

CITY OF MOUNT VERNON DESIGN STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES

**FOR NEW MULTI-FAMILY DEVELOPMENTS,
RESIDENTIAL PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT AND SMALL LOT SINGLE FAMILY
DEVELOPMENT.**



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INTRODUCTION TO DESIGN STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES

The purpose of these standards and guidelines is to produce development that meets a number of objectives.

These include:

- Ensure housing design is based on a consistent, compatible, and aesthetic architecture
- Ensure that new housing is designed with sensitivity to the site, as well as pedestrian scale, and reflects a strong residential character for the neighborhood and community.
- Ensure that new homes use building materials and architectural finishes in a manner that exemplifies quality, durability and encourages innovative and imaginative architecture.
- Supports and defines safe pedestrian, transit, bicycle and vehicular circulation.
- Maintain the scale, context and texture of existing neighborhoods.
- Encourage creative designs for sites and buildings.
- Allow for infill development that is sensitive to its context.

The standards and guidelines in this document intend to promote orderly community growth which will both protect and enhance property values for the community as a whole. To protect the existing environment of the City of Mount Vernon and to reduce potential impacts of new development and infill development, the provisions of this document shall apply to all multi-family development, residential Planned Unit Development (PUD), duplexes and single-family developments proposing lots (7600 sq ft or less). Each development project shall be evaluated with regard to how it achieves an overall design that meets the intent and direction of the Design Standards and Guidelines. Each standard includes examples and illustrations of ways in which the intent of the standard can be achieved. The graphic examples are meant to be examples, and are not the only acceptable means towards accomplishing the intent and purpose of the standards. Applicants are encouraged to consider designs, styles and other techniques not pictured in the examples provided that it fulfills the intent of the design standard. The standards in this document use the word “shall” while the guidelines use the word “should.” Regardless of which term is used, each standard and guideline must be addressed by an applicant. The City will expect to see how the design of a project has responded to each standard and guideline. The “shall” statements, with such wording, indicate requirements and offer relatively little flexibility unless choices are provided within the statements themselves. All projects must include these elements as described unless determined by the Design Review Authority that an alternative design proposed by the applicant meets the general intent and purpose of the design standards and guidelines (see MVMC 17. 70). However, the guidelines that use the word “should” are meant to be applied, but with flexibility. They indicate that the City is open to design features that are equal to, or better than, those stated - so long as the intent is satisfied. The applicant assumes the burden of proof to demonstrate how a proposed design meets the standards and guidelines and determination will be made by the Design Review Authority.

STANDARDS FOR MULTI-FAMILY DEVELOPMENT



FRONT YARDS / ENTRANCES

Intent

To provide transition and separation between proposed housing and the public pedestrian and vehicular systems where the front yard functions as usable outdoor space and provides a clear, welcoming, and safe arrival and entry for pedestrians from the sidewalk and streets to the multi-family buildings.

Standards

Required:

1. When there are common entries, they shall be clearly identifiable and visible from the street, with well-defined walkways from pedestrian routes to building entries.
2. Front yards shall include an entrance sequence between the sidewalk and the building including two (2) or more of the following elements: trellises, site furnishings, landscaped focal points and special paving.
3. Building entries should face primary pedestrian access points. If the doorway doesn't face the street, a clearly marked walkway shall connect the entry to the sidewalk.
4. Pedestrian scale lighting shall be provided to create a condition of personal security which shall include yard lighting, parking lot lighting and perimeter security lighting.
5. Four (4) or more of the following elements shall be used to highlight the main entrance to multi-family buildings:
 - Architectural details and accents;
 - Porches;
 - Fencing, arbors, trellis;
 - Open space, plaza, or courtyard;
 - Changes in paving. The use of Low Impact Development materials, if appropriate to the site conditions, is encouraged;
 - Ornamental gate and/or fence;
 - Planters;
 - Seating;
 - Water features; and,
 - Art work near the entry.
6. The use of landscaping shall be used to enhance the site, building elevations and / or screen elements such as adjacent commercial or industrial development, utility boxes, outdoor storage areas, and dumpsters. Fencing and other architectural features may be used in addition to or in lieu of landscaping.
7. Buildings and the major pedestrian entry shall be oriented towards the primary pedestrian street or parking area or if in clusters, toward a common open space with pedestrian connection to primary pedestrian street.
8. All landscape areas shall include a wide range of plant materials including perennials and flowering shrubs. A minimum 20% of plant material used shall provide seasonal color or interest.

Guidelines

Encouraged:

9. Curb cuts shall be limited to one per one hundred fifty (150) feet of street frontage or as required.
10. Landscape planting should consider the use of hardy evergreen native shrubs, trees and groundcovers where and when available or feasible.
11. Accent lighting should be used to highlight special focal points, building/site entrances, public art and special community features

COMMON SPACES / USABLE RECREATION AREAS

Intent

To provide a friendly pedestrian environment through the creation of a variety of usable and interesting open space(s) within multi-family developments and residential planned unit developments.

