CITY OF CONCORD, NEW HAMPSHIRE

ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN GUIDELINES

Adopted By:

City of Concord Planning Board

August 29, 1990
Revised: April 12, 1991

CITY OF CONCORD, NEW HAMPSHIRE

ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN GUIDELINES

CONSULTANT

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ILLUSTRATIONS

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PHOTOGRAPHS

City of Concord Planning Department
Christopher F. Kronser

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS - Continued PAGE #

CERTIFICATION

These regulations were amended on April 3, 1991 at a meeting of the City Planning Board after a duly notified Public Hearing and consideration of testimony received. Eight members of the Board were present and voted unanimously in favor of adopting these amended regulations which shall take effect on April 12, 1991.

ATTEST:

City Planning Board
City of Concord,
New Hampshire

Leon L. LaFreniere, Chair

Gerard Drypolcher, Vice-Chair

Barbara A. Butt, Member

Norman D. Butts, Member

Thomas J. Gatherum, Member

Mark H. Puffer, Alternate Member

James C. Smith, Ex-Officio Member

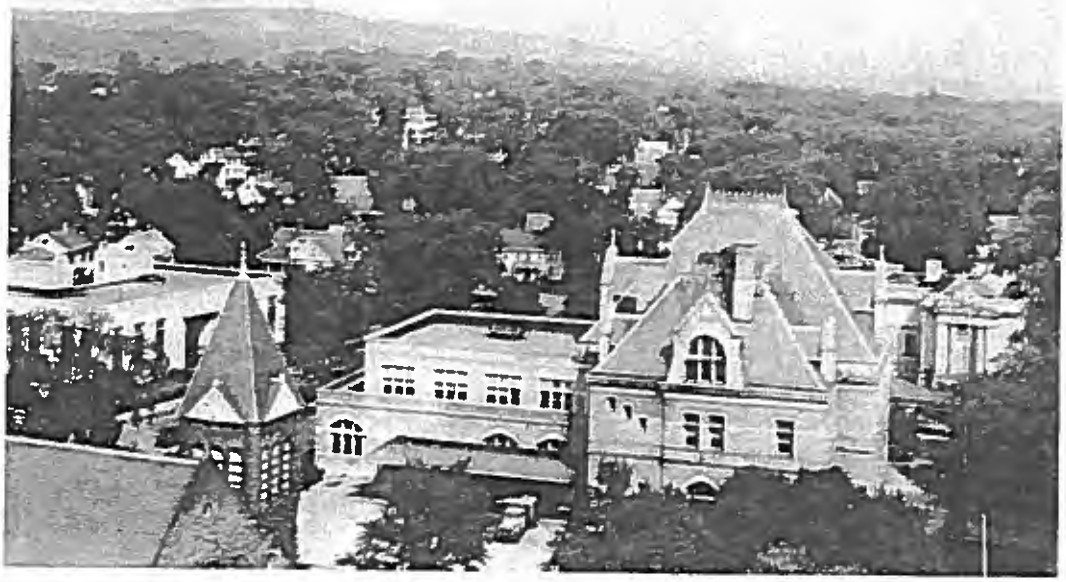
Richard K. Perkins, Ex-Officio Member

1. INTRODUCTION

The planning for the City of Concord's civic and institutional architecture has always been a part of the community's cultural tradition. The settlers who established Concord along the bend in the Merrimack River in the early 1700's developed a master plan for their settlement. As this process evolved, ordinances and regulations for private development were introduced and updated to ensure that rational and harmonious development would continue as an important feature of the City of Concord.

1.1 CITY DEVELOPMENT

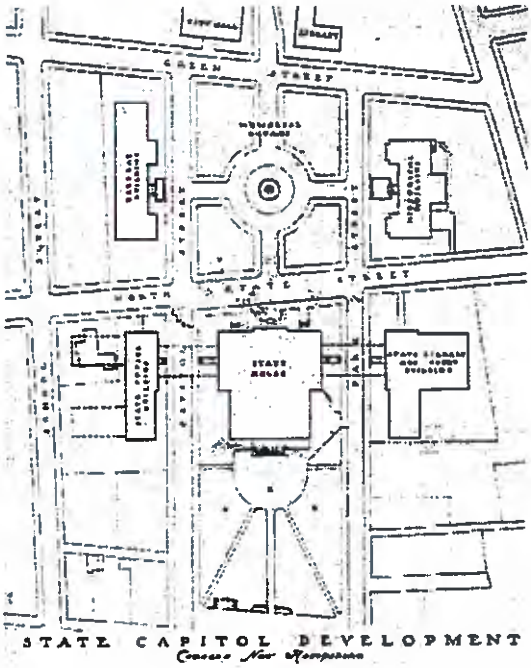
The unique characteristics of being both a city with a strong historic character and a state capital required that architectural and planning standards be established for the community. The location and relationship between government complexes and business enterprises will be guided by these standards. Maintaining Concord's architectural character is important to local citizens because of their continuing tradition of financial and political involvement in civic development.



Northern view of Concord

1.2 DESIGN TRADITION

The City's first master plan was created in 1726 and became the initial action in developing the urban design tradition of Concord. Historic buildings within the central civic complex were financed by local residents and built by local stonecutters and craftsmen using indigenous material such as brick and granite. This combination of public interest and local pride in Concord's built environment continues today.



Proposed 1930's plan by Gov. Winant

The State House complex and Concord's central business district evolved during the 19th century railroad era. The special character and quality of the main street became a crucial issue of the 1970's revitalization and has been protected and enhanced through sensitive development. This architectural evolution is also evident in the surrounding residential areas and commercial districts.

Antique postcard

1.3 DESIGN REVIEW HISTORY

Issues involving harmonious building relationships and compatibility of architecture were first addressed by City officials in the 1930's. Concord adopted its original requirements in 1967 for review of buildings within the State House area. The scope of architectural design review was expanded in 1977 to ensure that new buildings in certain districts would be consistent with the City's 19th century architecture.

At present, designated areas of the City require design approval before issuance of a building permit. Applicable projects are first reviewed by the Planning Board's Design Review Committee. The Committee's comments are given to the Planning Board for consideration as part of its final action on development applications.

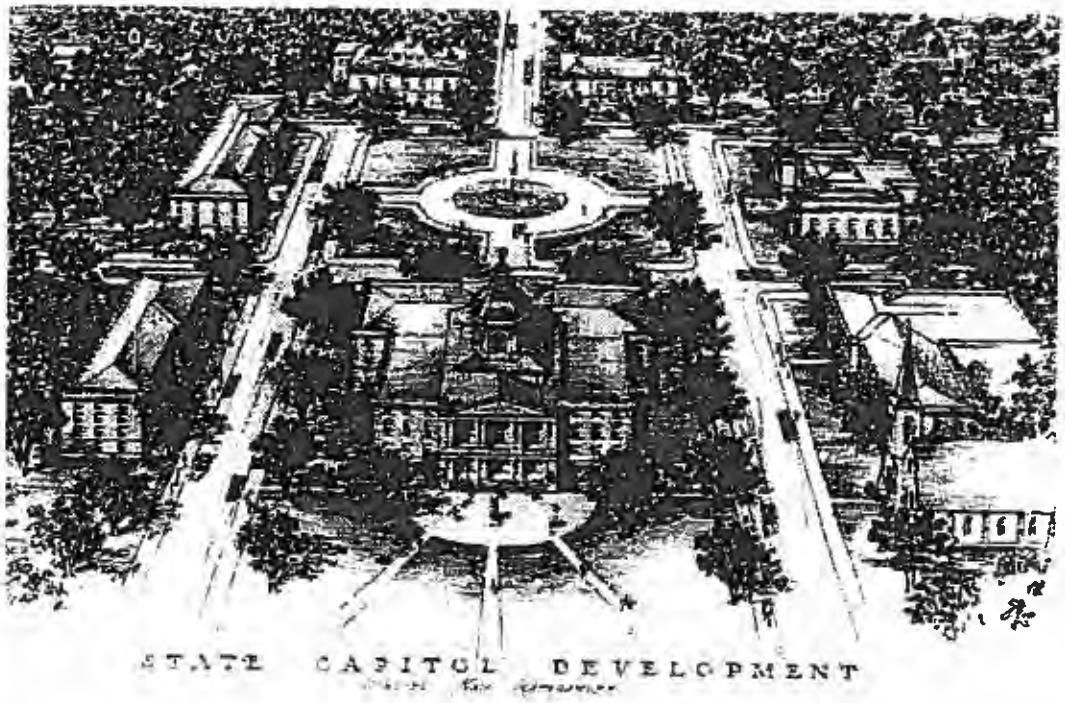
The increased municipal participation in design matters will ensure the continuation of Concord's design tradition in future development. Local zoning regulations affecting design review are being made more rigorous and special districts, such as the Gateway District, have recently been developed to protect Concord's heritage and architectural appearance.

Antique postcard

2. PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The Architectural Design Guidelines will provide written and graphic criteria for the appearance of all new development subject to design review. They are established to inform applicants of the expectations for the architectural appearance and site development of new and renovation projects. The guidelines are developed specifically for Concord with the input of various Planning Department officials, local architectural professionals and the general public. These guidelines will be periodically updated to reflect the evolution of the City's architectural character.

The Guidelines' flexibility will encourage and guide new development in a manner that will preserve the architectural heritage of the City of Concord. The Planning Board and Design Review Committee will use this criteria as a basis for accepting or rejecting the appearance of development projects. This will ensure that the high quality design tradition of Concord is continued in future development.



Proposed 1930's plan by Gov. Winant

3. APPLICABILITY AND AUTHORIZATION

In applying these guidelines, the City of Concord will enhance and preserve taxable values and promote the public health, welfare and safety. The Architectural Design Guidelines are created to implement Section 28-11-4 of the City of Concord Zoning Ordinance and are adopted as part of the Site Plan Review Guidelines pursuant to RSA 674.44.

