

**AESTHETIC AND SITE  
DESIGN GUIDELINES  
FOR LARGE SCALE  
BUILDINGS**

**Adopted October 27, 1999**

## **I. Introduction**

These Guidelines are to serve as a supplement to the Planning and Zoning Code with regard to aesthetics and site design. It is the intent that these Guidelines will apply to commercial and office uses located in the CC, O/I, PCC, PO, PID and PD Districts. Where guidelines and area plans have already been written for certain areas of the City, the specific guidelines or plans for the area should be deferred to.

Office uses, commercial uses, and more specifically, shopping centers and large format retail facilities usually locate along major traffic arteries in a City. Their presence along these heavily traveled thoroughfares has a major impact on the street scape of the City. These Guidelines have some more specific suggestions for large office buildings, large format retail and shopping centers. Due to their large size, these larger buildings have a greater impact on the street scape along these heavily traveled arteries than smaller buildings, thus unique guidelines for these uses are needed.

There are several goals that the City wishes to accomplish with these Guidelines. One goal of these Guidelines is to ensure that commercial and office buildings, especially the larger buildings, will not negatively impact their surroundings. Another goal is to promote the construction of unique, human scale buildings. Another goal is to create a look and identity that is unique to the City of Westerville.

The purpose of these Guidelines is to provide aesthetic and site design suggestions to applicants before they make application, so they will know the City's expectations regarding these issues. These Guidelines are also intended to provide the Planning Commission with additional documented criteria by which to judge submissions. The ideas contained herein have been formatted as guidelines due to the somewhat subjective nature of these issues and so not to inhibit creativity or be overly prescriptive. It is felt that the aesthetic and site design suggestions contained in this document are the minimum necessary to accomplish the goals above. Applicants are encouraged to follow these Guidelines and suggestions, however the Planning Commission does have the authority to vary from these Guidelines consistent with the criteria for approval for variances in Section 1113.03. Variances from these Guidelines shall not be deemed a legislative action.

## **II. Aesthetic Guidelines Applicable to All Commercial and Office Buildings**

### **Materials Colors and Mechanicals**

The materials used on building facades play a large part in determining the appearance of a building. In order to ensure that a building is aesthetically pleasing, it is important to ensure that the materials and colors used on the exterior of a building are pleasing to the eye and are compatible with the surroundings. As a general rule, the use of high quality natural building

materials such as brick, wood and stone contributes to an aesthetically pleasing building. Other materials may be appropriate but would need to be reviewed by Planning Commission on a case by case basis.

The use of low reflectance, subtle, neutral or earth tone colors as the predominant colors on the facade usually results in an acceptable appearance. The use of high intensity colors, metallic colors, black or fluorescent colors as the predominant facade color usually does not result in an aesthetically appealing building and applications utilizing such would have to be reviewed by Planning Commission on a case by case basis. Building trim and accent areas may feature brighter colors, including primary colors, but the use of neon tubing as a feature for building trim or accent areas is not encouraged.



A color other than an earth tone used as the predominant building color

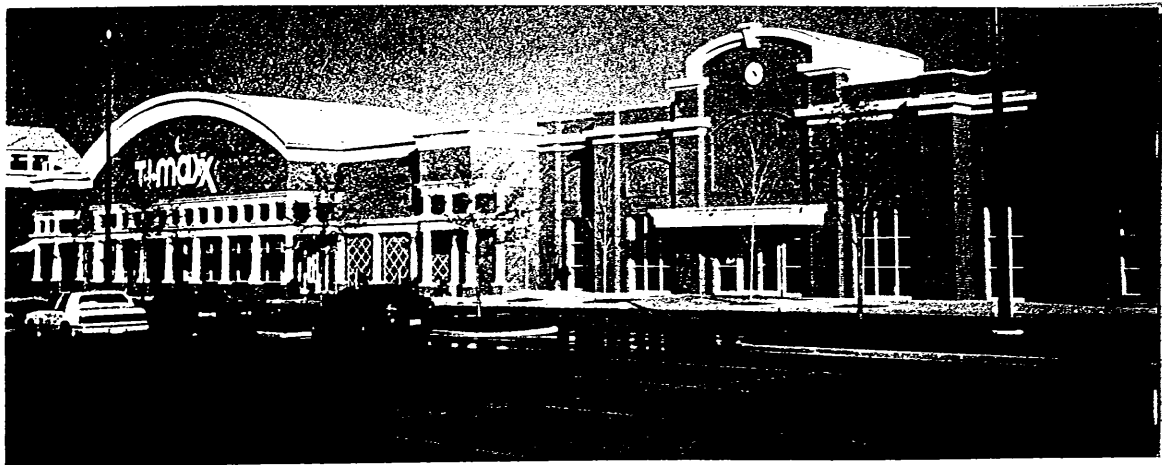
In addition, mechanical equipment such as venting, undecorated chimneys and HVAC units when mounted openly on roofs generally detract from the appearance of a building unless this equipment is screened. Therefore, roof top equipment such as HVAC units should be screened from public view.

