

TOWN CENTER  
DESIGN STANDARDS

FOR THE CITY OF  
**MOUNTLAKE TERRACE**

August, 2008



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The provisions of this document apply to the Mountlake Terrace Town Center, currently classified as the BC/D zone. These standards shall apply to all development and redevelopment within the Town Center. The degree to which each standard applies to a development/redevelopment project shall be evaluated on a case-by-case basis in an effort to achieve an overall design that meets the purpose and intent of the Mountlake Terrace Town Center Design Standards.

The design elements are intended to foster a cohesive pattern of development that supports pedestrian activity and transit-oriented development in the Town Center (BC/D). Each section of these design standards includes examples and illustrations of ways in which the intent of the standard can be achieved. The graphic images are meant to be examples, and are not the only acceptable means towards accomplishing the intent of the design standards. Applicants and project designers are encouraged to consider designs, styles and techniques not pictured in the examples that fulfill the intent of each of the Town Center design standards.

## Pedestrian Connections

### Intent

To create a network of safe, consistent, and convenient linkages for pedestrians, including locating building entrances adjacent to public sidewalks.

### Standards

1. A comprehensive system of pedestrian activity areas shall link all site entrances, building entries, parking facilities, and common outdoor spaces with the public sidewalk.
2. Clearly defined pedestrian connections shall be provided:
  - between public sidewalks and building entrances when buildings are not located directly adjacent to the sidewalk, and
  - between parking lots and building entrances.
3. Pedestrian connections shall feature pedestrian scale lighting, bollard lighting, landscaping, accent lighting, signage, or a combination thereof to reinforce the location and use of the pedestrian connection.
4. The type and nature of all materials used for pedestrian walkways shall be consistent within a development.
5. Where transit stops occur in the public right-of-way, pedestrian walkways shall provide a clear and direct connection from the main building entrance to the transit stop.
6. Pedestrian connections shall occur between adjacent developments where feasible.
7. Pedestrian walkways within parking areas may be included as part of the minimum requirements for interior parking lot landscaping if landscape is provided on one side.
8. For parking lots that contain greater than fifteen parking spaces, pedestrian connections through the parking lot shall be clearly defined in a combination of two or more of the following ways (except as walkways cross vehicular travel lanes):
  - a) a raised walkway
  - b) special railing, bollards, and/or other architectural features to accent the walkway between parking bays
  - c) special paving, such as concrete or unit pavers in an asphalt area
  - d) a continuous landscape area, a minimum of three feet wide along at least one side of the walkway.
9. Pedestrian walkways within parking areas shall be a minimum four feet width of clear, unobstructed passage.
10. Chain link fencing shall not be used to separate pedestrians from vehicular traffic.



## Parking Lot Lighting

### Intent

To maintain a safe and secure pedestrian environment through the use of adequate lighting.

### Standards

1. Parking lot lighting shall be appropriate to create adequate visibility at night and evenly distributed to increase security.
2. Night lighting shall be provided where stairs, curbs, ramps, abrupt changes in walk direction, and crossing vehicle lanes occur.
3. All lighting shall be energy-efficient, glare-free and shielded from the night sky and adjacent properties to reduce off-site spill-over.



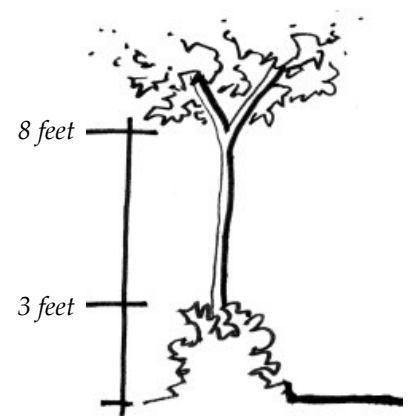
## Interior Parking Lot Landscaping

### Intent

To reduce the visual impact of parking lots through the use of landscape areas, trellises and/or other architectural features.

