

# DESIGN GUIDELINES

## Columbus Citywide Planning Policies

### FIRST EDITION

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# Design Guidelines

## INTRODUCTION

The C2P2 Design Guidelines are recommendations for the placement and design of development (what development should look like) including topics such as connectivity, setbacks, parking, open space, and natural resources. The guidelines include specific standards for design, but are intended to allow for flexibility in application. Rezoning or variance applications are reviewed for consistency with Columbus Citywide Planning Policies, including the Design Guidelines, Land Use Policies, and Land Use Plan (see also *About C2P2*, pp. 8-11).

It is important to note that the C2P2 Design Guidelines are city policy and do not replace the zoning code and its legislatively adopted standards. The guidelines do not replace regulations for traffic management, storm water and sewer management, or parkland dedication. These regulations are managed by the Department of Public Service, Department of Public Utilities, and the Recreation and Parks Department, respectively. Additionally, the guidelines do not replace FAA and State notification requirements for construction in the vicinity of airports. Regulations regarding airports are managed by the FAA and Ohio Department of Transportation.





## RESIDENTIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES

### GENERAL RESIDENTIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES

1. The appropriateness of infill development should be measured in terms of height, width, setbacks, and lot coverage. Projects that are proposed at a density higher than the recommended land use may be supported if they include a high level of site and architectural design.
2. Sensitive site design, cluster development and other design approaches should be used to preserve open space, natural resources, and other ecologically sensitive areas.
3. Building materials should be of high quality and durability, such as traditional masonry, stone, stucco, wood, etc.
4. Front facades should be designed to provide aesthetic appeal through the appropriate use and placement of doors and windows.
5. Development adjacent to parkland should be oriented in such a way that it faces the park (houses should not back up to parkland).
6. Lights should have fully shielded, recessed lamps directed downward to prevent glare and shine above the horizontal plane.
7. Building owners/developers are encouraged to conserve and rehabilitate historic buildings and architectural elements and to consult the Historic Preservation Office regarding best practices in maintaining and rehabilitating historic structures.

### SINGLE AND TWO UNIT

1. New single and two-unit housing should be oriented to the street and reflect the prevailing setback and spacing of nearby homes, as appropriate.
2. The design and character of new development, including homes, additions, and garages, should be appropriate and based on the principal and nearby structures in terms of height, width, setbacks, lot coverage, roof pitch, other.
3. Garages should be located and accessed from the rear of the property for those sites with alley access.
4. Accessory buildings (including, but not limited to, detached garages) should be located to the rear of the principal building.



### SINGLE AND TWO UNIT CONTINUED

5. Front porches are encouraged.
6. Attached garages facing front elevations should not exceed 40 percent of the home's width (including the garage) and be set back at least two feet from the front elevation. In situations where it is not feasible to set back the garage from the front elevation, a functional front porch of at least 100 square feet should extend beyond the face of the garage. Additionally, side facing garages should provide windows on the front elevation of the home. Single bay garage doors and/or garage doors with windows are preferred.

### MULTIUNIT

1. The primary facade on the ground level of multiunit buildings should include entrances, stoops, porches, balconies or other features to contribute to street activity.
2. Multiunit buildings should incorporate building articulation through the use of bays, balconies, cornice lines, and varying rooflines.
3. Multiunit development should incorporate plazas and courtyards which are open to and visible from the primary street.
4. Variation in building design is encouraged for multiunit developments with multiple buildings.
5. Building height transitions should be used to create a scale and massing that is appropriate based on the surrounding uses.
6. Setbacks of higher stories from the front facade should be considered for taller buildings to lessen their visual impact.
7. Multiunit development should include usable open space as described in the Open Space guidelines. Neither required setbacks nor stormwater detention basins substitute for recommended open space.
8. Multiunit development should face public streets and open space. Parking lots should be placed behind or, if necessary, next to buildings.
9. In urban areas, roof pitches should be appropriate based on nearby contributing building's roof pitch.



