



Old Town

Streetscape Design Guidelines

OCTOBER, 2025

Old Town

Streetscape
Design
Guidelines



Approved February 2026

A blue ink signature of Michael A. Olinger, written in a cursive style, positioned above a horizontal line.

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STREETSCAPE

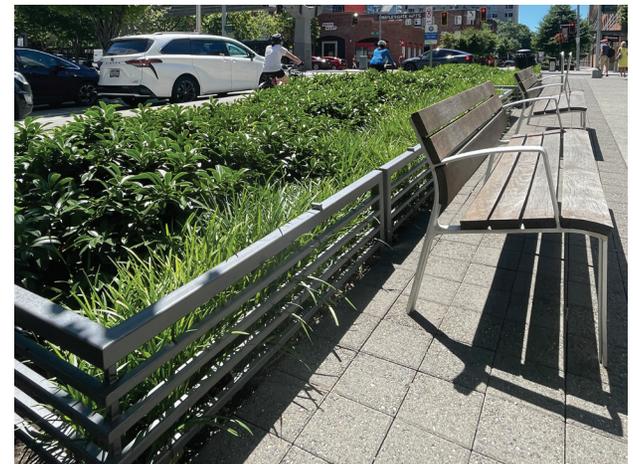
GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

These design guidelines are intended to inspire and inform direction for the development of the Right-of-Way (ROW) streetscape and landscape for the Bellingham Old Town Overlay District.

The long range vision for these guidelines is a cohesive and harmonious integration of streets, planting, and landscape elements that create a unified identity while allowing for individual expression of each block's use.

Following are the primary design guideline goals:

- Guide the landscape's character, identity, signature, and over-arching unifying elements for the Old Town streetscape.
- Ensure safety through increased use of the site and thoughtful ROW features.
- Establish a conceptual framework of style and materials to bring a unified vision to the streetscape.
- All specialty elements, including furnishings, should harmonize with both the natural and built environments, and be a low-impact expression of the area's identity.



Introduction

STREETSCAPE

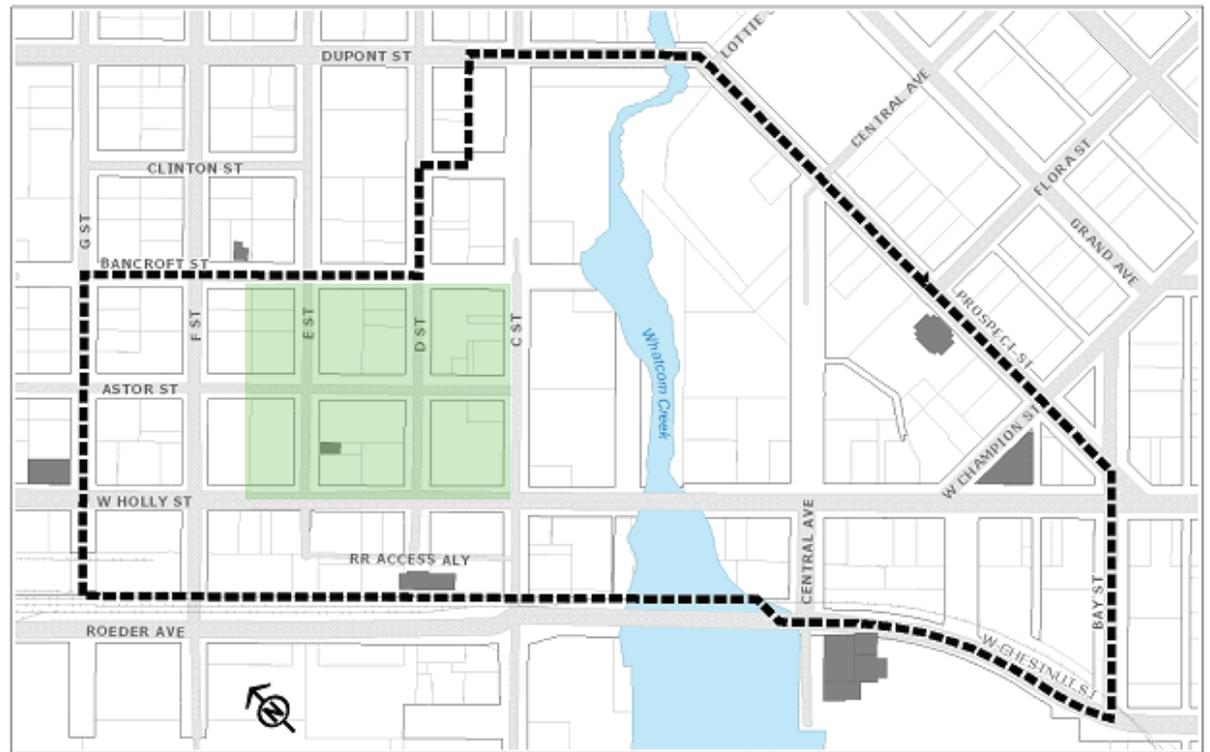
APPLICATION

These guidelines apply only to the ROW of the Bellingham Old Town Overlay District as established in section 20.35.060 of the Bellingham Municipal Code.

These Guidelines are a tool for guiding a portion of Lettered Streets at Old Town development, they do not supersede any applicable state, local, and federal codes and regulations. All such applicable codes and regulations shall apply; including but not limited to, building, mechanical, electrical, zoning, health, OSHA, safety, and fire codes.

If applicable state, local, and federal codes and regulations conflict with these guidelines, the codified language shall prevail excepting if these guidelines are more restrictive.

For any questions regarding application of this document, please contact the City of Bellingham Planning and Community Development Department.



Introduction

SITE CONTEXT DIAGRAMS - LETTERED STREETS

PLAN

LEGEND

-  Gateway Street
-  Active Residential Street
-  Typical Residential Street
-  Existing Commercial
-  Existing Mixed Use
-  Residential
-  Residential Entry Zone
-  Garage & Garbage Access
-  Lobby & Delivery Access
-  Neighborhood Open Space



Introduction

SITE CONTEXT DIAGRAMS - LETTERED STREETS

VIEW CORRIDOR & HEIGHT LIMITS

LEGEND

-  40' Height Limit
-  55' Height Limit
-  75' Height Limit
-  130' Height Limit



NOTE: Refer to BMC section 20.35.070 "Old Town Urban Village - Development Regulations" for further information

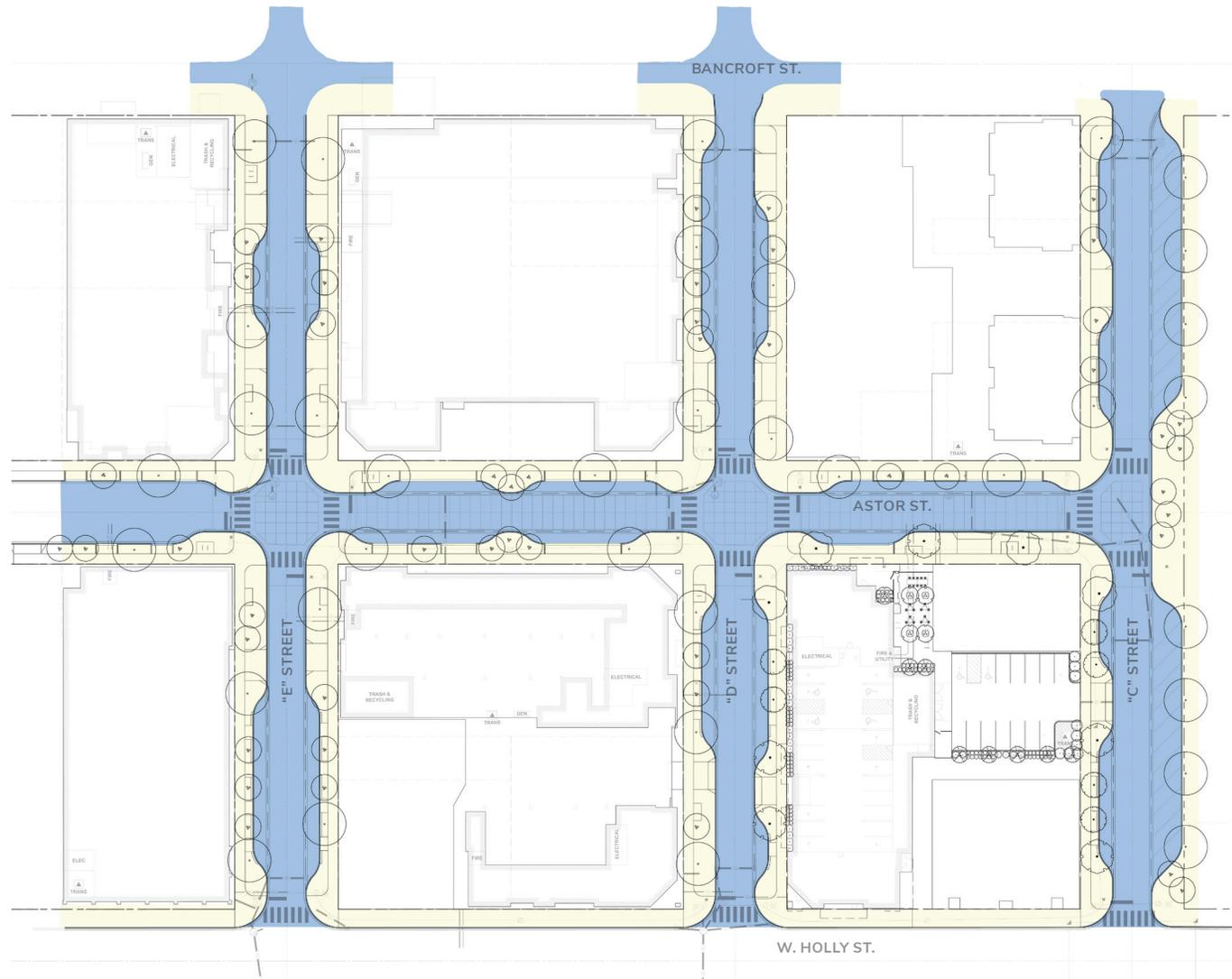
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SITE CONTEXT DIAGRAMS - LETTERED STREETS

