



Design Manual: Sidewalks



Existing Sidewalk

New Canopy Tree

Colored Concrete Pavement

Vehicular Rated Brick Pavement

Granite Curb
Metal Grate with River Stone Infill



Proposed Sidewalk Improvements

The life of a street is in the people who populate it, and the numbers of people walking along its sidewalks can define a place as thriving and bustling at best or deserted at worst. Improving the pedestrian experience, and thereby encouraging greater use of the sidewalks, is crucial to maintaining a vibrant image for Downtown Chapel Hill.

An examination of existing pedestrian activity in the Downtown District reveals areas that maintain a continuous flow of movement, such as the 100-block of East Franklin Street, and areas that have so little pedestrian presence, such as Rosemary Street, that the street has become the 'back road' of the Downtown District, attracting few to stroll along its sidewalks.

sidewalks

In improving the pedestrian experience, we must understand how pedestrian presence relates to the adjacencies of the streetscape. An improved sidewalk will not necessarily convert a quiet street to a busy street, but it can benefit the Town by providing a brightly lit, safer and visually improved walkway for pedestrians who rely on quieter routes to reach their Downtown destinations. A successful sidewalk improvement strategy must be developed with an understanding of what level of activity it needs to support and therefore what priorities must be addressed during design and construction.

Analysis of the varied districts within Downtown Chapel Hill resulted in the need for a flexible strategy to address the myriad of issues impacting the pedestrian experience. The goal is to emphasize a unified aesthetic character for the streetscape while addressing the changing levels of activity along Franklin and Rosemary Streets.

Taking the lead of prior sidewalk improvements in the Downtown area, brick paving along sidewalks will serve as a unifying visual element. In particular, along Rosemary Street, as pedestrian easements are acquired or sidewalks require repair and replacement, new brick sidewalks will be installed to further emphasize the relationship of Rosemary Street with the larger Downtown District. Where space allows, the brick-and-concrete sidewalk type typical of Franklin Street will be applied to Rosemary Street. In narrow areas along the sidewalk, exclusively brick sidewalks will be installed. The following chapter describes the sidewalk design strategy in greater detail.

nano parks

In the analysis of the Downtown area, a few small-scale open spaces were listed that serve as “nano parks” for the community, including the plaza at the Post Office, McCorkle Place facing Franklin Street, and the front lawns of the University Baptist Church and the University United Methodist Church. These nano parks establish a cadence of movement along the street; they allow the flow of movement to occasionally spill into larger spaces beyond the sidewalk, and they offer important places for gathering and resting.

There are many areas of Downtown that could benefit from the establishment of additional nano parks, most notably West Franklin Street. In the following chapter, opportunities for placement of these public spaces will be described.

street furnishings

The primary role of the sidewalk is a conduit for pedestrian movement, whereas nano parks can provide places to rest and gather. As such, the Master Plan encourages placement of benches only within public open spaces and at bus stops and suggests limiting future installation of benches along sidewalks unless specifically supported by businesses. Benches should remain in bus shelter areas and at corners where curb extensions have been installed that create wider gathering spaces. Given that 75% of blocks along Rosemary and Franklin Streets have two or more bus stops, ample seating will be distributed throughout the Downtown District.

architecture

In Downtown areas, buildings shape the urban spaces for vehicles and pedestrians. In specific areas along Franklin Street, due to the historic condition of flooding in Chapel Hill near the turn of the century, a series of older buildings within Downtown have been built at a higher elevation than the more recently added sidewalks adjacent to them, resulting in challenges relating to accessibility as well as to visual connectivity between the architecture and the streetscape. Future developments must meet the sidewalk grade to prevent further problems in terms of pedestrian accessibility.



