

Town of Chapel Hill, Tennessee



Design Guidelines

for Nonresidential Property,
Multiple Family Residential Property,
and Any Entrance to a Nonresidential Development.

Adopted on: September, 9, 2013

with Revisions as noted.

I. INTRODUCTION

Chapel Hill’s residents are increasingly demanding higher design standards for the built environment. There is also a growing realization of the importance of preserving the natural features of the land. Chapel Hill residents wish to preserve a small town rural atmosphere, while at the same time accommodating growth in a manner which preserves the quality of life. These are the challenges addressed in this design guideline manual as the population in Chapel Hill continues to grow.

A. Basis for Standards

The General Assembly of the State of Tennessee enacted Public Chapter No. 1049 (Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 6, Chapter 54) in May of 2008. This Law provides that a municipality “...may create a design review commission”. This DRC has the authority to develop general guidelines for the exterior appearance of nonresidential property within the municipality. The Law further authorizes the governing body to designate the Planning Commission as the design review commission (DRC).

In July of 2012, the Board of Mayor and Aldermen passed Ordinance Number 12-_____ that established the Design Review Commission and tasked them to develop and adopt general guidelines for the exterior appearance of nonresidential property, multiple family residential property, and any entrance to a nonresidential development within the Town. This Ordinance also established the Planning Commission members as the Design Review Commission.

B. Projects Subject to Review by the Design Review Commission

The Chapel Hill Zoning Ordinance provides in Section 3.120 that a Site Plan shall be reviewed and approved by the Planning Commission. This section of the Zoning Ordinance specifically excludes single-family and two-family dwellings. This Section should be amended to remove the existing language and provide that site plans be reviewed by the Planning Commission and the Design Review Commission for all nonresidential property, multiple family residential properties, and any entrance to a nonresidential property within the municipality.

II. GOALS FOR COMMUNITY APPEARANCE AND CHARACTER

A. Natural Character

New development within Chapel Hill should enhance and preserve the natural character of the town. Of special importance is the retention of mature trees and vegetation; the preservation of topography and other natural features where

feasible, and ensuring that new buildings sit within a landscaped setting. Guidelines will be addressed later in this manual for specific requirements.

B. Compatibility

New buildings should be compatible with their neighbors, assuming that neighboring structures are a credit to the community. That does not imply uniformity of architectural style; rather a sympathetic response to the height, scale, materials, color, site location, and other aspects of nearby structures.

C. Screening the Utilitarian

Utilitarian elements such as electrical equipment, waste storage areas, loading docks, air conditioning equipment, and the like should be screened from public view.

III. SPECIFIC GUIDELINES

A. Site Guidelines

1. Topography and Vegetation

- a. Buildings and improvements on the site should be organized to minimize changes to existing topography and the loss of existing mature vegetation.
- b. Smooth topographic transitions should be provided at the edges of properties. Slopes greater than 3:1 run to rise should be avoided wherever possible.
- c. Buildings should be situated to minimize destruction of existing vegetation. All existing trees with trunks over eight inches in diameter (measured four feet above grade) should be shown on the plans and, those that are proposed to be removed shall be identified.
- d. Changes in elevation may be used along the perimeter of sites to reinforce planting screens. The slope of earth should not exceed 3:1 run to rise, and should be planted with ground cover or shrubs to prevent erosion.

2. Run-off

- a. In order to minimize run-off and provide adequate open space, sites shall have a minimum pervious area of 20% except on industrial sites where the minimum is 10%.
- b. Peak post-development run-off rates from a site shall meet all the requirements of the Town of Chapel Hill.
- c. Where run-off rates require detention areas, the areas should be designed as a public amenity and be aesthetically pleasing to the public view. This can be accomplished by utilizing storm water retention ponds or Low-Impact Development (LID) storm water management practices to create new park-like settings or natural areas within a development. In situations where retention ponds or LID practices are not feasible, the Design Review Commission, at their discretion, may allow conventional detention ponds that are screened from the public view.

