



## Urban Design Modul – Sustainable Downtown in the City

### Urban Design Dictionary

Version 1

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**Accessibility** - the ease with which locations can be reached. People of any age, skill, or financial level can easily access a wide range of activities and destinations in an area with high accessibility, but those living in less accessible areas can only get to a small number of locations in the same amount of time. An area's accessibility is measured in terms of travel speed and distance to the number of locations ('destination opportunities'). Travel costs, route safety, and topography gradient may also be taken into consideration.<sup>1</sup>

**Activity centre** - activity centres within cities and towns are a focus for enterprises, services, shopping, employment and social interaction. They are where people meet, relax, work and often live. Usually well-served by public transport, they range in size and intensity of use from local neighbourhood strip shopping centres to traditional town centres and major regional centres. An activity centre generally has higher intensity uses at its central core with smaller street blocks and a higher density of streets and lots. The structure of activity centres should allow for higher intensity development, street frontage exposure for display and pedestrian access to facilities.<sup>2</sup>

**Adaptive Re-Use** – conversion of building into a use other than that for which it was designed, such as changing a warehouse into gallery space or housing.

**Amenity** - urban amenities means urban facilities such as parks, playgrounds, green spaces, parking facilities, public wi-fi facilities, public bus transport, bus shelters, taxi and rickshaw stands, libraries, affordable hospitals, cultural centres, recreation centres, stadium, sports complex and any other urban facility that the State Government may, on the recommendation of the Authority, specify to be an urban amenity, but does not include infrastructure development work.<sup>3</sup>

**Arterial road** - an arterial road or arterial thoroughfare is a high-capacity urban road. The primary function of an arterial road is to deliver traffic from collector roads to freeways or expressways, and between

urban centres at the highest level of service possible. As such, many arteries are limited-access roads, or feature restrictions on private access. Because of their relatively high accessibility, many major roads face large amounts of land use and urban development, making them significant urban places.<sup>4</sup>

**Background Buildings** - Buildings that lack individual architectural merit but contribute to the overall character of an area or district; simple commercial buildings in a historic district function as background buildings.<sup>5</sup>

**Brownfield** - Brownfield is a term for land that has been previously used for industrial or commercial purposes that is polluted or feared to be polluted. Such sites often require an expensive clean up and it is common for governments to require the parties responsible to pay such costs.<sup>6</sup>

**Barrier free design** – building and site design which is accessible to all people, regardless of age and abilities.

**Building envelope** – the volume of space that may be occupied by building usually defined by series of dimensional requirements such as setback, step back, permitted maximum height, permitted lot coverage.

**Buffer** – a strip of land established to provide separation between land use and typically developed as landscape area.

**Built Form** - built form refers to the function, shape and configuration of buildings as well as their relationship to streets and open spaces. Built form refers to the function, shape and configuration of buildings as well as their relationship to streets and open spaces.<sup>7</sup>

**buildout** - maximum allowable buildable area as stipulated by land use controls like zoning or a building cap.<sup>8</sup>

**Circulation** - movement patterns of pedestrians and vehicular traffic.<sup>9</sup>

**Compatibility** – the characteristics of different designs which, despite their differences allot them to be located near each other in harmony, such as scale, height, materials, fencing, landscaping and location of services areas.

**Connectivity** - the number of connecting routes within a particular area, often measured by counting the number of intersection equivalents per unit of area. An area may be measured for its 'connectivity' for different travel modes – vehicle, cyclist or pedestrian. An area with high connectivity has an open street network that provides multiple routes to and from destinations.<sup>10</sup>

**Cultural Heritage Landscape** – a defined geographical area of heritage significance, which has been modified by human activities. Such an area is valued by community and is of significance to the understanding of the history of a people place.

**Density of Use** – the number of individuals per unit of area. Higher levels of density must be appropriately supported by the urban infrastructure to prevent overcrowding and congestion. The advantages of denser settlement patterns include the decrease of separating distances between individuals, businesses and institutions; the increase of social interactions; and the preservation of natural resources such as land and energy (decrease the sprawl). The common means to measure and regulate density of development by Floor Area Ratio (FAR), which the proportional relationship between the total floor area of the buildings and land on which they are built.