Standards

Required:

1. Multi-family projects, excluding single-family residential planned unit developments, shall be planned and organized to create opportunities for usable, well-integrated open space. Fifty percent (50%) of the sum of the building footprints shall be in open space, landscaping, and active play or activity areas. A maximum of 25% of the required activity area may be an indoor game or activity area.
2. Pedestrian walkways and open spaces shall be connected and accessible to the residents. A site plan showing how all residents will be able to access the open space areas shall be required. Private open spaces shall not be included in this requirement.
3. At least one on-site common outdoor spaces shall provide at least two (2) of the following amenities to accommodate a variety of ages and activities. Amenities include:
 - Site furnishings (benches, tables, bike racks);
 - Picnic areas, tables, lawn areas;
 - Patios or courtyards;
 - Gardens;
 - Open lawn with trees;
 - Play area;
 - Special interest landscape;
 - Accent paving, such as colored or stained concrete, stone, brick or other unit pavers
 - Public art;
 - Water feature(s) such as fountains, streams, ponds, etc.; or,
 - Sports courts.
4. Low impact development: Landscaped swales with bio-infiltration designed as part of a stormwater system is counted toward open space and landscaping minimums. (Up to 25%)
5. A minimum of 40% of the total landscaped area shall be planted with plants other than turf or lawn.
6. Outdoor seating opportunities such as over-look benches, seat walls, ledges, perches, boulders, artwork, etc. shall be provided near building entries, along walkways, and other pedestrian routes outside of parking areas (see Front Yard Standards # 2).

Guidelines

Encouraged:

7. Location of outdoor spaces should take advantage of sunlight.
8. Landscape accent features, such as trellises, arbors, hanging baskets, site furniture, and container planting are encouraged within open spaces, along pedestrian circulation routes and to define building and/or residential entrances.
9. Perennials and/or annuals are encouraged to provide special interest and highlight pedestrian areas such as building and/or site entrances, public open space, plazas and major pedestrian connections.

INDIVIDUAL OUTDOOR SPACES

Intent

To provide outdoor space that encourages use and a sense of ownership by residents.

Standards

Required:

1. Individual private outdoor spaces such as yards, decks, terraces, porches, verandas and patios shall be visually screened from each other and delineated from the street. Shielding may consist of walls, fences, berms, hedges, trellises, arbors and landscaping.
2. Outdoor spaces shall not be located adjacent to dumpster enclosures, loading/service areas, or other incompatible uses without screening and sight obscuring landscaping provided.
3. Minimum of one hundred-twenty (120) square feet of attached private open space for rear or front facades of each unit, inclusive of decks, patios, other pedestrian-only areas. These areas shall have a minimum of 30 square feet (5 foot by 6 foot porch and entry or landing).
4. Where landscape screening elements are provided, plant materials should be a mixture of deciduous and evergreen varieties. Plant varieties shall provide interesting color, texture, aroma, and/or other special attributes.

Guidelines

Encouraged:

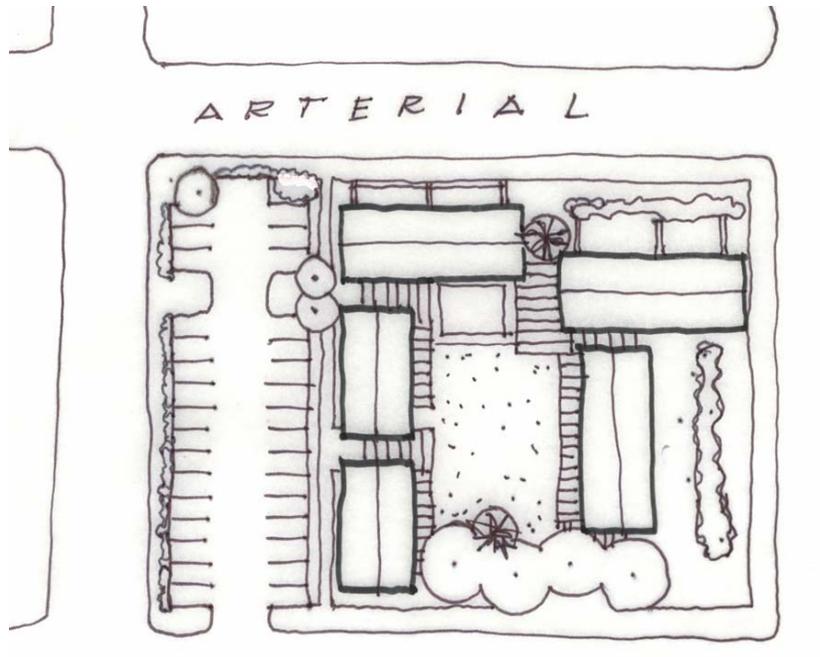
5. Planting areas are encouraged to use hardy natives where and when feasible.



