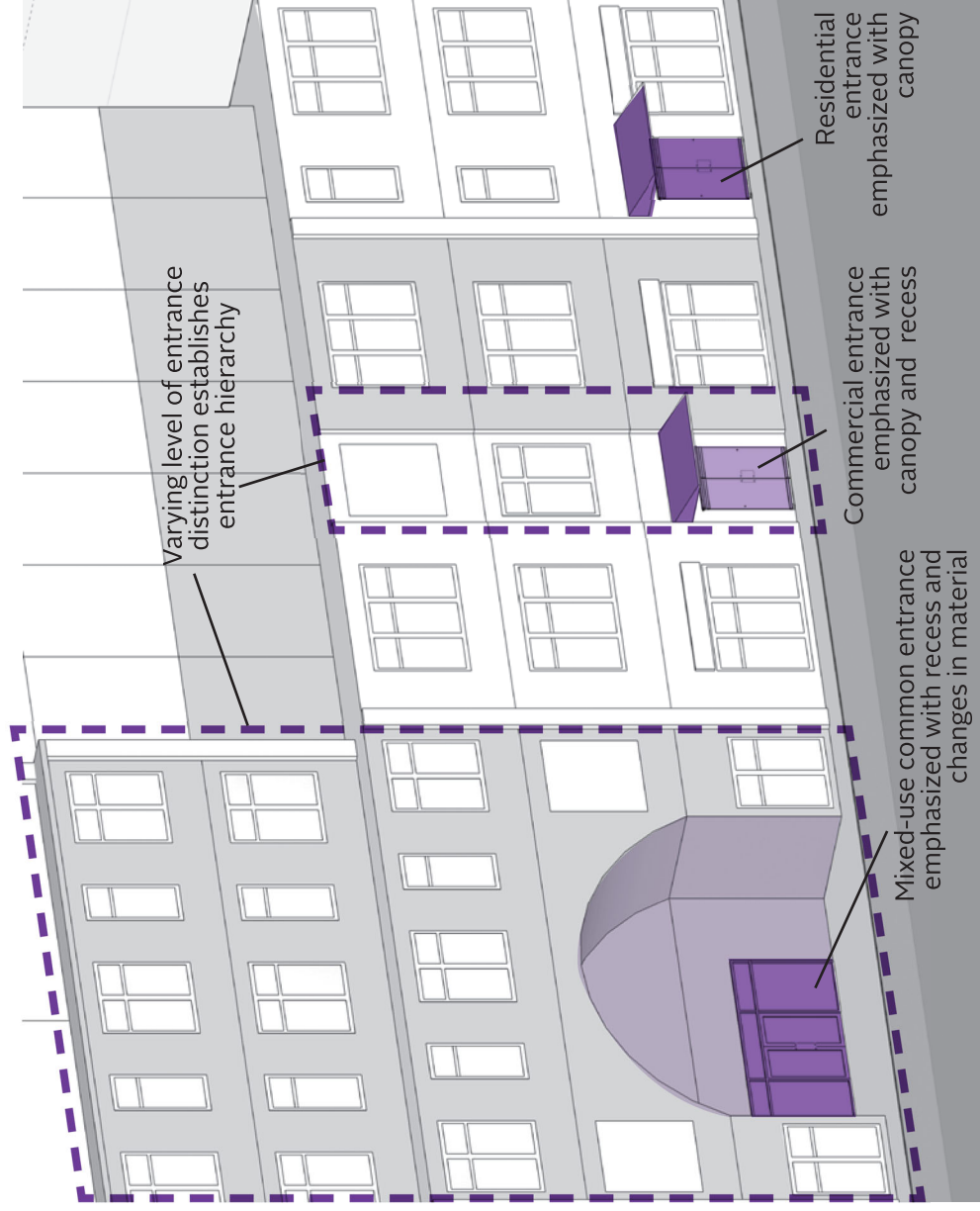
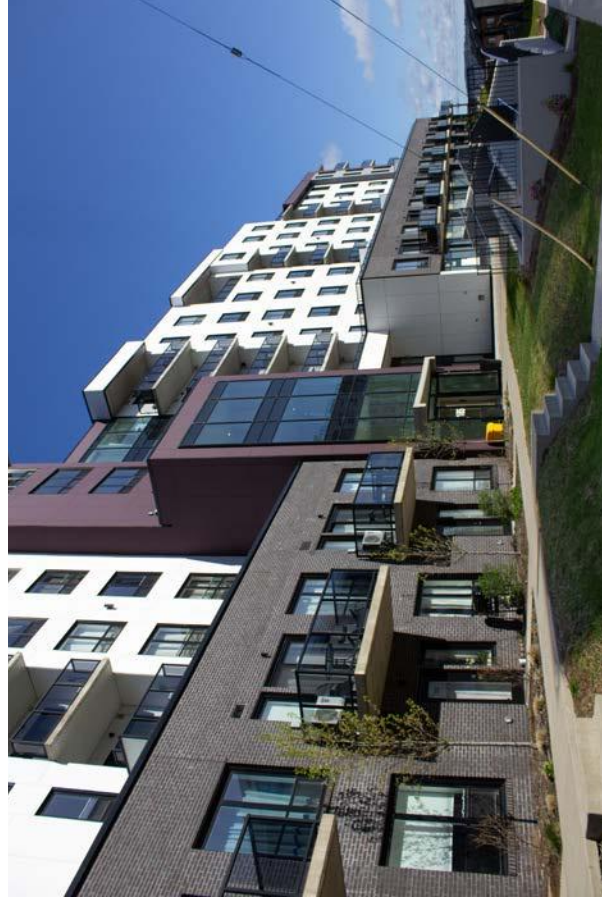