The guidelines apply to the following types of development and zoning districts:

Type	Zoning Ordinance Article/Section
Multi-Family Dwelling Conversions	Section 28-06-24(b)
Planned Unit Development	Section 28-08
Attached and Multi-Family Dwellings	Section 28-09
Large Scale Development	Section 28-10
Architectural Design (AD) District	Section 28-11-4
Historic Zone (HI) District	Section 28-11-5
Redevelopment (RDV) District	Section 28-11-7
Gateway (BF) District	Section 28-11-10
Suburban Development (SD) Overlay District	Section 28-11-11
Signs	Section 28-13-1

Special design districts and their associated standards will be established and described in future sections of the Design Guidelines.

Concord's main street in 1990

4. FACTORS FOR EVALUATION

The evaluation of the following factors will govern the Design Review Committee's commentary to the Planing Board on a submitted project's appearance. The Planning Board will consider these comments when deciding on a final approval or denial of a submission. The Planning Board is the final authority for all districts except the Historic District (Zone HI), in which the Historic District Commission will have final approval.

Appearance factors to be considered are:

a. Conformance to general appearance criteria.

b. Conformance to general appearance criteria for special design districts.

c. Architectural character of the buildings.

d. Material and color selections.

e. Vehicular and pedestrian circulation.

f. Harmony and compatibility.

g. Integration of landscaping and overall signage.

h. Retention, alteration or removal of existing structures and site features.

A critical element of the review process will be the evaluation of how well the new development fits within the existing site and neighborhood. The applicant should submit photos of the surrounding structures and a site analysis of the existing conditions as part of the material for review. The analysis should indicate existing natural and man-made features of the site, potential views, microclimate, etc.

5. GENERAL APPEARANCE CRITERIA

5.1 SITE DEVELOPMENT

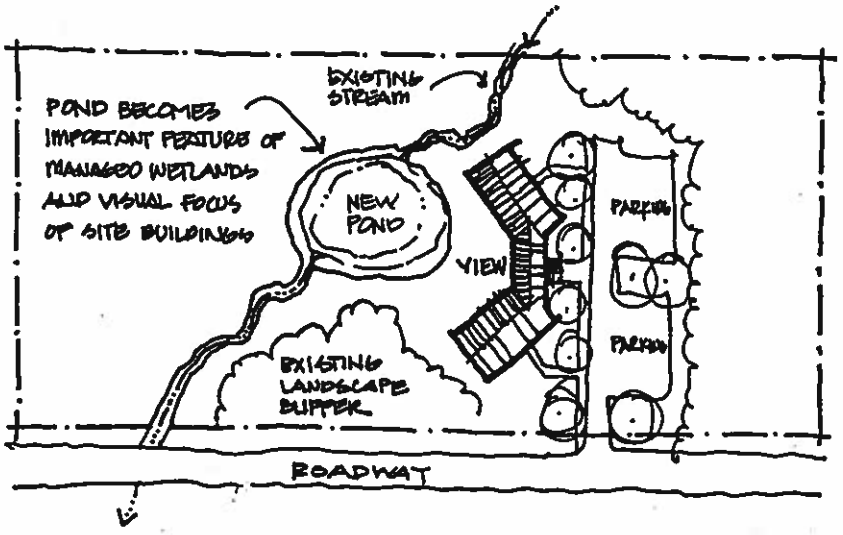
The development of site must address various elements in providing a design solution for a given building project. The building's orientation, setback, alignment with the street and relative spacing with other structures will be considered in the overall design. The reuse of existing structures and landscape features is encouraged and an overall architectural theme for the site development will create a positive image for the project.

A. Site Organization

All existing natural and man-made features of the site should be carefully considered for integration into the overall site design. These features should enhance and preserve the best portions of the environment. An overall theme or concept for the development will help organize a site and maximize the benefit of these site elements.

The developer should plan land development which responds to the surface flow of water and is in harmony with the existing site contours. This will require less regrading of the site and reduce erosion problems.

It is important to cluster buildings within a development wherever feasible. A compact building arrangement provides savings in grading, paving, utilities and other costs and conserves natural site features and open space.

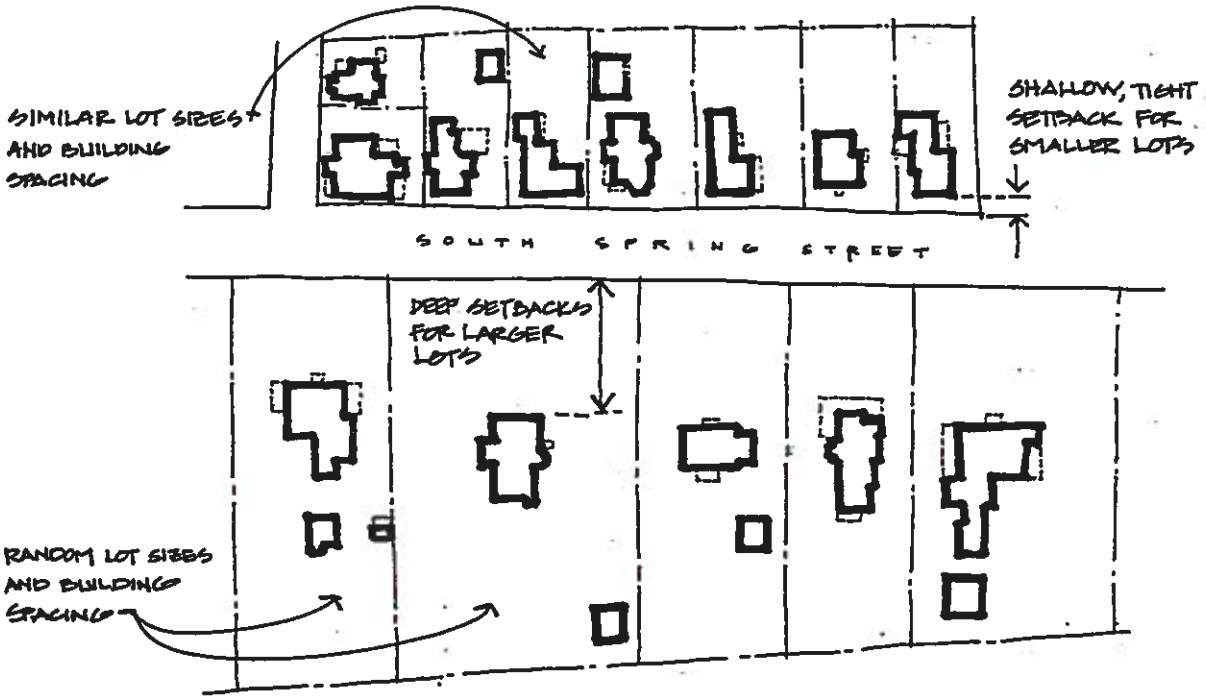


Separation of vehicular and pedestrian pathways is important to the overall safety and organization of a site. Walkways with landscaped borders and parking lot buffers can act as directional elements and provide the opportunity for natural and landscaped elements to be experienced by the pedestrian as they approach the complex.

B. Setback From Street

Each zoning district has specified setback requirements from the property lines. These setbacks are usually in response to the overall prevailing setback for the district. New construction should have setbacks which match the average setbacks of existing adjacent structures where possible. This will allow for the continuation of a given pattern in a particular district.

The front yard setbacks will not be as crucial to maintain in districts where there is not a uniform building setback. Other features such as zoning requirements, irregular topography, wetlands and preservation of positive natural features should be considered in establishing the final location of the structures.



C. Building Alignment

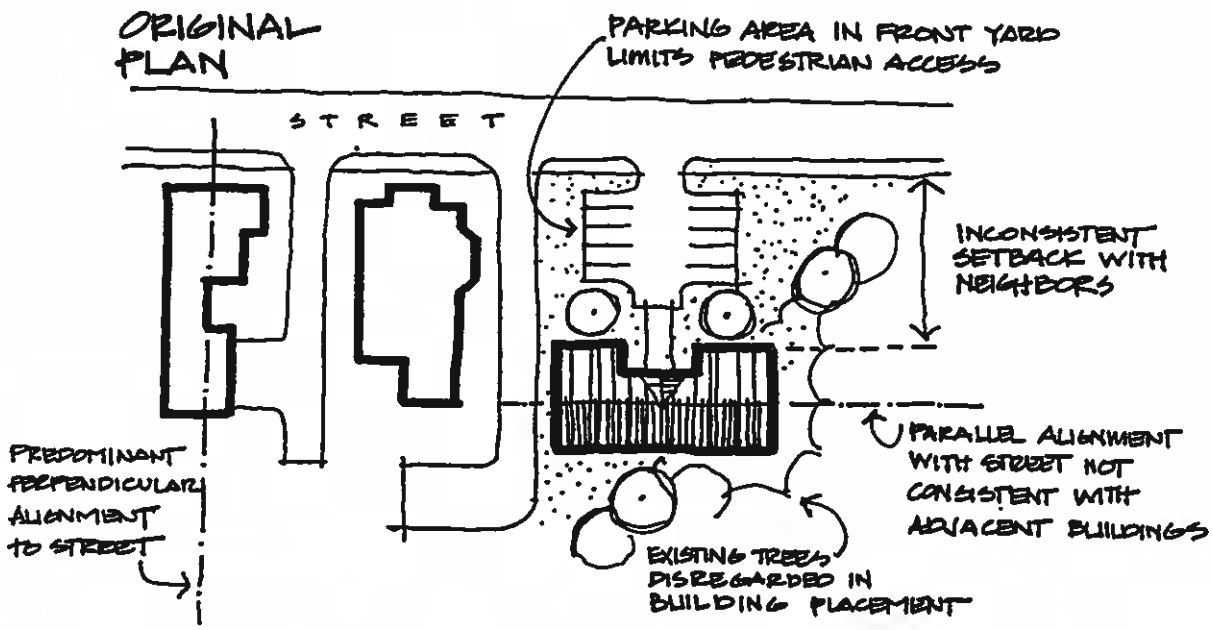
Existing buildings will often have a perpendicular or parallel alignment with the street. When a new development is in close proximity to existing structures, the new buildings should reflect the existing alignment. The existing building alignments relative to the street, may have resulted from natural topography, water ways, climate or the preferred alignment of a particular architectural style.

