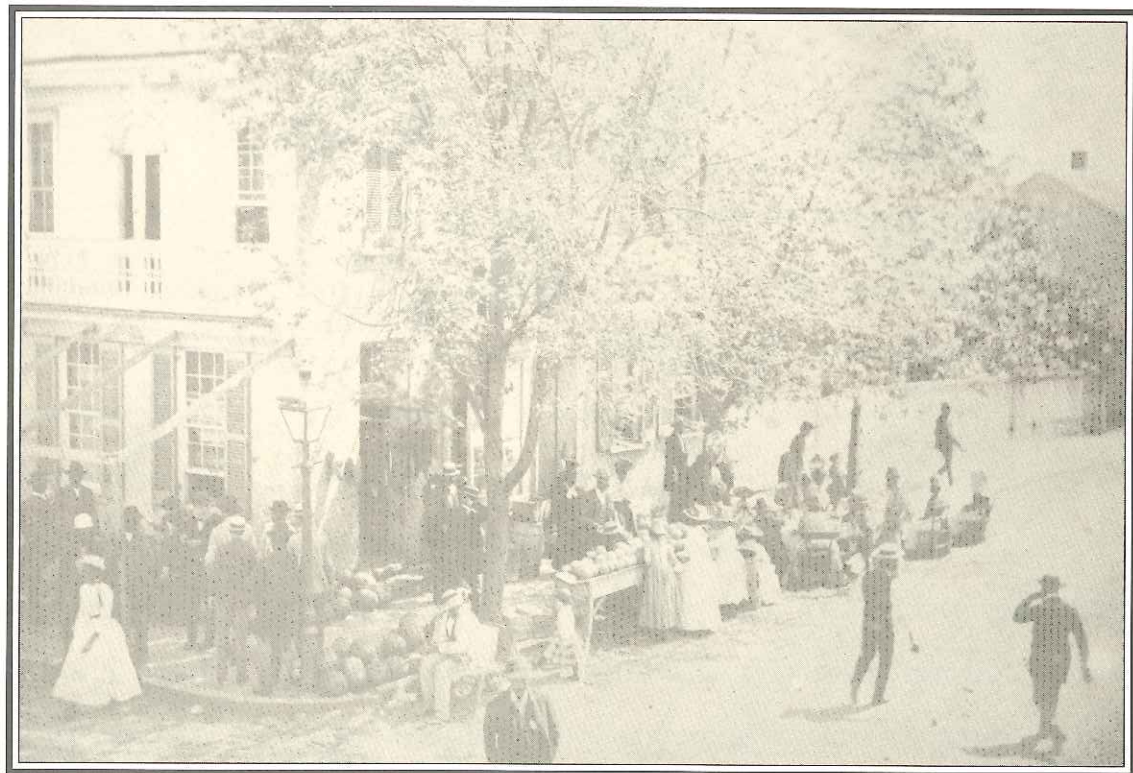


SITE DESIGN GUIDELINES



*August Court Days, c. 1892
Corner of King and Loudoun Streets*

SITE DESIGN GUIDELINES



“Before I built a wall, I’d ask to know what I was walling in or out.” –Robert Frost

Once the siting and form of a building have been determined, attention turns to serving and enhancing the building on its site through the provision of parking, paths and sidewalks, lighting and utilities, and fencing and walls. While these features ideally should be as integral to the overall site development as the building itself, too often they are given inadequate consideration or are approached in piecemeal fashion. No doubt most people can recall examples of unrelieved expanses of parking, obtrusive site lighting or oppressive fences that detract from an otherwise attractive building. By designing site elements that are consistent not only with the site development as a whole but also with the prevailing character of its surroundings, both

new and existing developments can reflect the contemporary vitality of Leesburg as well as regard for the town’s traditional environmental quality.

These guidelines begin with a discussion of natural site amenities and the importance of retaining significant natural features. Site access and parking, site features common to all development, are discussed. Vehicular and pedestrian circulation and pedestrian access to buildings then follows. The chapter concludes with guidelines for other space-defining features such as walls and fences, the importance of appropriate lighting, and the siting of utilities.

