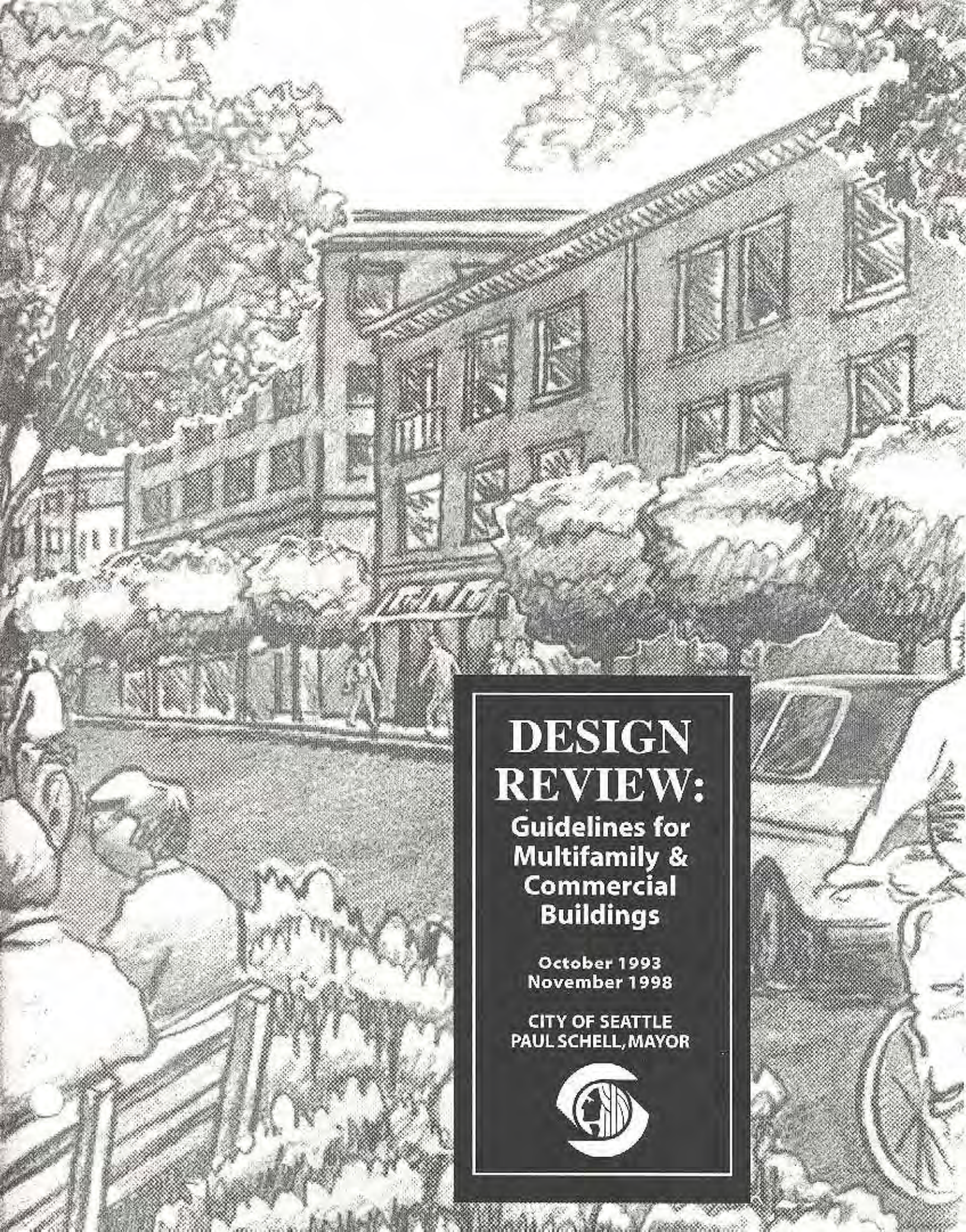

DESIGN REVIEW:

Guidelines for Multifamily & Commercial Buildings

October 1993
November 1998

CITY OF SEATTLE
PAUL SCHELL, MAYOR

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Foreword

What Is Design Review:

Design review is intended to be a forum for a neighborhood and a developer to work toward achieving a better community through attention to simple design principles. Those principles are presented in the design guidelines which follow. Design review is not intended to resolve disputes about zoning. It is about good communities and how new development can contribute positively to neighborhoods. Design guidelines offer a flexible tool, an alternative to prescriptive zoning requirements, which will allow new development to respond better to the distinctive character of its surroundings.

What Projects Are Subject To Design Review:

In general, commercial, multifamily and mixed-use projects over environmental review (SEPA) thresholds in most commercial and multifamily zones are subject to Design Review, as a component of Master Use Permit review. In addition, major institution structures outside Major Institution Overlay zone boundaries are also subject to Design Review. Design Review is voluntary for commercial, multifamily and mixed-use structures under SEPA thresholds in commercial and multifamily zones; however, those projects are considered in the "Administrative Design Review" process, as described on page "iii." Since the structure types, thresholds, and qualifying zones may change from year to year, please refer to Section 23.41 of the Seattle Municipal Code (SMC) for precise and current information on which projects are subject to Design Review.

It should also be noted that multifamily and commercial projects in Downtown zones are also required to undergo Design Review, again with varying thresholds that may be found in Section 23.41, SMC. For Downtown projects, a separate set of design guidelines will soon be available (estimated availability January 1, 1999).

How Design Guidelines Are Applied for Projects Subject to Design Review:

Pre-application

When a project will undergo design review, the first step is a pre-application conference with the Department of Construction and Land Use. At this session the developer receives a copy of citywide design guidelines and any applicable adopted neighbor-

hood design guidelines. The requirement for the preapplication conference may be waived by the Senior Urban Designer for applicants with experience with Design Review applications.

Early Design Guidance Application

When the applicant is ready to pursue the Design Review process, he/she must submit to DCLU an early design guidance application together with site and context plans as detailed in Client Assistance Memo 238.

Early Design Guidance Public Meeting

The next step is an early design guidance public meeting held in the neighborhood of the proposed project. This meeting is an important step in the development review process. DCLU provides public notice through the mail to nearby residents, and information about the proposal and the design review process will be posted in the vicinity of the proposed development. This meeting will be held in the general neighborhood of the proposed project and will be attended by the project proponent, the Design Review Board, staff and interested citizens. At the meeting, the proponent will present design and development objectives for the site, and citizens can raise issues and questions about the proposal. Attendees will discuss the design guidelines and identify those most important to the specific project and site. The Design Review Board will identify those design guidelines of highest priority to the project, incorporating community concerns.

Design Guideline Priorities

DCLU staff will produce a written summary of the Design Review Board's early design guidance, and will mail the summary to everyone who attended the early design guidance public meeting, or who wrote to express interest, and to the developer.

Project Design

The developer will refer to the early design guidance as the project design proceeds and may meet with staff or again with the Design Review Board to refine the project's design in light of the design guidelines and community concerns.

Master Use Permit Application

The project proponent will then submit a Master Use Permit (MUP) application. A public comment period concurrent with the SEPA public comment period for the project will follow. Citizens may comment on environmental impacts of the project and on the project design's response to the applicable design guidelines.

Design Review Board Review

The Design Review Board will meet to review the proposed design and consider public comments, the early design guidance established at the early meeting and staff's review of the project and subsequent conditioning, if any, under SEPA. Meetings of the Design Review Board will be held in the evening and will be open to the public and, except for project-specific pre-design meetings, will take place at a consistent location central to the relevant geographic area of the city.

Director's Decision

In order to gain approval for a Master Use Permit application, the applicant must present a project design which is responsive to the design guidance identified for the project. The Director of DCLU has the authority to make the decision regarding the issuance of a Master Use Permit.

The Director's decision will incorporate a consensus decision (at least 4 out of 5 members) of the Design Review Board without alteration except in limited circumstances. Such limited circumstances may include the Design Review Board's exceeding its authority, conflicts with SEPA conditions or other regulatory requirements applicable to the site, conflict with the requirements of state or federal law, or inconsistent application of the design guidelines.

Administrative Design Review

As mentioned on page "i," multifamily and commercial projects under the SEPA thresholds in any multifamily or commercial zone may be submitted *voluntarily* to Design Review in exchange for consideration of development standard departures. These projects are reviewed in the City's *Administrative* Design Review process, which is almost identical to the process described above, with one principal difference: these projects are *not* reviewed by the Design Review Boards.

All the procedural steps cited above are also followed with these projects, but the early design guidance and design review are performed solely by DCLU staff, without the assistance of the Design Review Boards. Again, public notice is given and comment is invited at both steps in the process – early design guidance and MUP review. As with mandatory design review, decisions on administrative design review applications are also made by the DCLU Director and are appealable by any interested party to the Seattle Hearing Examiner. For more details, please refer to Sec. 23.41, SMC.

Who Serves On The Design Review Board:

The City's Design Review Board members are appointed and confirmed by the Mayor and City Council. The Board includes members of the community, and development and design interests, and is selected to represent the various geographic areas of the city. The purpose of the Board is to review development projects subject to the City's design guidelines and to make recommendations to the Director.

Citywide there are eight such groups, each assigned to one of seven geographic subareas of the city, with the eighth group serving on an as-needed basis.

Each project is reviewed by a 5-member Board, composed in the following manner:

- **Three Members:** Each project review Board will include a representative from the community-at-large, the development field and the design profession.
- **Two Members:** Two additional members join the three above, one representing community residential interests and one representing community business interests from the geographic area in which the project is located.

Development Standard Departures:

In reviewing projects which are subject to design review, departure from Land Use Code development standards may be permitted. In order for a departure from development standards to be allowed, an applicant must demonstrate that the overall development, including departures from Land Use Code standards, would result in a development which better meets the intent of the design guidelines than a design that simply meets the Land Use Code. Through design review, departures may be allowed from the following Land Use Code standards:

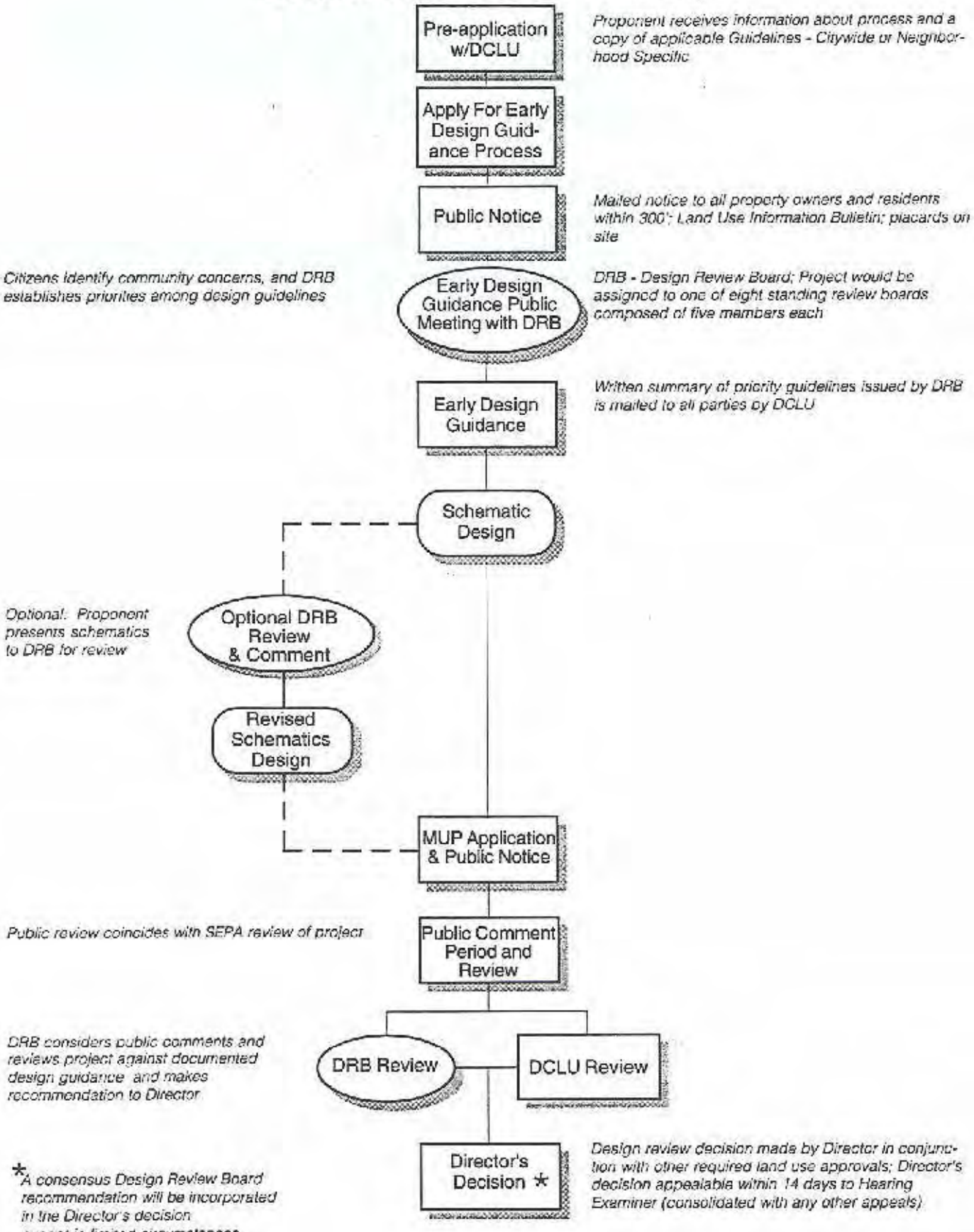
- Structure Width and Depth Limits
- Setback Requirements
- Modulation Requirements
- Design, Location and Access to Parking
- Open Space Requirements
- Lot Coverage Limits
- Screening and Landscaping Requirements
- Standards for the Location and Design of Non-Residential Uses in Mixed Use Buildings
- Roof height in L3 zones in limited circumstances

As with the specific Design Review requirements, one should consult Sec. 23.41, SMC, for the specific development standards available for departure. In addition, other development standards may be added to the list of permitted development standard departures through neighborhood-specific design guidelines which are adopted by the City Council.

Appeals:

The design review component of the Master Use Permit Director's decision may be appealed to the Hearing Examiner, who must give the Director's decision substantial weight. There is no further appeal of a design review decision to the City Council.

Design Review Process Summary



I. Introduction

The purpose of the citywide design guidelines is to describe ways that new multifamily and commercial buildings can be compatible with their surroundings. In contrast to the City's Land Use Code, which contains very specific regulations, the guidelines show ways to think about a project's context and provide flexible examples that can help a new project better fit that context. The guidelines supplement the Land Use Code, providing a means to adapt Code requirements to the characteristics of individual building sites.

The guidelines can also:

- set criteria and examples for judging the compatibility of new buildings in the city;
- facilitate the understanding of the terminology and key aspects of building siting and design; and
- highlight the important features of our surroundings to enhance our appreciation of the natural and built environment.

Who is Expected to Use These Guidelines?

Because these guidelines will be used in evaluating new development projects in the city, the most frequent users of this document will be the people concerned with the development of new commercial and multifamily buildings.

Property Owners/Developers

The guidelines can acquaint property owners and developers with concerns that citizens have identified about building compatibility and give direction toward the need and means of identifying neighborhood context.

Building Designers

The guidelines will help architects and others who design buildings to know what is expected of their products and what could make their designs more compatible with the neighborhoods where new projects are proposed.

Project Neighbors

People who live near new development projects may benefit the most from these guidelines. Some of those people participated in workshops to help define which aspects of building design were most important. Their comments form the basis of these guide-

lines. The guidelines may give neighbors a better vision of projects proposed near them and how those projects can enhance the neighborhood's character. Ultimately, the guidelines will be a tool that neighbors can use when they want to describe to developers or City staff what they consider appropriate design for their neighborhoods.

City Staff

In issuing permits for new developments, City staff will rely on these guidelines to help define specific design conditions that will be required for project approval.

How To Use These Guidelines

As reviewers apply the design guidelines to particular development projects, some important things to remember are:

1. Each project is unique and will pose unique design issues. Even two similar proposals on the same block may face different design considerations. With some projects, trying to follow all of the guidelines could produce irreconcilable conflicts in the design. With most projects, reviewers will find some guidelines more important than others, and the guidelines that are most important on one project might not be important at all on the next one. The design review process will help designers and reviewers to determine which guidelines are most important in the context of each project so that they may put the most effort into accomplishing the intent of those guidelines.

