Design Guidelines for
Commercial Development

CARROLLTON
TEXAS

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The City of Carrollton has many desirable aesthetic qualities and areas with unique character. The zoning attributes contributing to these qualities have been established to protect the community's aesthetic qualities and ensure design excellence.

These guidelines are intended to promote good design that is responsive to its contextual setting. The guidelines outline the City's expectations with regard to the design of commercial retail establishments and are intended to assist applicants, decision-makers and staff in the consistent development, review, and consideration of commercial retail proposals.

The guidelines are applicable to commercial development which includes office, warehouse, retail, and service.

The guidelines are to be applied throughout the community and are intended to respond to the varying conditions and constraints inherent to individual site and contextual settings.

Design Objectives

- Support the vision of the Carrollton City Council and architectural design principles.

- Protect and enhance the character and quality of commercial areas while maintaining and strengthening a recognizable identity and character of building design.

- Mitigate the negative visual impacts arising from the scale, bulk and mass inherent to commercial buildings and centers.

- Strengthen the pedestrian environment and improve access to transit.

- Provide flexibility to respond to the unique characteristics and constraints inherent to commercial development and to evolving commercial development configurations.

- Promote building designs and practices that are adaptable to multiple uses for extended building lifecycles.

- Balance the economic requirements of the development with aesthetic concerns of the community.

A variety of character/contextual architectural settings exist in the City of Carrollton, ranging from an urban setting in the Downtown area to industrial settings in industrial zones and in suburban and neighborhood settings in other areas.

Carrollton places a high value on architectural approaches that recognize a project's contextual setting and the scale of development within a given site. The architecture and site design of a project should contribute to the established (or planned) design character of the community, neighborhood, or street corner.

Intent

This is not a recipe book or a step-by step guide, it is instead a description of inherent human principles in the making of architecture. Using this premise, the standards seek to increase the prospect of compatibility between buildings, styles, and generations.

The intent of the architectural guidelines is to ensure a base level of quality architecture that is responsive to its context and builds upon the aesthetic identity of the community rather than a design solution(s) that is based on a standardized formula or market prototype superimposed on the selected site. Over time, certain projects and landmark buildings begin to define the dominant character of an area. Not all buildings in the surrounding area contribute equally to the area character and each example should be weighed against the balance of all other projects.

The intent of the architectural guidelines is to encourage proposals that will fit within and contribute to the established or planned architectural character and context of a specific area. Areas with little, no, or poor immediate context should expand the area of influence to identify the architectural context or establish a new design vocabulary consistent with the vision and mission of the City Council and the Planning and Zoning Commission.

The talent and creativity of individual designers must still be infused within each building for these standards to be successful.

Building Design

Architecture creates visual interest, character, and identity for the project while maintaining a relationship to the human scale and the natural environment.

The guidelines are intended for new construction and renovation proposals.

Design guidelines cannot predict the unique potential and/or constraints for each project. Thus, the following guidelines are intended to establish a general direction and a base level of development quality and compatibility with surrounding areas.

The guidelines are organized into five (5) sections including Site Design, Architecture, Landscape Design, Lighting, and Signage/ Corporate Identification.

Variation in roofline, wall plane, and materials creates a visually engaging design.

A. Materials

High quality materials are the building blocks of good buildings and great places, and provide an expression of concern for the quality of the pedestrian experience. The message of quality and durability inherent in long-lasting materials promotes the human perception of timelessness and continuity of place.

Masonry elements provide a particularly strong connection between human scale and the built environment. The size of a brick is directly related to the ability of a mason to lay it comfortably by hand. Therefore, we perceive buildings that have been assembled with human-scaled materials as the result of tangible human activities rather than as abstract or synthetic.

Materials also contribute to the perception of a building's overall scale and texture. Individual elements of a known size allow the observer to understand the total size and scale of the structure. The texture of the surface, together with its color, will affect its visual weight, scale, and light reflective qualities.

Brick or stone over a minimum percentage.

