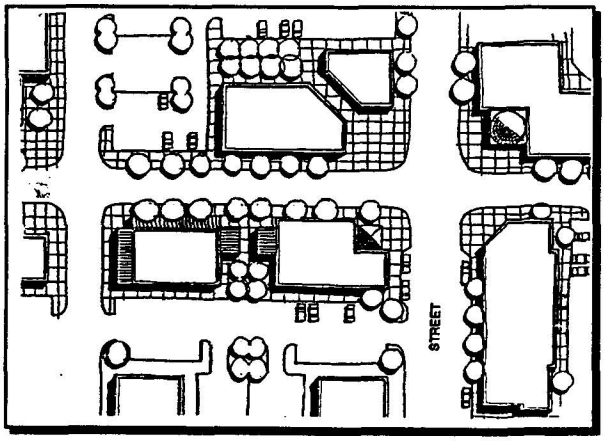
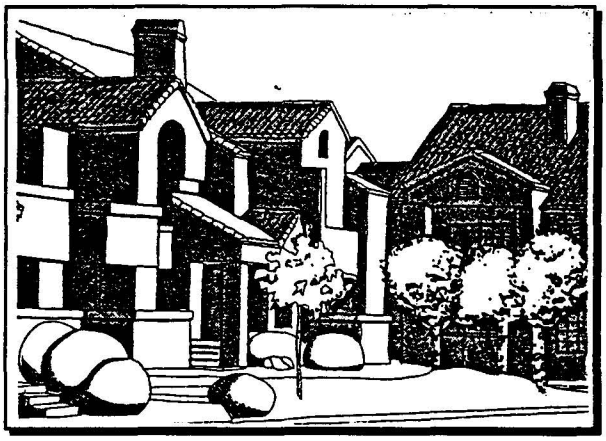
DESIGN GUIDELINES

SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY





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A COMMUNITY DESIGN REFERENCE DOCUMENT

SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING & BUILDING

COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO

ADOPTED BY RESOLUTION BY THE
SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

DESIGN GUIDELINES

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San Luis Obispo County

Design Guidelines

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PART I
Introduction, Applicability

1. INTRODUCTION

The *Design Guidelines* consists of design objectives, guidelines and examples that will help retain and enhance the unique character of the unincorporated communities and rural areas of San Luis Obispo County. The Design Guidelines are intended to serve as an information resource for project designers and other interested people and is not intended to be a regulatory document. The guidelines encourage creativity and flexibility rather than a rigid "one-size-fits-all" approach. Urban development that is pedestrian-oriented, compact in form, diverse and attractive in appearance is also encouraged. These approaches to design are intended to conserve and enhance the natural and aesthetic resources of the county, provide opportunities for the healthier economies enjoyed by attractive communities, and allow development that conserves natural resources and encourages community-building among residents. This document will be evaluated periodically for its continued applicability and relevance. The Design Guidelines do not address agricultural processing structures (as determined by the Ag Commissioner), except for those that emphasize public serving activities, such as wine tasting rooms.

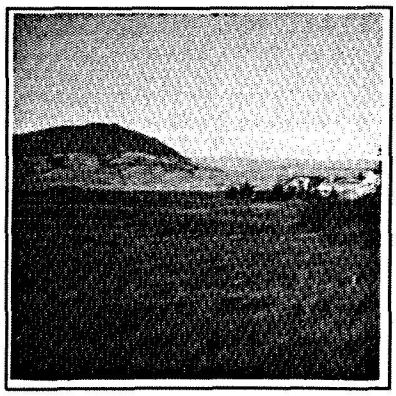
A. Goals

The goals of the *Design Guidelines* are the product of community input received at a series of regional workshops, and extensive discussions by the *Design Guidelines* Advisory Committee. These goals are also consistent with the overall planning goals of the *San Luis Obispo County General Plan*. The goals were developed to encourage good design by:

- Providing direction for the preparation of the specific design principles in the plan.
- Giving applicants and community advisory groups additional background information for situations where alternatives to the guidelines are being considered for specific projects.

The following goals are organized according to the general topics of site planning and design that they address. The goals are general statements about what the *Design Guidelines* attempts to accomplish, and are carried out through the guidelines themselves (Parts II, III, and IV of this plan).

1. Conservation of Resources and the Environment



Development should respect the key natural and built resources on each site, including on-site ecological systems, vegetative communities, major trees, water courses, land forms, archaeological resources, and historically and architecturally important structures.

a. Conserve special areas which are identified as having high ecological sensitivity. Examples of resources to preserve include riparian corridors, oak and pine woodlands, and estuaries.

b. Conserve special areas which are considered as having high visual sensitivity. Examples of resources to conserve and enhance include undeveloped ridgelines and major geologic features such as the Morros.

c. Conserve and enhance the diversity and unique qualities of villages and urban areas (hard edge, sense of place, community character) within the County. Examples of important resources to conserve and enhance in urban and village areas include overall community character, open spaces, and significant buildings.

d. Inhabited structures should maximize the use of on-site energy resources—warming sunlight and cooling winds.

2. Distinction Between Urban and Rural Areas

Create a clear distinction between urban and rural areas, expressed through differences in density and design.

a. Create and maintain clear community edges for urban and village areas and prevent sprawl by using open space buffers, greenbelts, clustered development and other appropriate types of landscaping, gateways and changes in design.

b. At the edges of rural areas, design low-density development to maintain a rural character, and preserve natural features such as fields, hillsides, and streams.

3. Consistency with Local Context

Design each project to be consistent with its unique local context and to enhance the diversity of the County.

a. Design projects to fit their context in terms of building form, siting, massing and scale.

b. Design projects to be consistent with a site's natural surroundings.

4. Appropriate Scale

Design each project at a human scale consistent with surrounding natural and built features.

a. Project design should give special attention to scale in all parts of a project, including grading, massing, site design, building detailing and landscape development.

b. Follow rules of good proportion in the design of every project where the mass of the building is balanced and the parts relate well to one another.

5. Non-motorized Transportation

Design projects to minimize the need to use automobiles for transportation.

a. Emphasize pedestrian and bicycle circulation in all projects.

b. Give individual attention to each mode of transportation with potential to serve a project, including pedestrian, bicycle, transit, and automobile.

c. Plan for trail systems, where appropriate to connect areas of development with natural and recreational resources in accordance with the County Trails Plan..

6. Urban Vitality

Encourage an active, varied, and concentrated urban life within urban areas.

a. Create and maintain pedestrian oriented centers of development within each urban area that contain mixtures of retail, employment, civic, and open space uses and provide a focus for community life. Orient all other development within urban areas around these hubs.

b. Create clustered and mixed use projects within urban and village centers that combine residential, retail, office and other uses.

c. Emphasize appropriate densities of urban development to both foster compact urban form and to conserve undeveloped rural land.

7. Conservation of Rural Landscape

Respect and preserve natural landscape within rural areas.

a. Design buildings to blend into the landscape.

b. Emphasize native vegetation and natural forms in site design and landscaping of projects.

B. Purpose

Background

The unincorporated areas of San Luis Obispo County include a wide variety of visually pleasing communities and landscapes. Despite continuing growth, the wooded hills, grasslands, and agricultural areas surrounding the more urban communities still retain a predominantly open, rural feeling. The county's unincorporated communities are still viewed as pleasant "small towns," with commercial areas of pedestrian scale, and some with an historic architectural heritage.

The county's visual character is widely appreciated by residents and visitors, and its importance is highlighted in official policies and regulations. For example, some County planning standards encourage the siting of new structures to maintain the rural appearance of landscape features, others work toward more pedestrian-oriented commercial development by encouraging buildings along sidewalks rather than behind parking lots.

In the past, most residential construction occurred on relatively uniform terrain near existing infrastructure and other public facilities and services. Those were the most efficient sites to develop. (Although a notable exception has been the development of antiquated subdivision lots in Cambria and the El Pomar.) However, past use of easy-to-develop properties and market preferences have focused future development pressures on sites with more difficult terrain, that are more environmentally sensitive, and more publicly visible.

Past commercial development has often emphasized the rehabilitation and re-use of existing structures rather than extensive new construction. Today, most unincorporated communities can only accommodate new commercial and industrial uses by expanding developed areas or replacing existing buildings with larger ones. So future commercial and industrial development is also likely to raise concerns about appearance. In general, recent growth has raised more community design issues than ever before.

These circumstances and the limited scope of existing County design policies have led to the formulation of this *Design Guidelines*. The guidelines emphasizes the importance of careful design.

The Importance and Difficulty of Design Standards

Even though court decisions on the rights of communities to manage the planning and appearance of development have found that aesthetic regulation is appropriate, the adoption of design

standards may be controversial. Everyone knows that each of us is free to form our own opinions about what is "good" design. And any sort of community agreement about preferred styles of building architecture, color, or materials can be difficult, if not impossible to achieve. Even if most residents *could* agree on these issues, the result of a community forcing rigid uniformity in project design can produce development as unappealing as where design issues are given no public attention at all.

On the other hand, communities which express no public policy about site planning and building design risk development having a location, scale or appearance that is disruptive instead of beneficial. Unless the community clearly describes its design expectations, insensitive development can eliminate the pedestrian scale of a business district, the historic character of an older residential neighborhood, or the appearance of a natural feature such as a ridgeline that, before the prominent new building, only presented a view of trees against the sky. Each of those consequences of absent or unclear community design policy can provoke public dismay, and the residents' comment, "How could that have happened?"

The public policy dilemma is that good design is hard to describe and harder to mandate; but having *no* design standards can result in the loss of the special qualities that a community wants to preserve. The intent of the *Design Guidelines* is, therefore, to provide guidelines and objectives that focus attention on the aspects of site planning and building design that can enhance community character. The plan then offers examples of how new development can be designed to be beneficial rather than detrimental, without mandating specific architectural styles or other single solutions. The *Design Guidelines* attempts to distill "careful site planning and design" to its most fundamental components, to encourage quality development while also allowing maximum design freedom.

C. Plan Organization

The provisions of the *Design Guidelines* are organized into four major groups. Most of the contents of this plan are "general" guidelines, which express basic site planning and project design principles that apply in a wide variety of communities and site-specific situations. These guidelines are in three groups: Urban and Village Area Guidelines (Part II), Rural Area Guidelines (Part III), and Resource Conservation Guidelines (Part IV).

A future component of this plan (Part V) is intended to be design guidelines for each individual unincorporated community, similar to those in the *Templeton Community Design Plan*, adopted by the Board of Supervisors in 1990. Community design guidelines for specific areas are beyond the scope of this initial countywide plan, and will be completed as individual community interest and available resources permit.

The design guidelines and examples in Parts II through IV of this plan cover general types of land uses and development in the urban and rural areas of the county:

- Downtowns and village centers, which are areas of concentrated commercial and urban activity and are identified as "Central Business Districts" on the *Land Use Element* maps. Urban areas with distinct centers include Avila Beach, Cambria, Cayucos, Los Osos, Baywood Park, Nipomo, San Miguel, Santa Margarita and Templeton;

- Urban areas outside downtowns, which include single-family, multi-family, and commercial developments within urban and village reserve lines, but outside of downtown areas. Communities such as Avila Beach, Baywood Park, Cambria, Cayucos, Los Osos, Templeton, Oceano, Nipomo, San Miguel and Santa Margarita all have such areas; and

- Rural areas outside of urban village communities, which include a variety of agriculture, resource conservation and low density residential uses.

2. APPLICABILITY AND USE

The Design Guidelines are intended to serve as an information resource for project designers, developers, interested people, and community advisory groups for use in preparing a design plan unique to their own community.

A. Relationship of the Design Guidelines to other Planning Documents

The *Design Guidelines* is intended to be used by the public and community advisory groups as a *reference document* for use in designing land development projects, and individual community design plans.

The review and approval of development by the County is based on policies and regulations adopted mainly as part of the *Land Use Element* of the *San Luis Obispo County General Plan* and the *Land Use Ordinance* (LUO):

- The *Land Use Element* includes general policies that address the location and character of development, that are used primarily when the County considers changes in the land use designations applied to property (e.g., residential, commercial, industrial, etc.).

- The *Land Use Ordinance* and the *Coastal Zone Land Use Ordinance* provide detailed regulations for many aspects of development, including minimum parcel sizes for new subdivisions, setback requirements and height limits for buildings, and standards for landscaping and fencing, off-street parking, signs, outdoor lighting, as well as other topics. The standards in the *Land Use Ordinances* (inland and coastal) are specifications for development in general, and are mostly expressed as quantities (e.g., a 25-foot front setback, 35-foot height limit, one parking space for every 300 square feet of floor area, etc.) without an obvious connection to any particular area of the county.

- Working with the LUO, the *Area Plans* of the *Land Use Element* provide the same type of detailed regulations (Planning Area Standards), but are written for specific unincorporated communities and rural areas to address their individual character. Community based guidelines are also envisioned where desired by individual communities.

The *Design Guidelines* provides advisory guidelines for the site planning and design of unincorporated area development. The guidelines and examples of the *Design Guidelines* are intended to offer more of a "cookbook" approach to development than the *Land Use Ordinance* and *Area Plans* by providing both more explanation and illustration of how the site planning and design principles can be applied to development.

B. Terms Used

This document contains goals, objectives, and examples/references. The following definitions explain the differences among a goal, objective, guideline, and example/references:

Goal. Goals are a general expression of community values, an ideal future result, or condition, related to public health, safety, or general welfare. Goals describe the *vision* of what is desired in the future.

Objective. Objectives are more specific than goals. Objectives are statements that guide architectes, designers and community advisory groups. The objectives of this plan are based on the information gathered and analyzed during the process of developing the plan.

Guideline. Guidelines provide direction on how to implement goals and objectives. While guidelines may provide specific direction for addressing a particular issue, alternative approaches that achieve the same result or better may also be used.

Examples/references. In some cases, specific examples have been idicated that should be considered in all projects. or where a county ordinance or policy found in another document may apply to a proposed project

The design guidelines are formulated to follow general principles, and are purposely broad in order to encourage design creativity and original ideas. Land planners, architects, landscape architects, developers and builders are encouraged to follow these guidelines, but are also encouraged to interpret them creatively so that there is both variety and individuality in development.

PART II
Urban and Village Area Guidelines

3. DOWNTOWNS AND VILLAGE CENTERS

The downtowns and village center areas in unincorporated San Luis Obispo County are the traditional hearts of their communities, offering a variety of shops, services and social activities. A typical and prominent element of these economic and social centers is a clearly defined, pedestrian-friendly main street and the businesses surrounding it. To support a sense of community and focus in each urban area, it is important that traditional downtown form and character be protected and enhanced. Although each village has its own unique identity, some common design characteristics can be identified:

- **Pedestrian orientation.** The placement of buildings directly along a wide sidewalk is one of the most obvious characteristics of a typical downtown. This arrangement encourages walking, window shopping, and social interaction along the street. This is unlike most suburban shopping centers where stores appear in the distance behind large parking lots. The "pedestrian friendly" nature of a downtown can be further enhanced by frequent entrances to shops, well-designed ground floor display windows, street trees and other landscaping, and the development of usable open space, such as parks, plazas, and smaller sitting and outdoor activity areas.

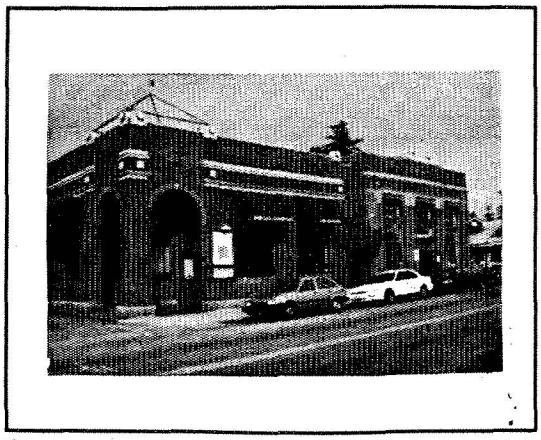
- **Established design character.** Most county downtowns and village areas have interesting older buildings. Both their design style and their sizes and shapes in relation to one another give each downtown its own unique character. New buildings that are not designed to "fit in" can disrupt established downtown character, often appearing as though they belong in an entirely different community.

This chapter provides a framework of basic urban design considerations which are applicable to each downtown area.

The guidelines and examples in this chapter apply to development in downtowns and village centers (areas identified by the *Land Use Element* as Central Business Districts). Additionally, guidelines and examples listed below apply to downtowns:

- Sections 5 for parking areas,
- Section 7 for streetscape design,
- Section 11 for resource conservation,
- *LUO*[1] standards in Section 22.04.029 commercial and office categories, and
- Planning area standards in Area Plans of the *Land Use Element*.

[1] All references to the *Land Use Ordinance* are intended to also include the *Coastal Zone Land Use Ordinance*.



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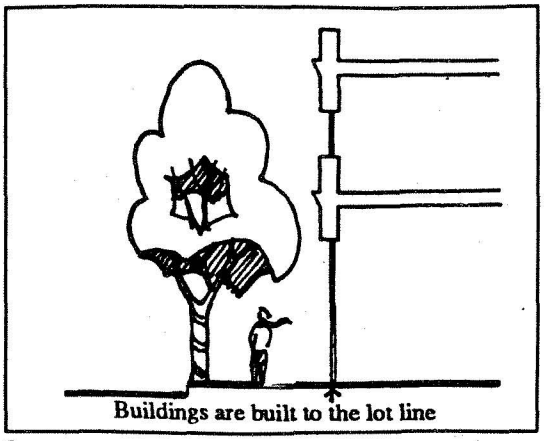

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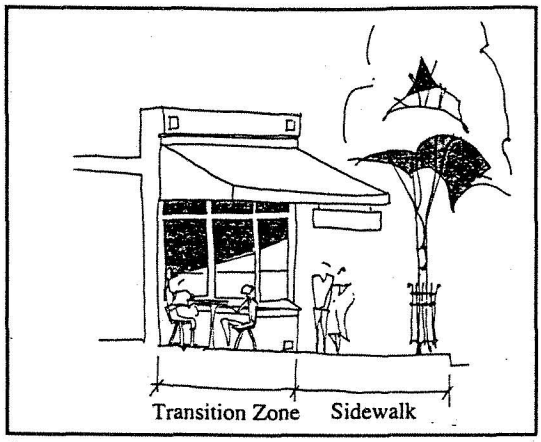

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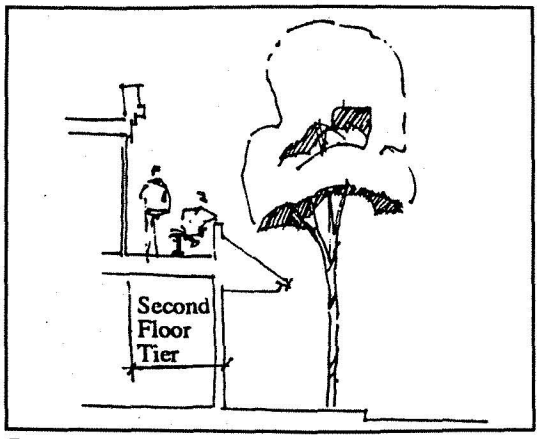
A. Downtown Buildings

OBJECTIVE DT-1: **Buildings should generally be built to the front and side property lines, without intervening parking or landscaping.**

Guidelines

a. **Preferred setback.** Front and side setbacks for downtown buildings should generally be zero, as shown in Figures 1 and 2.

b. **Transitional space.** At the fronts of buildings, transitional space may be used for building entries, seating, product display and other activities. Small planter beds may also occur in the transitional space. For example, a transitional space of 10 feet can accommodate 5 feet of planters and/or seating. A diagram and photo of such a transitional space are shown in Figures 3 and 4.



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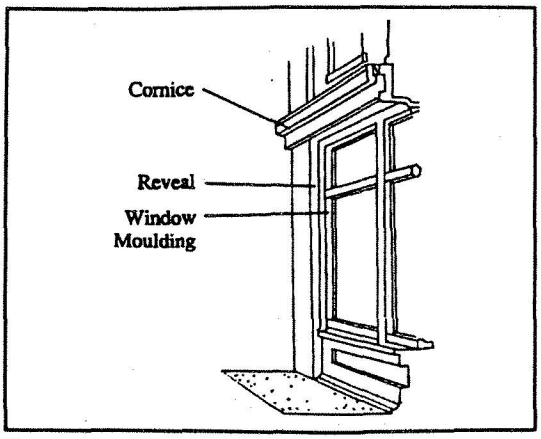
c. **Second floor setback.** Second floors may be tiered in from first floor frontages to accommodate architectural elements such as porches, balconies or trellises. A diagram of this setback area is shown in Figure 5.



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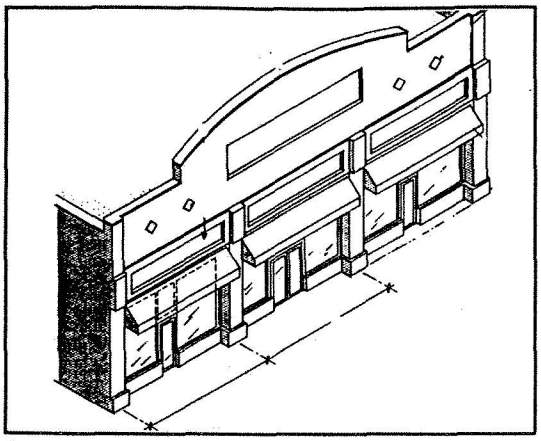

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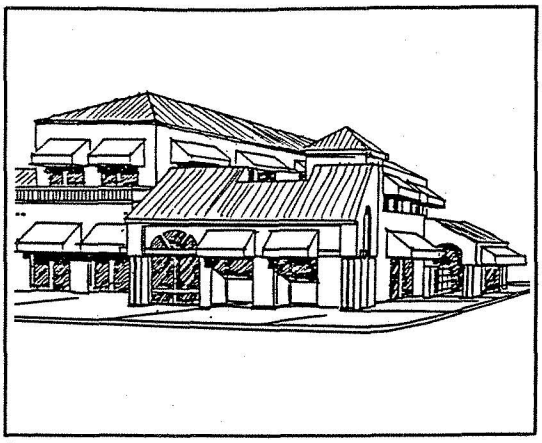

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OBJECTIVE DT-2: **New downtown buildings and remodeled facades should include pedestrian-oriented details to provide shade, comfort and interest at the ground level.**

Guidelines

a. **Building articulation.** All facades should emphasize three dimensional detailing such as cornices, window moldings, and reveals to cast shadows and create visual interest on the facade. Architectural elements used to provide relief can include awnings and projections, trellises, detailed parapets, or arcades, as shown in Figures 6 and 7.

b. **Building entries.** Building entries should be recessed in entry bays, to create transitional spaces between the street and buildings and to provide space for "pedestrian turning movements", as shown in Figure 8.

c. **Overhangs.** The use of overhangs and awnings are encouraged, as shown in Figure 9.Balconies are also encouraged, over transitional spaces. (See OBJECTIVE DT-1, Guideline b.)

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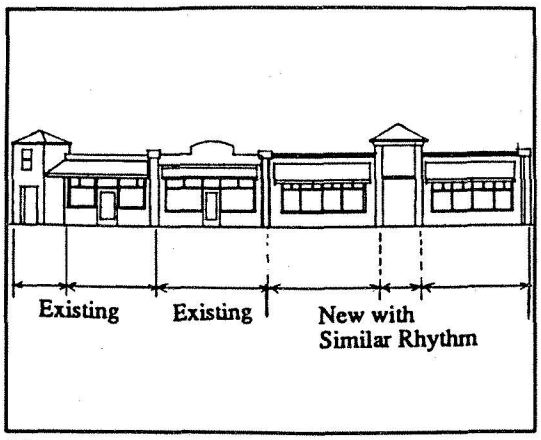
d. **Upper versus lower floors.** To encourage pedestrian interest, ground floor facades should have shop frontages that can be seen into and pedestrian oriented details such as recessed entries and overhanging awnings. Upper floors that have smaller window openings punched into solid walls (see Figure 10) are encouraged.

Example/Reference

1. **Street floor facade.** For new building construction, at least 60 percent of ground floor street facade should be transparent glass (windows or doors). See Figure 11.

2. **Blank solid end walls or side walls** visible from public view should be avoided. If such walls are necessary for interior reasons, the building wall should receive some form of articulation of add-on elements such as awnings, cornice bands, arcade trellises, etc.



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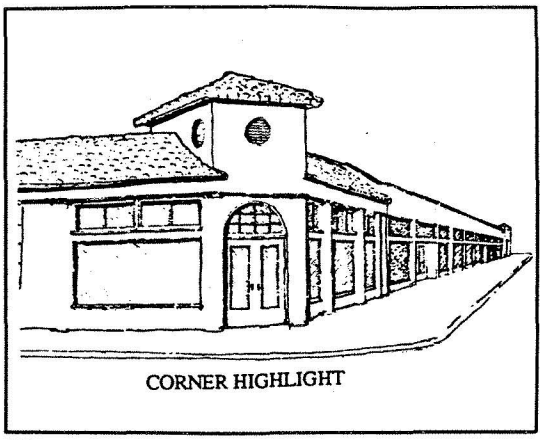

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OBJECTIVE DT-3: **New downtown buildings and remodeled facades should follow the traditional construction patterns of the downtown.**

Guidelines

a. **Repeat the rhythm.** The placement of windows, doors, and other building wall features should create a repetitive rhythm of bays that encourages continued walking along the street, as shown in Figure 12. Entrances are preferred at 25 to 30 foot intervals.

b. **Corner landmarks.** Landmark buildings with a taller height or a tower or other architectural elements should be constructed at one or more of the corners of key downtown intersections, as shown in Figure 13.

c. **Mixed use buildings.** Mixed use buildings with ground floor retail and upper floor residential or office use are encouraged in downtown areas, especially on main streets.

d. **Blending old and new.** Designs should relate new buildings to the surrounding architecture by providing similar massing, facade treatment, or materials. Historical integrity should be observed.

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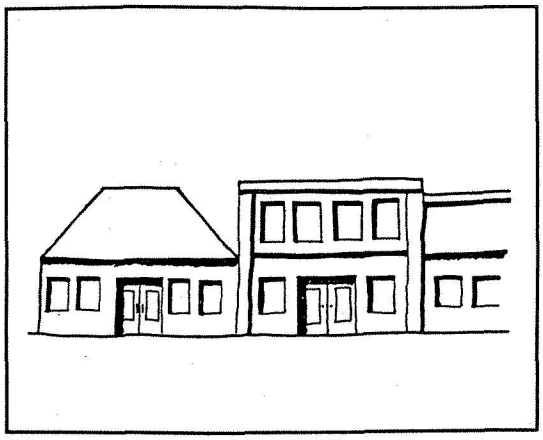

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OBJECTIVE DT-4: **New downtown buildings or remodeled facades should have roof lines that match the traditional vernacular (commonly used features) already found in the community in which the building is located.**

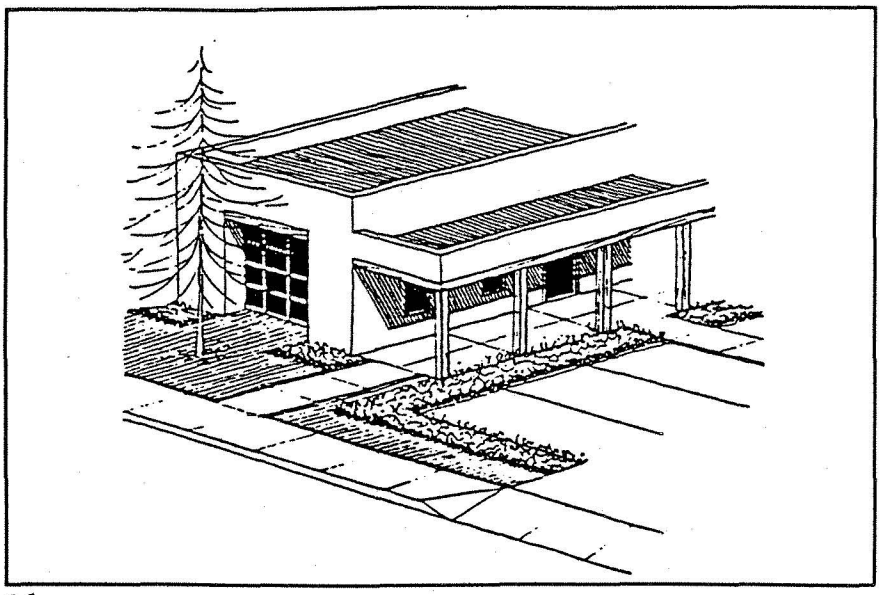
Guidelines

a. **Parapet roofs.** Downtown buildings are encouraged to have parapets or cornice features that create the visual effect shown in Figure 14.

b. **Roof detailing.** Roof parapets should be simply articulated and adorned for visual interest. Roofline cornices, shadow lines and detailed eaves should be developed to create interest on the building facade.

c. **Peaked roofs.** Peaked and unusual roof shapes are appropriate only on buildings that play a particularly prominent role in a downtown.

d. **Flat or overhanging roofs.** Flat or overhanging roofs (as shown in Figure 15) may appear out of place in most downtowns and are discouraged.



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Example/Reference

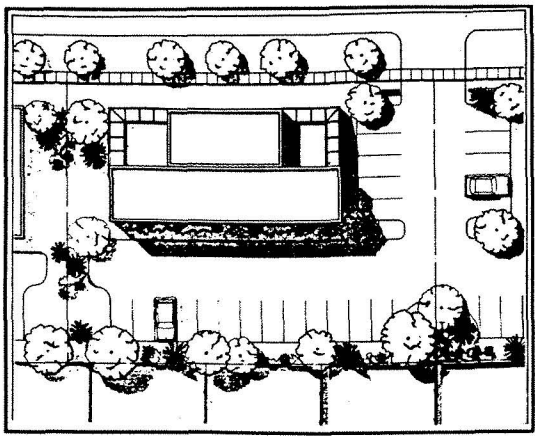
1. **Parapet details.** Any parapet or cornice details used on a street facade should be continuous on all walls of the building. See Figure 16.

