



Architectural design and materials should express the unity of the mixed-use and infill development and articulate the variety of uses and their functions.



Locate buildings in an orderly arrangement with human scale elements visible both from a distance and at street level.



In this walkable urban neighborhood in Alexandria, Virginia, residential townhouses (see photo on left) are located across the street from an office building with ground floor retail and residential apartment buildings behind (above). The use of brick unifies the neighborhood, while varying roof heights, sloping roof forms, and colorful ornamentation articulate the mix of uses.

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Well-designed buildings organized within a strong site plan and combined with an attractive landscape and streetscape design are necessary to create a vibrant environment in which to live, work, and play. A development of new buildings should present a consistent and distinctive overall identity. Architectural design should express the unity of the mixed-use and infill development and articulate the variety of uses and their functions.

Locate buildings in an orderly arrangement with human scale elements visible both from a distance and at street level. Relate the buildings through similar and compatible architectural features including building massing, rooflines, and palette of materials, finishes and colors.

Architectural design of infill development should express the unity of the mixed-use or infill development and the variety of uses and their functions.

COMPATIBILITY WITH CONTEXT

Building form and design of new buildings and additions to existing buildings should be compatible with buildings on adjacent property and respect visual and historic characteristics of the area.



Rooftop embellishments such as cupolas and bell towers may be allowed as specified by zoning ordinance.



Low-rise building: Maximum 35 feet in height measured above the ground plane.



Buildings of varying height should be organized to create a visually distinctive, balanced, and memorable overall form.



Use compatible building heights and setbacks of upper floors to integrate new buildings with old.

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BUILDING HEIGHT

In accordance with the zoning ordinance, building height is the vertical distance measured from the level of the curb or the established curb grade opposite the middle of the front of the structure to the highest point of the roof if a flat roof; to the deck line of a mansard roof; to the mean height level between the eaves and ridge of a gable, hip or gambrel roof; or to the highest point of any other structure. For buildings set back from the street line, the height shall be measured from the average elevation of the ground surface along the front of the building.

Low-rise building: Maximum 35 feet in height measured above the ground plane or 3 floors.

Mid-rise building: Maximum 75 feet in height measured above the ground plane or 6 floors.

High-rise building: High-rise buildings above 75 feet may be allowed within a planned unit development (PUD) or with the approval of a conditional use permit by City Council. For high-rise buildings, setbacks of upper levels should be considered to provide light, air, and views at street level.

There should be a transition in building height to minimize negative impacts of tall buildings on adjacent streets, open spaces, and buildings that are lower in height. Rooftop embellishments such as cupolas and bell towers may be approved by the city council with the approval of the master development plan.

New buildings should be constructed to a height compatible with existing adjacent buildings. New buildings should be within 10 percent of the average height of existing buildings as seen from the street and publicly accessible areas. Abrupt and overwhelming variations in building height should not be allowed.



Building corners may be articulated with balconies and distinctive roof forms, materials, colors, and signage.



These buildings present a unified form when viewed from a distance.



Use building massing to define the street space, frame views, and establish gateways.

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BUILDING MASSING

Building massing—the building size, relationship of height to width, and overall shape of a building’s volume—is influenced by the building’s use, physical and legal site constraints (zoned height limitations and required setbacks), and existing adjacent buildings. Massing should express the building’s function, respect the local context and scale of adjacent buildings, and contribute to a pedestrian-friendly environment. Massing should be compatible with the size, height, and shape of existing adjacent buildings as seen from the street and public areas and safeguard the provision of light,

air, and views at street level. Where appropriate, building form should be compatible with existing adjacent buildings and reflect the prevailing local architecture.

Use consistent and/or complementary building materials.

Use horizontal expression lines to visually define the base, middle, and top and integrate perceptible human scale devices.

Step down to the street / step back from the build-to line with increasing heights.

Use building massing to define the street space, frame views, and establish gateways.

Buildings of varying height should be organized to create a visually distinctive, balanced, and memorable overall form when viewed from a distance.

Building massing should provide light, air, and views at street level. Organize buildings to control the impact of shadows and mitigate against the impact of wind.



Conformance to build-to lines defines the pedestrian environment and provides buildings with greater presence on the street.



Locate and orient buildings to establish a rhythm of buildings and the spaces between them.



Provide adequate sidewalk space for pedestrian circulation and development of a streetscape that is appropriate to the building uses.

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LOCATION AND ORIENTATION

The location and orientation of a new building should reinforce the existing rhythm and orientation of buildings and the spaces between them.

BUILD-TO LINES

Build-to lines should be established to define the pedestrian environment at street level, provide buildings with greater presence on the street, and provide adequate sidewalk space for pedestrian circulation and development of a streetscape that is appropriate to the building uses. The placement of a new building should reinforce the prevailing

average setbacks of adjacent buildings and should be similar to prevailing side, rear, and topographic conditions.

