

## **Bundle 13 – Community Design**

Policies and Actions with Detailed Information

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The Plano Tomorrow Policies and Actions were developed through meetings with the Planning & Zoning Commission, City Council, and extensive public outreach. Information on this process can be found here:

- [Public Outreach Process](#)
- [Advisory Committee Workshops](#)
- [Adoption Process](#)

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### *The Built Environment – Community Design*

**POLICY** - Plano will promote and incorporate unique and functional community design components within new developments, public spaces, and streetscapes to enrich areas throughout the city, create distinctive visual character, and ensure a citywide pedestrian-friendly environment.

**CD1) Develop Criteria of Review for Community Design elements and update as necessary.**

**Status:**

- Recurring and on track

**Background:**

[As noted in Plano's Comprehensive Plan, as updated in 2005](#), community design elements contribute to Plano's overall safety, livability, and vibrancy by addressing the functional and aesthetic qualities of the physical environment at a range of scales, from the individual streetscape, block, or to the larger community.

Community design elements include both natural and manmade features that contribute to the functional and aesthetic qualities of a place. Implementing a combination of the design elements listed below will help create context sensitive streets and neighborhoods, maintain a cohesive community identity, and enhance the overall quality of life. Commonly used community design elements include:

Community design elements include a mix of natural and manmade features, such as:

- streetscape design,
- lighting,
- signage,
- medians,
- parkways,
- exterior building materials, and
- landscaping.

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Formalizing community design criteria will allow citizens, developers, and decision makers to have an agreed-upon expectation of the baseline standards that must be met by development projects. Furthermore, as Plano continues to address ongoing growth, development, and redevelopment, these criteria will help to maintain a cohesive city identity while creating unique civic brands at the district and neighborhood levels.

The city's [Retail Corner Guidelines](#) and draft community design assessment for [mixed-use developments](#) are examples of how a community design guide might be implemented.

**CD2) Evaluate the use of overlay districts to require unified design standards in transformation areas of the city.**

**Status:**

- Pending

**Background:**

An overlay district “[is a zoning district which is applied over one or more previously established zoning districts,](#)” and offer communities an opportunity to tailor stricter design standards in targeted locations, such as corridors, redevelopment sites, areas with historical significance, and environmentally sensitive lands. This zoning tool provides Plano an additional method to protect and refine the character of existing neighborhoods as the city reaches build-out and is faced with more redevelopment projects.

Plano currently has five corridor overlay districts, established in the late 1990s, which primarily address landscaping and signage:

- Preston Road Overlay District 1998
- Dallas North Tollway Overlay District 1996
- 190 Tollway/Plano Parkway Overlay District 1998
- State Highway 121 Overlay District 1998
- Parkway Overlay District 1998

[Heritage Districts and Heritage Landmarks](#) are other types of overlays that promote rehabilitation and redevelopment that is sensitive to the districts surrounding historic context. [Neighborhood Conservation Districts](#) were recently considered by the Heritage Commission and P&Z as an additional tool used to protect neighborhoods that retain some historic integrity or overall defining character, yet may not meet the age or architectural significance criteria for designation as a formal heritage district. Examples of such neighborhoods in Plano include the Douglass Community, Haggard Addition, and Old Towne neighborhoods.

**CD3) Create a Corridor Community Design Plan to identify unique streetscape design themes along major arterials.**

*Action CD3 was part of Bundle #10 and given preliminary approval during the Transportation theme discussion on July 21, 2020. The below background information was first provided in the June 30, 2020 packet.*

**Status:**

- Pending
- A [Community Design Assessment for Mixed-Use Developments](#) has been drafted.

**Background:**

This action will create more pedestrian- and multimodal-friendly environments, helping to attract economic investment and create more cohesive development. Developing a Corridor Community Design Plan creates an opportunity to manage the built environment along major transportation and commercial corridors that host some of the remaining undeveloped land in the city as well as critical reinvestment sites. Streetscape features, such as sidewalks, crosswalks, bike lanes, public art, specialty signage, street trees, and furniture, [provide low-cost and low-impact design solutions](#) that help create a sense of place while increasing the health and safety for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users in addition to vehicular traffic. Providing unique design standards for different corridors within Plano can create distinction between the corridors and recognize the unique character of each area of the city.

**CD4) Evaluate and create incentives to relocate overhead utilities underground for new development and redevelopment projects.**

**Status:**

- Pending

**Background:**

Relocating utilities underground can help create a safe and inviting public realm for all users. In addition to elevating community aesthetics, developing underground utilities [can be more economical in the long term](#) because utilities are protected from extreme weather events and environmental hazards, such as debris, wind, tree branches, which often damage overhead utilities. This, in turn, prevents power outages and physical damages to power lines, which can be costly and hazardous to the public.

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The city is able to partner with utility providers to bury some utility lines, as is the case of 15th Street and I Avenue:

*Before:*



*After:*



**CD5) Develop wayfinding signage guidelines to apply to special areas and public facilities citywide.**

*Action CD5 was part of Bundle #10 and given preliminary approval as shown above during the Transportation theme discussion on July 21, 2020. The below background information was first provided in the June 30, 2020, packet.*

**Status:**

- In Progress
- The Parks and Recreation and Engineering Departments are currently developing construction documents for citywide wayfinding signage.

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**Background:**

Implementing a cohesive wayfinding information system is an effective way to increase the navigability of the city's transportation systems and neighborhood districts while reinforcing Plano's civic brand. Wayfinding forms boundaries in shared spaces, such as municipal buildings with multiple agencies; creates neighborhood gateways; and leads to an increased awareness of walkability for residents and visitors, resulting in health benefits, and an increase in patrons for shopping, eating, and drinking establishments. Using signage, maps, symbols, and colors, the city can establish [clear branding and route legibility](#) for all pedestrians and motorists, who each have unique challenges navigating streets and roadways.

**CD6) Evaluate and make revisions to parking regulations to and revise to meet parking demand and ensure a balance between the needs of various transportation options and creating good community form.**

*Action CD6 was part of Bundle #10 and given preliminary approval as shown above during the Transportation theme discussion on July 21, 2020. The below background information was first provided in the June 30, 2020, packet.*

**Status:**

- Pending
- In FY2018-19, Granite Park properties created a planned development to amend the parking regulations of the whole development and provide better accommodations to pedestrians.

**Background:**

As noted in the [CPRC Memo #3, dated April 17, 2020](#), studies have shown that conventional zoning practices, which require parking minimums, lead to excessive parking supplies. In a [recent Transit Oriented-Development Parking Study](#), the North Central Texas Council of Governmental (NCTCOG) notes that an over-supply of low-cost and/or free parking is, "linked to an increased reliance on driving and decreased use of transit, even in transit-rich locations." Updating the city's parking regulations will help establish an appropriate amount of parking necessary to realize the vision of more compact, pedestrian, and transit-friendly districts, such as Legacy, Oak Point, and Downtown. Furthermore, updating the regulations in these specific locations will better align with the area's market potential and future land use designations and may reduce the amount of money spent on creating and maintaining parking infrastructure. Again, the NCTCOG study notes that vacant parking spaces across the Metroplex "represent over \$79M in unnecessary infrastructure." The Institute of Traffic Engineers (ITE) also recently updated their parking generation manual and [provides additional advice](#) to encourage impactful and efficient use of parking areas.