

Chapter 4

General Commercial

A. Introduction

Commercial developments are often located at some of the most prominent locations in a city and convey a strong visual image. The attention paid to their design reflects a city's pride in itself and its economic vitality. The particular nature and location of each development affects a project's specific design solution.

This chapter provides general design guidelines and concepts which are applicable to commercial projects in Huntington Beach, including retail, service, and office uses. The guidelines encourage the highest level of design quality and creativity and recognize the importance of parking and circulation design to the success or failure of commercial enterprises.

Site-specific standards and guidelines shall take precedence when in conflict with the following guidelines. Where site specific standards or guidelines are silent, these guidelines will serve as a supplement.

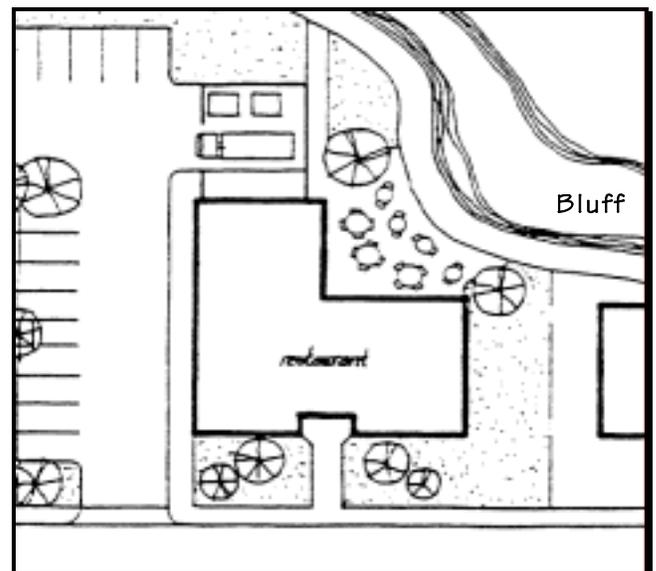


*Multi-tenant neighborhood commercial center
This type of commercial layout is encouraged*

B. General Design Objectives:

The design of each commercial project in Huntington Beach should:

- Contribute towards reinforcing or establishing a distinct architectural and environmental image for the district within which the project site is located
- Consider the scale, proportion and character of development in the surrounding area
- Establish attractive, inviting, imaginative and functional site arrangement of buildings and parking areas, and a high quality architectural and landscape design which provides for proper access, visibility and identity
- Facilitate and encourage pedestrian activity and mitigate existing adverse automobile oriented planning patterns
- Minimize excessive or incompatible impacts of noise, light, traffic and visual character
- Preserve and incorporate natural amenities unique to the site such as ocean views, mature trees, etc. into the project development proposal



Site development plans should incorporate natural amenities

- Preserve and incorporate structures which are distinctive because of their age, cultural significance, or unique architectural style into the project development proposal

C. Site Planning

1. Grading

- a. Commercial developments should be sensitive to their natural surroundings. Grading should be minimized by following the natural contours as much as possible. Graded slopes should be rounded and contoured to blend with the existing terrain.
- b. Grading should emphasize and accentuate scenic vistas and natural landforms.
- c. Large manufactured slopes should be avoided in favor of several smaller slopes integrated throughout the project. Smaller slopes are less obtrusive, more easily vegetated and can be used to add visual interest, preserve views and provide visual buffers where necessary.
- d. Significant natural vegetation should be retained and incorporated into the project.

2. Compatibility

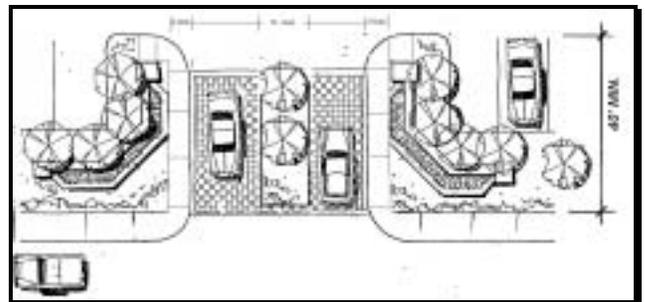
- a. The arrangement of structures, parking and circulation areas and open spaces should recognize the particular characteristics of the site and should relate to the surrounding built environment in pattern, function, scale, character and materials. In developed areas, new projects should meet or exceed the standards of quality which have been set by surrounding development.
- b. Structures which are distinctive due to their age, cultural significance, or unique architectural style should be preserved and incorporated in the project development proposal.
- c. Residential uses should be buffered from incompatible commercial development. Intensified landscaping, increased setbacks and appropriate building orientation should be utilized as a means of providing adequate separation between such land uses.
- d. Linkages (e.g walkways, common landscape areas, building orientation) between compatible commercial and residential uses are encouraged where appropriate.