Natural Site Amenities

Most undeveloped sites have certain natural features characteristic of the surrounding environment. Some may even possess unique features such as a particularly fine stand of trees, a dramatic landform or a memorable vista. These features help establish the character of the Leesburg environment, and provide transition and continuity between the town and its adjacent countryside. The following guidelines help promote the retention of natural site amenities:

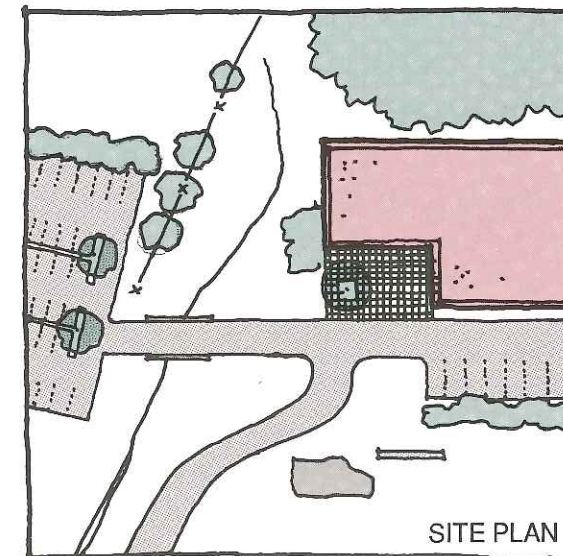
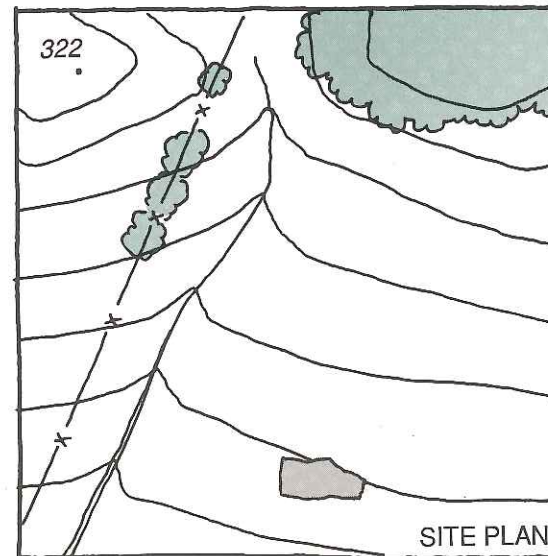
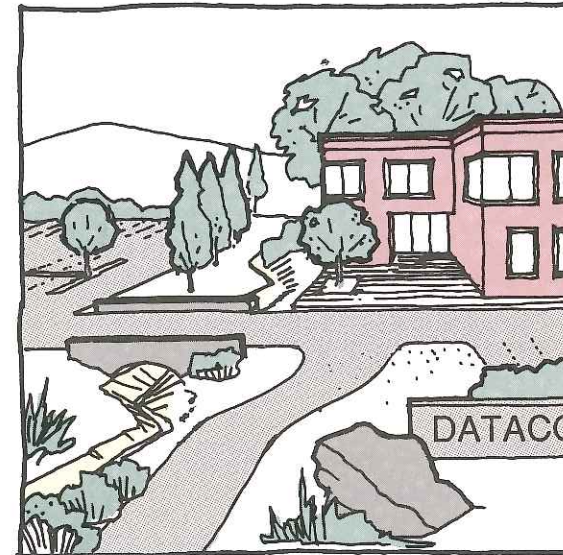
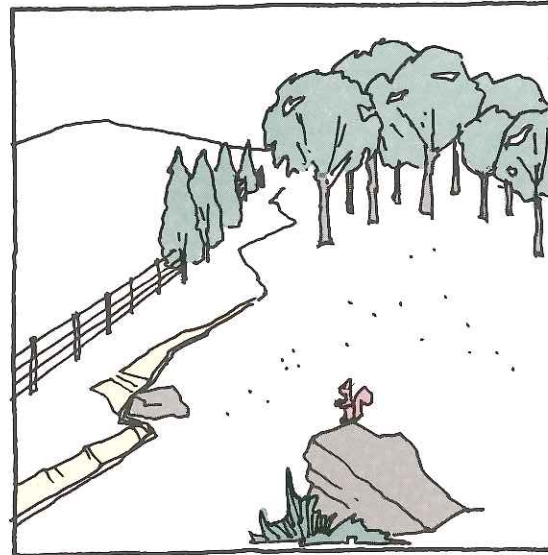
Existing vegetation and tree cover should be preserved to the greatest extent possible. Removal of significant individual trees or rows of trees associated with fence lines, drainage ways and property boundaries is strongly discouraged.