OBJECTIVE DT-5: **Building colors and materials should be generally consistent with those found in the existing downtowns of San Luis Obispo County.**

Guidelines

a. **Colors.** Building colors should add visual interest to downtown, yet be compatible with the surrounding businesses. For example, building colors may include light-colored tones and pastels. Primary colors and very dark colors may be used as accents.

b. **Materials.** New buildings will better fit into an existing downtown if building facades are constructed of materials already used in the downtown. In many instances, the use of highly finished, extremely rustic, or simulated materials would not be appropriate.



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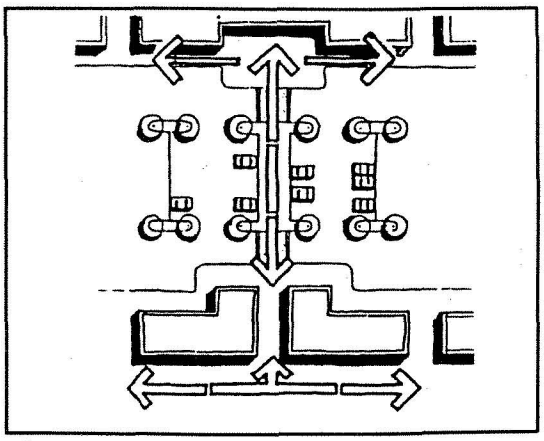

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B. Parking Lots and Structures

OBJECTIVE DT-6: **Parking lots should be easily accessible, serve multiple parcels, have attractive landscaping, and located so that they enhance the desired pedestrian orientation of downtowns.**

Guidelines

a. **Consolidate parking.** Downtowns are encouraged to provide consolidated parking facilities (common lots, parking structures, etc.). This will reduce or eliminate the need for some on-site parking. Some communities may wish to form parking districts out of pedestrian areas at the edge of commercial districts, and to share the burden of financing consolidated parking facilities.

b. **Location.** Downtown parking lots should be located behind buildings to protect the pedestrian character of the street frontage, as shown in Figure 17. View corridors into parking areas can be used to allow customers to see parking, but parking and/or parking lots should not take up more than 40 percent of the main street frontage of a project site.

c. **Access.** Access to downtown parking lots is generally best located on side streets, where the cars and pavement will not break up the streetscape appearance of a main street. Parking lot locations should be readily recognizable from the public road. When parcels are located on corner lots, access should be gained from side streets. When access can only be gained from primary streets, narrow entries should be developed and shared by multiple businesses. Driveways on the same street should be separated from one another by at least 150 feet. This may require the coordination of multiple land owners.

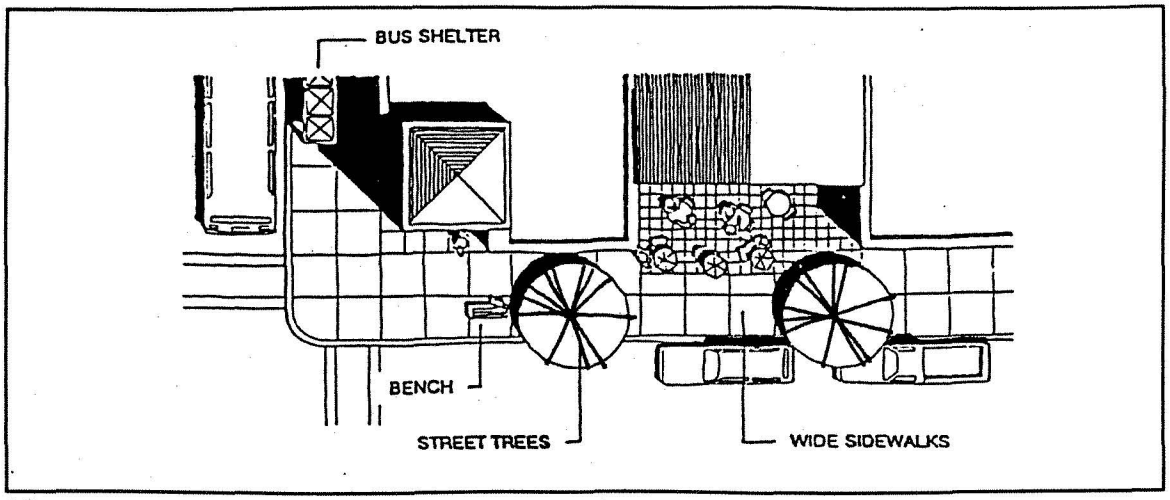
d. **Reflect historical character.** In Central Business Districts with a strong historic character, developers are encouraged to include landscape features or architectural elements that reflect this character in the parking lot design.

e. **Pedestrian movement.** Parking lots should be designed so that pedestrians walk parallel to moving cars. This means that drive aisles should generally be perpendicular to the buildings in a commercial center, as shown in Figure 18.

f. **Pedestrian links.** Parking lots should include specially treated pedestrian walkways to connect from all parking areas to all buildings in the development. This is also shown in Figure 18.

Example/Reference

1. **Parking.** On-site parking provided with new building construction should not be located on the street side of the buildings. Parking areas may be located on the side of commercial buildings fronting on a street, provided the parking area does not exceed 50% of the lot width, or 60 feet, whichever is less.



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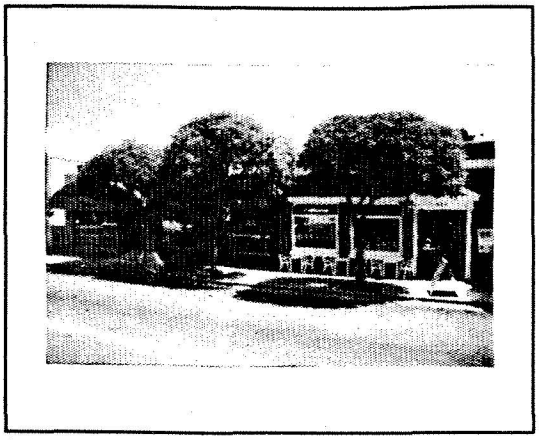

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C. Downtown Streetscape

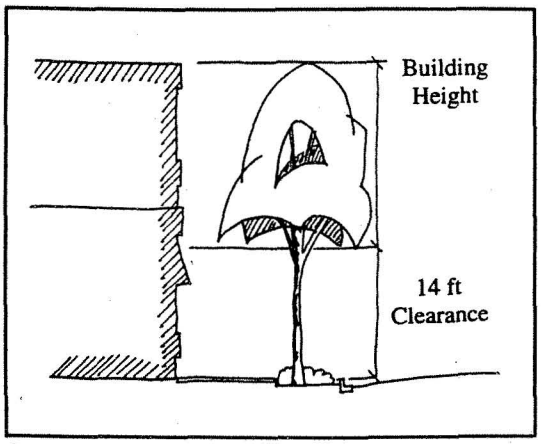
OBJECTIVE DT-7: **Within each downtown area there should be a uniform streetscape with wide sidewalks and closely spaced street trees.**

Guidelines

a. **Street trees.** Proposed projects should include ornamental or accent trees planted at special intersections, gateways or destinations to help define arrival, while common species should be used to provide shade without blocking signage or views.

b. **Street furniture.** Consistent pedestrian amenities, including benches, trash receptacles, drinking fountains, bus shelters, and lighting bollards, should be installed in downtown areas to match the local scale and ambience, as shown in Figures 19 and 20 above. As an incentive to provide such amenities, applicants may request a 10% reduction in the number

of required parking spaces in exchange for appropriate street furniture which encourages pedestrian and bicycle use.



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c. **Sidewalks.** Downtown sidewalks in commercial and mixed use areas should be at least 10 feet wide. (Tree wells may be placed within the sidewalk area subject to minimum clearances.) Sidewalks should include features to improve pedestrian safety including bulb-outs at intersections, and enhanced pedestrian crossing paths at mid-block crossings

d. **Appropriate plant materials.** Street trees should be selected according to the following criteria:

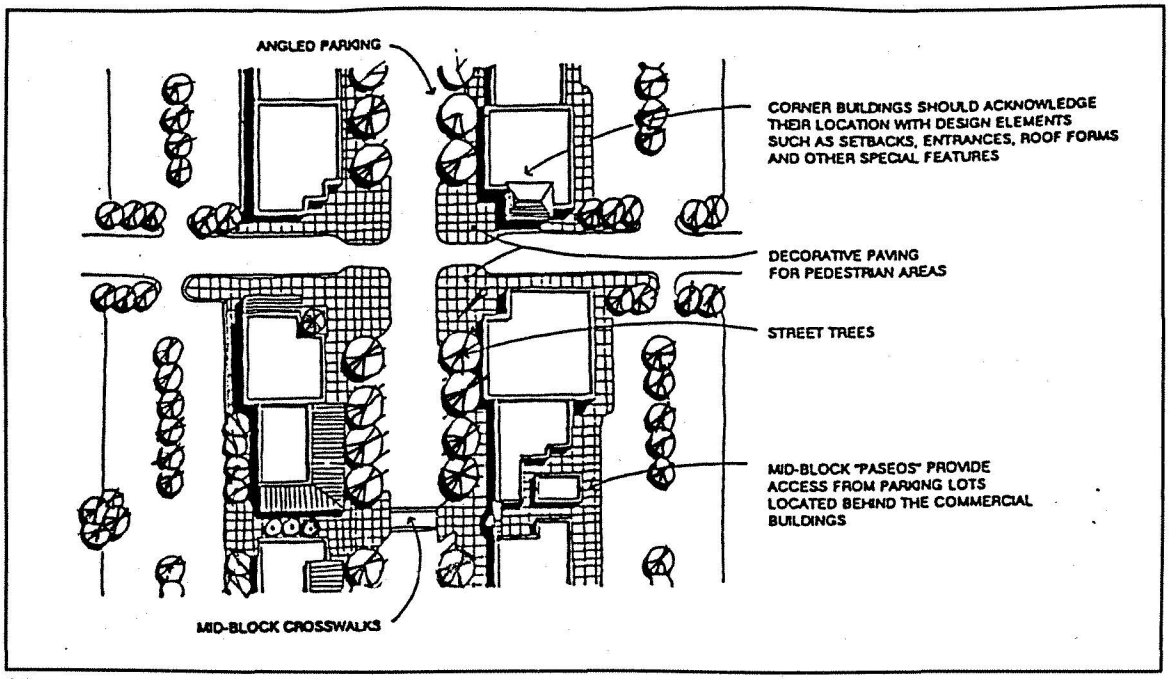
- little or no mess;
- drought tolerant or native species;
- the root system should not damage public sidewalks or roads as the plant matures; and
- the height at maturity should be approximately the same as the average building height (see Figure 21);
- trees should be planted at intervals that are proportional to roughly two-thirds of street width, but not more than 35 feet apart. The intent is to create a full canopy of shade along the sidewalks when the trees mature;
- the trees should have a relatively open structure that allows light to penetrate; and
- the trees should, at maturity, allow trimming up to a height of 14 feet (see Figure 21).

Example/Reference

1. **Street tree selection.** Street trees must be drought tolerant or native species that can, at maturity, be trimmed up to a height of 14 feet, as shown in Figure 21, and should be maintained in a condition such that the tree will not interfere with traffic. Root systems should not damage public sidewalks or roads as the plant matures.

2. **Street tree spacing.** Street trees should be planted at intervals that are roughly proportional to two-thirds of the street width, but not more than 35 feet apart.

3. **Street tree maintenance.** Street trees should be maintained by the adjoining property owner, or other approved entity.



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OBJECTIVE DT-8: **Downtowns should include a variety of types of open space, including squares, greens, parks and plazas.**

Guidelines

a. **Incidental open space.** Site development should provide open space area in relation to the intended use, if only a niche in the facade for sitting. Larger open areas should be provided where appropriate for a pedestrian destination along a street or paseo.

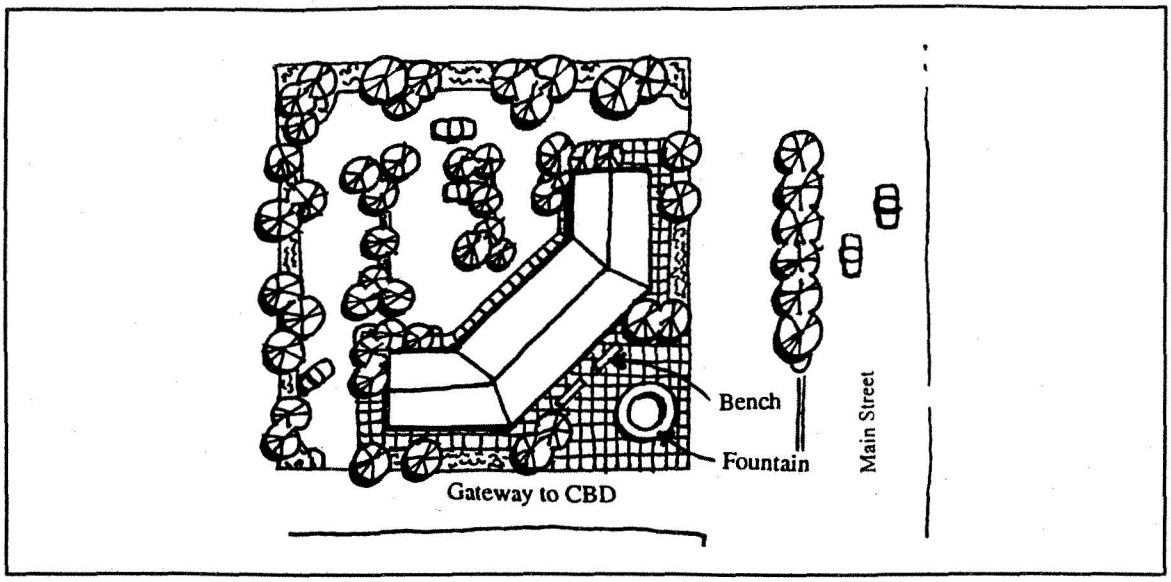
b. **Connected open space.** Open spaces should be located along streets within sight and easy walking distance from each other to provide a sequence of pedestrian destinations.

c. **Enclosure.** Open spaces should be adjacent to building facades, walks, or structural features, on at least two sides if intended for static activity such as sitting or eating.

d. **Contrast.** Open spaces should provide a contrast to adjacent buildings and a sense of arrival, by use of vegetation, sitting areas, and walkways.

e. **Variety.** Downtowns should include a variety of types of open space, including squares, greens, parks and plazas, as shown in Figure 22.

f. **Gathering places.** At their best, public open spaces should have places and facilities for groups and individuals to gather, such as benches, planters, and summer shade during hot weather. They should have a connection with the past, devices to emphasize nature (such as fountains and sunny spaces), a sense of arrival and progression, a place for reflection, and be visible from above and at night.



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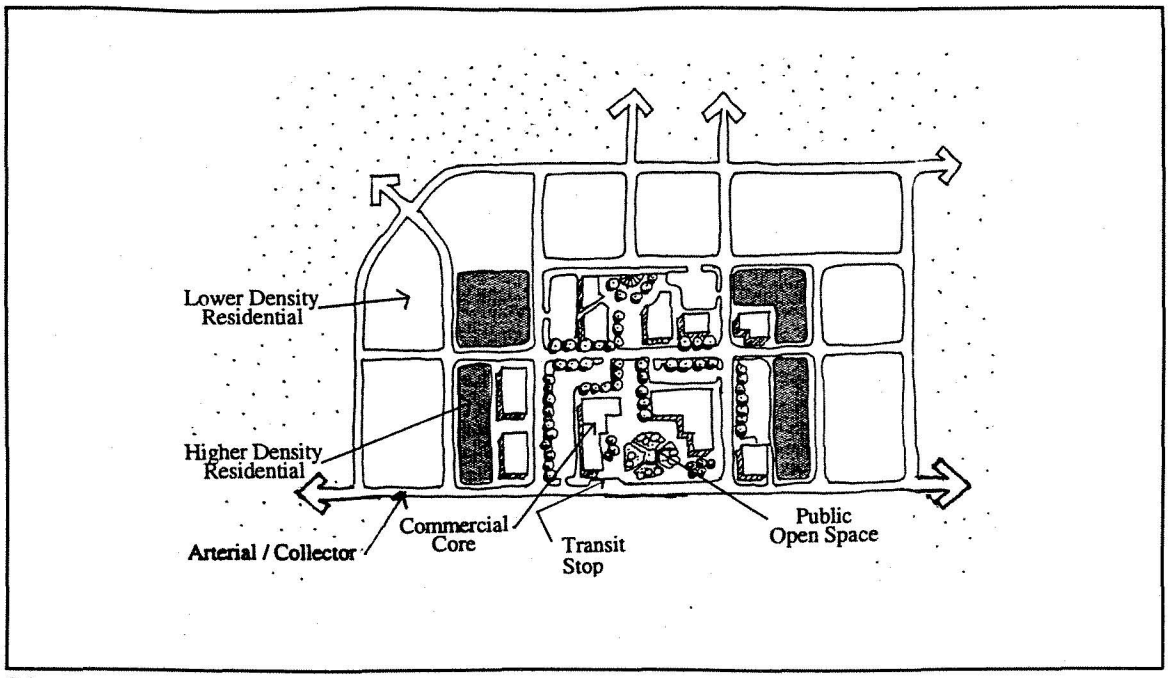
OBJECTIVE DT-9: **The boundaries of downtowns should be marked with entries and gateways that serve as introductions to the area and define its character.**

Guidelines

a. **Gateways to downtown.** The beginning of downtown areas should be identified in projects by a gateway feature such as a sign, fountain, special landscaping, sidewalk paving materials, landmark structures, sculptures, or similar design feature, as shown in Figure 23. The intent is to make an attractive, definitive transition into the commercial area that enhances downtown identity.

b. **Gateway location.** Downtown and village center gateways should be located at appropriate prominent roadway intersections or landmark areas, or where specifically designated within an *Area Plan*.

c. **Local identity.** Downtown and village center gateways sites should be identified and developed in keeping with the unique character of the individual community.



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D. New Town and Village Centers

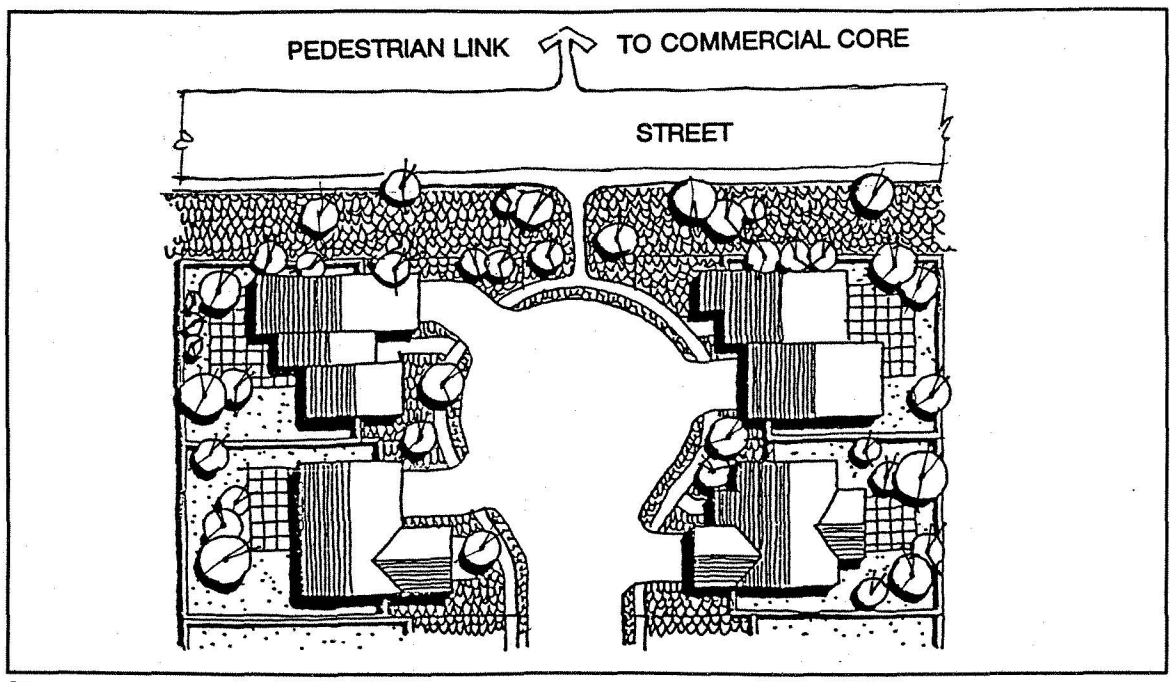
OBJECTIVE DT-10: **Any new town or village center should be designed to emphasize the history of the area, a compact physical form, pedestrian scale, and transit accessibility.**

Guidelines

a. **Compact form, pedestrian scale.** Any large-scale developments in the unincorporated areas that are designed to provide new town or village center areas should emphasize pedestrian circulation, convenience and accessibility, rather than automobile dominance. Commercial buildings and activities should be concentrated around plazas and other pedestrian spaces, with higher-density residential uses nearby. The use of any available public transit system should be encouraged by providing transit stops integral with new development. See Figure 24.

b. **Distinct identity.** New town and village centers should have clearly defined form and edges, reinforced by such means as linear parks, and should be buffered from surrounding major roadways. See Figure 24.

c. **Connection to residential areas surrounding the commercial core.** New town and village centers should provide access to and from the surrounding residential areas through the use of open-ended cul-de-sacs (See Figure 25), bikeways, pedestrian paths and linear parks.



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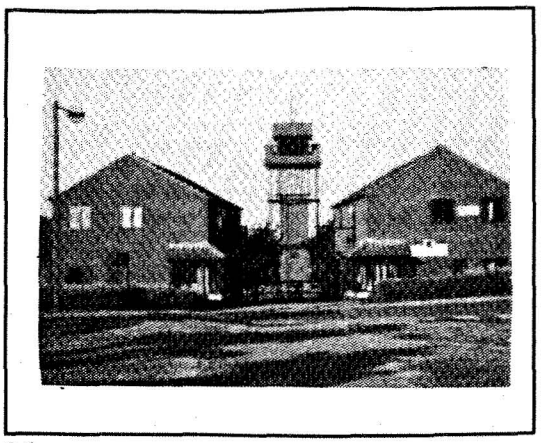
4. COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT OUTSIDE OF DOWNTOWNS

Commercial areas outside of downtowns serve an important role in any community, since they provide locations for both employment and shopping. Today, most shopping areas, office complexes, industrial and business parks are built with a primarily automobile orientation, which makes it convenient for people driving to reach these areas, but which discourage pedestrian traffic. These guidelines for commercial area design seek to promote aesthetically designed commercial facilities that are friendly to all types of transportation, including automobiles, transit, bicycles and pedestrians.

The guidelines in this section to commercial development outside of downtowns. Additionally, guidelines and objectives listed below apply to commercial areas outside downtowns:

- Sections 5 for parking areas,
- Section 7 for streetscape design,
- Section 11 for resource conservation,
- *LUO* standards in Section 22.04.029 commercial and office categories, and
- Planning area standards in Area Plans of the *Land Use Element*.

The Examples found in this section apply to non-residential development.



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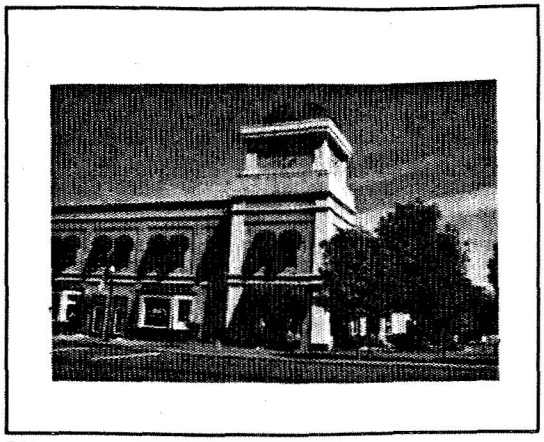

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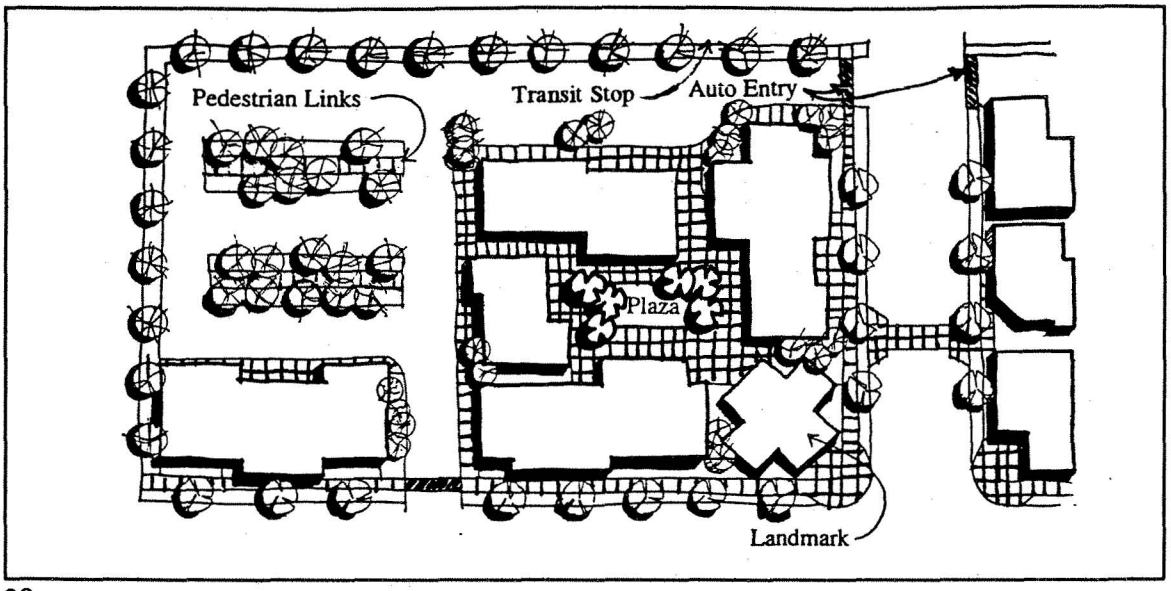

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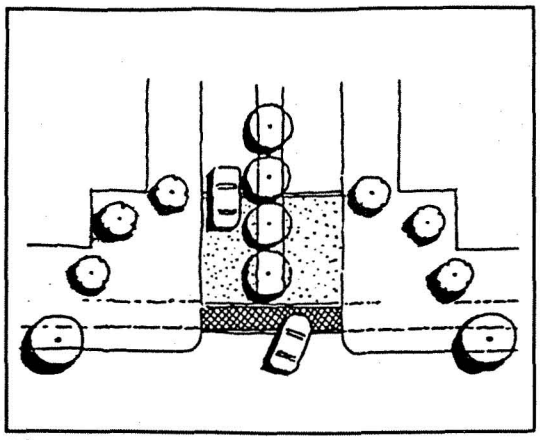
OBJECTIVE C-1: **Site design for shopping centers should balance creating a unique environment within the center while connecting the center to the surrounding community and creating a pedestrian-oriented environment.**

Guidelines

a. **Landmark buildings.** Each shopping center should have a landmark building with a tower or other vertical architectural element that reflects or recalls the area architecture and marks the project approach for visitors (See Figures 26 and 27). Landmark structures should generally not include signs unless they do not detract from the landmark structures.

b. **Plazas.** A plaza should be developed within each shopping center as a pedestrian amenity for visitors, as shown in Figure 28.



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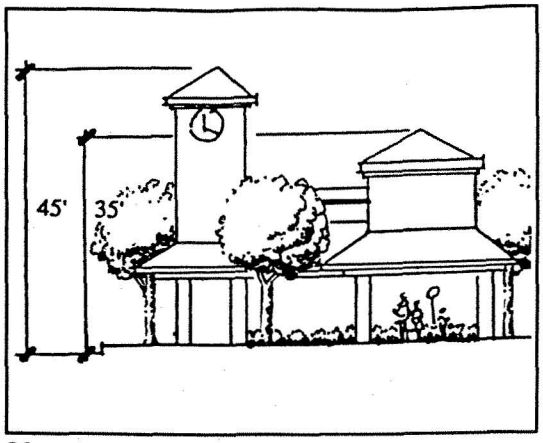

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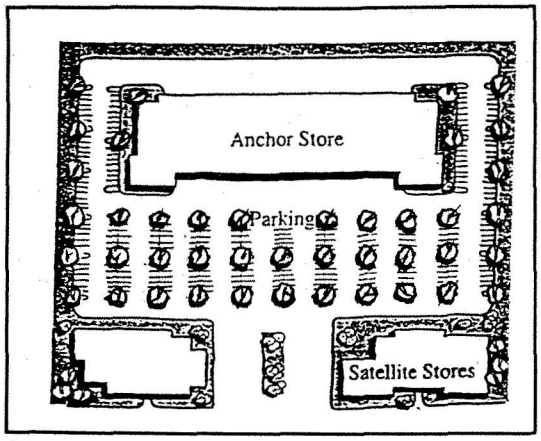

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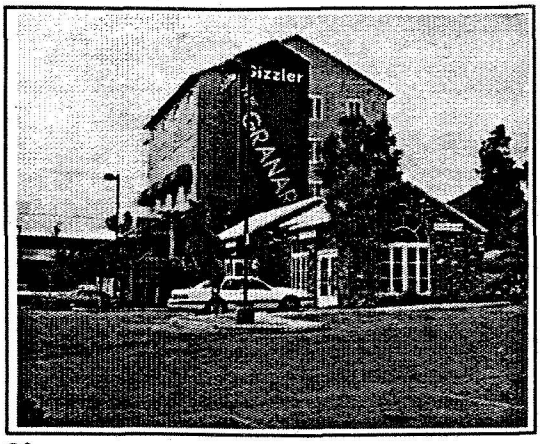
c. **Automobile entries.** Automobile entries should include special paving, signage and landscape treatments to announce arrival, as illustrated in Figure 29.

d. **Building height.** Commercial buildings should not exceed 35 feet in height. Landmark design elements should not exceed 45 feet in height, as shown in Figure 30.

e. **Pedestrian links.** Pedestrian links should connect all buildings in the development to neighborhoods, public sidewalks, special street crossings and parking areas. Access to adjacent property should be planned to link projects visually by use of other architectural devices. See Figure 28.

f. **Building locations.** Buildings should be located at or near the street frontage, except for large anchor stores which may be located behind sufficient parking areas for average shopping conditions (not peak times). Buildings should be located to provide for views to the anchor store where necessary, as shown in Figure 31.

g. **Parking locations.** Parking lots should be at the side or rear of the shopping center, except where a major anchor stores, such as a food store, would be located at the rear of a parking lot, in which case parking areas to serve average conditions (not peak times) may be in front as shown in Figure 31. Bus transit locations and areas for bicycle parking should be sited in a convenient location close to store entries.