3. Site Entry Design

- a. Entry areas to commercial development should be enhanced by ornamental landscaping, decorative paving, raised medians, gateway structures, and monument signage.



- b. Main entry drives should extend from the street to the front cross aisle and should include:
 - a median with a minimum 10-ft. wide clear landscaped area between the street and the first bisecting parking aisle
 - a minimum 5-ft. wide sidewalk on each side of the driveway
 - a minimum 10-ft. wide landscaped parkway on each side of the driveway
 - a minimum 20-ft. wide decorative paving band



Utilize decorative paving at project entries

4. Building Siting

- a. Structure siting should take into consideration the context of the commercial area, the location of incompatible uses, the location of major traffic generators as well as the site's characteristics.
- b. The placement and design of structures should facilitate and encourage pedestrian activity and convey a visual link to the street and sidewalks.



Building sited along mid-block street frontage creates strong link to street and sidewalk

- c. Whenever possible new structures should be clustered to create plazas and pedestrian malls and avoid the creation of “barracks-like” rows of structures. When clustering is impractical, a visual link between separate structures should be established. This link can be accomplished through the use of an arcade system, trellis, or other open structure.
- d. Parking shall not be permitted between the building and front and exterior side property lines for a minimum 40% of the total project street frontage. Such siting in conjunction with substantial landscape treatment, enhances the streetscape, and contributes in the screening of parking areas. This design solution should be utilized in high pedestrian activity areas and along auto-oriented corridors with less pedestrian traffic.



Building along auto-oriented commercial corridor

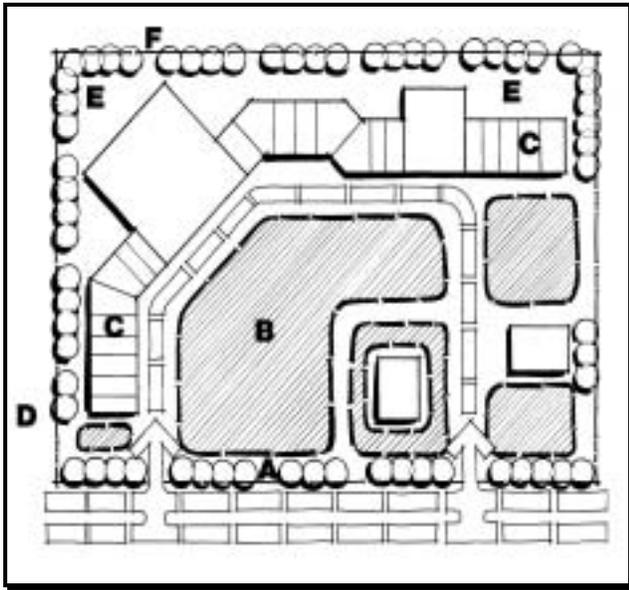
- e. Site and design buildings on corner and mid-block parcels to establish a strong tie to the street frontage. Buildings with angled corners or plazas are encouraged at corner locations.



Building with angled corners “anchors” intersection

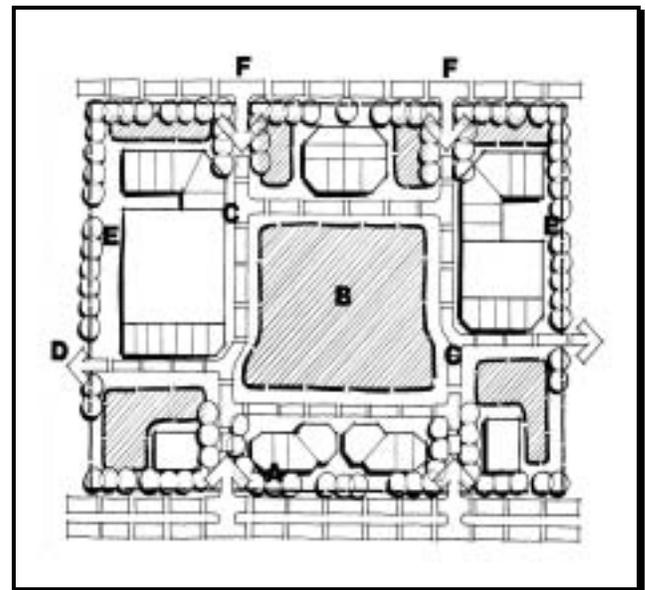


Plaza offers opportunity for pedestrian activities



Commercial development (>15 acres)
This commercial layout is discouraged (*)