When trees must be removed, efforts should be made to replace them with trees of similar potential size and species. For further information on the preservation and replacement of landscape materials refer to the [Landscaping, Screening and Open Space Regulations](#) section of the [Town Zoning Ordinance](#).

Creeks, natural drainage swales, rock outcroppings and similar natural features unique to the site should be preserved and incorporated into development proposals. Such features should be considered strong

Natural site characteristics such as topography, vegetation, creeks and natural drainage swales, and rock outcroppings (left, top and bottom) establish the character of the environment. **Integrating such**

features into a new development scheme (right, top and bottom) reduces its environmental impact, provides greater visual interest to the site, and may actually reduce site preparation costs.



Views to open space within a development are desirable. Retention of existing vegetation and views maintains a sense of Leesburg's scenic natural environment.



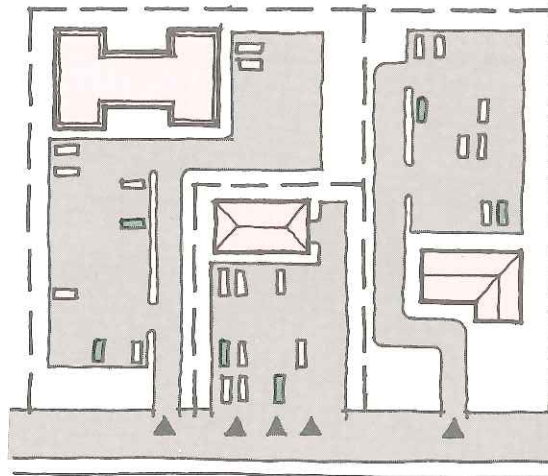
site design influences in relating the design to the natural landscape.

- ▶ The natural slope and topography of a site should be retained to the greatest degree possible.
- ▶ Significant views—both into the site from adjacent public rights-of-way and from the site to natural or man-made focal points—should be maintained and enhanced to the greatest degree possible. Views to these areas help retain a sense of Leesburg's scenic natural environment along the entry corridors. Existing site vegetation often frames or focuses attention on such views, and should be retained wherever possible. Likewise, vegetation and landforms that screen undesirable views should also be retained.

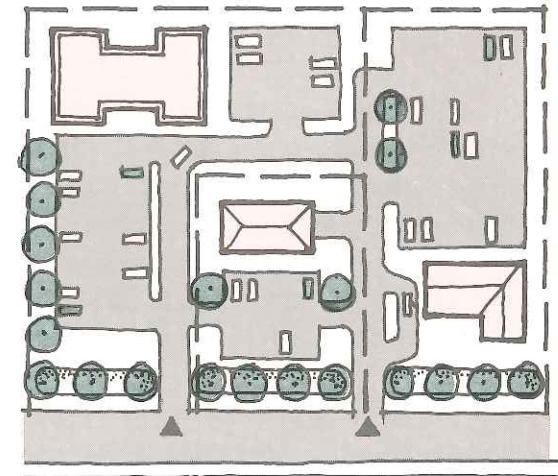
Site Access

Providing clear and convenient access to a development site for both motorists and pedestrians is often an early concern in the development process. Yet, when a number of parcels along a roadway frontage of limited length each take an independent approach to providing site access, complicated or confusing traffic patterns can result and create potential safety hazards. Numerous or excessively wide entrances also can reduce roadside opportunities for berming or the retention of vegetation that enhance the natural character of the area or may provide visual screening. The following guidelines offer suggestions for minimizing the impact of providing convenient site access:

- ▶ Direct access from the roadway to development sites adjacent to the roadway is discouraged. Access should be provided by secondary roads, streets or common driveways wherever possible.
- ▶ When site access must be provided directly from the main roadway, especially where existing banks or berms provide edge definition or visual screening along the roadway, the access point should be located where only minimal disturbance of existing topography is necessary.
- ▶ To minimize traffic conflicts, vehicular entrances/exits to a site should be consolidated at a single location a sufficient distance away from street intersections with high traffic volume.