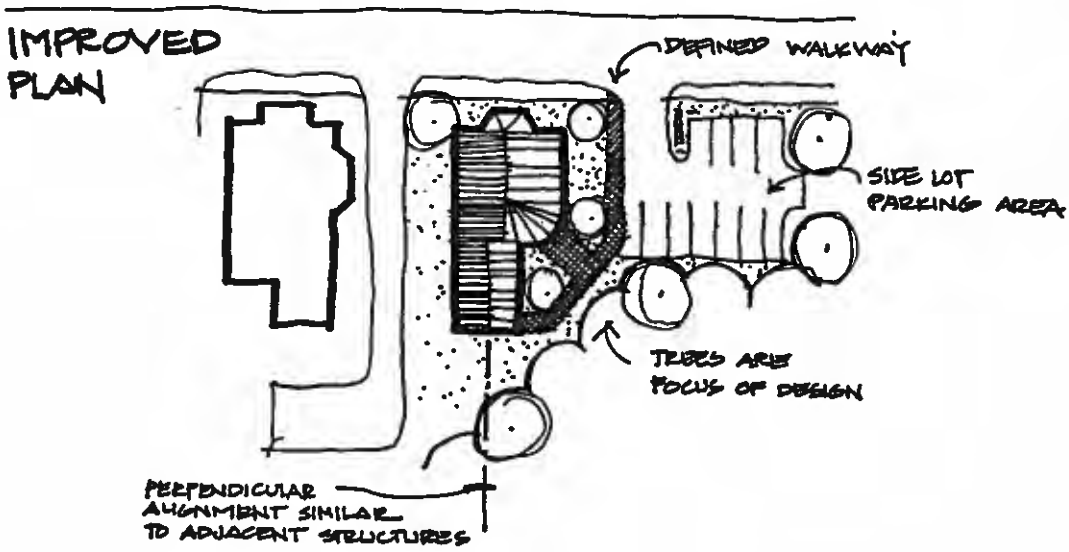
D. Building Spacing

The space between new and existing buildings is important in determining the rhythm and sense of enclosure along an existing street. The characteristics of prevailing spacing, either uniform or random, should be maintained in siting the new structures.

E. Building Siting

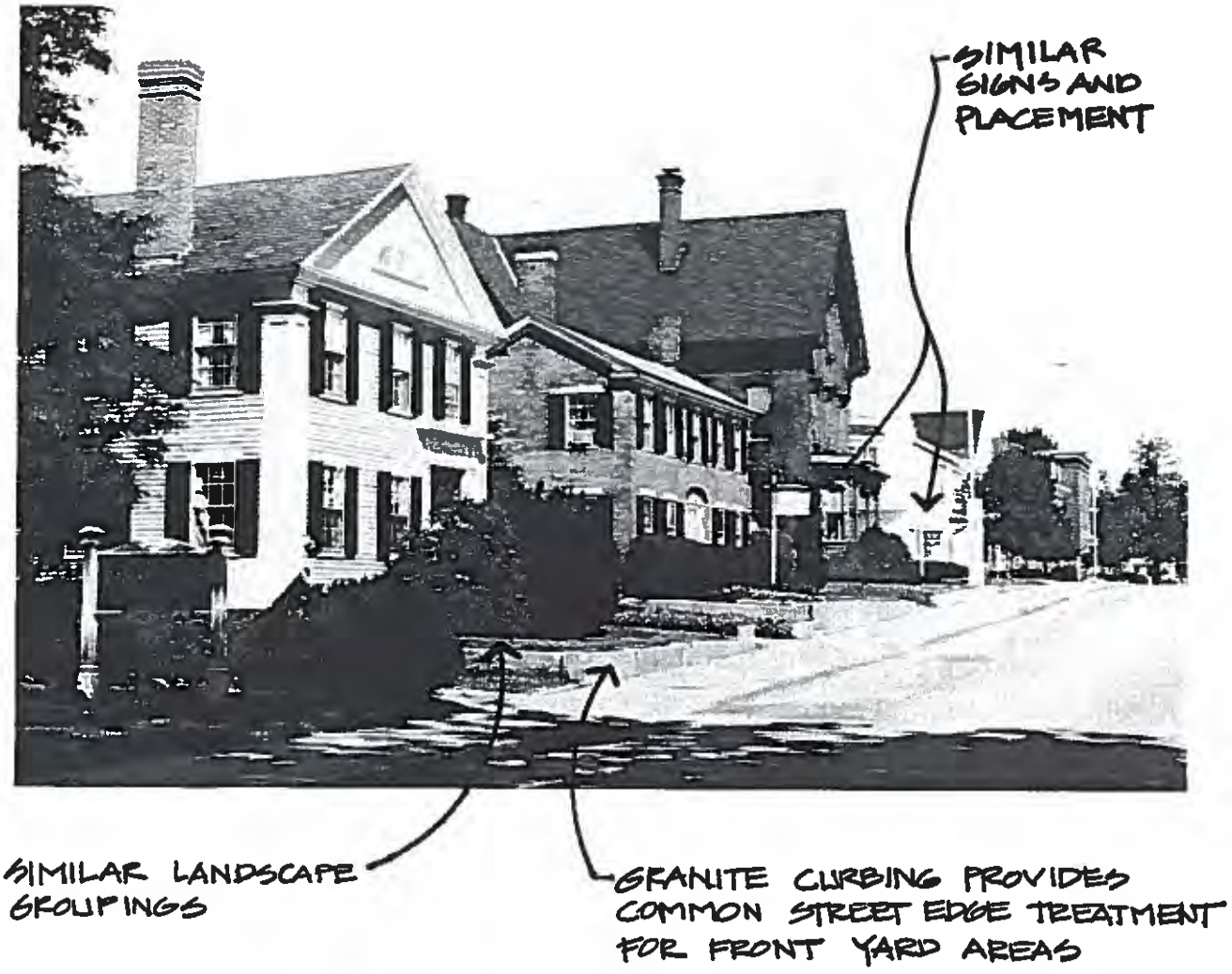
The building(s) placement and arrangement within a large scale site or at an isolated location should respond to the site development criteria. The site features and their corresponding building relationships will have a major influence on the character of the new development.





F. Visual Continuity

A new site development can blend with the existing neighborhood by utilizing similar fences, tree placements, similar plantings and walkways. This will give a feeling of continuity to the overall district and is important where adjacent structures are in close proximity to the new development.



5.2 LANDSCAPE AND SITE TREATMENT

All landscaping materials should be of a quality that will enhance the environment and serve as a functional part of the development. Trees should provide shade and have interesting character and color as they grow. Shrubs or ground cover should also include interesting colors and textures while providing screening in required areas and highlighting the architecture of the development. The use of evergreen materials are recommended for an all-season landscaping effect.

A. Existing Conditions

Unique or outstanding landscape features on a site should be preserved. Existing plant material should be incorporated into the new landscape plan where possible. Specimen trees and shrubs should be relocated on the site for a more mature landscaping effect.

It is important to preserve the existing ground covers which serve as water absorbers and act as soil stabilizers for erosion control. The site designer should plan land development which responds to the surface flow of water and is in harmony with the site contours. This careful planning will minimize erosion problems by reducing the amount of site regrading, ground cover disruption and existing plant replacement.

B. Pedestrian Circulation

Pedestrian pathways between parking areas and the buildings should be provided for a safe transition between buildings and vehicular areas. These pathways could be designated with different materials, curbing or landscaping.

C. Plantings

Plant materials should be selected for type, size and quality on the basis of suitability for the setting and climate. Plants should be tolerant to the area's climate and specific site conditions, hardy and properly sized for the design and compatible with the other development's planting character and functions. A ratio of 1/3 to 2/3 mix of evergreen and deciduous materials is a common landscape standard.

D. Plant Material Sizes

Deciduous and evergreen trees should be sized to reflect the scale of a project. Larger buildings and expansive areas will require larger plantings for optimum effect. Shrubs should be a minimum of three feet in height when used as a hedge and four to six feet in height if used as an ornamental planting.

The use of grass areas, ground cover plantings and flower beds are encouraged to create color, texture and interest in the overall landscape concept. Grass areas adjacent to buildings and high visibility areas can have an immediate effect through the use of sod. Other grass products are available for providing cover within a short time period.

E. Screening

Screening should be provided for service yards, trash receptacles, storage areas, utility equipment and other similar accessory structures and uses. Walls, fencing, berms and planting, or a combination of these screening materials, can accomplish an effective all-season enclosure.

F. Landscape Accent Material

Mulch materials should be a small size select stone, shredded bark or other organic material best suited for the site. Edging should be used to separate grass areas from shrubs, ground cover and mulch and can be a cut bed edge or a durable material which is securely fastened and retains the landscape material.

