Retail Developments

Design Guidelines

Designing Quality Places

Urban Design Policy for the City of Cape Town

2026 v1

CITY OF CAPE TOWN
ISIXEKO SASEKAPA
STAD KAAPSTAD

Please note:

These guidelines are not intended to be prescriptive. Instead, the principles contained in this document are meant to guide property owners, City officials, designers, developers, architects, planners and community members in managing and improving the principles expressed in the Urban Design Policy. The intended purpose is to collectively create sustainable, safe, contextually appropriate environments for the betterment of the City and its users.

Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy and quality of the information in this document, as well as the alignment with other City policies and guidelines available at the time of production.
The City cannot be held responsible, and will not be liable, for any errors or omissions contained herein.

In no event will the City be liable for any loss or damage that may arise from the use of these guidelines.

Many of the images used in this document are taken from real world examples, adapted to show the principles of the guidelines presented.

Endorsed by:

Robert McGaffin

Digitally signed by Robert McGaffin
Date: 2025.12.01 14:34:58 +02'00'

.....

Executive Director
Spatial Planning & Environment

Digitally signed by Erika Naude
Date: 2025.11.25 13:34:32 +02'00'

.....

Director
Spatial Planning & Environment

Rev. no	Date	Description
v1	01.01.2026	Date of release

Development typology

Retail plays a vital role in enhancing the economic prosperity, vitality and quality of urban life. These developments can trigger a series of urban design considerations that impact various aspects of the physical, social and economic fabric of the surrounding environment. Such considerations include approaches to locations, access arrangements, parking, building placement and scale. Successful integration requires thoughtful planning and collaboration between developers and local communities.

For the purpose of this design guideline, retail developments are characterised as **commercial developments** that are generally on a scale that services a single suburb or small neighbourhood. They typically consist of at least a **single large anchor tenant** with **multiple smaller tenants**

What & where?

Retail developments can be generally characterised by the following:

- Area extent (site): 6 000 - 14 000 sqm
- May be mixed use, including retail, commercial and/or residential
- At least a single anchor tenant
- Parking is on-grade and sometimes structured or in a basement

Retail developments are generally:
- embedded in a neighbourhood
- located on activity streets

What kind of developments are we trying to create?

Retail developments that:

- encourage a mixed-use environment
- create economically prosperous nodes within well-located urban environments
- respond to contextual surroundings, character and heritage cues
- are a series of interconnected structures, scaled and massed to integrate with surrounding urban fabric
- offer multi-use-oriented space
- contribute positively to the public realm
- are resilient developments that can adapt to changing market shifts and community needs
- can support phased growth within a development footprint
- are pedestrian friendly (internally and externally)

Contents

Key definitions

These definitions are shorthand and should be read in conjunction with the Urban Design Policy (2024).

Activity streets: A vibrant, pedestrian-friendly road typically lined with retail, commercial or public services that supports high levels of movement and interaction within urban neighbourhoods.
Anchor tenant: A major retail tenant (e.g. supermarket) that draws customers and supports smaller tenants.
Articulation (of façade): Variation in building surfaces to add visual interest.
Blank Façade: An elevation of a building that has no door or window openings or has opaque spandrel panels.
Built form: The shape and massing of development. Built form relates to qualities such as density or quantum of development (often referred to as massing), coverage (how much of the site is built up), building height, and the distance from property lines.
Colonnades / awnings / overhangs: Architectural features that provide shelter, enhance pedestrian comfort and assist with creating a human scale.
Connector streets: A road that links neighbourhoods or districts and supports moderate vehicle flow and accessibility.
Desire lines: A desire line is an imaginary line linking facilities or places.
Green Infrastructure Network (GIN): A network of natural and semi-natural systems (e.g., parks, wetlands) that provide ecological and recreational benefits.
Urban heat island effect: Where a metropolitan area is significantly warmer due to the heat absorbed by hard surfaces.
Interface theme: How buildings interact with public spaces, streets, and pedestrians.
Mixed-use development: A development that combines a mixture of uses, such as residential, retail or commercial.
Passive cooling: Design strategies that cool buildings without mechanical systems.
Passive surveillance: The casual observance of public and private areas by people in the course of their normal activities.
Perimeter Block: An urban form, or collection of structures, that concentrates the development of a city block along its outermost - or public - edges.
Phased growth: Development that occurs in stages over time.
Planted screen wall: A wall integrated with vegetation for aesthetic, health and environmental benefits.
Public realm: This term means the collection of physical and non-physical elements that are accessible or have an impact on the general public. Some aspects of the public realm are privately owned and managed. The public realm includes among others all forms of media, open spaces and streets.
Street hierarchy: A planning concept that ranks streets based on their function and traffic flow.
SUDS (Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems): Techniques for managing stormwater sustainably.
Topography/landform: The natural shape and elevation of the land.
Trading structure: Built elements designed to accommodate informal or formal street trading.
Typology matrix: A classification system for different types of developments.
Urban fabric: The physical layout and structure of a city, including buildings, streets and open spaces.
Urban Grain: The pattern and scale of streets and plots in an area, reflecting its development history and character.
Visual permeability: The ability to see through or into a space, enhancing openness and safety.
Active interface: A building edge, facade or frontage that has habitable spaces that connect well with the public realm. It includes a mix of uses and spaces facing the public realm, with doors, windows, balconies and clear shopfronts. These interfaces are intentionally designed to encourage public accessibility as well as physical and visual interaction with the public realm.
Positive interface: A building edge or facade that includes windows, balconies and overlooking features that encourage interaction, safety and passive surveillance.
Pedestrian-friendly interface: A building edge, facade or frontage that prioritizes the needs and safety of people walking. These interfaces should create a pleasant pedestrian experience. Landscaping and overlooking features can be used to create these interfaces.

Introduction

Guidelines are intended to provide the 'how' to the Urban Design Policy, which emphasises the 'what' and the 'why'. In general terms, guidelines are required for where there may be ambiguity, or where there are multiple interpretations of a policy, strategy or by law.

Purpose of the guidelines

The Urban Design Guidelines are developed as a suite of documents. These documents serve as part of the approved Designing Quality Places: Urban Design Policy for the City of Cape Town (2024). The intention is that the guidelines are flexible so that they can be updated and reviewed periodically. The executive director will be consulted on any updates to these documents, and will be responsible for implementing the contents of the guidelines as a decision-support tool. The executive director will report periodically on the implementation of the policy and guidelines to the relevant political oversight bodies, and will provide an overview of the current decision-support tools, as required.

The guidelines are intended to:

- serve as a facilitative document that assists in understanding the 'how' of the Urban Design Policy.
- supplement and streamline commenting.
- function as educational material that contextualises and explains how each development decision impacts the City and its users as a whole.
- encourage creative and innovative solutions to design challenges by 'demystifying' how good urban design principles can be achieved.
- promote early engagement with the City's Urban Planning and Design Department and the Urban Design Branch.
- be a clear, easy-to-read and user-friendly document.

It should be emphasised that the guidelines illustrated and explored in this document show a potential design solution. The principle of the guideline can be explored, changed and altered by anyone to achieve the same result in a different way.

The value of high-quality urban design

The international community recognises the importance of high-quality urban design in boosting the economic vitality of towns and cities. Effective urban design policies have been pivotal in transforming cities, driving economic development, and fostering social rejuvenation. High-quality urban design enhances the sense of place, pride and security within a community. It makes settlements more efficient by building on existing strengths and complementing the variety of resources available, leading to better resource use and greater economic vitality.

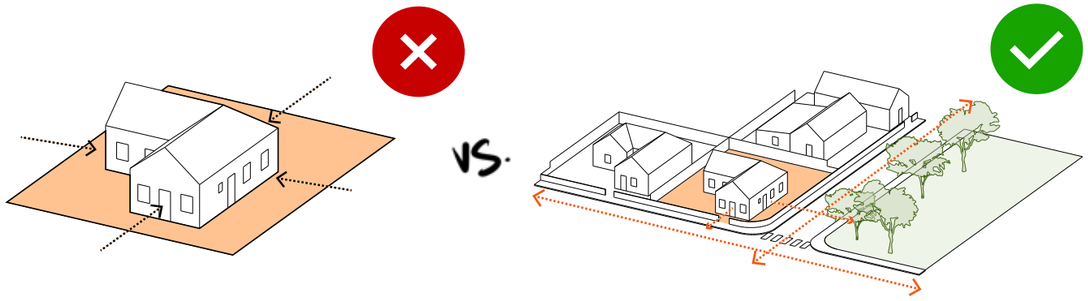
Attractive, well-designed spaces draw investments and stimulate economic growth. Conversely, poorly designed public spaces can negatively impact the environment, economy, and community. They can degrade natural resources, limit employment opportunities, and impose social costs. Residents in poorly designed areas often lack pride in their surroundings, perceive them as unsafe, and experience ongoing degradation and marginalisation.

Well-designed urban projects promote mixed-use activities, enhancing a city's adaptability and resilience in changing economic climates. Quality, safe and secure public spaces encourage exercise, walking and cycling, increasing street activity. This makes urban areas hubs of economic interaction the foster enterprise, innovation and tourism.

Building design vs urban design

Urban design is about creating better places for people by shaping buildings, spaces and infrastructure to improve the function, feel and form of towns and cities. It focuses on ensuring that the connections and relationships between buildings and spaces, public and private areas, and natural and built environments work well and efficiently as urban areas grow and develop. Urban design takes into account aesthetics, social, environmental and economic impacts, as well as the identity, character and heritage that define towns and cities.

Urban design can be applied at various scales, from large towns and cities to individual streets and buildings, and their surrounding landscapes or urban spaces. On a larger scale, it looks at how different parts of a city are connected and integrated, and where synergies between different activities can be created. On a smaller scale, urban design ensures that elements, such as street furniture and other features, are placed to support diverse uses and people, contributing to their continued use, comfort and safety, and the overall appearance of the community.



How the guidelines are structured

The guidelines are intended to be facilitative documents that assist in the processes of development and design. As such, the overall collection of guidelines should speak to a multitude of development **typologies** that are common within the city. A **matrix of typologies** has been developed, which looks to **identify, categorise and group** types of developments so that guidelines specific to those typologies can be produced. This matrix will be an evolving list that can and should respond to the ongoing trends and evolution of development across the city.

