

# PBOT

PORTLAND BUREAU OF TRANSPORTATION

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**Jo Ann Hardesty** Commissioner **Chris Warner** Director

## MEMO

**To:** Portland Design Commission  
**From:** Michelle Marx, PBOT Pedestrian Coordinator  
**Date:** June 1, 2021

**RE:** July 1, 2021 Briefing, Pedestrian Design Guide

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### Intent of Briefing

To return to the Commission to share the compromise developed by PBOT, BPS, and BDS staff regarding sidewalk dedication requirements in Historic Overlay Zones for integration into the in-progress update to the [Portland Pedestrian Design Guide](#). This briefing is a follow up to the December 7, 2020 briefing when PBOT staff discussed with the Commission the occasional conflict between existing ground-level sidewalk width requirements from the Pedestrian Design Guide to accommodate pedestrian demand and street tree requirements, and established building façade lines.

The Pedestrian Design Guide update will continue through 2021, with the sidewalk corridor section updated by June 2021

### Background:

[PedPDX](#), the 20-year update to Portland's 1998 Pedestrian Master Plan, was adopted by City Council in June 2019. Council directed the Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT) in the adopting resolution to update the 1998 Pedestrian Design Guide to reflect the recommendations of PedPDX. The Pedestrian Design Guide implements the policies and pedestrian classifications adopted within the Pedestrian Master Plan, translating those into a coherent set of standards for pedestrian facilities. It establishes sidewalk design criteria, including requirements for minimum sidewalk widths and street corner design at crossings. All pedestrian facilities designed and constructed in Portland by City-led capital projects and by private development must conform to these standards. Largely impacting private frontage improvements, the Pedestrian Design Guide provides a critically important mechanism for leveraging privately-funded pedestrian improvements.

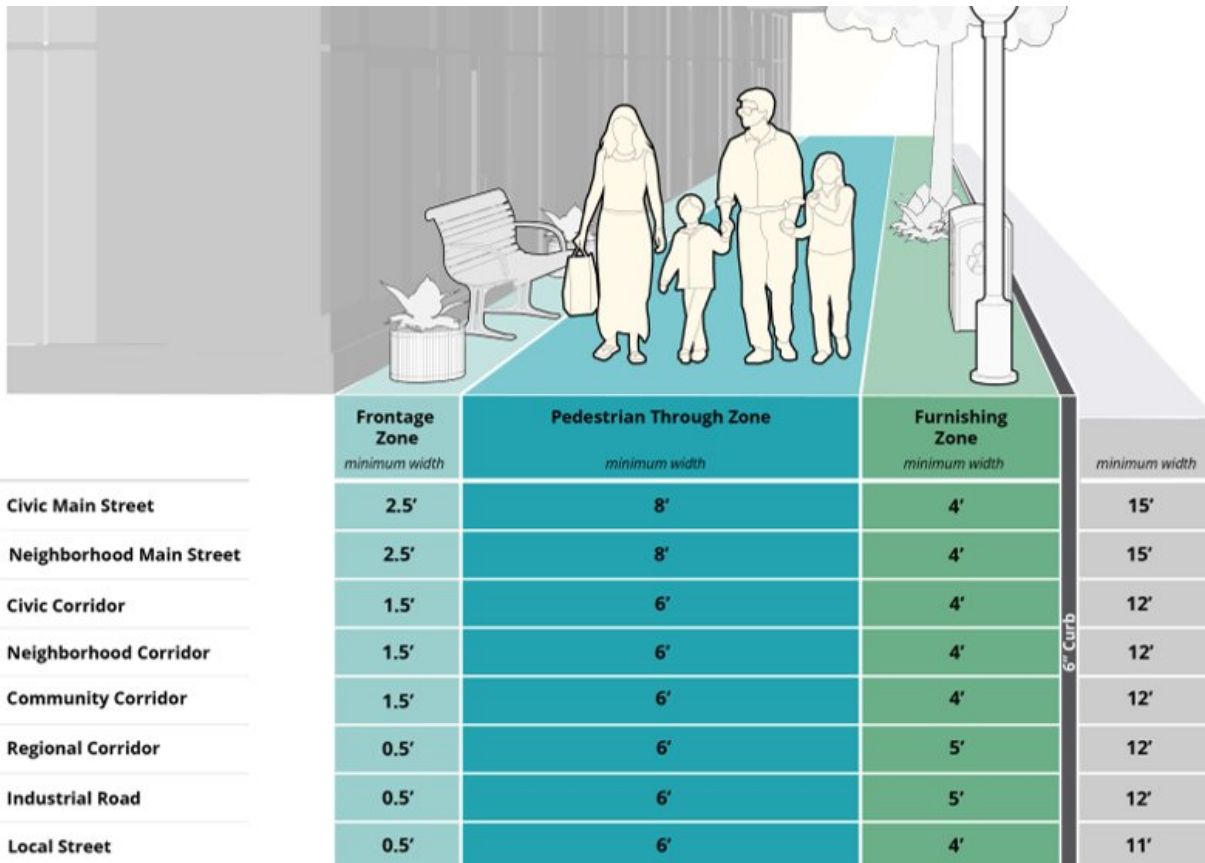
The Pedestrian Design Guide is one of the most critical tools for implementing the policies and objectives in the City's Pedestrian Master Plan. Updating the Pedestrian Design Guide, as directed by City Council, will effectively codify the policies and objectives in the newly adopted PedPDX into clear design requirements and provide clarity to the



