

2016

Development Design Preferences

Adopted



by the
City of Westminster
Mayor & Common Council



City of Westminster Development Design Preferences

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Purpose Statement

These Development Design Preferences are guidelines regarding the design of developments, buildings or improvements to properties within the City of Westminster. These preferences serve as recommendations to guide the layout, alteration, or construction of buildings or improvements. These design preferences are written for use by property owners, residents, the Historic District Commission, the Planning and Zoning Commission as well as City staff. While the City remains dynamic and change continues to occur in response to varying community goals and economic conditions, preserving Westminster's heritage and character remains a primary goal of the community.

City of Westminster Development Design Preferences

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Introduction

The City of Westminster is Carroll County's seat, home to the Carroll County Regional Airport, and centrally located within the Baltimore/Washington metro area. The City is a center for government and commerce within Central Maryland. The City's historic downtown is recognized by the State as a designated Sustainable Community and a Main Street Maryland Community and serves as a reminder of Westminster's small town past. The City's spacious, tree-lined Main Street also contributes to the City's standing as a Tree City USA, which the City has maintained for over 25 years.



City of Westminster Main Street in 1909

Recent development pressures, while temporarily decreased as result of the fiscal downturn, will continue to present growth management challenges in the future as a consequence of the City's geographic location. The task before the Mayor and Common Council and the Planning and Zoning Commission, therefore, is to meet the needs of current and future residents and businesses while promoting and protecting the City's historic downtown and valuable natural resources. A major aspect of this task is balancing the positive aspects of new growth with the annual limits on new water use.

The intent of the *Development Design Preferences* manual is to present creative ideas for consideration by designers, architects and engineers during the conceptual development stage of projects in the City. Projects should be designed utilizing consistency, sensitivity and efficiency. Overall, the City is looking for all projects to reference the historic downtown as the "look and feel" or brand for the entire City.



City of Westminster Main Street today

Consistency means consideration for the local architectural styles and existing environment. This includes reference to existing architectural downtown elements and small town character. It includes unobtrusive lighting fixtures and site illumination; landscaping to enliven the City's existing green neighborhoods and businesses; consistent signage themes; and, well-organized

building layouts and building placements as well as integrated and harmonious landscaping arrangements.

Sensitivity means both the use of and the protection of the natural environment and resources. This includes water quality and quantity protection, minimizing land and landscape impacts, rainfall capture and reuse, and creative stormwater treatment.

Efficiency means reduction of energy use and resource consumption. This includes reclaimed water to promote sustainable supplies; use of water-saving plumbing fixtures, energy-efficient appliances and lighting fixtures; and solar and geo-thermal heating as well as the exploration of other, new sustainable energy alternatives.



Historic Clock Tower built in 1896

Of particular note are alternatives listed under Section V. Resource Conservation Requirements. These are intended as mandatory elements to be included on every site plan submitted to the City.

Low Impact Development (LID) practices will be required on every new development proposal submitted to the City for review by the City of Westminster's Planning and Zoning Commission.

LID practices include permeable paving, vegetative swales, bio retention areas, cisterns and rain barrels and reduced overall building footprints. Additionally, water saving measures, such as low-flow plumbing fixtures, will be required in all development constructed in the City.



An example of pervious paving concept

I. Overview

General Design Objectives

The Westminster Mayor and Common Council and the Westminster Planning and Zoning Commission are pleased to present the City of Westminster's adopted ***Development Design Preferences*** manual.



Construction of Shoppes at Meadow Creek

The *Development Design Preferences* manual is for use during the conceptual design phase of all commercial and residential projects. Rather than legislating design standards for development and redevelopment projects, the manual presents a comprehensive, but not all-inclusive, inventory of methods and practices to be considered by designers, engineers and architects early in project design.

These preferences, represented by photos, text descriptions, illustrations and figures, are intended to result in exemplary projects that exhibit consistency, sensitivity and efficiency. When subdivisions and site plans are reviewed by the Planning and Zoning Commission, the Commission will utilize the adopted manual in coordination with other provisions and Code requirements. The Commission may modify the adopted preferences on a per project basis at any time, in order to meet requirements in the City Code.

Commercial Development



New development can reinforce existing character

Quality commercial and mixed-use development and redevelopment, along MD 140 and in the historic downtown area, positively reflect upon the City's role as the county seat and as an attractive place to do business. High-quality projects also highlight the City as an evolving center of commerce in Central Maryland. By incorporating these design preferences, new development will maintain local architectural character while boosting the economic base.

Residential Development

The inclusion of local architectural elements, sensitive site design and energy / resource efficient alternatives will result in Low-Impact Development (LID). This will minimize impacts on local and regional resources and the natural environment. Such approaches can result in more and better connections between neighborhoods, downtown merchants and other destination points in and around the City.



Historic District

The potential for new development and redevelopment in the historic district necessitates heightened design considerations that respect Westminster's heritage. Different design approaches, other than those on MD 140 and in newer neighborhoods, will result in development that is sensitive to the unique architecture and development patterns of the historic downtown beyond a brand approach. Examples of how to achieve this, while maintaining eligibility for historic district tax credits, are presented.

Resource Conservation



Creative design approaches, incorporating the efficient use of natural resources (land, water, wind, solar, rainfall, etc.), result in smart development projects that are attractive, functional and profitable while minimizing waste and environmental degradation. Efforts to improve energy efficiency, through the use of thermal and solar methods or high-efficiency appliances, are also described in this section. As noted in the Introduction, the City is requiring inclusion of these methods, practices and designs to promote consistency, efficiency and sensitivity with regard to the City's built and natural environments. Additionally, conservation will also become a City brand in the process.

II. Commercial Development

Comprehensive Plan

This section on preferences in the design of commercial development projects reflects the following recommended actions from the 2009 Westminster Comprehensive Plan:

Ensure new development is compatible with the community vision for the future of Westminster.

Develop pedestrian-friendly environments in Westminster that interconnect neighborhoods to community facilities while creating a pleasant walking and biking experience. (Best Practices Appendix: Diagram 1)



Shoppes at Meadow Creek upon completion

Promote Westminster's diverse architectural heritage by preserving and promoting an array of architectural periods, building types, and design styles in all new development.

Encourage redevelopment of blighted and underused properties with strong potential for reuse as business development sites in downtown Westminster.

Ensure that commercial and industrial activity is consistent with maintaining a high-quality built and natural environment.

Plan for increased density to provide high quality projects that will balance the need for accommodating growth and maintaining small town character.

General Design Objectives

The design of commercial development projects should:

Contribute towards reinforcing or establishing a distinct architectural and environmental image for the district within which the project site is located.

Consider the scale, proportion and character of development in the surrounding area.

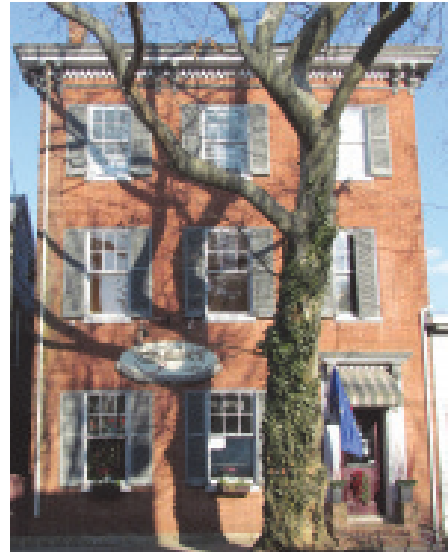
Establish attractive, inviting, imaginative and functional site arrangement of buildings and parking areas, and a high quality architectural and landscape design which provides for proper access, visibility and identity.

Facilitate and encourage pedestrian activity and mitigate existing adverse automobile oriented planning patterns.

Minimize excessive or incompatible impacts of noise, light, traffic and visual character.

Buildings

Architecture plays a major role in determining the City's image. Buildings shape the environment in which people live, work, shop and play. Architecture can help create a cohesive identity or, if mismanaged, create an unappealing hodgepodge. Developers are asked to utilize the preferences in this section during the architectural development process when building in the City. Incorporating these preferences is an important step to designing new buildings that create the look and feel of the historic downtown.



Building Facades



New commercial office and retail buildings should include windows, awnings and arcades that total at least 60% of the area of street-level façades (see Best Practices Appendix: Diagram 2). Such features should echo the rhythms and fenestration of the historic downtown with its large shop windows and deep awnings that invite foot traffic around stores and businesses. New buildings should also reference the architectural styles found along the historic Main Street. The City is looking for similar references in new mixed-use buildings, commercial townhouses and infill projects in existing developments. The goal is for new architectural expressions to reference historic downtown as the context and model for the overarching visual aesthetic of the entire City.

Color, Texture and Material

Architectural character can be highlighted in buildings and all project elements by careful use of color, texture and material. Brick, wood, native stone and tinted and/or textured masonry units are preferred. Restrained use of rhythm and selectively placed fenestration in concert with color, texture and material can create nuanced architectural expressions that honor historic settings without mimicking techniques.

Roofs

The City prefers that variations in rooflines and the roof structure be incorporated as well as features such as overhanging eaves and dormered windows. Rooftop utilities and mechanical equipment such as heating, ventilation and air conditioning should be fully screened from the public street and from above.

Roofs on Main Street

Rooflines should reflect the styles already existing within the downtown area and should incorporate similar design elements. The City prefers gabled, hipped and mansard roofs as well as standing seam. Deep cornices and dormered windows should be considered in context with vicinal façade treatments. These are preferred over flat roofs with exposed utilities. For new development, redevelopment and additions in the historic downtown, the immediate context should be studied for design approaches.





Chain Stores and Design

Chain franchises and big box stores can be designed to co-exist with existing or historic architecture. By working together with local government, corporations can deliver more than standard, pre-fabricated architecture. Many national chains have already developed alternative designs for use in historic contexts.

Site Design & Layout

When considering a new commercial development, the City encourages developers and designers to look beyond the typical storefront adjacent to a large parking lot and consider more creative ways to help the development fit into the character of the City, while also creating an attractive new place for customers to access goods and services. (Best Practices Appendix: Diagram 3)

When designing a site layout, the City prefers that historical buildings be preserved. Incorporating any existing trees and forested areas into the design with the least amount of removal possible is preferred. For guidelines pertaining to the restoration of historical buildings and resource conservation measures, please refer to Sections IV and V.

Parking

The City prefers that parking lots be located to the rear of the building site and that parking facilities not be highly visible from the street. As a result, buildings can be closer to the front of the lot and potentially closer to the street. (Best Practices Appendix: Diagram 4). Where there is an existing parking lot, it could be broken up by landscaping including native trees, shrubbery, stone or brick walls, and ground cover. Landscaping increases aesthetic enjoyment and helps the environment through the use of stormwater management and bio-retention opportunities. Parking lot improvements also increase property value.

