

# Design Guidelines for Multi-Family Residential Development



**CARROLLTON**  
TEXAS

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# Purpose



This document articulates the design principles for multi-family residential development to assist the Planning & Zoning Commission, City Council, City staff and project planners and architects by identifying the City's design criteria for multi-family development. The intent is to achieve well-designed projects that enhance the community's overall value and appearance.



This manual's intent is to encourage unique architectural expression and diverse design, not limit building styles. It is understood that modern buildings can still meet these design principles; however, exceptions may be provided when the specific design circumstances justify the exception.



# Design Objectives

This manual establishes design principles for new multi-family projects. It promotes good design and development of residential apartment and condominium buildings in the City of Carrollton. This manual should direct and encourage efficient processes and decision making as well as defining the level of quality of the built environment expected by the City Council. It provides the “how to” of designing better built outcomes. These principles contained herein are intended to promote and protect the public health, safety and general welfare of the community by carrying out the following design objectives:

- Foster project designs that create and enhance a sense of community and neighborhood.
- Create and promote usable public spaces.
- Being respectful of, and creating designs that reinforce, the relationship between public and private space.
- Creating neighborhoods of superior architectural and visual interest.
- Creating project designs that are transit and pedestrian friendly.
- Ensure community longevity by designing projects and neighborhoods that will endure over time.
- Incorporate environmentally sustainable features into project design.
- Consider and respond to the relationship and context of adjacent projects.



# Building Design Guidelines

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

## A. Architectural Design Concept

- A-1 The overall character of the development should be defined through the use of a consistent design concept and should incorporate the architectural embellishments commonly associated with that style.
- A-2 Architectural design concepts of neighboring projects should be considered. The project may adopt a consistent or contrasting approach.



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



## B. Form and Massing

### B-1 Variation of wall planes, rooflines and building form should be considered to create visually engaging designs.

- Architectural elements such as varied roof forms, articulation of the facade, breaks in the roof, walls with texture materials and ornamental details, and landscaping should be incorporated to add visual interest.
- Balconies and small decks with landscaping should be incorporated into 2-story or higher buildings to reduce the visual impact of tall structures.
- Architectural elements such as fenestrations and recessed planes should be incorporated into façade design. Large areas of flat, blank wall and lack of treatment are strongly discouraged.
- Semi-private areas such as covered front porches and/or courtyards are highly encouraged.
- Roof height, pitch, ridgelines and roof materials should be varied to create visual interest and avoid repetition. Architectural style should be considered when designing the roof plan.
- Stairs and other entry access requirements such as wheelchair ramps and elevators should be integrated into the overall project design.

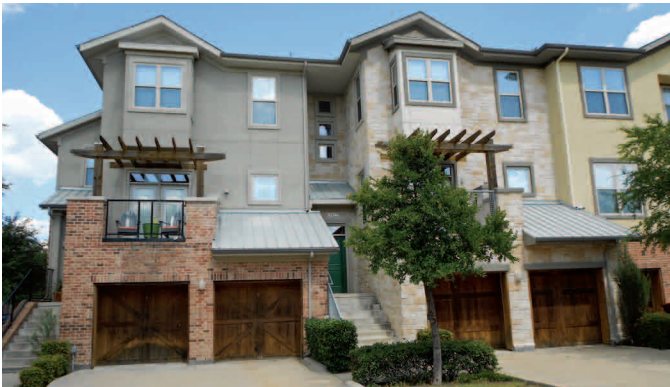




**B-2 Proportional relationship between adjacent buildings and between the building and the street should be maintained.**

- Building layout should ensure the gradual transition of building height and mass.
- Pedestrian scaled entry should be a prominent feature of the front elevation.
- Building entry zones should be clearly defined through the use, or combined use, of elements such as accent paving, accent planting, colored pots and bollards.
- Architectural detail such as windows, awnings, trellises, balconies, patios, landscape planters and material changes at the street level should be used to soften the edge of the building and enhance pedestrian scale.

**B-3 Placement and configuration of parking areas, garages and carports should be considered.**



**C. Exterior Building Materials and Color**

**C-1 Variation in color and materials should be considered to create visually engaging designs.**

- High quality and durable materials, such as stone, brick and cementitious siding, are encouraged.
- Creative use of plaster and stucco finishes that add visual depth and texture is highly encouraged.
- Creative and appropriate use of color is encouraged.
- Use of color should be consistent with the overall architectural style or theme of the project.
- Variation in exterior treatment of adjacent buildings is encouraged.

