16.3. Form and Character Development Permit Areas

16.3.1 AREAS

Lands designated as Downtown Smithers, Multi-Residential and Highway Commercial and identified on Map 7.

16.3.2 PURPOSE

The Form and Character Development Permit Area (DPA) regulates the form and character of commercial and multi-unit residential development in Smithers.

Objectives are to:

- Ensure that the commercial core remains the focal point of the community;
- Contribute to the existing character and identity of Smithers;
- Ensure new developments fit appropriately into the context of existing neighbourhoods;
- Address four-season design in these areas.
- Embrace Witsuwit'en inspired design.

16.3.4 EXEMPTIONS

A Development Permit is not required for the construction, addition, or alteration of a building, provided the following:

- Single-detached dwellings, duplexes, and semi-detached dwellings. Any additional dwellings (detached or attached) do not qualify for this exemption.
- Construction that amounts to less than 20% increase in total floor area or a maximum of 28m² (300ft²) of new floor area provided that no portion of the building addition is visible from pedestrian eye level from street on which the development fronts.

16.3.5 SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Every submission shall include:

- A completed Development Permit Application and applicable fees;
- Professionally prepared coloured building elevation drawings, illustrating all sides of the building(s);
- A professional prepared site plan showing buildings and structures, unenclosed storage areas; garbage areas, parking, loading, landscaping, and access;

- Drawings showing proposed signage details;
- Exterior building colour samples.
- Professionally prepared landscape plan and certified cost estimate.
- Lighting plans

For a summary of key requirements, see Appendix A for a succinct checklist that will help understanding and fulfilling the most important elements of these form and character guidelines.

16.3.6 JUSTIFICATION

Smithers' architectural history extends back to its roots as a farming, resource, and railway town. This is evident in several buildings of historical significance that exist today, including the Railway Station and Central Park building.

The importance of Main Street, and the immediately adjacent streets that make up downtown Smithers as the commercial center and focus of the Smithers' community was first acknowledged in the early 1970's with the establishment of an Alpine Theme. These design guidelines were in recognition of the mountain and winter sports heritage that is unique to Smithers. The definition of the alpine design theme included extended rooflines, shuttered windows, balconies, pictured exterior walls, and wooden signs.

View of Main Street, 2012

Since then, considerable energy and money has been invested in the reconstruction of portions of the downtown, including the rebuilding and paving of streets, brick pavers, angle parking, street furniture, lighting and landscaping. A "Downtown Revitalization Area" was

declared by the Provincial Government in 1981 resulting in an improved physical environment and the unique downtown that is evident today.

Initiatives to improve the downtown area continue to take place. Downtown merchants and property owners have contributed enormously to the continued development of the Downtown by creating a cohesive town core in accordance with the alpine theme. These theme elements have been integrated into the Downtown specific guidelines.

The implementation of the Development Permit Areas ensures a continuity of work already completed as well as incorporates the vision that resulted from the OCP process.

16.3.7 GENERAL FORM AND CHARACTER GUIDELINES

The following guidelines apply to all the Form and Character DPA's, both designated by land use and as shown on Map 7 "Form and Character Development Permit Areas."

16.3.7.1 Environmental Considerations

All design proposals should consider the design and construction requirements posed by the area's climate.

Wind - Hanging signs, parapet extensions, awnings and canopies should be constructed with sufficient bracing to withstand strong winds such as might be typical of the area.

Rain - Architectural elements exposed to precipitation, such as roofs, cornices, edges, canopies, and decorative detailing, should be properly designed and flashed to protect the building structure and carry water away from pedestrian pathways or human-use areas.

Snow - Any building structure upon which snow accumulates (canopies, awnings, roof forms) should be constructed in a manner conducive to spontaneous snow dump of accumulated loads into non-pedestrian areas. Snow must either be positively shed or positively retained. Shedding snow must be deflected from pedestrian areas by dormers, hipped roofs, canopies, or other means. All steps and wheelchair ramps must be covered or otherwise protected from ice and snow build-up.

Ice - Repeated heating and cooling of snow loads can give rise to ice accumulations. Building design should therefore consider heat loss factors as a method of controlling ice build-up. Proper flashing should be accorded to areas subject to ice accumulation. Walkways, entries,

and other human use areas should be designed with the aim of minimum potential ice build-up and efficient removal of accumulations that do occur.