Figure 10: Representation of Building Design - 3

How: Success is achieved when the frequency and legibility of entrances are directly related to the purpose and scale of the building and site. Successful streetwalls emphasize their internal uses with distinct entrances that differentiate between commercial and residential uses.

Examples of the successful application of this criterion include providing:

- building entrances through one or more of the following expressions: height, width, recesses, canopies, awnings, or landscaping;
- separate canopies or awnings for each building entrance;
- building entrances with breaks in streetwalls, variation in streetwall height and sightlines;
- building entrances that are similar for both sloping and flat conditions;
- clearly distinguishable common entrances in the streetwall to access upper storey uses;
- clear signs to delineate residential entrances;
- distinct building entrances for residential and commercial entrances through architecture and design;
- focused lighting above building entrances;
- unobstructed entrances to the building;
- signs that identify a ground floor business or businesses located on upper storeys, above or adjacent to the entrance;
- making entrances clearly visible from a public street or walkway and accessed by a direct path;
- providing a transition from public to private spaces with landscaping or hardscaping, changes in materials or colours, or the inclusion of porches; and
- highlighting the entrance with architectural details such as transom windows, columns, projections, and decorative or colourful doors.



Example 1: Mixed use building with common residential entrance, ground unit entrances, and separated commercial entrances



Example 2: Commercial entrance visible from sidewalk with colourful door

BUILDING DESIGN - 4

Criteria 4: Buildings are designed to be accessible to all

RATIONALE

What: Access is about the design of buildings, so they may be accessed, and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age or ability. It promotes feeling of belonging and allows all individuals to participate in the urban life and vibrancy within and surrounding a building. Designing a building to be accessible is about design choices that enable pedestrians to easily access the building. This includes elements of the building that do not specifically relate to physical access such as signs and audible tools.

Why: Welcoming people of all ages and abilities is important because everyone should feel comfortable and free to move throughout their communities and neighbourhoods. This supports complete communities as it pertains to accessing housing, services, amenities, and activities. Building design that relegates accessibility infrastructure, such as ramps located away from common entrances, and segregates any particular group contradicts the principles of complete communities.



Example 1: Halifax Central Library on Spring Garden Road, Halifax

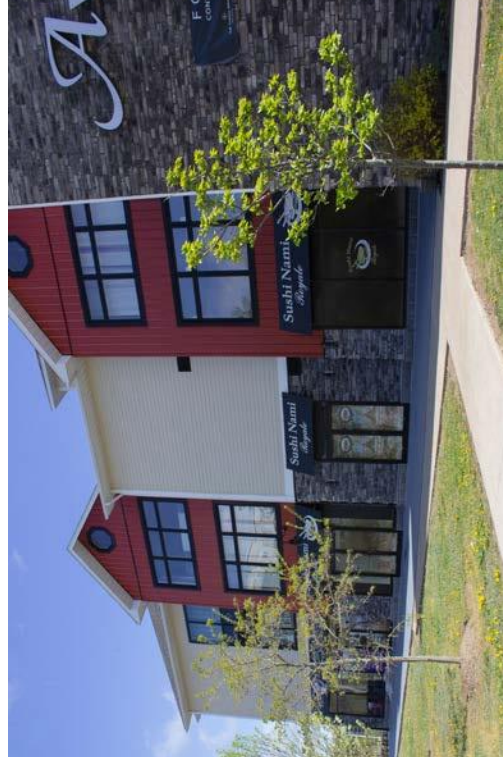
How: Successful building design incorporates accessibility measures and, specifically responds to the needs of associated communities and neighbourhoods. Buildings are most successful from an accessibility perspective when they do not compromise general best practice in urban design or, draw overt attention to any particular mobility challenge.