SCOPE DIAGRAM

LEGEND

-  City
-  Private



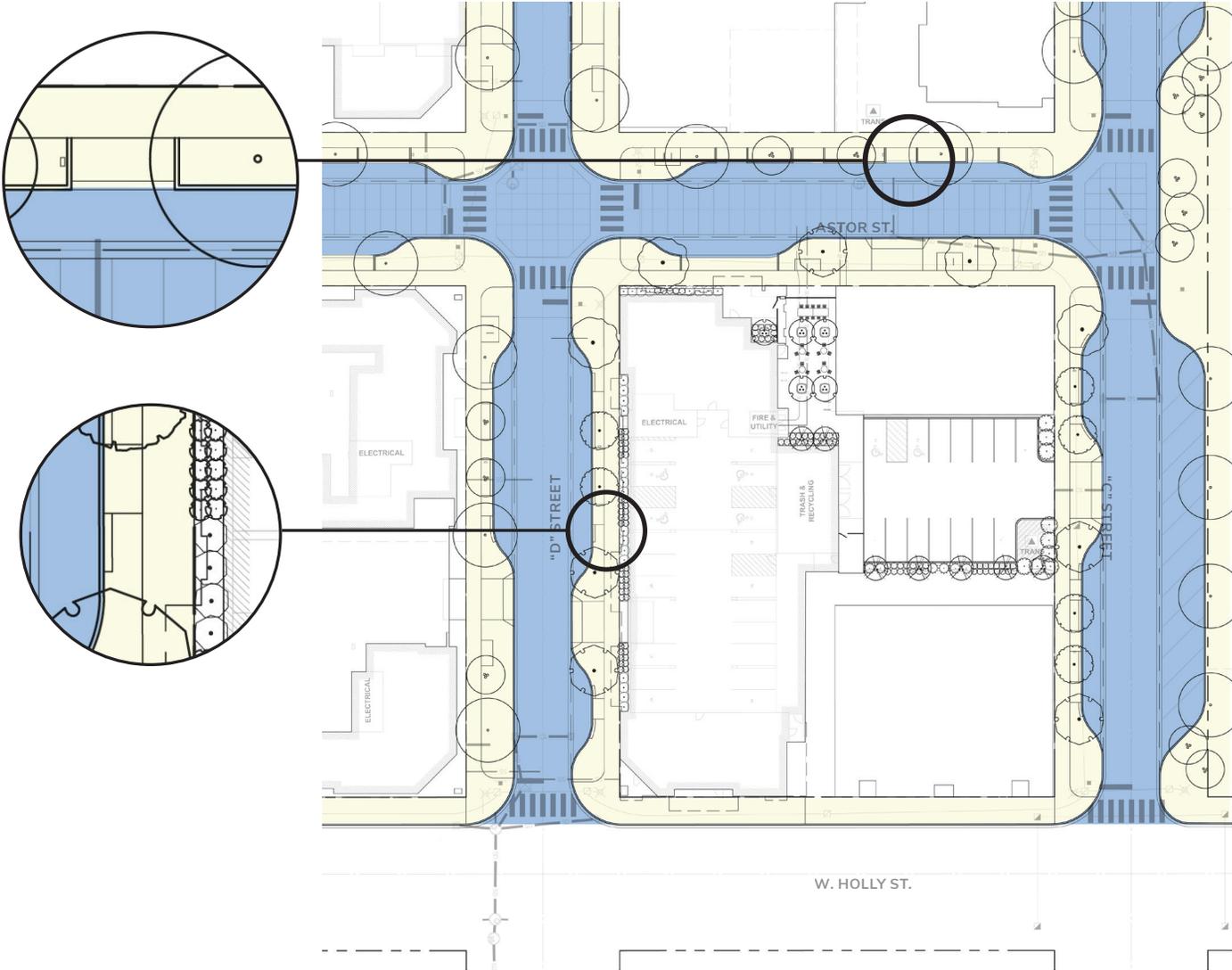
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SITE CONTEXT DIAGRAMS - LETTERED STREETS