2. Projects must be reviewed in the context of their zoning and the zoning of their surroundings. The use of design guidelines is not intended to change the zoning designations of land where projects are proposed; it is intended to demonstrate methods of treating the appearance of new projects to help them fit their neighborhoods and to provide the Code flexibility necessary to accomplish that. Where the surrounding neighborhood exhibits a lower development intensity than its current zoning allows, the lower-intensity character should not force a proponent to significantly reduce the allowable size of the new building.

3. Many of the guidelines suggest using the existing context to determine appropriate solutions for the project under consideration. In some areas, the existing context is not well defined, or may be undesirable. In such cases, the new project should be recognized as a pioneer with the opportunity to establish a

pattern or identity from which future development can take its cues. In light of number 2 above, the site's zoning should be considered an indicator of the desired direction for the area and the project.

4. Each guideline includes examples and illustrations of ways in which that guideline can be achieved. The examples are just that — examples. They are not the only acceptable solutions. *Designers and reviewers should consider designs, styles and techniques not described in the examples but that fulfill the guideline.*

5. The checklist which follows the guidelines (see Section IV) is a tool for determining whether or not a particular guideline applies to a site, so that the guidelines may be more easily prioritized. The checklist is neither a regulatory device, nor a substitute for evaluating a site's conditions, or to summarize the language or examples found in the guidelines themselves.

Viewing a Site

Seattle's Land Use Code sets specific, prescriptive rules that are applied uniformly for each land use zone throughout the city. There is little room in the Code's development standards to account for unique site conditions or neighborhood contexts. A project architect can read the Code requirements and theoretically design a building without ever visiting the site.

However, to produce good compatible design, it is critical that the project's design team examine the site and its surroundings, identify the key design features and determine how the proposed project can address the guidelines' objectives. Because they rely on the project's context to help shape the project, the guidelines encourage an active viewing of the site and its surroundings.

For a proposal located on a street with a consistent and distinctive architectural character, the architectural elements of the building may be key to helping the building fit the neighborhood. On other sites with few attractive neighboring buildings, the placement of open space and treatment of pedestrian areas may be the most important concerns. The applicant and the project reviewers should consider the following questions *and similar ones* related to context when looking at the site:

- What are the key aspects of the streetscape? (The street's layout and visual character)
- Are there opportunities to encourage human activity and neighborhood interaction, while promoting residents' privacy and physical security?

- How can vehicle access have the least effect on the pedestrian environment and on the visual quality of the site?
- Are there any special site planning opportunities resulting from the site's configuration, natural features, topography etc.?
- What are the most important contextual concerns for pedestrians? How could the sidewalk environment be improved?
- Does the street have characteristic landscape features, plant materials, that could be incorporated into the design?
- Are there any special landscaping opportunities such as steep topography, significant trees, greenbelt, natural area, park or boulevard that should be addressed in the design?
- Do neighboring buildings have distinctive architectural style, site configuration, architectural concept, materials or other features that add to the neighborhood's visual identity or quality?
- Do nearby buildings have a characteristic scale, proportion, rhythm, or other patterns that add consistency to the streetscape?
- Is the site next to or across the street from a less intensive zone?
- Are there special conditions related to a zone edge which should be addressed in the project's design?
- Does the existing layout and visual character of the streetscape promote a general sense of personal safety and discourage crime? Can the proposed project preserve and enhance such elements?
- Are there any special opportunities for the design of the project to correct or reduce elements of the existing streetscape which have elevated fear levels or promoted crime?

II. Overview of Design Guidelines

The Role of Context

Seattle is a city of communities, whose citizens value their neighborhood's design character and physical setting. For "in-fill" projects, which constitute most new development in Seattle, good design cannot be judged in terms of the individual building on its site, but must be considered in the context of its surroundings. A new building should fit with the context of its immediate neighbors and the street on which it is located. Therefore, these design guidelines direct new development to enhance the existing character of its surroundings. Design review is about creating good streets and good communities, protecting important symbols and ensuring that new development fits in.

These guidelines are intended to direct designers and project reviewers to look closely at local conditions and produce new buildings that enhance rather than detract from their surroundings.

Design Elements

The discussion below describes the design elements covered by these guidelines and explains the importance of each element in building stronger neighborhoods.

Site Planning

Site planning guidelines primarily address the organization of a project's components in two dimensions. They deal with the location of buildings and site features such as parking lots, open space and service areas. Good site planning can minimize a project's impacts on its neighbors (for example, by separating tall or bulky structures, retaining trees, enhancing views, or responding to steep slope conditions), increase the quality of the streetscape, continue existing patterns, or enhance the value of near-by land or improvements.

Height, Bulk and Scale

This guideline is intended to link State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) authority for mitigating height, bulk and scale impacts to design review. It addresses the compatibility of the scale between new development and its surroundings. Elements which contribute to the perceived scale of new construction are addressed in the context of specific site conditions, including the relationship of a project to any less-intensive zones nearby (e.g., multifamily or commercial zones on the edge of a single family zone).

Architectural Elements

Guidelines in this section deal with the exterior architectural elements of buildings — components which define the appearance of a building, such as roofs, windows, porches, modulation, entries, materials, balconies and details.

New buildings developed in an established neighborhood with an identifiable character will be viewed as undesirable intrusions unless they respond positively to the architectural characteristics of existing buildings. Therefore, guidelines for architectural elements encourage new development in established neighborhoods to complement neighboring buildings and consider how design gives a neighborhood its identity. This does not mean that new buildings should excessively mimic older ones. Rather, the guidelines suggest that new buildings use some traditional building concepts or elements. New structures can successfully relate to older buildings while still looking contemporary and responding to changing societal needs and design opportunities.

Pedestrian Environment

People traveling on foot see their neighborhoods most intimately. Making the pedestrian environment attractive and comfortable is one way to encourage the street activity that provides both security and a sense of community.

The pedestrian environment guidelines are directed toward improving the pedestrian qualities of all neighborhood streets by avoiding or mitigating undesirable conditions. The guidelines specifically address issues related to street-level uses; blank walls near sidewalks; the appearance of parking lots in street fronts; buildings with ground floor parking; sidewalks and street landscaping; visibility of utility meters, dumpsters and service areas.

Landscaping

Landscaping forms an integral part of the visual character of Seattle neighborhoods. The Land Use Code requires landscaping and requires the screening of certain features such as parking lots. The landscape guidelines encourage designers to consider creative ways to screen and buffer unsightly uses; separate incompatible uses; enhance a project's open space and buildings; reinforce the landscape character of the streetscape; or respond to special contextual conditions such as greenbelts, boulevards and steep slopes.

III. Design Guidelines

A. Site Planning

A-1 Responding to Site Characteristics

The siting of buildings should respond to specific site conditions and opportunities such as non-rectangular lots, location on prominent intersections, unusual topography, significant vegetation and views or other natural features.

- ***Explanation and Examples***

Site characteristics to consider in project design include, but are not limited to, the following:

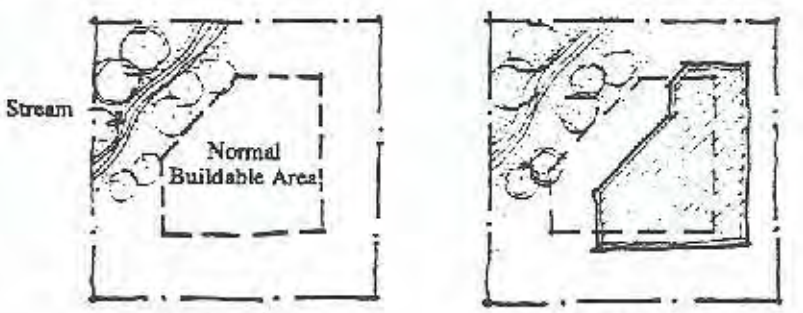
Topography

- Reflect, rather than obscure, natural topography. For instance, buildings should be designed to "step up" hillsides to accommodate significant changes in elevation.
- Where neighboring buildings have responded to similar topographic conditions on their sites in a consistent and positive way, consider similar treatment for the new structure.
- Designing the building in relation to topography may help to reduce the visibility of parking garages.

Environmental constraints

- Site buildings to avoid or lessen the impact of development on environmentally critical areas such as steep slopes, wetlands and stream corridors.

Site planning to protect and enhance a stream corridor.



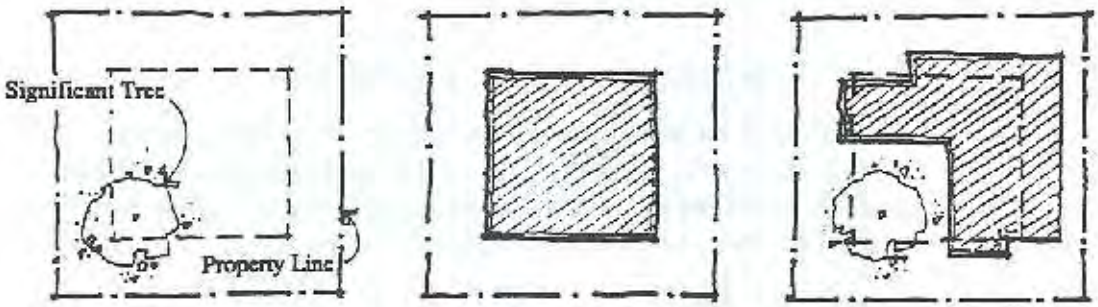
Site Conditions — Alternate Building Configuration

Solar orientation

- The design of a structure and its massing on the site can enhance solar exposure for the project and minimize shadow impacts on adjacent structures and public areas.

Existing vegetation

- Careful siting of buildings can enable significant or important trees or other vegetation to be preserved.



Site Conditions | Normal Site Development | Alternate Site Development to Save Tree

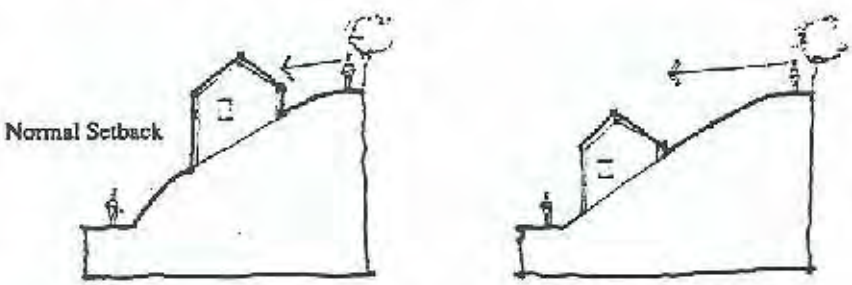
Slight modification of setbacks to save a significant tree.

Existing structures on the site

- Where a new structure shares a site with an existing structure or is a major addition to an existing structure, designing the new structure to be compatible with the original structure will help it fit in.

Views

- Adjustments to the siting or massing of a building may enable the preservation of public or private views which would otherwise be blocked by new development. The City's SEPA ordinance requires protection of designated public views. Protection of private views is not required under SEPA but could justify a code departure through design review provided that blockage of public views would not result and responsiveness to other design guidelines would not be compromised.



Reduced Front Yard Setback

Buildings located down-slope to preserve views.

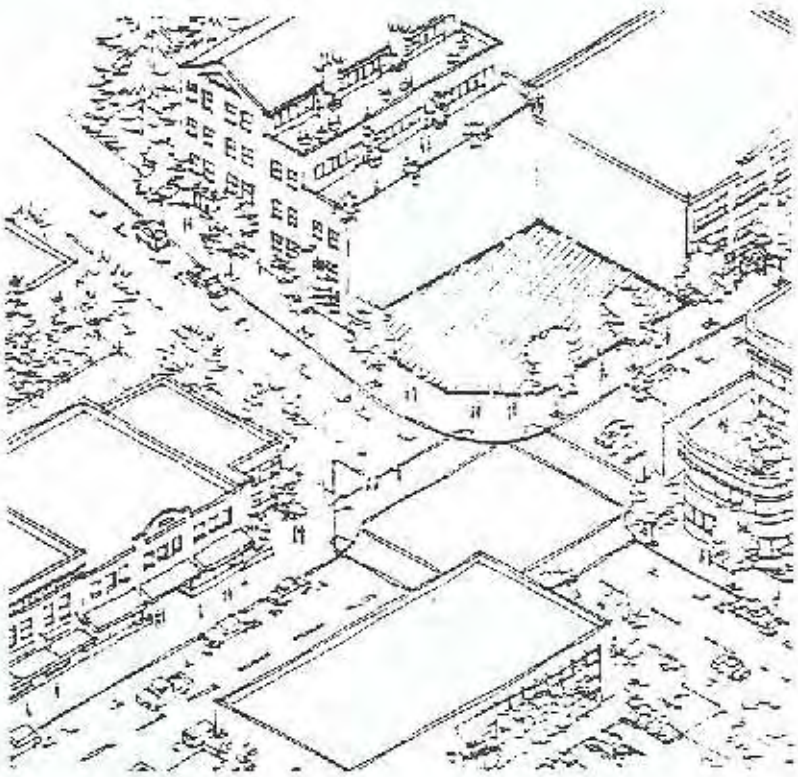
A-2 Streetscape Compatibility

The siting of buildings should acknowledge and reinforce the existing desirable spatial characteristics of the right-of-way.

- ***Explanation and Examples***

The character of a neighborhood is often defined by the experience of traveling along its streets. We often perceive streets within neighborhoods as individual spaces or "rooms." How buildings face and are set back from the street determine the character and proportion of this room.

The building to go up on this site should reinforce existing streetscape characteristics: pedestrian oriented businesses and shops at ground level, corner entries and consistent building edge abutting the sidewalk.

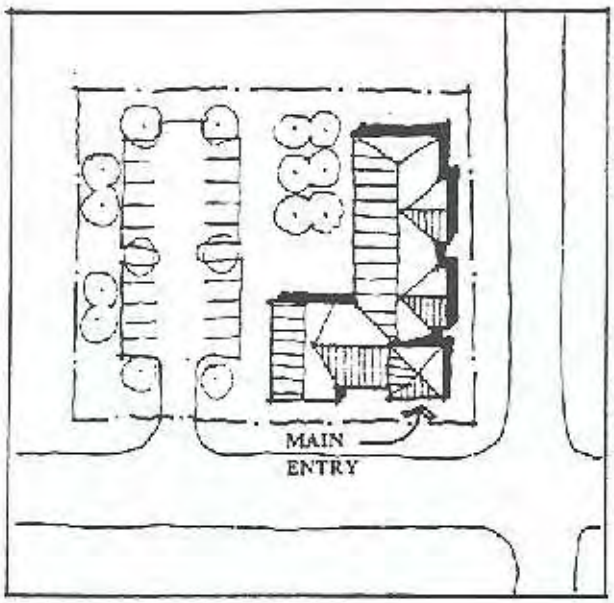


A-3 Entrances Visible from the Street

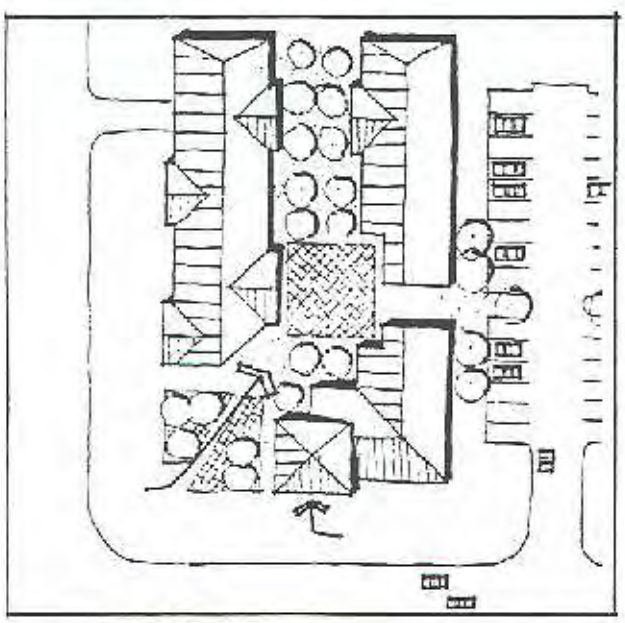
Entries should be clearly identifiable and visible from the street.

- *Explanation and Examples*

Entries that are visible from the street make a project more approachable and create a sense of association among neighbors.



Provide clear entries off streets not just from parking lots.



Clear paths using building and landscape elements can enhance building entries which are not on the street. Here the corner entry serves as a gateway into the complex.

