Great cities of the world—from Rio de Janeiro to Venice, Paris to Washington, DC and New York—all possess distinctive characteristics. Their world-famous buildings and boulevards, civic plazas, parks, waterfronts and neighborhoods are essential to their ambience, giving each city a unique personality and international identity.

Dallas offers many of these noteworthy attributes—its soaring Downtown skyline, neon flying Pegasus, historic Old Red Courthouse, the illuminated Texas Star Ferris Wheel against the nighttime sky, Oak Cliff’s hills, White Rock Lake and the manicured gardens along Turtle Creek are all special to the city. These structures, symbols and spaces make up the urban form that reflects the city’s cultural, historical and societal values.

This Urban Design Element seeks to define how the city’s identity and values can be captured in the visual and physical qualities of its urban landscape. Dallas’ built and natural environments exist in both horizontal and vertical dimensions and each contains elements.

The forwardDallas! citizen survey results show:

- 93 percent of Dallas residents agree it is important the City provide safe, convenient ways for children to walk to school and for adults to walk to restaurants and stores.

Good urban design can greatly influence the feel and quality of a place.
That contribute to the quality of life in Dallas. The man-made horizontal plane is defined by streets, plazas, civic spaces and open places in which the social and public life is carried out. The vertical plane is defined primarily by the scale, design, pattern and rhythms of buildings and structures and the point at which these structures meet the ground. Natural elements include water, trees, public and private green spaces, parks, roof gardens and landscaping. All of these elements are the components that establish the city’s quality and character. All will be addressed in the Urban Design Element.

Streets

Streets comprise the greatest portion of a city’s public space and dominate the scene of the traveling public and the pedestrian. Therefore the design and placement of all the elements contained in the public right-of-way—from a building face on one side of the street to a building face on the other—should be carefully considered and executed. Unfortunately, this exercise is rarely undertaken. Too often, streets are cluttered with wires, poles, traffic signals, signage and advertisements, all carelessly placed, creating visual chaos.

Downtown and the Urban Core

Downtown and urban retail streets should pulsate with activity and encourage rich, exciting urban interrelations. Street cafes, vendors, musicians and tourists enliven these streets while coordinated signage address the needs of pedestrians and travelers, whether they are residents, local office workers or visitors to Downtown. Street furniture, light standards, bicycle racks and information kiosks should be strategically located while awnings, arcades and trees will provide shade from the hot Texas sun. Wide sidewalks allow people to comfortably walk abreast or sit outside to enjoy a leisurely meal. The pedestrian way should be constructed of textured materials that lend a tactile quality to walking and differentiate it from the vehicular sphere. Building facades at the pedestrian scale should be visually engaging with architectural treatments, doors and windows.

Civic Spaces

Major plazas or large urban parks are civic symbols and should be carefully placed and designed to accommodate a wide variety
of formal and informal activities. Because of their scale and magnitude, these spaces immediately become a focal point and defining element of the city, such as St. Peter’s Square in Rome, Union Square in San Francisco or Rockefeller Center in New York City. In Dallas, these spaces must capture the essence of Dallas’ identity. Fountains, sculptures, water gardens and special lighting can all contribute to the life of the plaza and make the experience more meaningful.

Informal small plazas or pocket parks should be encouraged and located at the intersection of important streets, to announce a building or to provide spatial opportunity for public interaction around a culturally or historically significant area. These should contain sculptures, fountains, art and trees. Water can also provide an engaging element that helps establish the character and quality of the space.

**Trees and Open Space**

Trees soften the hard architectural environment, clean and cool the air and provide shade, all vital to a successful city. When planted in a formal design, trees can introduce structure, rhythm and a distinct pattern to an urban space. Conversely, trees planted in informal sequences can be playful and exuberant, provide a human scale and invite a relationship with nature in an otherwise unwelcoming urban space.

Green space and plantings can be easily incorporated into almost any form of development to accommodate drainage and runoff. Dallas has hundreds of creeks and streams that form the web of its riparian system. The typical way of handling these today is to reroute the stream or creek into a concrete channel in an alley-like service area. This is a wasted opportunity to bring a natural element and human scale to many developments. All efforts should be made to leave these areas in a natural condition and incorporate them as a site feature.