Building materials contribute to the human experience.

Material texture affects visual quality.

The standards require commercial buildings to use masonry materials over a majority of their surface area. Exceptions may be considered when the context of a building site suggests the use of other materials (e.g. an historic district). Materials used on designated primary facades, if not used for the entire building, should return along secondary sides a minimum distance based on visibility.

Building walls should incorporate brick, cast stone, stone, formed concrete, or other high quality, long-lasting masonry material over a minimum percentage of surface area (excluding windows, doors, and curtain walls). The remainder of wall area may incorporate other materials. Minimum percentages are outlined in the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance.

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B. Composition

The human perception of beauty is found to be influenced by the measure of symmetry within an individual composition.

Applied to buildings, this principle creates order within elements of a composition. Groups of elements are read visually by their rooflines. Under each roofline, a composition is formed which is visually enhanced when symmetry is achieved.

Minor variations to a symmetrical condition, for example a door that is balanced by a window of the same proportion on the other side, can be absorbed while maintaining an overall sense of balance.

Elements within each segment of a building facade, defined by a different roof height, are required to be symmetrical. A symmetrical condition is achieved when facade elements and openings are repeated in the same positions on either side of a central vertical line for that segment.

Balance achieved with symmetry.

Relate size to the human body.

C. Scale

Scale in architecture is relative size. It refers to how we perceive the size of a building element relative to other forms, and to the human body. There are two types of scale: overall scale and human scale.

Facades shall incorporate a minimum of two (2) continuous details refined to the scale of 12 inches or less within the first 10 feet of the building wall, measured vertically at street level.

Repetition of details.

D. Proportion

Proportion refers to the relationship of two ratios, for example, height to width. In architecture, this can refer to the overall building mass as well as openings for windows and doors within it.

Architectural features can be used to organize the perceived mass of larger buildings. Building features such as columns, piers, rooflines, and brick patterns can divide and create vertical orientation on a large surface. Once these proportions have been established, windows and doors should reinforce the vertical orientation of the composition.

The frontage of buildings should be divided into architecturally distinct sections no more then sixty (60) feet in width with each section taller than it is wide. Windows and storefront glazing should be divided to be either square or vertical in proportion so that each section is taller than it is wide.

The ratio of height to width.

Architectural features organize perceived mass.

Vertical orientation of the composition.

Each section taller than it is wide.

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Human perception seeks order.

Repeat elements along each elevation.

Windows and doors create a visual rhythm.

E. Rhythm

Rhythm applied to architecture refers to the regular or harmonious recurrence of lines, shapes, forms, and details. It incorporates repetition and spacing as a fundamental device to create visual organization.

Studies of human perception show that the mind and eye actually seek some type of organization in order to relate various elements. The viewer is uncomfortable with confusion or unrelated chaos. The mind tends to group items that are close to each other, whether they are objects, or the spaces between objects. Almost all buildings incorporate elements that are, by their very nature, repetitive. For example, windows and doors repeatedly puncture a building's surface to allow light and access. When these elements are considered together, they have the potential to create visual rhythm.

Architectural elements chosen to repeat on a façade should represent a primary characteristic of the building's identity, whether as a massing form or detail element.

A minimum of one significant detail or massing component should be repeated no less than three (3) times along each applicable elevation. The scale of the chosen element should relate to the scale of the structure.

F. Transparency

Building facades for commercial buildings should have large window areas to share the building's interior activities with the street.

Windows and doors narrate the uses inside the building to the observer and are a measure of how public or private these uses are intended to be. For example, storefront windows at street level are more expansive, suggesting common uses, while upper levels are smaller, indicating more private uses. The design of storefronts in particular can enhance pedestrian activity. Commercial and mixed-use buildings should provide a high level of transparency at the street level in order to visually connect activities within and outside of the building.

Seen from the outside, it is the openings in a wall that create one of the strongest visual impacts beyond the wall itself. As design elements, windows and doors provide the opportunity to accomplish many of the other facade principles.

