

Design Guidelines Checklist

A quick reference to the
City of Vista Design Guidelines

City of Vista
Community Development
Department
Planning Division



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This checklist has been provided as a reference to be used in conjunction with the text of the Design Guidelines. It is not meant to replace the Guidelines, and, because it cannot adequately communicate their underlying principles, cannot act as a replacement for a full reading of the Guidelines text.

Site Planning

Guidelines using the words “encouraged” or “discouraged” are desirable or undesirable, but are not mandatory.

- ◇ The use of perimeter parking drives is strongly discouraged;
- ◇ Long uninterrupted lines of carports, garage doors, or uncovered parking are discouraged;
- ◇ The use of landscaping, walkways, and decorative hardscape to emphasize pedestrian areas is encouraged;
- ◇ Buildings with angled corners or plazas are encouraged at corner locations;
- ◇ Ground-mounting of mechanical equipment, with appropriate wall or landscape screening is encouraged;
- ◇ Freestanding communication facilities are strongly discouraged and are only acceptable when other alternatives do not exist.

Guidelines that embody the word “should” are intended to be applied as stated. An alternative may be considered if it meets or exceeds the intent of the guidelines.

- ◇ Residential developments should prioritize the livability and privacy of future residents;
- ◇ Residential developments should strive to avoid monotony in the streetscape by utilizing variable front and side yard setbacks, as well as variable building and lot widths;
- ◇ Site plan and architectural design should protect views and natural topography whenever possible;
- ◇ Development proposals should exhibit respect for the scale, proportion and character of surroundings areas;
- ◇ Gated communities should be well-marked with distinctive entry treatments that are carried through and around a development;

- ◇ All signage components shall be integrated with one another and with the building architecture and site plan design;
- ◇ All proposed signage shall be submitted concurrently with the site plan for development;
- ◇ Signage shall be formally reviewed concurrently with the proposed site plan and building architecture.

Signage

Guidelines using the words “encouraged” or “discouraged” are desirable or undesirable, but are not mandatory.

- ◇ Externally-illuminated signs are encouraged for all development types, and are especially appropriate for projects within the downtown area and in areas allowing mixed use development;
- ◇ Use of creative means of internal sign illumination is encouraged;
- ◇ Pin mounting of sign letters is strongly encouraged;
- ◇ Use of hanging signs is encouraged where there are building overhangs or covered walkways;
- ◇ Use of decorative iron and wood sign brackets is encouraged.

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- ◇ Signage should have a three-dimension quality;
- ◇ Size should be reasonable, only large enough to be legible to pedestrians and motorists within the practical viewshed of adjacent roadways and pedestrian spaces;
- ◇ Text should be simple and direct, typically confined to one line and conveying only the name of the business;
- ◇ Signs typically should not incorporate more than three colors;
- ◇ In multi-story building applications, projecting signage should be used to advertise first floor businesses only;
- ◇ The text of window signage should be limited to the business name and a brief message identifying the principal product or service or conveying other routine information (e.g. business hours).

Guidelines using the words “shall” or “will” are compulsory, and must be included in the project’s design.

- ◇ New development proposing more than one sign shall submit a comprehensive sign program detailing all proposed signage;