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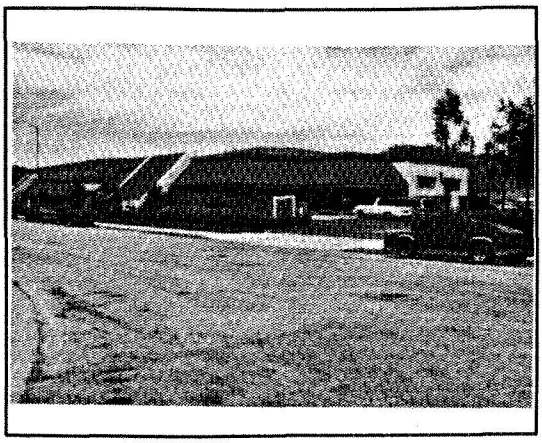


33

OBJECTIVE C-2: **Highway commercial buildings should be designed to promote visual interest.**

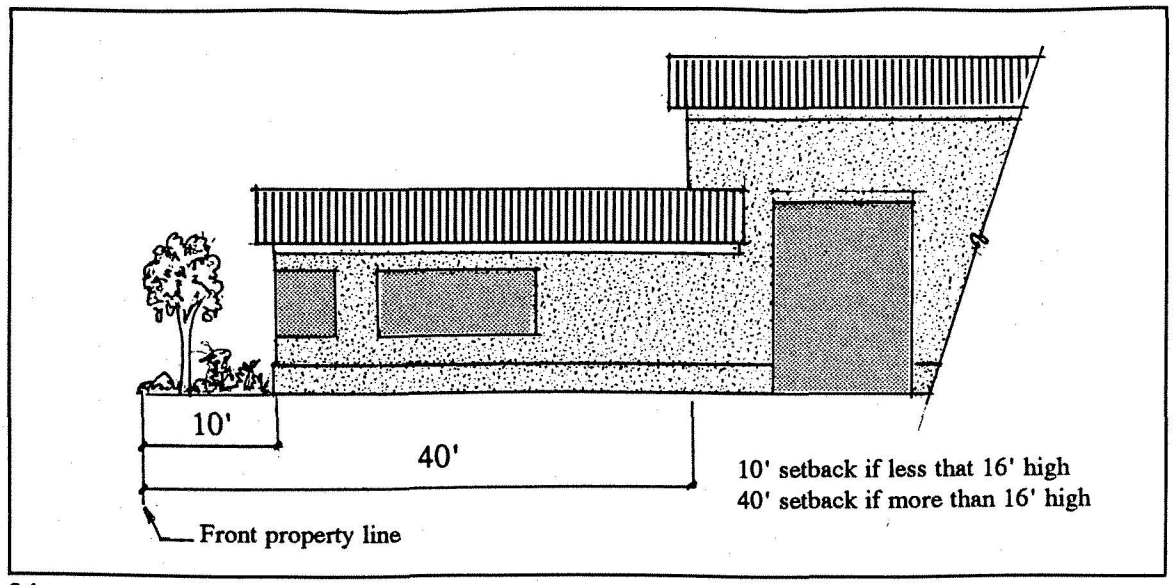
Guidelines

Commercial developments are sometimes built along highways and major thoroughfares. These developments often include large footprint retail structures and service commercial buildings.

a. **Building articulation.** The design of the sides and rear of buildings is as important as the street front; all facades should consider design elements for pedestrians, including relief elements and changes in plane. Architectural elements that can be used to provide relief include awning projections, trellises, built in planters, integrated plazas, colonnades or arcades, as shown in Figure 32. Blank, featureless walls should be avoided.

b. **Roof shape.** Outside communities, simple pitched roofs such as gables or hips (see Figure 33) are preferred over flat roofs on commercial buildings. Gables or hips may also be integrated with flat roofs.

c. **Roof parapets.** Where buildings have flat roofs, parapets should be articulated with roofline cornices and recesses to create visual interest on the building facade.



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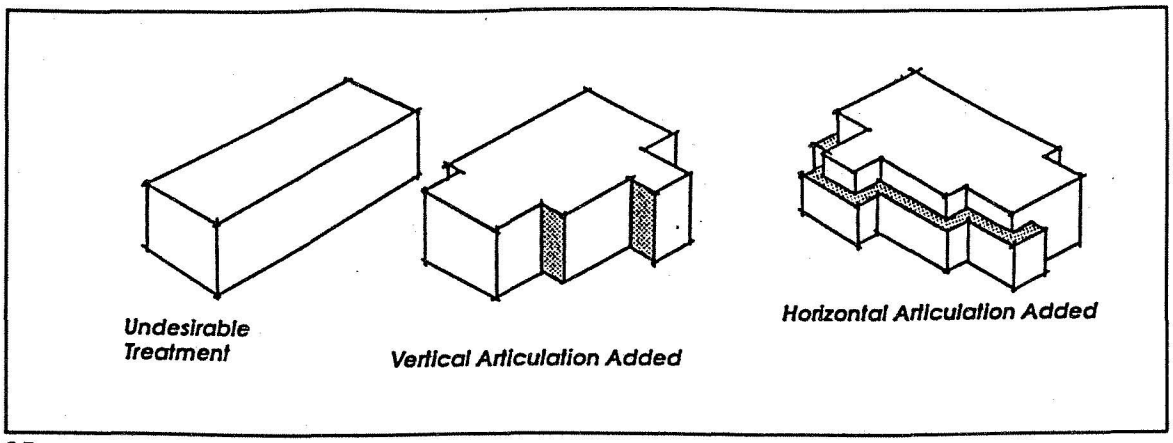
d. Setbacks. Proposed projects that have lot depths of 200 feet or greater should provide a large setback; building setbacks should vary depending on the height of the buildings. Setbacks should be as follows and as illustrated in Figure 34:

Parking lot: 20 feet;
If building height is 16 feet or less: 10 feet; and
If building height is more than 16 feet: 40 feet.



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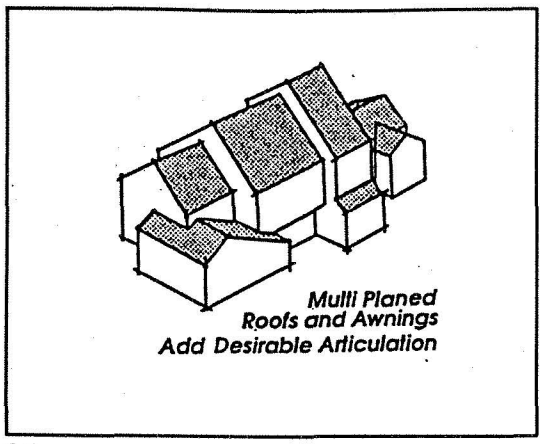

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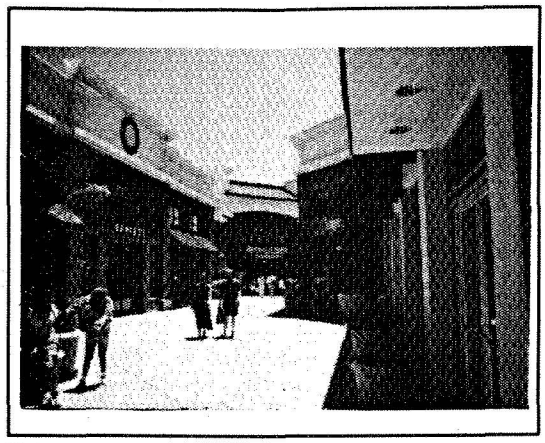


37

OBJECTIVE C-3: **The height, bulk, and scale of new commercial development should be compatible with that of surrounding commercial development.**

Guidelines

a. **Height.** New buildings should include architectural features that provide a transition from the height of adjacent development to the maximum height of the proposed buildings.

b. **Bulk.** Large, square box buildings are generally unattractive. There are several ways to reduce the appearance of excessive bulk in large buildings including (see Figures 35, 36):

- vary the planes of the exterior walls in depth and/or direction;
- vary the height of a building so that it appears divided into district massing elements;
- avoid blank walls at the street level; and
- use windows, wall articulation, change in materials or other features.

c. **Articulation.** All sides of commercial buildings should be detailed and treated with relief elements and changes in plane that transition the bulk of a building from the street level to

the top of the parapet or roof. Architectural elements used to provide relief include awning projections, trellises, built-in planters, integrated plazas, colonnades, arcades, and canopies. These features provide opportunities for climate control.

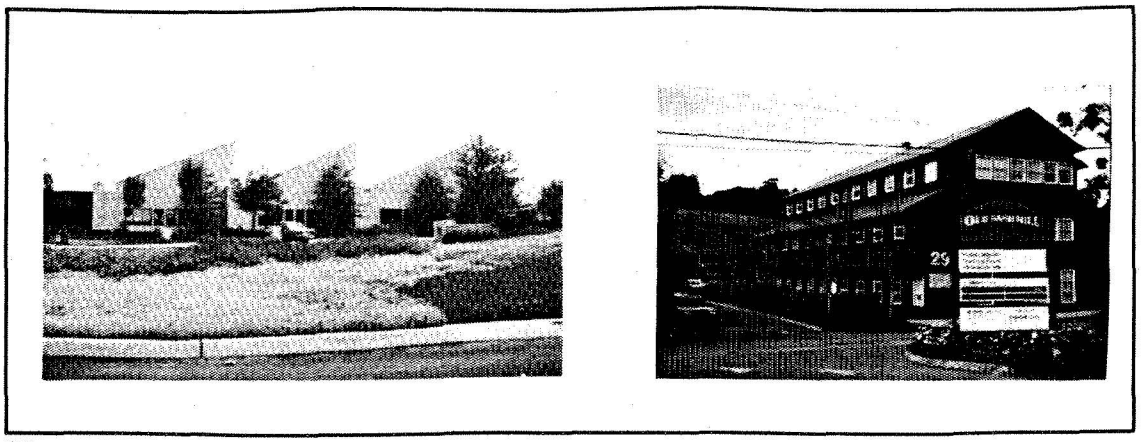
d. **Windows.** Buildings or those retail uses that generate significant amounts of foot traffic, should have transparent windows or display windows that provide interest to the pedestrian and articulation to the building.

e. **Scale.** The scale of buildings should be carefully related to adjacent pedestrian areas and buildings. Building scale should be reduced through window patterns, structural bays, roof overhangs, siding, awnings, moldings, fixtures, and details. See Figure 37.

f. **Building entries.** Ground floor facades should have visually permeable shop frontages and pedestrian oriented details such as recessed entries and overhanging awnings.

Example/Reference

1. **Setback and Height Restrictions.** See *LUO* and *CZLUO* Sections 22.04.100 through 22.04.124.



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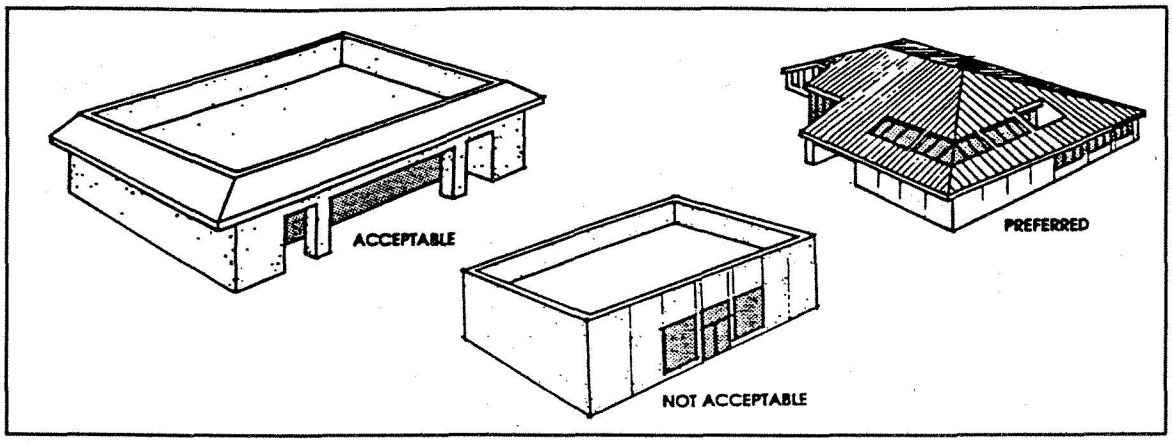


39

OBJECTIVE C-4: **Commercial buildings outside downtowns should have interesting roof shapes and interrupted parapet lines, avoiding the monotony of long, flat parapet roofs.**

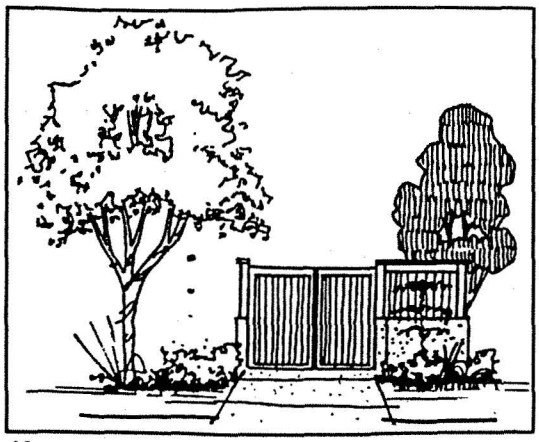
Guidelines

a. **Roof shape.** Outside of downtowns, simple pitched roofs such as gables or hips are preferred over flat roofs on commercial buildings, as illustrated in Figure 38. Gables or hips may also be integrated with flat roofs.

b. **Roof parapets.** Where buildings have flat roofs, parapets should be articulated with changes in elevation, roofline cornices and recesses to create visual interest on the building facade.

Example/Reference

1. **Parapet details.** Any parapet or cornice details used on a street facade should be continuous on all walls of the building, as illustrated in Figure 39.



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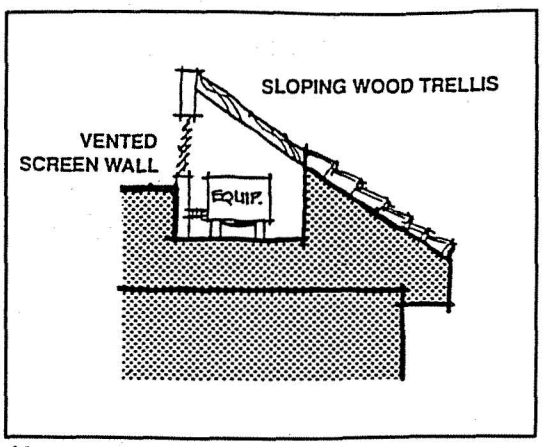

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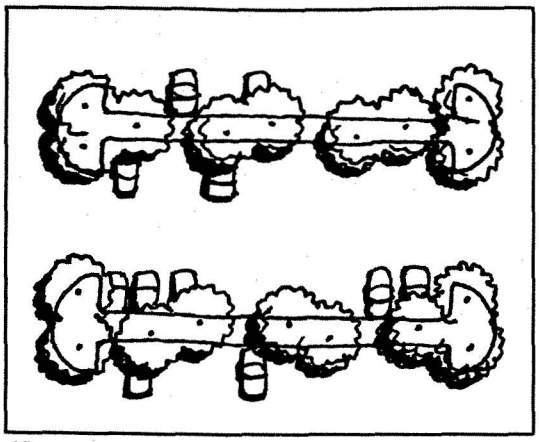

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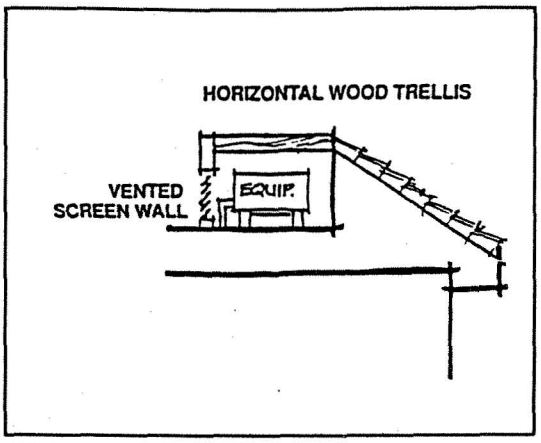


43

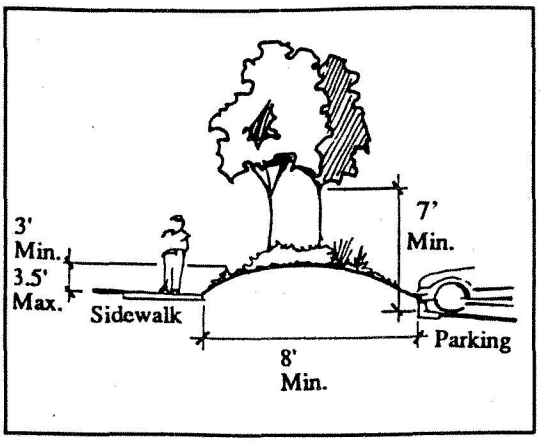
OBJECTIVE C-5: **Mechanical equipment on commercial buildings should be located so that it is visually unobtrusive.**

Guideline

a. **Ground level equipment.** Mechanical and electrical equipment at ground level should be installed in screened rear or side yard service areas, as shown in Figure 40.

Example/Reference

1. **Rooftop equipment.** Rooftop mechanical equipment should be screened by integral architectural elements such as pitched roofs, ornamental parapets, low towers, or full mansard roof (see Figure 41 and 42).



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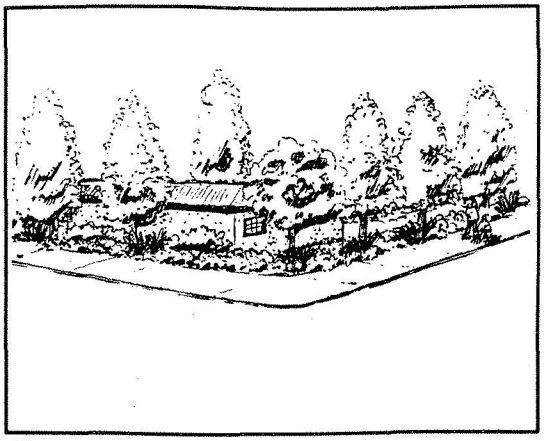

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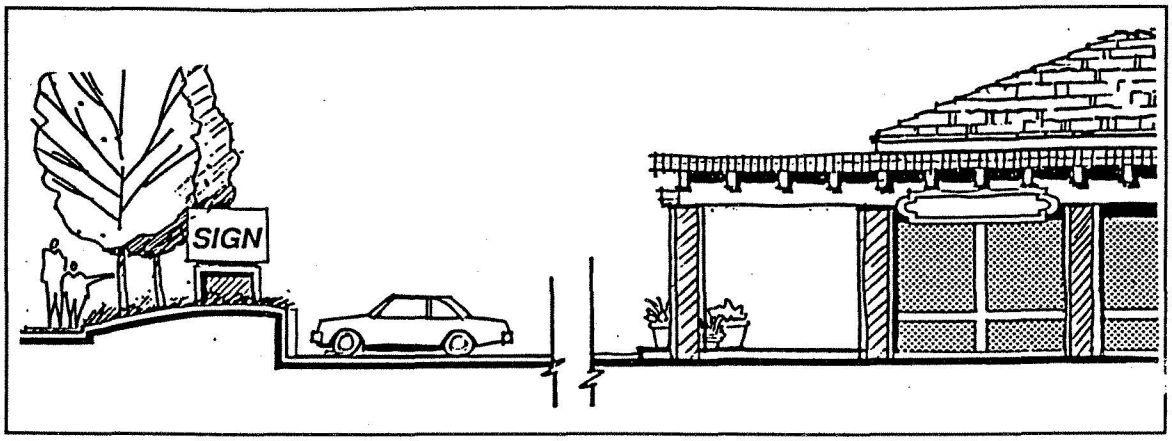

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OBJECTIVE C-6: **Commercial projects should include landscaping that adds a natural or suburban character, provided shading and screening of parking areas.**

Guideline

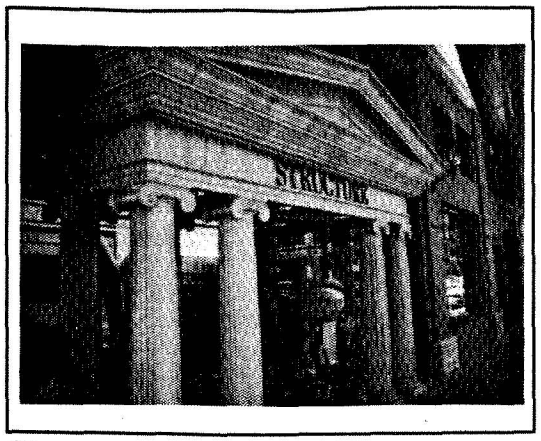
a. **Parking lot landscaping.** Parking lot landscaping should be provided as shown in Section 5, Parking Areas (page 39) and as shown in Figure 43.

Example/Reference

1. **Perimeter landscaping.** Provide landscaping at the edges of commercial sites, including an area at least 12 feet wide, or 12 percent of the lot width if less than 100 feet, but in no case less than 10 feet. The area should be planted to screen to a height of between 3 and 3.5 feet, and shade 60 percent of the strip within 10 years. See Figures 44, 45, and 46.

2. **Pedestrian safety.** Prune all trees so that limbs start at a height not less than 7 feet, to improve safety for people on sidewalks and in parking lots. Plant shrubs to grow or be

trimmed at a maximum height of 3.5 feet. Pedestrian access should be provided through landscaped setbacks and other planted areas where applicable.



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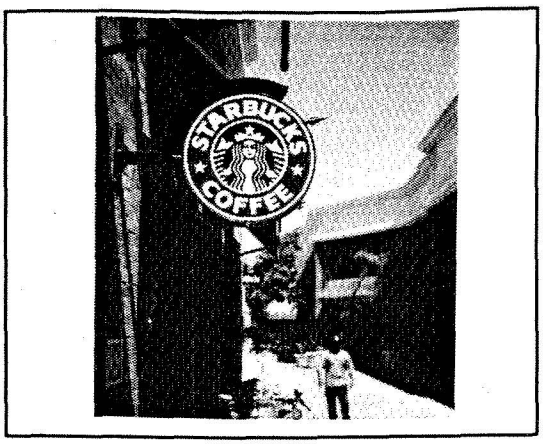

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OBJECTIVE C-7: **Commercial development signage should be designed as an integral part of the overall project, and should be attached to buildings and other architectural elements wherever possible.**

Guidelines

a. **Signage.** Commercial businesses should be identified through signs or logos integrated into the design of the buildings. See Figures 47 and 48.

b. **Shopping center tenant signage.** Shopping center tenants should have signs that are integrated into the centers' signs, mounted on buildings or towers, or hanging under arcades.

c. **Directional signs.** Directional and informational signage within a commercial project should be designed in a consistent style that reflects the design character of the development as a whole.

Example/Reference

1. **Type, location, and area limitations.** See **Land Use Ordinance* provisions Section 22.04.310(a)(1) through 22.04.310(c)(1) with regard to allowed type, location, and area.

2. **Height limitations.** See **LUO* Section 22.04.312(a).

3. **Sign illumination.** See **LUO* Section 22.04.312(b).

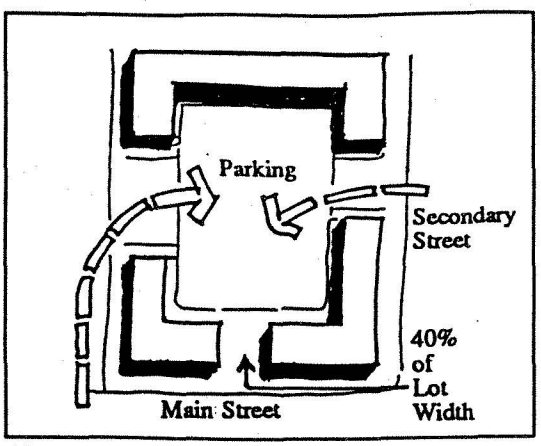
(*And corresponding sections of the *CZLUO*)

5. PARKING AREAS

The design of outdoor parking areas for commercial, office, industrial, and residential development presents special problems because parking areas must balance needs for safe and efficient vehicle access, with pedestrian accessibility. At the same time, parking areas can easily be the most unsightly feature of a development unless some basic design principles are observed. In most areas of the County, shared parking is preferred to reduce heat, improve energy efficiency, etc..

The guidelines in this chapter offer methods of minimizing the visual prominence of parking areas while enhancing both pedestrian and vehicular accessibility. All parking areas must comply with the standards established in Sections 22.04.160 through 22.04.190 of the *Land Use Ordinance and corresponding sections of the CZLUO.*

The guidelines and examples found in this section pertain to non-residential development.



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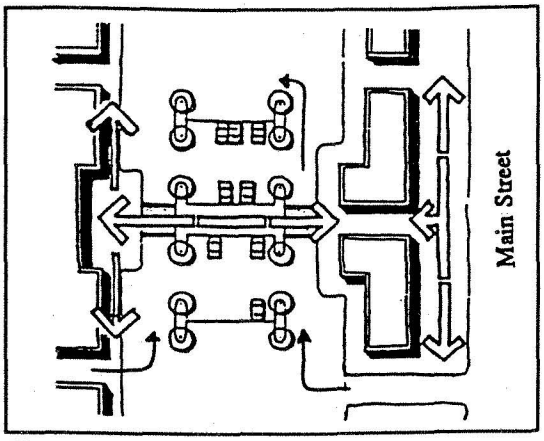

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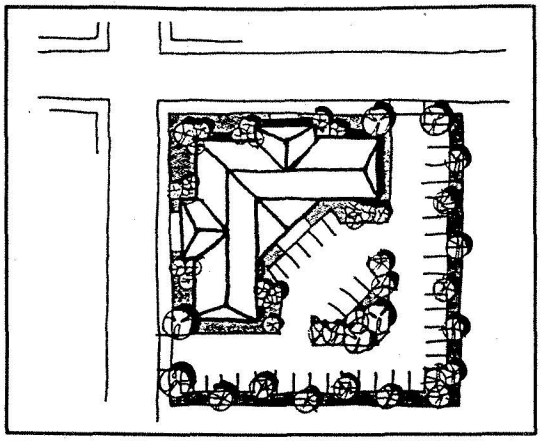

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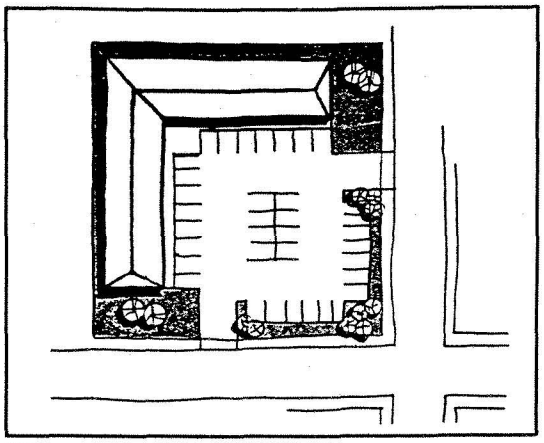


52 NOT THIS

OBJECTIVE P-1: Parking lots should be sited and designed to be as visually unobtrusive as possible, with easy pedestrian accessibility.

Guidelines

a. **Parking lots.** Parking lots should be located near the center of the site and be surrounded by buildings and landscaped areas. View corridors into parking areas can be used to allow customers to see parking, but parking should not take up more than 40 percent of the main street frontage of a project site, as shown in Figure 49.

b. **Pedestrian movement.** Parking lots should be designed so that pedestrians drive aisles are perpendicular to the buildings in a commercial center to make pedestrian access convenient, as shown in Figure 50.

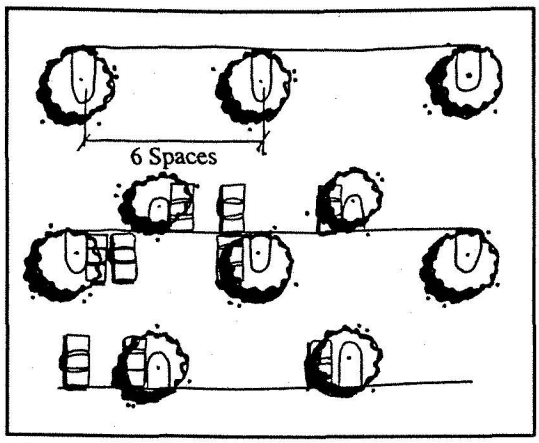
c. **Pedestrian links.** Parking lots should include specially treated pedestrian walkways to connect from all parking areas to all buildings in the development. This is also shown in Figure 50.

d. **Neighborhood commercial businesses.** Neighborhood commercial businesses should be located so that the parking is at the rear (not front) of the lot as shown on Figures 51 and 52.