Facades of all commercial structures should incorporate transparent features (windows and doors) over a minimum percentage of the surface area of street fronting facades. Minimum percentages for different levels are outlined as follows: Ground level of retail uses: 50% of surface area minimum; ground level of office and other commercial uses: 35% of surface area minimum; ground level of any commercial use over 25,000 SF: 25% of surface area minimum; and upper levels of all uses: 20% surface area minimum.

In cases where a building has more than two facades fronting a street or primary travel way, the transparency requirement shall only be required on two facades based on pedestrian traffic and vehicular visibility.

Minimum percentage of transparent features.

Storefront windows are more expansive.

Windows share the interior activities with the outside.

Window and doors narrate the uses inside.

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G. Articulation

Facades should be organized into three major components, the base, body, and cap. These elements transcend style and relate architecture to the human body with the visual analogy of feet, torso, and head. The feet provide stability, the torso provides height and bulk, and the head provides identity. The component described as the body shall constitute a minimum of 50% of the total building height.

Base: ground level, where the building makes contact with the earth. Body: upper architecture, forming the majority of the structure. Cap: parapet, entablature or roofline, where the building meets the sky.

This suggests both timelessness and a universal relationship to visual psychology. These elements may be present today in varying proportions, and achieved using a wide variety of techniques, but should always be clearly identifiable.
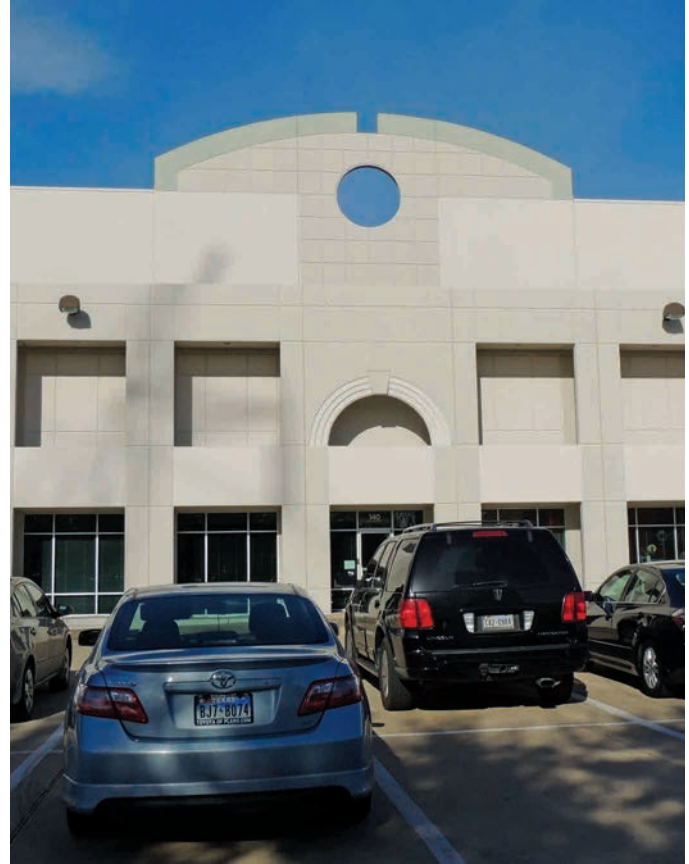
Articulation relates architecture to the human body and is achieved in a wide variety of techniques.

H. Expression

The principle of structural expression creates facades with inherent visual logic, and provides a human comfort level to the observer corresponding to our intuitive understanding of gravity.

Elevation design should work within the framework of chosen materials. Design and detailing of materials should result in an authentic-appearing structure, with dimensions and spans of visible materials related to their own structural properties.

Masonry elements should display characteristics of load-bearing design such as arches and headers that relate directly to columns or pilasters below. Alternatively, steel elements should display characteristics of framed structural members.

