

Gatlinburg, Tennessee
Gateway to the Smokies



Architectural Guidelines for the Commercial Corridor

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Gatlinburg, Tennessee

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Introduction

These design guidelines have been developed by the city of Gatlinburg, in conjunction with the Clemson University Master of Real Estate Development program. They have been created to assist developers, builders, and architects to design buildings that will reinforce Gatlinburg's mountain village aesthetic. They will also contribute to making the main commercial corridor an excellent pedestrian environment for visitors, residents, and local merchants. While the guidelines are advisory rather than mandatory, following them is strongly encouraged.

Purpose

The guidelines were developed to preserve and enhance the unique architectural character of Gatlinburg's main commercial corridor. This character is critical for the long-term health of the tourist economy because it creates the sense of place that makes Gatlinburg special. The guidelines encourage a respect for history and regional character, while leaving room for creative design and adaptation to changing circumstances.

The design guidelines encourage multiple features that will make walking through the commercial corridor a pleasant and visually interesting experience. For example, eaves and overhangs provide shade from the summer sun. Shake shingles and stacked stone provide the color, texture, and historic reference that are missing when metal siding is used. Buildings with attractive windows and doors engage the street and sidewalk, enticing visitors to stroll, linger, and

explore the many businesses in the downtown area.

Unlike many tourist destinations, Gatlinburg's commercial corridor remains a pedestrian oriented place, where people park their cars and then access individual businesses on foot. This means that buildings must be designed with attention to the details that are noticed by pedestrians, including building materials, textures, colors, windows and doors, arcades and balconies, courtyards and squares, roof massing, and the articulation of building facades. Careful treatment of these elements will ensure that visitors have a positive experience and return year after year.

How to Use the Guidelines

The architectural guidelines are organized according to four features:

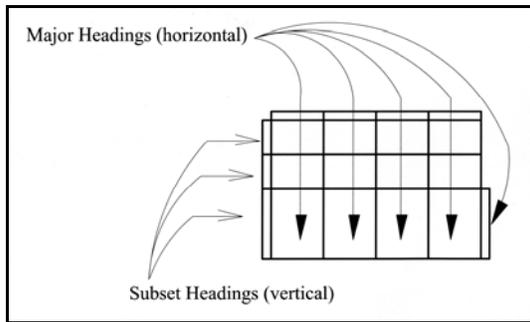
- Building and Site
- Exterior Walls
- Roofs
- Lighting and Signage

The City has identified each of these architectural features as being essential elements in creating a positive streetscape. Each of these features then has four primary characteristics:

- Materials
- Profiles, Articulation, and Configuration
- Application
- Color

The guidelines specify the preferred design characteristics for each architectural feature, with reinforcement of the mountain village aesthetic as an overarching goal. Photographs and

drawings provide examples of both preferred designs and practices that are discouraged.



Guidelines for site design are also provided, covering the following topics:

- Building Placement
- Tall Buildings
- Sidewalks and Street Trees
- Public Spaces
- Parking Lot Landscaping and Screening

The guidelines should be consulted by builders, developers, and architects at an early stage in the design process, to ensure that any proposed new construction makes a positive contribution to the distinctive character of Gatlinburg. If further clarification is needed, the City of Gatlinburg Planning Department can provide assistance.

The Mountain Village Aesthetic

These guidelines encourage the use of the mountain village aesthetic that is deeply rooted in the culture and history of the southern Appalachians. Gatlinburg's prominence as a tourist destination and cultural center derives from its beautiful mountain setting, regional vernacular architecture, and history as a gateway to the Great Smoky Mountains. An

important public purpose is served by encouraging the use of building forms and design elements that reinforce Gatlinburg's special character.

The regional architecture of eastern Tennessee and western North Carolina makes extensive use of natural materials and building forms appropriate to a mountain setting. Early inhabitants constructed log cabins using materials from the abundant forests. These were eventually supplemented by more substantial wood frame, stone, and brick buildings, but all were keyed to the mountain climate and topography. Many different architectural styles have been used, but all have been given a unique regional expression through the use of natural materials such as logs, bark shingles, fieldstone, and river rock.