G. Parking

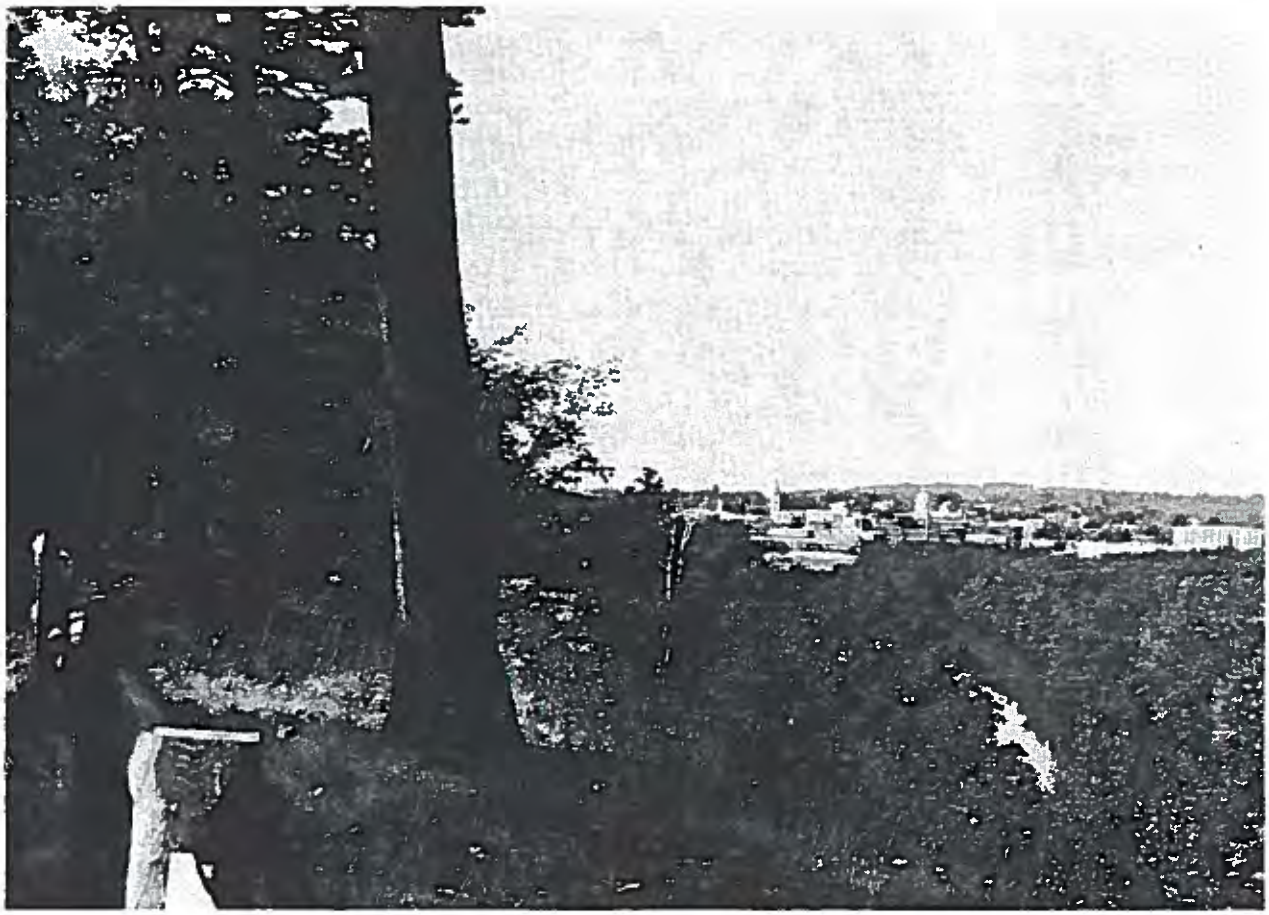
Parking should be located to the side or rear yard areas where possible. Landscaped areas containing tree groupings shall be utilized per the City's Zoning Ordinance, Section 28-12-5 for parking areas. A guide for parking lot design is available from the Concord Planning Department. Planting areas susceptible to injury shall be protected by the use of curbing, berms or tree guards.

H. Site Structures

Accessory buildings, storage enclosures, benches, tables, etc. should be in character with the building architecture and surrounding landscaping. This is typically accomplished through the use of common forms and materials. The scale and design of these elements should be consistent with the overall project. Lighting standards should be of a size and design which are compatible with the buildings and the adjacent area. Light sources should be shielded at all perimeter areas to reduce light glare on to adjacent properties.

I. Views

Scenic views from a site or public vistas through a project should be protected and enhanced where possible within the overall site development.



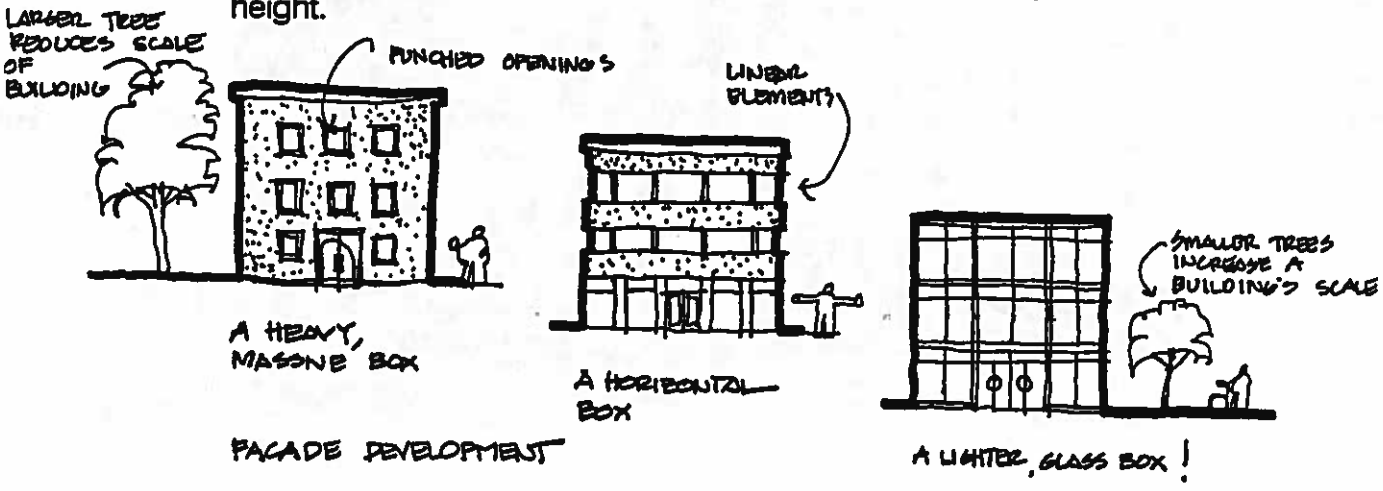
5.3 BUILDING DESIGN AND MATERIALS

During the design process, the designer recognizes the basic elements of natural forms and man-made space, understands how they can be manipulated in the development of a design concept, and visualizes the final design solution. The building is basically a response to an existing set of conditions. These conditions include the site, its existing context, the proposed building type(s) and owner requirements.

In all cases, the design solution should have elements and systems which are interrelated, interdependent and mutually reinforcing to form an integrated design. The building complex is created of elements and systems which are related among themselves and create order for the use of the site and building(s). This order relates to the building itself and to the adjacent property and developments. The architectural review will be an evaluation of the building's form, appearance and function to ensure that this order is maintained and that the project is appropriate for the site and compatible with the adjoining buildings.

A. Scale and Proportion

The intent of all theories of proportion is to create a sense of order among the elements in a visual composition. A proportion system establishes a consistent set of visual relationships between the parts of a building. This visual order can be sensed and should be compatible with neighboring developments. New buildings should not exceed the average height of existing adjacent buildings, although greater distances between buildings may allow larger differences in height.



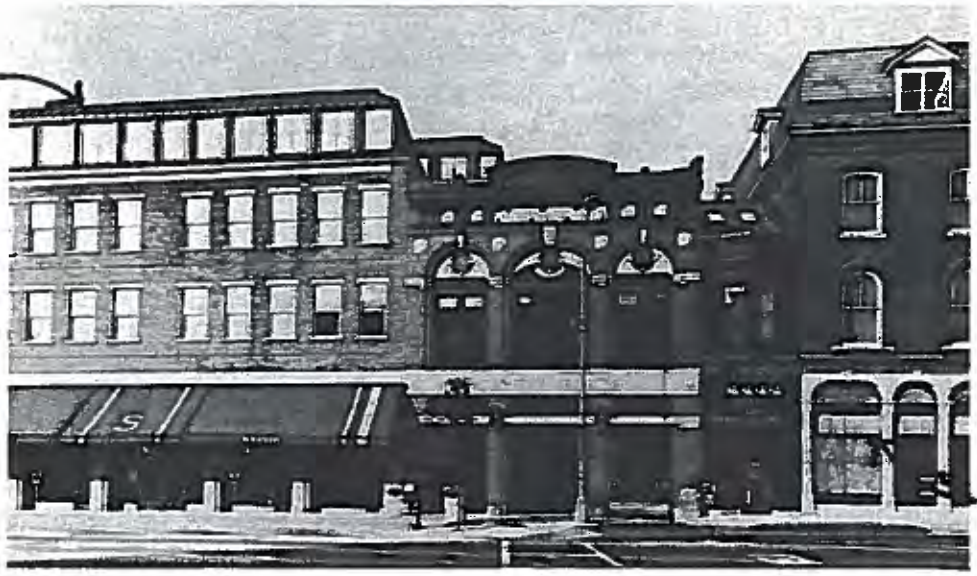
The size and proportion of windows and wall openings in a building facade are usually related to one another and the spaces between them within the overall development of the facade. The organization and placement of the openings and their relative sizes can create various degrees of scale for a building design. The window and wall openings should be in similar proportions to existing structures when they are in close proximity to the site development.

B. Vertical or Horizontal Emphasis.

Relate the vertical, horizontal or nondirectional facade characteristics of new buildings to the predominant directional expression of nearby buildings. This emphasis is created by the proportions, scale and the arrangement of the structure's door and window openings.

HORIZONTAL SIGN BAND EXTENDS OVER VARIOUS VERTICAL BUILDINGS

1978



NEW MANSARD ROOF OF INFILL STRUCTURE RELATES TO ADJACENT BUILDINGS IN HEIGHT AND FORM

NEW ARCHED STOREFRONT RESPONDS TO ORIGINAL VERTICAL DESIGN

1988

C. Roof Form

The roof plane is a building's prime sheltering element and the form is determined by the geometry and materials of its structure. As a visual design element, the roof plane is the building's hat and can have a significant impact on a building's form and silhouette. New roof forms should relate to the roof forms of adjacent structures where appropriate by duplicating the shape, pitch and materials.