Example/Reference

1. **Parking lots.** See *Land Use Ordinance* Sections 22.04.160 through 22.04.178 and corresponding sections of the *CZLUO*.

2. **Access and driveway design.** See Section 25.05.104 of the *LUO* and corresponding sections of the *CZLUO*.



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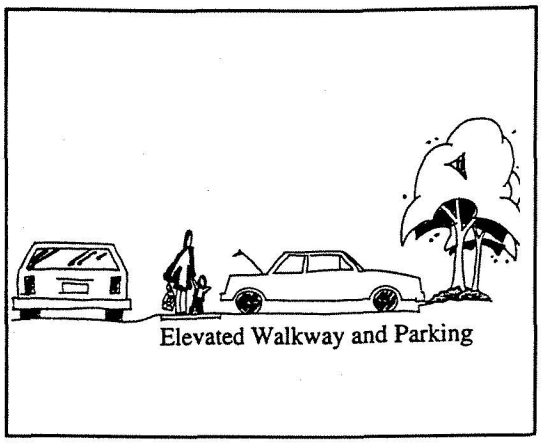

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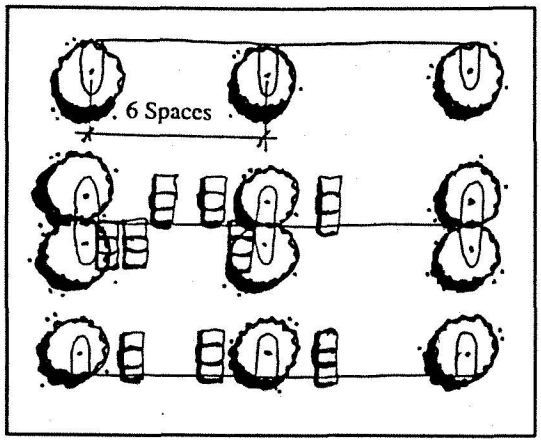

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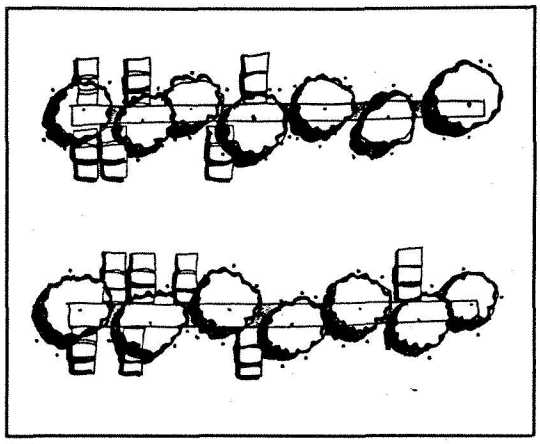
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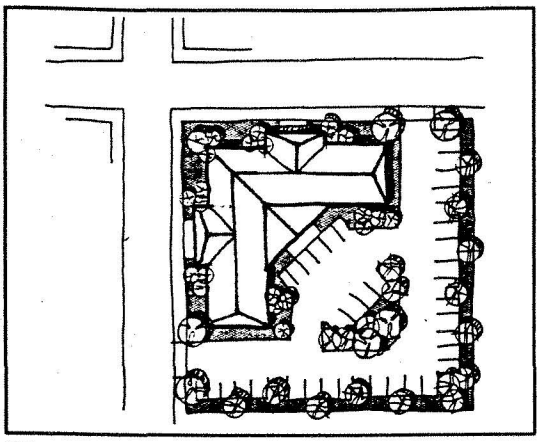
OBJECTIVE P-2: Parking lots should be landscaped to provide shade, soften their impact in the urban environment, and screen motor vehicles from public view.

Guidelines

a. **Median landscaping.** Medians along major site access roads and in parking lots, should be landscaped with shade trees and shrubs.

b. **Parking lot landscaping.** In parking lots, there should be a minimum of one landscaped planter with a tree for every six vehicle stalls; several alternatives are shown in Figures 53 through 56. The planter should allow sufficient area for the tree's root system. The standard rule of thumb is that the area of ground which should be left unpaved around the base of the tree should be at least equal to half the diameter of the crown at maturity.



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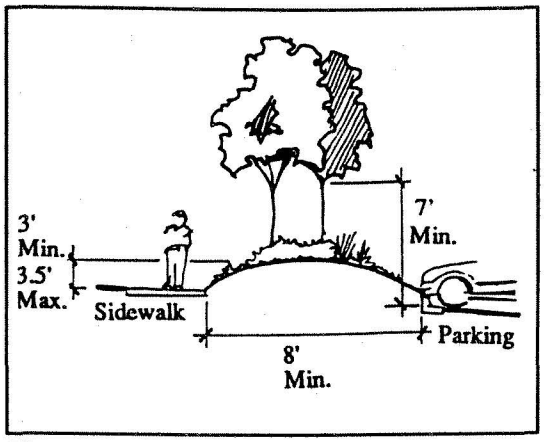

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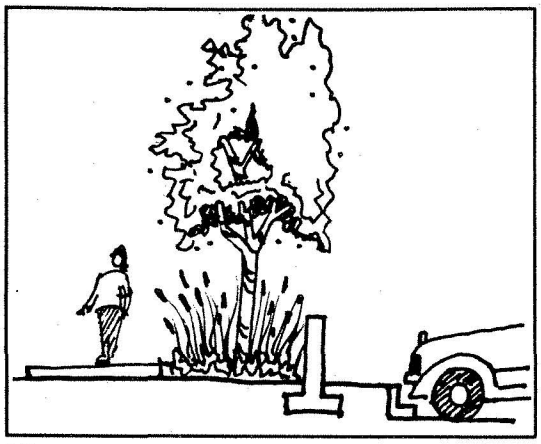

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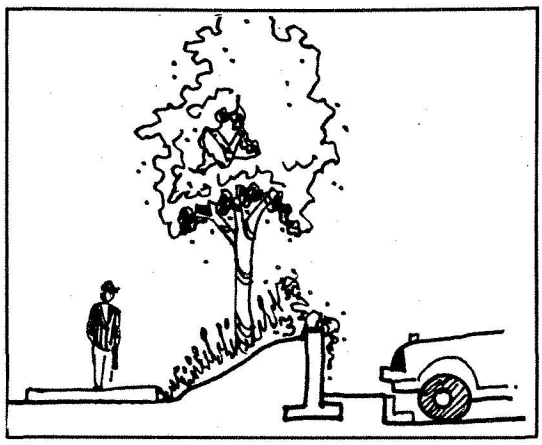

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Example/Reference

1. **Perimeter landscaping.** Landscaping should be provided at the edges of commercial, office, industrial, or mixed-use development sites with a minimum width of 12 feet or 12 percent of the lot width if less than 100 feet, but in no case less than 8 feet. This area should be planted to 1) screen to a height of between 3 feet and 3.5 feet, and 2) shade 60 percent of the strip within 10 years. See Figures 57 through 60.

2. **Planter widths.** To minimize damage caused by tree roots, all planter strips should be at least 5 feet wide and should be constructed with sub-surface drainage and compaction resistant soil.

3. **Pedestrian safety.** To maximize the safety of individuals using parking lots, all mature trees should be trimmed so that tree limbs start at a height not less than 7 feet. All shrubs should be trimmed to a maximum height of 3.5 feet.

4. **Landscaping and screening.** See **LUO* Section 22.04.168(f) and (g).

5. **Exterior lighting.** See *Section 22.04.320 of the *LUO*. (And corresponding sections of the *CZLUO*).

6. MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

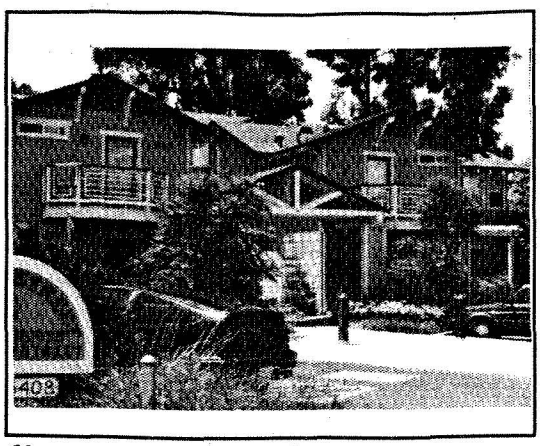
Multi-family dwellings are some of the community's most important housing resources because their density uses land more efficiently than single-family housing, makes more efficient use of community infrastructure, and thus offers greater potential for affordability. Unfortunately, many older multi-family housing developments included minimal design amenities, and often appear as overly large, unattractive buildings, that are often seen as less-than-desirable places to live.

Multi-family housing developments should be carefully designed as integral components of the community, reflecting a neighborhood's character, streetscape and scale. Multi-family developments should generally be designed to follow the same streetscape design principles as single-family homes. These design guidelines give ideas on how this can be realized.

The guidelines in this chapter pertain to multi-family housing developments. Additionally, guidelines and objectives listed below apply to multi-family residential development:

- Section 7 for streetscape design,
- Section 11 for resource conservation,
- *LUO* standards in Section 22.04.028 residential single- and multi-family categories, and
- Planning area standards in Area Plans of the *Land Use Element*.

The examples found in this section pertain to all multi-family residential development.



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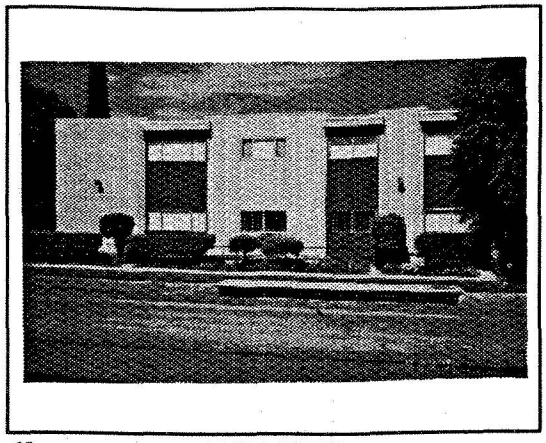

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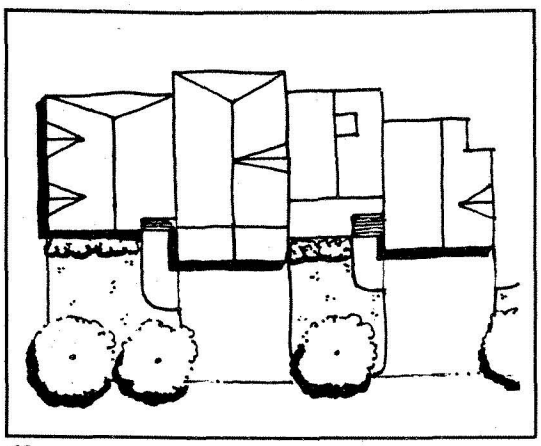

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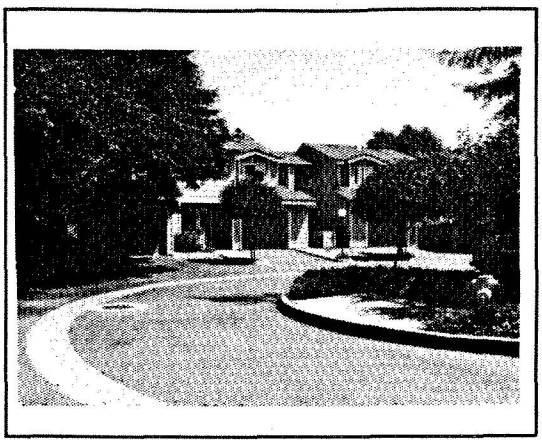

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OBJECTIVE M-1: **Multi-family buildings should be designed to include detailing and features similar to single family homes and other neighboring structures, as illustrated in Figure 61.**

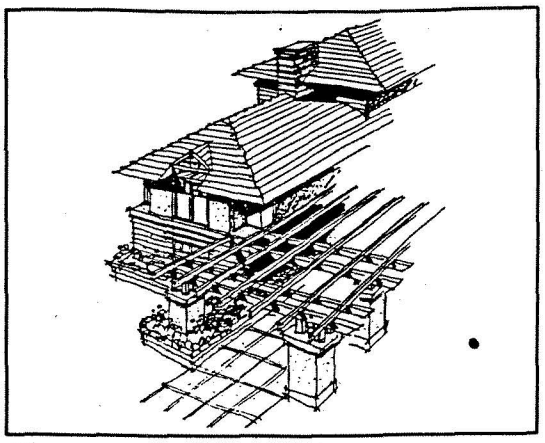
Guidelines

a. **Building orientation.** All units fronting on a street within a multi-family development should relate to a public or private street, so that all units have a connection to the community as a whole. Where possible, and consistent with overall design objectives, buildings should be oriented to make effective use of solar heating and cooling.

b. **Number of attached units.** Typically, the number of attached dwelling units in one structure should range from six to ten.

c. **Entries.** Each unit within a multi-family development should have its own separate main entry from the outdoors and when possible it should be located on the public street side of the project, as shown in Figures 63 and 64.

65



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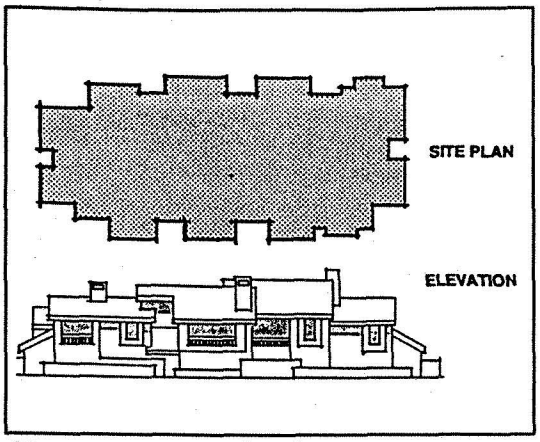

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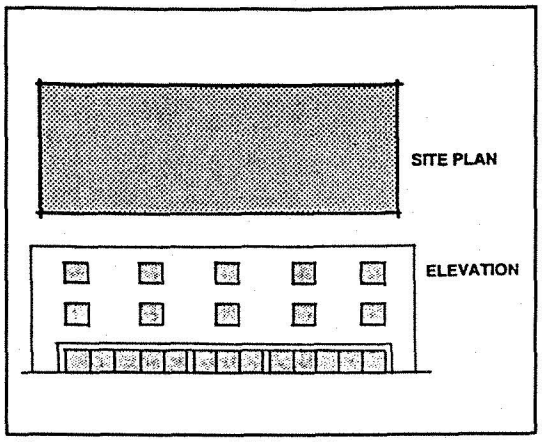


68 NOT THIS

d. **Building details.** Buildings should include details reminiscent of single-family construction, scaled to match surrounding development in the neighborhood, as shown in Figures 65 and 66. These architectural details can include porches, bay windows, chimneys, trellis, built-in planters, integrated low walls or changes in materials. To the extent possible, each dwelling unit should be individually recognizable through the use of balconies, porches, setbacks, or other architectural features. Cornices and molding at building corners, eaves, baseboard lines, and window borders should be provided.

e. **Landscape details.** Multi-family units should have landscape features commonly associated with single-family homes, such as flowering landscape materials, fenced yards, private parking areas, planter boxes, stone or stepping stone pathways, etc.

f. **Building articulation.** All sides of multi-family residential developments and garages should be detailed and articulated with relief elements and changes in plane. Large, unarticulated buildings with continuous blank walls should be avoided. The footprint of the building should vary in depth and appear to be broken into smaller geometric forms as illustrated in Figure 67. To vary building mass, about half of the structures should have deeper setbacks. Wall surfaces should emphasize the use of natural and indigenous materials (wood, brick, stone, stucco, etc.) designed to fit the community context.

Example/Reference

1. **Number of units.** Multi-family units should be clustered in groups ranging from six to ten attached units.

2. **Articulation.** Building walls and balconies should be inset or notched at least once for every 30 lineal feet.

3. **Building Variations.** Where two buildings are adjacent to one another with the same orientation, different design features should be used to differentiate between the buildings. In instances where there is a row of more than two buildings, a maximum of two adjacent units may have identical wall and roof lines.

4. **Fences and walls.** Fences and walls located at or within the front or street-side corner setback should be constructed of masonry, stone, or wood. Fences or walls that are located behind the front or corner side setback could be constructed of other materials or finishing but should be continuously screened by landscaping from the public right-of-way.

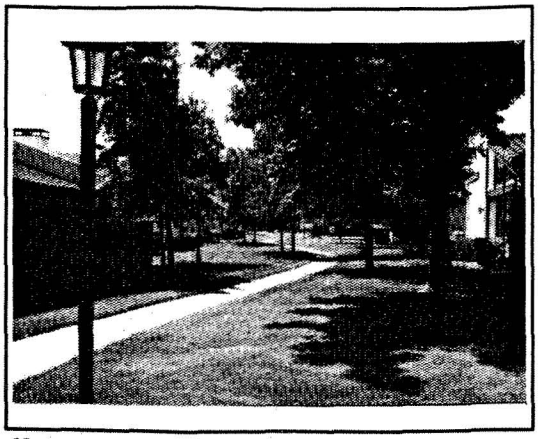
5. **Setbacks between buildings.** The placement of main buildings should conform to the following building separation Objectives:

   (a) When 2 or more building fronts face each other or are arranged around an open court, they should be separated from each other a minimum of 30 feet, plus 5 feet for each additional story of each building in excess of 1 story. Driveways should not be located within this building separation.

   (b) For a building which faces the rear or side of another building, they should be separated from each other a minimum of 20 feet, plus 5 feet for each additional story of such building in excess of 1 story.

   (c) When the rear of the building faces the rear or side of another building, they should be separated from each other a minimum of 15 feet, plus 2.5 feet for each additional story of each building in excess of 1 story.

   (d) When the building's side faces the side of another, they should be separated from each other a minimum of 10 feet, plus 2.5 feet for each additional story of each building in excess of 1 story. No entries should be occur between buildings placed side by side, unless an additional 10 feet of building separation is provided.



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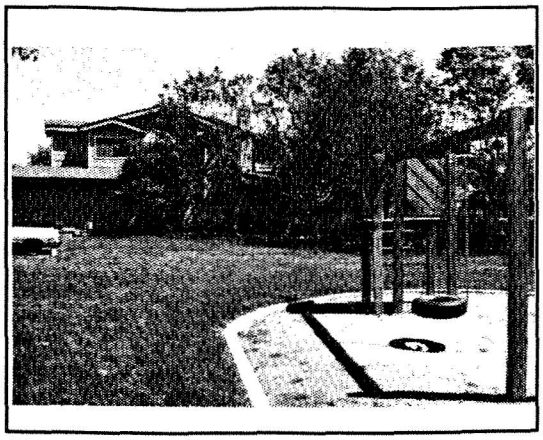

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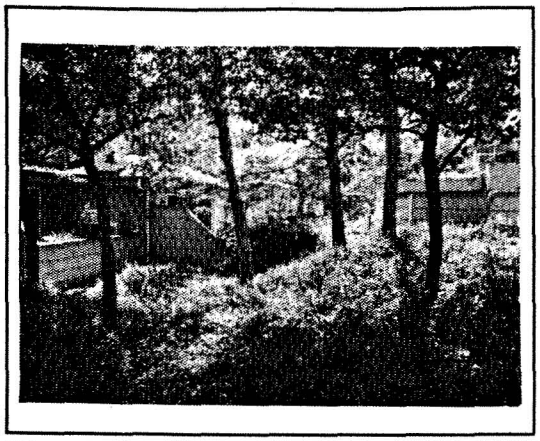


71

OBJECTIVE M-2: **Both private and shared open space should be provided for each unit within a multi-family residential development.**

Guidelines

a. **Private open space.** Each unit should have its own private usable open space with a minimum size of 150 square feet.

b. **Shared open space.** Multi-family housing developments (except those located in the central business district) should include usable shared open space amenities such as gardens, play areas, or swimming pools as shown in Figures 69 and 70.

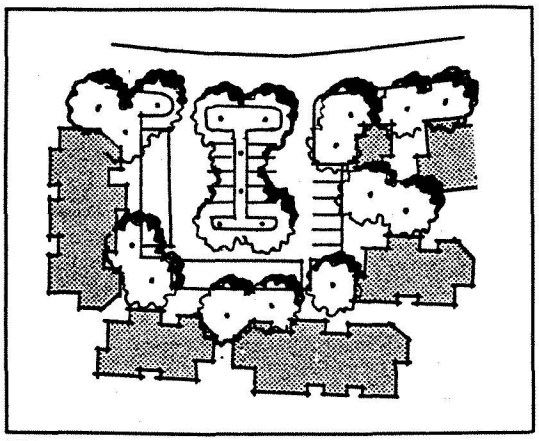
c. **Pedestrian links and greenbelts.** Public open spaces and pedestrian corridors should be integrated with other off-site pedestrian links to allow residents the same opportunities for community-wide pedestrian access as those offered in single family developments.

Example/Reference

1. **Private open space.** Residential private outdoor use areas should be provided for individual units. Private balconies should have minimum depth and width of 6 feet by 10 feet, respectively. Private ground level patios should have an area of at least 150 square feet.

2. **Common open space.** For residential developments of more than 10 dwelling units, a landscaped, unified and usable open recreational and leisure area totaling at least 200 square feet for each dwelling unit should be provided. The following areas should not be considered as contributing to required recreational and leisure area: 1) any required front or side yard or 2) any area used for parking or vehicular circulation. See Figure 71.

3. **Subdivision applications.** In cases where the proposed development includes a subdivision map, Sections 21.90.010 through 21.09.060 of the San Luis Obispo County Code provide additional information on parkland dedication and/or fee.



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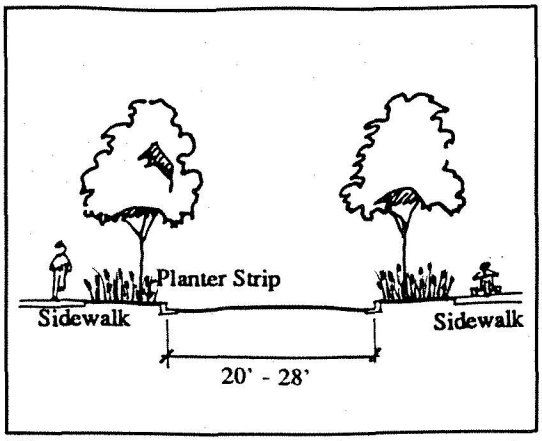

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OBJECTIVE M-3: **All multi-family housing development should have adequate circulation and parking that is sensitively located on-site.**

Guidelines

a. **Parking location.** Parking facilities, including garages, carports and parking lots, should be placed on the side or rear of multi-family buildings, and not on the street front. Private, two-way streets are allowed within a multi-family development.

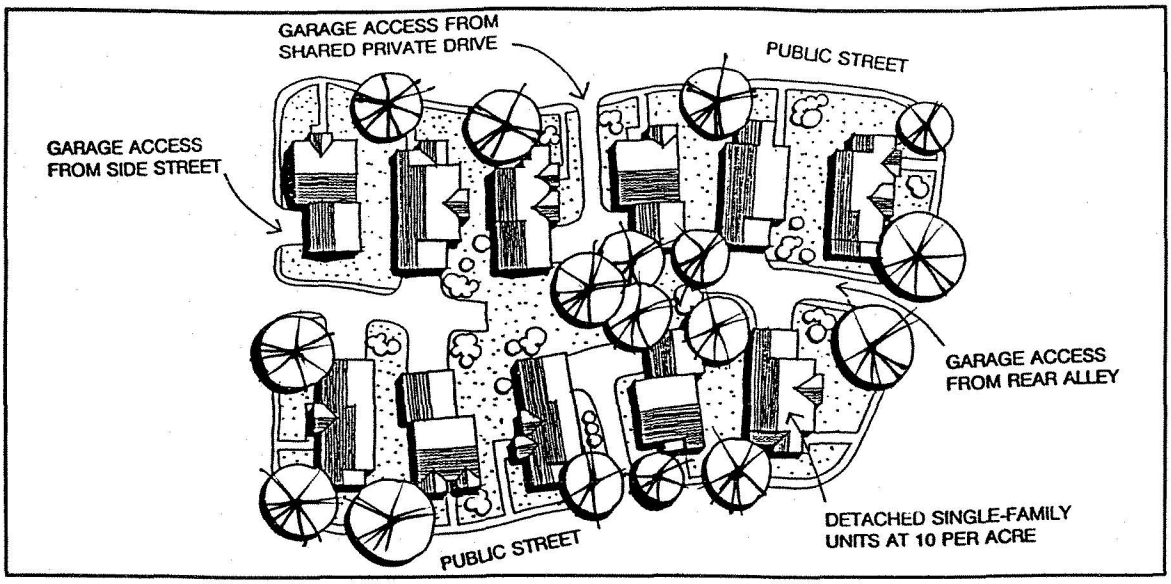
b. **Parking layout.** No more than six parking spaces or carport stalls should be grouped together, and landscaping should be installed between each group of parking spaces. Any carport structures should be architecturally compatible with adjacent residential structures and should be integrated with patio or building walls whenever possible. See Figure 72.

Example/Reference

1. **Private streets.** Private two-way streets should have a minimum paved width of 20 feet and a maximum paved width of 28 feet, and curbs, gutter, planting strips and sidewalks to create the appearance of traditional public streets, as shown in Figure 73. Sidewalks should provide safe, attractive pedestrian access to other parts of the development and to the larger community.

2. **Carport materials.** Carports should utilize the same, or similar, exterior siding, roofing and other similar design features as those used on the residential buildings.

3. **Carport design.** Single carport structures should be limited in length to 6 parking spaces. No independent carport structure should be located within 20 feet of a building or patio wall. Instead, said structures should be integrated with the building wall or patio wall.



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OBJECTIVE M-4: **Small lot detached single-family subdivisions are appropriate within multi-family zones.**

Guidelines

a. **Site configuration.** On parcels where the site configuration can accommodate a small lot subdivision (approximately 10 to 15 units per acre) such designs are encouraged.

b. **Site design.** Small lot subdivisions should include shared driveways and garages at the rear of the lots, as shown in Figure 74.

Example/Reference

1. See Section 21.03.010 of the *Real Property Division Ordinance* and Section 22.04.104© (Exceptions to Setback Standards) of the *Land Use Ordinance*.

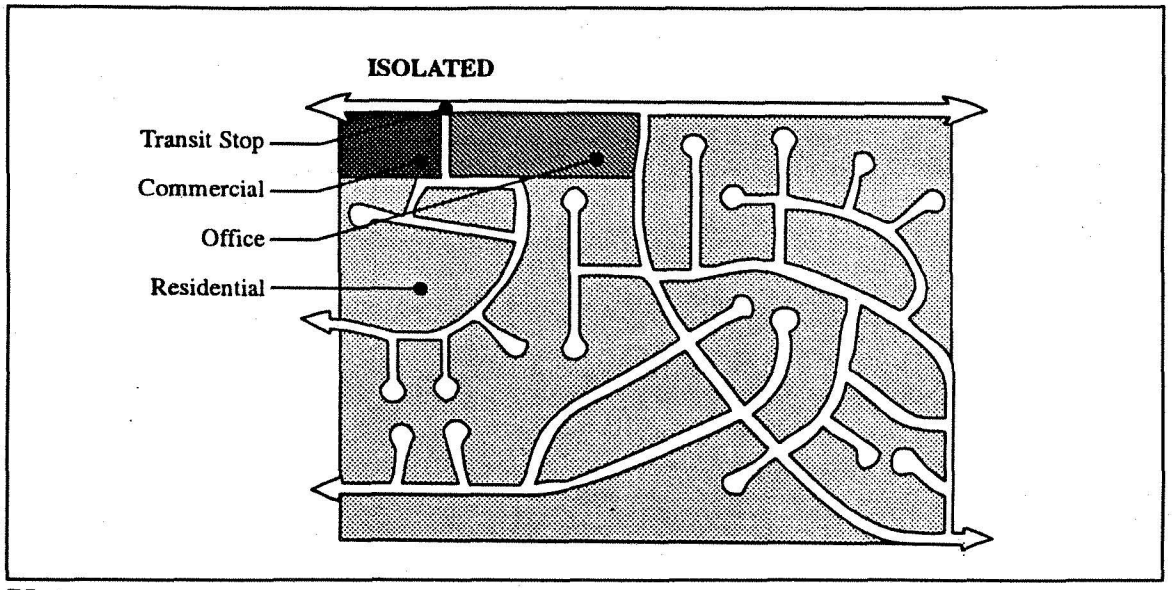
7. NEW RESIDENTIAL SUBDIVISIONS

Many of the unincorporated urban and village areas in San Luis Obispo County follow a suburban development pattern. This pattern includes quiet, family-oriented neighborhoods with winding streets and frequent cul-de-sacs. Unfortunately, the design of some developments has favored automobiles over pedestrian, transit and bicycle circulation, and has tended to separate different land uses, severely limiting convenient travel options other than the automobile (see Figure 75). The design guidelines for new residential subdivisions are intended to ensure the preservation and enhancement of existing suburban areas, while also preserving natural resources and encouraging transit- and pedestrian-oriented mixed use communities.

The guidelines in this section pertain to new residential developments where five or more lots are being subdivided through the tract map procedure. In cases where the subdivider will sell the subdivided lots to others who will construct new homes, the following guidelines relating to the site planning and development of individual lots could be carried out through such means as recorded building envelopes and other deed restrictions.

