

**PORTER RANCH**  
**LAND USE/TRANSPORTATION SPECIFIC PLAN**

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# Design Guidelines

Approved by the City Planning Commission on January 23, 2003, as part of  
Ordinance No. 166,068, Effective August 24, 1990 and  
Amended by Ordinance Nos. 173,871, 173872, and 173873, Effective May 17, 2001

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# Porter Ranch Land Use/Transportation Specific Plan DESIGN GUIDELINES

All non-residential and multi-family residential Projects in the Porter Ranch Specific Plan Community Center Area are required to submit site and building design plans for design review approval, pursuant to Section 10. Porter Ranch Design Review of this Specific Plan. Project applicants are encouraged to submit Projects which substantially conform to the following design guidelines. These guidelines will be used by the Porter Ranch Design Review Board in the review of projects and the Director of Planning in the approval of submitted design plans. Where graphics are used in these guidelines to illustrate design concepts, they should be viewed as interpretations of these guidelines in order to convey their meaning and intent. They are not intended as exact design standards. For the purposes of this document, the design components to be addressed are divided into the following categories:

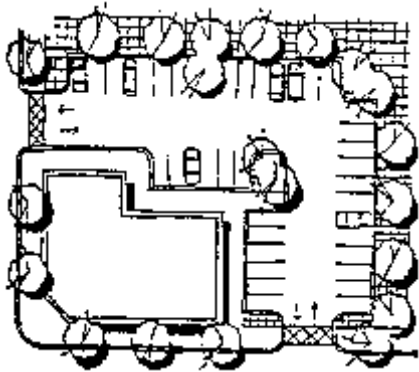
- A. The Site Plan
- B. Building Design Features
- C. Service Facilities and Mechanical Equipment Screening
- D. Walls and Fences
- E. Landscaping
- F. Residential/Non-residential Interface
- G. Signs

## A. The Site Plan

Objective 1: Develop commercial facade frontages to maximize pedestrian and commercial activity.

Guideline:

1. Design storefronts that will face the street to enhance the pedestrian experience, as shown in the figures below.



### A.1. a. The Retail Street Edge - Build to the Sidewalk or Edge of Pedestrian Courtyard

Objective 2: Except along streets with a required setback, buildings designed for retail and other commercial uses should be sited at or near the front property line or along the edges of a primary pedestrian courtyard entrance.

Guidelines:

- 2a. An active street front environment should provide a variety of color, textures, and variations in building planes.
- 2b. Parking lots and other non-active uses should be located behind buildings facing streets, whenever possible.
- 2c. Respect the placement and character of neighboring buildings.
- 2d. Create visual interest by varying the horizontal planes of the building.

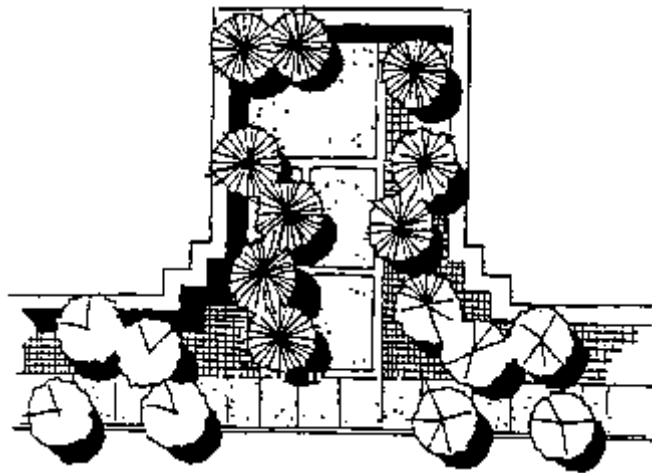
- 2e. Encourage courtyards and other open space areas.

### **A.1.b. The Non-Retail Street Edge**

Objective 3: Abundant landscaping should be used on non-residential and multifamily residential Projects to screen and buffer non-active and/or non-primary uses.

Guideline:

3. Frame the edges and entrances of Projects with landscaping, as shown in the figures below.



### **A. 2. Courtyards and Usable Open Spaces**

Objective 4: Promote pedestrian activity by incorporating courtyards and other outdoor pedestrian spaces into designs. The development of these spaces should consider the site arrangement of neighboring properties. Large-scale Projects should also provide pedestrian connections between properties whenever physically feasible. (Refers to Specific Plan Section 10.C.5.a-d.)

Guidelines:

- 4a. Outdoor areas should be visible from the sidewalk, street, or the primary pedestrian courtyard entrance.
- 4b. At least two sides of an open space area should have ground floor retail or service uses.

