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# LANDEN TOWN CENTER

# **DESIGN GUIDELINES**

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LandDesign, Inc.

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#### INTRODUCTION

Landen Town Center is the hub of the 600 acre Landen community in south Mecklenburg County. Town Center is at the center of the community occupying approximately 261 acres in the four quadrants created by the intersection of thoroughfares Rea Road Extension and East-West Circumferential Road. While the balance of the community comprises detached single family homes and lots, the town center will contain Landen's commercial uses - retail, office, and services, and medium density apartments.

The service area for the town center is planned to include a broader community, in particular residential areas served by Rea Road and East-West Circumferential Road including the communities of Marvin, Weddington, and Western Union County.

The following design guidelines are intended to assist owners, developers, builders, and designers in Landen to insure continuity of design and a continuance of quality throughout the community.

## 1.0 SITE PLANNING

## A. The Site

Landen Town Center comprises four quadrants of property, created by the crossroads of Rea Road Extension and East-West Circumferential Road. With Little exception, the property is gently rolling, falling uniformly in a southerly direction toward Flat Branch Creek, forming the southeast boundary of Town Center. Portions of the property are not well drained and include wetland areas, varying in quality. Much of the Town Center area is open field, not including significant trees. There does exist quality woodland, however, particularly in the southwest quadrant adjoining single family development and along Flat Branch Creek.

## B. Key Organizing Concepts

- The presence of wetlands on the site greatly influences the town center layout. Fingers of wetlands associated with Flat Branch Creek reach into the property providing an opportunity to use these features as open space connections. Other large areas of wetland are present in more upland areas, disconnected from Flat Branch. Flat Branch and its flood plain will remain open space and will become the major greenway connector for the community.
- The bisection of the site by the thoroughfares creates four land quadrants which, due to their size, orientation, depth, and access have varying potential for development.
- It is intended that the town center has a mix of uses including a significant retail component with community and neighborhood shopping, neighborhood office, attached multi-family residential, and possibly a corporate office component.
- The four quadrants of the town center will be connected by loop roads and sidewalks to connect one area to another.
- The streetscape for Rea Road Extension and East-West Circumferential Road will provide landscaped corridors throughout the town center, including pedestrian walks, with special emphasis at the intersection to create a strong sense of place.

#### C. Land Use and Development Program

#### 1. Northeast Quadrant

A neighborhood shopping center is planned for the area nearest the intersection of Rea Road Extension and East-West Circumferential Road. This center will include an anchor grocery, two or three mini anchor stores, shops, and two stand alone business parcels.

The balance of this site has several optional uses. Option 1 is the entire parcel is used for a single corporate office headquarters. In this scheme, the buildings will be at the front center of the property, clustering buildings with an emphasis on a major front open space. Parking and service will be at the rear of the complex. Some convenience and customer parking may be at the front.

A second option would be to use the half of the parcel nearest the intersection for office and the balance for multi-family residential units. A third option would be to use this entire property for multi-family residential development.

Other iterations exist that provide the opportunity to build lesser intensive uses, such as detached single family units. In all cases, however, more intensive uses are located nearest the intersection and lesser intensive or lower density units on the parcel further away from the intersection.

2. Southeast Quadrant

A single business property is planned on the corner at the intersection. The balance of the property is to be used for multi-family residential

- development. The site plan concept envisions building massing along East-West Circumferential Road which is looser and less formal further from the intersection becoming more formal and urban in character as it moves nearer the intersection.

3. Southwest Quadrant

The property nearest the intersection and along the frontage of Rea Road Extension will be developed for offices which are envisioned as a series of two and three story office buildings clustered around interior courtyards. Maximum building height for Parcel II, Tract B should be no higher than 2 stories. Parking would be kept to the perimeter. Along the frontage of East-West Circumferential Road and Rea Road an architectural edge forms the frontage to enhance the scale and character of the town center.

The site has several optional uses. Option 1 is that the entire site is developed solely for office uses. A second option is that the site is developed solely as a residential use. The third option of development is that the combination of office and residential development. All options must conform to the general notes prepared by Perry, Patrick, Farmer & Michaux. Each development option is to recognize and preserve the presence of wetlands and should organize the buildings to provide views into these open spaces.