MULTIPLE ENTRIES



SHARED ENTRIES

*The use of access drives or **shared entries** is preferable to multiple entry points for each site or parcel. Consolidation simplifies vehicular access and reduces disturbance of the natural environment.*

► The apparent width of entrances and driveways should be minimized wherever possible by the provision of a planted median strip of at least 6' in width between incoming and outgoing traffic—particularly if two or more lanes are provided in each direction.

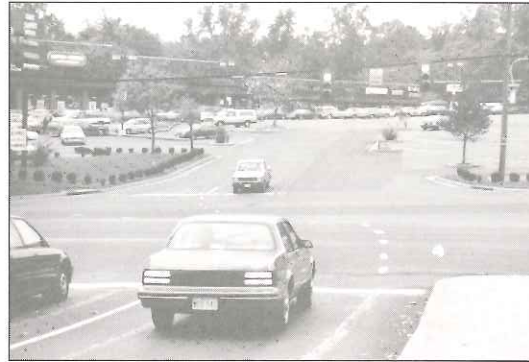
► Entrances and driveways should permit safe and convenient pedestrian crossing where they intersect sidewalks and other pedestrian circulation systems.

► Pedestrian access to sites should be provided from all adjacent public sidewalks, protected from vehicular traffic by grade separation, plant materials and/or berming.

► Where appropriate, effort should be made to provide secondary pedestrian access to sites and linkages between adjacent sites by the provision of pedestrian paths not necessarily associated with public roadways.

Parking Lots

The provision of an adequate number of parking spaces as required by the Zoning Ordinance is usually one of the more challenging aspects of any site development. Providing parking that is convenient as well as attractive increases the challenge. Yet, considering the percentage of a site that is often devoted to parking, its visual impact can be significant. In fact, it is the provision of on-site parking that most distinguishes the character of new and recent development



Wide entrances make pedestrian crossings difficult and dangerous.



A planted median makes entry drives more attractive and promotes safer crossing for pedestrians.

Large open expanses of parking reduce the human scale of the buildings and the site. Such parking areas lack safe pedestrian walkways, detract from the appearance of the buildings and the site, and lack landscaping that might afford protection from wind and sun.

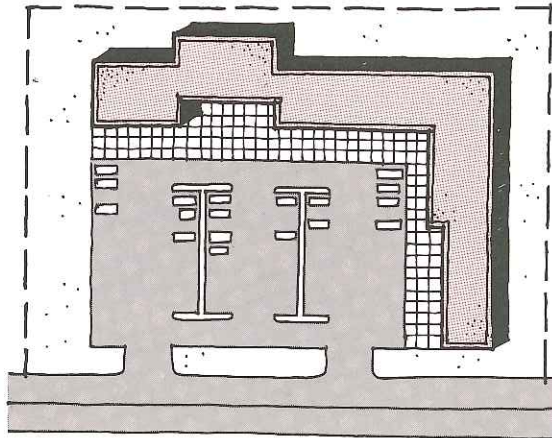


Retention of mature trees provides visual interest, reduces the impact of development on the natural environment, and moderates temperature and wind conditions.



AVOID the use of

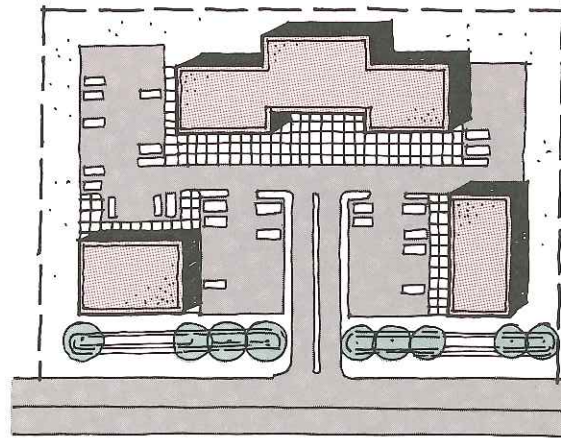
- Single, large parking lot
- One large building mass
- Lack of landscaping



from that traditionally found within the Old and Historic District, where major parking occurs at the rear of buildings and smaller-scale parking such as in linear driveways in residential areas. Consequently, reducing the visual impact of parking is crucial to making

USE instead

- Decentralized parking
- Several building masses
- Perimeter and interior landscaping



development along the entry corridors more appropriate to the character of historic Leesburg. The following guidelines suggest ways in which the impact of parking areas can be reduced while making parking more convenient, efficient and attractive:

A single large expanse of parking should be avoided. Instead, parking should be provided in smaller, well-defined areas, separated and screened by features such as berms, access drives, landscaping and/or buildings.

