

III. Commercial Development Within The Urban-Rural Demarcation Line

B. Freestanding

III. COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE URBAN-RURAL DEMARCATION LINE

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B. FREESTANDING



a. FREESTANDING CONCEPT

The use of Freestanding commercial buildings can be generally placed into two categories. The first category includes uses which have distinct operational demands generated by hours of operation, high parking requirements, or larger trip generation. Such uses include, but aren't limited to: restaurants, cafés, banks, fuel service stations, and auto repair establishments. The second category includes commercial buildings which have multiple tenants but no major anchor stores. Mixed office, retail, and residential uses are encouraged within these areas.

The arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the use of new and existing drive-thru lanes by freestanding businesses to quickly serve customers while minimizing contact. Not only does this increase the impervious surface area on-site, but it also complicates and increases the circulation of traffic on- and off-site by prioritizing motor vehicles. The safety of patrons and pedestrians is then impacted and could be decreased or even sacrificed.

The establishment of the following design guidelines are meant to foster a cohesive design of freestanding commercial buildings that are compatible with their surrounding neighborhoods. They also ensure that, when included, drive-thru lanes are carefully integrated into the

community and site design rather than as the dominant feature that is neither aesthetically appealing nor human-centered.

b. SITE PLANNING

1. Locate buildings and site elements to enhance surrounding uses.

- (a) Building entrances should be oriented towards the street, except where deviation would create more functional and useful access or programmed open space.
- (b) Buildings should form a uniform edge or setback along the street.
- (c) Buildings should be situated to allow pedestrian connection to the site and adjacent sidewalks.
- (d) Cluster freestanding structures to provide human-scale form and enhance the visual quality of the site development.
- (e) Arrange freestanding structures to provide visual prominence to the site's primary use and any outdoor uses by patrons.
- (f) Minimize front setbacks.
- (g) For sites with combined refueling station and convenience store uses, the convenience store should front to the road, with refueling stations

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either to the side or behind the storefront in order to reduce the vehicular dominance of the use. There should also be a pedestrian pathway that directly connects the convenience store to sidewalks along the major roadway.

- (h) Landscaping with native plantings.
- (i) Incorporate landscape design such as raingardens and bioswales for stormwater management.
- (j) Design landscape islands in the parking lot to be landscaped bioretention areas that are interconnected to capture, slow, filtrate, and reduce pooling of stormwater as appropriate.

C. LANDSCAPING AND OPEN SPACE

The Baltimore County Landscape Manual is to be used in companion with the CMDP Guidelines with the same emphasis and importance.

OPEN SPACE

1. Design open space to:

LANDSCAPING

1. Landscaping should be used for screening, shading, and enhancing site design.

Landscaping should be provided to address:

- (a) Continuous streetscape;
- (b) Screening/buffering of adjoining residences;
- (c) Screening/buffering of major roadways;
- (d) Perimeters between adjoining uses;
- (e) Landscaping of building edges, especially those without windows or other visual elements.
- (f) Adequate landscape screening along the drive-thru lanes that does not block the line of sight.
- (g) Landscaping should enhance environmental issues.

- (a) Provide green space around buildings and adjoining commercial uses for usable areas for employees and patrons;
- (b) Break up large bays within parking lots;
- (c) Allow some secure, on-site areas for sitting.
- (d) Create outdoor seating areas designed for use by occupants or clients. Provide around the existing or proposed building and prominently with the most aesthetically site pleasing views as possible.
- (e) Seating areas should also be considered on the terrace or rooftop of the building as secondary seating, or when accessible and not feasible to place seating at ground-level as the primary seating.

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- (f) Amenities provided should also include waste receptacles, landscaping, and weather protection-including shading. Whenever needed, guardrails or fences should be provided to ensure safety of customers and to help delineate seating areas.

d. CIRCULATION AND PARKING

CIRCULATION

1. Enhance pedestrian safety and accessibility.

- (a) Provide safe and convenient pedestrian access from adjacent sidewalks and interior parking areas to the existing or proposed building.
- (b) Sidewalks/paths should be provided to adjoining residential communities.
- (c) Provide sidewalks within the street right-of-way.
- (d) Sidewalk or path connections to adjoining uses should be considered at the building faces.
- (e) Crosswalks that have contrasting color to adjacent paving should be provided at the access/exit points of the subject property where appropriate.
- (f) Provide bike racks near the proposed building.
- (g) Separate pedestrian access from the drive-thru areas to minimize conflicts. Use lighting, raised crosswalks, pavement material changes, signage, and other safety devices to increase awareness of pedestrians.