Sun - Prolonged solar exposure can result in overheating of a space and areas. Conversely, lack of sun light can make an area undesirable. Design and siting of buildings and common areas should be done to maximize solar access while minimising over heating by strategically located glazing and shading. The site design should consider solar heating options. Massing of a building should be designed so it does not limit solar access on other properties.

16.7.3.2 Site Design

Locate and design site servicing and utilities, parking, and access to maximize pedestrian safety and enhance existing properties.

Guidelines include:

1) Overall Layout. Where feasible, “Back of house” activities should be in the back of buildings. “Back of house” activities including, but not limited to the following:
    - Off-street surface parking, access and loading areas;
    - Enclosed and unenclosed storage areas;
    - Vents, meters and transformers.
2) When it is unavoidable to locate driveways, garages and garage entrances in the fronts of buildings, they should be located so that they are visually less dominant, by, for example, recessing them behind the main building line or using landscaping for screening.
3) Access. Overall site design must include provisions that address the needs of walkers, transit patrons, cyclists, and people with various mobility needs. For example, safe and convenient walkways between the public street system and building entrance should be provided. Shared access is also encouraged.
4) Buffers. Screen parking areas from sidewalks and other active open spaces using materials that provide a visual buffer while still allowing clear visibility into the parking areas to promote personal safety. Screening examples include landscaping, a trellis, or grillwork with climbing vines.

16.7.3.3 Building Orientation and Form

New development should ensure a good fit within existing or new neighbourhoods through architectural features and building proportions.

Guidelines include:

- **Entrances**

  Entrances should be reinforced architecturally to provide building identity and address. Commercial entries tend to be public, and residential entries tend to be private, and should therefore be designed accordingly. Where possible, locate entrances with access from public streets and sidewalks. Ground floor entrances should be weather protected to provide comfort for pedestrians. Examples include awnings, covered entrances, or recessed entrances.

- **Orientation**

  New projects should ensure that their siting, form, and scale does not block significant views and solar access from existing or anticipated development, and that shadowing impacts on adjacent buildings and useable open spaces are minimized.

- **Scale**

  Building design elements, details, and materials should create a proportional and pedestrian scale building form. Where new development is taller than existing adjacent development, buildings and groups of buildings should transition in scale from larger to smaller developments. This transition should consider stepping buildings down or setting back buildings or a combination of the two.

16.7.3.4 Landscaping

Landscaping materials help integrate new projects into the surrounding landscape while adding greenery to the Town.

Guidelines include:

- **Add greenery**. Soften the appearance of buildings using plants, shrubs and trees. Where necessary use hard landscaping treatments such as terraced retaining walls and planters. Some strategies include:
  - Planter guards or low planter walls as part of the building design;
  - Landscape open areas created by building articulation;
  - Incorporate gardens in the site design;

- **Emphasize entries** with special planting in conjunction with decorative paving and/or lighting.
- **Retention.** Minimize the removal of existing significant trees and other vegetation. Where tree or vegetation removal is necessary, they should be replaced with new trees and vegetation.
- **Native Landscaping.** Incorporate native landscape materials and the use of plants resistant to Smithers cold winters.
- **Parking Areas.** Parking lots should be landscaped for comfort and visual interest. Rain gardens, bio-swales, and permeable materials are encouraged to absorb storm water at its source. Consideration should include connecting pathways from backing street through the parking area to the building in the case of larger parking lots.
- **Functionality.** Landscaping and building design should ensure penetration of sunlight in winter and shading of afternoon sun in summer. Evergreens and conifers are encouraged to provide year-round screening for blank walls.

16.7.3.5 Building Materials

New buildings should incorporate substantial and natural building materials and colour schemes into their facade to avoid a 'thin veneer' look and feel.

Guidelines include:

- Incorporate robust, natural materials that are local to Smithers. Examples include:
    - Masonry;
    - Natural and cut stone (i.e., granite);
    - Natural wood including substantial timbers both milled and not;
    - Unfinished concrete;
    - Red tiles, cedar shakes or shingles, or organic-coloured metal roofs;
    - Use of transparent guardrails that allow sun penetration into the building; and
    - Metal cladding may be used when combined with natural materials. Metal cladding should not be the dominant visual element used.