Roof gardens are the mark of a signature urban environment and add a sophisticated dimension to the city. This efficient way of providing green relief in dense urban settings can introduce dramatic views in an atmosphere of relative privacy, insulated from the noise and traffic occurring at street level.
GOAL 5.1 PROMOTE A SENSE OF PLACE, SAFETY AND WALKABILITY

Creating a quality urban environment through building design and streetscape design will inherently promote communities that are pedestrian friendly and foster a sense of place, safety and human scale. A “sense of place” rarely can be established when streets and public spaces are poorly defined. The placement, height, scale and design of buildings and their relationship to the street can have a tremendous impact on an area becoming a place where people feel safe and enjoy walking. All urban environmental components should contribute to place-making and enhance Dallas’ unique character and identity.

Parking lots lining the streets, buildings with large set backs, or buildings with no windows facing the street alienate pedestrians rather than invite them to enjoy the space. A true streetscape is created and walking is pleasant when buildings are pulled toward the street and designed at the pedestrian level with interesting architectural features, entrances and windows. This will not only encourage urban activity but will also discourage crime. Trees and landscaping create aesthetically pleasing and comfortable walking environments, offering protection from heat and sun and lend human scale to the area.

Policy 5.1.1 Promote pedestrian-friendly streetscapes.

Designing pedestrian-friendly streetscapes and encouraging new developments to provide pedestrian-oriented amenities and enhancements would encourage people to walk.

- Arcades, awnings and other architectural features will provide a human scale and offer protection from rain and the summer heat.
- Pedestrian plazas and green open space offer interesting public places for people to enjoy the street experience. These should incorporate water features, sculptures, art or other architectural objects or focal points.
- Public art, benches, trash receptacles, bike racks and other amenities enhance the quality of the pedestrian experience.
- Walkways and sidewalks, paved in materials with a tactile quality, differentiate the pedestrian space from the auto realm.
- Pedestrian-oriented street lighting increases the sense of safety and reduces the impact of light pollution.
- Trees and other landscaping visually enhance the space as well as provide shade and a cooler microclimate. Native or drought-resistant species should be encouraged.
• Walkways should lead directly to the street from building entrances that are set back from the street.
• Headlight screens and landscaping will visually screen parking lots adjacent to the street.
• Moving overhead wires to underground locations and relocating other utilities to the rear of the development clean up the area’s appearance.

IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES

5.1.1.1 Amend the Dallas zoning and plat regulations to establish pedestrian and transit oriented districts with urban design standards for walkability that encourage enhanced pedestrian amenities. These standards need to accommodate automobile dependent activities such as trash pickup and deliveries.

5.1.1.2 Amend the Thoroughfare Plan to accommodate Context Sensitive Design principles and develop a Context Sensitive Design manual that is consistent with urban design standards.

5.1.1.3 Apply urban design tools in pedestrian or transit oriented districts when approving zoning cases and when developing Area Plans.

5.1.1.4 Work with utility providers to increase options for street light fixtures that encourage walking and safety and options with trees and to resolve maintenance issues.

5.1.1.5 Allocate City funds and find other funding to enhance pedestrian amenities on streets in priority areas.

Dense urban neighborhoods like State Thomas call for creative and flexible design approaches to pedestrian lighting and street trees.
Policy 5.1.2 Define urban character in Downtown and urban cores.

By placing buildings adjacent to the street, with generous sidewalks, an area takes on the characteristics of an urban center rather than a suburban-style place. Wide sidewalks permit sidewalk cafes, attractive landscaping and pedestrian areas. Buildings should be massed with common parking lots rather than situated individually surrounded by private lots. Parking structures that front the street should provide ground floor retail, community service and/or professional office storefronts. If the ground level cannot include stores, then enhanced facades should be provided on parking structure walls that meet pedestrian oriented areas.

The placement and design of buildings should also consider other issues.

- Building entrances and windows should be provided to offer “eyes on the street,” improving security and pedestrian access.
- Sidewalks should accommodate pedestrians by including amenities such as seating.
- Parking lots, garage doors, loading zones and mechanical equipment should be placed away from streets.

IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES

5.1.2.1 Amend the Dallas zoning and plat regulations to establish pedestrian and transit oriented districts with urban design standards that discourage excessive front setbacks and blank building facades, and ensure that car-oriented functions are set away from the street. Auto-dependent services and functions such as trash pickup and deliveries must be accommodated.

5.1.2.2 Amend the Thoroughfare Plan to accommodate Context Sensitive Design principles and develop a Context Sensitive Design manual that is consistent with urban design standards.

5.1.2.3 Develop Area Plans for pedestrian or transit oriented districts to identify and recommend specific areas in which to apply urban design standards.