4. Northwest Quadrant

A community retail center is planned on this quadrant, composed of three parts. The main retail center, having three or more anchor stores, mini anchors and shops, are at the rear of the development parcel. One hundred foot wide buffer is provided between the service area and nearest residential lots at the property line.

The focus of the property is a pedestrian-oriented shopping core located at the front center of the property. The core will provide restaurants, shops, and other businesses at ground floor with the option of office space on the second floor. The core is organized on an axis with the intersection and the center of the main shopping area. The axis is a pedestrian and landscape spine connecting the pedestrian core, main retail area, and other parts of town center. The core area is designed around a courtyard which may include shade trees, water fountains, pergolas, umbrellas, or other shading devices, and ornamental flower beds to create a comfortable and inviting atmosphere for shopping and outdoor eating.

Three stand alone business or restaurant properties are located in the northern edge of the central core. Access to these properties will be provided by an internal road system.

#### 2.0 LANDSCAPE AND OPEN SPACE

#### A. Streetscape

- 1. The main thoroughfares, Rea Road and East-West Circumferential Road shall be treated as gateway entrances to Town Center. Streetscape design grading, landscape, lighting, signs, monumentation, and furniture shall be done so as to provide a consistency and continuity throughout these corridors in the town center area. For purposes of design the streetscape area shall at a minimum include the road right-of-way, landscape setback area, and any additional areas in the parcels which are contiguous landscape zones.
- 2. A 50 foot wide landscape setback will be provided continuously along both sides of the thoroughfares, Rea Road and East-West Circumferential Road, contiguous to the right-of-way for the entire frontage of town center. Setback areas will be owned and managed as common open space.
- 3. The design concept for streetscape along the thoroughfares shall be to provide an informal variety and massing of trees and/or shrubs in lawn areas in the areas further away from town center. Earth mounding may be used informally to enhance visual buffers to parking zones or adjacent land uses. Sidewalks should meander in graceful curves through this area and may be located in the road-right-of-way and/or landscape setback. Tree spacing in this area shall vary and be designed to provide a deliberate clustering or massing affect.
- 4. The streetscape should transition to a more formal and uniform treatment using shade trees near the intersection of Rea Road and East-West Circumferential Road. Tree spacing in this area shall not be greater than 40' o.c. in planting areas.

A landscape design for the intersection will create a sense of arrival and provide continuity of landscape and hardscape unify the four corners of intersection. These areas will include pedestrian crossings in accordance with NCDOT standards. Any median areas available for landscaping within 200 feet of the intersection shall be included in the landscape design.

- 5. Parking areas immediately adjacent to the landscape setback will be appropriately screened to reduce glare and the impact of large expanses of pavement in accordance with the provisions of the Zoning Ordinance.
- 6. Storm water retention will not be permitted within any setback area.
- 7. Utility easements shall be coordinated to minimize impact on existing setback vegetation or proposed setback treatments.

#### **B.** Landscape Design and Materials

- 1. A landscape master plan for streetscape design shall be prepared by the Petitioners in accordance with these design guidelines for Rea Road Extension and East-West Circumferential Road at the time of roadway construction or prior to the issuance of building permits for adjacent uses, which ever occurs first. The design intent should be to establish continuity and unify these major thoroughfares as they create a significant "crossroad" for the community.
- 2. Local indigenous plants species should be predominately used.
- 3. Canopy shade trees should be used in an organized manner along designated roadway thoroughfares within the development to define vehicular circulation corridors and establish continuity throughout the development. Species should be selected on their merit as a street tree and should be compatible with the overall plant pallet for the development.
- 4. Flowering trees should be used to create visual interest at appropriate locations and produce seasonal color.
- 5. Buffer areas with existing vegetation shall be supplemented with evergreen trees or shrubs to provide screening of parking and service areas should existing vegetation not provide a screen.
- 6. Buffer areas with no existing vegetation shall be designed to include evergreen trees and/or berms for screening purposes. Planting schemes may include deciduous shade trees, flowering trees and deciduous and evergreen shrubs and ground covers to create visual interest and seasonal color. All plant species shall be compatible with the overall plant pallet for the development.