### OPEN SPACE

1. Open space should be integrated into new development, serving in one or more of the following ways: an organizational element, a central green space, connection to adjacent open space, protection of natural areas, and/or as a buffer along scenic roadways.
2. Open space should include landscaping, trees and connections to sidewalks or trails as appropriate. The design and placement of landscaping should consider the type of open space, its relationship to the built environment and the best use of the space.
3. Usable open space should be incorporated along bodies of water (streams, rivers, etc.) for active or passive recreational use. When appropriate, opportunities to connect to the regional trail system should be pursued (see also *Natural Resources* section).
4. Development proposals should clearly delineate areas set aside for stormwater management.
5. Neither required stormwater detention basins nor setbacks substitute for recommended open space.
6. Development should address open space—buildings should front parks and open space.

### PARKING

1. Requests for parking reductions, including those beyond that provided by applicable overlay provisions, will be considered based on:
  - a. the presence of on-street parking,
  - b. mixed use development pattern of surrounding area,
  - c. pedestrian accessibility,
  - d. access to transit,
  - e. extent of variance requested,
  - f. size and nature of use,
  - g. potential impact on adjacent residential uses, and
  - h. provision of pedestrian and bicycle facilities beyond that required by code.
2. Shared parking arrangements are encouraged, particularly between land uses with differing peak hours.



### PARKING CONTINUED

3. The use of green technologies to manage stormwater runoff in parking lots, subject to city engineering requirements, is encouraged. Examples include rain gardens, bio-swales and pervious pavement.
4. Bicycle parking should be incorporated into development projects as required by code. Additional consideration should also be given to including supporting facilities in multiunit, office and mixed use developments.
5. Structured parking, designed to minimize visual impacts and buffered from adjacent residential, should be considered for high density residential, mixed use, office, or institutional projects.
6. Parking structures should not front primary corridors, but should instead be placed at the rear of development.
7. Parking lots should be hidden to the greatest extent possible by locating it to the rear or side of a building.

### CONNECTIVITY

1. Development should connect to the public sidewalk, bikeway network, adjacent parks, and multi-use trail network. Within a given site, an interconnected series of streets, sidewalks, and paths should be provided.
2. Connectivity within and among developments to parks and open space should be a design priority.
3. Connectivity between developments via public streets is encouraged. In the case connectivity via public streets is not feasible, pedestrian connections should be considered.
4. Traditional suburban curvilinear block and street design should be avoided unless it facilitates preservation of natural features.
5. Maintenance of existing street and alley grids is encouraged. Evaluation of potential disposal of right-of-way (ROW) should consider whether the subject ROW is improved and the degree to which it provides connectivity not otherwise available.



### LANDSCAPING, BUFFERING AND SCREENING

1. Landscape installations should enhance buildings, create and define public and private spaces, and provide shade, aesthetic appeal, and environmental benefits.
2. Buffering of adjacent uses, particularly lower density residential, should use elements such as existing and new vegetation, fencing, masonry walls, mounding, orientation of residential garages, and placement of site lighting such that it avoids spillage into adjacent sites.
3. Landscaping should be used to support storm water management goals for filtration, percolation, and erosion control consistent with the Department of Public Utilities Stormwater Manual.
4. Plant species should be adapted to urban conditions. Native species are encouraged and invasive species should be avoided.
5. Existing landscaping should be preserved and integrated into site design where feasible (see also *Natural Resources* section).
6. Screening should be provided between residential and non-residential uses.
7. Service and loading zones should be located to the rear, side, or in an internal location to reduce visibility and noise and should be screened appropriately.
8. Parking lots should be screened from view from public right-of-way and adjacent development. Screening should include a combination of the following items: walls, mounds, trees, shrubs, and/or landscaping.
9. Chain link fencing is not appropriate for screening.
10. Street trees should be provided as part of new development, with guidance from the Recreation and Parks Department.



## NATURAL RESOURCES

1. Development should be appropriately sited to conserve natural features as integral components of development or as part of public or private park and recreation systems.
2. Protected natural areas should be clearly delineated from development to prevent encroachment, particularly in the case of single-unit homes (e.g. split-rail fencing and bollards).
3. Usable open space should be incorporated along bodies of water (streams, rivers, etc.) for active or passive recreational use. When appropriate, opportunities to connect to the regional trail system should be pursued (see also *Open Space* section).
4. Stream corridors, wetlands, ravines and the 100-year floodplain should be protected in a natural state (more specific methodology is found in the Department of Public Utilities Stormwater Manual).
5. Mature trees provide significant environmental benefits and should be preserved whenever possible. Tree preservation measures should be density neutral.
6. Alternative “green” methods to manage stormwater should be considered (i.e. bio-swales, vegetated swales, native landscaping, naturalized detention and retention basins, pervious surfaces), consistent with Department of Public Utilities Stormwater Manual.