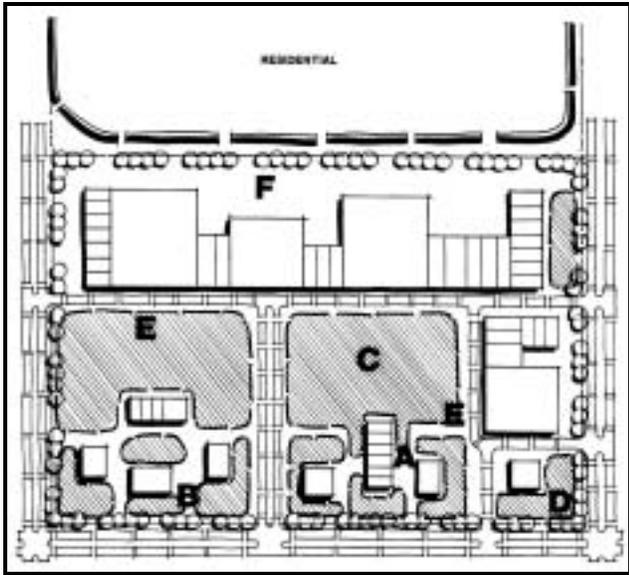
- Lack of defined street edge discourages pedestrian access. (A)
- Primary view is of parking area. (B)
- Linear arrangement does not encourage multiple shopping stops. (C)
- Limited opportunity to connect to adjacent office/commercial. (D)
- Service area too expansive; underutilized, requires heavy landscape screening. (E)
- Layout eliminates any opportunity to connect to adjacent residential area. (F)



Commercial development (>15 acres)
This commercial layout is encouraged (*)

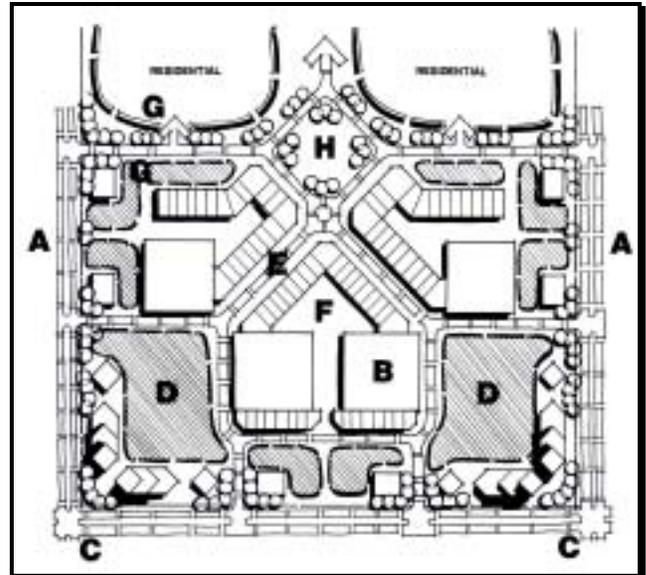
- Defined street edge creates more desirable pedestrian environment. (A)
- Internal parking reduces negative impact from street. (B)
- Inward-focusing arrangement creates a “village” feeling, encourages multiple shopping stops. (C)
- Strong connection to adjacent office/commercial areas. (D)
- Service areas reduced, oriented to adjacent office/commercial, less screening required. (E)
- Service areas consolidated, internalized, and controlled for security. (F)
- Layout encourages use by adjacent residential, eliminating need to access via collector road system. (G)

(*) *A Concise Guide To Community Planning*
-Gerald A. Porterfield – Kenneth B. Hall, Jr.-
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Commercial development (<15 acres)
This commercial layout is discouraged (*)

- Multiple outparcels and freestanding shops compete for attention and create confusing traffic patterns. (A)
- Parking between building and street eliminates a viable pedestrian environment. (B)
- Outparcels reduce visibility of parking areas and storefronts. (C)
- Parking location weakens intersection visually. A missed opportunity for public space. (D)
- Expanse of parking and size of center discourage pedestrian access across site. (E)
- Expansive service area creates underutilized paved area that requires screening and security while eliminating direct pedestrian or vehicle access to the center. (F)