D. Architectural Features and Details

Any features and details such as balconies, decks, covered porches, columns, towers, skylights and arches should be in proportion with the building. Accurate restoration of existing detail is encouraged but use of historical details on contemporary structures should be included only where they are appropriate to the overall design.

OFFICE ADDITION REPEATS IMPORTANT BUILDING FEATURES

E. Materials and Colors

The exteriors of buildings should utilize materials appropriate for the character of the building and compatible with significant adjacent structures. All exterior surfaces visible to the public should be covered with a siding material and long-term maintenance characteristics of all materials should be considered during the selection process. The side and rear building elevations should incorporate the materials, design details and theme when exposed to public view.

BRIGHTLY COLORED AWNINGS ADD DETAIL AND A CHANGE IN TEXTURE FOR THE SIMPLE BRICK STRUCTURE

Subtle colors should be used on larger and very plain buildings while smaller buildings with elaborate detailing can use more colors. Colors that are disharmonious with other colors used on the building or found on adjacent structures should be avoided. Paint colors should relate to natural material colors found on the building such as brick, terra-cotta, stone or ceramic title and existing elements such as signs or awnings. Contrasting colors, which accent architectural details and entrances, are encouraged.

F. Mechanical Equipment.

All roof-top mechanical equipment should be screened from view with either building walls or roof forms. All sides visible to the public should have this screening material.

5.4 SIGNAGE

Signs should be visible and legible through the use of appropriate details and proper locations. Allowable sign areas and locations per district are explained in Article 28-13, Signs, of the City of Concord Zoning Ordinance. The following design guidelines will give examples and methods of adding interest and quality to a building project while enhancing the overall development.

A. Scale and Proportion

Every sign should be an integral, subordinate element within the overall building and site design. The scale and proportion of the signage shall not overpower the building or obscure the building's architectural features.

B. Materials

Sign materials should harmonize with the building's design. A simple and direct message, with upper and lower case letters, is most effective. A limited number of colors should be used with light colored letters placed on a matte, dark background which reduces reflected glare.

C. Illumination

Illumination of signs should be from an indirect light source to reduce glare and ensure attention is focused on the sign. The light should be contained within the sign frame and not spill over to other portions of the building. Internally lit signs should provide opaque backgrounds with translucent letters.

D. Coordination

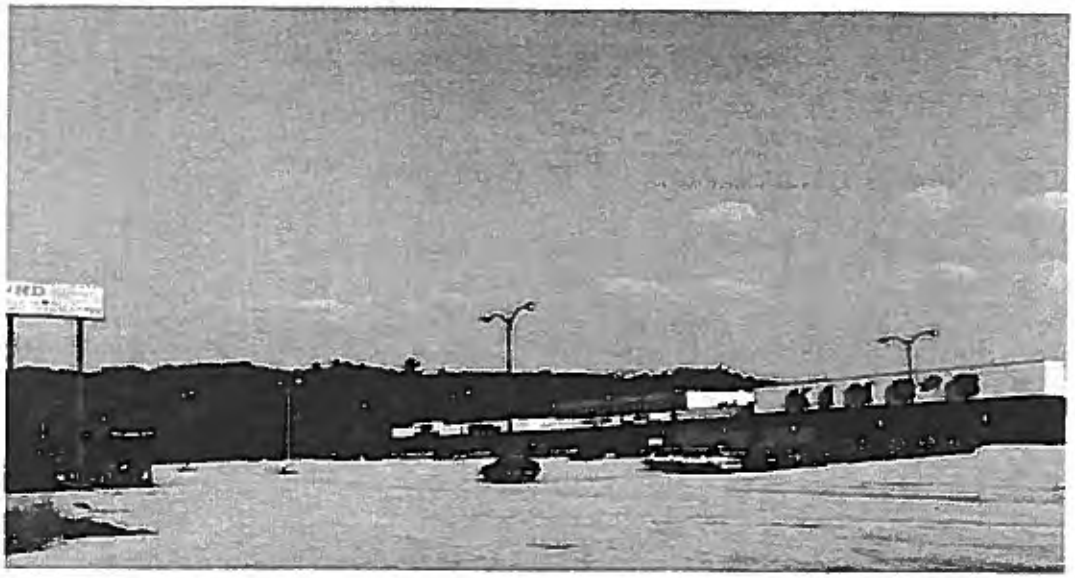
All signage within a building complex should be coordinated by using similar materials, letter styles, colors and overall sign sizes to ensure sign continuity and a uniform appearance throughout the development.

E. Logos and Graphics

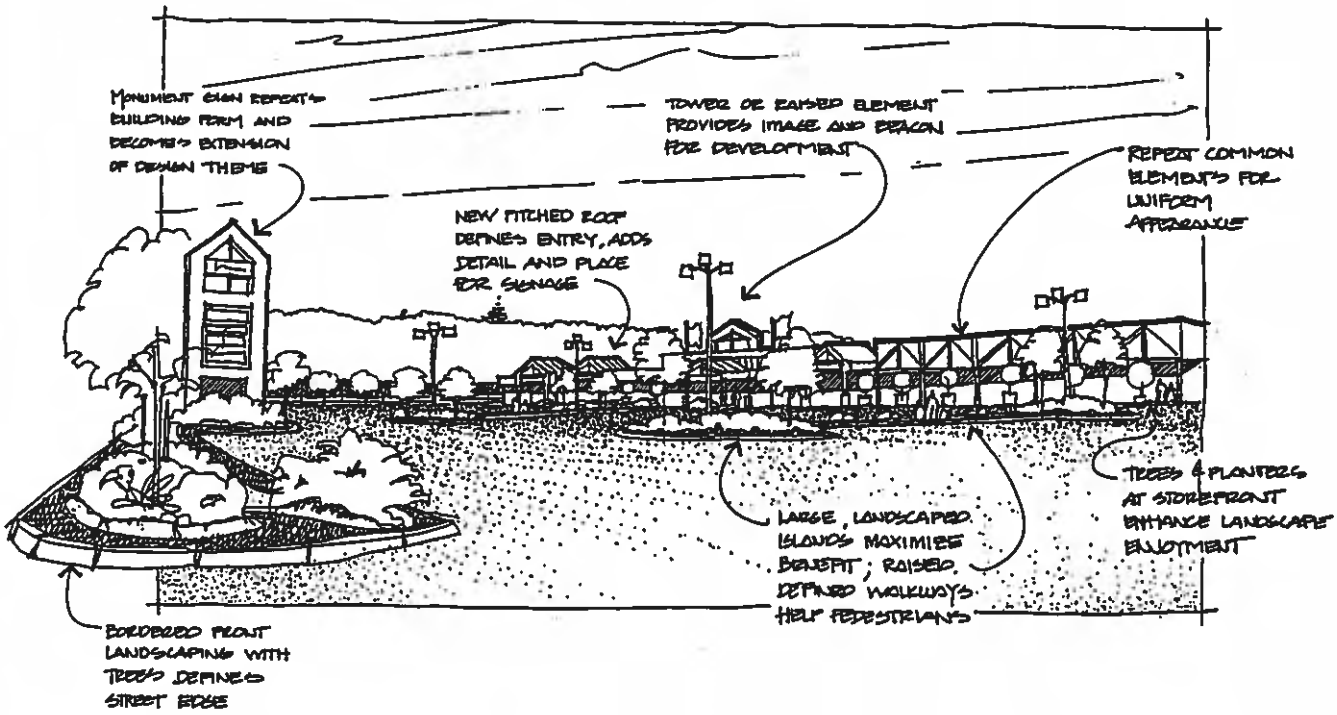
Company logo's should be incorporated into the overall sign and not become the sign itself.

5.5 CASE STUDY

A. Typical Shopping Complex



BEFORE GUIDELINES



AFTER GUIDELINES

6. SPECIAL DISTRICT APPEARANCE STANDARDS

The appearance criteria will be expanded to include additional criteria for special districts as they are added to the City of Concord Zoning Ordinance. These standards will be in addition to the general appearance criteria which also apply to these new districts.

6.1 GATEWAY COMMERCIAL (BF) DISTRICT

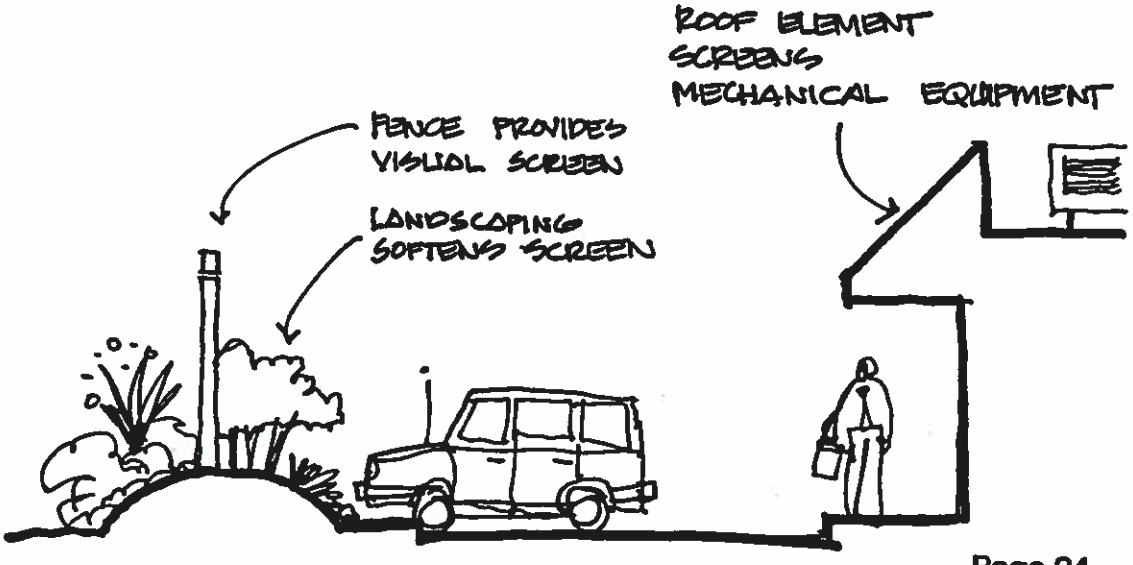
The BF District will allow for high quality commercial development along major highway corridors within the City. This development should be compatible with the natural environment, provide buffers for surrounding residential areas, coordinate vehicular and pedestrian access for safe and efficient travelways, increase roadside landscape areas, coordinate signage and reflect Concord's architectural heritage.

