

Downtown Living Initiative Guidelines

Program Goals

The purpose of the TIRZ #3 Downtown Living Initiative Program is to increase downtown housing, promote economic development and encourage sustainable growth and good urban design by offering incentives for developers and investors looking to invest in downtown Corpus Christi. In 2014 Zimmerman/Volk Associates, Inc. conducted a downtown housing potential study which concluded that 1,850 new market-rate dwelling units developed within the Downtown Study Area could be absorbed in five to seven years, based on projected market capture rates. In the 1st quarter of 2015, apartment occupancy was 94.2% (industry considers 96% full occupancy).

Incentives

Under this program, a \$10,000 per unit reimbursement is available to stimulate growth and activate downtown as a live-work-play center through the construction of residential and mixed-use developments. Applicants applying for this incentive will be required to meet certain design criteria that will contribute to downtown's sense of place. Projects that are not in accordance with specific design criteria will not be considered.

Additionally, if over 100 units are being considered, or to support increases in costs associated with these guidelines, the Board may consider utilizing the Project Specific Developer Agreement, which allows an annual tax reimbursement of up to 75% of taxes by participating TIRZ taxing entities (City of Corpus Christi, Del Mar College, Nueces County) for up to 10 years. The Board has the ability to alter requirements specified under these standards.

Project Design Guidelines

A. BUILDING DESIGN AND PLACEMENT

- 1. Dwelling Unit Size.** Units must be 450 sq. ft. or larger.
- 2. Building Setback.** Zero ft setbacks are preferred in most instances. However, a minimum of 6 ft. of setback may be permitted in some cases (i.e. ground floor residential or if the sidewalk in the public right of way is not sufficient for the proposed use) and additional setback allowance can be permitted with the inclusion of outdoor cafés, balconies, plazas, etc. [See Figure 1].
- 3. Frontage.** Buildings must be configured with at least 75% frontage facing the street. Drive-thru and other automobile dependent development must be recessed or sufficiently screened.
- 4. Diverse.** Buildings should be built on a scale that supports multitenant and mixed-use development that enhance the environment at the street level.
- 5. Ground Floor.** The ground floor should be active and engage with the street. Ground floor design should be inviting and easily accessible from the street. For commercial ground floor uses, clear, energy efficient windows are preferred to allow pedestrians to see into the businesses. Designs are encouraged to include multiple uses to attract a wide range of users that promote a diverse community.
- 6. Canopies/Awnings.** Developments are encouraged to have canopies or awnings to provide architectural interest and to shield pedestrians from weather and the elements.
- 7. Signage.** Well-designed signs that are pedestrian oriented like hanging signs, blade signs and signs with channel letter are encouraged. All signs should incorporate appropriate lighting.



Figure 1: Sidewalk cafés and restaurants that incorporate outdoor seating offer inviting entrances and engage with the street.

B. PARKING

1. **Parking Requirement.** One parking spot is required for each dwelling unit built. This can be achieved with onsite construction or through adjacent shared use parking facilities. Applicants using adjacent shared use facilities must include a lease agreement with the application.
2. **Parking.** Parking structures and lots must be visually appealing and should be integrated with the building’s design. Cars must not be visible from the street and structures should be screened with architectural and landscape elements.

New surface parking is required to utilize zero setback, placing building frontage adjacent to higher traffic streets, with parking in the rear [See Figure 2]. Access to these lots should be through side-streets or alleyways. All parking areas must be of good urban design and at a minimum be paved, striped and adequately landscaped and lighted.

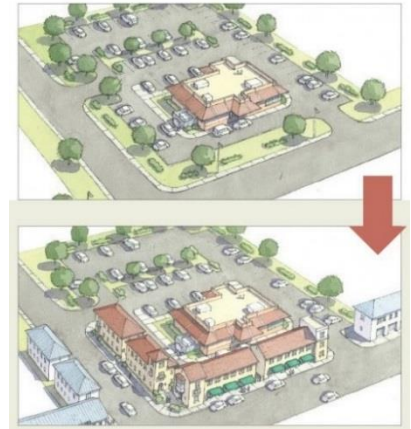


Figure 2: Parking should have minimal visual presence from the street.

C. STREETScape

1. **Sidewalks.** Site owners will be required to install sidewalks in locations that currently do not have any installed. The sidewalk must comply with all standards set by the ADA and *should* be at a minimum of 10’ wide to accommodate possible landscaping, street furniture and sidewalk cafés.
2. **Landscape.** Planting zones shall include irrigated street trees and also include other landscape features, street furniture, etc. All new buildings must have at least one tree for every 25 ft. of building frontage. Landscape areas should be designed to maximize tree canopy [See Figure 3]. *Note: Palm trees are not considered shade maximizing street trees.*
3. **Street Lighting.** Lamp fixtures installed on street walls are encouraged to be well designed and visually contribute to the pedestrian experience. Sidewalks must be well-lit and defined to ensure the safety of people using the space.
4. **Street Wall.** Wall space facing the street must be active, meaning the space should contain a mix of uses that will encourage use throughout the day and into the night. Maintaining an active space will ensure livable streets and strengthen the downtown economy.



Sidewalks that incorporate integrated seating options allow for additional sitting locations and increase pedestrian activity in the area.



Figure 3: Streetscape design should maximize tree canopy cover.

D. UTILITIES

1. **Underground.** A significant portion of the utilities provided in the target area are currently served by underground utilities. Where underground utilities exist, they should remain underground. Projects located in areas that are not served through underground sources should plan for future access to this service.
2. **Service.** Exterior utility service such as dumpsters, transformers, electrical boxes and other utility elements must be concealed from public view as much as possible.

E. CITY OF CORPUS CHRISTI CODES AND ORDINANCES

Design must adhere to the coding and zoning requirements from the City of Corpus Christi.