Parking areas should not be located exclusively at the front of building sites. Wherever possible, some of the required parking should be provided at the sides or rear of the site, following the traditional pattern of downtown Leesburg. Promoting variety in the placement of buildings on the site (see *Size and Scale, Chapter 1/ Building Design Standards*) may also help achieve spatial variety in the placement of parking areas.

Within the interior of the parking lot, landscaping should be used to delineate vehicular and pedestrian circulation patterns. Where specimen or mature trees exist, the parking layout should be designed to incorporate and protect such trees in designated planting areas.

Clear and legible signs, different types and textures of paving materials, raised areas and other techniques should be used to clearly define pedestrian zones within parking areas and direct the flow of both vehicular and pedestrian traffic throughout the site.

Pedestrian Circulation

Just as parking is generally a more dominant characteristic of new and recent development, pedestrian circulation—sidewalks, paths and alleys—is a more conspicuous feature of the Old and Historic District. The higher site densities found within the District often make walking more convenient than driving. Yet as Leesburg has grown, the network of sidewalks has grown with it, providing important links between neighborhoods as well as with the town center. Even along the entry corridors, sidewalks provide an alternative to driving for residents, and reinforce the general sense of accessibility. Where appropriate, provisions should be made for sidewalks and other pedestrian routes to strengthen linkages and promote the accessibility of the town as a whole. The following guidelines provide suggestions for incorporating effective pedestrian circulation in the site design process:

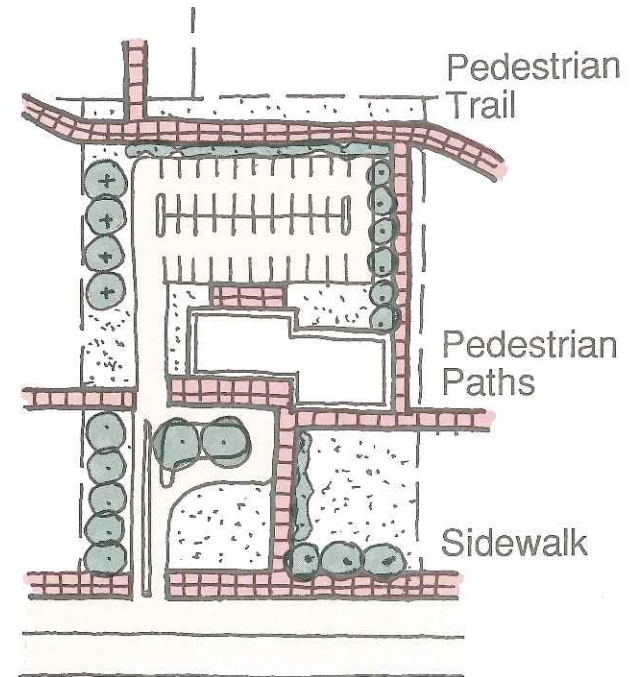
- ▶ In all developments—and particularly in large commercial centers—safe and attractive pedestrian linkages should be developed between buildings and parking areas.

- ▶ Pedestrian circulation within a development should be encouraged by the provision of an internal pedestrian circulation network linked to the municipal sidewalk system adjacent to all public rights-of-way.

Suitable **paving materials for pedestrian paths** include (from top to bottom):
 brick; textured concrete;
 and plain concrete combined with
 exposed-aggregate concrete.



Paths within a development can make it more accessible by **providing pedestrian linkages** between parking areas, public sidewalks, adjacent parcels, and community trail systems.



In addition, pedestrian paths[†] linking a commercial or office development to adjacent residential development should be provided to the greatest extent possible.

► Pedestrian circulation within a development should be handicapped accessible.

► Where new development is adjacent to an existing or proposed municipal pedestrian trail[†] system, linkages should be provided between the trails and the development's internal pedestrian circulation network.

► Paths should be paved with a hard, even surface material such as brick, concrete or asphalt rather than loose gravel or individual stepping stones. In addition, variety in the width, color and texture of pedestrian paving should be considered to provide visual interest and help express the hierarchy of routes and destinations.