## PUBLIC AND PRIVATE ART

1. Art placed on city property or within public right-of-way must be approved by and meet the evaluation criteria of the Columbus Art Commission, as provided in City Code.
2. Existing art incorporated into structures should be conserved where feasible.
3. Integration of art in larger development projects is encouraged, as is placement of art in public spaces, such as plazas.
4. Works of art should be designed with consideration to maintenance and durability.



## COMMERCIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES

### GENERAL COMMERCIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES

1. Buildings should be generally parallel to and facing the street, with an entrance door(s) connected to the public sidewalk.
2. A consistent level of detailing and finish should be provided for all sides of a building, allowing for service areas.
3. Building materials should be of high quality and durability, such as traditional masonry, stone, stucco, cedar, etc.
4. Buildings should be articulated by dividing facades into modules or bays, use of piers and columns, recessed and projecting bays, varying rooflines and building setback above cornice line as appropriate.
5. Drive-through pickup windows and coverings should be located to the rear or side of the principal building.
6. Awnings and associated framing systems should be compatible with building design.
7. For multistory buildings, ground floor uses should address and contribute to the street. This can be accomplished through such design elements as door entries, windows, and landscaping.
8. Building owners/developers are encouraged to conserve and rehabilitate historic buildings and architectural elements and to consult the Historic Preservation Office regarding best practices in maintaining and rehabilitating historic structures.

### FACADES

1. Street level facades adjacent to a public sidewalk should be as transparent as possible to create an interesting pedestrian environment, except for residential spaces on ground floors.
2. Street level facades should incorporate a high level of design and material quality.
3. Blank walls should not be presented to primary streets. Buildings with blank walls (without doors or windows) adjacent to side streets and residential areas should use building articulation and landscaping to mitigate impacts on adjacent uses.
4. Design elements should be used to distinguish between street level and upper story windows.



## SETBACKS

1. Buildings in urban areas should generally have a zero foot setback. Consideration of larger setbacks should be based on the incorporation of public spaces, placement of adjacent buildings, and/or unique geometry.
2. Consideration should be given to allow reduced setbacks for commercial buildings in suburban areas when parking and circulation are placed behind the principal structure (see also *Parking* section).

## HEIGHT

1. Requests for a variance in height will be considered based on:
  - a. Site size and situation
  - b. Adjacent uses
  - c. Quality of architectural design and materials
  - d. Parking provision
2. Building height transitions should be used to create scale and massing that is appropriate relative to surrounding uses.
3. The use of a setback from the front, rear and/or side facade(s), or other design strategies, should be used to lessen the visual impact of taller buildings.





## OPEN SPACE

1. Open space should be integrated into new development, serving in one or more of the following ways: an organizational element, a central green space, connection to adjacent open space, protection of natural areas, and/or as a buffer along scenic roadways.
2. Open space should include landscaping, trees and connections to sidewalks or trails as appropriate. The design and placement of landscaping should consider the type of open space, its relationship to the built environment and the best use of the space.
3. Usable open space should be incorporated along bodies of water (streams, rivers, etc.) for active or passive recreational use. When appropriate, opportunities to connect to the regional trail system should be pursued (see also *Natural Resources* section).
4. Development proposals should clearly delineate areas set aside for stormwater management.
5. Neither required stormwater detention basins nor setbacks substitute for recommended open space.
6. Development should address open space—buildings should front parks and open space.



## PARKING

1. Requests for parking reductions, including those beyond that provided by applicable overlay provisions, will be considered based on:
  - a. the presence of on-street parking,
  - b. mixed use development pattern of surrounding area,
  - c. pedestrian accessibility,
  - d. access to transit,
  - e. extent of variance requested,
  - f. size and nature of use,
  - g. potential impact on adjacent residential uses, and
  - h. provision of pedestrian and bicycle facilities beyond that required by code.
2. Shared parking arrangements are encouraged, particularly between land uses with differing peak hours.
3. The use of green technologies to manage stormwater runoff in parking lots, subject to city engineering requirements, is encouraged. Examples include rain gardens, bio-swales and pervious pavement.
4. Bicycle parking should be incorporated into development projects as required by code. Additional consideration should also be given to including supporting facilities in multiunit, office and mixed use developments.
5. Structured parking, designed to minimize visual impacts and buffered from adjacent residential, should be considered for high density residential, mixed use, office, or institutional projects.