Matrix of Typologies:

Residential developments toolkit

Mixed-use, multi-storey developments
Multi-storey residential developments
Single residential
Gated residential developments
Residential infill developments
New development areas (NDAs)
Small-scale rental units (SSRUs)

Economic developments toolkit

Retail Developments
Infill high-rise developments
Neighbourhood mixed-use commercial precinct
Trading

Business park/ Industrial Precincts toolkit

Industrial precincts
Business precincts

Public space handbook

Green open space
Dignified spaces
Public parks
Urban public squares

Community facilities handbook

Community facilities
Clinics
Schools and ECDs

Institutional facilities handbook

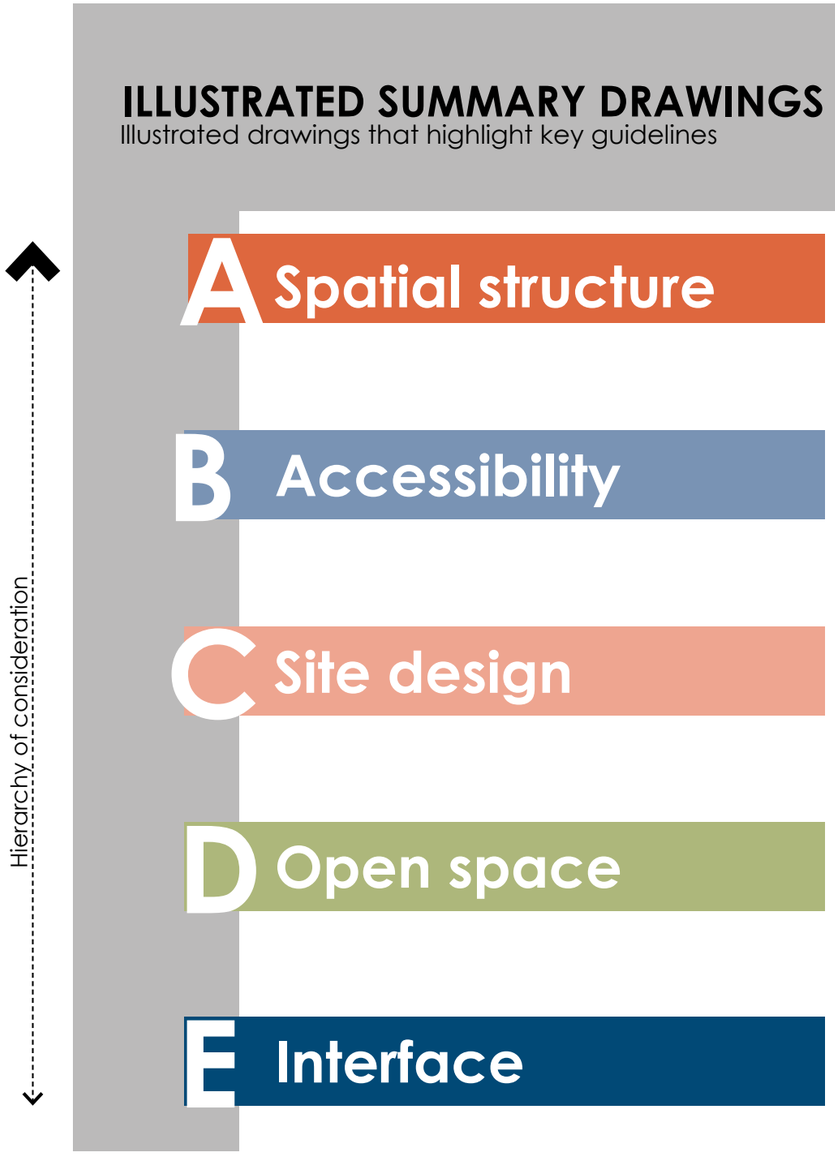
Transversal handbook:
Human settlements
Complete streets

Why the guidelines are structured in this way

All Urban Design Guideline documents are structured under **five main themes**, namely structure, accessibility, site design, open space and interface.

Urban designers use these themes as guiding principles when assessing development proposals.

For ease of reference, the guideline themes are provided in a hierarchical sequence; from large-scale site considerations to small-scale built form details. However, it is important to emphasise that all of the themes relate to each other and should be considered in an iterative manner in the planning and design process for a new development project. For example, decisions on the type and choice of boundary wall treatment, which are discussed in the 'interface theme', relate to the site's location, which is discussed in the 'structure theme'. When applying and using the guideline document, users will need to consider all of the themes and consider how they relate to each other in the final formulation of a design proposal.



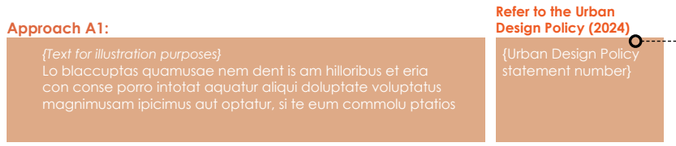
How to read this guideline document

The guidelines are constructed using a few elements. This is done to create a document that can be easily understood and clearly expresses not only a specific guideline, but the thinking behind that guideline.

Theme

Each guideline document is made up of **5 five themes**.

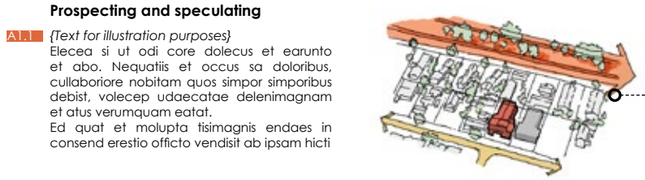
This descriptor note aims to express the specific theme and how it relates to the identified typology. It looks to explain why that theme is important to the development typology, and what the general principles are and how they are explored and expanded upon in the proceeding guidelines.



Approach

The approach aims to describe the intended outcome for a specific set of guidelines. This section helps to understand the reasoning behind the specifics of a guideline, and relate it back to methods of achieving good design.

A reference to specific policy statements, held in the Designing Quality Places: Urban Design Policy for the City of Cape Town (2024), helps to place these guidelines and their relationship to the Urban Design Policy (2024).



Guideline & Sketch

Specific guideline points are provided to explore potential design solutions that achieve the policy's principles and objectives.

In many instances, an illustrative example is provided that captures the guideline in a diagrammatic form.

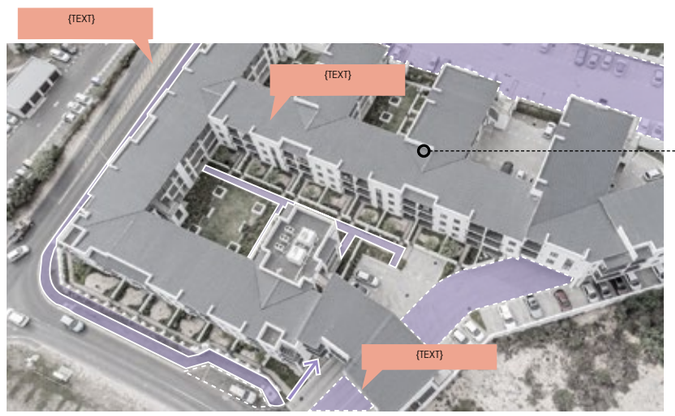


Image & Annotations

Annotated images are used to visually clarify what a potential guideline(s) is. Annotations highlight key features or design elements that help readers grasp what a 'real-world' example of a guideline would look like.

Retail developments

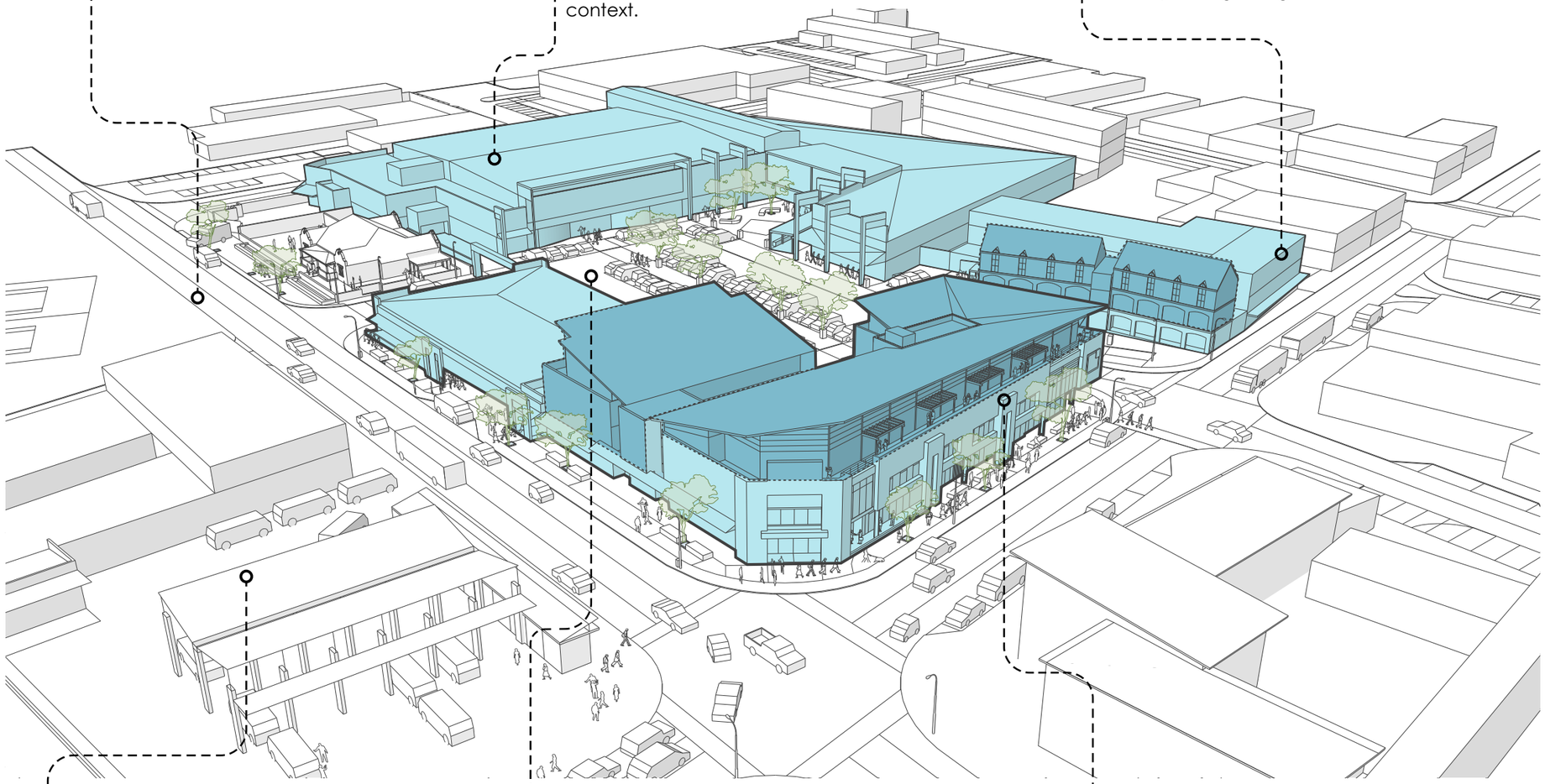
Core guidelines: Illustrated summary

The images and accompanying annotations below outline key design guidelines that should be carefully considered when planning and designing a retail development.

Retain and enhance existing pedestrian and vehicle connections, extending them into the site while introducing new pedestrian routes to key destinations within the development.

Vary building height and massing to avoid creating a monolithic structure. Achieve this by breaking up the massing. Where embedded in an existing neighbourhood, gradually step down building heights toward adjacent structures or streets to blend with the context.

Establish a continuous building line with active and positive edges to ensure new buildings blend into the urban fabric and maintain the street's cohesive character. Ensure sufficient space is retained within the property boundary for tree planting alongside the road.



Village Square, Durbanville

Locate retail developments alongside local services, public facilities and public transport infrastructure to form integrated zones that reinforce existing community or regional clusters.

Locate parking to the rear, side, or centre of the block to prioritise building placement along the street edge, thereby creating active frontages and supporting a pedestrian-friendly streetscape.

Promote mixed-use developments as a sustainable strategy offering the flexibility to adapt to changing market demands and evolving community needs. Mixed-use environments foster vibrant, inclusive neighbourhoods.

Development context

What and where?

Retail developments can be generally characterised by the following:

- Area extent (site): 6000 - 14000sqm
- At least a single anchor tenant.
- Parking is on-grade and sometimes structured or in a basement.
- May be mixed use, including retail, commercial and/ or residential.