BLOCK PROTOTYPE - BLOCK 6

LEGEND

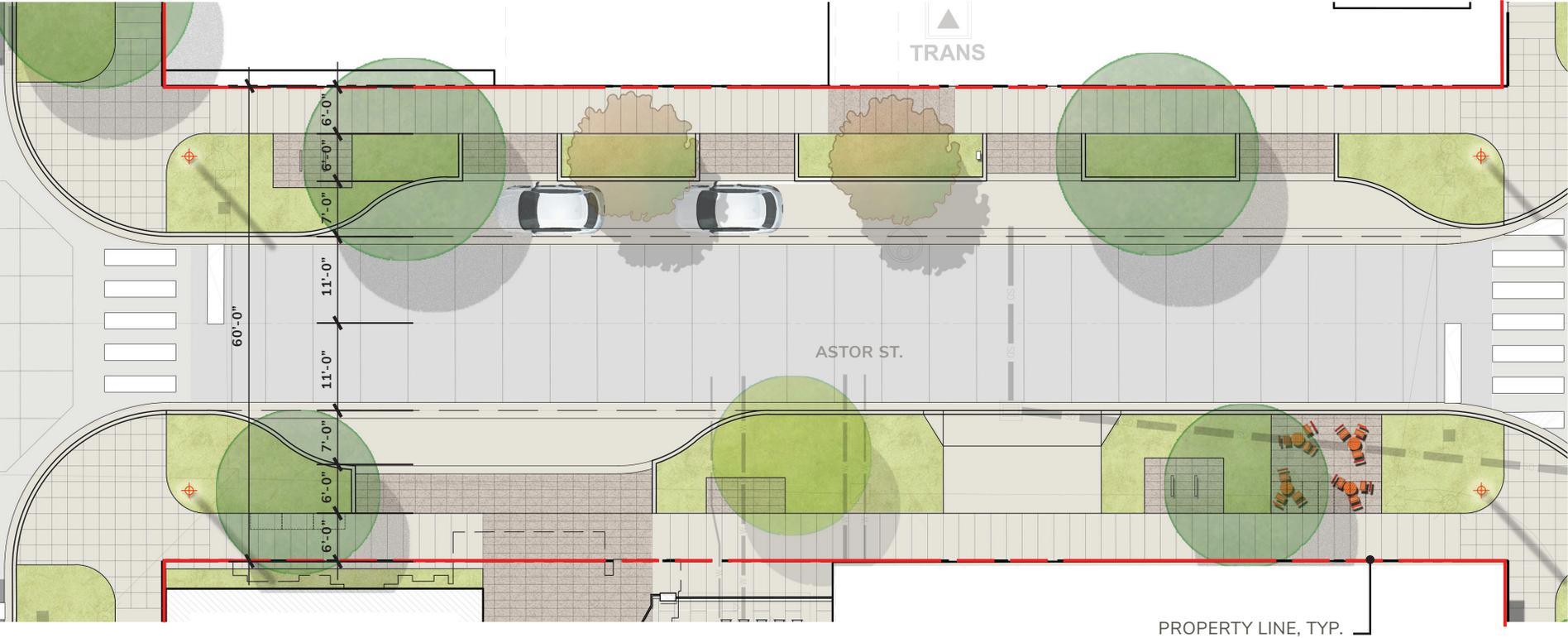
- City
- Private



Introduction

STREETSCAPE PLANS

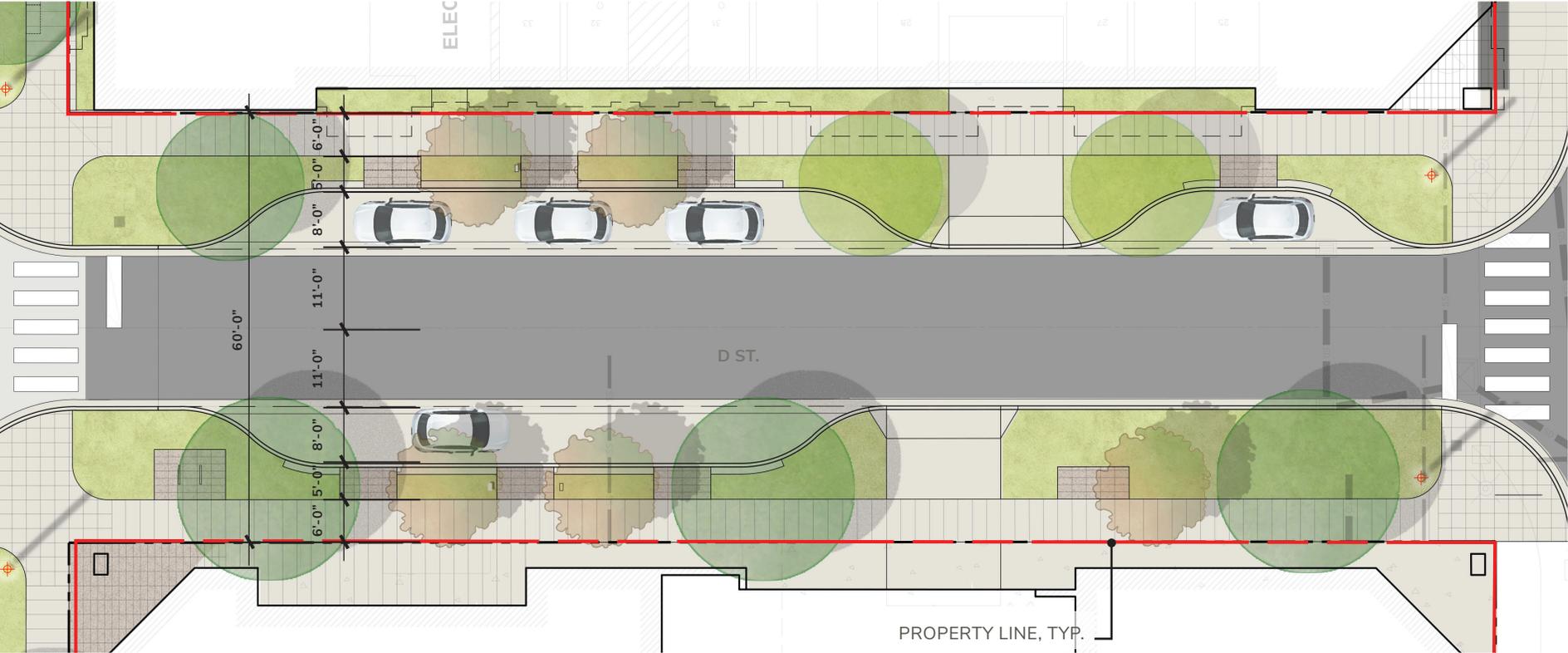
ASTOR STREET



Introduction

STREETSCAPE PLANS

LETTERED STREETS



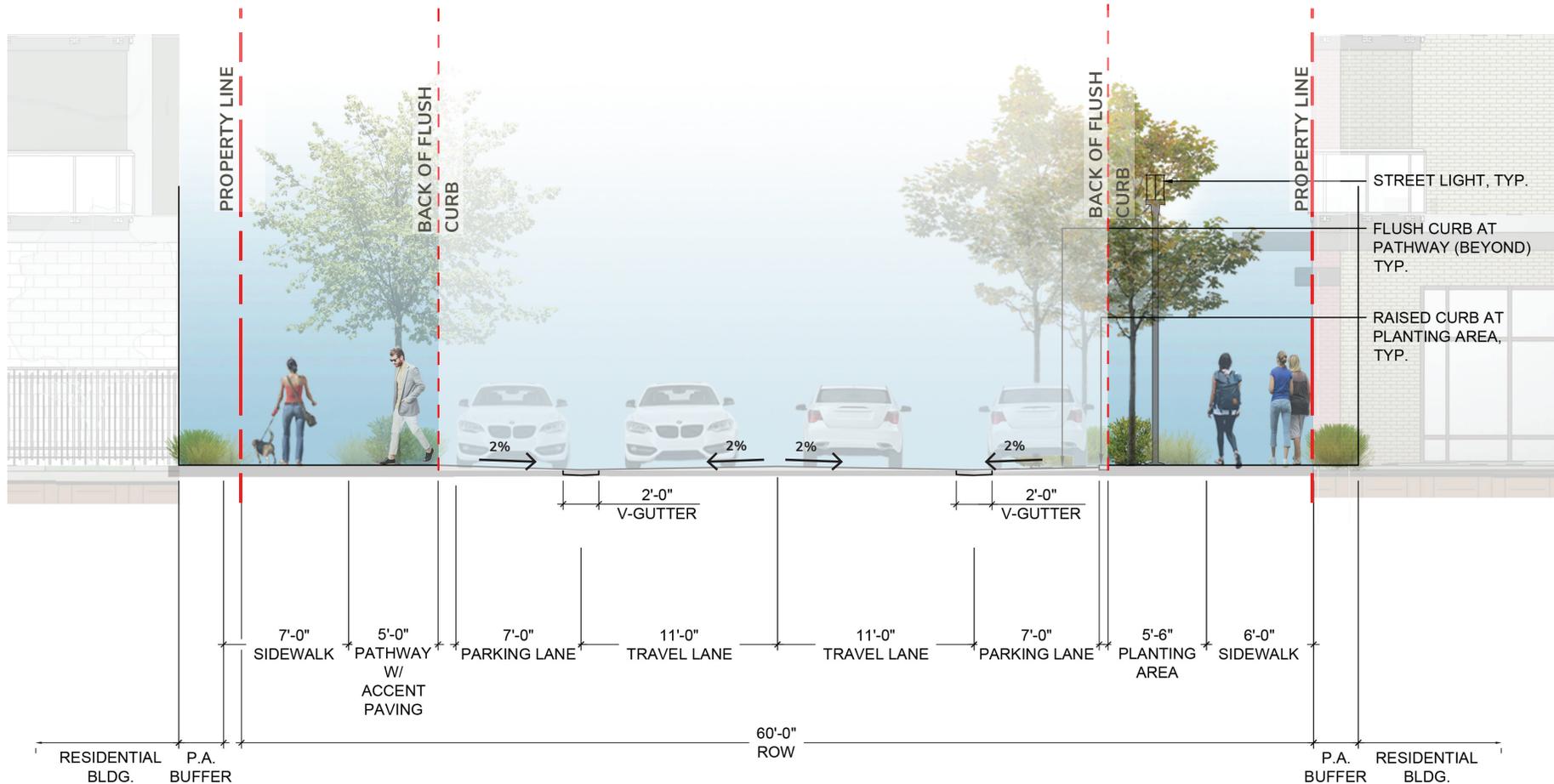
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STREETSCAPE SECTIONS

ASTOR STREET



KEY PLAN



NOTE: Refer to Streetscape Enlargements on pages 14 & 15 for conditions relative to building types.