### **III. Aesthetic Guidelines Applicable to All Large Office Buildings, Large Format Retail Stores and Shopping Centers**

The size threshold for these Guidelines for large office buildings is 50,000 square feet. Shopping centers carry the definition provided in the Planning and Zoning Code. Large format retail is defined as retail buildings with floor areas 50,000 square feet and above.

#### **Facades and Exterior Walls**

In order to promote human scale, large blank building facades need elements that provide visual interest. Human scale and visual interest can also be provided through the use of articulation, which breaks down large facades into smaller, more human scale segments. The elements used to accomplish this should be integrated into the design of the building structure. Other methods used to break down large, blank building facades include but are not limited to color changes, texture changes, or material changes. The utilization of superficial trim, painting or other graphics as the sole method of breaking up large building facades is not encouraged. All building facades which are visible from adjoining properties and/or public streets should follow the material and color guidelines of these aesthetic and site design guidelines.



The use of articulation, earth toned natural materials, varied roof lines, and covered entrances

#### **Roofs**

In order to reduce the massive size of large structures, flat roofs should be avoided if at all possible. The use of varied roof lines through the utilization of parapets and or sloped roofs is encouraged. The roof treatment should harmonize with the character of the surrounding neighborhoods.

## IV Site Design Guidelines for Large Format Retail Developments and Shopping Centers

### Entryways and Weather Protection

Customers patronizing shopping centers and large format retail developments should be able to locate entryways easily. This could be accomplished by providing at least one customer entrance on each side of the building which faces the public street. Where a principal building directly faces more than two abutting public streets, this guideline should apply to two sides of the building and should include the side of the building facing the primary street. The aesthetic treatment of the entryway should provide a visual cue to users as to the location of the entryway and contribute aesthetically to the character of the building. The entrances should be highly visible, yet harmonize aesthetically with the rest of the building. The provision of weather protection features such as awnings or arcades near all customer entrances is encouraged to protect shoppers from inclement weather, which is an inconvenience. Where additional stores will be located in the principal building, each such store should have at least one exterior customer entrance, which should follow the Guidelines above in order to encourage pedestrian shopping.