### Standards

1. Parking lot landscape shall be used to reinforce pedestrian and vehicular circulation, including:
  - parking lot entrances
  - ends of driving aisles
  - defining pedestrian walkways through parking lots.
2. Landscape areas next to a pedestrian walkway shall be maintained or plant material chosen to maintain a clear zone between three and eight feet from ground level.
3. A setback shall be provided that allows space for all trees and shrubs where vehicle overhang extends into landscape areas, except in landscape planting strips directly adjacent to internal pedestrian walkways within parking areas.
4. For parking lots that contain greater than fifty parking spaces, the location of interior landscape islands shall be allowed to be consolidated for planting of large stands of trees to break up the scale of the parking lot.
5. The number of trees required in the interior landscape area in parking lots shall be dependent upon the location of the parking lot in relation to the building and public right-of-way:
  - Where the parking lot is located between the building and the public right-of-way, one tree for every four spaces shall be provided (1:4)
  - Where the parking lot is located to the side of the building and partially abuts the public right-of-way, one tree for every six spaces shall be provided (1:6)
  - Where the parking lot is located behind the building and is not visible from the public right-of-way, one tree for every eight spaces shall be provided (1:8).



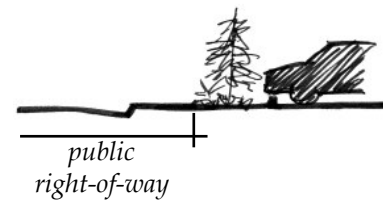
## Parking Lot Screening

### Intent

To reduce the visual impact of parking lots through the use of landscape buffers or architectural screening features.

### Standards

1. Parking lots that abut the public right-of-way shall be screened with one or a combination of the following treatments:
  - a) low walls made of concrete, masonry, or other similar material that reflects the building architecture in material, texture and color, and not exceeding a maximum height of three feet.
  - b) raised planter walls planted with a minimum of 80% evergreen plant materials not to exceed a total height of three feet, including the plant material planted on top.
  - c) landscape planting consisting of 80% evergreen trees, shrubs, and groundcovers.
2. All walls and/or raised planters shall be designed to be viewed from all sides.
3. A minimum five foot wide landscape planting area shall be provided between parking lots and adjacent developments to include a year-round sight barrier except where parking lots have been consolidated.
4. Walls and raised planters shall not exceed a maximum height of three feet, unless all of the following are provided:
  - screen treatment does not create a safety hazard
  - portion of treatment that is above three feet in height is a minimum of 75% transparent (i.e. see-through metal railing or other similar treatment).
5. Chain link fencing shall not be permitted to screen or enclose parking. In addition, the use of razor ribbon or barbed wire shall be prohibited.



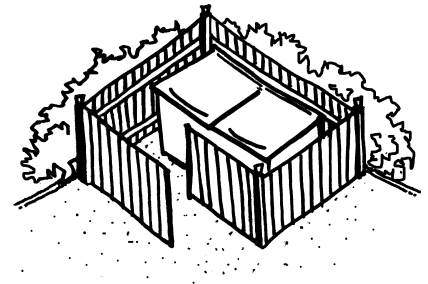
## Screening of Site Service Elements

### Intent

To reduce the visual impact and provide screening of trash, service, loading and storage areas, and at grade mechanical equipment.

### Standards

1. On-site service facilities, such as loading docks, dumpsters, etc., shall be located in an area that is least visible from the public right-of-way or common outdoor spaces. If service areas are located in a significantly visible area due to site constraints, they shall be screened from public view using landscaping or screen walls to the extent possible.
2. When located next to a parking lot, service areas shall be placed in such a way as to be as visibly unobtrusive as possible from primary pedestrian walkways and the main parking area.
3. All service, loading, and trash collection areas shall be screened by a combination of masonry, wood, and/or planting areas. Full screening shall be at least six feet high or as necessary to screen site service element(s).
4. Loading and service areas shall not face any residential district, unless no other location is possible due to site constraints.
5. Landscape screening shall be used in combination with architectural features or landforms.
6. All screening shall reflect building architecture and shall include consideration of proportion, color, texture, and materials.
7. At-grade mechanical or electrical type equipment (such as cabinets), if within ten feet of a RS or RM zone, a public right-of-way, or an internal pedestrian walkway shall be either screened or concealed as part of a landscape or architectural feature (e.g., within an artificial boulder).