- 4c. Outdoor areas should be integrated into the site design of new developments, surrounding buildings, and existing open spaces. One way to achieve this is to create a seamless public and private interface, free of a defined edge.
- 4d. Outdoor pedestrian spaces may integrate both public and private improvements, such as landscaping and street furniture.
- 4e. Open space should contain high-quality design elements, such as shade trees, strategically-placed shade structures, fountains, other water features, and art work.
- 4f. Seating should be integrated into the design of open space areas.
- 4g. The hardscape should include the following:
  - ? Seating,
  - ? Shade,
  - ? An aesthetic environment,
  - ? Pedestrian scale, and
  - ? Sense of place.

### **A. 3. Parking Arrangement**

Objective 5: Promote a safe pedestrian environment adjacent to parking structures and parking lots. (Refers to Specific Plan Section 6.G.1.a-e.)

Guideline:

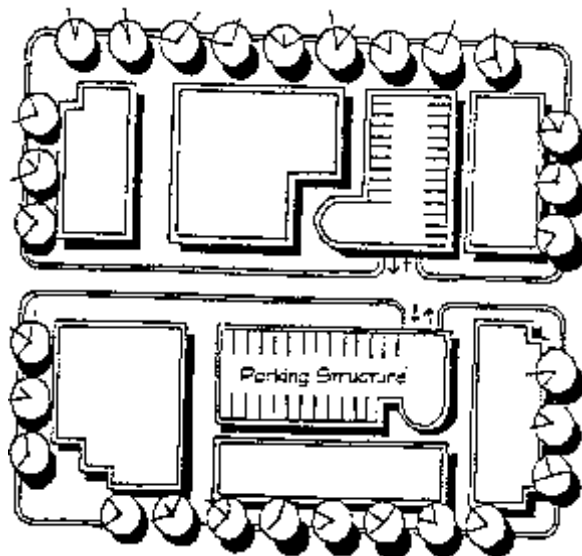
- 5. Install walkways for pedestrians which link parking areas to non-residential uses whenever possible.

#### **A.3. a. Parking Structures**

Objective 6: Parking structures should minimize their visual impact to the greatest extent possible by the following techniques in order to increase pedestrian activity at commercial sites. (Refers to Specific Plan Section 6.G.1.d.)

Guidelines:

- 6a. Parking structures should be sited to minimize the mass of the structure and visual impact from the street, as indicated in the figure below.



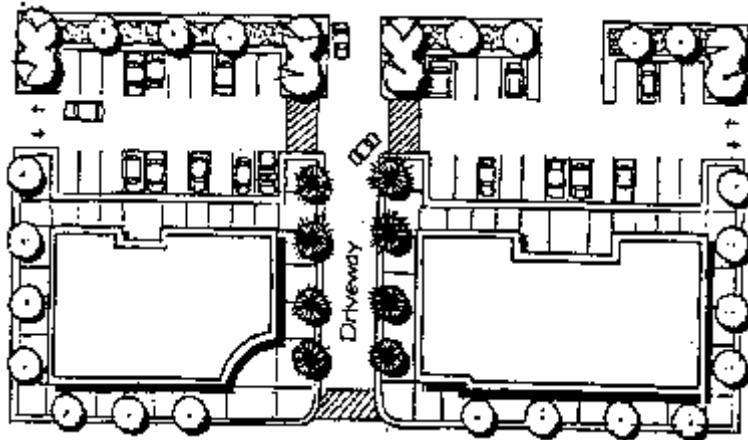
- 6b. The street frontage, (i.e., shops, offices, and other non-residential uses), should be located at ground level adjacent to the sidewalk to contribute to the pedestrian environment.
- 6c. Landscaped open space areas should be used to buffer the street and the parking structure when non-residential uses are not possible.
- 6d. Entrances to parking structures should originate from alleys and side streets not from major arterials.
- 6e. Stepping back upper levels of a parking structure from the street provides areas for landscaping and reduces the mass of the structure.
- 6f. Parking structures should be compatible with surrounding buildings in scale.

### A.3. b. Surface Parking

Objective 7: Surface parking lots should avoid large expanses of asphalt in order to increase pedestrian activity. (Refers to Specific Plan Section 6.G.1.a.,b.,and c.,)

Guidelines:

- 7a. Driveway openings should minimize conflict with traffic on public streets, as shown in the figure below.



