

## **SECTION 17.**

### **SITE PLAN REVIEW**

#### **Sec. 17.1. Authority and Purpose.**

Development Plan Review shall be required for certain types of development as described in Section 17.2 below, but will not preclude the need to meet other requirements as contained in the Zoning Ordinance, nor be used to deny a permitted use as provided in Section 5.4. The Development Plan Review requirements of this section are designed to assure safe, orderly and harmonious development of property in a manner that shall:

- (1) Promote public health, safety and general welfare;
- (2) Provide suitable safeguard and consideration for land use and site and architectural design that is compatible with adjacent districts and uses;
- (3) Permit development to an extent commensurate with the availability and capacity of public facilities and services and promote safe circulation of traffic throughout the Town;
- (4) Preserve and protect natural, historic and cultural resources and features and encourage consideration of environmental impacts and mitigative measures;
- (5) Encourage the provision of open space and public access and give due consideration to the quality and design of landscaping;
- (6) Encourage adequate consideration for the proper control of erosion, surface and subsurface drainage and pollution;
- (7) Facilitate orderly and harmonious site development including safe and convenient provision and design of egress and ingress, off-street parking, truck loading, internal circulation, emergency access, refuse disposal, outdoor storage, signing and lighting;
- (8) Comply with the North Smithfield Comprehensive Plan, as amended.

This section is adopted pursuant to RIGL 45-24-49, as amended.

#### **Sec. 17.2. Applicability.**

A site plan review is required by the planning board for all construction relating to business, professional services, manufacturing and multifamily uses. Activities and uses requiring site plan review include the following: The following types of development shall be subject to Development Plan Review:

- (1) Any construction of a non-residential or mixed-use building. .
- (2) Any expansion, alteration of a non-residential or mixed-use structure exceeding 5,000 square feet or site exceeding one acre., or change of use of site, structure, or parking for business, professional services, manufacturing or multifamily uses.
- (3) Any change of use, construction, expansion or alteration that creates a need for over 20 total parking spaces.

- (4) Any proposed development that involves a gasoline service station, or contains a drive-up window (including an Automated Teller Machine).
- (5) Any proposed non-residential or mixed-use for which a special-use permit or Use Variance is being requested.

Proposed developments which meet the thresholds above, but which the Building Inspector, in concurrence with the Town Planner, determines do not have a significant impact on community aesthetics, traffic, public services and utilities, environmental quality, community economics or public welfare may be exempted from the provisions of Development Plan Review. Such determination shall be presented to the Planning Board in the form of a written report.

No building permit shall be issued by the Building Inspector for an activity for which Development Plan Review is required until approval is received from the appropriate permitting authority. The approved plans and other documents shall become part of the building permit application, and shall be binding on any permit issued.

### **Sec. 17.3. Review Process.**

**17.3.1. Review by Planning Board.** Development Plan Review applications involving construction or alteration of non-residential or mixed use buildings less than 5,000 square feet shall be reviewed by the Planning Board pursuant to the same procedures and time periods set forth in ~~Section~~ Article 3-5 of the Land Development and Subdivision Regulations (Regulations) for Minor Subdivisions, as amended. Applications involving construction of buildings or alterations greater than 5,000 square feet shall be reviewed by the Planning Board pursuant to the same procedures and time periods set forth in Article 3-6 of the Regulations for Major Subdivisions, as amended. Any application that is also subject to review as a subdivision or land development project shall be reviewed concurrently under the provisions of both this Section and the Regulations.

While the Planning Board shall assume primary responsibility for processing, review and approval of all Development Plan Review applications, the Board may, from time to time, rely upon the expertise of a development review committee serving at the pleasure of, and as advisory to, the Planning Board. The committee shall have expertise in the areas of architecture, landscape architecture, historic preservation, zoning, construction, planning or allied fields, and shall assist the Planning Board in evaluating overall site design and building design when needed.

**17.3.2. Precedence of Approval between the Planning and Zoning Boards.** For those developments subject to the provisions of this Section that involve an application for a Special-Use Permit or a Use Variance, the Planning Board's final determination shall be in the form of recommendations that shall be forwarded to the permitting authority, i.e. the Zoning Board of Review. For developments which require a Special-Use Permit or a Use Variance, the Planning Board may also, at the request of the applicant, refer the application to the Zoning Board prior to conducting Development Plan Review. In such cases, review by the Zoning Board shall be limited to the use in question until such time as Development Plan Review is undertaken by the Planning Board.

### **Sec. 17.4. Application Contents.**

Every site plan submitted in accordance with this article shall include the following data, details and supporting plans. Plans must be prepared and signed by registered engineers, architects, land

surveyors or landscape architects, as appropriate. The number of pages submitted should depend upon the proposal's size and complexity. All of the requirements must be met in each plan, with notations explaining the reasons for any omissions. Ten (10) copies of the application, plans and materials must be submitted, unless the proposed project requires a Special-Use Permit or Use Variance in which twenty (20) applications must be submitted.

- (1) Name and address of the owner(s), name and addresses of applicant(s) (if different from owner), names and addresses of professionals, date, north point, locus and scale.
- (2) Boundary of the entire tract and any adjacent or contiguous parcels in the same ownership and total acreage encompassed thereby.
- (3) Any existing water courses, wetlands, railroad, street rights-of-way, utility lines, easements, public open spaces, permanent buildings, structures, permanent easements, natural, cultural, historic and archaeological resources including cemeteries or burial grounds or features and municipal boundary lines within 500 feet of the tract.
- (4) Plan drawings:
  - (a) Scale shall be one inch equals 50 feet or other suitable scale as determined by the Administrative Officer.
  - (b) When more than one (1) sheet is required, a cover sheet drawn to suitable scale shall show the whole site and indicate match lines for each page of the plan.
  - (c) Plan will be drawn on sheets no greater than 40 36 inches long by 24 28 inches wide. A margin of two inches on the left and top sides and one inch on the right and bottom sides shall be left around each sheet. Every final plat shall have a space, at least three inches wide and two inches high at the lower left-hand corner of the plan for the Board's approval stamp.
- (5) All building setback lines, easements and rights-of-way. Location and use of all existing and proposed buildings and structures in the development.
- (6) Detail of adjacent properties (abutters) and public ways as will relate to the subject premises, to the neighborhood and to the street pattern.
- (7) Existing and proposed sewers, water mains, culverts, and other underground facilities and utilities within the tract, indicating pipe sizes, grates, manholes, and location.
- (8) Existing and proposed contours at intervals of no greater than two (2) feet.
- (9) Building dimensions indicating exterior of building design and proposed landscaping. No smaller than 1/8" = 1'. Architectural drawings for all buildings, including plans, sections, and exterior elevations. (Architectural rendering may be required and should include such items as materials, color, door and window size and locations, roof and cornice lines, and other major design elements.)
- (10) Landscape plan at the same scale of the site plan, showing limits of work, existing tree lines site furnishings, all proposed landscape features, improvements including planting areas with size and type of stock for each shrub or tree. All landscape plans shall be

stamped by a Landscape Architect.

- (11.) Erosion and sediment control plan (containing all materials as identified in Section 18.13)
- (12) A map showing the proposed circulation patterns, including present and proposed locations, design for ingress, egress, parking, road system, acceleration and deceleration lanes, traffic signs, pavement stripping and markings and pedestrian circulation.
- (13) Location, arrangement and dimensions of truck loading and unloading spaces and docks; how the building will be serviced.
- (14) Construction completion date; the phases, if any to be followed in the construction of the development.
- (15) Location, height, materials of walls, fences and plantings specific for screening purposes.
- (16) Location, size, height and orientation of all signs and exterior lighting on building facades and elsewhere on property.
- (17) Text of Provisions to restrict uses of the property or to establish an association of merchants or property owners by means of lease provisions, covenants or other legal documents the text of such provisions shall be provided.
- (18) All necessary State or Federal permits shall be submitted as part of the Final submission package.

Applications involving a Special-Use Permit or Use Variance shall also submit all other materials specific to their particular request as specified in the Zoning Ordinance.

A filing fee of one hundred (\$100) dollars for structures or uses 5,000 square feet or less; three hundred (\$300) dollars for structures or uses 5,000-20,000 square feet; and five hundred (\$500) dollars for structures or uses over 20,000 square feet.

Additionally, the Planning Board, in its discretion, may retain independent assistance, reviews, consultations, tests and analyses regarding any aspect of or issue related to the application or related to its review of the proposed development, and all such fees, costs and expenses shall be borne by the applicant. A retainer fund paid prior to the retention of such consultants, ~~or~~ experts, or professionals, may be required in the discretion of the Planning Board. In any event, the applicant shall pay all such invoices within seven days, the prior payment of which shall be a condition of any approvals by the Planning Board. Such assistance may include, but not be limited to, the review of overall building and site design, site engineering including drainage, ~~and~~ traffic impacts, evaluation of landscaping, site amenities, environmental, engineering and architectural review.

The need for such review shall be at the discretion of the Planning Board. Amounts paid by the applicant shall not exceed actual costs incurred by the Planning Board. Meeting costs, including but not limited to, advertising and abutter notification, shall also be borne by the applicant, as applicable.

#### **Sec. 17.5. Environmental impact assessment.**

The applicant shall minimize significant emission of noise, dust, fumes, noxious gases, radiation, water pollutants, flooding, erosion, sedimentation, glare and adverse lighting.

The following impact analysis of the proposed development *shall be required* by the Board with respect to on-site and off-site environmental quality:

- (1) Potential impacts on the quality of air, surface water and groundwater adjacent to and/or directly affected by the proposed development (e.g. amount and nature of all industrial and chemical wastes generated).
- (2) On-site and/or off-site flooding and erosion Best Management Practices.
- (3) Off-site hazards from radiological emissions or other hazardous materials.
- (4) Adverse impacts on temperature and wind conditions on the site and adjacent properties.
- (5) Impact on solar access of adjacent properties.
- (6) Off-site noises and vibrations.
- (7) Lighting impacts.
- (8) Evaluation of adequacy of existing or proposed systems and services for water supply and disposal of liquid and solid wastes.
- (9) Impacts on historical (properties, districts, areas) natural, cultural and archaeological resources.
- (10) Consistency and compatibility of proposal with local and regional developmental goals and plans.

#### **Sec. 17.6 . Fiscal impact assessment.**

A fiscal impact analysis of the proposed development shall be required by the Board with respect to the economic impact of Major Land Development Projects on the Town. The Board, at its discretion may require an impact analysis for Minor Land Development Projects. When required, a fiscal impact analysis shall address the following:

- (1) Costs arising from increased demands for public services and infrastructure.
- (2) Benefits from increased tax revenues, employment and value of public infrastructure to be provided.
- (3) Impact of proposed development on the values of adjoining properties.
- (4) Five-year projection of increased Town revenues and costs resulting from the proposed development.

#### **Sec. 17.7. Traffic impact assessment.**

The applicant shall minimize vehicular and pedestrian conflict (i.e., provisions for off-street

loading and unloading of vehicles incidental to the normal operation of the establishment, adequate parking, internal traffic control, and control of flow patterns).

A traffic impact analysis of the proposed development shall be required to evaluate the points of pedestrian and vehicular traffic conflict for all Major Land Development Projects. The Board, at its discretion may require a traffic impact analysis for Minor Land Development Projects. When required, a traffic impact analysis shall address the following:

- (1) Level of service, existing and projected, according to criteria set forth by the Transportation Research Board of the National Research Council in impacted intersections and streets.
- (2) Impact on daily and peak hour traffic.
- (3) Capability of existing and proposed roads to handle gross weight of vehicles.
- (4) Projected pedestrian circulation.