Additionally, guidelines and examples listed below apply to new residential subdivisions:

- Sections 7 for streetscape design,
- Section 11 for resource conservation,
- Standards found in Sections 22.04.025 through 22.04.028 for all residential categories of the Land Use Ordinance and Section 21.03.010 of the *Real Property Division Ordinance*, and
- Planning area standards in Area Plans of the *Land Use Element*.



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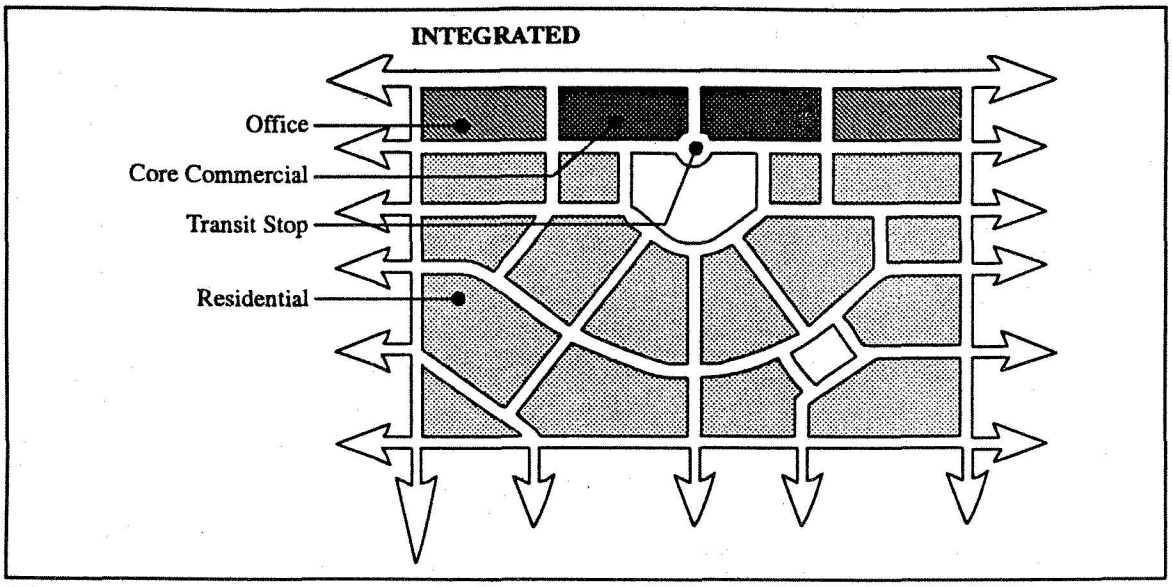
The new residential subdivision guidelines in this section are based on two different types of models: traditional (Figure 76) and planned development (Figure 77) subdivisions. Tradition subdivisions were oriented toward the street as the meeting and viewing place of the community. Typical features would include:

- narrow streets connected to one another in a grid pattern
- tree-lined streets with sidewalks
- relatively small lots
- garages at the rear of the property
- garage access often through alleys or flared driveways
- formal parks or community areas
- fenced rear yards
- front porches



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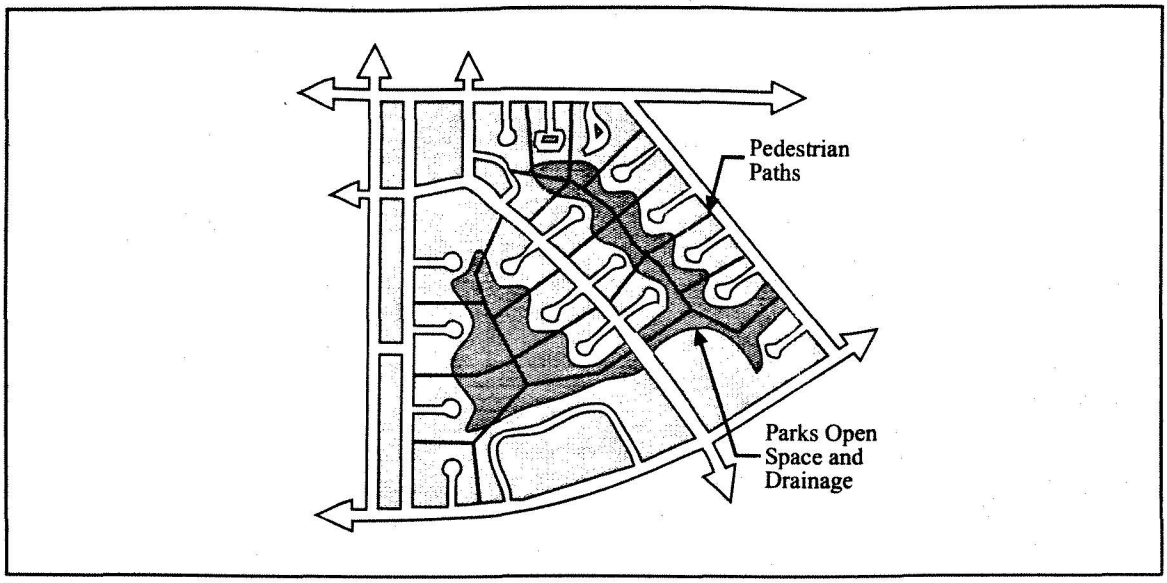
Planned development subdivisions often turn the focus of the subdivision inward and provide community areas at the rear of the property. Common features might include:

- curvilinear, tree-lined streets (not cul-de-sacs);
- garages at the front of the house or clustered in separate parking areas;
- internal pathways or trails (paved and unpaved) and common areas away from streets and roads;
- natural drainage features;
- road underpasses to allow safe passage from one common area to another;
- community gardens;
- rear-yard patios with little or no fencing; and
- a specified greenbelt or open space area around the perimeter of the subdivision.



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A. Subdivision Layout, Circulation

OBJECTIVE R-1: **Where proposed by an applicant or required by an Area Plan, developers should consider a traditional layout for new single-family subdivisions.**

Guidelines

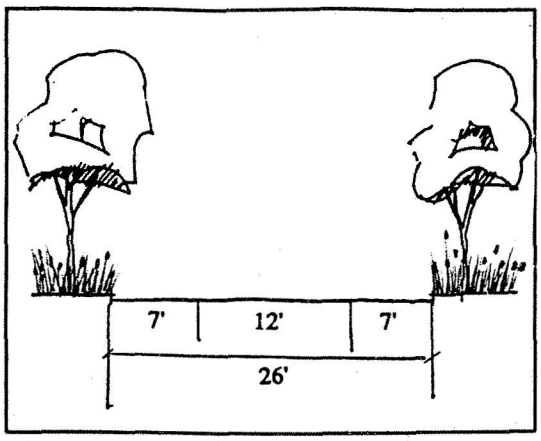
a. **Subdivision design.** Developers are encouraged to provide traditional subdivisions emphasizing the qualities noted in the introduction to this section. In particular, it would be appropriate to protect historic grid patterns within existing communities.

b. **Narrow streets.** In order to reduce the excessive amount of pavement normally found in residential subdivisions, local streets should be no wider than necessary to accommodate expected traffic volumes, with a maximum paved curb-to-curb width of 28 feet.

c. **Sidewalks and parkway.** All streets should have: parkways of five-foot minimum width, planted with street trees; and sidewalks or pedestrian paths on at least one side of a street. Sidewalks should be four-foot wide where separated from the curb or five-foot wide where integrated with the curb.

d. **Lot pattern.** Subdivision layout should avoid double-frontage lots, except where alleys provide garage access.

e. **Driveways.** The apparent size of driveways should be minimized through the use of single-lane driveways that flare near the garage, and shared driveways or alleys (privately maintained) for more than one house, as shown in Figure 79.



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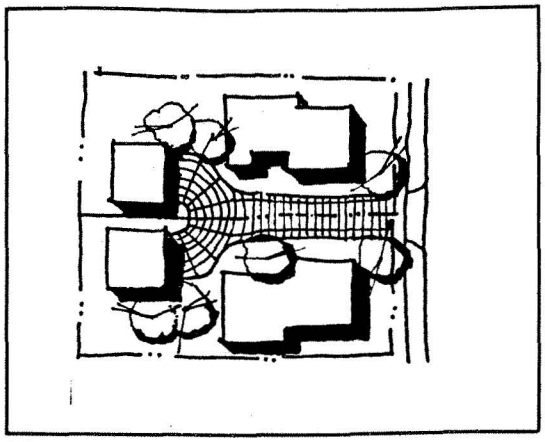

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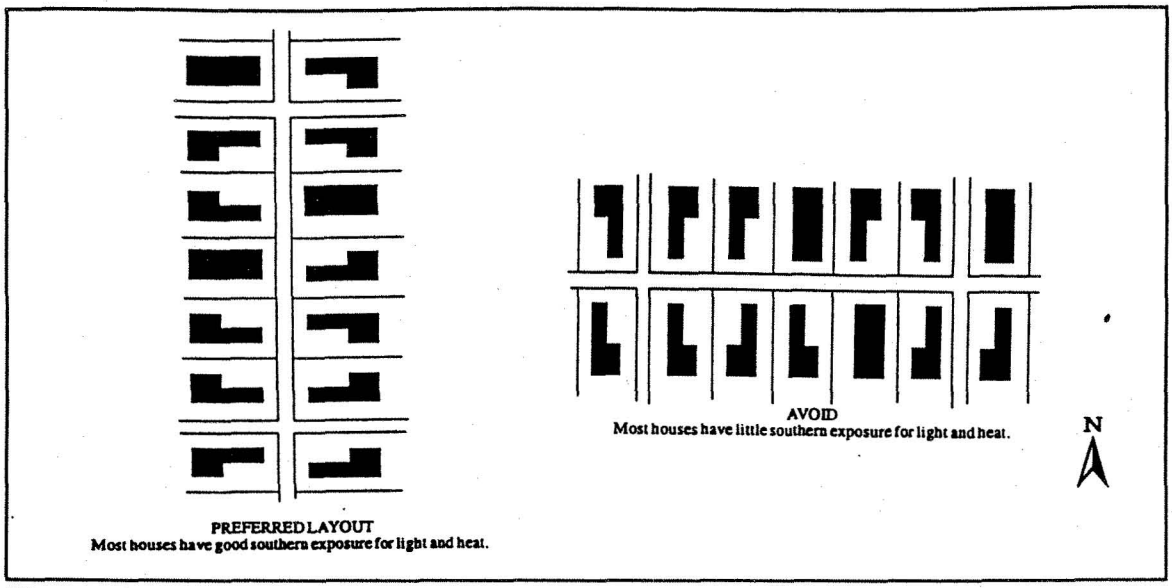

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f. **Transit stops.** All major roads within a subdivision should provide bus pull-outs and sheltered pedestrian facilities at least every half mile. The intent is to provide a transit stop within a quarter mile of each home to encourage walking in combination with transit as a reasonable alternative for longer automobile trips (especially work related trips).

g. **Energy efficiency.** Subdivisions should be designed to encourage energy efficient land development by promoting compact residential areas and commercial service cores with non-vehicular linkages between them. Infill development and expansion of existing developed areas into adjacent undeveloped areas is preferred to new development in remote, undeveloped locations. Concurrent expansion of commercial land uses should be encouraged so that individual communities become more complete, diverse, and balanced.

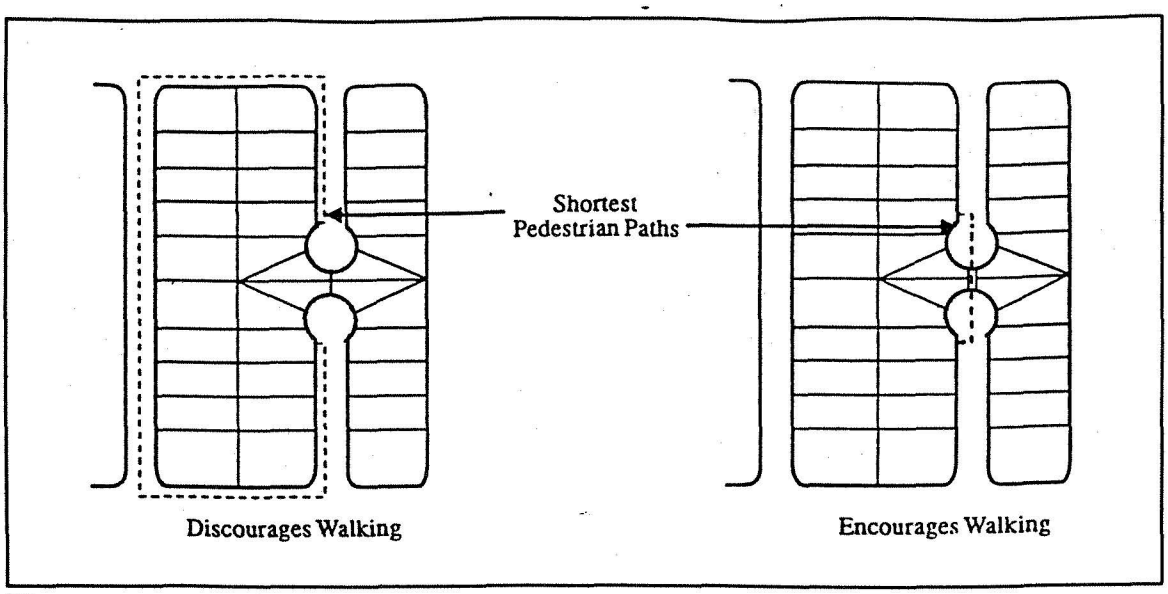

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Figure 80 provides an example of how a subdivision might be designed for proper solar access. Note that "subdivision" applies to residential as well as commercial, office, or industrial areas. The following criteria should be considered prior to approval of a subdivision application:

Provide a network of interconnected neighborhoods or areas. Discourage continuous walls which prohibit pedestrian access. Offset berms to control privacy and noise are encouraged where applicable.

Employ narrow automobile traffic lanes, traffic calming measures, energy efficient exterior lighting, street trees, and pedestrian and bicycle paths where applicable.

Design the site such that convenient and accessible sites for existing and future transit stops are available consistent with approved transit and circulation plans.

Consider sufficient setbacks and orientation to maximize solar access to all homes. Flexible frontage and setback requirements will allow building sites with larger yards on the south side of structures for better solar orientation.

Locate pedestrian ways and bicycle paths to reduce conflicts among motor vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists. Alleys should be considered where appropriate.

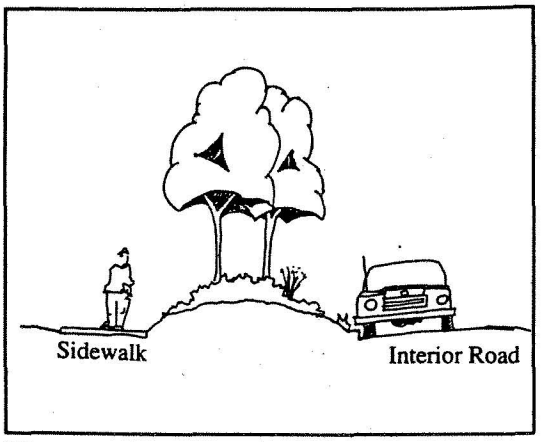
Provide street trees at regular intervals along pedestrian and bike pathways. A landscaping plan should identify appropriate species and locations.

Sidewalks or trails should be provided on at least one side of the road and should have adequate clearance and safe, energy efficient lighting.

For land divisions larger than 100 units, provide opportunities for neighborhood shops and services. The project should provide for a convenient mix of uses by locating housing, commercial and office buildings, industry, schools and day care services in proximity. Transit access should be available throughout the development. Figure 81 illustrates methods of subdivision design that can encourage walking and bicycle riding.

Example/Reference

1. See Section 21.03.010 of the *Real Property Division Ordinance*.



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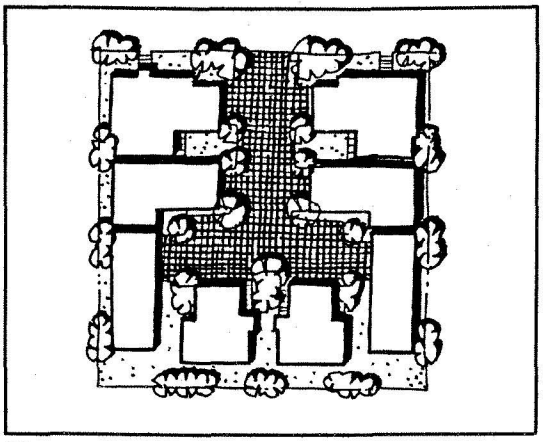


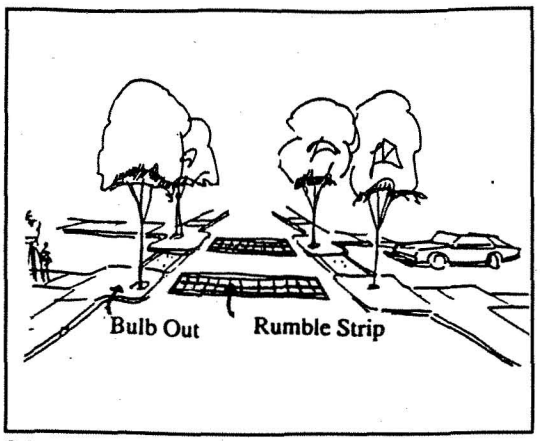
83

OBJECTIVE R-2: **Where planned developments are proposed by an applicant, special consideration should be given to the perimeter walls and fences visible to the general public.**

Guidelines

a. **Landscaping.** In communities where the individual homes are focused inward, the view from public streets should also be considered. The perimeter of the site along public roads should have a large, landscaped setback including berms and street trees. Attractive low walls (to a maximum height of 4 feet) may be used when appropriate to provide more defined separation between private and public spaces. See Figure 82.

b. **Buildings and garages.** For buildings and garages that face streets or internal roadways, long, blank building walls should be avoided, as well as long rows of garage doors. Applicants are encouraged to consider parking courts (see Figure 83) where several garages are clustered around a small cul-de-sac. Such courts should be heavily screened and landscaped.



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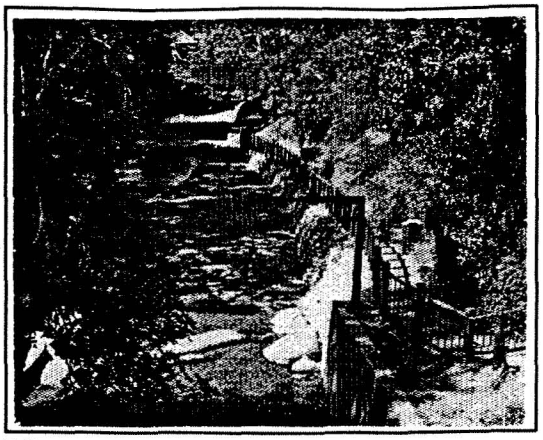

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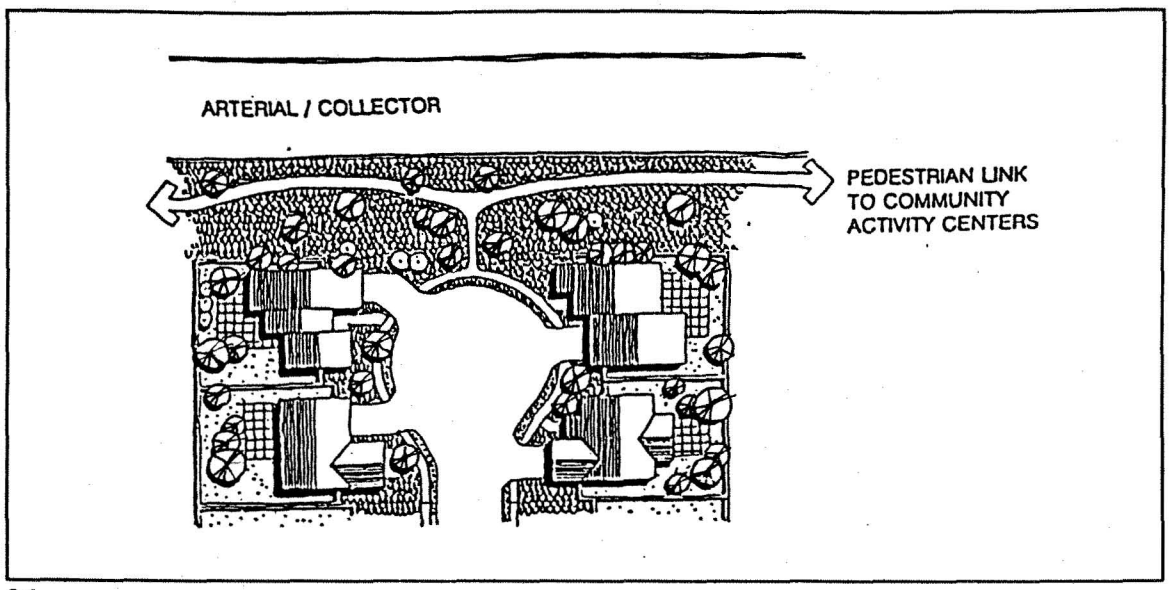


86

OBJECTIVE R-3: **Local neighborhood streets should include design features that will reduce or slow automobile traffic without prohibiting through pedestrian and bicycle connections.**

Guidelines

a. **Traffic calming.** On private streets, streetscape devices to slow traffic entering residential streets are encouraged. Such devices may include bulb outs with street trees near intersections and special "rumble strip" paving, as shown in Figure 84.

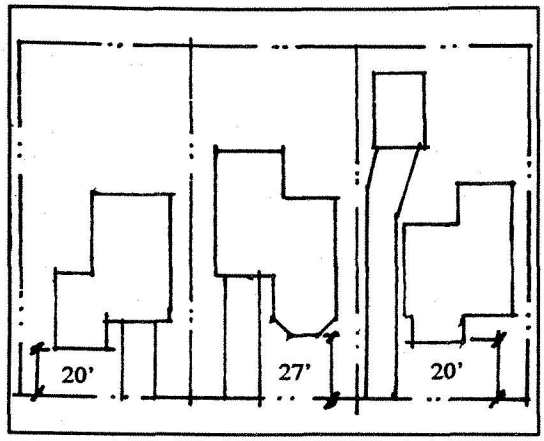
b. **Through street connections.** Subdivisions should be designed with a series of through street connections within the site that connect to other through streets (i.e., that form a grid pattern) in the surrounding area. Coordination among several land owners in a given area is encouraged.

c. **Pedestrian links and greenbelts.** Pedestrian links and greenbelts should be developed to provide through pedestrian connections between neighborhoods, subdivisions, parks, commercial centers, downtowns or other community gathering areas. These links could be developed in the form of creek or hillside trails as shown in Figure 85, or as paths connecting between public streets and sidewalks.

d. **Cul-de-sac streets.** Cul-de-sac streets and adjacent lots in new residential subdivisions should be designed to provide pedestrian links between the end of the cul-de-sac and an adjacent cul-de-sac, or between the cul-de-sac and a larger pedestrian pathway system. See Figure 86.

Example/Reference

1. See Sections 21.03.010 and 21.09.010 of the *Real Property Division Ordinance.*



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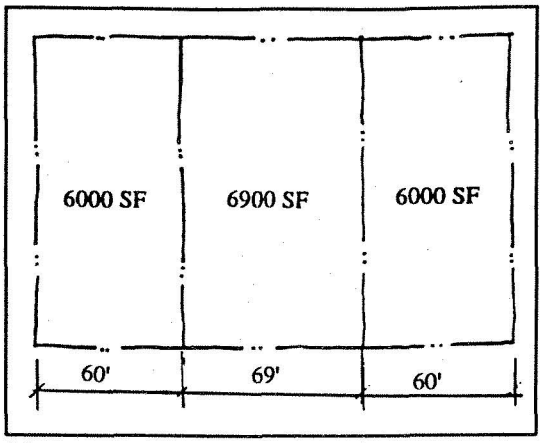


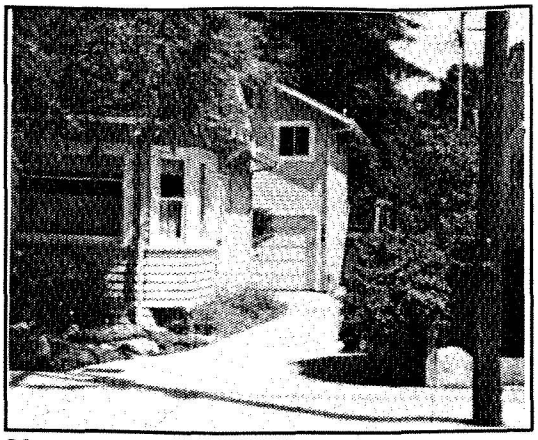
88

B. Variety in Building Placement

OBJECTIVE R-4: **Where appropriate to break up the monotony of long blocks of uniform lots, single-family subdivisions should include features that provide variety in the streetscape appearance and a perception of open spaces between houses.**

Guideline

a. **Varied setbacks and lot sizes.** In some subdivisions it may be appropriate to vary front setbacks by as much as five feet and lot areas and widths by up to 15 percent. See Figures 87 and 88.



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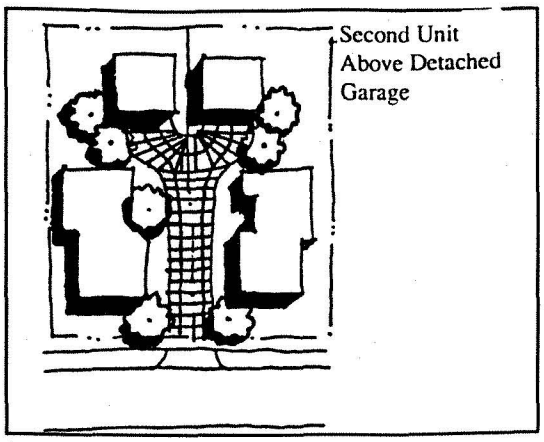

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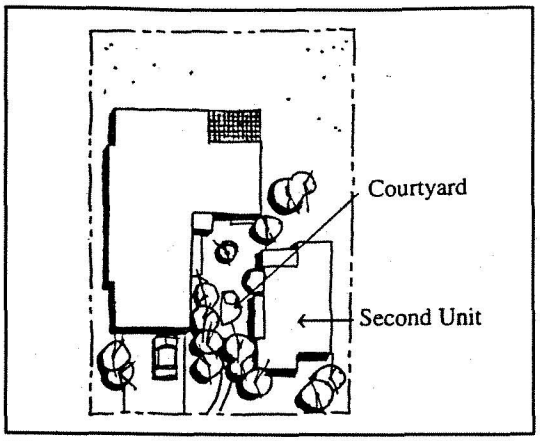


91

OBJECTIVE R-5: **To increase neighborhood diversity and affordable housing opportunities, second or "granny" units are encouraged in new single-family subdivisions.**

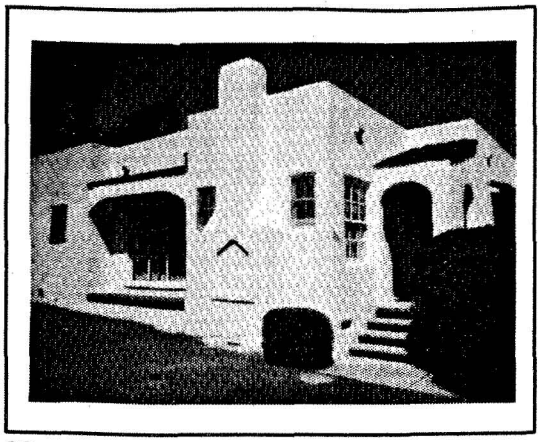
Guidelines

a. **Second unit design.** Second units should be designed to have an appearance similar to or compatible with the main house, as shown in Figure 89.

b. **Second unit location.** Second units should typically be located at the rear of the lot (with or without access from a narrow public alley) above a detached garage as shown in Figure 90. Second units may also be attached to the main building. In some instances (see Figure 91) a second unit may be appropriately sited at the front of the house to create a courtyard between the main and second unit; this, however, requires a Minor Use Permit.

c. **Corner lots.** Second units are strongly encouraged on corner lots where each unit has an entrance from a different street frontage.

d. Second unit parking. Adequate parking for a second unit must be provided on-site or on a lot immediately adjacent to the main lot and connected by a public street.