Parking lots with large grass dividers and mature trees provide for an established appearance, as well as providing shade for the cars parked there. Landscape dividers are separated by a lowered concrete walk so walking across the lot is easier.

One option is to offer limited parking in the front of the building. This allows a building to be closer to the street. It can also help provide the desired small town feeling of the historic downtown.



Another option is to locate all of the parking at the rear of the building. This allows development to more closely reference the historic downtown. Increased use of trees and landscaping in any area can allow for an overall more welcoming appeal.

Walkability and Site Layout

In keeping with the goal to emulate the downtown atmosphere and branding across the City, developers are encouraged to keep walkability in mind when planning for development. Developers should include walkways and sidewalks to connect their development to the existing community's pedestrian network. The City supports the use of bricks, special pavers and scored concrete to enhance pedestrian safety and aesthetics. Incorporating plazas, squares and courtyards is another way to enhance general walkability.

Plazas and squares can create a setting for a social atmosphere where people are encouraged to spend time with friends and family. Socially activated settings can also increase the time spent at retail shops and service establishments. Courtyards with appropriately sited hardscape, landscaping, water features and street furnishings can create further opportunities for walking, shopping and socializing.



Also, expanding brick or special paved sidewalks and walkways provides more flexibility for businesses wanting to offer sidewalk sales or outdoor dining options. It also creates an exciting atmosphere that people will be drawn to and, as a result, be drawn to the goods and services that the businesses offer. Pedestrian-oriented lighting should also be provided for pedestrian-friendly settings during the evening.

Building facades can also be designed to enhance the pedestrian-business connection. Developers are encouraged to place awnings, on-site lighting, planters and store windows with the pedestrian in mind. The use of sidewalk and adjoining patio space for outdoor dining is an attractive feature for destination shopping areas. Also, external lighting, business logos and signage should complement the streetscape.

Attractive developments integrate awnings into their design. When combined with large windows they become aesthetically pleasing and contribute to the pedestrian friendly environment. Brightly colored awnings can also attract attention, especially when matched with colors in logos and themed signage.

Dumpsters & Trash Collection

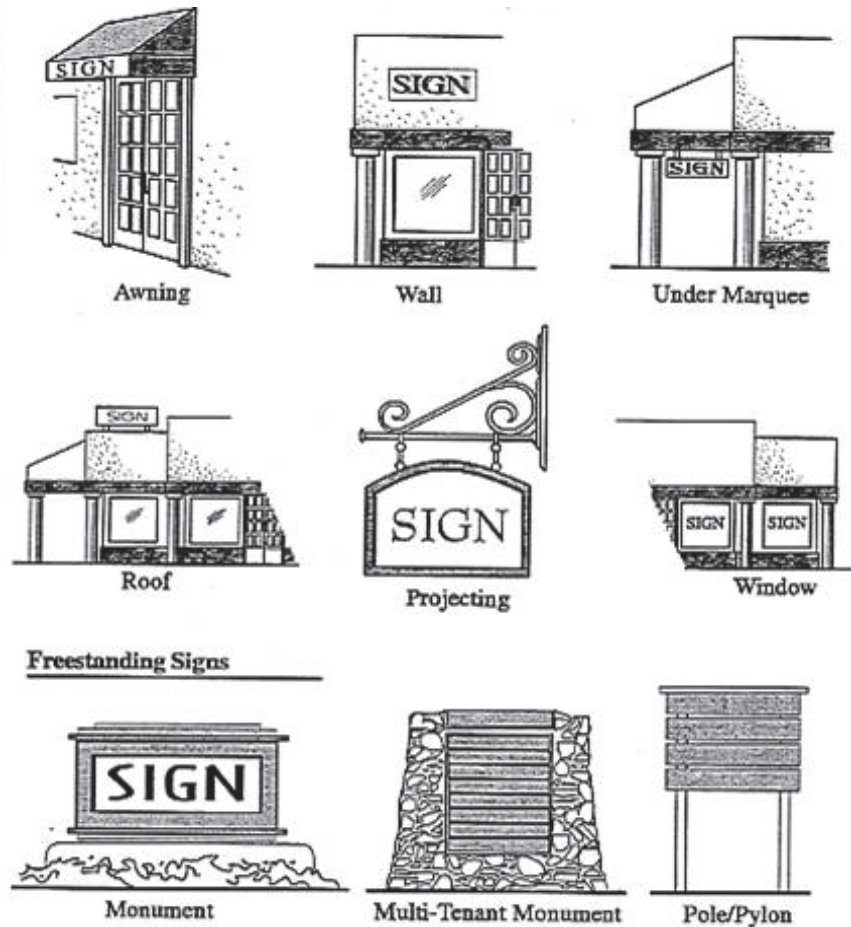
The City prefers that loading docks, trash collection areas, outdoor storage and similar utility facilities and functions be incorporated into the overall design of the site. These facilities should be shielded from the public eye and kept out of view of adjacent properties and streets. Dumpster enclosures help keep dumpsters hidden. This can be accomplished by integrating a dumpster in building design (below left). This can also be accomplished by isolating the dumpster from the adjacent buildings but locating it in an enclosure that architecturally matches the materials used in the adjacent buildings (below right).



Signage

The City of Westminster provides these signage guidelines for new developments to give developers an idea of its preferences and expectations regarding signage. Signs must be compatible with the related building. (Best Practices Appendix: Diagram 5) This means that the materials, colors and shapes of the proposed signage need to be compatible and of a similar design to the architecture of the project.

Overall, monument signs and pin-mounted letters are preferred over pole or pylon sign and box signs. This makes it easier to architecturally integrate signage packages with the surrounding buildings and allows the signage to be designed as an integral architectural component of the project. A lower profile monument style sign also decreases the chances of the signage becoming an eyesore or a driver distraction.



Awning signs, first-floor wall and window signs as well as marquee and projecting signs provide business information that is immediately accessible for potential customers. Roof signage and freestanding signs provide business information for customers using motorized transportation to locate area businesses.

Monument signs are the City's preferred type of freestanding sign. Monument signs allow shopping centers to list individual tenants. This provides street visibility for all tenants while incorporating design elements and branding the center. Integration of the monument sign with the architecture of the buildings (similar materials, colors, etc.) creates attractive and architecturally integrated signage.

Electronic Signs

Variable Electronic Message Signs (VEMS) are allowed in the City with certain restrictions: no rapidly blinking, distracting messages may appear; the image must be text only and may contain up to three colors (no graphics or illustrations); no off-premises advertisements are allowed; and, VEMS must be a complementary feature – not the predominant feature - of a monument style or wall mounted sign (no pole-mounted VEMS signs allowed). For more information, please refer to [Article XVII](#) of the City Code.

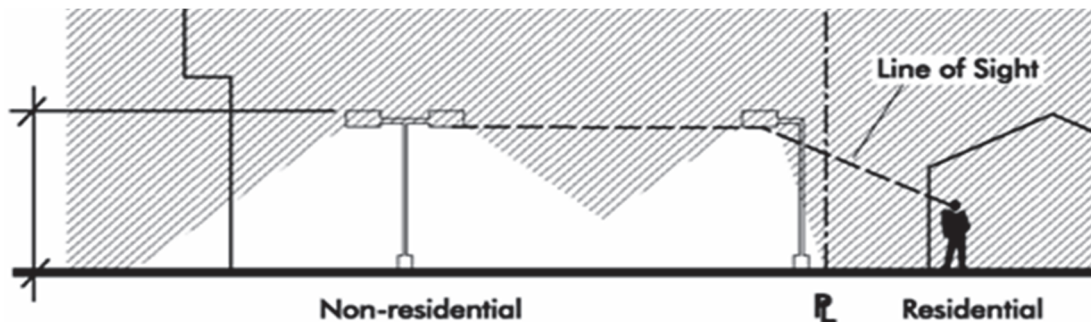


Pin-mounted, backlit lettering is a preferred sign type.



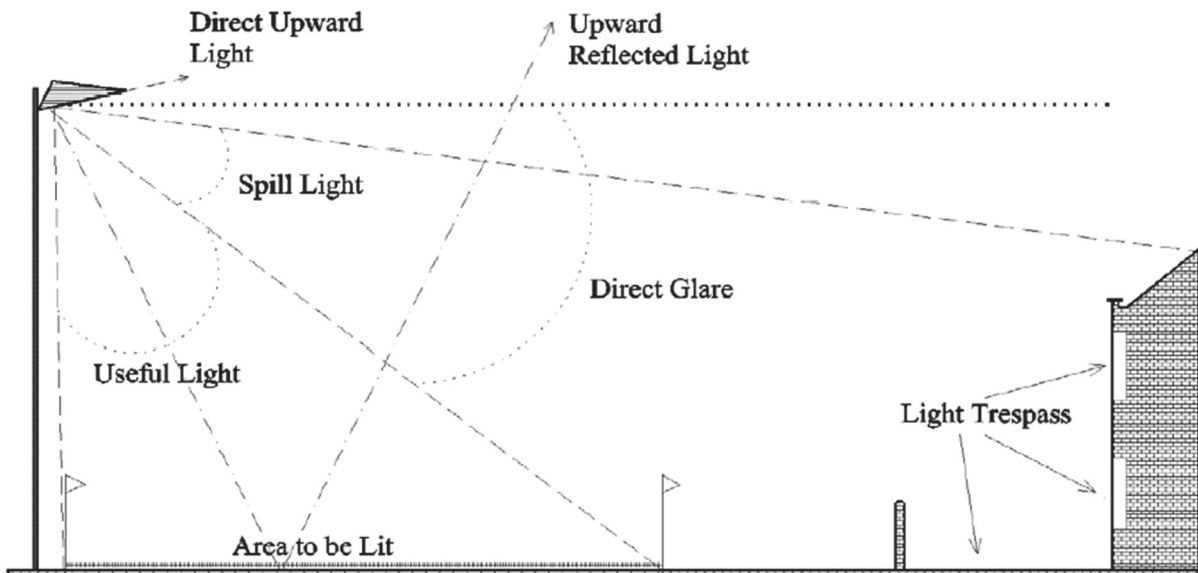
Monument-style signs may now include VEMS.

Lighting



Along with efficient and creative site design, signage, conservation measures and other preferences the City has detailed in this manual, the concept of functional lighting without placing undue burden on neighboring properties, and without sacrificing citizen safety, will be incorporated into development proposals. By preserving intelligent lighting projects will combat the glare as well as light trespass and pollution. The City encourages developers to include photometric plans along with their main site plans

when submitting a planned development for review. The photometric plan should detail light positions as well as any dark spots on the property that may give rise to security concerns.



Regarding security, the City encourages exterior lighting of buildings and property for security surveillance purposes, if security lighting levels are less than one foot-candle in brightness.

