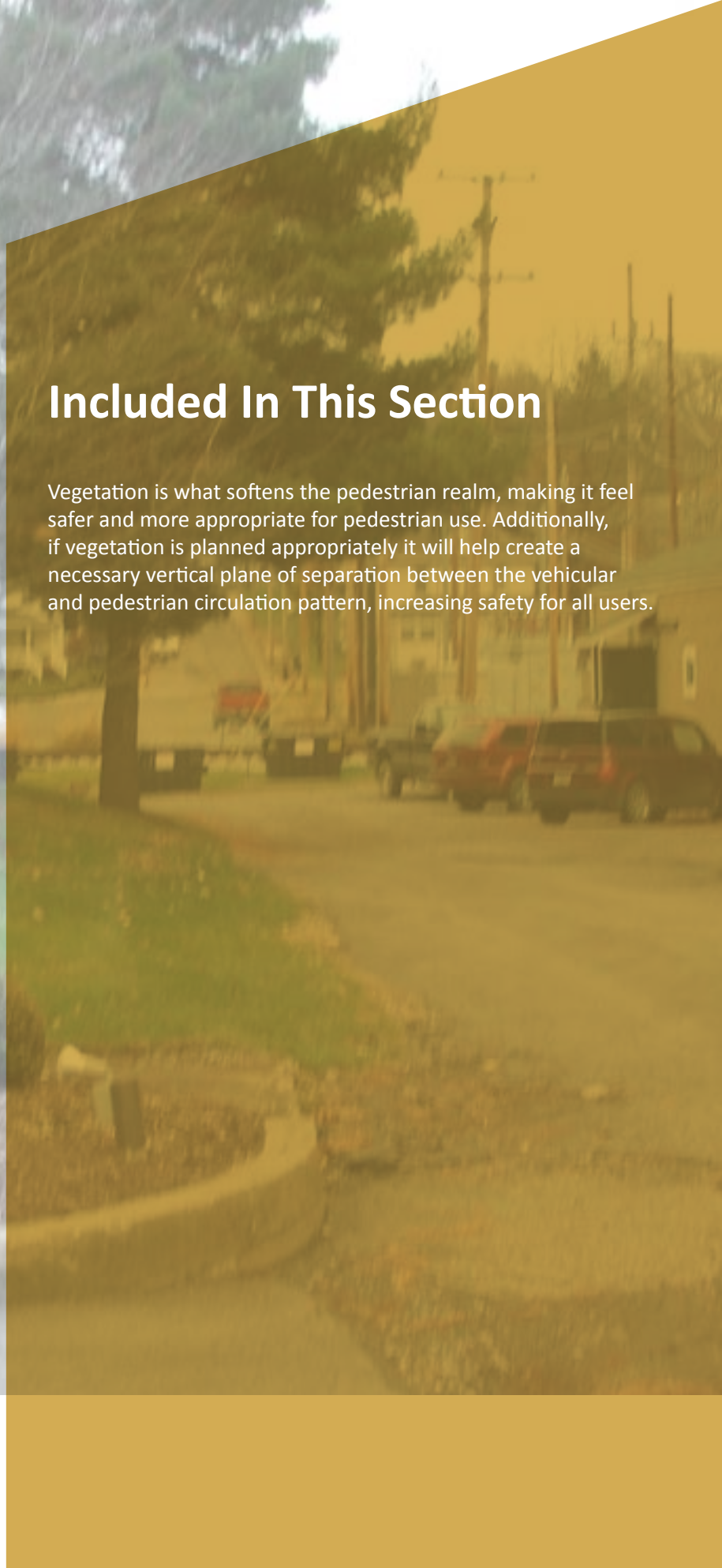




Included In This Section

Vegetation is what softens the pedestrian realm, making it feel safer and more appropriate for pedestrian use. Additionally, if vegetation is planned appropriately it will help create a necessary vertical plane of separation between the vehicular and pedestrian circulation pattern, increasing safety for all users.