#### **Sec. 17.8. Site and design standards**

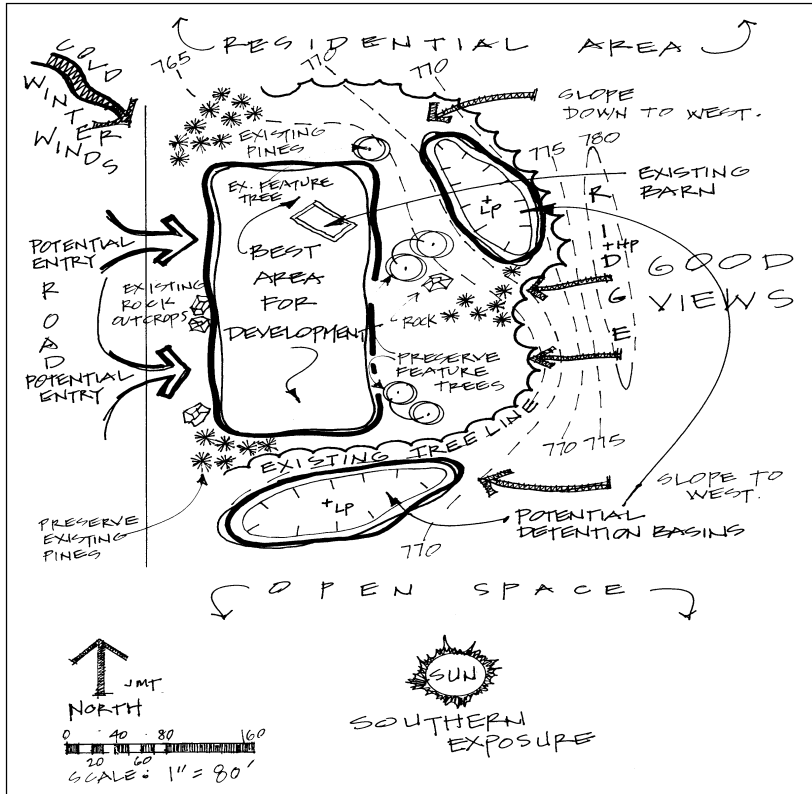
The following standards pertain mainly to land outside of the public right-of-way. Any construction or improvements involving a public right-of-way or utilities in the public right-of-way shall be designed in accordance with the standards contained in the Regulations, incorporated herein by reference.

**17.8.1. Site Planning.** To the maximum extent practicable, development should be located to preserve the natural features of the site, to avoid areas of environmental sensitivity, to minimize alterations of and negative impacts to natural features, historic and cultural resources, and scenic areas. A Site Analysis should be conducted prior to the conceptual site planning process (Figure 1).

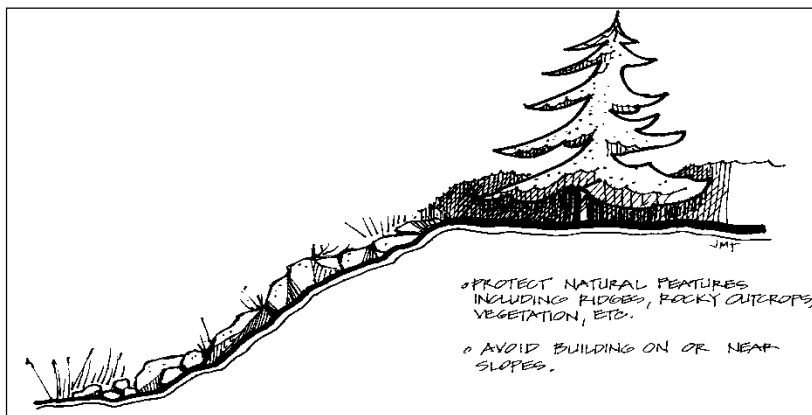
##### **Natural Context**

The following specific areas should be preserved as undeveloped areas in accordance with applicable Federal, State and Town Regulations and Ordinances (Figure 2):

- (1) High value recreational waters
- (2) Steep slopes above 15% as measured over a 10 foot interval
- (3) Habitats for rare, threatened or endangered flora and fauna
- (4) Historically significant structures and sites
- (5) Prime agricultural soils

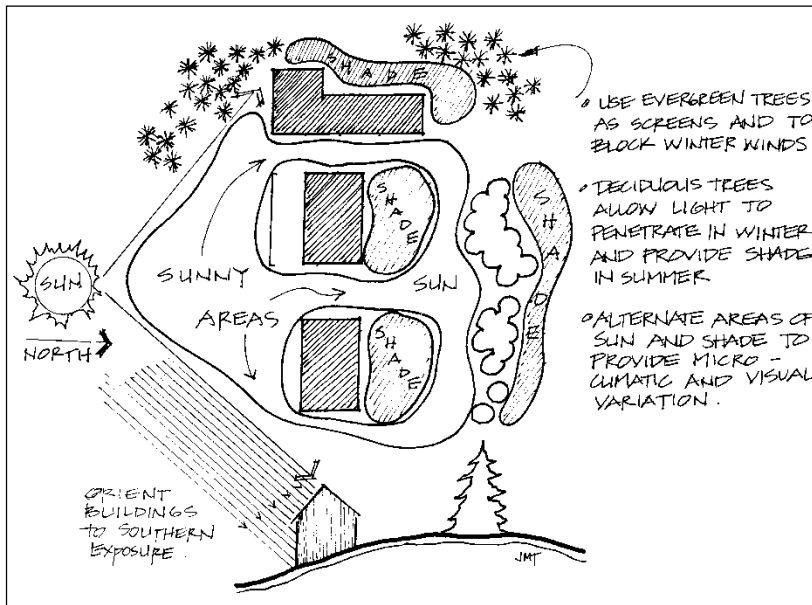


**Figure 1. Example of Site Analysis**



**Figure 2. Protect Natural Features and Slopes**

Development should take advantage of natural solar irradiation through southern exposure and design features in order to reduce energy usage and increase connections to the surrounding environment. Vegetation, berms, and shade structures should be used to provide warmer areas during winter and cooler areas during summer (Figure 3).

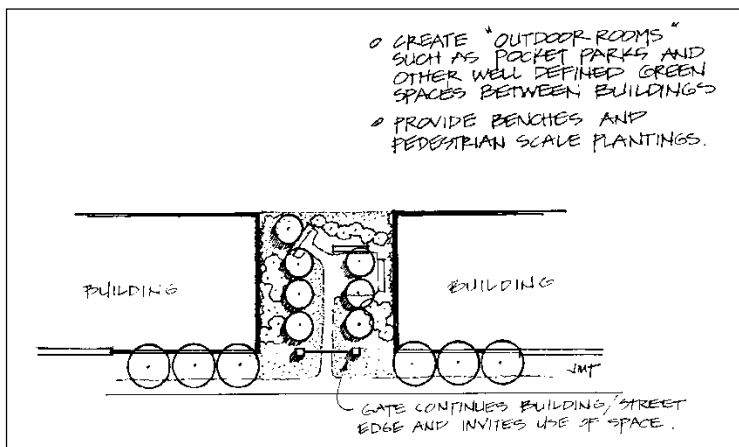


**Figure 3. Climatic Factors**

Utilize the space between buildings as viable “outdoor rooms” which can function as pedestrian transition areas, provide building connections and project coherence (Figure 4).

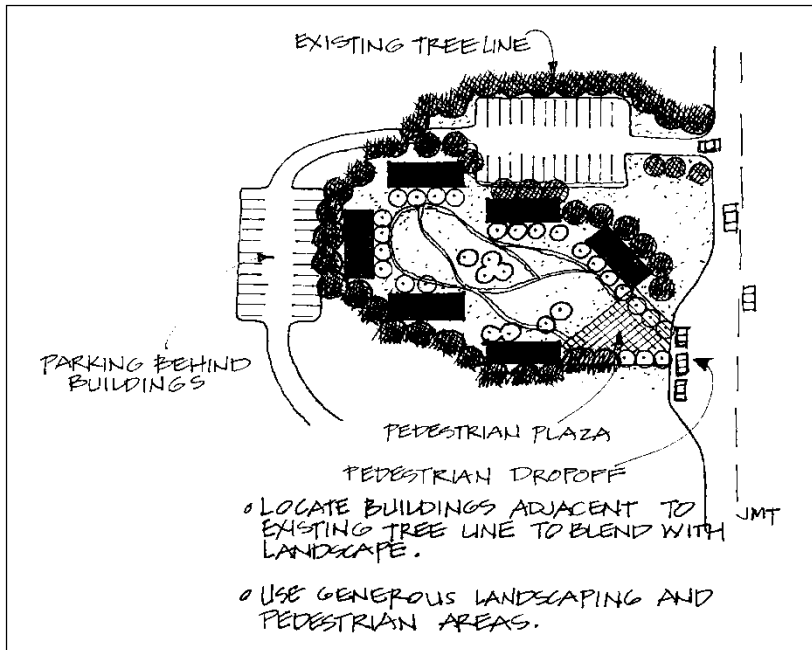
Building envelopes should be located so that character-defining site features such as stone walls, open fields, ridge lines, stands of mature trees, rolling topography (especially slopes in excess of 15%), outcrops, wetlands, streams, rivers, ponds, and lakes, and listed historic and natural resources are preserved whenever possible (Figures 5 & 6)

Avoid placement of structures on ridgelines or hillcrests. These areas are potentially erosive, exposed to wind, and highly visible, making the potential for negative impacts higher (Figures 7 & 8).