A. Natural Environment

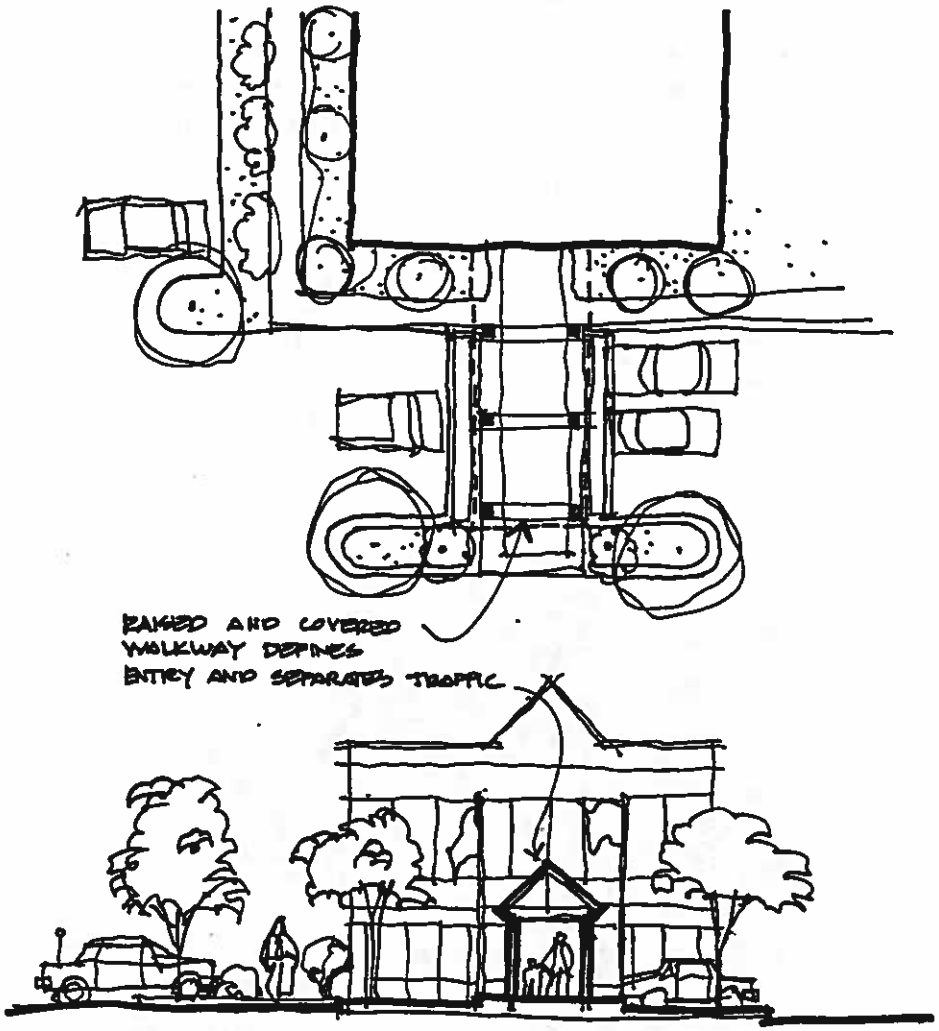
Existing natural environmental features shall be incorporated into the overall site design. Environmental standards are established within the Zoning Ordinance for protection of these features, i.e. rivers, streams, wetlands, steep slopes and bluffs.

B. Buffers

Screening and buffers for different building functions are established within the Zoning Ordinance. Screening shall be in harmony with the building form and colors. A combination of landscaping and decorative fencing or berming shall provide noise and visual barriers for adjacent residential districts. Noise levels for operations shall be per the Municipal Code, Title 1, General Code, Article 13-6 Noise.



Landscape buffers adjacent to residential properties should consist of an evergreen hedge or combination of solid fencing and landscape materials. In locating the fencing and landscape hedge, the designer shall consider the snow storage areas and encroachment of car bumpers. Berms of 2 ft. minimum height are encouraged in larger planting areas and should have a maximum slope of 3 to 1. Stone walls or granite curbing are recommended for raised planting areas, boundary areas or retaining walls.



C. Vehicular and Pedestrian Access

An interconnected and cohesive circulation plan is desirable for ease of on-site vehicular and pedestrian movement. Consideration should be given for slightly raised or covered walkways for connecting major parking areas to buildings. This articulation of major walkways will allow for separation between the automobile and pedestrian traffic.

G. Acceptable Materials

High quality materials will make a strong statement for this special district and maintain consistency with other new developments. The selected materials should contribute to the aesthetics of the project and be durable and easy to maintain.

Roofs	-	Steeply pitched mansard (if flat), cupolas or towers.
	-	Visually screened mechanical equipment
	-	Metal, copper or colored standing seam
	-	Shingles, asphalt, fiberglass or fire treated wood
Walls	-	Wood clapboards (stained, painted or vinyl)
	-	Red Brick
	-	Granite, marble or stone (natural or finished)
	-	Fiber-reinforced stucco
Windows	-	Butt-joint or ribbon glass
	-	Multi-paned windows and groupings
	-	Etched, beveled, sandblasted or stained glass
Trim	-	Wood (painted or stained)
	-	Anodized aluminum (color or natural)
	-	Metal with baked-enamel finish

H. Flags

Landscaped areas and pedestrian walkways may benefit from the use of flags for added color and interest. These elements should comply with other City Ordinances for sizes, locations and types.

6.2 SUBURBAN DEVELOPMENT (SD) OVERLAY DISTRICT

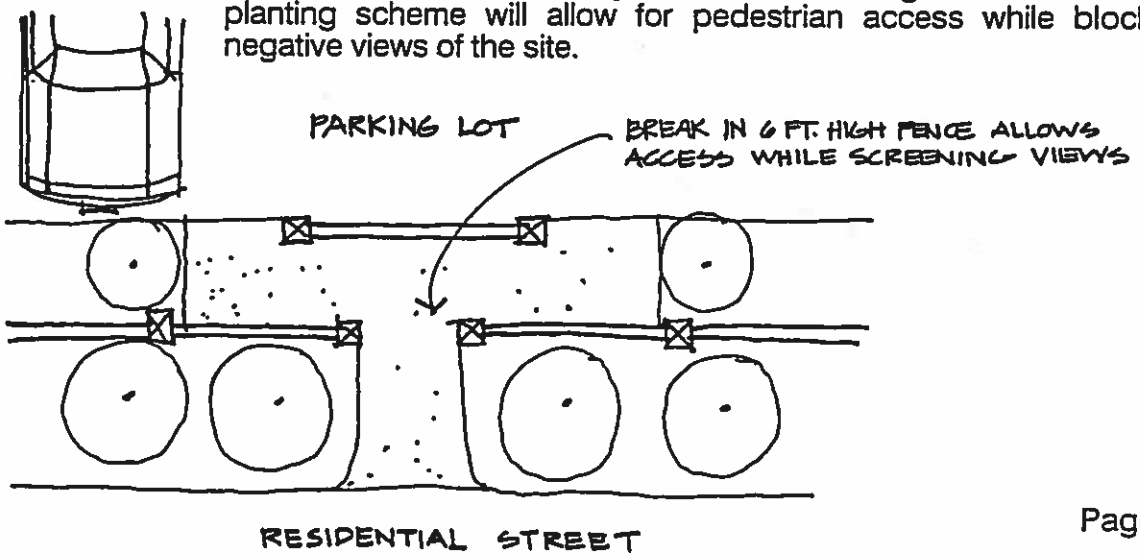
One of the main reasons for creating the Suburban Development (SD) Overlay District is to enhance the roadside appearance along major roadways which lead to the center of Concord. In most cases, the project development will be concentrated along the road edge and will be surrounded by residential areas. The integration of the overall site development with the site's vehicular and pedestrian entries will be a major consideration for determining the success of a project. A responsive design will also develop the required visibility for a project through careful placement of the buildings and landscaping.

