

CHAPTER 6: COMMUNITY IMAGE AND **URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES**



TABLE OF CONTENTS: CHAPTER 6

Introduction to the Community Image and Urban Design Guidelines..... 6.1

Community Focal Points/Landmarks 6.3

Gateway Entry Treatment 6.5

Residential Development..... 6.7

Typical Subdivision Treatments..... 6.9

Platting Adjacent to Creek and Drainage Areas 6.15

Typical Streetscape Treatments for Travel Corridors..... 6.17

 Identity Features for Residential Subdivisions 6.19

Urban Design Guidelines..... 6.21

 Site Design Criteria for New Nonresidential Development 6.21

 Landscaping of Nonresidential Development..... 6.21

 Purpose 6.21

 Guidelines 6.22

 Implementation..... 6.22

 Screening of Waste Storage Containers 6.23

 Purpose 6.23

 Guidelines 6.23

 Implementation..... 6.24

 Screening and Location of Outside Storage, Loading Areas, and Utility Equipment 6.24

 Purpose 6.24

 Guidelines 6.24

 Implementation..... 6.25

 Signage..... 6.25

 Purpose 6.25

 Guidelines 6.25

 Implementation..... 6.26

 Access, Driveway, and Median Openings 6.27

 Purpose 6.27

 Guidelines 6.27

 Implementation..... 6.27

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INTRODUCTION TO THE COMMUNITY IMAGE AND URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES

Many factors contribute to the livability of a city. The impression that a community imparts to residents and visitors is a good indication of its livability. The city's physical appearance is the aspect of the city that can be encouraged or promoted to enhance its livability. This element of the Comprehensive Plan is intended to identify those aspects of the urban fabric that could be enhanced or improved to increase the community's pride and commitment in working towards quality development. The perception people have as they travel through Copperas Cove is one of the most important issues regarding urban design as used in the context of this 2007 Comprehensive Plan.

Several major areas of the City's design have been identified that can enhance the image the public has of Copperas Cove and are as follows:

- (1) Gateway treatments at selected points along major arterials;
- (2) Methods of creating better residential neighborhoods, as well as promoting and enhancing existing neighborhoods in an effort to avoid deteriorated housing and urban blight;
- (3) Streetscape treatments along major thoroughfares (screening, landscaping, etc.) and within travel corridors;
- (4) Site design criteria for new nonresidential development; and
- (5) Signage, street lighting, and other amenities.

The physical design goals referenced in Chapter 2 (Goals and Objectives) identify the need to improve the physical quality and appearance of Copperas Cove. By considering the design of the City as a whole and site- or location-specific design, enhancement of the overall image of the City can be achieved. This element of the Plan serves as a guide and provides examples for achieving such community goals. The following recommendations and discussions suggest standards to implement upgrading the appearance of the City.

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COMMUNITY FOCAL POINTS/LANDMARKS

Copperas Cove presently does not have a clear identity or focal point. However, to a large extent, the area along existing U.S. Highway 190 can be defined as its present identity. Since the preponderance of people travel on U.S. Highway 190 and can be expected to do so in the future, it is suggested that the City begin to apply a coordinated series of design controls along this corridor. This can be accomplished through building orientation, landscaping, signage, and similar treatments.

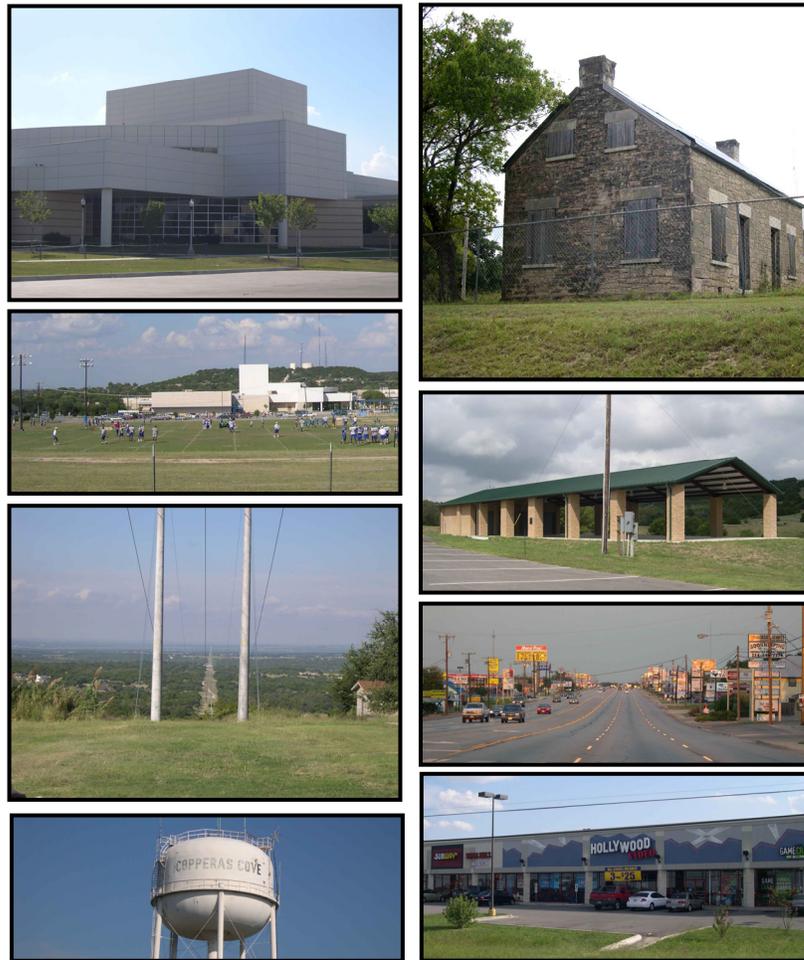


Illustration 6-1
Copperas Cove Landmarks

There are landmarks that exist within the City of Copperas Cove, which residents identify with and relate to, whether formally acknowledged or not. The high school, the golf course, the city park, major shopping areas along U.S. Highway 190, large retail stores, public utilities such as water towers

on high points in the community, and electric transmission lines are often cited as landmarks within the community. All of these “landmarks” collectively form the perception by which people formulate opinions about Copperas Cove.