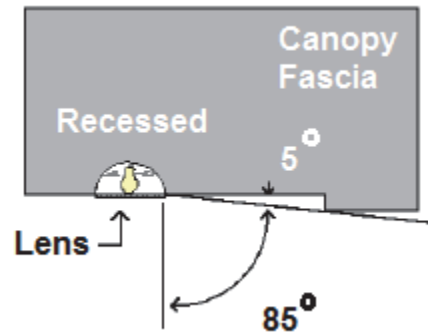
Lighting should be directed toward buildings and not trespass beyond property boundaries. The City encourages developers to use lighting that can be controlled through automatic switching devices such as timers, motion detectors and photocells. Lighting should be extinguished by 10:00 p.m. or one hour after business hours ends if it is later than 10:00 p.m. to help reduce sky-lighting pollution. In addition, the City asks that lighting fixtures not be placed higher than 20 feet above grade. If a new project abuts a residential area, the illumination projected preferably should not exceed 0.1 vertical foot-candles.

Glare

Outdoor lighting should be located or designed to reduce or eliminate disabling glare that creates a hazard to drivers or is a nuisance to neighboring properties. Reducing glare and light trespass helps improve the overall aesthetics of a planned development. Developers can combat glare through a variety of measures.

Canopy Lighting

Canopy lighting is a great way to illuminate an area around a building without causing glare. Canopy lighting should be recessed within the building allowing only the canopy to protrude outwardly. This cheap, easy fix for building lighting discourages crime while being attractive and discreet. This gasoline service station utilized canopy lighting to illuminate raised islands. Notice how glare is reduced, yet the lighting still works effectively to create a safe, illuminated environment.



Cut-off Light Fixtures

Cut-off light fixtures can also help reduce glare. Using this type of lighting can still provide the same effect as flood lighting but without the glare. This type uses a reflector to direct light to the desired location. On the left, fog was used to illustrate the area of illumination around a cut-off light fixture. There are building-mounted cut-off light fixtures as an alternative, if canopy lighting is not feasible.



Fixtures

Along with preventing glare, light pollution and trespass, we encourage developers to capitalize on the aesthetic benefits of attractive light fixtures. Creative lighting and attractive fixtures can be part of a functional and energy-efficient lighting plan for a new development. We encourage the use of creative light fixtures that, without sacrificing protection from glare and light pollution, are aesthetically pleasing and fit into the downtown character of Westminster.



These are examples of cut-off light fixtures. Notice how light sources are recessed within the fixtures.



This solar-powered lighting is an example of how to capitalize on energy savings and prevent glare. The fixture is full cut-off. The fixture helps to save the environment on multiple ways as well as save money.

III. Residential Development

This section provides preferences that are applicable to single-family, multi-family, apartment, condominium and townhome residential developments, regardless of ownership. These guidelines apply to both smaller infill developments and larger master planned communities. These preferences are intended to encourage the highest level of design quality and creativity.



Workforce Housing

Comprehensive Plan

This section on preferences in the design of residential development projects also reflects the following recommended actions from the 2009 Westminster Comprehensive Plan:

Create interesting, unique development projects which reflect the values and cultures of the people who reside in Westminster.

Encourage and support a diversity of affordable housing choices.

Recognize the importance of community facilities, public spaces and gateways as opportunities to promote a sense of place and welcoming environment for residents and visitors.

Design communities in a way that permits more efficient use of land and resources.

Comply with all City goals and standards regarding the quality of public services, community facilities and resources.

Promote infill development and other redevelopment options on underutilized residential or commercial lots.

General Design Objectives

The incorporation of the design guidance included herein will facilitate creative and functional residential communities in the City. New residential development in Westminster will achieve the following:

Contribute to the sense of community by respecting the scale, proportion and character of the surrounding area.

Offer alternatives to automobile-oriented growth patterns by providing pedestrian-friendly walkable design solutions.

Establish attractive, imaginative and functional site arrangements of buildings, open space, recreation areas and parking areas, and a high quality architectural and landscape design.

Provide adequate open space, parking and privacy.

Preserve and incorporate natural amenities unique to the site, such as mature trees, in the project development proposal.

Preserve and incorporate structures that are distinctive because of their age, cultural significance, or unique architectural style in the project development proposal.



Unique Layout for Townhouses or Duplexes that mimic typical single-family neighborhood

Site Planning

The following site characteristics should be considered during the conceptual development stage of the project:

Compatibility

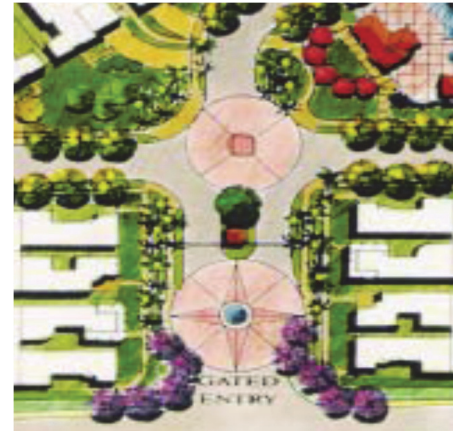
- The arrangement of structures, circulation and open spaces should recognize the particular characteristics of the site and should relate to the surrounding built environment in pattern, function, scale, character and materials.
- Structures that are distinctive due to age, cultural significance or unique architectural style should be preserved and incorporated in the development proposal.
- Residential uses should be buffered from incompatible development. Intensified landscaping, increased setbacks and appropriate building orientation should be utilized to provide adequate separation between such land uses.

Site Entry and Edge Design

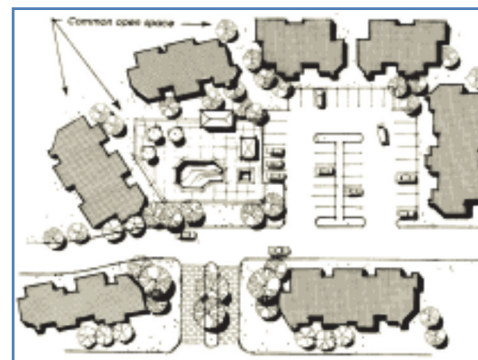
- New residential communities should be distinguished by site entry and edge design features such as ornamental landscaping, open space areas, natural features and architectural features.

Building Siting

- Buildings should be oriented parallel to streets with façade articulation to provide visual interest and varying patterns.
- Clustering of multi-family units should be a consistent site-planning element. Large projects should be broken up into groups of structures.
- Including building elements of various heights within the overall project design is encouraged. Buildings should be oriented to promote privacy to the greatest extent possible.



Use of enhanced paving & ornamental landscaping at project entrance



Orient buildings to create useable open space

Vehicular Access/ Circulation/ Parking

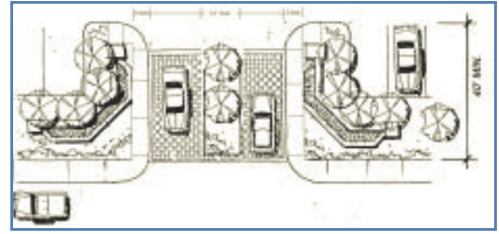
- Site access and internal circulation should promote safety, efficiency and convenience. Conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians should be avoided. Continuous circulation should be provided throughout the site to the greatest extent possible. Dead-end drives should be minimized.
- The number of site access points should be minimized and located as far as possible from street intersections.
- Principal vehicular access into multi-family projects should be through an entry drive rather than a parking aisle.
- Large multi-family parking areas should be divided into a series of connected smaller parking courts.

Pedestrian Circulation

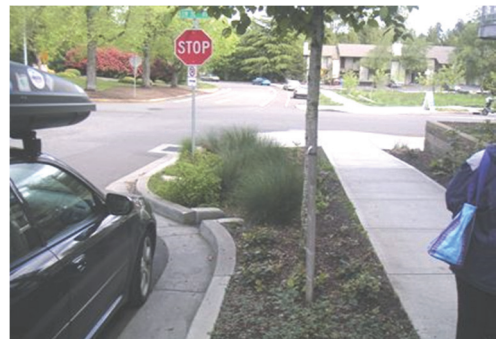
- Pedestrian access and circulation should be facilitated for multi-family developments. Entry design should incorporate sidewalks on both sides of the driveway.
- Where possible, new developments should incorporate pedestrian and bicycle connections to adjoining residential neighborhoods, commercial projects and downtown.
- Pedestrian walkways should be provided to link dwelling units with common areas, recreation areas and the street. Paths to link access to open space areas are encouraged.
- Pedestrian walkways should be safe, visually attractive and well defined by landscaping. Use of decorative pavement is encouraged. At a minimum, decorative paving should be used to delineate crossings at driving and parking aisles.

Open Space

- Open space areas should be large and meaningful areas.
- Common open space area should be sited to maximize their accessibility, visibility, aesthetics and use by residents.



Facilitate pedestrian access at project entries



Create Open Space including Walking Paths

Architectural Preferences

New developments in Westminster should replicate the architectural features found in neighborhoods located throughout the City. Architectural elements such as gabled roofs, molding, porches and other elements that add visual interest and complement the scale and character of the neighborhood are encouraged.

Building Façade and Roof Articulation

- For multi-unit projects, building heights should be varied and building facades should provide offsets to give the appearance of a collection of smaller structures and reduce the perceived height and massing of multi-story structures.
- Boxy and monotonous building facades that lack human scale proportions and large expanses of flat wall planes are discouraged.
- Distinctive architectural elements, materials and colors should be used to denote primary building entries or individual unit entries.
- Roof-lines should be segmented and varied within an overall horizontal context. Varying heights are encouraged.
- Combinations of one, one and a half, and two story units create variation and visual interest, and are encouraged.
- Awnings, moldings, pilasters and comparable architectural embellishments are encouraged.



Building Materials and Colors

- Building materials should be durable, low-maintenance and relate a sense of quality and permanence.
- The building and its elements should be unified by textures, colors and materials. Materials should be consistently applied and should be chosen to work harmoniously with adjacent materials.
- Piecemeal embellishments and frequent changes in materials should be avoided.
- Exterior materials and architectural details should complement each other and be stylistically consistent.

Diversity in Housing

- The City wants new developments that offer a diversity in housing choices in the same neighborhood.
- A diverse housing mix (detached single-family homes of all sizes, duplexes, small and large apartments, townhouses, studios above shops, and lofts) within neighborhoods allows people to stay near friends and families, as well as employment and their hometown, as they move through the stages of life.



This neighborhood offers a diversity of housing options: apartments, duplexes and detached single-family homes.

Public Safety through Design

The safety of citizens moving to these new and redeveloped communities will be a priority.

- Traffic calming features should be considered where appropriate and integrated into the design of streets.
- Lighting should be sufficient for sidewalk and street illumination. Pedestrian-scale lighting fixtures that provide appropriate levels of lighting are encouraged.
- Front porches, back porches and/or decks to permit casual observation of alleys and streets are encouraged.
- Locate neighborhood parks so that residential development provides safe, easy access and good visibility.



