

§9-3 DESIGN GUIDELINES

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[\[See Commentary\]](#)

§9-3-1 PURPOSE AND INTENT

Left to its own workings, the real estate development industry is unlikely to produce development that is coordinated with adjacent buildings and uses. These design guidelines provide a set of criteria to evaluate the appropriateness of proposed changes to individual buildings, properties, and land use activities in a designated area or community. The ultimate goal of design guidelines is to direct physical and visual changes to create an architecturally and physically cohesive area of specified character. Design guidelines are meant to create a strong identity for the area as a distinctive place to shop, visit, work, and live. Design guidelines are a means of bringing together the interests of individual property owners and the general public to achieve mutual benefits.

Without guidance, future developments will likely be self-contained, compartmentalized, and without coherence and relationship with other developments. Without guidance, developers are unlikely to interrelate streets, buildings, human uses, and natural systems in a manner that results in a coordinated, pleasing, and sustainable-built environment across property lines.

These guidelines are intended to help site planners and urban designers look beyond their individual buildings and single parcels of land, to shape the physical features of their development in a manner consistent with preferred principles of community design. The guidelines seek to help unify what would otherwise become a disparate and irreconcilable collection of land uses and architectural traditions.

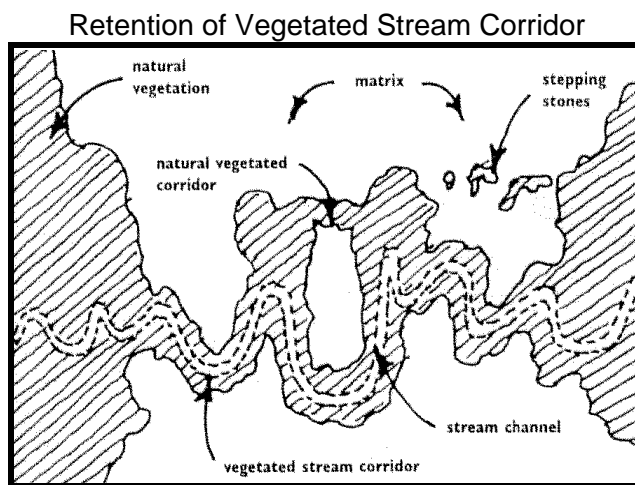
§9-3-2 SITE PLANNING

The site plan, building design, and landscaping of new development should achieve high quality and appearance that will enhance and be compatible with the character of the surrounding area.

Site planning and design of projects proposed (adjacent to dissimilar land uses) should carefully address the potential undesirable impacts on existing uses. These impacts may include traffic, parking, circulation and safety issues, light and glare, noise, odors, dust control and security concerns. [\[See Commentary\]](#)

§9-3-3 PROTECTING THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

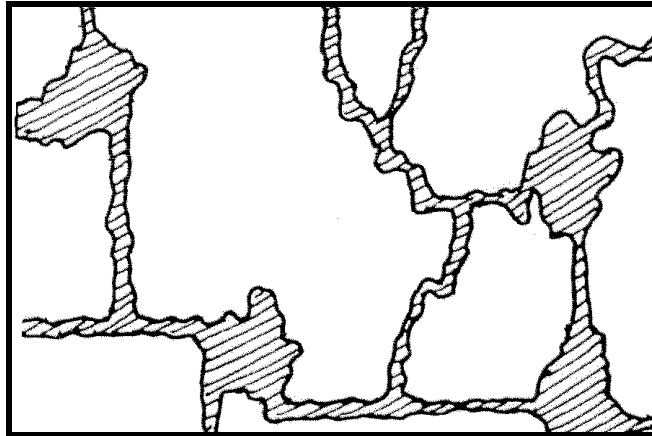
- (a) Evaluate the proposed development's compatibility with the existing environment to determine the limitations and capabilities of the site for development.
- (b) Conserve and protect natural resources, including air quality, trees, natural vegetation, existing topography, streams, creeks, wetlands, watersheds, water quality, and wildlife habitat. Development should be limited to a level that does not exceed the capabilities and requirements of a healthy environment.
- (c) Significant site features such as habitats, natural ground forms, existing site vegetation, large rock outcroppings, water, and significant view corridors should be identified and incorporated into development plans. Where possible, a diversity of habitats is preferred.
- (d) Riparian zones, stream corridors, and wetlands should be protected for their wildlife habitat and other values. Development plans for these areas should treat these components as assets. A continuous, connected, natural vegetative corridor should be preserved along all creek and stream corridors to provide stream quality protection and for the efficient movement of wildlife throughout the area. No fill, removal, or modification of a riparian area should take place, unless there is no reasonable and feasible alternative. The alteration or improvement of significant natural resource areas where permitted, should ensure that potential losses are mitigated and best management practices are employed to minimize permanent damage. (See Figure).



