CHARLOTTESVILLE

ENTRANCE CORRIDOR DESIGN GUIDELINES

Amendments adopted by City Council March 7, 2011

4

BUILDINGS

CHARLOTTESVILLE

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IV GUIDELINES FOR BUILDINGS

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. Architectural Compatibility

1. 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.

2. A distinctive identity for each corridor should be created through a combination of materials, forms and features that create a coordinated and inviting mix of buildings and spaces.

3. Encourage a diversity of architectural materials, forms and styles that respect the traditions of architecture in the Charlottesville area including gable or hipped roof forms, standing seam metal roofing, brick, and wood siding.

4. New development should strive to implement the intended vision rather than repeat existing inappropriate development patterns.

5. New development should respect existing historic buildings and excellent examples from the recent past.

6. Existing development should be upgraded as opportunities arise.

Conceptual sketch of possible new mixed-use corridor development at Barracks Road as envisioned in the Torti Gallas Corridor Study.
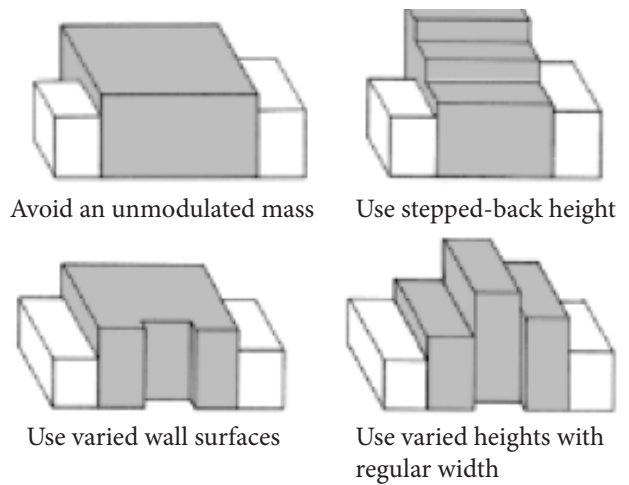
C. BUILDING MASS, SCALE & HEIGHT

Historically, many of Charlottesville's buildings were small an pedestrian scaled. Newer, more recent developments on several of the commercial corridors are more massive with large stores and expansive parking areas. These developments do not reflect the human scale of the community. Many techniques suggested in these guidelines provide tools for allowing large development while reducing their perceived massiveness. While the footprint of new commercial development may remain large, massing, architectural details, ground floor pedestrian access, and organization of building forms can help to retain the human scale of Charlottesville.

1. Break up the front of a large building by dividing it into individual bays of 25 to 40 feet wide.

2. Use variation in materials, textures, patterns, colors and details to break down the mass and scale of the building.

3. Use building mass appropriate to the site. Place buildings of the greatest footprint, massing, and height in the core of commercial or office developments where the impact on adjacent uses is the least. Follow setback requirements for upper story according to zoning classification of the corridor.

4. When making transitions to lower density areas, modulate the mass of the building to relate to smaller buildings. Heights can be greater if the mass is modulated and other scale techniques are adopted. Reduce height near lower density uses.

5. Use massing reduction techniques of articulated base, watertables, string courses, cornices, material changes and patterns, and fenestration to reduce the apparent height of a large building. Fake windows and similar details are not appropriate articulation. Floor-to-floor heights of a building can have an impact on the mass of a building. For instance, typical ceiling heights in a residence are 8-9 feet. First floors of office buildings or retail shops can range from 10-15 feet. Upper floors that include residential or office are generally 8-12 feet in height. When actual or implied floor-to-floor heights exceed 15-20 feet on the exterior, then a building may begin to read as more massive than human-scaled. When articulating large buildings, keep these dimensions in mind.