IV. Historic District

Introduction

This chapter provides design direction and concepts applicable to new development and rehabilitation of existing structures within downtown Westminster. There are hundreds of properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places in the downtown area. The design preferences reflect the small town design theme and pedestrian-oriented character and are intended to promote high standards in site planning, architectural design and landscaping.



Comprehensive Plan

This section on preferences in the design of residential development projects also reflects the following recommended actions from the 2009 Westminster Comprehensive Plan:

Promote the preservation of neighborhood identity and visual character

Guide development to reflect Westminster’s heritage and to foster a sense of community pride

Support infill and redevelopment projects that reflect sensitivity to site and neighborhood conditions

Promote a mix of high-quality housing and business types necessary for an active, 18-hour downtown Westminster

Provide opportunities for the construction of compatible infill within the older parts of Westminster and the development of “neo-traditional” type neighborhoods

Allow for a full range of residential uses to promote diversity in the housing stock while increasing the housing unit capacity



General Design Objectives

The design of new development projects, additions and rehabilitation of existing structures within the downtown Historic District should:

Enhance the City's downtown as a principal focal point of the community. Developments should contribute to a pedestrian-oriented environment.

Consider the scale, proportion and character of development in the surrounding area.

Establish pedestrian-oriented, attractive, inviting, imaginative and functional site arrangement of buildings and parking areas, and a high quality architectural and landscape design which provides proper access, visibility and identity. (Best Practices Appendix: Diagram 6)

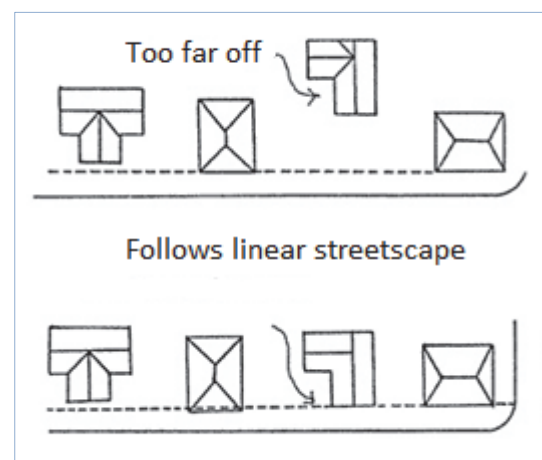
Preserve and incorporate structures which are distinctive due to their age, cultural significance, or unique architectural style, into the project.



Site Planning

Site planning and design in the Historic District must consider the unique qualities of the downtown area and pedestrian dominated environment.

- Street adjacent building siting is encouraged.
- Provide corner "cut-offs" for buildings on prominent intersections.
- Place ground-level front elevations of the building on the front property line to maintain the continuity of the "street wall."
- Create continuous pedestrian activity in an uninterrupted sequence by minimizing gaps between buildings.
- Avoid placing parking lots which interrupt commercial space along street frontages.
- Avoid blank walls and "dead" spaces at the ground level.



Street adjacent building siting

- Create pedestrian access to rear-loaded parking lots.
- Use building indentations to create small pedestrian gathering areas along the street wall.
- Storefronts and major building entries should be oriented toward major streets.
- Corner buildings should include storefront design features on at least 50% of the side street elevation wall area.

Architectural Preferences

- Development and redevelopment within the Historic District must respect and reflect the existing built environment. The failure to respect the exiting downtown would detract from the effectiveness of the preservation efforts already currently underway.

Style

- New infill development and renovation to existing structures must be respectful of their surroundings.
- Architectural styles that attempt to reference other historically significant styles found in the downtown area are acceptable. Compatible designs, distinguishable from their historic neighbors, are encouraged.



Use of Traditional Facade Components

- Repetition of traditional facade components creates patterns and alignments that visually link buildings within a block, while allowing individual identity of each building. These elements are familiar to the pedestrian and help establish a sense of scale. The use of traditional facade components is encouraged.
- Some traditional facade components include bulkheads, arches, arcades, plazas, and balconies. These elements may be reinterpreted in many ways.



Perceived Scale of Structures

Buildings with human-scale proportions are most suitable to the atmosphere of downtown Westminster. Human-scaled buildings respect the existing architectural character of the district while enhancing its marketability as a unique commercial and residential area.

The Pedestrian Experience

Buildings facing the street should incorporate design features that provide visual interest at the street level. Building elements should be designed in a way that enhance the visibility of merchandise and store-related activities by pedestrians.



Predominantly Transparent Ground Floor Facades in Commercial/Retail Areas

Storefronts with blank or solid opaque walls degrade the quality of the pedestrian experience. To enhance the pedestrian atmosphere, it's important to provide transparent storefronts to maintain visual interest.

Infill Projects

- Whenever a proposed infill building is wider than the existing facades on the street, the infill façade should be broken down into a series of appropriately proportioned "structural bays" or components such as a series of columns or masonry piers.
- Long, blank, unarticulated street wall façades are strongly discouraged.



Example of Infill Project in Historic District

- If maintaining a horizontal rhythm or alignment of an infill building is very difficult or otherwise impossible, the use of fabric canopies or awnings is encouraged to establish a shared horizontal storefront rhythm.

Building Materials and Colors

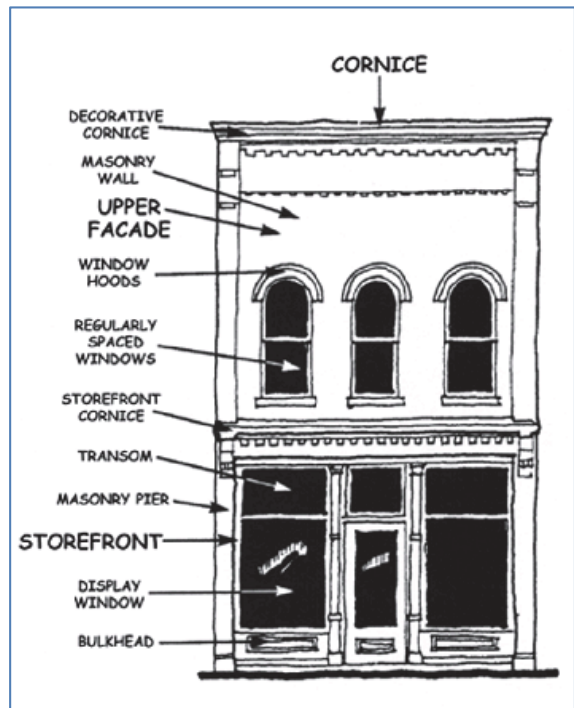
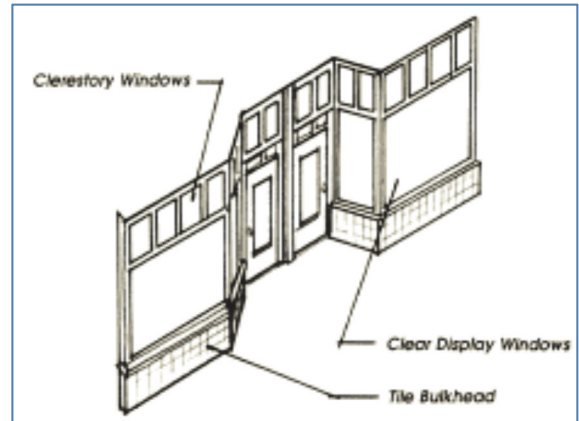
- Exterior building materials and color choices should complement materials used on adjacent buildings.

Building Elements/Details

- Building and site details should be integrated into the overall design of the building or development.
- Vertical building focal elements are encouraged.
- Towers, spires, or domes become landmarks and serve as focal/orientation points for the community.

Storefront Design Guidelines

The storefront is one of the most important visual elements for downtown buildings. Storefronts are the most frequently altered building elements and their modification can affect the character of the building and the streetscape (Best Practices Appendix: Diagram 7).



Storefront Design

Traditional storefronts are comprised of few decorative elements that repeat across the face of the building (e.g., structural bays containing window and door openings, continuous cornice line, transoms, bulkheads, etc.), and integrate the storefront into the entire building facade.

Storefront Lighting

- The exterior and interior of storefronts should be well-lit. Exterior lighting should be of a decorative design and be appropriately scaled for the façade.
- Wall sconces and gooseneck lighting are recommended examples of appropriate lighting.
- Ample lighting of interior window displays is recommended for storefront transparency.
- Light fixtures must be designed to minimize glare.
- Exterior lighting must be directed onto storefronts, and light must not spill over onto other properties.
- Period fixtures to match the building architectural style and the historic downtown are encouraged.



Example of Gooseneck Lighting



Restoring or Revitalizing Existing Storefronts

- Removal of non-historic overlays, damaged siding, non-conforming signage or other objects that obscure original architectural details and materials is often a quick and cost-effective way to improve the appearance of a storefront.
- Restoration of unique architectural features such as bulkhead panels, plate glass windows, bronze panels, columns and piers, transom glass, and original doors, kick-plates and trim is encouraged.
- Suggested enhancements to existing storefronts may include new display windows, window shutters on single windows, awnings or canopies, exterior painting, flower boxes and/or enhanced lighting.



Building Additions and Renovations Guidelines



The renovation and restoration of structures is an excellent means of maintaining the historic character of the City. Renovation not only increases property values in the area but also serves to inspire other property owners and designers to undertake similar efforts. Work should respect the original design character of the structure and should comply with the design guidelines in this section. In addition, renovation should follow *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties and Associated Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring and Reconstructing Historic Buildings*, published by the U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service.

Preserve Traditional Features and Decorations

- Existing materials, details and proportions as well as patterns of materials and fenestration should be considered when additions or building renovations may affect the existing building's exterior appearance.
- Frequently, original storefront decorative details are intact as visual "leftovers" or simply covered up by previous construction. These forgotten details should not be wasted in proposed building refurbishments. If only a few remain, they should be incorporated as design features in a new storefront. In any case, the design of improvements should be emphasized and evolve from the remaining building details and should create a harmonious and integrated background.
- Existing historic building detailing should be preserved.



Example of Main Street light pole

Additions to Existing Structures

- The design of an addition should follow the general scale, proportion, massing and detailing of the original structure.
- New additions should be interpretations of the existing buildings. The main characteristics of the existing structure should be incorporated using modern construction methods. This may include the extension of architectural lines from the existing structure to the addition, repetition of window and entrance spacing, use of harmonizing colors and materials and the inclusion of similar architectural details (for example, door and window trim, lighting fixtures and tile/brick decorations).
- New additions should be designed so that if the addition were to be removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the original structure would be unimpaired.