Source: Dramstad, Olson and Forman 1996.

- (e) Existing vegetation should be retained to the maximum extent possible. Clearing of native vegetation should be limited to that required for the provision of essential purposes (i.e., access, building, sewage disposal, etc.). Where appropriate, existing native vegetation should be enhanced with plantings of the same variety.
- (f) Preserve patches of high-quality habitat, as large and circular as possible, feathered at the edges, and connected by wildlife corridors. (See Figure).

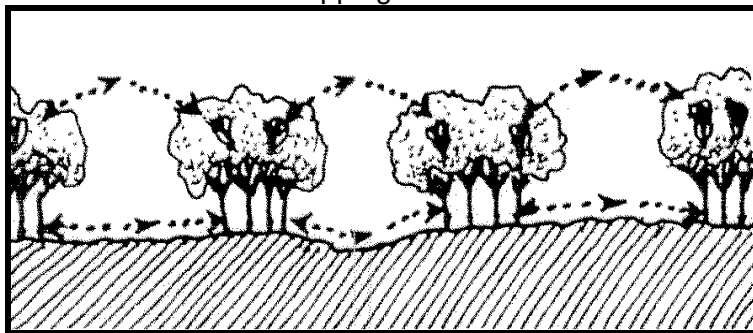
Habitat Patch Preservation and Connection



Source: Dramstad, Olson and Forman 1996.

When continuous greenspace corridors cannot be provided or must be broken up for road access or other valid reasons, patches should be retained as “stepping stones” for wildlife corridors. (See Figure).

Stepping Stones



Source: Dramstad, Olson and Forman 1996.

§9-3-4

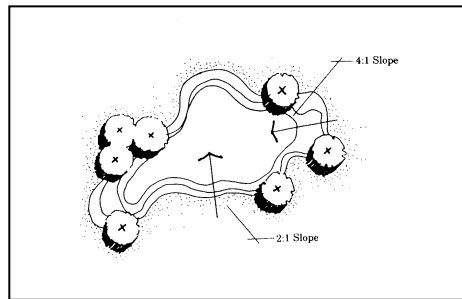
SITE GRADING

- (a) Developments should be designed to fit the existing contours and landform of the site and to minimize the amount of earthwork. Excavation and earthwork should be kept to a minimum to reduce visual impacts and erosion. Where cut and fill is required, balancing the cut and fill is highly encouraged.
- (b) Abrupt or unnatural-appearing grading is strongly discouraged. Avoid the creation of harsh, easily eroded banks and cuts.
- (c) The height and length of retaining walls should be minimized and screened with appropriate landscaping. Tall, smooth-faced concrete retaining walls should be avoided in highly visible areas. Terracing should be considered as an alternative to the use of tall or prominent retaining walls, particularly in highly visible areas on hillsides.
- (d) Disturbed areas that are not used for roads, buildings, or other auxiliary uses should be replanted.

§9-3-5 DRAINAGE

- (a) Natural on-site drainage patterns should be used where practicable. Detain runoff with open, natural drainage systems where possible.
- (b) Design man-made lakes and stormwater ponds for maximum habitat value and/or to serve as amenity features. (See Figure).

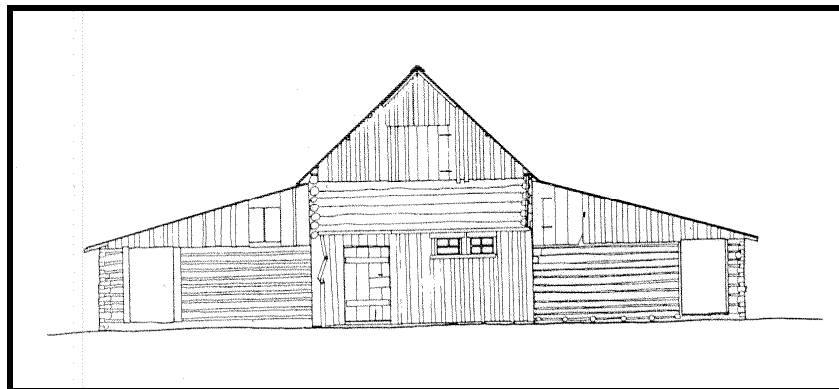
Drainage Feature as an Amenity



§9-3-6 RETAINING RURAL RESIDENTIAL CHARACTER

- (a) Where possible, barns and other agricultural outbuildings in reasonably good condition and which contribute to the rural character of the area should be retained on the site (see Figure).