*Dumpster screening with easy access hinge doors*



## Site Landscape Areas

### Intent

To reinforce the character of Mountlake Terrace through site landscaping.

### Standards

1. Perennials and/or annuals are encouraged to provide special interest and highlight pedestrian areas such as building and site entrances, public open space, plazas, and major pedestrian connections.
2. Rocks, pebbles, sand, and similar non-living materials shall not be used as groundcover substitutes, but may be used as accent features provided such features do not exceed a maximum 5% of the total landscape area.
3. All areas not otherwise devoted to landscape required by these standards, parking, structures, or other site improvements shall be planted or remain native, non-invasive vegetation.



## Pedestrian Activity Areas

### Intent

To provide continuous, safe, and consistent street frontage character within and adjacent to the street right-of-way.

### Standards

1. A pedestrian activity area shall be fifteen feet in width measured from the face of curb, even if part of the width is located on private property.
2. Pedestrian walkways or sidewalks ten feet in width shall provide for continuity between developments.
3. Unless otherwise required or where larger plaza areas are provided, sidewalk paving material shall be consistent with street frontage improvements of adjacent developments.
4. Required sidewalks and pedestrian walkways in the pedestrian activity area shall be concrete on a two and a half foot grid, standard Mountlake Terrace sidewalk color, and float finish.
5. A five foot wide landscape area between the curb and sidewalk shall be planted and maintained to provide a clear zone between three and eight feet high from ground level, excluding the mature tree canopy.



## Street Trees

### Intent

To provide consistent street frontage character within the street right-of-way.

### Standards

1. Street trees shall be planted in the right-of-way between the property line and street in pits with dimensions of 5 X 5 feet, approximately twenty-five to thirty feet on center.
2. Street trees shall be spaced to provide a full and connecting canopy above the roadway according to tree species type.
3. Street trees within the public right-of-way shall be located in tree pits with grates or in a continuous planting strip with other plant material.
4. If a street has a uniform planting of street trees or a distinctive species within the right-of-way, then new street trees should be of a similar height and form as the planting pattern and species.
5. Trees used adjacent to the public right-of-way should help create continuity within a neighborhood by displaying a strong repetitive form and/or seasonal interest with color, interesting bark, branching pattern, or flowers.
6. Where tree grates are required, they shall be ADA accessible and of a similar size and material as tree grates found in adjacent developments.
7. Street trees shall be installed in a planting bed or pit that provides a hospitable growing environment and be of a type and size approved by the Community Development Department for compatibility with the urban street system. (The Department may provide a list of compatible tree types, planter preparation and tree installation details.)



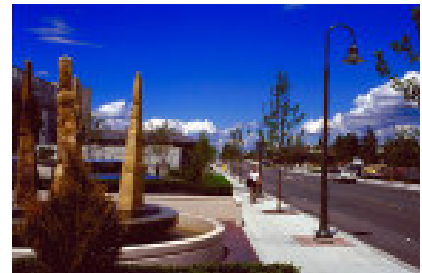
## Elements of the Pedestrian Activity Area

### Intent

To provide for the consolidation, enhancement, or maintenance of outdoor spaces for public use within the Town Center.