Commercial development (<15 acres)
This commercial layout is encouraged (*)

- Separation of outparcels reduces confusion and orientation reinforces streetscape. (A)
- Anchor stores' visibility remains the same, if not better. (B)
- Buildings at intersection screen parking and foster public use of space. (C)
- Parking areas separated to reduce expansiveness and provide overlap opportunities. (D)
- "Main Street" with sidewalks and parallel parking re-creates hometown feeling, reinforces neighborhood identity, and encourages pedestrian activity. (E)
- Service areas consolidated, internalized, and controlled for security. (F)
- Access road serves both commercial and adjacent residential. (G)
- "Village Green" as focal point/ gathering area (H)

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5. Vehicular Access/ Circulation/ Parking

- a. Site access and internal circulation should promote safety, efficiency, and convenience. Conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians should be avoided. Continuous circulation should be provided throughout the site to the greatest extent possible. Dead-end driveways should be minimized. Adequate areas for maneuvering, stacking, truck staging, loading and emergency vehicle access should be accommodated on site.
- b. The number of site access points should be minimized and located as far as possible from street intersections. The use of common or shared driveways is encouraged and in some case may be required. Designs which encourage the use of streets for “internal circulation” should be avoided.
- c. Driveway entry locations should be coordinated with existing or planned median openings and driveways on the opposite side of the roadway.
- d. Parking lots should be designed with a clear hierarchy of circulation: major access drives with no direct access to parking spaces; major circulation drives with little or no parking; and parking aisles for direct access to parking spaces. Loading and service areas should be provided with separate access and circulation whenever possible.
- e. Parking should not dominate street frontages.



Adverse visual impacts of parking areas along street frontages should be minimized

- f. Parking areas should be screened by buildings and landscaping.



- g. Parking lots which accommodate a significant number of vehicles should be divided into a series of connected smaller lots.
- h. Parking lots should be separated from buildings by a raised walkway (minimum 4 feet wide) and landscape strip (minimum 7 feet wide).

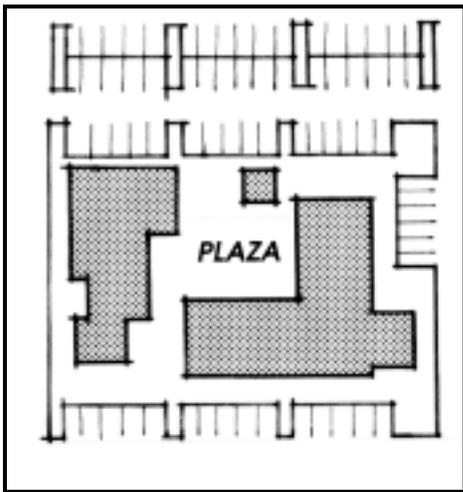
6. Pedestrian Circulation

- a. Placement of primary vehicle access points to the project site in close proximity to major building entries should be avoided in order to minimize pedestrian and vehicular conflicts.
- b. Clearly defined pedestrian paths should be provided from parking areas to primary building entrances and sidewalks along the site’s perimeter.



- c. Design parking areas so that pedestrians walk parallel to moving cars. Minimize the need for pedestrians to cross parking aisles and landscape islands to reach building entries.
- d. Raised pathways, decorative paving, landscaping and bollards should be used to separate pedestrian paths from vehicular circulation areas to the maximum extend possible.

7. Plazas and Courtyards



Cluster buildings to create pedestrian areas

- a. Commercial developments should incorporate plazas and courtyards into their design. Primary access to public plazas and courtyards should be provided from the street. Secondary access may be provided from retail shops, restaurants, offices and other uses within the development.



- b. Entries to the plazas and courtyards should be

inviting and well lit.

- c. Shade trees or architectural elements which provide shelter and relief from direct sunlight should be provided within plazas and courtyards.
- d. Landscaping, water features, and public art should be incorporated into plaza and courtyard design.
- e. Courtyards should be buffered from the street, parking areas or drive aisles.



Courtyard with water feature focal point

8. Auxiliary Structures/ Areas

- a. Auxiliary structures and areas such as play areas and outdoor dining areas should be integrated within the overall site design. Play structures associated with commercial uses should be enclosed and integrated within the building design.