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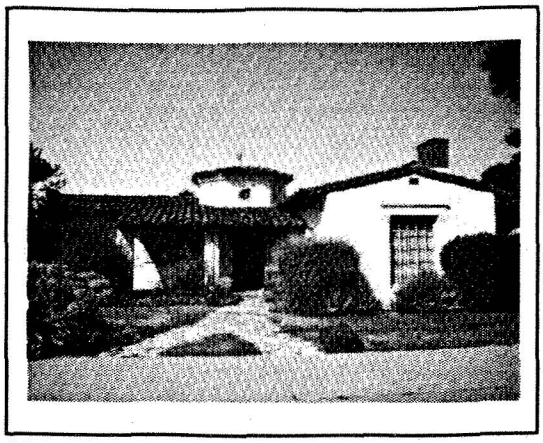

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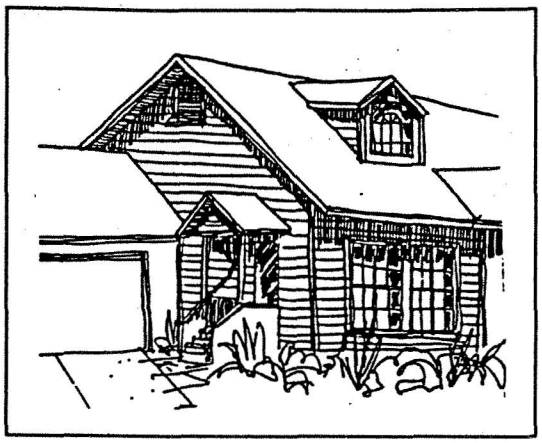

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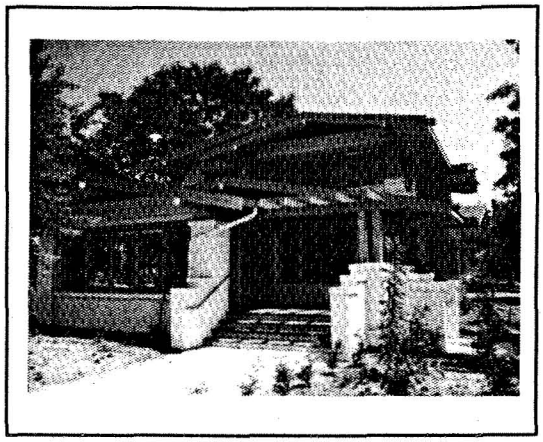


95

C. Design of Homes in Subdivision Projects

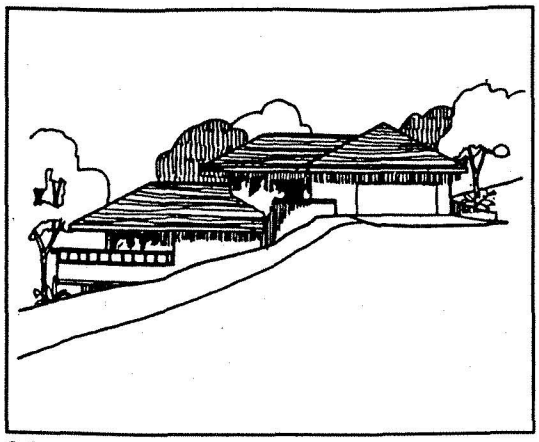
OBJECTIVE R-6: **Architectural style should reflect traditional Central California architecture and San Luis Obispo County's unique scenery and mild climate.**

Guidelines

a. Architectural style. Simple, uncomplicated exterior detailing is preferred. Architecture preferably should emphasize early California architecture (such as Spanish/Early Mission, Mediterranean, Prairie, or Craftsman/Bungalow styles) and should not visually compete with surrounding buildings. Possible examples are shown in Figures 92 through 95.

b. Building articulation. All sides of residences should be detailed and articulated with relief elements and changes in plane. Walls should be designed with changes in plane or other

forms of articulation such as bay windows, chimneys, trellises or changes in materials. These features will create depth and interest on building facades.



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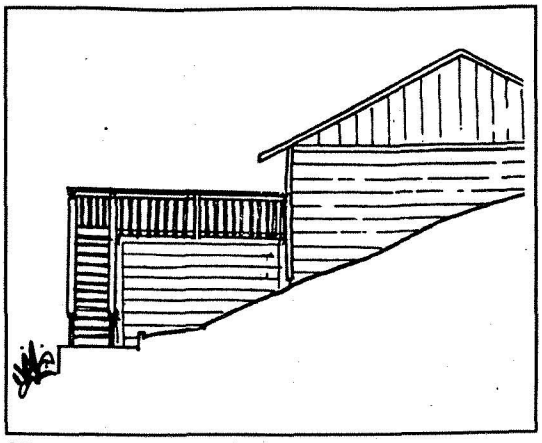

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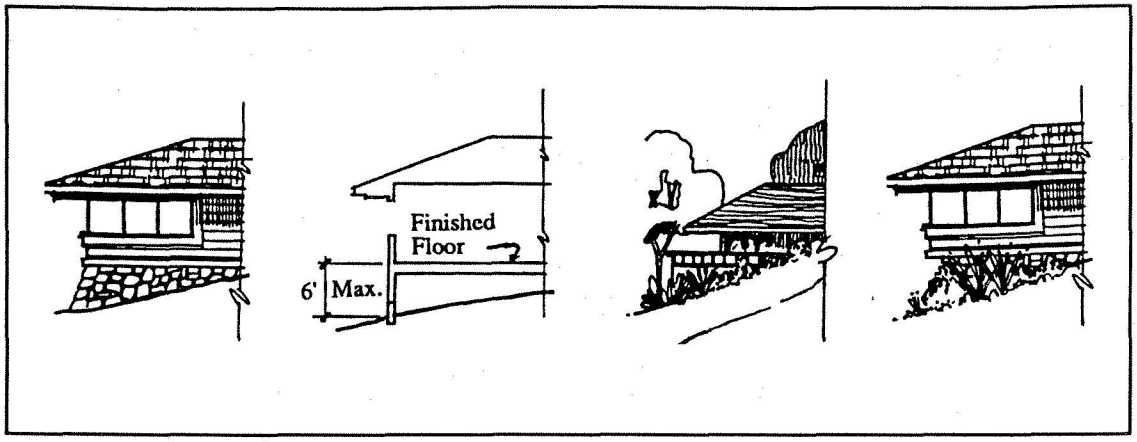
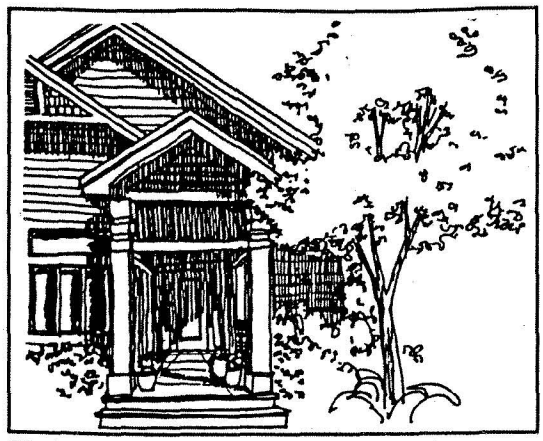


98

c. **Balconies, decks and exterior stairs.** Balconies, decks and exterior stairs should be designed as integral components of the structure. They should reflect the style of the home and not appear to be "tacked-on", as shown in Figures 96 and 97.

d. **Under-building screening.** As shown in Figure 98, the distance between the lowest floor of a structure and finished grade where it meets that floor should not exceed six feet. Such areas should be covered with finished walls or appropriate architectural screening, and not be left open. The addition of landscaping can further improve the appearance of the building and reduce the apparent mass.



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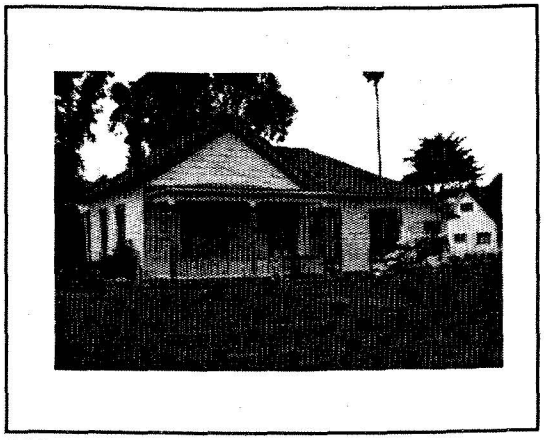


100

OBJECTIVE R-7: **Single-family homes constructed as part of new subdivisions should be designed with details that convey a sense of human habitation along the street.**

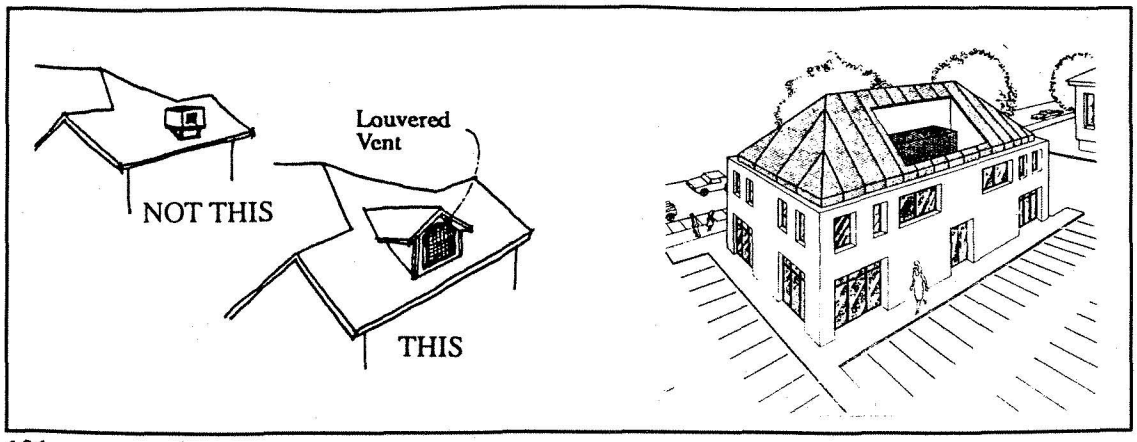
Guidelines

a. **Entries.** The main entry to a home should be located on the street side of the building at or above street level to create a presence for the building on the street, as shown in Figure 99.

b. **Doors and windows.** Single-family homes should have significant numbers of door and window openings on the front facade, because these openings convey a sense of habitation.

c. **Porches.** Covered front porches and sitting areas at the fronts of houses are encouraged in traditional subdivisions, since they define transitional areas between the public realm and the house, as shown in Figure 100. Back porches may be more appropriate in a planned development subdivision. Front porches are allowed in the front setback area pursuant to Section 22.04.116 of the *Land Use Ordinance*.

d. **Garages**. Preferably, in traditional neighborhoods, garages should be located behind the front of the house or along the side of the property. Regardless of the type of subdivision, if the garage is sited at the front of a parcel it should be recessed at least 5 feet from the front facade of the house.



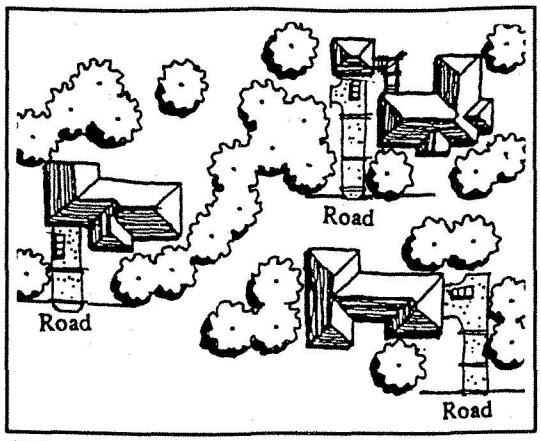
101

OBJECTIVE R-8: **Roof design in subdivisions should be varied and articulated, and should follow traditional types of Central California.**

Guidelines

a. **Materials.** Roofing materials should be non-reflective.

b. **Mechanical equipment.** Mechanical equipment (such as air conditioning units) should be located off of roofs, as possible with use of a "split-system" as illustrated in Figure 101. Solar panels, and satellite dishes over two feet in diameter, should also be screened to the maximum extent possible. First preference is to have such items located on the ground.



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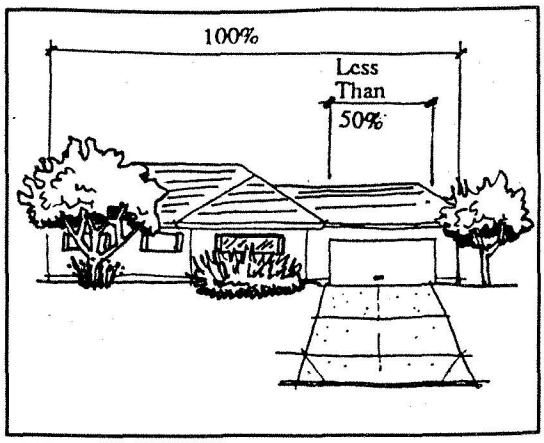

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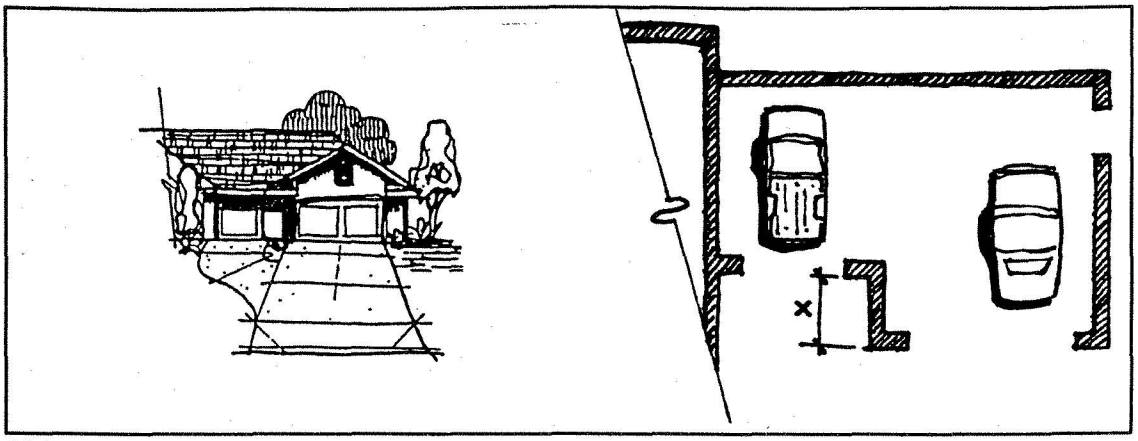


104

OBJECTIVE R-9: **The potential visual impact of large garages should be minimized.**

In many residential areas, large garages facing the street create an unappealing street facade. These guidelines are intended to reduce this impact.

Guidelines

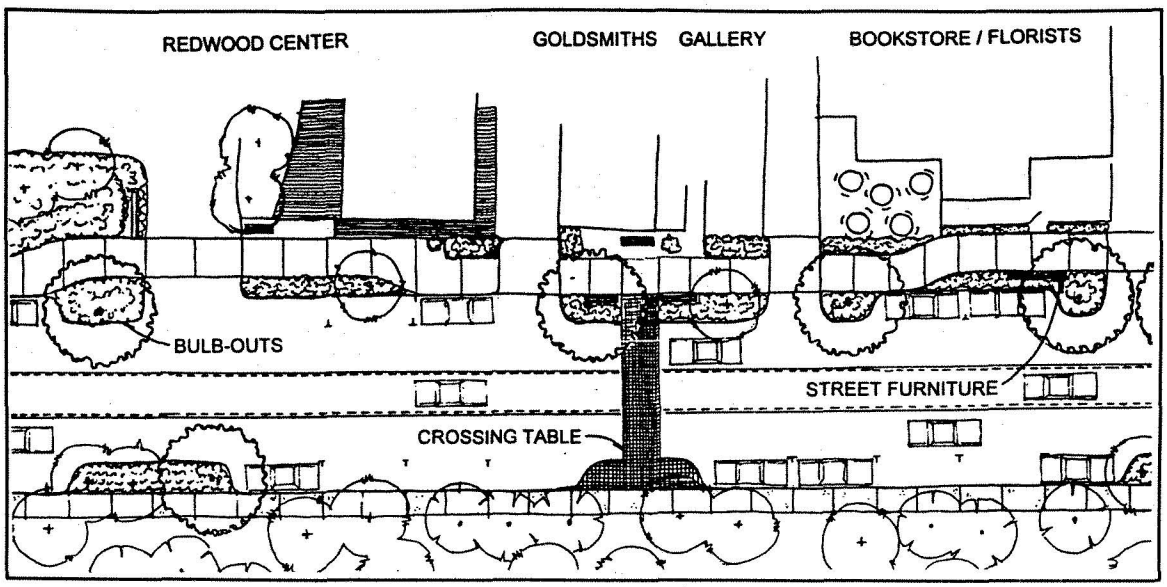
a. **Garage siting.** As shown in Figure 102, garages should be pulled back from the front of the house, turned perpendicular to the street or placed behind the house wherever possible.

b. **Large garages.** The apparent width and mass of garages for three or more cars should be reduced by dividing the garage into sections. For example the two car section may be pulled slightly forward, as shown in Figure 104.

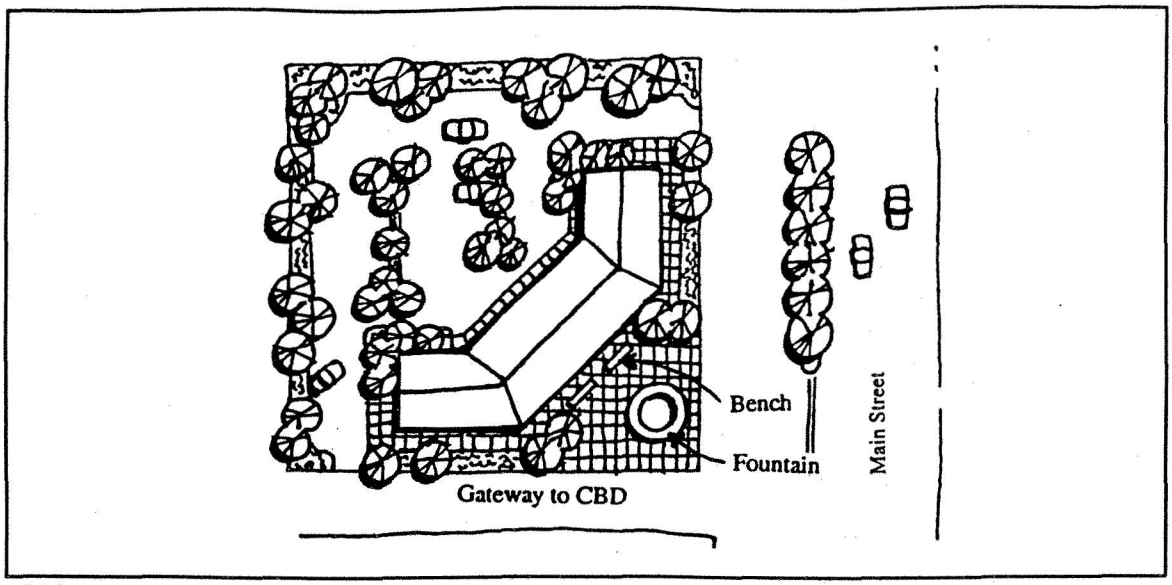
c. **Restriction on overall size.** The width of a garage door should not exceed 50 percent of the total width of the street-facing building facade (See Figure 104). If the parcel width is too narrow to comply with this Guideline, applicants might consider stacked or tandem parking.

8. STREETSCAPE DESIGN

The *streetscape* of a community refers to design features directly associated with the street. These features include the type of pavement used in sidewalks and pedestrian crossings, street trees and other landscaping along the street, the design of pedestrian walkways (next to the curb, separated from the curb by landscaping, etc.), and the design and placement of street furniture (benches, street lights, etc.). The streetscape design guidelines in this section pertain to residential and commercial/industrial development. The streetscape designs must comply with applicable sections of the *Land Use Ordinance and CZLUO*.



Main Street, Cambria East Village Area



105

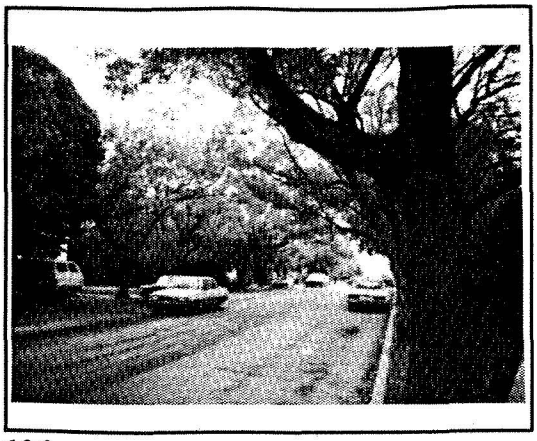
OBJECTIVE S-1: Entrances to unincorporated communities on major roadways should be provided with gateway features to enhance community identity.

Guidelines

a. **Gateways to communities.** The beginning of unincorporated communities should be identified by a gateway feature such as a sign, fountain, special landscaping, landmark structures, sculptures, or similar design feature, as shown in Figure 105 and 110. The intent is to make an attractive, definitive transition into the community that enhances the local identity.

b. **Gateway location.** Community gateways should be located at appropriate prominent roadway intersections or landmark areas, or where specifically designated within an Area Plan.

c. **Local identity.** Community gateway sites should be identified and developed in keeping with the unique character of the individual community.



106

OBJECTIVE S-2: Street trees and frontage landscaping should be used to help define neighborhood character.

Guidelines

a. **Street trees.** Collectors and local streets should typically be planted with compatible species of large trees (30 to 50 feet apart). Deciduous trees such as sycamores, big-leaf maples, or liquid amber, can provide energy conservation advantages through summer shading and increased access to sunlight in winter. See Figure 106. Approved street trees are listed in the appendix.

b. **Street trees on narrow streets.** Where public rights-of-way are too narrow to allow street trees, the trees may be planted in bulbs that extend into a road's parking lane, if determined not to pose a safety hazard.

c. **Curbs.** Curbs should be installed in all new urban and village area developments as required by the *Land Use Ordinance and CZLUO*. However, a new development without curbs can help to create or maintain a visual impression of a rural area, which is desired in parts of the County. Therefore, curbs and gutters may be omitted from the developments with lot sizes of 20,000 square feet or larger where approved by the Engineering Department, and where adequate provisions for street storm drainage are included in street design.

OBJECTIVE S-3: Landscaping should be consistent with the type of plants naturally occurring in the County.

Guidelines

a. **Turf.** Areas of turf or lawn should be limited to the minimum necessary for recreation and active use consistent with the County water conserving landscape ordinance.

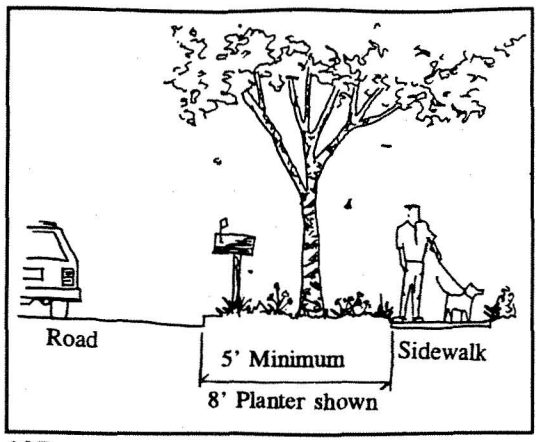
b. **Drought-tolerant and native landscaping.** Streetscape and on-site landscaping should emphasize drought tolerant and local plant materials and be consistent with the County's landscaping ordinance.

c. **Drainage.** Landscaping and spot grading should be designed to accommodate increased amounts of water without damage and without concentrating the runoff flow. Runoff from roofs and pavement should be directed away from areas that are easily eroded. Where storm drains are not available, grassy waterways and other well-vegetated area are generally not prone to erosion and are encouraged over other less attractive drainage alternatives such as ditches, and culverts.

d. **Preservation of existing trees.** Existing trees on site should be preserved and protected to the greatest extent possible. All trees to remain on site should be marked and fenced prior to any grading or trenching. If necessary, a qualified individual (e.g., arborist or forester) should be consulted regarding appropriate protection measures.

Example/Reference

1. See Sections 22.05.020 through 22.05.050 of the *Land Use Ordinance* and corresponding sections in the *CZLUO*.



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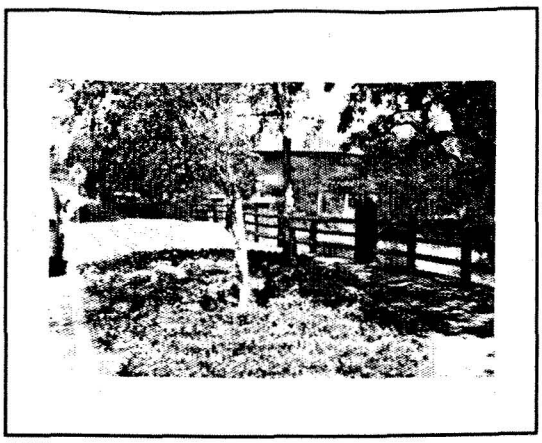


108

OBJECTIVE S-4: All roads should have pedestrian facilities, which need not be sidewalks.

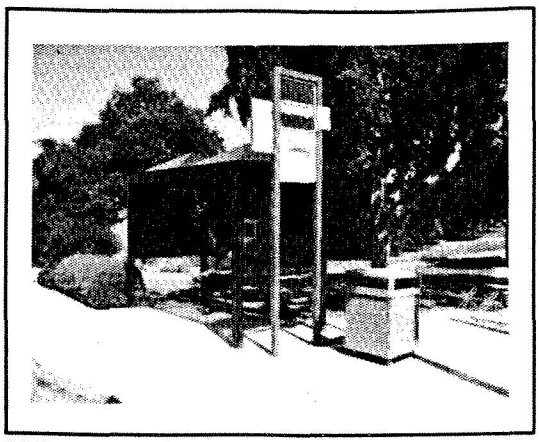
Guidelines

a. **Sidewalks.** Sidewalks are appropriate in both the traditional and planned development subdivision models. Sidewalks should be separated from the roadway by a minimum five-foot wide planting strip to accommodate street trees and mail boxes, as illustrated in Figures 107 and 108. Varied widths of planter strips along sidewalks are encouraged. Trees in planter medians should be at least 10 feet away from vehicle travel lanes.

b. **Alternative Pathways.** Alternatively, pedestrian pathways outside of public street right-of-ways may be constructed of decomposed granite, shredded bark, wood planks, or other approved material. In rural areas, these pathways are encouraged to follow irregular curving patterns along the street.

Example/Reference

1. See *LUO* standards Section 22.05.106 and corresponding section of the CZLUO.

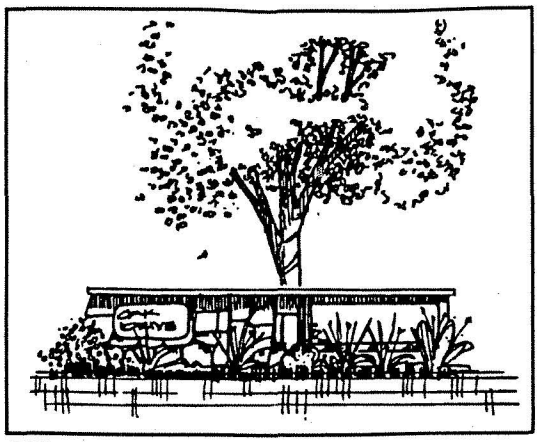


109

OBJECTIVE S-5: All transit stops should provide an attractive, safe, and sheltered rest area.

Guideline

a. **Transit stops.** Transit stop shelters should be compatible with other features within the subdivision or village center. The shelters should be attractive and of similar appearance as other benches, kiosks, or other streetscape facilities in the area, as shown in Figure 109.



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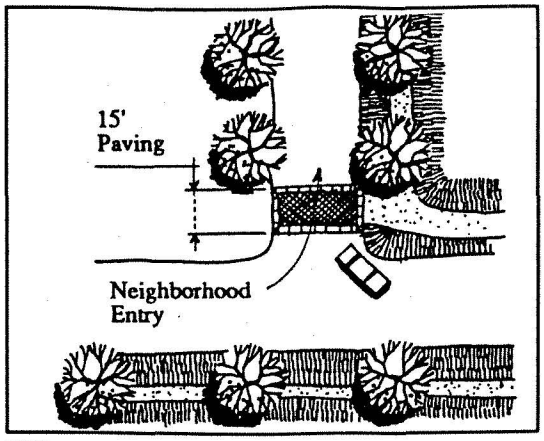


111

OBJECTIVE S-6: Neighborhood entry features should be designed with sensitivity to the setting, and should reflect their surrounding areas.

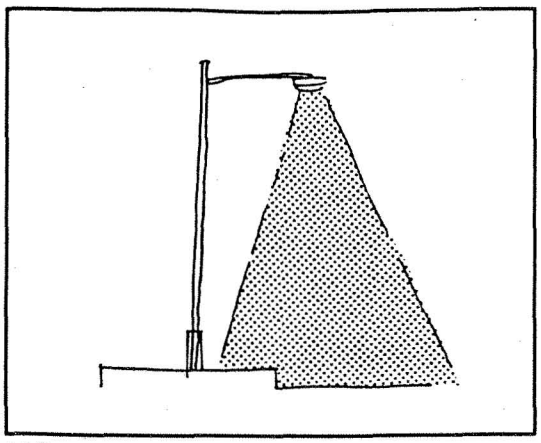
Guidelines

a. **Materials and treatment.** When proposed, entry features should include traditional, rural materials such as wind row planting, native stones, columns or rail fences. Highly reflective or machined materials and overly decorative designs are discouraged. An elevation and plan of an acceptable entry are shown in Figures 110 and 111.

b. **Entry feature height.** Entry features should be monument-type elements, with a maximum height of three feet, so that vehicles sight distance is not impaired.

c. **Entry feature lighting.** Entry feature lighting should be ground mounted and directed inward to illuminate entry features, and should be minimized so as not to disturb wildlife, impair views of the night sky, or impair vision of oncoming drivers.

d. **Decorative paving.** When the subdivision has privately maintained streets, decorative paving materials should be used to establish a definite transition between rural roads and individual neighborhoods, and should be approximately 15 feet, as shown in Figure 111.



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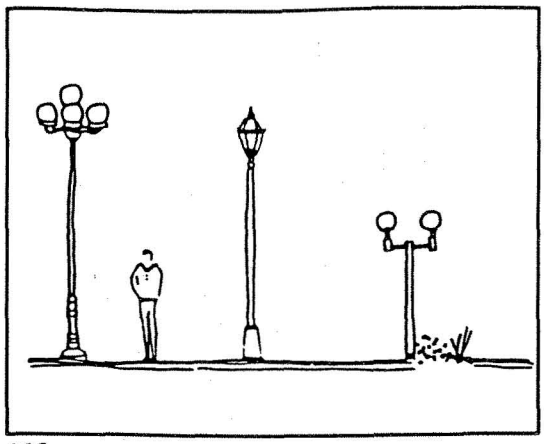


113

OBJECTIVE S-7: Where street lighting is appropriate, it should be considered an integral part of roadway design.

