CHARLOTTESVILLE

ENTRANCE CORRIDOR DESIGN GUIDELINES

Amendments adopted by City Council March 7, 2011

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Site

CHARLOTTESVILLE

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III | GUIDELINES FOR SITES

A. DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Charlottesville's special visual character is defined by the area's natural beauty, historic resources, architectural quality, distinctive building materials, and cultural variety expressed in the built environment. The intent of the entrance corridor guidelines and review process is to protect the City's historic, architectural and cultural resources, by ensuring a quality of development compatible with those resources through design control measures. Charlottesville's Entrance Corridor Guidelines are based on the following ten Design Principles:

- **Design For a Corridor Vision**

  New building design should be compatible (in massing, scale, materials, colors) with those structures that contribute to the overall character and quality of the corridor. Existing developments should be encouraged to make upgrades consistent with the corridor vision. Site designs should contain some common elements to provide continuity along the corridor. New development, including franchise development, should complement the City's character and respect those qualities that distinguish the City's built environment.

- **Preserve History**

  Preserve significant historic buildings as well as distinctive architecture from more recent periods. Encourage new contemporary design that integrates well with existing historic buildings to enhance the overall character and quality of the corridor.

- **Facilitate Pedestrian Access**

  Encourage compact, walkable developments. Design pedestrian connections from sidewalk and car to buildings, between buildings, and between corridor properties and adjacent residential areas.

- **Maintain Human Scale in Buildings and Spaces**

  Consider the building scale, especially height, mass, complexity of form, and architectural details, and the impact of spaces created, as it will be experienced by the people who will pass by, live, work, or shop there. The size, placement and number of doors, windows, portals and openings define human scale, as does the degree of ground-floor pedestrian access.

- **Preserve and Enhance Natural Character**

  Daylight and improve streams, and retain mature trees and natural buffers. Work with topography to minimize grading and limit the introduction of impervious surfaces. Encourage plantings of diverse native species.

- **Create a Sense of Place**

  In corridors where substantial pedestrian activity occurs or is encouraged, or where mixed use and multi-building projects are proposed, one goal will be creating a sense of place. Building arrangements, uses, natural features, and landscaping should contribute, where feasible, to create exterior space where people can interact.

- **Create an Inviting Public Realm**

  Design inviting streetscapes and public spaces. Redevelopment of properties should enhance the existing streetscapes and create an engaging public realm.

- **Create Restrained Communications**

  Private signage and advertising should be harmonious and in scale with building elements and landscaping features.

- **Screen Incompatible Uses and Appurtenances:**

  Screen from adjacent properties and public view those uses and appurtenances whose visibility may be incompatible with the overall character and quality of the corridor, such as: parking lots, outdoor storage and loading areas, refuse areas, mechanical and communication equipment, Where feasible, relegate parking behind buildings. It is not the intent to require screening for utilitarian designs that are attractive, and/or purposeful.

- **Respect and Enhance Charlottesville's Character**

  Charlottesville seeks new construction that reflects the unique character, history, and cultural diversity of this place. Architectural transplants from other locales, or shallow imitations of historic architectural styles, for example, are neither appropriate nor desirable. Incompatible aspects of franchise design or corporate signature buildings must be modified to fit the character of this community.

B. CONNECTIVITY BETWEEN ENTRANCE CORRIDOR AREAS & NEIGHBORHOODS

1. Maintain or provide a strong sense of community, by providing pedestrian and vehicular links from a corridor site to nearby neighborhoods, parks, schools and other public destinations.