BUILDING FACADES

Building façades should be composed to relate all of the parts (wall, doors, windows) to provide variety and interest, relate comfortably to human scale, and create a pedestrian-friendly environment.

Façades should be organized by horizontal expression lines incorporated between the base, middle, and top of the façade. Façades should be articulated by the spacing of openings, expression

of structure, and surface relief such as projecting bays and pilasters. The selection of materials, finish, and color should reinforce the composition.

Buildings fronting on more than one street should address the streets with a consistent façade treatment. Building corners should be articulated. The street level façade should be the primary orientation and access for pedestrians and provide continuity of visual interest. The street level use at commercial street corners should be non-residential. Building exteriors visible to a public right-of-way or any property zoned or used for residential purposes should be consistent in architectural



Horizontal expression lines define the base, middle, and top of the façade to relate comfortably to human scale.



The rhythm of building openings should present a pleasing pattern along the street.



Building façades should be composed to relate all of the parts, including walls, doors, and windows.



All building façades, including rear alley façades, should be consistent in architectural quality, materials, appearance, and detail.

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quality, materials, appearance, and detail to any other exterior of the same building. The rhythm of windows, doors, porches, or other projections should present a pleasing pattern and should vary along the street block to avoid a monotonous and uninteresting appearance.

Façades of new buildings located adjacent to existing buildings should relate to the pattern of existing façades and contribute to a consistent rhythm and continuity of features along the street. On streets where the majority of existing buildings have front porches, incorporation of porches in a new building should be considered as a compatible design

feature to reinforce the prevailing architectural character and façade treatment.

The directional expression of façades of new buildings, generally determined by the building structure and height, the placement and proportion of openings, and architectural detailing should be compatible with existing adjacent buildings, whether that expression be vertical, horizontal, or non-directional. The proportion, or ratio of width to height, of a new building's windows and doors should relate to the proportions of openings of existing adjacent buildings visible from the street and public areas. The pattern of solids and voids, of wall surfaces and the openings between them, and the proportion of openings to

wall surface should be compatible with existing adjacent buildings.

Doors and windows should be spaced to create a pleasing pattern. Classical proportions should be followed to guide the design of fenestration. At least 60-percent of the street level façade should be glazed area (i. e., windows and doors). Main entrances should be clearly identifiable. Retail, restaurant, and business entrances should be on the street level to encourage pedestrian activity. Service entrances and loading docks should be located on side or rear façades and appropriately screened or located behind roll-down doors.



Locate retail, restaurant, and business entrances on the street level to encourage pedestrian activity.



Architectural detail affects the play of light and shadow on a building façade, articulates the pedestrian environment and defines the skyline.



Doors and windows should be spaced to create a pleasing pattern.

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FACADE ARTICULATION

Architectural detail affects the play of light and shadow on a building façade, articulates the pedestrian environment at street level, and defines the skyline. Such details may include lintels, cornices, arches, chimneys, porches, overhanging roof eaves and other projections, and ironwork. Ground level façades should have the greatest level of detail where it is most visible to the pedestrian. Wall plane projections or recesses should be incorporated to modulate façades greater than 100 feet in length measured horizontally and visible to a public right-of-way or any property zoned or used for residential purposes.

LOWER LEVEL FACADES

Ground floor façades should have the greatest level of detail where it is most visible to the pedestrian. Provide the maximum amount of glazing at the ground and second floor levels. At a minimum, ground floor façades should be transparent between the heights of three feet and eight feet above the public walkway for no less than 60 percent of the horizontal length of the building façade. Ground floor façades facing public streets should incorporate a variety of the following features: recesses or projections, overhangs, articulated roof forms, raised corniced parapets, arcades, arches, display windows, parapets over entrances,

awnings, and/or integrated landscaping such as planters or seat walls.

BUILDING ENTRANCES

All sides of a principal building that directly face an abutting street should feature at least one entrance. Where the principal building directly faces more than two abutting streets, this requirement should apply only to two sides of the building, including the side of the building facing the primary street and another side of the building facing a second street. Entryway design elements and variations are encouraged. Each principal building on a site should have clearly defined and highly visible entrances featuring not less than three



Awnings and canopies should be of a design, material, form, construction, and color appropriate to the architectural style and function of the building.



Awnings and canopies shade windows and doors and provide cover for the pedestrian and outdoor seating and dining areas.



Entryway design elements and variations are encouraged.



Each principal building on a site should have clearly defined and highly visible entrances.

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of the following architectural features: canopies or porticos, roof overhangs, recesses or projections, arcades, raised cornice parapet, peaked roofs, arches, outdoor patios, display windows, architectural ornament such as tile and moldings integral to the building design, or integral planters or wing walls that incorporate landscaped areas and or places for sitting.

AWNINGS AND CANOPIES

Awnings and canopies shade windows and doors and provide cover for the pedestrian and outdoor seating and dining areas. Awnings and canopies should be of a design, material, form, construction, and color appropriate to

the architectural style and function of the building and visually integrated and in harmony with other buildings and sites in the district.