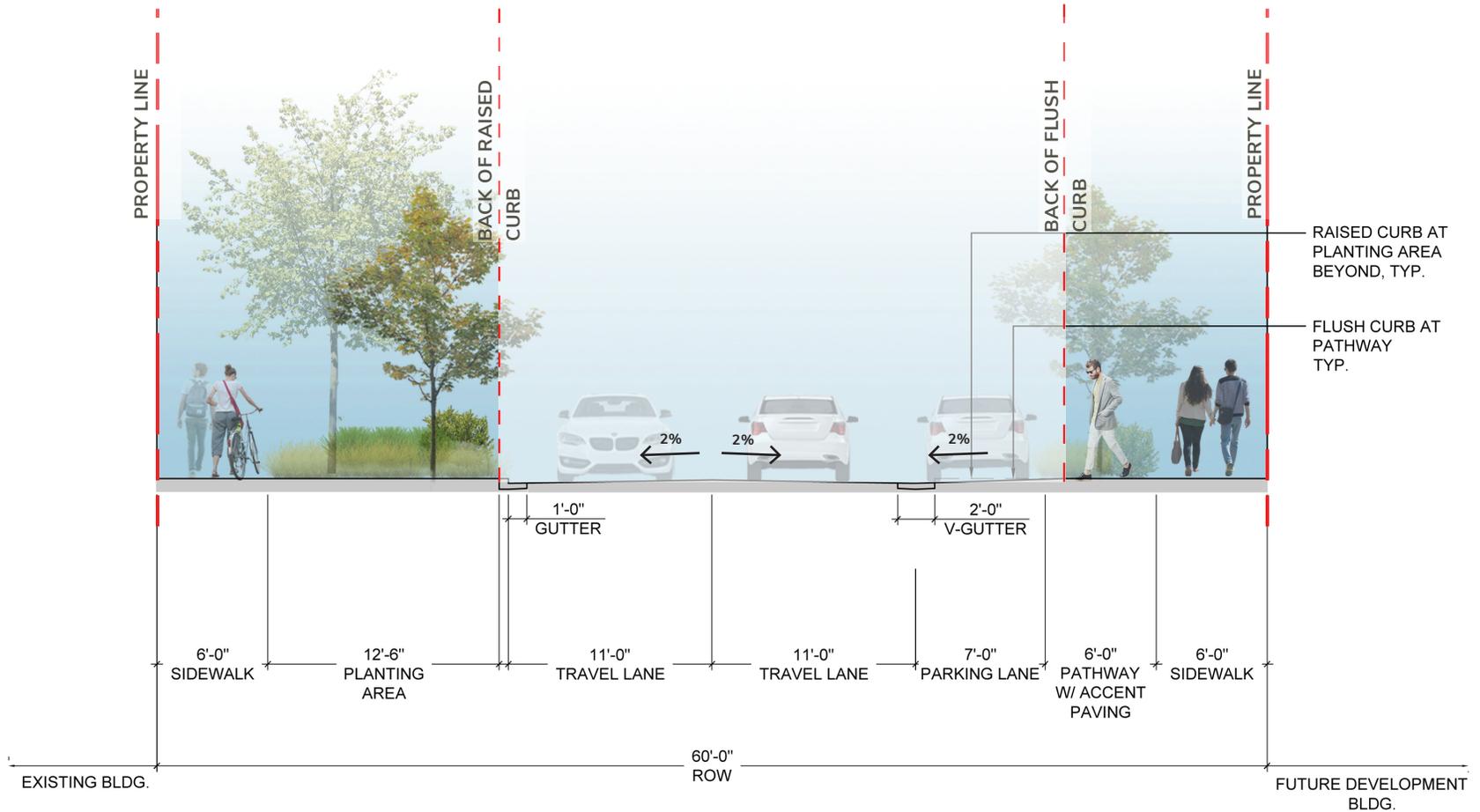
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STREETSCAPE SECTIONS

ASTOR STREET



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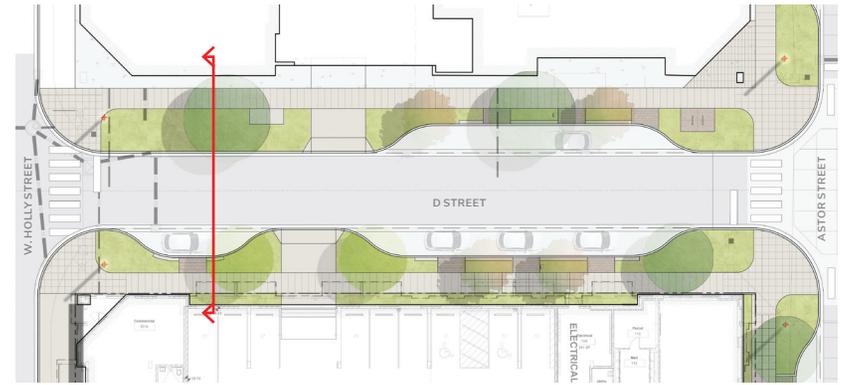


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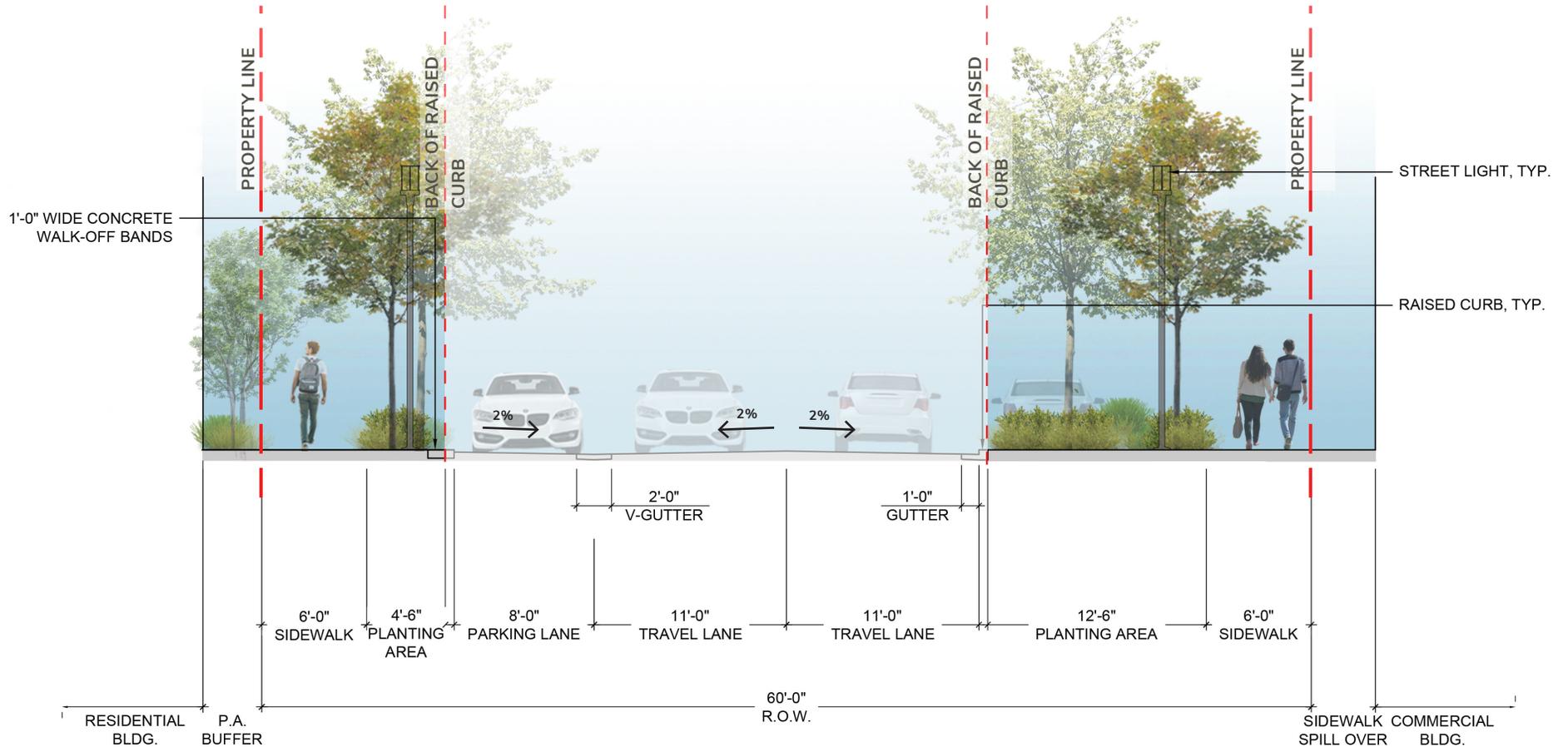
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STREETSCAPE SECTIONS