2. Use common streetscape elements, materials and designs to visually link the corridor areas and neighborhoods.

3. Provide continuous pedestrian routes along corridors where feasible.

4. Site grading should promote connectivity with adjacent sites.
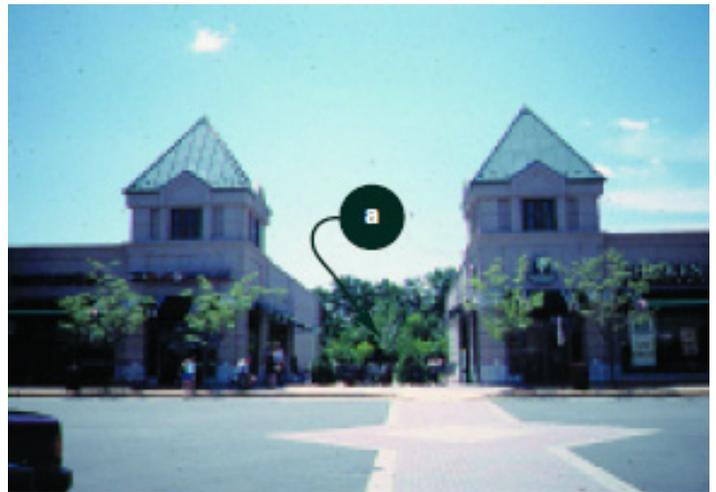
This connection to adjoining development of a shopping center also includes an outdoor cafe (a), further encouraging pedestrian activity.

The rear of this large shopping center uses small retail shops (a) to create a pleasing transition to neighboring residential development (b).

This urban park connects municipal functions to adjacent neighborhoods.
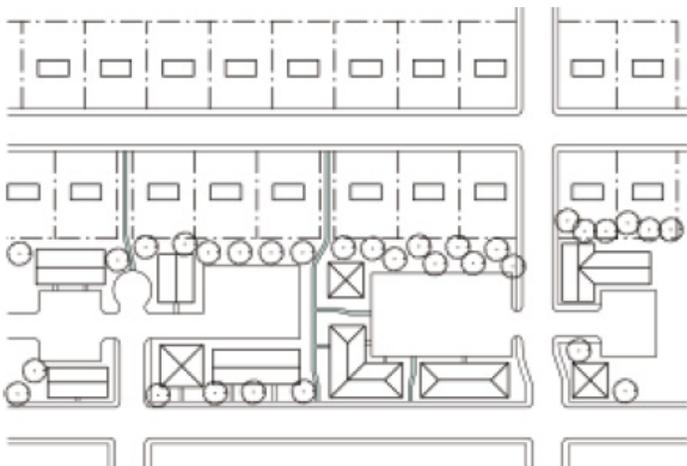
Connect commercial developments to surrounding neighborhoods.

C. Connectivity between & within Sites

1. Create a complete pedestrian pathway system within a site and between adjacent sites, linking all buildings, parking areas and green spaces. Ensure that this network connects to any nearby public pedestrian pathway.

2. Design pedestrian and vehicular circulation to maximize the quality and safety of pedestrian experience through:

• Design approaches such as "shared space" that slow vehicle speeds and enhance pedestrian experience.

• Designated, separate sidewalks with planted areas through large parking lots.

• Crosswalks at points of vehicular access routes and in front of building entrances.

• Crosswalks designs that highlight their visibility by slightly raisin them, by making them wider, by constructing them of materials other than asphalt and by using bulb-out corners that reduce their length.

3. Ensure that new paving materials are compatible with the character of the area. Scored concrete with broom finishes, colored, exposed aggregate concrete, and brick or unit pavers are examples of appropriate applications. Avoid large expanses of bright white or gray concrete surfaces.

4. Provide passageways within large building masses to allow pedestrians to pass through, particularly through shopping centers.

These developments are connected with paths through an interior courtyard and highlighted by a fountain plaza with seating.

Use pedestrian friendly crosswalks within commercial developments where sidewalks intersect vehicular access points.