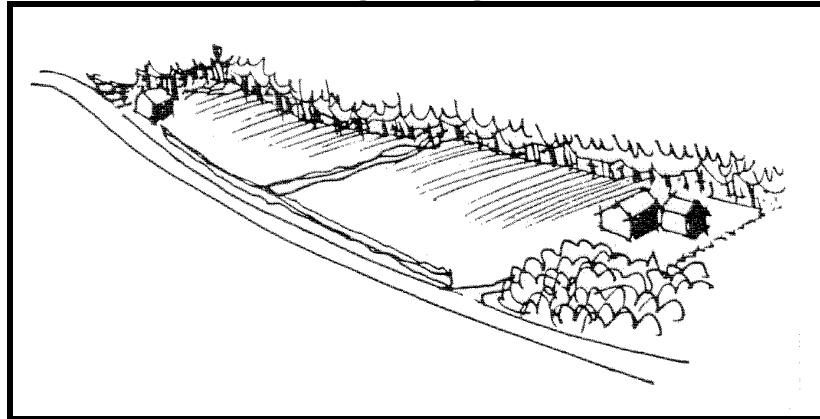
Retention of Agricultural Structures



Source: Stokes et al. 1989.

- (b) Dwellings and driveways should not be prominent visual features within the landscape along any existing rural road. Dwellings and associated outbuildings along existing rural roads should have a low visual impact. When a rural residential dwelling is proposed in an area with an open field or area with agricultural character, it should be sited at the edge of the field if possible to preserve the view of the open field, pasture, or agricultural scene (see Figure).

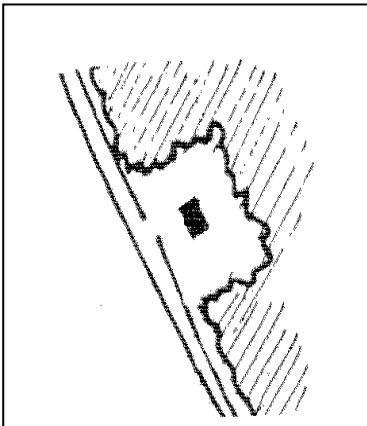
Figure
Site Dwellings at Edges of Fields



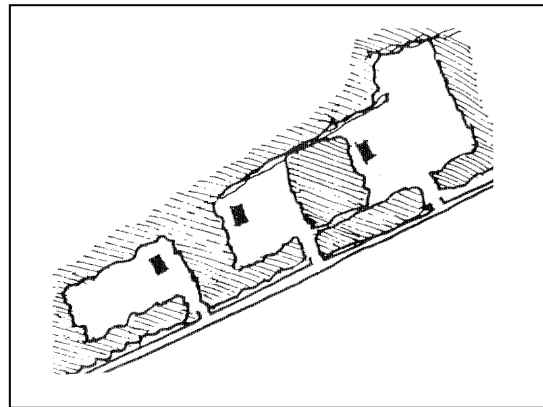
Source: Craighead 1991.

- (c) In siting rural residential dwellings, gouging out (i.e., clearcutting) building sites along the road (Figure) is strongly discouraged. Instead, rural dwelling sites should leave a natural buffer along the road and houses should be sited at the edge of clearings rather than in the center (Figure).

Clearcutting Discouraged



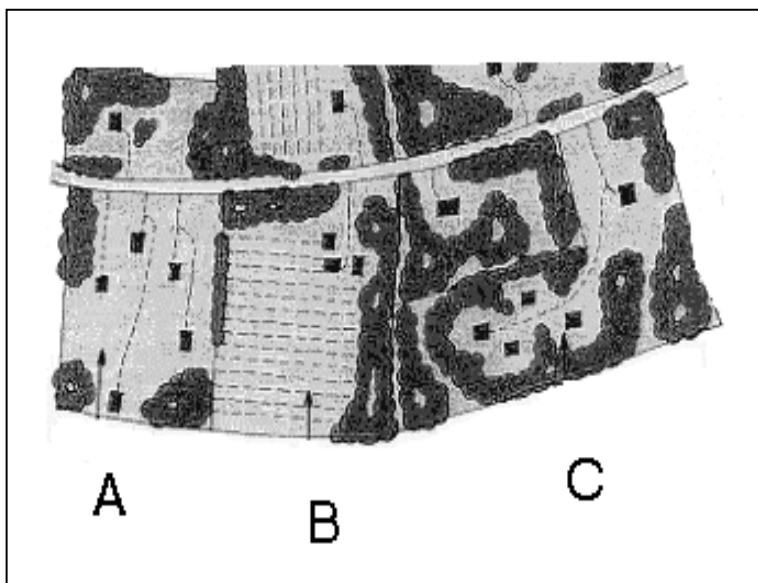
Dwellings Buffered



Source: Craighead 1991.