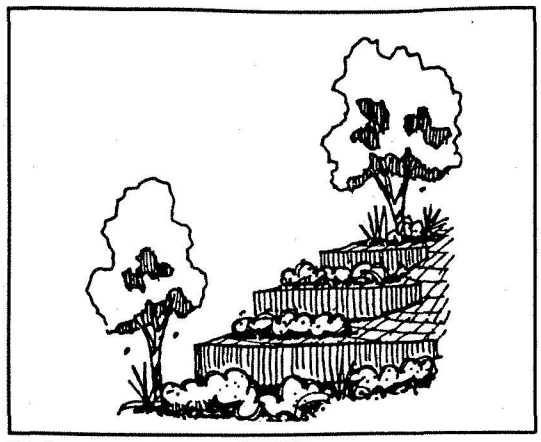
Guidelines

a. **Lighting locations.** Roadway intersections should be sufficiently lit with appropriate streetlights. Few streetlights, if any, should be provided along continuous stretches of local roadways. Lighting should be located in a manner that minimizes the impact of lighting upon adjacent buildings and properties.

b. **Lighting directions.** Major street lighting should be directionally oriented downward with no splay of light off-site, as shown in Figure 112.

c. **Light standard design.** Street light standards should be designed or selected to match an area's unique character. Examples are shown in Figure 113.

d. **Lamp height.** The height of streetlights should be related to the scale and character of the street. Lamp locations should provide for adequate truck height clearance.



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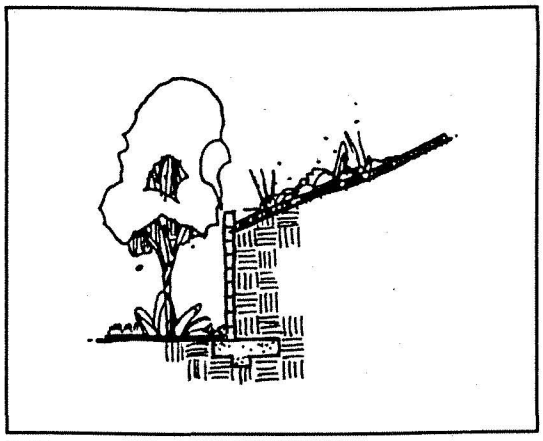

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OBJECTIVE S-8: Large retaining walls and sound walls should be avoided in road and streetscape construction.

Guidelines

a. **Retaining wall materials.** Where retaining walls are necessary for buildings, yards, roads or other streetscape construction, the walls should be of split-face concrete block or other textured masonry units, treated concrete surfaces (such as colored, blasted or textured), or applied fascias such as field stone. These alternatives are preferred to untextured concrete or masonry materials.

b. **Treatment.** Where retaining walls are necessary on private lots, the walls should feature design and materials compatible in appearance with buildings on the lot.

c. **Stepped Landscaping.** As shown in Figures 114 and 115, retaining walls should be stepped down a slope, rather than designed as a single vertical wall. The visibility of retaining walls should be minimized by providing a landscaping strip along each step that is as wide as the step is tall, as shown in Figure 114. Vertical steps should generally not exceed four feet in height.

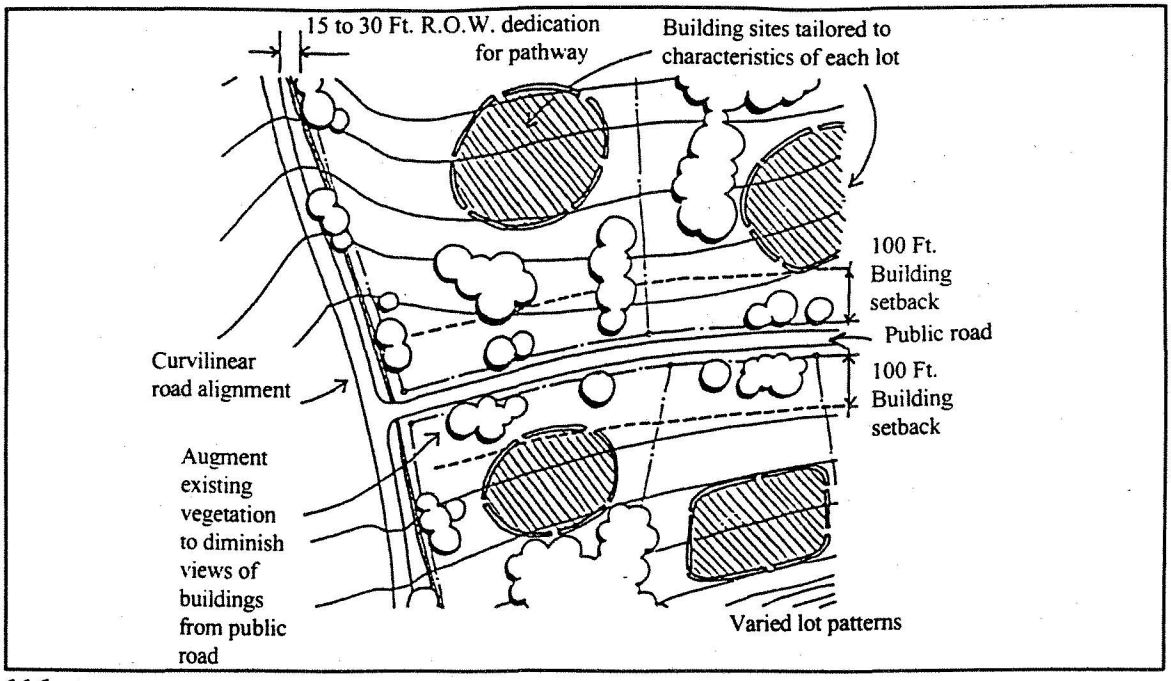
d. **Sound walls.** Sound walls for noise mitigation should be avoided unless no other method is suitable. Noise mitigation should occur through site design or berms wherever feasible.

PART III
Rural Area Guidelines

9. RURAL AND SUBURBAN RESIDENTIAL SITE LAYOUT, BUILDING FEATURES

The visual character of rural areas in San Luis Obispo County varies greatly. Many portions of the north coast can be typified as having steep hills, dotted with large oak or Monterey pine trees, while inland areas have gently rolling hills, scrubby brushlands and vast expanses of cattle grazing land. The south county includes both rugged mountainous regions and fertile plains. The development pattern in these areas is generally similar, however, including large ranches and small ranchettes, separated by picturesque meadows, grazing lands, and stands of trees, and linked by curving country roads. These design guidelines are intended to help protect the attractive rural character and address the visual impacts of rural building construction and related grading.

Rural area construction should also be consistent with the Resource Conservation design guidelines in Part IV of this *Design Guidelines*, beginning on page 96 and with the standards of the *Real Property Division Ordinance*.



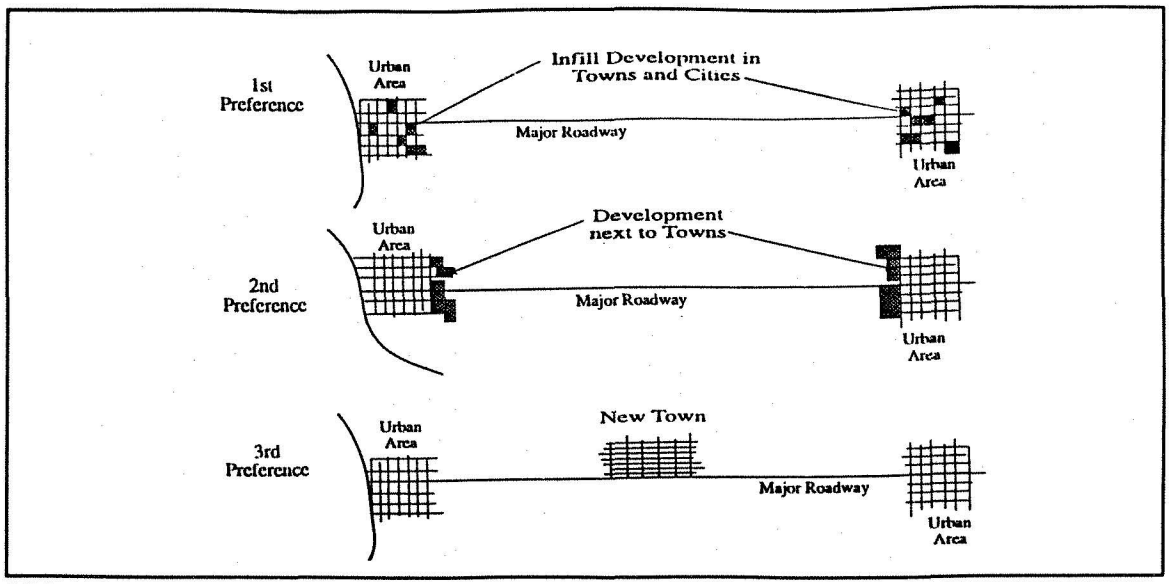
116

A. Rural Subdivision Design

OBJECTIVE RU-1: **New subdivisions for residential development outside of urban and village areas should be designed to maintain rural character by placing building sites in the least sensitive areas.**

Guidelines

a. **Building site location.** New residential subdivisions should locate building envelopes where the visibility of new buildings from public roadways and adjoining properties will be minimized. Generally, buildings in rural areas should be set back a minimum of 100 feet from public roads where site characteristics permit. See Figure 116.



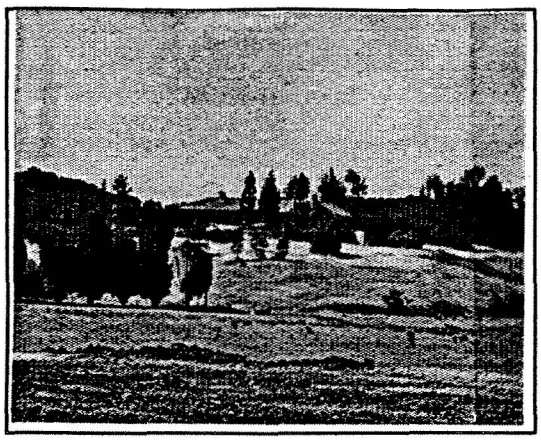
117

b. Road design. Roads in new rural subdivisions should be gradually curved to follow natural topography and minimize the need for cuts and fills, but be connected to provide alternate routes.

c. Landscaping. Building site selection should take best advantage of the screening capabilities of existing vegetation, and development should include augmentation of existing vegetation to soften views of new buildings.

d. Highway setback. Buildings and structures visible from a highway should provide a large landscaped setback; building setbacks should vary depending on the height of the building.

e. Energy conservation. Infill development and expansion of existing developed areas into adjacent undeveloped areas is preferred to new development in remote, undeveloped locations, as shown in Figure 117. Additional guidelines on energy efficient subdivision design can be found in Section 5, New Residential Subdivisions (Objective R-1, Guideline g).



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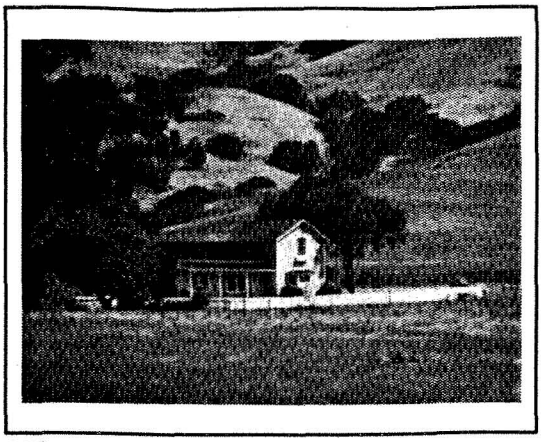


119

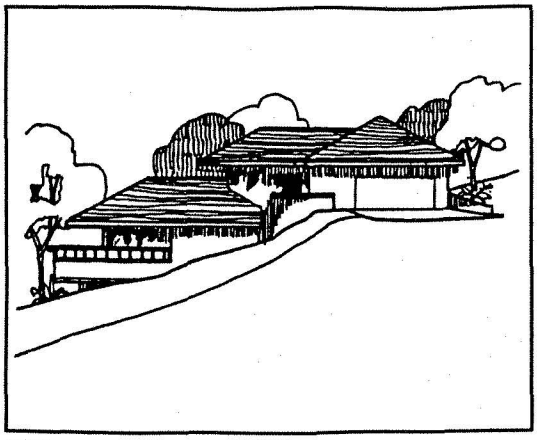
B. Building Form and Features

OBJECTIVE RU-2: **Building form and roof design should further enhance the rural character of the area.**

Guidelines

a. **Building styles.** Building styles or forms that 1) appear to mimic the surrounding topography as shown in Figure 118, or, 2) evoke the traditional farm or ranch house style as shown in Figure 119 are highly encouraged. Box-like or square buildings that have little relation to the surrounding topography or historic use of the area are discouraged.

b. **Roof design.** Hip roofs and staggered or overlapping roofs such as shown above are encouraged as a means to blend the building into the surrounding landscape.



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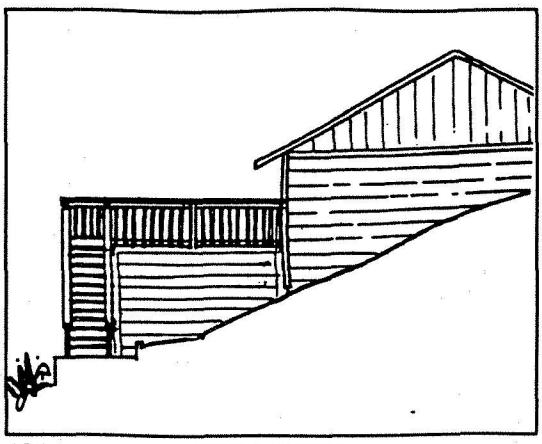

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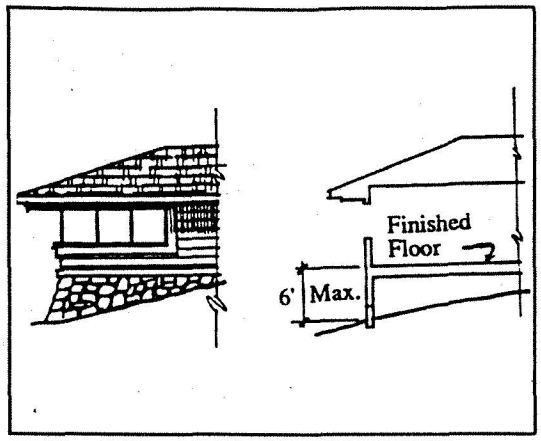


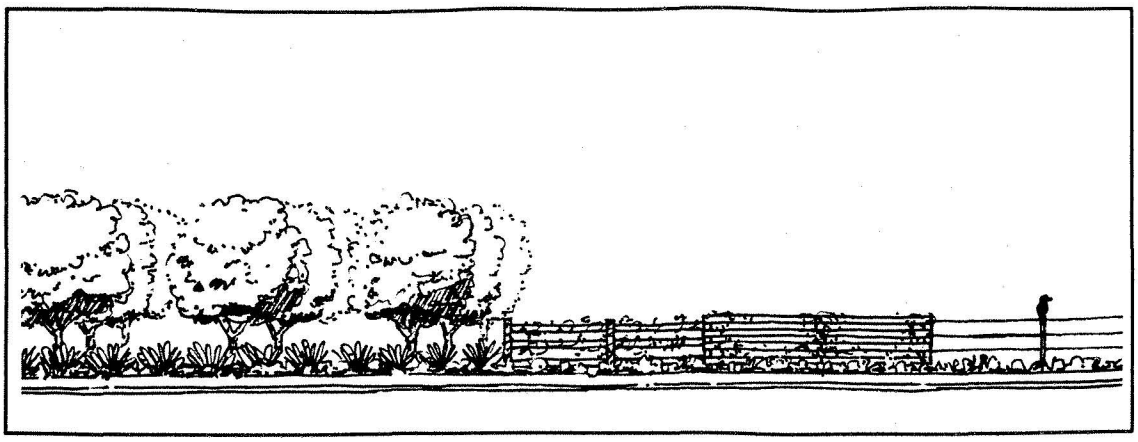
122

OBJECTIVE RU-3: **The design of building features such as decks, exterior stairs, and hillside support structures should be integrated with the buildings themselves.**

Guidelines

a. **Balconies, decks and exterior stairs.** Balconies, decks and exterior stairs should be designed as integral components of the structure. They should reflect the style of the home and not appear to be "tacked-on." See Figures 120 and 121.

b. **Under-building screening.** As shown in Figure 122, the distance between the lowest floor of a structure and finished grade where it meets that floor should not exceed six feet. Such areas should be covered with finished walls, and should not be left open.



123

C. Accessory Structures and Fences

OBJECTIVE RU-4: **Accessory structures should be in keeping with the design characteristics of the main house.**

Guideline

a. **Accessory structure design.** Accessory structure design should reflect the character of the main house.

Example/Reference

1. See also Sections 22.08.020 through 22.08.032 of the *Land Use Ordinance* and the corresponding sections of the *CZLUO*.

OBJECTIVE RU-5: **Fences and screening should reflect an area's rural quality.**

Guideline

a. **Fence types.** When provided, fencing located along public roadways should consider the use of low split rails or peeler posts, architectural wire and fences with vines or shrubs, as shown in Figure 123. Windrow or orchard tree planting can also create screening with a rural character.

Example/Reference

1. See Section 22.04.190 of the *LUO* for standards and the corresponding section of the *CZLUO*.

OBJECTIVE RU-6: **Water tanks, satellite dishes over two feet in diameter, solar water heaters, and other similar infrastructure that support rural residences should be located or painted to reduce their visibility.**

Guidelines

a. **Infrastructure siting.** Infrastructure should be sited in trees or behind structures or newly installed landscaping so that it is not visible from public roads or other residences in the area.

b. **Infrastructure color.** Where possible, infrastructure should be painted to blend with its surroundings.

c. **Undergrounding.** Where infrastructure would be visible and cannot otherwise be concealed, undergrouding of utilities is encouraged.

D. Landscaping

OBJECTIVE RU-7: **Landscaping should be consistent with the type of plants naturally occurring in the County and should limit the need for irrigation.**

Guidelines

a. **Turf.** Areas of turf or lawn should be limited to the minimum necessary for recreation and active use consistent with the County water conserving landscape ordinance.

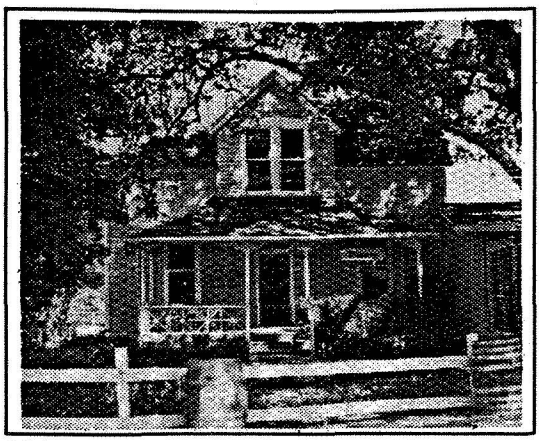
b. **Drought tolerant landscaping.** On-site landscaping should emphasize drought tolerant, fire resistant, and local plant material.

c. **Drainage.** Landscaping and grading should be designed to accommodate increased amounts of water without damage and without concentrating the runoff flow. The grading should allow for sheet flow of water across the site. Runoff from roofs and pavement should be directed away from areas that are easily eroded. Grassy waterways and other well-vegetated areas are generally not prone to erosion and are encouraged over other less attractive drainage alternatives such as storm drains, ditches, and culverts.

10. WINERY TASTING AND SIMILAR FACILITIES

Agricultural processing in this chapter refers to buildings for production or storage within agricultural areas, and includes wineries, greenhouses, packing houses and storage buildings that emphasize on-site service to the public. Although the use for these buildings is specifically agricultural, their visual and design character may be more that of light industrial buildings.

The Objectives and guidelines in this section are intended to serve as an educational resource for architects designing agricultural processing facilities that emphasize an on-site service to the public, such as winery tasting rooms. Further information can be found in Section 11 (Resource Conservation) and the standards of Sections 22.04.024 (Agriculture Categories) and 22.04.030 (Industrial Categories) of the *Land Use Ordinance* and corresponding sections of the *CZLUO*.



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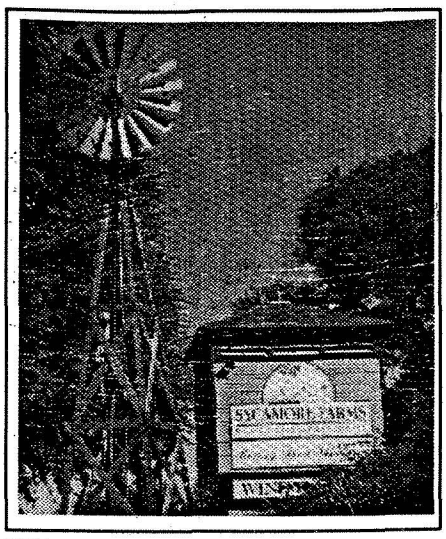

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OBJECTIVE AI-1: Winery tasting rooms and other agricultural processing facilities that emphasize being open to the public, should be designed to blend with their agricultural surroundings and/or reflect the historic context of the area.

Guidelines

a. **Building articulation.** All sides of winery tasting rooms and similar public serving facilities if located in a separate buildings should be detailed and treated with relief elements and changes in plane. Architectural elements used to provide relief should include windows, awning projections, trellises, built in planters, integrated plazas, colonnades or arcades. Blank walls should be avoided. Desired results are shown in Figures 124, and 125.

b. **Orientation.** Buildings should be oriented so that customer entrances face the street or side. Any bay doors or service doors should not face the street.

Example/Reference

1. See **Land Use Ordinance* Sections 22.08.040 (Agricultural Uses—Specialized), 22.08.041 (Agricultural Accessory Structures), 22.08.042 (Agricultural Processing Uses), 22.08.046 (Specialized Animal Facilities), and 22.08.054 (Nursery Specialties).

   *And corresponding sections of the *CZLUO*.

OBJECTIVE AI-2: **Winery tasting rooms and similar public serving facilities if located in a separate buildings should have interesting roof shapes and parapet lines, and should avoid the monotony of flat parapet roofs.**

Guidelines

a. **Roof shape.** Simple pitched roofs with a slope of 3:12 or greater, and gables or hips are preferred over flat roofs on commercial buildings. Gables or hips may also be integrated with flat roofs.

b. **Roof parapets.** Where buildings have flat roofs, parapets should be articulated with roofline cornices and recesses to create visual interest on the building facade.

OBJECTIVE AI-3: **Landscaping for agricultural processing buildings should be designed to soften building appearance and create a transition or buffer between the buildings and their surroundings.**

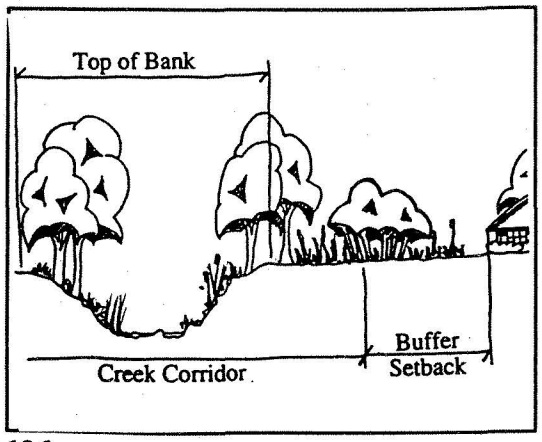
Guideline

a. **Perimeter landscaping.** Landscaping areas should be provided at the edges of agricultural processing building sites and should have a minimum width of 15 feet.

PART IV
Resource Conservation Guidelines

11. RESOURCE CONSERVATION

San Luis Obispo County places a high priority on the conservation of its natural resources. This chapter reflects the importance of those resources by providing design guidelines to preserve the natural appearance of ridgelines and other natural topographic features, and the ecological integrity of creeks, major vegetation features, and other habitats. Additional guidelines that encourage energy and water conservation are also included.



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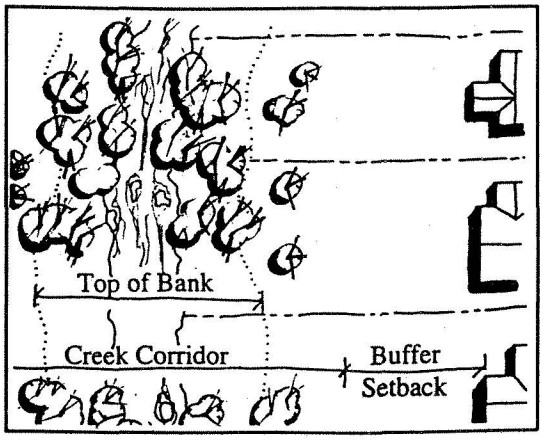

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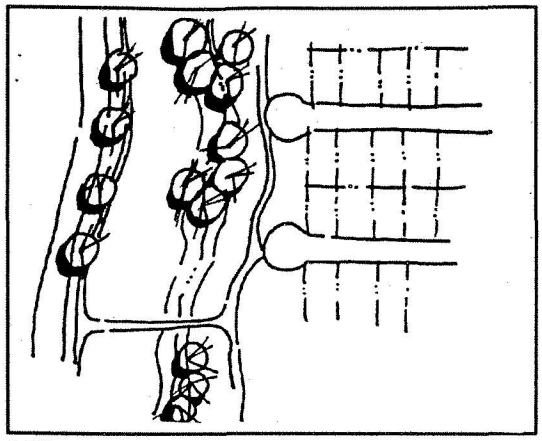

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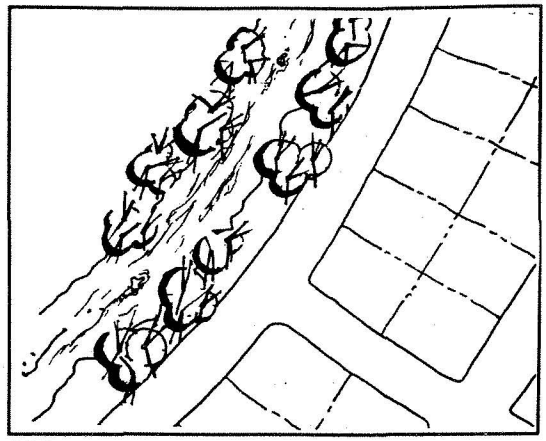


129

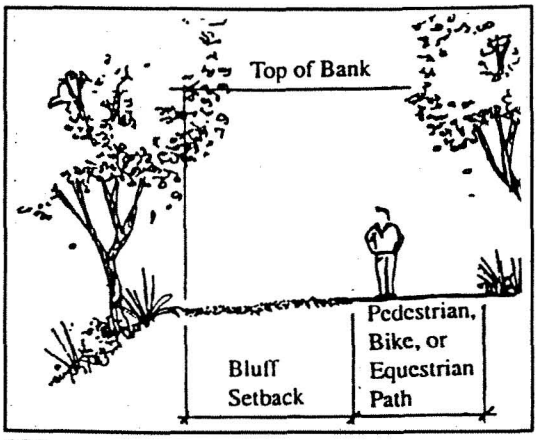
A. Creek, Habitat Protection and Drainage Improvements

OBJECTIVE RC-1: **Creek corridors should be protected and enhanced.**

Guidelines

a. **Location of development.** Building development, roadway construction, and introduced landscaping should be located away from the top of a creek bank consistent with adopted standards or outside the dripline of riparian vegetation to avoid significant impacts on the habitat as shown in Figures 126 and 127. Adjustments are possible where alternatives are infeasible or more environmentally damaging.

b. **Lot orientation in subdivisions.** As illustrated in Figures 128 and 129, creeks should generally have access from public streets and greenbelt corridors to extend their enjoyment to neighborhoods. New subdivisions should generally be planned so that private lots do not back up to creeks.



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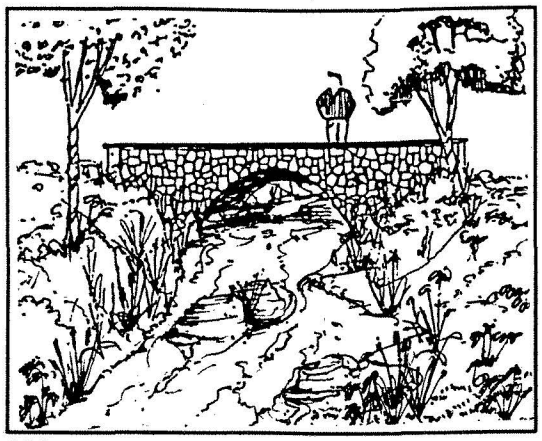
c. **Creek enhancement.** Where existing creeks have been degraded, development may include enhancement of creek channels (consistent with maintaining proper creek flow) to create natural looking creek corridors, including retention of existing native vegetation, planting of new native vegetation, naturalistic erosion control measures and prohibition of grazing. Where creek enhancement is completed as a part of a project, a creek setback may be reduced.

d. **Natural drainage ways.** Development should avoid disturbance of natural drainage ways and should not alter the existing drainage courses without County approval.

e. **Public trail design.** In new subdivision or large multi-family projects, meandering, multi-use paths offering pedestrian, bicycle, and/or equestrian access should be developed along one side of major creeks outside the riparian area and in conjunction with creek enhancement measures. Figure 130 shows a possible cross section, but narrower paths may be necessary to preserve habitat in some areas. Emphasis should be given to habitat protection where possible conflict may occur with construction of a multi-use trail. Please also refer to the adopted County trails policy.

Example/Reference

1. See Section 22.05.034(d) of the *Land Use Ordinance*, and Section 23.07.174 d. of the *Coastal Zone Land Use Ordinance* for riparian area setbacks.