Retail developments are generally:

- embedded in an existing neighbourhood
- located in an urban or suburban context
- typically located on an activity or connector street or class 3, 4 or 5 road

What kind of developments are we trying to create?

Retail developments that:

- create integrated nodes within well-located community clusters
- encourage a mixed-use environment
- respond to contextual surroundings, character and heritage cues
- are a series of interconnected structures, scaled and massed to integrate with surrounding urban fabric
- have parking that is located to the rear or side of the development, or in the basement/ semi-basement
- contribute positively to the public realm
- are sustainable developments that can adapt to changing market shifts and community needs
- can support phased growth within a development footprint
- are pedestrian friendly (internally and externally)

Retail developments

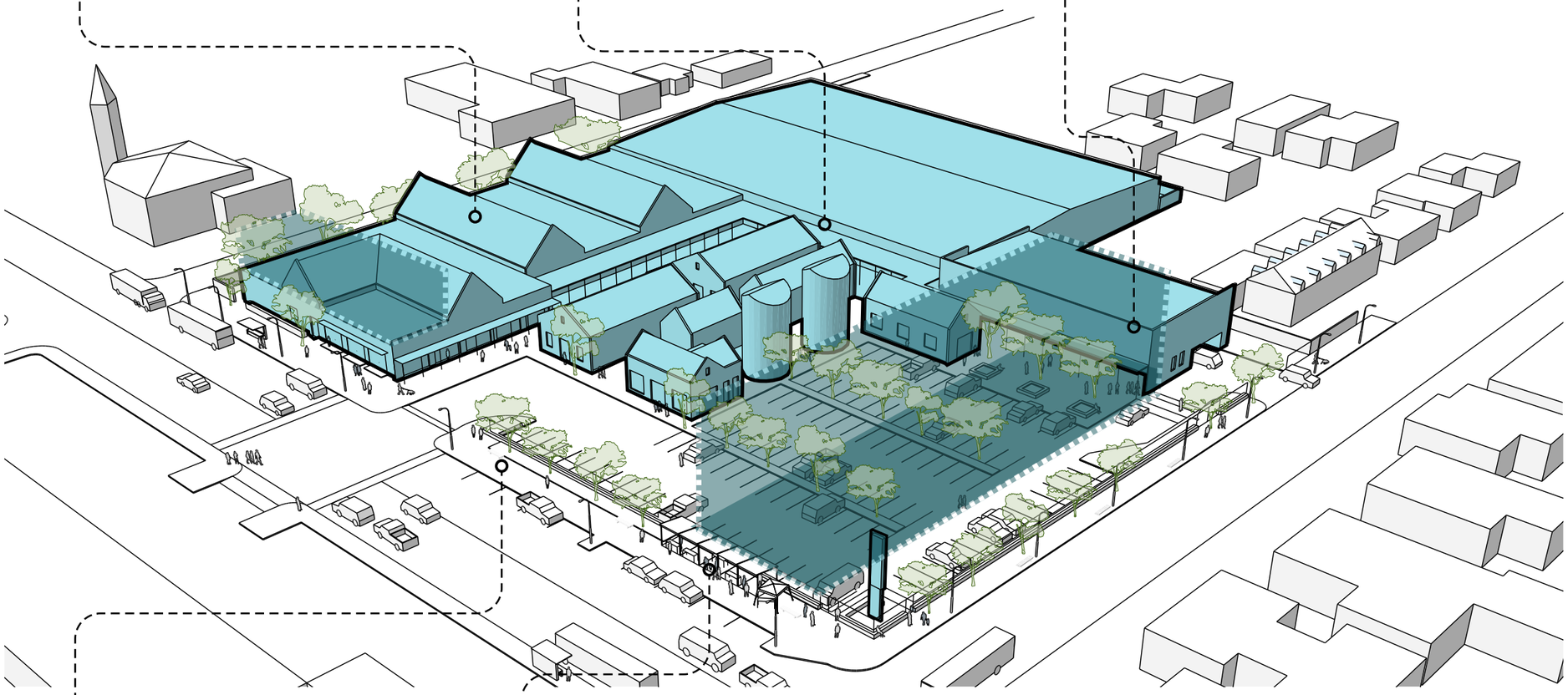
Core guidelines: Illustrated summary

The images and accompanying annotations below outline key design guidelines that should be carefully considered when planning and designing a retail development.

Locate back-of-house activities away from primary street frontages and pedestrian zones to minimise visual and functional impact. Access from secondary roads improves loading logistics while avoiding disruption to customer flow and preventing blockage of key entry points.

Wrap larger buildings with smaller, finer grain buildings. Larger retail developments often have a major anchor tenant with a single busy frontage, leaving the remaining sides inactive. Activate these edges with smaller retail, commercial or residential uses to transform the 'dead' sides into functional and active spaces.

Plan site layouts to accommodate future growth in phases in the form of additional storeys, new building blocks and new land uses. This provides the development the flexibility to incorporate mixed-use development over time.



Provide a continuous tree canopy along streets and building edges to visually soften building massing and parking areas, and to provide shade for pedestrians and reduce urban heat island effect. Provide dedicated pedestrian paths that are landscaped and separated from vehicle movement.

Provide informal trading opportunities at strategic edges and key locations. This approach creates active edge conditions, reduces the need for fencing, and helps discourage unmanaged trading on the periphery.

Site configuration

How the site should be occupied

Larger retail developments often have a major anchor tenant with a single busy frontage, leaving the remaining sides inactive. Activate these edges with smaller retail, commercial or residential uses to transform the 'dead' sides into functional and active spaces.

Strategically locate service areas to minimise their visual and operational impact.

Enhance the public realm with trees along streets, in parking lots and along building edges. Provide generous landscaping and pedestrian pathways for safe and comfortable access,

Support informal trading at strategic locations to create active edges.

Design site layouts to accommodate future growth and mixed-use integration.

Retail developments

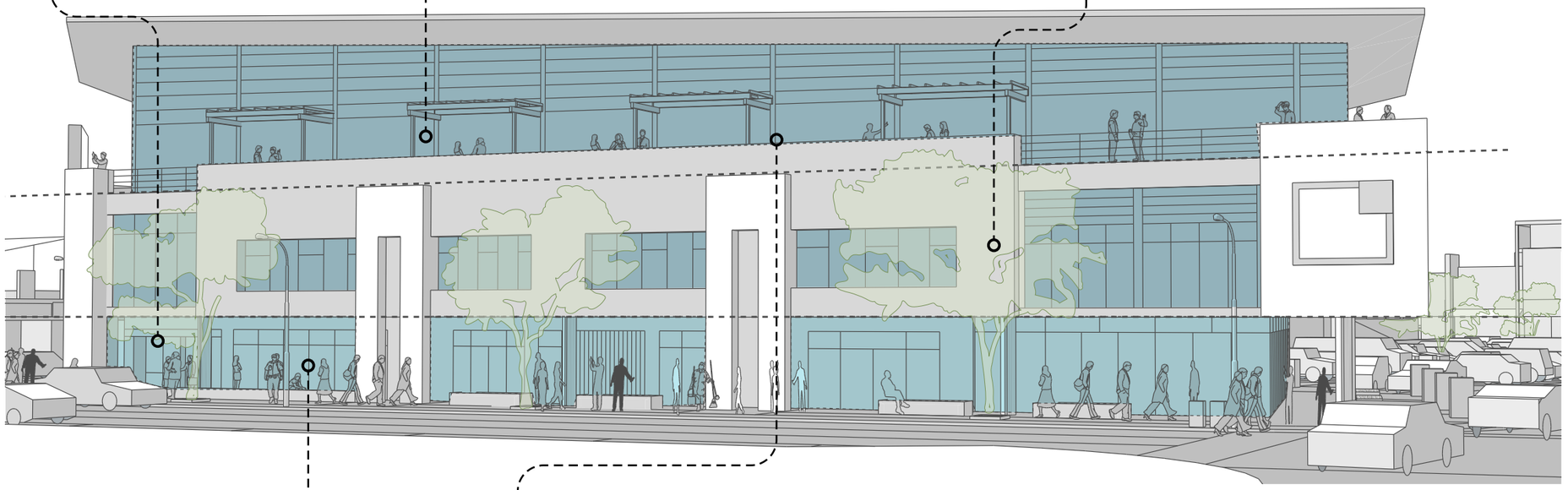
Core guidelines: Illustrated summary

The images and accompanying annotations below outline key design guidelines that should be carefully considered when planning and designing a retail development.

Establish a continuous building line along the street edge to ensure new structures blend into the urban fabric and maintain the street's cohesive character. Ensure sufficient space is retained within the property boundary for tree planting alongside the road.

In mixed-use developments, locate more private uses, such as offices or apartments, above or behind the more public retail ground floor. These uses benefit from being set back or elevated, which provide more privacy, security and views while still supporting the overall density and vitality of the development.

Provide a mix of hard and soft landscaping, including seating for rest across all ages and abilities. Add appropriately sized trees to offer natural cooling, aesthetic value, and a welcoming public realm, along with public lighting to enhance safety, visibility, and overall comfort. These elements together help create a pedestrian-friendly streetscape.



Village Square, Durbanville

Activate ground floor street-facing interfaces with cafés, restaurants, and shops to encourage pedestrian engagement, social interaction, and safety through passive surveillance. Incorporate colonnades, awnings, or overhangs to provide protection from the weather. Ground-floor façades should feature transparent entrances and windows to further enhance visibility and contribute to a safe, well-overlooked public realm.

Provide positive interfaces. Articulate facade with varied depths and materials, which add character and break up large building masses. Provide balconies on the upper floors for passive surveillance. In addition, elements such as integrated signage, murals, green landscaped walls and window displays offer opportunities for an engaging streetscape.

How development should address the public realm

Maintain a continuous building line along the street to ensure new structures integrate with the urban fabric and preserve a cohesive streetscape.

Activate ground floors with retail, cafés and restaurants to engage the public realm and encourage pedestrian activity. Locate private uses, such as offices or residential, above or behind active frontages.

Incorporate trees, landscaping, seating and lighting alongside the development to enhance comfort and enrich the streetscape.

Provide positive interfaces through architectural articulation, material variation, integrated signage and landscaping elements, contributing to a visually engaging and pedestrian-oriented streetscape.

A Spatial structure

Where a retail development is located within the broader context of a neighbourhood and city, it is important to gauge its size, scale, mix of land uses, and response to its surroundings. What type of retail development and whether it includes offices and residential depends on its context, and what form that development takes, are all based on aspects of structure and good urban design principles.

Approach A1: Location, scale, massing and connectivity

Refer to the Urban Design Policy (2024)

PS1.2; PS1.5; PS4.4; PS5.1; PS6.2; PS9.1 - 9.6

Ensure retail developments integrate, connect and are scaled appropriately in relation to their surrounding context.
This can be achieved in the following ways:

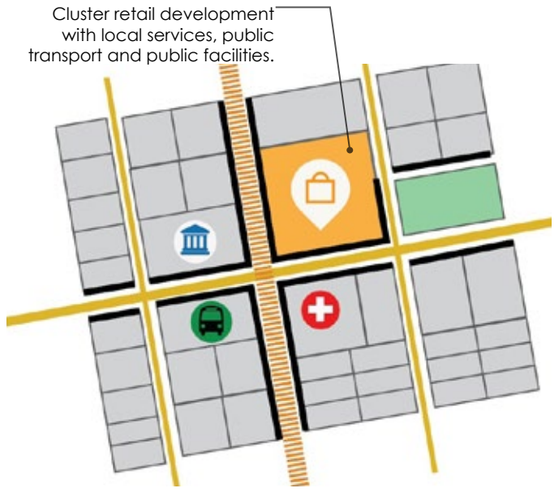
Location and scale

A1.1 Scale retail developments to reflect the site's role in relation to the metropolitan, district, or local node. Ensure it is appropriate to the nodal scale, and size and needs of the community it serves.