3. Curb Cuts and Site Entrances

- a. The number of site entrances should be the minimum necessary for effective on-and off-site traffic control, combining adjacent entrances whenever possible.
- b. All site entrances shall be designed and located in accordance with the Town Of Chapel Hill's Subdivision Regulations and Zoning Ordinance.

4. Sidewalks - Reserved

5. Building Orientation

- a. Landscaping should be located between building and streets so that structures appear to be set in landscaped surroundings.
- b. Orient the front façades and main entrances of new buildings to public streets. If a building does not have public street frontage, it should be oriented to any public space or its most visible side from the public realm.
- c. Building should respect the orientation of neighboring buildings and neighboring developments. Front façades should face front façades, and sides face sides.

- d. Avoid orienting the back of a building to the front of another building, especially at a transition between land uses. Front-to-front relationships are preferred.
- e. Orient service areas to limit their impact on the public realm, on the development, and on any neighboring developments or uses. Coordinate the location and design of service areas with public access to buildings from parking areas.
- f. In general, the amount of frontage occupied by parking should be minimized. Where parking lots front on public streets, they should be buffered by landscaping.
- g. When all sides of a building will be seen from public rights-of-way, they should be constructed to screen utilitarian areas. Incorporate loading areas, service areas, and utilities into the design of the building, through the use of screening integral to the building's architecture.

6. Site Elements - Reserved

B. Parking Areas

1. General Parking Guidelines

- a. The number and width of curb cuts should be the minimum necessary for effective on- and off-site traffic circulation. Whenever possible, curb cuts should be combined with adjacent entrances.
- b. All parking areas should be designed as an integral character defining feature of the development to contribute to the quality of the image of the Town. Use landscaping, pedestrian amenities, paving, and site features to achieve this goal, including the use of white striping to designate spaces.

2. Surface Parking Lots

- a. Reduce the amount of excess parking lots and spaces through such methods as providing pull-in spaces in front of shops, by sharing parking lots between uses, and by creating on-site overflow lots.

- b. To reduce the scale of parking lots in excess of 25 parking stalls, they should be divided into modules, or multiple smaller lots. Use techniques such as the natural topography, logically placed landscaped pedestrian paths to destinations, and linear aisles of plantings to separate parking areas.
- c. Portions of the parking should be located to the rear and sides of buildings whenever possible, limiting the amount of parking between the street and principal buildings oriented to the street.
- d. Screen parking lots from streets, parks, pedestrian spaces, and from adjoining developments using low fences or walls, and/or evergreen plantings.
- e. Provide landscaping within parking areas. Refer to the parking Lot Landscape Guidelines, page 11, for specific guidelines.
- f. Parking areas and drive aisles should be constructed of asphalt or concrete (or approved alternative hard, dustless surface). Additionally the boundaries of parking areas and drive aisles should be concrete curbed .
- g. Accommodate pedestrian needs within parking areas.
 - Provide clear pedestrian paths and crossings from parking spaces to main entrances and to the street.
 - Plan parking for least interference with appropriate pedestrian access and connections to adjoining developments.
 - Walkways within parking areas should be a minimum of five feet wide, not including car overhang space.
 - Orient parking bays perpendicular to building entrances to allow pedestrian movement down, rather than across, rows of parking.

3. Structured Parking - Reserved

4. Multi-Family and Attached Residential Garages - Reserved

5. Bicycle Parking - Reserved

A. Open Space, Landscaping, and Screening

Landscaping plays many roles in a community. It provides scale and enclosure; it provides shade and buffers; and it creates cool, inviting gathering places in commercial districts and residential areas alike. It can tie together the character of a development, reinforce connections between neighborhoods, and provide a barrier to unsightly views. All developments should include well-designed open spaces and landscaping as an integral part of the project to highlight entryways, to soften parking lots and buildings, to buffer the transitions between uses, and to create an image of quality throughout Chapel Hill.