- 7. All proposed planting within thoroughfare setbacks shall be in accordance with the Zoning Ordinance.
- 8. All specified plant materials shall meet or exceed the minimum installation sizes as follows and shall meet all minimum requirements of the Zoning Ordinance. Caliper measurements are to be taken 6" above ground.

Canopy hardwood trees - 21/2"-3" caliper, 8'-10' height

Large evergreen trees - 3'-4' spread, 6'-8' height

Small deciduous trees - 11/2" caliper, 7'-8' height

Small evergreen trees - 2'-3' spread, 4'-5' height

Large evergreen shrubs - 3 gallon, 24" spread, 30" height

- 9. Berms should be gradual, flowing and undulating and should be designed in coordination with proposed planting to assure effective screening and a harmonious appearance.
- 10. Walls and fences may be utilized for screening purposes within thoroughfare setback areas provided locations, heights, materials, and colors reflect all applicable Architectural Control Guidelines. Such structures shall be designed to assure a subtle transition from adjacent screening treatments and shall be subject to review and approval by the Design Review Committee.

## C. Sidewalks and Pedestrian Zones

1. Sidewalks will be provided by Petitioners along each side of major thoroughfares. As a minimum, other sidewalks will be provided in accordance with the appropriate Subdivision Ordinance. Sidewalks will be installed along Rea Road and the East-West Circumferential concurrent with road improvements in the areas nearest the intersection or prior to the issuance of building permits for adjoining parcels in the areas farther from the intersection. In this connection, reference is made to the Concept Streetscape Plan for a specific sidewalk schedule. Within each nonresidential parcel sidewalks will be installed for each outparcel as outparcels are developed unless a shopping center is built first in which case sidewalks shall be installed for the entire parcel, including outparcels.

- 2. Sidewalks should be designed to provide adequate and functional pedestrian circulation throughout the development and should provide a safe linkage between all proposed uses including access to pedestrian walkways systems within proposed open spaces and designated greenways.
- 3. Sidewalks should be planned to minimize roadway crossings and function with vehicular traffic signalization and signage. All pedestrian crossings should be clearly marked and defined consistently throughout the development.
- 4. Sidewalks should be designed in conjunction with other landscape elements such as street trees, existing vegetation, buffer planting, berms, walls, lighting, etc. and should provide shade and promote a pleasant experience for the pedestrian. Sidewalks should meander where appropriate and provide varying but reasonable separation from vehicular use areas.

## D. Lighting

- 1. The design, installation, and maintenance of streetscape and pedestrian lighting will be coordinated throughout the site and lighting fixtures for each type of development will be consistent. All such lighting fixtures will be subject to review and approval by the Design Review Committee and, if required, by NCDOT.
- 2. The height and spacing of fixtures shall provide safe and adequate lighting that is appropriate for the thoroughfare classification. In parking area light fixtures should not exceed 30' in height. In Parcel II, Tract B detached lighting shall not exceed 20' in height.

# E. Open Space

1. It is intended that a continuous pathway network be provided through Landen Town Center to enable pedestrians and bicycles safe and convenient means of access. In general, open spaces including greenway, buffers, landscape setbacks and other open areas are intended for possible pathway construction. Wetlands are preserves and generally not intended for any type of construction.

- 2. Open space should be located strategically and should be of appropriate dimension to serve its intended function. Open space should be allocated to connect various land uses with the Flat Branch Greenway corridor.
- 3. At least 10% of each quadrant shall be devoted to open space consisting of external perimeter buffers, internal parcel buffers and setbacks along vehicular thorough fares. All minimum open space requirements for each District shall be satisfied. For purposes of this calculation, paved parking areas may not be treated as open space. However, required landscaped areas within parking areas may be included as part of the open space.
- 4. Reasonable efforts shall be made to preserve all significant trees (8" DBH or greater) within open space areas. During construction, significant trees shall be protected per standards of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Land Development Manual.
- 5. The developer will preserve the right to utilize open spaces to accommodate pedestrian walkways and/or bicycle pathways, berms, grading, slopes, walls, fences, signs and graphics, lighting, drainage, and utilities.
- 6. A network of pedestrian walkways and bicycle pathways will be designed and constructed to provide a safe and aesthetic linkage between residential neighborhoods, commercial parcels and the Flat Branch Greenway corridor.