Existing Sidewalk

Existing Pear Tree

Granite Curb

Mulch Bed

Brick Edge

New Canopy Tree



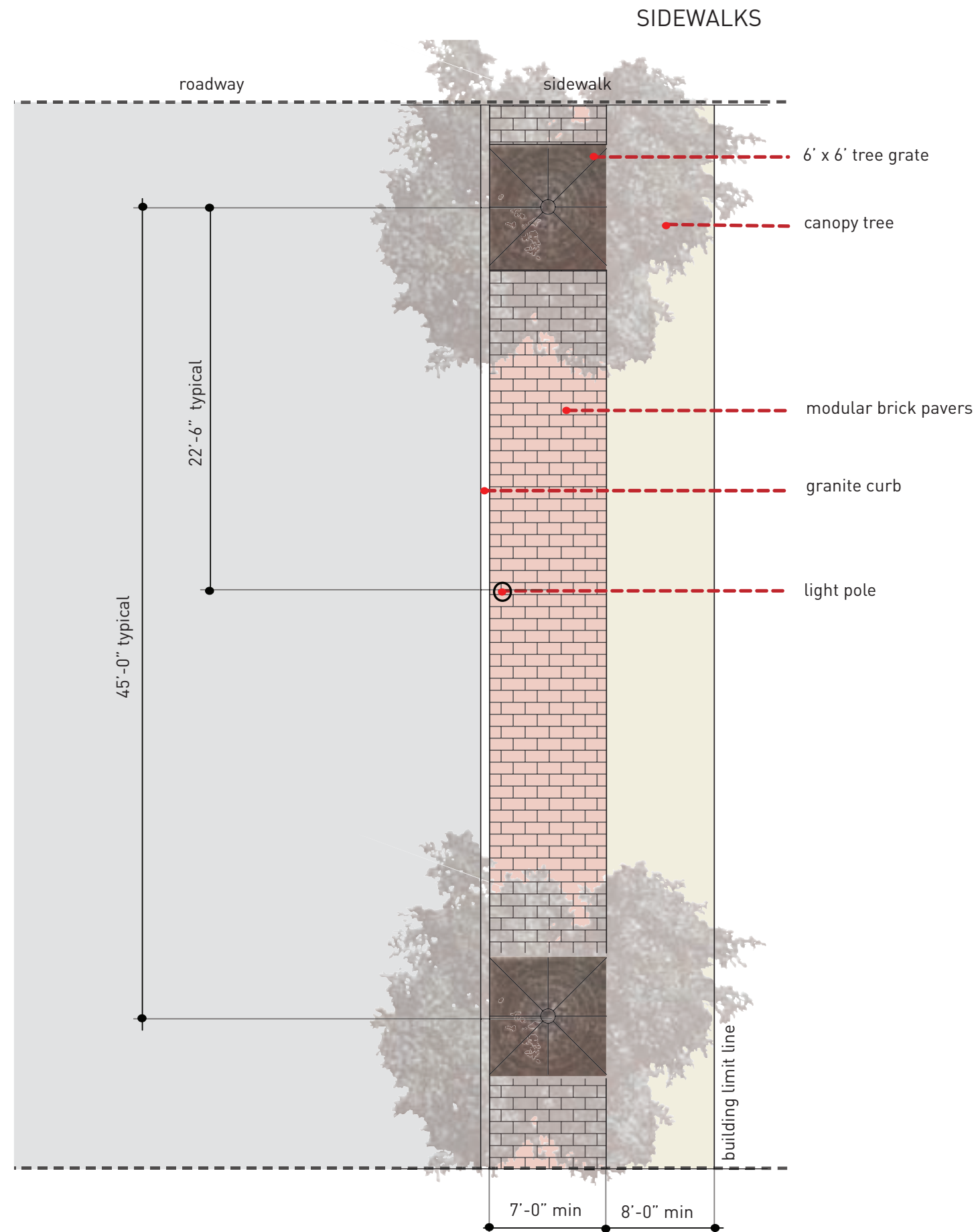
Colored Concrete Pavement

Brick Wall to Remain and Be Protected

Brick Pavement

Granite Curb

Metal Grate with River Stone Infill



Scale: 1/8" = 1' - 0"

Sidewalk Type A: Urban Sidewalk

Sidewalk Type A supports the different speeds of pedestrian movement along the street. Maximizing the walkable surface, particularly in areas where the sidewalk width cannot be expanded, is an important strategy to improving the flow of pedestrian traffic, particularly in the busiest areas of Downtown.