► Paths should provide a comfortable and attractive pedestrian environment. Lighting, landscaping for shade and protection, benches, trash receptacles and other street furniture should be provided along pedestrian paths and should be both compatible in design with the buildings on the site and consistent throughout the development.

Landscaping / Plant Materials

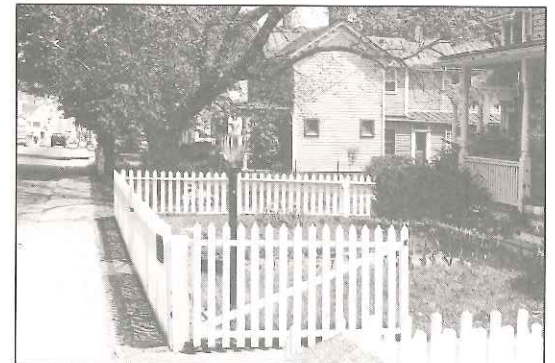
The Leesburg Town Zoning Ordinance currently regulates the planting of landscape materials. The planning department staff administers these landscaping/plant materials regulations. For further information refer to Article 9: Landscaping, Screening and Open Space Regulations of the Town Zoning Ordinance.

Fences, Walls and Other Space-Defining Features

Traditionally, fences and walls have defined outdoor spaces, either by defining the property lines of a parcel or separating different site functions or activities within the parcel. When relatively open they can visually mark a boundary, act as a means of limiting access, or clarify the distinctions between public and private space. Fences and walls that are solid in appearance also act as visual barriers. The following guidelines address some of the ways in which fencing and other means of defining outdoor space can be effective:

► Fences and walls may be used to separate public from private outdoor spaces as well as areas of differing uses. When used in this way, fences should be visually open in character rather than solid and opaque. Walls should be low—approximately 3' in height or less. If taller, they should be

Preferred fencing materials include (below, from top to bottom): stone, iron, and wood. Less appropriate materials include (opposite page, top and bottom): chain link and exposed concrete.



combined with open fencing placed between solid wall piers.

► Fences and walls should be built of traditional materials found in the Leesburg environment: painted or stained wood or painted iron for fences, and unpainted brick or stone for walls. Chainlink, plastic, fiberglass or plywood fences or concrete block walls are not preferred in most locations.

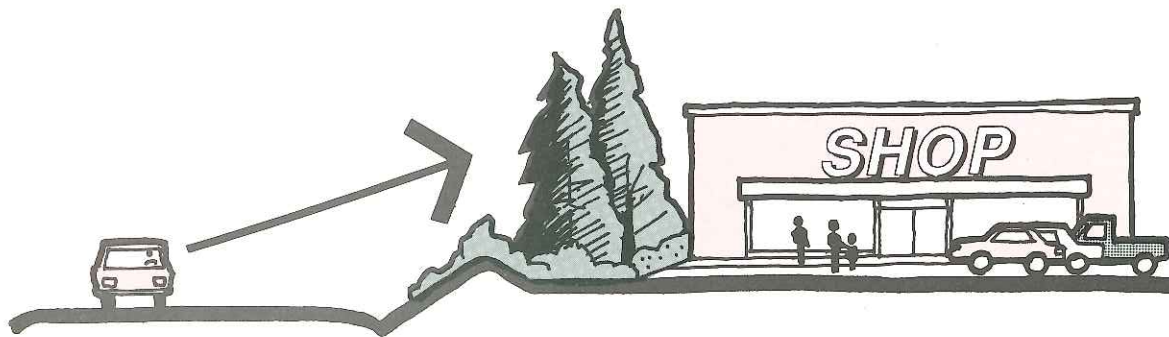
► Privacy fences and solid walls should not be used, except where necessary to provide screening for delivery, storage or utility areas otherwise visible from public rights-of-way. Such fences should be built of individual boards rather than of plywood, and should be painted or stained rather than left untreated. It is also preferable to supplement such fences and walls with plant materials to soften their visual impact.



► Retaining walls should be of dry-laid stone, stone masonry or brick faced. Log and railroad ties, combined with terracing and plantings, may be used on a limited basis provided there is a horizontal method of construction. Unfaced concrete or concrete block is not appropriate for retaining walls.