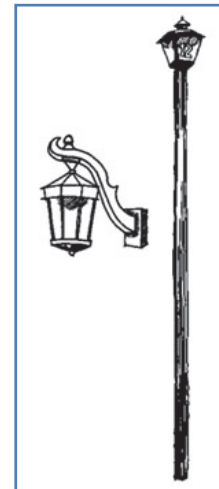


Historic Addition to Third Floor

Lighting

Lighting for downtown projects, within the Historic District, must respect the existing built environment and not detract from the overall pedestrian experience.

- Lighting should create a festive atmosphere and encourage nighttime use by pedestrians.
- Lighting fixtures should be attractively designed to complement the architecture of the project and improve identification of residences and businesses.
- Wall-mounted lighting fixtures should be utilized to the greatest extent possible to minimize the total number of freestanding light standards.



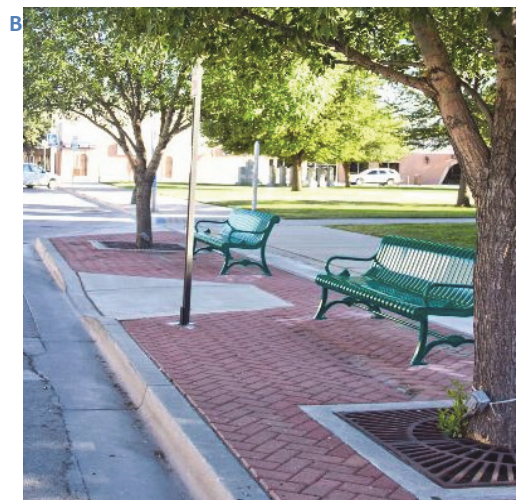
Pedestrian-friendly lighting

Street Furniture

Street furnishings can enliven and provide variety to outdoor spaces used by the public. Street furnishings serve both an aesthetic and utilitarian function.

Proper design and placement of such amenities will reinforce the “small town charm” design theme and create a lively and festive atmosphere throughout the year. Street furniture includes all items placed within the public right-of-way such as benches, bus shelters, trash receptacles, plant containers, tree grates and guards, bicycle racks, bollards, kiosks and fountains.

- The design and selection of street furniture shall include considerations for the security, safety, comfort and convenience of the user.
- Wherever possible, street furniture shall consist of specially designed units, which incorporate several items such as benches, planters, newspaper racks, and trash receptacles.
- Street furniture shall be conservative in use of sidewalk space and maintain a clear width sufficient to accommodate pedestrian flows.
- The selection, siting and layout of the different elements of street furniture shall insure that each article or structure is designed and situated to be in harmony with both the surrounding furnishings and the area as a whole. All street furniture installed by private parties as part of a development shall be subject to approval by the City.



V. Resource Conservation

General Objectives

The Development Design Preferences manual presents alternatives for consideration by architects, engineers and designers during the concept development stage of a proposal. The inventory of items to be considered includes many of the aesthetic and functional aspects of the total development project. The Resource Conservation section presents a listing of resource protection measures and alternatives to traditional development methods which are required to be incorporated into new development.



Bio-Retention Storm-Water Management

Comprehensive Plan

This section on preferences in the use of resource conservation in development projects reflects the following recommended actions from the Westminster Comprehensive Plan:

Reduce the amount of runoff from new development

Provide a stormwater management system which promotes preservation of natural resources and improves the quality of surface water run-off

Use less energy and water per capita than cities comparable in size to Westminster

Encourage trees and native vegetation as necessary components

Reduce the adverse effects of development on environmental resources

Encourage community water conservation and efficiency strategies to ensure the sustainability of the City's limited water supply



Solar Parking Lot

Water Conservation Measures

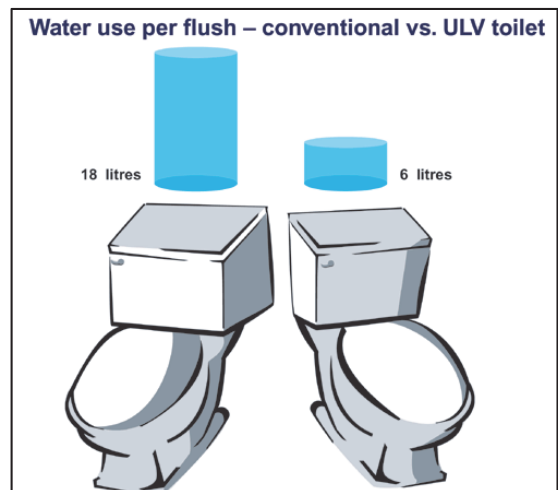
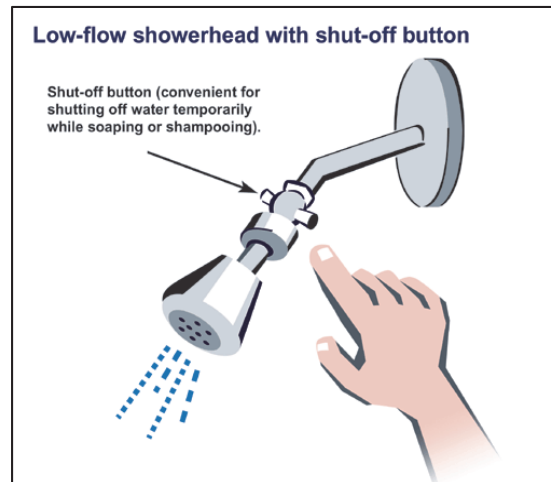
New development is now required to include the following water saving measures in construction:

Interior Conservation

- Install or retrofit water conserving fixtures in all units and any common facilities with the following:
 - Toilets – 1.2 to 1.28 gpf
 - Urinals – 0.5 gpf
 - Showerheads – 1.5 to 2.0 gpm
 - Kitchen faucets – 1.5 to 2.0 gpm
 - Bathroom faucets – 0.5 to 1.5 gpm
- Harvest, treat and reuse rainwater and/or greywater to meet a portion of project water needs: target range of 10% minimum reduction to maximum of 40% reduction.

Exterior Conservation

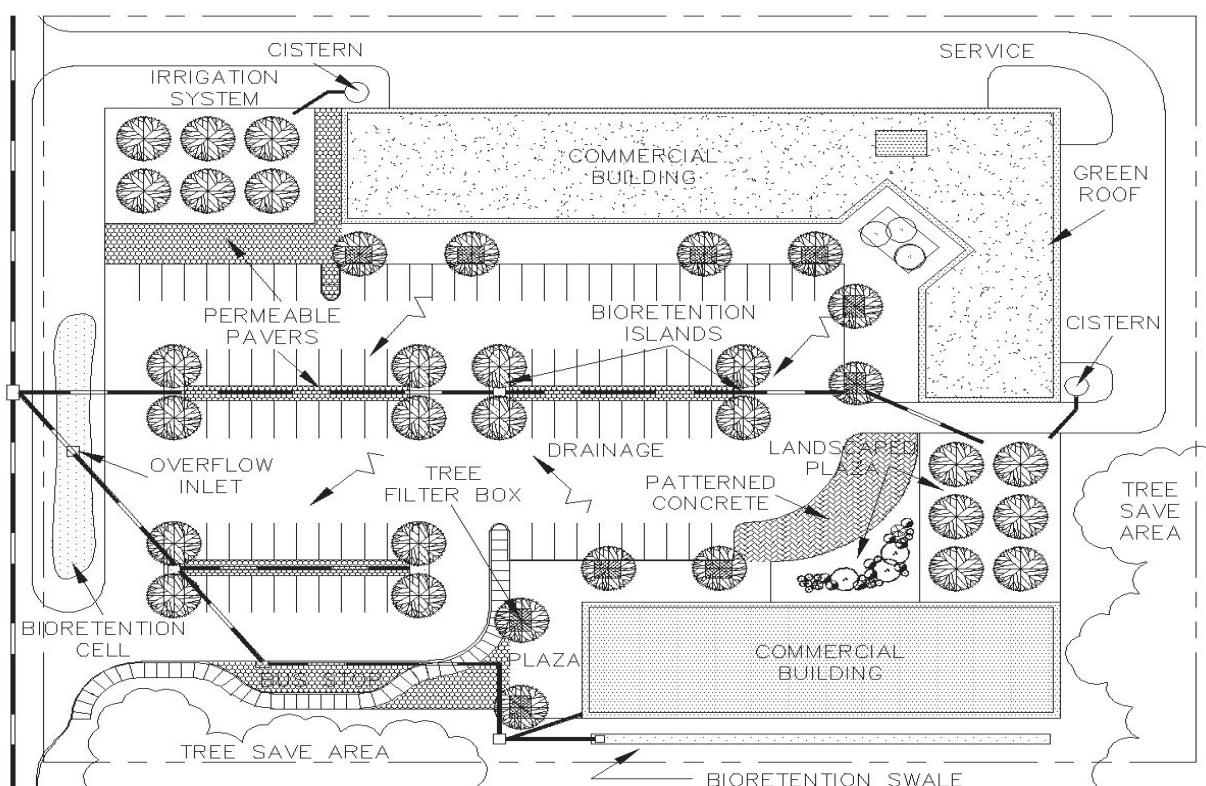
- Integrate xeriscaping into landscape plans. Xeriscape is not a landscape style or garden design. Xeriscape is a concept of water conservation that may be applied to landscapes of any style.
- Xeriscape incorporates seven water-conserving principles:
 - Planning and design
 - Efficient irrigation systems
 - Use of mulch
 - Soil preparation
 - Appropriate turf
 - Water-efficient plant material



Example of Xeriscaping

Best Management Practices for Site Plans

Low-Impact Development (LID) practices, incorporating a number of innovative techniques, will be implemented as part of all new development plans in the City. LID is a comprehensive, landscape-based approach to smart and sustainable development. The goal is to maintain existing natural systems, hydrology and ecology throughout the development process. The emergence of LID is a result of the failure of more conventional approaches to development. Increased runoff and decreased recharge, loss of community character, reduced local water supplies and increased treatment costs, and the cost of traditional development practices are all contributing factors to the need for LID in Westminster.



Site planning and development should follow these LID principles:

Focus on prevention. Minimize clearing and grading (implement EPA's Best Management Practices for erosion and sediment control during construction); cluster buildings and reduce footprints; reduce roadway width; use shared parking to reduce impervious parking areas; use permeable paving to reduce runoff (i.e., porous pavement, grass pavers, paving stones); and align roads to minimize impact.

Emphasize non-structural, low-tech, low-cost methods.

Include rain barrels with new homes with downspouts directed to tanks or barrels where excess water is diverted to dry wells or rain gardens to be used for landscaping, car washing or other non-potable uses.

Reduce construction disturbance. Minimize lawn areas, and provide a landscape where 50% of the area is planted with native or adaptive species. All new plants must be appropriate to the site's soil type and micro-climate, and none of the new plants may be invasive species.