- ◇ Whenever possible, new structures should be articulated and/or clustered to create plazas and pedestrian malls. When clustering is impractical, a visual link should be established between separate structures through the use of an arcade system, trellis or other structure. This applies to pad as well as inline buildings;
 - ◇ Clustering of buildings can create increased opportunities for privacy and open space and should be used whenever practicable or possible;
 - ◇ Building orientation, placement of windows and doors, and pedestrian facilities should recognize internal and external connections;
 - ◇ Multiple panel door designs, windows or architectural detailing should be used to differentiate adjacent garages within a residential development;
 - ◇ Views of open space, major landforms or special landmarks should be protected and enhanced;
 - ◇ Parking spaces and aisles in commercial developments should be setback from the street entry a minimum of 50-feet;
 - ◇ Parking and circulation layouts of adjoining commercial developments should be coordinated and interconnected wherever possible;
 - ◇ Direct pedestrian linkages to adjacent residential areas should be made wherever appropriate;
 - ◇ Parking in attached residential developments should be located as near to the units they serve as possible. Guest parking should be located conveniently throughout the community, serving all units adequately and easily;
 - ◇ Sidewalks should be built on both sides of entry drives when possible, and never on less than one side;
 - ◇ Pedestrian-only pathways from parking areas should be provided in order to remove pedestrians from vehicle lanes;
 - ◇ Adverse auto-oriented impacts of residential developments should be mitigated for by well-thought out provision of pedestrian amenities;
 - ◇ Vehicular entry points to parking lots should include landscaping and incorporate paving accents where the driveway crosses the public sidewalk;
 - ◇ Driveways should not be the most prominent feature of a residential development, and should be kept to the minimum number and width required for the project;
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- ◇ Whenever possible, parking lot entries should be located on side streets or alleys in order to minimize conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles;
- ◇ Parking areas should be designed to minimize the need for pedestrians to cross parking aisles and landscaped islands to reach building entries;
- ◇ Pedestrian circulation should be clearly delineated and separated from automobile circulation;
- ◇ Walkways should be well-marked by means of human-scale signage and lighting, along with distinctive paving and landscape planting treatments;
- ◇ Layout of walkways should anticipate pedestrians' desired movements and should provide direct routes for them;
- ◇ Meandering sidewalks or walkways should contain only shallow curves to avoid frustrating pedestrians with unnecessary detours;
- ◇ Facilities such as plazas, courtyards, outdoor café areas and covered pedestrian walkways should provide relief from the elements when needed, and should include amenities such as seating (tables and chairs, seating walls), fountains, unique landscape or hardscape, and artwork;
- ◇ Every feature of pedestrian facilities should be human-scale, including signage, lighting and plantings;
- ◇ Higher degrees of architectural detail should be provided in courtyards and other pedestrian spaces when compared to other spaces;
- ◇ Pedestrian spaces should be enhanced by planting accents such as trees, shrubs and/or vines espaliered against wall surfaces, flower beds, window boxes, and hanging pots;
- ◇ Multi-family development projects should provide well-appointed outdoor common areas which are accessible and usable to residents of all ages;
- ◇ Grading and utility layouts should be designed with the end goal of seamless integration into the site surroundings;
- ◇ Manufactured slopes over 5 feet in height should be designed to reflect the appearance of surrounding natural hillsides and to avoid long flat-planed surfaces;
- ◇ Tops and toes of manufactured slopes should be contoured and landscaped to blend into adjacent terrain. A smooth transition should be made where the planes of manufactured

Lighting

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- ◇ Use of exterior lighting to accent architectural features and landscape elements is encouraged.

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- ◇ Lighting is an essential design element which should be addressed at project initiation and not left to the implementation phase;
- ◇ Lighting facilities should be an appropriate mix of site and pedestrian-scaled facilities;
- ◇ Fixtures should complement the architectural style and be compatible with the development in which they are located;
- ◇ All lighting fixtures within the same development should be from the same family of fixtures with respect to design, materials, color/finish and color of light;
- ◇ Decorative accent lighting and fixtures above the minimum one foot-candle illumination levels of surrounding parking lots should be provided at vehicle driveways, entry throats, pedestrian paths, plazas, and other activity areas;
- ◇ Wall-mounted lights should not extend above the height of the wall or parapet on which they are mounted;
- ◇ Parking lot lighting should be no taller than what is required to provide safe, well-lit parking lots as established by a photometric study.

- ◇ Corner buildings should include storefront design features for at least 50% of the wall area on the sidewalk;
- ◇ Each storefront should be treated like as a small building, with its own base, roofline, and door and window pattern;
- ◇ Storefronts should be based on modules approximately 25 feet wide;
- ◇ Storefront windows should be as large as possible and at least 18 inches off the ground;
- ◇ Tops of walls should receive adequate attention;
- ◇ Roofs are powerful in creating the visual quality of the streetscape, and should be designed as an integral component of building form;
- ◇ Roofline elements, including parapet walls, should be carried around all elevations;
- ◇ Flat roofs should include ornamental cornices and edge details;
- ◇ Material alterations should occur at locations where wall planes change;
- ◇ Changes in materials should occur at inside corners;
- ◇ Finish materials should be appropriate to the building's architectural style; similarly, appropriate combinations of materials should be used;
- ◇ Exterior materials and architectural details should relate to each other in logical ways;
- ◇ Accent materials should be used to highlight building features and provide visual interest;
- ◇ Whenever possible, materials with integral color, such as brick, should be left natural;
- ◇ One dominant color should be used for the building walls;
- ◇ Roofing materials should generally be a mixture of lighter and darker colors;
- ◇ With two-piece tiles, mud grouting should be placed between the stacked tiles;
- ◇ Mechanical equipment should not be visible from any angle or any height outside of the building;
- ◇ The method of screening should be architecturally integrated with the structure in terms of materials, color, shape and size;
- ◇ Awnings should be made of durable materials which will not fade.