### PARKING CONTINUED

6. Parking structures should not front primary corridors, but should instead be placed at the rear of development.
7. Parking lots should be placed to the rear or side of a building and be hidden from view to the greatest extent possible. In situations where a parking lot is proposed in front of a building, the following should be considered:
  - a. Larger shopping centers may incorporate outlot development designed in such a way as to screen parking areas. No parking or circulation aisles should be located between outlot development(s) and the right-of-way.
  - b. Smaller suburban shopping centers (*i.e. strip centers*) should be limited to no more than two rows of parking plus drive aisle between the building and right-of-way.
8. A high level of landscaping and screening should be provided between the right-of-way and parking lot. (See also *Landscaping, Buffering and Screening*)
9. Large commercial parking lots should include a network of pedestrian walkways to provide access to the building (s) and adjacent sidewalk(s).

### CONNECTIVITY

1. Development should connect to the public sidewalk, bikeway network, adjacent parks, and multi-use trail network. Within a given site, an interconnected series of streets, sidewalks, and paths should be provided.
2. Connectivity within and among developments to parks and open space should be a design priority.
3. Connectivity between developments via public streets is encouraged. In the case connectivity via public streets is not feasible, pedestrian connections should be established.
4. Traditional suburban curvilinear block and street design should be avoided unless it facilitates preservation of natural features.
5. Maintenance of existing street and alley grids is encouraged. Evaluation of potential disposal of right-of-way (ROW) should consider whether the subject ROW is improved and the degree to which it provides connectivity not otherwise available.



### LANDSCAPING, BUFFERING AND SCREENING

1. Landscape installations should enhance buildings, create and define public and private spaces, and provide shade, aesthetic appeal, and environmental benefits.
2. Buffering of adjacent uses, particularly lower density residential, should use elements such as existing and new vegetation, fencing, masonry walls, mounding, orientation of residential garages, and placement of site lighting such that it avoids spillage into adjacent sites.
3. Landscaping should be used to support storm water management goals for filtration, percolation and erosion control consistent with the Department of Public Utilities Stormwater Manual.
4. Plant species should be adapted to urban conditions. Native species are encouraged and Invasive species should be avoided.
5. Existing landscaping should be preserved and integrated into site design where feasible (see also *Natural Resources* section).
6. Screening should be provided between residential and non-residential uses.
7. Service and loading zones should be located to the rear, side, or in an internal location to reduce visibility and noise and should be screened appropriately.
8. Parking lots should be screened from view from public right-of-way and adjacent development. Screening should include a combination of the following items: walls, mounds, trees, shrubs, and/or landscaping.
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## NATURAL RESOURCES

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4. Stream corridors, wetlands, ravines and the 100-year floodplain should be protected in a natural state (more specific methodology is found in the Department of Public Utilities Stormwater Manual).
5. Mature trees provide significant environmental benefits and should be preserved whenever possible. Tree preservation measures should be density neutral.
6. Alternative “green” methods to manage stormwater should be considered (i.e. bio-swales, vegetated swales, native landscaping, naturalized detention and retention basins, pervious surfaces), consistent with Department of Public Utilities Stormwater Manual.

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4. Works of art should be designed with consideration to maintenance and durability.



## GRAPHICS

1. In urban areas, blade signs are recommended.
2. In suburban areas, monument style signs are recommended and should not be taller than six feet.
3. Wall signs should not obscure or interfere with architectural lines and details and should be sized to fit in with the building's facade design.
4. New signage should be designed to be a logical and complementary component of the overall design of a storefront.
5. Buildings should not be dominated by graphics. Crowded or cluttered graphics arrangements should be avoided.
6. Signs for storefronts/businesses in the same building/development should be of coordinated design—reinforcing rather than competing with each other.
7. Large commercial developments should utilize integrated signage, with an emphasis on wall signs and central identification signage for the entire development, rather than multiple freestanding signs.
8. Excessively large signs are discouraged.
9. Some types of signs are generally discouraged (or otherwise prohibited in city code), including ad murals, off-premises signs, billboards, signs with flashing lights or bare bulbs, co-op signs, rotating signs, pole signs, automatic changeable copy signs, bench signs, and roof-mounted signs.