



Glossary

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This glossary is an attempt to provide simple definitions to terms that have been or may be used during discussion on the Downtown Plan.

Would you like to see a specific term defined and added to this list? If so, please let us know by e-mailing rcnare@cityofmadison.com, or call Rebecca Cnare at 266-4957.

*Special Thanks to Capitol Neighborhoods, Inc. for their work in helping to put this glossary together!

A

Accessory Dwelling Unit: A self-contained housing unit incorporated within a single-family dwelling that is clearly a subordinate part of the single-family dwelling. This may also include freestanding units on the same lot/parcel, such as an apartment above a detached garage.

Activity center: An intensively developed area that is the visual and/or functional center of a neighborhood(s) or a district. Activity centers are typically comprised of high intensity land uses including: residential, commercial, employment, civic, institutional, parks and open space or any combination thereof.

Adaptive reuse: When a building is modified for a different purpose or use. For example, a warehouse building that is converted to apartments or condominiums.

Alternative transportation: Forms of travel that are different than traveling by automobile, including walking; bicycling; and use of transit vehicles such as buses, streetcars, light rail and commuter rail.

B

Best management practices (BMPs): BMPs minimize the impact of development and other land use activities on the natural environment, such as reducing stormwater, through the use of rain gardens and other infiltration devices and practices.

Bicycle facility linkages: Facilities that allow bicyclists to move between destinations and access various land uses. Examples include an on-street bicycle lane or a separate bicycle path.

Bioretention System: The bioretention system (can be in the form of a *rain garden* or a *biofilter*) is a stormwater management practice to manage and treat stormwater runoff using a conditioned planting soil bed and planting materials to filter runoff stored within a shallow depression.

Blight: Physical and economic conditions within an area that cause a reduction of or lack of proper utilization of that area. A blighted area is one that has deteriorated or has been arrested in its development by physical, economic, or social forces. For Tax Increment (TIF) Districts, ‘blight’ is defined in State Statutes. There are three types of blight; physical, economic and social. A blight determination for TIF purposes does not trigger condemnation, building code enforcement or penalties.

Brownfields: Sites that are underutilized or not in active use, on land that is either contaminated or perceived as contaminated.

Build-to-lines: The maximum building setback from a front yard street property line. Buildings, or a specified portion of a front building facade, must be set no farther back than the build-to line.

Built Environment: The urban environment consisting of buildings, roads, fixtures, parks, and all other improvements that form the physical character of a city.

Bulb-outs: A paved area usually located at a street intersection that extends from the sidewalk out into the street to narrow the effective street width and shorten the distance a pedestrian must walk to cross the street.

C

Capitol Neighborhoods, Inc (CNI): Capitol Neighborhood’s, Inc. A neighborhood association comprised of six districts in downtown Madison. Capitol Neighborhoods' purposes are enhancement of the neighborhoods' residential attributes and character and the promotion of camaraderie among the downtown neighborhoods' residents. Capitol Neighborhoods consists of six districts: Mansion Hill, First Settlement, Bassett, Mifflin West, State/Langdon and James Madison Park.

Capitol View Preservation: Wisconsin Statutes (s.16.842) limit the height of buildings to preserve the view of the State Capitol. The height of buildings within one mile of the State Capitol may not exceed the elevation of 1,032.8 feet (city datum). Exceptions may be made by the City’s Plan Commission for such things as flagpoles, communications towers, church spires, elevator penthouses, screened air conditioning equipment or chimneys. The statute does not apply to any building or structure erected prior to April 28, 1990.

Central Business District (CBD): The downtown retail trade and commercial area of a city or town, or an area of very high land valuation, traffic flow, and concentration of retail business offices, theaters, hotels and services.

Charrette: A Charrette is a planning session in which participants brainstorm and visualize solutions to a design issue. Charrettes provide a forum for ideas and offer the unique advantage of giving immediate feedback to designers while giving mutual authorship to the plan by all those who participate.

Common Council: The City's primary policy making and review body and is comprised of 20 Alders elected to two-year terms. In the case of development review, the Council is the body that grants final approval for zoning map amendments (including *Planned Unit Developments*) and subdivision plats, and serves as an appeal body for decisions made by the Plan Commission regarding conditional use and demolition permits.

Comprehensive Plan: An officially adopted public document that establishes an urban development strategy and policies to guide the future growth and development of the community over the next several decades. The Plan provides the basis for making decisions regarding land use and the location of development, the extension of services and the placement of community facilities. As such, it is one of the primary tools used by the Madison Plan Commission, the Common Council, and the City administration in making decisions that affect the future of the community. Madison's Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2006.

Conservation Areas: Environmentally sensitive and valuable lands protected from any activity that would significantly alter their ecological integrity, balance, or character, except in cases of overriding public interest.

D

Deed Restriction: A legally binding restriction on the use, activity, and/or limitation of property rights, recorded at the registry of deeds.

Density: The average number of people, families, or housing units on one unit of land. Density is usually expressed as dwelling units per acre or bedrooms per acre.

Density bonus: Allows developers to build in specified areas densities that are higher than normally allowed. Where available they may be considered in exchange for, and to help offset the cost of, something such as outstanding architectural design.

Design Standards: Design standards or guidelines can serve as a community's desire to control its appearance, from within and without, through a series of standards that govern site planning policies, densities, building heights, scale, massing and architecture.

Downtown Design Zones: Four defined zones are included in the City's Zoning Ordinance, which limit the heights, setbacks, and other aspects of new buildings. Design Zone One includes State Street and a band next to State Street. Design Zone Two is south of Design Zone One to Dayton and west of Broom Street. Design Zones Three and Four are east of Lake Street and north of Design Zone One to Lake Mendota.

E

Ecosystem: The species and natural communities of a specific location interacting with one another and with the physical environment.

Eminent Domain: The legal right of government to take private property for public use, provided the owner is offered just compensation for the taking of property.

Encroachment: An improvement or obstruction that physically intrudes upon the public right-of-way property of another or which extends over an easement boundary or building setback line.

F

Façade: The exterior walls of a building.

Fenestration: Openings in the exterior walls of a building typically composed of windows and doors.

Floor Area Ratio (FAR): A measure of development intensity. FAR is the ratio of the amount of floor area of a building to the amount of area of its site. For instance, a one-story building that covers an entire lot has an FAR of 1. Similarly, a one-story building that covers 1/2 of a lot has an FAR of 0.5.

Frontage: The continuous linear distance along any approved way, measured on the street line, between the side lot lines.

Functional Classification of Roadways: Streets and highways serve two separate and conflicting functions, one to carry traffic, and the other to provide access to abutting property (land use). The more traffic a road carries, the greater the difficulty in accessing property directly from the road. But, as the number and density of access points along the road increases, safety is compromised and speed limits need to be lowered, reducing the traffic carrying capacity of the street or highway. Streets and highways are classified by function, and range from roadways with the sole purpose of carrying traffic to roadways that primarily provide access to property. Following is a generally accepted classification and functional characterization of highways and streets:

Principal arterial: A street or highway designed and given preference to carry traffic, but also providing access to abutting property. Cross traffic is accommodated at at-grade, signalized intersections for streets with high traffic levels, and at at-grade intersections without signals, for streets with moderate or low traffic levels. If intersections do not have signals, through traffic flow on the principal arterial is given preference.

Minor arterial: A street or highway designed to both carry traffic and provide access to abutting property. Cross traffic is accommodated at at-grade intersections without signals for streets with low traffic levels. The primary purpose of the minor arterial is to serve moderate length neighborhood trips and to channel traffic from collectors and local streets to principal arterials or expressways.

Collector: A street or highway designed to carry traffic and provide access to abutting property. Cross traffic is accommodated at at-grade intersections with local streets. No signals are provided. The primary purpose of the collector is to serve short length neighborhood trips and to channel traffic from local streets and abutting properties to minor arterials and principal arterials.

Local street: A street or rural road designed to provide access to abutting property and only incidentally channel traffic short distances to collectors or minor arterials.

G

Green Building or Green Design: The United States Environmental Protection Agency defines green buildings as “Structures that incorporate the principles of sustainable design – design in which the impact of a building on the environment will be minimal over the lifetime of that building. Green buildings incorporate principles of energy and resource efficiency, practical applications of waste reduction and pollution prevention, good air-quality and natural light to promote occupant health and productivity, and transportation efficiency in design and construction, during use and reuse.”

H

Historic District: A geographic area, designated by ordinance, which possesses a historic character. Historic Districts can be established locally through the Landmarks Commission or designated as National Historic District by meeting federal requirements.

Historic Landmark: *Landmark* means any property which has a special character or special historic interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the city, state or nation and which has been designated as a landmark pursuant to the provisions of Madison Ordinances 33.01.

I

Impervious Surface/Paving: A surface through which water cannot penetrate, such as roof, road, sidewalk, or paved parking lot – the amount of impervious surface increases with development and results in the need for drainage facilities to carry the increased run-off.

Infill Development: The development of vacant or underutilized lots that are surrounded by areas that are either partially or fully developed.

Infrastructure: Water and sewer lines, roads, urban transit lines, schools and other public facilities needed to support developed areas.

L

Land Use: The manner in which a parcel of land is used or occupied (i.e. residential, commercial, office, open space, etc.)

Local Historic District: An area designated by the Madison Common Council which contains one or more landmarks or landmark sites, as well as those abutting improvement parcels, to assure that their appearance and development is harmonious with such landmarks or landmark sites according to criteria established for each district.

M

Mixed-Use Development: A building or structure with two or more uses. Such uses could include: residential, office, manufacturing, retail, public or entertainment uses.

