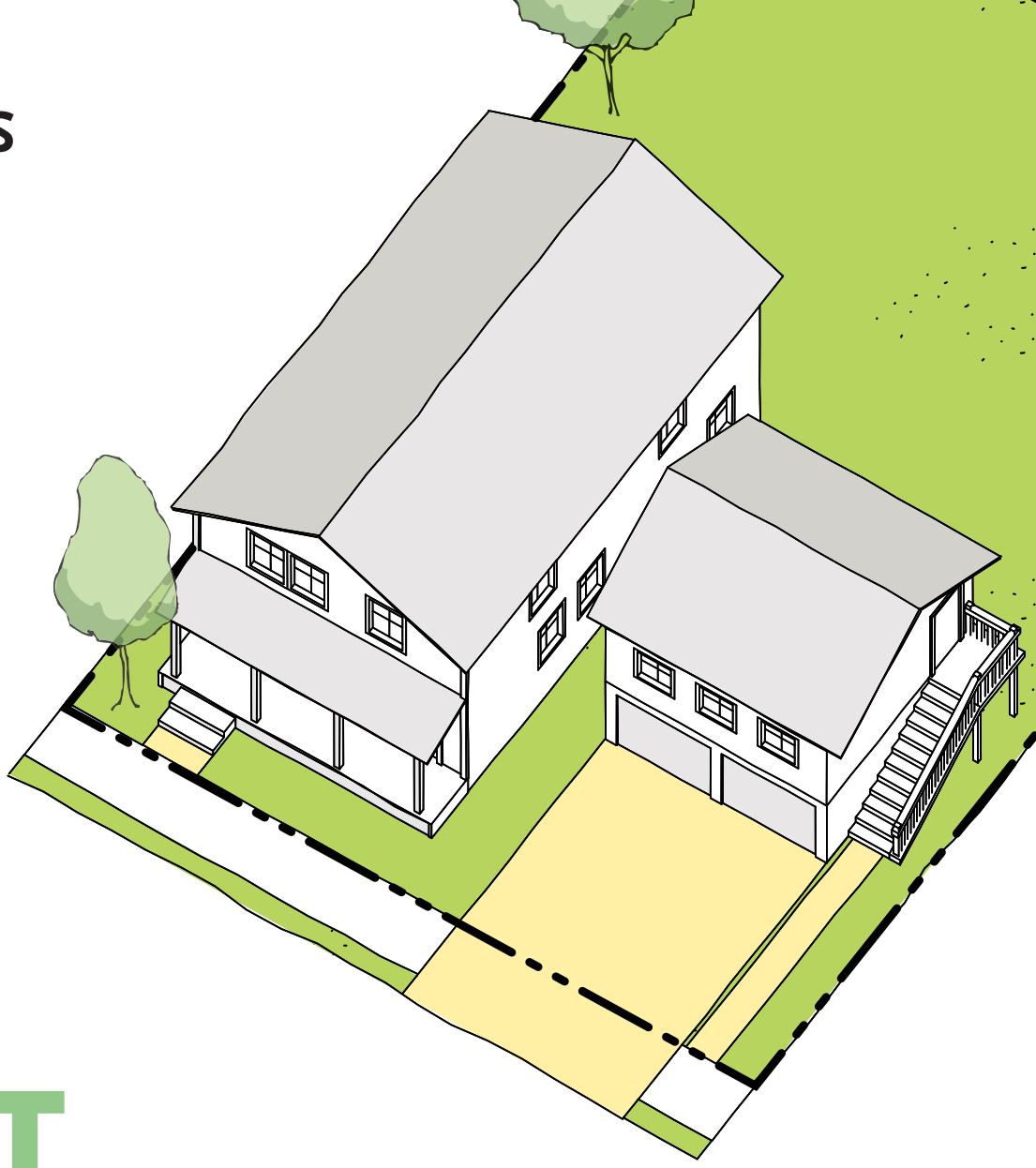
PLACEWORKS



GREAT COMMUNITIES DESIGN TOOLKIT

ideas for high quality infill development

San Luis Obispo County Planning and Building Department
July 23, 2014

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INTRODUCTION

A Vision for Great Communities

San Luis Obispo County is renowned for its scenic beauty, unique culture, and high quality of life. The County is committed to protecting these assets for current and future residents. One way to do this is to direct future growth and development towards existing communities with adequate resources, thereby maintaining the character of rural areas, agriculture, natural resources, and open space. This community-centered growth will enable the County to better utilize its limited energy, land, water, and fiscal resources. It will also help provide additional housing, business, employment, and travel choices for residents throughout the county.

Future development should be community-centered and provide housing choices for residents throughout the county.

What is the Great Communities Design Toolkit?

The Great Communities Design Toolkit is a resource to help San Luis Obispo County achieve the goal of high-quality development in unincorporated communities. The toolkit presents ideas for types of infill development to enhance the built environment of existing communities.[1] Development types include residential, mixed-use, and commercial land uses appropriate for a small town or rural setting. Development types in this toolkit include:

- Small Lot Single-Family Homes
- Carriage Homes
- Side Yard Homes
- Duplex, Triplex, and Quadplex
- Bungalow Courts
- Townhomes
- Small Apartment Buildings
- Courtyard Apartment Buildings
- Vertical Mixed Use
- Horizontal Mixed Use
- Live/Work

High quality development in unincorporated communties should enhance the existing built environment.

The toolkit presents a diagram and sample photographs to illustrate what each development type might look like. For each development type, the toolkit gives examples of appropriate design standards, including location, unit and lot sizes, typical densities, access, parking, landscaping, and building design.

1 Infill development is defined as development on vacant or underutilized land within urban or village areas that is surrounded by existing development and served by existing or improved public infrastructure.

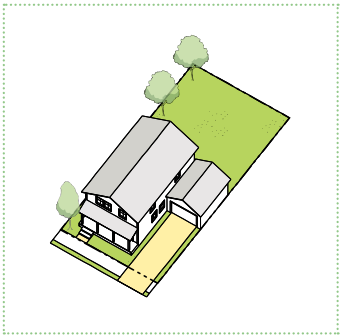
How will the Design Toolkit be used?

The toolkit is intended to help guide the design of high-quality infill development in the County's unincorporated communities and facilitate public discussion of the desired type of new development. It is a resource to be used by residents, developers, designers, County staff, and County decision makers to help visualize how infill development can be of high quality, create housing choices, and enhance the unique character and identity of existing communities. The toolkit will be used as a starting point in future Community Plan updates and other planning efforts, as they occur, to define appropriate site and building design that is in character with individual communities. As it is intended as a guide, this toolkit is not a regulatory document.

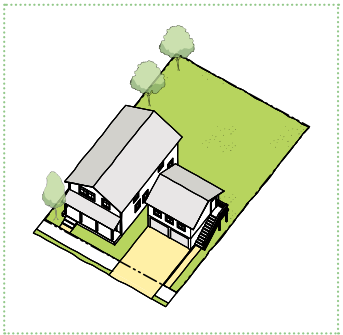
Infill development should incorporate building design elements that complement and enhance the unique character of existing communities.