All masonry elements designed to appear as load-bearing shall be visually supported by other masonry elements directly below. On masonry building walls, expressed or implied structural piers shall be evident as vertical alignments on the facade.

Masonry elements imply load-bearing and express vertical alignment.

I. Color

Brick, concrete, and stone have their own inherent color and should be left in their natural state to weather over time. Paint can be used to complement and accent other exterior building materials.

Proposed color schemes shall incorporate a base primary color for each building. Each building within a complex does not need to be of the same base primary color but the color must be compatible with other selected colors on the site. In the case of buildings that are entirely of brick, concrete, or stone, the base color may be the natural color of the material.

Color definitions are as follows: Color Palette: A color scheme that incorporates related colors of complimentary hues and shades. Primary Color: One to three base colors chosen to dominate a color scheme. Accent Color: A contrasting color used to emphasize architectural elements.

A maximum of two primary colors for each building segment may be proposed with a maximum of two secondary accent colors. If accent colors are to be used, they too must be described and used throughout the development.

Natural inherent color of stone.

Paint used as a complement.

Accent colors to emphasize architectural elements.

Primary base color for each building.

Site Design

The site design of commercial development is one of the most critical aspects of a successful project.

Decisions made at the conceptual design stage have repercussions throughout the design development process. This section begins with a listing of some of the more common components of commercial site development. The list of components is followed by key site characteristics and contextual influences that may impact the arrangement and relationship of the components within the site.

Natural topography.

Site drainage screened with landscaping.
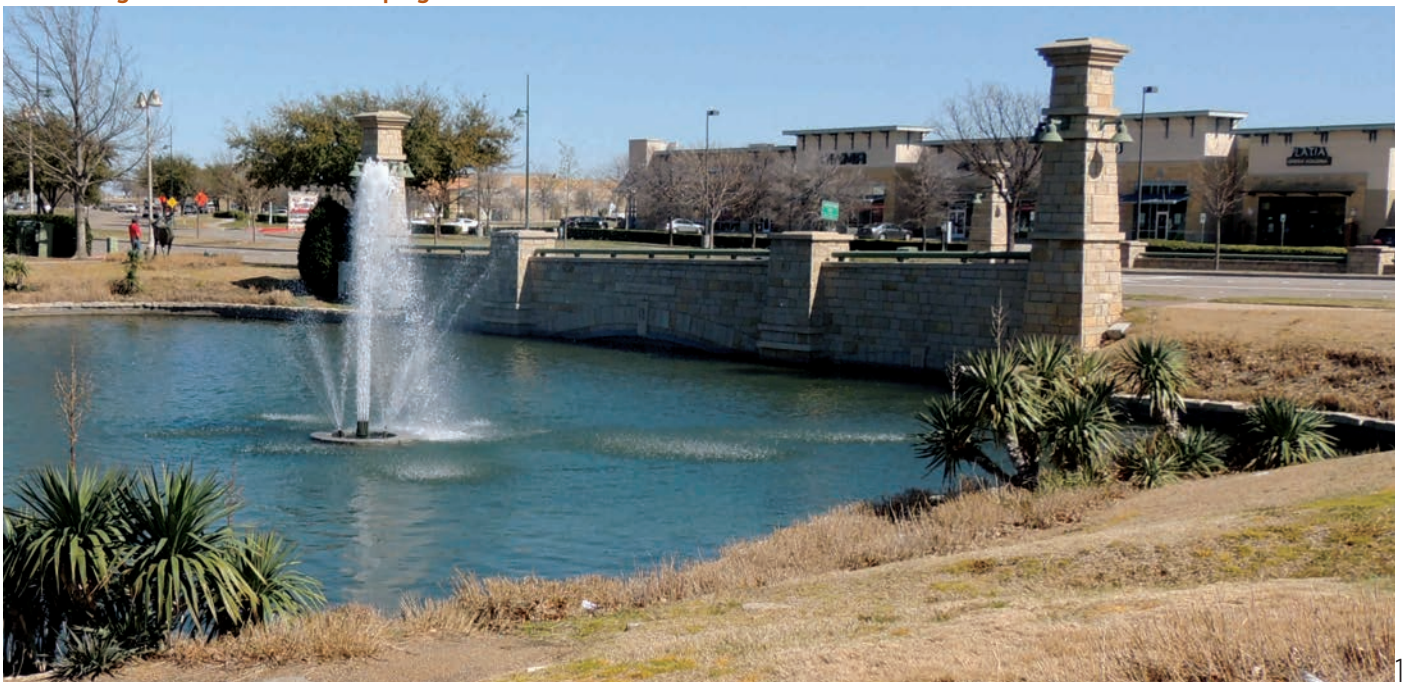
Site design should respond to the topography, infrastructure, landscape features, and drainage characteristics of the site.