16.7.3.6 Signage

Regulation of sign size and type is necessary to set upper limits on business sign competition and to prevent an escalation in sign size, animation, and flash at the expense of pedestrian scale, architectural character and streetscape.

Guidelines include:

- **Branding.** New developments should be creative in incorporating the intent of these guidelines into corporate logos, brands and identities as expressed in the design and materials of signage.
- **Scale and Presence**. Commercial buildings should provide signage that identifies the business and is appropriately scaled. When new signage is applied to an existing building, it should provide the appearance that the signage was part of the original building design. Signage should be in proportion to the look of the entire building.

16.7.3.7 Lighting

Lighting has a powerful effect on the overall ambience, safety and security of a building.

Guidelines include:

- **Location.** Directed lighting should be provided on the face of commercial buildings and at main entries to multi-unit buildings.
- **Safety.** Paths and entry areas should be sufficiently lit to ensure pedestrian comfort and security.
- **Illumination levels.** Illumination levels should be appropriate for the function it serves while at the same time preventing light pollution. Encouraged lighting examples include downcast gooseneck lights, pot lighting, LED lighting of storefront

16.4. Specific Guidelines: Downtown Commercial

Downtown Smithers is the social, economic, and historic heart of the community, playing a significant role in the community's overall character and identity, and as such, the historic downtown theme needs to be considered during design. Specific objectives of the Downtown Commercial area are to:

- Build on the existing pedestrian scale of development;
- Reinforce Main Street as the heart of the community;
- Sensitively incorporate residential uses into the downtown;
- Preserve/restore views to the mountains and of prominent buildings.

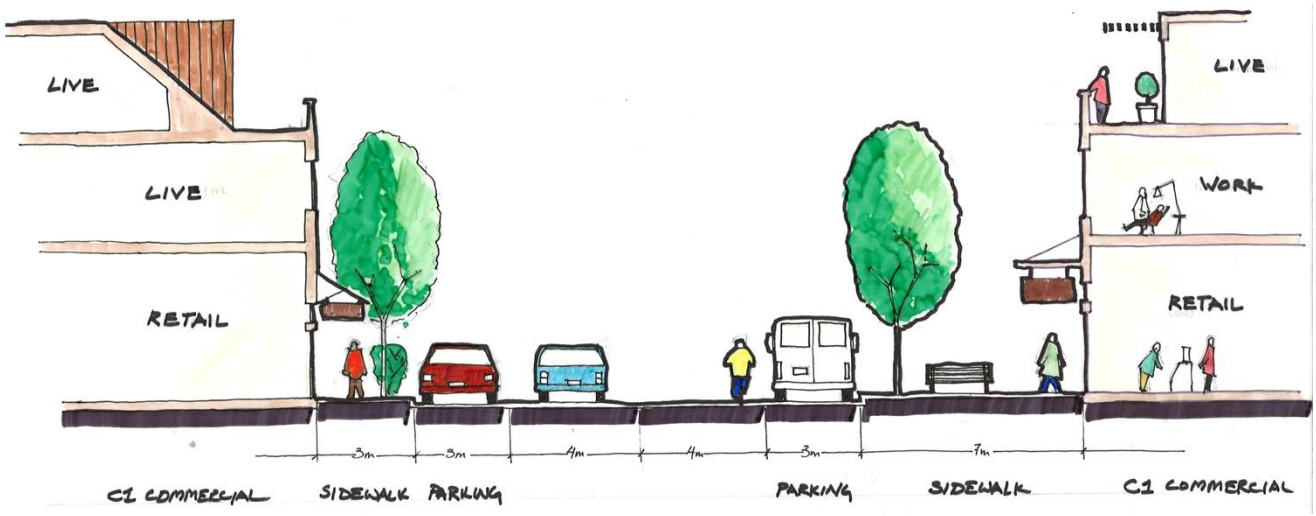
16.4.1 GUIDELINES:

16.4.1.1 Mountain Theme

- Where possible building design should integrate alpine elements such as deep overhangs, projecting timbers, balconies, projecting upper levels, bay windows, recessed doors and windows, and flower boxes.
- All relief details should be compatible with neighbouring buildings both in height and depth.
- Shallow balconies figure significantly in downtown Smithers design, sheltered by the deep overhangs and in turn sheltering doors and windows below. These balconies are a focal point for decoration, as well as the favoured location for flower boxes.
- All construction is to be limited to between 1 ½ and 3 stories with a maximum height restriction of 12.0 m.
- The traditional downtown palette is based on natural earth tones with more exuberant colours limited to accents, ornamental painting and appropriately fitting murals.
- Three-dimensional painting is acceptable around doors and windows when shutters are not present.
- All facades visible from the street should receive typical treatment.
- All windows should receive one or more of the following treatments: recessing, shutters, painted decorative trim, gridded mullions.