1. General Landscape Guidelines

- a. Landscaped areas shall be located along site boundaries, within parking areas, along unlined drainage or storm water management structures and retention/detention areas, and across the front building elevation. Use combinations of fencing, trees, shrubs, and other landscaping features to provide screens for service areas, parking, and utilities.
- b. Evergreen plantings, which provide effective screening year-round, shall be used and enriched with plants of seasonal color variation.
- c. Landscape zones should be consolidated into areas large enough to give natural character to a site rather than randomly distributed in small and narrow open spaces that do not match the context and scale of the project.
- d. Open space and landscaped areas shall be covered with a variety of trees, shrubs, ground cover, and sod, or with materials such as mulch.
- e. Use plant species appropriate for site conditions including available sunlight, water and root and canopy space.
- f. All planting must be maintained by the respective property owners or owner's association.
- g. Approved planting plans must be maintained as originally designed. Any diseased, dying, or dead plants should be treated or removed by the property owner and appropriate replacement plants should be installed.

- h. Irrigation systems shall be provided to ensure robust planting areas (including within parking islands and medians, if applicable). For smaller scale sites, an exterior hose spigot located nearby the landscaping area to be irrigated may serve as the irrigation system.

2. *Preservation of Existing Natural Features*

- a. The existing topography and vegetation shall be preserved intact as much as possible to minimize disruptions in drainage.
- b. Large existing specimen trees and existing forested areas shall be incorporated into site design to the greatest extent possible, and such features as mature woods and riparian areas shall be retained.

3. *Street and Site Perimeter Landscaping - Reserved*

4. *Entryway Landscaping*

- a. All entry signs and features to developments shall be highlighted with ornamental shrubs, ground cover, and small trees in addition to the required street tree landscaping.
- b. The design of entryway landscape features should respond in scale to the entry and buildings and in plant material to the rest of the site, to reinforce the character of the development.
- c. Landscaping at corners of intersections and of driveways should be carefully designed to avoid blocking sight lines, creating a safety hazard for vehicles and pedestrians.

5. *Front Building Elevation Landscaping*

Buildings shall be softened with landscaping and pedestrian amenities where there are not building entrances or active storefronts. Use ornamental plants and ground covers with evergreen plantings as a backdrop. Building foundation landscaping shall be designed to respond in scale to the building and in plant material to the rest of the site. Walkways along these buildings should be separated from the building by a landscape area.

6. *Parking Lot Landscaping*

The landscaping of the interiors of parking lots is required. Landscaping the interiors of parking lots softens the appearance of large expanses of pavement and provides shade for cars and pedestrians.

- a. The interiors of surface parking lots should have no more than fifteen spaces without a landscape island, which should at a minimum be sized to the same dimensions as the adjacent parking space to provide adequate space for landscaping. All parking rows should begin and end with a landscaped island regardless of the number of parking spaces within the row. At a minimum, landscaped islands shall include one (1) shade or ornamental tree and three (3) shrubs.
- b. Perimeter parking lot landscaping shall be provided for all parking lots to screen parking from view from streets, public areas, and adjacent uses. The use of landscaped hedges, low walls, or a combination of these techniques are effective screening methods.
- c. All parking lot landscape areas should contain trees as the primary landscape element to provide shade and visual barriers. Trees should be complemented by the use of shrubs, ground cover, and ornamental plants. Use trees of sufficient number and size at maturity to shade a substantial portion of the lot. Consider orientations that will provide the greatest shade during summer months. Smaller, more decorative trees can be used closest to buildings and near overhead utilities.
- d. All parking lot landscaping should take into consideration the safety and visibility of pedestrians and vehicles, keeping hedges, walls, and groundcover low enough for safe visibility by pedestrians throughout parking areas, and from within cars, especially at entrances.

B. Fences, Walls And Screening

Fences and walls help define edges along major roadways and property lines and provide screening when landscaping alone is insufficient. They can serve as screens for service and loading areas. A buffer of landscaping, possibly in combination with a fence or wall, can serve to screen less intensive uses from undesirable views, noise, and light.

1. *Locations of Screening, Fences, Walls, and Buffers*

- a. Fences should be set back from the street right-of-way to allow a clear area for utilities and landscaping.

- b. Fences, walls, and screens should be located and designed so as not to compromise safety by blocking vision, especially at intersections. Refer to the Zoning Ordinance for specific requirements.