In particular, the space available for sidewalks is limited along the north side of Rosemary Street. It is recommended that efforts be continued to expand the sidewalks.

Tree grates will be included in the Type A sidewalk to allow pedestrians to walk with few obstructions while maintaining a shaded canopy that enhances the visual character of the streetscape. In addition, tree grates will protect the tree while allowing ample room for roots to grow. Refer to page 56 for development of trees with tree grates.

Installing colored concrete will be an ongoing upgrade and investment for the town, helping to create a pedestrian identity through a cool colored concrete pavement. The ultimate selection of color will be determined through a selection process with the Town and the designer while the first case study project is being constructed. During project demolition of old sidewalks in disrepair, saw cuts will be provided to create a clean transition between the new colored concrete and the old standard gray concrete. The granite curb and brick pavement will act as unifying elements for the sidewalks.



Existing Sidewalk

- ← Mulch Bed
- ← Brick Edge
- ← Existing Brick Sidewalk
- ← Granite Curb

Canopy Tree

Colored Concrete Pavement

Brick Stair

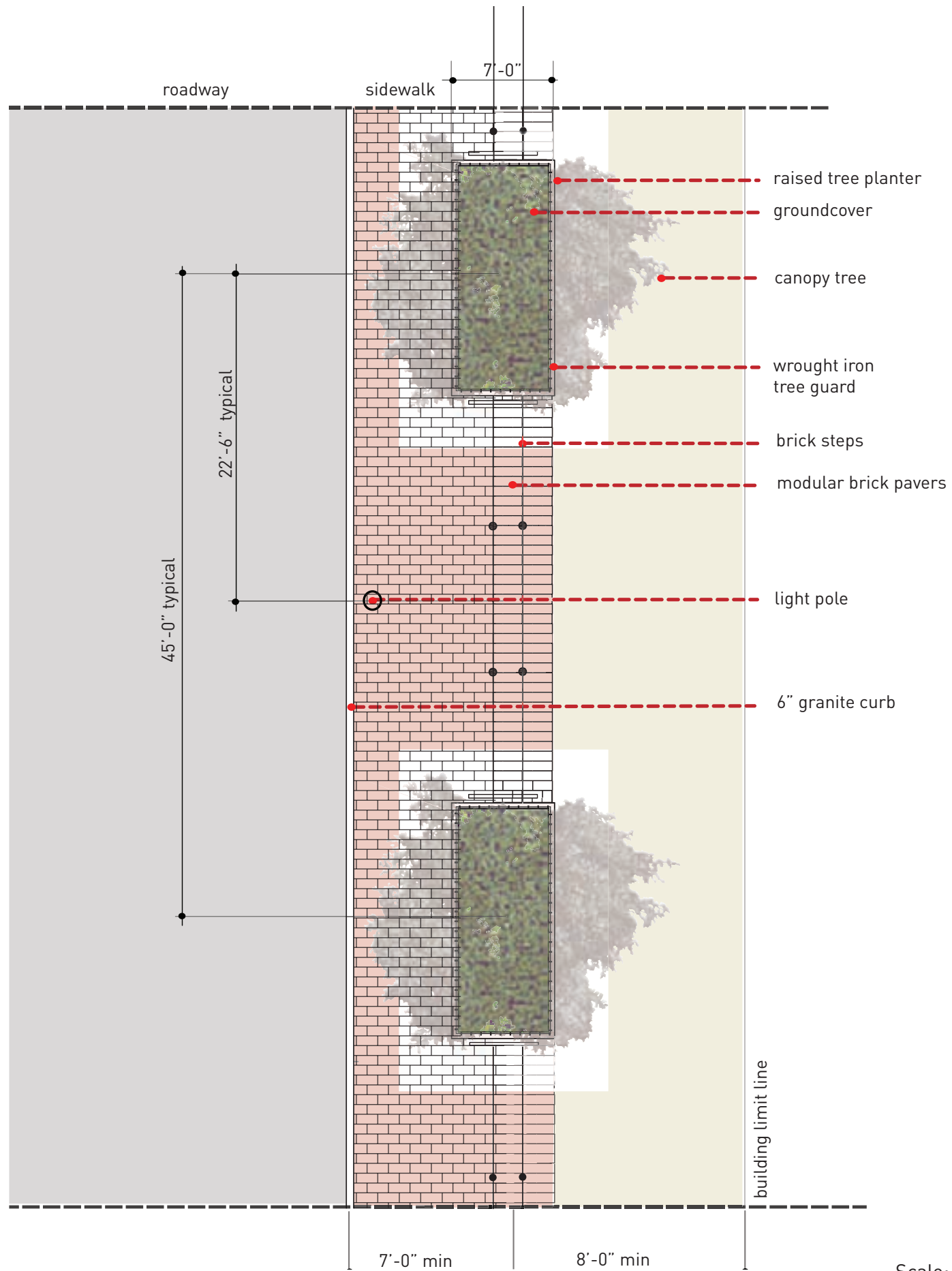
Planter Bed with Tree Guard

Brick Pavement

Granite Curb

Brick Sidewalk





Sidewalk Type B: Urban Sidewalk with Topographic Change

Sidewalk Type B is an alternative to Sidewalk Type A that accommodates sidewalks that have a slope. Tree grates are placed within large, linear planters that provide ample room for root growth while maintaining an elevated grade at the building entry.

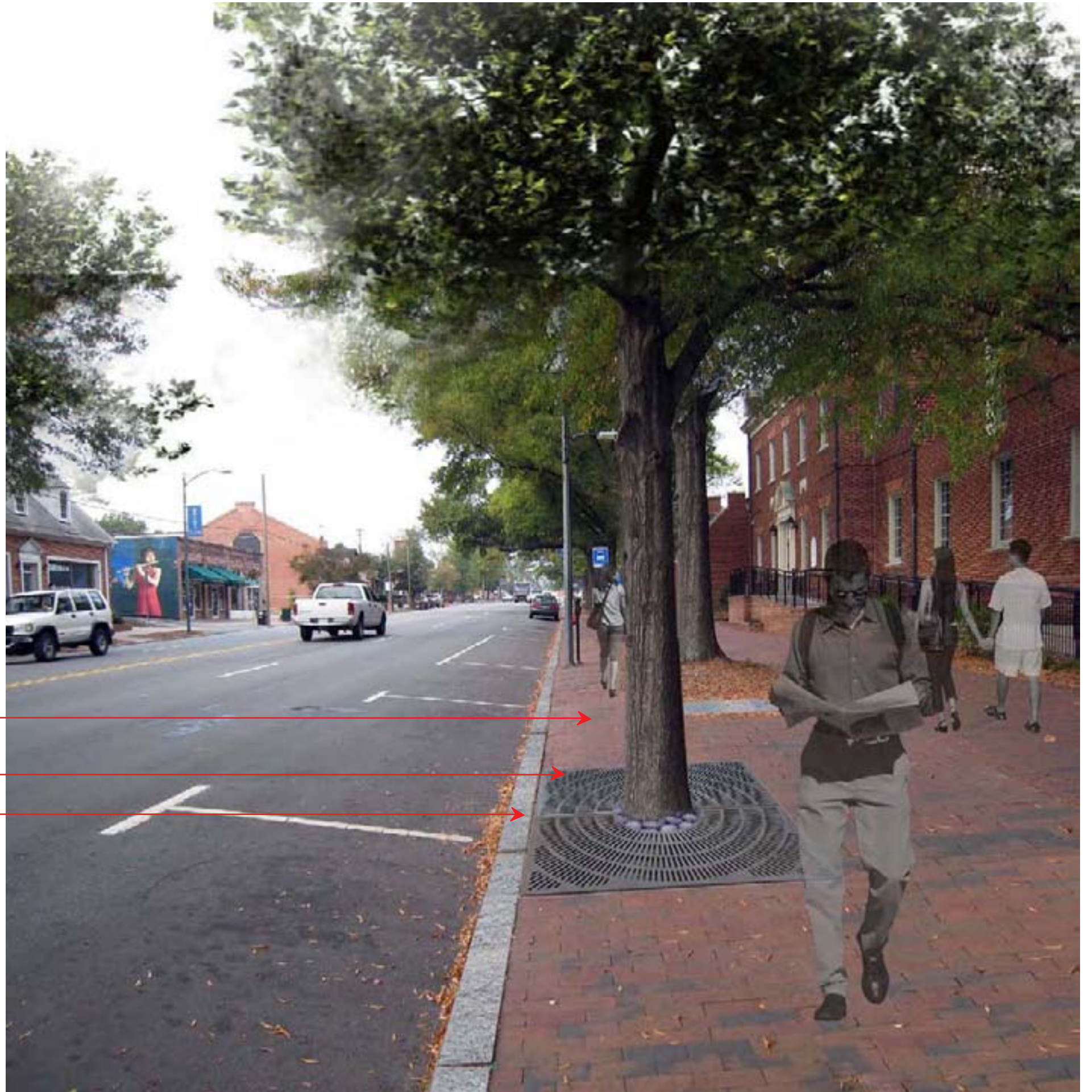
This sidewalk type establishes an accessible route while also providing steps that can be used for both movement and for seating. Sidewalk Type B maintains the same tree and light pole spacing as Type A but within a framework that adjusts according to the grade of the sidewalk.