- 7b. Decorative colorful paving materials should be included in sidewalk and pavement areas at pedestrian/automobile contact zones. They should also integrate public and private areas. The change in surface material provides a visual element that is aesthetically pleasing and a safety feature that defines the pedestrian space.
- 7c. Parking lots should be accented with landscaping that highlights the importance of the driveway from the street, frames the major circulation aisles, and highlights pedestrian pathways.
- 7d. Pedestrian and automobile conflict should be minimized by incorporating a common pedestrian pathway through the parking lot.



## B. Building Design Components

Objective 8: Enhance the pedestrian experience and maintain human scale in building designs.

Guideline:

8. Design projects that have retail on the ground floor, as demonstrated in the figure below.



### B. 1. Building Mass and Scale

Objective 9: Buildings should be no higher than three stories. (Refers to Specific Plan Section 6.D.1-6.)

Guidelines:

- 9a. Retail use areas should have recessed frontage as the primary pedestrian access courtyard.
- 9b. The physical mass of a building should be broken up or articulated in order to avoid large blank walls.
- 9c. Repeated architectural treatments, such as window bands, reveals, or moldings, should be used to achieve a visual linkage between adjacent buildings.
- 9d. The physical mass of buildings should be graduated. Stepping the upper levels of tall buildings back from the street makes the building seem less imposing to pedestrians.
- 9e. Buildings should relate to the prevailing scale and enhance the design details of adjacent buildings, with a focus on the first floor to reinforce the pedestrian environment.

- 9f. Adjacent buildings should have compatible roofline and parapet treatments to establish architectural continuity, as shown in the figure below.



## B. 2. Entryways

Objective 10: Design elements, such as wall recesses, roof overhangs, canopies, arches, signs and similar architectural features for building facades and storefronts, should have pedestrian-scale proportions.

### Guidelines:

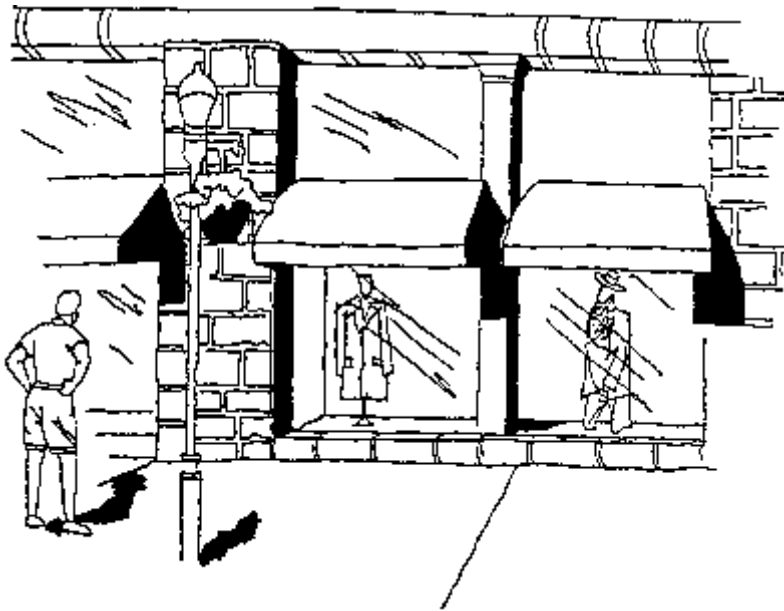
- 10a. The main building entrances should face the sidewalk or pedestrian courtyard.
- 10b. Building entries should be architecturally enhanced to provide visual interest and a sense of arrival to the building(s).
- 10c. Greater refinement of design details, such as decorative trim elements, should be incorporated into entry ways. Carefully coordinated changes in color and texture also provide contrast and a sense of scale.

### B. 3. Windows

Objective 11: Windows should be strategically placed to create an inviting pedestrian environment.

Guidelines:

- 11a. Display windows should face the sidewalk or pedestrian courtyard to create a spatial rhythm that heightens the interest at the pedestrian level, as shown in figure below.



- 11b. Windows should be designed to coordinate with the architectural design of this building.
- 11c. Security bars should not be visible on the outside of the structure because their proliferation portrays a negative image.
- 11d. Efforts should be made to provide transparency (e.g. windows) on first floor facades. Transparency refers to pedestrian entrances, display windows, or openings with views into retail, restaurant, offices, or lobby space.

## **B. 4. Architectural Details**

Objective 12: Articulation of the building facade should be achieved by utilizing various architectural enhancements. (Refers to Specific Plan Section 10.D.3.a-h.)