LOCATION OF PARKING

Intent

To maintain a contiguous, active pedestrian realm along street fronts by locating and screening parking lots to the side or behind buildings. The intent of these guidelines is to locate the parking areas away from the street frontage in a manner which screens and reduces the appearance of the parking areas from the viewpoint of the adjacent street frontages.



Standards

Required:

1. In situations where there is one building on a property, the intention of the guideline is to encourage the resident and guest parking for that building to be located primarily behind or to the side of the building.
2. In situations where one or more larger primary buildings are located on a property, multiple parking areas are discouraged to be located adjacent to the street frontages.
3. Front yard setbacks may be reduced to no less than 10 feet when parking is provided at the rear or side of the building or screened.

Guidelines

Encouraged:

4. Access to multi-family parking lots located behind buildings should be provided from rear alleys, auto-courts, and/or other internal drives.

PARKING LOT LANDSCAPING

Intent

To reduce the visual impact of parking lots through landscaping, screening and/or architectural features that compliments the overall design and character of development.

Standards

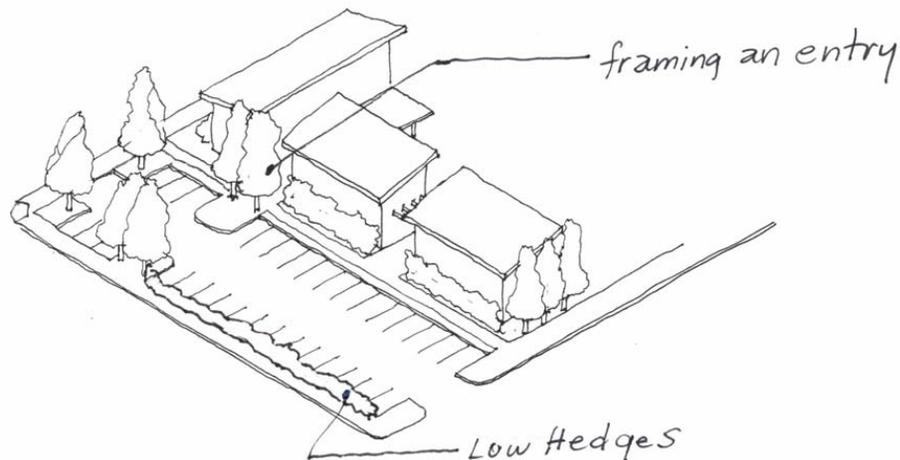
Required:

1. The number of trees required in the internal planting areas in parking lots shall be dependant upon the location of the parking lot in relation to the building and public right-of-way:
 - Where the parking lot is located between the building and the public right-of-way, one tree for every four spaces shall be provided (1:4).
 - Where the parking lot is located to the side of the building and partially abuts the public right-of-way, one tree for every eight spaces shall be provided (1:8).
 - Where the parking lot is not visible from the public right-of-way, one tree for every twelve spaces shall be provided (1:12).

Guidelines

Encouraged:

2. Existing trees shall be retained unless they are unhealthy, cause public safety hazards, or cannot be reasonably retained due to site specific limits.



PARKING LOT LIGHTING

Intent

To maintain a safe and secure pedestrian environment through the use of adequate lighting.

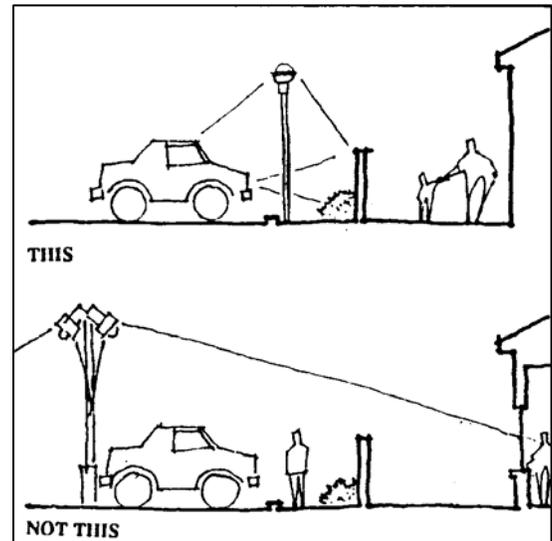
Standards

Required:

1. Lighting used in parking lots shall not exceed a maximum of 16 feet in height or as deemed appropriate by the reviewing official. Pedestrian scale lighting located in areas other than parking lots shall be a maximum of 13 feet in height.
2. The parking lot lighting should be appropriate to create adequate visibility at night and evenly distributed to increase security.
3. All lighting should be glare-free and shielded from the sky and adjacent residential properties and structures, either through exterior shields or through optics within the fixture.
4. Lighting levels and design should comply with the Illuminating Engineering Society of North America's *Recommended Practices and Design Guidelines*, latest edition.