16.4.1.2 Site Design

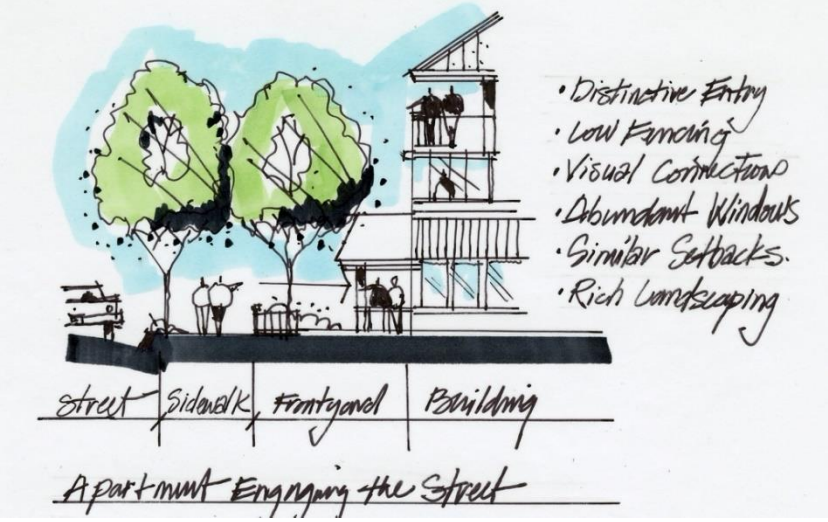
- Commercial and mixed-use buildings in the downtown should be oriented and designed to maximize street vitality and enhance pedestrian amenity by encouraging shops with street level entrances and transparent shop fronts where visible from the street.
- Site buildings to frame and define public streets and open spaces. Locate buildings at the sidewalk edge more or less continuously along a street using a common set back or ‘build to’ line.
- Large scale commercial developments are encouraged to locate within the downtown provided they sensitively integrate into the existing streetscape and established urban fabric by:
    - Incorporating small shops into facades fronting public streets and open spaces;
    - Incorporating frequent entrances and display windows to be consistent with the existing building and façade rhythm in the downtown;
    - Locating off-street surface parking to the side or rear of the building.



16.4.1.3 Building Design

A. Façade Articulation

1. Renovation or new construction should maintain the consistent building alignment along the sidewalk edge in those blocks where this is already occurring.
2. Where there is no uniform alignment at the sidewalk, new construction should be within a range of 10% of the average setback in the block.
3. Where setbacks occur, the sidewalk material should match or be visually tied to the existing sidewalk.
4. Open spaces should be treated as courtyards with at least one of the following:
    - tree(s),
    - planter(s),
    - decorative lighting,
    - ironwork,
    - bench(es), or
    - landmark such as a clo



B. Roofline and Massing

1. Corner site buildings should be of a height similar to that of the other corner buildings at that intersection.
2. Where an existing, flat-roofed, short building is adjacent to a tall building, the visual transition between the two heights should be eased by the addition of a parapet or other roofline features to the lower building.
3. Mechanical equipment (such as air conditioning and ventilation, antennae and receiving dishes) should not be visible from street level.

C. Materials and Colour

1. Metal, plastic or vinyl siding or sheathing should not be used in place of real wood.
2. Mirrored, tinted or reflective materials are inappropriate. Solar film to avoid heat gain may be acceptable in certain situations.
3. For climatic reasons, rafters and lookout beams should not extend beyond the fascia.
4. Murals of any size should be an appropriate part of the overall design of the building, not an obvious attempt to disguise an awkward expanse of concrete block.

Example of an effective mural that provides contrast and design on a large secondary façade providing interest.