This brick sidewalk connects a public sidewalk with the deeply setback commercial development. Note the trees and light fixtures lining the walk and the brick crosswalk. The walk is aligned to minimize its visible impact on building features and storefronts. Lastly, note the metal fence, granite piers and planting strip that define the front edge of the development.
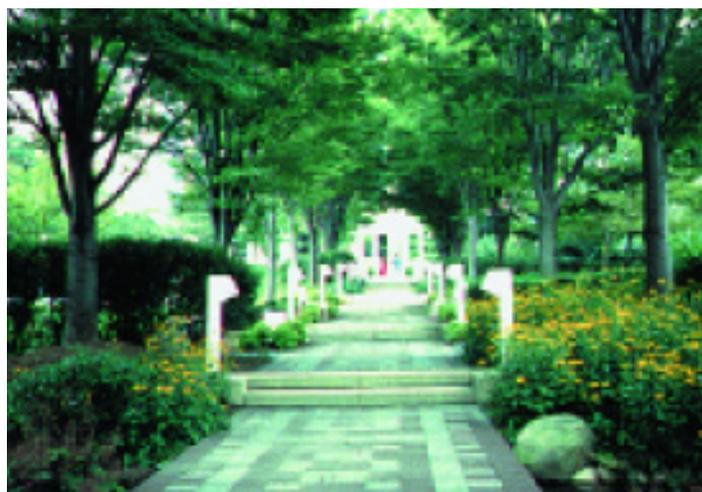
Landscaped walkways provide a pleasant connection between buildings and developments.

D. BUILDING PLACEMENT

1. Orient the facade of new buildings to front on the corridor.

2. Limit setback of new buildings according to the zoning of the particular corridor.

3. Limit setbacks at major intersections so that the architecture can help define the area.

4. Use compact building arrangements to reduce the feeling of seas of parking, encourage pedestrian activity and define space.

5. Strive for contiguous building arrangement along the street face, and avoid large breaks between buildings in identified development sites.

6. Ensure that larger developments orient their design to any adjoining neighborhoods and to side streets.

7. Provide breaks in large developments and building masses to allow pedestrian connections between developments.

8. Orient service areas to limit their impact on the development and any neighboring areas.

9. Each side of a corner building that faces a street should be considered a facade of the building for design purposes.


This new commercial building is placed at the intersection with minimum setbacks to help define the corner.

This restaurant on a corridor is placed close to the front of the street to strengthen the corridor edge.

The limited setback of these commercial buildings accompanied by trees, projecting signs and pedestrian-scaled lighting all help create a human scale at the Corner.
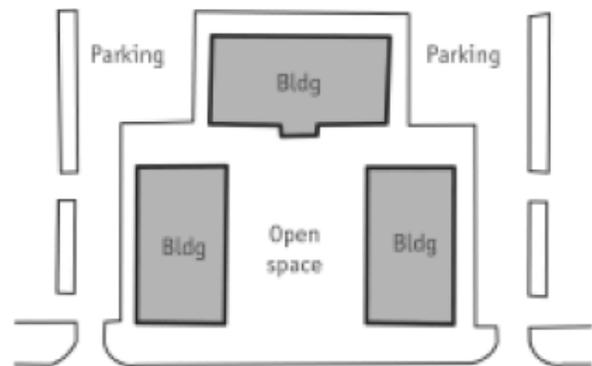
This arrangement allows for shared open space, parking to the side and rear and buildings facing both the street and common area.

E. PARKING

1. Reduce the scale of parking lots by:

a. Dividing parking lots into modules or multiple smaller lots using techniques such as the natural topography, logically placed landscaped pedestrian paths to destinations, and by linear aisles of plantings. Avoid large expanses of asphalt.

b. Reducing the amount of parking lots through such methods as providing on-street parking, using off-site parking such as municipal lots, sharing parking among complementary uses, providing pull-in spaces in front of shops and creating overflow lots. These techniques may require some flexibility when applying parking standards.

2. Where existing parking lots are located on the street, screen such lots from the street and from adjoining development, using low fences or walls, or year-round plantings.

3. Reduce the visibility of residential garages by:

a. Not allowing a garage to become the primary architectural feature when a development is viewed from the street, especially for attached housing.

b. Placing garages behind the building setback, preferably facing to the side or rear of attached housing.

c. Placing garages and parking in the rear with alley access

4. Accommodate pedestrian needs within parking areas by:

a. Providing clear pedestrian paths and crossings from parking spaces to main entrances and to the street.

b. Planning parking so that it least interferes with appropriate pedestrian access and connections to adjoining developments.

5. Construct parking lots that reinforce the existing street wall of buildings and the grid system of rectangular blocks.