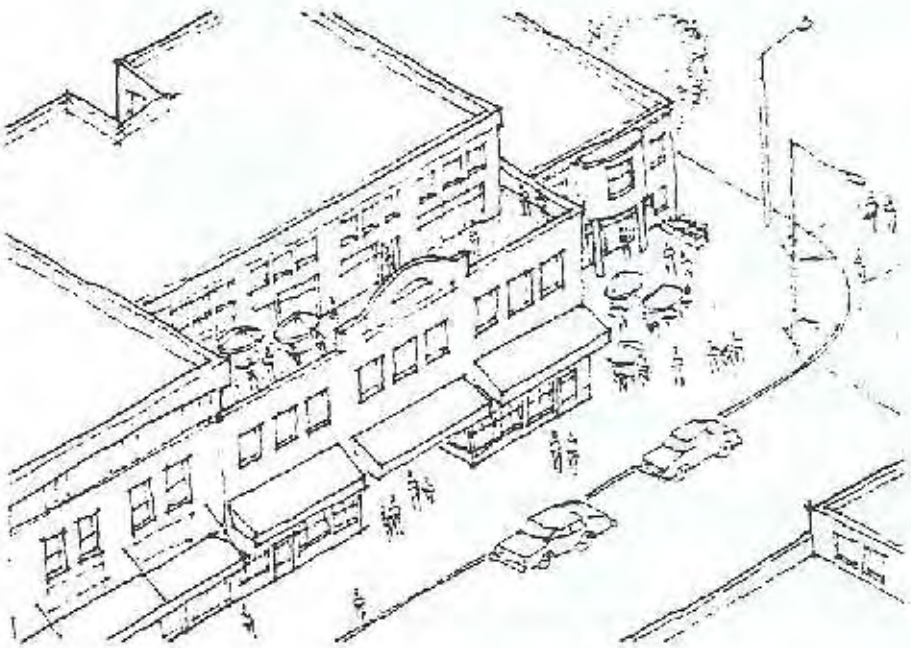
A-4 Human Activity

New development should be sited and designed to encourage human activity on the street.

- ***Explanation and Examples***

Livelier street edges make for safer streets. Ground floor shops and market spaces providing services needed by residents can attract activity to the street and increase safety through informal surveillance. Entrances, porches, balconies, decks, seating and other elements can promote use of the street front and provide places for neighborly interaction. Siting decisions should consider the importance of these features in a particular context and allow for their incorporation.

On commercial streets, elements can include shop front windows, plaza space with outdoor seating, rooftop decks, balconies, and canopies which protect pedestrians from the elements.



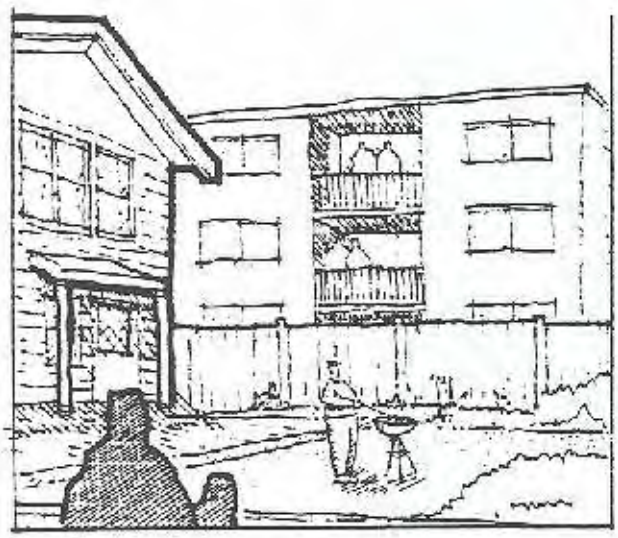
A-5 Respect for Adjacent Sites

Buildings should respect adjacent properties by being located on their sites to minimize disruption of the privacy and outdoor activities of residents in adjacent buildings.

- ***Explanation and Examples***

One consideration is the views from upper stories of new buildings into adjacent houses or yards, especially in less intensive zones. This problem can be addressed in several ways.

- Reduce the number of windows and decks on the proposed building overlooking the neighbors.
- Step back the upper floors or increase the side or rear setback so that window areas are farther from the property line.
- Take advantage of site design which might reduce impacts, for example by using adjacent ground floor area for an entry court.

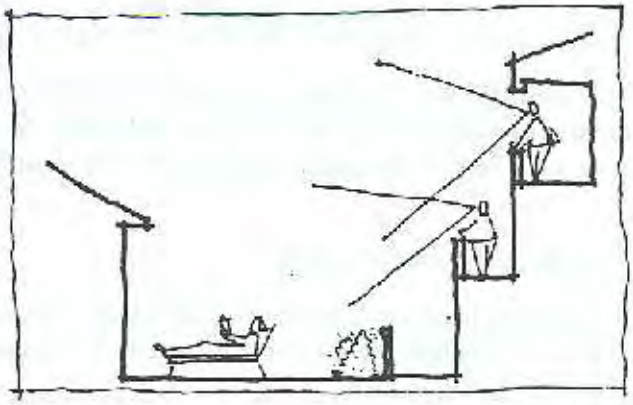


AVOID THIS

Inappropriate siting of large buildings can reduce the privacy of adjacent homes.

- Minimize windows to living spaces which might infringe on the privacy of adjacent residents, but consider comfort of residents in new building.
- Stagger windows to not align with adjacent windows.

Reducing windows and decks overlooking neighboring residential property or increasing side setbacks can increase privacy.



This apartment located the entry court adjacent to the neighboring residence and arranged interior spaces so the views into the neighboring properties were minimized.

A-6 Transition Between Residence and Street

For residential projects, the space between the building and the sidewalk should provide security and privacy for residents and encourage social interaction among residents and neighbors.

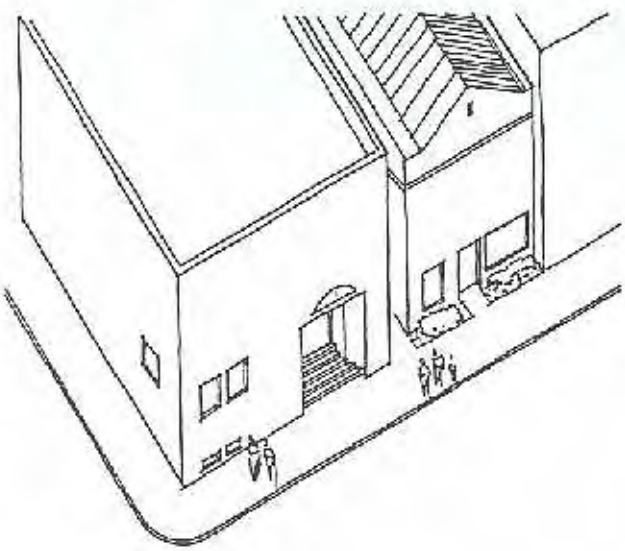
- ***Explanation and Examples***

The transition between a residential building and the street varies with the the depth of the front setback and the relative elevation of the building to the street.

The following examples illustrate these conditions and suggest how this guideline may be met through setbacks, entry design, landscape treatment and other techniques.

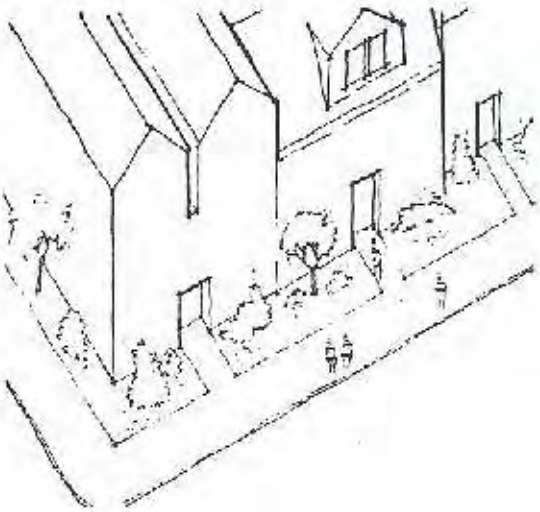
Minimal or No Front Setback

Buildings with little or no front yard should include creative use of landscaping, and/or window placement and treatment to provide privacy. Recessed entries can be used to provide security and/or weather protection.



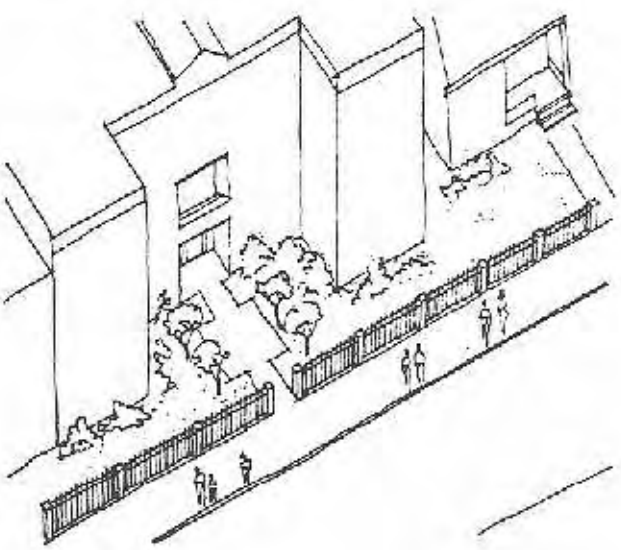
Shallow Residential Street Front

Buildings set back a small amount from the sidewalk provide sufficient area to include such features as balconies or decks, which allow privacy while encouraging visual interaction with the street. Courtyards, arcades, recessed entries or other similar entry designs may be desirable to provide privacy to ground-floor residents.



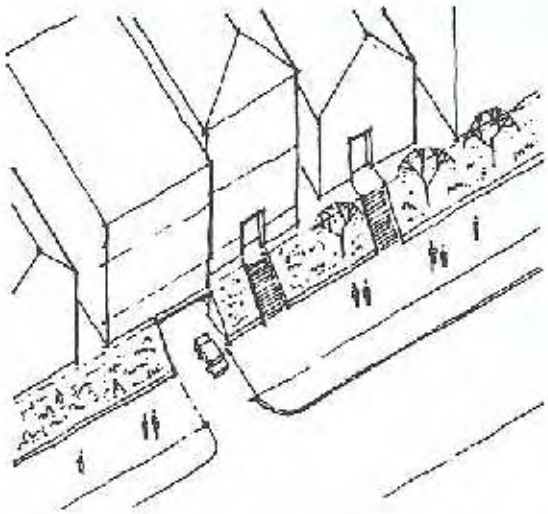
Deep Residential Setback

Buildings with deep setbacks from the sidewalk provide sufficient privacy through spatial separation to permit more open porches, picture windows and garden space for ground-floor residential units. Fences may provide further separation from the sidewalk.



High Bank Residential Street Front

Where the ground floor of a building is above pedestrian eye level, it is easier to achieve a sense of privace and separation from street activity, and there is more opportunity for creating social spaces.



A-7 Residential Open Space

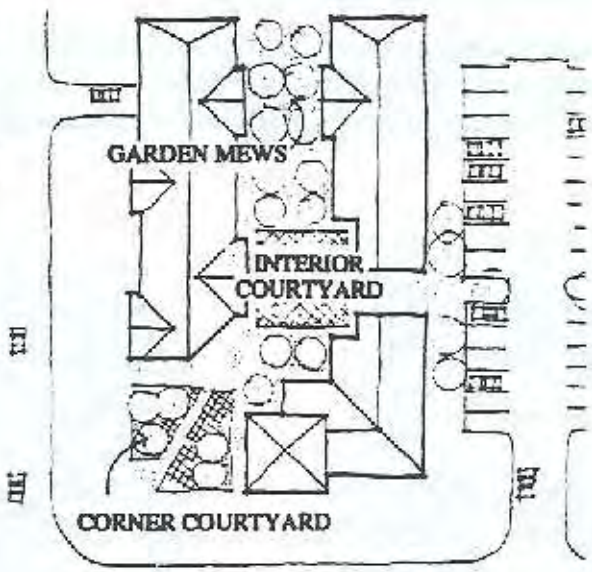
Residential projects should be sited to maximize opportunities for creating usable, attractive, well-integrated open space.

- ***Examples***

Residential buildings are encouraged to consider these site planning elements.

- Courtyards which organize architectural elements, while providing a common garden or other uses.
- Entry enhancement such as landscaping along a common pathway.
- Location and design of decks, balconies and upper level terraces.
- Play areas for children.
- Individual gardens.
- Location of outdoor spaces to take advantage of sunlight.

Well-organized outdoor spaces created by the grouping and orientation of buildings and building elements.



A-8 Parking and Vehicle Access

Siting should minimize the impact of automobile parking and driveways on the pedestrian environment, adjacent properties and pedestrian safety.

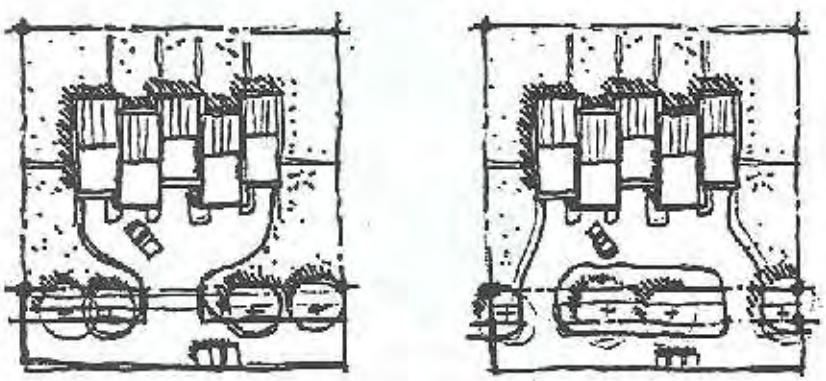
- ***Examples***

The following are some examples of techniques used to minimize the impacts of driveways and parking lots.

- Locate surface parking at rear or side of lot.
- Break large parking lots into smaller ones.
- Minimize number and width of driveways and curb cuts.
- Share driveways with adjacent property owners.
- Locate parking in lower level or less visible portions of site.
- Locate driveways so they are visually less dominant.

Often driveways and garage entrances can be located to take advantage of topography and conform with the overall form of the building, while not placing the pedestrian entrance in a subordinate role, or reducing pedestrian safety.

Pedestrian safety can be enhanced by reducing the width of the curb cut or by consolidating driveways. In most cases, a single lane is sufficient to serve several apartments or commercial spaces.



PREFERRED ACCEPTABLE

Driveway design to increase pedestrian safety.

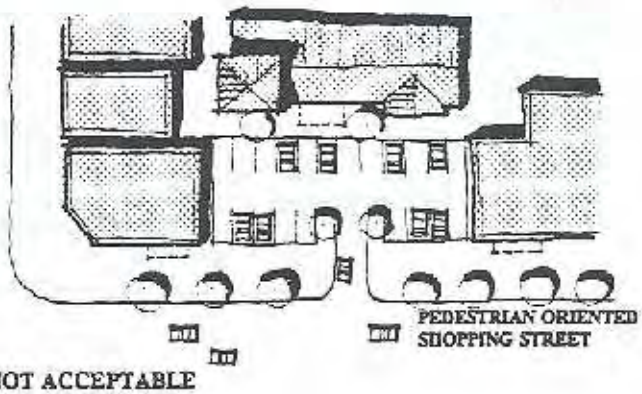
A-9 Location of Parking on Commercial Street Fronts

Parking on a commercial street front should be minimized and where possible should be located behind a building.

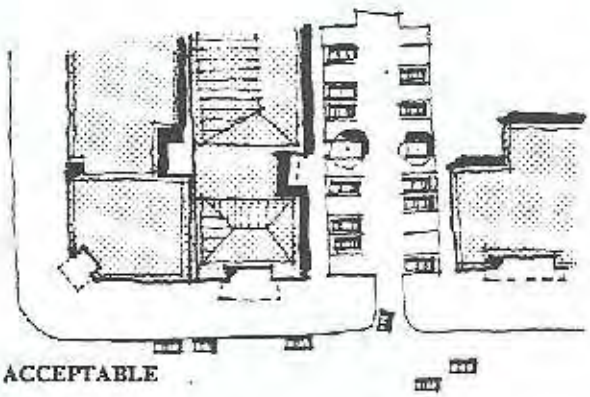
- *Explanation and Examples*

Parking located along a commercial street front where pedestrian traffic is desirable lessens the attractiveness of the area to pedestrians and compromises the safety of pedestrians along the street.