### **B.4. a. Facade Articulation**

Guideline:

12. Use enhancements such as porticos, recessed doors and windows, reveals, changes in surface texture, color, and variations in the building plane to articulate facades. These techniques should be utilized to divide a wall plane into smaller components that relate to a pedestrian scale, as shown in the figure below.



### **B.4. b. Finish Materials**

Objective 13: The use of various building materials should vary and create visual interest, while exhibiting an overall coordination of color and materials.

Guidelines:

- 13a. The finish materials on all visible external walls should wrap the exterior corners and cover the sides of the building. Such treatment will alleviate the appearance of a “wallpaper” application and will give a sense of permanence to a structure.

- 13b. Exposed concrete masonry units and split faced concrete masonry units with integral color and texture may be used, but are discouraged as a primary building material.

#### **B4. c. Wall Thickness**

Objective 14: Wall thickness should be used as an architectural feature.

Guidelines:

- 14a. Expression of wall thickness can be achieved by providing recessed windows and entries to exaggerate wall thickness.
- 14b. The dimension of a column is often lost when its mass is not proportional to its size. Columns should relate in scale to that portion of the building which they visually support.

#### **B4. d. Decorative Elements**

Objective 15: Buildings should have a variety of architectural features.

Guideline:

15. Buildings should have cornices, moldings, reveals, and lighting to provide visual interest at the pedestrian level.

#### **B4. e. Color**

Objective 16: Light and earthtone colors should be used.

Guidelines:

- 16a. Color should be harmonious and compatible with adjacent structures while offering enough contrast to express architectural interest. Contrasting colors, including deep hues and dark colors, should only be used as accents.
- 16b. Fluorescent paints, highly reflective materials, and colors which produce glare or large expanses of dark colored surfaces, saturated hues, and bright, or garish colors should be avoided.

#### **B4.f. Awnings**

Objective 17: Awnings are encouraged and should coordinate with the architectural style of a building.

Guidelines:

17. Solid colors with matte finish are recommended instead of bright colors, unless used sparingly as an accent on awnings.

#### **B. 4. g. Roof Forms**

Objective 18: The roofline of a building should provide visual interest and de-emphasize a building's mass. This can be achieved by the use of offsets and other methods, to articulate the horizontal and vertical planes of a building.

Guidelines:

- 18a. Commercial roofing, while usually flat, should incorporate sheds, gables, mansard, and hip roof configurations as decorative elements, as shown in the figure below.



- 18b. Roof structures and materials should be designed to consider the architectural style of adjacent properties.
- 18c. Roof styles should be consistent with the building design style.

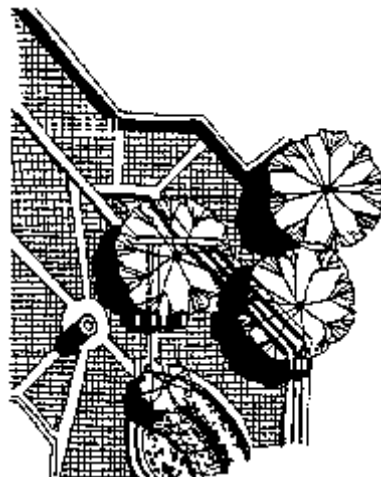
- 18d. Decorative roof treatments, such as terra cotta tiles, should continue around the sides and rear of a building or terminate in a logical manner. Using decorative roof treatments only in locations that are visible from a street or pedestrian courtyard view is not appropriate.
- 18e. Special attention should be given to buildings with flat roof construction. Flat roofs should be enhanced by such techniques as parapets, finishes with cornices, or other horizontal decoration, depending on the architectural style of the building.

#### **B4. h. Paving Materials**

Objective 19: The use of decorative paving materials, colors, and patterns are encouraged at building entry ways and access walks to promote the identity of a site.

Guidelines:

- 19a. Decorative paving treatments are encouraged at building entrances, walkways, and automobile and pedestrian contact zones. Decorative paving treatments such as the use of colored concrete can reduce glare and visually anchor a building to the landscape, as shown in the figure below.



- 19b. Paving patterns should be kept simple and relate to the architectural theme of a building's public and private areas. The pavers could also integrate story bands or dedications. Paving patterns and score lines can also provide a sense of direction and may humanize the scale of large paved areas.
- 19c. Appropriate paving materials include masonry block pavers, brick, stone, granite, concrete, and ceramic tile. Textured concrete finishes and/or integrally colored surfaces may also be enhanced by scoring or accented with contrasting paving materials.
- 19d. Color should provide contrast while relating to the overall color scheme of the building.
- 19e. A soft paving material, such as grass-crete, is also encouraged when appropriate to a site.
- 19f. Concrete bands may be used to define the edge as a transitional tool between differing materials.