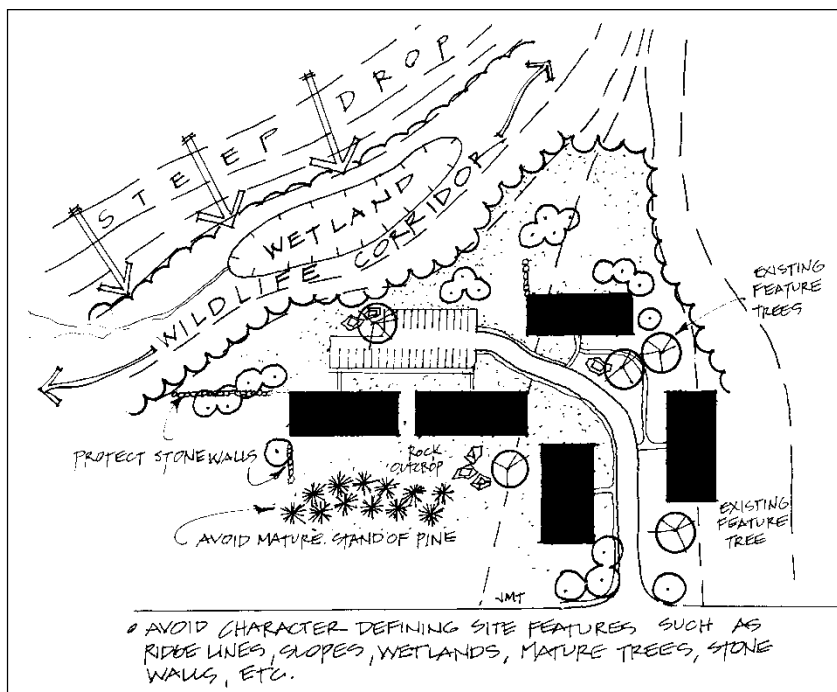


**Figure 4. Pedestrian “Outdoor Rooms”**

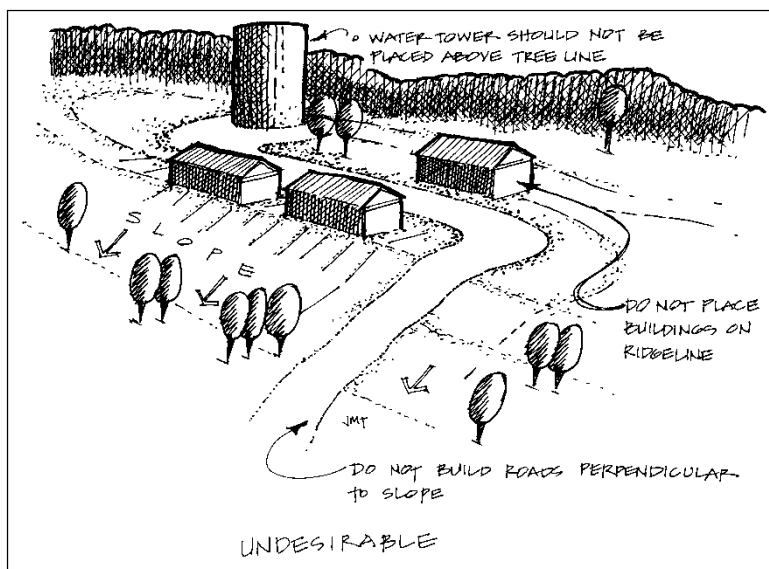




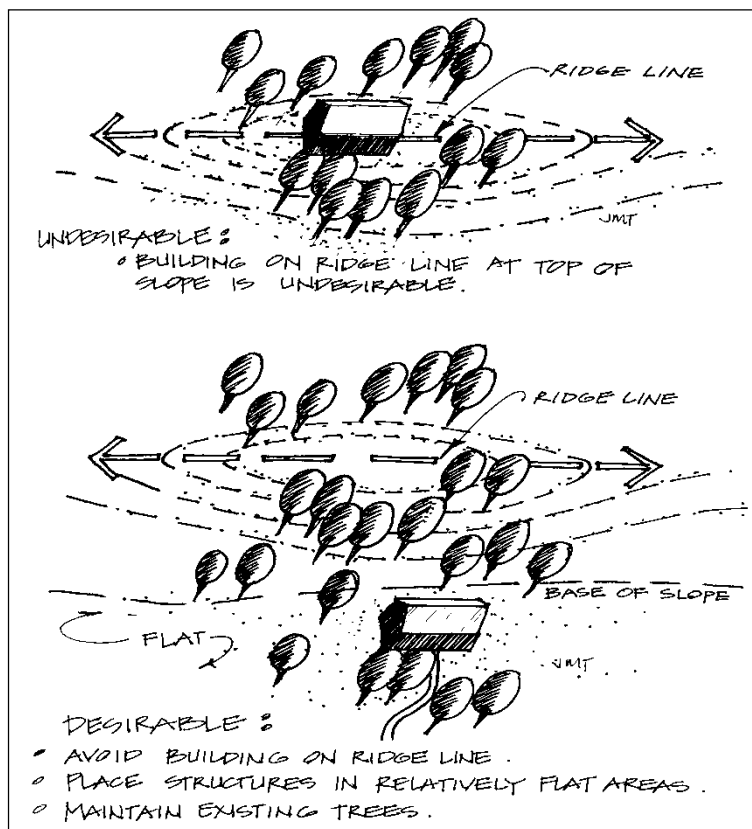
**Figure 5. Preserve Natural Features**



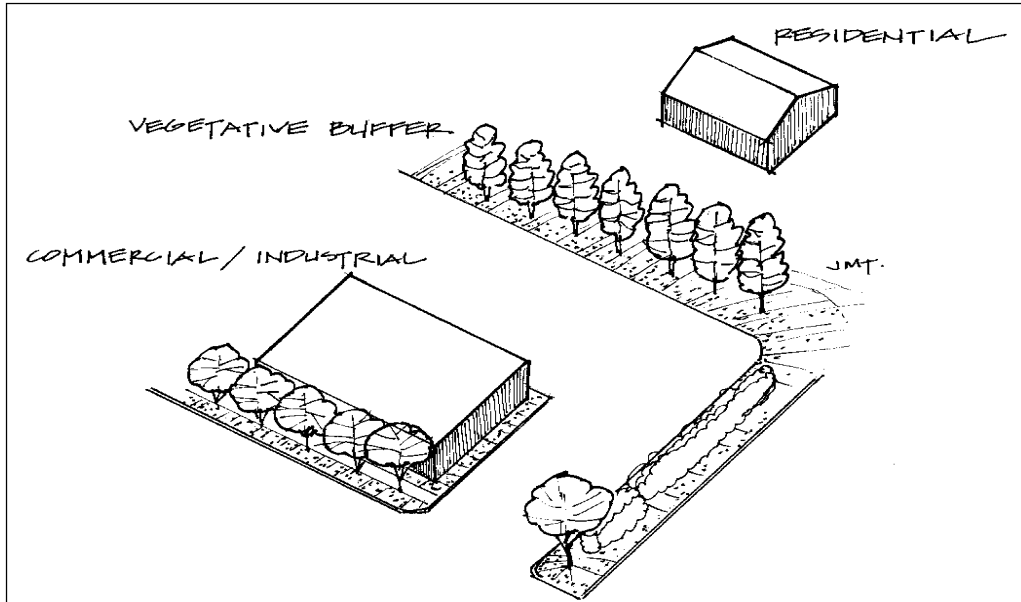
**Figure 6. Character Defining Site Features**



**Figure 7. Ridgelines and Steep Slopes**



**Figure 8. Ridges and Steep Slopes**



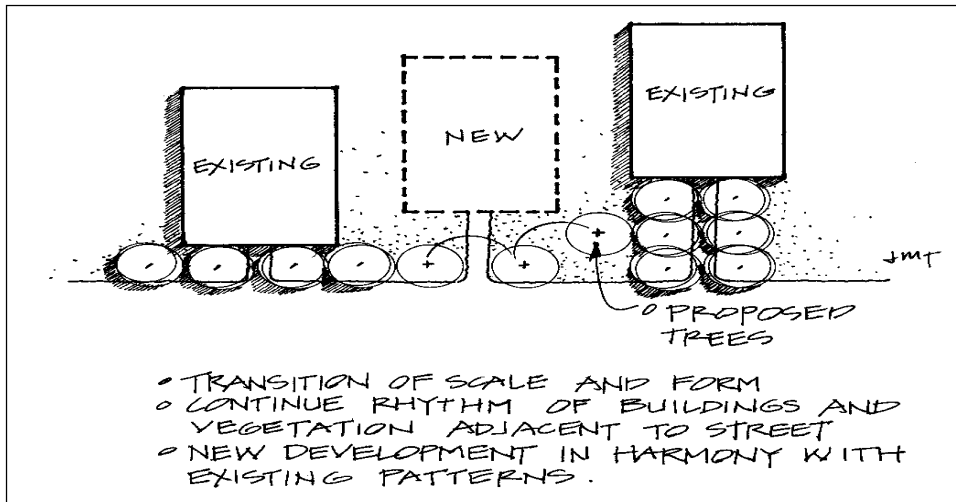
**Figure 9. Buffer Adjacent Developments**

When commercial/industrial buildings back up to residential areas, the rear setback area should be heavily landscaped and functionally and/or visually combined with the residential open space where possible (Figure 9).

### **Built Context**

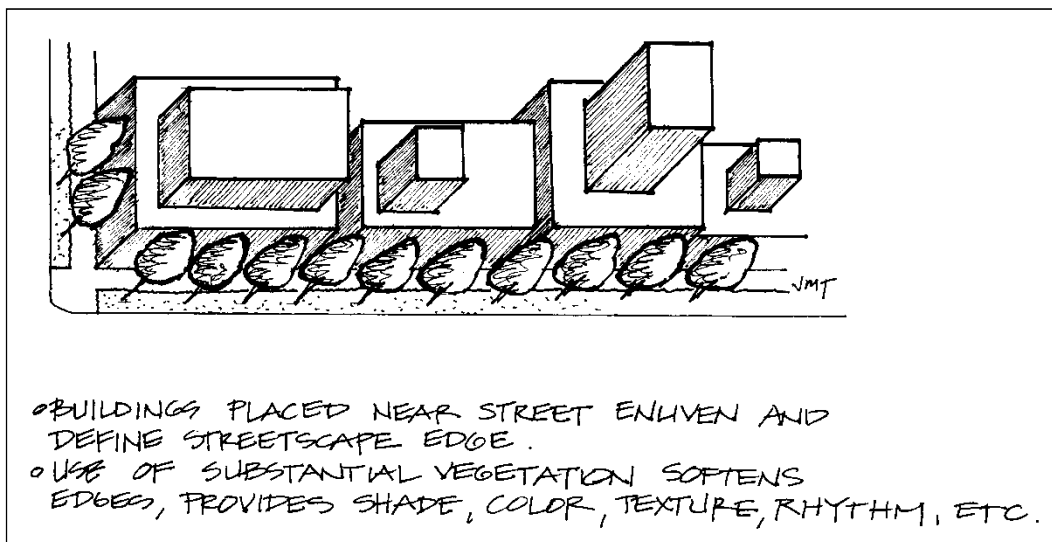
The Slatersville Area Plan prepared by Everett Associates shall be used as a guide when reviewing development proposals in the village areas and will employ the more general standards contained herein on a townwide basis.

Placement of buildings shall consider the built context of the area, the location of compatible and incompatible uses, traffic corridors, vegetation, and other site characteristics. Where adjacent setbacks are inconsistent, an attempt should be made to moderate them. If this is not possible, vegetation, walls and other landscape features must be used to continue the rhythm of the built environment (Figure 10).



**Figure 10. Continue Prevailing Setback Patterns**

In commercial and industrial areas, and particularly in the historic villages and in other densely developed zones with direct street frontage, buildings fronting on streets should generally be placed at their front setback lines in order to enliven the street. This siting, in combination with substantial landscape treatment, reinforces and strengthens the streetscape and helps to screen off-street parking areas. Only active building elevations with public access should face public streets (Figure 11).



**Figure 11. Strengthen Streetscape Environment**

Multiple buildings in a single development should create a positive functional relationship. Whenever possible, buildings should be clustered to achieve a village feel. This creates opportunities for plazas and pedestrian areas while preventing long “barrack-like” rows of buildings. When clustering is impractical, a visual and/or landscape linkage should be established.

When adjacent residential and non-residential uses can mutually profit from connection rather than separation, applicable connective elements such as walkways, common landscape areas, building orientation, and unfenced property lines shall be employed.

## **17.8.2. Groundwater Resource Protection**

### *Wastewater Disposal*

Parcels connected to the sewer system will be required to follow the Sewer Commission's regulations. Lots requiring Individual Sewage Disposal Systems (OWTS) will need to comply with the Department of Environmental Management's (DEM) regulations and Section 6.19 of the Town's Zoning Ordinance, when applicable.

Clean on-site wastewater disposal is desirable for aquifer recharge and natural filtering, as long as no danger of environmental contamination exists.

### *Stormwater Management*

Stormwater management systems should:

1. Be designed using non-structural or low-structural components where possible and as small an area as possible.
2. Not allow downstream or off-site flooding, soil erosion or other related runoff problems.
3. Improve the water quality of runoff and protect and restore the quality of ground and surface waters.
4. Be designed for routine maintenance to be conducted on-site by the owners at regular intervals. A schedule for maintenance shall be submitted with the final plans.
5. Maintain the natural hydrodynamic characteristics of the watershed.

All commercial and industrial developments shall use Low Impact Development (LID) techniques for stormwater management design. Refer to the "Rhode Island Stormwater Design Manual" for suggested LIDs.

Any increase in storm runoff should be retained and recharged as close to its place of origin as feasible, using one or more of the following options:

1. Retention/detention ponds
2. Porous pavements
3. Under-drains
4. Surface swales with French drains
5. Creative pavement design which can shed surface water to vegetated areas
6. Catch basins
7. Temporary stone pads at road access point or similar techniques

Natural drainage ways should be maintained in an undisturbed state to the greatest extent possible.

Retention/detention ponds should only be employed where the natural features cannot adequately control runoff.

Water should be managed to decrease velocity, increase infiltration, and allow suspended solids to settle. Preferred options include grassy swales, artificial wetlands, vegetated buffer strips, extended detention basins, infiltration devices, alternative turf and wet retention/detention basins. The siting of stormwater management structures including dry and/or wet ponds and swales shall be incorporated into the natural landscape to enhance functional values of the structures and provide visual amenity to the site.