LETTERED STREETS



KEY PLAN



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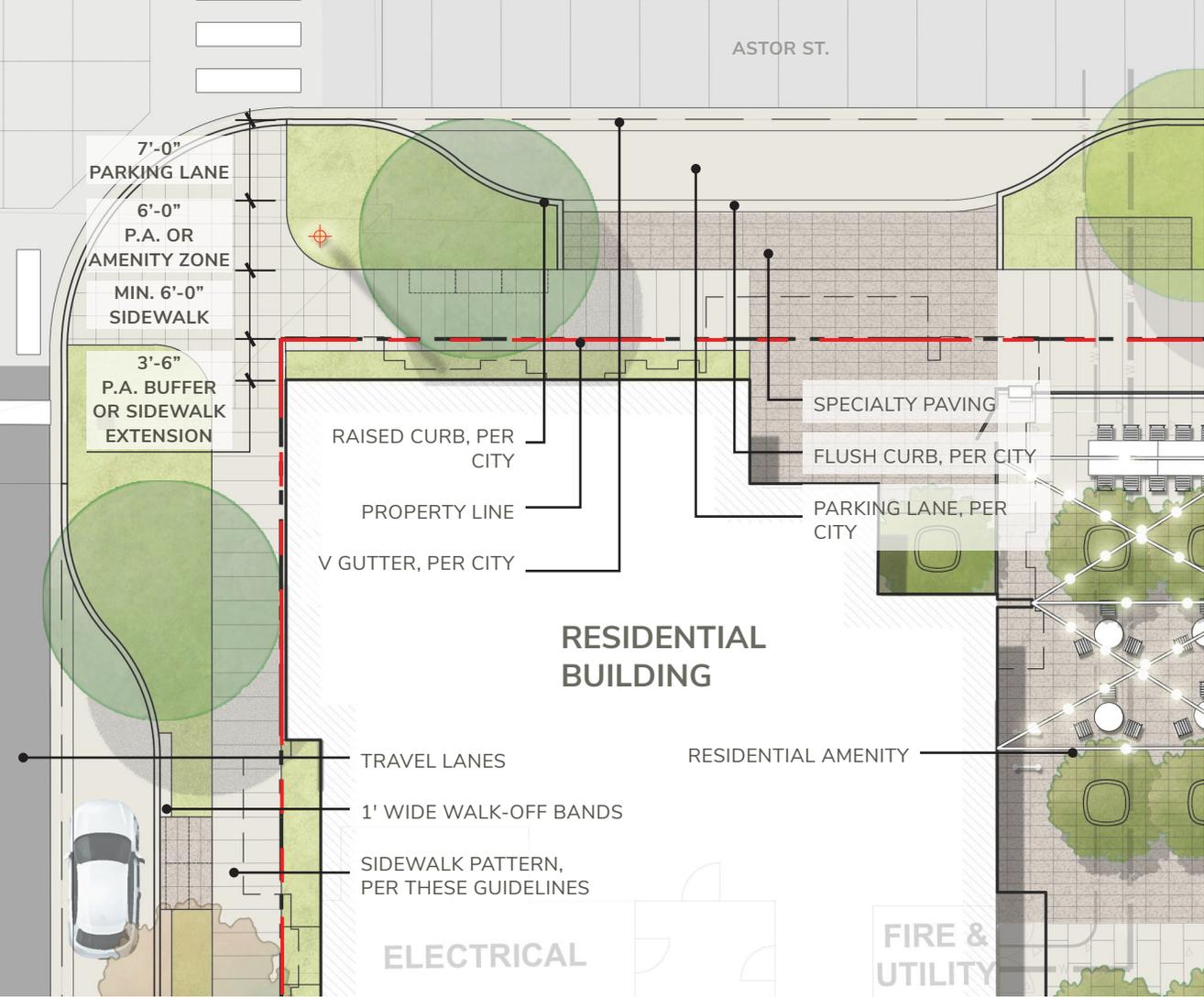
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Streetscape Elements

STREETSCAPE ENLARGEMENTS

CONDITIONS ADJACENT TO RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS

Planting is a more desirable option for buffer zones adjacent to residential buildings. The planting will soften the building appearance and enhance the aesthetic qualities of the sidewalk path. However, care should be taken that planting will not cover windows or impede views or emergency egress.



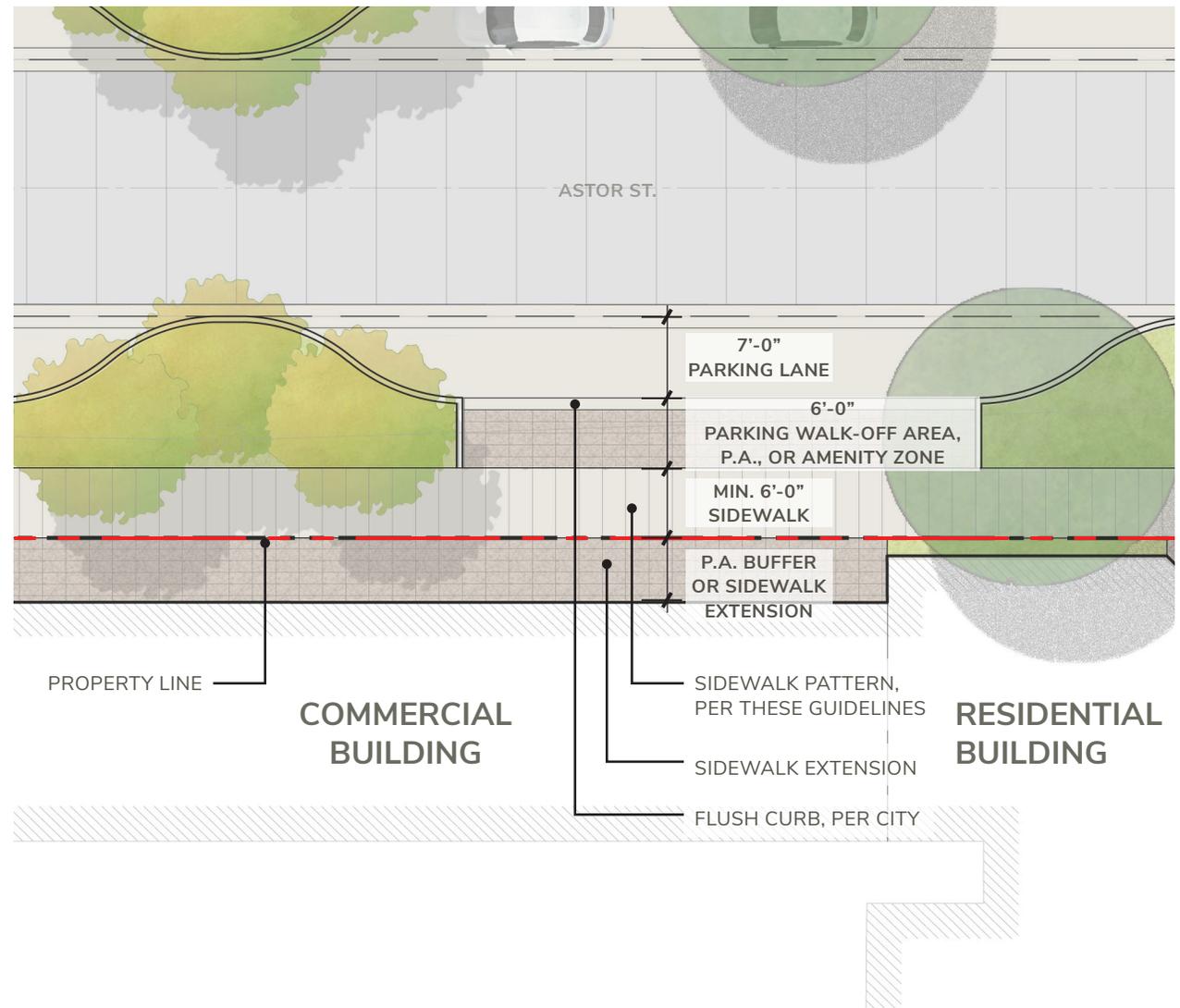
Streetscape Elements

STREETSCAPE ENLARGEMENTS

CONDITIONS ADJACENT TO COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS

To allow for pedestrian access, planting should be minimized in the buffer areas adjacent to commercial buildings. Rather, these areas should be an extension of the sidewalk or utilize specialty paving, so as to visually extend the commercial zone as far outward as possible.

This approach also allows for commercial activity to spill out from the building and activate the external space.



NOTE: Commercial building footprint is for graphic purposes only, buildings under development at the time these guidelines were developed.

Streetscape Elements

PAVING

Paving and hardscape are the basis of any circulation system and have the single greatest impact on the pedestrian experience. Paving materials, layout, color, and texture all play a key role in safety and accessibility for users. They also allow for low-impact means of identification and separation.

Paving surface materials must be non-slip to ensure the safety of pedestrians. It is crucial that these materials provide adequate traction, especially in wet or icy conditions. To achieve this, materials must comply with established safety standards and regulations that dictate factors such as surface texture and friction levels.

To avoid damages to paving and sidewalk areas by undermining roots, always install root barriers for trees per the City of Bellingham's Development Guidelines and Improvement Standards, Individual Standard Plans for Streets.

When planning amenities in paved areas, consideration should be given to view triangles and maintained sightlines.

The following are the paving types anticipated for Old Town:

- City Sidewalks
- Specialty Paving
- Walk-off Bands
- Tactile Warnings

Streetscape Elements

PAVING

SIDEWALK

Sidewalks are the understood primary pedestrian travel path and serve to provide a safe and inclusive environment for all users. These paths also serve to define the ROW and help reinforce public zones.

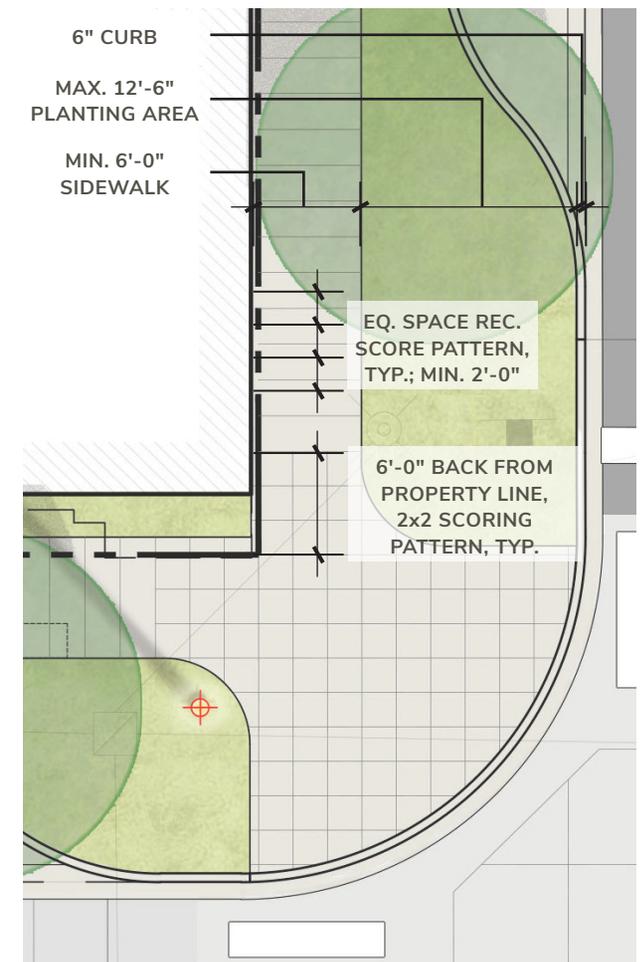
To differentiate the Old Town district from the surrounding area, a multi-pattern approach to sidewalks has been established.