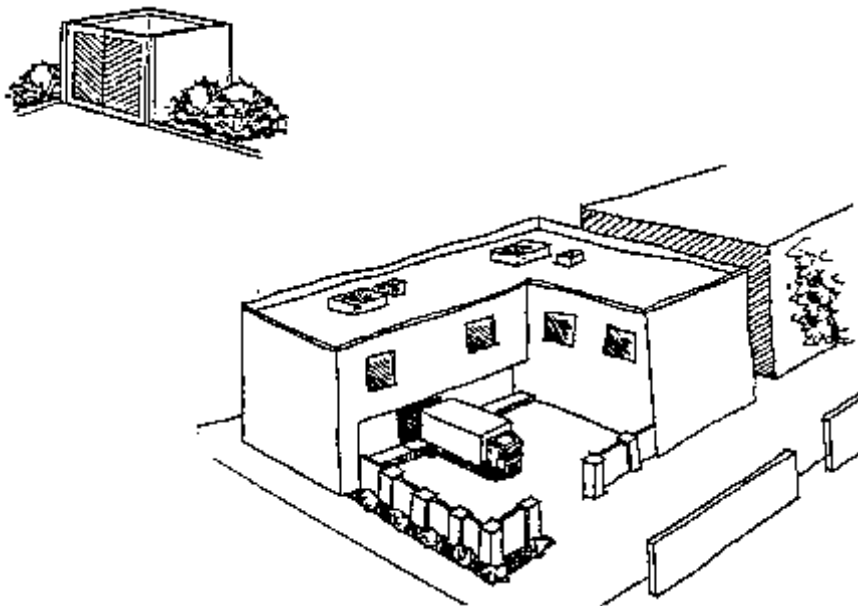
**C. Service Facilities and Mechanical Equipment Screening**

Objective 20: The location of service facilities should be considered early in the design process. These facilities should be located where they will not create a nuisance for adjacent uses, the public, and the property owner. Service facilities include trash enclosures, loading zones, storage areas, utility cabinets, and utility meters.



Guidelines:

- 20a. All storage areas and ground level mechanical equipment should be enclosed or screened from view. Screening can include walls, building(s), gates, and landscaping, alone or in combination, as shown in the figure below.



- 20b. Durable finish materials should be chosen to match or compliment the accompanying building.
- 20c. Service facilities should be located and designed for easy access by service vehicles and tenants.
- 20d. Access to service entrances, loading docks, and refuse collection facilities should not be from a property's primary street frontage.
- 20e. Appropriate roof top screening should be incorporated into the design of new buildings. Rooftop mechanical equipment, solar collectors, satellite dishes and other communications equipment should either be concealed or enclosed from view, unless such equipment (e.g., telecommunication panels) is integrated into a building's facade.

## D. Walls and Fences

### D.1. Free Standing Walls

Objective 21: Walls should be designed to coordinate with the architectural character of the adjacent building and surrounding hardscape elements.

Guidelines:

- 21a. The color, texture, and details used on the adjacent building should coordinate with wall surfaces.
- 21b. Walls may be constructed with masonry units, such as brick, decorative stone, split face concrete block or masonry block with stucco finish, as shown in the two figures below.

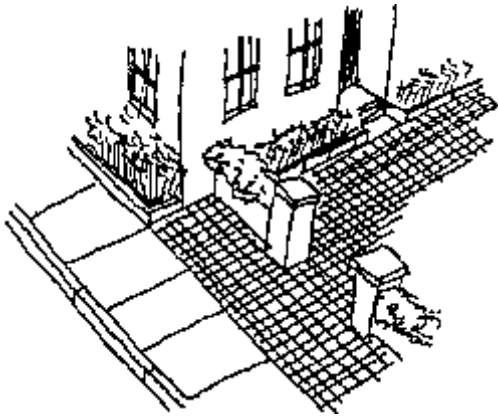


Figure 1

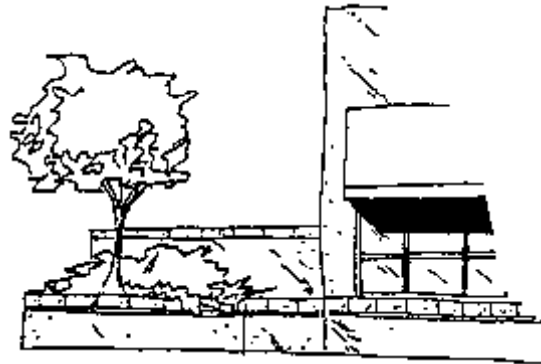


Figure 2

- 21c. Consideration should be given to low walls, which can function as a seat by utilizing the proper height, width, and edge detail for comfort.
- 21d. Wall design should incorporate surface coating, textures, and vine treatments which discourage graffiti.