Mountain village architecture makes use of traditional building forms that fit harmoniously into the mountain landscape. Buildings are visually complex with pitched roofs, varied rooflines, exposed wooden structural elements, and projections such as porches, porticos, and verandas. The textures and colors of natural materials such as wood or stone predominate.

New and remodeled buildings in Gatlinburg should enhance the City's sense of place by expressing local character and avoiding the standardized architecture of freeway interchanges and suburban strip malls. Visitors come to Gatlinburg to enjoy the mountain village atmosphere and high quality pedestrian environment of the City's commercial corridor. Maintaining that distinct architectural character is important culturally and also for the long-term economic success of the City.

Architectural Guidelines

Gatlinburg, Tennessee



Gatlinburg Commercial Corridor

Building and Site

MATERIALS

Building materials should be of high quality and the use of alternative hardscape materials, such as pavers or flagstone, is encouraged.

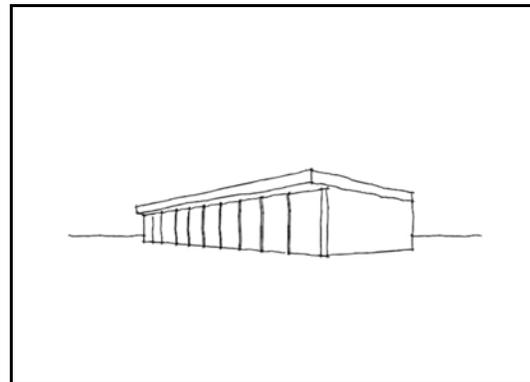
Large blank expanses of concrete, masonry block, or stucco retaining walls are discouraged.

Site walls should include natural or rustic finishes and integrate the building and parking with the site.

Utility covers should be of natural materials and in keeping with the architectural style of the building.



High quality materials and landscaping create an attractive seating area for pedestrians.



Long glass facades should be avoided.



This articulated separation wall blends well with the setting by using natural materials.



These bland materials are inconsistent with the mountain village aesthetic of Gatlinburg.

Building and Site

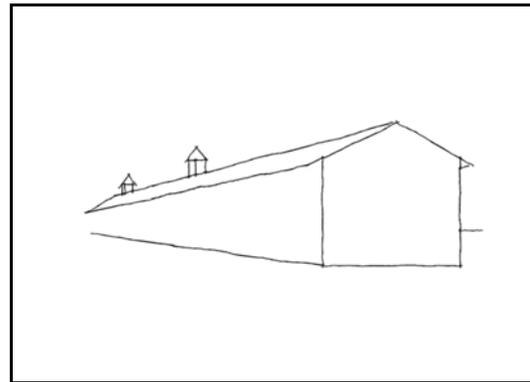
PROFILE, ARTICULATION, AND CONFIGURATION

Buildings should be varied and articulated in order to provide visual interest by their orientation, shape, and massing. They should be harmonious with the mountain setting and site as well as the site topography.

The tops of retaining walls should follow and mimic the natural curves of the site. Long, straight walls with no horizontal or vertical articulation are discouraged.



This building fits well on the site and the stone wall responds to the topography.



Long, monotonous buildings that lack any variety or articulation should be avoided.



The natural materials used in this building help to define a positive sense of place and a consistent visual image that expresses local character.



The lack of variation in the massing of this building detracts from its appearance.

APPLICATION

Large building masses should be avoided in favor of smaller units in order to create a pedestrian scale.

Maximum building height should be reserved for the central portion of the site allowing the building to cascade down to the public way in order to promote the pedestrian scale as well as a sense of openness.

Enough building setback should be provided to allow space for landscape features, green space, and pedestrian common areas.

Site and building design should screen mechanical equipment as well as loading and trash collection areas from the general public, and placement of utilities underground is recommended.