Avoid an unmodulated mass

Use stepped-back height

Use varied wall surfaces

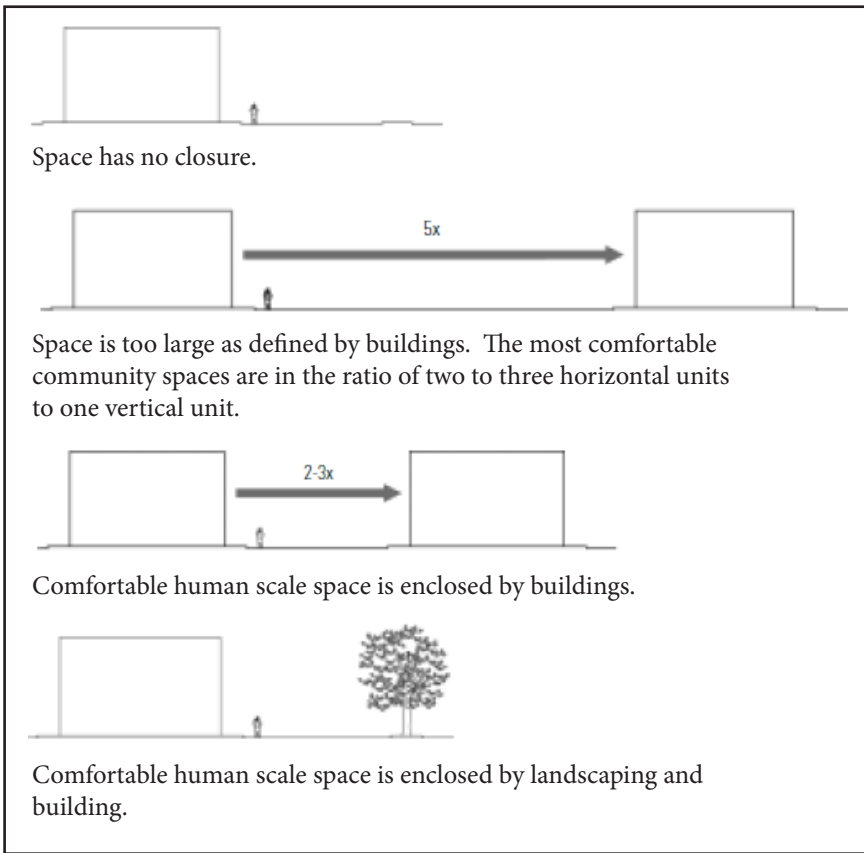Use varied heights with regular width

This corner infill building uses a change in materials to reduce its mass.

The use of vertical bay divisions and horizontal bands of masonry patterns visually reduce the mass of this office building.

Space

Spaces between buildings can be out of human scale, causing a feeling of being lost in a sea of emptiness. Creating human-scaled spaces that are defined by either buildings or landscape features provide more friendly, inviting places.

Space has no closure.

5x

Space is too large as defined by buildings. The most comfortable community spaces are in the ratio of two to three horizontal units to one vertical unit.

2-3x

Comfortable human scale space is enclosed by buildings.

Comfortable human scale space is enclosed by landscaping and building.

The facade of this infill building relates to the scale of the street while upper levels step back.

Avoid This

A large mass without defining architectural elements gives observers no visual reference to themselves.

Do This

Architectural features such as cornices, windows, and vertical divisions such as columns and piers break the same mass down to human scale. The person feels invited to be near and in the spaces created by such buildings.

D. FACADE ORGANIZATION & STOREFRONTS

1. Orient primary entrances on a building facade to the street or corridor.

2. Use a hierarchy of entry design on any complex, if the building has more than one orientation, and focus main entry on street/corridor facade.

3. Secondary entries may be created to allow convenient access from adjacent buildings, sidewalks, parking, bicycle paths and transit stops.

4. Orient at least part of public elevations of shopping complexes to any adjoining neighborhoods.

5. Provide attractive facade treatments on any elevation that is visible from streets/corridors or from any primary elevations of adjoining developments and avoid use of unadorned blank walls.

6. Consider using the traditional three-part facade of cornice, pattern of upper story windows and a storefront with articulated base when designing a new building or when renovating an existing structure.

7. Use a regular pattern of solids and voids for openings that relate to more traditional building design in the corridor.

8. Use a proportion of openings (vertical or horizontal) that generally is consistent with the context of the building. More traditional designed openings are typically vertically proportioned.

9. Strive for designs and materials that reflect the architectural traditions of the region.

10. Storefronts or large display windows should be used at the street level.

This new bank is located along a corridor, is buffered by a wooded strip and has a modulated facade to reduce its scale.

This library facade has three projecting classical bays to reduce its mass and parking is contained within the first floor of the structure.

Vertical piers create bays and frame large expanses of glass divided into small panes accented with decorative insets. The storefront level is capped by a cast stone cornice.

This storefront design is well detailed with transoms and an integrated sign band.

These storefronts are unified by a visually dominant shingled roof while clear divisions are made with an unusual roof form.

This grocery store uses large storefront display windows at street level, with smaller openings above, to break the facade into bays.

When renovating or designing a new storefront, consider using a traditional three-part facade of cornice, upper story windows and a storefront with an articulated base.