► When parking areas are to be screened, the use of plant materials and berms may be more appropriate than solid walls and privacy fences and should be examined. When the latter are used, their appearance should be softened through the use of adjacent plantings.

► Mechanical equipment, energy conservation or collection equipment, or communications transmitting or receiving apparatus located on the site away from buildings should be screened from public view.



Small earthen berms combined with vegetation can provide a cost-efficient and effective means of screening views from the roadway.

Lighting and Utilities

Exterior lighting is an important part of a development's site design, not only to enhance its nighttime image but to promote user safety and building security. Yet often the illumination levels or character of the lighting may not be well suited to its task. Site utilities, on the other hand, should not be visually apparent, even when they are extensive in nature. The following guidelines provide advice on appropriately integrating lighting and site utilities into the development plan:

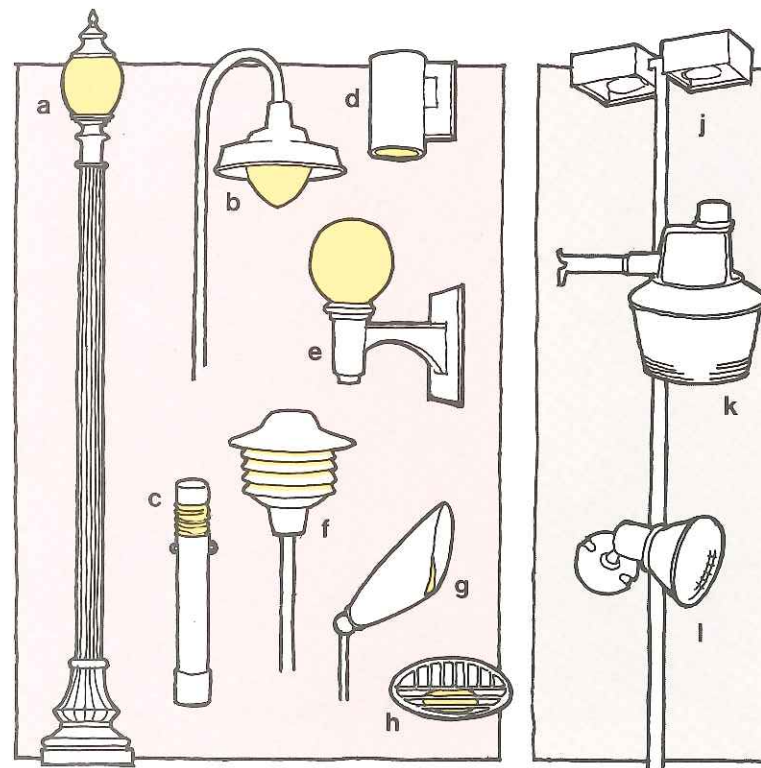
- ▶ Exterior lighting for various purposes such as vehicular and pedestrian circulation, building and landscape illumination, and security should be compatible with the architecture of the building and the landscape plans for the site as well as with each other. For each lighting need, the fixture style and design should be consistent throughout the project.
- ▶ Lighting should be controlled in both quality and intensity. Luminaries should be shielded to prevent light shining beyond the property lines onto adjacent properties.
- ▶ Wherever possible walkway, parking and loading areas should be illuminated by fixtures attached to the building. Use of low, bollard-type light fixtures, approximately three feet in height or less, is encouraged for pedestrian areas not immediately

adjacent to buildings.

- ▶ The use of high-intensity security lighting as general area lighting or associated with any portion of a building visible from public rights-of-way should be avoided. Such lighting is only appropriate for service entrances or other areas screened from general view.
- ▶ Light fixtures should be placed to provide maximum effective illumination and avoid

conflict with expected growth of trees and shrubs.

- ▶ Lighting should be located in close proximity to the area(s) to be illuminated in order to minimize glare. If spotlights or landscape floodlights are used, they should be aimed away from public rights-of-way. Pole-mounted fixtures that direct light downward or outward should not exceed 20 feet in height.



APPROPRIATE LIGHT FIXTURES

- a area light standard
- b downlight standard
- c bollard
- d downlight wall bracket
- e area wall bracket
- f landscape/path light
- g shielded spotlight
- h landscape uplight.

INAPPROPRIATE LIGHT FIXTURES

- j tall light standard (over 20')
- k high-intensity security
- l unshielded spotlight.