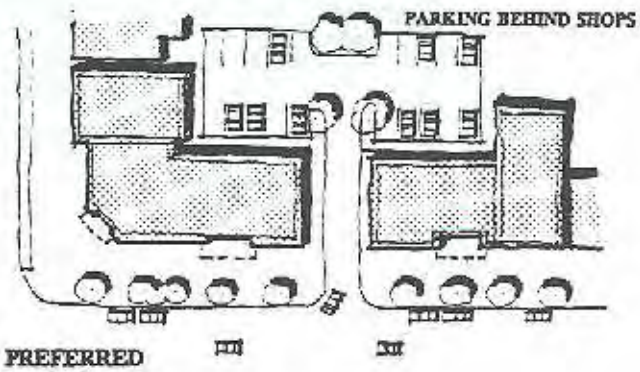
Parking lots along the full length of the streetfront are generally inappropriate.



In certain situations limited streetfront parking lots may be acceptable.



Parking lots located behind shops and offices are preferred.



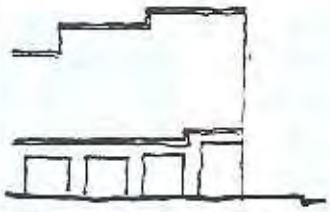
A-10 Corner Lots

Buildings on corner lots should be oriented to the corner and public street fronts. Parking and automobile access should be located away from corners.

- *Examples*

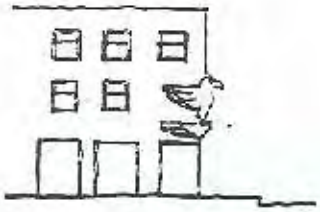
Corner lots offer unique opportunities because of their visibility and access from two streets.

Turret

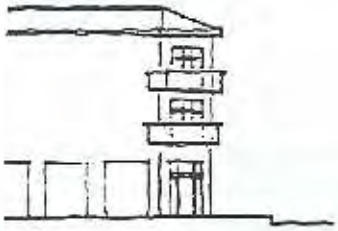


Corner accentuating roof line

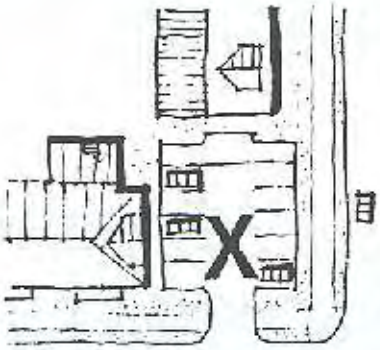
Corner entries and/or architectural features are encouraged.

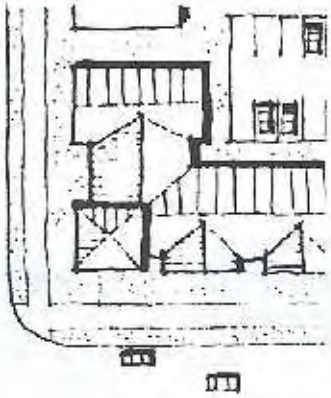


Sculpture



Balconies





Parking lots should not be located on a street corner.

A residential project on a corner lot that relates to both street fronts and provides visual and physical access to the project from the corner.

B. Height, Bulk and Scale

B-1 Height, Bulk and Scale Compatibility

Projects should be compatible with the scale of development anticipated by the applicable Land Use Policies for the surrounding area and should be sited and designed to provide a sensitive transition to near-by, less-intensive zones. Projects on zone edges should be developed in a manner that creates a step in perceived height, bulk and scale between the anticipated development potential of the adjacent zones.

- ***Explanation and Examples***

This guideline restates the City's SEPA (State Environmental Policy Act) Policy on Height, Bulk and Scale. Development projects in multifamily and commercial zones may create substantial adverse impacts resulting from incongruous height, bulk and scale. For projects undergoing design review, the analysis and mitigation of height, bulk and scale impacts will be accomplished through the design review process. Careful siting and design treatment based on the techniques described in this and other design guidelines will help to mitigate some height, bulk and scale impacts; in other cases, actual reduction in the height, bulk and scale of a project may be necessary to adequately mitigate impacts. Design review should not result in significant reductions in a project's actual height, bulk and scale <u>unless</u> necessary to comply with this guideline.

Height, bulk and scale mitigation may be required in two general circumstances:

1. Projects on or near the edge of a less intensive zone. A substantial incompatibility in scale may result from different development standards in the two zones and may be compounded by physical factors such as large development sites, slopes or lot orientation.

2. Projects proposed on sites with unusual physical characteristics such as large lot size, or unusual shape, or topography where buildings may appear substantially greater in height, bulk and scale than that generally anticipated for the area.

Factors to consider in analyzing potential height, bulk and scale impacts include:

- distance from the edge of a less intensive zone.
- differences in development standards between abutting zones (allowable building height, width, lot coverage, etc.).
- effect of site size and shape.

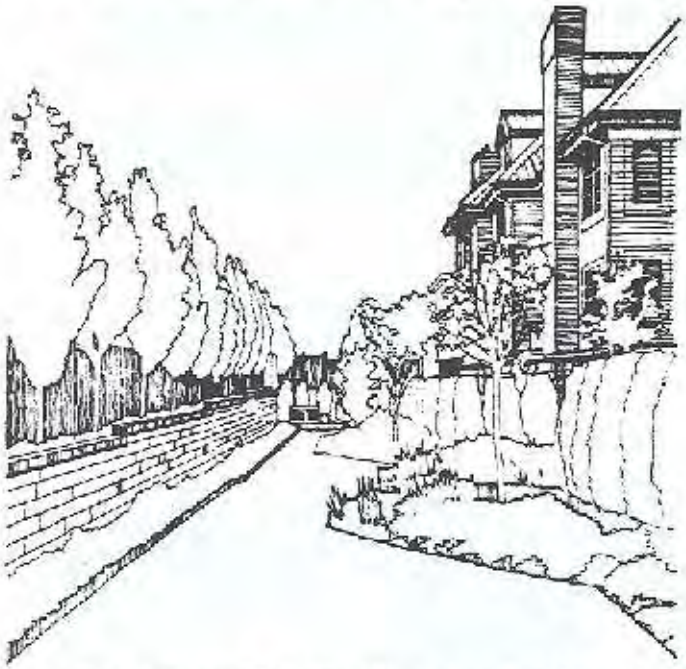
- height, bulk and scale relationships resulting from lot orientation (e.g., back lot line to back lot line vs back lot line to side lot line).
- type and amount of separation between lots in the different zones (e.g. separation by only a property line, by an alley or street, or by other physical features such as grade changes).

In some cases, careful siting and design treatment may be sufficient to achieve reasonable transition and mitigation of height, bulk and scale impacts. Some techniques for achieving compatibility are as follows:

- use of architectural style, details (such as roof lines or fenestration), color or materials that derive from the less intensive zone. (See also Guideline C-1 Architectural Context)

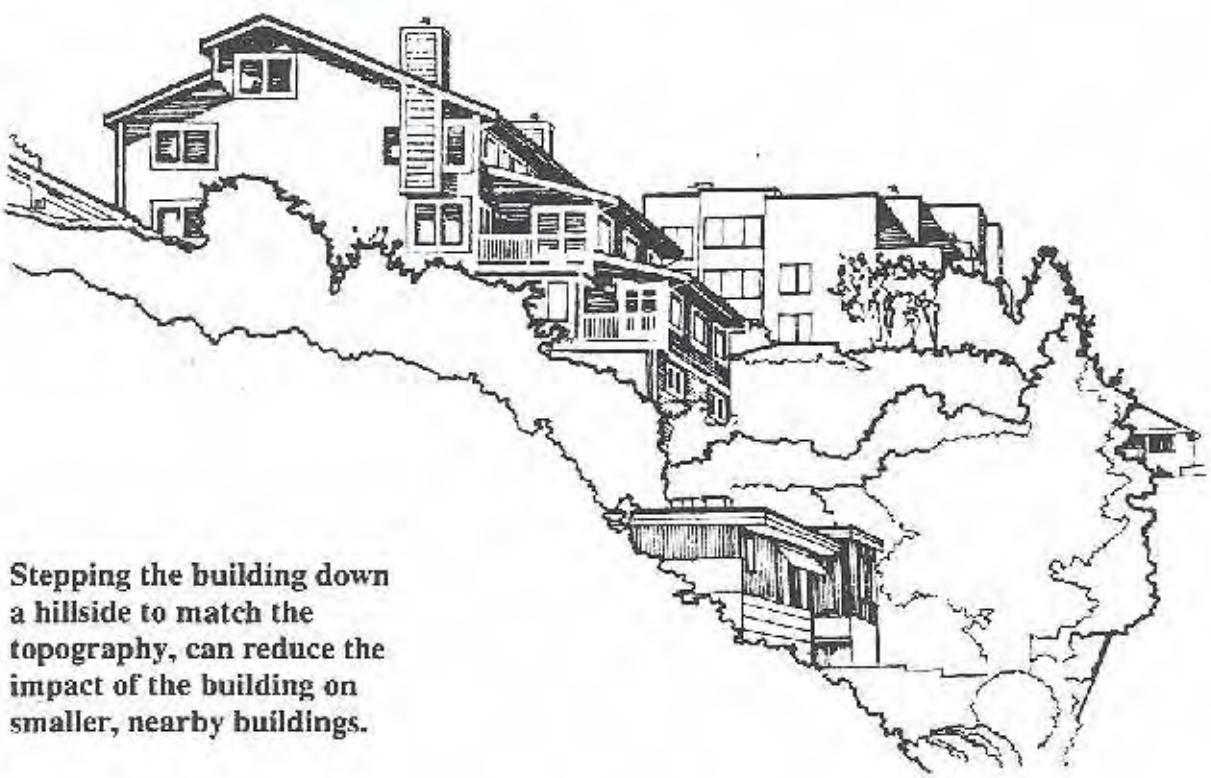
Use of similar roof forms helps this mixed- use building fit in better with the small single-family house in the single family zone next door.

- creative use of landscaping or other screening.
- location of features on-site to facilitate transition, such as locating required open space on the zone edge so the building is farther from the lower intensity zone.



The varied landscape treatment helps soften the transition to existing development.

- treating topographic conditions in ways that minimize impacts on neighboring development, such as by using a rockery rather than a retaining wall to give a more human scale to a project, or stepping a project down the hillside.

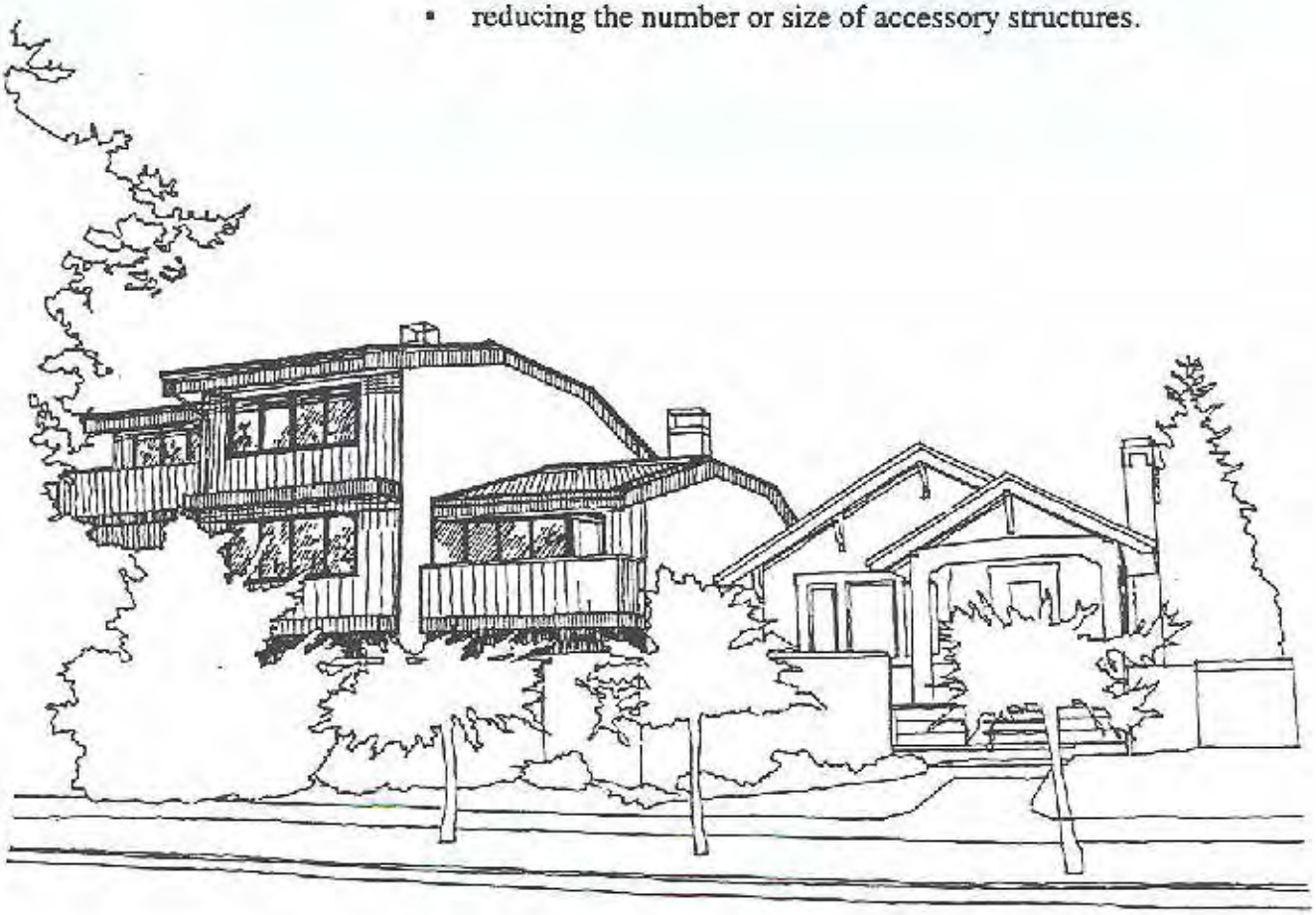


Stepping the building down a hillside to match the topography, can reduce the impact of the building on smaller, nearby buildings.

- in a mixed-use project, siting the more compatible use near the zone edge.

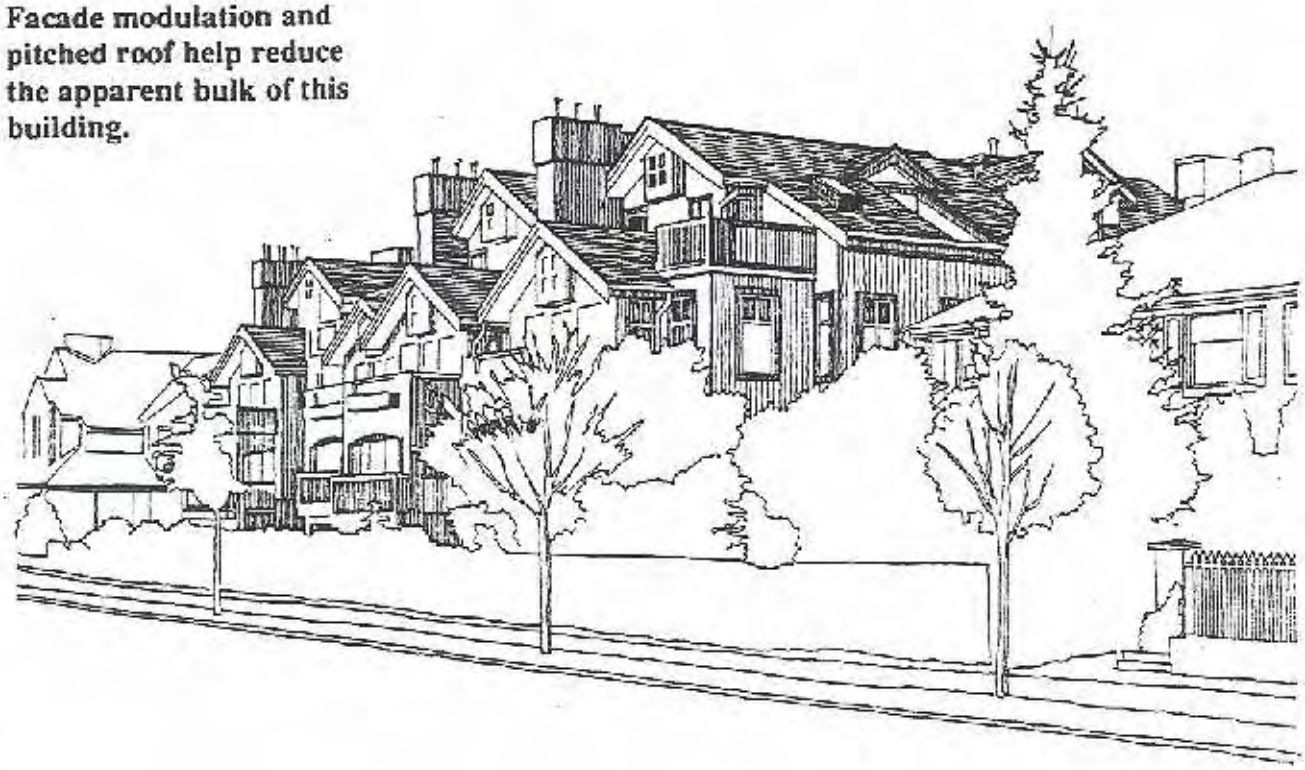
In some cases, reductions in the actual height, bulk and scale of the proposed structure may be necessary in order to mitigate adverse impacts and achieve an acceptable level of compatibility. Some techniques which can be used in these cases include:

- articulating the building's facades vertically or horizontally in intervals that conform to existing structures or platting pattern.
- increasing building setbacks from the zone edge at ground level.
- reducing the bulk of the building's upper floors.
- limiting the length of, or otherwise modifying, facades.
- reducing the height of the structure.
- reducing the number or size of accessory structures.