Remodeled facades on simple buildings have articulated cornices and colorful awnings on the storefronts.

E. MATERIALS & TEXTURES

The choice of materials and texture has great visual significance. Coordinating materials within a development can tie together buildings of different sizes, uses, and forms while contrasting materials or textures within a large building may add visual interest and reduce its apparent scale. Modern construction materials offer choices that can provide many different looks and textures.

1. Use material changes to help reduce mass and provide visual interest.

2. Choose materials that offer texture and avoid monotonous surfaces. For example, use wood or brick or stone, or sustainable synthetic materials, such as cementitious siding, that approximate the look and dimension of these materials.

3. Use quality materials consistently on all visible sides of commercial, office and multi-family residential buildings.

4. In Charlottesville, common building materials are brick, wood or stucco siding, and standing-seam metal roofs. Stone is more commonly used for site walls than building walls.

5. Avoid the use of building materials with long-term maintenance problems, such as EIFS (exterior insulation and finishing systems), or vinyl siding. Sustainable, utilitarian building materials such as concrete block, metal siding or cementitious panels may be appropriately used for a contemporary design.

6. Clear glass windows are preferred.

This Charleston, South Carolina hotel uses a decorative stone base, two colors of bricks, a shingle mansard roof, iron balconies and colorful awnings to divide up this monolithic structure.
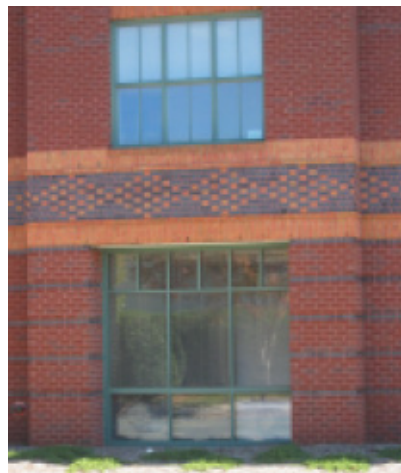
Multiple colors of brick are used to create a variety of decorative elements on this facade.

Avoid blank walls on sides of buildings, particularly along pedestrian routes.

This facade has a traditional decorative cornice along with cast stone and masonry to divide up its large mass.

Color is an integral element of the overall design.

1. A coordinated palette of colors should be created for each development. This palette should be compatible with adjacent developments.

2. Set the color theme by choosing the color for the material with the most area. If there is more roof than wall area in a development, roof color will be the most important color choice and will set the tone for the rest of the colors.

3. Limit the number of color choices. Generally there is a wall color, trim color, accent color, and roof color.

4. Bright accent colors may be appropriate for smaller areas such as awnings and signs on commercial buildings.

5. Use color variation to break up the mass of a building and provide visual interest.

6. Do not use strong color that has the effect of turning the entire building into a sign.

The unified paint scheme at Barracks Road ties in the roof color by using it as an accent color and on cornice bands throughout the development.

A strong palette of harmonious colors coupled with unpainted surfaces was used to differentiate between the feed store and former warehouse while tying the composition together with blue metal awnings.

Yellow and blue rooftop screens accent the silver metal facade of this structure and reinforce its vertical expression by drawing the eye upward.

G. DETAILS

Architectural details are important tools to create human scale and architectural character. Techniques include highlighting foundations, lintels, sills and cornices with contrasting materials and breaking up the mass of the building with bands at floor levels or projections at entries. These techniques are only a few of the ways to transform a massive building into one of human scale. Consider the façade design of all buildings - even service buildings can have attractive facades.

1. Use articulated elements such as cornices, belt courses, water tables, bay divisions, variations in wall plane and roof features to create designs of interest.

2. Include human-scaled elements such as columns, pilasters and cornices, particularly at street level and on facades with a pedestrian focus.

3. Avoid large expanses of blank walls that are visible from the public right of way or neighboring developments.

4. Avoid decorative elements that do not relate to the architecture but serve to turn the whole building into a sign.

A decorative metal canopy and patterned brickwork help to emphasize the entry of this office building.

A stepped cornice tower, brick corbelling and string courses provide decorative details to this commercial structure.

Look to examples of traditional architecture throughout the City for a vocabulary of appropriate details.

The importance of roof materials depends on its form. Certain roof types result in very visible roof materials. While larger commercial projects may have roofs hidden behind parapet walls, smaller commercial buildings, office parks and multi-family residential developments often have very visible roofs.
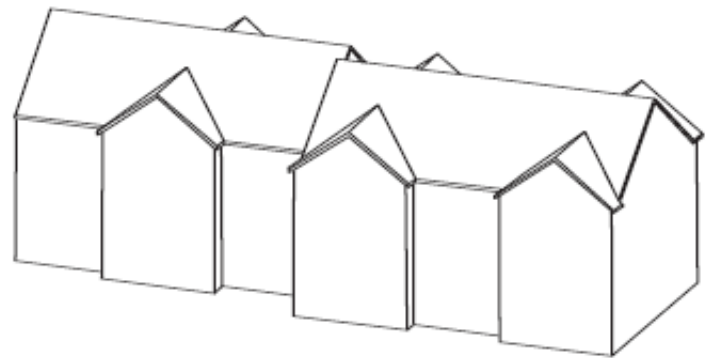
1. Use roof forms that complement the building design and contribute to a human scale. Avoid tall roof areas that overwhelm the height of the building's wall. Common Charlottesville roof forms include hipped, gable, flat and gambrel.

2. If a shed roof or flat roof design is used, add a parapet wall to screen the roof.

3. Avoid a visible monolithic expanse of roof on large-scale buildings. Break the roof mass with elements such as gables, dormers, or parapets. Scale these features to the scale of the building.

4. Consider using a special roof feature on buildings located at a gateway, a prominent corner or highlight entry bays on larger structures.

5. Steeper forms are associated with more traditional design and can be appropriate when the development adjoins nearby neighborhoods.

6. On roofs that are visible such as gable, hipped or shed designs, use quality materials such as metal or textured asphalt shingles.

7. Screen from public view any equipment located on a roof.

This stepped roof corner tower serves as a gateway feature and also helps screen the stepped back upper floors of this Richmond hotel.
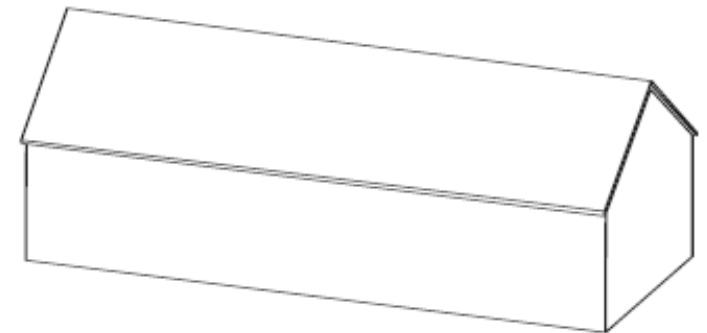
Avoid long stretches of the same roof form.

This mixed-use residential and office building has gable roof forms which serve it well as a transition building between a downtown area and a nearby neighborhood.

Articulate the roof at frequent intervals, every 30 to 60 feet if possible, depending on the type of building. This recommendation is particularly important in the design of a commercial building that adjoins a residential neighborhood.

I. AWNINGS

1. Encourage the use of awnings at the storefront level to shield displays and entry and to add visual interest.

2. Coordinate the choice of colors, as part of an overall color scheme. Solid colors, wide stripes and narrow stripes should be considered as appropriate.

3. Awning forms may be angled or curved.

4. Use of a canopy as an illuminated sign is not appropriate.

5. Awning materials should be appropriate to the overall design of the building. Traditional cloth fabric, as well as standing-seam metal or newer rigid materials may be considered.

Awnings can provide a variety of color, protection, enclosure and interest to a commercial facade.
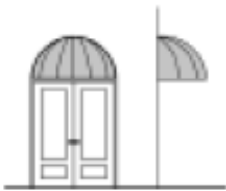
Curved Fabric Awnings

Standard Sloped Awning

The suspended canopies over these storefronts provide an opportunity to introduce a bold accent color to this facade.

Coordinated awnings highlight the storefronts of this commercial development.

Appurtenances refer to all of the miscellaneous equipment and elements that is necessary for the building to function in its appropriate use. These items, when not properly located, screened, or integrated into the design, can detract from the overall appearance of an otherwise well designed building.

1. Building service, loading, and utility areas should not be visible from public streets, adjacent developments or from access drives within large developments. Such service areas should be located behind the main structure in the least visible location possible.

2. Mechanical equipment on roofs or sides of buildings should not be visible from streets.

3. When the mechanical equipment vents, meters, satellite dishes and similar equipment is ground mounted, screening should include either an opaque fence or wall made of the same material as the building or an evergreen hedge that screens objectionable views.