Create a multi-functional landscape. Use stormwater treatments that provide filtration and pretreatment of runoff (e.g., bio retention, parking lot islands, median strips, vegetated filter strips near parking lots and roadways, rain gardens); infiltration (e.g., grassy swales, infiltration swales and trenches, dry wells); and, harvest storm water on site and reuse for landscaping purposes.



Example of a Bio-Swale

Capturing Storm Water on Site

Future development in Westminster should capture as much stormwater on site as possible. Stormwater carries pollutants into local waterways and can cause harmful erosion. The key to successfully managing rain water requires many methods (Best Practices Appendix: Diagram 8). Methods include:

Install a Rain Barrel or Cistern. Catch the rain water as it comes off of roofs to slow it down and then store it for future use, such as watering gardens. Rain barrels can improve the health of rivers. They look great in garden areas, and they save money on irrigation costs (Best Practices Appendix: Diagram 11).

Build a Rain Garden. A rain garden soaks up rain water that flows off buildings and other impervious areas. As storm water passes through the soil, physical and biological processes remove pollutants and nutrients (Best Practices Appendix: Diagram 12).

Choose to Have Conservation Landscapes. Planting with native plants provides a natural habitat, cleans storm water, and saves time and money on maintenance (Best Practices Appendix: Diagram 13).

Plant Native Trees. The benefits of planting a tree include cleaning polluted air and water. Planting native trees provides a habitat for local birds and wildlife (Best Practices Appendix: Diagram 14).

Direct Water with Swales and Berms. By directing the water to a vegetated area, water is slowed down to reduce erosion and infiltrated into the ground to be cleaned (Best Practices Appendix: Diagram 15).

Use Permeable Pavers and Pavement. Permeable surfaces allow water to soak in and infiltrate into the ground (Best Practices Appendix: Diagram 16).

Energy Efficiency

New development in the City will strive for higher standards of energy efficiency (Best Practices Appendix: Diagrams 9 and 10), based on the following recommended benchmarks:

- Certify the project under ENERGY STAR New Homes program (single family and multi-family application).
- Demonstrate compliance with EPA's Multi-family High Rise (MFHR) program (for projects of four stories or more).
- Demonstrate that final energy performance of the building is equal to a Home Energy Rating System (HERS) Index of 85 (single family and multi-family application).
- Consider seeking LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification or higher.
- Size heating and cooling equipment in accordance with the Air Conditioning Contractors of America (ACCA) Manuals (Parts J and S).
- Install ENERGY STAR – labeled washing machines, dishwashers and refrigerators.
- Interior Areas Efficient lighting: install ENERGY STAR Advance Lighting Package (ALP) or, if replacing, new fixtures and ceiling fans must meet or exceed ENERGY STAR efficiency levels.
- Common Areas Efficient lighting: Install ENERGY STAR-labeled fixtures or equivalent high-performing lighting fixtures and bulbs in all common areas or, if replacing, new common space and emergency lighting fixtures must meet or exceed ENERGY STAR efficiency levels.

Best Practices Appendix

The Best Practices Appendix serves as a reference section for recommended designs and layouts; as well as resource conservation best practices.