Examples of the successful application of this criterion include providing:

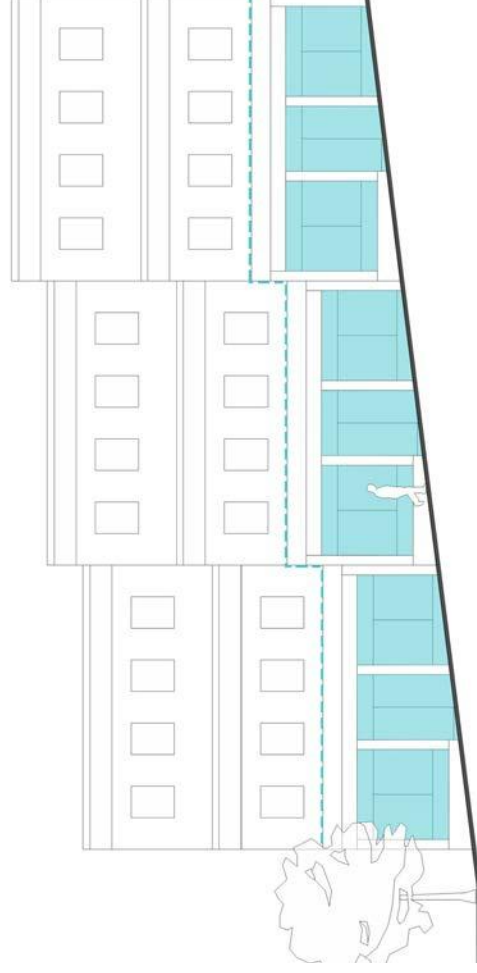
- at-grade entrances for direct access from the sidewalk to building entrances;
- internalized access ramps or, where external ramps are necessary, where possible avoid the access ramps running the length of the façade;
- signs indicating the location of accessible entrances and for wayfinding tools; and
- clearly delineated, safe and accessible pedestrian access routes though accessory surface parking areas.