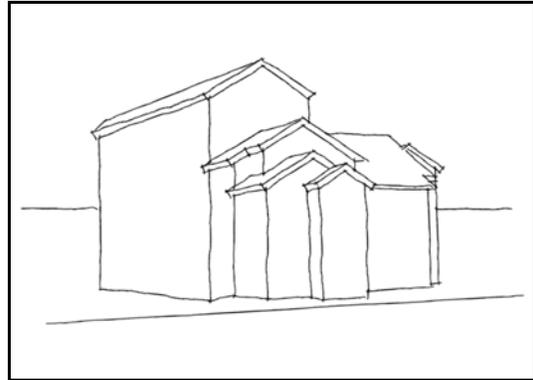
Landscaped relief between buildings and parking should be naturalistic and reflect the scale of the building and site.



The building cascades down to the front of the site and the building massing is broken up into smaller units.



This building functions well at the pedestrian scale. The facade is divided into smaller units. The arcade provides both visual interest and shelter from the elements.



Large building masses should be avoided in favor of smaller units that cascade toward the street.



Unattractive utility areas like this should be screened so that they cannot be seen from the street.

Building and Site

COLOR

Exterior color composition should be in keeping with the natural environment, consistent with the mountain village aesthetic, and in harmony with the surrounding structures.

Earth tones of greens, blue-grays, rusts, grays, and browns are most appropriate. Bright, fluorescent, or pastel colors should be avoided altogether.



The bright colors used here are unattractive and should be avoided.



Stone, wood, and slate shingles provide a color scheme that reinforces the mountain village aesthetic.



The color and texture of the rubble stone in this building fit in well with the mountain landscape.



This attractive color palette is natural and rustic.



Gatlinburg Commercial Corridor

Exterior Walls

MATERIALS

The use of natural materials such as wood and stone are recommended as opposed to exposed standard concrete blocks and vinyl or aluminum siding.

Materials should be used in a manner consistent with their characteristics and visual weight. Stone should be placed at the base or lower levels below wood siding.



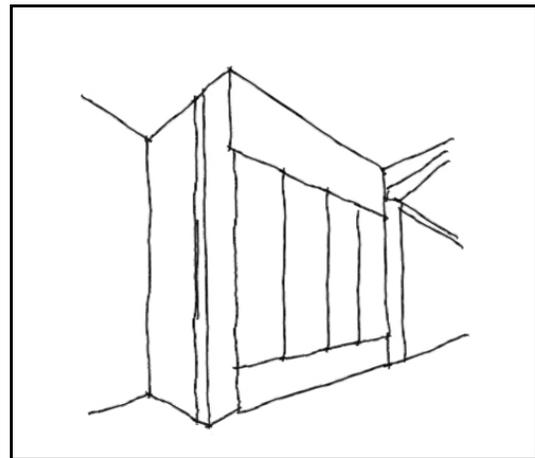
This building creatively uses two variations of wood to break up the vertical masses.



This is a good example of combining wood with stone, with the stone at the base level and the wood above.



Painted concrete block and long unbroken walls with no detail are not appropriate for the commercial corridor.



Facades made entirely of glass should be avoided.

Exterior Walls

PROFILE, ARTICULATION, AND CONFIGURATION

Facades should provide visual interest, character, and scale and share these traits with surrounding buildings.

In order to protect the character of the streetscape, large horizontal openings and roll-up doors are to be avoided. Narrow storefronts should have openings that are proportional to their width and height.

Recessed or covered entrances are encouraged.



The store entrance and other openings are proportional to one another, and the covered entrance is aesthetically appealing.



In this development, the building facades are visually interesting, share similar proportions, and create a positive space that is pleasing for pedestrians.



Facades should resemble one another in scale. Window and door openings should be in proportion to each other.