Use porous paving whenever possible. Options include porous asphalt, brick or concrete pavers set on porous base material such as sand, soil cement and gravel. (Figure 12)

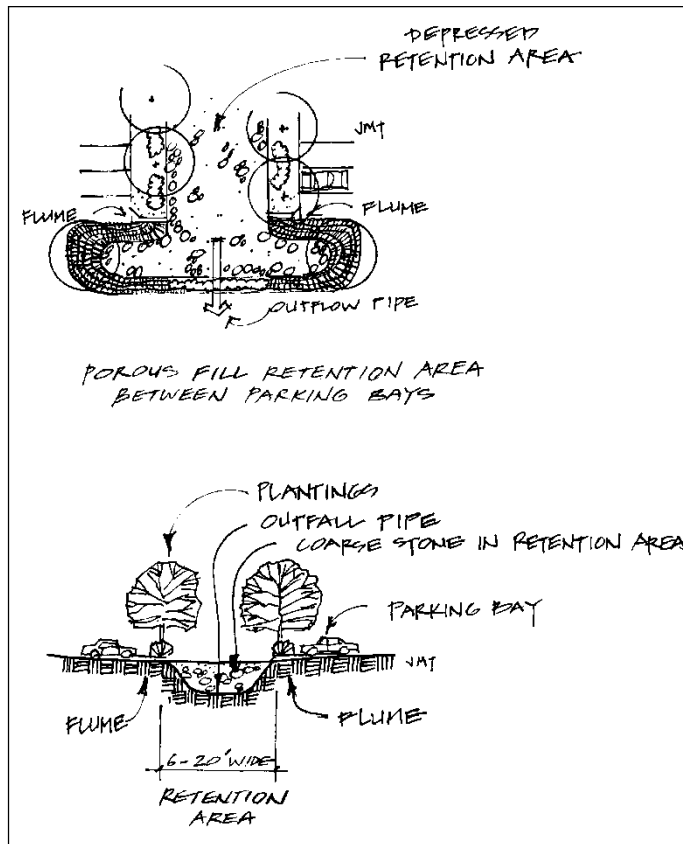
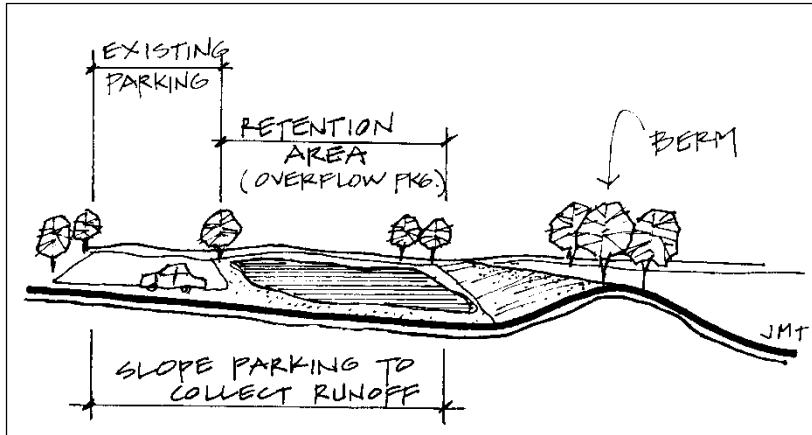


Figure 12. Stormwater Retention Area

#### *Erosion and Sedimentation Control*

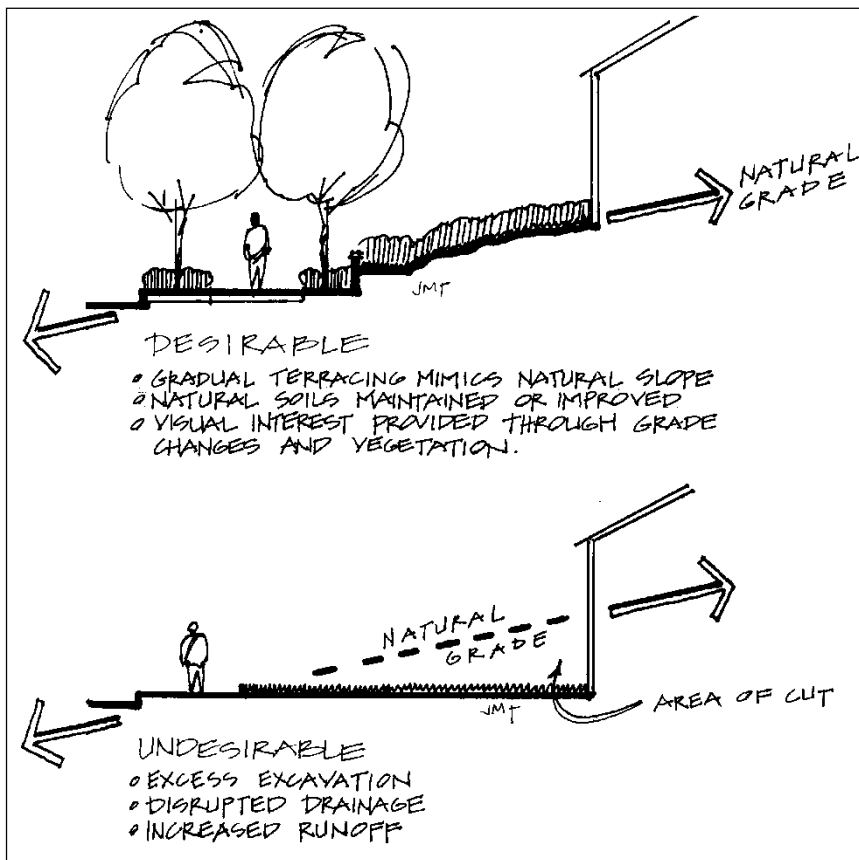
Erosion and Sedimentation Control shall be in accordance with Section 18 of the North Smithfield Zoning Ordinance, as amended.

Site design should avoid steep slopes, minimize slopes in graded areas and work with the natural drainage and topography of the site. Original boundaries, alignment and slopes of watercourses within the project locus shall be preserved to the greatest extent feasible (Figure 13).

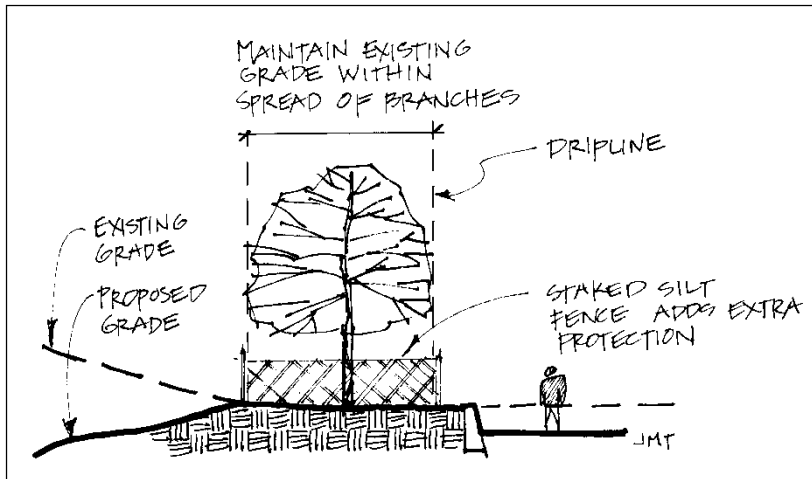


**Figure 13. Stormwater Retention Area Doubles as Overflow Parking**

Development plans should preserve natural features, keep cut and fill operations to a minimum and ensure conformity with topography so as to adequately handle the volume and velocity of surface water runoff. Trees and other existing vegetation shall be retained whenever feasible; areas within the drip line should be fenced or otherwise protected against damage by construction equipment (Figures 14 & 15).



**Figure 14. Preserve Natural Drainage and Topography**



**Figure 15. Maintain Grade Near Existing Trees**

### 17.8.3 Access and Circulation

Vehicular and pedestrian circulation should be clearly organized and functional, providing safe and efficient means of access to all non-sensitive areas of the site. Vehicular and pedestrian circulation areas should be separated to ensure safety, with appropriate linkages at designated inter-modal transportation nodes. A development's circulatory system, including roadways, paths, and parking areas provides the pattern for human experience and should be designed considering aesthetics, social and environmental issues.

Use special accents at all entries. Monuments, uniquely textured paving, plantings, walls, sculptures, and specimen trees should be used to generate visual interest. Roads and parking areas should be designed to respect natural features and topography, and to present an attractive "streetscape" environment. Vast expanses of paving without visual relief are undesirable. Materials should be harmonious with the existing, surrounding environment. Materials such as brick, granite, stone, wood, and textured/colored concrete are encouraged.

#### Roads

Integrate access points for automobiles and pedestrians carefully – especially within the village centers where pedestrian and vehicle traffic co-exist. Driveways should be shared by adjacent developments wherever possible to minimize curb cuts and impervious surfaces.

Every development should have sufficient emergency access as required by the local Fire and Police Departments. Separate customer access and circulation from service truck access.

Roads and driveways should follow existing contours to minimize site disturbance designed parallel, rather than perpendicular, to existing slopes (Figure 16).

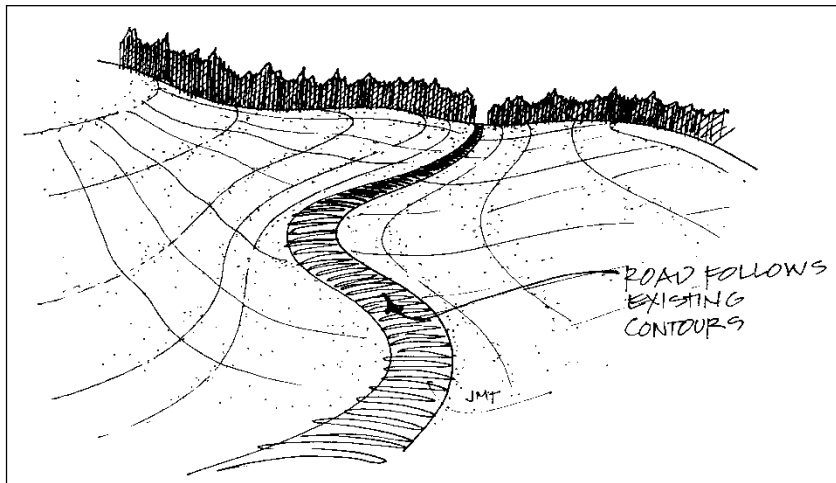
#### Parking

Off street parking shall be provided in accordance with existing Ordinances, however, the Planning Board may recommend relief for good cause. In general, where parking areas can be reduced in size, or spaces shared with adjacent businesses, it is considered beneficial to reduce impervious surface areas and maintain a more natural appearance.

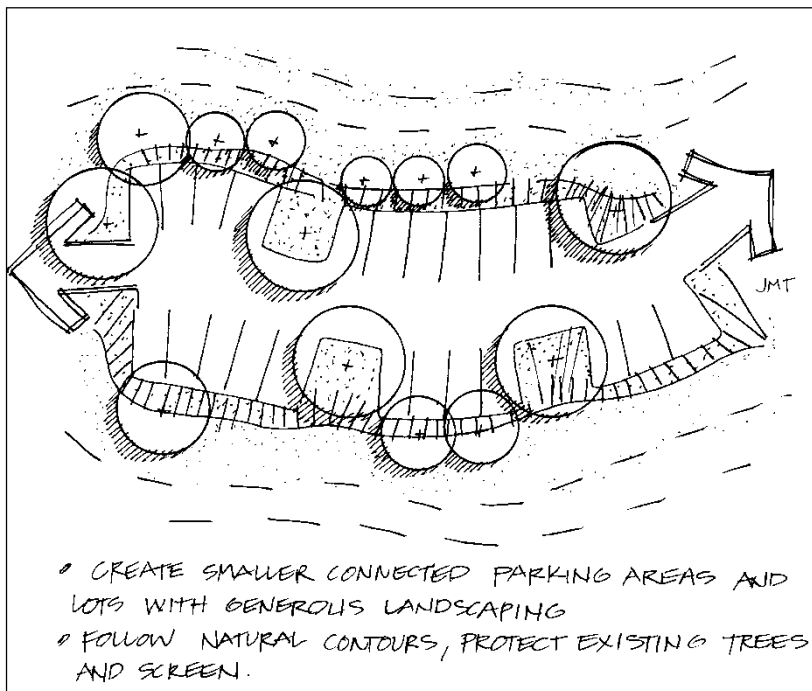


A landscaped buffer strip at least 10 feet wide, continuous except for approved driveways, shall be established adjacent to any public road except in instances where the Planning Board deems this would unduly detract from the adjacent streetscape and/or architectural character of the area.