2. *Design of Screening, Fences, and Walls*

- a. Choose high-quality designs and materials, such as brick, stone, metal, and wood. Select materials used elsewhere on the property or the structures within the site. The use of brick, stone and metal is encouraged because of longevity and the reduced cost of maintenance for homeowner associations and property owners. Chain link or vinyl-coated chain link fencing may be used for industrial facilities, government facilities, animal care facilities, and public and/or institutional sports facilities.
- b. Use a scale and level of ornateness of the design on any new walls and fences that relate to the scale and ornateness of the building(s) within the site. Use simpler designs on small lots.
- c. Solid walls or fences should not create a stockade appearance. This can be accomplished in a number of ways, including adding an evergreen screen on both sides of the fence/wall, or by undulating the plane of the fence/wall.
- d. Design fences to be attractive from the public realm as well as functional for screening. Fence stringers (the structural framing of the fence) shall be located facing the interior of the lot or development, with the finished side facing out toward the public realm.

3. *Commercial*

- a. In non-residential areas, fencing may be up to eight feet in height.
- b. Screening of service areas, dumpsters, storage, and mechanical appurtenances may be taller than eight feet; this screening shall be at least one foot taller than the item being screened.

4. *Industrial*

- a. In industrial areas, the maximum height for fencing is fifteen feet for exterior storage areas, with stored materials at least two feet below the height of the screening.

- b. Chain link or vinyl-coated chain link fencing may be allowed for side and rear yards of industrial sites that abut industrially-zoned property.
- c. Chain link or vinyl-coated chain link fencing may be used for government facilities, animal care facilities, and public and/or institutional sports facilities.

5. Multifamily Residential

- a. For front yard fencing in residential areas, opaque fencing should be avoided except for brick walls. Appropriate fencing types include wood picket fencing, ornamental metal, brick walls, and combinations of brick and ornamental metal. The maximum height of front yard fencing should be 48".
- b. Fencing for rear yards may be opaque.
- c. Privacy screening shall be provided in cases where single-family residential lots back up to Common Open Space areas adjacent to roadways.
- d. No fencing in residential areas may exceed six feet in height.

6. Screening Between Land Uses

- a. Transitional landscape screening buffers between uses and developments should consist of a densely planted buffer strip to provide an adequate visual screen. The screen should be of appropriate plant materials to form an effective buffer for all seasons. Mature vegetation should be retained in such areas and supplemented as necessary by new vegetation to screen sight lines.
- b. Transitional buffer screening may include an opaque fence six feet in height.
- c. Privacy screening may be required in multi-family housing areas to separate individual yards from adjacent uses or from streets and pedestrian walkways.
- d. Sound protection in the form of solid masonry walls should be provided where service areas are adjacent to residential areas. Additional planting area may be required to provide for adequate screening .

- e. Transitional screening shall be located outside any easements.
- f. Refer to the landscape template in the Appendix of this document for transitional buffer screening requirements.

C. Architectural Guidelines

1. General Architectural Guidelines

a. Compatibility with Surroundings

- The use of materials and colors compatible with buildings adjacent to a site is encouraged.
- The use of certain façade materials and colors for buildings along arterials and in planned commercial districts is discouraged. These materials are painted concrete block and artificial stone. Full chroma colors are also discouraged, except as accents.
- The use of exposed or painted metal siding is prohibited for front building facades for commercial and multi-family buildings.
- Prototype or franchise designs should be adapted to reflect the Chapel Hill context, by careful siting, use of compatible materials, and landscaping of the site.

b. Materials, Texture, and Color

The choice of materials and texture has great visual significance. Coordinating materials within a development can tie together buildings of different sizes, uses, and forms while contrasting materials or textures within a large building may add visual interest and reduce its scale. The choice of materials and colors shall also take into consideration surrounding conforming developments, as these elements can help to soften transitions between uses. Color is an integral element of the overall design. Brick, stone, and concrete have an inherent color created by nature or during the manufacturing process. Other surfaces will get their color from applied materials such as paint.