VEGETATION GUIDELINES



BACKGROUND DATA

Vegetation is an integral part of an active, attractive and inviting downtown corridor. The vegetation will help soften the harsh automobile centric environment and create the feeling of a safer space for pedestrian uses. For a downtown to effectively implement and maintain a strong landscape plan, the community must understand that it is a partnership between local property owners and the municipality. Vegetation, no matter the size, requires maintenance and continual observation; and to effectively maintain the landscape will require a partnership. This partnership will focus around ensuring proper care and efforts of service are provided by all parties and that open lines of communication remain available.



VEGETATION ELEMENTS

Outlined in this section are the necessary elements of a strong vegetation pallet and standard for a downtown corridor. All elements are crafted to fit within the overall context of the Mars look and feel. Elements of vegetation to be included are:

- Vertical plans for circulation segregation – Providing vertical planes of vegetation softens up a streetscape and makes the downtown more inviting to walk through. While providing vertical planes may not provide an improvement in safety, there is a perception that their placement in locations that will separate auto/pedestrian uses will provide improved safety. It is through this perception that people feel safer while walking downtown.



VEGETATION SOFTENS THE DOWNTOWN, MAKING IT MORE INVITING

- Layered vegetation at periphery of pedestrian spaces – Vegetation within a downtown cannot block or hide any features of the built environment. It must work to personify the unique characteristics that are present and draw attention to the buildings. By layering the vegetation in rows or sections, the vegetation can be carefully crafted to accentuate the architectural elements of the downtown. Special care should be taken to layer plants (perennials, shrubs and trees) at intervals of no less than 33% height difference between sections. This will create a visually appealing and attractive planting buffer.
- Elements of year-round color spaced throughout the downtown – While many plants have a growing season where blooms are an attractive element, many are not flowering year-round. While this is common of plants, a downtown needs to have elements of interest from the vegetation year-round. To achieve this, plant materials should be designed and coordinated together in an effort to create planting beds that will have year round interest from one plant or another.
- Low maintenance and high impact – The secret to a strong plant palette for a downtown is to have low maintenance and high impact plants. This means that

plants utilized will be “showy & attractive” yet require the minimal amount of maintenance. To achieve this, plant materials should be chosen that are:

- Resilient to the climate (wind, rain, etc.)
- Resilient to the traffic and style of use (salt resistant, traffic resistant)
- Impactful in color and other attributes (unique branch styles, different growth patterns, etc.)

The above elements for vegetation in the streetscape are conceptual in design. Final design and planting plans must be prepared by the Borough of Mars prior to implementation of any projects.

VEGETATION REQUIREMENTS

Vegetation requirements are unique to each community and the USDA hardiness zone that the community is located within. General vegetation requirements that are universal among all communities are outlined below:

- Chose the correct plants – Plant materials should be selected for one hardiness zone colder than the climate of the community. This will ensure they are more likely to survive colder climates or upswings in temperature.

VEGETATION DESIGN & PLACEMENT

Vegetation design is tailored to the specific site or location in which the plantings will be located. Understanding that the below are conceptual representation only, the following are recommendations for design and placement of vegetation within the downtown corridor:

- Native plants should be utilized – Where possible native plants should be utilized to create a landscape design that is attractive and resilient. Use of native species will help the community create an identity as well as improve sustainability.
- Vegetation should be mature – Vegetation installed within the downtown should be of adequate size and maturity to survive the use and/or abuse that is common among streetscape uses.
- Layering implementation - Layering should be implemented in all planting areas that are more than 6' in depth. This will fill the spaces more productively and provide less visual intrusion within larger planting areas.
- Proper maintenance – Similar to vegetation within a residential property, downtown vegetation will require continual and careful maintenance. Required maintenance should be performed to protect the plants as well as the investment of the installation.
- Drought tolerant – Despite being located within a rain heavy state, Mars should work to provide drought tolerant plants within the downtown corridors.
- Add annual color – Adding elements of color should be done annually. This can be completed by planting annuals every spring in the planters, hanging baskets, etc.; or alternatively through careful design of perennials that will require less water or maintenance.
- Non-walk surface vegetation – The non-walk surface is the space between the parking stalls and the sidewalk space. This location should be utilized to plant vegetation that will provide a feeling of separation of pedestrian and vehicular circulation methods. Vegetation in these areas should be vibrant year round and provide a physical barrier of separation. Tree grates and vertical elements should be included where possible. Ample crossing or breaks in vegetation should be provided to encourage less damage to the vegetation. Utilizing vegetation in this manner, in this location, will help reduce the noise common on streetscape corridors.
- Curb bulb-out – Vegetation within the curb bulb outs should be low in height and provide year round presence; providing no impact to the view-shed of vehicular traffic, yet letting vehicles know where a curb and vegetation is to avoid. The vegetation selected for this area is recommended to be a vine or perennial, offering reduced maintenance costs.
- Seating areas - Seating areas within the downtown streetscape need protection and noise reduction to make them enjoyable. This is completed through careful planning of vegetation to accompany the benches or other site amenities. Both vertical and horizontal elements should be utilized. By using both elements the users utilizing the benches will be provided with reduced sound and provided with the



COMMUNITIES SHOULD HAVE A VEGETATION PALETTE FOR DIFFERENT DOWNTOWN DISTRICTS OR NEIGHBORHOODS. THIS WILL HELP ENCOURAGE INDEPENDENT CHARACTER AND PROVIDE A UNIQUE LOOK.

perception of a safer environment by being enclosed by the vertical plane. Ample space should be provided around the site amenities so that access is provided and growth of the vegetation will not hamper potential users.

- Building face vegetation – Vegetation along the building face, otherwise known as foundation plantings, should be utilized where buildings are not immediately adjacent to the sidewalks. By filling this space with vegetation it will provide the sense that the setback of buildings along the corridor are maintained. Vegetation in these areas should be very colorful, providing an attraction or draw toward the building; yet remain low in height as to not detract from the retail windows.
- Flower/planter baskets – Flower baskets should be utilized in conjunction with banners along the streetscape. Flower baskets can either be located on the light poles or within the same non-walk surface area. All planter baskets should be made of a material that will withstand year-round use in the climate. Annuals should be planted in these baskets or planters to provide a “pop” of color for the streetscape.
- Central island/median plantings – Center islands and medians are utilized to separate traffic patterns. Often these areas are not planted, yet they can very easily be. Plantings in the medians should remain low and provide visual interest.



- Large planting bed – Large planting beds within the streetscape or downtown corridors should be layered to provide maximize visual interest reduce visual intrusion to buildings. Layering should be done in three parts:

- *Layer 1* – closer to sidewalk/roadway – This layer of plantings should be low to the ground and spread in growth format. All plants in this layer should reach no more than 8” in height and be colorful.
- *Layer 2* - middle layer – This layer is an intermediary between foundation plantings and ground covers. This layer should be made up of perennials and other vegetation not to exceed 18” in height.
- *Layer 3* – building face layer – This layer should be evergreen or year round interest plants. Shrubs should be primarily used in this layer, offering maximum height of 30-40”.



Large planting beds should split the planting space as follows:

- *Layer 1* – 25% of space
- *Layer 2* – 30% of space
- *Layer 3* – 45% of space

- Small planting beds – Small planting beds should be crafted similar to the large planting beds, yet have a maximum height of 24". Shrubs should still be utilized exclusively in the final layer, yet smaller shrub varieties should be planned.
- Canopy and Tree Guidelines - A strong tree canopy should be maintained within the downtown corridors of Mars. Tree canopy should be made up of mature trees that are properly maintained, limbed up and inspected by an urban forester regularly. When a tree is removed from the canopy, it is important to replace it with a tree similar in size, quality and design.

The above design and placement recommendations are based on an analysis of the Borough of Mars. All vegetation design will require further study and design prior to implementation.