- (d) Dwellings sited within an open field are discouraged (see area A in Figure 9-3-6.5). The location of dwellings in Area B of the illustration improves on the locations shown in area A, but the residences are still visible from the road. In the bottom part of area C (Figure), dwellings are clustered and screened from view. In the top part of area C, the road should be located at the edge of the clearing rather than in the middle of the field, and the dwellings should be located closer to the tree line.

Siting Dwellings in Rural Areas



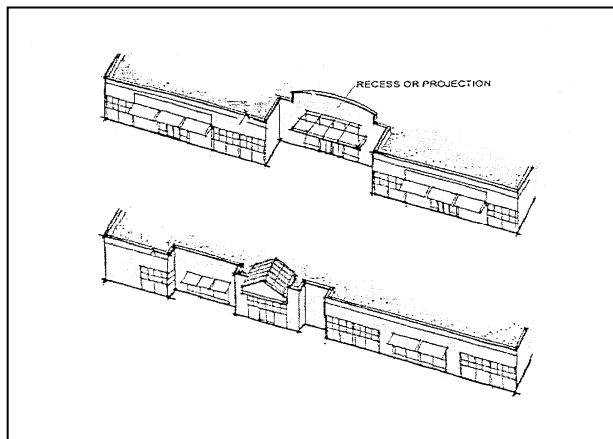
Source: Arendt 1994.

§9-3-7 ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN

- (a) Architectural design should be compatible with the developing character of the neighboring area. Design compatibility includes complementary building style, form, size, color, materials, and detailing.
- (b) The designer should consider each of the following contexts as part of the design process:
 - 1. Size (the relationship of the project to its site);
 - 2. Scale (the relationship of the building to those around it);
 - 3. Massing (the relationship of the building's various parts to each other);
 - 4. Fenestration (the placement of windows and doors);
 - 5. Rhythm (the relationship of fenestration, recesses and projections);
 - 6. Setback (in relation to setback of immediate surroundings);
 - 7. Materials (their compatibility with the historic district); and,
 - 8. Context (the overall relationship of the project to its surroundings).
- (c) Efforts to coordinate the height of buildings and adjacent structures are encouraged; this is especially applicable where buildings are located very close to each other. It is often possible to adjust the height of a wall, cornice, or parapet line to match that of an adjacent building. Similar design linkages, such as window lines, should be placed in a pattern that reflects the same elements on neighboring buildings.
- (d) Diversity of architectural design should be encouraged. "Theme" or stylized architecture which is characteristic of a particular historic period or trend is discouraged, unless the existing building or site is historically important to the district or necessary for architectural harmony.
- (e) Multiple buildings on the same site should be designed to create a cohesive visual relationship between the buildings.

- (f) Long or continuous wall planes shall be avoided, particularly in pedestrian activity areas, where buildings should exhibit more detail and elements appropriate for close range pedestrian view. Outside of pedestrian retail districts, building surfaces over two stories high or 50 feet in length should be relieved with changes of wall plane (i.e., recesses and projections, see Figure) that provide strong shadow or visual interest.