GATEWAY ENTRY TREATMENT

An important issue to be addressed in this element is the first impression a person forms when entering the City. Currently, the City has established two entryway signs on U.S. Highway 190. These signs are located on the east and west sides of the City near the City limit lines (refer to **Illustration 6-2**). These well designed entry points into the community create a sense of identity and a sense of arrival in Copperas Cove.



Illustration 6-2
Entryway Sign

In the future, the City may determine that additional entryway signs may be beneficial to the community's image. If additional signs are considered for construction, then the design of these entryways should be guided by several factors. One of the most obvious factors is the number of people using a particular entry point.

Although there may be numerous roads that lead into the City, only four or five of these entry points are heavily used – these are U.S. Highway 190 and the farm-to-market (F.M.) roads. The design of these entry features should be coordinated throughout the City and conform to the City's existing entryway, unless substantial benefit would be served using a different design. Other entry features could be considered for F.M. 116 north of the City's water treatment plant, F.M. 1113 just

north of the Western Hills Subdivision, and at the convergence of F.M. 3046 and F.M. 116 south. Often, donations can be solicited from civic groups to assist in funding of a specific gateway (such as an "adopt a gateway" program). Priority for funding, both in terms of total dollars spent per entry and in terms of timing of expenditures, should be directly related to the number of people using a particular entry point.

RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

Treatment of residential subdivisions is also an important component in the City's urban design. As more property is developed into residential subdivisions, such factors as entry features into subdivisions, screening, and landscaping, as well as the design of the subdivision itself, will be critical to the perception of Copperas Cove. While the City clearly must provide developers with options appropriate to the marketing of subdivisions, the City must also strive to maintain some continuity between different subdivisions throughout the City.



Illustration 6-3
Subdivision Construction in Copperas Cove

Another critical component to the City's urban design is how newer subdivisions will interface with homes existing in Copperas Cove. How will screening along new subdivisions blend with existing screening around existing lots or subdivisions? How can the design of these new subdivisions maintain compatibility with surrounding residential development while meeting stricter construction regulations?

One of the factors that will determine the ultimate efficiency of Copperas Cove's thoroughfare system is the manner in which land adjacent to major thoroughfares is developed and platted. By regulating points of access to adjacent property, and by providing for wider spacing of intersecting streets, it becomes possible to design the maximum traffic capacity of each thoroughfare. Curvilinear streets within the residential neighborhoods create interesting visual setback variations

while discouraging rapid through-traffic. It is recommended that a requirement be developed to encourage circuitous or curvilinear residential streets.

Another consideration will be the manner in which public and private landscape improvements of nonresidential developments occur adjacent to thoroughfare right-of-ways. A program encouraging community participation in landscaping certain areas should be developed by the City. These area beautification programs could include financial incentives (i.e., participation by the City), integrity improvement measures such as code enforcement, participation by volunteer organizations, and similar activities. By coordinating and guiding development efforts, the City can create an effective and efficient thoroughfare system that projects a positive image for the community and adjacent subdivisions.

TYPICAL SUBDIVISION TREATMENTS

Arterial roadways normally attract large volumes of traffic; therefore, it is not desirable to front residential lots directly onto these streets. Fronting residences on major thoroughfares will reduce the efficiency of the thoroughfare due to the number of driveways, curb cuts, and cross streets. In addition, where the subdivision pattern provides lots fronting on an arterial roadway, ultimately there is pressure to convert these residences to strip retail or commercial-type uses. Obviously, the frontage of all arterial roadways in the City cannot be used for retail and commercial purposes. The demand will not justify the allocation of such extensive areas for these uses.

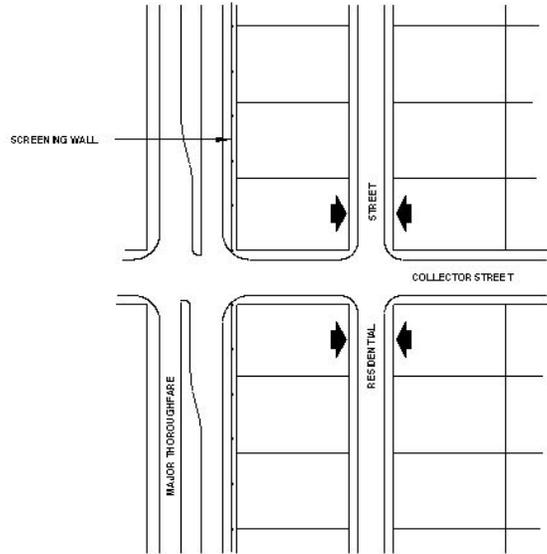
The general appearance and image of the neighborhood and the City as a whole are also greatly influenced by the orientation of development along the arterial streets. Fronting lots on arterial streets presents aesthetic problems for area residents due to large amounts of traffic passing in front of homes. Equally important is the safety factor when area residents back into the arterial and enter traffic. No space is usually provided along arterial streets for parking which would serve the needs of visitors, deliveries, etc. In addition, backing of lots onto streets can produce unsightly appearances, as rear-entry garages are exposed and rear yards are generally fenced but not usually maintained in a uniform fashion. Siding lots along arterials is greatly preferred in terms of subdivision design; this allows an open appearance of the neighborhood with views of home fronts, landscaped yards, etc., such as exist in older areas. Careful treatment of subdivision design adjacent to the arterials shown in Chapter 3 (Thoroughfare Plan) on **Plate 3-3** will contribute to the safety and capacity of the arterials, and will protect adjacent properties from the negative influences of these roadways and possible long-term pressures to convert to nonresidential land uses.