Shielded, pedestrian-scale lighting in parking lot (on left).



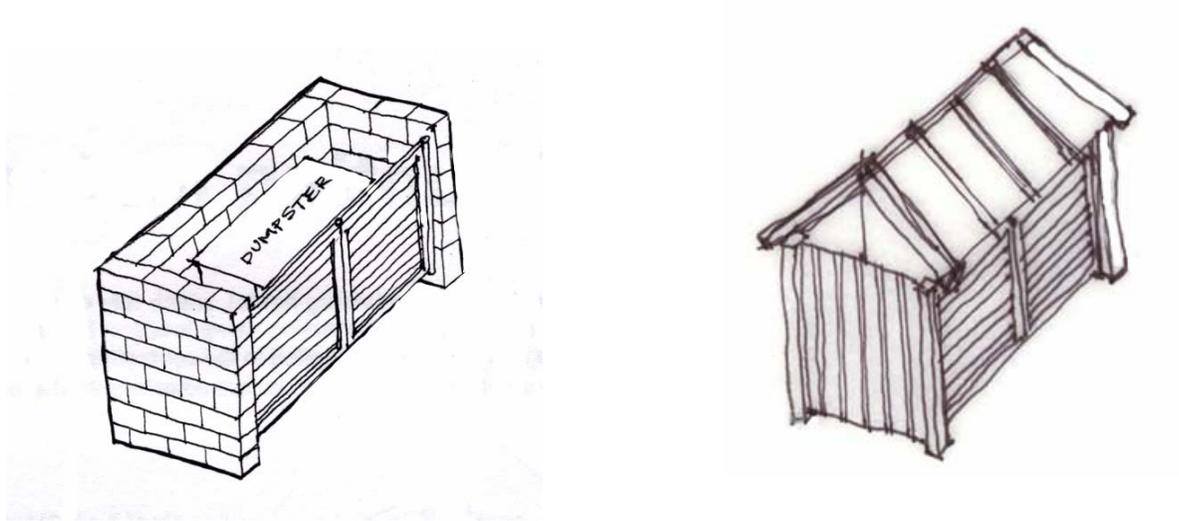
SCREENING OF TRASH AND SERVICE AREAS

Intent

To reduce the visual impact of trash storage areas.

Standards

Required:



1. All trash collection areas shall be screened by the use of one or more of the following:

- Masonry;
- Wood; or,
- Landscape planting areas.

2. Use of trellis, arbors, landscaping or other architectural elements.

ROOF PITCH (MINIMUM /MAXIMUM)

Intent

To maintain the residential scale and character of neighborhoods.

Standards

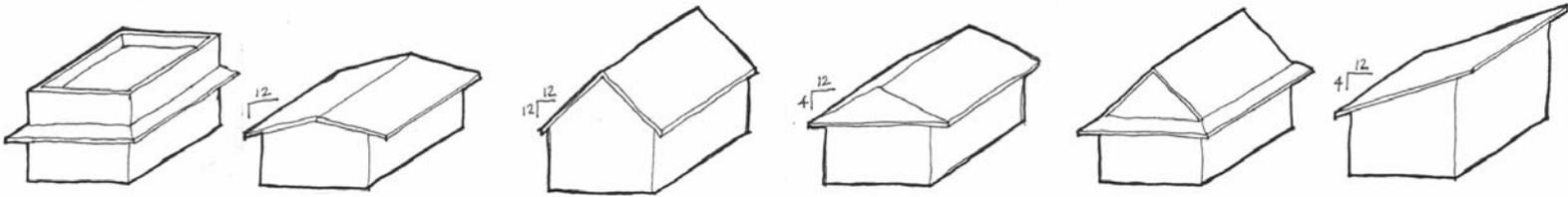
Required:

1. Structures shall incorporate pitched roof forms having slopes between 3:12 and 12:12 or greater, or flat roofs with parapets that provide compatible character.
2. Roof mounted mechanical equipment located on the exterior of the roof may be located within wells or pockets to preserve the visible rooflines. The mechanical well floor would not be subject to the slope requirement. However, in no event shall such roof mounted equipment project above the buildings roof line as viewed from the ground or from adjacent properties.

Guidelines

Encouraged:

3. Gables or other roofline variations (i.e., parapets, dormers, etc...) facing the street are encouraged.
4. Dormers, chimneys and other architectural elements may be incorporated to break up long lengths of roof.