A. Screens and Buffers

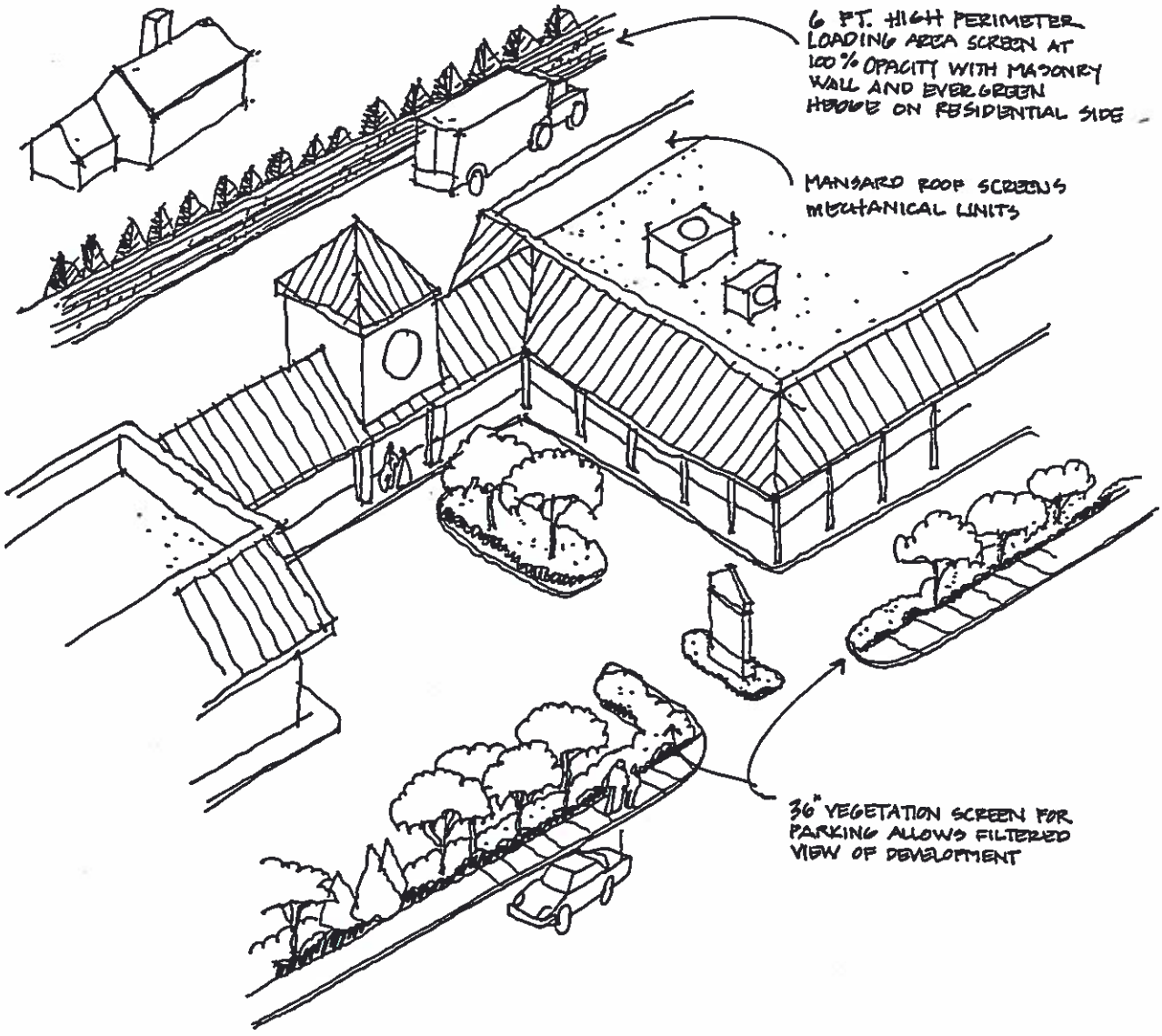
The high visibility of the development which occurs along the arterial roadways within the SD District requires special treatment in order to screen undesirable views of parking and service areas. Negative visual, acoustical and environmental impacts on neighboring residential districts can be controlled with effective screening and buffering materials. These screens and buffers are crucial to the mutual existence of the residential areas and the commercial developments.

Different degrees of opacity for screening can be obtained through the varied use of dense evergreen materials or loose deciduous trees and shrubs, closed or open fencing, and earth forms such as berms. Typically, a combination of these items provides the best design and accomplishes the desired screening effect.

Most service oriented developments will require pedestrian access from surrounding residential areas. Perimeter screening design along residential areas shall provide pedestrian access points. Staggered openings in the screening material and the planting scheme will allow for pedestrian access while blocking negative views of the site.



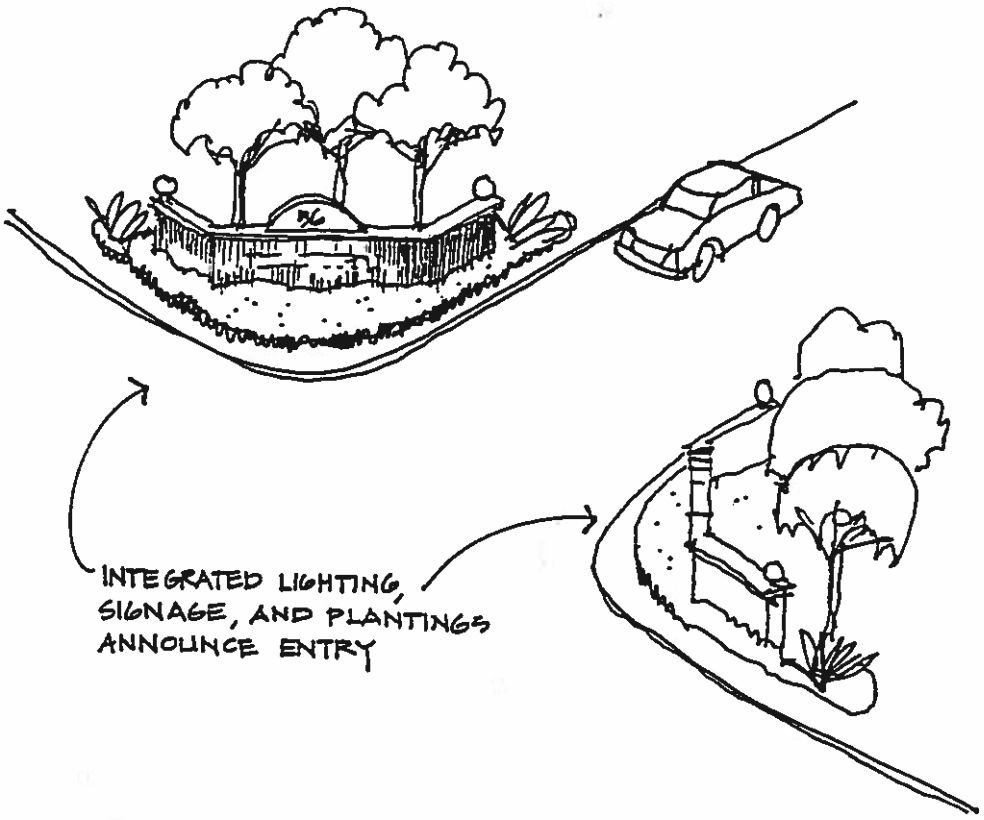
Screening shall be 100% opaque up to six feet along boundary lines adjoining residential areas. The standards for other site screening opacities will be site specific and evaluated for the type of development. The treatment of adjoining properties will also help determine the screening requirements.



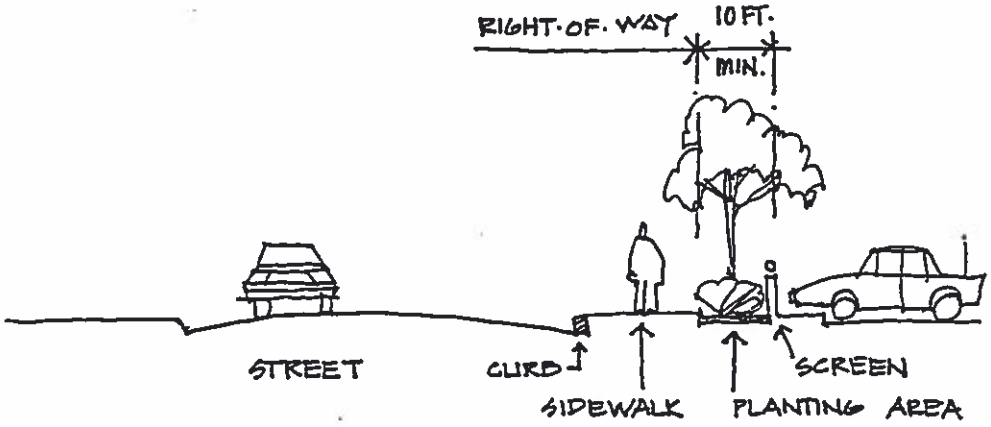
B. Vehicular and Pedestrian Circulation

The critical design elements for site circulation should address vehicular roadways, entries, parking lots and pedestrian access. The roadway entry treatment and the intergration with the internal site organization will determine the effectiveness of the overall site layout. Special consideration should be given in separating pedestrian pathways from large parking areas, which is crucial for a safe development.

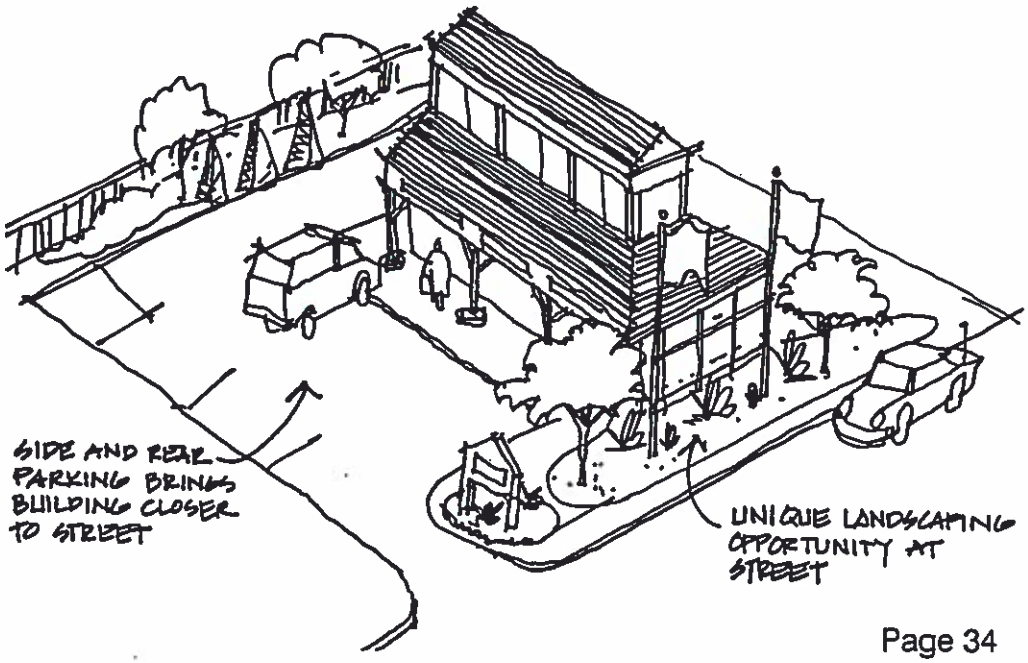
The overall vehicular entry to the project will require careful design treatment because of the high volume of roadway traffic. The design character of the entry treatment should respond to the overall design theme. These announcements for the entries can be enhanced through the use of effective landscape lighting, integral signage, planting beds and varied earth forms.



