

# Chapter 4

## **IMPLEMENTING THE VISION: COMMERCIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES**

## IMPLEMENTING THE VISION – COMPREHENSIVE DESIGN GUIDELINES

The design guidelines are intended to convey overall best practices. These are additional to specific guidelines tailored to a specific place or neighborhood. However, conditions vary from site to site, and there may be a more appropriate solution that is in conflict with or is not included in the guidelines. ***Innovative design solutions that are consistent with the spirit of the design principles identified in this document will be considered and encouraged.***

### COMMERICAL DESIGN GUIDELINES

There is more than one kind of commercial area. These guidelines focus on improving the pedestrian experience for all commercial areas. Much of the commercial development should refer to the “Main Street Corridor” section that provides a focus for a vital street front. For commercial areas that are more auto-oriented, please refer to the “Suburban Corridor” section at the end of this chapter.

### MAIN STREET CORRIDOR

**Site Planning - Site planning involves a careful analysis of the opportunities and constraints of the site, including existing site features such as mature trees, topography, and drainage patterns. The components of site development extend beyond building placement and configuration, including topography, surrounding uses, retaining walls, landscape design, hardscape considerations, and parking.**



**Buildings at front property line provide active pedestrian-oriented environment**

#### A. Building Location

1. To focus activity along the street in a quality, human-scaled environment, buildings should be located at or near the front property line.
2. Buildings should be set back to provide a minimum of 12 feet from the curb to enable sufficient sidewalk and parkway.



**Outdoor dining, awnings, storefront glazing, and landscaping add to inviting streetscape**

3. Coordinate setbacks with the building design and streetscape.
4. Site buildings in relation to topography and adjacent structures.
5. Outdoor dining adjacent to the sidewalk is encouraged.
6. For sidewalk dining that may encroach into the Public Right-of-Way, an encroachment permit must be obtained from the Public Works Department.
7. A continuous, unobstructed path of travel, 5' wide minimum, must be provided along the sidewalk as required by ADA. The path of travel need not be in a straight line but should be maneuverable by a person in a wheelchair.

**B. Usable Open Spaces**



**Well-scaled courtyard with seating landscaping and other amenities enhances commercial development**

1. New development is encouraged to create site plans that incorporate outdoor pedestrian spaces and courtyards.
2. Outdoor areas should be integrated into the site design of new developments, surrounding buildings and existing open spaces.
3. The development of these spaces should consider the site arrangement of neighboring properties, including opportunities for pedestrian connections between larger-scale projects.
4. Outdoor areas should be visible from the sidewalk, and promote pedestrian orientation.



**Landscape enhances outdoor space and sidewalk**

5. Outdoor pedestrian spaces may include both public and private improvements.
6. Open space should contain high-quality hardscape and softscape elements, such as strategically placed shade structures, fountains or art work.
7. Seating should be considered in the design of open space areas.
8. Where buildings are greater than 100 lineal feet of frontage, usable open space should be incorporated into the design to break up the building massing as viewed from the street.

### **C. Access and Parking**



**Landscaping screens parking while enhancing pedestrian experience**

1. If there is an alley, vehicular access should be from the alley.
2. On corner lots where alley access is not available, vehicular access should be from the street that is less pedestrian-oriented.
3. Curb cuts should be the minimum width and number required by Zoning.
4. Common parking areas with shared access for adjacent buildings are encouraged.
5. To minimize disruption of commercial activity, service and loading should be from the alley or side street during business hours.
6. Space for landscaping should be provided adjacent to alley garage entries where feasible. Typically, pockets of landscaping can be provided between garages.
7. Consider topography and adjacent uses when siting parking areas.
8. If parking is located near or at the street, a landscape area with 3 foot tall planting is required between the sidewalk and parking area.
9. Driveways should be located away from street intersections and minimize conflict with traffic on public streets.

10. Include decorative paving materials and use of color in sidewalk and pavement areas at pedestrian/automobile contact zones.
11. Minimize pedestrian and automobile conflict by incorporating a dedicated pedestrian pathway through the parking lot area in larger projects.
12. Utilize permeable paving, landscaping, drainage swales and other techniques to reduce stormwater runoff.
13. Parking areas should maximize canopy trees and use light colored pavement to minimize heat island effect.