# F. Parcel Buffers

- 1. All areas designated as buffers shall be qualified as permanent open space. Buffer widths from parcel to parcel and from parcel to external property boundary shall vary depending on the proposed use of each parcel and the existing use of adjacent off-site property. Reference is made to the Technical Data Sheet for specific buffer dimensions.
- 2. For all perimeter lines (other than perimeter lines which abut a public street r.o.w.) where multi-family or non-residential zoning abuts single-family residential zoning, a perimeter landscaped zone is required adjacent to the side, front and rear property lines. This landscaped area must include a planned combination of trees, bushes, grass and ground cover. These landscape zones shall meet or exceed the buffer requirements of Section 12.302 and 12.304 of the Mecklenburg County Zoning Ordinance, as shown on the Technical Data Sheet.

- 3. Each access point along the thoroughfares leading into the Town Center shall be designed to complement buffer areas by incorporating such features as monuments and landscaping.
- 4. All internal buffer relationships shall be designed to ensure adequate screening and privacy between adjacent developments and building areas. Site relationships such as building orientations and elevations shall be designed to enhance privacy and screening requirements between different land uses.
- 5. In areas where natural vegetation is insufficient, proper infill planting will be required in order to attain the desired screening relationship between uses. Existing natural vegetation shall be preserved in those parts of all buffer areas which are designated as undisturbed areas on the Technical Data Sheet, except to the extent necessary to accommodate pedestrian pathways, access points, berms, walls, fences, drainage pipes or channels, grading and utility lines and facilities. Grading may be performed and slopes may be installed within those parts of any buffer area which are not designated as undisturbed areas on the Technical Data Sheet. Utility installations may only cross undisturbed buffer zones at interior angle measured at the property lines which are not less than 75 degrees and, to the extent possible, paths cleared for such utility lines shall be replanted with plant materials which are the same as or similar to the types of materials that are in place within the buffer zone involved. In all buffer areas where existing trees and natural vegetation have been cleared to accommodate pedestrian pathways, berms, walls, fences, drainage pipes or channels, grading and the installation of utility lines and facilities, the cleared, unimproved areas will be landscaped. All buffer areas at a minimum will satisfy the requirements of Section 12.302 or Section 12.304 of the Mecklenburg County Zoning Ordinance.

# 3.0 SIGNS, MONUMENTATION AND GRAPHIC STANDARDS

It is intended that signs, sign platforms or carriers and other monumentation will be designed to have a continuity throughout town center. This continuity may be obtained through uniform use of materials, type style, color, and other design considerations. Variation is permitted, however it is intended that a continuity in graphic standards be present. Generally, it is recommended that monuments and signs have some affinity to the architecture in that area. Materials in business and office areas may most appropriately use masonry, stone or steel in sign and monuments while residential areas may most appropriately use stone or wood.

Signs located within 400 feet of the Rea Road and East-West Circumferential intersection should be part of an "intersection focal" design theme. This design would provide an integrated approach to materials and graphic design throughout the intersection area. Signs included in this area should be a monument-type and including a combination of low profile, horizontal elements. No basic pole-type signs will be permitted.

All such signs shall be subject to review and approval by the Design Review Committee and at a minimum shall meet all standards of the Mecklenburg County Sign Ordinance.

## A. Project and Directory Signs

- 1. Retail project and directory signs may only be located at major intersections along Rea Road Extension and East-West Circumferential Road and should identify only the project situated within the quadrant in which they are located.
- 2. A master signage and monumentation program shall be prepared to establish a theme, location points, and vocabulary of materials that will contribute to a strong unifying element for the development.
- 3. Such signs will be designed and coordinated in conjunction with entrance landscape treatments.
- 4. All such signs will complement architectural design and should utilize materials and colors that are consistent with the overall development.