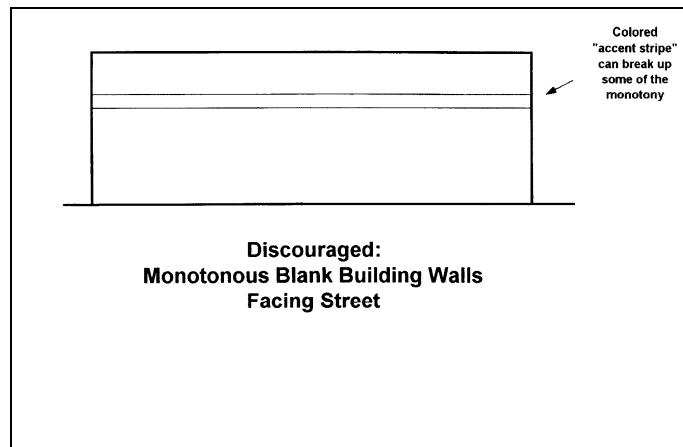
Recesses and Projections



§9-3-8 BUILDING MATERIALS, FINISHES, AND COLORS

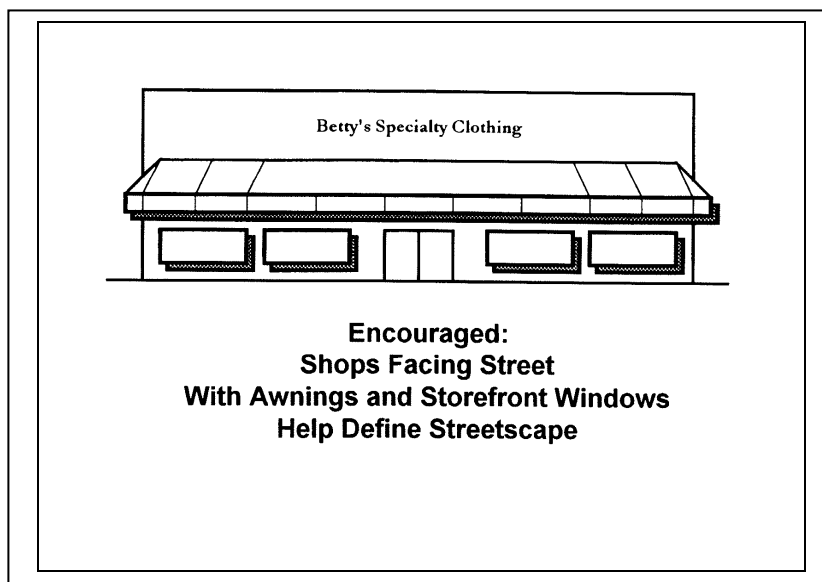
- (a) All sides of a building may have an impact on its surroundings and should be considered for treatment with an architectural finish of primary materials (i.e., brick, wood and stone), unless other materials demonstrating equal or greater quality are used. As a general rule, front facades should be at least 80 percent brick and stone. Side facades should be at least 50 percent brick and stone. Rear facades do not have a minimum requirement for primary materials and can consist entirely of secondary materials (e.g., stucco). Tertiary materials (i.e., wood and metal) should be used for decorative elements and trim only.
- (b) Exterior building materials on the primary structure should not include smooth-faced concrete block, tilt-up concrete panels, or prefabricated steel panels.
- (c) The following types of building materials should not be used: highly reflective, shiny, or mirror-like materials; mill-finish (non-colored) aluminum metal windows or door frames; exposed, unfinished foundation walls; exposed plywood or particle board; and unplastered, exposed concrete masonry blocks.
- (d) Material or color changes generally should occur at a change of plane. Piecemeal embellishment and frequent changes in material should be avoided.
- (e) A horizontal accent stripe (e.g., a foot wide stripe of different color, see Figure) should be used to help reduce the monotonous color and break up the appearance of large building walls.

Monotonous Blank Building Walls



- (f) Facade colors should be low reflectance, and subtle, neutral, or earth-tone colors. High-intensity colors, metallic colors, black, or fluorescent colors should not be used. Building trim and accent areas may feature brighter colors, including primary colors, provided that the width of the trim shall not exceed four feet.
- (g) Building colors should be carefully chosen so that each building color complements that of its neighbors. Colors can be classified as the "base" color (used on the majority of the building surface), "trim" color (used on the window trim, fascia, balustrades, and posts), and "accent" color (used on signs, awnings, and doors). The base color should consist of more subdued earth tones or brick shades. Trim colors should have contrasting lighter or darker shade than the base color. If natural brick is used, it should not be painted.
- (h) The use of awnings on buildings is recommended to provide much needed protection from sun, wind, and rain, and to improve aesthetics of the building exterior.

Figure
Awnings and Storefront Windows



- (a) It is recommended that awnings be constructed with a durable frame, covered by a canvas material. Awnings that are backlit through translucent materials may be acceptable but are not particularly encouraged. Aluminum and other metal canopies are acceptable in most instances, particularly when integrated into shopping center designs. Flameproof vinyl, canvas or metal awnings and canopies may be used.
- (b) Solid colors are preferred over striped awnings, but striping is permitted if colors complement the character of the structure or group of buildings.
- (c) Awnings are encouraged for first floor retail uses to provide architectural interest and to encourage pedestrian activity. Where awnings are used, they should be designed to coordinate with the design of the building and any other awnings along the same block face.
- (d) The design of fences and walls shall be compatible with the architecture of the main building(s) and should use similar materials. All walls or fences 50 feet in length or longer, and four feet in height or taller, should be designed to minimize visual monotony by changing plane, height, material or material texture, or significant landscape massing. Chain link fencing is discouraged. Use of special fencing design or materials should be discussed in cases where site security is paramount. If used, chain link fences should be vinyl coated (black or green colored vinyl encouraged).
- (e) All garbage dumpsters and other similar areas devoted to the storage of waste materials should be screened on three sides of said dumpster or area, with a minimum six-foot high solid wooden fence or a wall constructed of materials substantially similar in appearance to the building on site. In addition, said dumpster areas should be gated on the fourth side with a material that provides opaque screening.