**C-2 Architectural treatment should be applied to all elevations of a building and may include elements such as color, materials or form drawn from the design of the primary frontage.**

- Rear and side elevations of units/buildings facing a major street should be given particular emphasis.
- Side and back walls of units/buildings on corners should include treatment on walls facing the street, and should incorporate design features such as pop-outs, variation in building mass, and window placement.



**C-3 Architectural features that enhance the façade or building form are encouraged.**

- Architectural features such as decorative moldings, windows, shutters, dormers, chimneys, balconies and railings, and landscaped elements such as lattices that add detail to a facade are encouraged.



# Site Design Guidelines

Site planning respects and enhances the natural environment, connects the project to its surroundings, promotes walkability, ensures effective access and circulation, includes green-design features and provides for services and storage.

## A. Site Planning and Building Siting

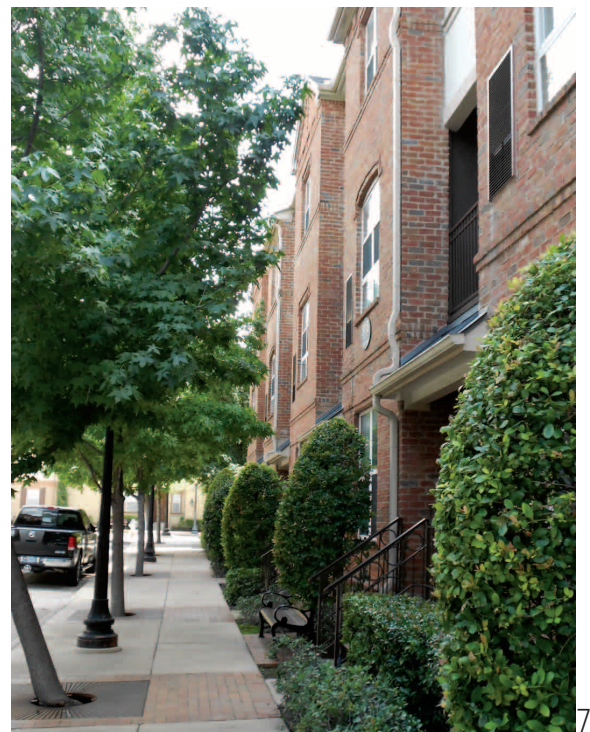
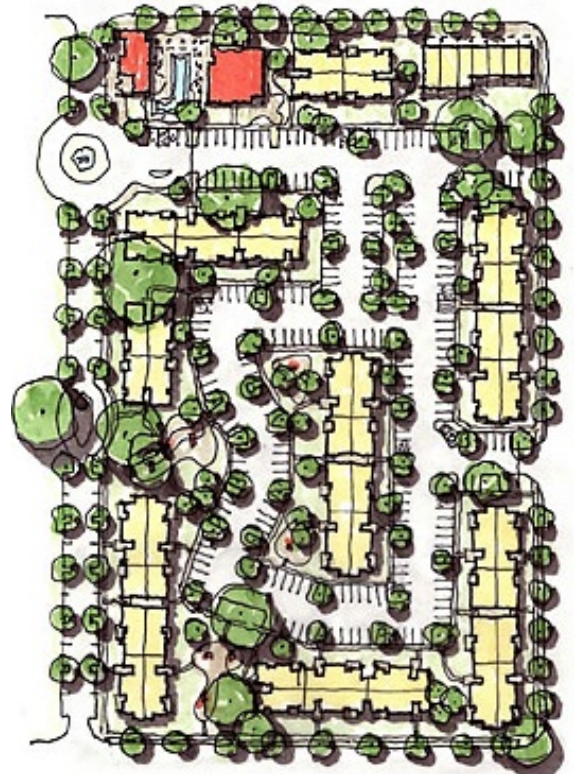
**A-1 Units should be clustered to define public open spaces and activity areas.**

**A-2 Parks and open space should be integrated into the overall design of the project.**

- Open space and recreational areas should be designed as an integral part of the project, not as an afterthought.
- Open space areas should be planned as a community amenity.
- Greater visual, pedestrian and bicycle connectivity use and access should be encouraged.