## D. 2. Fences

Objective 22: Designs should be simple with minimal ornamentation.

Guidelines:

22a. Tubular steel and wrought iron fencing is encouraged.

22b. Chain link, barbed wire and razor wire fencing should not be used.

## E. Landscaping

Objective 23: Landscaping may be used to delineate pedestrian linkages; emphasize an entryway or another architectural element, or to enhance the color, materials, and features of a building.

Guideline:

23. Design landscaping to have an inviting pedestrian path, as in the figure shown below.



### **E. 1. Coordinated Landscape Elements**

Objective 24: Coordinated landscape elements should be used throughout the project.

Guideline:

- 24. Landscape elements should include plant materials, walls, site furniture, sun shelters, lighting, fountains, and paving materials.

### **E. 2. Desirable Landscape Elements**

Objective 25: Landscape elements should be placed at the pedestrian level.

Guideline:

- 25a. Desirable landscape elements should include:
  - c. Pedestrian-scaled lighting.
  - d. Plant materials and structures which provide shade, color, and contrast.
  - e. Seating opportunities such as benches, raised planters, and walls.
  - f. Landscaping that is designed to achieve continuity between separate developments.
  - g. Special features, such as fountains and art work.

### **E. 3. Minimum Landscaping Standards**

Objective 26: Areas not occupied by buildings, parking, or non-residential activities should be permanently landscaped with live plant materials. Hardscape may be used where pedestrian activity occurs and in minor areas where such an application is appropriate. Permanent landscaping should consist of landscaped areas at the ground level, in planters, or in potted containers. Landscaping should have a minimum length, width, diameter, or depth of 24 inches.

Guidelines:

- 26a. Landscaping should include trees, shrubs, vines, ground covers, and perennial and annual plant species.
- 26b. Landscaping should be developed to contain a combination of low, medium and tall plant materials. Low planting should be used in the foreground, proceeding back to the tallest.

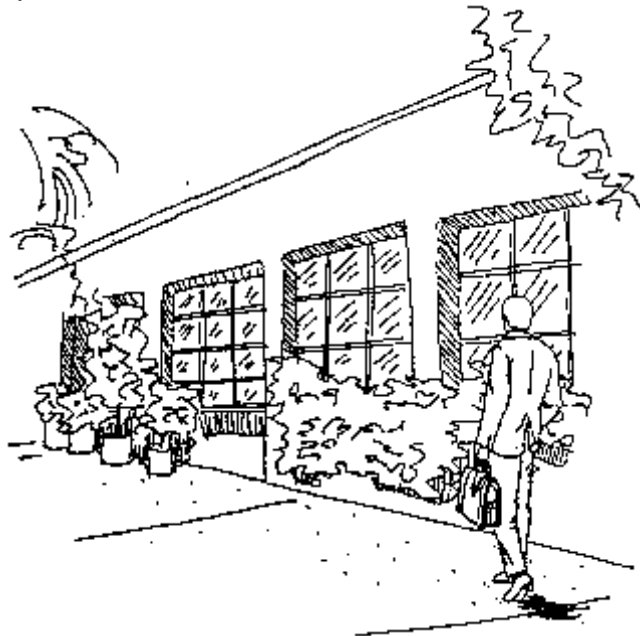
- 26c. All landscaped areas should be automatically watered through with a permanent irrigation system.
- 26d. Plant selections should be designed to accentuate the architectural character and hardscape elements of the site.
- 26e. Mature trees should be preserved whenever possible.

#### **E. 4. Limited Space Landscaping**

Objective 27: Nonresidential buildings should be designed to maximize the building envelope, leaving little room for landscaping. This situation is particularly relevant for buildings sited along the property line.

Guidelines:

- 27a. The use of raised planters, window boxes, potted plants, and the installation of vines should be considered as solutions for small landscape areas.



