



Ideal commercial street.

DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR BEAUTIFUL COMMERCIAL STREETS

Street building should be undertaken with the same care that is given to creation of any other important public or civic space. Streets should be viewed as centers of human activity and designed to be inviting and comfortable places for people to be whether they are in a car or walking.

The most critical issues in designing beautiful and active commercial streets include the height of buildings relative to the width of the street space, the placement and alignment of buildings along the street, sidewalk widths, street trees, landscaping, adequate parking, street furnishings, and lighting.

**Height to width ratios** - The importance of adequate building height has been illustrated and discussed earlier in this report. Minimum and recommended heights will vary with the width of the street and sidewalks. For six-lane boulevards like SR 7 and Griffin Road, building heights should range between three to five stories.

**Building placement and alignment** - A fairly continuous facade of appropriately scaled buildings set close to the street is essential to transforming the feel of SR 7 from that of a highway that divides the community into a beautiful public space that serves as a unifying central main street and front door to the area. The consistent alignment of building facades forms the walls of the great outdoor room.

**Sidewalk widths** - Sidewalks should be very wide on commercial streets. Minimum sidewalk widths for commercial streets should be twelve feet. In important commercial areas anticipated to have a great



**Retail Block**  
Colonnade or 14' - 20' sidewalk  
Trees planted in grates

**Mixed Use Block**  
14' sidewalk  
6' planting strip

Relationship of buildings to the street.

deal of pedestrian traffic, sidewalks might be even wider. Wide sidewalks provide space for pedestrians, bicycles, tables, chairs, lighting, and street trees.

**Street trees and landscaping** - The most beautiful streets include strong alignments of regularly placed street trees. Trunks should be clear to at least twelve feet so that retail is easily visible from the street. Palm trees can be used in combination with arcades, but where arcades are not provided, it is much preferable to use shade trees such as oaks, black olives, or sycamores.

**Parking** - Whenever possible, on-street parking should be provided at store fronts. Parking lots and garages should be provided at the rear of buildings and hidden from street view. Parking lots should never front the street in a commercial retail district. Several Florida coastal cities (Delray Beach, Lake Worth, West Palm Beach, Stuart, and Lake Park) have successful four and six-lane state roads with on-street parking.

**Street furnishings and lighting** - Benches, shelters, fountains, and signage should be detailed and designed as furniture to be placed within the "living room" of the city. Lighting should be pedestrian scaled and full spectrum



Wide sidewalks provide space for pedestrians, children on bicycles, strollers, and a variety of street activities including dining. Sidewalks in commercial areas should never be less than twelve feet wide and may be even wider in busy areas.



The most beautiful commercial streets include a combination of wide sidewalks and formal alignments of shade trees. Random plantings of different species have no place in formal urban commercial landscapes. Trees should be of a single species and of similar sizes and planted in straight lines.



Wherever possible, on-street parallel parking should be provided at the front of retail shops and businesses. On-street parking provides short term parking for shoppers and patrons. It buffers the sidewalk from street noise and traffic. It helps to define the space of the sidewalk just as buildings define the space of the street. Wherever on-street parking is provided, it calms and slows traffic on the street. When traffic slows, it is easier for motorists to see storefronts and pedestrians to cross the street.

Parking lots and parking garages should always be placed at the rear of buildings; they should never front on a commercial street. It is impossible to create a beautiful and comfortable street environment when parking lots are allowed to front the street. Gaps formed by surface parking lots undermine the critical objective of providing enclosure to the street space. Gaps in the continuous facade of retail storefronts and businesses also discourage pedestrian shoppers. As a result, these gaps hurt the value of the retailing environment.



Main street should be viewed as the living room of the city. In great commercial spaces, care is taken in the furnishings and detailing of important commercial street space.



Great residential streets include the same components as beautiful commercial streets: building alignment, wide sidewalks, street trees, lighting, and on-street parking. The best residential streets are narrow with on-street parking on both sides and large street trees planted close to the curbs. All these elements combine to dramatically slow and constrain traffic flow. They differ from commercial streets in having greater but still uniform building setbacks, smaller sidewalks (five to six feet), subdued lighting, and more landscaping.