6. The number and width of curb cuts should be the minimum necessary for effective on- and off-site traffic circulation. Whenever possible, curb cuts shall be combined with adjacent entrances.

7. Design any detached parking structures to be architecturally compatible with its setting or to be screened by other buildings or by landscaping. If it fronts on a street or pedestrian path, design the street level facade with storefronts, display windows, bay divisions, and other pedestrian oriented features.

8. Bicycle parking facilities should be provided within areas where significant bicycle traffic is anticipated. They should be located in designated areas close to buildings and pedestrian paths. The design, materials, and color of the bicycle racks should coordinate with other site elements and should be well-lit for night time uses.

Place buildings next to the street, especially at corners.
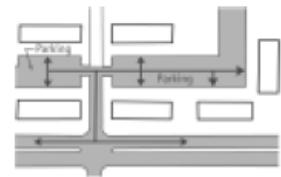
Use an access street off a major corridor to provide entry to shared parking for several businesses.

Parallel parking along the front of a shopping center can reduce the size of surface parking lots.

The design of this freestanding parking structure uses materials and forms to reflect the architectural character of the adjoining commercial area.

Parking arranged within the interior of a block is appropriate for this office complex.

F. PLANTINGS & OPEN SPACES

1. Provide landscaping within parking areas by:

a. Separating parking aisles with medians planted with shade trees along the length of the islands.

b. Including pedestrian walkways with planted medians to reinforce connectivity and separate pedestrians from vehicular traffic.

c. Avoiding isolated islands of single trees and instead providing landscaped tree aisles between every other row of cars.

d. Using shade trees of sufficient number and size at maturity to shade a substantial portion of the lot. Consider orientations that would provide the greatest shade during summer months. Smaller, more decorative trees can be used closest to buildings.

2. Planting zones should be consolidated into areas large enough to give a natural character to a site rather than randomly distributed in small and narrow open spaces that do not match the context and scale of the project.
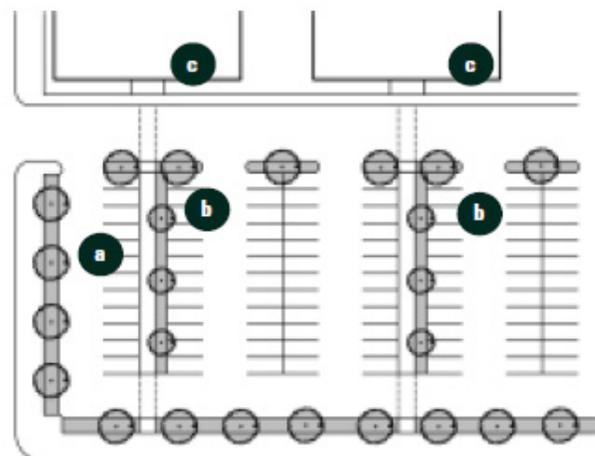
3. Planted areas should be located along the public boundaries of the site to provide screening, within parking areas, along drainage or stormwater management areas, around buildings, and at building entries.

4. The existing topography should be preserved intact as much as possible to minimize disruptions in drainage.

5. Different scales of plantings (trees, shrubs, flowers) should be incorporated into site design to the extent possible and such features as mature woods and riparian areas should be retained.

6. Use species appropriate for site conditions including available sunlight, water and root and canopy space.

7. Use trees, shrubs and other landscaping features to provide screens for service areas, parking and utilities.

8. Use large specimen street trees along pedestrian routes to provide shade and to define edges.

9. In the core of larger commercial and office centers, street trees and more formal urban plantings organized around public open spaces are recommended.

10. Consider using landscaping areas that also provide storm water treatment, such as rain gardens.

11. Refer to the Tree Planting and Preservation BMP Manual in the Charlottesville Standards and Design Manual.

12. Encourage day lighting of streams where appropriate.

This example shows a planted buffer between the corridor and retail development.

This hedge screens a parking lot and would be appropriate for Charlottesville's corridors.

Plazas with shade, fountains and seating area are welcome additions for shoppers in larger commercial developments.


