



<http://nacto.org/usdg/about-the-guide/>

## [Urban Street Design Guide](#)

### About the Guide

Over the coming century, the challenges borne by cities and the burdens placed upon their streets will multiply in quantity and complexity. Growing urban populations will demand that their streets serve not only as corridors for the conveyance of people, goods, and services, but as front yards, parks, playgrounds, and public spaces. Streets must accommodate an ever-expanding set of needs. They must be safe, sustainable, resilient, multi-modal, and economically beneficial, all while accommodating traffic.

In response to these unprecedented demands, cities around the country are developing an innovative body of practice and expertise to design for and around the special characteristics of the urban environment. From New York's Times Square to Chicago's Wacker Drive to Spring Street in Los Angeles, a better approach to and understanding of street design is taking root in our cities.

#### Relation to Other National, State and Local Design Guidelines

The Urban Street Design Guide focuses on the design of city streets and public spaces. While other national manuals, such as AASHTO's *A Policy on Geometric Design of Highways and Streets*, provide a general discussion of street design in an urban context, the Urban Street Design Guide emphasizes city street design as a unique practice with its own set of design goals, parameters, and tools.

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In instances where a particular sign or marking should be used, the guide highlights its specific reference to the [Manual for Uniform Traffic Control Devices \(MUTCD\)](#).

Many cities have already gone through the process of developing a local street design manual in the interest of creating internal design consensus between different local agencies. NACTO references materials from a selection of these guides and urges municipalities to use the Urban Street Design Guide as a basis for the creation of local standards. The [references](#) page contains a complete list of Design Guides referenced by NACTO.

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It is important to note that urban situations are complex. The treatments and topics discussed in this guide must be tailored to individual situations and contexts. NACTO encourages good engineering judgment in all cases. Decisions should be thoroughly documented. To assist with this, this guide links to references and cites relevant materials and studies.

#### Levels of Guidance

For a majority of topics and treatments in the guide, the reader will find three levels of guidance. Certain sections contain a general discussion only and have no critical, recommended, or optional points.

##### **Critical**

Critical Features are elements for which there is a strong consensus that the treatment cannot be implemented without.

##### **Recommended**

Recommended Features are elements for which there is a strong consensus of added value.

##### **Optional**

Optional Features are elements that may vary across cities and may add value depending on the situation.