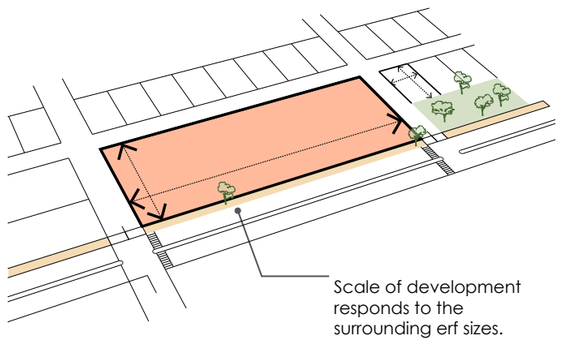
A1.2 Locate retail developments alongside local services, public facilities and public transport infrastructure to form integrated zones that reinforce existing community or regional clusters.

A1.3 Integrate the development with the surroundings by ensuring compatibility with adjacent land uses and supporting seamless transitions to residential, commercial or civic areas.

A1.4 Scale the development to reflect the site's context, supporting compact and mixed-use forms when embedded in existing neighbourhoods.



A1.1 A1.2 A1.3



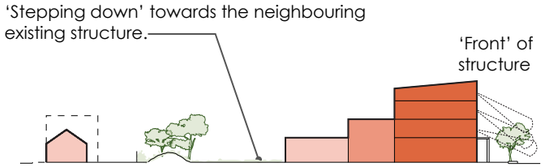
A1.1 A1.4

Palmyra Junction, Claremont, Cape Town

Harbour Bay, Simon's Town, Cape Town

Massing

A1.5 Ensure the massing of retail developments respects existing block sizes and street patterns, particularly when consolidating plots. Consider how larger developments may impact connectivity and movement through the surrounding neighbourhood.

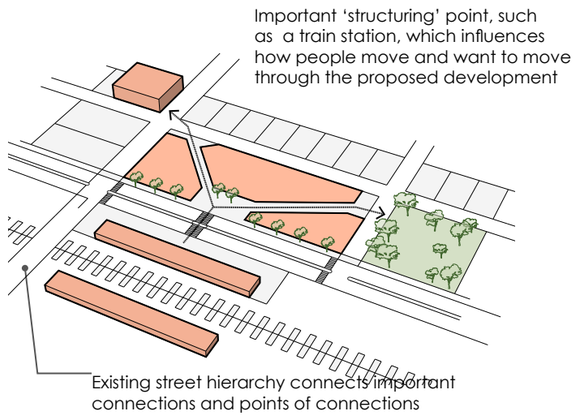


A1.6

A1.6 Vary building height and massing to avoid creating a monolithic structure. Achieve this by breaking up the massing. Where embedded in an existing neighbourhood, gradually step down building heights toward adjacent structures or streets to blend with the context.

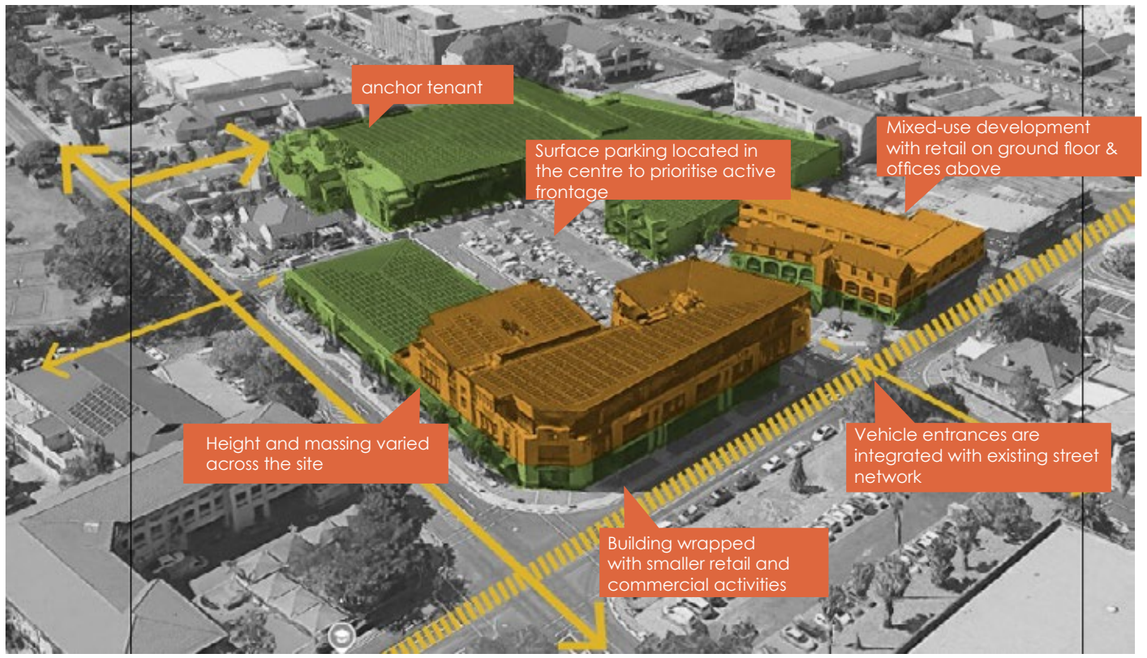
Connectivity

A1.7 Respond to the existing and planned street hierarchy, ensuring retail interfaces are oriented toward key movement corridors.



A1.5 A1.7 A1.8

A1.8 Retain, enhance and extend existing connections across the site and integrate new pedestrian desire lines to significant destinations within the development.



A1.5 A1.6 A1.7 A1.8 A2.1 A2.2 A2.3 A3.2

Village Square, Durbanville

Approach A2: Site Layout

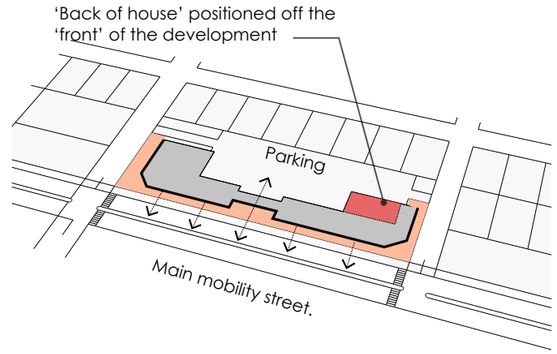
Organise the site to frame the street and define the public realm.
This can be achieved in the following way:

Refer to the Urban Design Policy (2024)

PS2.5; PS4.8; PS4.9; PS 6.1 - 6.8

Site layout

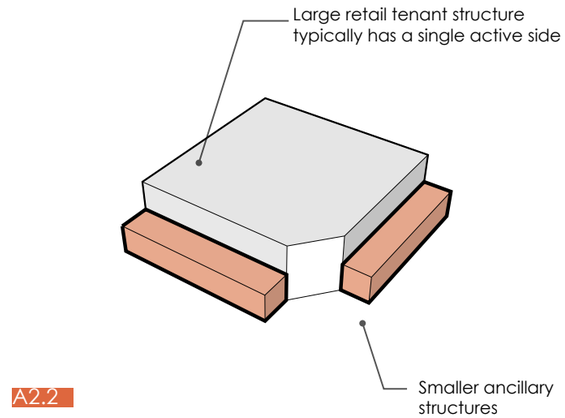
A2.1 Prioritise active frontages by positioning buildings along the street edge, and locate parking to the rear, side, or centre of the block to support a pedestrian-friendly environment.



A2.01

A2.2 Wrap larger buildings with smaller, finer grain buildings. Larger retail developments often have a major anchor tenant with a single busy frontage, leaving the remaining sides inactive. Activate these edges with smaller retail, commercial or residential uses to transform the 'dead' sides into functional and active spaces.

A2.3 Where possible, aim to create a perimeter block with buildings that actively engage the street, arranging parking, circulation networks and public spaces including inviting public forecourts in and around the buildings to complement the scale and character of the surrounding context.



A2.2

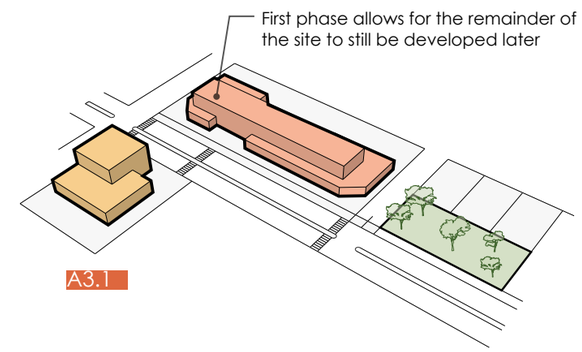
Approach A3: Mixed-use future proof

Plan site layouts to accommodate future growth in phases, with the flexibility to incorporate mixed-use development over time.
This can be achieved in the following way:

Refer to the Urban Design Policy (2024)

PS5.4 - 5.11

A3.1 Design the site layout to maximise land value while allowing for future intensification, redevelopment, and integration with subsequent development phases.



A3.1

A3.2 Promote mixed-use developments as a sustainable strategy offering the flexibility to adapt to changing market demands and evolving community needs. Mixed-use environments foster vibrant neighbourhoods.

B Accessibility

How a development responds to access and mobility dictates how major aspects of a design are positioned and formed. Creating a relationship between the end user of a development and how they travel to and from that development dictate where functions and spaces are positioned on a site and the form that they ultimately take.

Approach B1: Vehicular movement and circulation

Design circulation to be logical and facilitate easy navigation for customers, delivery trucks and emergency vehicles.
This can be achieved in the following ways:

Refer to the Urban Design Policy (2024)

PS3.1; PS3.2; PS4.1; PS4.11

Vehicular access

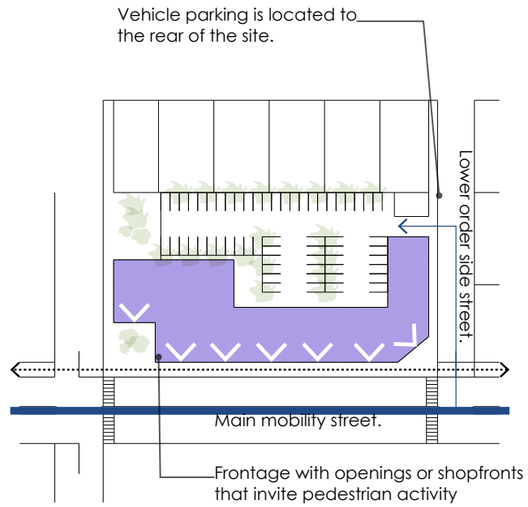
B1.1 Ensure vehicle access points align with the surrounding street network to promote seamless connectivity.

B1.2 Locate vehicle entrance/ exit points on secondary roads to maintain active frontage of primary roads and reduce conflict with pedestrians and cyclists.

B1.3 Prioritise separation of vehicular traffic from pedestrian and bicycle circulation for safety and comfort.

B1.4 Provide clear signage for entrance and exit points to reduce confusion and improve traffic circulation.