### Standards

1. Site designs shall have a pedestrian activity area or areas at or near their main entrances.
2. Pedestrian activity areas shall include at least four of the following elements:
  - a) special interest landscape
  - b) pedestrian scale, bollard, or other accent lighting
  - c) special paving, such as colored concrete, brick, or unit pavers
  - d) public art
  - e) seating, such as benches, tables, or low seating walls
  - f) water feature.
3. Pedestrian activity areas shall be highly visible from the street and shall be contiguous and concentrated in one or two locations rather than scattered in small, unusable portions.
4. Use of site furnishings, such as benches and planters, shall be provided at building entrances, plazas, open spaces, and/or other pedestrian gathering areas without blocking pedestrian access.
5. Opportunities for “stationary” activities such as standing or sitting shall be provided, where people choose to stay in a place to observe or participate in public outdoor activities. Seating can be primary (chairs and benches, such as that found at a café or a transit stop) or secondary (low walls, steps, fountain edges, where people spontaneously gather).
6. Pedestrian activity areas shall not be located adjacent to dumpster enclosures, loading/service areas.



## Parking Lot Location

### Intent

To locate parking lots behind or to the side of buildings and reduce overall need for parking space through the shared use of parking lots.

### Standards

1. Parking shall not be located between a building and the street unless the reuse of a preexisting building precludes this and is accepted by the Community Development Department. Additional mitigating landscape area and planting shall be required.
2. Every possible effort shall be made to provide shared parking facilities between developments.
3. Rocks, pebbles, sand and similar non-living materials may not be used as groundcover substitutes, but may be allowed as accent features within landscape planting areas so long as the area covered by such features does not exceed 5% of the total landscape planting area.



## Location of Driveways

### Intent

To maintain a contiguous, uninterrupted sidewalk by minimizing, consolidating, and/or eliminating driveway access points.

### Standards

1. All vehicular driveways are encouraged to be located off of arterials whenever possible.
2. Driveways shall not be located along 56th Avenue W, except where no other vehicular access to the property is available. Properties that abut other streets should have driveways on those streets. When no other access is available, driveways along 56th Avenue should be consolidated between developments for shared access.
3. Where a driveway is allowed on arterials, driveway entrances shall:
  - include an identifying feature, such as a trellis, monument, low wall/column or special landscape treatment, and
  - extend sidewalk paving material and grade across the driveway entrance.



## Site Lighting

### Intent

To provide pedestrian scale lighting, accent lighting, and festival lighting to accompany street lighting in the Town Center.

### Standards

1. Pedestrian scale street lights shall be installed three feet from face of curb within the pedestrian activity area. Type and spacing shall be approved by the Community Development Department.
2. Bollard lighting shall be used to define pedestrian walkways, crosswalks, connections and/or other pedestrian areas within a site development.
3. All lighting (except festival lighting) shall be shielded from the sky and adjacent properties either through exterior shields or through optics within the fixture.
4. Accent lighting should be used to highlight special focal points, building/site entrances, public art, and special landscape features.
5. Festival lighting is encouraged during holidays and festivals to reinforce the character and image of the Town Center.
6. Electrical wiring shall be provided to all tree pit areas (along 56th Avenue W and 236th Street SW) in order to provide for festival lighting.



## General Standards

### Intent

To ensure that the placement of buildings contributes to the liveliness of streets and emphasizes key intersections.

### Standards

1. Buildings, along with trees and landscaping, shall be predominant rather than parking lots and free-standing signs.
2. Pedestrian access to the building shall be visually and functionally clear and should offer a convenient alternative to walking through driveway entrances and exits.
3. Storefronts, windows, merchandise, and other aspects of business activity shall be visible by people traveling along commercial streets.
4. Development at intersections shall provide two or more of the following:
  - a) placement of the primary pedestrian entry
  - b) tower form
  - c) corner plaza
  - d) other architectural feature, as approved by the City, to create a distinctive and welcoming appearance from the two adjacent rights-of-way.



## Prominent Pedestrian Entrances

### Intent

To ensure that building entrances are welcoming to pedestrians, easily identifiable and accessible from streets and sidewalks.

### Standards

1. Visual prominence - the principal entry to the building shall be marked by at least one element from each of the following groups:

#### Group A

- a) recess
- b) overhang
- c) awning/canopy
- d) portico
- e) porch.