Example 2: Building providing clear at grade accessible entrance



Example 4: At-grade entrance for direct access from sidewalk



Example 3: Stepped floor plates respond to grade changes

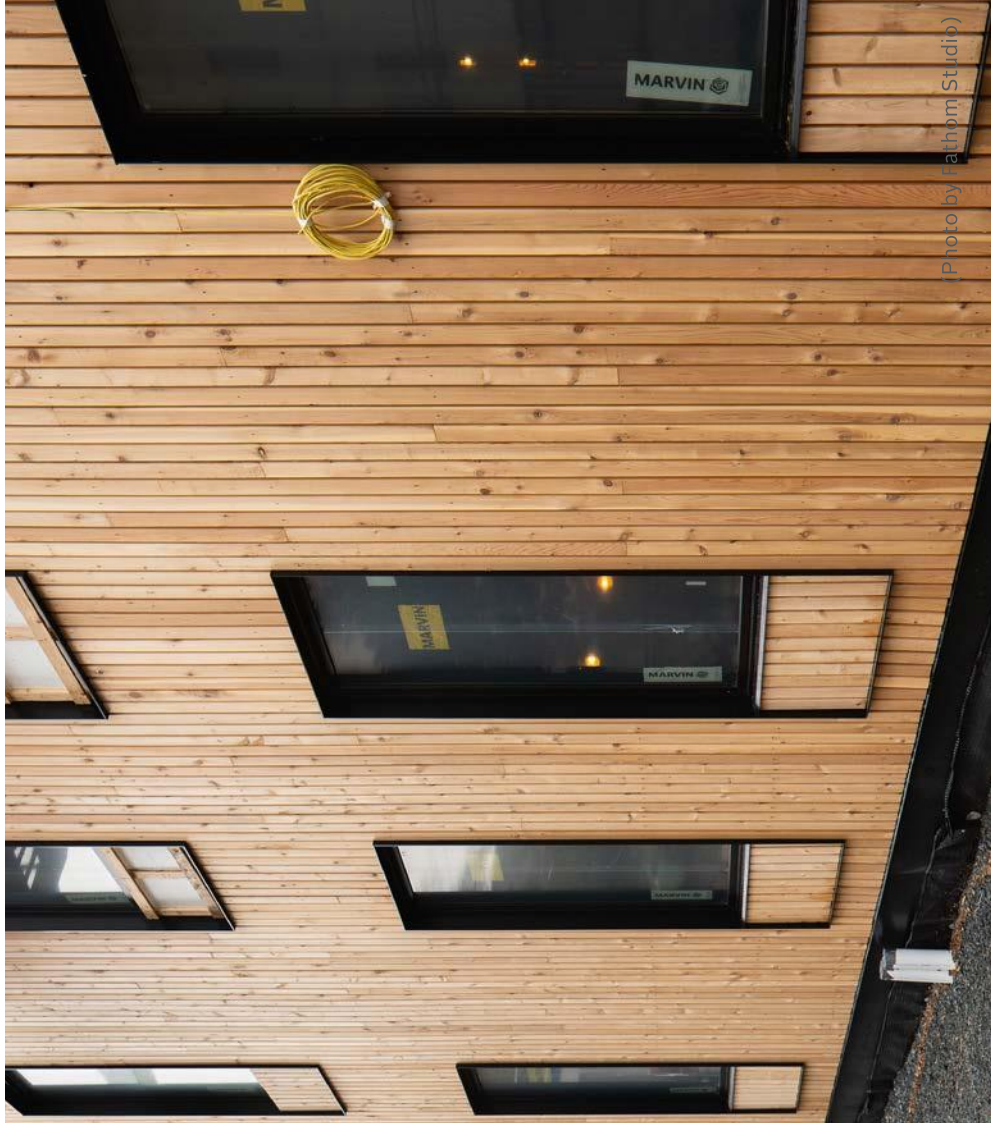
BUILDING DESIGN - 5

Criteria 5: Buildings are designed with durable, high quality materials

RATIONALE

What: Durable, high-quality materials are those that result in permanence and stability. In this regard, a thoughtful design process determines what durability and high-quality means for the site and its context, including climate.

Why: Material selection for buildings can greatly influence their use and relationship to people and the public realm. Material choices that are of the highest quality and true to their nature, illustrate a lasting investment in the building and a positive relationship with pedestrians and the surrounding context. Materials that are not suited to their context and deteriorate easily, generally represent poor design decisions, and low quality development.



(Photo by Fathom Studio)

How: Success occurs when buildings use a range of lasting quality materials that present the building as attractive and inviting and require minimal maintenance. This promotes interaction with and use of the building in all different seasons, and weather conditions.

Examples of the successful application of this criterion include use of:

- locally tested and proven high-quality materials on all façades, particularly those that can be seen from the public realm;
- the same durable high-quality materials as those used for abutting heritage resources; and
- masonry, stone, glass, steel, and high-quality natural wood within the streetwall.



Example 2: Balconies reflecting historical context with materials and colour patterns



Example 3: Streetwall using a diverse range of durable materials that integrate contemporary architecture and historical building practices

BUILDING DESIGN - 6

Criteria 6: Buildings are designed with utilities, services and parking that mitigate negative impacts on the public realm and adjacent properties

RATIONALE

What: Most developments require access to spaces for utilities, services, and parking. Although the effects of these elements typically affect pedestrians negatively, design decisions related to the siting, integration, and buffering can minimize their impact.

Why: Buildings can become unwelcoming and inactive where design measures are not taken to minimize the impact of services, utilities, and parking on the public realm. People will avoid places abutting high volumes of vehicle traffic and unsightly or bad smelling places. Back of house services are not typically conducive to pedestrian-friendly places.