Integrated play-structure design

9. Loading & Delivery

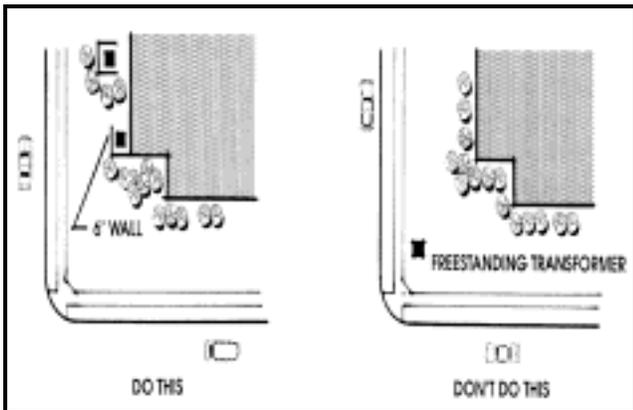
- a. Loading and delivery service areas should be located and designed to minimize their visibility, circulation conflicts and adverse noise impacts to the maximum feasible extent.
- b. Loading and delivery service areas should be screened with portions of the building, architectural wing walls, freestanding walls and landscape planting.
- c. Loading and delivery areas should not be located in required setback areas.



Well-concealed loading and delivery areas

10. Utility and Mechanical Equipment

- a. Utility and mechanical equipment (e.g. electric and gas meters, electrical panels, transformers and junction boxes) should be screened from view. All screening devices should be compatible with the architecture, materials and colors of adjacent structures.



- b. Transformers should not dominate the street scape. When transformers are required to be installed adjacent to the street, they should be undergrounded.

11. Refuse and Storage Areas

- a. Trash storage must be enclosed within or adjacent to the main structure or located within separate freestanding enclosures.
- b. Trash enclosures should be unobtrusive and conveniently accessible for trash collection but should not impede circulation during loading operations.
- c. Trash enclosures should be located away from residential uses to minimize nuisance to adjacent properties.
- d. Trash and storage enclosures should be architecturally compatible with the project design. Landscaping shall be incorporated into the design of trash enclosures to screen them and deter graffiti.



Trash enclosure screened with landscaping

- e. Cart storage should be integrated within the initial building and site design. Large freestanding enclosures or unscreened “cart corrals” are generally considered unacceptable.

12. Walls and Fences

- a. Wall/ fence design should complement the project's architecture. Landscaping should be used to soften the appearance of wall surfaces.
- b. Walls should be offset every 50 ft. Landscape pockets along the wall should be provided at regular intervals.
- c. Solid walls with pilasters, decorative caps and offsets are recommended for screening purposes. Low solid wall segments with integrated landscaped planters are encouraged for open space areas.
- d. Walls and fences within front and exterior side yards of commercial sites should be avoided.

13. Paving

- a. Decorative paving should be incorporated into parking lot design, driveway entries, pedestrian walkways and crosswalks.



Paving should compliment the project theme

- b. Paving materials should complement the architectural design. The use of stamped concrete, stone, brick, pavers, exposed aggregate, or colored concrete is encouraged.

14. Lighting

- a. The type and location of parking area and building lighting should preclude direct glare onto adjoining property, streets, or skyward. Lighting systems should be designed for two operating levels; a higher intensity lighting level for business operating hours and a reduced intensity level for non-operating hours.

- b. The design of the light fixtures and their structural support should be architecturally compatible with the theme of the development.



Decorative light fixtures are encouraged

- c. Pedestrian scale/decorative light fixtures are encouraged. "High mast" poles are discouraged.

15. Other Site Amenities

- a. Site amenities within a commercial setting should be coordinated in terms of color, materials and design in order to convey a cohesive project appearance and distinctive character.

Site Furniture

- a. Seating should be included in plaza and courtyard design. Where possible, seating should be provided in active and passive areas.



Seating should be provided within courtyards



Seating should be visually attractive

Tree Grates/Guards

- a. Tree grates should be provided along street edges and plazas where a continuous walking surface is needed. Grates should be a minimum of four feet in diameter. Knockouts must be provided to enlarge the inside diameter to support a larger tree trunk as the tree grows.
- b. Tree guards should be provided to protect trees in high activity areas. Tree guard design should be compatible with other site furnishings. Tree guards should be attached to the tree grate, welds should not be visible.