5.1.2.4 Enhance Downtown’s character and identity with consistent standards for public and private improvements.
Table II-5.1: Guidelines for Building Front Setbacks
(Intended only as a policy guide and not for regulatory purposes.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Downtown, Urban Mixed-Use. Main Streets, and retail frontage within Transit Centers and Multi-Modal Corridors</td>
<td>0 feet</td>
<td>5 feet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campus Districts, Urban Residential and office and residential frontage within Transit Centers and Multi-Modal Corridors</td>
<td>5 feet</td>
<td>15 feet</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table II-5.2: Guidelines for Building Street Frontages
(Intended only as a policy guide and not for regulatory purposes.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Building (Minimum)</th>
<th>Parking, Garage Doors and/or Blank Walls (Maximum)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Downtown, Urban Mixed-Use, Main Streets, and retail frontage within Transit Centers and Multi-Modal Corridors</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campus Districts and office frontage within Transit Centers and Multi-Modal Corridors</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Residential and residential frontage within Transit Centers and Multi-Modal Corridors</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table II-5.3: Guidelines for Windows and Doors Extents on Street-Facing Facades
(Intended only as a policy guide and not for regulatory purposes.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Ground Floor</th>
<th>Upper Floors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Downtown, Urban Mixed-Use, Main Streets, and retail frontage within Transit Centers and Multi-Modal Corridors</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campus Districts, Urban Residential and office and residential frontage within Transit Centers and Multi-Modal Corridors</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Policy 5.1.3  Encourage complementary building height, scale, design and character.

By encouraging development of buildings, structures and landscapes that complement the character and scale of their setting and relate to the human scale, a more defined sense of place is created.

- New development should be appropriate to the context of its location in density, intensity and size, particularly when adjacent to existing residential areas, historic or conservation districts.
- Buildings should be designed to be compatible in height, scale, bulk and massing to the urban context and established character of the surrounding area.
- The impact of parking lots and structures on adjacent areas should be given careful consideration. Location, configuration, access points and screening should be designed to minimize spillover and mitigate any negative effects.
- All parking lots and structures must be designed and screened to eliminate visual intrusion or incompatibility with the adjacent residential neighborhoods, historic or conservation districts.

IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES

5.1.3.1 Encourage the use of historic and conservation districts to protect the character and scale of Dallas’ older residential neighborhoods, retail centers and office buildings.

5.1.3.2 Amend the Dallas zoning regulations to establish urban design standards that reflect quality design and good land use principles through regulations which address height, scale, bulk and massing of new development. Standards will also address the impact of parking lots and structures to minimize spillover to adjacent neighborhoods, mitigate any negative effects and eliminate visual intrusion or incompatibility with the adjacent residential neighborhoods, historic or conservation districts.
Policy 5.1.4 Enhance visual enjoyment of public space.

There is a public interest in preserving and enhancing people's ability to view and enjoy a limited number of designated important public natural, cultural and historical landmarks, objects and spaces from designated public areas within Dallas. Being able to see these elements promotes a sense of place, strengthens community identity and image and facilitates navigation based on visual landmarks. Prior to designations of (i) important public natural, cultural and historic landmarks, objects or spaces and (ii) the public spaces from which they are viewed; the view shed, view cone or view corridor shall be mapped and analyzed to identify the impact on private property rights.

- It is important that the City enhance and protect designated public views from designated public viewing areas of significant natural elements such as designated views of the Trinity River Corridor, the escarpment and White Rock Lake, all of which establish Dallas' identity.
- Public signage and gateway features will help define neighborhoods and districts.
- Civic institutions and community events, such as street fairs, parades, farmers markets and live performances, all give Dallas an important cultural and urban flair.

Downtown Dallas presents a dramatic view from several angles. Studies should be undertaken to identify significant public view corridors to protect.
IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES

5.1.4.1 Identify and inventory significant public views and vistas and develop guidelines to protect important public landmarks and focal points that define the city and contribute to its identity.

5.1.4.2 Establish public “viewsheds” along important corridors as part of Area Plans developed in priority implementation areas.

GOAL 5.2 STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY AND NEIGHBORHOOD IDENTITY

Establishing a sense of identity for Dallas and its individual neighborhoods is critical to promoting civic investment and pride. Creating a sense of community will help foster the continued success of important neighborhoods and districts. This can be accomplished through building and landscape design.

Policy 5.2.1 Maintain neighborhood scale and character.

The City recognizes the importance of encouraging and maintaining the scale and character of existing residential neighborhoods.

IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES

5.2.1.1 Encourage the use of neighborhood stabilization overlays to maintain building setbacks, heights and garage placements so new development respects the scale of existing stable residential neighborhoods.