Illustration 6-4, on page 6.11, shows residential lot arrangements designed to protect not only the residences, but the capacity and function of the thoroughfares. One method of accomplishing a desirable thoroughfare residential relationship is to design residential lots fronting a parallel residential street and backing to the major thoroughfare (see **Illustration 6-4**). By restricting access and providing a screened alley or suitable landscape treatment along the rear of the lots backing the major thoroughfare, it is possible to avoid problems that would be created if all abutting lots had direct access to the major thoroughfare. Intersections of collector streets or other subordinate roadways should be spaced at a minimum of 600 feet. Spacing such as this will result in an interior subdivision design permitting access to property, but discouraging the movement of through traffic in residential areas.

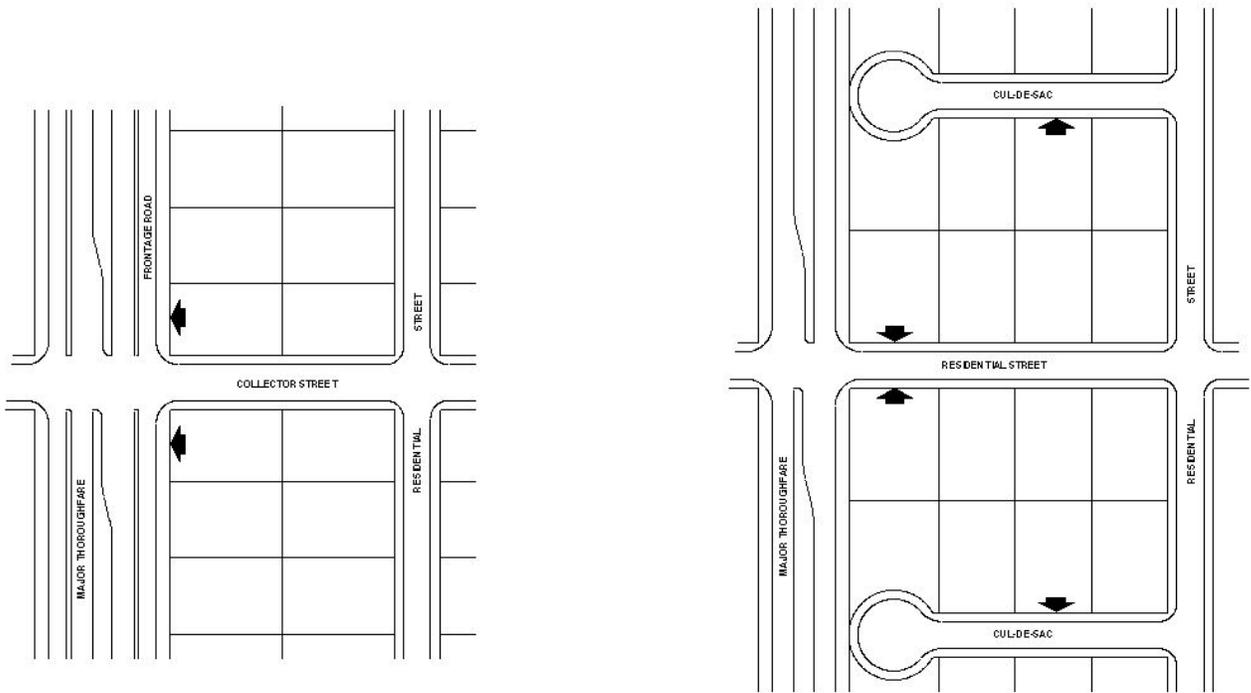
Another method of arranging lots in relation to a major thoroughfare is also shown in **Illustration 6-4**. In this example, a frontage road has been added, providing access to lots which front or side to the major thoroughfare. This technique, however, requires additional right-of-way and the installation of more curb and pavement than the other examples. The cost of developing the frontage roads and providing additional right-of-way is obviously higher than other techniques, but frontage roads allow access points to be more widely spaced and provide an excellent buffer to heavy traffic movements. This technique is also desirable in areas where business or industrial developments are located adjacent to high-capacity thoroughfares.

Illustration 6-5 on page 6.12 shows how short "cul-de-sac" streets may be used to create lots that do not have direct access to a major thoroughfare. This technique offers a practical and economical way to protect the capacity of the major thoroughfare, as well as the integrity of the residential neighborhood. This method of "siding" generally does not require screening walls; therefore, it is one of the more desirable options to developers. The use of Cul-de-sac streets can be an efficient way to develop land, and are very desirable for residents due to the reduced through traffic. Cul-de-sac streets alternated with intersecting streets to a major thoroughfare yields an efficient design yet maximizes thoroughfare capacity. **Illustration 6-5** also shows comparative examples of pavement versus lot-yield for suggested street configurations adjacent to thoroughfares in Copperas Cove.