Exterior Walls

APPLICATION

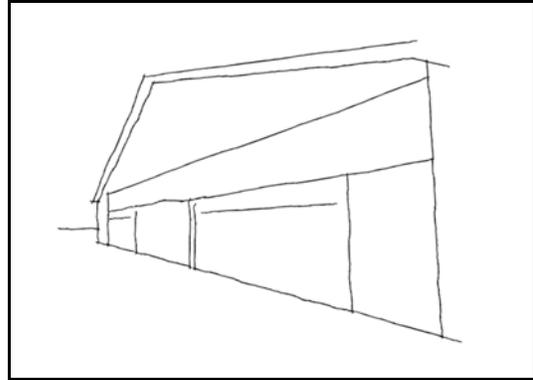
Windows should reflect the architectural style of the building.

Oversized window and door openings should be avoided in favor of smaller detailed openings. Windows with two or more sashes look best in addition to windows that have true divided lites as opposed to one large pane of glass.

Repetitive and large expanses of uninterrupted glass panels should be avoided in addition to butted and reflective glass and roll up doors.



These windows match the architectural style of the building.



Large horizontal openings that are out of proportion with the building height should be avoided.



Materials appear heavy over a full glass facade and the architectural style is completely unrelated to the mountain village aesthetic.



Large repetitive walls of glass should be avoided.

Exterior Walls

COLOR

Exterior color composition should be in keeping with the natural environment, consistent with the mountain village aesthetic, and in harmony with the surrounding structures.

Earth tones of greens, blue-grays, rusts, grays, and browns are most appropriate, and bright, fluorescent, or pastel colors should be avoided altogether.



The color palette here is consistent with the natural environment, varying between different shades of brown, green, and gray.



This building takes advantage of different shades of wood and stone in order to create a rustic appearance.



Stone and minimal use of vibrant colors make this a good example of a corporate restaurant chain.



The color palette here is too bright and contrasts sharply with the natural landscape.



Gatlinburg Commercial Corridor

Roofs

MATERIALS

Suggested materials to use are composite shingles, wood shingles, shakes, metal, and slate.

Dimensional relief is encouraged in the selection of roofing.

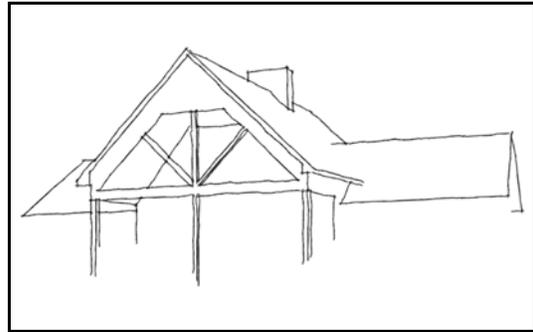
Roofing elements such as chimneys, dormers, and ventilation outlets can be accented with natural materials or materials similar to those used on the building's exterior.



The use of natural materials such as slate or wood shingles creates a rustic appearance.



This is a good example of the use of metal roofing.



Exposed timber framing, accented roof elements, and high quality roofing materials can combine to create an attractive design.



Roofing materials with no dimensional relief should be avoided.

Roofs

PROFILE, ARTICULATION, AND CONFIGURATION

Pitched roofs are preferred.

The use of low pitched roofs should be reserved for porches and similar roof extensions.

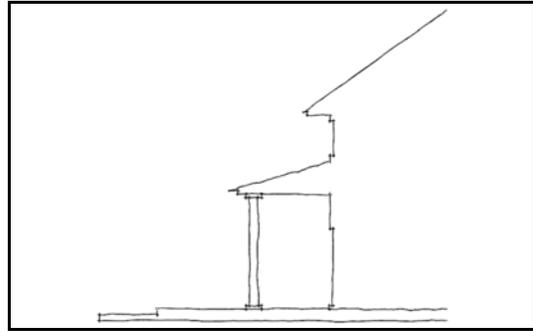
Exposed elements such as timber framing and support structures help to create the feel of a mountain village.



Lower pitched roofs work well when they are an extension of the main building.



Medium pitched roofs that cascade towards the ground make buildings more consistent with the pedestrian scale.