5.2.1.2 Encourage the use of conservation and historic districts to protect the unique character, history or architectural quality of existing residential neighborhoods. Implement design standards to address sensitivity to the character of adjacent uses.

5.2.1.3 Encourage the use of street-topper signs to establish neighborhood identity.

5.2.1.4 Acknowledge the distinctive character of the area and include appropriate design tools to facilitate place-making in Area Plans.

5.2.1.5 Locate and design thoroughfares to promote integration of amenities in the design of new development and to preserve neighborhoods.
Policy 5.2.2 Promote the character of the city's significant districts, linkages and areas.

The quality and character of developed and natural destinations and amenities in Dallas attract tourists, visitors and residents alike. Their perception and experiences of these significant areas, as well as key pathways throughout the city, contribute collectively to the identity and image of Dallas as a whole. Enhancing these assets, which define Dallas’ character, should be fostered through strong urban design principles.

IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES

5.2.2.1 Inventory and identify significant districts, linkages and natural amenities that contribute to and enhance the city's image so these amenities may receive special design consideration. The character of these areas should be defined and protected in order to maximize their contribution toward enhancing the image of Dallas or providing opportunities to revitalize key areas.

5.2.2.2 Identify new opportunities to create significant areas of interest around emerging regional destinations within the city, and direct the character of the growth and development in that area with urban design standards.

5.2.2.3 Use Area Plans to establish urban design standards that ensure a strong sense of community identity.

5.2.2.4 Identify capital improvement programs or other funding mechanisms to implement urban design standards in priority areas.

Policy 5.2.3 Ensure attractive gateways into the city.

Creating attractive and memorable gateways at important intersections, entrances to the city, major public open spaces, civic and cultural spaces and historic landmarks helps define the city’s boundaries, neighborhoods and important places.

IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES

5.2.3.1 Identify and prioritize major points of entry into Dallas to receive special design treatments including landscaping, public art and/or signage that reflect the unique character of the area.
5.2.3.2 Partner with TXDOT on major highway reconstruction projects to identify and implement urban design enhancements and gateways at exits into important districts.

5.2.3.3 Develop Area Plans to ensure appropriate land uses at significant gateways.

Policy 5.2.4 Enhance retail, industrial and business operations.

By encouraging better design quality and convenience in retail centers, business parks and industrial parks, the city takes on a more notable look.

- Primary building entrances should be highlighted through building massing and their orientation toward streets.
- Variation in massing of large buildings should be used to avoid the “big box” look.
- Adding trees and landscaping to parking lots provides shade and reduces heat island effect.
- Walkways from building entrances through parking lots should be landscaped.
- Mechanical equipment and open storage should be screened.
- Exterior lighting should be directed downward to avoid skyward light pollution.

IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES

5.2.4.1 Develop design standards for retail centers, business parks and industrial parks.

5.2.4.2 Enact new design standards for retail centers, industrial and business parks, where appropriate, through Area Plans.

5.2.4.3 Establish cooperative relationships with private and civic organizations to improve urban design, landscaping and other amenities. These amenities will, in turn, enhance commercial areas throughout the city.
GOAL 5.3 ESTABLISHING WALK-TO CONVENIENCE

If residents wish to walk rather than drive for some of their daily trips, they need a safe and pleasant environment and direct access to the goods, services and jobs they seek. “Walk-to convenience” can bring small neighborhood services, shops and offices within a short distance of homes and businesses, connected through pedestrian-friendly routes. This shift from current development patterns calls for a new approach to integrating land uses, platting lot and access ways and distributing street traffic. These efforts will result in increased accessibility for pedestrians, reduced driving requirements and improved air quality.

A one-quarter mile distance, determined by transit industry research, is the established walking standard for the average pedestrian. Studies show that transit users will walk five minutes at three miles per hour. The Nationwide Personal Transportation Survey (NPTS) shows that the median walking distance to and from transit stops is almost exactly a quarter-mile. Young people may be willing to walk a little farther than older adults and users of premium transit (i.e., light rail) may walk a little farther than those who ride the bus.

Policy 5.3.1 Encourage a balance of land uses within walking distance of each other.

The City should encourage integrating and balancing land uses, as is consistent with the forwardDallas! Vision’s Mixed-Use Building Blocks. These compatible land uses should be appropriate to and complement the surrounding area and would preclude land uses that are inherently incompatible with residential quality of life and/or uses that have negative or harmful secondary effects.