§9-3-9 AUTOMOBILE-RELATED ESTABLISHMENTS

- (a) Auto service facilities should not have their service bays facing the street, and parking for all uses should be located to the side or rear of the building rather than in the front yard. Service areas and/or service bays should be screened or sited so they are not visible from the street.
- (b) Vehicles under repair should be kept either inside a structure or in an area that is screened from view from the street.
- (c) Service areas shall provide adequate queuing space that does not impede vehicle circulation through the site or result in vehicles stacking into the street.
- (d) Perimeter and security fencing, when needed, should be constructed of attractive materials that are compatible with the design and materials used throughout the project.
- (e) Razor wire or electric fencing should not be used, and chain link fencing is discouraged, but if used, should be vinyl coated.
- (f) Separate structures on the site (i.e., canopy, car wash, cashier's booth, etc.) should have consistent architectural detail and design elements to provide a cohesive project site. If a car wash is incorporated into the project, it should be well integrated into the design. The car wash opening should be sited so that it is not directly visible as the primary view from the street into the project site.
- (g) Where permitted, the outside storage or display of vehicles, equipment, and merchandise to be rented, leased, or sold, including manufactured home sales, should be visible along no more than 30 percent of the frontage of the property abutting a highway or street, excluding approved driveway entrances and exits.

Screening may be accomplished by using a natural vegetative buffer; a building; an earthen berm; a 100 percent opaque, solid wooden fence or wall; or a combination of these screening methods. The use of low-lying landscaping that does not screen the display areas from the public view right-of-way would not comply with this guideline.

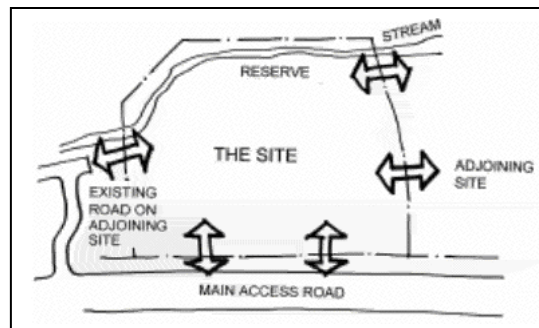
§9-3-10 INDUSTRIAL DISTRICTS

- (a) Industrial districts are typically laid out in a gridiron of large blocks, 1,000 to 2,000 feet long and 400 to 1,000 feet deep. Road right-of-ways should be 80 to 100 feet for major roads and 60 feet for secondary roads. Curves and radii shall be large enough to accommodate large trailer trucks.
- (b) All areas devoted to the outside storage of vehicles, merchandise, and/or equipment that are not intended for display, or for public rent, lease, or sale, shall be screened from view from the right-of-way of the highway or public road along the entire property frontage, except in areas where access crossings have been approved. A view from the public right-of-way shall not be deemed to comply with this requirement.

§9-3-11 ACCESS

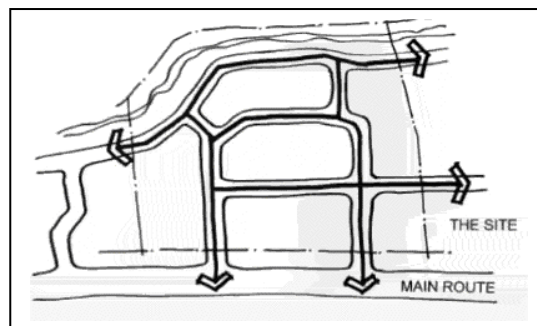
- (a) The entire parcel, rather than simply a particular project, shall be considered in formulating and approving access plans. (See Figure).

Access Considerations

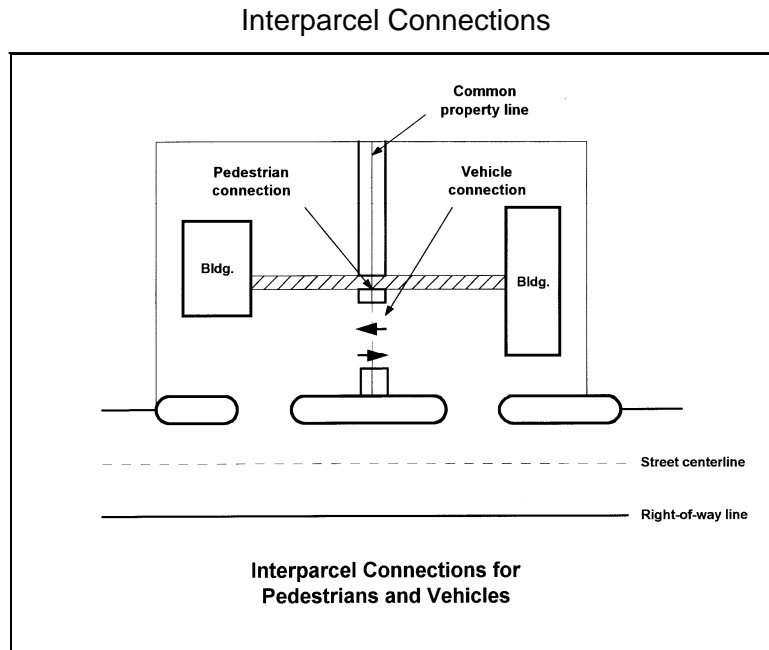


- (b) The street layout within planned communities should provide as many direct links to adjacent sites and surrounding roads as practical. (See Figure).

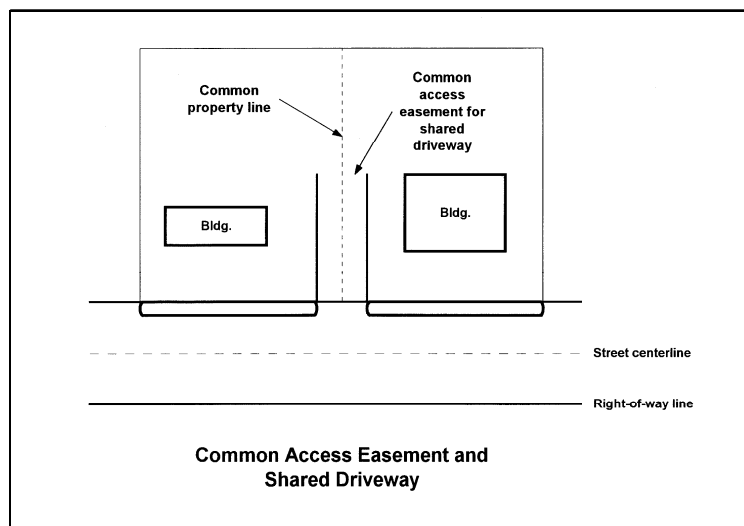
Connectivity



- (c) The street pattern should be designed to allow easy direct access to and from various origins and destinations.
- (d) Interparcel site access, for pedestrians as well as vehicles, should be provided to adjacent properties, when land uses are compatible. (See Figure).



- (e) Common access easements for shared driveways along state highways and busy streets are strongly encouraged. (See Figure).