The bulk of this project's upper story was reduced and significant landscaping was retained to better fit with the neighboring single family zone.

Facade modulation and pitched roof help reduce the apparent bulk of this building.



C.Architectural Elements and Materials

C-1 Architectural Context

New buildings proposed for existing neighborhoods with a well-defined and desirable character should be compatible with or complement the architectural character and siting pattern of neighboring buildings.

- *Explanation and Examples*

Paying attention to architectural characteristics of surrounding buildings, especially historic buildings, can help new buildings be more compatible with their neighbors, especially if a consistent pattern is already established by:

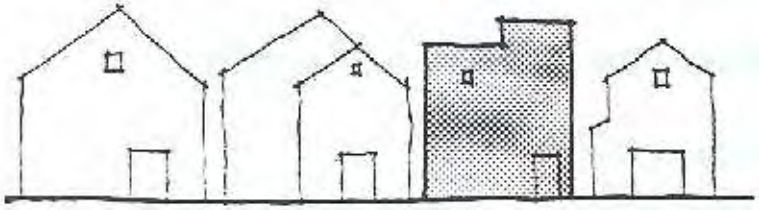
- Similar building articulation;
- Similar building scale and proportions;
- Similar or complementary architectural style;
- Similar or complementary roof forms;
- Similar building details and fenestration patterns; or
- Similar or complementary materials

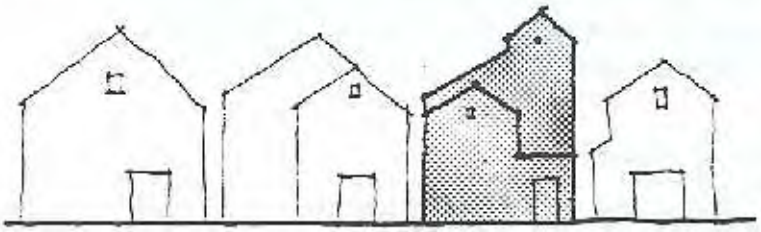
Even where there is no consistent architectural pattern, building design and massing can be used to complement certain physical conditions of existing development.

In some cases the existing context is not well defined, or may be undesirable. In such cases, a well-designed, new project can become a pioneer with the opportunity to establish a pattern or identity from which future development can take its cues.

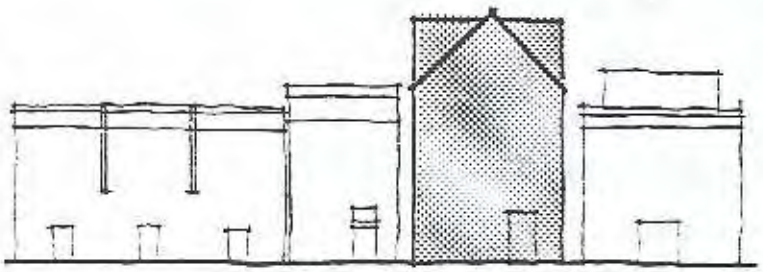
Architectural Features

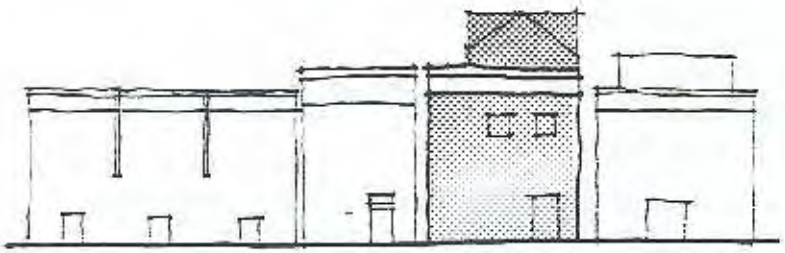
Below are several methods that can help integrate new buildings into the surrounding architectural context, using compatible architectural features, fenestration patterns, and building proportions.



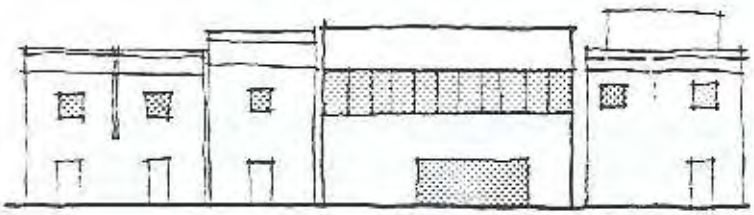


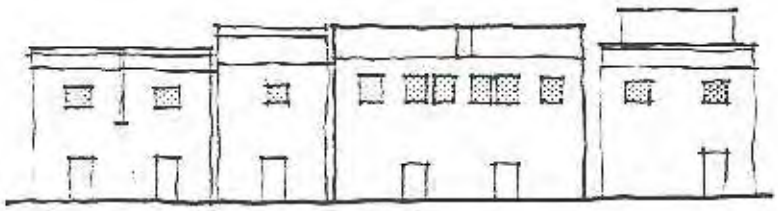
Rooflines can reinforce the architectural character of a street.





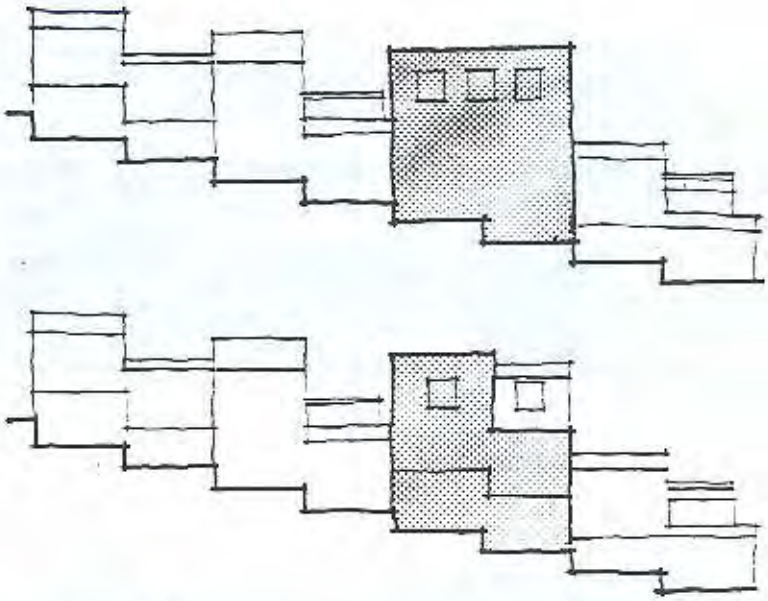
Architectural features like cornices can relate to adjacent buildings, lowering the apparent, conflicting height of the building.





Sometimes an area has a number of buildings that feature a distinctive architectural concept or style In these cases, referring to that organizational concept can achieve compatibility at a deeper level.

The pattern and proportion of windows, doors and other glazed areas (fenestration) is important in determining the building's architectural character. Following the proportion and pattern of neighboring buildings will increase the consistency of the overall streetscape.

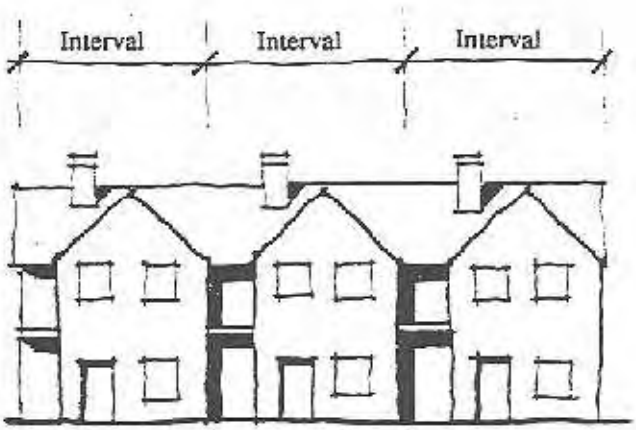


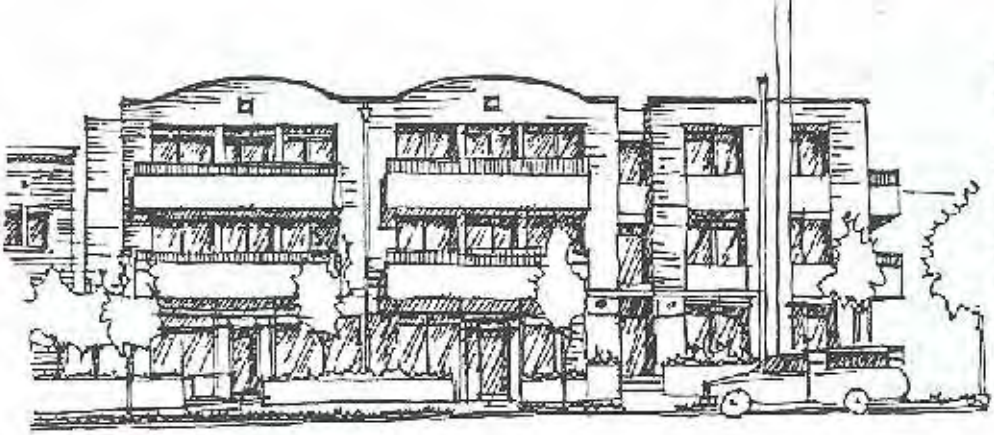
Building Articulation

Below are several methods in which buildings may be articulated to create intervals which reflect and promote compatibility with their surroundings.

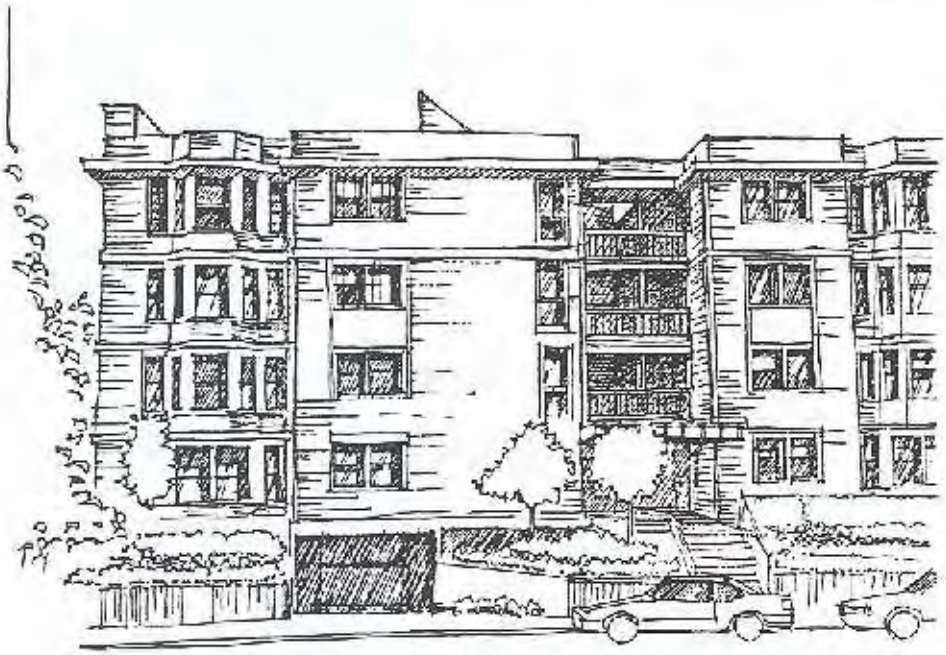
- Facade modulation - stepping back or extending forward a portion of the facade.
- Repeating the window patterns at intervals equal to the articulation interval.
- Providing a porch, patio, deck, or covered entry for each interval.
- Providing a balcony or bay window for each interval.
- Changing the roofline by alternating dormers, stepped roofs, gables, or other roof elements to reinforce the modulation or articulation interval.
- Changing materials with the change in building plane.
- Providing a lighting fixture, trellis, tree or other landscape feature within each interval.

This building is articulated into intervals. Articulation methods include modulation, broken roof lines, building elements (chimneys, entries, etc.) and landscaping.





This mixed-use building also expresses intervals through modulation, a mix of roof forms, landscaping and other elements.



This apartment building incorporates architectural elements typical of nearby buildings such as bay windows, cornice lines, double hung windows, building modulation and horizontal banding. Also, the street front landscaping helps it to better fit in an established neighborhood.

This project relates well to its neighbors by reflecting similar proportions, materials and architectural features.

C-2 Architectural Concept and Consistency

Building design elements, details and massing should create a well-proportioned and unified building form and exhibit an overall architectural concept.

Buildings should exhibit form and features identifying the functions within the building.

In general, the roofline or top of the structure should be clearly distinguished from its facade walls.

- ***Explanation and Examples***

This guideline focuses on the important design consideration of organizing the many architectural elements of a building into a unified whole, so that details and features can be seen to relate to the structure and not appear as add-ons.

The other objective of this guideline is to promote buildings whose form derives from their function. Buildings which present few or no clues through their design as to what purpose they serve are often awkward architectural neighbors. For example, use of expansive blank walls, extensive use of metal or glass siding, or extremely large or small windows in a residential project may create architectural confusion or disharmony with neighbors. Conversely, commercial buildings which overly mimic residential styles might be considered inappropriate in some commercial neighborhoods.

Architectural features may include any of the following.

- Building modulation or articulation
- Bay windows
- A corner accent, such as a turret
- Garden or courtyard elements (such as a fountain or gazebo)
- Rooflines
- Building entries
- Building base.

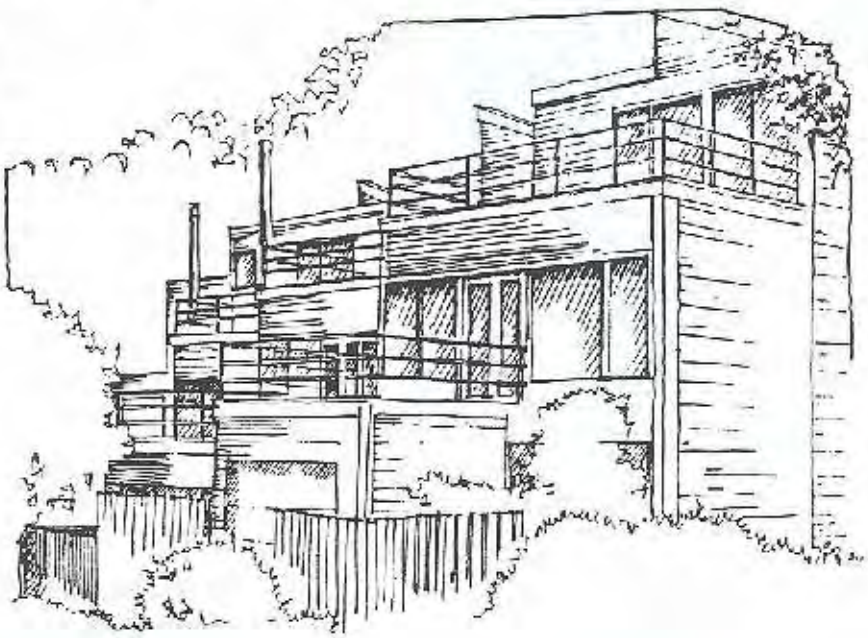
Architectural details may include some of the following.