Decorative tree guard and grate

Pots and Planters

- a. Planters and pots should not obstruct pedestrian traffic flow. Consider placing pots in building recesses, at locations where access is discouraged and adjacent to blank walls to provide visual interest and color accents.
- b. Group similar sized planters in clusters to enrich streetscapes and plazas.
- c. Planter materials should compliment the project architecture. Use of cast stone and masonry is encouraged.



clustered pots can enhance the streetscape



Planters should not obstruct pedestrian traffic flow

Bollards

- a. Bollard design should be consistent with the overall project theme and should coordinate with other site furnishings.



- b. In locations where emergency access may be necessary, removable bollards should be considered.

Trash Receptacles

- a. Trash receptacle design should coordinate with other streetscape furnishings.

Bicycle Racks

- a. Bicycle rack design should be consistent with other streetscape furnishings. Use of “loop racks” and “ribbon bars” are encouraged.



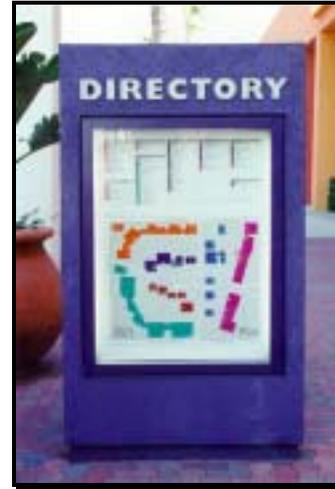
“Bicycle Rack”

Newspaper Racks

- a. Newspaper racks should be consolidated. Newspaper rack locations should not inhibit pedestrian flow.
- b. Newspaper rack design should incorporate masonry and/or metal elements that compliment other streetscape furnishings.

Kiosks, Bulletin Boards, Directories

- a. Kiosks, bulletin boards and directories should be provided near vehicular and pedestrian entrances to multi-tenant commercial developments.



“Directory Sign”

- b. Directory and bulletin board siting should maximize their visibility while minimizing the potential for creating a traffic hazard.
- c. Kiosk design should be consistent with the architectural theme of the development and other site furnishings.

Bus Shelters

- a. Bus shelters should be compatible with streetscape furniture and the architectural style of adjacent buildings.



- b. Bus shelters should be designed to provide unobstructed visibility into the shelter.

D. Architectural Guidelines

1. Architectural Imagery

- a. No particular architectural “style” is required for commercial structures. High quality, innovative and imaginative architecture is encouraged.
- b. The use of standardized “corporate” architectural styles associated with franchises is discouraged. Site specific design solutions are encouraged.
- c. The selected architectural style/ design should consider compatibility with surrounding character, including harmonious building style, form, size, color, materials and roofline. In developed areas infill projects should meet or exceed the standards of quality which have been set by surrounding development.



Harmonious building proportions, colors and materials are encouraged

- d. The designer is expected to employ variations in form, building details and siting in order to create visual interest. In all cases the selected architectural style should be employed on all building elevations.

For district-specific guidelines, refer to Chapter 11.



Harmonious building details are encouraged

2. Building Façade and Roof Articulation

- a. Buildings should be divided in distinct massing elements. Building facades should be articulated with architectural elements and details. Vertical and horizontal offsets should be provided to minimize building bulk.
- b. Variable building facades along linear street frontages are encouraged.



Variable facades create interesting streetscene

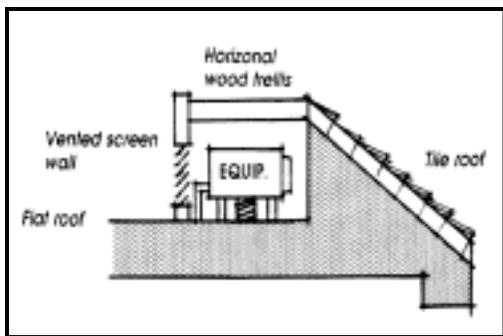
- c. Arcades trellises and other open structures should be utilized to visually and physically link buildings and provide connections to adjacent sidewalks.
- d. The siting and design of “anchor buildings” for major tenants should balance rather to overwhelm minor tenant structures.
- e. Building entries should be readily identifiable.

Use recess projections, columns and other distinctive materials and colors to articulate entries.



Building entries should be readily identifiable

- f. All wall surfaces visible to the public should be architecturally enhanced.
- g. Nearly vertical, mansard or pitched roofs should be avoided.
- h. Vertical architectural elements such as towers should be used as focal points.
- i. Stairways should be designed as an integral part of the building architecture. Boldly-projecting stairways that complement the architectural massing and form of commercial buildings are encouraged
- j. Gutters and downspouts should be concealed, unless designed as a decorative architectural feature.
- k. All mechanical equipment should be screened from view of public streets, neighboring properties, and nearby higher buildings.