BUILDING DESIGN

Intent

To provide differentiation to large residential structures, with a single front façade, shared entries and elevation options for common side and/or rear entries. The following standards and guidelines shall apply to all building elevations.

Standards

Required

1. When the building floor plans or shapes are repeated in a project, the architectural components shall be changed on each building to add variety. Examples: front façade treatments, porches and decks, bay windows, trim details.



WINDOWS

Intent

To maintain a residential character and varied streetscape and building elevation.

Standards

Required:

1. Windows shall be provided in building façades facing streets, comprising at least 15% of the maximum glazing permitted by the Washington State Energy Code.
2. Windows shall have visually prominent trim and accent elements, at least 3" in width; and no less than two (2) of the following features shall be installed:

- a) Sun shading devices;
- b) Planter boxes and trellises;
- c) Accent trim; or,
- d) Window shapes that contribute to an overall composition.



MODULATION OF EXTERIOR WALLS

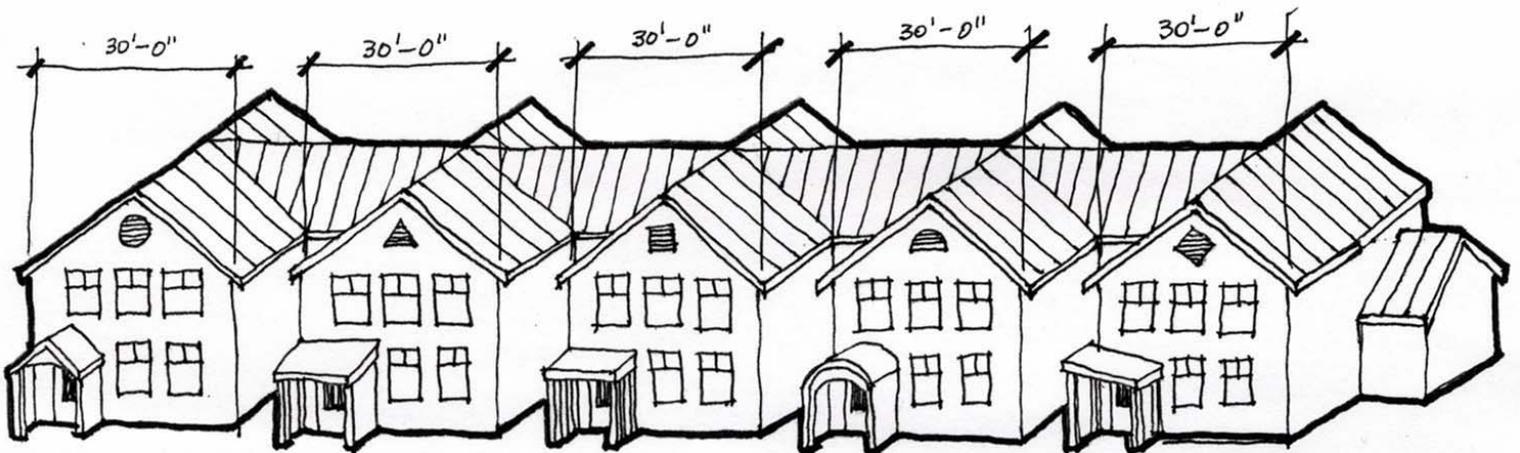
Intent

To provide residential/pedestrian character along the streetscape.

Standards

Required:

1. Buildings shall include building modulation along the building façades. Special attention shall be given to street/publicly viewed areas. Flat blank walls shall not be allowed.
2. Horizontal façades longer than 30 ft shall be articulated into smaller units of the residential scale. At least two (2) of the following methods shall be included:
 - a) Distinctive roof and wall forms or elements;
 - b) Changes in materials or patterns;
 - c) Windows (shape, pattern, trims and / or details);
 - d) Color differentiation; or,
 - e) Recesses / offsets / cantilevers. Architectural features (bay, bow windows, chimneys, lower roofs and awnings).



STANDARDS FOR RESIDENTIAL PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT (PUD) / DUPLEX AND SINGLE-FAMILY DEVELOPMENT



FRONT YARDS / ENTRANCES

Intent

To provide distinction and transition and separation between buildings and the public pedestrian and vehicular systems where the front yards function as usable outdoor space and provides a clear, welcoming, and safe entry for pedestrians from the public sidewalk and streets to the single-family residences.