Diagram 1: Pedestrian Friendly Environment



Diagram 2: Building Façade Treatments and Transparency

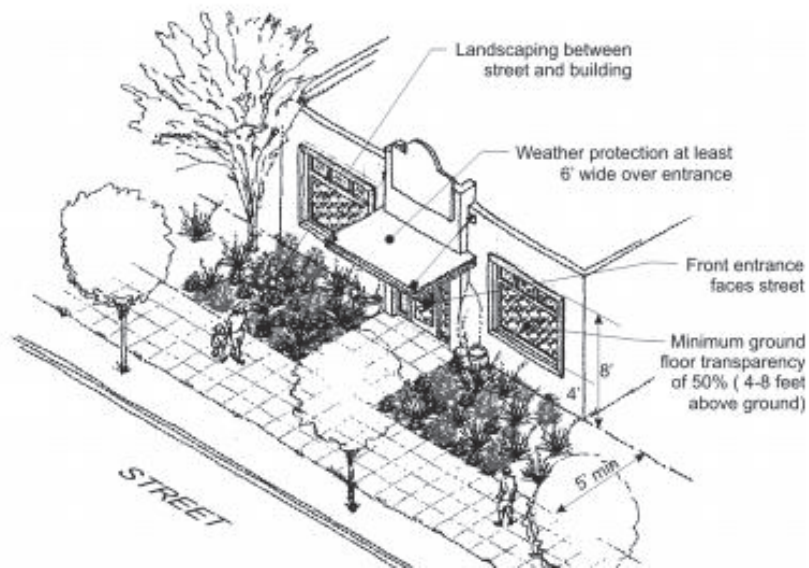


Diagram 3: Improved Commercial Site Design and Layout

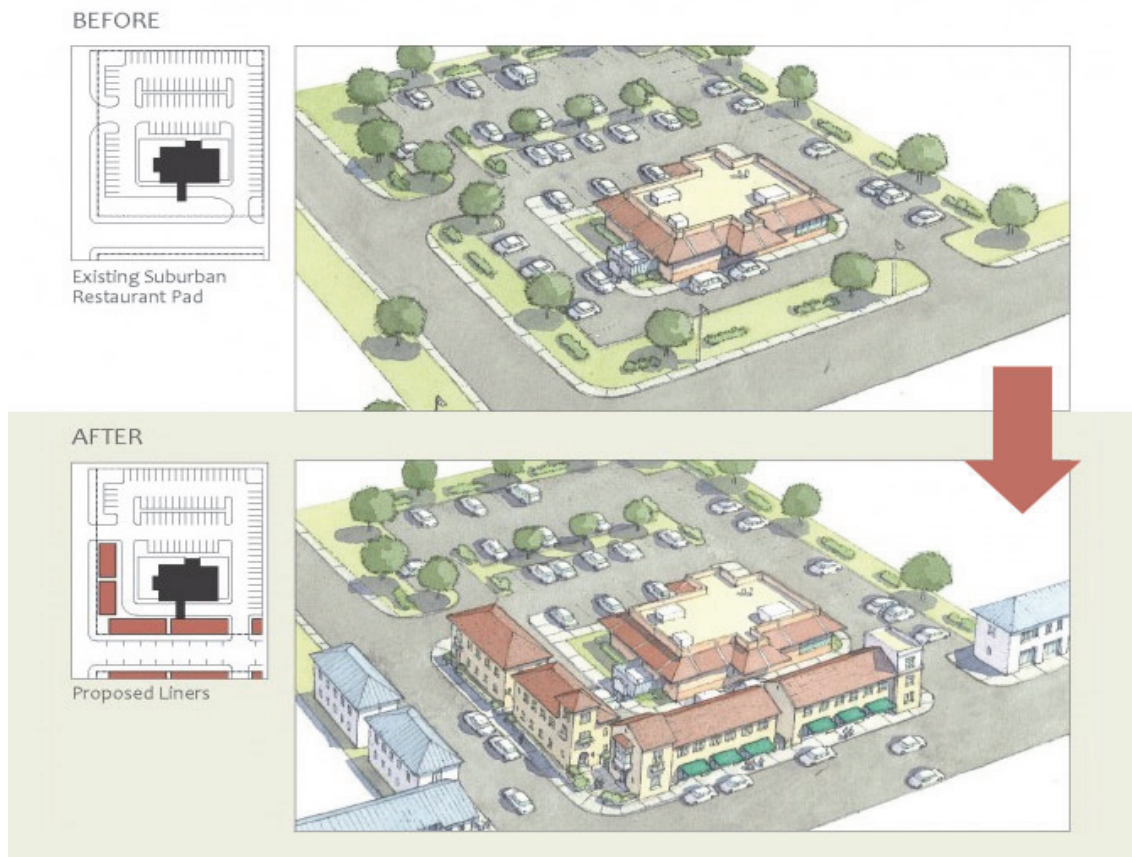


Diagram 4: Rear Loaded Parking

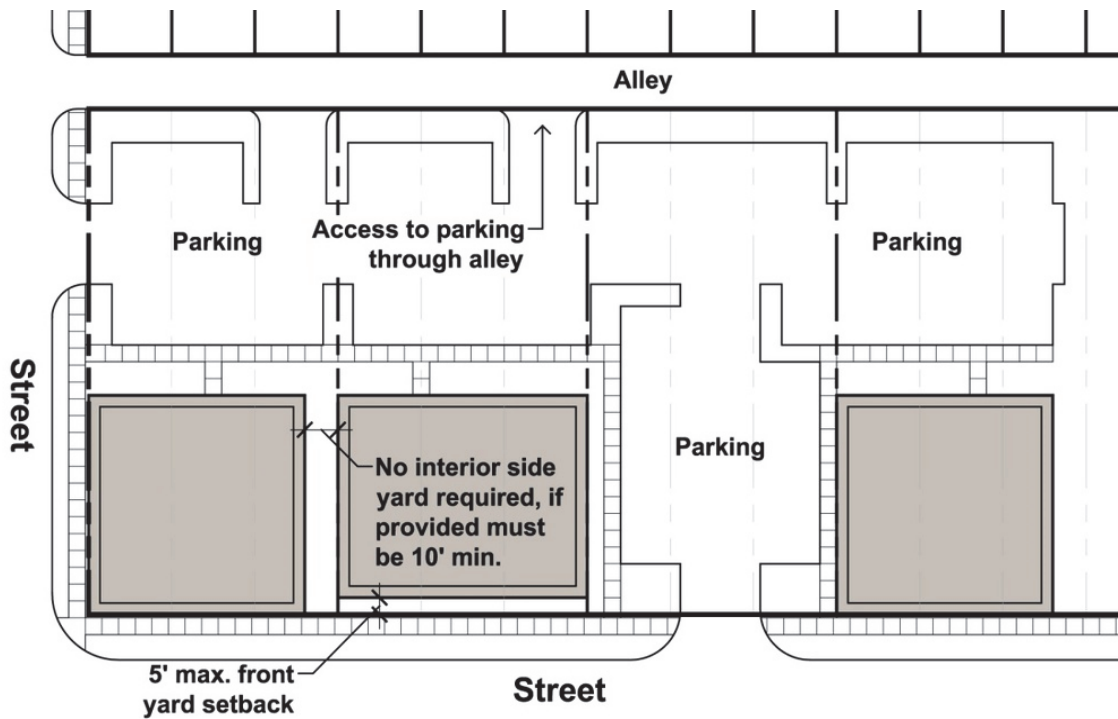


Diagram 5: Wall Mounted and Window Signage

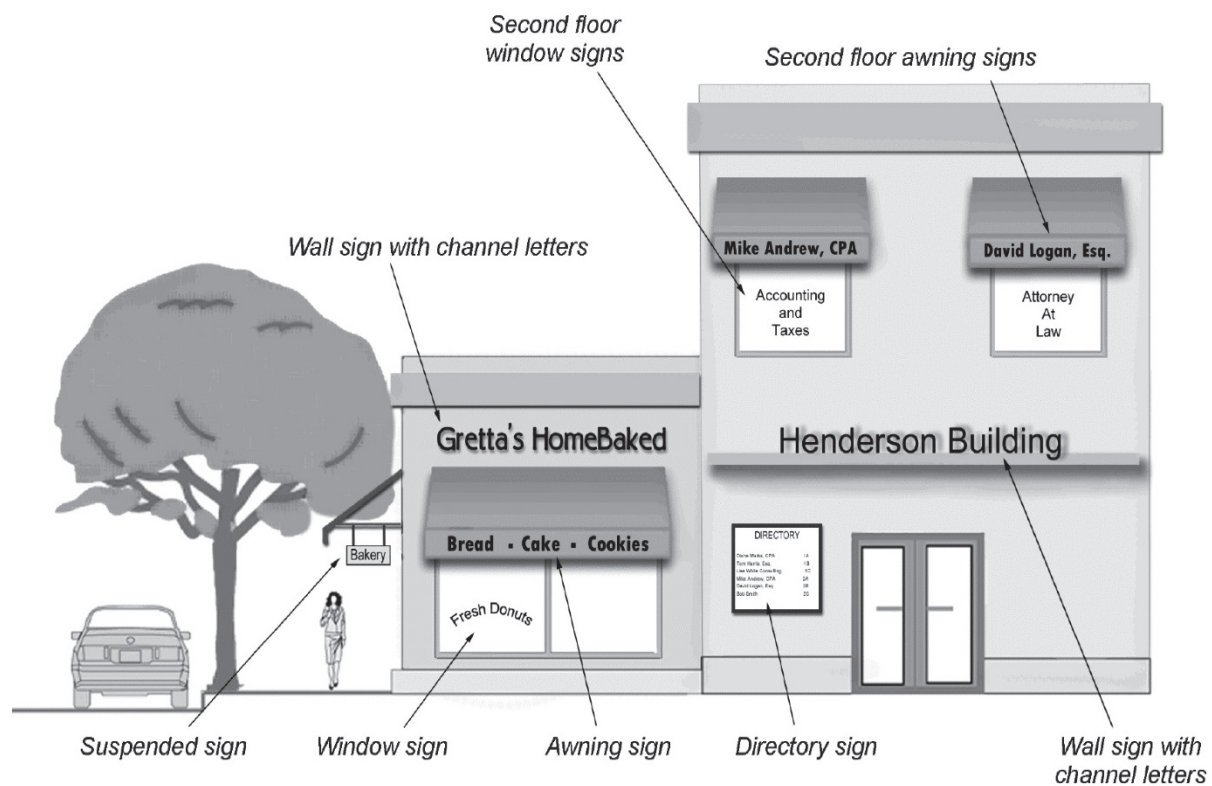


Diagram 6: Pedestrian Oriented Streetscape

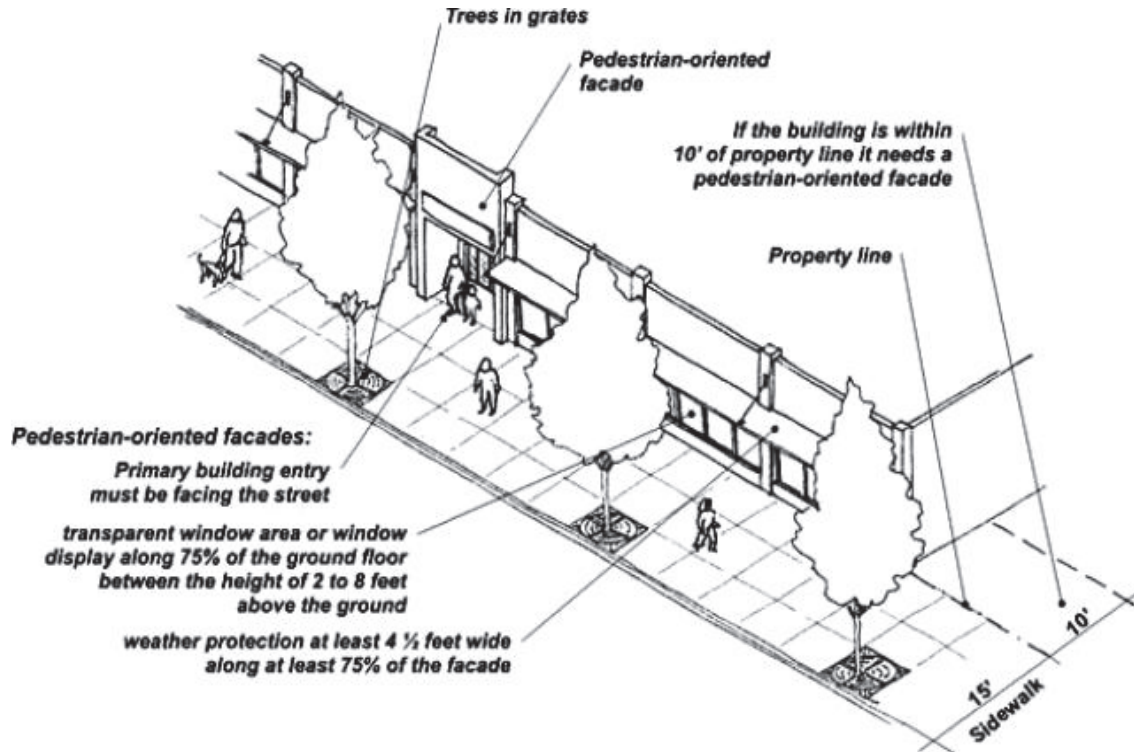


Diagram 7: Storefront Design Considerations

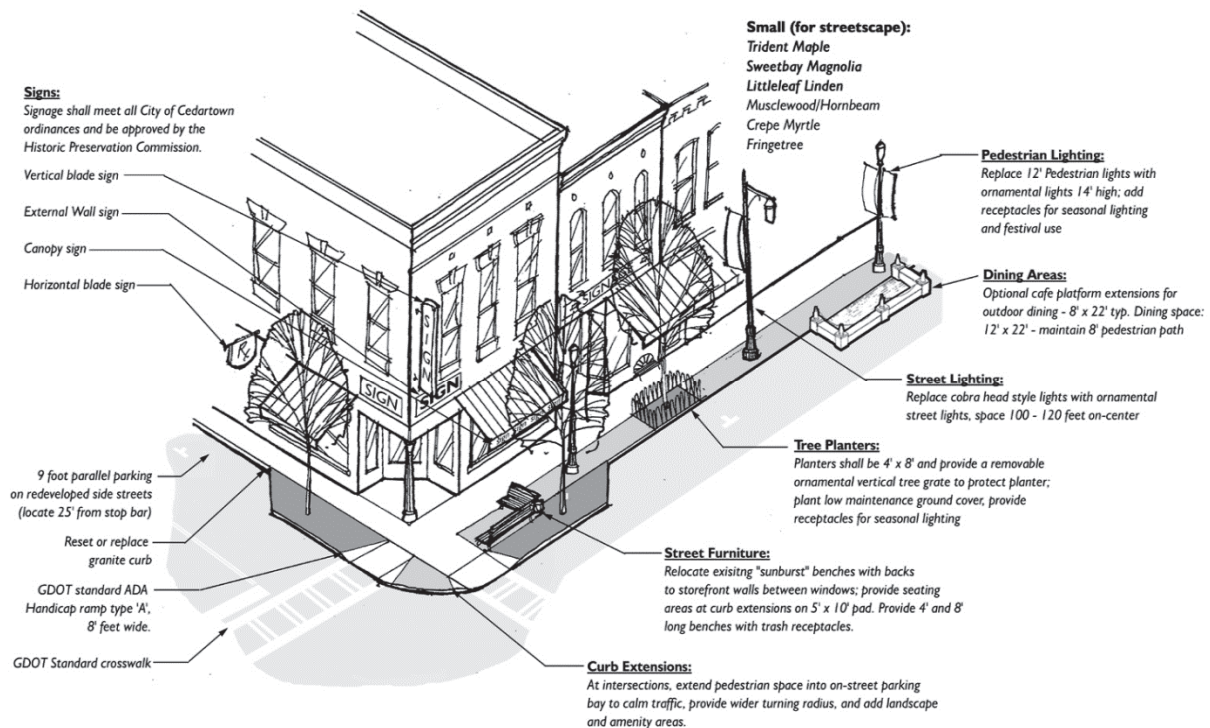


Diagram 8: Capturing Rainwater on Site

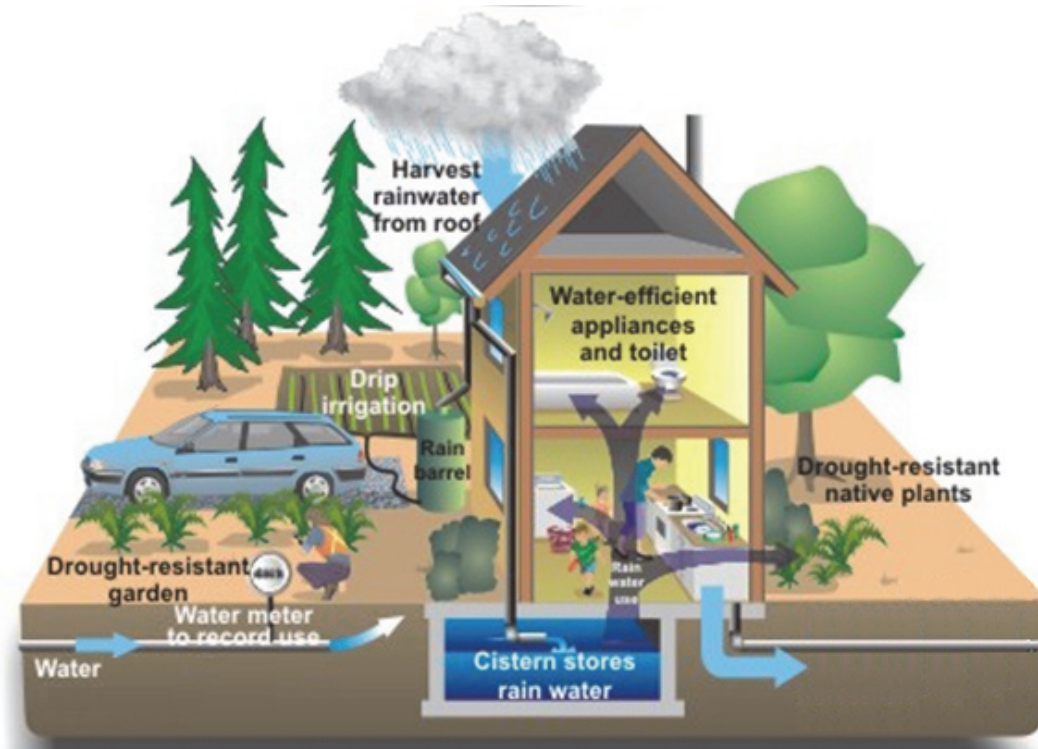