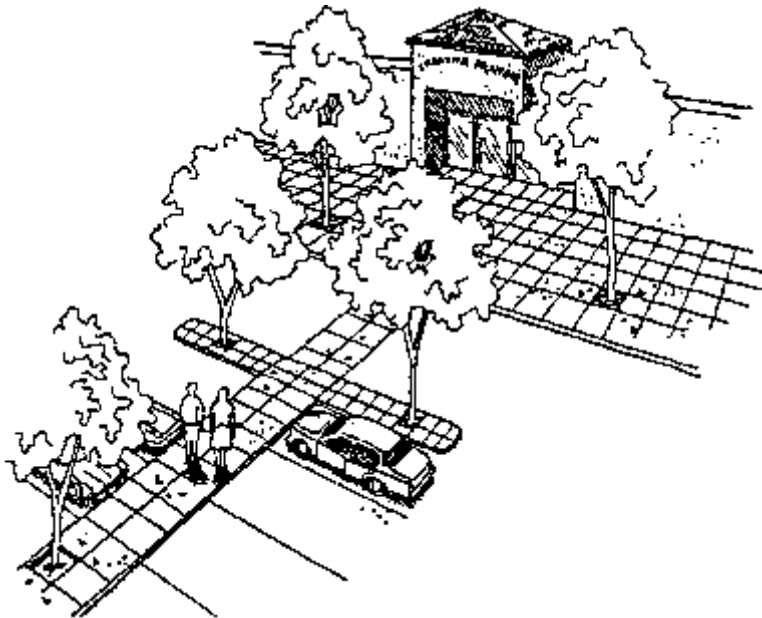
- 27b. Planters and/or clinging vines should be utilized to soften blank walls. The planting area should extend to an appropriate height to ensure its effectiveness.
- 27c. Building should be coordinated with landscaping.

## E. 5. Landscaping Surface Parking Lots

Objective 28: To prevent surface parking lots from becoming heat islands, relief should be provided from direct and reflected sun by regularly-spaced canopy trees and intermittent planting strips or fingers.

### Guidelines:

- 28a. The perimeter of the site should be landscaped to screen public views from adjacent uses from automobiles.
- 28b. Trees should be planted along the interior property line abutting a residential use to provide an effective screen with minimum 24-inch box trees, (Refers to Specific Plan Section 6.G.1.c. and d.,) as shown in the figure below.



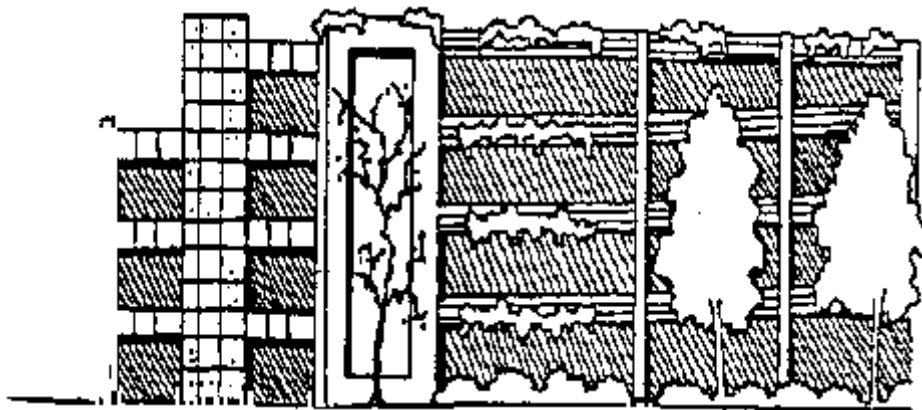
- 28c. Larger projects should incorporate a dedicated pedestrian pathway or path of travel between parking lanes and through the parking lot area. Landscaping can also function as a directional tool defining and separating pedestrian and vehicular circulation.
- 28d. Parking stall areas, not including the driveways, should be planted to ensure that 50% of surface areas will be covered by a canopy of mature trees.

## E. 6. Landscaping Parking Structures

Objective 29: Parking structures can visually dominate a streetscape. Efforts should be made to soften the appearance of parking structures by selecting plant materials that both screen and reduce the perception of mass. This landscape should be coordinated with architectural features which are not buffered by landscaping.

### Guidelines:

- 29a. Plant material should be used to identify points of access into the parking structure.
- 29b. Parking structures on public street frontages should incorporate landscape elements to soften the visual impact. Planters, planter boxes, and trellis structures should be incorporated into the design of a parking structure, as shown in the figure below.



- 29c. Parking garage roof tops should be designed to accommodate raised planters. The planting areas can function as a traffic control device delineating pedestrian path ways or establishing a protective barrier on the roof top perimeter. Shade on roof areas, such as a trellis with vines, should also be utilized when possible.

## **E. 7. Plant Selection**

Objective 30: The selection and layout of plant materials should optimize each species growth potential and maintenance requirements. Planting design should also respect the need for water conservation.