Divide large parking lots into a series of smaller connected lots using raised landscape strips at least 5 feet wide (preferably more) with one shade tree for every 5 spaces (Figure 17).

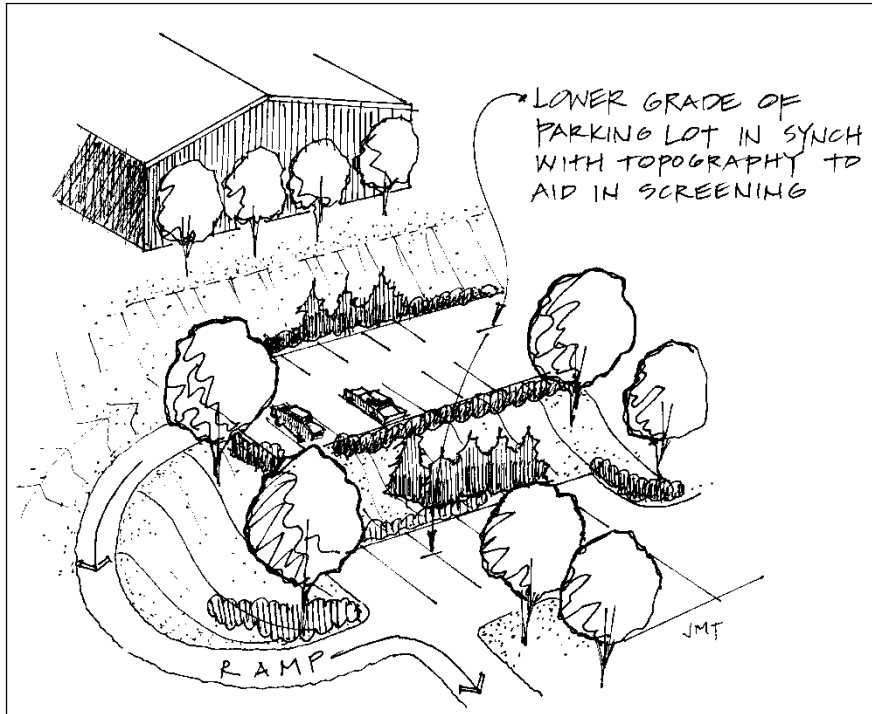


**Figure 16. Follow Existing Contours**



**Figure 17. Divide Large Parking Lots**

Lower the grade of parking lots, where practical and respectful of existing topography, to aid in screening views of automobiles while permitting views of buildings (Figure 18).



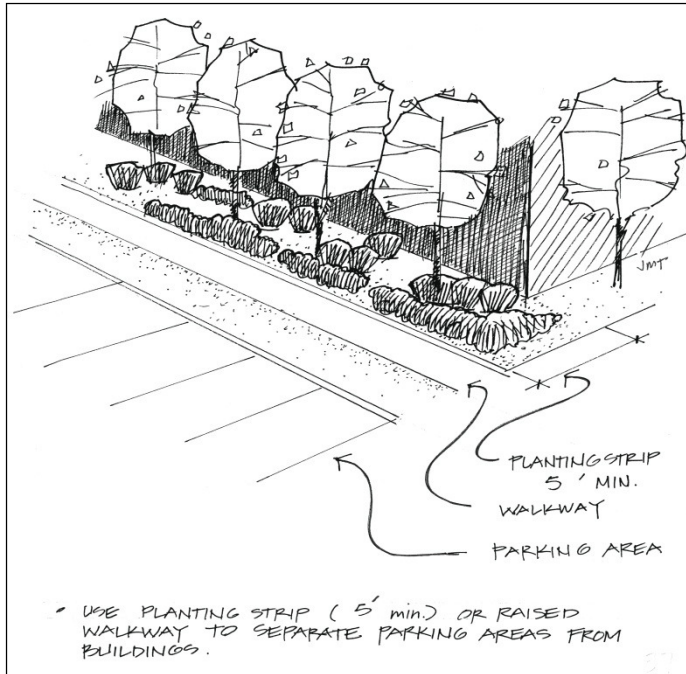
**Figure 18. Creatively Utilize Grade Changes in Parking Lots**

Parking areas should be separated from buildings by a raised walkway or planting strip at least 5 (preferably more) feet wide. Parking areas directly abutting the building shall not be considered acceptable (Figure 19).

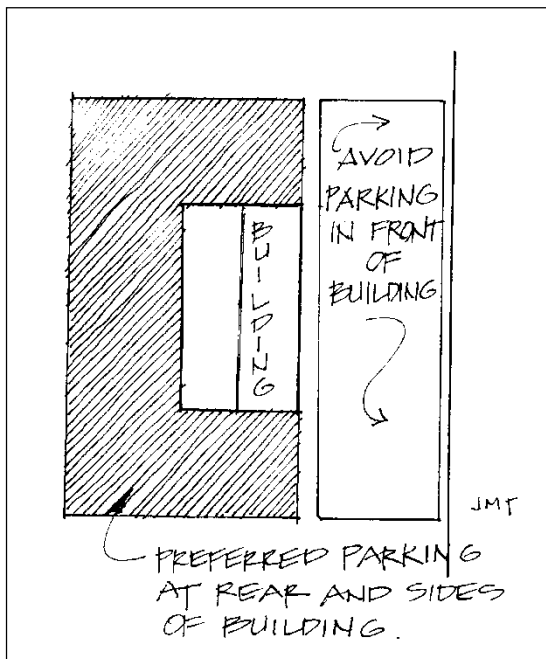
The buffer strip should be planted with grass, shrubs and shade trees (minimum 3 inch caliper diameter at breast height, minimum height of 15 feet, planted at least every 30 feet along the road frontage).

Parking areas should be located to the rear or sides of buildings out of sight from passing traffic to the greatest extent possible. Vegetative buffering, berms, walls and fences should be used to screen parking to the greatest extent possible from all surrounding areas. In all developments, pedestrian walkways should be provided through and between parking areas and separate buildings wherever possible to adjacent streets. Figure 20 exemplifies a desired outgrowth of these standards.

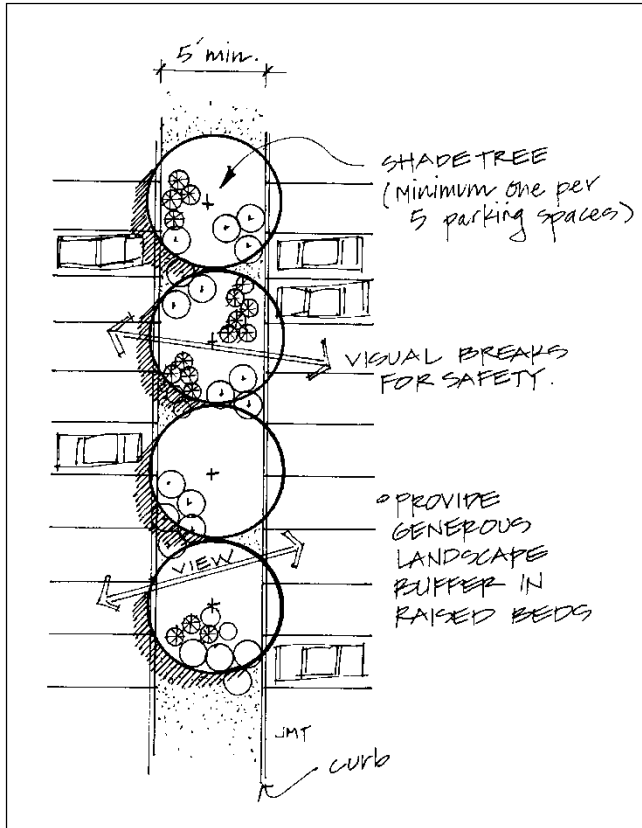
Parking areas should be softened with vegetative screens with at least one tree per 5 parking spaces should be provided. A continuous wall of green should be provided with breaks for visual safety (Figure 21).



**Figure 19. Planting Strip and Raised Walkway**



**Figure 20. Parking behind buildings**

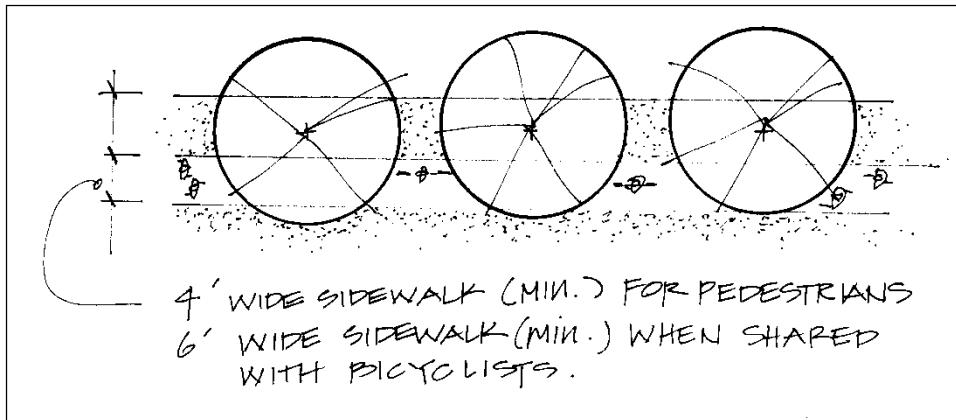


**Figure 21. Acceptable parking island**

### *Pedestrian Pathways*

Natural earth-like walking paths shall be encouraged outside the village centers. Asphalt (bituminous concrete) walkways shall be avoided for aesthetic and environmental reasons in such outlying areas.

Within the village centers, sidewalks and paved pathways should be a minimum of 4 feet wide. Clearly defined pedestrian access should be provided from bus stops to primary building entrances. In areas where bicycles are expected to share the sidewalk, they should be a minimum of 6 feet (Figure 22). Informal pathways/trails should be provided to connect adjacent natural areas and potential future regional pathways and bikeways.

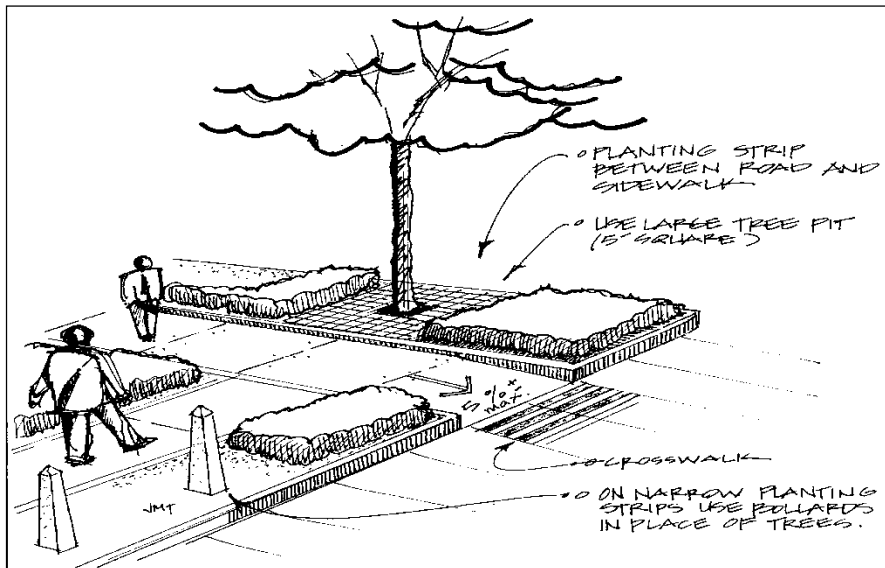


**Figure 22. Sidewalk Widths**

Crosswalks, signs, or other warning cues should be used wherever pedestrians cross traffic aisles (Figure 23). Developments should provide ample pedestrian open spaces (green spaces) for enjoyment of pedestrians. Walkways and open areas shall be generously vegetated.

#### *Stairways and Ramps*

All buildings should be handicapped accessible in accordance with state and federal laws. Stairs should combine visual attractiveness with safety considerations and provide landings every 10 stairs for visual variation and pedestrian rest. Sloping paths are preferable to ramps or lifts. However where ramps are used, they should be handicapped accessible and integrated with the building design.