Illustration 6-6 (shown on page 6.13 and previously referenced in Chapter 5) shows a typical neighborhood area and how the proposed subdivision treatments and thoroughfare standards should be used. The important aspects of **Illustration 6-6** are that major thoroughfares bound the area and lots do not front these roadways. Many lots back to the major thoroughfares and cul-de-sacs are used to provide access to residences. Collector streets are not continuous, discouraging direct through-traffic flow within the neighborhood.



Lots Rearing on Major Thoroughfare

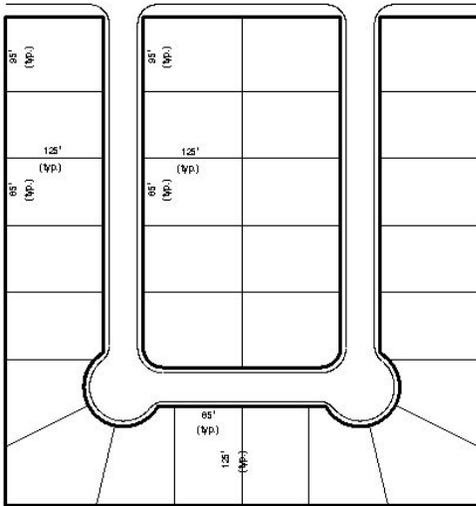


Lots Fronting on Major Thoroughfare

Lots Siding on Major Thoroughfare and Fronting on Cul-de-Sac

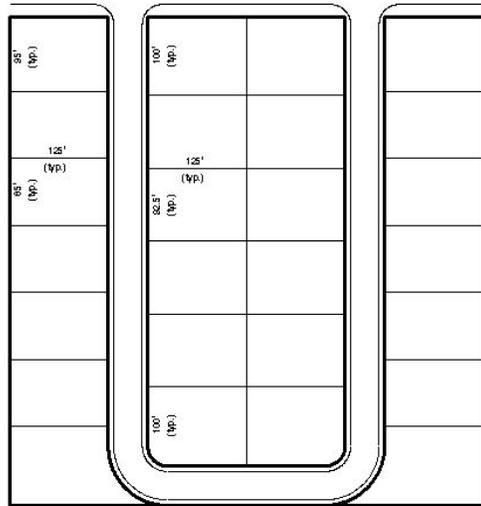
**Illustration 6-4
Methods of Arranging Lots in Relation to Major Thoroughfares**

A



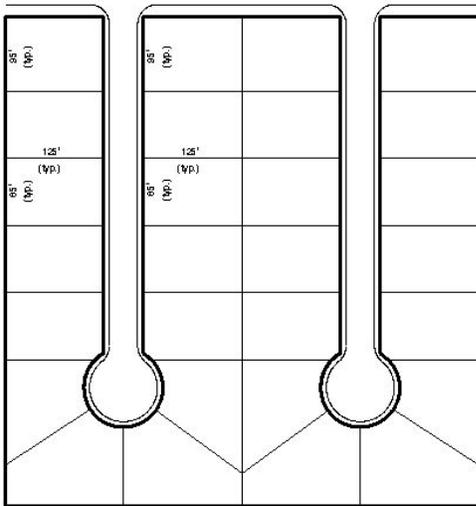
Lots = 28
Pavement = 67,990 S.F.

B



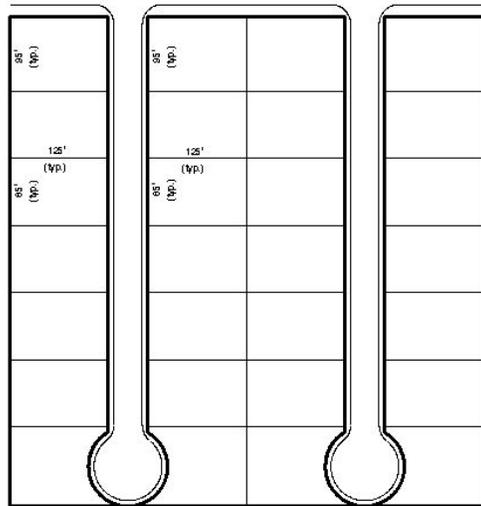
Lots = 26
Pavement = 72,354 S.F.

C



Lots = 28
Pavement = 57,872 S.F.

D



Lots = 28
Pavement = 67,894 S.F.

Alternative	Lots	Pavement (Square Feet)
A	28	67,990
B	26	72,354
C	28	57,872
D	28	67,894

Illustration 6-5
Single Family Lot Layout Examples Adjacent to Major Thoroughfares