DEVELOPMENT TYPE OVERVIEW

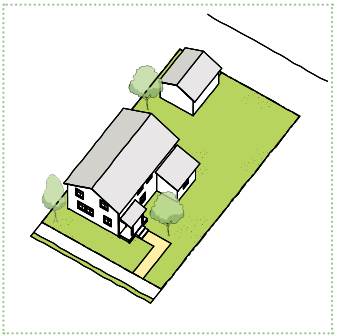
Residential Development Types



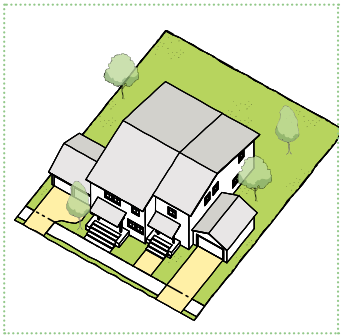
Small Lot Single Family Homes



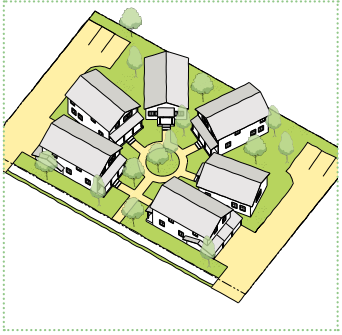
Carriage Homes



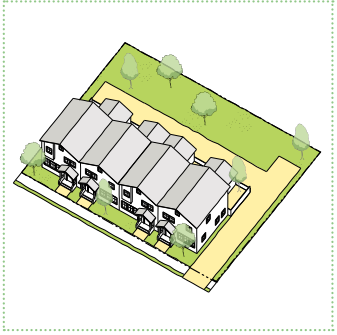
Side Yard Homes



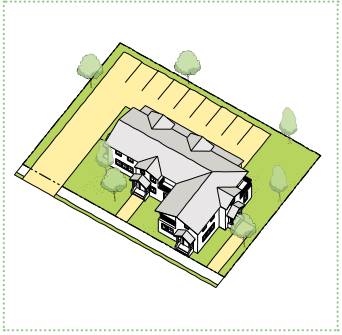
Duplex, Triplex & Quadplex



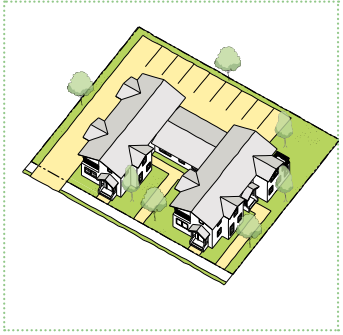
Bungalow Courts



Townhomes

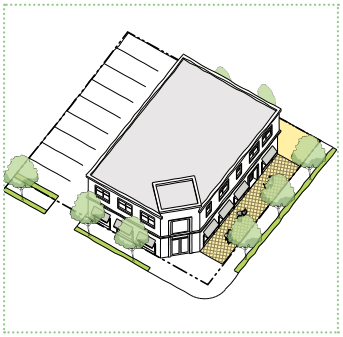


Small Apartment Buildings

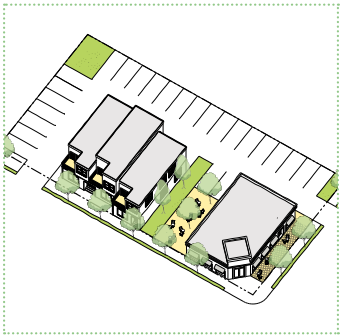


Courtyard Apartment Buildings

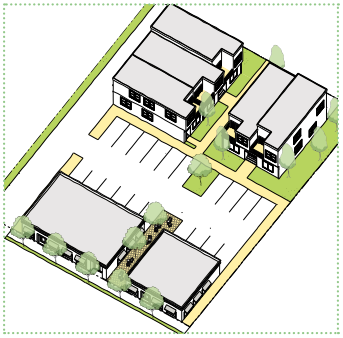
Commercial and Mixed Use Development Types



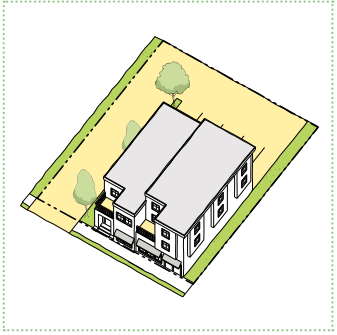
Vertical Mixed Use



Horizontal Mixed Use

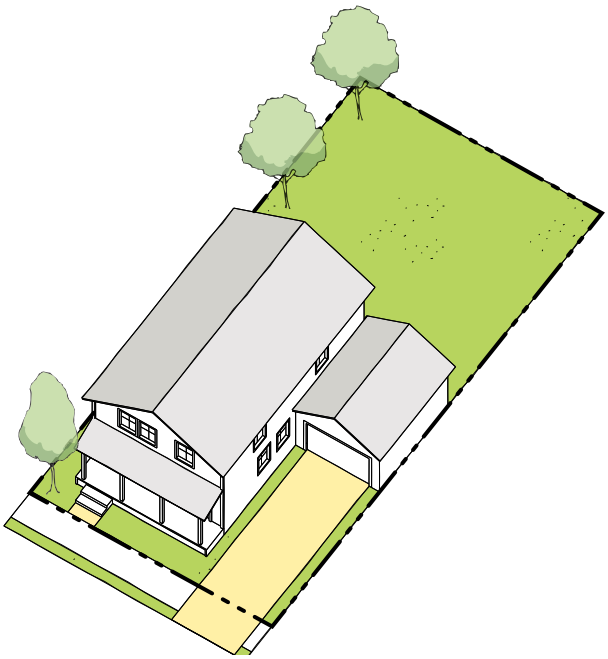


Horizontal Mixed Use

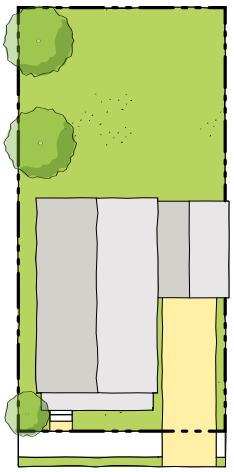


Live/Work

SMALL LOT SINGLE-FAMILY HOMES



A small lot single-family home is a detached residential structure on a small lot that provides a complete, independent living facility for one household. This type of development is typically located in low- to medium-density residential neighborhoods or in transition areas between commercial areas and low- to medium-density residential neighborhoods.



PLAN VIEW

SIDE ELEVATION

DESIGN STANDARDS

Typical Unit and Lot Sizes

- Unit size: 600 square feet to 1,800 square feet
- Lot width: 25 feet to 50 feet
- Lot depth: 100 feet to 150 feet
- Density: 5 to 15 dwelling units per acre

Pedestrian and Vehicle Access

- The main entry to the home should be located in the front (street-facing) façade with direct access to the public sidewalk.
- For homes served by an alley, vehicle access should be provided from the alley.

Parking

- Garages should be set back a minimum of 5 feet from the front façade of the residence.
- Uncovered surface parking is allowed.
- Required vehicle parking should not be located in the front setback area.