- Efforts in Downtown should focus on increasing urban-style housing, retail, parks, cultural amenities and entertainment to create an active, vibrant 24-hour urban core.
- Activity should support the creation of higher density urban mixed-use areas at major centers outside Downtown that are well served by transit.
- Attractive, quality mixed-use transit centers should be supported in order to make transit more accessible and appealing to more people.
- The commercial strips along Multi-modal Corridors should be transformed into mixed-use boulevards.
- Creation of pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use campus areas will encourage a balance of retail, services and housing near major employers.

Policies in forwardDallas! encourage transforming existing commercial corridors into mixed-use boulevards that bring conveniences, several housing options and transit-supportive businesses to underdeveloped communities.

A mix of land uses within walking distance is a key ingredient for promoting walkability.
• By supporting the viability of ground floor retail along main streets, upper story housing and offices will be encouraged.
• Small infill housing and the redevelopment of struggling retail strips and nodes within Urban Neighborhoods can be encouraged and should be sensitive to the scale and character of the existing neighborhood.
• Connections must be provided in Urban Neighborhoods to area amenities.

IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES

5.3.1.1 Amend the Dallas zoning regulations to establish mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly zoning districts. These zoning districts should provide for a range of densities and intensities to suit a variety of urban contexts.

5.3.1.2 Encourage mixed-use zoning districts and developments particularly in the Walkable Mixed-Use Building Blocks, yet ensure sensitivity to existing, surrounding vulnerable land uses.

5.3.1.3 Enact mixed-use zoning districts after consideration and study of Area Plans that identify specific opportunities and needs.

5.3.1.4 Build signature urban parks within walking distance of major concentrations of population and employment with particular emphasis on Downtown parks.

5.3.1.5 Build neighborhood facilities, such as schools, libraries and community centers, within walking distance of transit stations and homes.

The potential exists to redevelop vacant lots, underutilized parcels and parking lots throughout the Jefferson Boulevard corridor.

In addition to walking, mixed-use developments also facilitate the use of bicycles and transit.
Policy 5.3.2 Direct pedestrian routes to home, school or work.

It is important that street alignments and pedestrian connections provide reasonably direct routes from homes or jobs to schools, local destinations and transit stations. Where existing man-made or natural conditions prevent direct routes, trail connections to reduce walking distances should be encouraged or funded.

IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES

5.3.2.1 Amend the plat regulations to encourage walkability through an interconnected network of streets and block lengths appropriate for comfortable, safe walking.

5.3.2.2 Develop small Area Plans in priority implementation areas to identify and prioritize locations where new street connections or pedestrian ways will significantly reduce walking distances from homes and jobs to local destinations.

5.3.2.3 Collaborate with the school districts to identify neighborhoods served by elementary schools. Ensure that safe, accessible and direct routes are available for schoolchildren and their parents. Minimize walking distances and conflicts with traffic. Adopt measures to reduce traffic speed and volume.

5.3.2.4 Encourage new developments to incorporate convenient and reasonably direct walkways from concentrations of homes and jobs to local destinations. Use open space networks to enhance connectivity.
Policy 5.3.3 Encourage transit oriented developments and transit centers.

There is a symbiotic relationship between public transit, a person’s willingness to walk and quality design of urban places. This depends not only upon the thoughtful integration of appropriate land uses, but upon a built environment reflecting careful attention to the human scale.

IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES

5.3.3.1 Consider the public realm with regard to integrating a defined pedestrian network and quality pedestrian amenities through Area Plans around transit stations and multi-modal corridors. Design should be sensitive to various scales of development, acknowledging the difference between Transit Centers or Multi-modal Corridors that serve as regional or communitywide destinations and those that are more neighborhood-oriented.

5.3.3.2 Amend the Dallas zoning and plat regulations to establish development standards to ensure a quality built environment contributes positively to the pedestrian environment. Include appropriate setbacks, heights and other building standards for a range of scale and densities.

5.3.3.3 Establish standards for public improvements in transit oriented development areas that foster a quality pedestrian environment.

5.3.3.4 Identify capital improvement programs and other funding sources to implement urban design standards in priority areas.

Why one-quarter mile?

A one-quarter mile walking distance is a well known rule-of-thumb in planning. It comes from a well established transit industry standard, that transit users will walk a quarter mile, or five minutes at three miles per hour. This is actually much better than most people might guess. Studies conducted regarding walk times by the Nationwide Personal Transportation Survey (NPTS) show that the median walking distance to and from transit stops is almost exactly a quarter mile. Of course, young people may be willing to walk a little farther than older people, and users of premium transit (light rail, for example) may walk a little farther than regular bus users.