2. Incorporate drive-thru lanes as a part of the overall design.

- (a) Avoid drive-thru lanes as the dominant feature of the design.
- (b) With the drive-thru service evolving from a single lane to multiple lanes, utilize innovative design to minimize the footprint of the proposed building and the impervious area of the site.

3. Enhance environmental protection.

- (a) Incorporate permeable paving materials to infiltrate and manage stormwater onsite, such as reinforced grass/gravel pavement systems, porous asphalt and concrete, and permeable interlocking concrete pavers.
- (b) Install electric vehicle charging stations.

4. Support alternative transportation.

- (a) All developments should meet Complete Streets requirements: <https://resources.baltimorecountymd.gov/Documents/Planning/cmdp/bcompletestreets.pdf>
- (b) Provisions for transit facilities where feasible shall be included.
- (c) Establish bicycle lanes where sufficient space is available. Provide bicycle racks. (See [BCZR § 409.14. Bicycle parking.](#))

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- (d) Baltimore County's Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan shall be considered when Main Street development is designed: <https://baltimorecountybikeped.weebly.com/>
- (e) Create a pedestrian-friendly environment through uniform paving texture and identification of pedestrian crosswalks.
- (f) Install electric vehicle charging stations where feasible.

PARKING

1. Provide safe and convenient parking.

- (a) Circulation and parking areas shall include landscaped peninsulas and/or islands.
- (b) Minimize the number of ingress/egress points.
- (c) Share pedestrian and vehicular access to adjoining non-residential properties.
- (d) Locate parking bays along the sides and rear of the lot; minimize parking areas along the front.
- (e) Secondary vehicular access to side streets is encouraged.

e. ARCHITECTURE/BUILDING FEATURES

1. Incorporate representative architectural/ site characteristics.

- (a) The proposed use should incorporate attractive representative characteristics of surrounding areas. Transitional treatment may include matching cornice lines, continuing a colonnade, or using similar materials and building proportions. Consistency of scale, volume and details is important in addition to materials or colors.
- (b) The proposed design should respect existing historic structures or districts in the immediate area. A vernacular style is preferred over "franchise" type structures.
- (c) Nonresidential buildings sharing street frontage with residentially developed properties should maintain the basic design elements characteristic of the residential uses.
- (d) Blank walls facing streets should be avoided.
- (e) Exterior building elevations should be consistent on all sides in regard to roof style, materials, form and detailing.
- (f) Roofs should be an integral part of the building design and conform to a specified roof type.
- (g) Building materials and colors should be based on their visual impact as well as their compatibility with the neighborhood.
- (h) Use materials and systems that simplify and reduce maintenance requirements.

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- (i) If the drive-thru is included, building design should be innovative to reduce the building footprint and paved areas.
- (j) Whenever feasible, a shaded patio or terrace featuring outdoor seating should be provided to customers on the premises in addition to the traditional indoor dining room.
- (k) Utilize sustainable design approaches, materials and measures.
- (l) Incorporate solar panels, water recycle systems or other systems in architectural design to mitigate energy and water consumption and optimize energy use.
- (m) Sustainable building materials are encouraged.
- (c) All signage should be graphically consistent and color coordinated.
- (d) Signage should enhance the safety of pedestrians and motorists.
- (e) Provide adequate directional signs, particularly for projects that incorporate drive-thru lanes. Directional signs should be properly situated across the site and are visible to vehicle drivers and pedestrians.
- (f) Directional signage should be prominent and provide visual cues to help navigation.

LIGHTING

1. Lighting should complement the building architecture and be appropriate for its purpose.

- (a) Lighting should be designed to meet the specific needs of the site elements and integrated with the building design. Tall light standards which illuminate the entire site are discouraged because they lack scale.
- (b) Lighting standards adjacent to residential areas should not exceed 18 feet in height and should be designed to prevent spillover of light onto the adjoining residences.
- (c) Incorporate energy-efficient lighting.
- (d) Provide pedestrian-scale lighting to illuminate crosswalks, sidewalks, and signage for safety.

f. SIGNAGE AND LIGHTING

SIGNAGE

1. Signage should complement the building architecture and be appropriate for its purpose.

- (a) Signage should be integrated with the building design.
- (b) Freestanding identification signs should not exceed the height of the building. Monument type signage is preferred.