Guidelines:

- 30a. Buffering should be done at a residential/non-residential interface with substantial planting, including trees. The trees should be a minimum 24-inch box planted 20 feet on center.
- 30b. Drought tolerant species are preferred and should be used whenever appropriate.
- 30c. Integration of areas should be done within the landscape plan for the massing of seasonal color to enhance the visual effect.
- 30d. Selection of tree types should be appropriate to the setting.
- 30e. When selecting plant materials, the size of trees at maturity should be taken into consideration to ensure they will not conflict with or obstruct signage or other prominent architectural features.
- 30f. Turf should be avoided in small areas which are difficult to maintain.

## **F. Residential/Non-residential Interface**

Objective 31: Transitions between residential and nonresidential uses should be gradual. Buildings should respect that transition in their relationship to each other. Characteristics of one building can be repeated in another. For example, the roofline and color of a building can be used in an adjoining structure. The goal is to have buildings that fit within the architectural context of their neighbors.



Guideline:

- 31a. Neighboring properties should complement each other by size, setback, and roofline. The apparent bulk of a building should be reduced by using proportions and heights similar to those of adjacent properties, as shown in the figure below.



- 31b. If a nonresidential building is adjacent to a residential property, it should incorporate a setback design.
- 31c. The composition of a roof plays a significant role in achieving compatibility. Efforts should be made to complement rooflines between buildings.
- 31d. A gradual roofline transition can also be achieved by increasing the degree of architectural detail. Residential elements, such as a trellis structure, should be used in nonresidential building facades so that they better relate to abutting residential uses.
- 31e. Similar building materials, color, window proportions, and windows should be used to improve the interface between nonresidential and residential uses. By using the details of adjoining structures, the harsh dividing line between separate land uses can be removed and an acceptable interface achieved.

**F.1. Use Landscaping to Mask Unsightly Views**

Objective 32: Landscaping, a natural way to soften a transition between adjoining land uses, should be utilized.

Guidelines:

- 32a. Clinging vines should be planted along walls and solid fences to soften an imposing section of a building or a row of trees can be planted between the building and an interior setback.
- 32b. Stepping back the floors of a building above the second floor and including landscaped terraces will minimize the visual impact of the building upon adjacent properties.
- 32c. Landscaped perimeter berms should be utilized to minimize the impact of surface parking lots.
- 32d. Retaining walls should use interlocking pieces of precast concrete (crib walls) in order to create a landscaped embankment.

## **G. Signs**

Objective 33: A mixed-media approach in which signs are composed of several different elements and lighting techniques is encouraged (e.g., standard channel letters with some exposed neon as a graphic accent) in order to reduce sign clutter, de-emphasize the visual impact of signs, and improve the coordination of signs on adjacent buildings.

Guideline:

- 33a. Create a Master sign program to coordinate all buildings on the site. The sign program should address letter size, fonts, colors, location, and use of logos.
- 33b. The following types of signs should be used for signage:
  - a. Reverse channel letters with clear acrylic backing.
  - b. Channel letter forms with seamless edge treatment.
  - c. Internally illuminated signs with seamless opaque cabinets and pop-through lettering.
- 33c. The following materials should be used:
  - a. Painted metal.
  - b. Screens, grids, or mesh.
  - c. Etched, polished, or abraded metal.
  - d. Neon.
  - e. Opaque acrylic materials with matte finishes.
  - f. Tiles

- 33d. The exposed backs of all signs visible to the public should be adequately finished so as to screen them from public view.
- 33e. The following types of signs should not be used:
  - a. Exposed fastenings, unless fastenings make an intentional design statement.
  - b. Simulated materials (i.e., wood grained plastic laminates) or materials used for building wall covering (i.e., stucco).
  - c. Cabinet signs

## **G. 1. Sign Lighting**

Objective 34: Signs may be illuminated using a variety of lighting techniques. Where fixtures, shades, or other elements are exposed, they should contribute to the design of the storefront.

### Guidelines:

- 34a. The following types of lighting should be used:
  - a. Internal illumination.
  - b. Halo illumination.
  - c. Open channel neon.
  - d. Fiber optics.
  - e. Front lighting, baffled and obscured in channels where possible.
  - f. Cove lighting.
  - g. Gooseneck lamps.
- 34b. The following types of lighting should not be used:
  - a. Blinking, flashing, mechanical or strobe lights which give the appearance or impression of movement, or changes in hue or intensity of illumination.
  - b. Professional office building signs located on parapet, rooftops or similar locations above the second floor should not be illuminated.

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