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development community regarding the impact that the newly adopted PedPDX will have upon the City’s frontage improvement requirements.

Of particular concern to the Commission are sidewalk setback requirements within Historic Resource Overlay Zones where there is an established building façade wall that results in a narrower sidewalk corridor than the sidewalk widths prescribed in the Pedestrian Design Guide. The currently proposed widths for sidewalk corridors per Street Design Classifications in the Transportation System Plan are as follows:



Typical sidewalk corridors are required to be between 11 and 15 feet wide in order to accommodate the level of pedestrian demand associated with each of the street types above and to effectively house sidewalk elements such as street trees without compromising pedestrian access. Within Historic Resource Overlays however, there is sometimes an existing sidewalk corridor that is narrower than the widths prescribed by the Pedestrian Design Guide, as defined by existing building façade lines. In recognition of the special circumstances within Historic Resource Overlay Districts wherein the established street wall is often an identifying element of the historic district, PBOT and BDS staff have worked together to propose the following compromise between PBOT sidewalk width requirements and concerns about established street walls within Historic Resource Overlay Zones for integration into the updated Pedestrian Design Guide:

**Sidewalk Corridors Within Historic Resource Overlay Zones and Design Overlays –**

- Historic Resource Overlay Zones - For a development site within the Historic Resource Overlay Zone, sidewalk width may match the established sidewalk width adjacent to the development site, provided that all of the following conditions are met:
  - The development site has 99 feet of street frontage or less;

- There is an existing building that is Designated a Historic Landmark or contributing resource in a Historic Resource Overlay Zone on at least one side of the development site where the existing resource extends to the front property line;
- The proposed development will extend to the front property line.

In all other instances, minimum sidewalk width within Historic Resource Overlay Zones will be dictated by Table B.2 of the Pedestrian Design Guide. Development that abuts a designated Historic Landmark or contributing resource is permitted to match the designated historic resource's street wall for the first 25 feet adjacent to the contributing resource before setting back. The area that abuts the contributing resource shall have an active ground level use. Minimum sidewalk widths for new development on vacant lots within Historic Districts where the side of the designated Landmark is already visible shall meet the requirements of Table B.2 for the full length of the building face.

- Design Overlays - For a development site within Design Overlays with designated Historic Landmarks or contributing resources on both sides of the development, sidewalk width may match the established sidewalk width adjacent to the development site provided that all of the following conditions are met:
  - The development site has 50 feet of street frontage or less;
  - There are existing buildings designated a Historic Landmark on both sides of the development site where the existing resource extends to the front property line; and
  - The proposed development will extend to the front property line.

In all other instances when all of these criteria are not met, minimum sidewalk width within Design Overlays will be dictated by Table B.2 of the Pedestrian Design Guide. For new development that abuts a designated Landmark on at least one side, the new development is permitted to match the designated historic resource's street wall for the first 25 feet adjacent to the contributing resource before setting back. The area that abuts the contributing resource shall have an active ground level use. Minimum sidewalk widths for new development on vacant lots within Design Overlays where the side of the designated Landmark is already visible shall meet the requirements of Table B.2 for the full length of the building face.

**At the briefing, Michelle will share the following maps with Commissioners showing how the proposed language above would apply within Historic Resource Overlay Zones.**