

North Capitol Streetscape Guidelines

A Coordinated Design for North Capitol Street between the Capitol and Michigan Ave.



Overview

Preeminent view corridors framing important buildings and landmarks are defining features of Washington, DC's distinctive layout. One of these is the view south along North Capitol Street from open spaces at Michigan Avenue toward the Capitol Building dome. Beyond its symbolic grandeur, North Capitol Street also provides important retail services for surrounding neighborhoods and opportunities for new housing. Recently, an increase in construction and rehabilitation proposals have demonstrated a need for the DC Office of Planning and Department of Transportation to provide clear guidance on how adjacent public spaces are improved. The public space guidelines that follow present a high-level vision for a more attractive and vibrant neighborhood corridor while ensuring its most iconic feature – the view toward the Capitol dome – is maintained and enhanced.

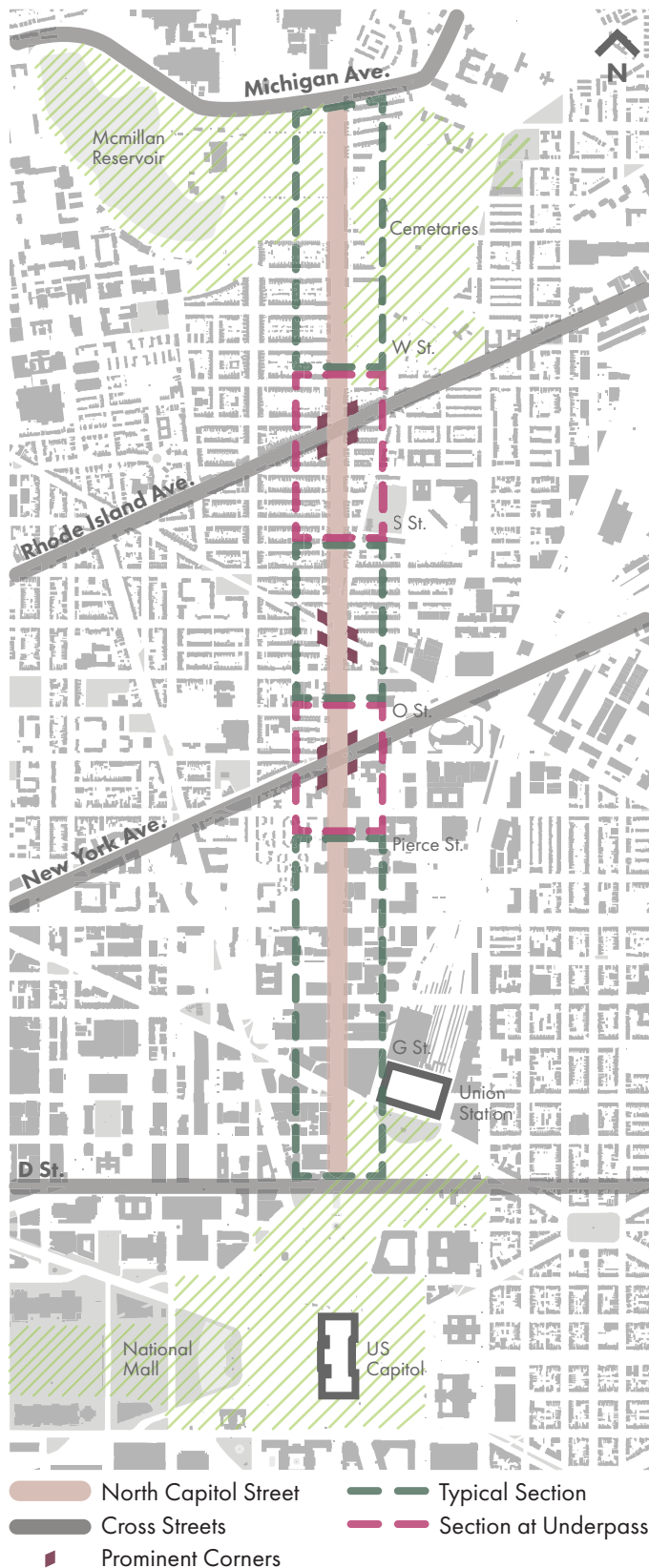
These guidelines build upon past efforts to shape the corridor while incorporating 21st century goals. Its prominence in the historic city plan is reinforced by a generous 130-foot right-of-way. Past improvements include tall shade trees at the curb framing the view to the Capitol dome and a continuous band of green spaces between the sidewalk and building frontages. While the basic elements of the corridor's historic design are