Landscape

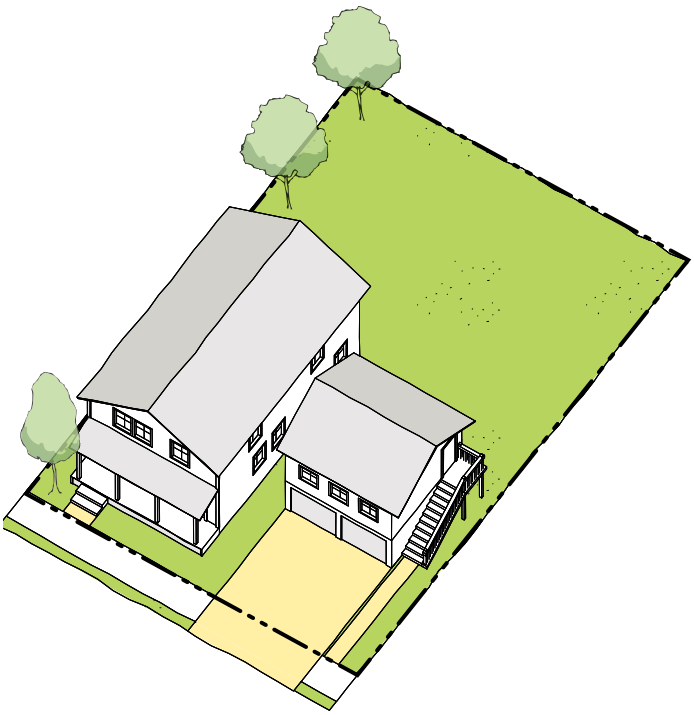
- A pathway should be provided from the public sidewalk to the front entry of the home.
- A minimum of one tree should be located in the front yard and/or parkway.
- All front and streetscape setback areas not used for access should be landscaped.

Building Design

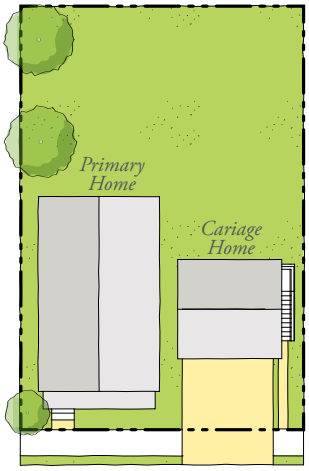
- Building scale should be appropriate for the lot width and proximity to adjacent residences.
- Functional front porches are encouraged for outdoor enjoyment in a neighborhood setting.
- Façades should be broken into smaller components through elements such as windows, bays, balconies, and stepped-back upper stories.
- Visually attractive building materials, such as bricks, stones, crafted wood, copper and other ornamental metals, should be used.

NEIGHBORHOOD CONTEXT

CARRIAGE HOMES



A carriage home is a secondary dwelling unit located above or behind a detached or semi-detached garage structure. Carriage homes contribute to a more diverse housing stock and can provide affordable housing opportunities. This type of development is typically located in low- to medium-density residential neighborhoods.



PLAN VIEW

ELEVATION

DESIGN STANDARDS

Typical Unit and Lot Sizes

- Unit size: 500 square feet to 800 square feet
- Minimum lot size (of primary home): 5,000 square feet
- Density: Variable, depends on the size of lots in neighborhood

Pedestrian and Vehicle Access

- The main entry should be located on the front or side of the structure with access to second floor living quarters from an interior or exterior stairway.
- A pathway should be provided from the public sidewalk to the front entry of the carriage home.
- Vehicle access should be in common with the main residence.

Parking

- Uncovered on-site surface parking is allowed.

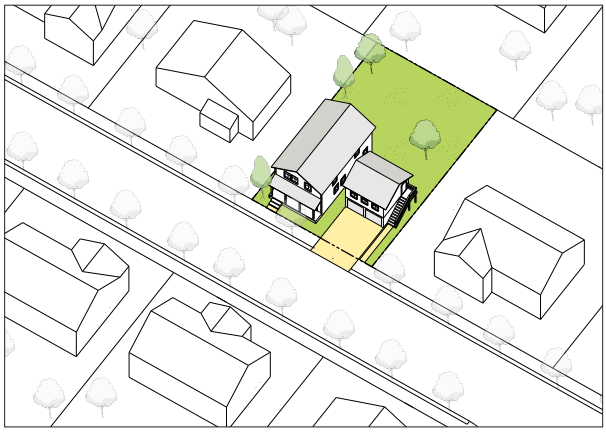
Landscape

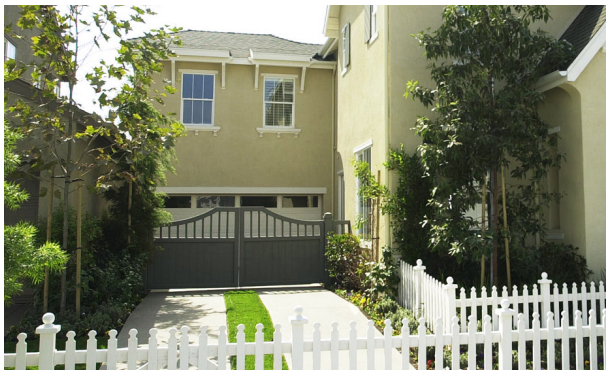
- A private exterior area should be provided for the carriage home.
- All front and streetscape setback areas not used for access should be landscaped.

Building Design

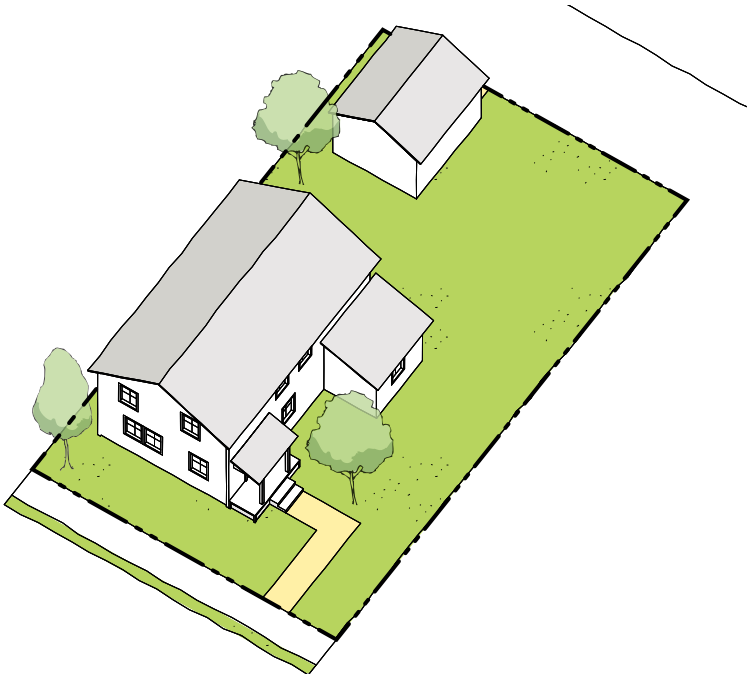
- The design of the carriage home should relate to the design aesthetic of the primary home, including the use of compatible exterior materials and colors, window and door styles, and roof lines and materials.
- The street-facing façade above the garage should include windows or other architectural features that relate to the streetscape.
- The carriage home should be set back farther from the street frontage than the primary residence.