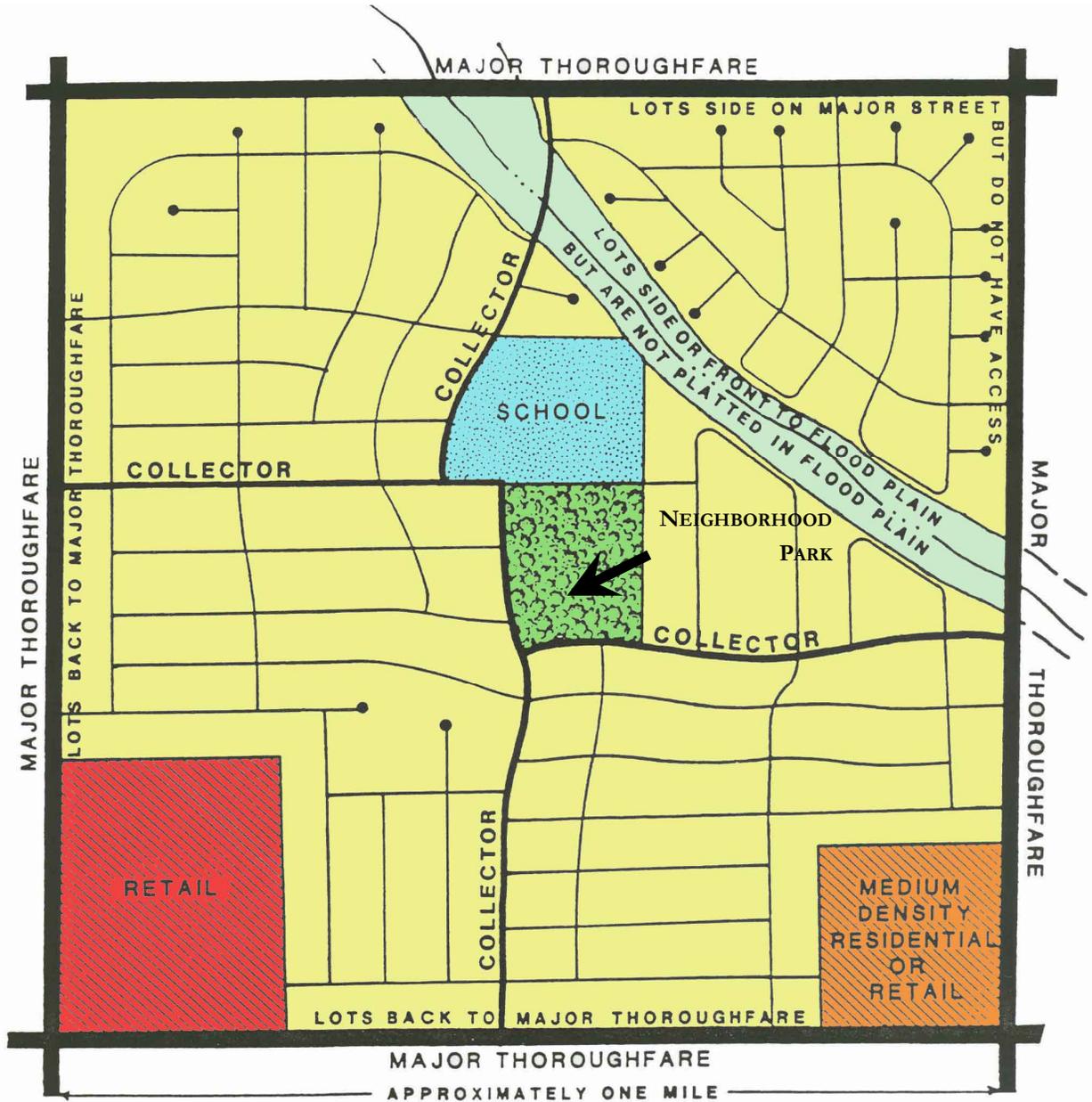


Illustration 6-6
Typical Neighborhood Area
(Neighborhood Unit Concept)

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PLATTING ADJACENT TO CREEK AND DRAINAGE AREAS

As Copperas Cove expands its City limits, residential sections will include several drainage areas. Since most of the future development will likely be residential, it is probable that at least a portion of this development will occur adjacent to tributaries of House Creek, as well as other significant creeks or drainage areas. In order to protect the integrity of the remaining drainage system and reduce the potential for flood damage downstream, it is recommended that the City adopt a comprehensive policy for facilitating residential development adjacent to these creeks and drainage areas.

The City should restrict the platting of residential lots in the flood plains of creeks and drainage areas that have the potential of carrying significant volumes of storm water runoff. An assessment should be undertaken of all relevant creeks and tributaries. The City can preserve the carrying capacity of these areas by designating them as private or public open space.

Another accepted method of creek protection is use of the floodway management area (FMA). Many cities use this technique, and it is suitable for implementation in Copperas Cove. Under this program, the floodway areas would be dedicated to the City and maintained in a natural condition. That is, little maintenance would be needed except trash or debris removal. Mowing and other types of maintenance normally performed in City parks would not occur. It is recommended that Copperas Cove restrict platting in the floodways of its significant drainage areas and seriously consider preventing development of the flood fringe area (100-year flood plain).

As the areas in Copperas Cove urbanize, the potential for flooding will likely increase due to the higher runoff from impermeable surfaces. Protection of the flood plain areas can reduce capital expenditures in the future that may be needed for correcting problems caused by urban flooding. **Illustration 6-7**, on the following page, shows acceptable platting techniques adjacent to a creek or drainage area.