- **AT INTERSECTIONS:** A standard 2'x2' scoring and jointing pattern to be used. Pattern to continue beyond edge of property line for 6'.
- **AT MID-BLOCK:** A linear scoring and jointing pattern which is perpendicular to the property line, to create a rectangular appearance. Pattern to be of equal spacing along length of block, at 2' minimum.

Refer to included images for visual examples of paving patterns.

All sidewalks must:

- Comply with the City of Bellingham's Historic Preservation Ordinance, when applicable.
- Be constructed so all joints and edges are clean and orderly, no shiners, raveling, or spalling should be permitted.
- Scoring and jointing patterns should never be smaller than 2' and no larger than 8' in any one dimension.
- Expansion joints should be located no further than 10' apart, and always at property line when sidewalk extensions are present.



Streetscape Elements

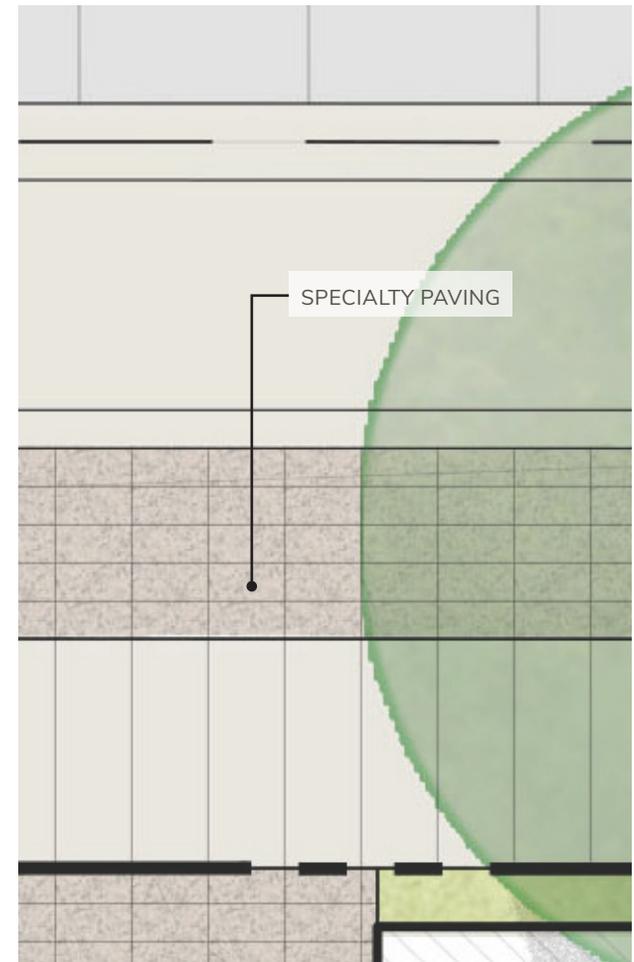
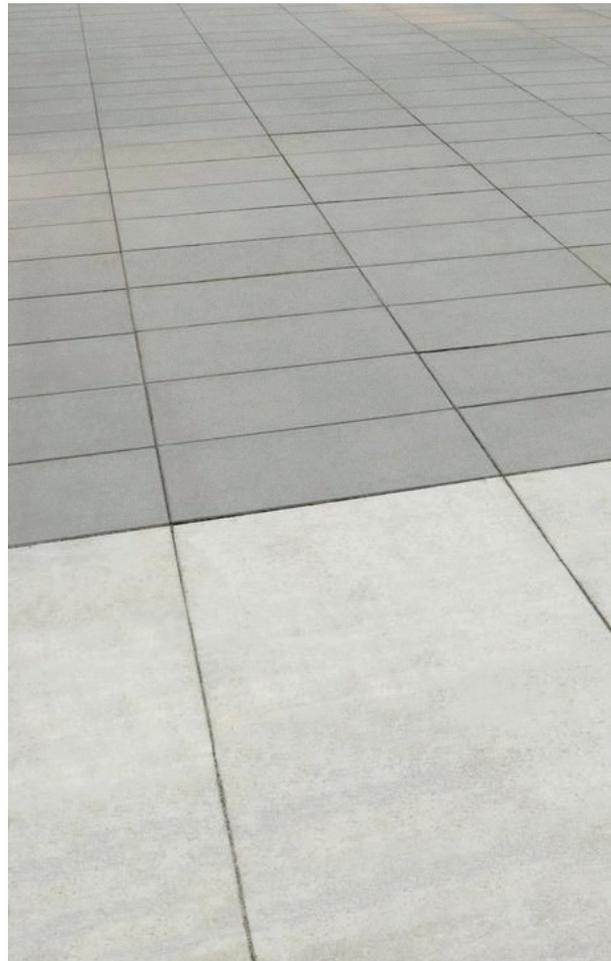
PAVING

SPECIALTY PAVING

Specialty paving refers primarily to a decorative paving used to differentiate itself from the primary pedestrian pathway or sidewalk. In the Old Town District these are provided as pathways adjacent to parking zones, as amenity zones adjacent to sidewalks, and as an extension of a sidewalk adjacent to commercial areas.

To maintain a cohesive character across Old Town, concrete should also be used for specialty paving areas and areas where pedestrians are encouraged to pause or wait. However, the scoring and joint pattern should be different from the sidewalk, a 12"x24" rectangular pattern is recommended.

Utilizing an integral color along with the scoring and jointing pattern will further serve to differentiate these areas. A dark gray color, such as Dark Gray (Carbon) 8084 from Davis Colors, is recommended as being in-line with the character of Old Town.



Streetscape Elements

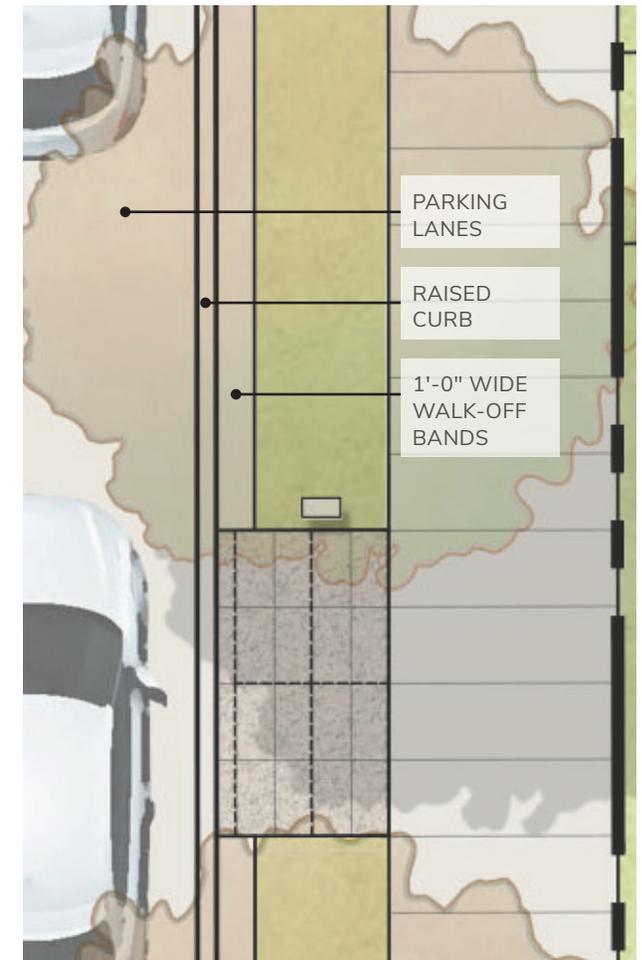
PAVING

WALK-OFF BANDS

Walk-off bands are provided along Old Town lettered streets as concrete strips adjacent to the raised curb in parallel parking zones.

These bands create a small but effective buffer between parked vehicles and the landscape ROW, offering a clean, finished edge that enhances the overall streetscape appearance. In addition to improving the aesthetics, walk-off bands provide passengers extra space to safely exit vehicles and unload goods without encroaching on adjacent planting areas.

Walk-off bands should be 12" wide and of the same material and pattern as the proximate sidewalk.