B1.5 Utilise features such as lighting, different road materials, narrower sections and raised crossings for speed management and pedestrian safety.

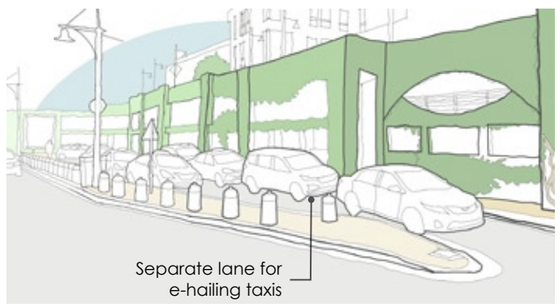


B1.2 B1.3

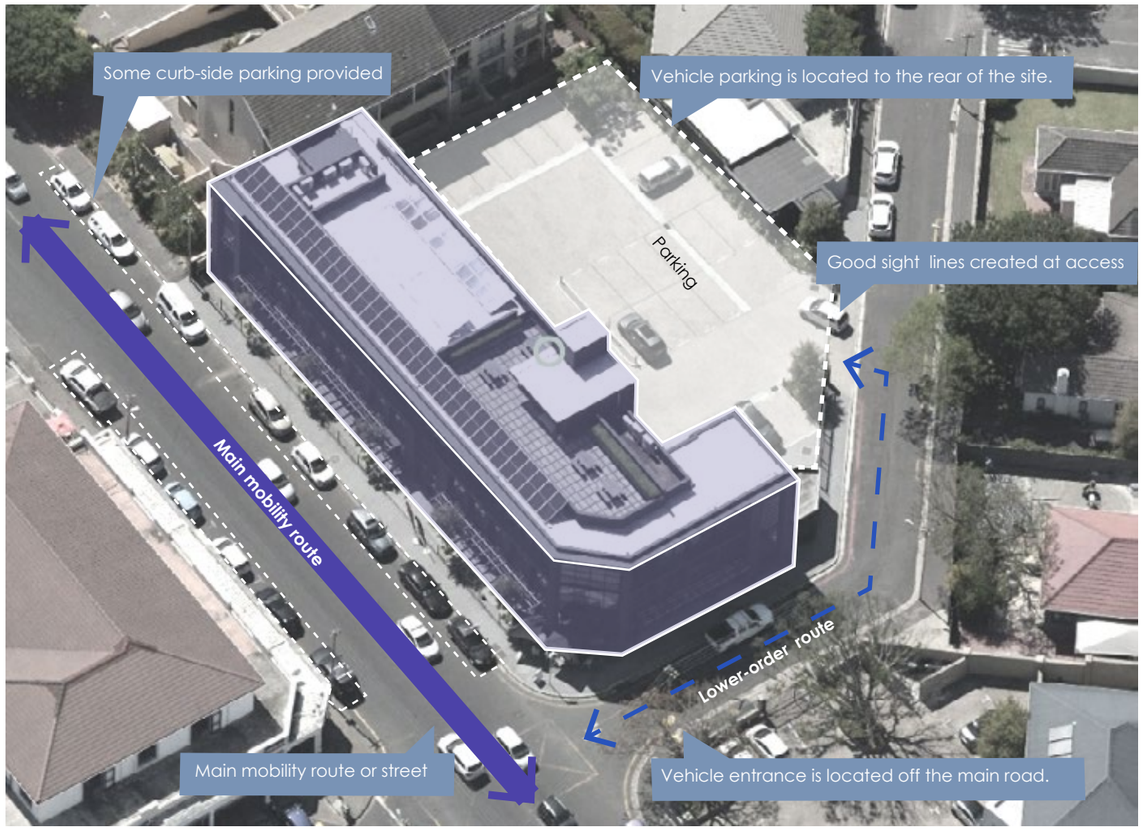
E-commerce and ride-hailing services

B1.6 Incorporate dedicated holding and delivery 'pick-up' spaces, thereby incorporating the functional requirements and supporting the growth of e-commerce activities, such as food delivery service.

B1.7 Incorporate dedicated pick-up and drop-off spaces for ride-hailing services, ensuring efficient operations while avoiding congestion in road networks and parking areas.



B1.7 V&A Waterfront



Service access

B1.8 Locate service and truck access at the rear or side of buildings, away from primary public spaces and active frontages.

B1.9 Shield service areas from public realm with landscaping to mitigate noise and smells from ventilation grilles, exhausts, generators, etc.

B1.8 Eden on the Bay Development, Big Bay, Cape Town

Approach B2: Prioritise pedestrian access, safety and comfort

Refer to the Urban Design Policy (2024)

PS4.1 - 4.7; PS6.10

Both internal circulation and external connections to the street network must be designed to support safe, accessible and comfortable pedestrian movement.
This can be achieved in the following ways:

Pedestrian access

B2.1 Provide direct and convenient routes and pathways from public transport stops, parking areas and surrounding neighbourhoods to retail entrances.

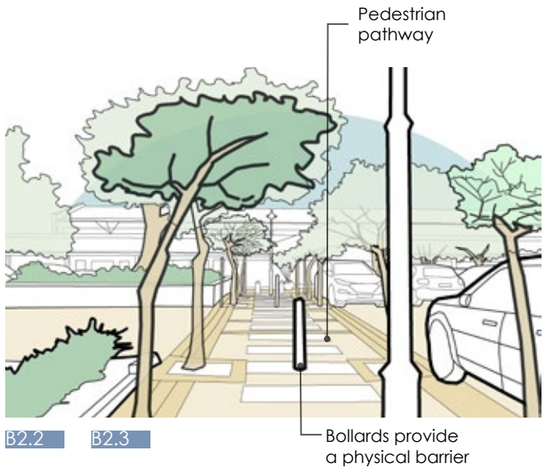
B2.2 Provide universally accessible (children, elderly, people with disabilities) pedestrian pathways throughout development. The desired width of a pedestrian 'clearway' on a sidewalk is 2m. Where a 2m clearway is not achievable, provide a minimum 1.5m route

B2.3 Separate pedestrian pathways from roads by utilising physical barriers, e.g. bollards, planters, trees and textured paving.

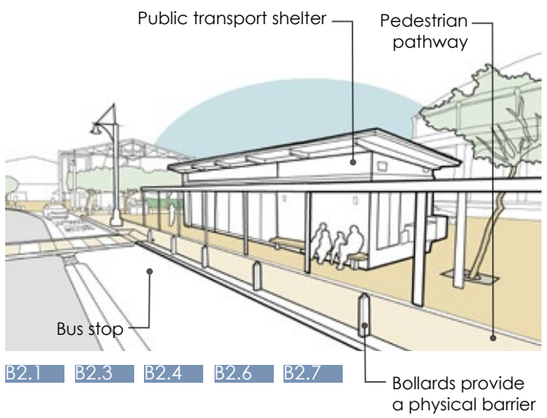
B2.4 Sidewalks adjacent to roads should not be gravel or 'loose materials'. This surface can pose a hazard to cyclists as well as pollute roadways.

B2.5 Provide multiple pedestrian access points to enhance connectivity across the development and ensure integration with the surrounding context.

B2.6 Utilise way finding - use signage, landmarks and maps to guide pedestrians easily through the site.



B2.2 B2.3



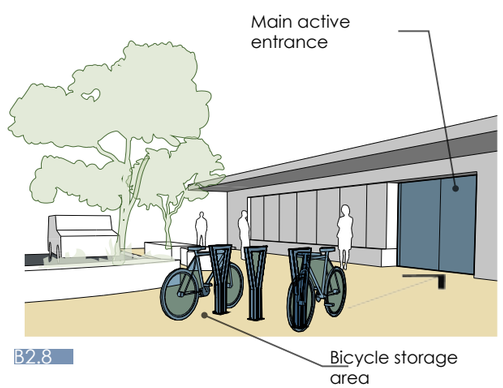
B2.1 B2.3 B2.4 B2.6 B2.7

Public transport

B2.7 Create pedestrian connections to existing and future public transport infrastructure.

Non-motorised Transport

B2.8 Provide bicycle racks close to building entrances to increase desirability of cycling to retail development.



B2.8

Approach B3: Parking

Refer to the Urban Design Policy (2024)

PS4.8 - 4.11; PS6.6

Parking should be discreet and its visual impact on the public environment should be minimised.
This can be achieved in the following ways:

On-grade parking

B3.1 'Break-up' and scale parking according to the areas they serve. Multiple smaller areas mitigate the negative impact of a single large one by reducing the heat-island effect and increasing safety as they are easier to monitor.

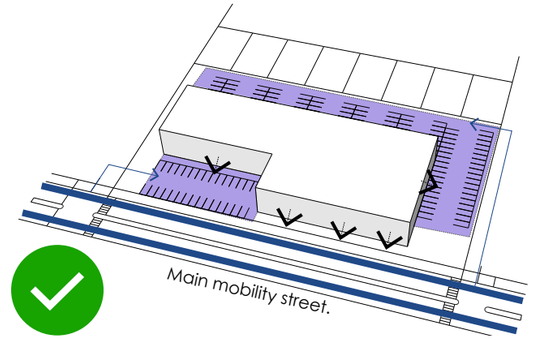
B3.2 Locate on-grade parking behind or beside development to preserve active street frontage.

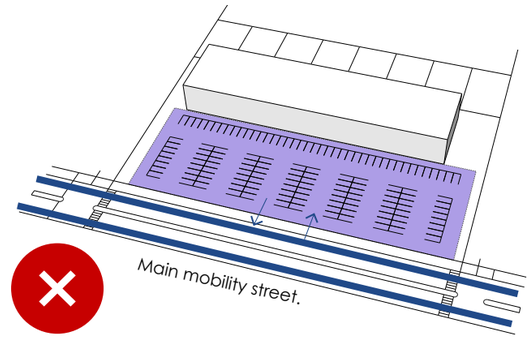
B3.3 Where unavoidable, provide active frontage when on-grade parking is located between street and building frontage.

B3.4 Provide overlooking features, such as windows and balconies, onto parking, thereby building in safety and security.

B3.5 Explore shared parking with neighbouring developments.

B3.6 Design parking lots to accommodate additional economic and social opportunities such as weekend markets, sporting events etc.





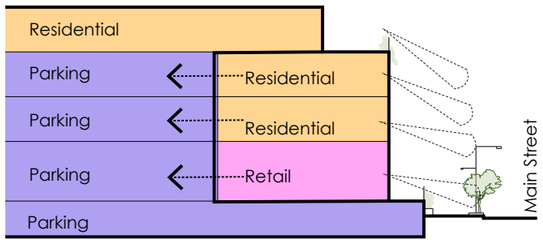
B3.1 B3.2

Basement/ semi-basement/ structured parking

B3.7 Prioritise basement, semi-basement and structured parking over on-grade parking as these options create a more compact building footprint and reduce the negative impact parking has on the public realm.

B3.8 Structured parking fronting onto the street should be avoided, especially on the ground and first floor of the building. Wrap structured parking with a retail, residential or commercial use to create an active street interface.

B3.9 Design parking structures with a minimum floor-to-ceiling height that supports future redevelopment, enabling ground floors to be converted to habitable retail spaces.



B3.7 B3.8

C Site Design

Retail development site design should ensure safe, legible and inclusive access for all users, integrating seamlessly with pedestrian, cycling and public transit networks. Building placement must prioritise active frontages and clear sight lines, with primary entrances oriented toward key pedestrian routes. Development should respond sensitively to local context, ensuring the scale and design reinforce and enhance the existing neighbourhood character and contribute positively to the public realm.

