

# Design Standards for New Neighborhoods

A guide to creation of Smart Neighborhoods  
in the  
CMPD & SMPD Zoning Districts



Queen Anne's  
County  
Maryland

# **DESIGN STANDARDS FOR NEW NEIGHBORHOODS**

## **A GUIDE TO CREATION OF SMART NEIGHBORHOODS IN THE CMPD & SMPD ZONING DISTRICTS**

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# RECOMMENDED DESIGN STANDARDS FOR NEW NEIGHBORHOODS

## SECTION 1: INTENT

These standards are established to foster the development of comprehensively planned, pedestrian-oriented neighborhoods and to avoid the negative impacts of suburban sprawl by minimizing infrastructure costs, traffic congestion, and environmental degradation. This is to be accomplished by promoting a variety of land uses, housing types, and density, and by requiring skillful architecture in building design accompanied by landscaping, as well as site design for the location of lots, placement of structures and open spaces.

The design of the neighborhood should reflect the following features:

1. Architectural harmony, including compatibility in styles, materials, colors, and building size and setbacks.
2. Variety in housing types, density, and cost.
3. Parks, squares, and other common open spaces for residents to interact and recreate, and to provide a setting for the architecture of the development.
4. Neighborhood centers and civic spaces, which, depending on the scale of the development, can include places to shop, work, learn, or worship.
5. An interconnected street system that is based on a modified grid system or is composed of interconnecting, curvilinear streets, designed to conform to the topography (for sloping terrain, streams and wetland, environmentally sensitive areas), or for areas adjacent to curvilinear streets}.
6. Sidewalks, street trees, and substantial on-street parking, providing distinct separation between pedestrians and traffic.
7. Streets and sidewalks that are spatially defined by buildings in a regular pattern, and unbroken by parking lots.
8. Traffic calming techniques, including more narrow streets with shorter turning radii than suburban streets, and medians, circles and related features along prominent streets.
9. Lighting that is designed for safe walking, and signage that has a pedestrian orientation.
10. A system of land subdivision and development which links one neighborhood to another and can logically be extended.

## **SECTION 2: GENERAL DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS**

### **A. PHYSICAL DISTRIBUTION OF LAND USES**

A range of residential unit types and lot sizes is appropriate and should be mixed throughout the Neighborhood Proper and Neighborhood Fringe, with smaller lots located in the center of the common of the village neighborhood such that density decreases from the center to the periphery.

### **B. MIX OF HOUSING TYPES**

Smart neighborhoods support economic diversity and serve people with different housing needs. Housing that is affordable to people with a range of incomes supports economic diversity. Thus, ten percent (10%) of the dwelling units in the neighborhood shall be moderately priced dwelling units in accordance with Chapter 18 of the County Code.

### **C. LOGICAL EXTENSION OF COMMUNITIES**

Pedestrian and vehicular connections shall be provided between existing and future development to disperse traffic flow and provide route options.

Design shall provide for continuity of protected on-and off-site environmental features to increase environmental protection, connect on and off-site wildlife habitat and support the community benefits provided by natural systems.

The extent, physical distribution, and design of open space shall contribute to the development of a regional spatial hierarchy of open spaces.

### **D. BUILDING DESIGN AND MASSING**

#### **STANDARDS:**

#### **Architectural Compatibility**

- A. A building must incorporate architectural styles, building materials, and colors used in surrounding buildings or buildings within the neighborhood.
- B. Design styles of both residential and non-residential buildings should reflect the local vernacular architecture representative of the Eastern Shore.

- C. A building greater than one story should clearly delineate the boundary between each floor of the structure through belt courses, cornice lines, or similar architectural detailing.
- D. Attached buildings within the same block must maintain consistent cornice lines in buildings of the same height within multi-family, townhome, non-residential, or mixed-use structures.
- E. Porch frontages are encouraged on all single family detached homes.
- F. In Mixed Residential Areas, roof lines must be pitched or gabled. Overhanging eaves must be provided to the greatest extent possible.
- G. Multi-family structures shall appear as large single-family units. Small groups of townhouses (four or less) may be designed to appear as large single-family structures.
- H. Signs shall be limited to wall, awning, or hanging signs, and freestanding signs shall be monument style at a pedestrian scale.
- I. For commercial and non-residential building, significant departures from off-the-shelf standardized franchise building design may be required to meet these standards.

### **Human Scale Design**

- A. Doorways, windows, and other openings in the façade of a building are to be proportioned to reflect pedestrian scale and movement, and to encourage interest at the street level.
- B. A building shall avoid long, monotonous, uninterrupted walls or roof planes. The façade of a building should be divided into distinct modules no longer than 100 feet.
- C. A building that is located on the periphery of the Neighborhood Center shall generally not exceed twice the height and massing of adjacent structures.

## **Encouragement of Pedestrian Activity**

- A. Parking lots are to be located to the rear or side of the structure. If located at the side of the structure, the parking must be screened through the use of solid streetwalls or landscaping. Streetwalls should not exceed four (4) feet in height, but in no event block vehicular sight distance at site entrances or street intersections.
- B. Awnings, covered walkways, open colonnades, or similar weather protection must be provided by commercial structures.
- C. A commercial use must provide a minimum 50 percent of the front façade on the ground floor as clear or lightly tinted windows, doors, or other treatments sufficiently transparent to provide views into the interior of buildings.

