

COLONIAL AVENUE CORRIDOR

DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPMENT/REDEVELOPMENT

Background

Colonial Avenue provides a vital link in the regional highway network from the inner city of Roanoke to the outlying suburbs of Roanoke County. As development has increased over the years around the inner city area, the function of Colonial Avenue has stayed the same. This increase in development has had a direct impact on the roadway as traffic volumes rise steadily.

High traffic volumes and the availability of developable land often cause developers to seek locations along such corridors for new commercial development. This situation has begun along the Colonial Avenue corridor.

As commercial pressures increase, the importance of protecting established neighborhoods and ensuring the safe and efficient flow of traffic becomes more crucial. It is also important to ensure a comfortable transition for existing residential frontage properties if neighboring parcels become commercial. Compatibility can be improved upon, if not achieved, through the proper use of building style, orientation and location, landscaping, signage, lighting, parking concepts and access management. Staff recommends the following site design guidelines - particularly on Colonial Avenue frontage properties - for development or redevelopment in the corridor.

Goal

- To plan for and achieve compatibility between new and existing developments along the corridor.

Design Guidelines

Objectives

- To encourage well designed, aesthetically pleasing developments that make a positive contribution to the streetscape and lessen potential negative impacts on adjacent residential properties.
- To encourage architectural compatibility with the surrounding residential character.
- To minimize impacts to traffic flow from new developments.
- To encourage the use of landscaping to improve environmental quality within new developments, enhance property values and create an enduring community image.
- To limit light pollution onto adjacent residential areas and encourage human scale in detail lighting.
- To minimize sign clutter by encouraging attractive, well-placed signage.

I. Existing Conditions

- A. The proposed development should show sensitivity to the existing residential character of the corridor by incorporating as many of the following as possible:
 1. The preservation and use of existing residential structures for small offices (architecturally compatible alterations and additions are permitted), or the construction of new buildings having a distinct residential character.

2. The preservation and incorporation of existing vegetation.
3. Front yard character that is a common feature of residential properties should be preserved.
4. Depending upon terrain, the use of terraced parking lots, minimizing their visual and site impacts, may be appropriate.
5. Existing drainage ways should be protected and incorporated into all proposals.

II. Site Layout

A. Buildings

1. A building should be prominent from street view, using its architecture as advertising.
2. Setbacks should be determined according to ultimate road right-of-way.
3. Minimum distance between a building, off-street parking, driveway, loading space or paved surfaces and any contiguous residential property should be 25 feet.

B. Parking

1. Parking should be constructed to the rear and sides of buildings only. Street frontage should be devoted to building architecture and landscaping.
2. Parking areas should be designed to allow future interconnections with adjacent parcels.
3. Where feasible, break up required parking into smaller areas spaced throughout the site, lessening their visual and environmental impacts.
4. Alternative surface materials, such as pervious pavement, are recommended. Asphalt pavement should be minimized to mitigate existing drainage problems.

C. Site Access

1. Where feasible, businesses should share access points from the street right-of-way. Temporary access points may be utilized until further development of the corridor allows for combined access. These temporary permits are issued with the understanding that they will be closed when a satisfactory alternate access is available in the opinion of the local governing body.
2. At the time of project approval property owners should provide a joint easement agreement allowing cross access to and from other properties in the surrounding area and a unified parking and circulation plan should be established wherever feasible.

III. Architectural Treatment

A. Scale

1. Size of buildings should approach a residential scale. Avoid excessive height and buildings out of scale with adjacent structures.
2. Where larger buildings are proposed, landscaping and architectural facades should be used to lessen their impact.
3. Where infilling between existing residential structures, maintain a continuity of building height, width, first floor elevation, architectural style and porch detailing, if applicable.

B. Entrances

1. Design entrances that are clearly visible and easily recognizable from parking lots and walkways which serve the building.

2. The principal “front” facade should face Colonial Avenue, for all buildings directly adjacent to the road, although the major pedestrian entrance may be in the back or side of the structure.

C. Materials

1. Materials should be selected for harmony with the surrounding community and for suitability to the type of building and style in which they are used.
2. Exterior materials such as exposed concrete block, metal or brightly colored siding are not recommended. Materials should be in the range of earth tones.

D. Roofs

1. Utilize dormers, gables and other variations in roof shapes and/or heights that are compatible with the basic facade elements and add interest and scale to the building. Avoid flat roofs. Gable roofs, hip roofs and multiple plain roofs are encouraged.

IV. Landscaping

A. Native Vegetation

1. Landscape plans should incorporate the use of native vegetation.

B. Adjacent Right-of-Way Plantings

1. Front yards should be developed as open green spaces with a combination of large and small trees, evergreen & deciduous shrubs, earth berms, and/or ground covers.
2. Where it is necessary that portions of a parking lot front the adjacent right-of-way, a planting strip of 10 feet in width should be provided along the adjacent right-of-way. Within this strip a combination of large and small trees, evergreen & deciduous shrubs, earth berms or ground covers should be utilized to buffer the parking area.

C. Parking Areas

1. Parking areas should incorporate raised landscaped islands in order to break up large expanses of pavement.
2. Large shade trees should be planted within and along the perimeter of parking areas in order to mitigate the negative environmental effects of heat and glare.
3. Landscaped berms located around parking areas to soften the noise, light and view of a parking area to its neighbors are highly encouraged.

D. Building Plantings

1. Buildings should incorporate foundation plantings where appropriate.

E. Stormwater Management

1. Above- ground stormwater management areas and facilities should be landscaped with plants adaptable to being temporarily inundated with water and designed as an asset to the overall development.

F. Screening & Buffering

1. Where a development adjoins residential property, a 25-foot wide buffer yard should be required.
 - a. Within this buffer yard landscaping and screening should be provided and maintained to an

average height of 15 feet. A combination of large and small trees, evergreen & deciduous shrubs, earth berms and/or ground covers should be utilized. Berming is encouraged to supplement screening. Average berm height should be 3-4 feet. Berm slopes should be no greater than 2:1.

V. Lighting

- A. Details of lighting fixtures should be compatible with the existing residential character of the corridor.
- B. Path and landscape lighting are encouraged where appropriate. Lighting should be at a pedestrian scale through the use of light standards or placements 14 feet or less in height.
- C. Parking lot lighting should be no more than 14' above grade, down-lit or shielded so as to direct light to the interior of the lot and not project glare onto the street or adjacent properties. Average intensity should not exceed the minimum required for safety.
- D. Any security lighting should be shielded and located so as to not cast light onto adjacent properties. In addition, the light source should not be visible from adjoining residential areas.

VI. Signage

- A. The shared use of signs is encouraged for adjacent businesses.
- B. Signage should complement a buildings' architectural style.
- C. Signage placed on buildings should occupy less than 5% of the facade area.
- D. All freestanding signs should be monument type and meet the following criteria:
 - 1. Monument signs should not exceed 5 feet in height or 7 feet in width;
 - 2. Signs should be ground lit or top lit with shielded lamps placed so as to not cast light onto the path of traffic or on any adjacent road or property.
- E. Message length should be limited so that a passing motorist can read a sign within three-to-four seconds. No interchangeable boards should be permitted.
- F. Signs should be complemented, accented and enhanced by landscaping. The size of the landscaping plot should be one and one-half times the square footage of the sign.
- G. No portable or temporary signs should be permitted.