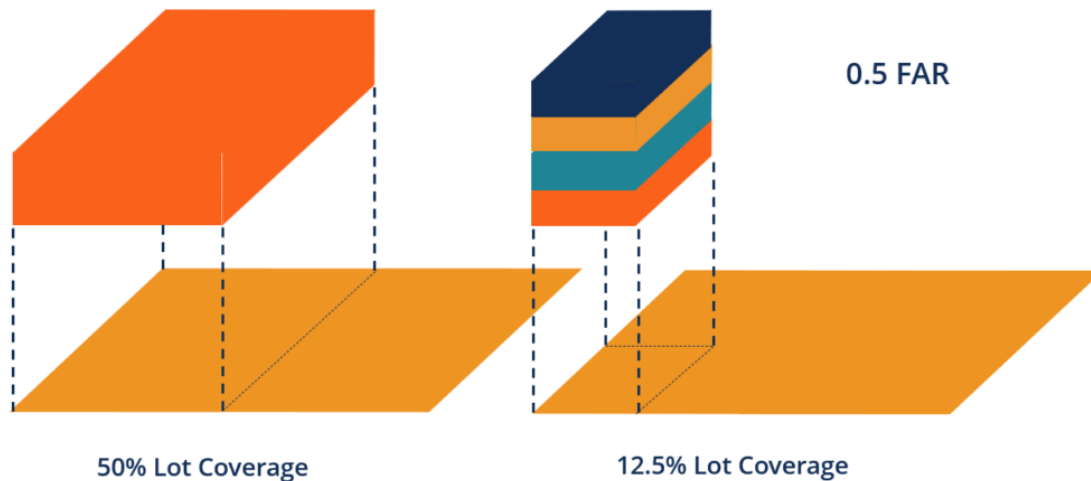


Fig. 1. Floor area ratio (FAR).<sup>11</sup>

**Design Guidelines** – criteria established to guide development toward a desired level of a quality through the design of the physical environment and which are applied on a discretionary basis relative to the context of development.

**Desire-line (or 'pedestrian desire-line')** - The desire-line path usually represents the preferred route and the shortest or most easily navigated route between an origin and destination. Desire- lines can often be seen as alternative shortcut tracks in places where constructed pathways take a circuitous route. They are almost always the most direct and the shortest route between two points.<sup>12</sup>

**Design response** - explanation and demonstration of how a proposed building development or public space design is informed by and responds to the site and context analysis.

**District** - geographical areas of relatively consistent character, such as exhibited in many residential neighbourhoods and downtowns.

**Drip line** – the outer boundary of an area on the surface of the ground that corresponds to the outer edge or the crown of the tree.

**Elevation** – a drawing showing an external face of a building.

**Enclosure** (sense of) – an experience in which a pedestrian feels sheltered with semi-private realm. Buildings, trees, landscaping and street widths are all factors in creating a sense of enclosure.

**Fabric or Urban Fabric** - the term 'urban fabric' describes the physical characteristics of urban areas, that is, cities, and towns. This includes the streetscapes, buildings, soft and hard landscaping, signage, lighting, roads and other infrastructure. Urban fabric can be thought of as the physical texture of an urban area.<sup>13</sup>

**Façade** – the exterior wall of building exposed to public view or that wall viewed by person not within the building.

**Fenestration** – the arrangement of windows in a building.

**Figure-ground diagram** - a drawing which shows only building footprints, rendered in black, with the ground plane left white, providing an abstract representation of development density and the extent that buildings define public spaces. A figure-ground diagram is a two-dimensional map of an urban space that shows the relationship between built and unbuilt space. It is used in analysis of urban design and planning.

**Focal point** – a prominent structure, feature or area of interest or activity.

**Gateway** – the design of a building site or landscape to symbolize an entrance or arrival to a special district.

**Historic Assets** – buildings or aspects of neighbourhood that hold significant shared memories for the residences and provide historic identity for the community. Some buildings are specifically recognized by the city for their historic character and provided with a degree of protection from destruction or significant alterations to the exterior. Some neighbourhoods that have many historic structures have been recognized as History Districts, or alternatively, Conservation District, and these classifications provide certain levels of protection for the neighbourhood as a whole.

**Human Scale** – the quality of the physical environment which reflects a sympathetic proportional relationship to human dimensions and which contributes to the citizen's perception and comprehension of the size, scale, height, bulk and massing of buildings or other features of the built environment.

**Infill** – the placement of new buildings into established built-up urban areas, which usually results in an increase of the existing building's stock.

**Landmarks** – buildings, structures and spaces which create distinct visual orientation points that provide a sense of location to the observers within the or the districts such as that created by significant natural feature or by architectural form which is highly distinctive relative to its surrounding environment.

**Land use** - urban land use comprises which activities are taking place where and their level of spatial accumulation, which indicates their density, intensity, and concentration. In urban planning, land use planning seeks to order and regulate land use in an efficient and ethical way, thus preventing land use conflicts. Governments use land use planning to manage the development of land within their jurisdictions.

14

**Mass** – the combination of three dimensions of length height and depth which give buildings its overall shape; a building is often composed of many masses, hence the term massing, which is often used to describe the form of shape structure.

**Microclimate** – outdoor conditions around buildings and the impact of the buildings on site conditions, pedestrian spaces and adjacent buildings; conditions include amount of sunlight/shade, wind levels and snow loads are influenced by building placement, height, design, orientation and massing.

**Mixed use** – a development or area comprised of mixed land uses either in the same building or in separate buildings on either the same building or the same lot or on separate lots or, at larger scale, in nodes.