#### **D. Parking Structures**



**Parking structure elevations should be inventively designed**

1. Where appropriate, parking structures should be lined with retail or other commercial uses at the ground level.
2. Landscaping or open space areas should be provided between the street and the parking structure when commercial uses are not feasible.
3. Parking structures should be designed with as much care and interest as any other structure. Special attention should be paid to elevations, including screens, marquees or other architectural elements to enliven the facades of the parking structure.

#### **E. Landscaping**

1. Provide landscape design complementary to site and building design in all open spaces on the site.
2. Utilize native planting where possible, and drought tolerant planting where natives are not feasible.

## F. Walls and Fences



**Provide landscaping to buffer site walls**

1. Use of walls and/or fences at street side of commercial properties is discouraged.
2. If a wall or fence is necessary, it should be fully integrated into the project design.
3. Utilize planting instead of site walls wherever possible.

## G. Retaining Walls

1. Minimize the use of retaining walls to modify landform.
2. Use decorative material that complements the landscape design or the building.
3. Provide landscaping to minimize the visual impact of retaining walls.

## H. Screening



**Equipment screening complements building**

1. **Mechanical equipment should be placed out of public view. If equipment is located on the roof, it should be fully screened by a parapet or other method integral to the overall roof and building design.**
2. **Trash bins should be stored out of public view in a designated trash enclosure that is integrated into the design of the project.**

**Mass and Scale-New projects should fit well with surrounding building fabric. While new proposals need not copy existing development, mass and scale should respect adjacent building context.**



Larger buildings appear properly scaled in relation to one-story buildings

- A. Relate new buildings (especially if larger than existing context) to existing adjacent buildings through use of proportion, transition, or other design feature/s.
- B. Building heights should follow existing topography.
- C. Provide for stepped retaining walls and/or minimize the use of retaining walls to alter grades.
- D. Identify open space, building solid and void, overall configuration in relation to overall concept, relationship to adjacent structures and best functional project design.



Big box with open and active street frontage

- E. Typical development patterns along the street vary from 50 to 100 feet. Building massing should reflect the development pattern of the neighborhood.

- F. To provide appropriate massing with surrounding buildings and a human scale, long, continuous segments of building walls facing the public street should be avoided. Provide a break in massing or architectural solution to break up the massing as viewed from the street.
- G. As new development is often larger in size and mass than existing neighboring structures, a building may need to be expressed as a series of separate volumes. A variety of architectural strategies can be used to express or break up the massing of a building including: variations in building height, setbacks and stepbacks, recessed volumes, or breaking up the overall mass into separate forms.
- H. New projects can be larger than existing development, provided the mass and scale of the new proposal is appropriate and transitions well to the existing context.
  - Provide an appropriate massing concept for proper fit into the neighborhood.
  - Design of larger buildings should diminish apparent size and scale, especially as viewed from the street.

**Design and Detailing-The design and detailing of the building are paramount to a quality environment. Detailing and choice of materials should reinforce the overall project design. Architectural design elements, details and materials should be consistent throughout a project, recognizing that a building is 3-dimensional and must be well designed on all sides.**

#### A. Entryways

1. Face building entrances and openings onto the sidewalk to promote pedestrian activity.
2. Recess building entries for visual interest and to provide a sense of arrival to the structure.
3. Provide maximum transparency (windows, pedestrian entrances) on first floor facades, with the objective to obtain 50% transparency in this pedestrian area.

#### B. Windows

1. The ground floor along the street in commercial districts should be lined with commercial storefronts.
2. In order to provide an open and active street front, a minimum of 12-foot floor-to-floor height for the ground floor is encouraged. Consider providing 15-foot floor-to-floor height in pedestrian-oriented areas.
3. Face display windows toward the sidewalk to create visual interest.
4. Design windows to coordinate with the architectural design of the building.
5. Use of opaque and reflective glass surfaces is discouraged.
6. Use of “security bars” is discouraged, especially along the street front.