Roof lines should cascade down to the street to create a scale that is comfortable for pedestrians. Porches and other roof extensions should not be as steep as the roof over the main building mass.



Awkward roof designs and flat, low-pitched roofs should be avoided.

Roofs

APPLICATION

Sloped roofs should be proportioned to supporting walls below.

Flat roofs should be minimized or concealed.

Long, unbroken roof lines should be avoided.



Roofs should be broken up with dormers, arches, pediments, or other architectural elements. Long unbroken roofs should be avoided.



Windows and dormers provide a way of breaking up long horizontal roof spans.



Flat, mansard, and hipped roofs should be avoided. Utilities on roofs should be concealed.



This sloped roof is proportional to the supporting walls below.

Roofs

COLOR

Exterior color composition should be in keeping with the natural environment, consistent with the mountain village aesthetic, and in harmony with surrounding structures.

Earth tones of greens, blue-grays, rusts, grays, and browns are most appropriate, and bright, fluorescent, or pastel colors should be avoided altogether.



The roof material color palette should contain earth tones and use natural materials.



Roofs with bright colors are distracting and contrast with the natural colors of the mountain landscape.



The materials used in the roofing here are multi-colored with different shades of brown and gray. The color and texture are visually appealing and in harmony with the surrounding natural environment.



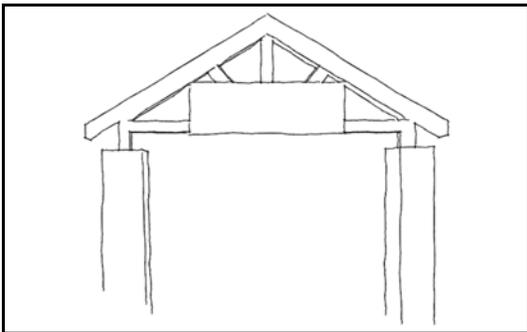
Gatlinburg Commercial Corridor
Lighting and Signage

MATERIALS

Plastic or internally lit signage is discouraged.

The use of neon should be minimized, or as an accent only.

The use of natural materials is encouraged.



Signs should be carefully integrated into the architecture of buildings using materials that are consistent with the mountain village aesthetic.



Large neon or internally lit signs are discouraged.



Backlit signage and cheap framing materials like the aluminum used in this sign are discouraged.



Natural materials have been used effectively in the structure that supports these signs.

Gatlinburg Commercial Corridor
Lighting and Signage

**PROFILES,
ARTICULATION, AND
CONFIGURATION**

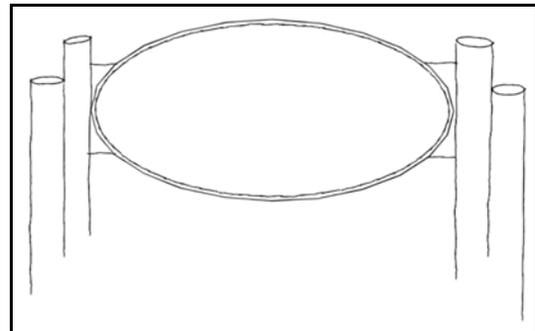
Sign panels with three dimensional relief are encouraged.



Effective combination of lighting and signage.



This sign has a clever design with dimensional relief.



Signage supports, like buildings, should use natural materials, and signs should use simple elements that convey the desired message clearly.



This sign uses an attractive color scheme and natural materials.

Gatlinburg Commercial Corridor
Lighting and Signage

APPLICATION

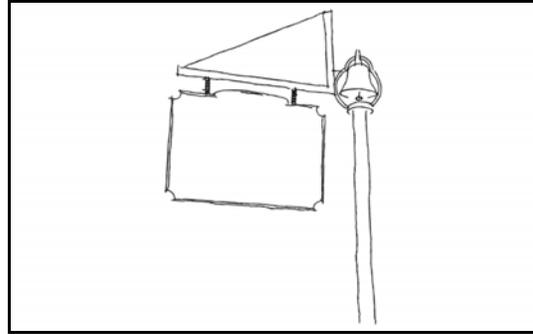
Lighting should be adequate for public safety and enhance the building environment while preserving views of the night time skies.

