

## SLOWER, SAFER STREETS

*Design narrow streets in cities, villages, and hamlet centers with buildings close to sidewalks, street trees, and other pedestrian-friendly features that promote slower speeds.*

Narrow streets with short setbacks and framed by buildings like an outdoor room are safer, since closer clearances to storefronts, on-street parking, and overhanging trees tend to slow vehicle speeds. Studies show that narrow lanes and street trees can reduce the severity of car crashes, with one eight-year study finding that injury accidents rose over 400% as streets increased in width from 24 feet to 36 feet.<sup>1</sup>

Skinnier streets with tighter corner radii also shorten crosswalks, use less land, reduce stormwater runoff, and cut construction and maintenance costs, contributing to less expensive initial housing prices and lower long-term taxes. Narrow, pedestrian-friendly streets reduce speeds more reliably than just speed limit signs or irregular enforcement. And slowing traffic to 30 mph can actually move more cars through an area per hour than faster speeds, which compel drivers to increase gaps between vehicles. Safe, smoothly flowing traffic should be the goal for street design in centers.

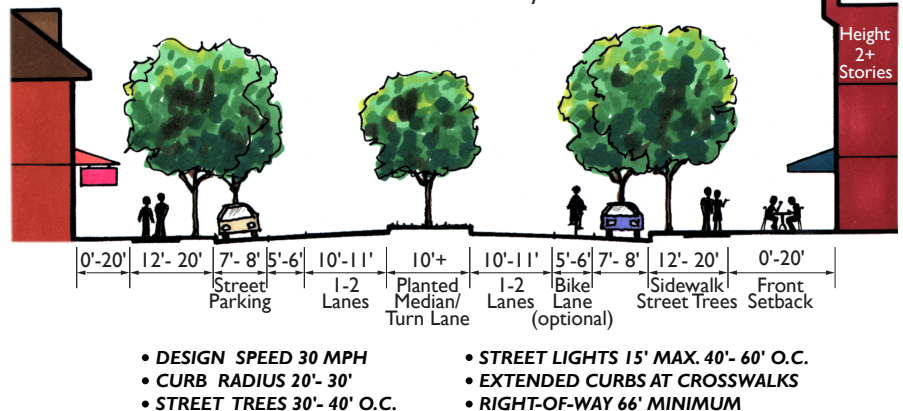


*Compare two main streets: one is difficult to cross and looks like a highway, while the other is narrow, balancing cars with walkability.*

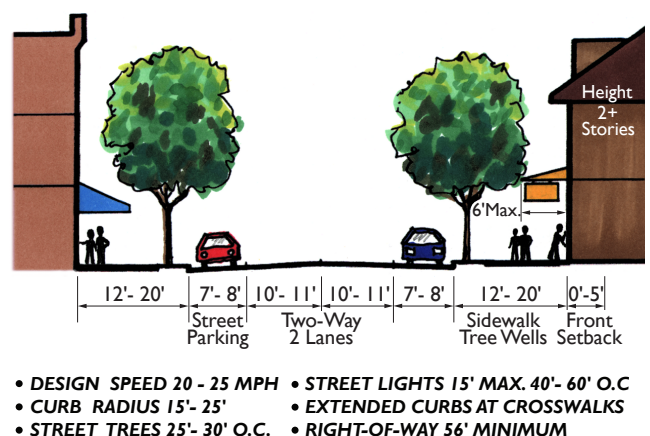
### Commercial Street Guidelines for Centers



#### Commercial Avenue/Boulevard\*



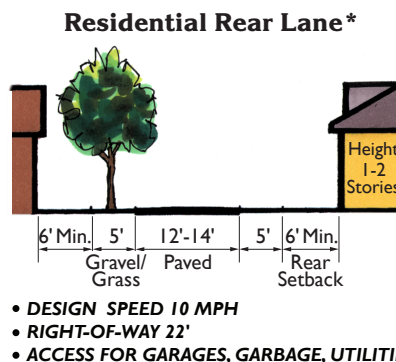
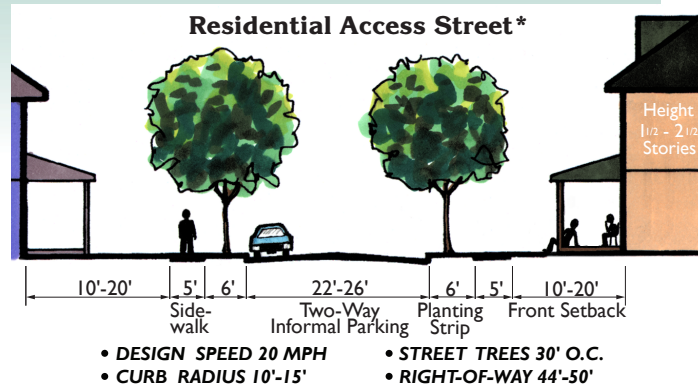
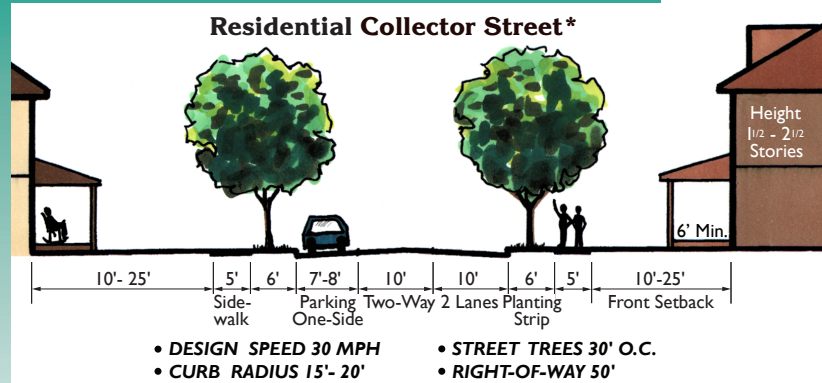
#### Commercial Main Street\*



*This guide is intended for local streets, not higher volume state or county thoroughfares.*



## Residential Street Guidelines for Centers



*\*Street designs adapted from guidelines for the LaGrange Town Center.*

## What about fire and emergency access?

Street design must consider both traffic and fire safety, but vehicle crash injuries far outnumber fire injuries, by up to 185 to 1. Having multiple ways to get to a fire from an interconnected street system with short blocks and rear access lanes is more important than making all streets wider and prone to higher everyday traffic speeds. The Village of Tivoli significantly narrowed two of its main intersections for traffic and pedestrian safety, but first chalked the proposed curb lines on the pavement and made sure that the fire trucks could still easily make the turns.



### Sources:

Dan Burden, *Street Design Guidelines for Healthy Neighborhoods*, Local Government Commission, 1999

Walter M. Kulash, *Residential Streets, Third Edition*, Urban Land Institute, 2001

Philip Langdon, "Context-sensitive design makes headway with planners, engineers," *New Urban News*, June 2003