- Treatment of masonry (such as ceramic tile inlay, paving stones, or alternating brick patterns)
- Treatment of siding (such as wood siding combined with shingles to differentiate floors)
- Articulation of columns
- Sculpture or art work

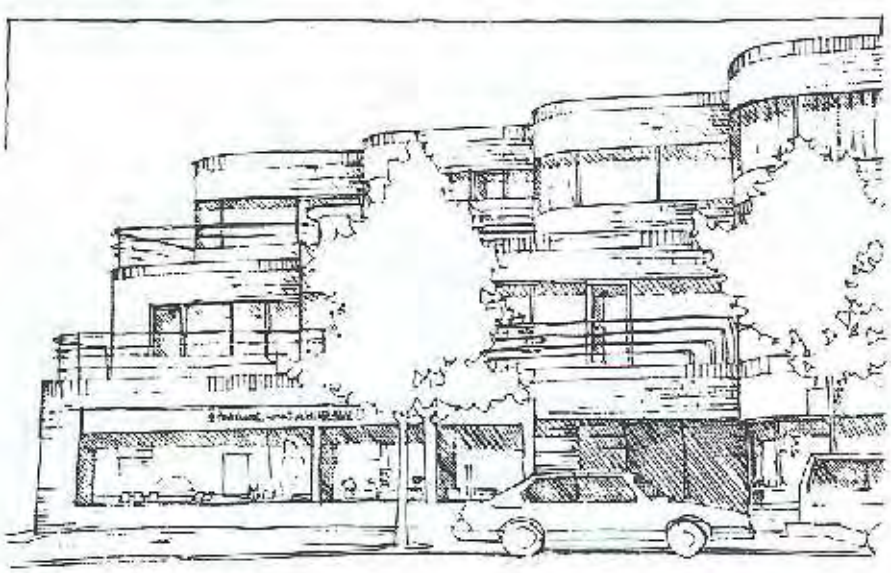
- Architectural lighting
- Detailed grilles and railings
- Special trim details and moldings
- A trellis or arbor.

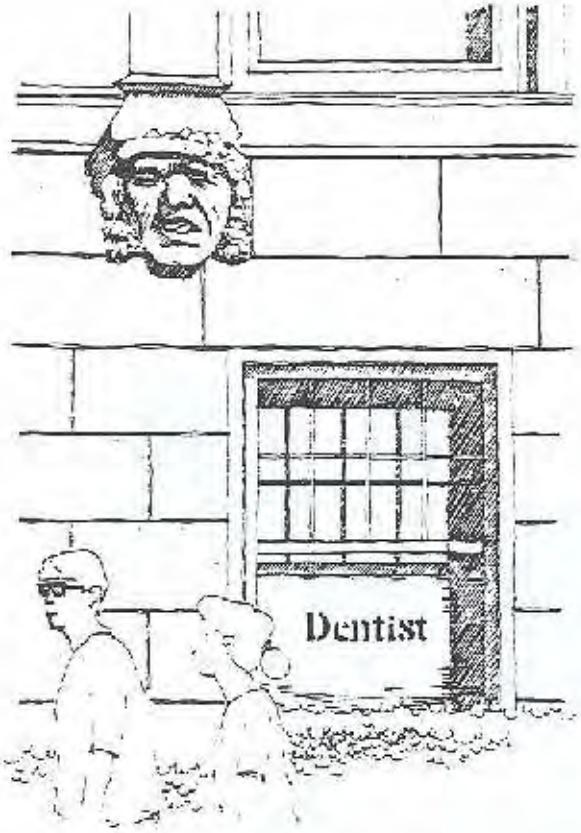
Some illustrations of these features are presented on this and the following pages.

A contemporary townhouse building that employs building articulation, broken roof lines, chimneys, multicolored trim and consistent detailing in a pleasing composition.



This contemporary building employs decorative masonry, modulation of the building face, decks and railings, and a recessed entry to give it a distinctive architectural character.





Clever use of ornament can highlight a building's uses.

This commercial building employs the use of varied roof forms, canopies and window boxes to create a well-proportioned, unified composition.

This mixed-use building differentiates the residential uses from the commercial uses below, and clearly distinguishes a base, middle and top. It fits in better with its lower height neighbors by setting back the upper floors and changing finish materials.

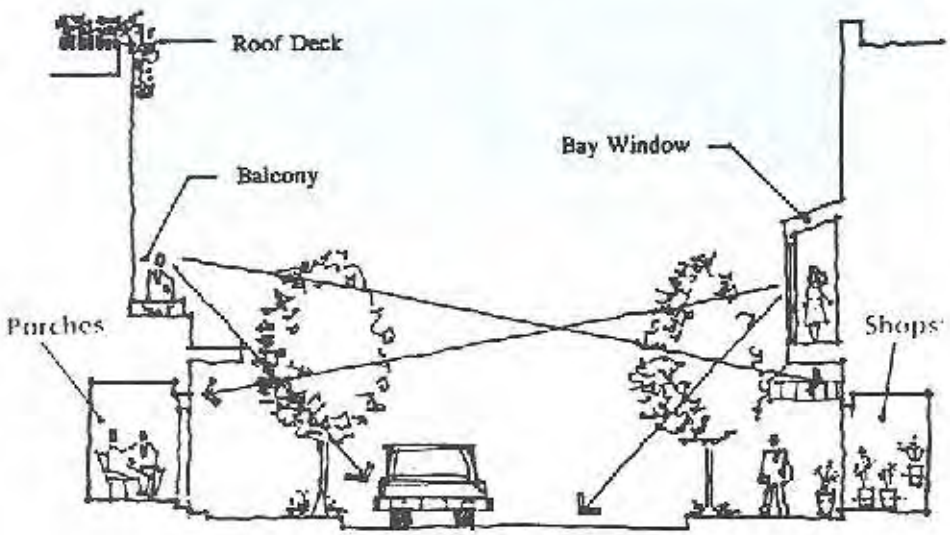
C-3 Human Scale

The design of new buildings should incorporate architectural features, elements and details to achieve a good human scale.

- ***Explanation and Examples***

The term "human scale" generally refers to the use of human-proportioned architectural features and site design elements clearly oriented to human activity.

A building has a good human scale if its details, elements and materials allow people to feel comfortable using and approaching it. Features that give a building human scale also encourage human activity.

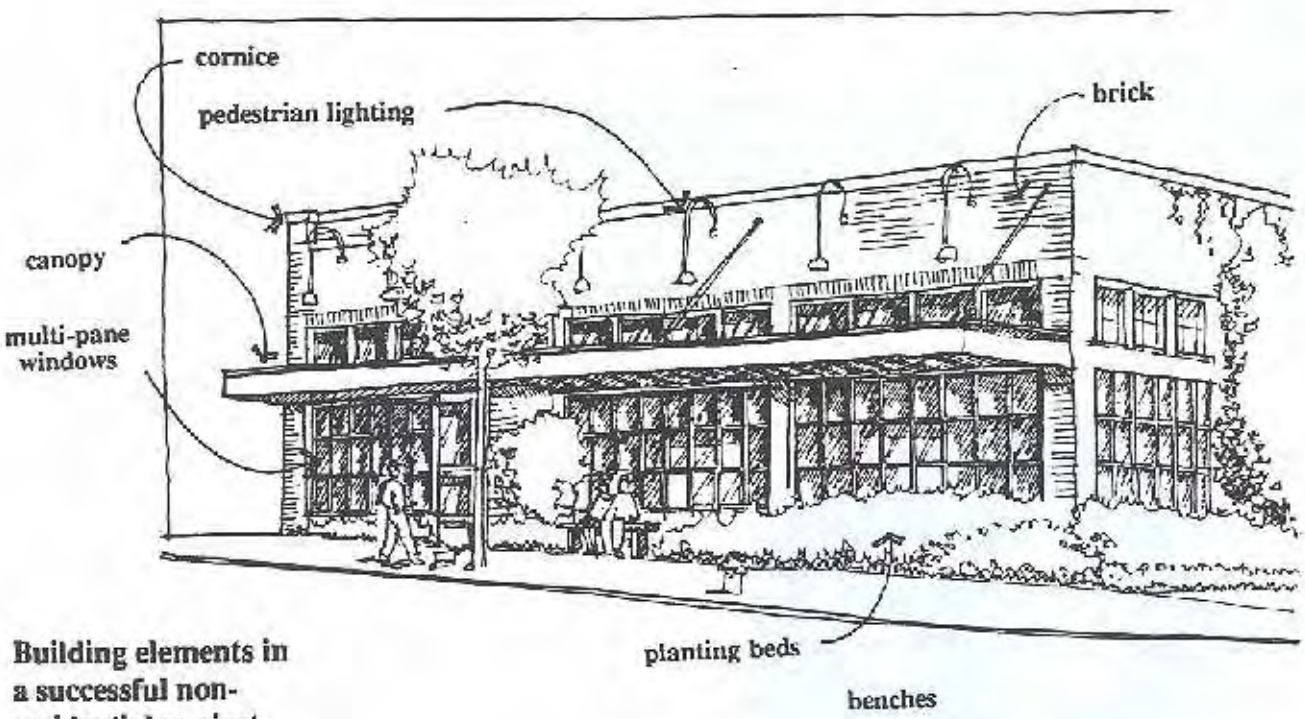


Elements along the streetfront which promote a human scale on the street.

The following are some of the building elements that may be used to achieve better human scale.

- Pedestrian-oriented open space such as a courtyard, garden, patio or other unified landscaped areas.
- Bay windows extending out from the building face that reflect an internal space such as a room or alcove.
- Individual windows in upper stories that:
  - are approximately the size and proportion of a traditional window.
  - include a trim or molding that appears substantial from the sidewalk.
  - are separated from adjacent windows by a vertical element.

- Windows grouped together to form larger areas of glazing can have a human scale if individual window units are separated by moldings or jambs.
- Windows with small multiple panes of glass.
- Window patterns, building articulation and other treatments that help to identify individual residential units in a multifamily building.
- Upper story setbacks.
- A porch or covered entry.
- Pedestrian weather protection in the form of canopies, awnings, arcades or other elements wide enough to protect at least one person.
- Visible chimneys



Building elements in a successful non-residential project

C-4 Exterior Finish Materials

Building exteriors should be constructed of durable and maintainable materials that are attractive even when viewed up close. Materials that have texture, pattern, or lend themselves to a high quality of detailing are encouraged.

- ***Explanation and Examples***

The selection and use of exterior materials is a key ingredient in determining how a building will look. Some materials, by their nature, can give a sense of permanence or can provide texture or scale that helps new buildings fit better in their surroundings.

Materials typical to Seattle include:

Clear or painted wood siding
Shingles
Brick
Stone
Ceramic and terra-cotta tile

Many other exterior building materials may be appropriate in multifamily and commercial neighborhoods as long as the materials are appropriately detailed and finished, for instance, to take account of Seattle's climate or be compatible with nearby structures. Some materials, such as mirrored glass, may be more difficult to integrate into residential or neighborhood commercial settings.

Simple building forms can be enlivened with the appropriate use of materials and the creative use of color.

C-5 Structured Parking Entrances

The presence and appearance of garage entrances should be minimized so that they do not dominate the street frontage of a building.

- *Examples*
- Subordinate the garage entrance to the pedestrian entrance in terms of size, prominence on the streetscape, location and design emphasis. Sometimes the relative importance of the garage entrance can be reduced by enhancing the pedestrian entrance.
- Locate the entry on the side of the facade where it will draw less attention than if it is centered in the facade.
- Recess the portion of the facade where the entry is located to help conceal it.
- Extend portions of the structure over the garage entry to help conceal it.
- Emphasize other elements of the facade to reduce the visual prominence of the garage entry.
- Use screening and landscaping to soften the appearance of the garage entry from the street.
- Locate the garage entry where the topography of the site can help conceal it.

Garage entry subordinated by emphasizing the pedestrian entry.

Garage entry located where the topography of the site can help to minimize its dominance of the facade.

D. Pedestrian Environment

D-1 Pedestrian Open Space and Entrances

Convenient and attractive access to the building's entry should be provided. To ensure comfort and security, paths and entry areas should be sufficiently lighted and entry areas should be protected from the weather. Opportunities for creating lively, pedestrian-oriented open spaces should be considered.

Explanation and Examples

In business districts where pedestrian activity is desired, the primary function of any space between commercial buildings and the sidewalk is to provide visual and physical access into the building, and where possible, a space for additional outdoor activities such as vending, sitting or dining. Street fronts can also feature art work, street furniture, kiosks and landscaping that invite pedestrians to linger, thus activating commercial areas.

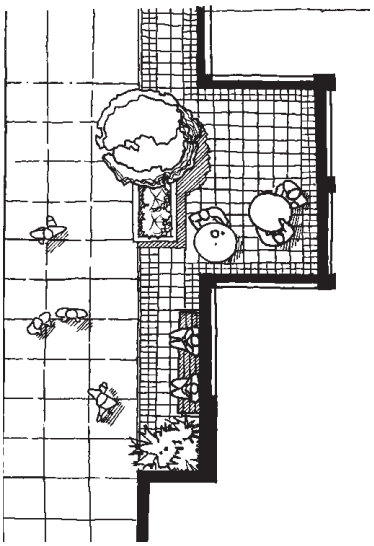
Where a commercial, mixed-use or residential building is set back from the sidewalk a sufficient distance, pedestrian enhancements such as those listed below should be considered in the resulting street front design:

- accented paving or walking surfaces
- street furniture such as benches or seating ledges built into the building or incorporated within landscaping features, and bicycle racks
- landscaping that enhances the space and helps to soften the zone where the building meets the sidewalk
- art that expresses local character
- visual and pedestrian access into the site from the public sidewalk
- overhead weather protection in the form of canopies, awnings, arcades or other elements of appropriate width
- signage appropriately scaled to pedestrians (see D-9)
- pedestrian-scale lighting and marquees (see D-10)

Overhead weather protection provides shelter for pedestrians and may add detail to a building's facade.

Seating ledges built into the facade can provide comfort and help to activate the street front.

Incorporating art into a building's street-level facade adds interest to the street front and can help to express local character.



Building setbacks can create active public spaces that can compliment surrounding uses.

Pedestrian Space

Street-level pedestrian spaces such as plazas or parcel parks can be created in building setbacks. These spaces should enliven the pedestrian experience while enhancing surrounding businesses. The following are some considerations for creating comfortable and inviting spaces that are open to the public:

- Provide seating in the form of fixed benches, ledges, landscaping features or movable furniture.
- Orient surrounding building(s) and entrances so that activity "spills" into the public space.
- Include details on the facades of surrounding buildings which add visual interest to the space.
- Incorporate public art or other elements such as fountains, which express neighborhood character.
- Use a change in paving color, pattern or texture to help define the public space and add visual interest.
- Incorporate ample landscaping in beds or planters which provide year-round greenery.
- Ensure visibility into and out of the space.
- Use adequate lighting to provide a sense of security and to add ambience during evening hours.

Pubic art elements help to activate public spaces and express local character.

Building form, plantings and a change in paving material help to create an intimate public space.

Ensure visibility into and out of public spaces.

Vegetation planted on or in front of blank walls helps to soften them, creating a more comfortable pedestrian street front.

Overhanging vegetation visually reduces the expanse of blank walls.

Incoporating art adds visual interest to a blank wall.

D-2 Blank Walls and D-3 Retaining Walls

Buildings should avoid large blank walls facing the street, especially near sidewalks. Where blank walls are unavoidable, they should receive design treatment to increase pedestrian comfort and interest.

Retaining walls near a public sidewalk that extend higher than eye level should be avoided where possible. Where high retaining walls are unavoidable, they should be designed to reduce their impact on pedestrian comfort and to increase the visual interest along the streetscape.

Explanation and Examples

A wall may be considered "large" if it has a blank surface substantially greater in size than similar walls of neighboring buildings. The following are examples of design solutions for blank walls and retaining walls:

- creating small setbacks, indentations, or employing changes in material color, texture and pattern breaks up the wall surface and creates a more human-scale
- setting the wall back and providing a landscaped or raised planter bed in front of the wall, including plant materials that could grow to screen the wall
- installing a durable vertical trellis in front of or on the wall for climbing vines or other plant material
- providing art (mosaic, mural, decorative masonry pattern, sculpture, relief, etc.) over a substantial portion of the blank wall surface

For retaining walls:

- terracing and landscaping
- using stone walls, rockeries, modular masonry or other high quality materials that add visual interest
- adding hanging plant materials below or above the wall

D-4 Design of Parking Lots Near Sidewalks

Parking lots near sidewalks should provide adequate security and lighting, avoid encroachment of vehicles onto the sidewalk, and minimize the visual clutter of parking signs and equipment.

