



# Urban Design

## 5-1 Introduction

The way a city plans and designs its public spaces shapes how it is perceived. Urban design has many components, including street design, street furniture, the placement of utilities, landscaping, signage, and building and site design. The following chapter identifies several issues related to urban design in West Valley City, and makes recommendations to enhance the City's appearance and perception through quality urban design.

## 5-2 Background

Urban design considerations include:

- Street pavement width
- Park strip/tree wells: width and composition
- Sidewalks: width and location
- Street furniture: lighting, benches, etc.
- Utilities (placement of lines and boxes)
- Landscaping along property frontage: width and composition
- Signs: size, height, placement, and design
- Setbacks/build to lines
- Building orientation
- Building design
- Building height
- Parking: location and screening
- Pedestrian accommodations
- Property maintenance

Several of the design considerations listed above are addressed in the concept of complete streets. The website [www.smartgrowthamerica.org](http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org) defines complete streets as streets “designed and operated to enable safe access for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit riders of all ages and abilities.”





The increase in value of the resulting new buildings needs to be substantially higher than the original buildings to offset the loss in value resulting from the demolition of the original buildings.

**5.1 Goal: Promote a more urban environment along certain major corridors and at light rail stops.**

**5.1.1 Action:** Develop ordinances that encourage higher intensity, more urban development along Redwood Road, 3500 South east of Mountain View Corridor, the Hunter Town Center area and near LRT stops with design standards geared toward urban development.



*3500 South at Market Street before and after the reconstruction of 3500 South. The Embassy Suites Hotel was built in 2012 according to the standards in the new City Center Zone, which incorporated new streetscape and building standards.*

**Issue: Commercial Development Quality and Maintenance**

Beginning in 1996, the City has made major changes in ordinances, review procedures, and City organizational structure to improve commercial development quality, property maintenance and the appearance along major streets. The following timeline outlines these changes:

- 1996: The Commercial Overlay Zone was adopted for the Maverik Center area.
- 1998: The Jordan River Overlay Zone was adopted for the River area near 3300 South.
- 1999: The Bangerter Highway Overlay Zone was adopted for development along the north portion of Bangerter Highway. Also, a streetscape ordinance was approved for the east portion of 3500 South.
- 2001: The parking ordinance was amended to require berming along streets and landscaping within parking lots. The Redwood Road streetscape ordinance was adopted for all property fronting on Redwood Road. Also in 2001, the sign ordinance was amended to limit pole signs to 10 acre sites and to require nonconforming signs to be replaced with conforming signs under certain conditions.
- 2003: The sign ordinance was amended to cap the number of billboards and to encourage the relocation of nonconforming billboards. Between 2002 and 2004 the Planning Commission began to emphasize the architectural quality of buildings during conditional use review. For example, consider the differences between the Walmart at 3100 South built in 2002 and the Walmart at 6200 South built in 2004.

- 2004: Commercial design standards for all commercial development were adopted. The 5600 West Overlay Zone was adopted for development along the north portion of 5600 West.
- 2006: The City Center Zone was adopted with specific form-based design requirements for the City's planned downtown area.
- 2008: A new department, Community Preservation, was formed with the primary focus of improving property maintenance.
- 2010: The City passed ordinances that further restricted the allowed locations for sexually oriented and outcall businesses, updated provisions for monument signs that reduced allowed sizes and amended fencing/hedge standards along arterial streets.
- 2013: The City passed ordinances that further restricted the allowed locations for pawn shops and updated the Commercial Overlay Zone (now called the Decker Lake Station Overlay Zone).



*Commercial development along a busy arterial. Improved landscape standards and proper maintenance can vastly improve the look of commercial properties.*

The ordinances listed above have made a difference in new commercial development; however, it takes time for such ordinances to make a more consistent, visible impact.

While there have been major improvements to commercial development, there is still room for improvement. Some existing commercial properties are not properly maintained and/or are underutilized. As older development along commercial corridors is remodeled or upgraded, the City should work to bring these properties up to the latest standards. Where redevelopment is contemplated, existing ordinances may need revisions to yield more intense development.

Residential development quality and maintenance are addressed in the Housing and Existing Neighborhoods Chapters.

## **5.2 Goal: Improve commercial development property maintenance.**

**5.2.1 Action:** Under the direction of the Community Preservation Department, coordinate enforcement efforts between Code Enforcement, Business Licensing, Legal, Building

Inspections and Planning and Zoning. Enforcement should be proactive instead of just reacting to complaints.

**5.2.2 Action:** Review commercial properties for compliance with approved site and landscape plans and enforce deficiencies (example: landscaping shown on the approved landscape plan has died or has been removed).

**5.3 Goal: Promote high quality development, reinvestment and redevelopment along commercial major corridors and near light rail stations.**

**5.3.1 Action:** Develop small area plans as time and resources permit for specific corridors or other areas in the City where specific design standards are desired.

**5.3.2 Action:** Implement small area plans through form-based zoning tailored to each corridor or location.

**5.3.3 Action:** Amend ordinances to improve the City's ability to bring nonconforming sites into compliance.

**5.4 Goal: Promote attractive, water-efficient landscaping and efficient landscaping review.**

**5.4.1 Action:** Amend landscaping standards to provide incentives to developers to install the type of landscaping and site amenities that the City desires. Examples of desired landscaping amenities would be drip irrigation with substantial live plant material, building placement close to the street, benches and patios.



*Water-Efficient Landscaping*

**5.4.2 Action:** Where appropriate, consider wider park strips to allow more efficient lawn watering, offer more tree variety, and provide a more attractive streetscape.

**5.4.3 Action:** Explore ways to preserve mature trees on vacant parcels or on land to be redeveloped.

**5.4.4 Action:** Encourage enhanced or additional landscaping adjacent to or within very large parking areas.

**Issue: Civic Improvement Quality**

Along with improvements on private property, public property or civic improvements have a significant impact on the aesthetics of a street. Such civic improvements include park strips, street trees, street and sidewalk lighting, and sidewalks. The size, quality, and placement of these improvements can make a substantial difference in the quality of a street's appearance and appeal for pedestrians. Wide streets with little or no park strip and no street trees or landscaping can be uninviting or even intimidating for pedestrians.

## 5.5 Goal: Promote quality streetscapes on major streets.

- 5.5.1 Action:** Where possible, increase park strip widths beyond five feet.
- 5.5.2 Action:** Enforce maintenance of required park strip trees. To ensure proper maintenance, the City should consider maintaining these trees in certain locations.
- 5.5.3 Action:** Consider center landscaped medians to improve the aesthetics and capacity of major streets.
- 5.5.4 Action:** Work with UDOT when state roads are being widened or otherwise modified to improve the streetscape. Where necessary, the City should fund streetscape enhancements.
- 5.5.5 Action:** Amend ordinances to emphasize the following design considerations: high quality and consistent street furniture like bus stops and trash cans, burying overhead power and utilizing different pedestrian accommodations such as varied paving treatments.
- 5.5.6 Action:** Whenever a City street is being widened or reconstructed consider functional as well as aesthetic upgrades including new street lights, complete streets principles, landscaping enhancements, fencing replacement for back facing lots, etc.



*Looking south at the intersection of Constitution Blvd. and 3500 South, before and after the reconstruction of both roads and redevelopment of the Valley Fair Mall.*