**Modulation** – variation in the plane of the building wall used to provide visual interest.

**Public realm** – the public and semi-public spaces of the city, especially the street space of the city from building face to the opposite building face (including the façade, front yard, sidewalk and streets) and open space such as parks and squares.

**Reverse lotting** – lots located adjacent to an arterial or collector road which front onto an internal street.

**Rhythm and pattern** – relating of materials, styles, shapes and spacing of building elements and the building themselves, the predominance of one material or shape and its patterns of recurrence.

**Right-of-way** – that part of the street space that is publicly owned and lies between the property lines.

**Scale** – the sense of proportion for apparent size of the buildings in its setting; scale usually applies to how the sense is perceived in relation to the size of a human being and refers to the apparent size, not actual size, since its always viewed in relationship to another building or element.

**Significance** – to regard wetlands and areas of natural and scientific interest, an area identified as provincially or regionally artifact.

**Step-back** – a setback of the upper floors of a building which is greater than the setback of the lower floors.

Storm water management – plans and facilities designed to control and quality and quantity of storm water flows on a site.

**Sense of place** – the feeling associated with a location based on unique identity and other memorable qualities.

**Street wall** – the condition of enclosure along street created by the fronts of buildings and enhanced by the continuity and height of the enclosing buildings.

**Subdivision Plan** – a plan for design and division of a large property into individual buildings lots and blocks, street, parks, schools and other neighbourhood facilities and uses.

**Street Edge** – a term often used describe the line to which the front walls of buildings on particular street are built. For example: If a new store on Chestnut Street is built with its front wall back twenty feet from the front of all other buildings on the block to provide off-street parking spaces, that building can be said to have not maintained the street edge.

**Sustainable Materials and Building Practices** – terms used to describe a wide range of building practices and materials that are designed to limit the depletion of natural resources. Building designs that utilize such practices are often refer to as “Green Architecture”.

**Transit oriented** – the elements of urban form and design which make transit more accessible and efficient, these remaining from land use elements (i.e. locating higher density housing and commercial uses along transit routes) to design (i.e. street layout which allows efficient bus touting).

**Transportation Infrastructure** – includes all built aspects of the private and public systems of transportation, such as rail lines, roadways, bridges, paring lots, and bike paths.

**Urban design** – the planning and design cities focusing on three dimensions form and function of public and publicly accessible space.

**Way finding** – the information available to people which they need to find their way around the city and can be verbal, graphic, architectural and spatial.

**Zoning** – a document dividing the municipality into smaller areas called zones, employed by the municipality to regulate the use of land stating exactly what lad uses are permitted and providing regulations, among other matters, regarding permitted locations for buildings; and standards for lot size, parking requirements, building height, side yard dimension and setback from the street.

**Zoning and Planning Code** – the legal guidelines by which the city controls the uses of buildings or areas of land and also the rules about building size and height, setbacks from lot lines, and required open space.

<sup>1</sup> Source: Urban Design Lab, <https://urbandesignlab.in/urban-design-terminology/> [15.02.2023].

<sup>2</sup> Source: Urban Design Lab, <https://urbandesignlab.in/urban-design-terminology/> [15.02.2023].

<sup>3</sup> Source: Urban Design Lab, <https://urbandesignlab.in/urban-design-terminology/> [15.02.2023].

<sup>4</sup> Source: Urban Design Lab, <https://urbandesignlab.in/urban-design-terminology/> [15.02.2023].

<sup>5</sup> Source: Urban Design Lab, <https://urbandesignlab.in/urban-design-terminology/> [15.02.2023].

<sup>6</sup> Source: Urban Design Lab, <https://urbandesignlab.in/urban-design-terminology/> [15.02.2023].

<sup>7</sup> Source: Urban Design Lab, <https://urbandesignlab.in/urban-design-terminology/> [15.02.2023].

<sup>8</sup> Mayors’ Institute on City Design, [www.micd.org](http://www.micd.org) [15.02.2023].

<sup>9</sup> Mayors' Institute on City Design, [www.micd.org](http://www.micd.org) [15.02.2023].

<sup>10</sup> Source: Urban Design Lab, <https://urbandesignlab.in/urban-design-terminology/> [15.02.2023].

<sup>11</sup> Source: Urban Design Lab, <https://urbandesignlab.in/urban-design-terminology/> [15.02.2023].

<sup>12</sup> Source: Urban Design Lab, <https://urbandesignlab.in/urban-design-terminology/> [15.02.2023].

<sup>13</sup> Source: Urban Design Lab, <https://urbandesignlab.in/urban-design-terminology/> [15.02.2023].

<sup>14</sup> Source: Urban Design Lab, <https://urbandesignlab.in/urban-design-terminology/> [15.02.2023].

The study material was created within the project Challenge-Oriented Collaborative Online Communities in the Paradigm of Sustainable City (Project No: 2021-1-LT01-KA220-HED-000023277)

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