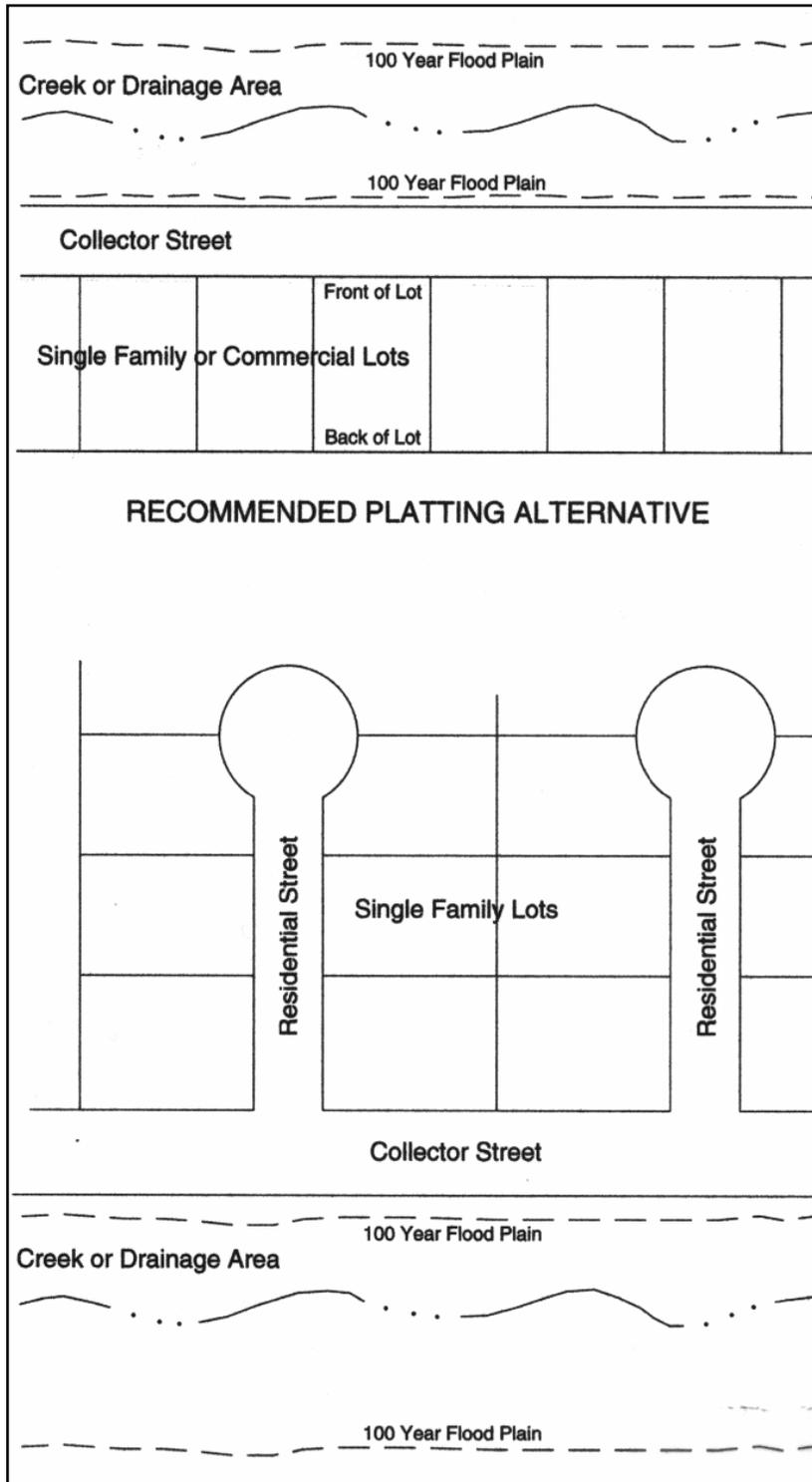


Illustration 6-7
Acceptable Platting Techniques Adjacent to a Creek or Drainage Area

TYPICAL STREETScape TREATMENTS FOR TRAVEL CORRIDORS

The term "streetscape" has been developed in recent years to describe the image projected by a city street and various elements in and around the street right-of-way. Overhead power lines, traffic signals, signs, light fixtures, plant materials, and street paving are some of the most noticeable physical elements that are found in a typical streetscape. Adjacent developments and their physical form also influence one's perception of a streetscape and community. The streetscape design of Copperas Cove is another factor that can positively contribute to the livability of the City.

For example, landscape streetscape commonly utilize accent-planting techniques to provide variety and color, while requiring street trees in order to establish a sense of cohesiveness throughout the City. Landscaping and related features add to the attractiveness of any site, but are particularly effective on retail and multi-family sites. It is therefore recommended that the City pursue reasonable and practical landscape requirements for retail, offices, commercial uses, and apartment complexes, as well as along the edges of residential subdivision.

In addition, the City should adopt a comprehensive screening program that promotes quality "edge" or screening treatment, yet offers the developer several design choices. It is recommended that three or four screening concepts be developed and included in the subdivision ordinance. The screening concepts can consist of all or a combination of the following:

1. A solid brick masonry wall (wood and other weather-sensitive materials are discouraged) with selected larger trees.
2. A brick masonry and aluminum or steel tubing wall with brick detailing and living evergreen shrubs.
3. Solid living screen with selected landscaped materials.
4. Use of a frontage road (so that development is visually divided from the roadway).

The following pictures show examples of these recommended screening concepts where similar treatment has been used. These concepts are also appropriate for screening multi-family uses adjacent to major thoroughfares.



Illustration 6-8
Examples of Screening Concepts

Carefully designed screening treatments for subdivisions with houses that back or side to thoroughfares, such as those pictured above, will be one of the single most important features which can improve Copperas Cove's streetscape view along major thoroughfares. Once installed, the City may need to make a commitment to properly maintain “edge” or screening treatments (and require a maintenance bond for one or two years).

IDENTITY FEATURES FOR RESIDENTIAL SUBDIVISIONS

All subdivisions in excess of twenty (20) platted lots should be encouraged to provide a landscaped identity feature at an access point from each thoroughfare greater than sixty feet (60') in right-of-way width to which the subdivision is adjacent.

1. Design suggestions: The entryway feature should include living landscaped materials from an approved planting material list. Wall materials should be masonry and the same as or similar to the material used for the screening wall. The design of the identity feature should also include lighting features, irrigation system, and subdivision identification (signage located on the wall).
2. The design of the identity feature should be in accordance with design policies as provided by the City.
3. The maintenance of the identity feature should be the responsibility of the developer, the homeowners association, the City, or another approved entity. The developer should pay a maintenance fee at the time of installation based upon a percentage of the value or square footage of the landscaped area if the City is to maintain the entryway. The City should maintain the identity feature only if it meets adopted design policies of the City.