**A-3 Buildings should be placed to create a street presence and enhance neighborhood character.**

- Building setbacks should be varied to break building mass facing the street and provide additional landscape opportunities.
- When adjacent to single family residences, side and rear setbacks shall allow for a sufficient planter area to buffer impacts and screen undesirable views.
- When necessary, setbacks should be used to provide sound attenuation by creating space for the placement of sound barriers.



## B. Edge and Boundary Treatment

### B-1 Major intersections and corners should be treated as neighborhood/project entryways.

- Unit/building configuration should maintain visual and physical connections.
- Landscaping, public spaces and/or “gateway features” should be used to define the entryways into the project.

### B-2 Entryway features should reflect the overall architectural identity or character of the development.

### B-3 Pedestrian, bicycle and vehicle linkages should be provided to adjacent developments and uses.



Enhanced paving, landscaping and monument signage create an attractive project entry.

### B-4 Cluster buildings to define, connect and activate pedestrian edges and public spaces and to locate convenient transit stops.

### B-5 Projects should provide fencing as appropriate between adjacent land uses.

- Projects abutting single-family residential areas should provide screening walls or approved fencing along the boundary except at pedestrian access points. The compatibility of adjacent land uses should be considered in choosing appropriate fencing materials and design.
- Fencing between multi-family uses and open space is discouraged. When necessary, such fencing should be an open type (such as wrought iron) to allow for continuous views to the open space.
- Fence materials and colors should complement the building design and the prevailing materials and design in the vicinity of the project.
- Materials and finishes should be durable and easily maintained, resistant to graffiti and water staining, and be able to withstand the local climatic variations.



## C. Topography and Grading

### C-1 Natural topography should be integrated into site design to the extent feasible.

- Retaining walls should reflect the overall architectural identity or character of the development.
- Innovative wall designs such as keystone and integral color split-face CMU are encouraged.
- Finished slopes should taper or terrace to match the existing grades and the grades on adjacent streets.

### C-2 Grade changes and berming should be used in conjunction with landscape to screen undesirable views.

Innovative wall design and open-style fencing create an attractive interface to open space.

Detention pond screened from public view.



## D. Access, Circulation and Parking

### D-1 Adequate vehicular access to the site, internal circulation and parking should be provided.

- Guest and handicap parking should be evenly and conveniently distributed throughout the project
- Shared access drives between adjacent parcels are encouraged to minimize curb cuts.
- Reciprocal access easements for vehicles and pedestrians, and shared parking facilities between compatible adjacent uses are encouraged.
- Short term parking should be provided at the main entry to the leasing office and at building entries.

### D-2 High-level of pedestrian and bicycle connections and networks should be provided on site.

- Sidewalks and/or green-belt connections for pedestrians and bicyclists should be provided.
- Transit connections should be accommodated where appropriate.

### D-3 Paving material for driveways, drive aisles and walkways should be consistent with the architectural style of the units/buildings and should incorporate similar accent elements.

- Stamped and/or colored concrete or other decorative accent is encouraged.

### D-4 Site circulation should allow for and facilitate emergency access to the site and all buildings.

- Speed bumps are strongly discouraged as they impede emergency response.



Long, straight drives are discouraged to prevent speeding and conflicts with pedestrians.





Materials and colors used should reflect the overall design of the development.



## E. Service and Storage

**E-1 Services and storage, including garbage collection, recycling, fire and utilities should be planned. Trash enclosure location, dimensions and design shall comply with current City standards.**

- All refuse containers shall be placed within screened storage areas or enclosures.
- Refuse containers should be conveniently located throughout the project, yet sufficiently buffered from project entries, main building entries and main pedestrian paths.
- Enclosures should be located to provide easy accessibility for users, adequate room for servicing by refuse trucks and should not hinder visibility for vehicle circulation.
- Enclosure materials and colors should be consistent with, and complimentary to, building materials and finishes.
- Landscaping should be provided on all non-accessible sides of trash enclosures.

# Public Space Guidelines

The design of public spaces provides safe, active and accessible gathering places in the community that encourage social interaction and a sense of community.