**Recessed storefronts with canopies and consistent detailing provide simple yet sophisticated design**



### C. Finish Materials



**Recessed entry with different materials highlighting building idea**

1. Reinforce overall building design with high quality design and detailing.
2. Change materials on building facades to create an overall component of color and variety to maintain human interest.
3. Use high quality materials, especially on the ground floor facing the street.
4. “Wrap” finish materials around exterior corners (to be terminated at an inside corner) to alleviate the appearance of a “wallpaper” application.
5. Use of exposed concrete masonry units and split faced concrete masonry units is discouraged as a primary building material.

### D. Wall Thickness



**Recessed window openings with sills above stone base provides quality detailing for well-designed facade**

Expression of wall thickness can be achieved by providing recessed windows and entries to exaggerate wall thickness.

### E. Color

1. Provide a color and materials that work well together and complement the building and site design.
2. Use of the following colors/materials is discouraged:
  - Highly reflective materials and colors, especially those that produce glare
  - Garish or overly bright colors
  - Large expanses of dark color surfaces



**Outdoor dining, awnings, street furniture and landscaping provide a welcoming, active, pedestrian-oriented street on Honolulu**

### F. Awnings

1. If awnings are proposed, they should be designed to coordinate with the architectural style of the building, generally avoiding long and continuous treatments.
2. A solid color with matte finish is recommended rather than bright colors, unless used sparingly as an accent.

### G. Paving Materials

1. Use of decorative paving treatments is encouraged at building entrances, walkways and at automobile and pedestrian contact zones.
2. Keep paving patterns simple and related to the architectural theme of the building.
3. Appropriate paving materials include masonry block pavers, brick, stone, granite, concrete and ceramic tile.
4. Textured concrete finishes and/or integrally colored surfaces may be enhanced by scoring or accented with contrasting paving materials.
5. Relate color/s to the color scheme of the building.
6. Use of soft paving materials (i.e., Grass Crete) is encouraged when appropriate to the site.
7. Concrete bands may be used to define the edge as a transitional tool between differing materials.



**Decorative paving is encouraged to highlight building and site features**

## H. Roof Forms

1. Use roofline configurations to provide visual interest and de-emphasize a building's mass.
2. Roof forms should be consistent with the building design style.
3. Continue any decorative roof treatments, such as parapet details or coping, around the building or terminate in a logical manner. Using decorative roof treatments only in locations that are visible from a street or alley is not appropriate.

## SUBURBAN CORRIDOR

**Site Planning** - Site planning involves a careful analysis of the opportunities and constraints of the site, including existing site features such as mature trees, topography, and drainage patterns. The components of site development extend beyond building placement and configuration, including topography, surrounding uses, retaining walls, landscape design, hardscape considerations, and parking.



**Building located behind parking with landscaping at the street to enhance pedestrian experience**

### A. Building Location

1. In the Suburban Corridor, buildings may be located near the front of the lot with parking behind, or toward the back of the lot with the parking in front.
2. Regardless of building location, ground floor facing the street should have an open appearance.
3. If the proposal is for a corner site, the building should be located at or near the corner.
4. Coordinate building improvements with trees, bus stops and other elements in the Public Right of Way.

## B. Usable Open Spaces



**Building set back from the sidewalk for landscaping and outdoor dining to enliven the street and enhance shopping center**

1. Consider exterior open space at or near the street to enhance the pedestrian experience, but allow flexibility for open space for new development.
2. Well-planned, exterior open space with well-designed landscaping is important to the overall project design.

## C. Parking



**Utilize permeable paving, landscaping, swales and other techniques to reduce stormwater runoff**

1. Parking may be in front or behind the building.
2. If there is an alley, vehicular access should be from the alley.
3. On corner lots where alley access is not available, vehicular access should be from the street that is less pedestrian-oriented.
4. Curb cuts should be the minimum width and number required by Zoning.
5. Common parking areas with shared access for adjacent buildings are encouraged.
6. Space for landscaping should be provided adjacent to alley garage entries where feasible. Typically, pockets of landscaping can be provided between garages.
7. Consider topography and adjacent uses when siting parking areas.
8. If parking is located near or at the street, a landscape area with 3 foot tall planting is required between the sidewalk and parking area.
9. Driveways should be located away from street intersections and minimize conflict with traffic on public streets.
10. Include decorative paving materials and use of color in sidewalk and pavement areas at pedestrian/automobile contact zones.
11. Minimize pedestrian and automobile conflict by incorporating a dedicated pedestrian pathway through the parking lot area in larger projects.