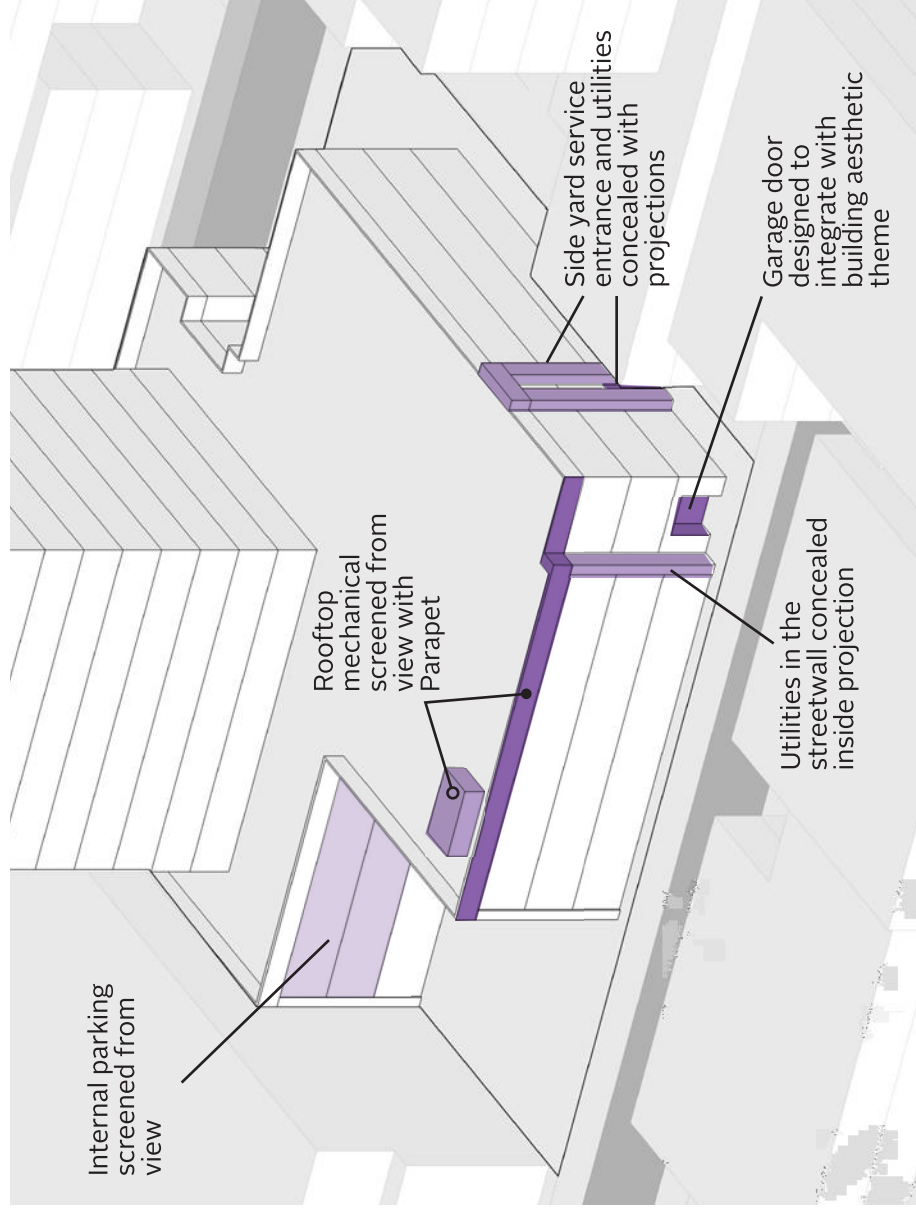


Figure 11: Representation of Building Design - 6

How: Active and animated spaces, such as streetwalls and publicly accessible open spaces, are most successful when back of house uses are in fact in the back, on the side of a building, or where access points are integrated into the theme of the building design, or architectural concept.

Examples of the successful application of this criterion include:

- requiring commercial uses at grade and ground-oriented units in the streetwall of multi-unit dwellings;
- locating parking away from the streetline, either underground, inside, or to the rear of the building with access doors not visible from the public realm;
- concealing utilities and services;
- integrating utilities into the building design;
- prioritizing architecture and design strategies to minimize the impact of utilities, with landscape screening used as a last resort;
- consolidating utility rooms and their venting to minimize the impact on façades;

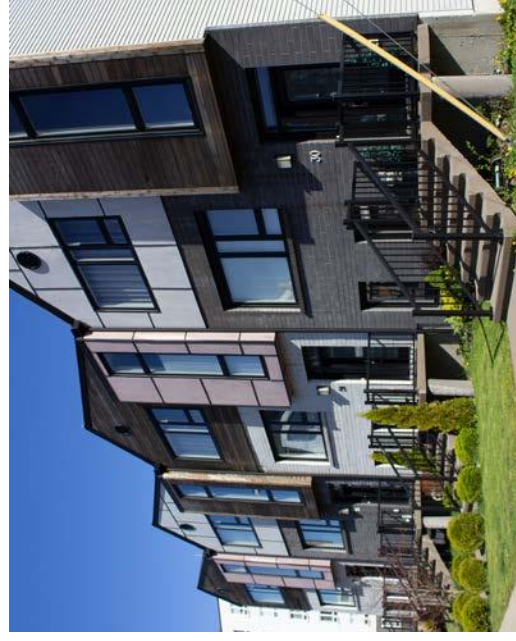
- consolidating garage entrances and service accesses to minimize impact on the street;
- using windows or translucent materials in garage doors to make pedestrians aware of exiting traffic;
- designing garage door widths in keeping with the fine-grained architectural rhythm and articulation of the building; and
- avoiding elements or techniques that detract from adjacent or abutting streetwalls and the associated overall pedestrian experience.



Example 1: Garage entrance integrated with design of building



Example 3: Underground parking vents integrated into building and open space design



Example 2: Townhouses with parking hidden behind the building