Plantings are provided at the perimeters (a) and at the intermediate points (b) of the parking lot. Pedestrian paths are part of the planted median (c).

G. LIGHTING

1. Use full cutoff luminaires in accordance with City lighting requirements to provide better lighting and prevent unwanted glare. Lighting should at all times be designed to prevent light pollution in the form of light transmission laterally beyond site boundaries or upward to the sky.

2. Coordinate the lighting plan with the landscape plan to ensure pedestrian areas are well-lit and that any conflict between trees and light fixtures is avoided.

3. Lighting should provide for appropriate and desirable nighttime illumination for all uses on and related to the site to promote a safe environment.

4. Light pedestrian areas with appropriately scaled poles and luminaires. Their heights are typically ten to fourteen feet.

5. Avoid using building accent lighting that is too bright and draws too much attention to the building. Reasonable levels of accent lighting to accentuate architectural character may be appropriate in individual instances when it is shielded and is not aimed towards neighboring properties, sidewalks, pathways, driveways, or public right-of-ways in such a manner as to distract travel.

6. Gasoline station/convenience store aprons and canopies should utilize fully shielded lighting fixtures

7. Provide pedestrian lighting at transit stops and along paths to parking lots and other destinations.
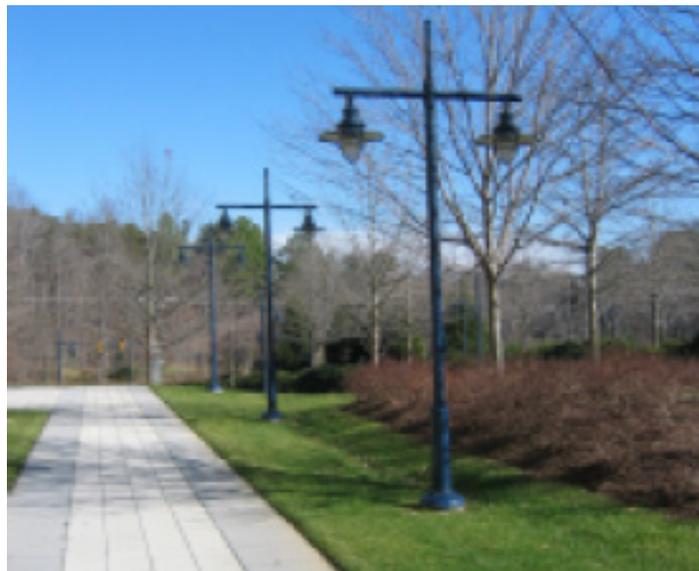
Shielded lighting mounted on pedestrian-scaled poles focuses light on where it it needed - the sidewalk.

In this commercial development, smaller pedestrian-scaled light fixtures are placed along the sidewalk while a taller non-decorative light fixture is used for general lighting in the parking areas.

Attached to the building, this accent lighting is targeted downward and washes a portion of the facade as well as providing illumination to passing pedestrians. Additional accent lighting is located under the awnings.

1. Choose high-quality materials and designs using materials such as brick, stone, metal, and wood. Avoid untreated wood, vinyl, chain-link, or wire fences or concrete block walls. Consider selecting materials used elsewhere on the property or the structures within the site.

2. Use a scale and level of ornateness of the design of any new walls and fences that relate to the scale and ornateness of the building within the site. Use simpler designs on small lots.

3. Avoid exceeding the average height of other fences and walls of surrounding properties.

4. Fences should be set back from the street right-of-way to allow a clear area for utilities and landscaping.

5. When walls or fences stretch longer than 50 feet, use designs with texture and modulation to provide a regular rhythm without being monotonous. For example, use vertical piers (generally spaced no more than 25 feet apart) of a different material or width or height. Plantings and street trees should be used in conjunction with a wall or fence to break up a long expanse.

6. Use paint or opaque stains on pressure treated or unpainted wooden fences.

7. Fence stringers (the structural framing of the fence) should be located facing the interior of the subject lot, with the finished side facing out away from the subject property.