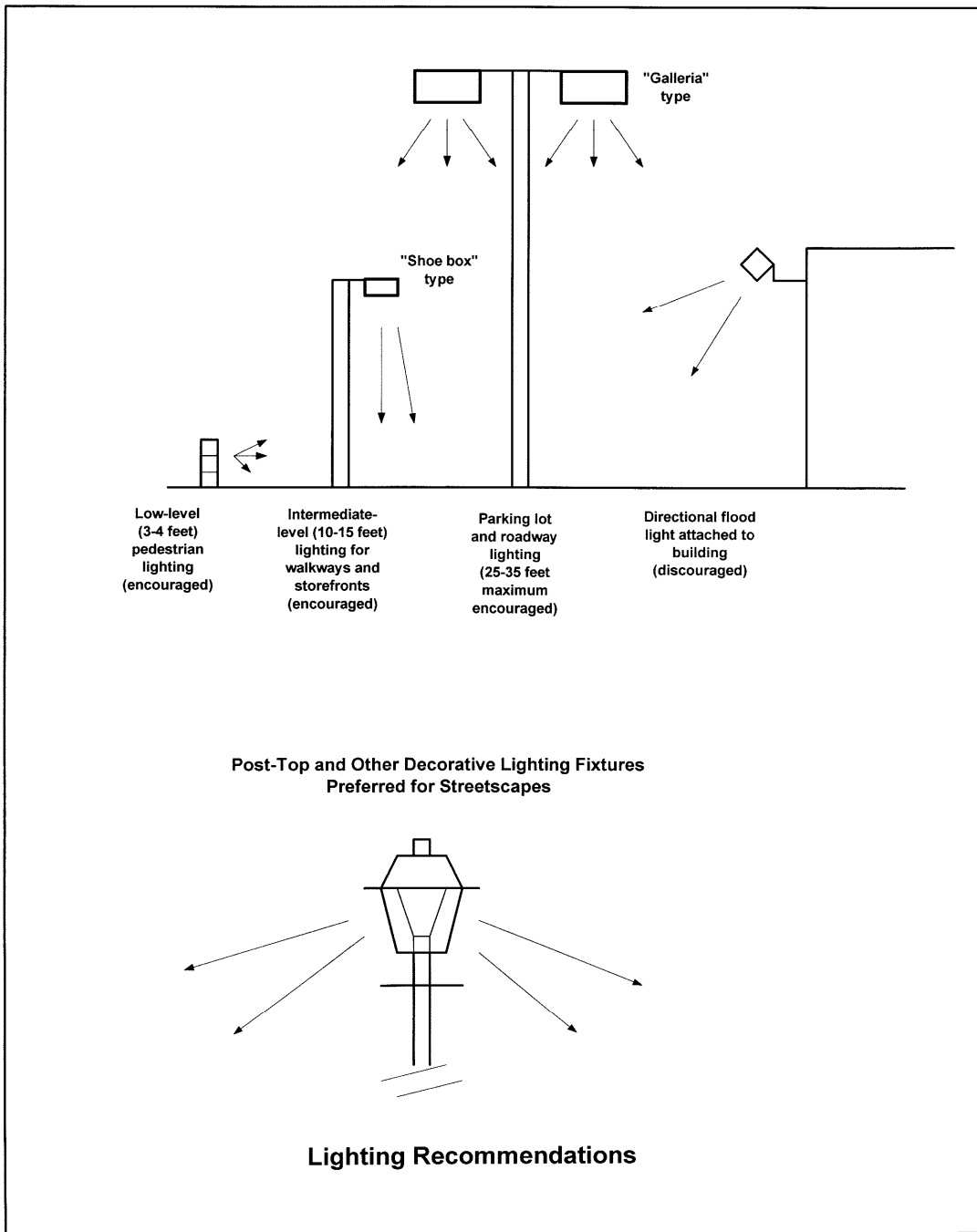
- (f) If at all feasible with the development plan, service functions (e.g., deliveries, maintenance activities) shall be integrated into the circulation pattern in a manner that minimizes conflicts with vehicles and pedestrians. Commercial and industrial

developments should have service and loading areas separate from main circulation and parking areas.

§9-3-12 EXTERIOR LIGHTING

The following are exterior lighting recommendations consistent with the requirements as specified in this code (see Figure)

- (a) Exterior lighting should be architecturally compatible with the building style, material, and colors. Galleria style and shoebox styles (cutoff fixtures) are preferred over cobra type light fixtures and directional floodlights.
- (b) Exterior lighting of the building and site should be designed so that light is not directed off the site, and the light source is shielded from direct offsite viewing. All outdoor light fixtures should be fully shielded or be designed or provided with light angle cut-offs, so as to eliminate uplighting, spill light, and glare.
- (c) Excessive illumination of signage, building, or site should be avoided. Roof lighting, down-lighting washing the building walls, and illuminated awnings are all strongly discouraged.
- (d) Fixture mounting height should be appropriate for the project and the setting. The mounting height of fixtures in smaller parking lots or service areas should not exceed 20 feet, with lower mounting heights encouraged, particularly where adjacent to residential areas or other sensitive land uses. Use of low, bollard-type fixtures that are three to four feet in height, are encouraged as pedestrian area lighting.



Model Land Use Management Code for Small
 Cities and Rural Counties in Georgia

Figure

Jerry Weitz, & Associates, Inc.
 Planning and Development Consultants
 Alpharetta, GA

§9-3-13 PARKING LOT LANDSCAPING

- (a) Parking lots that face a street should be partially screened from the street by a low fence, wall, hedge, berm, or vegetated buffer. If a parking lot fronts an arterial or major collector street, and is of such a size that it dominates views from the fronting arterial/collector street and detracts from the overall streetscape and community appearance, then the parking lot should be screened or buffered with vegetation in its entirety from view along the fronting roadway(s) within the required right-of-way frontage planting strip.
- (b) Landscape islands containing at least one overstory tree, or two understory trees planted in each landscape island, should be provided within parking areas with 10 or more spaces and located in such a manner so as to divide and break up the expanse of parking areas (see Figure). One landscape island should be located at the end of each row of parking spaces in the interior of the parking lot. In addition, one parking lot landscape island should also be provided for every 150 linear feet of parking spaces, whether at the periphery or in the interior of the parking lot. Each landscape island should be of sufficient shape and size so that one overstory tree or two understory trees will fit within the island. No portion of an island should be less than three feet in width.

[\[See References\]](#)

Parking Lot Landscaped Island