Separated sidewalks and street trees provide for a comfortable pedestrian environment.



## A. Streetscape Design

### A-1 Safe and comfortable pedestrian environments should be provided within the project.

- Physical separation from streets should be provided through landscaping to encourage walking.
- Pedestrian amenities such as appropriate signage, street furniture, landscaping and pedestrian-scale lighting should be provided.
- Wider sidewalks should be provided to allow for two persons to walk comfortably side-by-side.

### A-2 Pedestrian and bicycle friendly projects should be designed to encourage walking and bicycling.

- Traffic calming elements such as enhanced paving and bulb-outs at intersections should be provided. Other traffic calming measures should be explored.
- Parking bays and other on- and off-street parking should be explored.

### A-3 Utilities should be screened from public view.

- HVAC units should be located away from private outdoor space such as porches and patios, and screened from public view through landscaping and/or screen walls.
- Utility meters and other equipment should be screened with landscaping or low screen walls.
- Public utility infrastructure and other utility components should be oriented away from public view to the extent possible and screened with evergreen shrubs to the extent allowed by the Utilities.



**A-4 Loading, service and storage areas should be screened from public view through a combination of building design and/or layout, masonry walls, grade separations and/or dense landscaping.**

- Ground or wall mounted equipment should be located out of public view to the extent possible and screened or placed in an enclosure to the extent allowed by the utility companies.
- Screening for roof-mounted equipment shall be integrated into the building and roof design and use compatible materials, colors and forms. Wood lattice or fence like coverings are inappropriate for roof screening and are discouraged.
- Roof mounted equipment, including but not limited to air conditioners, fans, vents, antennas and microwave dishes, shall be set back from the roof edge, placed behind a parapet or in a well, or painted to match their background, so that they are not visible to motorists or pedestrians on the adjacent streets.



**A-5 A combination of landscaping, berming and screen walls should be used to screen views of parked cars adjacent to the streetscape.**

Painted to match building material.



Screened with landscaping.



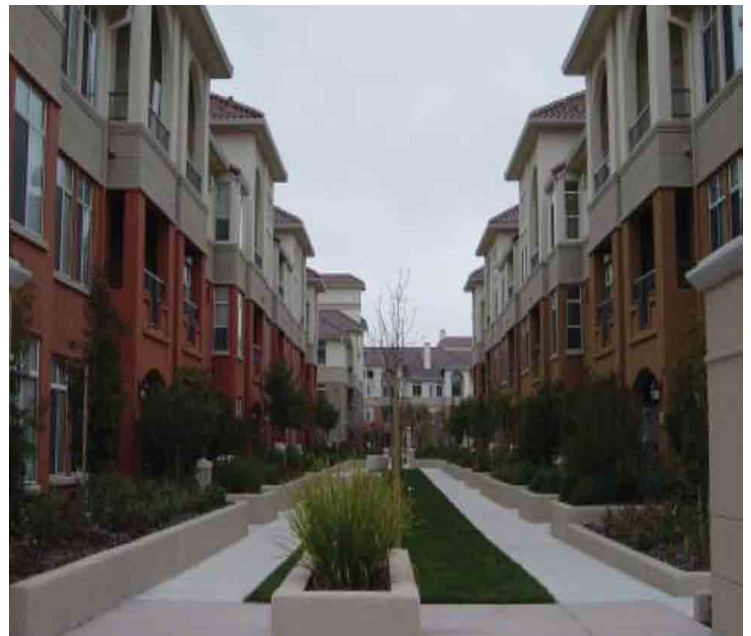
## B. Public/Private Spaces and Separation

### B-1 Visual and physical connection between private and public space should be maintained to encourage natural surveillance while creating separation between the street and living areas.

- Vertical grade separation should be considered or product types with reduced setbacks or living area within close proximity to the sidewalk.
- Floor plans should orient indoor activity areas toward the front of units to provide more “eyes on the street.”
- Clear definition of the semi-private space such as decks, patios and porches should be maintained from the public space such as sidewalks and parks.

### B-2 Active use of outdoor spaces should be encouraged.

- Relationship between indoor and outdoor spaces and uses should be considered in unit designs.