8. Fences at intersections and driveways should comply with City requirements for site distance. (See Article IX, Division 7 of the Zoning Ordinance for detailed site triangle requirements.)

9. Transitional screening should consist of a densely planted buffer strip to provide an adequate visual screen. The screen should be of appropriate plant materials to form an effective buffer for all seasons. Mature vegetation should be retained in such areas and supplemented as necessary by new vegetation to screen sight lines.

This brick wall and landcaping help define the edge of the sidewalk along a corridor.

Visual interest can be provided by the fence design (above) or the use of appropriate plantings (below).

I. SIGNS

See Article IX, Division 4 of the City of Charlottesville Zoning Ordinance for detailed sign regulation information.

1. Place signs so that they do not obstruct architectural elements and details that define the design of the building.

2. Respect the design and visibility of signs for adjacent businesses.

3. Use colors and appropriate materials that complement the materials and color scheme of the building, including accent and trim colors.

4. Use a minimal number of colors per sign where possible.

5. Exterior illumination of signs shall comply with the City's outdoor lighting requirements. Exterior neon is discouraged.

6. Illumination of any sign shall not be directed toward any residential area or adjacent street.

7. Consider using a comprehensive signage plan for larger developments.

8. Encourage the use of monument signs (rather than freestanding signs) with accent landscaping at the base along corridors.

9. Internally lit signs should use an opaque background so only letters are lit.

10. Flashing lights are prohibited.

This monument sign set within a planted median serves as the main entrance sign to this commercial development.

These smaller wall-mounted signs are designed to be viewed from vehicles within this shopping center.

Projecting signs are designed for the pedestrian.

Channel set letters such as these at Barracks Road Shopping Center illuminate only the face of the letters and can be fabricated to match logos of individual stores as part of a unified sign plan.
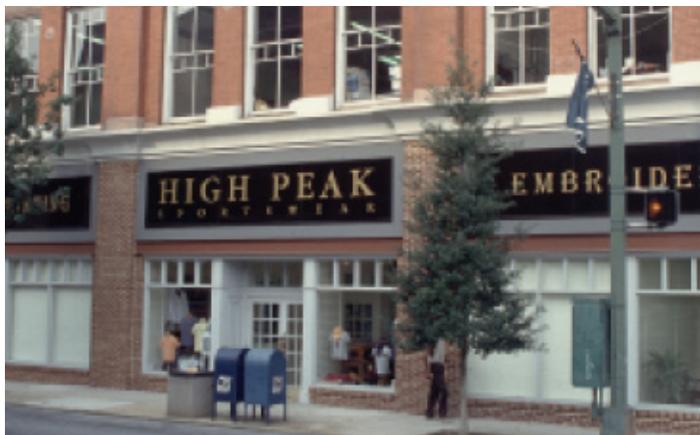
Signs should fit within the architectural framework of the building as do these storefront signs.

1. Locate utilities to minimize their visual impact from the street and adjoining developments.

2. Screen and landscape dumpsters with wood board or solid barrier wall when multiple sides of a building are highly visible.

3. Place utilities underground if at all possible or locate behind buildings.

4. Screen service areas and loading docks that are visible from streets or adjoining development with berms, landscaping, structures or fences.

5. Site noise-generating features away from neighboring properties especially residences, or use noise barriers or other means of reducing the impact.

6. Screen roof-top communications and mechanical equipment.

Plantings and lattice screen this service area for a multi-family residence from the adjacent structures and busy street.

This enclosure coordinates well with surrounding buildings while screening mechanical equipment from view of passing pedestrian and vehicular traffic.

Large evergreen trees work with the grade of the site to obscure the view of utility equipment located behind this building.

Parapet walls and railings shield rooftop equipment from view at Barracks Road Shopping Center.

AVAILABLE GUIDELINES SECTIONS

These entrance corridor design guidelines have been divided into the following sections so that you need only read those pertinent to your project.

Guideline sections are available from the Charlottesville Department of Neighborhood Services. Online they may be accessed through http://www.charlottesville.org at the Planning Commission home page.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS