PR4

MID-BLOCK CONNECTIONS

This guideline addresses the planning and design of mid-block connections, as well as the public realm interface with the adjacent built form

The planning and design of mid-block connections apply to both existing (e.g. brownfield) and new (e.g. greenfield) contexts, at varying scales (e.g. from the planning of neighbourhoods to the design of sites)

The general llocation and configuration of mid-block connections is also addressed in *US1 Site Design*.

The thoughtful design of a mid-block connection focuses on creating safe, walkable, attractive, connected and inclusive public spaces that are extensions of the adjacent public realm. The design of these spaces shall promote pedestrianization and strong integration with adjacent land uses to encourage increased connectivity and density of development.

GENERAL

- Mid-block connections may be employed:
  - As extensions of adjacent streets, alleys and civic spaces (Figure 1);
  - To preserve views and create sightlines to nearby destinations including schools, facilities and open spaces (Figure 2); and/or
  - To break up large blocks and building sites to help reduce building massing and improve connectivity for a range of travel modes (Figure 3).
- Mid-block connections should be designed primarily for pedestrians and active modes.
  - It may be appropriate for mid-block connections to accommodate limited vehicular access for emergency vehicles, loading, deliveries, on-site parking facilities, etc. In these instances the mid-block connection should be designed as a shared space.
- Special consideration should be given to the animation of mid-block connections, by:
  - Fostering pedestrian-oriented uses such as informal seating, play areas and community gardens, complemented by landscaping, signage, furnishings and public art (Figure 4);
  - Providing appropriate lighting and ensuring good sightlines for safety (Figure 5);
  - Prioritizing active transport modes for people of all ages and abilities; and/or
  - Creating strong at-grade connections with adjacent land uses, whether commercial, residential or mixed use (Figures 6-8). See also *PR2 Commercial and Mixed Use Interfaces* and *PR3 Multi-Unit Housing*

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Interfaces.

- Mid-block connections should be designed in a manner that can easily adapt to changes in function and program; e.g. minimizing steps, ramps, retaining walls and other barriers.
- Mid-block connections should generally be open to the sky and special consideration should be given to minimizing adverse microclimate effects such as wind and shadows.
- Mid-block connections should be a minimum width of 6m; however, increasing the width may be necessary to accommodate the desired functionality and integration with adjacent land uses, ensure environmental comfort, and create an appropriate human scale (Figure 9).
- Other design considerations for mid-block connections include:
  - Arranging utilities, waste collection, and building equipment away from pedestrian walkways to reduce visual clutter and negative impacts for pedestrians and cyclists using these important connections.
  - Where mid-block connections meet a street or open space, turning building frontages around corners (with corresponding civic space) to create gateways and inviting entrances.

Summary of key mid-block design considerations

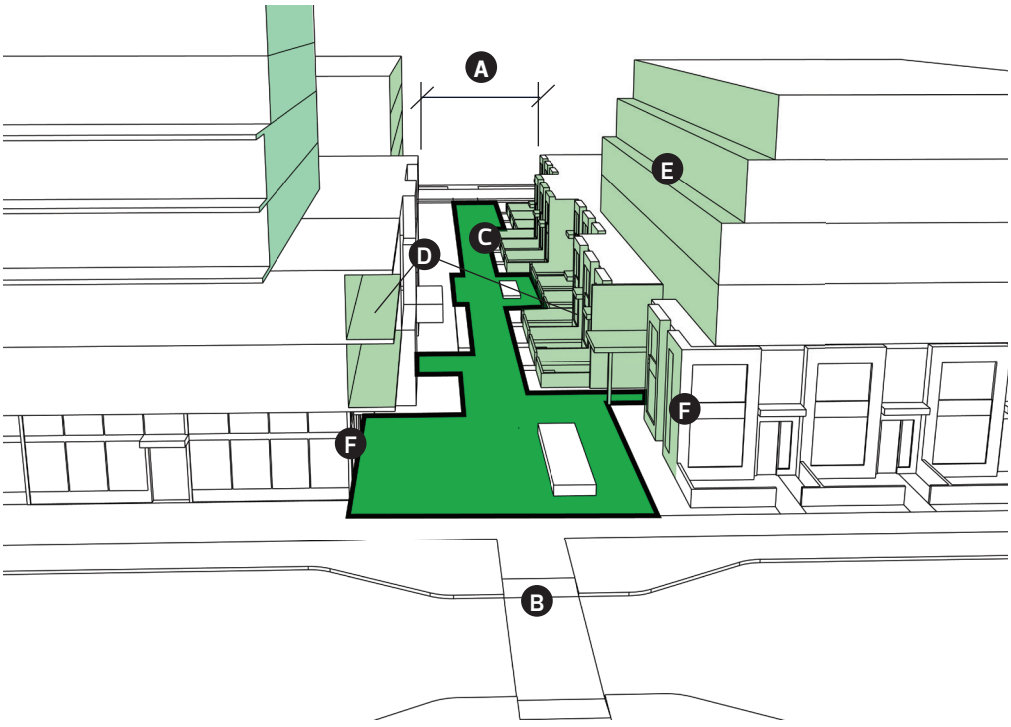
Maximize connectivity through adequate space with clear sightlines (**A**), and associated street improvements (e.g. curb extensions) (**B**).

Opportunities for landscaping and amenities (**C**) to animate the space.

Good land use integration for activity and surveillance (**D**).

Appropriate built building height and form to ensure human scale and environmental comfort (**E**).

Wrapping building frontages at corners, with associated civic space improvements, to create more inviting entrances (**F**).



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1–3 Mid-block connections can be used in a greenfield setting to break up long blocks, improve connectivity and access to community facilities (**1**); on a redevelopment site to provide physical access to an important open space (**2**); and as an alternative to an alley – to improve vehicular movements while creating pedestrian opportunities (**3**).

4 Mid-block connection with community garden, lighting and seating, Vancouver.

5 Mid-block connection with appropriate lighting and good sightines.

6, 7 Mid-block connection with good residential land use integration.

8 Mid-block connection as vibrant commercial space, Toronto.

9 Mid-block connection with appropriate access and human scale, Portland.