Modal Split: A term that describes how many people use alternative forms of transportation. Frequently used to describe the percentage of people using private automobiles as opposed to the percentage using public transportation.

Multi-modal: Those issues or activities that involve or affect more than one mode (i.e. car, bus, bicycle, etc.) of transportation, including transportation connections, choices, cooperation and coordination of various modes.

Multi-use paths: Transportation trails that allow use by all forms of non-motorized transportation, such as bicycles, pedestrians and in-line-skaters.

N

National Register Historic District: A National Register historic district is a concentration of historic buildings, structures, sites, or objects united historically or aesthetically by plan or physical development. Any one of the properties in a historic district may not have particular historical, architectural, engineering, or archaeological distinction, but the collection must have significance in one of these areas.

Natural Step: An organizational and process framework, adopted by the City, to provide a model and a common language that facilitates cooperation in working towards the goal of sustainability. This framework helps the City to systematically enhance the sustainability of its facilities, operations, decision-making and management.

New Urbanism: The process of reintegrating the components of modern life--housing, workplace, shopping, and recreation--into compact, pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use neighborhoods linked by transit and set in a larger regional open space framework

Nonconforming Use: Madison City Ordinances definition “Any principle use of land or buildings which does not comply with all of the regulations of this ordinance or any amendment hereto governing use for the zoning district in which such use is located.” In addition, specific zoning requirements address the ability to make major substantial changes to structures designated as nonconforming uses.

O

Overlay Districts: Zoning districts in which additional regulatory standards are superimposed on existing zoning. Overlay districts provide a method of placing special restrictions, such as specific architectural design requirements, in addition to those required by basic zoning ordinances.

P

Pedestrian-Scaled: A combination of development features that people find comfortable; created by elements such as the size and design of buildings, the relationship between building height and street width, streetscape features such as trees, decorative lighting, or benches, and outdoor spaces.

R

Redevelopment: The conversion of a building or site from an old use to a new one. Examples are the conversions of old warehouses to bars or coffee shops or converting an old industrial complex into a shopping center. It is also known as *Adaptive Reuse*. Redevelopment can also be the construction of a totally new building on a previously developed site.

S

Setback: The minimum distance between the building and any lot line.

Site Plan: A scaled plan showing proposed uses and structures for a parcel of land. A site plan could also show the location of lot lines, the layout of buildings, open space, parking areas, landscape features, and utility lines.

Streetscape: The space between the buildings on either side of a street that defines its character. The elements of a streetscape include: building frontage/façade; landscaping (trees, yards, bushes, plantings, etc.); sidewalks; street paving; street furniture (benches, kiosks, trash receptacles, fountains, etc.); signs; awnings; and street lighting.

Sustainability: Meeting today’s needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. A sustainable development is a development whose patterns of production and consumption can be reproduced indefinitely without doing irreparable damage to essential natural ecosystems. Sustainable development is achieved through adhering to the triple bottom line: environment, economy and social equity.

Sustainable Development: Development with the goal of preserving environmental quality, natural resources and livability for present and future generations. Sustainable initiatives work to ensure efficient use of resources.

T

Tax Increment Financing (TIF): A program designed to leverage private investment for economic development or infrastructure projects that benefits the public interest.

Terrace: That portion of the public right-of-way that occurs between the street curb and the sidewalk.

Tax Increment District (TID): A specified area within a municipality for which the increment of property tax revenues are directed solely to the municipality for use for economic development, infrastructure, or other public improvements within the district for a specified number of years.

Traffic Calming: An approach and technique designed to reduce the adverse impacts of motor vehicles on built-up areas. Usually involves reducing vehicle speeds, providing more space for pedestrians and bicyclists. An example of a traffic calming technique is a round-about or traffic circle along a through street to discourage speeding.

Transfer of Development Rights (TDR): A system that assigns development rights to parcels of land and gives landowners the option of using those rights to develop or to sell their land. TDRs can be used in urban situations in order to preserve historic structures, blocks or neighborhoods by giving landowners the right to transfer the development rights of one parcel to another parcel. By selling development rights, a landowner gives up the right to develop his/her property, but the buyer could use the rights to develop another piece of land at a greater intensity than would otherwise be permitted.

Transit-Oriented Development (TOD): A mixed-use area within walking distance to a transit stop. Transit-oriented developments mix residential, retail, office, and public uses in a walkable environment, making it convenient for residents and employees to travel by transit, bicycle, foot or car.

V

Viewshed: the landscape or topography visible from a geographic point, especially that having aesthetic value.

W

Watershed: The geographic area that drains into a specific body of water. A watershed may contain several sub-watersheds.

Wetlands: Area having specific hydric soil and water table characteristics supporting or capable of supporting wetlands vegetation.

Z

Zero-lot-line Development: A development option where side yard restrictions are reduced and the building abuts a side lot line.

Zoning: Classification of land in a community into different areas and districts. Zoning is a legislative process that regulates building dimensions, density, design, placement and use within each district.