NEIGHBORHOOD CONTEXT

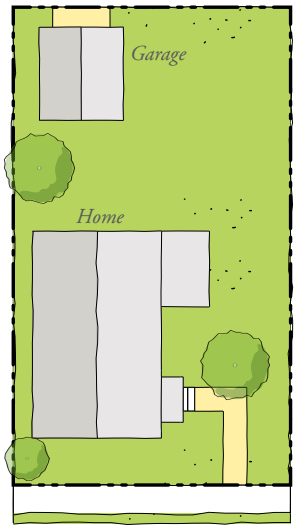




SIDE YARD HOMES



A side yard home is a single-family home that occupies one side of a lot, leaving a spacious side yard. Typically, the side yard home is oriented on a narrow lot so that the primary façade takes advantage of a southern or southwestern exposure, and vehicle access is taken from an alley. This type of development is typically located in low- to medium-density residential neighborhoods.



PLAN VIEW

SIDE ELEVATION

DESIGN STANDARDS

Typical Unit and Lot Sizes

- Unit size: 600 square feet to 1,800 square feet
- Lot width: 35 feet to 50 feet
- Lot depth: 100 feet to 150 feet
- Main side yard setback: 10 feet to 20 feet
- Density: 5 to 15 dwelling units per acre

Pedestrian and Vehicle Access

- The main entry should be located on the elevation facing the large side yard and access the public sidewalk by a walking path. The street-facing facades should not have a front entrance.
- Where available, alleys should be used for vehicle access.

Parking

- Garages are typically placed at the rear of the lot, accessed from the alley, and set back a minimum of 5 feet from the rear property line, or as needed for safe vehicular movement.
- Uncovered surface parking is allowed.

Landscape

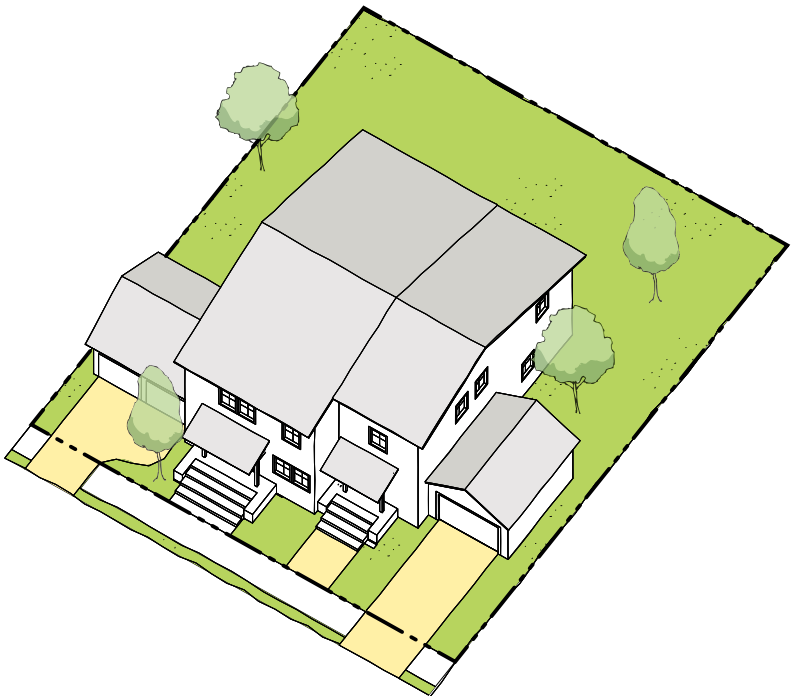
- A pathway should be provided within the side yard connecting the public sidewalk to the main entry of the home.
- A minimum of one tree should be located in the side yard, and at least one tree should be located near the street frontage.
- All front and streetscape setback areas not used for access should be landscaped.
- Solid fencing taller than three feet in height should be set back from the street frontage farther than the home's main entrance.

Building Design

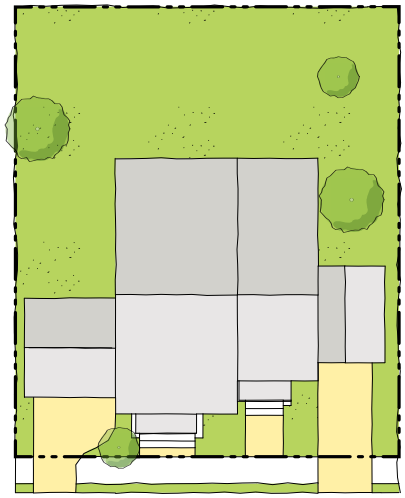
- Porches and patios are encouraged at the main entrance for outdoor use.
- Solar access and use of solar energy devices should be considered in building design.
- The front and main side yard elevations should be treated equally with attractive architectural elements, building materials and use of color.

NEIGHBORHOOD CONTEXT

DUPLEX, TRIPLEX, AND QUADPLEX



A duplex, triplex, or quadplex is a single residential structure that contains two to four dwelling units, with each unit having its own entrance. The dwelling units may be positioned side-by-side, back-to-back, or stacked above each other. This type of development is typically located in low- to high-density residential neighborhoods or in transition areas between commercial areas and residential neighborhoods.



PLAN VIEW

SIDE ELEVATION

DESIGN STANDARDS

Typical Unit and Lot Sizes

- Unit size: 600 square feet to 1,600 square feet
- Lot width: 50 feet to 120 feet
- Lot depth: 100 feet to 150 feet
- Density: 12 to 26 dwelling units per acre

Pedestrian and Vehicle Access

- The street-facing façade should be the primary location for main entries. Entries on other elevations may be used to help maintain the look of a single-family residence. Each entry should have direct access to the public sidewalk.
- Where available, alleys should be used for vehicle access.

Parking

- Garages may be attached or detached from the main structure.
- Uncovered surface parking is allowed.
- Required vehicle parking should not be located in the front setback area.