Illustration 6-9
Examples of Entryway Features

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URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES

The following urban design guidelines are intended to provide examples of the types of development standards that can easily be incorporated into city ordinances, which will eventually result in better-designed nonresidential areas. It is recommended that this section be used to provide general guidance for creating ordinances that would implement these design standards.

SITE DESIGN CRITERIA FOR NEW NONRESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

Another important aspect of creating a more attractive streetscape is the site design items that can be addressed by the private sector as part of site development. Often, much of what creates a better view from the street is simply improved or quality site design. Site design review can be incorporated into the City's normal project review of site plans. The following are examples of site design or material usage that could enhance nonresidential land use areas, such as along U.S. Highway 190. These examples should be adopted as policies, and then amended into the appropriate City ordinances.

Landscaping of Nonresidential Development

Purpose:

- Enhance the view and image of the community, particularly from major thoroughfares.
- Contribute to the development quality and appearance of individual properties.
- Reduce glare from paved surfaces.
- Replenish oxygen supply and provide natural air conditioning.
- Provide open space within urbanized development.

Guidelines:

- For nonresidential parcels with frontage adjacent to a dedicated public thoroughfare, require at least fifteen percent (15%) of street yard to be permanent landscape area.
- Require a minimum ten-foot (10') landscape buffer (on-site) adjacent to right-of-way of any street. Reduce the landscaping requirement to five feet (5') for secondary frontages to the rear or side. In addition, a five-foot (5') landscape buffer should be provided adjacent to a street with a lesser right-of-way if a residential use exists or is planned adjacent to the nonresidential use. Developers should be required to plant one tree per forty (40) linear feet of street frontage.
- All landscape areas shall be protected by a monolithic curb and remain free of trash, litter, and car bumper overhangs. Landscape areas should be no less than five feet (5') wide. Landscape areas within parking lots should generally be at least one parking space in size, with no landscape area less than fifty (50) square feet in area. Within parking lots, landscape areas should be located to define parking areas and assist in clarifying appropriate circulation patterns. Landscape islands should be located at the terminus of all parking rows, and should contain at least one tree.
- Provide a bonus for preservation of existing trees. Developments that preserve and protect existing trees should be given additional credit towards the total number of trees required.
- Provide a listing of appropriate plant material for use within required landscape areas. Use of plants not specified should be approved by the City Parks and Recreation Department.

Implementation:

- Revise the existing zoning ordinance to incorporate guidelines suggested above.

Screening of Waste Storage Containers

Purpose:

- Improve the appearance of the City from public streets.
- Prevent public access to storage containers.

Guidelines:

- Require a six-foot-high minimum screen around any commercial or industrial waste storage container visible from an existing or proposed public roadway (waste containers in the rear or behind buildings would not be required to be screened). Required screening should be a masonry wall on three sides of the container with a steel gate to control access to the receptacle. Steel gate should be of tube frame construction, with evenly spaced pickets to permit air circulation while providing sufficient screening. Other masonry screening walls, including concrete poured in place, concrete panels, and stucco, may be allowed with specific City approval provided the material is consistent with that used for the main building. Access areas should face the interior of the site. All access areas must be paved with concrete.
- Trash containers should not be placed in a required parking space and should be accessible to service trucks.
- Where possible, screening material should match the material used for the primary on-site building.



Illustration 6-10
Example of a Refuse Areas Being Screened

Implementation:

- Develop an acceptable gate and screening detail. Currently, the zoning ordinance has a general requirement but no specific standard. Once this has been resolved, the above guidelines should be incorporated into Section 20-19 of the Zoning Ordinance.



Illustration 6-11
Example of a Refuse Area That Is Not Screened

Screening and Location of Outside Storage, Loading Areas, and Utility Equipment

Purpose:

- Improve the appearance of the City from public streets.
- Prevent public access to outside storage areas, loading areas, and utility equipment.

Guidelines:

- Loading docks, doors, or storage areas should not face an arterial roadway.
- When loading docks and/or outside storage face a side yard, they should be screened from adjacent properties and public right-of-ways by one of the following methods:
 - Brick or other masonry wall; or

- Earthen berm with landscaping.
- An appropriate combination of trees and shrubs from an approved plant list should be able to be used to meet this screening requirement, but only with specific Council approval.
- Encourage relocation and/or underground placement of existing and future electrical feeder lines.
- Wall-mounted electric meters and other related equipment should not be in view of the public or adjacent properties.

Implementation:

- Guidelines regarding screening and placement of loading docks should be considered for incorporation as a part of the zoning ordinance.

Signage

Purpose:

- To provide a more unified, organized streetscape through more consistent signage.
- Reduce visual clutter and improve the City’s visual character along roadways.



Illustration 6-12
Signs along U.S. Highway 190

Guidelines:

- Require monument-type signage in certain designated areas. The maximum allowable height, including the base, for a monument sign should be about six feet (6'). The overall surface area of the sign, including the base, should

be no more than about eight (80) square feet per side. This restriction would not apply to temporary real estate, development, or construction signage.

As used in these guidelines, a monument sign refers to a sign with a continuous base approximately the same width as the actual signage, with the signage generally directly attached to this base. If preferred, the signage could be attached to the base by short, one to two foot poles as long as the overall height of the sign and base does not exceed six (6) or eight (8) feet.