- Site grading should emulate the natural characteristics of the site's underlying topography. Finished floor elevations of buildings and parking areas should transition with the grades of the site.

- Site designs should incorporate and retain features of the natural environment such as drainage ways, associated vegetation masses, and mature specimen trees.

- Significant site features, such as rock outcroppings, washes, and prominent views enjoyed by key locations within the public realm should influence site design.

Site designs should respond to local contextual influences and to the site designs of adjoining developments. Elements that could be coordinated between adjacent sites include:

- Shared driveways for accessing perimeter streets
- Linkages of internal vehicular circulation systems
- Linkages of interior pedestrian systems with the systems of adjoining sites
- Linkages/continuation of open space systems
- Perimeter open space and landscape buffers zones
- Areas and access for service and refuse collection
- Drainage and retention facilities
- Linkages of other networks systems and functional areas where a coordinated site design approach will benefit the cohesiveness of the larger area

Mature specimen trees.

Shared driveways.

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Landscape buffer between street and building.

A. Development Patterns and Relationship to the Public Realm

Proposals should follow local development patterns (i.e. geometry of street system, open space and view corridors, common setbacks, streetscapes). The continuation of such patterns should contribute to a unified visual appearance within an area.

Streetscape appearance.

Building entries should be easily identifiable and should acknowledge the importance of the need for visibility from the public realm.

Unless constrained otherwise, buildings should have a strong visual and pedestrian relationship to the street and should be clustered around and connected to public space.

Where buildings are required to be set back far from the street (i.e. sites with street-side buffer or scenic corridor setback requirements), a strong pedestrian connection should be provided to the street edge to promote connectivity to transit and existing or planned area wide pedestrian pathway network.

B. Parking Facilities

Commercial developments are encouraged not to exceed parking requirements imposed by the City, and to seek opportunities and incorporate features intended to reduce the dependence on the automobile (i.e . enhanced accessibility to transit and pedestrian connectivity).

Surface parking areas and other expansive areas of paved surfaces should be broken up with landscape planting.

Where parking structures have a strong relationship to the street or other pedestrian areas, the lower level of the structure should be activated with pedestrian related improvements, storefronts or alternate uses and enhanced landscape treatments to soften the structure. Other sides of parking structures should also be landscaped with increasing intensity the more visible the parking structure is from surrounding uses.

Top deck lighting of parking structure should strive to eliminate glare and visibility of pole mounted fixtures by employing full cut-off fixtures and minimizing pole heights.

Consider parking structures with full roofs, varied parapet heights, or other suggestive roof form variations to eliminate top deck lighting concerns and to create a more finished appearance. This may not be appropriate in all contexts.

**Parking areas broken up with landscape planting.**

C. On-Site Amenities and Special Features

Commercial centers should feature a pedestrian space(s) scaled with respect to the size and demands of the particular use. The space(s) should incorporate landscaping, shaded areas, and seating opportunities for customers and employees.

Outdoor dining areas are encouraged and when part of the development program, should be used to activate plazas, the edges of open space, building frontages, and street frontages. Outdoor dining areas should be oriented away from off-site uses that are sensitive to noise or night-time activity.