Landscape

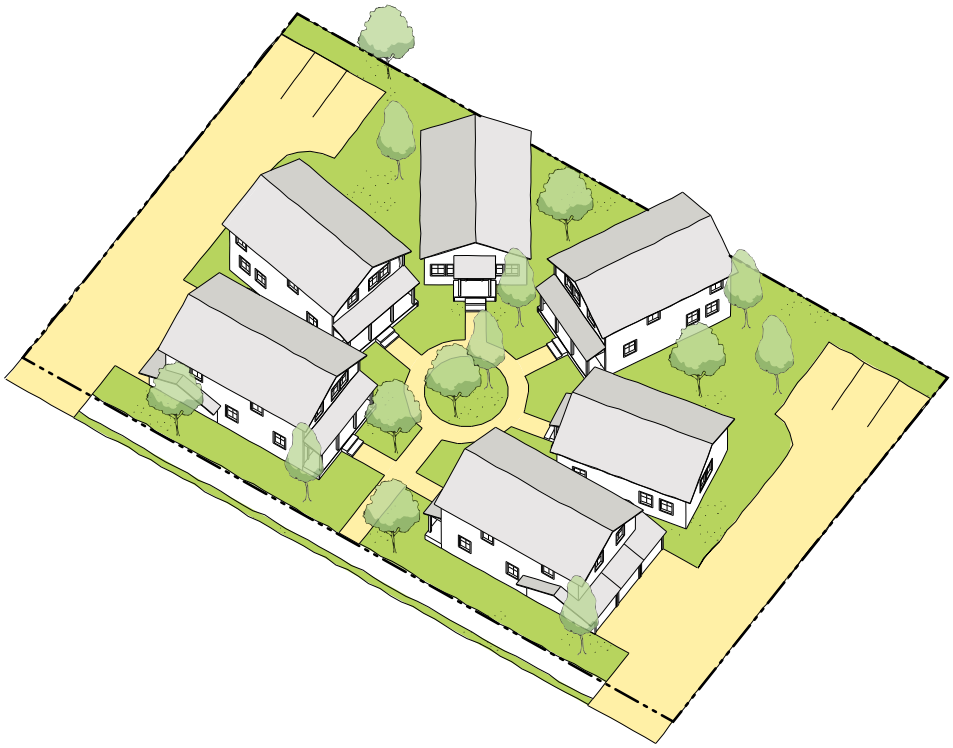
- A pathway should be provided from the public sidewalk to the front entry of each unit.
- A private exterior area should be provided for each unit, in addition to or in lieu of sufficient usable common area for all the units.
- All front and streetscape setback areas not used for access should be landscaped and include at least one tree in the front yard and/or parkway.

Building Design

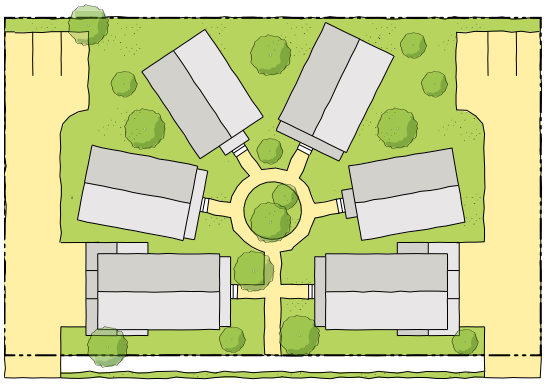
- Buildings should be designed to appear as large single-family homes.
- Consideration should be given to the placement of exteriror doors so that no more than two doors are visible in the same view.
- Functional front porches are encouraged for outdoor enjoyment in a neighborhood setting.
- Façades should be broken into smaller components through elements, such as windows, bays, balconies, and stepped-back upper stories.
- Visually attractive building materials, such as bricks, stones, crafted wood, copper and other ornamental metals, should be used.

NEIGHBORHOOD CONTEXT

BUNGALOW COURTS



A bungalow court consists of a grouping of detached single-family homes arranged around a courtyard that is typically perpendicular to the street. This housing type allows a high-quality, single-family living environment with shared outdoor space. This type of development is typically integrated into low- to medium-density residential neighborhoods.



PLAN VIEW

FRONT ELEVATION

DESIGN STANDARDS

Typical Unit and Lot Sizes

- Unit size: 600 square feet to 1,200 square feet
- Lot width: 100 feet to 180 feet
- Lot depth: 100 feet to 150 feet
- Density: 10 to 20 dwelling units per acre

Pedestrian and Vehicle Access

- The main entry to each home should be accessed directly from the front yard or the courtyard.
- Where available, alleys should be used for vehicle access.
- Where an alley is not present, parking should be accessed by a driveway(s) less than 20-feet wide (or the minimum needed for emergency access).

Parking

- A common rear or side parking area is encouraged to reduce the number of driveways.
- Uncovered surface parking and shared garages are allowed.

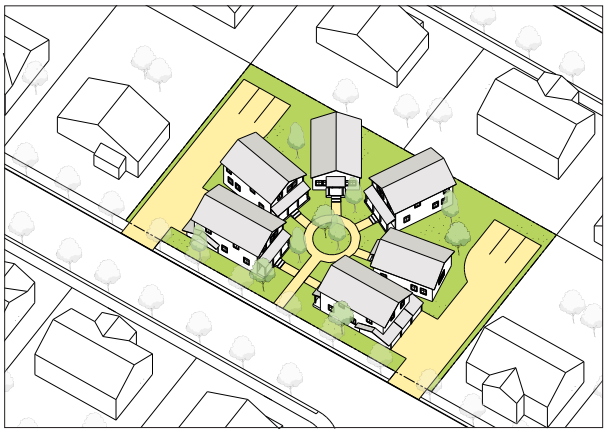
Landscape

- The shared courtyard should comprise at least 15 percent of the lot area. Usable common areas are encouraged.
- A pathway through the courtyard should connect each home to the public sidewalk.
- Each home should have a private outdoor space or yard. A minimum of one tree should be located in each yard for privacy and shade.
- All front and streetscape setback areas not used for access, as well as the courtyard, should be landscaped and include street trees along the frontage.

Building Design

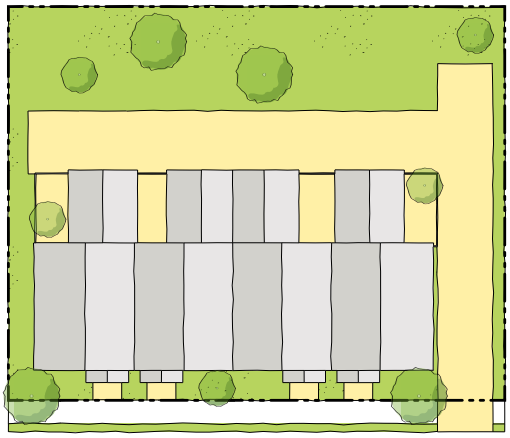
- The design aesthetic of homes in a bungalow court should relate to each other. The use of compatible exterior materials, window and door styles, and roof pitch and materials is encouraged.
- Any street-facing façades should include windows or other architectural features to relate to the streetscape.
- Visually attractive building materials should be used (e.g. bricks, stones, crafted wood, copper, and other ornamental metals).
- Functional front porches are encouraged and may encroach into the courtyard.

NEIGHBORHOOD CONTEXT



TOWNHOMES

A townhome is a single-family home attached to one or more other single-family homes in a linear arrangement, either as multiple townhome units per parcel or one townhome unit per parcel. Because of its linear arrangement, a townhome typically features a yard and a garage in the rear. This type of development is located in medium-density residential neighborhoods or in transition zones between commercial areas and low-density residential neighborhoods.



PLAN VIEW

SIDE ELEVATION

DESIGN STANDARDS

Typical Unit and Lot Sizes

- Unit size: 850 square feet to 2,200 square feet
- Lot width: 20 feet to 120 feet
- Lot depth: 80 feet to 150 feet
- Density: 10 to 20 dwelling units per acre

Pedestrian and Vehicle Access

- The main entry to a home should be located on the street-facing façade. A main entry may front an internal walkway if it does not front a street.
- Where available, alleys should be used for vehicle access.
- Where an alley is not present, parking should be accessed by a driveway less than 20-feet wide (or the minimum needed for emergency access).