Signage should identify the business clearly with simple messages and a simple layout that is proportional to setting.

Lighting should not be a nuisance to the public way or adjacent properties.



This lighting fits in well with the building design and materials.



Lighting and signage can be combined to create an attractive ensemble..



Well-designed awnings provide a way to present signage and identify a business without interfering with the public way.



This sign identifies a business clearly and projects a positive image.

Gatlinburg Commercial Corridor
Lighting and Signage

COLOR

Exterior color composition should be in keeping with the natural environment, consistent with the mountain village aesthetic, and in harmony with the surrounding structures.

Earth tones of greens, blue-grays, rusts, grays, and browns are most appropriate, and bright, fluorescent, or pastel colors should be avoided altogether.



The colors of this sign are loud and obtrusive.



Appropriate colors and a simple design make this a successful sign.



This sign uses subdued colors effectively to identify a business and enhance the streetscape.



Signs can identify businesses clearly while also improving the aesthetic character of a community.

Site Design Guidelines

Gatlinburg, Tennessee

Site Design

Building Placement

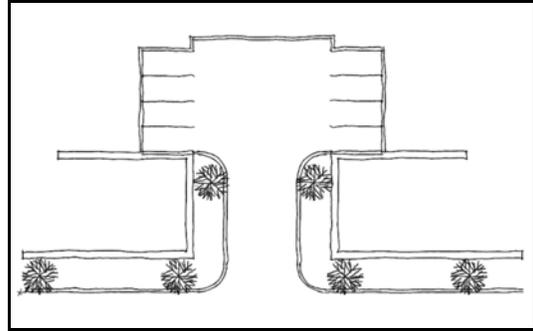
Buildings should be placed close to the street, so long as the maximum height does not occur at the setback. There should be sufficient room for pedestrian traffic, street furniture, and plantings.

When possible, parking should be placed at the rear of the building. If parking must be placed to the side, the lot should be screened. This is not intended, however, to discourage landscaping of public space between the ROW and building front.

Street facades should be as continuous as possible, without excessive gaps and curb cuts.



Buildings should be placed close to the street, with parking lots located in the back. Pedestrians see stores and offices rather than monotonous expanses of parking.



Whenever possible, parking lots should be concealed from public view by placing them behind buildings.



Placing buildings along the sidewalk makes the street feel like a "public room" with a comfortable sense of enclosure.



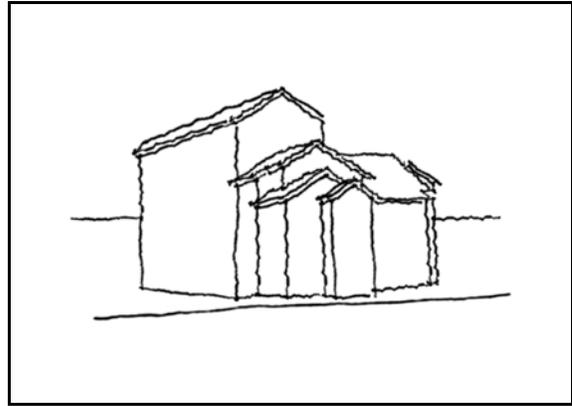
Maintaining a continuous street wall improves the pedestrian experience.

Tall Buildings

Future developments along the corridor may involve taller buildings. Special steps should be taken to integrate such buildings into the human-scale pedestrian fabric of Gatlinburg.

Tall buildings should be designed to “step down” toward the street edge. This reduces the visual bulk of the building so that it doesn’t overwhelm the pedestrian scale along the sidewalk.

The facades of tall buildings should be broken up into visually smaller units to avoid monotony and provide visual interest. Architectural elements that are consistent with the mountain village aesthetic are encouraged.