Approach C1: Orientation of buildings in relation to the public realm

Position and orientate retail developments to allow active frontages.
This can be achieved in the following ways:

Refer to the Urban Design Policy (2024)

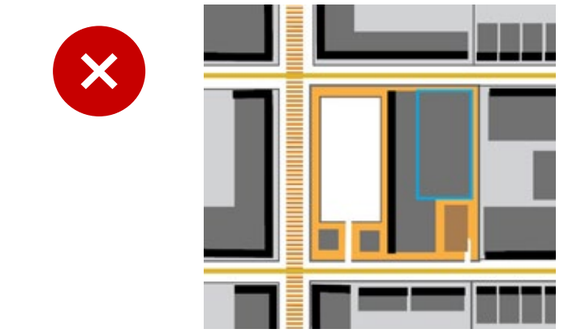
PS1.6; PS2.5; PS2.9; PS5.7; PS6.1 - 6.4; PS7.1; PS7.2; PS7.7; PS7.10 - 7.11

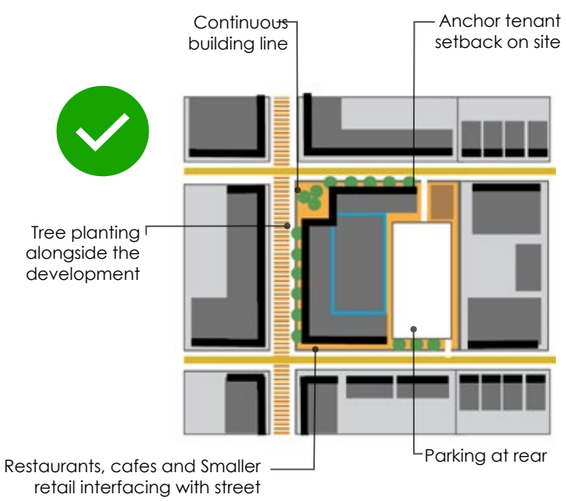
Placement and orientation of buildings and land uses

C1.1 Establish a continuous building line along the street edge to ensure new structures blend into the urban fabric and maintain the street's cohesive character. Ensure sufficient space is retained within the property boundary for tree planting alongside the road.

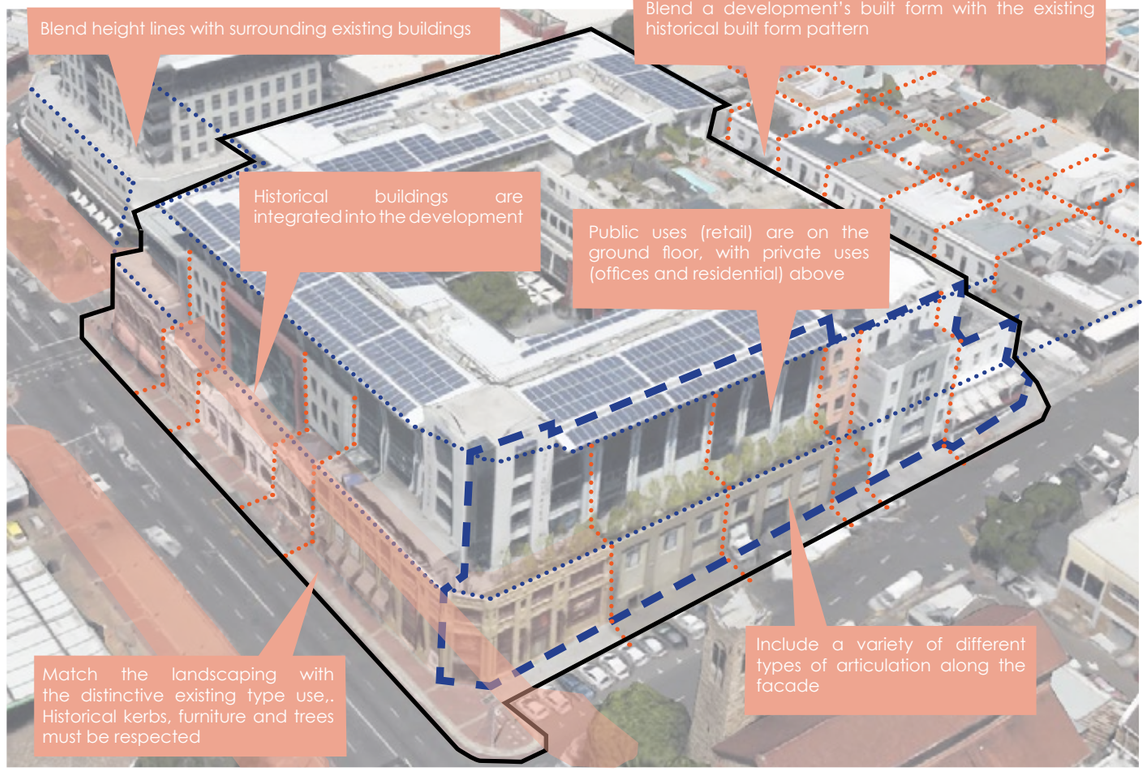
C1.2 Orient buildings so they interface with the street and other public spaces, rather than turning their backs on them. This helps create welcoming, active interfaces that provide passive surveillance and increase safety.

C1.3 Locate public and semi-public functions, such as retail and restaurants at the ground level to activate the street and public realm. Position more private uses, such as offices or residential spaces above or behind these active frontages to support vibrant, mixed-use environments.





C1.1 C1.2



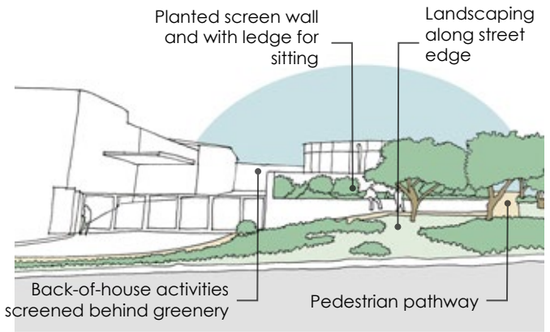
Cape Quarter, Waterkant, Cape Town

Utilities and services

C1.4 Locate back-of-house activities away from primary street frontages and pedestrian zones thereby minimising their visual and functional impact.

C1.5 Screen service areas with landscaping or built form to maintain a high-quality streetscape.

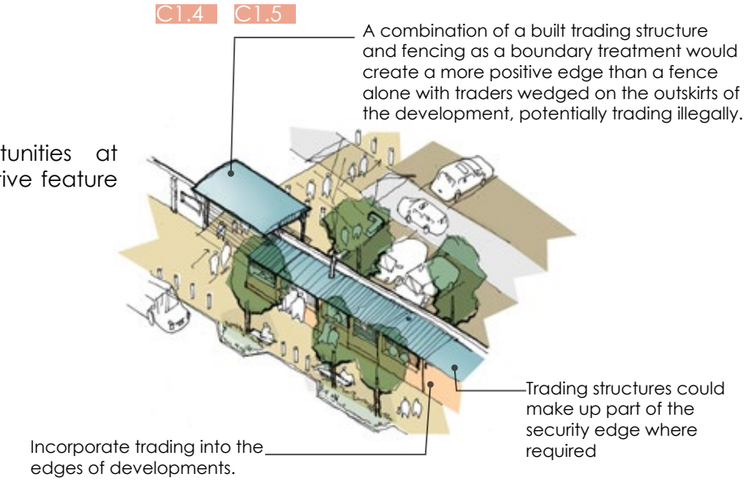
C1.6 Conceal utilities underground or on rooftops to reduce noise, odour and visual impact on the public realm.



C1.4 C1.5

Trading

C1.7 Provide informal trading opportunities at strategic edges to become a positive feature of the development.



C1.7

Approach C2: Designing for neighbourhood character:

Respond to the character and identity of an area by considering the fabric and grain of the existing surrounding context. .
This can be achieved in the following ways:

Refer to the Urban Design Policy (2024)

PS9.1 - 9.6

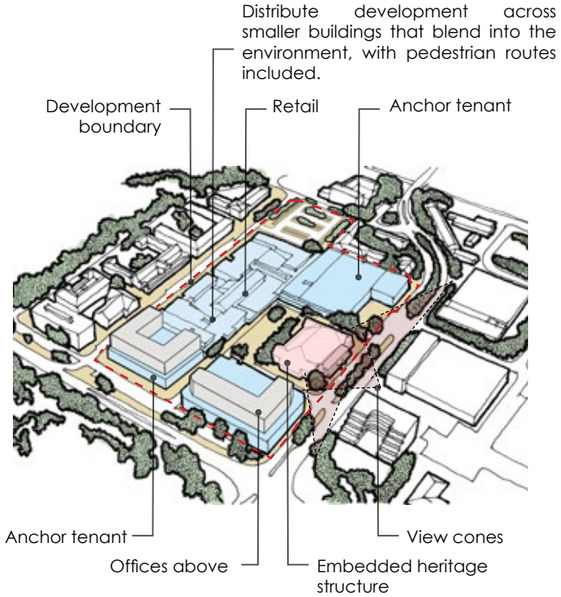
Response to context and neighbourhood character

C2.1 Arrange and position buildings to complement the existing streetscape, taking into account orientation, scale, urban grain, architectural articulation and street setbacks. Ensure new buildings respect and align with the established setbacks of the surrounding context

C2.2 Preserve visual links and views of key cultural and historical landmarks.

C2.3 Incorporate existing heritage structures to preserve the neighbourhood's unique character.

C2.4 Make intangible heritage visible to raise awareness and enhance character through murals, landscaping, paving, sculptures, street furniture or other means.



C2.1 C2.2 C2.3

Approach C3: Orientation of buildings in relation to natural features

Utilise topography and climatic conditions when orientating the buildings on site.
This can be achieved by:

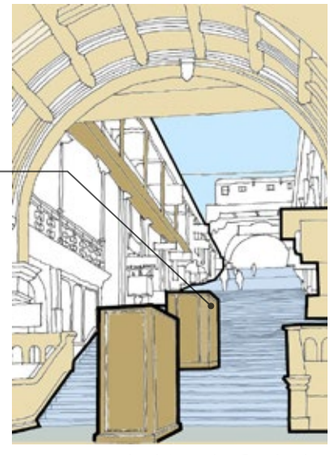
Refer to the Urban Design Policy (2024)

PS1.7; PS1.8; PS5.5; PS5.6

Topography/ landform

C3.1 Use the natural slope to benefit the development, such as incorporating a basement to optimise space, while preserving the site's character and connections to the environment.

This retail arcade cuts through a large building to connect two streets that are at different heights



C3.1

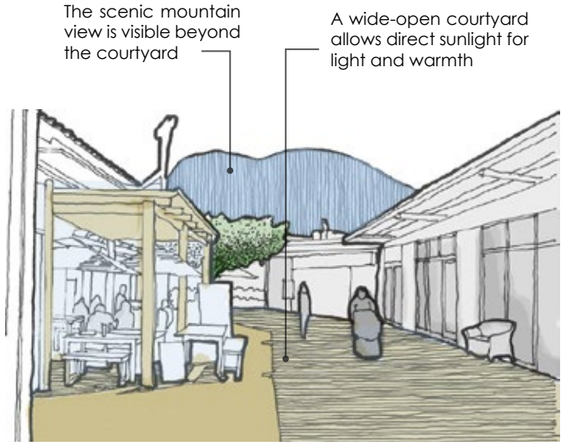
Mutual Arcade, Gqeberha

Climate

C3.2 Provide shading solutions that balance summer shade and winter sun exposure. Use shading solutions such as eaves, verandas, louvres, screens, trees and plants.