Highly visible entryway with weather protection features

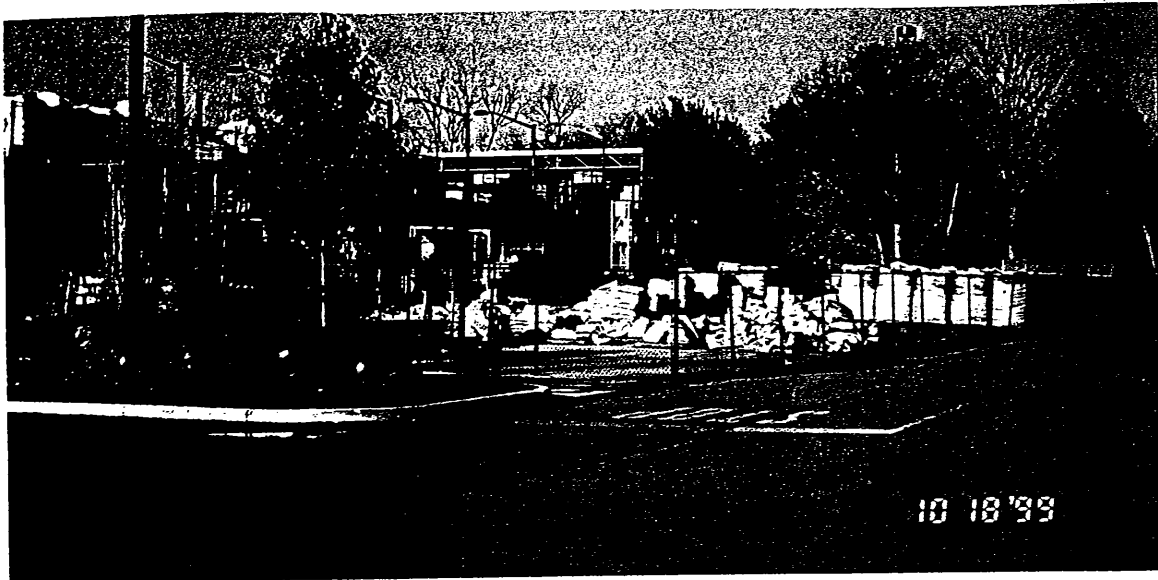
## **Parking**

Parking lots should provide users with safe and convenient access to buildings. Large expanses of unsightly asphalt do not promote human scale and have a negative impact on the street scape. The City already has landscaping requirements in the Planning and Zoning Code to help break up large expanses of asphalt. However, the location and layout of parking can also do a great deal to break up large expanses of asphalt. In order to accomplish this, the distribution of parking around, not solely in front of shopping centers and large format retail uses is encouraged. This enables buildings to be located closer to the street, thus providing human scale to the site by increasing the sense of enclosure and reducing the walking distances within parking lots.

## **Outdoor Storage, Trash Collection, Mechanical and Loading Areas:**

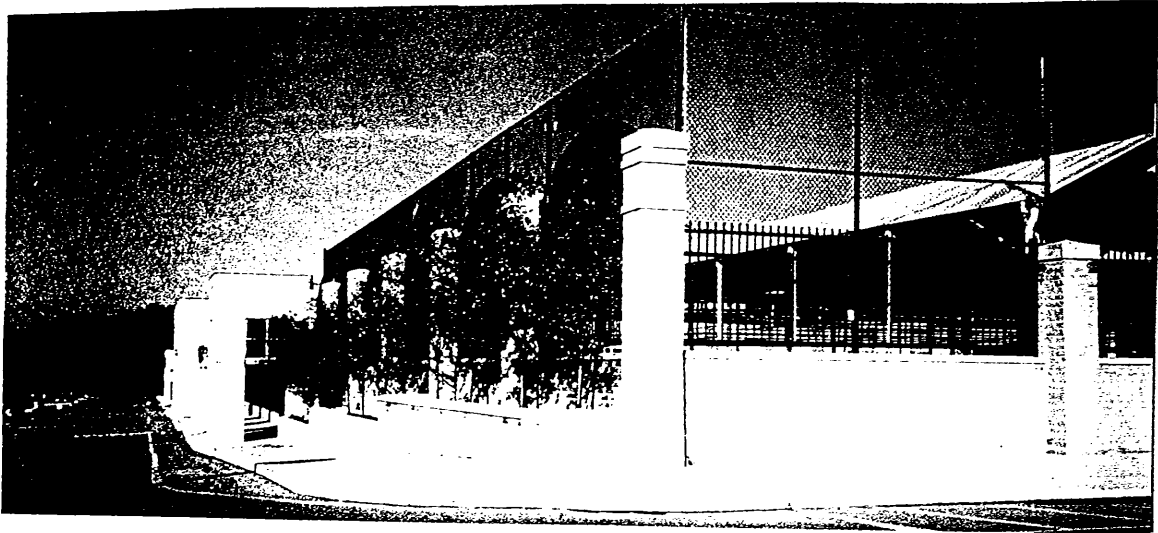
Loading areas, mechanical areas and dumpsters are often unsightly and create noise disturbing to residents. Garden centers and outdoor centers often stack bags of mulch, top soil and other garden supplies in the parking lot, resulting in a cluttered unattractive street scape.

In order to avoid these negative impacts, non-enclosed areas for the storage and the sale of seasonal inventory should be permanently defined and screened with walls and/or fences. The materials, colors, and design of screening walls and/or fences and the cover should match the predominant materials and colors on the building. If such areas are to be covered, then the covering should conform to those used as predominant materials and colors on the building.



An example of poorly screened outdoor storage

In addition, loading docks, truck parking, outdoor storage, vending machines, utility meters, HVAC equipment, trash collection, trash compaction, and other service functions should be incorporated into the overall design of the building and the landscaping so that the visual and acoustic impacts of these functions are fully contained and out of view from adjacent properties and public streets, and no attention is attracted to the functions by the use of screening materials that are different from or inferior to the principal materials of the building and landscape.



A better way of screening outdoor storage



Unscreened HVAC equipment

## Exclusive Site Design Guidelines for Shopping Centers

Shopping centers should offer well designed pedestrian-oriented features, spaces, and amenities for the public. By providing identifiable features or gathering places, features such as these help promote a sense of community identity and spirit. Any such features should be integrated into the overall design of the site in such a way as to ensure that they can be conveniently used or seen. Such features should not be constructed of materials that are inferior to the principal materials of the building and landscape.



Example of a Site Amenity