Sidewalks should be provided at the edge of roadways and connected to on-site pedestrian paths within the overall development. The edge of the walkway should be curbed to differentiate the walkways from the roadways. A ten foot planting strip is required at the edge of the right-of-way which will create a landscaped area between the parking areas and the off-site sidewalks.

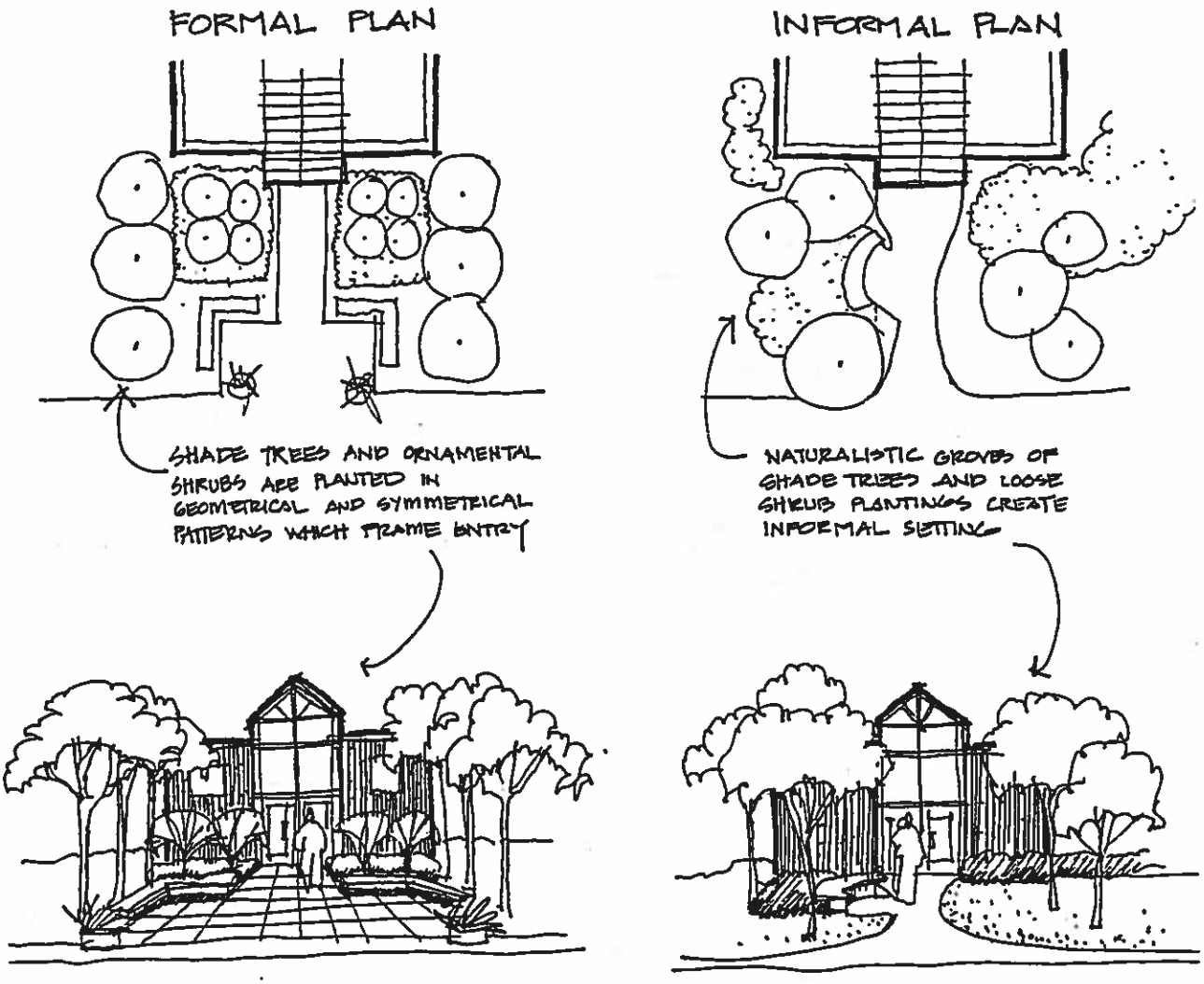


The overall parking lot size, arrangement and circulation should conform to existing topography where possible. Clustering of small parking areas is desirable to reduce large, unbroken areas of pavement and should be oriented toward the side and rear yards of the development. This will allow for placing the building closer to the road edge which can add additional landscaping areas and enhance the street image of the development.



C. Landscaping

The overall requirements for existing landscaping, which are covered in the general criteria, will again pertain to this district. Additional emphasis will be required for the screening treatments and the street edge of the development. A variety of planting techniques can be used to either frame views, provide formal or informal settings, and develop special landscape features.

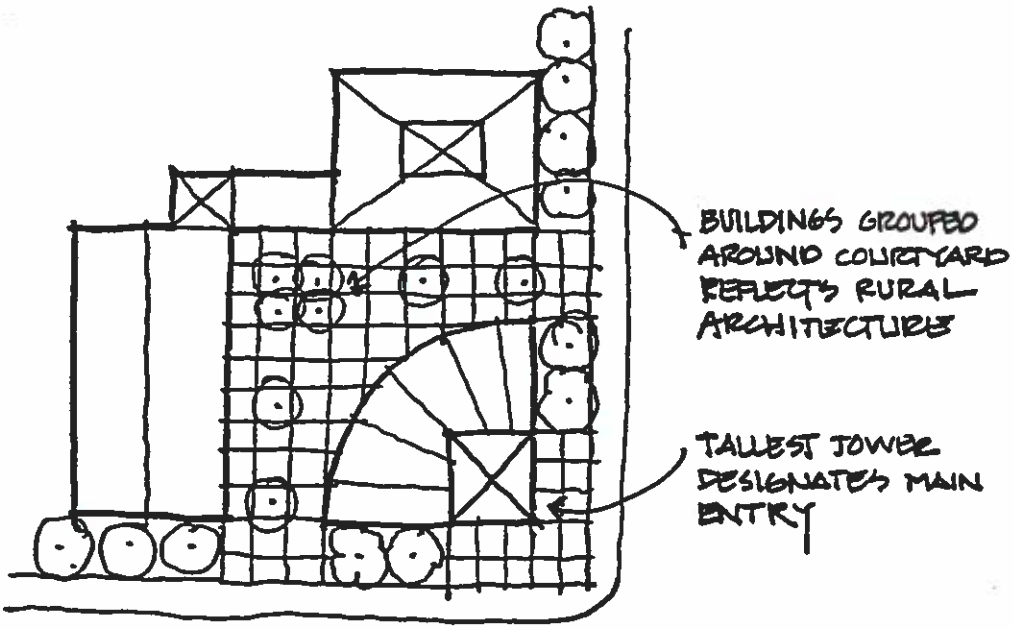


A strong, bold design is desirable because of the reduced green space that typically remains after the building and parking is placed on a given site. More landscaping impact will be obtained with a concentrated area of planting which is integrated with the overall design theme.

E. Building Features and Materials

The design of the architectural elements of a project will be a major factor in determining the visual quality of the development. The more successful projects will draw from regional references and use similar building materials and building shapes throughout the project. Groupings of buildings can reflect the New England residential and rural character and provide an interesting human scale to the project.

The use of common building features in a variety of settings which are organized around a design theme will provide a contiguous effect for the overall design and help unify the project. Building elements which have varied offsets, roof heights and forms can create focal points and establish a hierarchy among the development's components. Varying the placement of windows and adding elements which form shadows and detail special features will add interest to an otherwise plain building.



The color, texture and type of materials should be considered for their overall effect on the building design. Typically, one or two different materials used throughout the project with varied colors and patterns will be more cost-effective and have a stronger impact than a variety of multiple materials which will add visual chaos to the design.

Because of the neighboring residential districts, a pitched or an appearance of a pitched roof is critical for the project. A mansard roof, which can help screen roof-top mechanical equipment, is one appropriate alternative and will reflect the New England character of the Concord area.

No unclad masonry block construction or corrugated metal may be used when visible from any public space, adjacent residential areas or roadways.

All roof-top mechanical equipment shall be enclosed with the same material as the building cladding. The overall effect of this screening will be reviewed relative to adjacent properties and their associated building heights and floor elevations.

G. Utilities and Lighting

All service connections to new buildings from existing roadway utilities shall be underground. It is desirable to move pole mounted transformers to ground mounted pad installations where possible. This will help reduce the visual clutter along the street edge which can have a major impact on the street image of the overall development.

The major goal of the exterior lighting should be to help make the development feel safe and identify and accent key elements in the project's design.

Lighting poles and structures should be appropriately scaled and styled for the project. Pedestrian areas should have poles twelve to fourteen feet high and parking areas should have poles twenty to twenty-five feet high. The pole heights will determine the overall spacing of the poles and luminaries should be shielded to reduce glare. Off-site illumination to adjacent properties shall not exceed 0.2 footcandles as measured at the property line.

The coordinated style of the parking and pedestrian light fixtures should be compatible with the building lighting which will allow for a contiguous appearance for the project. The overall quality of the lighting can be enhanced by using the lamp color output which will be similar to adjacent street lighting.