Streetscape Elements

PAVING

TACTILE WARNINGS

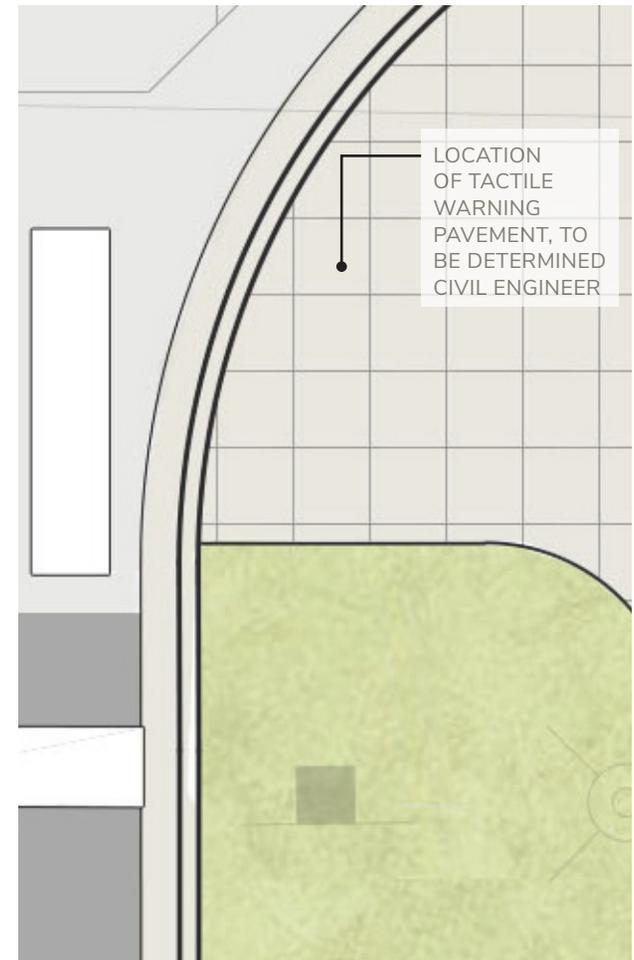
Tactile warnings are textured ADA compliant surfaces that serve to assist those with visual impairment by providing a physical cue of pathway change.

While considered a specialty paving, tactile paving is used explicitly for safety and accessibility purpose. Due to this specialized nature, it should never be used for decorative or similar purposes and in no way should a specialty paving have similar characteristics to tactile paving.

All tactile paving should be installed per the current version of the WSDOT standard plans and specifications.

Agreement was reached with the City of Bellingham to use the following:

- **PAVER:** Truncated Dome Paver by Stepstone LLC
- **COLOR:** Charcoal #1811
- **FINISH:** Light Sandblast



Streetscape Elements

SITE FURNISHINGS

Furnishings should harmonize with both the natural and built environments and be a low-impact expression of Old Town's identity.

As the site furnishings in the district will be coming from differing manufacturers, maintaining materiality and finishes will be paramount to achieving a cohesive and unified identity. If possible, the same material and finish should be used across all furnishings.

All furnishings should be commercial grade, low maintenance, and mounted so as to deter theft or vandalism.

The products included herein are samples of a singular aesthetic matching with the character of Old Town. It is recommended to select similar styled products.

The following are the site furnishings types anticipated; however, it is not a complete list of potential site furnishings and other items may be included provided they meet with the same style and standards as the below:

- Bike Racks
- Seating
- Lighting

Streetscape Elements

SITE FURNISHINGS



Streetscape Elements

SITE FURNISHINGS

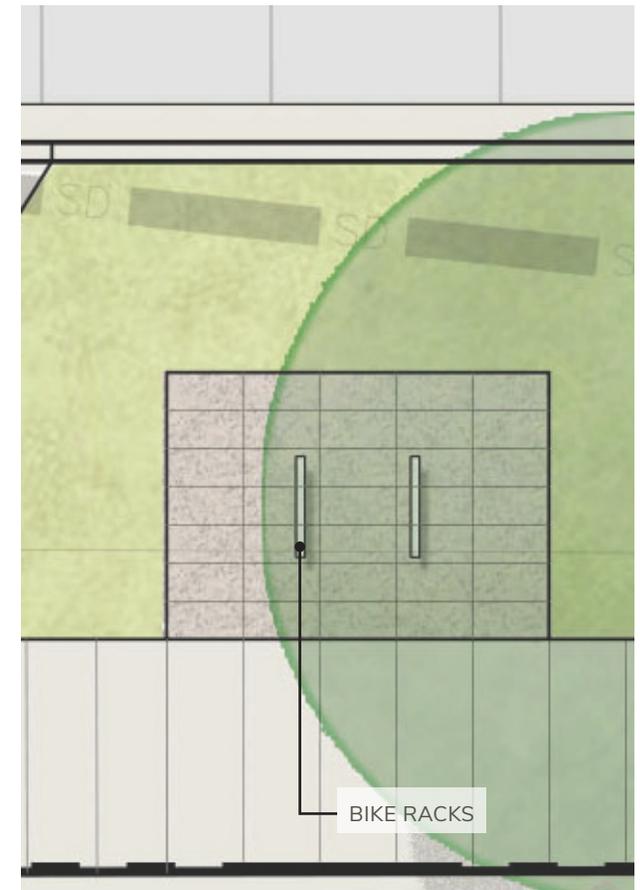
BIKE RACKS

Designated bike parking areas should be provided along the ROW to encourage alternative transit methods through the Old Town area. These locations should be strategically placed near building entrances and evenly distributed to ensure adjacent pedestrian access remains uninterrupted. Placement should also be coordinated to minimize visual clutter in the ROW; thereby minimizing potential negative impacts on surrounding uses.

The number of bike racks to be provided must align with the City of Bellingham's requirements for the Old Town Overlay District and is dependent on building use.

Recommended options include:

- **TOP:** Vroom A-bicycle Stand by Vestre



Streetscape Elements

SITE FURNISHINGS

BENCHES

To activate the outdoor spaces and encourage pedestrian use, appropriate seating should be provided at regular intervals as well as at areas of anticipated higher use. This seating can be provided in the form of benches, chairs, seat walls, or artistic elements sited for such use.

While linear elements, such as benches, are preferred for Old Town, it is understood that these long spans of horizontal surface will need to be broken up by vertical elements (such as arm rests) to optimize community use.

These seating elements are optional, and should be installed later in development after usage patterns have been determined.

Final product selections will be made by the design team(s) at the time of development and coordinated with the City of Bellingham.

Possible options include:

- **TOP:** Blocq Park Bench with Backrest and Armrests, and Blocq Stool by mmcité
- **BOTTOM:** Bancal Bench with Offset Back by Landscape Forms



Streetscape Elements

SITE FURNISHINGS

STREET LIGHTING

Light pollution distracts from the enjoyment of the night sky and is easily reduced by selecting the right light fixture. All exterior lighting for Old Town should therefore be prevented from projecting upward, either by design or by using an integral shield as recommended by the fixture manufacturer.

The fixture provided herein is currently in use in the neighborhoods adjacent to Old Town, it is recommended to continue to use this fixture to maintain cohesion throughout the area.

Street lighting at intersections will be supplemented with building-mounted lights mid-block to achieve sufficient illumination. Photometric studies will be required during development to determine the number of building-mount fixtures required to meet safety standards.

- **FIXTURE:** Eclipse Maxi with 30" shade and 3 louvers mounted to 14'x4" pole by Luminis
- **LIGHT:** Distribution Type 3, 120-277 Volts, Static White at 7,675 lumens, 3,000K Soft White color.
- **FINISH:** Both fixture and pole to be Jet Black finish.