## **Building Design**

- A. The main entrance of a structure should be clearly articulated through the use of architectural detailing.

## **E. OPEN SPACE**

The physical distribution of open space amenities gives all residents visual and functional access to nature and recreational opportunities.

### **STANDARDS:**

1. Public use areas, parks and greens shall be reasonably located and distributed within the neighborhood.
2. Open space shall be provided within each neighborhood to establish an edge or greenbelt to distinguish the neighborhood from adjacent properties. The design and location of open space shall protect important natural assets, features and sensitive environmental features.

Such Open Space shall establish a natural edge which may include wilderness preserves for wildlife and marine habitats, parks protecting the natural vegetation, greenbelts, hybrid parks, and undisturbed shoreline areas.

## **F. LANDSCAPING**

Landscaping should accentuate the natural and built environment, establish visual connectivity and community identity, and provide environmental and public health benefits.

Landscaping accentuates the appearance and improves the function of the public realm, including streets and open spaces.

### **STANDARDS**

1. All utilities are to be located to accommodate the planting of street trees of a minimum 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> inch caliper, planted at approximately 30-foot intervals along sidewalks. Tree lawns, (the area between the edge of pavement or curb, and the sidewalk) shall be no less than four (4) feet in width to accommodate the planting of street trees. Shrubs or planters may be used when street trees are not feasible. Landscaping development plans shall clearly reflect the location of all utilities including fire hydrants so that there are no conflicts between the utilities and the location of trees.
2. Trees shall be used as a design element to provide visual identity to the neighborhood and reinforce the hierarchy of streets.
3. On any Neighborhood Boulevard, median trees and landscaping are required. Median trees should be a minimum 1 ½ inch caliper, spaced 20 feet on center. Medians may also contain shrubs and plant groundcover.
4. Plantings in immediate proximity to buildings in front and side yards shall respect architectural lines (should be seen as extension of architectural walls.)
5. Landscaping shall be used to improve the quality of the natural environment and to improve the quality of groundwater recharge.
6. Islands and other landscaping alternatives shall be incorporated into parking areas to add visual interest. The use of islands and perimeter gardens designed and landscaped to serve as bioretention facilities is encouraged.

7. For all parking lots with more than six spaces, the landscaped area shall be comprised of a minimum of twenty (20) percent of the total parking area. One native shade tree which grows to a minimum height of 40 feet at maturity shall be required for each three hundred (300) square feet of the above required open space. Native shade trees shall have a minimum caliper of 2 ½ inches at time of planting.
8. Landscaping shall be provided to screen facilities for refuse disposal. Facilities for refuse disposal shall be enclosed by solid fence or walls that are higher than the refuse container and landscaping shall be installed around the perimeter.

## **G. ACCESS AND CIRCULATION**

Smart neighborhoods balance the mobility, safety, and other needs of pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicular traffic. Pedestrian walkways, bicycle lanes, and other amenities enhance the possibility and desirability of walking and bicycling.

### **STANDARDS**

1. Pedestrian ways shall be continuous, direct, and convenient with grade separation where necessary.
2. Pedestrian ways should be secure, well lighted, and have good visibility.
3. Pedestrian Pathways include a planting or buffer strip to separate pedestrians from the street and provide room for street light poles, pedestrian amenities, street trees, etc. The planting or buffer strip (tree lawn) shall be no less than four (4) feet in width.
4. Sidewalks at least 5 feet in width shall be provided and constructed of similar materials consistent with adjacent sites.
5. Pedestrian-scale streetlights (no greater than 12 feet high) shall be provided at no greater than 80 foot intervals along sidewalks and parking areas.
6. Sidewalks shall be provided the entire length of property fronting the main streets. Connections to existing sidewalks adjacent to the property shall be provided where appropriate.

7. All non-residential sites shall include an area for parking bicycles. This area may be designated parking space within the parking lot near the building or an area outside the parking lot adjacent to the building. The bicycle parking area must include a bike rack.
8. Restaurants may be permitted to operate outdoor cafes on sidewalks and in courtyards provided that pedestrian circulation and access to store entrances shall not be impeded.
9. Buildings should be oriented to face local streets, rather than highways, with entrances and display windows at the street level.
10. Interconnected streets shall be designed to encourage people to walk and provide a variety of route options.
11. Streets shall terminate at other streets within the neighborhood and, where appropriate, connect to existing and projected through streets outside the development.
12. Street design shall take into account the safety of drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists.

### **SECTION 3: LOT DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS**

Lot development standards in smart neighborhoods contribute to the development of a continuous streetscape and pedestrian atmosphere. Front setbacks in residential areas create an inviting and safe pedestrian atmosphere.

#### **STANDARDS**

1. Lot widths shall be designed to ensure that garages do not dominate the front facade of residential structures.
2. Lot sizes shall be designed so that houses can be sited close to the street, while accommodating structures that include front porches
3. Commercial buildings shall be sited to create a continuous streetscape.