intact, new buildings and public space improvements need to respect this design, meet current standards, and provide services for residents. The width of tree boxes, sidewalks, and landscaped "public parking" defined here respect the grand ambitions of past design and ensure current standards for street trees and pedestrian facilities are maintained. Additional guidance is provided for the type of building projections city agencies support to frame views, activate storefronts, and create a pedestrian scale. North Capitol Street is a corridor that has long awaited new development. This guide will help define the public space associated with this development in a way that respects its importance as a neighborhood place and its prominence in the plan for the city of Washington.

Today, new development is encouraged to have either: commercial space with retail and other active uses at the sidewalk or multi-family residential buildings behind a landscaped "public parking" zone. Tower projections at prominent corners frame views toward the Capitol dome. All public space should incorporate green infrastructure that collects and manages stormwater and promotes healthy street trees. The result is a grand, shaded tree-lined boulevard with a park-like character and vibrant commercial areas – all integrating resilient design.

Street Conditions

The width of public space between the curb and property line varies where North Capitol Street becomes an underpass at New York Avenue and Rhode Island Avenue. Prominent corners are located where avenues cross North Capitol Street.



Public Space Vision

The character of North Capitol Street contributes to the national and international image of the nation's capital city, as well as the day-to-day lives of the city's residents. These guidelines propose a streetscape that balances: visual consistency that is worthy of a grand gateway experience; localized variation that addresses the different needs of residential and commercial frontages; and, sustainable features that contribute to a resilient future.

Parklike Residential Facades



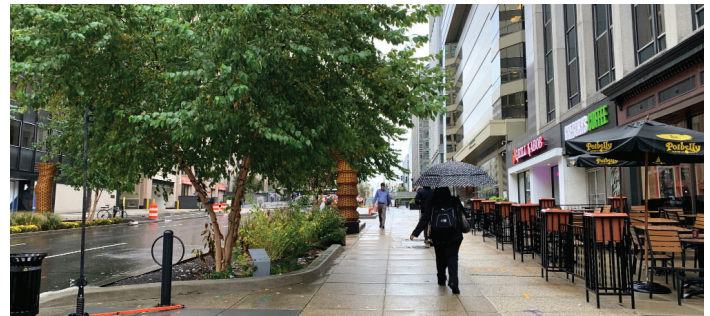
Public space along residential buildings maintains a park-like character with continuous and attractive landscaped spaces. Bay and oriel windows contribute to visual interest and residential scale; canopies, marquees, and porches highlight building entrances and places for informal gathering and interaction.

Active Commercial Facades



Comfortable sidewalks adjacent to commercial uses are animated with cafes and other active uses. Attractive show windows open vibrant retail spaces to the sidewalk. Awnings at the ground level create visual interest and pleasant pedestrian spaces.

