

Design Guidelines

1. Community Design Guidelines

The Severna Park Area possesses many assets of an ideal community. It contains a friendly core with shops, restaurants, offices and public institutions in close proximity. Tree-lined streets and sidewalks facilitate travel comfortably by car, bicycle or foot in some areas. The community offers a choice of housing styles and prices. Small neighborhood parks and larger area parks provide recreational opportunities for all. The objective of creating design guidelines is to maintain areas with these assets, while establishing a high standard for new development. The main goal of this section is to preserve and enhance the quality of development and the physical image of Severna Park by fostering order and harmony in the built environment. Preserving and creating identifiable communities through the use of design standards for both rehabilitation and new construction that reflects the prevailing architectural character, building mass, lot layout, vegetation and street pattern of a given neighborhood will be the key to achieving this goal. Several illustrations collected from various Master Plans in Montgomery County and Prince Georges County, Maryland are presented in this section.

Most of the of the residential neighborhoods in the Severna Park Area present strong, positive images. Others, however, suffer from a variety of physical problems that undermine their appearance. Typically these problems include incompatible land uses, deteriorated housing stock, architecturally incompatible infill construction, poorly buffered commercial and industrial locations, loss of street trees, absence of sidewalks, and inconsistent public ownership and maintenance of stream valleys which often define the boundaries between different areas.

Recommended Guidelines for Residential Areas

The opportunities for maintaining and improving the image of the residential neighborhoods includes an array of activities designed to foster visual harmony without sacrificing individual variations. They include:

- Minimizing incompatible uses through consistent application of zoning and stringent code enforcement.
- Buffering existing commercial and employment uses from adjacent neighborhoods to the standards in the County landscape guidelines for new construction.
- Strengthening neighborhood identify with entry/gateway improvements.
- Constructing sidewalks on both sides of all residential streets and providing sidewalk and trail connections to adjacent commercial and employment areas.

- Planting and maintaining deciduous street trees which at maturity will provide a continuous canopy. The existing mature trees should be protected as road improvements are made.
- Continued public acquisition of open space.
- Rehabilitation of housing stock.
- Adoption of design guidelines to regulate rehabilitation and infill construction.

A. Streetscape

- Six-inch concrete or granite curbs should define the edge of travelways.
- Sidewalks should be a minimum of five feet wide and made of concrete or durable pavers, preferably separated from the street by a tree lawn a minimum of four feet wide along residential streets and six feet wide along arterials.
- Medians should be landscaped whenever possible and should include large shade trees and groundcover.

B. Trees

- Maintain existing street-tree patterns, spacing and relationship to curbs and sidewalks where possible.
- Reinforce and maintain the continuity of the street canopy by using trees with design characteristics and growth habit similar to the existing street trees.
- Preserve healthy street trees where possible.
- Existing street trees removed during construction should be replaced with an equivalent species so that when mature, the functions and patterns of the original trees are restored.
- Coordinate any proposed streetscape plans with the planting programs approved by the Anne Arundel County.
- When no regular pattern exists, street trees should be large deciduous shade trees planted 30 feet on center wherever possible to establish a rhythmic, unifying feature. Species selection should accommodate public utilities.

C. Site Guidelines

- Site layout should maintain and reinforce the existing pattern in a given neighborhood.
- Avoid placement of earth embankments or cut slopes along adjacent properties that may create drainage problems, restrict light or block views.
- Maintain similar building to street grade relationships.
- Organize buildings to define useable outdoor spaces that contribute to the neighborhood's overall design pattern.
- Locate buildings on infill sites in the same manner as buildings in the adjacent neighborhood by providing similar front, side and rear yard setbacks.
- When a new development is across the street from or along the same street as an existing neighborhood, then the parking pattern should be located in a manner that is similar.
- Allow for on-street parking where precedent is established.

D. Signage

- Design attractive exterior ground-mounted signs to identify neighborhoods.
- Incorporate ground signs into the landscape design at entrances
- Control glare from lighting of ground-mounted signs. Prevent light from spilling over onto adjacent sites.

E. Screening Fences and Walls

- Design fences and walls as extensions of the buildings so that they are stylistically consistent with the design of the building.
- Incorporate fences and walls into the landscape and create logical ending points having a finished appearance.
- Yard fences should be limited to side and rear of lots and not extend any closer to the street than the front of the building line.

F. Site Lighting

- Select private area light poles and fixtures to be of a scale and style that are appropriate to the neighborhood character.

- Site- and architectural- lighting should be downcast, shielded or directed so that the flare or intensity of light does not adversely affect the surrounding properties.
- Light color should match that of the surrounding neighborhood.

G. Building Bulk, Scale and Massing

- The building dimensions should be similar to those of the adjacent buildings.
- Incorporate roof forms similar to nearby residential structures.
- Repeat predominate width dimension of building facades facing the street.
- In multi-family developments, offset building walls and roof lines to approximate widths and heights of surrounding buildings.

H. Proportion and Details

- Make visual linkages between surrounding buildings and proposed buildings by repeating or incorporating similar massing, ridgelines, eaves, and window and door openings.
- Incorporate similar trim details and proportions.
- Utilize predominant patterns of windows, doors and walls as in the facades of surrounding buildings.
- Incorporate similar building materials.