Standards

Required:

1. Primary building entries shall be clearly identifiable and visible from the street, with well-defined walkways from public pedestrian and vehicular systems to residential entries.
2. Developments which utilize a clustered arrangement shall orient buildings around a common open space with a common pedestrian / vehicle entrance onto the primary street.
3. When the doorway doesn't face the street, a clearly marked and well maintained walkway shall connect the entry to the sidewalk.
4. Landscaping shall screen undesirable elements such as views to adjacent commercial or industrial development, utility boxes, outdoor storage areas, and dumpsters.
5. Front yards shall include an entrance sequence between the public-way and the residence which includes at least two (2) of the following elements: trellises, site furnishings, fencing, berms, walls, low hedges, landscaped borders, site lighting, signage, graphics, art and accent paving.
6. Common landscaped areas shall include a wide range of hardy, native, evergreen plant materials including perennials and flowering shrubs where and when available or feasible. A minimum 20% of plant material used shall provide seasonal color or interest.
7. Accent lighting shall be used to highlight special common area focal points, building/site entrances, public art and special landscape features.
8. Signage identifying building address shall be visible from the street and public pedestrian walkway and the size according to location, contrast and distance from the public way.



LANDSCAPING

Standards

Required:

1. Landscaping and landscape plans are required for all new structures.. Landscaping and landscape plans shall include:

- A mix of hardy, native, evergreen and deciduous trees, shrubs, and ground cover where and when available, in the front yard and side yards of each lot.
- Rear lots shall be landscaped, however decks, patios and other such features may be added in lieu of landscaping.
- Street trees.

2. The minimum amount of landscaping installed per residential unit shall be as follows: 3, 2” caliper trees, 80, 2-gallon shrubs and 20, 1 gallon ground cover plants. The landscape beds created for the landscaping shall have no less than 2” of fine fir bark or other similar material (other materials shall be individually pre-approved by the Community & Economic Development Director).



Guidelines

Encouraged:

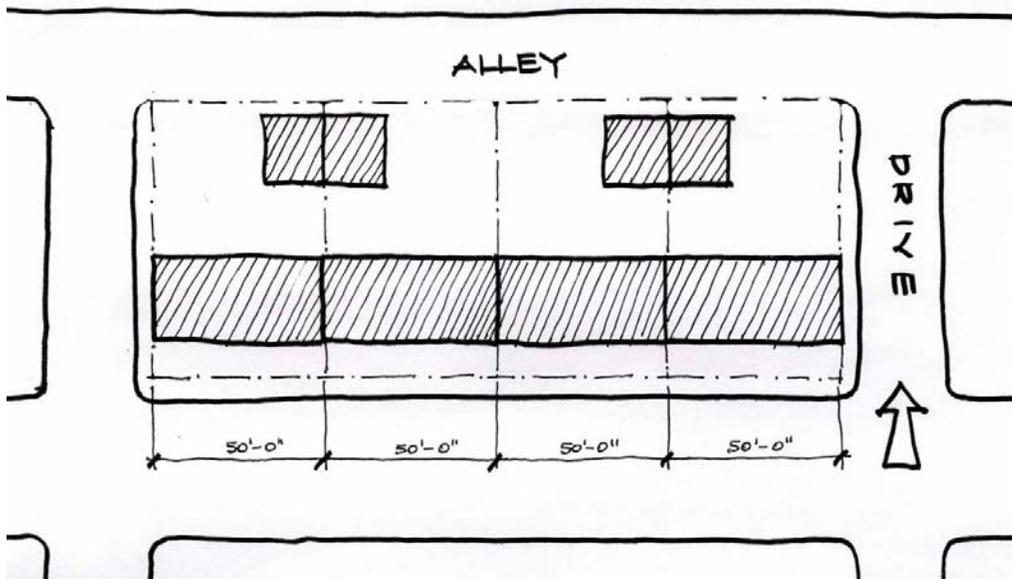
1. Front yards should be planted with drought tolerant, native, evergreen vegetation is encouraged when and where available and feasible

DRIVEWAYS AND CURB CUTS

Standards

Encouraged:

1. Driveways which access onto public streets shall be spaced to minimize access points and to increase the amount of on-street parking available.
2. If alley access is available or is provided within the development, vehicle access shall be from the alley with no curb cuts.



INDIVIDUAL OUTDOOR SPACES

Intent

To provide private, outdoor space as distinct from common space that encourages use and reinforces a sense of ownership by residents.

Standards

Required:

1. Outdoor spaces shall be screened when located adjacent to dumpster enclosures, loading/service areas, or other incompatible uses.
2. All outdoor spaces shall be landscaped. Decks, patios, walkways are also acceptable in lieu of or in addition to landscaping.
3. Walls, hedges, or fences shall be used to define outdoor private spaces in the rear yards of residential homes. These areas shall be created with a minimum of a 6-foot tall fence, wall or hedge.
4. Where landscape areas are provided, plant materials shall be a mixture of hardy, native, deciduous and evergreen varieties. Where and when available and feasible, a minimum 20% of plant varieties shall provide year-round color, texture and/ or other special interest.
5. Outdoor spaces such as yards, decks, terraces, porches, verandas and patios shall be delineated from common space. Delineation may consist of walls, fences, berms, hedges, and landscaping.