BUILDING CORNERS

Building corners located at street corners may be articulated with chamfered or curved walls, vertical elements such as towers and cupolas, or bay windows.

MATERIALS AND FINISHES

Materials should be high quality, attractive, and durable. Primary materials should be brick veneer, natural stone, architectural metal, architectural precast, cementitious siding, stucco

or stucco-like materials such as EIFS, wood clapboard, wood shingles, board and batten wood siding, smooth-face synthetic siding such as Hardiplank, or glass. Where permitted, synthetic siding to simulate clapboard siding may be used. Textured or “wood grained” siding is discouraged. Use of alternative materials to the above listed preferred materials is subject to approval by the Planning Director. The selection of materials and textures for a new building should relate to the materials and textures used in the surrounding area and on existing adjacent buildings. In areas where strong continuity of materials and textures is a factor, the continued use of those materials should be strongly considered. Trim should not exceed 2 inches in actual thickness, be at



Building corners provide opportunities to create community icons, such as bell towers, projecting bay windows, and porches

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least 6 inches in width at corners and at least 4 inches in width around openings.

COLOR

The selection of colors for a new building should relate to the use of color in the surrounding area and on existing adjacent buildings. In areas where strong continuity of color is present, the continued use of existing colors should be considered. Exterior color should be low reflectance; the use of high intensity, metallic, black, or fluorescent colors is discouraged. Exterior colors should be subtle, neutral, or natural tones; bright colors should be used only as accents. Mortar and caulking colors should be compatible with the predominant material.

ROOFS AND ROOFLINES

Roofs should provide visual interest and become positive additions to the skyline. Roofs may vary from flat to sloping. Use of similar roof forms will create a more unified and cohesive development. Roof forms and heights should be appropriate to the architectural style of the development. Varying roof forms and heights to create an interesting skyline should be considered. The visual impact of roofs, roof overhangs, and parapets on adjacent open space, streetscape, and other buildings should be considered.

Roofs should be gable, hip, gambrel, or a combination, or flat if concealed from

view by a parapet. Gable roof ends should have a minimum roof overhang of 12 inches. The roofs of new buildings visible from the street and public areas should relate in shape, pitch, and materials to the roofs of existing adjacent buildings. Overhanging eaves should extend no less than 3 feet past the supporting wall for no less than 30 percent of the building perimeter. Sloping roofs should not exceed the average height of the supporting wall, with an average slope greater than or equal to 1 foot of vertical rise for every 3 feet of horizontal run and less than or equal to 1 foot of vertical rise for every 1 foot of horizontal run. The average height of parapets should not exceed 15 percent of the height of the supporting



Above are illustrations of a variety of roofs within a community with a mix of residential types.



The central clock tower is a community icon on the pedestrian plaza. In contrast, note the flat parapet on the roof flanking the tower.



Roof overhangs, towers, and cupolas create a varied and interesting skyline adjacent to this public waterfront.

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wall and should not exceed at any point one-third of the height of the supporting wall. Parapets should feature three dimensional cornices to provide visual interest and shadow lines, and should not be of a constant height for a distance greater than 150 feet. Dormers, cupolas, and other rooftop elements are encouraged to create interest, introduce human scale, and relieve building mass. The roofscape defined by the roofline of a building or buildings should be an integral part of the design with respect to form, material, and color. Sloped roof materials should be wood, tin, slate, terra cotta, standing seam metal, or dimensional fiberglass shingles. Porches and bay windows should have metal roofing. Roof penetrations should

be on the rear slope of roofs and painted to match the color of the roof. Skylights should not be visible from any public area.

ROOFTOP EQUIPMENT

Rooftop mechanical units, flues, vents, or any other equipment should be organized and screened from views, including from adjacent buildings. Accessible rooftops and green roofs are encouraged.



In this mixed-use and infill development in Alexandria, Virginia, the ground floor parking garage is located beneath the apartment buildings and behind the retail/office buildings (left).



The pavilion marks the entrance to additional shops as well as both surface and structured parking located behind this retail street in Shirlington, Virginia.



In this office and retail complex in Alexandria, Virginia, retail parking is accommodated beneath a motor court.



This two-level parking deck is located behind the retail shops with offices and apartments on the upper floors.

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LIGHTING

Building-mounted lighting should be designed as an integral part of the architecture and should not direct or reflect illumination on adjacent properties.

should be treated with materials, colors, finishes, and signage consistent with the overall quality and character of the development.

PARKING STRUCTURES

Parking structures provide convenient and sheltered parking adjacent to the uses that they support. When the cost to build parking structures is justified by the density of the development and site constraints, the design of the structures should be designed to integrate well with the adjacent buildings. Structured parking may be accommodated in garages within buildings or in free-standing parking decks. Visible façades