Parking

- Vehicle parking should be located at the rear of the building and garage doors should not be allowed in the front elevation.

Landscape

- A pathway should connect the public sidewalk to the front entry of each home.
- A minimum of one tree should be located in the front yard and/or parkway per home.
- All front and streetscape setback areas not used for access should be landscaped.
- Each home should have a private outdoor space or yard.

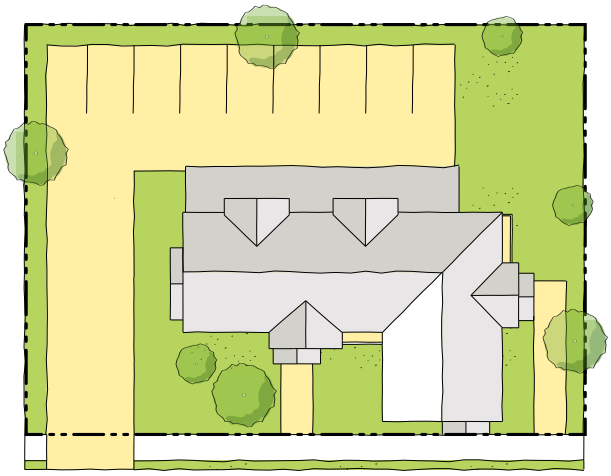
Building Design

- Functional front porches or stoops are encouraged for outdoor enjoyment in a neighborhood setting.
- Homes on corner lots should be designed with two street-facing facades.
- Façades should be broken into smaller components to visually distinguish each individual home through wall breaks, projections, color schemes, and individual roof treatments.
- Visually attractive building materials should be used (e.g. bricks, stones, crafted wood, copper, and other ornamental metals).

NEIGHBORHOOD CONTEXT

SMALL APARTMENT BUILDINGS

A small apartment building is a 2- to 3-story structure that contains multiple dwelling units that share one or more common entries. A small apartment building is developed at a scale that is compatible with adjacent single-family homes. As such, small apartment buildings are typically located in medium- to high-density residential neighborhoods or in transition zones between commercial areas and residential neighborhoods.



PLAN VIEW

SIDE ELEVATION

DESIGN STANDARDS

Typical Unit and Lot Sizes

- Unit size: 500 square feet to 1,700 square feet
- Lot width: 125 feet to 200 feet
- Lot depth: 100 feet to 150 feet
- Density: 15 to 30 dwelling units per acre
- Buildings: Larger lots may contain multiple buildings.

Pedestrian and Vehicle Access

- An entry to the building lobby and/or the majority of unit entries should be provided through the building's street-facing façade.
- The primary entry to ground floor units may be provided directly from the street.
- Vehicle access from the street should be provided by no more than one 24-foot wide driveway or two 12-foot wide driveways (or the minimum needed for emergency access).

Parking

- Vehicle parking should be located at the rear of the building.
- Uncovered surface parking, shared garages, podium parking*, and underground garages are allowed.
- Driveways should be located close to the rear property line.

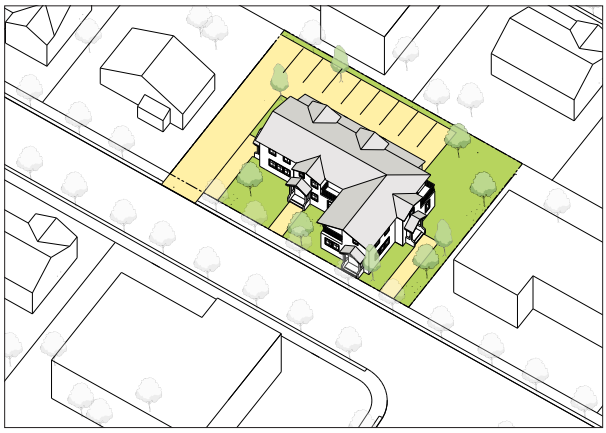
Landscape

- A pathway should connect the public sidewalk to the entry of each home or lobby.
- Trees should be located in the front yard and/or parkway.
- Usable open areas should be placed in convenient locations at the side or rear of the building.
- Side yards can be designed as garden areas or landscaped buffer areas.
- All front and streetscape setback areas not used for access should be landscaped.

Building Design

- Vertical modules of units should incorporate architectural features that individually distinguish them, such as wall breaks, projections, color schemes, and individual roof treatments.
- The street-facing façade should include windows or other architectural features to relate to the streetscape.

NEIGHBORHOOD CONTEXT

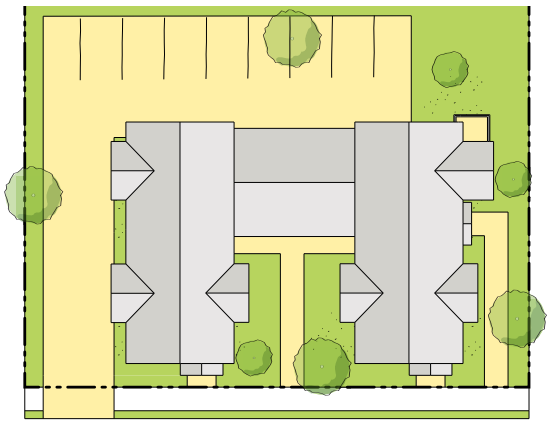


- Visually attractive building materials should be used (e.g. bricks, stones, crafted wood, copper, and other ornamental metals).

**Podium parking refers to a ground-level parking garage that is wrapped by the building, which hides the garage from the street view.*

COURTYARD APARTMENT BUILDINGS

A courtyard apartment building is a grouping of attached homes arranged to share one or more central courtyards. This type of development is typically located in medium- to high-density residential neighborhoods or in transition zones between commercial areas and residential neighborhoods.



PLAN VIEW

SIDE ELEVATION

DESIGN STANDARDS

Typical Unit and Lot Sizes

- Unit size: 600 square feet to 1,700 square feet
- Lot width: 125 feet to 200 feet
- Lot depth: 100 feet to 150 feet
- Density: 15 to 30 dwelling units per acre
- Buildings: Larger sites may contain multiple buildings and courtyards.

Pedestrian and Vehicle Access

- Units should have their primary entry from a courtyard, either individually or in common (with interior hallway access to individual units).
- Where a ground floor unit is located at the end of a building, its primary entry may have direct access to the public sidewalk.
- Courtyards should have direct access to the public sidewalk or through connecting courtyards on larger sites.
- Vehicle access from the street should be provided by no more than one 20-foot wide driveway or two driveways with a 12-foot maximum width each (or the minimum needed for emergency access).
- Where available, alleys should be used for vehicle access.

Parking

- Vehicle parking should be placed at the rear of the building.
- Uncovered surface parking, shared garages, podium parking*, and underground garages are allowed.
- Driveways should be located close to the rear or side property line.