HOUSE SIZE IN RELATION TO LOT SIZE

Intent

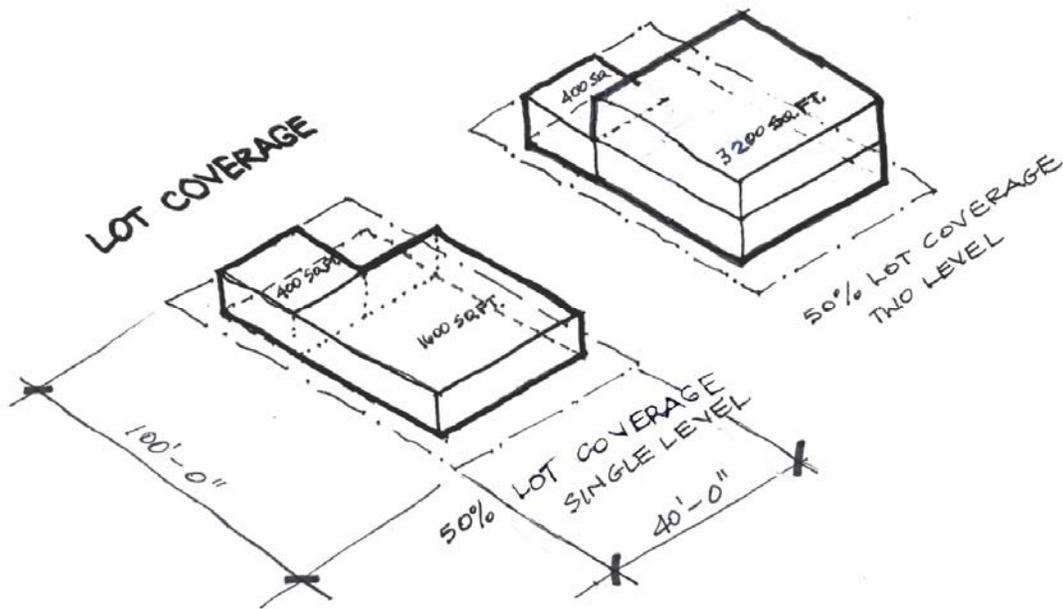
To ensure that single family development with small lot sizes are compatible with land use goals.

Standards

Required:

1. Except as permitted under the City's PUD ordinance, MVMC 17.69, lot coverage shall not exceed 50% for lots 4,500 square feet or smaller. The following are exempted from floor area calculations:

- Uncovered decks less than 18 inches above grade. Decks shall respect setback requirements per the IRC.
- Accessory buildings or structures less than 120 ft and under 5 feet in height (limit one per lot).



ROOF PITCH (MINIMUM /MAXIMUM)

Intent

To maintain the residential scale and character of neighborhoods.

Standards

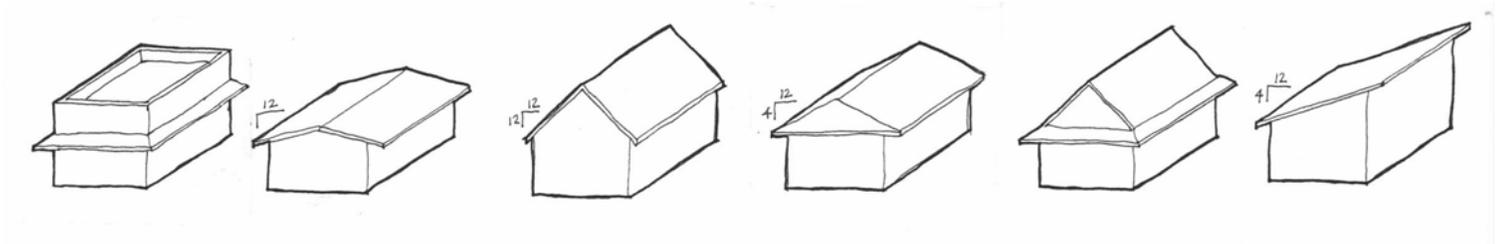
Required:

1. Structures shall incorporate pitched roof forms having slopes between 2:12 and 15:12 or greater (not applicable to porches and dormers). Flat roofs with parapets shall also be allowed.

Guidelines

Encouraged:

2. Gables or other roofline variations (i.e., parapets, second roof, dormers, etc...) facing the street are encouraged.
3. Dormers, chimneys, bay windows and other architectural features may be incorporated to break up long lengths of roof.



WINDOWS

Intent

To maintain a residential character and varied streetscape and building elevation.

Standards

Required:

1. Windows shall be provided in building façades facing streets, comprising at least 15% of the maximum glazing permitted by the Washington State Energy Code.