4. Items such as roof ladders, railings, roll-up doors and service doors should be located on building elevations that are the least visible from public streets/corridors, adjacent developments or from access drives within large developments. Their colors should be coordinated among all these elements and with the rest of the building.

5. In some cases, appurtenances may be integrated into the building design if such integration enhances the compatibility of the overall design with the corridor vision.

Rooftop screening of mechanical equipment can provide an opportunity to continue design elements at roof level.

Ground level parking accessed from the rear of this mixed use building provides an ideal location for the placement of utility meters.

This brick wall, constructed of the same brick as the building, screens mechanical equipment from view.

K. ADDITIONS & CORRIDOR CONVERSIONS

Use additions to assist in bringing existing buildings into conformance with goals of creating two or more story buildings with storefronts and limited setbacks.

The following two examples show typical corridor buildings and existing site plans. They also show how these structures can be converted and expanded or replaced to better meet the guidelines.

These sketches are conceptual in nature and actual site conditions, building configurations and zoning requirements may result in different site designs, parking layouts and vehicular entry and building design than shown here.

This development converted an older corridor residence to commercial use and added a new wing with similar forms and materials.

The design of this commercial corridor building to the left has been integrated with a former garage structure to the right. A pathway between them leads to a larger new residential infill building that unifies the rest of the site.

A mix of small professional and specialty retail occupies this converted roadside motel.

In this example, a former service station has been redesigned to serve as the town's chamber of commerce.

In recent years national retail chains have developed more options in their standardized designs. They also will create customized designs in a targeted community if local regulations require it.

1. Charlottesville seeks new construction that reflects the unique character, history, and cultural diversity of this place.

2. Franchise design or corporate signature buildings should not reflect "Anywhere, USA" designs but should follow the same guidelines applicable to other buildings. 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.

3. Avoid using false or non-functional design elements to appear compatible with surrounding buildings.

McDonald's

Whole Foods

Burger King

Taco Bell

Rite Aid

Major national chains will customize their designs to fit local guidelines and neighborhood context as these five buildings demonstrate.

M. GAS STATION CANOPIES

1. Use compatible materials and forms with the building that the canopy serves.

2. Use a complementary scale that relates to the building it serves. Consider designing the canopy to integrate with the rest of the building instead of being a separate element on the site.

3. Do not internally illuminate the canopy cornice.

4. Use fully shielded lighting fixtures.

5. Use colors on the canopy that complement the colors used on the building.

6. Minimize number of logos displayed on the canopy.

This gasoline canopy is integated into the roof of the building and creates a more unified design than would a separate element.

The piers supporting this canopy are clad in the same brick as the surrounding buildings and numerous recessed lights provide adequate lighing.

The symbolism and function of city halls, courthouses, libraries, schools, churches and other civic and institutional buildings usually result in distinctive designs. These structures are the visual landmarks scattered throughout the community. They usually have a larger surrounding site and their architectural design reflects their importance in the life of the community.

This new juvenile and domestic relations courthouse design reflects its civic function.

The Clark School located on Monticello Avenue/Route 20 corridor overlooks the surrounding neighborhood from its large, elevated site with mature plantings.

This federal courthouse uses classical forms reorganized into a more contemporary manner to create a pleasing design.

Several types of masonry along with a metal roof and decorative details create the distinctive design of this fire station.

The bow-shaped addition to a community center continues the brick material, as well as the classical cornice line, while introducing larger more contemporary-sized windows.

O. MULTI-FAMILY BUILDINGS

Large-scaled apartment buildings or condominiums may be a part of a mixed-use development along the corridors in future years. These large structures are not appropriate within a single-family residential neighborhood but may be located near them.

1. Follow the other guidelines within this chapter as applicable for the overall design of such buildings in such issues as massing and building footprint, scale, complexity of form, height and width, materials, textures and colors, roof forms and materials, etc.

2. Give consideration to placing first floor retail storefronts in multi-family buildings if they face along a commercial corridor or face a pedestrian-oriented street within the downtown.

3. Avoid creating street front facades that are dominated by garage doors.

4. Ensure that the designs of such buildings are consistent with any adjoining neighborhoods and the zoning ordinance.

This mixed-use building on Water Street uses a number of techniques to reduce its overall mass and includes storefronts on tis primary facade (above) and secondary facade (below).

Multi-family housing is setback beyond street-level storefronts to create a mixed-use development.

Complex rooflines, a variety of materials and bay divisions combine with a landscaped buffer for a multi-family building design appropriate to Charlottesville's corridors.

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