

DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR PROPERTIES IN THE MIXED-USE OVERLAY ZONE

Projects located in the Mixed-Use Overlay Zone (MU) are subject to Urban Design Review by the City's Design Review Board. The City's Urban Design Program report describes the City's Design Review Process and provides design guidelines. The following design guidelines include three sections. Section I of this document is the vision. Section II includes the design guidelines to be utilized by the City's Design Review Board in addition to the guidelines in the current Urban Design Program. Section III includes conceptual plans and massing studies for several specific sites. If a guideline is already part of the Urban Design Program, it is not repeated here.

SECTION I - OVERALL VISION

The City of La Mesa General Plan designates three older commercial corridors, El Cajon Boulevard, University Avenue, and La Mesa Boulevard, as "Mixed-Use Urban." In order to implement this General Plan designation, and to prepare zoning development standards and guidelines for the properties designated as Mixed-Use Urban, a vision for the corridors must be defined first.

Mixed Use means a mixture of both commercial and residential, combined to create a vital and attractive environment for residents, employees, and visitors along each corridor.



The boulevards are envisioned to be transformed by a mixture of uses including retail, office, residential, open space, and public uses connected to each other and to transit by a walkable environment along the street.

Today, El Cajon Boulevard, University Avenue, and La Mesa Boulevard are wide streets giving the adjacent private development an auto-oriented character. The City has undergrounded the utilities and added landscaped medians to corridors making the streets more attractive.

However, to create places for people to live, work and stroll along the boulevards, the overall environment will need to change at the edges of the street adjacent to private properties. These street edges, the pedestrian realm, will need to become walkable and lively places with more street trees, wider sidewalk, fewer curb cuts, special bus shelters, street furniture, decorative pedestrian crossings, public gathering spaces, and visual interest at the ground floor of buildings.



Changing the character of the boulevard with new uses, a new pedestrian realm along the street and pedestrian improvements along the cross streets will enhance the quality of life in the neighborhoods adjoining the corridors.

Mixed use may be “horizontal mixed use” or “vertical mixed use.” “Horizontal mixed use” means that residential and commercial uses are adjacent to each other. “Vertical mixed use” means that residential and commercial uses are stacked over each other. Typically, residential uses are placed over ground-floor retail, office and/or restaurant uses. Not all projects along the corridor must be mixed use to achieve the goals of the plan. For example, a new residential-only project sensitively designed and located adjacent to an older existing commercial building may help to stimulate renovation and reuse. The commercial building could be adaptively reused as a restaurant with outdoor seating serving the new residents as well as existing nearby residents. Successful infill development keeps a sense of history of each boulevard and enriches the life of the community.

The following are features of the overall vision for the corridors:

- Attractive, walkable environments along the streets include:
 - Wider sidewalks with landscaping, street furniture and other amenities.
 - Buildings instead of parking lots along the street
 - Visual interest incorporated at the ground level including frequent windows, awnings, indentations, outdoor dining, etc.
- New uses that enhance the walkable environment such as:
 - Infill residential and new retail spaces that are less auto dependent
 - Limitations on uses that are incompatible with residential
- Two- to four-story townhouses / condominiums / apartments designed to be pedestrian friendly and compatible with adjacent neighborhoods
- Design considerations of privacy, noise, light, and traffic intrusion when adjacent to existing neighborhoods
- Incentives for consolidating parcels
- Flexibility in requirements to respond to varied site conditions
- Places for transit stops designed as part of new development
- High-quality design with appropriate detail and articulation

Where appropriate, create a sense of history along each corridor by incorporating existing buildings and uses in a project.



SECTION II - DESIGN GUIDELINES

The following are design guidelines to be utilized by the City's Design Review Board in addition to the guidelines in the Urban Design Program.

A. Pedestrian Orientation Along Street Frontage / Setbacks



The pedestrian realm should include the following:

1. 36-inch box street trees should be planted approximately 30 to 35 feet apart in a 5-foot street furnishing area adjacent to the curb in the public right-of-way, if underground utilities permit. If the City's Department of Public Works determines that below grade utilities limit street trees at the curb, trees in planters with irrigation should be located at the curb or additional width may be added to the pedestrian realm to allow street trees to be planted between the sidewalk area and the adjacent building.
2. Street trees along El Cajon Boulevard, University Avenue and La Mesa Boulevard should be planted in tree wells with metal or concrete grates or that are landscaped, as approved by the City.
3. Street trees and ground cover may be planted in the 5-foot wide landscaped parkway adjacent to the curb along La Mesa Boulevard.
4. A concrete sidewalk should be provided with a clear pedestrian passage at least 5 feet wide, free of encroachment by landscape features, street furniture, or similar obstructions.
5. Appropriate pedestrian amenities should be provided such as outdoor seating, bus waiting areas, trash receptacles, public art, and plants in pots.
6. Plant materials specified for the pedestrian realm and the public open space areas are subject to City approval.
7. Residential on the ground-floor fronting the pedestrian realm should be located a minimum of 2 feet and a maximum of 3 feet above the sidewalk level or provide some other similar solution to provide privacy.
8. At least 50 percent of the ground floor façade of a commercial building should be devoted to transparent windows and/or doors.

9. For projects located at intersections, the design treatment provided for the pedestrian realm should be continued around the corner and an appropriate transition to between the project improvements and the adjacent public and private improvements should be provided.



B. Ground-Floor Use and Design

1. Although ground-floor retail, restaurant and other pedestrian-friendly neighborhood serving uses are preferable along the pedestrian realm, residential is permitted on the ground floor with the following guidelines:

- a. Residential located on the ground floor facing the pedestrian realm should be designed with articulated facades, including features such as awnings, elevated steps and entrances, recessed windows, doors and patios, windows treated for privacy and pedestrian interest, and drought-tolerant planting.
- b. The more public areas of the residential units, such as lobbies, exercise rooms, living rooms, or dining areas, should face the street while more private areas, such as bedrooms, should be located in the rear of the building or on upper floors.

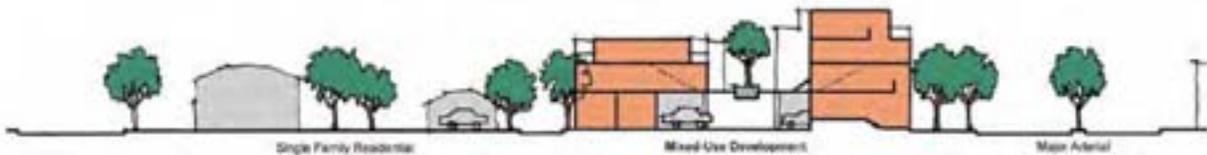


2. New development located at signalized intersections of major streets should include pedestrian-oriented community-serving commercial uses.
3. For development on sites over 30,000 square feet, it is encouraged that at least 30 percent of the linear street frontage on a major arterial excluding driveways and pedestrian connections be designed to accommodate pedestrian-oriented neighborhood serving uses including retail, restaurant, office or other community serving uses. The minimum depth of these uses should be 25 feet.

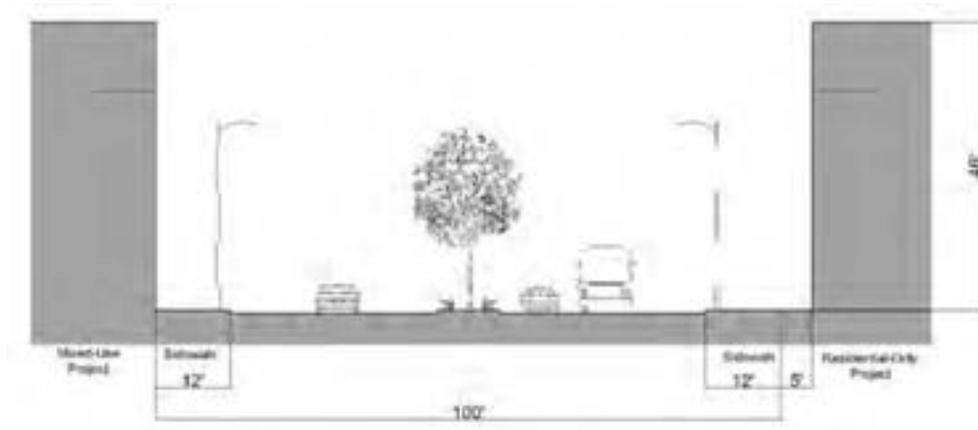


C. Building Height

1. Building height should transition from the maximum building height to a lower height when directly adjacent to a single-family residential zone. However, when the adjacent single-family residential zone is at a much higher elevation than the mixed-use development, the building height may not need to transition to a lower height.



2. To accommodate the extra floor-to-floor ceiling heights of commercial uses, new mixed-use development with retail or restaurant uses on the ground floor may exceed the 46-foot building height limit up to 4 feet as long as the building does not exceed 4 stories, upon approval by the Planning Commission of a Special Permit, Section 24.02.050.
3. Heights greater than 46' (up to 6 stories) may be considered under Section 24.02.050 – Special Permits for any mixed-use development that includes underground parking, more public open space adjacent to the street than is required, and is sensitively designed to be compatible with adjoining properties.
4. Forty-six feet (46') is the maximum height limit. However, variations in building height and massing as well as articulated facades contribute to community image, provide human scale and improve the pedestrian experience along the mixed-use corridors.



D. Treatment Adjacent Single-Family Residential Zone

1. To provide privacy for adjacent single-family, windows in mixed-use projects directly facing single-family zones within 15 feet of the property line, should be designed either as translucent, louvered, offset from existing single-family windows, located at least five feet above the floor of each level or another solution achieving this intent.
2. Mixed-use projects should be designed to minimize motor vehicle circulation through local single-family neighborhood streets.
3. Guest parking areas should be located and designed to be convenient in order to minimize parking in residential neighborhoods.
4. Façades and garages that face existing single-family should be designed to be comparable with the setbacks and scale of the existing development.





E. Access

1. To minimize the number of curb cuts thereby making the streetscape more walkable and attractive for new mixed-use projects, consolidation of building sites should be encouraged to reduce the number of access drives from the major arterials. Shared driveway access between lots is permitted to further reduce driveways cuts from the arterials.
2. Vehicular access should be provided from the side streets, adjacent alleys, and parallel streets, if available and traffic calming techniques should be provided to minimize intrusion of traffic into adjacent neighborhoods. Where side streets, alleys, or parallel streets are not available, driveways access should be limited to no more than one 20-foot wide driveway per 200 feet of building frontage.
3. Improvements in the public right-of-way and pedestrian realm should be consistent with City plans for streetscape improvements such as median landscaping. Pedestrian crossings at arterials should include items such as curb extensions at intersections, decorative crosswalk paving, shortened turning radii for cars, complementary plant materials, pedestrian lighting and bus shelters. For details, refer to the Master Plan for University Avenue and Design Guidelines and Recommendations for the Revitalization of El Cajon Boulevard.





F. Parking

1. Parking should be conveniently located near non-residential uses but visibly minimized from arterial streets and public spaces.
2. Centralized parking decks/courts within the mixed-use development or below-grade parking should be provided for projects that include over 30 dwelling units per acre.
3. Parking access may be taken directly from an alley.



G. Open Space

1. Common recreational areas should be centrally located and preferably be designed as courtyards or outdoor rooms. Outdoor recreational furnishings, community amenities, public gathering places, trees, shrubs and trellises for shade should be provided, where appropriate.
2. On sites over 30,000 square feet, a usable open space or public gathering place accessible to the community such as a pocket park or an expanded waiting area adjacent to a bus stop may be provided.



H. Architectural Character and Massing

1. The form of mixed-use and “residential use only” buildings and architectural details should be designed to create visual interest at the street level using techniques such as staggering the frontage of the building, recessing doors and windows, providing varied display windows, providing awnings and canopies for weather protection and scale, and visually extending interior spaces outside through paving and glazing.
2. Building plans and facades should vary from building to building and from project to project to create interest along the street.
3. Materials and colors should be selected to unify the building appearance and fit into the pedestrian realm context.
4. Security features and equipment should be permitted if completely concealed and mounted inside of the structure.





I. Compatibility with Surrounding Development and Between Uses on the Site

1. The design of the structures should address privacy between residential units and other non-residential uses on the site and on adjacent properties.
2. The design of the structures should compliment the street pedestrian realm with plazas, pocket parks, public gathering spaces, street furniture and landscaping.
3. The design should provide visual and physical cues that demark the public space from the private space.





4. To integrate new buildings with the surrounding area, new buildings are encouraged to provide passageways through new buildings that allow for light and air to adjacent buildings.

J. Building Entries and Service Access

1. To promote active, pedestrian-friendly streets, each individual tenant or business establishment and residential lobbies should be oriented to and accessible from the major street frontage and directly from the public sidewalk.
2. Where possible, services area should be located at the rear of the building unless these areas can be concealed within the interior of the building design.



K. Consolidations

1. As many of the lots are smaller than 10,000 square feet, lot consolidation is encouraged along the corridors to leave more space along the pedestrian realm for streets trees, other pedestrian amenities and on-street parking, as well as providing more efficient private development sites.
2. When consolidating lots, new development should respect the existing fabric of the community by reflecting historic development patterns through the use of building indentations, breaks in buildings for open space, changes in color, or other methods.