I. Decks, Balconies and Porches

- Design decks, balconies and porches as integral components of the building following dominant building lines, proportions and style.
- Design balconies and decks so that they are set in an appropriate scale relationship to the available space on the lot.
- Use materials and finishes that are consistent with the building, providing uniform and visually attractive extensions of the building.

J. Accessory Structures and Canopies

- Design accessory structures at an appropriate scale that reflects the architectural style of the main building.

2. Recommended Guidelines for Commercial Corridors

An ideal commercial corridor balances transportation needs with the demands of commercial activity. The traditional tree-lined boulevard has historically incorporated these two functions by creating an urban design ideal while moving patrons safely and efficiently. Attractive commercial development will include such improvements as street trees, buffers and landscaping, crosswalks, buried utility lines and innovative design concepts and mixed use development that permits people to live, work and shop in close proximity to one another.

The commercial corridors of the planning area occur along portions of MD 2, Veterans Highway, Benfield Boulevard, and Robinson Road. The problems that mar the appearance of some of the commercial corridors typically include one or more of the following: lack of large street trees to define the road and cast shade; unbuffered views of parking lots and service areas; unbuffered views of utility lines; discontinuous sidewalks; insufficient number of pedestrian crosswalks; excessive curb cuts; excessive public and private signage; lack of architectural consistency within a given complex; lack of appropriate connections and buffers between different and abutting land uses; and, lack of an enclosing streetwall.

Special guidelines, in addition to Community Design for Commercial Corridors are:

A. Streetscape

- Medians should be landscaped whenever possible. Landscaping should include large shade trees and groundcover.
- Crosswalks at minimum should be striped, preferably they should be built with an impressed concrete pattern or interlocking pavers.
- Locate crosswalks and crossing signals at all traffic signals.
- Handicap access ramps should be installed at all curb cuts.
- At all commercial driveway entrances, the sidewalk material and width should continue across the driveway width.
- Minimize the number of curb cuts.

B. Trees

Similar to Community Design Guidelines.

C. Utilities

- Place utility lines underground where possible.
- Consolidate utility pole usage.
- Locate overhead utility lines to rear of the buffer strips.

D. Streetlights

- Streetlights should light both street and sidewalks.
- The poles, fixture, light color and intensity should be consistent.
- Consistent use of decorative poles and fixtures should be encouraged within distinct retail shopping districts rather than using the standard cobrahead highway fixture.

E. Bus Stops

- Locate all-weather shelters at all bus stops.
- Provide a paved landing to the curb from the sidewalk.
- Should be handicap accessible, well lit and maintained.

F. Traffic Signs in the Right-of-Way

- Signs should be consolidated whenever possible.
- Should be of consistent style, construction and graphic appearance to reduce a cluttered image.

G. Parking Lots

- Landscape islands should delineate parking areas, circulation lanes and to further shield the view from the public right-of-way.
- All individual and shared lots should be paved consistently with the same material.
- All parking spaces should be delineated.

H. Service Areas

- Parking, service and loading areas should be visually buffered from roads and adjacent land uses.
- Mechanical equipment should be shielded from external views.

I. Signs

- Integrated shopping center and its pad sites should be limited to one freestanding sign.
- Obsolete signs should be removed.
- Individual shop signs should be similar in size and consistently placed on the building.

J. Site Layouts

- Whenever possible, the complex should be arranged or redesigned around a clear focal point.
- The major vehicular entrance should be well articulated.
- Build 28" - 36" high stone or brick walls at a minimum distance of four feet from the front property line to help screen the parking areas.
- Internal sidewalks should be well defined and should connect to external sidewalks.

K. Building Bulk, Scale, Massing

- Relate the height of new buildings to the predominant building height of the neighborhood.
- Offset building walls and roof lines to approximate widths and heights of surrounding buildings.
- Vary and articulate building elements and context to create focal points and establish a building hierarchy.
- Make gradual transitions in building width and height, avoiding abrupt and excessive differences in scale.

L. Proportions, Details and Materials

- Within a given complex including its pad sites, the architectural details, materials and patterns of windows and doors should be stylistically similar.

3. Recommended Design Guidelines for Village Centers

Urban design seeks to create, enhance and restore village centers that “serve as the commercial, social, cultural, educational, and recreational focal points” for the surrounding community. The traditional downtown with its mixed uses and clustering of public institutions is the conceptual urban design ideal.

The Village Square is the focal point; “the park”, of Severna Park’s Village Center. The Village Square will contain a landscaped public exterior space, with water and historic Severna Park features, as well as a cultural center, including a 400 seat auditorium, rooms for meetings presentations and performances. The Square will be encompassed by shops, offices, restaurants and living facilities and will have easy access to sidewalks, bicycle paths, streets and underground parking.

The urban design opportunities for the core areas might include:

- The reestablishment of a village center.
- The Village Center is planned to include retail, office and residential uses. Other centers could be retrofitted over the coming years to include a similar mix.
- Zero foot setback from front and side property lines to create the traditional street wall and density.