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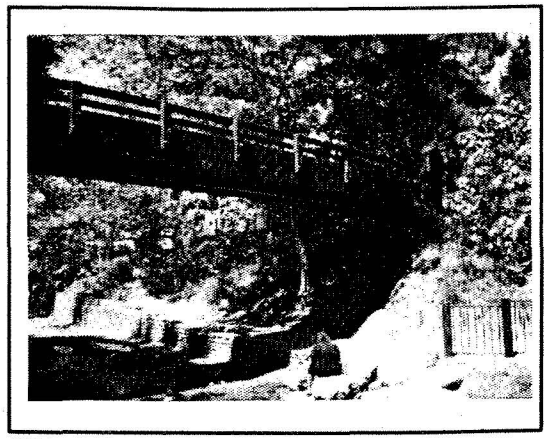

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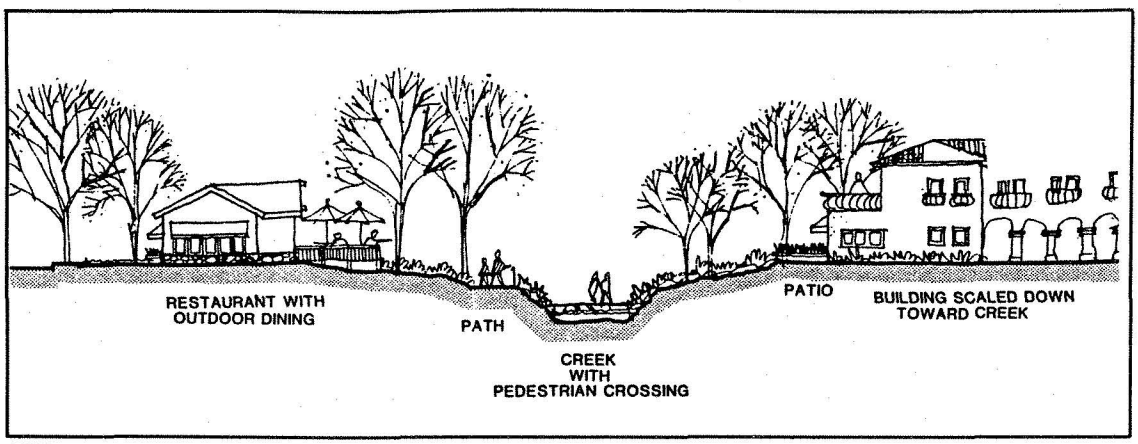


133

OBJECTIVE RC-2: **Creek crossings for pedestrians and driveways should be designed to protect and enhance creeks as natural amenities.**

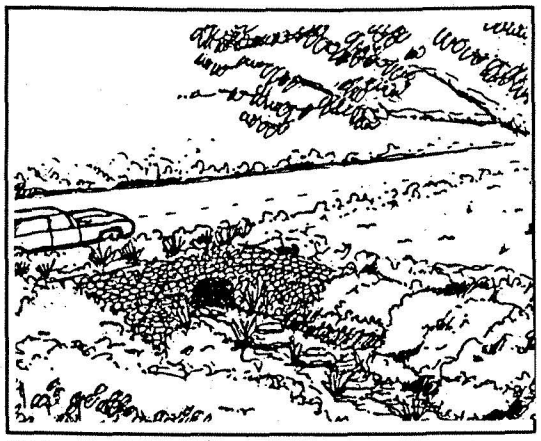
Guidelines

a. **Bridge materials.** Creek crossings should be designed as aesthetic and practical bridges or arched culverts, with solid, facia-covered footings and a rural character. Examples are shown in Figures 131 and 132.

b. **Bridge design.** Bridge rails should be semi-transparent so as to not obstruct views. Bridges should span the creek without reducing the effective flow of the stream, and should generally have footings that avoid the limits of flow of the one hundred-year storm.

c. **Culverts.** Culverts are less desirable for creek crossings than bridges. Culverts often create barriers to water flow and fish movement, and require more ongoing maintenance to ensure the proper functioning of the creek. If culverts are used, the preference is for half circle

culverts that do not disturb the natural stream bed as shown in Figure 133 although at-grade ("Arizona") crossings may be appropriate in certain locations.



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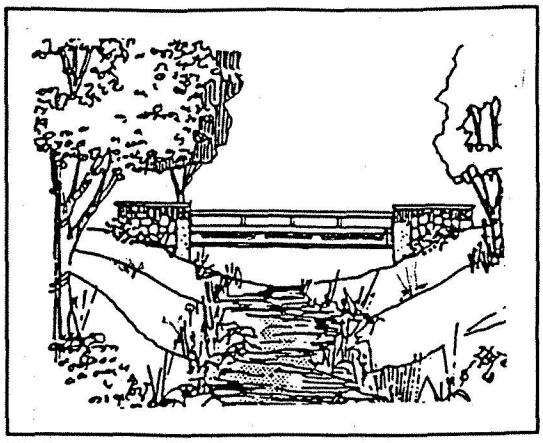

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OBJECTIVE RC-3: **Drainage improvements should be designed to mimic natural creeks in their visual and hydrologic qualities.**

Guidelines

a. **Drainage channels.** Underground creek culverts and pipes should be avoided. Drainage channels should only be developed where absolutely necessary to convey storm flows to existing creek channels, and should have the visual character of naturally occurring creeks. Where consistent with County standards, drainage channels should follow meandering courses, be planted with native vegetation, and be stabilized with rock linings or similar materials rather than smooth concrete. An example is shown in Figure 134.

b. **Outfalls.** Pipe outfalls from development areas into creeks should be designed to blend into the banks of the creek. Headwalls visible from a public road, should be faced with natural-appearing stone, or textured to resemble stone, rather than smooth finished, as shown in Figure 135. Biotechnical[2] slope protection should be used where possible around discharge points.

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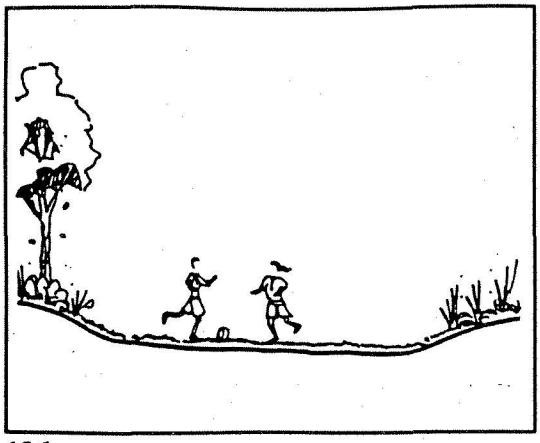
[2] Biotechnical: native vegetation and other selected materials. (See glossary for complete definition.)



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OBJECTIVE RC-4: **Detention and retention basins in new subdivisions should incorporate design features to lessen their visual impacts and allow them to serve as multi-use areas.**

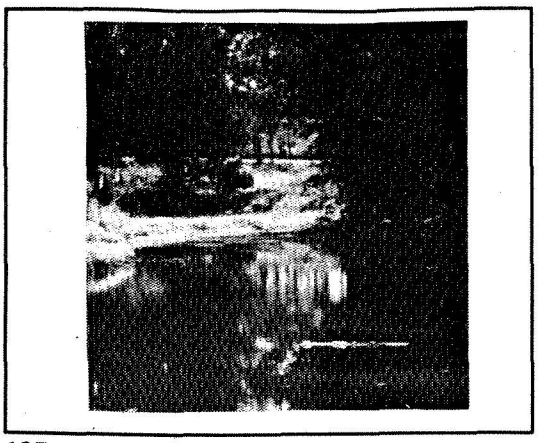
Guidelines

a. **Subdivision design.** Where feasible, new subdivisions should be designed to provide common detention or retention basins rather than detention provisions on individual lots.

b. **Basin uses.** Designed to serve as multi-use areas, such as wildlife habitat or playing fields, as shown in Figure 136.

c. **Basin depth.** Wherever possible, detention and retention basins should be designed to avoid the need for fencing (less than two feet deep).

d. **Basin shape.** Detention and retention basins should have natural shapes. Rectilinear shapes and straight edges should be avoided.



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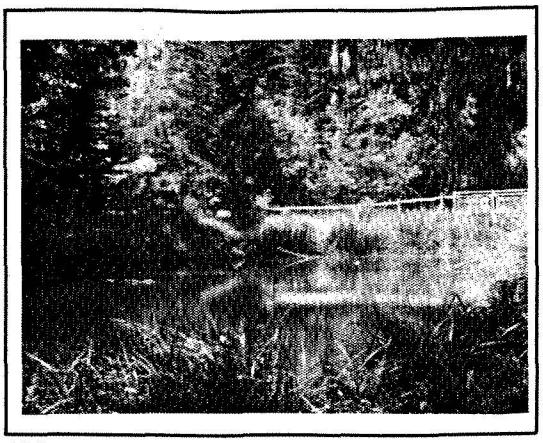


138

OBJECTIVE RC-5: Existing habitats should be retained wherever possible.

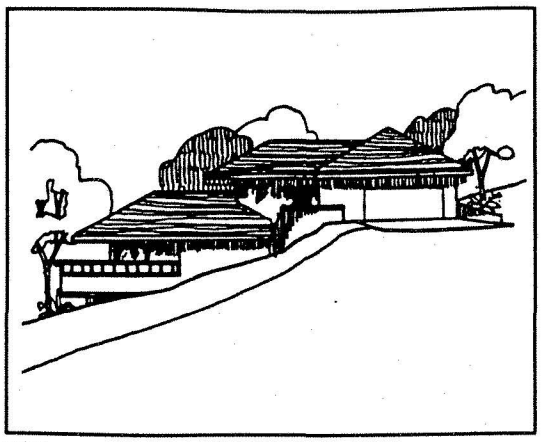
Guidelines

a. **Habitat protection.** Habitat protection priorities are to save oak woodlands and protect links between habitats to protect or preserve wildlife corridors. Habitat protection should take precedence over individual tree preservation, except for landmark trees. See Figures 137 and 138.

b. **Tree preservation.** Development projects should be designed to preserve and protect existing native trees on the site if feasible. Where appropriate, an arborist or other qualified individual should be consulted on specific tree protection measures.

c. **Tree replacement.** Any trees that are removed for a project should be replaced with trees of a similar species in 24-inch boxes, at a ratio specified in the *LUO and CZLUO,* or permit requirements. Replacement oak trees should be from a maximum 15 gallon sized container maximum. Recent studies on the very high disease rates among Monterey pines suggests that these trees should not be replaced with like species if suceptible to pine pitch canker. A suitable native tree may be substituted within native stands of Monterey pines..

d. **Tree preservation.** When a proposed site plan identifies trees to be preserved, those trees should be marked and fenced at the dripline prior to grading. Construction activities, material and equipment storage should not occur within the fenced area.



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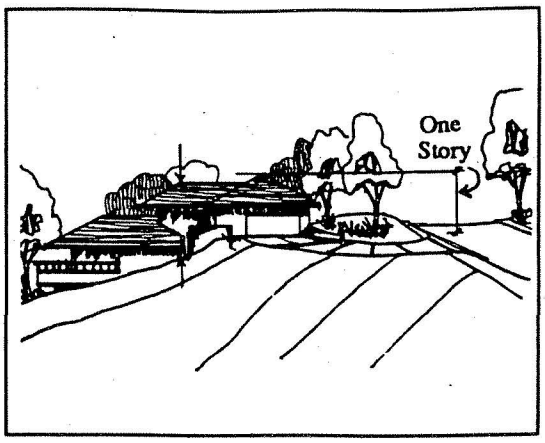

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B. Grading

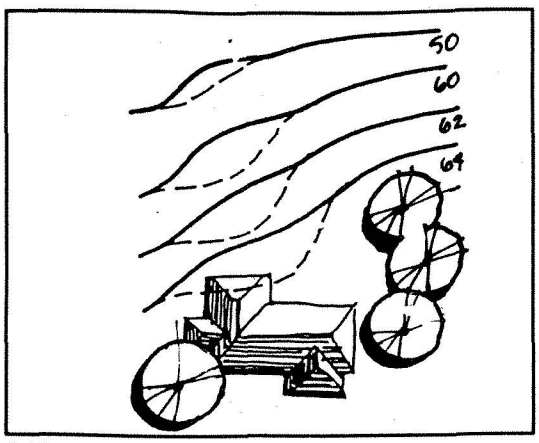
OBJECTIVE RC-7: **The impacts of grading should be minimized, both by limiting the amount of grading and by properly contouring areas where grading occurs. (This Objective does not apply to surface mining operations.)**

Guidelines

a. **Grading limitations.** Site grading should generally be limited to areas within and adjacent to the building footprint, access roads and driveways, and where necessary due to unusual site conditions, or where necessary to blend graded areas with adjacent natural contours. Where possible, large cuts and graded pads should be avoided with foundation areas being stepped to minimize the alteration of natural contours.

b. **Building forms.** Buildings masses should generally follow contours. On sloping sites, buildings should have multiple levels, and be dug into and step down the hill, as shown in Figure 139. All buildings in areas with natural slopes above 20 percent should have stepped foundations, pole construction, or similar techniques to minimize grading associated with large building pads.

c. **Downslope development.** Downslope sites are those with slopes over 20 percent where the roadway is at the top of the slope. On these sites, houses should appear to be one story when viewed from the street, as shown in Figure 140.



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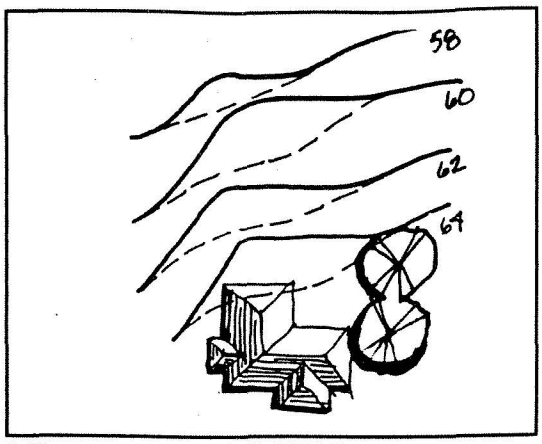

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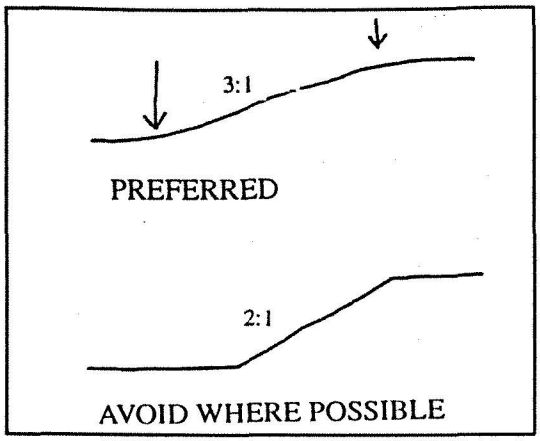

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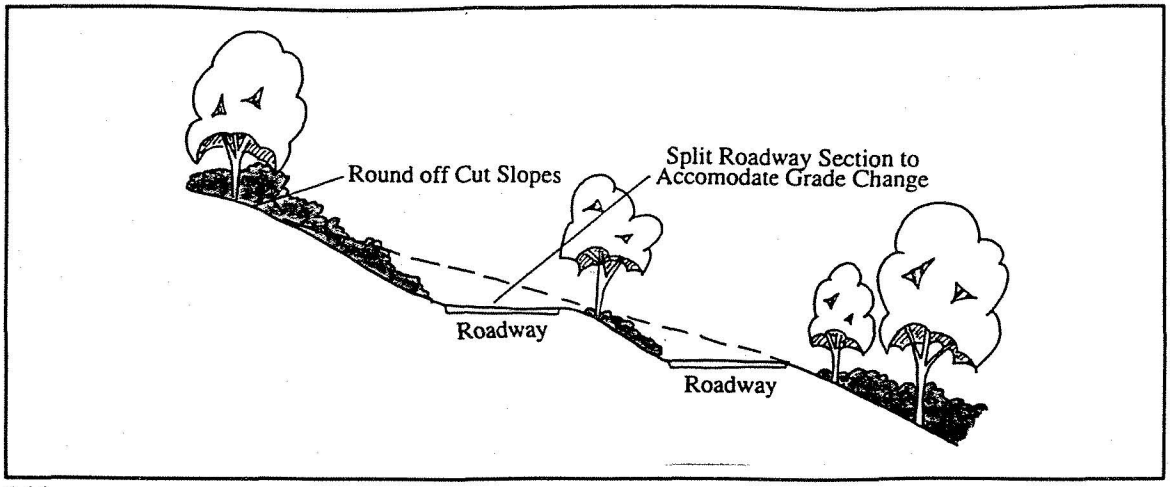
d. **Graded Slopes.** New graded slopes should be configured to retain the natural character of the site, as shown in Figure 141. In plan view, new contour lines should be rounded to mimic natural contours. Graded slopes should undulate and should not result in relatively flat planes.

e. **Slope steepness.** Artificial slopes that are visible to the public should match the natural slopes in its immediate vicinity, and graded areas are encouraged to have slopes no greater than 3:1, as shown in Figure 142, except where steeper graded slopes can significantly reduce the total graded area.

f. **Feathering.** Graded areas should be "feathered" so that there are no abrupt transitions between flat areas and graded slopes, or between graded and ungraded areas, as shown in Figure 143.



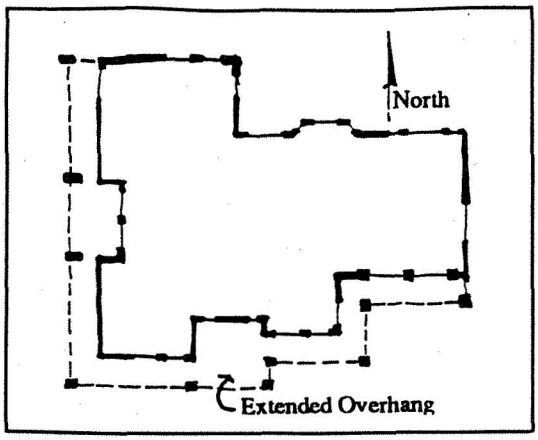
144

OBJECTIVE RC-8: **Grading for new road construction should minimize environmental impacts while providing adequate access to rural areas and be designed to retain as much of an undeveloped appearance as possible.**

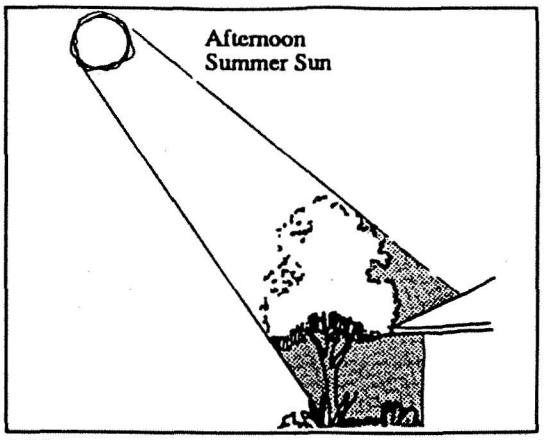
Guidelines

a. **Design.** The amount of disturbance associated with constructing a new road should be minimized by limiting the length and width of roads. Roads should, whenever practical, parallel the existing contours and blend with the existing topographical conditions.

b. **Steep slopes.** Where the terrain is steep, a split-level road configuration is encouraged to minimize scarring, as shown in Figure 144. In general, grading on steep slopes should be minimized; scars are more visible, revegetation is more difficult to plant and maintain, and the success rates for plant survival are much lower than on flatter terrain.



145



146

C. Energy and Water Conservation

OBJECTIVE RC-10: **Design new buildings to provide for the most effective use of solar radiation for heating and cooling ventilation.**

Guidelines

a. **Solar orientation.** To allow for solar gain in winter, most windows should face south. To avoid summer heat gain in hot, non-coastal areas, only a few, small windows should face west. These concepts are illustrated in Figure 145. Resource: *Passive Solar Handbook.*

b. **Overhangs.** Where necessary to shade summer sun, windows on the south, east and west sides of a building should have overhangs or awnings. Covered porches or louvers may be appropriate on the southern elevation, as shown in Figure 145.

c. **Landscaping.** As shown in Figure 146, deciduous trees that create shade in summer but allow light to pass through in winter should be planted along building edges, particularly on the east and west where heat gain from the summer sun is not desired.

d. **Energy Element guidelines.** Other guidelines in the *Energy Element* that may be of interest include Guideline 1.2 (page 3-11) and Guideline 18.2 (page 3-35).

OBJECTIVE RC-11: **Development should incorporate water conservation measures such as low-flow plumbing fixtures and drought-tolerant landscaping.**

Example/Reference

Existing County requirements for water conservation and drought tolerant landscaping can be found in Section 19.20.240 of the *Building and Construction Ordinance*, and Section 22.04.184 of the *Land Use Ordinance and corresponding section of the CZLUO*, respectively.

PART V
Guidelines for Specific Communities

12. APPLICABILITY OF COMMUNITY BASED GUIDELINES

This section of the *Design Guidelines* is intended to contain specific design guidelines for each individual unincorporated community, similar to those in the *Templeton Community Design Plan*, adopted by the Board of Supervisors in 1990. While detailed design guidelines for the individual unincorporated communities are beyond the scope of this document, they will be completed as individual community interest and available resources permit.

PART VI
Glossary and Appendix

GLOSSARY

Aesthetic Regulation. Example s that address the appearance of development. Some examples include regulations that specify acceptable architectural styles, paint color, and/or building material.

Arcade. A covered walk, either freestanding or as part of a building, flanked by a series of arches or columns.

Architectural Elements. Details of a building such as windows, doors, bays, joints, trim, materials and ornaments.

Articulation. Horizontal and vertical variation in the surface plane of a structure. For example, a cube has no articulation. By adding and subtracting vertical and horizontal elements to or from the cube, a more interesting shape may be achieved.

Awning. A roof like shelter of canvas or other material that extends over a doorway or from the top of a window to provide shade and shelter. Usually colorful and often embellished with signage.

Bay. A regularly repeated spatial unit of a building or wall defined by a vertical element such as a window or column. For example, if a 100-foot long building were divided evenly four times by columns, the 25-foot space between each column would be a bay.

Berm. A mound of earth usually 2-6 feet high and landscaped, designed to shield and buffer uses such as parking lots.

Biotechnical Slope Protection. The use of native vegetation and materials that blend with the surrounding natural environment to stabilize and protect slopes susceptible to erosion.

Building Height. The vertical distance from the average level of the highest and lowest point of that portion of the lot or building site covered by the building to the highest point of the structure.

Bulb. An area that projects from the sidewalk area into the street parking lane to provide a landscaped area (see figure on page 38).

Collector Road. A road that collects traffic from local roads to arterials.

Colonnade. A series of regularly spaced columns supporting a horizontal member.

Community Edge. The visual transition which occurs between places. In many places in San Luis Obispo County, the rural landscape separating cities and towns is clearly differentiated from the urban character of towns because of the sparse development, open areas and dense vegetation. Towns and cities are easily recognized due to their higher development densities.

Cornice. A horizontal molding or decorative band that crowns a building or individual architectural element. Cornices typically project out from a building, creating a shadow that adds to the building's visual interest.

Cul-de-sac. A dead-end street with a vehicle turnaround at the end.

Discretionary Approval. An approval that requires the exercise of judgement to determine if the proposal conforms with applicable County Codes and development regulations. The County Planning Commission typically is responsible for reviewing these applications at a public hearing.

Dormer. A small window structure projecting through a sloping roof.

Drought Tolerant Landscape. Plant species that survive with minimal water after establishment period.

Facade. The front or any other face of a building, particularly where it is given special architectural treatment through detailing and ornamentation. This may include structural components such as columns or the use of distinctive building materials.

Finished Grade. The elevation of land on a development site after grading for the project occurs.

Flag Lot. A parcel of land, most of which is separated from its roadway by one or more intermediate lots. Access to the flag lot is gained by a narrow strip of land located between two lots adjacent to the road.

Footprint. The footprint of the building. The area of land that is actually covered by the building.

Form. The three dimensional shape of a building.

Gable Roof. A roof with two sides that slope in opposite directions from a central ridge.

Gateway. A feature that distinguishes an entry into a district or building. Gateways can be marked by architectural elements, planting, lighting, signs or even special sidewalk or street pavement.

Greenbelt Corridor. An area of trees or other landscaping in an urban area (e.g. a park, nature preserve or landscaping adjacent to a roadway).

Ground Cover. An alternate to paving or turf grasses appropriate in height and spread for the intended use and scale in various areas of the project. Specie selection and ground covers shall be appropriate to the climatic, water usage and soil conditions at the site.

Headwall. The sloping bank of a drainage swale or creek.

Hip Roof. A roof with four sides sloping away from the a single point.

Human Scale. A scale specifically related to human beings and their size. A plaza integrated into a building designed at a human scale may include benches, shade trees, trellises, or other elements which create inviting gathering areas. A similar plaza *not* designed at a human scale without offering any such amenities could feel enclosed or unusually large and uninviting.

Local Road. A road used primarily for access to abutting properties.

Mansard Roof. A roof having two slopes on each of four sides. The top slopes are traditionally less steep than the lower slopes. A commonly seen hybrid of this includes the use of steep lower slopes which are integrated with parapet walls. In this case the mansard and parapet walls are ornamental, projecting above a flat, functioning roof.

Mass. A building's general form or bulk, and its inclusion of elements such as towers or other prominent architectural elements.

Mixed Use. A mixture of land uses, such as retail, residential, and office, in close proximity to each other in a single building or development project. Mixed use includes both *Vertical Mixed Use*, in which various land uses occur one above the other in a single building, and *Horizontal Mixed Use*, in which mixed uses occur in several buildings next to each other.

Natural Grade. The slope and elevation of the ground surface in its natural state before any manmade alterations.

Neo-Traditional Design. An urban design concept that uses traditional American towns of the early 20th century as a model for development and emphasizes *pedestrian-oriented design*. Key components of this concept include town centers, distinct community edges, street grids, narrow streets, mixed-use neighborhoods, and in some instances, alleys behind buildings. Emphasis is placed on the pedestrian and a de-emphasis is placed on the automobile. Neo-traditional development should develop a strong sense of place and make it easy for residents to walk between houses, jobs, and commercial services.

Node. A widely recognized meeting or gathering area. This may include a particularly busy intersection or a formal meeting area such as a plaza, park, kiosk or civic activity center.

Outbuilding. A detached accessory structure that is subordinate to the main structure, such as shed or pool cabana.

Overhang. The horizontal distance a roof projects beyond the exterior building wall.

Parapet. The part of an exterior wall that extends above the edge of the roof. In many cases, parapet walls include detailing and ornamentation to add to the building's visual quality.

Paseo. A pedestrian passageway between building usually linking the parking area to the front of the building. See "Human Scale"

Pedestrian Scale. A scale designed to appeal specifically to people who are walking. Pedestrian scale is similar to Human Scale, but it generally refers specifically to streetscape design. Elements that help to create a Pedestrian Scale include storefront detailing such as awnings, windows and architectural elements, street trees and other amenities such as benches, sidewalk lighting, drinking fountains and trash receptacles.

Pedestrian-Oriented Design. Design that emphasizes pedestrian convenience and safety by creating direct, walkable linkages between homes, shops, and offices. This type of design emphasizes Pedestrian Scale, and it gives priority to walking as a mode of transportation equal to or greater than automobiles.

Pipe Outfall. The place along a drainage swale or creek that a pipe outlet discharges drainage from surrounding development.

Plot Plan. A ministerial land use permit established by the *Land Use Ordinance*.

Re-Use. The development of a new use for an older under utilized building. An example is when a historical building is adapted to use different from that for which the structure was originally built (e.g. residence is used for a restaurant or retail shop).

Required Yard. The open space between a lot line and the buildable area where no structures are permitted except as provided by the local zoning ordinance.

Rock Aprons. An area beneath the pipe outfall that is faced with rock to provide a natural look and prevent soil erosion.

Roof Pitch. The slope of the roof from the ridge usually expressed in terms of rise over run (e.g 4:12 four feet of rise for every 12 feet of run).

Rumble Strip. An area of textured pavement within a traffic lane that creates noise and vibration as vehicles drive across them. A rumble strip is utilized as a method to slow traffic (see page 38).

Scale. The relationship between building size and the size of adjoining permanent structures. It is also how the proposed building's size relates to the size of a human being. See also *Human Scale*.

Shrub. Vegetation which normally achieves a shrub form appropriate in height and spread for the intended use and scale in various areas of the project. Specie selection of shrubs shall be appropriate to the climate, water usage and soil conditions at the site. Shrubs should be selected and planted at spacings which, at maturity, will achieve the design intent.

Setback. The distance by which a structure or facility is separated from a property line, right-of-way, easement or other boundary.

Shed Roof. A roof with a single plane that slants in one direction.

Transit-Oriented Design. Design concepts that emphasize the convenience of public transportation.

Tree. Vegetation which normally achieves tree form appropriate in height and spread to the intended use and scale in various areas of the project. Specie selection of trees shall be appropriate to the climatic, water usage and soil conditions at the site and selected for appropriate scale at maturity to achieve the design intent.

Urban Reserve Line. A boundary identified in the *Land Use Element* of the *County General Plan* that distinguishes between urban/suburban land uses and rural land uses.

Village. Any area within the village reserve lines established by the *Land Use Element* of the *General Plan*.

Village Reserve Line. A boundary line identified in the *Land Use Element* of the *County General Plan* that distinguishes developed areas from the surrounding rural countryside

Visual Sensitivity. Susceptibility to visual change through the introduction of man-made structures or changes to the landscape. An example would be a prominent ridgeline or hilltop which could be seen by many people from many places.

APPENDIX - PHOTO AND ILLUSTRATION CREDITS

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