

Block Guidelines

Block Guidelines

An assembly of buildings, open spaces and pathways define a city block, as well as do the streets that outline the block's perimeter. An urban block is a distillation of a neighborhood's identity and an expression of a community's sense of place. In Elliot Park, block elements to consider are:



Neighborhood Character

Streetwall

Pedestrian Realm

Courtyards and Gardens

Through-block Connections

Parking

Views

Vistas



B L O C K G U I D E L I N E S

Neighborhood Character

Elliot Park Neighborhood has the recognizable character of a mature residential district that historically has featured an array of community services and amenities. Its history, cultural identity, and buildings—even with the current gaps in the streetwall and variety of architectural styles—convey a sense of place and meaning. New development and restorative redevelopment should contribute to the preservation and promotion of the unique urban character of Elliot Park Neighborhood:

- as the neighborhood changes it should retain continuity with its social / cultural traditions and its spatial / architectural precedents by redeveloping with a mix of uses, economic and cultural diversity, and built forms responsive to existing contexts
- new development and public realm improvements should express a sense of stewardship, building with a commitment to long-term investment in the neighborhood



Block Guidelines

Streetwall



In its period of maximum structural density the streets of Elliot Park Neighborhood were lined with a continuous streetwall of three-to-four story brick buildings. This consistent datum line along the streetwall created the experience of a well-defined pedestrian environment.



Recreating this streetwall of building heights and setbacks in new development will retain the look and feel of proportionate harmony in the neighborhood's built form. The design and placement of buildings along a block should:

- observe continuities and/or contrasts with the heights and setbacks of existing buildings
- call attention to “breaks” in the streetwall with variable setbacks or courtyards and through-block connections
- create scales and transparencies along the streetwall that reinforce pedestrians' experience of familiarity and belonging



Pedestrian Realm

The spaces between the façades of buildings and the edges of streets comprise a continuum of public and private realms. In these spaces the pedestrian is of primary importance. The physical elements used in these spaces—porches, planters, lawns, trees, street furnishings—and the relationship between them can convey a variety of messages about how people are intended to interact.

In Elliot Park Neighborhood these elements are arranged in a variety of ways to create unique streets. New additions to the neighborhood should recognize and respond to the particular circumstances of each street by incorporating such elements as:

- porches, porticos and stairways
- front and side yard lawns and gardens
- window and balcony planter boxes
- grass, trees and plantings along sidewalk boulevards
- pedestrian scale lighting
- sidewalk furnishings, such as benches, kiosks, bike racks and attractive trash receptacles
- aesthetic improvement to sidewalks, such as multi-patterned surfaces and public art
- pedestrian enhancements to street crossings, such as intersection bump-outs and crosswalk pavers



B l o c k G u i d e l i n e s

Courtyards and Gardens



A number of older and newer buildings in Elliot Park Neighborhood have open courtyards or gardens that define relationships between the public realm and private spaces. Such courtyards and gardens contribute to the unique character of the neighborhood.

To be attractive and lively, courtyards should be surrounded by a mix of activities, have at least two self-evident entry points, and be inviting to public access. Both open courtyards and gardens should:

- allow people to “preview” the space before entering
- provide alternative means for accessing and leaving the space
- feature a variety of opportunities for leisure, socializing, play and solitude
- incorporate elements that enhance a shared sense of public space



B l o c k G u i d e l i n e s

Through-Block Connections

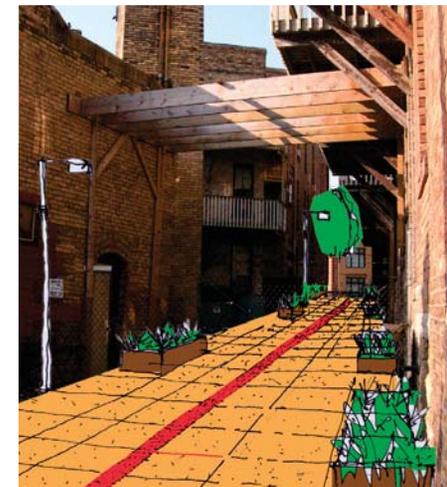
Elliot Park Neighborhood has many alleys and through-block pathways that are used by residents. These routes provide convenient and intimate ways of moving through the neighborhood.

New development should respect this pattern of public connections that is not governed strictly by the grid of public sidewalks. Incorporating through-block pathways into development will help extend this fine-grained movement system that offers welcoming transitions between private and public spaces. These connections can be accomplished by:

- creating a focal point that draws pedestrians onto and along the pathway
- defining distinct interfaces between vehicles and pedestrians
- taking into consideration the service and delivery requirements of buildings
- increasing the sense of personal safety and security
- using pavers, plantings and lighting to enhance the appeal of pathways



existing alleyway



improved through-block alley connection

Block Guidelines

Parking



existing surface parking condition



housing liner on Grant Park garage

When too much of the land surface is used for automobile parking a neighborhood's pedestrian environment is destroyed and a community's sense of place and internal connectedness gradually disappears.

Elliot Park Neighborhood's objective is to reclaim surface parking lots for new in-fill redevelopment and greening. Underground parking is the preferred option; and above-ground structured parking should be "masked" with liner commercial or residential development. The following standards and practices regarding parking in the neighborhood will be applied:

- where accessory off-street surface parking is allowed, parking lots will observe and preferably exceed the minimum standards for landscaping, setback from sidewalks and storm water run-off management required by zoning code
- existing surface parking lots should maximize the use of plantings, permeable surface materials, ornamental fencing and public art
- on-street parking, walking and alternative transit modes are encouraged to reduce the demand for parking lot spaces and to stimulate reclamation of surface parking lots for residential and commercial redevelopment or green space



B l o c k G u i d e l i n e s

Views

Shifts in the street and block grids define much of the landscape of Elliot Park Neighborhood. These shifts provide unanticipated views that help enrich the experience of moving along streets and through blocks. Particular focal points present opportunities for visual connections when planning for new development. Because so many blocks in Elliot Park have been cleared of buildings, these same blocks offer potential for featuring urban views through well-situated infill development. The design of buildings and arrangement of spaces on a block should:

- pay attention to terminus views from, into and through the site
- consider various perspectives both distant and near that might influence the massing and scale of proposed structures
- take into account sight lines to surrounding distinctive features on the landscape



Block Guidelines

Vistas



Open spaces provide orienting vistas of Downtown and other surrounding communities that help people understand the organization of their environment. These vistas complement the neighborhood's sense of identity with a feeling of connectedness to other parts of the city.

Openings in built form experienced from the ground plane can be large and panoramic or smaller and more telescopically framed. New development should take these vistas into account by:

- becoming acquainted with the view corridors that feature important Downtown landmarks, such as the City Hall clock tower, the Mills District sign edifices, the IDS tower
- designing buildings that will frame skyline views from streets, sidewalks, buildings, courtyards and through-block pathways