Diagram 9: Energy Efficient Options

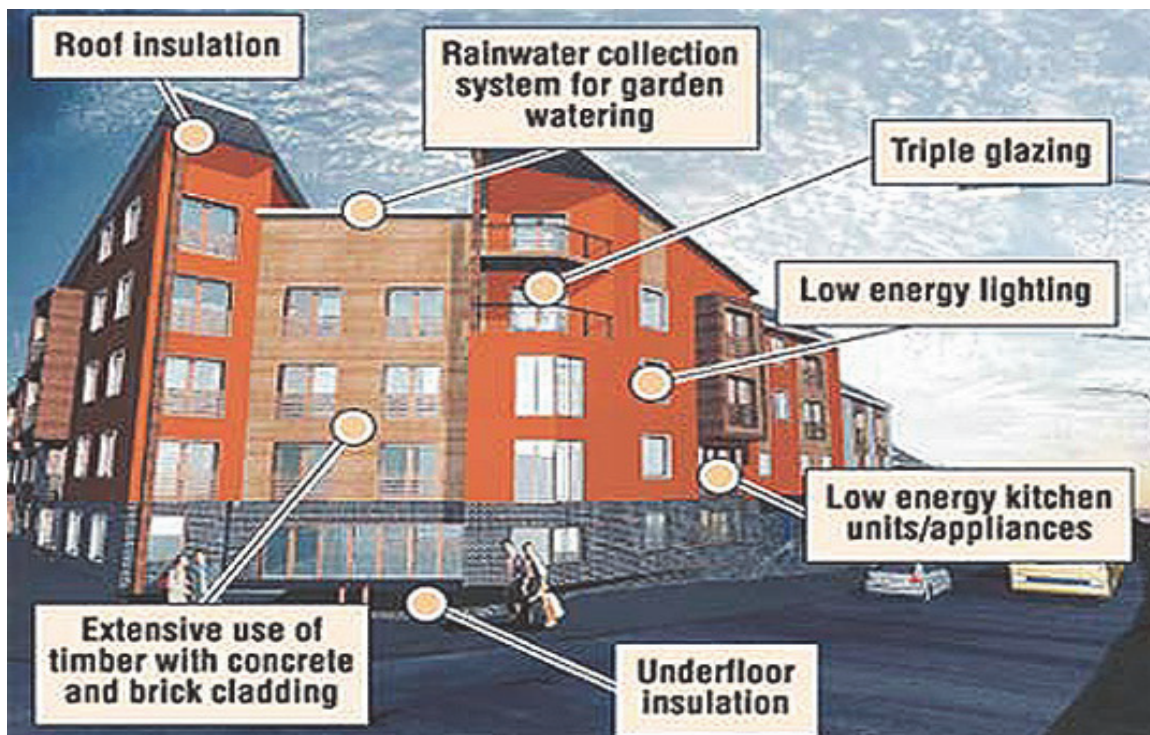


Diagram 10: Energy Efficient Opportunities

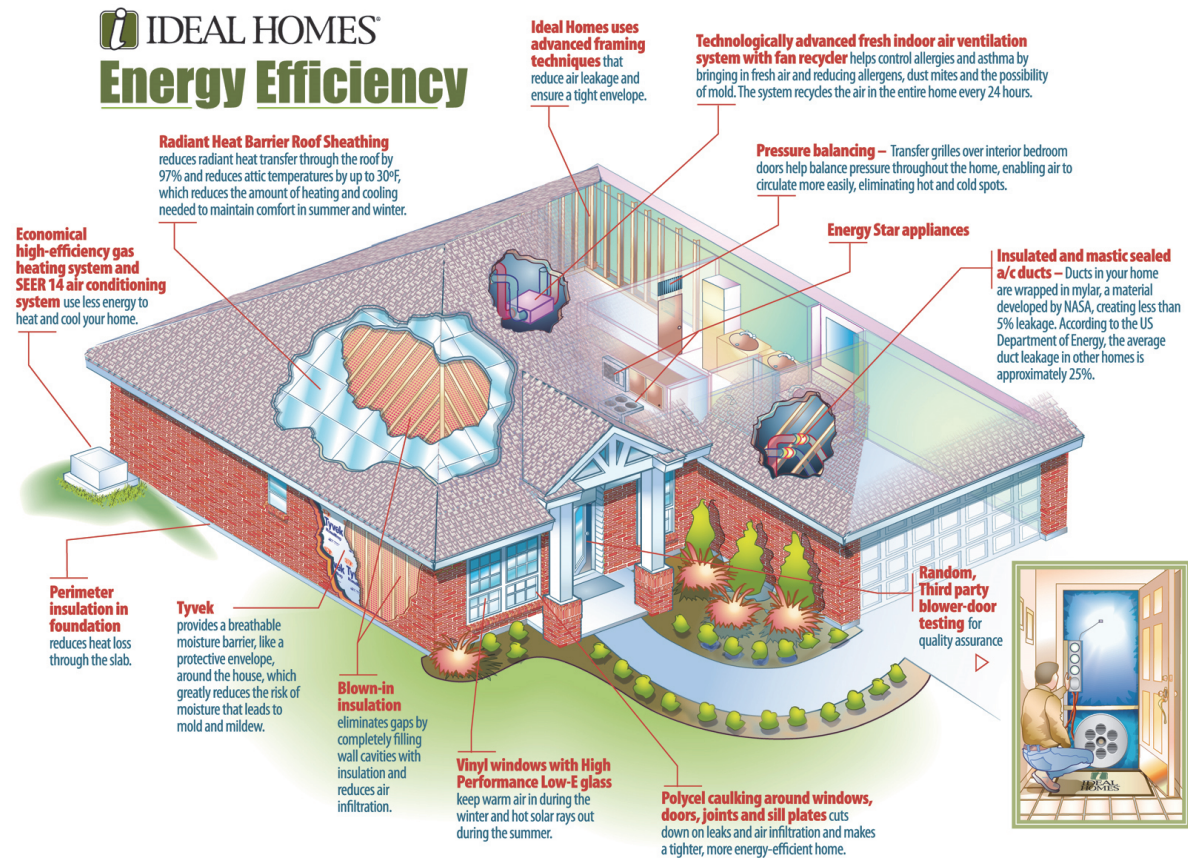


Diagram 11: Rain Barrel or Cistern

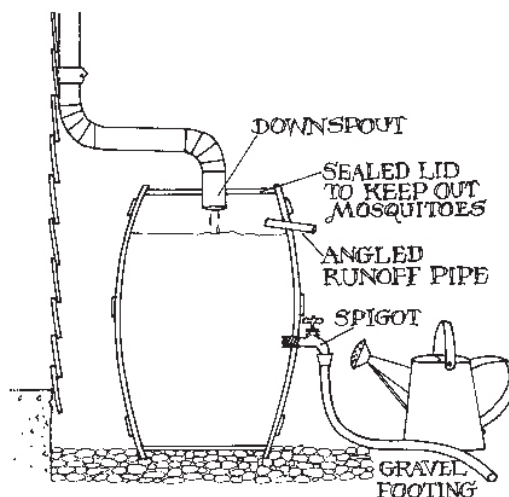


Diagram 12: Rain Gardens

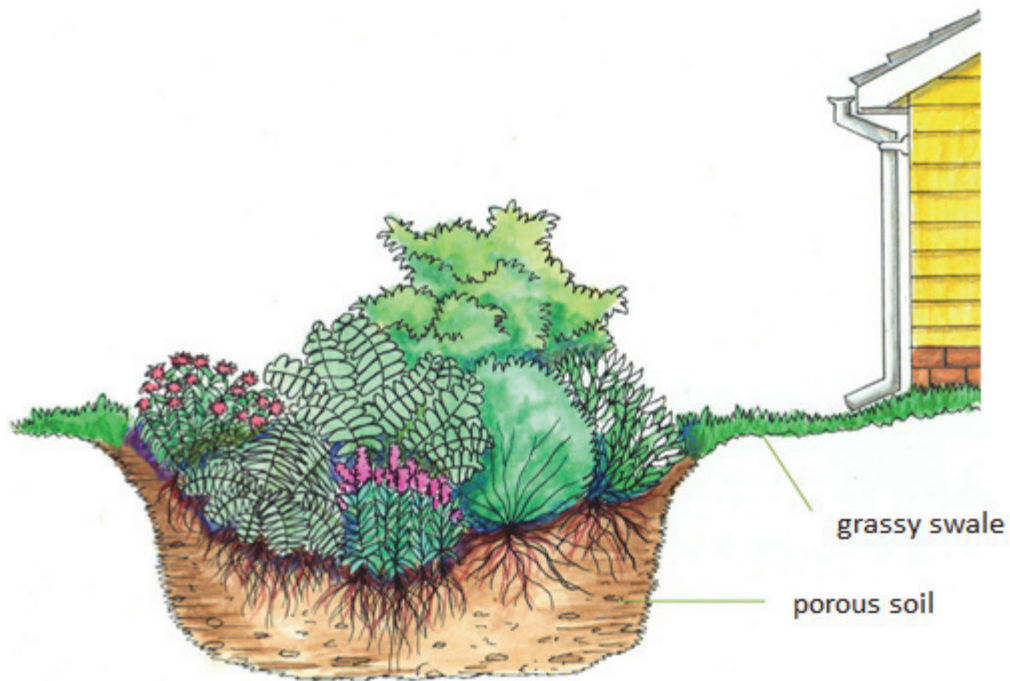


Diagram 13: Conservation Landscape



Diagram 14: Native Tree Examples



White Oak



American Chestnut

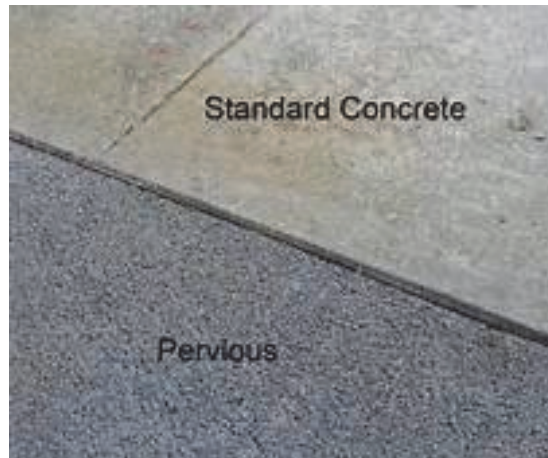


Silver Maple

Diagram 15: Direct Water with Swales and Berms



Diagram 16: Permeable Pavers and Pavement Examples





**City of Westminster's 2016 Adopted
Development Design Preferences**
Available at www.WestminsterMD.gov