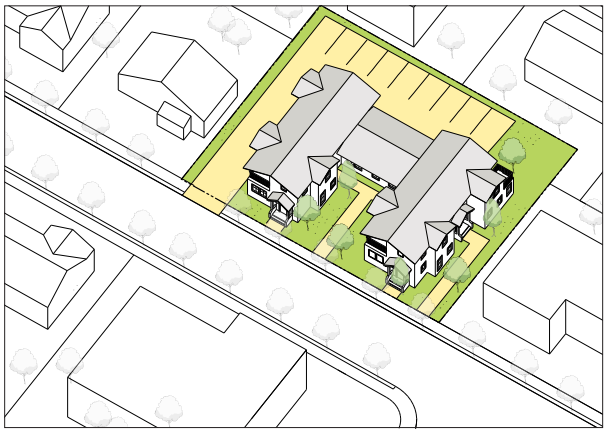
Landscape

- A pathway should be provided from the public sidewalk to the entry of the courtyard or ground floor end units.
- The courtyard should function as a common area that contains a focal element such as a fountain, seating or special landscape feature.
- All front and streetscape setback areas not used for access should be landscaped.

Building Design

- Vertical modules of units should incorporate architectural features that individually distinguish them, such as wall breaks, projections, color schemes, and individual roof treatments.
- The street-facing façade should include windows or other architectural features to relate to the streetscape.
- Visually attractive building materials should be used (e.g. bricks, stones, crafted wood, copper, and other ornamental metals).

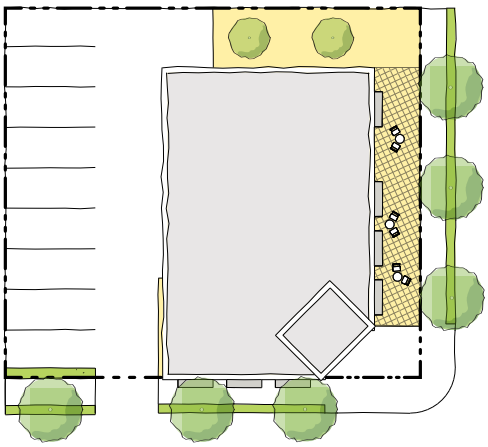
NEIGHBORHOOD CONTEXT



**Podium parking refers to a ground-level parking garage that is wrapped by the building, which hides the garage from the street view.*

VERTICAL MIXED USE

A vertical mixed-use building is a small- to medium-scale building that provides a mix of uses. It typically consists of retail, service, and/or office uses on the ground floor and residential uses on the upper floors. In areas with a fair amount of pedestrian traffic, vertical mixed-use buildings provide pedestrian-oriented retail or services on the ground floor. This type of development is typically located in downtown commercial neighborhoods or on corner lots in residential neighborhoods.



PLAN VIEW

SIDE ELEVATION

DESIGN STANDARDS

Typical Unit and Lot Sizes

- Unit size (upper floors): 600 square feet to 1,000 square feet
- Lot width: 50 feet to 120 feet
- Lot depth: 100 feet to 150 feet
- Overall Building Intensity: 0.6 to 1.5 floor area to lot are ratio (FAR)

Pedestrian and Vehicle Access

- The main entry to each use should be through a street-facing façade with direct access to the public sidewalk, internal courtyard, plaza or internal (upstairs) hallway.
- Vehicle access from the street should be provided by no more than one 24-foot wide driveway or two driveways with a 12-foot maximum width each.
- Where available, alleys should be used for vehicle access.
- Loading and service entrances should be located at the rear of the building.

Parking

- Vehicle parking should be placed at the sides or rear of the building and screened from the street.
- Driveways should be located close to the rear or side property line.

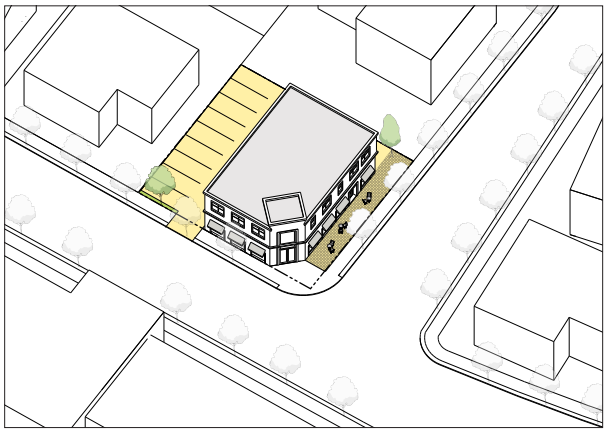
Landscape

- Where a portion of a building is set back from the street, landscaping should be provided.
- Surface parking areas should be landscaped with ample trees for shade, and well-defined pathways should be provided for pedestrians.
- Street trees should be provided on all frontages.

Building Design

- Ground-level facades should incorporate pedestrian scale elements to give visual interest along the sidewalk.
- Façades should include a variety of visually attractive elements, such as windows, wall insets, balconies, colors, textures, and materials to avoid large blank walls. Balconies and stepped-back upper stories can also add interest to the building.
- Buildings on corner lots are encouraged to include special design features, such as an embedded corner tower or a landscaped public plaza.

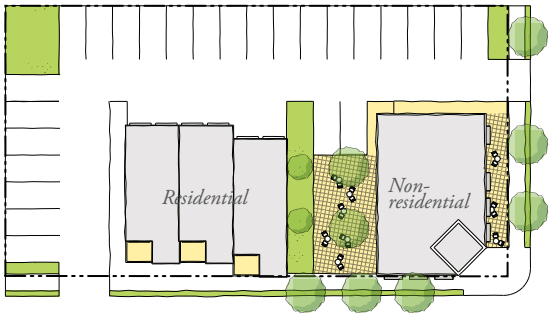
NEIGHBORHOOD CONTEXT



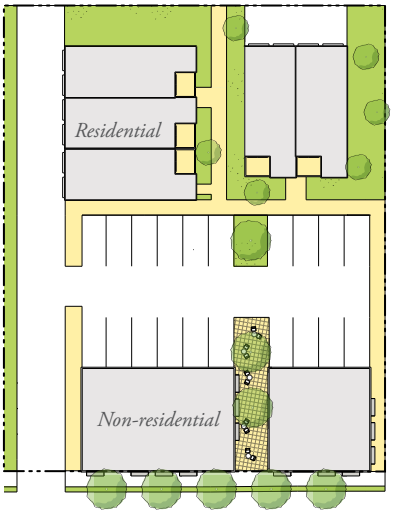
HORIZONTAL MIXED USE

Horizontal mixed use is a type of mixed-use development where residential uses are located behind or next to non-residential uses on the same development site. The uses could be placed in the same building or in separate buildings on the site. This type of development is typically located in downtown commercial neighborhoods or in transition zones between commercial areas and residential neighborhoods.

PLAN VIEW



Scenario A



Scenario B

Scenario A

FRONT ELEVATION

Scenario B

SIDE ELEVATION

DESIGN STANDARDS

Typical Unit and Lot Sizes

- Residential unit size: 600 square feet to 1,000 square feet
- Lot width: 50 feet to 120 feet
- Lot depth: 100 feet to 150 feet (or more where residential is to be located in the rear)
- Building Intensity: 0.5 to 1.2 floor area to lot area ratio (FAR).