Illustration 6-13 shows examples of monument signage.

Freestanding "pole signs" should still be permitted, but monument signage should be required in many parts of the City unless special circumstances warrant a variance.

- Through the City's development review process, ensure that signage is compatible with building and surroundings. Also, ensure that signage does not interfere with sight visibility when entering or leaving the site.
- Nuisance Signs - No sign should be illuminated to an intensity to cause glare or brightness to a degree that could constitute a hazard or nuisance. Moving, flashing, intermittently lighted, changing color, beacons, revolving or similarly constructed signs should not be permitted.
- Portable signs should require a permit, and should only be temporary. The permit should limit the use to a maximum of two 15-day periods per year.

Implementation:

- The City's existing sign regulations could be revised as outlined above.



Illustration 6-13
Typical Monument Signs

Access, Driveway, and Median Openings

Purpose:

- Improve traffic flow along U.S. Highway 190 and other major thoroughfares.
- Reduce required pavement surface by sharing driveways, thus reducing storm water run-off and providing opportunities for landscape enhancement.

Guidelines:

- Require access easements between businesses along all major traffic arteries to promote lateral or "cross" access between properties.
- Promote shared driveway openings and limit drive openings to one per property on parcels with 300 feet or less of frontage. On larger parcels, permit no more than one driveway opening per 300 linear feet of frontage along a thoroughfare.
- Require site visibility easements to ensure proper visibility at corners.

Implementation:

- The Design and Technical Construction Standards (DTCS) for the City of Copperas Cove should be revised to incorporate the above standards, including **Illustrations 6-14, 6-15, and 6-16.**

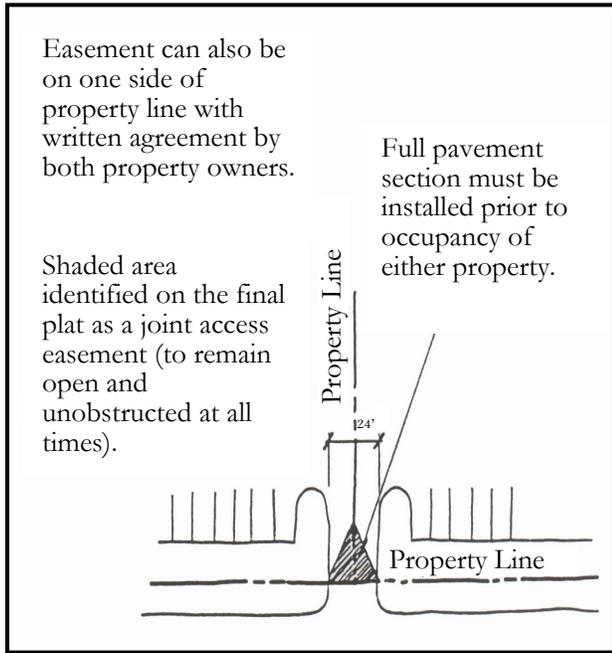


Illustration 6-14
Joint Property Openings for Non-Residential Sites

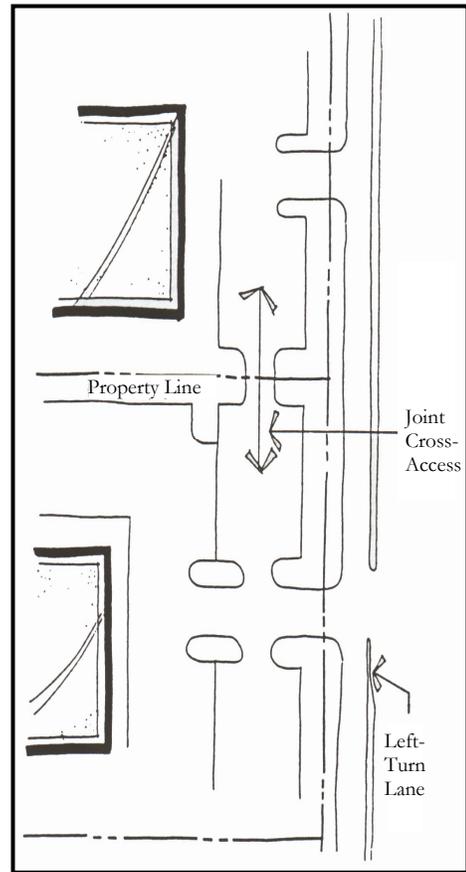


Illustration 6-15
Cross-Access

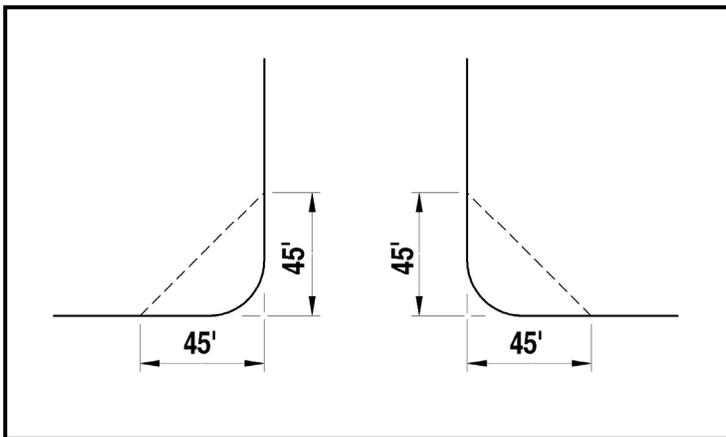


Illustration 6-16
Sight Visibility