**Figure 23. Sidewalks and Crosswalks**

#### **17.8.4. Landscaping**

To the maximum extent possible, the natural landscape should be preserved. Landscaping should reflect the site as a whole, integrating the various elements of site design into the plan with the surrounding landscape elements and processes. Effort shall be made to use native plants with high wildlife value and aesthetic interest. Plants should also accent the cultural landscape, providing such elements as rhythm, spatial structure, color, texture, etc. to the built environment.

Landscape plantings should generally follow a three-tiered system:

1. Grasses and groundcovers
2. Shrubs and vines
3. Trees

All areas not covered by structures, service yards, driveways, paths, etc. should be landscaped. The following are planting design concepts that should be used whenever possible:

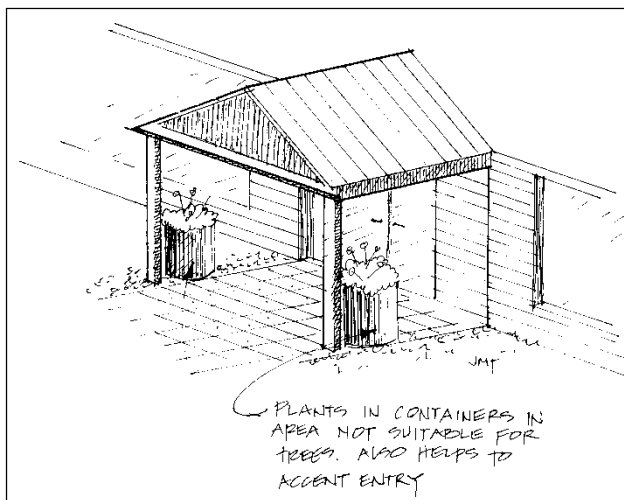
1. Specimen trees in informal groupings and rows at major focal points
2. Use of flowering vines on walls and arbors
3. Use of planting to create shadow, texture, patterns, rhythm, aroma, color, etc.
4. Use of trees to create canopy and shade, especially in parking areas
5. Use of berms, planting and walls to screen outdoor areas from wind and noise.
6. The development of sloped properties should follow the natural contours of the land.
7. Terraced parking lots, stepped building pads, and larger setbacks should be used to preserve the general topography of the site and to minimize grade differences between adjacent streets and properties, especially when adjacent downhill properties are residential.
8. Landscaping around the entire building to soften edges and moderate scale is recommended, particularly near parking lots, entrances, and other pedestrian areas.

Plants in containers are encouraged for areas not conducive to permanent plantings (Figure 24).

#### ***Landscaped Setback Yards, Berms, Walls, and Screens***

Vegetated setback yards, berms, walls, and other screens provide barriers to undesirable land uses such as roadways, parking lots, utility areas, loading docks, trash pickup areas, and transportation corridors. These barriers will vary in materials and dimensions depending on the intensity of adjacent land uses and other design considerations. The goal should be to provide as much buffering as possible from undesirable land uses.

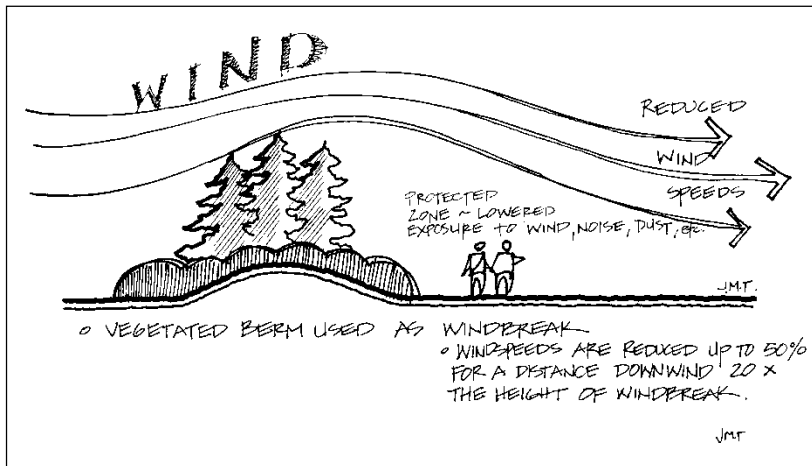
Fences and walls should be architecturally appropriate. Walls shall be terraced with wall sections no more than 5 feet in height. Chain link fencing should be avoided except where necessary for security purposes.



**Figure 24. Container Plants**

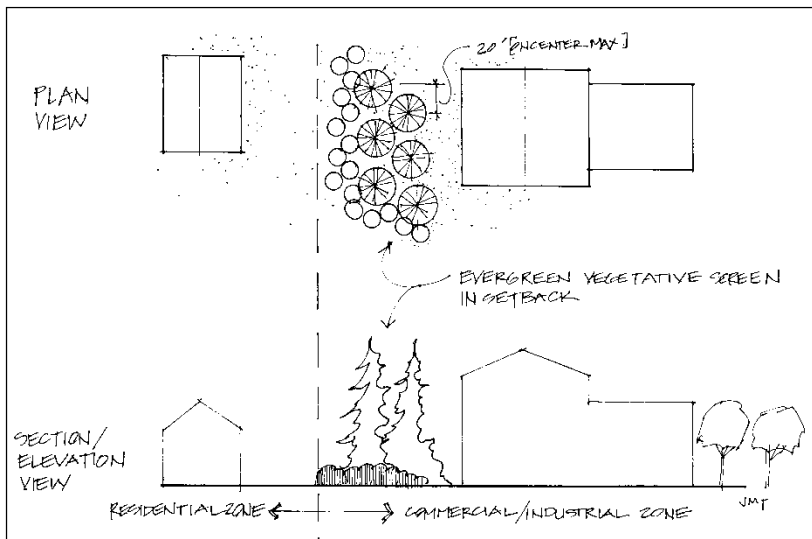
Utilize berms, vegetation and walls to:

1. Reduce wind speeds in and around developments, particularly where development on ridges cannot be avoided and in open areas where winds could cause uncomfortable pedestrian conditions.
2. Provide insulation to reduce the need for heat and air conditioning. Reduce dust, fumes, noxious smells or other potential air borne pollutants near certain industrial land uses (Figure 25).



**Figure 25. Windbreaks**

Adjacent residential and non-residential uses should be segregated as much as possible in order to maintain a healthy residential environment through the use of berms, walls, fences, buffer yards, and other barriers unless connections are for some reason desirable. A screen along the lot line should be provided consisting of either a row of evergreens at least 6 feet in height at planting, which will grow into a thick hedge not less than 6 feet high, or an opaque and neatly maintained fence not less than six feet in height (Figure 26).



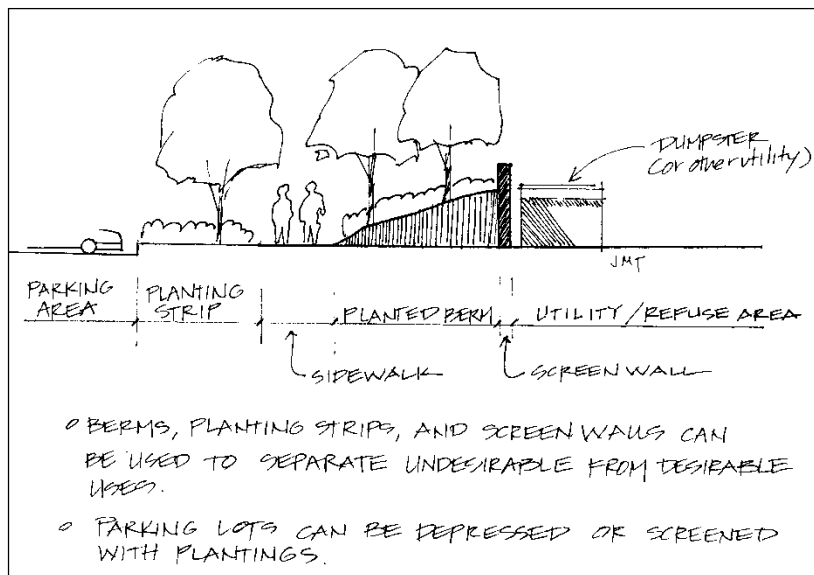
**Figure 26. Use Vegetative Screens**

Screen parking lots and undesirable facades of buildings. Consider the following screening options:

1. Evergreen trees (maximum 20 feet on center)
2. 3-4 foot high evergreen hedge, fence, berm, or wall; 36" maximum immediately in front of buildings
3. Masonry walls approximately 4 feet in height consisting of stone, brick, or other similar solid masonry materials (Figure 27).
4. Wooden walls approximately 4 feet tall and constructed of heavy wood, or heavy wood and masonry to form an opaque screen
5. Depressing the parking lot so that its elevation is approximately 4 feet below adjacent land use.

Long expanses of fence or wall surfaces should be offset and architecturally designed to prevent monotony. Landscape pockets should be provided at 50-foot minimum intervals along the wall. Vines should be used to break up flat surfaces.

Berms can be used to block wind, noise, views and other undesirable land uses or to vary soil depths above unfavorable soil conditions (Figure 27).



**Figure 27. Berms and Screen Walls**

#### *Vegetation and Plant Lists*

*Species should be suitable for U.S.D.A. Zone 5 hardiness. Use of native vegetation and xeriscaping (low water use landscaping) is encouraged.*

*Scale of plants should be compatible with buildings and land use. Plants should be used to moderate changes in scale. Larger plants can be used to buffer and soften buildings while smaller plants with greater sensory interest can be used in pedestrian areas.*

*The approved plant list reference is entitled Sustainable Trees and Shrubs, third edition, and 1999, authored by the University of Rhode Island Cooperative Extension Landscape Horticulture*



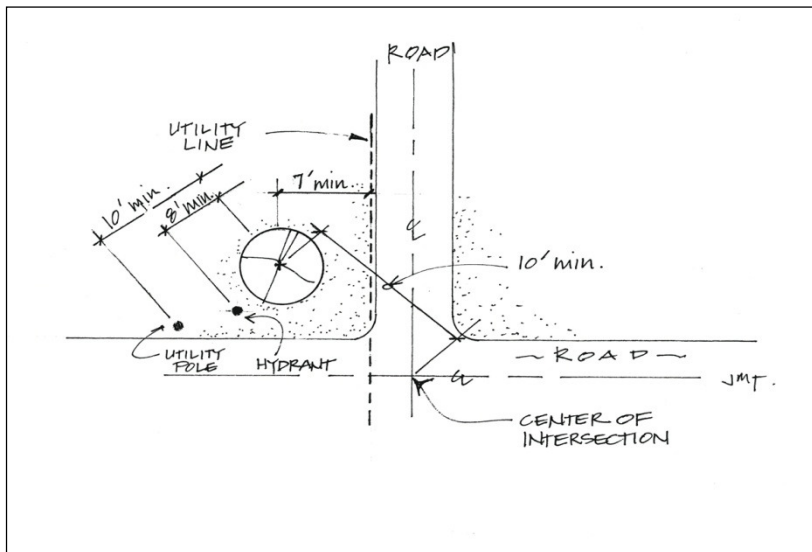
*Program. Although the list is comprehensive, designers and developers should feel free to add species that they feel augment the objective outlined within this document.*

#### *Plant Size, Quality, Spacing, and Distribution*

*Newly planted large shade trees should have a minimum caliper size of 3 inches dbh , minimum 15 feet in height and should be staked securely for a period of two years from date of planting. The lowest branch should be at least 80 inches above finished grade to meet ADA standard.*

*Street trees should be planted along both sides of all streets at not more than 30 feet apart, preferably closer, as long as they do not obstruct sight triangles at street intersections. Trees and large shrubs should be placed as follows:*

1. A minimum of 7 feet between centers of trees or large shrubs and edge of driveway, water meter or gas meter and sewer laterals.
2. A minimum of 10 feet between centers of trees or large shrubs and point of intersection of driveways and streets or walkways.
3. A minimum of 10 feet between center of trees and large shrubs to utility poles.
4. A minimum of 8 feet between center of trees or large shrubs and fire hydrants and fire department sprinkler and standpipe connections (Figure 28).