Examples

The following examples illustrate some considerations to address in highly visible parking lots in commercial areas.

Signs and equipment

- Reduce sign clutter by painting markings on the pavement or by consolidating signs.
- Any on-site storage should be out of view or appropriately screened from the sidewalk and adjacent properties.

Security lighting

- Provide the appropriate levels of lighting to create adequate visibility at night. Evenly distributed lighting increases security, and glare-free lighting reduces impacts on adjacent properties.

Screening of parking

- Screening of parking areas need not be uniform along the property frontage. Variety in the type and relative amount of screening may be appropriate.
- Screen walls constructed of durable, attractive materials need not extend above waist level. Screen walls adjacent to residential zones could also include landscaping or a trellis or grillwork with climbing vines.
- Screening can be designed to allow clear visibility into parking areas to promote personal safety.
- Screening that incorporates pedestrian amenities such as seating is preferred.

Parking area containment

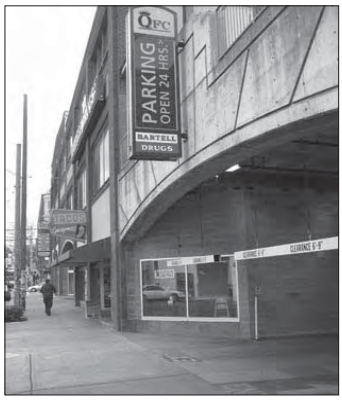
- Provide a "wheel stop" at the perimeter of parking areas between parking lot pavement and adjacent landscaping or other pavement to alleviate unsightly edge conditions.
- Tire bumpers, a low wall, or an extended curb prevent parked cars from encroaching on landscaped or pedestrian areas. Extended curbs are preferable because they are more durable and do not catch debris.

Tire bumpers keep cars from encroaching onto sidewalk.

Provide a "wheel stop" at the perimeter of parking areas.

Screen walls may be softened by incorporating landscaping.

Screen walls no higher than waist-level allow visibility into and out of parking area and can provide seating ledges for pedestrians.



Retail spaces incorporated along street-front facade of a parking structure

Parking access can be located off an alley.

Well-designed screening can add visual interest to structures along the street front.

Visually integrate parking entrances with the overall architecture of the building and use non-opaque garage doors.

D-5 Visual Impacts of Parking Structures

The visibility of all at-grade parking structures or accessory parking garages should be minimized. The parking portion of a structure should be architecturally compatible with the rest of the structure and streetscape. Open parking spaces and carports should be screened from the street and adjacent properties.

Examples

- Incorporating any of the blank wall treatments listed in Guideline D-6.
- Incorporating active retail spaces reduces the visual impact of parking structures in commercial areas and creates activity along the street front.
- Visually integrating the parking structure/entrance into the overall architecture of the whole project by continuing a frieze, cornice, canopy, overhang, trellis or other devices from adjacent structures along the façade of parking structure.
- Reducing the size of garage entrances lessens the visual impact it will have on the street front.
- Using recessed lighting or using baffles or valances deep enough to screen interior light sources.

Smaller garage entrances have less visual impact on the street front.

D-6 Screening of Dumpsters, Utilities and Service Areas

Building sites should locate service elements like trash dumpsters, loading docks and mechanical equipment away from the street front where possible. When it is not possible to locate these elements away from the street front, they should be screened from view using high-quality and compatible materials and should not be located in the pedestrian right-of-way.

Service elements should be placed out of view.

Explanation and Examples

Unsightly service elements can detract from the compatibility of new projects and create hazards for pedestrians and autos.

Screening service areas and utilities

- Plan the feature in a less visible location on the site.
- Screen it to be less visible.
- Use durable materials that complement the building.
- Incorporate landscaping to make the screen more effective.
- Locate the opening to the area away from the sidewalk.

Screen service elements using high-quality and compatible materials.

D-7 Personal Safety and Security

Project design should consider opportunities for enhancing personal safety and security in the environment under review.

Explanation and Examples

Project design should be reviewed for its contribution to enhancing the real and perceived feeling of personal safety and security within the environment under review. To do this, the question needs to be answered: Do the design elements detract from or do they reinforce feelings of security in the residents, workers, shoppers and visitors who enter the area?

Techniques that can help promote safety include the following:

- providing adequate lighting
- retaining clear lines of sight
- use of semi-transparent security screening, rather than opaque walls, where appropriate
- avoiding blank, windowless walls that attract graffiti and that do not permit residents or workers to observe the street
- use of landscaping that maintains visibility, such as short shrubs and pruning trees so there are no branches below head height
- creative use of ornamental grille as fencing or over ground-floor windows in some locations
- absence of structures that provide hiding places for criminal activity
- design of parking areas to allow natural surveillance by maintaining clear lines of sight both for those who park there and for occupants of nearby buildings
- clear directional signage
- encouraging "eyes on the street" through the placement of windows, balconies and street-level uses
- ensuring natural surveillance of children's play areas
- Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles should be reviewed and where appropriate incorporated into the priority guidelines for site and structure. Refer to "Defensible Space" by Oscar Newman, available online.

D-8 Treatment of Alleys

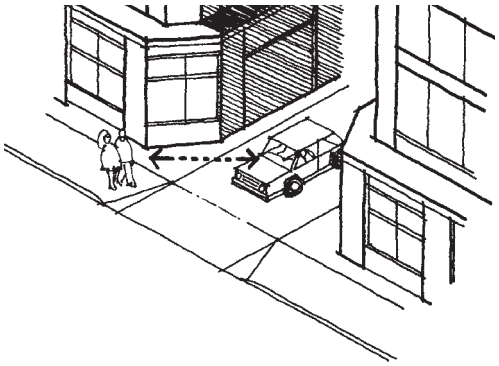
The design of alley entrances should enhance the pedestrian street front.

Explanation and Examples

Providing activity and visibility at the entrances to alleys increases safety and visibility.

Alleys

- Activate alley entrances and enhance the street front by extending street front fenestration into the alley one window bay.
- Chamfer building corners to improve visibility and safety for pedestrians and vehicles.
- Add effective lighting to enhance visibility and safety.



Chamfered building corners enhance visibility into and out of alleys.

Extend street front fenestration of retail spaces into the alley one window bay.

D-9 Commercial Signage

Signs should add interest to the street front environment and should be appropriate for the scale and character desired in the area.

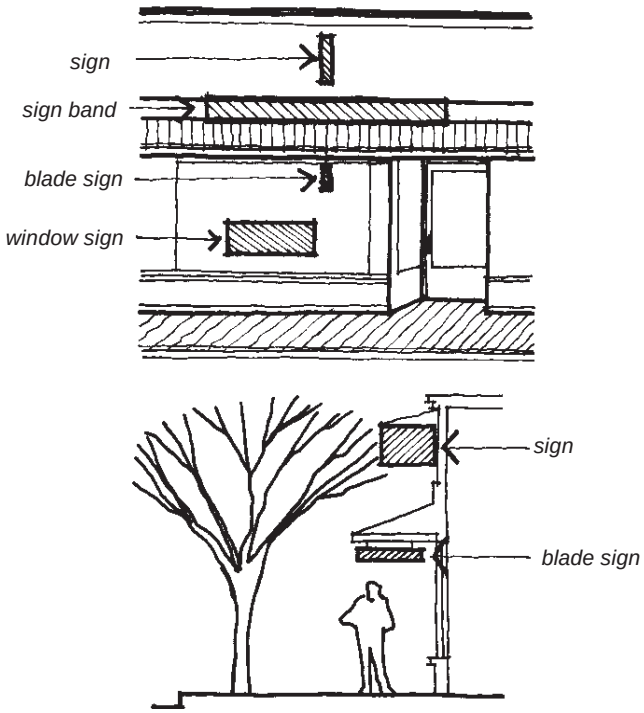
Explanation and Examples

The details expressed by buildings at the street level influences how a pedestrian perceives an area. Appropriately scaled signage can provide visual interest and a human dimension to street-level building facades. Consider the following:

- Signage should be designed as an integral part of the building facade.
- Use signage to help distinguish the ground level of a building from the upper levels of a building.
- Creativity and individual expression in the design and placement of signs is encouraged.
- Establishing a rhythm along the street-level façade through continuity and spacing of signs helps to create a human scale.
- Use creative lighting to accent signs and assure their legibility at night.

Blade signs placed underneath overhead weather protection allow greater visibility and provide visual variety.

Unique signs add interest to the street front.



Illuminate distinctive building features such as signage.

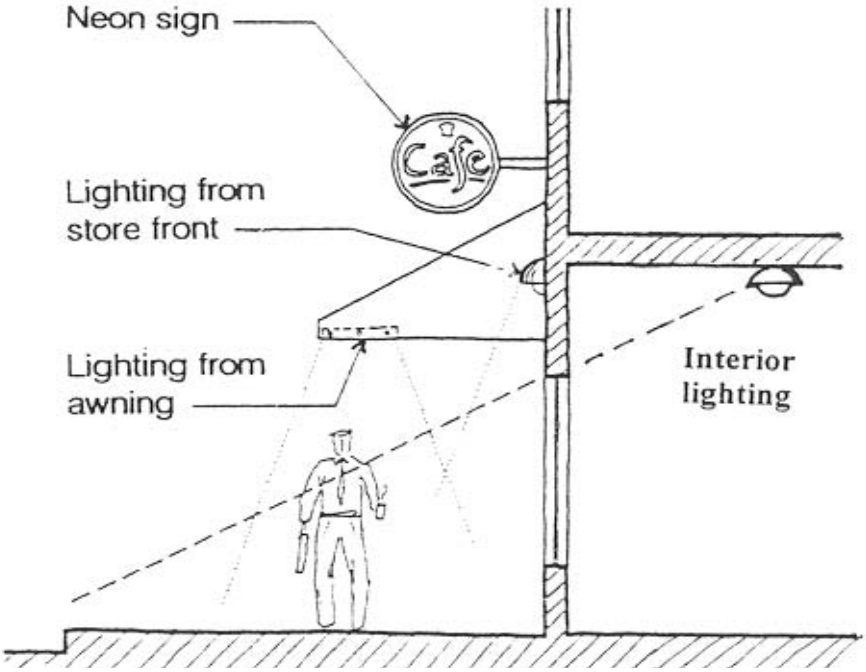
D-10 Commercial Lighting

Appropriate levels of lighting should be provided in order to promote visual interest and a sense of security for people in commercial districts during evening hours. Lighting may be provided by incorporation into the building façade, the underside of overhead weather protection, on and around street furniture, in merchandising display windows, in landscaped areas, and/or on signage.

Consider employing one or more of the following lighting strategies as appropriate:

- Illuminate distinctive features of the building, including entries, signage, canopies, and areas of architectural detail and interest.
- Install lighting in display windows that spills onto and illuminates the sidewalk.
- Orient outside lighting to minimize glare within the public right-of-way or in adjacent property.

Well-designed illumination creates a distinctive and secure entry.



Soft, yet secure sidewalk illuminaction can be created from multiple sources.

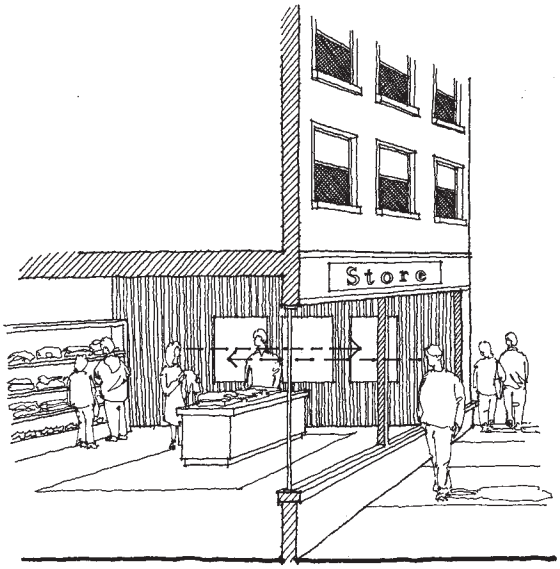
D-11 Commercial Transparency

Commercial storefronts should be transparent, allowing for a direct visual connection between pedestrians on the sidewalk and the activities occurring on the interior of a building. Blank walls should be avoided.

Explanation and Examples

Transparency at the street level enlivens the street environment, providing visual interest along the sidewalk and at night providing a secondary, more intimate, source of lighting. The following are examples of desirable design treatments that should be encouraged:

- windows that are sized and located to allow the most visibility into the interior spaces
- low-reflective glass
- limited use of appropriate display cases in place of windows
- windows that do not allow views of an interior wall or equipment



Storefront transparency allows for a visual connection between interior activities and people on the sidewalk.

Transparency allows store light to "spill" out onto the sidewalk at night, creating a second, more intimate source of lighting and a more vibrant street front.

Impeding window transparency disconnects building use from the street, deadening the pedestrian environment and may be a code violation.

D-12 Residential Entries and Transitions

For residential projects in commercial zones, the space between the residential entry and the sidewalk should provide security and privacy for residents and a visually interesting street front for pedestrians. Residential buildings should enhance the character of the streetscape with small gardens, stoops and other elements that work to create a transition between the public sidewalk and private entry.

1. Townhouse/Rowhouse

Explanation and Examples

Buildings with individual unit entries require special considerations such as:

- entrances with stoops are preferred because they provide semi-public/semi-private spaces, encourage activity in front of units, and reduce visibility into residential units;
- providing transitional spaces such as portals or arcades;
- paving of on-site walkways or entryways that is distinctive in color, pattern or texture; and
- providing "surrounds" around entry doors using color, texture and material variation creates visual distinction for residential entries.

Entries that are setback and incoporate landscaping help to establish a semi-private transitional space between a residential entry and the public sidewalk.

Unimposing gates help to define a private residential entry while maintaining visual connection with the street.

Portal entries establish semi-private spaces and provide shelter.

Stoops provide a transitional space between semi-public and semi-private space and grade differentiation reduces visibility into residential units.

Distinctive paving helps to define residential entries.

Courtyard entries provide a transition zone.

2. Multi-Family/Mixed-Use

Explanation and Examples

Main entrances of multi-family/mixed-use buildings should be located on the "primary pedestrian corridor" within commercial areas and should be clearly identifiable. Entries should be inviting to pedestrians while also providing adequate transition between public and private space. Consider the following:

- Recessed or courtyard entries provide a transition between private and public spaces and open space along the street front.
- Stooped entries or "grand stairways" set residential entrances apart from the sidewalk, create visual interest, and can provide informal seating and meeting spaces.
- Contrasting trim or "surrounds," lighting, differentiated overhead weather protection and/or grand canopies can create distinctive entries and provide comfortable transition zones for pedestrians.
- Accented paving helps to call out a residential entry and adds interest to the sidewalk.
- Entrances to residential uses within mixed use buildings should be distinctive so that they stand out from adjacent commercial uses.
- A change in glazing materials helps to differentiate between and residential and commercial uses.
- Distinctive signage for residential entries or addresses helps to define residential uses and facilitates wayfinding.

An entry "surround" and accented paving help to call out a residential entry and adds visual interest.

A residential entry should be distinguishable from adjacent commercial uses.

This distinctive weather canopy defines an entry and provides cover.

Incorporating a variation in color, material or texture adds visual distinction to a residential entry.

E. Landscaping

E-1 Landscaping to Reinforce Design Continuity with Adjacent Sites

Where possible, and where there is not another overriding concern, landscaping should reinforce the character of neighboring properties and abutting streetscape.

- ***Examples***

Several ways to reinforce the landscape design character of the local neighborhood are listed below:

Street trees

If a street has uniform planting of street trees, or a distinctive species, plant street trees that match the planting pattern or species.