#### Group B

- a) clerestory
- b) sidelights flanking door
- c) ornamental lighting fixtures
- d) large textured entry door(s).

#### Group C

- a) stone, masonry or patterned tile paving in entry
- b) ornamental building name or address
- c) pots or planters with flowers
- d) fixed seating.



2. Weather protection - some form of weather protection (wind, sun, rain) shall be provided. This can be combined with the method used to achieve visual prominence.
3. On slopes, the primary pedestrian entrance should be located in the place that requires the least amount of grade change between the primary pedestrian entrance and the sidewalk.

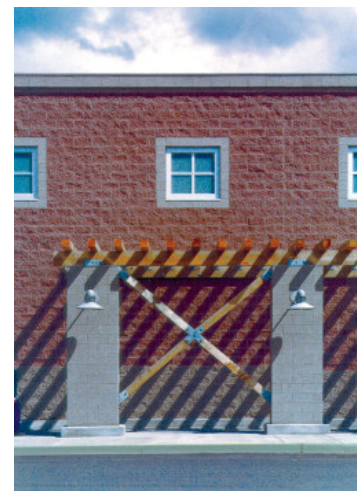
## Backsides and Blank Walls

### Intent

To ensure that buildings do not display unembellished walls visible from the street, the public right-of-way, any pedestrian activity area, or from an abutting residential zoning district.

### Standards

1. Any side of a building shall be given architectural treatment to meet the intent of this section by using two or more of the following:
  - a) varying rooflines with one foot or greater changes of height at least every twenty feet
  - b) transparent windows that comprise at least 30% of the visible façade
  - c) secondary entrances that include glazing and landscape treatment
  - d) balconies
  - e) awning/canopy
  - f) planted trellises
  - g) textured surfaces
  - h) projecting cornices at least twelve inches in height
  - i) variation in form and materials.
  
2. Where transparent windows are not provided on at least 30% of walls (or portions of walls) to meet the intent of this section, at least four of the following elements shall be incorporated:
  - a) masonry (but not flat concrete block)
  - b) concrete or masonry plinth at wall base
  - c) belt courses of a different texture and color
  - d) projecting cornice
  - e) projecting awning/canopy
  - f) decorative tilework
  - g) trellis containing planting.
  - h) medallions at intervals of twelve feet or less
  - i) opaque or translucent glass windows
  - j) artwork of a scale clearly visible from the associated right-of-way
  - k) vertical articulation
  - l) lighting fixtures
  - m) recesses
  - n) an architectural element not listed above that is approved as meeting the intent.



## Massing and Articulation

### Intent

To ensure that the size and volume of buildings in the Town Center are at an appropriate pedestrian scale.

### Standards

1. Buildings shall have a distinct “base” at the ground level, using two or more of the following:
  - a) transparent windows and doors that comprise at least 50% of the ground level façade
  - b) pedestrian-scaled architectural details (see ‘Ground Level Details’)
  - c) awnings/canopies (see ‘Weather Protection’)
  - d) overhangs of at least twelve inches
  - e) masonry strips and cornice lines
  - f) stone, masonry, or decorative concrete façade on the ground level.
2. The “top” of the building shall emphasize a distinct profile or outline with elements such as a projecting parapet, cornice, upper level setback, or pitched roofline.
3. Façades longer than thirty feet shall be broken down into smaller units through the use of offsets, recesses, staggered walls, stepped walls, pitched or stepped rooflines, overhangs and other elements of the building’s mass. Simply changing materials or color is not sufficient to accomplish this goal.
4. Articulation shall be provided along façades visible from streets, right-of-ways and residential areas.



## Setbacks

### Intent

To ensure the visibility of retail businesses and establish active, lively uses along the sidewalk.