**Figure 28. Tree Placement and Spacing**

No species of plant or large shrub should be planted under the overhead lines or over underground utilities if its growth might interfere with the installation or maintenance of any public utilities.

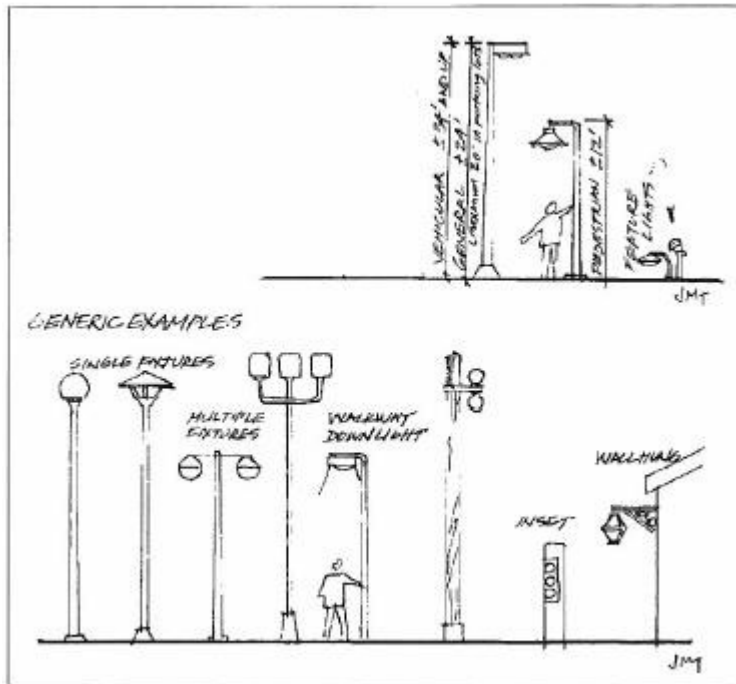
Evergreen trees shall be planted no further apart than 20 feet on center, depending on species, to screen parking lots and large commercial buildings in order to provide a visual barrier between commercial and residential areas.

## Lighting

Lighting shall be designed so as not to disturb adjacent properties or traffic. Lights shall be directed down and the height of light standards appropriate to the site.

Upward lighting, such as accent lighting shall be carefully directed away from oncoming traffic.

Lamp and post selection shall reflect architectural style of the building and be sensitive to adjacent architecture (Figure 29).



**Figure 29. Examples of Overhead Lighting and Fixtures**

## Site Furnishings and Amenities

Site furnishings such as trellises, benches, lighting, trash containers, fencing, phone booths, etc. should be integral elements of the design and should be shown on the plans.

Site furnishings shall be placed leaving adequate space for the stockpiling and removal of snow.

Exterior vending machines such as soft drink and cigarette dispensers are to be discouraged, unless they are screened such that they do not constitute another outdoor sign or advertisement.

## Seating/Benches

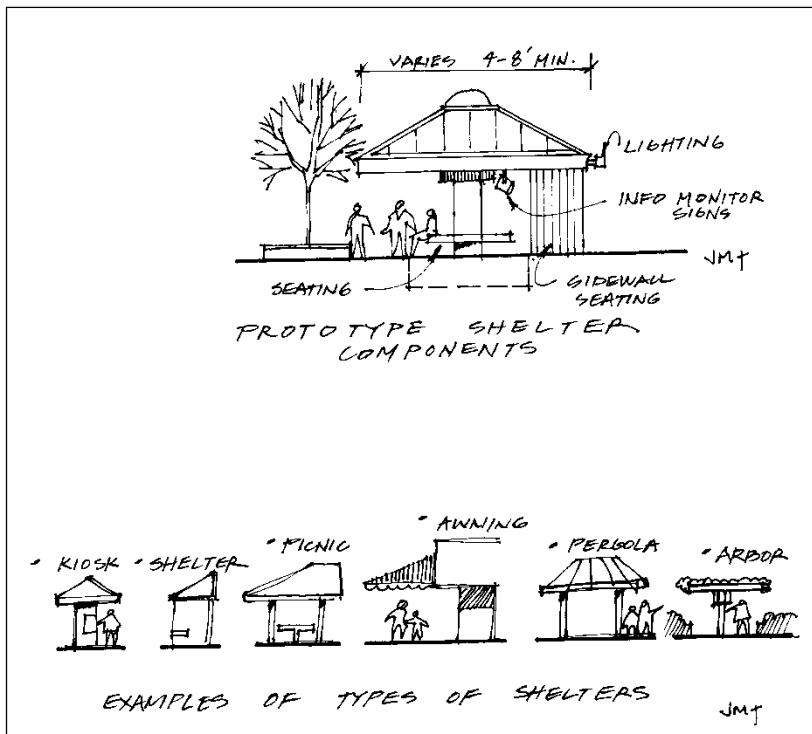
Rest areas such as benches and wall seating should be provided where pedestrians walk long distances. At least one seat for every 100 feet of pathway is a good rule of thumb. A variety of bench heights should be provided for different uses and user groups:

1. For the elderly, a wall height of 18-22 inches is preferable.
2. Wall heights of 24-36 inches provide a surface to lean against in a half-sitting position.
3. Benches are typically 18-20 inches high and 12-18 inches wide.

### ***Shade Structures and Shelters***

Shade structures and shelters must be used generously for their practical and aesthetic purposes (Figure 30). Some examples include:

1. Kiosks
2. Typical shelter
3. Picnic area
4. Awnings
5. Pergolas
6. Arbors



**Figure 30. Kiosks and Shelters**

#### ***17.8.5. On-site Storage and Use of Materials***

No materials of a hazardous nature as defined by the Hazardous Substance Act (Rhode Island General Laws 23-24-2) shall be stored except with the explicit approval of the Town and then in strict compliance with applicable local, state, and federal regulations governing such storage.

All aboveground storage tanks containing hazardous materials shall use the highest state of the art equipment to ensure safety. Facilities should include secondary containment within a vault constructed of appropriate materials, i.e., concrete.

Outside storage of materials supplies, or equipment, including trucks or other motor vehicles, must comply with the appropriate applicable sections of the Zoning Ordinance. Further, equipment shall be screened on sides and top in harmony with the architecture, design, and appearance of neighboring structures and other surroundings.

## 17.8.6. Building Design

### *Maintaining Local Architectural Character*

New developments and expansions shall be integrated with and complementary to existing architecture. Development projects should reuse existing buildings of character whenever possible. Vacant, historic buildings should be stabilized and preserved until rehabilitated.

“... In performing their functions, Town commissions and boards should require owners to emulate typical village building forms when carrying out new construction, renovations or restorations.”

- 1994 Slatersville Area Plan

### *Facades and Exterior Walls*

Facades should be articulated to reduce massive scale and uniform, impersonal appearances of large buildings and provide visual interest that will be consistent with the community's identity, character and scale.

Facades greater than 100 feet in length, measured horizontally, shall incorporate wall plane projections or recesses having a depth of at least 3% of the length of the facade and extending at least 20 percent of the length of the facade. No uninterrupted length of any facade shall exceed 100 horizontal feet.

Ground floor facades that face public streets shall have arcades, display windows, entry areas, awnings, or other such features along no less than 60 percent of their horizontal length.

Multi-planed pitched roofs and entryways (Figure 31)

Each principal building on a site shall have clearly defined, highly visible customer entrances featuring at minimum four of the following:

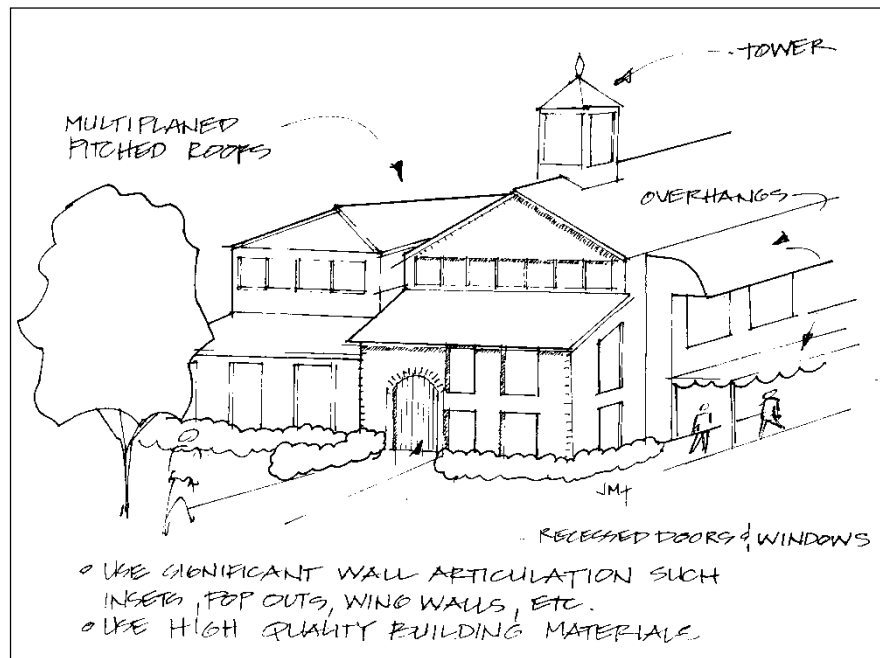
1. Recesses/projections
2. Arcades, overhangs or canopies
3. Raised corniced parapets over the door
4. Peaked roof forms
5. Arches
6. Outdoor patios
7. Display windows
8. Architectural details such as tile work and moldings which are integrated into the building structure and design
9. Integral planters or wing walk that incorporate landscaped areas and/or places for sitting.

### *Detailed Features*

Buildings should have architectural features and patterns that provide visual interest, at the scale of the pedestrian, reduce massive aesthetic effects, and recognize local character. The elements in the following standard should be integral parts of the building fabric, and not superficially applied trim or graphics, or paint. Building facades must include a repeating pattern such as: color change, texture change or material module change.

### *Wall materials and colors*

Exterior building materials should be aesthetically pleasing and compatible with materials and colors used in adjoining neighborhoods. Predominant exterior building materials shall be high quality materials, such as: brick, wood, sandstone, other native stone, tinted, textured, concrete masonry units.



**Figure 31. Required Building Elements**

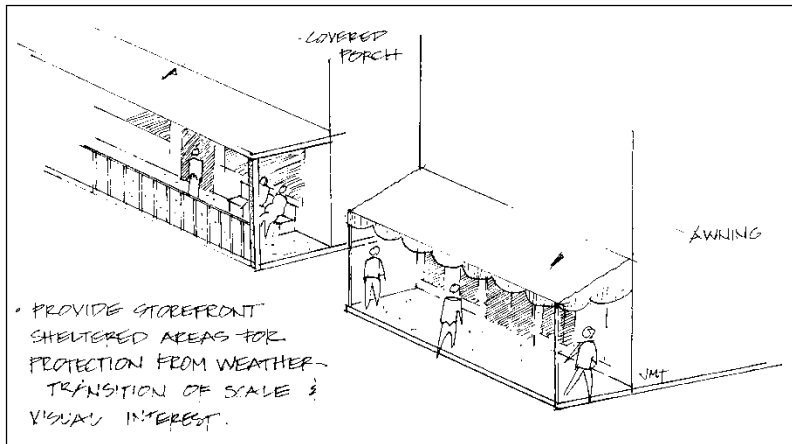
Predominant exterior building materials shall not include the following:

1. smooth-faced
2. tilt-up concrete panels
3. pre-fabricated steel panels
4. Large blank walls
5. Flat roofs without a decorative cornice or parapet
6. Unpainted concrete and cinderblock walls
7. Highly reflective surfaces
8. Square “box like” buildings
9. Mixing of unrelated exterior materials
10. Exposed pipe columns

Franchise architecture is strongly discouraged. Building elevations should be designed to fit into the surrounding neighborhood. Architectural gimmicks, such as roof lights, distinctive roof shapes, large false cornices and parapets that sacrifice the integrity of a streetscape to promote a single structure should be avoided. Building forms shall be designed to create and define visually attractive exterior and functional spaces. Auxiliary structures should be architecturally consistent with primary structures on site.