Resilient Urban Design

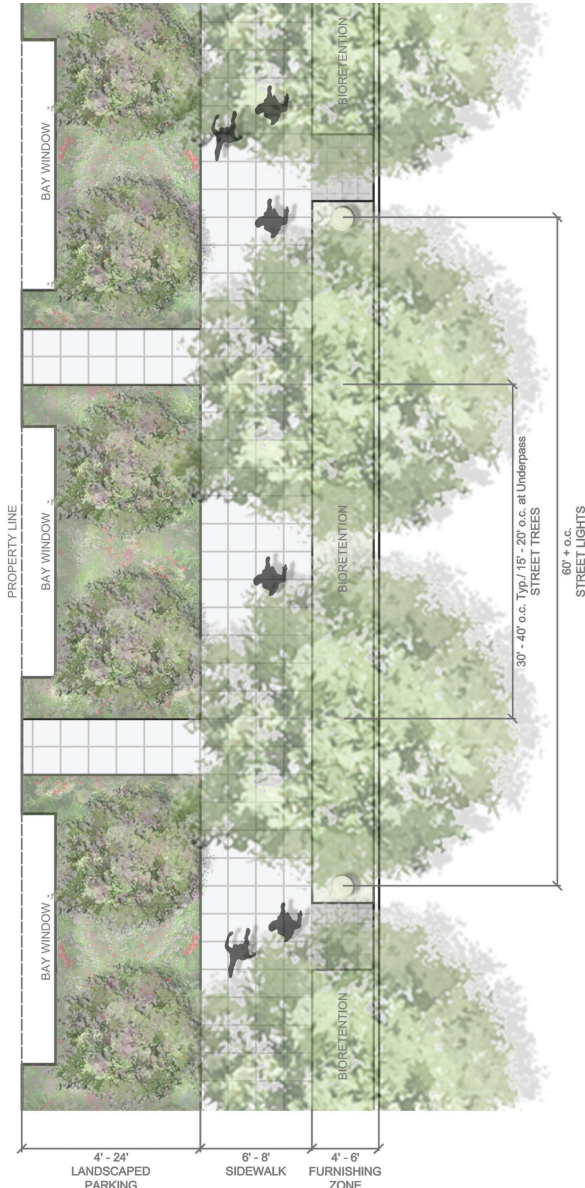


A healthy, continuous tree canopy defines the corridor's visual identity and contributes to pedestrian comfort. Integrated stormwater retention features promote sustainability. Both expand the city's capacity to deal with stormwater runoff and reduce the heat island effect or rising urban temperatures.

Sidewalk Plans

Although North Capitol Street has a consistent 130-foot width, there are two very different sidewalk conditions along the corridor: one with wider sidewalks and ample green spaces; and another with narrower sidewalks, adjacent to underpasses at New York and Rhode Island avenues. Both streetscape conditions are addressed in these guidelines.

Plan at Residential Facade



- Sidewalks in residential areas are 6 to 8 feet wide.
- Furnishing zones vary in width from 4 to 6 feet.
- All remaining public space should be set aside for landscaping along the building.