The scale of the building should be gradually reduced as it approaches the sidewalk.



Buildings should be massed so as to “step down” and “greet” pedestrians near the sidewalk.

Sidewalks and Street Trees

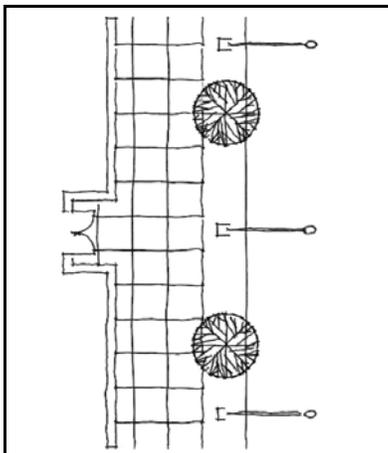
Streets should incorporate elements that reinforce the mountain village aesthetic, such as trees, plantings, furnishings, and art.

Sidewalks should be wide enough to provide for comfortable movement by pedestrians.

Trees should be evenly spaced in order to provide sufficient shade for pedestrians while not obscuring stores and signage.

Attractive street furniture, including benches, chairs, trash cans, and planter boxes, should be provided along the sidewalks. They should be placed to avoid blocking pedestrian traffic. Provision of places to sit and rest is particularly important.

Art reinforces the identity of the community, and should be seen throughout the entire corridor.



Sidewalks should be wide enough to provide room for pedestrian traffic.



This sidewalk is wide enough to provide room for pedestrian traffic.



The trees along this streetscape provide welcome shade for pedestrians.



Trees, planting beds, and well-designed street furniture make this an attractive pedestrian street. The benches provide places for visitors to rest and observe.

Site Design

Public Spaces

In addition to pleasant sidewalks, the commercial corridor should have attractive public spaces where pedestrians can rest, sit, and observe the passing scene.

In appropriate locations, buildings can be designed to create small spaces where pedestrians can pause, view store windows, or sit and watch the passing parade of people.

Public spaces do not have to be large. Small areas off to one side of the sidewalk can become valuable amenities by adding comfortable seating, shade trees, flower beds, and fountains.



Flower beds provide a colorful visual accent along the public way.



This building pulls back slightly from the sidewalk to create a space for pedestrians to step aside from the passing flow.



Benches, planting beds, and pedestrian-scaled lighting make this an attractive public space adjacent to a busy sidewalk.



This space has places to sit, attractive lighting, flower beds, and a pleasing sense of enclosure.

Site Design

Parking Lot Landscaping and Screening

The planting of trees inside parking lots is encouraged. This improves the appearance of the lots and provides shade. Trees can be placed in landscaped areas at the end of the parking aisles, at entrances, and along pedestrian walkways inside the lots.

Where parking lots border a public sidewalk or street, their visual impact can be reduced by screening. Acceptable screening treatments include low walls made of attractive natural materials, raised planter walls, and low hedges composed of native plant materials.

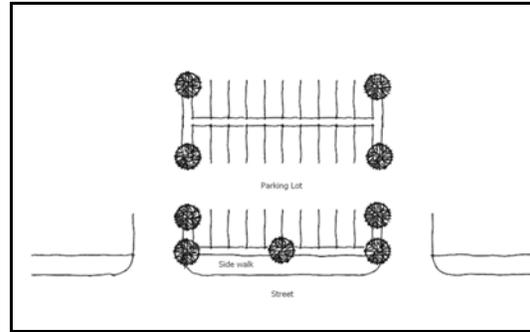
Screening should be balanced with safety considerations. Hedges and walls should be low enough to allow surveillance of the lots by passersby.



Landscaped islands, trees, and ground covers provide visual relief from large expanses of asphalt.



Screening of parking lots using low hedges or walls improves their appearance from surrounding streets and sidewalks.



Trees, shrubs, and planted areas can be placed throughout parking lots to reduce the negative visual impact of large paved surfaces.



This low hedge provides screening while still allowing surveillance of the lot.

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