## C. Landscaping

**C-1 Landscaping should be used extensively throughout the project for multiple objectives, such as:**

- Screening buildings and adding texture to walls;
- Screening undesirable views;
- Strengthening the pedestrian scale;
- Buffering pedestrian walkways from the street and buildings;
- Providing shade in public spaces and parking lots;
- Assisting in neighborhood wayfinding;
- Softening transitions between horizontal and vertical planes;
- Providing a visual and noise buffer; and
- Breaking up hard surfaces.



**Prior to any construction or development a Tree Preservation Plan must be submitted and approved by the City.**



**C-2 Layered landscaping and a mix of deciduous and evergreen trees should be incorporated in the landscape design. Plant palettes should emphasize massing and form rather than individual or small groupings of shrubs and trees.**

**C-3 Tree placement should provide maximum shading of streets, sidewalks and outdoor public spaces.**

**C-4 Native planting or compatible species of drought-tolerant plants should be used as much as possible to reduce water consumption.**

- Turf is not permitted in median strips or within the protected zone of any native oak tree.
- Limit turf to accent areas, activity areas or in parkway areas between sidewalks and street curbs.
- Group plants according to water needs and irrigate accordingly.

**C-5 Visual surveillance of common open space, parking areas or dwelling entries should not be obscured through landscaping.**

- Trees and shrubs shall be selected and located to maintain safe sight line distances per the City's Clear Vision Triangle.

**C-6 Landscape designs should consider and enhance adjacent site landscaping.**

**C-7 Plant materials shall be selected and located to avoid conflicts with the underground or above ground utilities.**

**C-8 Plant selection should consider site geology and soil conditions. Soil should be amended as necessary to ensure establishment.**

**C-9 All required landscaping improvements shall be continually preserved and maintained to professional maintenance industry standards.**

- Plant materials that have died or are in a visible state of decline shall be replaced to meet the requirements of the original landscape plan approval.
- All proposed tree work should adhere to the Tree Preservation Ordinance.

**C-10 Carports or trees should shade the paved parking areas.**



## D. Plazas, Parks and Play Lots

- D-1 An adequate amount of site amenities, plazas and play areas should be provided.**
- D-2 Common outdoor gathering areas should incorporate a mix of active and passive amenities.**
- D-3 Recreational amenities such as playground equipment, shaded areas, picnic tables, barbecue grills, exercise equipment and sports facilities should be provided in common outdoor space to encourage community activity and use.**



Play lots centrally and conveniently located to encourage use and foster interaction.



Water features provide active and passive recreation.



## E. Defensible Space

- E-1 Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) best practices including, providing defensible space, opportunities for natural surveillance, territorial reinforcement and access control should be incorporated in unit/building design.**
- E-2 The concept of private space and control of access points should be reinforced through the use of low fences, walls and landscaping, as appropriate.**
- E-3 Window placement between units should balance privacy and natural surveillance.**



Low walls and landscaping transition grades provide separation between public and semi-private space.

## F. Lighting

- F-1 Pedestrian-scale lighting should be incorporated in outdoor areas such as pedestrian walkways, plazas, play lots and parking areas.**
- F-2 Pedestrian-scale lighting should be integrated into building and landscape design. Light fixtures should be compatible with the architectural style, materials, color and scale of the project.**
- F-3 Safety and security in the project and its immediate surroundings shall be enhanced through lighting design.**
- F-4 Energy efficiency, color rendition and overall effect should be considered for lighting design.**
- F-5 Exterior lighting should reinforce the architectural features and blend into the landscape. Special lighting may be used to highlight unique design elements or art features.**
- F-6 All exterior lighting must comply with the glare ordinance.**

## G. Public Art

- G-1 Art features should be incorporated into public spaces where possible.**
- G-2 When provided, art features should be consistent with the overall design concept.**
- G-3 When provided, art features should enhance the quality and use of the public space.**
- G-4 Art features should be made of durable and vandal resistant material.**



## H. Signage

- H-1 Thoughtfully integrated design themes and styles for project signage that conforms to the Sign Ordinance are highly encouraged.**
- H-2 Sign type and locations should be consistent throughout the project and the sign materials and graphics should complement the project design.**
- H-3 Building and site addressing shall comply with applicable City addressing policies.**
- H-4 A lighted directory sign that shows building and apartment numbers should be placed at each project entrance to direct visitors to their desired destination.**