Scale: 1/8" = 1' - 0"



Mulch Bed
Brick Edge
Existing Brick
Sidewalk
Granite Curb

Brick Pavement
Metal Grate with
River Stone Infill
Granite Curb



SIDEWALK TYPE A: APPLICATIONS

Sidewalk Type A: Residential Application

This example along West Rosemary Street illustrates the application of Sidewalk Type A to a residential setting. Canopy trees are installed along the sidewalk to contribute a more urban character that will help to unify the West Rosemary Street District to the larger Downtown. To adapt to the narrower width of sidewalks in this area, a 4' x 6' metal tree grate is installed in lieu of the standard 6' x 6' metal grate.

Narrow areas of concrete sidewalk in need of repair will be upgraded to brick sidewalks. Where space allows, the full version of Sidewalk Type A, with both brick and concrete walking surfaces, will be installed.

Existing concrete curbing that is in disrepair will be replaced with granite curbing for durability as well as aesthetics and will tie into standard granite curbing that will be installed in other areas of Downtown.



Existing Rosemary Street Intersection

Overhead
Utility Lines

Utility Pole

Concrete
Sidewalk

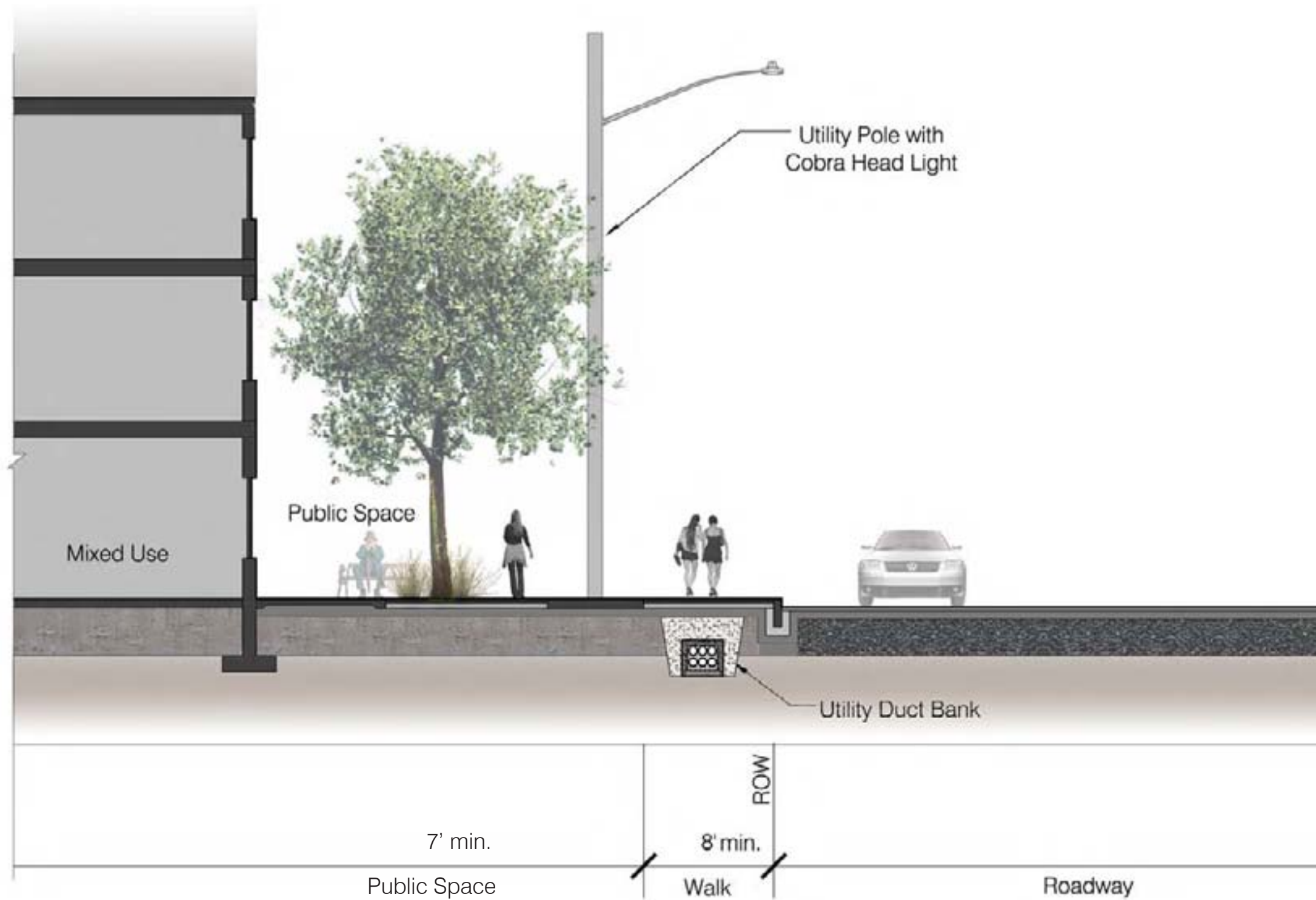


Brick Crosswalk

Widen Inter-
section Sidewalk

4' Metal Grate

Granite Curb

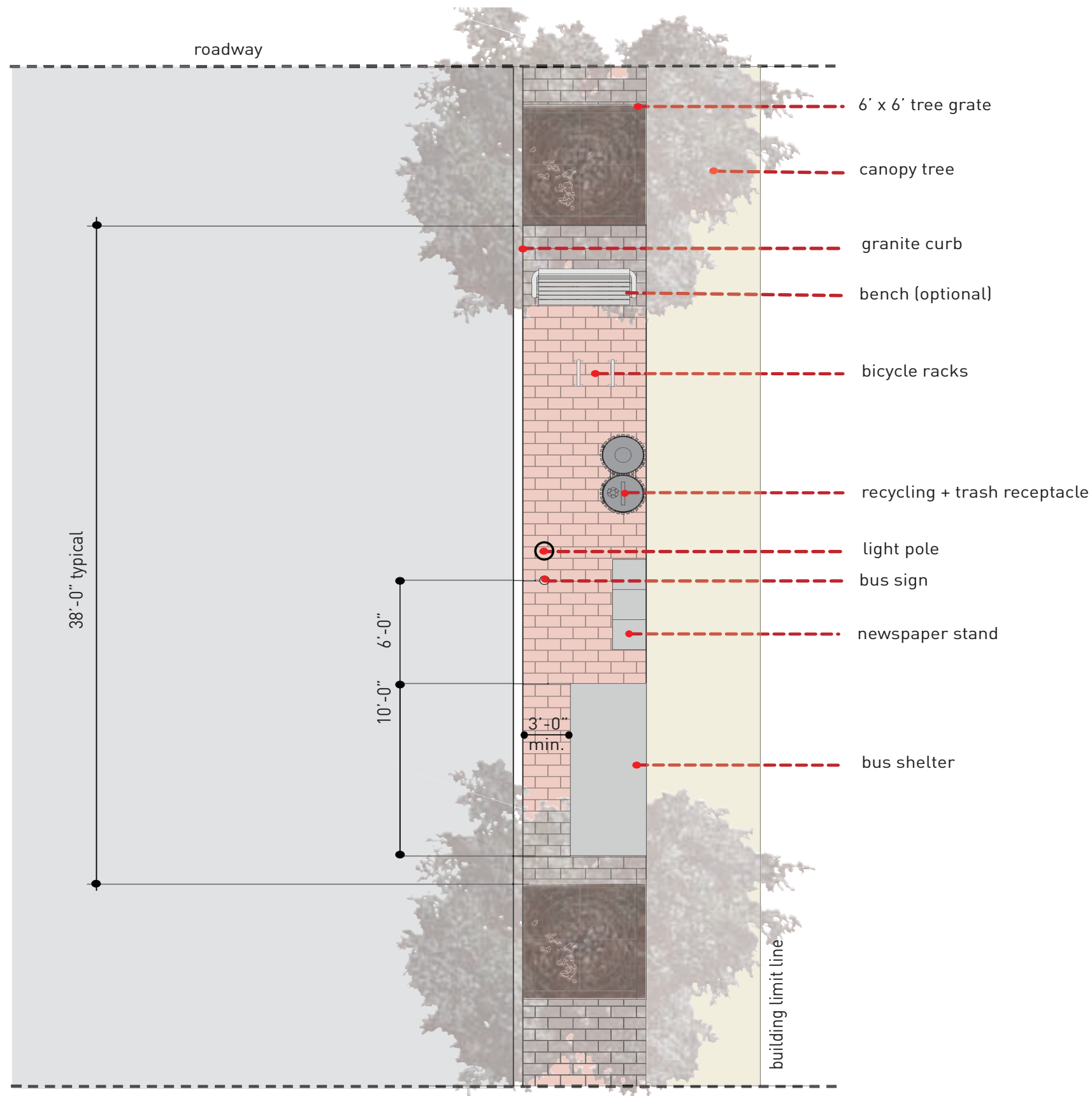


Rosemary Street: Sidewalk Requirements for Future Development

Typical Section

Notes:

1. Minimum public space requirement is 15' from back of curb to building.
2. New development must accommodate pedestrian lighting to meet IESNA standards.
3. Developer to install underground utility duct bank for future burial of overhead utility lines.
4. New development must accommodate a minimum 8' wide pedestrian way along street. See [Section 9.0: Building Setbacks](#) for further guidelines regarding sidewalks at new developments.



Typical Bus Stop Plan: Street Furnishings

Bus stops throughout the Downtown District offer opportunities for including streetscape furnishings and amenities, including seating, shelter and newspaper stands. All bus stops should include a bus shelter, with benches as additional seating where space allows. If the pedestrian right-of-way is particularly restricted, a bench may suffice as the sole form of seating at a bus stop. This may be a common scenario along West and East Rosemary Streets.

The diagram to the left illustrates a standard placement of street furnishings at bus stops, including signage with a lead spacing of 6 feet from the bus shelter, newspaper stands, and recycling and trash receptacles in close proximity. In addition, all bus stops should include placement of one or more bicycle racks to accommodate cross-modal commuters.

In addition to existing bus stops, new developments may also include bus stops and appropriate seating and shelter. The terms of these installations are to be negotiated between developers and the Town.