#### *Commercial Storefront Design*

Interesting and enticing storefronts are one of the most crucial ingredients in promoting a vital environment in a commercial development. Storefronts should be generous, providing ample displays and entrances and a level of design detail that establishes individuality for each shop while assuring relatedness to the complex. Provide protection from rain and snow for pedestrians through the use of covered walkways and waiting areas, vegetation, and recessed entryways (Figure 32).



**Figure 32. Storefront Sheltered Areas**

### *Architectural Elements*

Every new building in North Smithfield shall strive to contain some, if not all, of the following desirable architectural elements. Although design not containing such elements may be permitted, the architect should be prepared to explain his/her design and how it meets the intent of the standards:

In general, base material should appear “heavier” in appearance than walls. Windows, doors, and other openings should be detailed to establish them as important parts of the total composition. Design details should be employed to accentuate all entries.

Where a flat roof not meant to be visible from the street is used in the building’s design, decorative cornices and parapet walls should be used to screen the roof and to delineate the building’s profile.

Mechanical equipment shall not be located on the roof if the building is located below grade of an adjacent road unless it can be hidden from view by building elements that are designed for that purpose as an integral part of the building design.

Roofs should be an integral part of the building design and overall form of the structure and should respond to the general design and nature of other roofs along the street. Roofs shall have no less than two of the following features:

1. Parapets concealing flat roofs and rooftop equipment such as HVAC units from public view. The average height of such parapets shall not exceed 15% of the height of the supporting wall and such parapets shall not at any point exceed one-third of the height of the supporting wall. Such parapets shall feature three dimensional cornice treatment.
2. Overhanging eaves, extending no less than 3 feet past the supporting walls.
3. Sloping roofs that do not exceed the average height of the supporting walls, with an average slope greater than or equal to 1 foot of vertical rise for every 3 feet of horizontal run and less than or equal to 1 foot of vertical rise for every 1 foot of horizontal run.
4. Three or more roof slope planes.

Signs may be printed/painted on awnings but should be restricted to the awing flap (valance) or the end panels of angles, curved, or box awnings. Awning signs are regulated by the Town’s sign code. Sign design guidelines are included below.

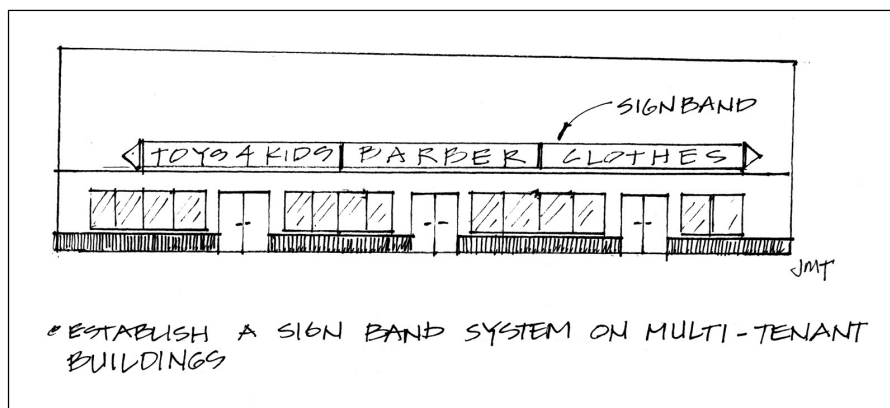
## ***Signage***

### ***Design, Dimension, Scale and Location***

Signage should be provided for both vehicles and pedestrians. Each development should work within a pre-established “sign envelope” according to the type of sign and size of the development. Envelope size should be proportional to the size of the overall development and immediate streetscape as defined in the Zoning Ordinance.

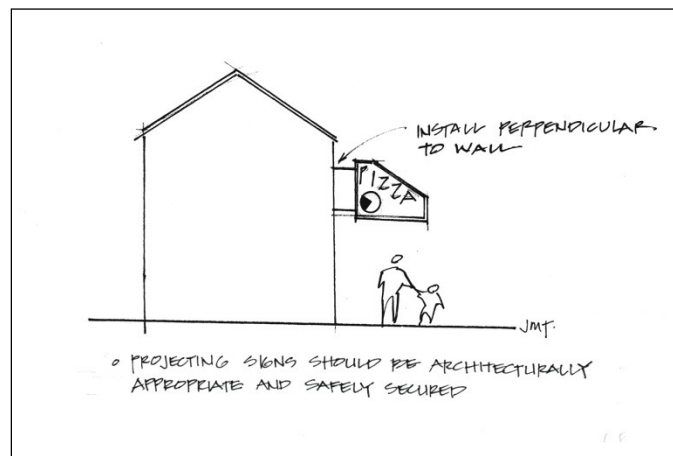
Signs should be simple, easy to read by passing motorists, adequately illuminated, and should complement the color, materials and design of the building architecture. Signs and their illumination shall not adversely impact public safety.

For multi-tenant buildings, a comprehensive signage program shall be developed; only one freestanding sign is allowed (Figure 33).



***Figure 33. Signs***

Projected and or hanging signs shall reflect the architecture and be safely secured (Figure 34).



***Figure 34. Projecting/hanging signs***

### *Sign Materials*

Materials shall be similar to those used in buildings. Signs shall be simple in design, although engraving, molding and other design features can provide a craftsman-like look.

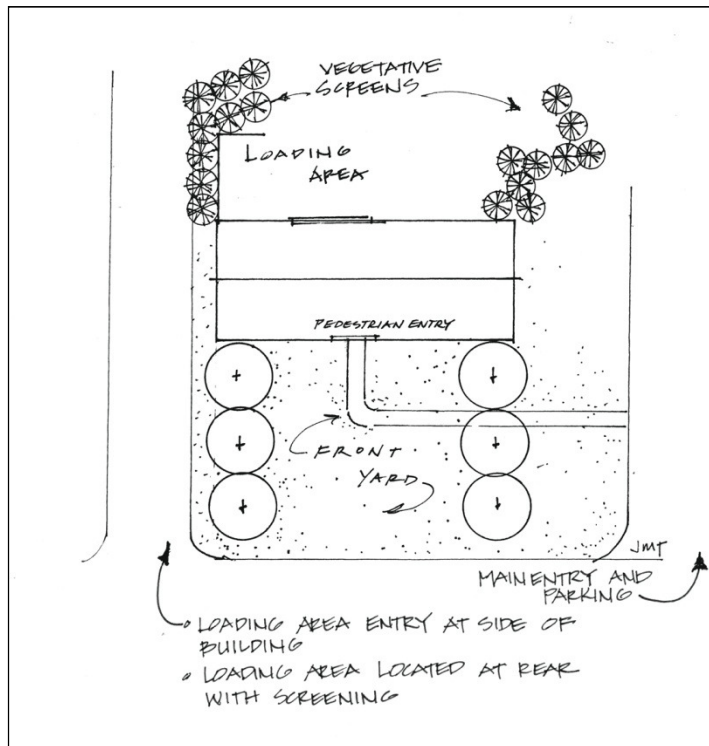
## **17.8.7 Servicing the Building**

### *Loading Areas*

Loading areas shall not be in front of buildings. Locate loading areas at the rear or sides of buildings and screen as appropriate (Figure 35). Areas adjacent to residential properties should be free of service circulation. Dumpsters, air conditioners, HVAC equipment, trash compaction equipment and other utilities shall be incorporated into the building architecture or screened from view with appropriate fencing or plantings.

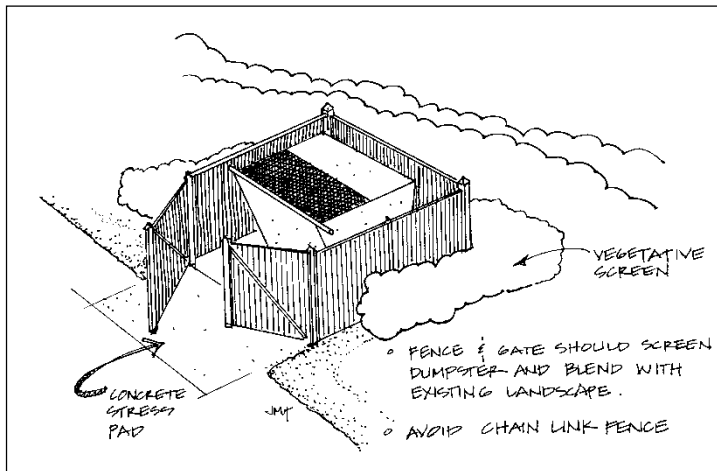
All trash and garbage bins shall be:

1. stored in an approved enclosure unless bins are stored in an approved service yard
2. easily accessible by each tenant
3. located away from residential areas
4. architecturally compatible with the project
5. screened using plant materials
6. provided with stress pads to avoid damage to pavement (Figure 36).



**Figure 35. Loading Areas**





**Figure 36. Dumpster Screened from View**

### **Section 17.9. Waivers.**

The Planning Board may grant waivers to the application of design standards in Article V of the Land Development and Subdivision Regulations, but may not grant waivers that are contrary to required standards contained in this Zoning Ordinance. Requests for waivers shall be based on the impact of the proposal on the quality of life. Specific impacts on noise levels, air, surface and groundwater quality, soil, traffic, fiscal, natural, historical, cultural and scenic resources shall be considered.

### **Section 17.10 Required Findings**

The following required findings shall be the basis for Development Plan Review approval:

- (1) That the design of the proposed development will be consistent with the purposes of this Ordinance as listed in Section 17.1;
- (2) That the design of the proposed development will be consistent with the goals of the North Smithfield Comprehensive Plan, as amended, and complies in all respects with the North Smithfield Zoning Ordinance;
- (3) Any conditions or restrictions that are necessary to ensure that these findings have been met have been incorporated into the vote of approval.

### **Section 17.11 Conditions of Development Plan Review Approval**

The following conditions of approval may be imposed by the Planning Board if it is deemed necessary to promote the purpose of this section and minimize the impacts of the project:

- (1) Sidewalk or easements for future sidewalks to connect stores and buildings within the site and to adjacent sites.

- (2) Construction of travel lanes not less than twelve (12) feet in width, to permit travel on the site, to and from adjacent parking areas and adjacent property, or where deemed necessary, a separation between parking areas.
- (3) Connection, wherever possible, of walkways, travel lanes and driveways with similar facilities in adjacent developments.
- (4) Screening, fences, walls.
- (5) Adequate drainage system for the disposition of storm and natural waters.
- (6) Temporary and permanent erosion and sedimentation control measures.
- (7) Construction of public improvements including but not limited to curbs and sidewalks as required by the Land Development and Subdivision Regulations.
- (8) Landscaped areas and planting strips (vegetative buffers) between the parking area, the street, adjacent property and other landscaping treatment that will enhance the premises. The types and methods of planting may be specified by the Board.
- (9) Revision of the location, height, and size of signs in relationship to the overall plan.
- (10) Connection to public utilities, services and facilities.
- (11) Appropriate and adequate lighting (minimum glare and light spill over to adjacent properties).
- (12) Appropriate mechanisms for the containment and disposal of solid waste.
- (13) Application of traffic impact, control, mechanisms and principals.
- (14) Minimization of nuisances from excessive or unreasonable noise, vibrations, dust, fumes, noxious gases, gases, radiation, water pollutants, or any other significant environmental impact.
- (15) Minimization of impacts on natural resources.
- (16) Design standards and features in harmony with existing historic (properties, districts or areas), cultural, natural and archaeological resources.
- (17) Reduction in scale of project.
- (18) Interim measures to reduce impact on traffic and environmental factors during construction.
- (19) Other relevant measures to meet purposes as identified in Section 17.1.
- (20) A performance bond with a rating of A minus or better or certified check filed with the Town as a guarantee for all or part of the proposed improvements.

**Section 17.12 . Appeals.** Any and all appeals from any decisions of the Planning Board as it relates to Site Plan Review shall be to the Zoning Board of Review as other appeals of decisions by the Planning Board.

**Section 17.13. Enforcement.** The provisions of this Ordinance shall be enforced by the Zoning Inspector or his designee.