C3.3 Orient buildings to maximise direct sunlight in retail forecourts and restaurants, creating inviting, comfortable environments.

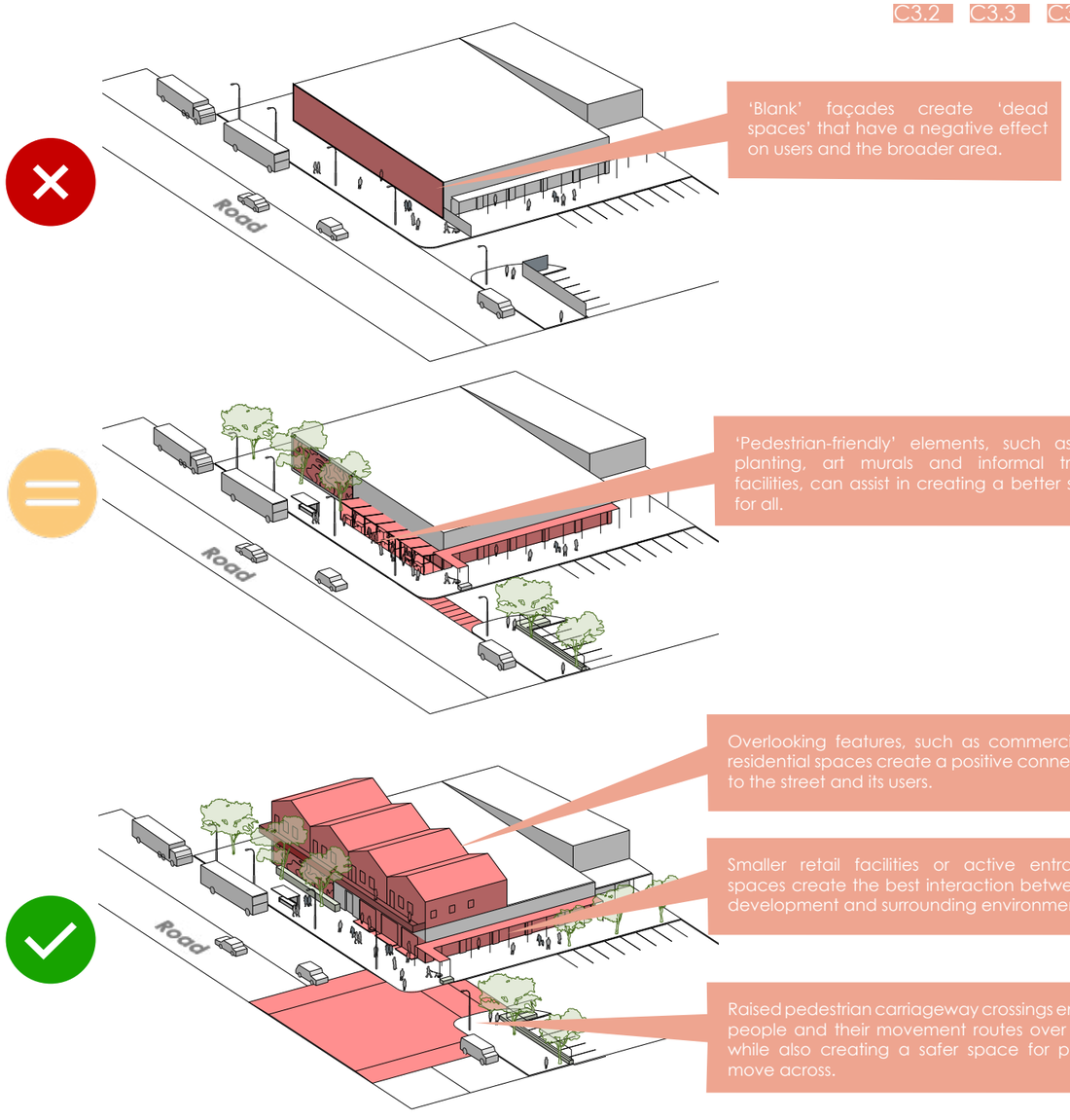
C3.4 Reduce wind exposure in open spaces by integrating design features, such as landscaping, wind screens, retractable awnings, and pergolas to protect customers and enhance comfort.



The development shields the open courtyard from SE and NW wind gusts and the pergola provides shading.

Palmyra Junction, Claremont, Cape Town

C3.2 C3.3 C3.4



Open Space

Open spaces, both hard and soft, must be intentionally designed - not treated as leftover areas - and scaled and configured to suit their intended functions. Open space plays a crucial role in enhancing usability, comfort, and the overall experience for visitors and the surrounding environment. To ensure positive integration, open spaces should be thoughtfully planned to foster a seamless connection between the retail area and its broader context.

Approach D1: Using landscape design to enhance development

Refer to the Urban Design Policy (2024)

PS1.7; PS1.8, PS2.3, PS2.4; PS2.7; PS3.6; PS3.7; PS8.1- 8.8

Designed landscaping must be utilised and enjoyed by all users.
This can be achieved in the following way:

Landscaping and design

D1.1 Provide a variety of open space types, such as forecourts, plazas, green areas or pocket parks, scaled to the size and context of the development.

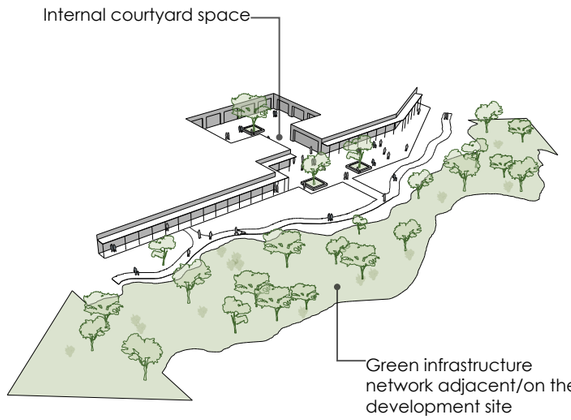
D1.2 Where possible, connect retail open spaces to the wider green network, including parks and environmental corridors. Use pathways, landscaping, and clear sight lines to create seamless links that encourage movement, enhance the customer experience, and support ecological and community connections.

D1.3 Ensure that sidewalks and open spaces are designed for universal access, with smooth surfaces, gentle and consistent gradients, and seating areas that are accessible to all users.

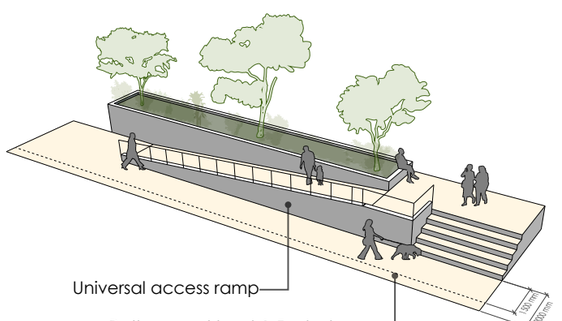
D1.4 Provide dedicated pedestrian paths that are landscaped and separated from vehicle movement. Ensure paths are at least 1,5 metres wide.

D1.5 Incorporate locally relevant materials, planting and public art to create a sense of place and reinforce neighbourhood identity.

D1.6 Ensure public areas such as streets, walkways, entrances, and parking lots are well-lit to improve visibility, deter crime, and enhance passive surveillance. Effective lighting extends the usability and encourages longer visitor stays, and contributes to the atmosphere and identity of the retail streetscape.



D1.1 D1.2



D1.3 D1.5

Approach D2: Biodiversity, green infrastructure and Trees

Refer to the Urban Design Policy (2024)

PS1.10; PS2.8; PS3.1; PS3.2; PS3.5; PS3.8; PS6.6

Ensure continuity of the city's green infrastructure network into and through the development to promote ecological corridors thereby supporting biodiversity.
This can be achieved in the following ways:

Green infrastructure

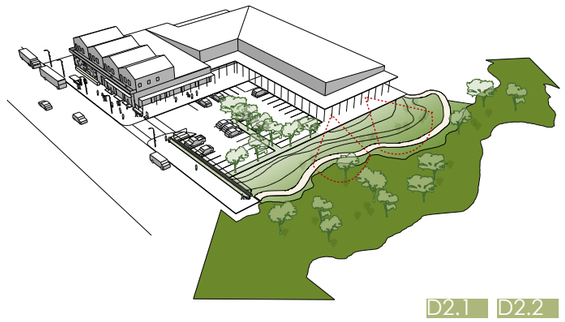
D2.1 Ensure existing ecological service features, such as trees, wetlands and riverine habitat are celebrated, enhanced and integrated in the landscape design.

D2.2 Create positive interfaces and connections to green open spaces with suitably designed ecological setbacks and buffers to avoid any negative impacts on the environmental resource.

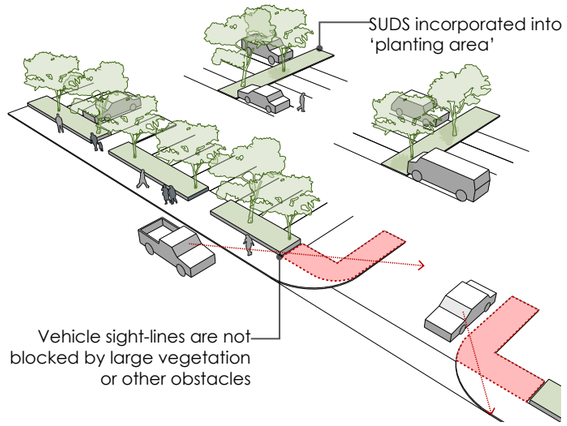
D2.3 Maximise permeable surfacing within a development to allow for on-site groundwater recharge.

D2.4 Incorporate sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS) in the development.
** Refer to the Urban Stormwater Management SUDS Policy.*
SUDS slow rainwater flow rates and enhance water quality. These SUDS spaces can also enhance the beauty of a retail development with vibrant vegetation and greenery.

D2.5 Ensure all landscaping within the verge maintains appropriate sight distances for both vehicles and pedestrians to promote safety and visibility.



D2.1 D2.2



D2.4 D2.5

Eden on the Bay Development, Big Bay, Cape Town

Designing for biodiversity

D2.6 Use sustainable design elements, such as permeable paving, bioswales and indigenous planting to manage stormwater and support biodiversity.

D2.7 Design for long-term maintenance and sustainability by choosing plant species suited to Cape Town's environmental conditions and ecosystem.

D2.8 Where applicable, retain and protect existing habitats such as bushy riverine vegetation, reedlands, wetlands, grasslands, coastal dune thickets and soils that function as carbon sinks to support biodiversity and ecological health.

Trees and planting

D2.9 Retain and incorporate all existing trees, especially healthy, mature trees into the design and layout of the development.

D2.10 Plant trees in hard surface parking areas to enhance visual and functional amenity and address the urban heat island effect.