Pedestrian and Vehicle Access

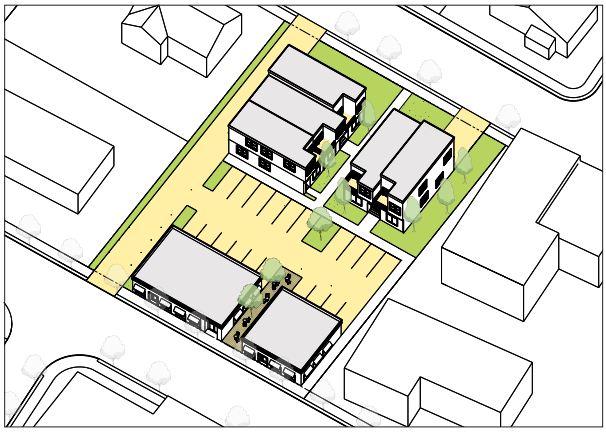
- The main entry to each use should be through a street-facing façade, except where residential is to be located in the rear of the site.
- Vehicle access from the street should be provided by driveway(s) of minimum width for emergency access.
- Where available, alleys should be used for vehicle access.
- Loading and service entrances should be located at the rear of the building.

Parking

- Vehicle parking should be placed at the sides or rear of the building.
- Driveways should be located close to the rear or side property line.

NEIGHBORHOOD CONTEXT

Scenario A



Scenario B

Landscape

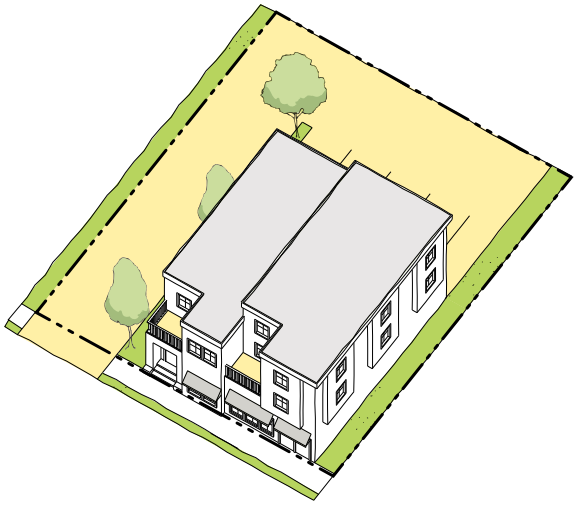
- Where a portion of a building is set back from the street, landscaping should be provided, especially in a plaza or other pedestrian space.
- Surface parking areas should be landscaped with ample trees, and well-defined pathways should be provided for pedestrians.
- Landscaped buffers should be located between residential and non-residential uses when the uses do not share the same building.
- Street trees should be provided on all frontages

Building Location and Design

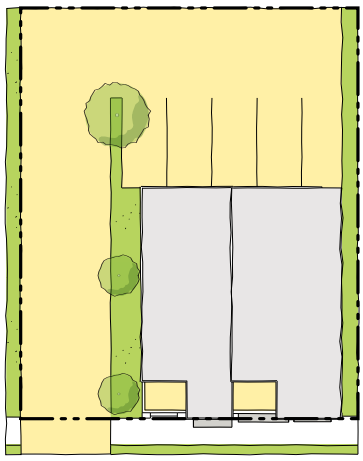
- Residential uses may be located on the street frontage when they will not diminish opportunities for needed commercial uses.
- The residential building(s) should be architecturally compatible with the commercial building.
- Ground-level façades should incorporate pedestrian scale elements to give visual interest along the sidewalk.
- Façades should include a variety of visually attractive elements, such as windows, wall insets, colors, textures, and materials to avoid large blank walls. Balconies and stepped-back upper stories can also add interest to the building.

Source: McNellis Partners, 2014

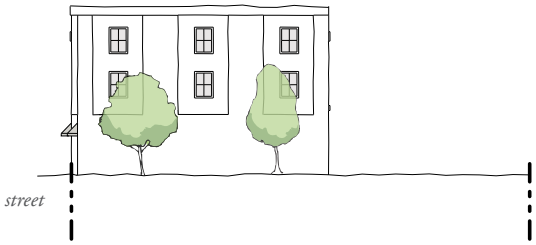
LIVE/WORK



A live/work unit is a building that is used jointly for commercial and residential purposes. A live/work unit is typically 2- to 3-stories high with a non-residential use on the ground floor. This type of development is typically located in downtown areas, commercial and service-commercial areas, and higher-density residential neighborhoods where the residential uses are compatible with adjacent non-residential uses.



PLAN VIEW



SIDE ELEVATION

DESIGN STANDARDS

Typical Unit and Lot Sizes

- Unit size (live/work): 1,000 square feet to 2,700 square feet
- Living area: 40 to 80 percent of the total unit floor area
- Lot width: 40 feet to 120 feet
- Lot depth: 100 feet to 150 feet
- Building Intensity: 10 to 20 dwelling units per acre or 0.5 to 1.5 floor area to lot area ratio (FAR).

Pedestrian and Vehicle Access

- An entry to the ground floor space should be through the street-facing façade and directly access a sidewalk.
- Separate entrances may be provided for the live and work components of the building.
- Where available, alleys should be used for vehicle acces.

Parking

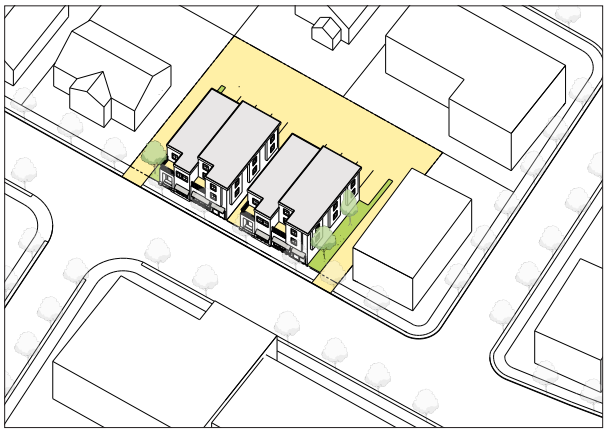
- Vehicle parking should be placed at the sides or rear of the building.
- Uncovered surface parking and podium parking* are allowed.

Landscape

- A minimum of one tree should be located in the front yard and/or parkway.
- All front and streetscape setback areas not used for access should be landscaped.
- Private outdoor space should be provided for the live unit.

Building Design

- Ground-floor street frontages should be non-residential in character and incorporate visually interesting facades with windows, doors, and other elements.
- Façades should be broken into smaller components using elements, such as windows, wall insets, balconies, and stepped-back upper stories.
- Visually attractive building materials, such as bricks, stones, crafted wood, copper and other ornamental metals, should be used.

**Podium parking refers to a ground-level parking garage that is wrapped by the building, which hides the garage from the street view.*

NEIGHBORHOOD CONTEXT