Rooftop mechanical equipment screening

3. Fenestration

- a. The size and location of doors and windows should relate to the scale and proportions of the building elevation on which they are located.



Fenestration should relate to the building elevation in terms of size and design

4. Building Materials and Colors

- a. Corporate franchise tenant buildings should utilize colors and materials which are complementary to the overall design theme and consistent with the colors/ materials palette for the commercial development.



Franchise tenant building colors and materials should be consistent with overall design

- b. Exposed gutters should be colored to match fascia or wall materials. Exposed downspouts should be colored to match the surface to which they are attached.

E. Landscaping Guidelines

1. Standard Guidelines

- a. Landscaping should enhance the quality of commercial developments by framing and softening the appearance of structures, defining site functions, screening undesirable views and buffering incompatible uses.
- b. Landscaped areas should generally incorporate planting utilizing a three tiered system: 1) grasses and ground covers, 2) shrubs and vines, and 3) trees. All areas not covered by structures, service yards, walkways, driveways, and parking spaces should be landscaped, in accordance with City Ordinance requirements.
- c. The following design concepts should be utilized in all project design:
 - Specimen trees (36-inch box or more) in informal groupings or rows at major focal points
 - Use of flowering vines both on walls and arbors or trellises
 - Use of planting to create shadow and patterns against walls
 - Use of planting to soften building lines and emphasize the positive features of the site
 - Trees to create canopy and shade, especially in parking areas and passive open space areas
 - Berms, plantings, and walls to screen parking lots, trash enclosures, storage areas, utility boxes, etc.
- d. Trees generally should be placed as follows:
 - A minimum of 8 ft. between center of trees and edge of driveway, 6 ft. from water meter or gas meter and sewer laterals
 - A minimum of 25-ft. between center of trees and point of intersection of the edge of driveways and streets or walkways
 - A minimum of 15-ft. between center of trees or large shrubs to utility poles/street lights

- A minimum of 8-ft. between center of trees or large shrubs and fire hydrants, fire department sprinklers, standpipe connections
- e. Trees or large shrubs should not be planted under overhead lines or over underground utilities if their growth will interfere with the installation or maintenance of these utilities.
- f. Landscaping materials should be spaced so that they do not interfere with the lighting of the premises or restrict access to emergency apparatus such as fire hydrants or fire alarms boxes.
- g. Existing healthy mature trees should be preserved and incorporated into the overall landscaping plan.



Existing mature trees should be incorporated into landscape plans

- h. Gravel or astroturf is not permitted as a substitute for planting materials.
- i. Use of vines and climbing plants on buildings, trellises, and privately owned perimeter walls is encouraged.
- j. Landscaping should be in scale with adjacent buildings and be of appropriate size at maturity to accomplish its intended goals.
- k. Landscaping should be protected from vehicular and pedestrian encroachment by raised planting surfaces. Concrete step-off areas should be provided in landscape planters adjacent to parking spaces.

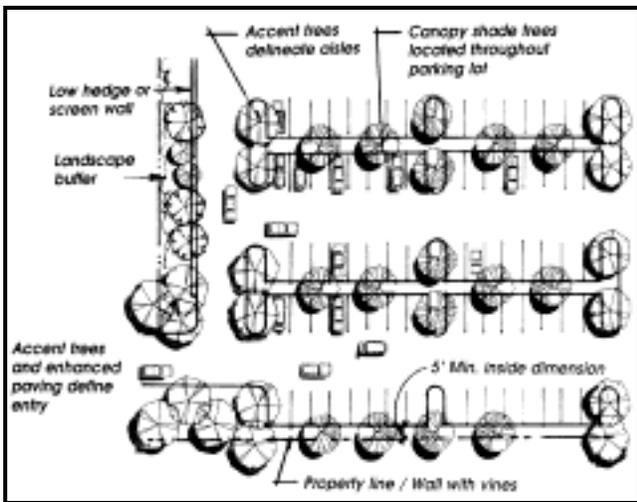
1. Landscaping around the entire base of buildings is encouraged to soften the edge between parking lot and the structure.