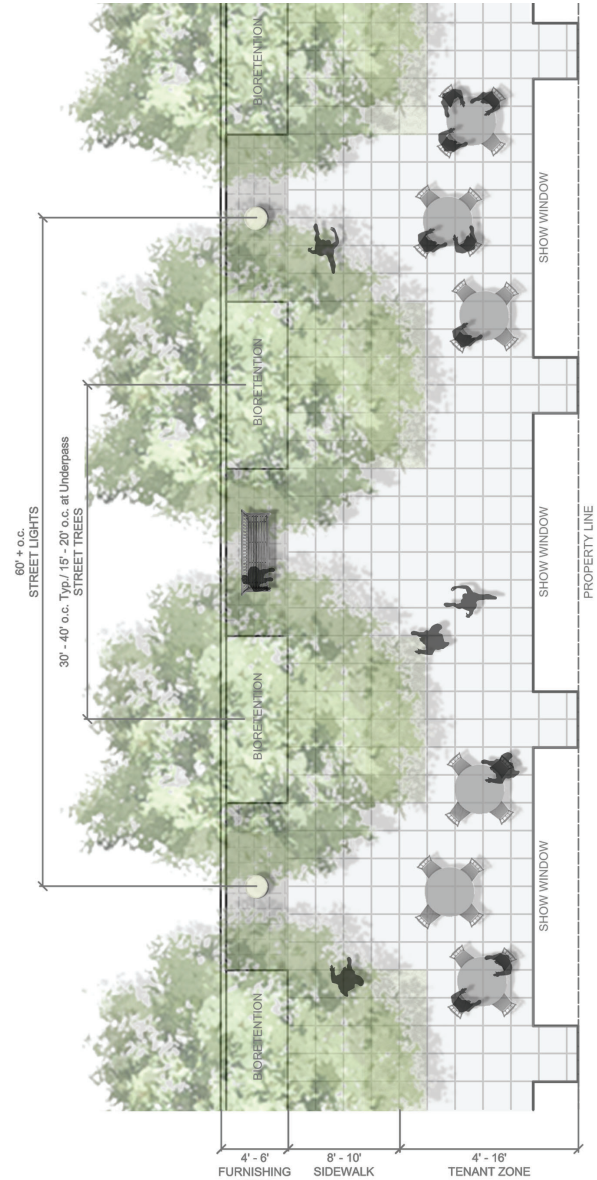
Building Projections

Building projections into public space are allowed for embellishing building façades and prominent corners. Due to the 130-foot width of North Capitol Street, all projections are required to maintain a 15-foot minimum distance from the face of the adjacent curb (DCMR 12A-3202.7.1.1). When this requirement cannot be met, OP and DDOT staff support applications requesting a code modification for

Landscaped Parking

The landscaped area between the back of the sidewalk and property line is referred to as “public parking” in the city’s municipal regulations. In 1870, Congress passed the “Parking Act”, and allowed the city to designate part of the right-of-way immediately next to private property as parkland, to be maintained by the adjacent property owner. Today, this area has become a defining feature of Washington, DC, and a regulated part of the city’s park and open space system.

Plan at Commercial Facade



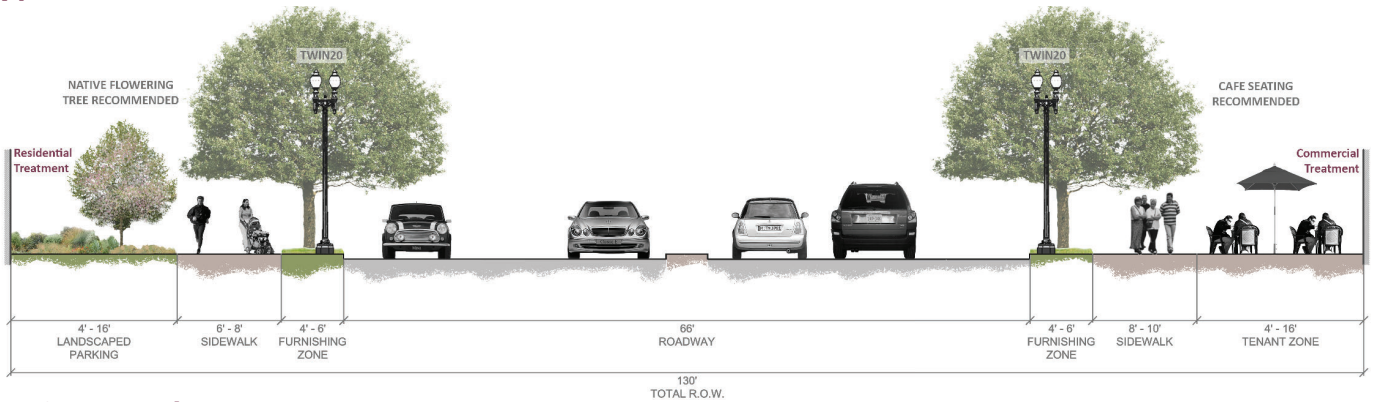
- Sidewalks adjacent to commercial uses are 8 to 10 feet wide.
- Furnishing zones vary in width from 4 to 6 feet.
- All remaining public space should be set aside for tenant zones (café seating, show windows, etc.) along the building.

how far certain projections can extend into public space:

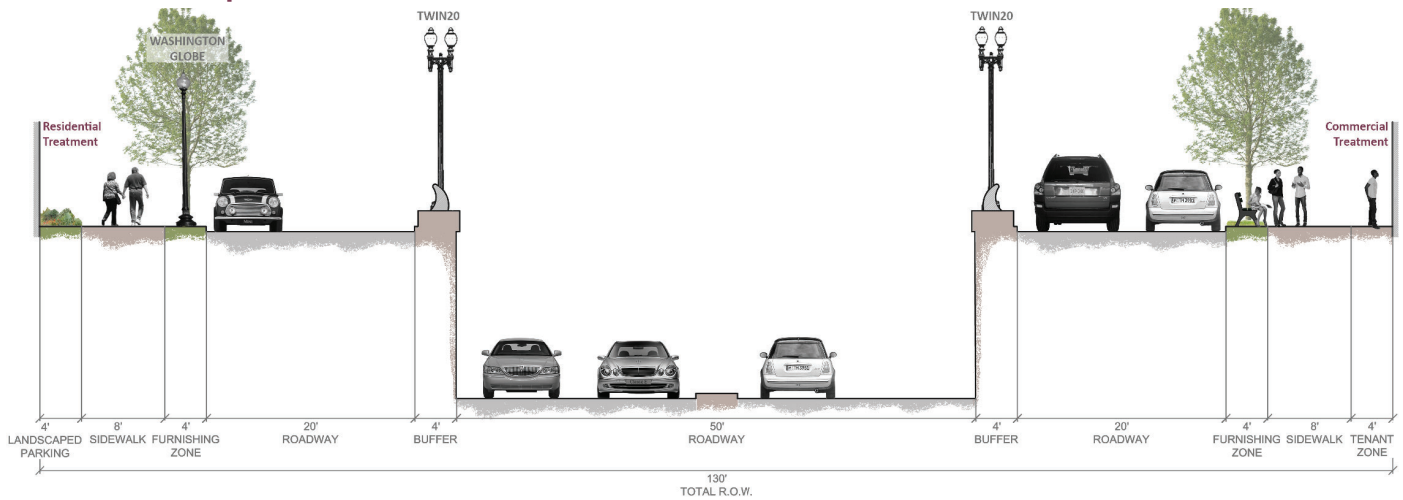
1. Towers, Bay windows, show windows, and open balconies projecting up to 3 feet;
2. Awnings, canopies, marquees up to 18 inches over windows; and,
3. Awnings, canopies, marquees up to 3 feet over primary entrances.

Street Sections

Typical Section



Section at Underpass



Streetscape Dimensions

To ensure consistency along the corridor, all streetscape plans are recommended to follow these dimensions and materials. Street trees have been selected to ensure that an open view corridor toward the Capitol dome will be maintained.

N. Capitol Street Location	Furnishing	Sidewalk	Parking/ Tenant Zone
D to G St.			
400-600	6 ft.	10 ft.	13 - 24 ft.
G to Pierce St.			
700 - 1100	6 ft.	10 ft.	16 ft.
Pierce to O St.			
1100 - 1400	4 ft.	8 ft.	4 ft.
O to S St.			
1400 - 1700	6 ft.	10 ft.	16 ft.
S to W St.			
1700 - 2100	4 ft.	8 ft.	4 ft.
W St. to Michigan Ave.			
2100 - 2900	6 ft.	8-10 ft.	12 - 14 ft.

Streetscape Element	Specification
Street Trees (Typical Section)	Shumard Oak; Nuttall Oak alternate at 30 - 40 ft. o.c.
Street Trees (Section at Underpass)	Streetspire Oak; Crimson Spire Oak alternate at 15 - 20 ft. o.c.
Street Light	Twin 20; black color; 60+ ft. o.c.
Sidewalk	3 x 3 Poured-in-place Concrete
Curb	Granite
Gutter	Concrete
Furnishing Zone	Granite Cobblestone

* Developments near intersections or underpasses may require additional analysis in order to maintain the required lighting levels.

* All applicants should work with UFD to ensure soil volumes are being met.



For questions about these guidelines, contact the Urban Design Division at OP, or the Planning and Sustainability Division at DDOT.