### Standards

1. Buildings located within the Town Center shall not be set back from the required pedestrian activity area, with the following exceptions:
  - Deviations from the maximum setbacks may be approved by the Department to the extent necessary to accommodate pedestrian access where the site has grade or slope challenges or to ensure traffic safety.
  - A setback of up to four feet can be used to highlight entrances and provide for wider sidewalks or plantings.
  - A setback of up to ten feet may be allowed for the purpose of providing landscaped public space that includes seating.



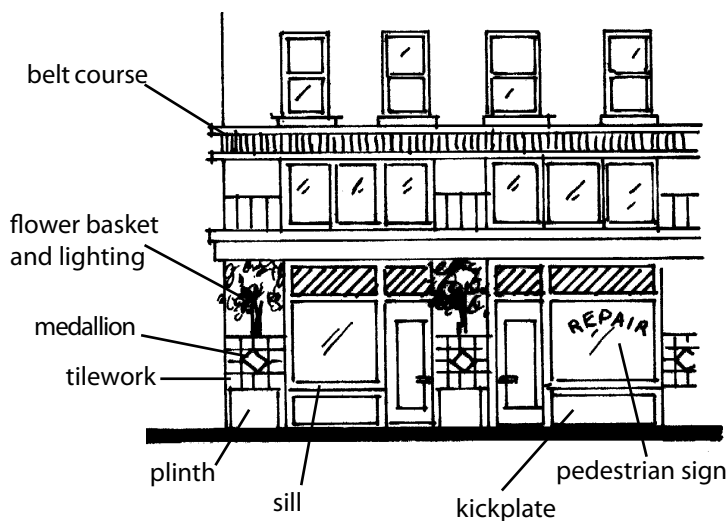
## Ground Level Details

### Intent

To reinforce the character of the pedestrian-oriented streetscape by encouraging the greatest amount of visual interest along the ground level of buildings on Town Center streets.

### Standards

1. Ground-floor, street-facing façades of commercial and mixed-used buildings shall incorporate at least six of the following elements:
  - a) lighting or hanging baskets supported by ornamental brackets
  - b) medallions
  - c) belt courses
  - d) plinths for columns
  - e) kickplate for storefront window
  - f) projecting sills
  - g) tilework
  - h) pedestrian scale sign(s) painted on windows
  - i) planter box
  - j) an architectural element not listed above, that is approved as meeting the intent.
  
2. The sides of buildings not facing a street shall incorporate at least four of the above mentioned items, unless the building side is less than eighteen inches from another existing building or otherwise will not be visible.



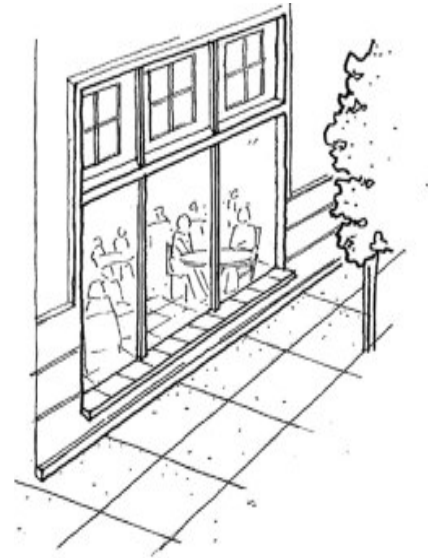
## Transparency

### Intent

To provide visual connections between activities inside and outside of buildings.

### Standards

1. A minimum of 50% of any ground floor façade facing the street shall be comprised of windows with transparent glass.
2. A minimum of 30% of any floor above the ground level façade facing the street shall be comprised of windows with transparent glass.
3. Reflective glass or film shall not be permitted on the ground floor façade.



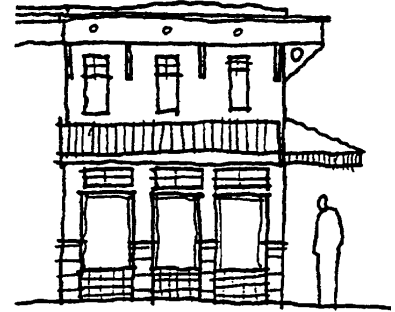
## Weather Protection

### Intent

To provide weather protection for pedestrians.