2. Windows shall have visually prominent trim and accent elements, at least 3" in width; and two (2) or more of the following Decorative window features shall be installed:

- a) Sun shading devices;
- b) Planter boxes and trellises;
- c) Accent trim; or,
- d) Window shapes that contribute to an overall composition.



MODULATION OF EXTERIOR WALLS

Intent

To provide visual residential / pedestrian character and variety along the streetscape.

Standards

Required:

1. Buildings shall include modulation along the building façades facing and visible from public rights-of-way and private access driveways and roads. Flat blank walls are not allowed.
2. Horizontal façades longer than 30 ft shall be articulated into smaller units, of the residential scale. The following methods shall be included:
 - a) Distinctive roof forms and wall forms or elements;
 - b) Changes in materials or patterns;
 - c) Windows (shape, trim, pattern and or details);
 - d) Color differentiation; or,
 - e) Recesses / offsets / cantilevers. Architectural features (bays, bows windows and awnings or lower roofs).



LOCATION OF GARAGES

Intent

To ensure that garage doors and automobiles do not dominate the street-facing building façades or overshadow pedestrian entryways and that adequate parking is provided.

Standards

Required:

1. When garage doors are facing the street or private driveways, they shall be set back at least 20 feet from the property line or sidewalk or edge of pavement of private street.
2. When the face of a garage is visible from the street it shall comply with the garage façade standards outlined on the following pages 25 and 26.
3. Where alleys exist, access to garages shall be primarily off the alley.
4. Where street parking is limited or restricted, each lot shall provide for a minimum of two fully enclosed parking spaces with a driveway area that can accommodate a minimum of two vehicles.
5. When feasible, garages are to be located away from the street frontage of building façades.



GARAGE FACADE STANDARDS

Garage facades that are visible from public or private streets shall incorporate no less than four (4) of the following design features:

1. Arching garage doorway.
2. Install cultured stone, board and batten or other decorative material approved by the CEDD on the face of the garage with the sill on top of the stone, board and batten or other material to meet the sill standards outlined within this document.
3. Install different types of materials on the garage gable versus the rest of the face of the garage, i.e., shake, board and batten, etc.
4. Install decorative trim around garage doors, between the gable and the rest of the garage face, and the sides of the garage. The decorative trim between the gable and the rest of the garage shall be decorative and have some elevation differences to it.
5. Install keystones on top of the garage trim and the peak of the garage gable; or install corbels or outlooks.
6. Install a trellis or an arbor around the garage door.
7. Cantilever main structure over garage face; or extend roofline with decorative supports in front of garage face. If the roofline is extended with decorative supports the CEDD department may allow this element to count towards two (2) of the required four (4) elements on this list.
8. Install decorative vents on garage gable; or tulip/starburst/or wagon wheel treatment shall be installed along the peak of the garage gable.
9. Split two (2) car garage into two (2) single car garages.

The pictures below and on the following pages identify the above-referenced elements. These pictures are not meant to show garage faces with all required elements installed; but rather examples of the individual elements listed above.

In addition to choosing four (4) elements above, all of the following elements are also mandatory on the face of the garage:

1. Windows shall be installed on the garage door.
2. Lighting shall be provided on the face of the garage.
3. Garage door face shall be decorative; a flat, blank door is not allowed.
4. Varying, but complementary colors for trim and different building materials.



Outlooks and decorative trim.
Cultured stone installation on face of garage.
Main structure cantilevered over garage face.

Corbels and decorative trim.
Arched garage doorway.
Different material on gable vs. rest of garage face.
Cultured stone installation on face of garage.





Roofline extended in front of garage with decorative supports.
Different material on gable vs. rest of garage face.

Differing materials on garage gable and rest of garage face.
Cultured stone installed.
Keystone installed on peak of garage.
Decorative trim.



Keystone above garage trim.
Cultured stone installed.
Differing materials on garage gable and rest of garage face.
Corbels and decorative trim.

Corbels.
Cultured stone installed.
Differing materials on garage gable and rest of garage face.
Decorative trim.



Arbor installed around face of the garage.



ACCESSORY SITE ELEMENTS

Intent

Street furniture, mailboxes, kiosks, lighting standards / fixtures and accessory elements located on private property, public ways and other public properties are designed as part of the architectural concept of the building, neighborhood and landscape design.

Standards

Required:

1. Mailboxes shall be clustered in convenient locations and shall be designed using architectural features such as peaked roofs over mailboxes. For security purposes, the clustering of mailboxes should not exceed 16 boxes unless otherwise required by the US Postal service.
2. Street lights shall be a maximum height of 13 feet.
3. "No parking signage shall be no higher than 3 feet from the ground and shall be placed on decorative posts.