Similar plant materials

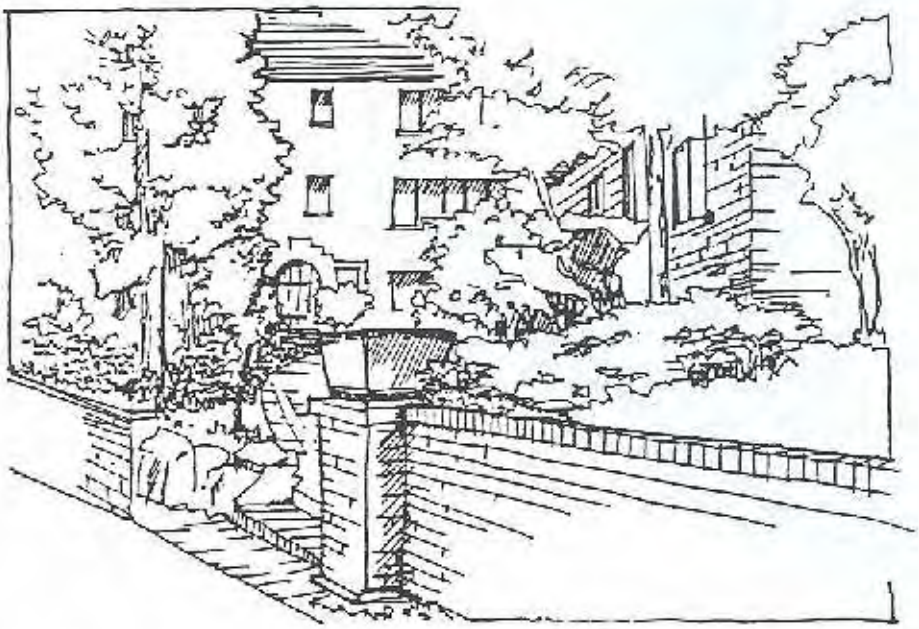
When many lots on a block feature similar landscape materials, emphasis on these materials will help a new project fit into the local context.

Similar construction materials, textures, colors, or elements

Extending a low brick wall, using paving similar to a neighbor's or employing similar stairway construction are ways to achieve design continuity.

E-2 Landscaping to Enhance the Building and/or Site

Landscaping, including living plant material, special pavements, trellises, screen walls, planters, site furniture and similar features should be appropriately incorporated into the design to enhance the project.

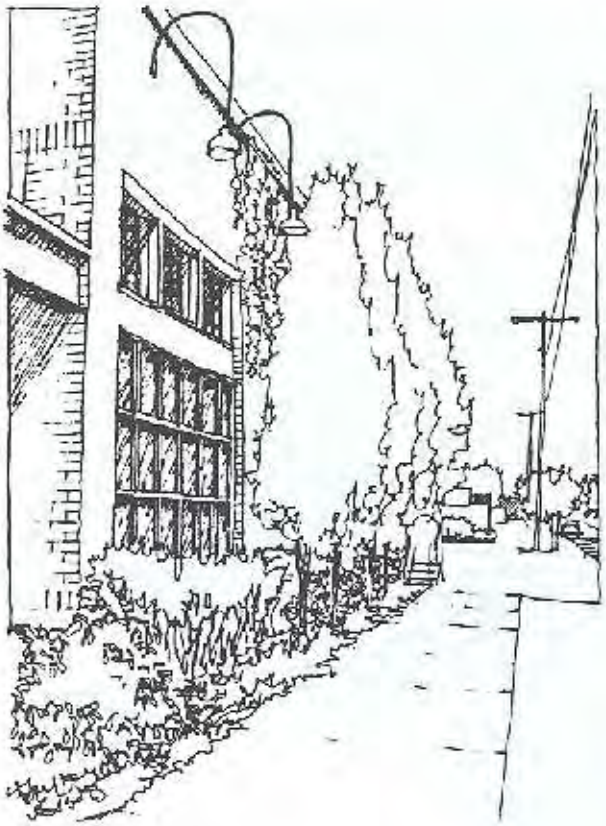


Creative landscaping and a well detailed, low wall help create a garden for the residents in the entry forecourt of this residential building.

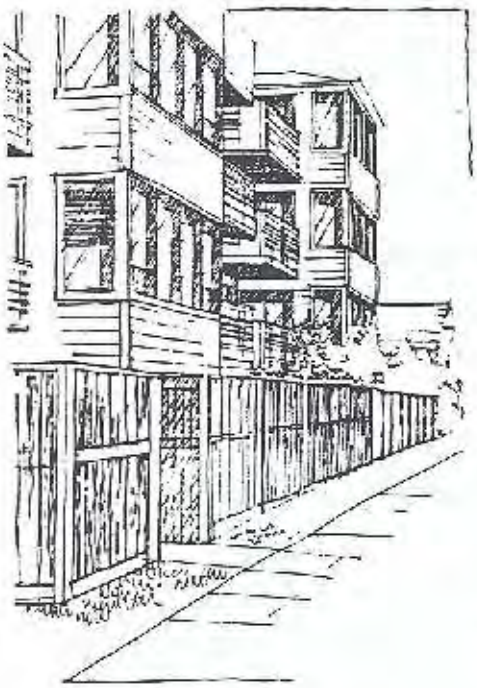
- *Examples*

Landscape enhancement of the site may include some of the approaches or features listed below:

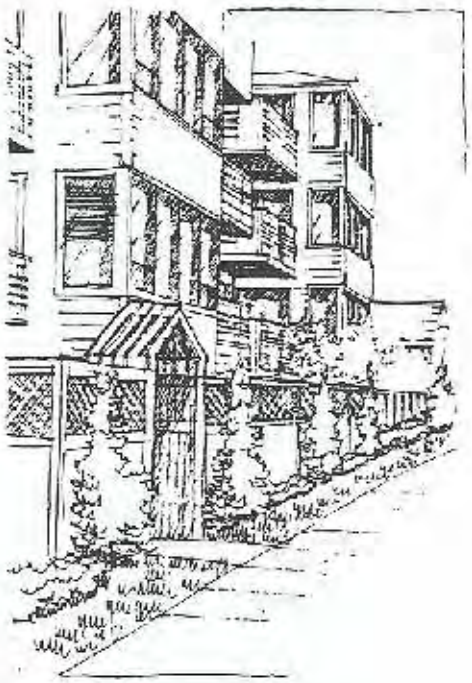
- Soften the form of the building by screening blank walls, terracing retaining walls, etc.
- Increase privacy and security through screening and/or shading.
- Provide a framework such as a trellis or arbor for plants to grow on.
- Incorporate a planter guard or low planter wall as part of the architecture.
- Distinctively landscape open areas created by building modulation.
- Incorporate upper story planter boxes or roof planters.
- Include a special feature such as a courtyard, fountain or pool.
- Emphasize entries with special planting in conjunction with decorative paving and/or lighting.
- Screen a building from view by its neighbors, or an existing use from the new building.



Vines, hardy shrubs and columnar trees used to landscape a narrow planting bed.



Plain Wall



Improved condition with trellis and landscaping

Note how the lattice work and landscaping improve the pedestrian environment.

E-3 Landscape Design to Address Special Site Conditions

The landscape design should take advantage of special on-site conditions such as high-bank front yards, steep slopes, view corridors, or existing significant trees and off-site conditions such as greenbelts, ravines, natural areas, and boulevards.

- ***Explanation and Examples***

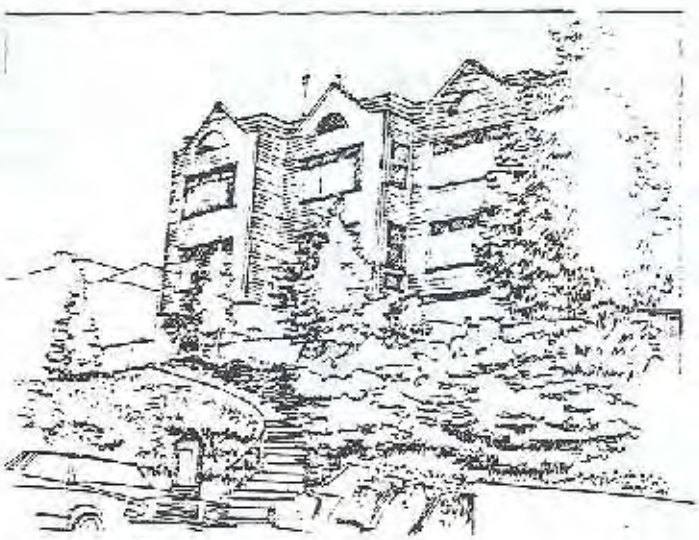
The following conditions may merit special attention. The examples suggest some ways to address the issue.

High-bank front yard

Where the building's ground floor is elevated above a sidewalk pedestrian's eye level, landscaping can help make the transition between grades. Several techniques are listed below.

- Rockeries with floral displays, live ground cover or shrubs.
- Terraces with floral displays, ground covers or shrubs.
- Low retaining walls with raised planting strips.
- Stone or brick masonry walls with vines or shrubs.

Positive example of a high-bank front yard landscaped with evergreen ground cover.

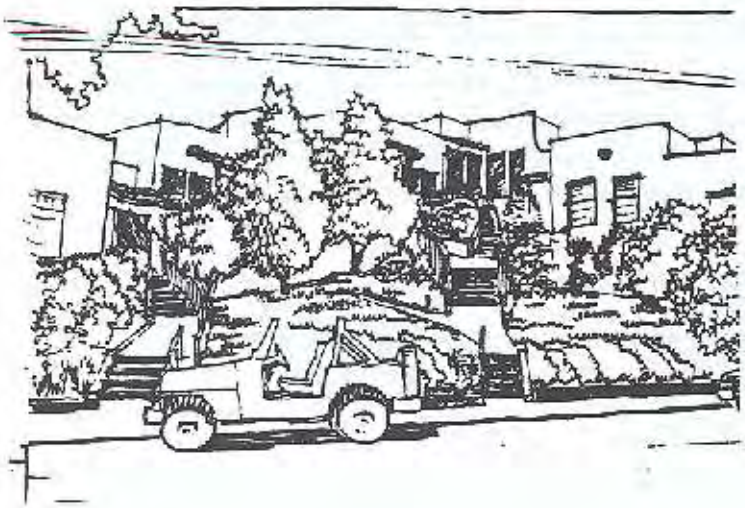


Barrier-free access

Where wheelchair ramps must be provided on a street front, the ramp structure might include a planting strip on the sidewalk side of the elevated portions of the ramp.

Steep topography

Special plantings or erosion control measures may be necessary to prevent site destabilization or to enhance the visual qualities of the site in connection with a neighborhood improvement program.



This residential project enhanced its steeply sloping site with generous landscape.

Boulevards

Incorporate landscaping which reflects and reinforces the unique character of these streets.

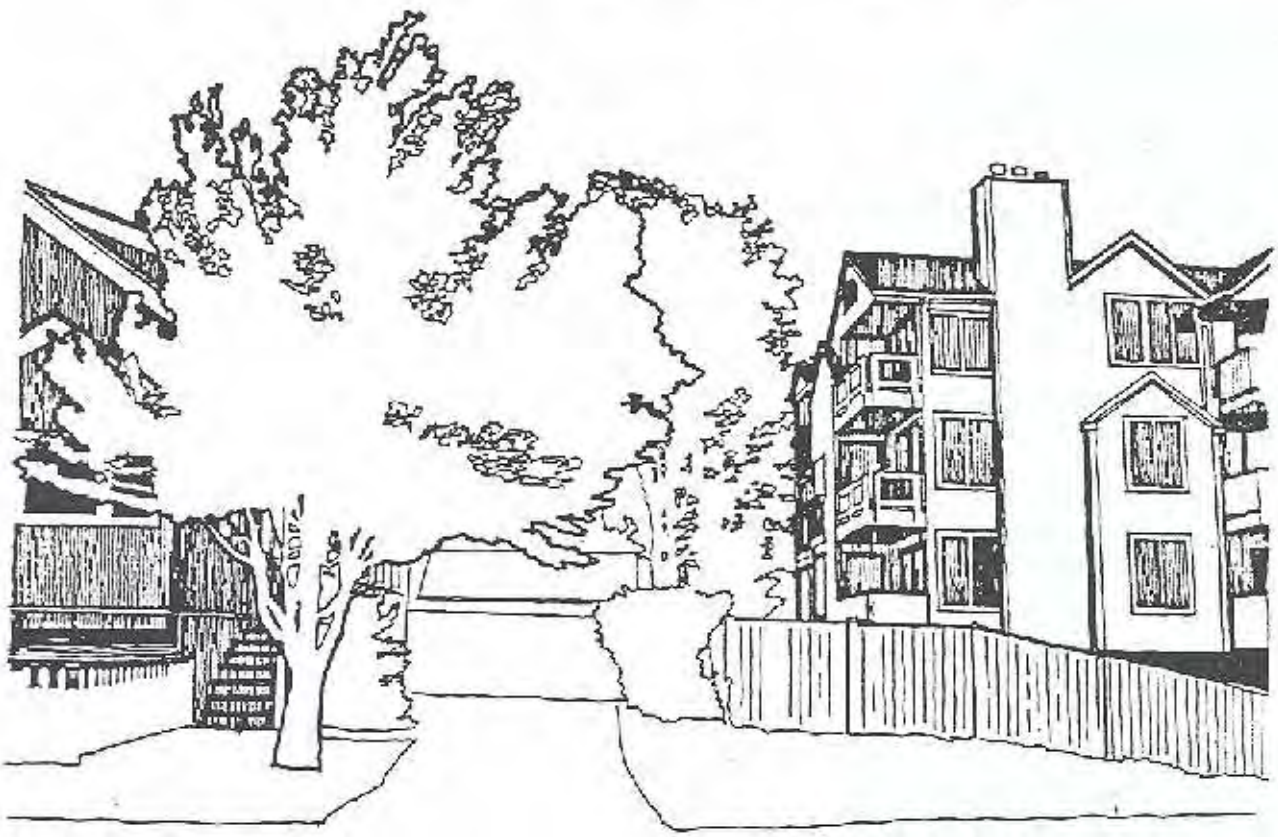
Boulevards are important visual corridors linking parks and neighborhoods with bands of green. Project landscaping can emphasize their special character.

Greenbelt or other natural setting

- Minimize the removal of significant trees.
- Replace trees that were removed with new trees.
- Emphasize naturalizing or native landscape materials.
- Retain natural greenbelt vegetation that contributes to greenbelt preservation.
- Select colors that are more appropriate to the natural setting

On-site vegetation

- Retain significant vegetation where possible.
- Use new plantings similar to vegetation removed during construction, when that vegetation was distinctive.



Site planning that retains significant trees can make a new project seem more like an established part of its neighborhood.

IV. Design Guidelines Checklist

This checklist is intended as a summary of the issues addressed by the guidelines. It is not meant to be a regulatory device or a substitute for the language and examples found in the guidelines themselves. Rather, it is a tool for assisting the determination about which guidelines are most applicable on a particular site.

A. Site Planning

	N/A	Lower Priority	Higher Priority
1. Reinforce existing site characteristics	☐	☐	☐
2. Reinforce existing streetscape characteristics	☐	☐	☐
3. Entry clearly identifiable from the street	☐	☐	☐
4. Encourage human activity on street	☐	☐	☐
5. Minimize intrusion into privacy on adjacent sites	☐	☐	☐
6. Use space between building and sidewalk to provide security, privacy and interaction (residential projects)	☐	☐	☐
7. Maximize open space opportunity on site (residential projects)	☐	☐	☐
8. Minimize parking and auto impacts on pedestrians and adjoining property	☐	☐	☐
9. Discourage parking in street front	☐	☐	☐
10. Orient building to corner and parking away from corner on public street fronts (corner lots)	☐	☐	☐

B. Height, Bulk and Scale

1. Provide sensitive transition to nearby, less-intensive zones	☐	☐	☐

	N/A	Lower Priority	Higher Priority
C. Architectural Elements and Materials			
1. Complement positive existing character and/or respond to nearby historic structures	☐	☐	☐
2. Unified architectural concept	☐	☐	☐
3. Use human scale and human activity	☐	☐	☐
4. Use durable, attractive and well-detailed finish materials	☐	☐	☐
5. Minimize garage entrances	☐	☐	☐
D. Pedestrian Environment			
1. Provide convenient, attractive and protected pedestrian entry	☐	☐	☐
2. Avoid blank walls	☐	☐	☐
3. Minimize height of retaining walls	☐	☐	☐
4. Minimize visual and physical intrusion of parking lots on pedestrian areas	☐	☐	☐
5. Minimize visual impact of parking structures	☐	☐	☐
6. Screen dumpsters, utility and service areas	☐	☐	☐
7. Consider personal safety	☐	☐	☐
E. Landscaping			
1. Reinforce existing landscape character of neighborhood	☐	☐	☐
2. Landscape to enhance the building or site	☐	☐	☐
3. Landscape to take advantage of special site conditions	☐	☐	☐