5. Expansive blank walls (i.e., over 5 metres in length) fronting public streets should be avoided. When blank walls are unavoidable, they should be mitigated by:
    - Installing vertical trellis in front of the wall with climbing vines or plant materials.
    - Setting the wall back slightly to provide room for a landscaped or raised planter bed in front of the wall, including plant materials that could grow to obscure or screen the walls surface.
    - Providing art (such as a mosaic, mural, decorative masonry pattern, sculpture, relief, etc.) over a substantial portion of the wall surface.
    - Employing different texture, colours, and materials to articulate and break up the wall's surface and make it visually more interesting.
    - Providing special lighting, a canopy, awning, horizontal trellis or other pedestrian oriented features that break up the size of the blank wall's surface and add visual interest.
    - Incorporating them into a patio or sidewalk café.

D. Doors and Windows

1. Tinted or reflective glazing is inappropriate.
2. Doorways should be constructed of wood or stucco.
3. Frames of existing non-anodized metal doors should be painted a neutral colour.

E. Corners

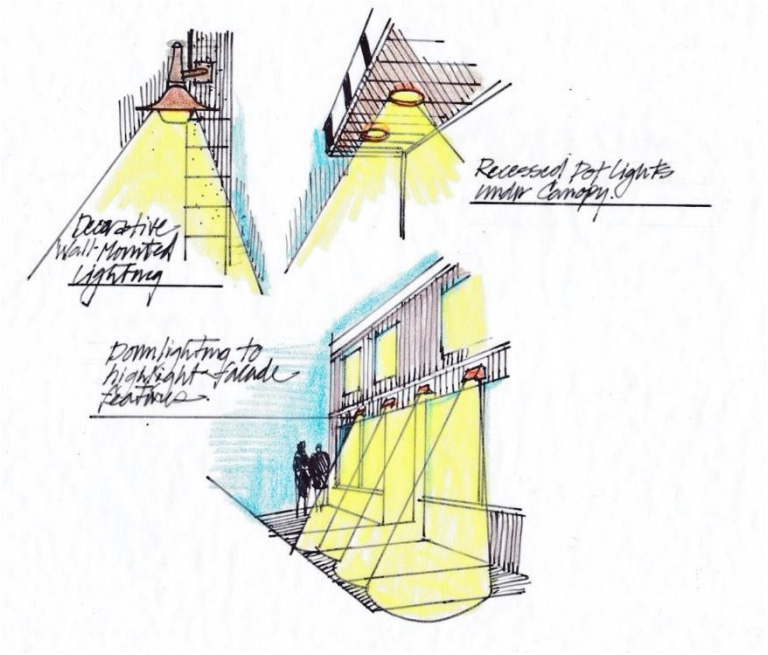
1. Corner walls may be painted to simulate rectangular stone.
2. Corner buildings should be taller than adjacent buildings in the same block and appropriately define the end of the block and the corner with shopfronts wrapping around the corner where appropriate.
3. Corner buildings should be of a height similar to that of the other corner buildings at that intersection.

16.4.1.4 Signage

1. Typestyles should be serifed or script or similar style font (Serifed styles have smaller lines to finish off the main strokes of each letter. Script styles appear handwritten.)
2. Signs should be limited to two per building – one on the building and one hanging sign along the sidewalk. Window signs indicating hours of operation are acceptable. The intent is to have a coherent, clean, and coherent sign pattern.
3. Rooftop signs, internally illuminated (backlit) sign boxes, moving or flashing signs, and signs with foam or metallic fish-scale lettering are all inappropriate.

16.4.1.5 Lighting Design

1. Lighting fixtures should be concealed unless they are especially attractive or part of the theme.
2. Track pot lights should be painted a neutral colour.
3. Storefront entrances should be illuminated with adequate, even light that does not create shadows.
4. Fluorescent, neon and coloured lighting are all inappropriate, as are internally lit.



16.5. Specific Guidelines: Highway Commercial

Highway 16 is a key transportation corridor through and gateway into the community. A standard of design is important for this area as it provides the initial impression presented to travelers as they pass through Smithers as well as a local transportation network. The character of development within the Highway 16 corridor should reflect the community's heritage and character. Specific objectives of the Highway 16 commercial corridor are to:

- Ensure that the form and character create a pleasant and welcoming experience for both visitors and community members;
- Reinforce the relationship of Hwy.16 as a gateway to downtown Smithers;
- Encourage designs that respect and respond positively to the surrounding natural and built environment.