Landscaping along building edges is encouraged

2. Parking Lot Landscaping

- a. Parking lot landscaping should accent driveways, frame the major circulation aisles, and highlight pedestrian pathways.
- b. Parking areas for more than 250 parking spaces should provide continuous landscape planting strips between every row of parking and should be planted with shade trees low shrubs and groundcover at a minimum distance of 35-ft on center. These landscaping areas should provide a minimum of 7-ft. clear plantable width and shall be protected by a 6-inch high curb and a 12-inch wide concrete or comparable hardscape material mow strip on both sides.



- Provide planting strips and landscape islands*
- c. Parking areas for more than 250 parking spaces should provide landscaping islands with minimum 500 sq. ft. of plantable area and 7-ft. wide clear plantable width at the end of parking rows. These landscaping areas should be planted with shade trees, low shrubs and groundcover and should be protected by a 6-inch high curb on all sides and a 12-inch wide concrete step-off area adjacent to parking spaces.
 - d. Parking areas for more than 250 parking spaces should provide interior planting islands with minimum 135 sq. ft. of plantable area every 10 parking spaces. These landscaping areas should be planted with shade trees, low shrubs and groundcover and should be protected by a 6-inch high curb on all sides and a 12-inch wide concrete step-off area adjacent to parking spaces.
 - e. All parking lot street frontages for lots with more than 250 parking spaces should be screened by landscaping. Screening materials should provide a clear line of sight between 32 inches and 5 ft. above grade. Parking lot landscape screening should be implemented by utilizing one or a combination of the following:
 - a maximum 32-inch high evergreen hedge, to create a solid hedge
 - a maximum 32-inch high earth berm with a slope no greater than 3.5:1
 - non-deciduous (evergreen) trees planted at a distance of 35 ft. on center. Trees should be a minimum 36-inch box container size, or as recommended by conditions of approval.



Appropriate parking lot perimeter landscape screening

- c. Sprinkler heads and risers should be protected from car bumpers. “Pop-up” heads should be used near curbs and sidewalks.
- d. The landscape irrigation system should be designed to prevent run-off and overspray.
- e. All irrigation systems should be designed to reduce vandalism by placing controls in appropriate enclosures.

3. Slope Revegetation and Erosion Control

- a. All slopes to be constructed at a gradient steeper than 6:1 horizontal to vertical and with a vertical height of three feet or greater, shall be revegetated within 30 days of completion of grading.
- b. All slopes should be covered with herbaceous or prostrate shrubby ground covers.
- c. All plant materials should be appropriate to the site conditions, water conserving and appropriately spaced to control soil erosion.
- d. Trees, shrubs, and ground covers should be planted in undulating massings and groupings to reduce the constricted character of manufactured slopes.
- e. Revegetation on permanent slopes should include permanent irrigation systems.

4. Plant Maintenance and Irrigation

- a. All young trees should be securely staked with double staking and/or guy-wires. Root barriers shall be required for any tree placed in paved or other locations where roots could damage adjacent paving/curb surfaces.
- b. Automatic sprinkler controllers should be installed to ensure that landscaped areas will be watered properly. Backflow preventors and anti-siphon valves should be provided in accordance with current codes.

F. Public Safety Through Design

- a. Electronic surveillance and security hardware should be as invisible and unobtrusive as possible. If security grilles are necessary, they should be architecturally integrated within the overall building design theme. The use of scissor grilles is strongly discouraged.



Appropriate Security Hardware

- b. Lighting should be designed to satisfy functional and decorative needs. Security lighting should be designed as part of an overall lighting plan rather than as single stand-alone elements.



Lighting fixtures should be aesthetically pleasing

- c. Safety behind buildings should be ensured through: 1) adequate security lighting for parking areas and pedestrian ways; 2) limited access (walls, fences, gates, shrubs); 3) signage; 4) introduction of activities (e.g., rear entrances for commercial activities) that increase surveillance; 5) surveillance through windows or with cameras; and 6) ongoing maintenance of storage areas and alleys.
- d. Storefront lighting should complement the architectural style of the building while providing illumination of building facades and entrances.
- e. Lighting should be sufficient for sidewalk and street illumination. Pedestrian scale lighting fixtures that provide good levels of lighting are encouraged.
- f. Window signage should be installed in a manner that provides clear and unobstructed view of the interior of the business establishment from the sidewalk.
- g. Building address numbers shall be visible from the public right-of-way.



Building numbers should be clearly visible

- h. Landscaping should be planted and maintained to allow visibility and eliminate areas of potential criminal activity.
- i. Delineate the separation between public and private spaces with paving, building materials, grade separations or with physical barriers such as landscaping.