and natural slopes intersect;

- ◇ Aesthetic impacts of drainage terraces and down drains should be softened by the use of river rock, colored concrete, or other treatments which produce a more natural appearance than do standard drainage devices;
- ◇ Solid trash enclosure covers should be integrated into decorative overhead structures such as trellises;
- ◇ Utilities which are added after project opening, such as communication facilities, should be integrated into the existing structures and hidden from view;
- ◇ Designers should utilize interesting forms, as well as colors, textures and materials in site circulation, site furnishings and landscaping, as well as building architecture;
- ◇ Arcs and angles utilized in building architecture should be carried into hardscape and planting as appropriate to create attractive and varied spaces;
- ◇ A palette of materials, colors and textures should be used in a unified approach to all components of project design;
- ◇ Interior streets of multi-family developments should be gently curving, especially if necessary to conform to existing topography and provide visual relief. Long straight streets should be avoided.

Guidelines using the words "shall" or "will" are compulsory, and must be included in the project's design.

- ◇ Site planning shall address off-site conditions and shall minimize the use of elements which prohibit or complicate connections to offsite facilities; all proposed connections shall be fully illustrated on plans;
- ◇ Physical and visual links shall be established from the site to the sidewalk as an extension of the internal pedestrian circulation system;
- ◇ Whenever feasible, site plans shall be designed so that walkways connect individual buildings directly, without forcing pedestrians to mix with vehicular traffic;
- ◇ Systems of internal pedestrian walkways shall be included on all commercial and residential projects;
- ◇ Entry drives shall have an adjacent pedestrian path;
- ◇ A hierarchy of parking drive-ways shall be created;

- ◇ Where it is necessary for pedestrians to cross landscape areas, those areas shall be treated with decorative hardscape;
- ◇ The creation of outdoor spaces shall be fundamental to the development of site plans;
- ◇ Buildings shall be street adjacent when appropriate;
- ◇ Utilities shall be integrated into the building design and all utilities not placed underground must be effectively screened;
- ◇ Utility planning, including the siting of all facilities, including trash enclosures, shall be accomplished on the site development plan;
- ◇ Trash enclosures shall be directly accessible via alleys or driveways whenever possible, and shall be located substantially away from public views, pedestrian, and circulation areas.

Architecture

Guidelines using the words “encouraged” or “discouraged” are desirable or undesirable, but are not mandatory.

- ◇ Attached ground floor covered walkways such as verandas, pergolas and arcades are encouraged;
- ◇ Building recesses are encouraged;
- ◇ Elements that increase natural lighting, such as clerestory windows, skylights or greenhouse windows and wells, are strongly encouraged;
- ◇ Long, blank, unarticulated building walls over 25 feet in length are strongly discouraged;
- ◇ Blank, windowless walls are strongly discouraged. If windowless walls are proposed, appropriate wall articulation and other enhancing design features shall be incorporated into the design;
- ◇ Pitched roofs – either gable, shed, or hip – are encouraged;
- ◇ Roof designs which include offset roof planes, eave heights and rooflines are encouraged.

Guidelines that embody the word “should” are intended to be applied as stated. An alternative may be considered if it meets or exceeds the intent of the guidelines.

- ◇ Buildings should be designed to reinforce pedestrian scale;
- ◇ Each building should be designed with a well-defined base, a mid-section body, and a top story (roofline);
- ◇ Design features should be consistent on all elevations of a building;
- ◇ Multi-tenant buildings should communicate a balanced rhythm;
- ◇ Building entrances should be oriented toward walkways but should be designed to minimize conflicts between passers-by and people entering or leaving the building;
- ◇ Primary building entries should be easy to identify;
- ◇ Entries should be inviting in appearance and covered or inset to provide weather protection;