The placement of patios, plazas, and similar spaces (including outdoor dining areas) should take into consideration the impact of solar orientation. Spaces having a southern or western orientation should incorporate landscape and architectural shading. If a site exists such that natural landscaping can not possibly be incorporated, only then may shading occur singularly as architectural shading.
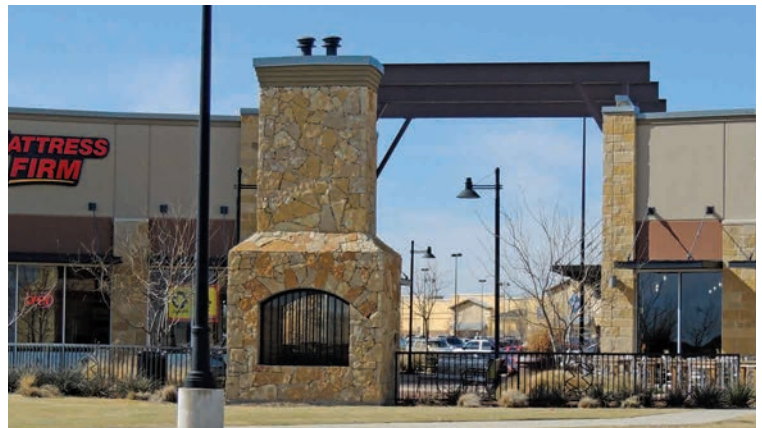
Outdoor dining.

Programming enhanced pedestrian areas should consider the following features and elements:

- Protection and relief from the vehicular environment
- Structured and/or informal seating or waiting opportunities
- Flexibility for special events, vendors and/or promotions
- Active edges and adjoining dining areas
- Lighting and power
- Street furnishings (trash, information kiosk)
- A focal element (water feature, sculpture, landscape, architectural feature or natural site feature)
- Landscaping and decorative hardscape areas
- Shaded and sunny areas
- Public art
- Featured views outward

Water feature with public art.

Landscaping with public art.

D. Service, Refuse Collection and Utilities

Service areas, storage areas and refuse enclosures should be oriented away from public view and screened from public areas. In larger commercial developments, trash collection, service and loading areas should be separated from main circulation and parking areas.

In highly developed settings (i.e. downtown) or when a proposed refuse area adjoins a residential property, commercial uses that dispose of wet organic refuse should utilize odor controlling trash compactors.

Service and refuse areas of nearby buildings should be clustered together when possible.

Shopping carts should be stored within the building or in an area screened with a wall that is integral to the architectural design of the adjoining building.

Refuse enclosures.

Utilities out of the public right of way.

Screened HVAC units.

Shopping cart storage area.

Utility cabinets and pedestals should not be located within parking lot landscape islands or public right of way where they cannot be screened, are exposed to damage from vehicles, and/or present a visual hazard to drivers or pedestrians. Utility cabinets, pedestals, and other above ground utility infrastructure should be clustered and screened to the extent allowable by operation requirements and should be painted or integrally colored a tone that is neutral to its setting (see ROW Ordinance.) Consideration should also be given to accessibility of such facilities for required service and maintenance.

Consider any potential need for wireless communication facility sites early in the design process. Current proposed facilities and future facilities should be fully screened and integrally designed with the site.

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E. Ancilary Uses

E-1   Pedestrian, Transit and Bicycle Facilities

Clearly visible and direct pedestrian paths should be established between neighboring buildings, between buildings and outlying parking areas, and between buildings and transit facilities (see Landscape Section).

Where pedestrian circulation paths cross vehicular routes, a change in paving materials, textures, or colors should be provided to emphasize the conflict point, improve visibility, enhance safety, and provide added aesthetic appeal.

Bicycle parking should be provided at locations that do not obstruct the flow of pedestrians, are easily identifiable and visible, and convenient to customer entrances.

E-2   Drive-through Facilities

Drive-through windows, menu boards, equipment, and associated stacking lanes should be located to minimize impacts on adjacent residential areas and should be adequately screened from public view and the view of adjacent sites.

