

GETTING STARTED

Identify your available space. Find out what you have to work with outside your front door. Measure from the front of the building to the nearest permanent fixture near the curb – sign, tree, bike rack, garbage container, etc. Is there at least three feet of walkway clearance? Is there room for even better passage, four to five feet? Consider how much space you have between the building and edge of walkway to place seating, planters, or merchandise displays. Is there a little room curbside for additional bicycle parking or a sign? Think about overhead clearance, too. Do tree limbs need to be pruned (seek a professional) or are temporary signs hanging too low? Work up a plan for how you would like to curate the usable areas.

Double-check the code. Every city has building and development/zoning codes to protect the health and safety of its citizens. It's important to understand your legal rights and obligations when using the public space outside your business. Items that typically require permits include signs, lighting, bicycle parking and other permanent installations.

Call your main street, city permitting, planning or economic development staff to determine what you can do out front. Talk to your business association or other businesses that regularly display or plant outside their stores – what sort of permits did they obtain or interactions have they had with the city? Are there lessons to be learned? Is the city planning to overhaul the public streetscape? How can your ideas be included in the design?

Start fresh. The first step to enhancing your sidewalk appeal is cleaning and maintenance. Spend a couple of hours weeding the tree wells, freshening up your existing planters, picking up wayward trash, sweeping and/or power-washing the sidewalk, scrubbing the front door, and taking account of tattered or faded displays, fabrics and signs. Consider a regular schedule for maintenance including daily sweeping and watering, weekly weeding and cleaning. Or hire a maintenance contractor to make sure you stay on top of it. Customers notice and appreciate a well-cared-for establishment.

Coming up in August

Trade secrets of distinctive signs and lighting

Visit oregonmetro.gov/getstreetmart for details.



GET STREET SMART

THRIVING DISTRICTS BY DESIGN



JULY 2012

Boost visibility with sidewalk appeal



PRESENTED BY:

City of Gresham
City of Hillsboro
City of Lake Oswego
Hillsboro Downtown Association
Main Street Oregon City
Metro

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Brian Emerick, AIA, Emerick Architects

HIGHLIGHTS

There are many elements along public sidewalks and street furnishing zones that help to define the identity of a district and can even become part of your business calling card. Outlined below are the critical principles to keep in mind as you select the elements that can best highlight your store exterior and lure customers through your doors.

DISTRICT-WIDE STREET APPEAL

Pedestrian friendly. Customers come to downtowns and main streets for a unique, pedestrian-scale experience and they typically want to patronize more than one place when they visit. Your business is one piece of the puzzle. Making it pleasant for a customer to get to your store and attractive for them to walk a couple of blocks down the street is providing a special experience not available in strip centers and shopping malls.

Sense of place. Street trees, plantings, flower baskets, furniture, lighting, bike racks, and waste receptacles are important elements that make a district look and feel unified, vibrant and distinctive. Public art and quirky local traditions – from sidewalk stenciling, to toy ponies at horse rings, to bubbles and more – all help to add a splash of dynamism, fun and sense of community.

STREETSCAPE ETIQUETTE

Comfortable clearance. Dressing the front of your business works only if there is adequate space for customers to easily walk down the street. This includes proper clearance for people with disabilities, baby carriages, and for two pedestrians to pass. The Americans with Disabilities Act requires at least a 3-foot passageway on public sidewalks.

Clean and safe. A customer assumes everything from the curb to the front of the building is under your control. Keep the tree wells free of weeds, sweep or wash the sidewalk regularly. Place bicycle racks in a safe and highly visible location. Work with public agencies, media outlets, and neighboring businesses to control the clutter of signs, street furniture, and newspaper boxes.

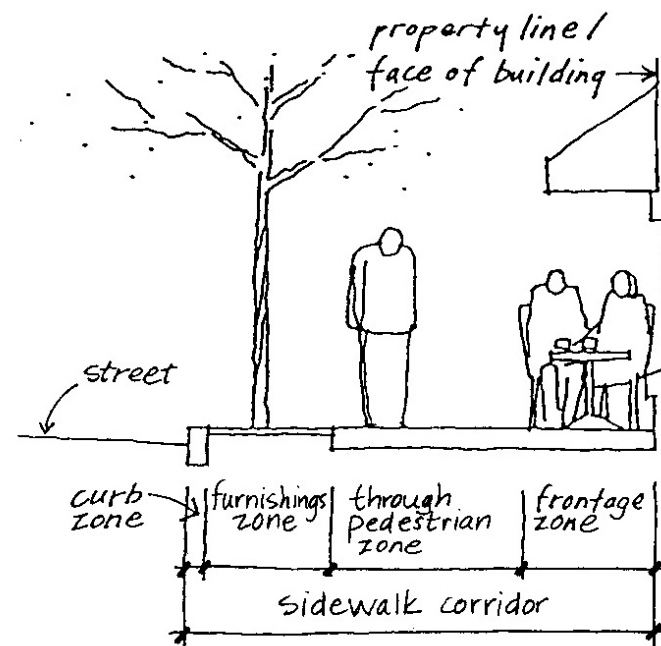


Diagram by Emerick Architects



Images and left cover photo by FrontdoorBack

BUSINESS PRESENTATION AND VISIBILITY

Express your brand. Consider how all elements from umbrella fabric, to flower pots, to sandwich boards quickly express who you are. Make selections carefully that will create a rich experience for pedestrians while reinforcing and celebrating your unique brand. Consider how every single element outside your doorstep helps define and express the identity of your business.

Extend your sales floor. Simple displays can help you instantly tell the pedestrian about your business. Displays can specifically highlight your brand or just direct the interest to your window merchandising. A display out in front of your business is a great way to catch the eye of a passer-by and highlight specific merchandise you are trying to sell. Remember the principles of presentation: dynamic, uncluttered, curated, and complementary to your district.

Leverage special events. Large community events, like nearby farmers markets or parades, can be challenging for the main street business owner, but they don't have to be.

Hundreds of potential customers walking by your storefront is a significant advertising opportunity. Event-goers may not come into your store on market day, but if you present your business well, they may remember you on a return visit. Consider special staging of your sidewalk on festival days or other promotions to capture the energy. Remember the rules of comfortable clearance, especially on event days with congested sidewalk traffic.

CONSIDER THESE DETAILS

Furniture. Type and placement of outdoor seating

Fabrics. Umbrellas, banners, pennants, or flags

Lighting. Temporary, seasonal, and permanent

Plantings. Scale, plant selection, and color

Bike racks. Personalize to your brand (if permitted)

Signage. Coordinate custom signs and sandwich boards (if needed) with your brand; place with care

Seanette Corkill, FrontdoorBack

With a BS in Marketing from the University of Colorado, LEEDS School of Business and a successful career in sales, Seanette brings a business-minded approach to the retail design arena. Her 25 years of professional training and design experience have intermingled to give her creative voice an artful yet practical tone. Seanette started FrontdoorBack to bring the benefits of design and merchandising to businesses of all persuasions. Seanette consults and presents for both Oregon and Washington Main Street programs, and has been featured in Entrepreneur.com's retail segments.

Brian Emerick, AIA, Emerick Architects

A seventh generation Oregonian whose family came over the Oregon Trail, Brian earned his architectural degree from the University of Oregon. In 1999, he co-founded Emerick Architects P.C. with his wife, Melody Emerick. Their firm has forged a reputation for timeless architecture created from regional materials and the heritage of the Pacific Northwest. Brian is currently Vice-Chair of Portland's Historic District Landmarks Commission and also serves as the Main Street Architect for the Portland Development Commission in partnership with the National Trust for Historic Preservation.