- Choose materials that are high in quality and durable and that offer texture - avoid monotonous surfaces.

- Use material and texture changes to help reduce mass and provide visual interest and variety.
- Preferred materials include brick, stone, and wood, and new synthetic materials that approximate the look and dimension of these materials, such as cementitious siding, artificial slate, and some artificial stone products. Use of these quality materials is required on all front building facades and is strongly recommended for all other building facades visible from the public right-of-way for commercial, office, and multi-family residential buildings.
- Use of exposed or painted metal siding, painted concrete block, vinyl siding, and corrugated metal siding must not exceed 25% of the non-glass area of the front building facade.
- In industrially zoned districts, materials such as painted metal, tilt-up, and painted block may be acceptable for building elevations. Brick or stone materials are encouraged on front elevations in industrially zoned districts and any elevation facing residential or non-industrial zoned properties.
- Use consistent or compatible materials on all sides of a building.
- For large buildings, use color variation to break up the mass of a building and provide visual interest.

c. Rooftop Utilities

- Screen all rooftop mechanical and communications equipment from public view from adjacent streets and adjoining developments. Exceptions may be allowable when topography or other unchangeable conditions, such as elevated roadways, do not permit services to not be visible.
- Rooftop screening shall be integrated into the architecture of the building in terms of massing, materials, and details. Ideally, the screening for rooftop equipment shall be part of the roof form. Rooftop utilities should not be visible from adjacent streets and shall be avoided adjacent to residential and parking areas.

- Exemptions from screening may be granted on projects seeking LEED certification and shall be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

D. Signage – Reserved

E. Lighting

1. All lighting must be shielded from neighboring properties, sidewalks, pathways, driveways, or public rights-of-way in such a manner as to prevent distractions to traffic. No direct lighting is permitted on adjacent properties.
2. Lighting shall not, under any circumstance, exceed one footcandle at a commercial property line or one-half footcandle at a residential property line.
3. Lighting design should take neighboring uses into consideration, especially residential uses. Lights should not be oriented towards residential areas; parking lot and signage lights should be screened.
4. Parking areas shall not be lighted by building-mounted light fixtures. All wall-mounted lights shall be downward directed, not outward.

F. Continuing Maintenance Of Projects

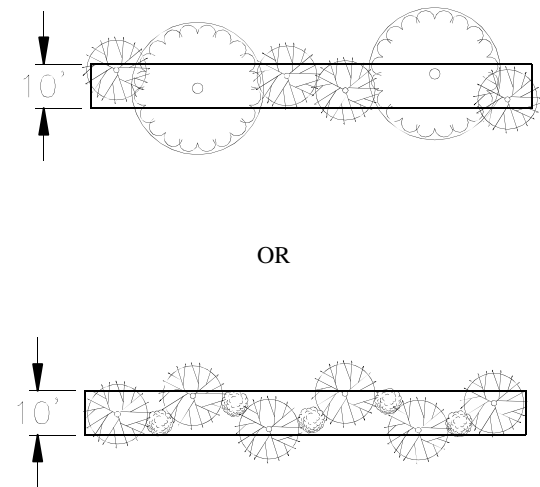
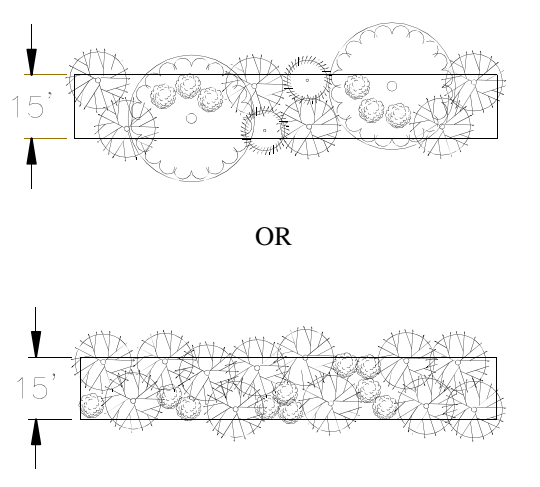
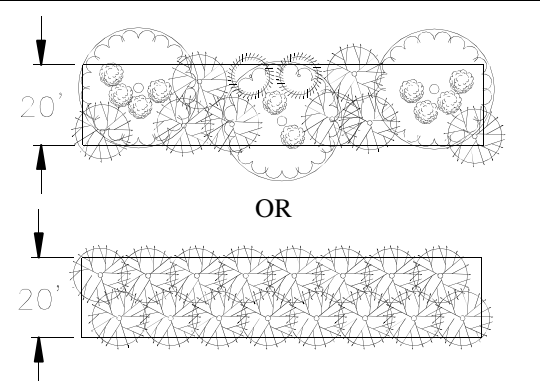
Following the construction or modification of any development, the design of which is approved by the Design Review Commission, the development shall be maintained continually in accordance with the following standards.