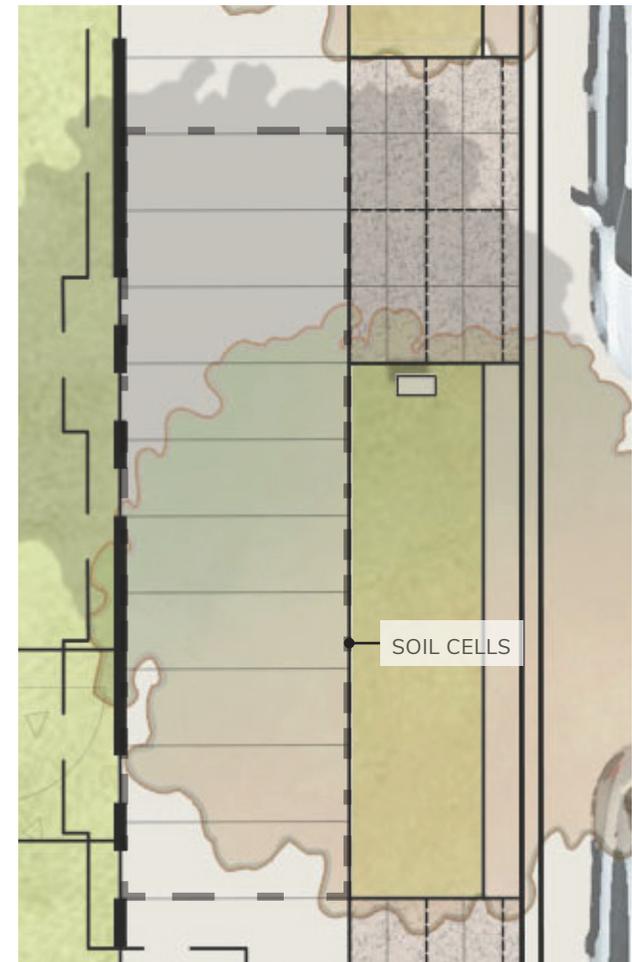
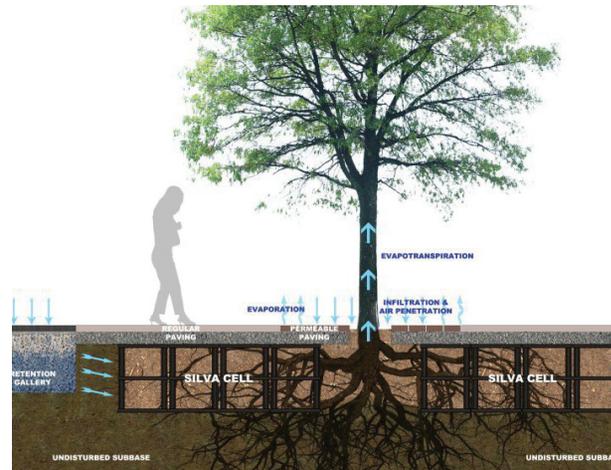
Streetscape Elements

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

SOIL CELLS

Soil cells address the challenges of growing trees in urban environments by creating a dedicated space that ensures sufficient soil conditions beneath pavement to allow root growth. This sustainable solution supports healthy trees, enhances urban landscaping, and contributes to a more vibrant, natural environment.

The total amount of soil volume needed will vary with the size of tree planted, but all trees should be provided with a minimum of 3' of soil depth.



Streetscape Elements

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

SOIL VOLUME

Included herein are the minimum soil volumes required for each size of street tree within the Old Town district.

Refer to the City of Bellingham Parks and Recreation Department current List of Approved Street Trees for additional information on tree species and sizes.

Some additional considerations for soil volume include:

- **SHARED SOIL:** If multiple trees are planted within the same volume of soil, a 30% reduction in soil volume requirements can be applied. All areas of shared soil must have an unrestricted path of at least 4' in both length and width.
 - Soil cells can be used under pavement to connect multiple planting areas, provided the cells do not extend further than 25' from any one tree.

- **STRUCTURAL SOIL:** Due to the aggregate nature of structural soil, and the difficulty of plant roots to penetrate, use of structural soil should be minimized. If structural soil is used, 1/4 of the total volume can be counted towards the required volumes noted below.

STREET TREE REQUIREMENTS

TREE SIZE	SOIL VOLUME REQUIRED	SPACING
Small	500 Cubic Feet	No closer than 10'
Small to Medium	750 Cubic Feet	No closer than 15'
Medium	1,000 Cubic Feet	No closer than 20'
Large	1,500 cubic feet	No closer than 30'

Plant Materials

PLANTING CONSIDERATIONS

Achieving sustainability in landscaping relies on a combination of water conservation practices and the extensive use of drought-tolerant plantings. Key water conservation strategies include selecting appropriate plant materials, considering sun and shade conditions, and implementing appropriate watering schedules and practices.

All ROW landscaping must comply with the current City of Bellingham code, including Landscape Buffer Zones.

- **PLANT SELECTION:** Emphasize the use of native and adapted plants to create a sustainable, low-maintenance landscape. Avoid the use of turf. Use drought tolerant and hardy plant materials that meet sun exposure requirements for each particular site. This strategy will conserve water use, minimize maintenance requirements.
- **VIEW TRIANGLE:** To ensure sightlines and maintain safety for the community, an implied triangle of uninterrupted vision should be provided at all ROW intersections, including street corners, through-block connections, driveways, and other locations where paths of travel cross.
 - This area is defined by measuring 20' along each property line and diagonally connecting the ends to create a triangular area.
 - Planting within this triangular area may not be over 36" in height.
 - Visual obstructions must maintain a vertical clearance of at least 6'-6" above the street surface.
 - Refer to City of Bellingham Municipal Code for additional information.
- **PLANTING AREA PREPARATION:** Prior to any planting being completed all planting pits and trenches will need to be prepared in accordance with the City of Bellingham's current landscape standards.
 - Root barriers to be installed at hardscape per standard tree planting detail(s).
 - Street trees shall conform to current sizing requirements.
 - All excavated areas to be of sufficient size to receive planting with bottom and sides scarified to promote drainage.
 - All landscape beds should ensure proper drainage.
 - All planting soil should be tested by an unaffiliated third party lab and amended per recommendations to achieve proper plant growth.

Plant Materials

PLANTING CONSIDERATIONS

SAMPLE R.O.W. PLANTING DIAGRAM

LEGEND

-  Street Trees
-  ROW Planting



Plant Materials

RECOMMENDED PLANT LISTS

TREES

Street tree species should be well-suited to urban environments and compatible with the conditions of ROW limitations; such as utilities, view clearances, planting area size, and water availability. When selecting species, long term maintenance should be considered.

Included are a selection of trees recognized as being in line with the character of Old Town and meeting with the needs of the local climate and conditions. It is recommended to select from the included for all ROW improvements.

Trees should be distributed in a fashion that promotes diversity of size and spacing along street frontage to prevent a sense of uniformity among the streetscape. Larger trees should be placed nearer to ends of each block, smaller trees may be placed in clusters as soil volume allows.



Pacific Sunset Maple
Acer truncatum x p. 'Warrenred'



Japanese Hornbeam
Carpinus japonica

Plant Materials

RECOMMENDED PLANT LISTS

TREES



Princeton Sentry Maidenhair Tree
Ginkgo biloba 'Princeton Sentry'



Persian Ironwood
Parrotia persica 'Vanessa'



Crimson Spire Oak
Quercus robur x alba "Crimschmidt"

Plant Materials

RECOMMENDED PLANT LISTS

SHRUBS

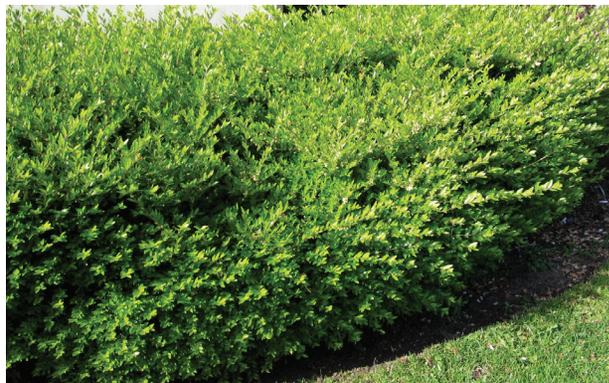
Shrubs included in ROW planting areas should be native or adapted to the region. To maximize safety, ROW shrubs should be small and porous enough as to not create a visual barrier between the sidewalk and the roadway. Larger shrub species should be kept away from intersections to maintain sightlines.



White Rock Rose
Cistus x hybrid



Western Sword Fern
Polystichum munitum



Privet Honeysuckle
Lonicera pileata



Mount Vernon English Laurel
Prunus laurocerasus 'Mount Vernon'

Plant Materials

RECOMMENDED PLANT LISTS

SHRUBS



Dwarf Sweetbox

Sarcococca hookeriana var. *humilis*



David Viburnum

Viburnum davidii

Plant Materials

RECOMMENDED PLANT LISTS

GRASSES

Grasses included in ROW planting areas should be adapted to the region. To maximize safety, grasses should not be of a tall variety to ensure that they do not interfere with vehicular sightlines.



Blonde Ambition Blue Grama
Bouteloua gracilis 'Blonde Ambition'



Blue Oat Grass
Helictotrichon sempervirens

Plant Materials

RECOMMENDED PLANT LISTS

GROUND COVERS

Ground covers included in ROW planting areas should be native or adapted to the region whenever possible. They should not be allowed to overgrow the sidewalk or curbs.

Turf grass is not considered a desirable plant material for the ROW due to its high maintenance needs.



Creeping Mahonia
Mahonia repens



Creeping Taiwan Bramble
Rubus calycinoides



Japanese Pachysandra
Pachysandra terminalis



Hancock Chenault Coralberry
Symphoricarpos x c. 'Hancock'

Plant Materials

RECOMMENDED PLANT LISTS

PERENNIALS

Perennial species should be used sparingly and only to emphasize areas of particular interest and seasonal color contrast.



Gaura
Gaura lindheimeri



Spotted Geranium
Geranium maculatum



Catmint
Nepeta x faassenii 'Walker's Low'

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