Consider drive-through windows that incorporate an architectural covering consistent with the design theme of the building. Coverings over drive-throughs can help to achieve more variation to building mass, added comfort for users, breakdown of building mass, and finished building appearance.

E-3   Open Air Display and Sales

Outdoor display and sales (i.e. propane sales, firewood displays, news racks, vending machines, and amusements) are highly regulated in all zoning districts. When such uses occur, display areas should be well organized, within a designated zone and not prominent from off-site views.

E-4   ATMs, Sales Kiosks and Other Ancillary Uses

Walk-up ATMs, vending machines, and similar uses should be integrated into existing or planned buildings. Freestanding sales kiosks are discouraged.

Pedestrian path between buildings.

Pedestrian path across vehicular path.

Stacking for drive-through facilities.

Outdoor display and sales and walk-up ATM.

Lighting

Site lighting, security lighting, and architectural/landscape lighting should provide the user with illumination levels appropriate for the designed activity (i.e. parking, walking, outdoor dining). Illumination levels should also be reasonably uniform throughout the site and strive to minimize glare.

General Lighting Standards

Avoid competing light levels and maintain balanced light levels on-site and between adjacent properties. The exterior lighting design must take into account the background lighting levels, lighting from other sources, and characteristics of the surrounding area.

Refer to the City of Carrollton's Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance performance standards for site lighting, glare, and brightness.
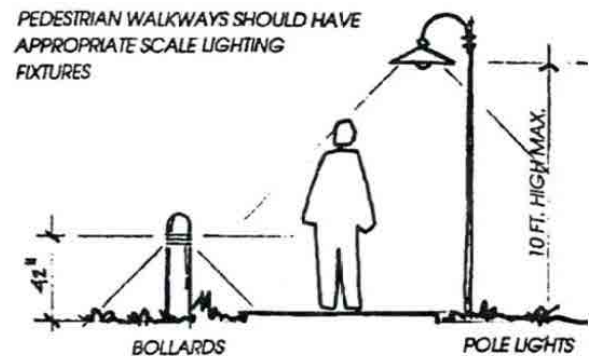
Light glare or excess brightness should be minimized. Cut-off fixtures, mounting heights, and the elevation of potential viewers must all be considered for effectively controlling glare by directing light below the horizontal.

Security lighting and lighting of service areas should meet the standards listed above.

Architectural and Landscape Lighting

Architectural lighting should be used to highlight special features only. Lighting of expansive wall planes or the use of architectural lighting that results in hot spots on walls or roof planes should be avoided.

Landscape feature lighting and lighting at the pedestrian level is encouraged.

PEDESTRIAN WALKWAYS SHOULD HAVE APPROPRIATE SCALE LIGHTING FIXTURES

10 FT. HIGH MAX.

42"

BOLLARDS   POLE LIGHTS

PEDESTRIAN LIGHTING

Light trespass beyond property lines should be controlled by shielding or aiming fixtures away from residential properties. Light trespass should not exceed ambient levels.

Landscape Design

Landscaping should be integral to the overall design concept and should be carefully planned to serve more than one purpose. The intent of these guidelines is to ensure that landscape design contributes to the overall appearance and function of the site, as well as the streetscape.

Refer to the City of Carrollton's Landscape Design Guidelines for more detailed information on landscape design.

Signage/Corporation Identification

The architecture of the building should be viable and appropriate for its location and use regardless of the business identity. Commercial signage plans should reflect a balance between allowing adequate signage for business identification while protecting the visual aesthetic of the streetscapes. Other forms of branding or business identity not falling under the sign ordinance will be viewed as architectural elements and features and evaluated as such.

Refer to the City of Carrollton's Sign Guidelines for more detailed information on signage.

Retail Concepts

Industrial Concepts

Restaurant Concepts

Hotel Concepts

Gas Stations Concepts

Public Art Concepts