1. Buildings and appurtenances, including signs, shall be cleaned and painted or repaired as required to maintain an attractive appearance.
2. Illuminated elements of buildings and signs shall be replaced as required to maintain the effect for which designed.
3. Landscape materials and plantings which have deteriorated shall be reconstituted or replaced. Plantings shall be kept watered, fed, cultivated, and pruned to give a healthy appearance during all seasons.
4. Parking areas shall be kept in an orderly state, properly marked, and clear of litter and debris.
5. Vacant property shall be kept free of refuse and debris, and vegetation shall be trimmed periodically.

APPENDIX

THE TOWN OF CHAPEL HILL

TRANSITIONAL BUFFER SCREENING REQUIREMENTS

| Buffer Type Required | Land Uses | | Quantitative Description of Buffer (per 100-foot segment) | Typical Plan View of Buffer (100-foot segment, not to scale) |
|----------------------|----------------------------------|--|---|--|
| | Proposed Use of Subject Property | Existing Use of Adjacent Property | | |
| A | R2 w/ multi-family use | R1, R2 w/ single family use, R3 w/ single family use, B1 | <p>10' Wide Buffer Strip with the following minimum plantings:</p> <p>4 Evergreen Trees + 2 Shade Trees +</p> <p style="text-align: center;">OR</p> <p>6 Evergreen Trees + 5 Evergreen Shrubs</p> |  |
| | R3 w/ single family use | R1, R2 w/ multi-family use, R3 w/ multi-family use, B2, B3 | | |
| | R3 w/ multi-family use | R1, R2 w/ single family use, R3 w/ single family use, B1 | | |
| | MHP | B1, B2, M1, M2 | | |
| | B1 | R2 w/ multi-family use, R3 w/ multi-family use, MHP | | |
| | B2 | R2 w/ multi-family use, R3 w/ multi-family use, MHP | | |
| | B3 | R1, R2 w/ single family use, R3 w/ single family use | | |
| | M1 | B1, B2, B3 | | |
| M2 | B1, B2, B3 | | | |
| B | R1 | MHP, B1, B2 | <p>15' Wide Buffer Strip with the following minimum plantings:</p> <p>6 Evergreen Trees + 2 Shade Trees + 2 Ornamental Trees + 6 Evergreen Shrubs</p> <p style="text-align: center;">OR</p> <p>12 Evergreen Trees + 10 Evergreen Shrubs</p> |  |
| | R2 w/ single family use | MHP, B1, B2 | | |
| | R2 w/ multi-family use | MHP, B2 | | |
| | R3 w/ single family use | MHP, B1, B2 | | |
| | MHP | R1, R2, R3, M1, M2 | | |
| | B1 | R1, R2 w/ single family use, R3 w/ single family use | | |
| | B2 | R1, R2 w/ single family use, R3 w/ single family use | | |
| C | R1, R2, R3 | M1, M2 | <p>20' Wide Buffer Strip with the following minimum plantings:</p> <p>8 Evergreen Trees + 3 Shade Trees + 2 Ornamental Trees + 10 Evergreen Shrubs</p> <p style="text-align: center;">OR</p> <p>16 Evergreen Trees</p> |  |
| | M1, M2 | R1, R2, R3 | | |