Illustration : Appropriate Setbacks

- Facade and building restoration in places such as Old Severna Park could recapture some of the

area's unique architectural history and serve as a model and catalyst for new infill.

- Street tree planting in accordance to guidelines stated above.
- Sidewalk construction and upgrading.
- Installation of crosswalks and handicap access ramps at all pedestrian crossings within centers.
- Installation of pedestrian scaled lighting systems.
- Screening parking lots with walls or substantial fences.
- Locate public facilities such as libraries, government offices, and police stations in existing centers.

Special Guidelines for Village Centers

Are Similar to Community Design and include:

A. Streetscape

- Wherever possible, consideration should be given to narrowing the width of the street in the commercial cores to allow for wider sidewalks and on-street parallel parking.
- Medians should be landscaped where possible landscaping should include large shade trees and ground covers.
- Sidewalks should span from the back of the curb to the base of the building. Walks should be made of durable pavers or concrete and be consistent throughout the village center.
- Handicap access ramps should be installed at all curb cuts.

B. Trees

- Trees should be planted in properly designed tree pits provided with tree grates, air and water irrigation and drainage.

C. Utilities

- Place utility lines underground where possible.
- Consolidate utility pole usage.
- Locate overhead utility lines to rear buffer strips.

D. Streetlights

- Streetlights should light both street and sidewalks.
- The poles, fixture, light color and intensity should be consistent with the center and preference given to use of decorative poles and fixtures rather than using the standard cobrahead fixture

E. Bus Stops

Similar to the guidelines of Commercial Corridors

F. Traffic signs in the Right-of-way

Similar to the guidelines of Commercial Corridors

G. Bicycle

- Provide bicycle racks at key locations in centers.

H. Site Layout

In the traditional town cores the near continuous streetwall should be reestablished. New and infill construction should place the building at the edge of the public right-of-way with sidewalks located on the property lines.

I. Parking Lots

Special guidelines in addition to those in Commercial Corridors include:

- Landscaped islands should delineate parking areas, circulation lanes and to further shield the view from the public right-of-way.
- All parking lots adjacent to residential land uses should be fenced and landscaped to County standards

J. Service Areas

Similar to Commercial Corridors

K. Signs

- Obsolete signs should be removed.
- Individual shop signs within a single building should be similar in size, design, and material, and consistently placed on the building.
- Encourage attractive window displays

L. Building Bulk, Scale, Massing

- Build to front property line.
- Build to side property lines a minimum depth of 10 feet.
- Relate the height of new buildings to the predominant building height of the neighborhood.
- Offset building walls and roof lines to approximate widths and heights of surrounding buildings.
- Make gradual transitions in building width and height, avoiding abrupt and excessive differences in scale.
- Where possible establish a recognizable hierarchy of buildings and places within the village center.

4. Commercial Areas Guidelines

- An internally well-ordered environment that is effectively buffered from adjacent land uses is the controlling urban design concept for the employment areas.
- The urban design opportunities for positively improving the image of the employment areas include:
 - Rehabilitate old buildings to develop a shared appearance among adjacent structures and sites.
 - Use dense evergreen landscaping, earth beams and deep setbacks to buffer objectionable views where possible.
 - Internally, the older employment areas need the unifying structure of large street trees, landscaped fronts and well designed, substantial fencing and lighting.

A. Streetscape

Similar to Community Design and including:

- Crosswalks at minimum should be striped, preferably they should be built with an impressed concrete pattern or interlocking pavers.
- Handicap access ramps should be at all curb cuts.
- At all driveway entrances, the sidewalk material and width should continue across the driveway width.
- Minimize the number of curb cuts.

B. Trees

Similar to Community Design Guidelines

C. Utilities

- Place utility lines underground where possible.
- Consolidate utility pole usage.
- Locate overhead utility lines to rear buffer strips.
- Streetlights
- Streetlights should light both street and sidewalks.
- The pole, fixture, light color and intensity should be consistent.

D. Bus Stops

Similar to Community Design guidelines.

E. Traffic Signs in the Right-of-Way

Similar to Commercial Corridors

F. Site Layout

- There should be one major entrance into an employment area, which should be well designed and include landscaping, lighting and ground-mounted signage.

G. Parking Lots

- Should be screened.
- Landscaped islands should delineate parking areas, circulation lanes and further shield the view from the public right-of-way.
- All individual and shared lots should be paved consistently with the same material.
- All parking spaces should be delineated.

H. Service Areas

Similar to Commercial Corridors Guidelines

I. Signs

- Obsolete signs should be removed.
- Individual shop signs within a single building should be similar in size and consistently placed on the building.
- Design attractive exterior ground-mounted signs.
- Control glare from lighting of ground-mounted signs. Prevent light from spilling over onto adjacent sites.

J. Building Bulk, Scale, Massing

- Relate the height of new buildings to the predominant building height within a given complex.
- Make gradual transitions in building width and height, avoiding abrupt and excessive differences in scale.

K. Proportions, Details, and Materials

- The façade in view from the public right-of-way should be designed to incorporate well-proportioned windows and doors, attractive building materials, and architectural details.
- Within a complex, incorporate similar or complementary building materials and details into each building.