12. Utilize permeable paving, landscaping, drainage swales and other techniques to reduce stormwater runoff.
13. Parking areas should maximize canopy trees and use light colored pavement to minimize heat island effect.

**D. Landscaping**



**Landscaping to screen parking lot and enhance pedestrian experience**

1. Landscaping should be provided near sidewalk to improve pedestrian experience.
2. Provide a landscape buffer between sidewalk and surface parking.
3. Provide sufficient landscaping between commercial development and adjacent residential zones.

**E. Retaining Walls**

Provide for stepped retaining walls and/or minimize the use of retaining walls to alter grades

**Mass and Scale – New projects should fit well with surrounding building fabric. While new projects need not copy existing development, mass and scale should respect adjacent building context.**

- A.** As new development is often larger in size and mass than existing neighboring structures, a building may need to be expressed as a series of separate volume.



**Development broken into several forms to reduce appearance of large-scale building**

- B.** To provide appropriate massing with surrounding buildings and a human scale, long, continuous segments of building walls facing the public street should be avoided.

- C. New development should reflect the existing development pattern. Buildings greater than 100 lineal feet of frontage should include significant breaks and/or sufficient architectural interest to reflect existing development pattern.
- D. New development should have greater architectural interest than existing buildings. Surface detailing should not serve as a substitute for well integrated and distinctive massing.
- E. Encourage buildings with varying roof heights, allowing for architectural elements that may exceed base height where appropriate.
- F. Building heights should follow existing topography.



Buildings should reflect topography and existing development pattern.

- G. Provide for stepped retaining walls and/or minimize the use of retaining walls to alter grades
- H. Building massing should assist in providing effective transitions between commercial and residential zones.

**Design and Detailing –The design and detailing of the building is paramount to a quality environment. Detailing, choice of materials, etc. should reinforce the overall project design. Architectural design elements, details and materials should be consistent throughout a project, recognizing that a building is 3-dimensional and must be well designed on all sides.**

- A. Encourage a variety of architectural styles. Continue to allow the street to have an eclectic feel. Do not prescribe building location, style, open space, etc.



Building details reinforce and enhance overall design

- B. New development should provide architectural interest. A variety of shapes, forms and variation in roof height and form is also important.
- C. Provide effective transitions between commercial and residential zones. This could be in the form of well-designed building envelopes, and/or providing sufficient landscaping as a buffer.



**Building placed at or close to the street with open and transparent elevation toward the street, utilizing quality materials and details**

- D. The ground floor of all buildings should be well-crafted, using quality materials. Elevations that face the street should be open and transparent toward the street, even if set back on the site.
- E. Buildings must be well-designed on all elevations.
- F. **Entryways**  
Entry design should be evident while well integrated into overall building.
- G. **Windows**  
Utilize aluminum or commercial quality storefront for all commercial buildings.
- H. **Finish Materials**  
Utilize quality materials throughout the development. Use a change in materials to emphasize design features.



**Utilize quality materials and changes in materials to emphasize design features.**



**Quality storefront design, usually with a solid base and glass above, is typical of the area.**

**I. Wall Thickness**

Window design should be appropriate to the architectural style. For traditional style buildings, provide sufficient wall thickness to allow windows to be recessed. For modern or contemporary buildings, flush windows are also appropriate.

**J. Color**

Create a color palette appropriate for the architecture and overall setting. Colors for buildings and structures near hillsides should be natural colors.

**K. Awnings**

Awnings may be used to provide shade and identify entries. Canvas awnings are appropriate, but other materials are also encouraged, depending on the architecture and details of the building.

**K. Paving Materials**

Decorative paving should be used for walkways as well as outdoor areas. Permeable paving is encouraged.