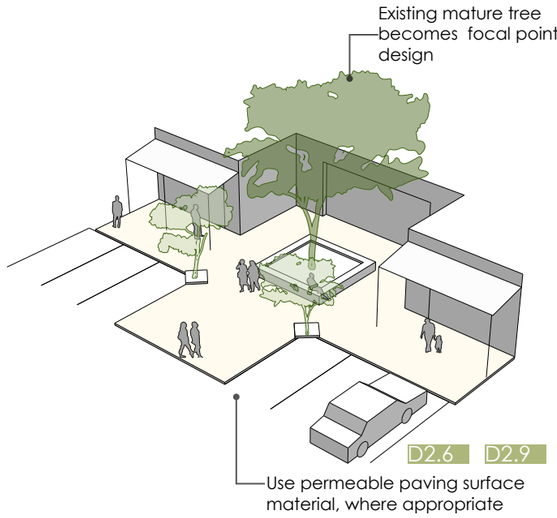
D2.11 Trees must be planted at a ratio of 1 tree for every 2 parking bays if a single row and 1 tree for every 4 bays if back to back bays (ie parking rows opposite each other).

D2.12 Where desired number of trees per parking bays is unavoidable, provide for these trees elsewhere on the development site.

D2.13 Plant appropriately sized trees compatible with the environment to ensure growth throughout the development. A **minimum of 100-litre size**, for commonly used species is recommended, as these trees are more likely to survive and will shorten the time needed for them to mature and provide a dense canopy.

D2.14 A minimum **200-litre** tree may be required along primary roads.

D2.15 Provide trees with air, water and organic matter in their root zones to allow them to grow adequately. Promote growth by combining tree planting with other planting, such as ground covers and shrubs.



Khayelitsha hospital, Khayelitsha, Cape Town
source: Clare Burgess


Mountain view development, Mossel Bay
source: Marijke Honig

D2.16 Plant a diversity of species. Not only indigenous species should be allocated. Species diversity is good and non-invasive alien trees also have a place and role in the urban landscape.

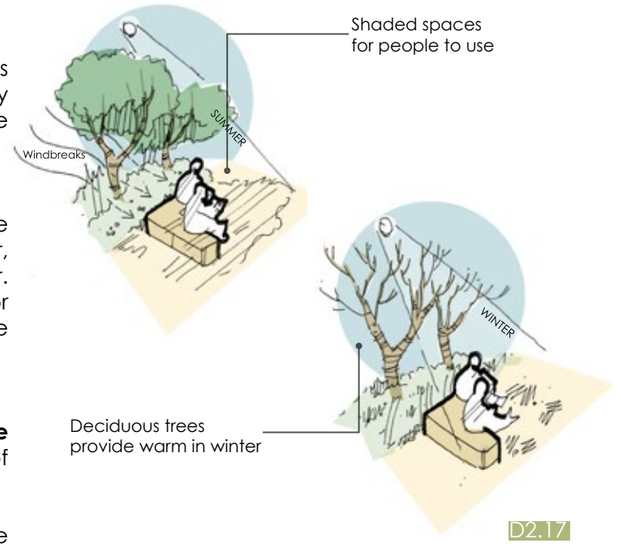
D2.17 Plant deciduous trees strategically to provide shade and reduce heat gain during summer, while allowing sunlight to penetrate in winter. Position these trees on the appropriate side or aspect of the site based on the intended use of adjacent spaces or structure.

D2.18 A **minimum** planting distance of **1,5-metre radius** should be provided around the base of each new tree.

D2.19 Provide a minimum of **5m radius** of permeable surfacing around each tree. This allows for water penetration and a healthy root zone for the tree to survive.

D2.20 Provide generous landscaped sidewalks and pathways along key pedestrian desire lines to enhance access and comfort.

D2.21 Incorporate tree planting and vegetation to establish a positive interface along service-oriented areas.



Interface

The success of a retail development is influenced by the level of activity at its interfaces. By creating active and positive interfaces, a development can foster improved interaction, attract more customers, and enhance its surrounding environment.

Approach E1: Interfaces onto the public realm

Retail developments need to actively and positively respond to the public realm through various design measures.
This can be achieved in the following ways:

Refer to the Urban Design Policy (2024)

PS2.5; PS3.1; PS6.1 - 6.8

Active interface

E1.1 Activate interfaces with uses such as cafés, restaurants and shops that support pedestrian engagement and social interaction while providing safety through passive surveillance.

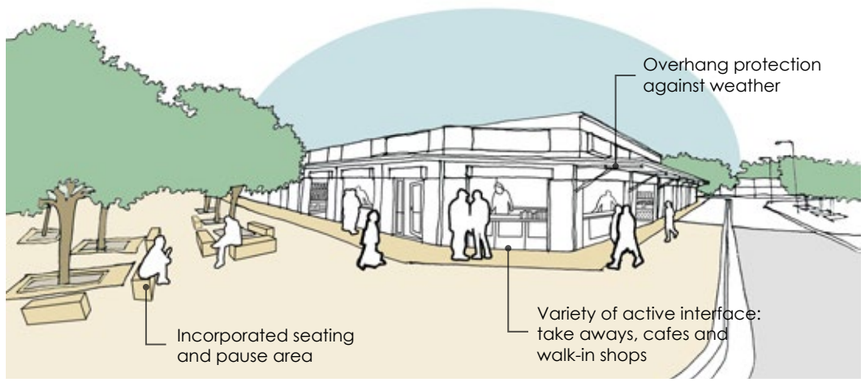
E1.2 Provide colonnades and overhangs for protection against the weather; sun, rain and wind.

E1.3 Ground floor entrances and windows must be transparent, supporting passive surveillance.

E1.4 Incorporate seating and pause areas along the retail edge to activate the public interface and encourage pedestrian engagement.

E1.5 Avoid blank façades and 'backs of buildings' fronting onto the street. When unavoidable, create positive interfaces.

E1.1 **E1.2** **E1.3** **E1.4** Village Square, Durbanville



E1.1 **E1.2** **E1.3** **E1.4** Shoprite, Langa

E1.1 **E1.2** **E1.9** Eden on the Bay Mall, Big Bay

Positive interface

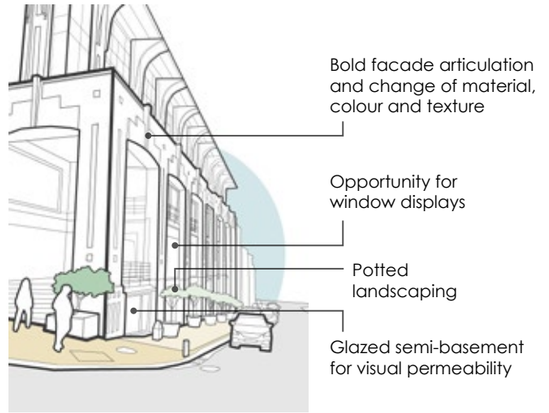
E1.6 Where active interfaces are not possible for example at service lanes or the rear of buildings, provide passive interfaces.

E1.7 Murals transform blank walls into vibrant artworks that create visual interest, reflecting the local culture and fostering a unique sense of identity.

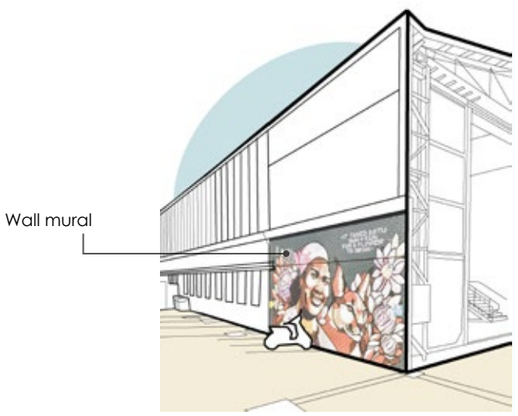
E1.8 Window displays add visual interest and enhance public safety by illuminating the public realm at night. For example, clothing stores regularly change displays to reflect seasonal trends.

E1.9 Articulate facades with recesses, protrusions or bold patterns to create a more dynamic and visually interesting facade.

E1.10 First floor balconies and windows and overlooking features.



E1.8 **E1.9** **E1.10** Cape Quarter, Waterkant



E1.7 The Watershed, V&A Waterfront

Landscape interface

E1.11 Green/ landscaped walls soften hard surfaces, adding natural colour and texture. They also support passive cooling and reflect seasonal changes through the growth and variation of plants.

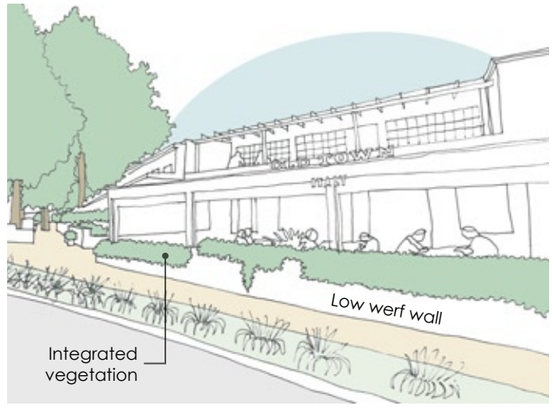
E1.11

Boundary treatment

E1.12 Boundary walls facing onto the street to be visually permeable. It is recommended that street boundary walls be a maximum of 1,5m high or that 70% of the street boundary wall be permeable.

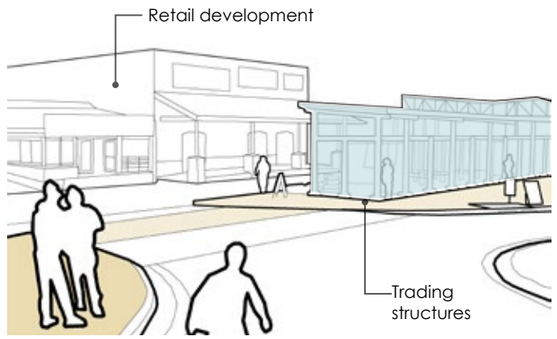
E1.13 Incorporate fences, steel palisades, low walls and integrated vegetation, or a combination thereof. These preserve visual connectivity and enable passive surveillance and security.

E1.14 Incorporate bus shelters and seating into the design of boundaries that interface with open spaces, public spaces, or active streets.



E1.12 E1.13 Cnr Groot Constantia Rd and Main Rd

E1.15 Incorporate trading structures at key locations to create an active edge condition. This option reduces the need for fencing and discourages informal trading on the periphery.



E1.15 The Vineyard, Somerset West

Entrances

E1.16 Entrances should function as key points of connection and activity and should be easily identifiable and universally accessible.

E1.17 Support way finding through designing building entrances as focal points, thereby promoting easier navigation within larger developments.

E1.18 Provide active uses around the entrances such as restaurants, cafés and shops to ensure consistent activity.

Safety and security

E1.19 Use lighting strategically along pathways, entrances, and gathering areas to enhance visibility and support night-time safety.

E1.20 Use bollards strategically at high-traffic and vulnerable points to enhance pedestrian safety without compromising movement or accessibility.

Cape Quarter, Waterkant

E1.16 E1.17 E1.18

Village Square, Durbanville

Acknowledgements:

This document was produced by the City of Cape Town's Urban Design Branch in collaboration with a multi disciplinary group of individuals representing internal and external groups.

We extend our sincere appreciation to all internal departments and external professionals whose collaboration and expertise were instrumental in the development and drafting of this Urban Design Guideline document. Their collective input has helped shape a comprehensive and forward-thinking framework that reflects a shared vision for sustainable and inclusive urban environments.

These guideline documents look to provide a tool for users to use when designing and developing within the City. As such, the intention will be to periodically update and revise these documents based on the changing realities within the urban realm.

If you would like to provide any feedback or comments on the urban design guidelines and Policy, please make contact with our team via the email below:

urban.design@capetown.gov.za