



# ALLEYS

Alleys feature low volume and low speed vehicular traffic, operating in narrow access ways typically located behind and between buildings. Alleys typically provide access to adjacent residential or commercial properties for parking or services. Alleys are shared access points that typically service a number of individual properties, thus reducing the need for numerous separate access points on the street.

## USE

- Alleys provide rear access to buildings and can provide access to parking spaces located behind the building. Alleys commonly provide service access to adjacent businesses and residences.
- Because they provide access to private properties, alleys are an important tool to limit the number of curb cuts on busier streets where people may be walking and bicycling.

## DESIGN

- Alleys should be appropriately designed for their use and operation. Alleys typically must support service vehicles such as trash trucks and delivery vehicles, and therefore must be scaled to accommodate access by these vehicles. The standard alley width in a residential area is 16 feet. In commercial areas, alleys should be 18 feet to allow trucks to utilize the alley for deliveries. Narrow widths are the most effective way to maintain slow travel speeds in the alley network.
- Alleys may have a number of turns within a block. Short sight lines deter the use of alleys by cut-through vehicles. Alleys must be designed to ensure large vehicles can negotiate turns slowly but safely.
- Lighting in alleys is important to ensure a safe environment.
- Access to parking should be from an alley, where one exists or can be provided.
-  Alleys can be an ideal location for green infrastructure that may not be possible on higher volume or wider streets. Green alleys can be constructed with low-impact pavement materials, such as pervious pavements with high reflectivity to reduce heat-island effects.
-  To avoid puddling, stormwater run-off should be infiltrated in-place using rain gardens at the edge of the alley or near entrances.

## SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Alleys are not eligible for Act 51 funding and were not planned for investment in the Vital Streets plan. While alleys are desired and encouraged, they must be privately funded.
- Parking within the alley right of way should be discouraged or prohibited.
- Alleys should not be closed wherever possible and the right-of-way preserved.

## OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE

- Maintenance agreements must be agreed upon with the establishment of new alleys. The City generally does not have resources for the maintenance of new alleys.
- Parking and the storage of dumpsters and other obstacles should not be permitted within the right-of-way of the alley, as this impedes vehicular access, circulation, and service in the alley.
- Maintenance and snow clearance on alleys are a low priority for the City. Abutting property owners should be encouraged and enabled to take over maintenance responsibilities.
- Snow clearing equipment should be able to pass through alleys in the winter. Alleys should not be used for snow storage.
- Due to their less visible nature parallel to the street network, alleys should have a regular repair and resurfacing cycle in order to avoid deep potholes and costly pavement repairs.

## REFERENCES

- City of Grand Rapids Street Classification Policy, 1996
  - Section 3. Driveways
- AASHTO: Guide for the Planning, Design, and Operation of Pedestrian Facilities, 2004
  - Section 2.4.4: Driveways and Access
  - Section 3.2.6: Driveway Access Management
- City of Grand Rapids Standard Construction Specifications, 1993 Edition
  - Standard Details P-2A Radius Alley Return and Approach Details and Sidewalk Details
  - Standard Details P-4 Combined Dub-Down Alley Approach and Sidewalk Details
  - Standard Details P-4A Standard Dub-Down Alley Approach Details
  - Standard Details P-17 Alley Pavement