### Standards

1. Canopies or awnings shall be provided along the building façade facing the street. The minimum depth of any canopy or awning shall be five feet. The vertical dimension between the underside of a canopy or awning and the sidewalk shall be at least eight feet and no more than twelve feet.
2. Weather protection can be combined with the method used to achieve visual prominence at entrances.
3. Plastic awning material is not allowed. All awnings/canopies shall have closed ends.



## Roof Expression

### Intent

To ensure that rooflines present a distinct profile and appearance for the building and express the neighborhood character.

### Standards

1. Buildings shall include extended parapets and projecting cornices to create a prominent edge when viewed against the sky. Pitched roof elements are strongly encouraged.
2. Flat, unembellished parapets shall not be permitted.



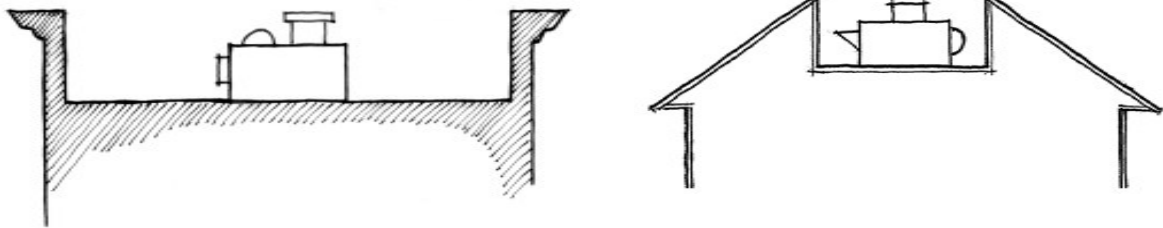
## Screening of Rooftop Equipment

### Intent

To screen the view of any rooftop mechanical and communications equipment from the ground level of nearby streets and residential areas.

### Standards

1. Mechanical equipment shall be screened by extended parapet walls or other roof forms that are integrated with the architecture of the building.
2. Painting rooftop mechanical equipment or erecting fences are not acceptable methods of screening rooftop equipment.
3. Any rooftop mounted voice/data transmission equipment shall be integrated with the design of the roof, rather than being simply attached to the roof-deck.



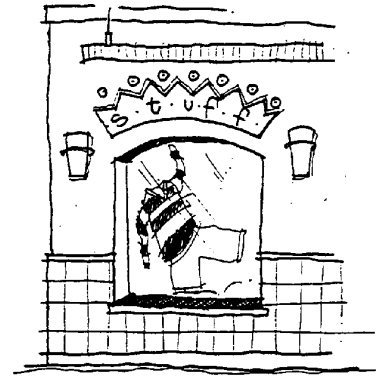
## Integration with Site and Building Design

### Intent

To ensure that signage is a part of the overall design approach of a project -- not an additive element or afterthought.

### Standards

1. The design of buildings and sites shall identify locations and sizes for future signs. As tenants install signs, it is expected that such signs shall be in conformance with an overall sign program that allows for advertising which fits with the architectural character, proportions, and details of the development.
2. Monument signs may be up to five feet in height and shall incorporate art features or plantings around the base.
3. Signs shall not project above the roof, parapet, or exterior wall.
4. Pole signs are not allowed.
5. Rooftop signs are not allowed.



## Creativity, Craft, and Artistic Elements

### Intent

To encourage interesting, creative and unique approaches to the design of signs for both new buildings and old buildings with new tenants.

### Standards

1. Signs should be expressive and individualized.
2. Signs should convey the product or service offered by the business in clear, graphic form.
3. Projecting signs, supported by ornamental brackets and oriented to pedestrians are strongly encouraged.
4. Internally illuminated boxes with formed or painted lettering are not permitted.
5. Neon may be used in an artful way in signs; however, simply outlining the roof or building in neon tubing shall not be allowed.

