

Special Area Development Guidelines

URBAN AREAS

Site Design - Urban Areas

Setbacks and Building Location

- Locate buildings close to the pedestrian street with off- street parking behind or beside buildings.
- If site is located at a street intersection, place the building at the corner. Do not place parking, loading or service area at the intersection.
- Organize the site so that the buildings frame and reinforce pedestrian circulation. Pedestrians should walk along building fronts rather than along or across parking lots or driveways.



Urban building placement

Access and Circulation

- The goal within the urban environment is more ease and pleasure in walking and less need to use a car. Individual businesses need to be linked to the street, to the sidewalk, to bus stops, to neighborhoods and each other. There should be pedestrian and some vehicular connection. Access must be ADA compliant.
- Pedestrian routes not less than five feet in width should be direct and minimize conflicts with vehicles. Where there are pedestrian pathways from the street to parking areas between buildings ensure, a reasonably safe, and uninterrupted access. Provide a visible crosswalk where pedestrian pathways cross an internal driveway or curb cut.
- Locate bike racks close to main building entrances so they are visible and convenient to use.

Parking Areas (See www.vbgov.com for information on Parking Lots & Structures)

- Wherever possible join parking areas to create an internal circulation network. Minimize or eliminate curb cuts by sharing vehicular access with adjacent properties and or utilizing alleys for access.
- Parking areas should not dominate the frontage of streets. Off street parking areas should be located behind buildings or in the interior of a block whenever possible. Shared parking is strongly encouraged between adjacent or vertically mixed uses whose peak demand is offset from each other.
- Large parking areas should be visually and functionally segmented into several smaller lots.
- Consider the feasibility of providing a parking structure to conserve land and minimize impacts on the environment.
- The building materials of a parking structure should complement surrounding design and be of high quality. Pedestrian entries should be clearly visible. The ground level of a parking structure should include retail, office or some other active use along primary street facades.
- Bicycle rack parking and storage lockers are encouraged inside the parking structure.
- Where appropriate, transit stops (incorporating weather protection) should be included.

Landscaping (See www.vbgov.com for Landscaping Guide)

- Quality landscaping is essential to the built urban environment. Where possible retain the existing natural landscape. The corners of significant street intersections, gateways or site entries should be enhanced by special landscape treatments such as pavers, flowering plants, signage or decorative lighting.
- Fences are recommended only where complementary to the building design. Discourage the use of stockade or chain link fence where visible from any public street.
- Urban open space or plazas should have direct access from adjacent streets and allow for multiple points of entry and be located with regard

to sun, shade and wind. The open space should be visible from the sidewalk allowing passersby to see directly into the space but buffered from moving cars. Partially enclose the space with building walls, freestanding walls, landscaping, or raised planters to create a relaxing outdoor area.

- The importance of street trees and planters should be recognized and planned into the design.

Natural Features

- Undisturbed natural areas and important natural features should be identified during the design process. Unlike suburban and rural areas where there is greater opportunity to preserve large stands of trees, wetlands or hedgerows, the urban area might find a significant focal point within the development to create a distinct sense of place. An example would be working a significant tree specimen into the design of an urban plaza.

Stormwater Management as Landscaping Features

- Whenever possible, stormwater retention and detention systems are encouraged to be designed as open space or landscape amenities.
- When structural systems are provided, plant material should be used to soften the appearance. The design of the system should blend in with natural site features and become a design element of the overall development.
- Nonstructural systems can be of a variety of landscape plant materials that include groundcover, low to mid-height shrubs or a combination thereof.

Lighting

- Site lighting should be designed to reduce light trespass and glare. Pole standards and fixture design should be of a style and scale that is complementary to the area.
- Lighting for pedestrians should be provided from storefronts using either indirect illumination from the building or direct illumination under canopies or awnings.

Signs

- Signs should primarily serve to identify the name, street number and nature of the business establishment. The color and theme of signs should be consistent with the primary building and the surrounding area. The overall surface area and height must be in compliance with the Zoning Ordinance.

Outdoor Art

- Incorporation of outdoor art and other focal points into the overall design of a project creates a stronger identity and is encouraged.

Building Design – Urban Areas

Urban neighborhoods have a higher density of development and a greater intensity of activities. The area might include some mixed use development that integrates retail, office and residential uses within the same structure either vertically mixed in or horizontally. Drive thru windows and services are discouraged in the core of an urban area.

Building Silhouette

The pitch and scale of roof lines should be considered in relationship with adjacent structures.

Spacing between building facades

Design sensitive to the surrounding built and natural conditions. Adjacent buildings should relate in similarity of scale, height and configuration. The use of retail, cafes or restaurants, and higher density residential around the perimeter of an open space area provide pedestrian traffic and uses for the open space. Public open space should provide as many seating opportunities as possible.

Proportion of the primary façade

Buildings located on corners shall provide a building entry, additional building mass and distinctive architectural elements at the corner.

Proportion of windows, bays and doorways

Windows and door openings should be proportioned so that verticals dominate horizontals except for street level storefront, which may be square.

Location and treatment of entry

The primary entrance shall be both architecturally and functionally designed on the front façade of the building facing the primary street.

Retail uses should be placed at street level with office and residential uses placed in the upper levels or in the rear.

Residential building entrances should be raised above the sidewalk to distinguish them from commercial entries and to reinforce their privacy.

Exterior building materials

Building exteriors should have a human scale which helps to relate people to the size of the building. Features that promote human scale would be recessed or projecting entries, individual windows with multiple window panes rather than oversized large single panes of glass, balconies, columns or covered walkways, textured or modular building materials.

Building Scale

Buildings should be considered as being composed of three parts, similar to a column. Each building has a ground floor, upper floors and a roof or parapet.

Shadow patterns

For taller buildings, recess the upper floors to allow sunlight to pass onto the street.

Consider the choices of building materials and colors and how they will interplay with the sun and shade.

Street Design - Urban Areas

Streetscapes

Sidewalks that encourage pedestrian use need to be buffered from cars on both sides. They should not be located directly on the road's edge, since passing traffic can feel dangerous. One simple and inexpensive approach is to allow on-street parking.

Provisions should be made for wider sidewalks in urban commercial areas (minimum range of 12 to 16 feet wide) to accommodate uses such as vendors, merchandising and outdoor seating.

Streets should be designed with street trees that complement the activity of the area without hampering street lighting and sight distances. Residential street trees provide an appropriate canopy that shades the street and sidewalk as well as provide a visual buffer between the street and home. Commercial street trees shade the sidewalk without interfering with signs and building facades.

On-street parking protects pedestrians, benefits merchants, slows traffic, and allows drivers to visit several stores while parking once (instead of having to move from one store's parking lot to the next store's lot). If a sidewalk abuts a parking lot, make sure there are planters or other buffers between the sidewalk and the lot.

Where on street parking is provided, planting and street furniture should be located so as not to conflict with opening doors or pedestrian access.

Consolidate the number of fixtures placed within the right of way; consider the location of street lighting, pedestrian lighting, and hanging planters or banners with other streetscape elements.

Provide for an even distribution of light along sidewalks or pedestrian paths to avoid shadows or dark areas.

Bus routes and stops are encouraged to be placed within an urban or mixed use center.