16.5.1 GUIDELINES:

16.5.1.1 Site Design

1. Orient buildings to front onto Highway 16 and the adjacent frontage street with parking located to the rear or side of the building.
2. Large format buildings should try to create internal ‘pedestrian streets’ that connect to the surrounding external streets and to the main building entrances.
3. Parking should be located to the side or rear of building.
4. All parking should include bicycle parking. This should be located adjacent to the main entrance to the building.

16.5.1.2 Building Design

1. Large format buildings that front onto and have their main entrance accessible from the off-street parking lot (i.e., buildings that present the side of their building to the adjacent frontage street) should be designed in a manner that breaks up the appearance of expansive blank walls.
2. Mechanical equipment (such as air conditioning and ventilation, antennae and receiving dishes) should not be visible from street level except for solar panels, windmills or other equipment directly required to the reduction of energy use and greenhouse gases.
3. Buildings should incorporate natural materials including heavy timbers and stone that reflect the Town's historic alpine theme.

16.5.1.3 Lighting Design

1. Lighting fixtures should be concealed unless they are especially attractive or part of the theme.
2. Track pot lights should be painted a neutral colour.
3. Storefront entrances should be illuminated with adequate, even light that does not create shadows.
4. Fluorescent, neon and coloured lighting are all inappropriate, as are internally lit signage.
5. Field lighting for parking should be dark sky certified.

16.5.1.4 Landscape Design

1. Large parking lots with more than 10 stalls should include a landscape bed every ten stalls to provide for the greening of the area.
2. Where located adjacent to residential uses, a 3.0 m landscape buffer should be provided to screen the use and reduce both light and noise impacts.

16.6. Specific Guidelines: Multi-Unit Residential

Multi-unit residential buildings (three units or more) such as town houses, apartments and multiple detached dwellings play a key role in the community in terms of size, scale and design as well as being focal points of activity generation. Specific objectives of Multi-unit Residential areas are to:

- Ensure the form and character of development in these areas contributes positively to the neighbourhood context and community as a whole.
- Encourage building designs that promote privacy, safety and accessibility.

16.6.1 GUIDELINES:

16.6.1.1. Site Design

1. Larger residential developments should be separated into smaller groups or clusters to maintain a residential scale and image.
2. Where possible, provide direct access from the front street to individual ground floor units.
3. Site residential projects to maximize opportunities to create open spaces and networks including play areas for children according to the following guidelines:
    a. Encourage green spaces and common areas as defining elements of the project. Examples include common garden areas, play spaces, courtyards, gathering places, and walkways.
    b. Encourage direct access to a private outdoor space, patio or balcony, or upper-level terrace for each dwelling unit.
    c. Provide natural surveillance for children's play areas by orienting units with views onto these spaces.
4. Parking should be located to the side or rear of the building to allow for the building or front onto the primary street.

16.6.1.2. Building Design

1. Minor visual breaks in the façade should be used to further break up building mass, to accentuate individual entrances and units, and to create variation and enhance visual interest from public and private open spaces.
2. The scale and massing of buildings should be broken up vertically and horizontally to reduce the visual impact of buildings, cater to pedestrian scale, and to create variation and visual interest.
3. Mechanical equipment (such as air conditioning and ventilation, antennae and receiving dishes) should not be visible from street level with the exception of solar panels, windmills or other equipment directly required to the reduction of energy use and greenhouse gases.

16.6.1.3. Lighting Design

1. Pedestrian access should be lighted and designed to meet Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles so that the spaces are made as safe and secure as possible.
2. Architectural lighting is encouraged to highlight the facades of building. This can help to create visual interest and highlight architectural details.
3. All exterior lighting should meet dark sky certification standards and be direct lighting where possible so to reduce any glare and visual pollution.

16.6.1.4. Landscape Design

1. Apartment development should provide an area of not less than 10 m² of private amenity space per unit.
2. Townhouse development should provide not less than 15 m² of private outdoor landscaped amenity area
3. Green spaces and common areas should be integrated as defining elements of the site design. Examples include common garden areas, play spaces, courtyards, gathering places, and walkways.
4. Trees and landscaping should be provided to buffer development from adjacent exiting residential uses.
5. Large parking lots with more than 10 stalls should include a landscape island every ten stalls to provide for the greening of the area.
6. When located in front of a building, parking areas should be buffered to the street using landscaping and trees.