# B. Identity Signs

- 1. Identity signs will be utilized to identify projects within each quadrant, individual buildings, or individual businesses within office or commercial buildings. All out parcel signs shall be low profile monument type signs that will conform to the overall project master signage and graphic system.
- 2. All such signs shall be fixed and may not move, rotate or flash.
- 3. An identity sign may either be a wall sign or a detached sign but in either case should be complementary in scale and appearance to the architectural design of the building. Unifying elements such as size, material, color and lighting techniques should be utilized to assure a harmonious appearance.
- 4. Lighted signs will not interfere with the effectiveness or obscure any official traffic sign, device or signal or generate beams or rays of light of such intensity or brilliance as to cause glare or to impair the vision of motorists on any street.
- 5. Signage is not permitted along the rear of all buildings facing Blakeney Heath Road.
- 6. The maximum height of signage along Blakeney Heath Road is to be no larger than 7' high and 50 square feet.

## C. Informational Signs

- 1. A master signage program shall be developed for all informational signs throughout the development, including directional and regulatory signs such as traffic signs, building or address directional signs, handicap signs, etc., prior to the issuance of building permits.
- 2. Such signs should be easily understood and complementary in scale and appearance throughout the development. Graphic symbols and word economy should be utilized.

## 4.0 BUILDING AND ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN CRITERIA

To reinforce the quality of town center, architectural design should typically be urban in character, particularly in the areas adjoining the intersection of Rea Road and East-West Circumferential Road. The business and retail buildings should have a consistent architectural theme including the northeast, southeast, and northwest quadrants. The neighborhood offices in the southwest corner should also convey an urban, town-like feel.

In the main retail area occupying the northwest quadrant an axial design connects the main retail center through the pedestrian shopping core to the monumentation at the main intersection. Buildings coinciding with this axis should be landmarks including architecture elements and heights sufficient to become focal points for town center. In the main retail center, these elements should be repeated to identify main anchor stores. Similarly, these same elements may be used in the neighborhood center or other business properties in town center.

In the southeast quadrant of the intersection of Rea Road and East-West Circumferential a retail parcel on the corner adjoins a multi-family residential area to the south. The architectural design of this retail building should contribute to the design unity of the intersection as a whole as well as provide a coordinated appearance with the residential buildings.

## A. Architectural Design

- 1. Building height and massing should be analyzed as they relate to the parcel on which they are to be constructed and to adjacent structures. Integrating the structure with the topography, existing vegetation and building clusters should be a major objective for each building within the development. Generally, a variety of building heights and rooflines are encouraged.
- 2. The developer should achieve compatibility and continuity of architectural design through the use of one or a combination of materials, colors, textures, facade articulation, rooflines, building mass and scale, and other criteria as deemed appropriate. The developer reserves the right to utilize variant color, material, texture, architectural facades, rooflines, building mass and scale as long as compatibility in aesthetics and design is achieved. Pitched roofs or architectural elements which lend variety to the appearance of the roofline shall be used. Expanses of flat, uninterrupted roofs are not permitted.

- 3. Monotony of design, especially in multi-family projects, should be avoided. Variation of detail, form, and siting should be used to provide visual interest.
- 4. All buildings proposed for the development shall be reviewed and approved by the Design Review Committee.
- 5. When developing the northwest quadrant, the developer must achieve continuity of architectural design along Blakeney Heath Road. The aesthetics of the rear and side facades in this location are to match the facade of front of the structures.

#### **B.** Service Zones and Mechanical Areas

- 1. Building service areas including trash and loading zones should be located with strong regard for the site, visibility, and adjacent uses. Ideally, such areas should be positioned so as not to be visible from public view, however, their function as loading and service zones should also be strong consideration. Should the service zone be visible from public view, the area shall be screened through the use of walls, fences, plant material, grade changes, retaining walls or other element as deemed appropriate. The screening method should blend harmoniously with the building while creating a soft transition to the adjacent landscape.
- 2. Mechanical equipment or other utility hardware on the roofs of building should be integrated into the architectural design so that they are screened from public view. Such equipment located on the ground shall also be screened through the use of walls, fences, plant material, grade changes, retaining walls or other elements as deemed appropriate.
- 3. All screening techniques shall be effective during all seasons of the year.
- 4. All dumpsters will be screened with solid enclosures with gates.

#### C. Pedestrian Zones

- 1. All pedestrian zones such as walkways and crosswalks shall be clearly defined and function in a safe manner.
- 2. Pedestrian circulation servicing each building and adjacent uses should be designed to maximize function and create a pleasant experience for

pedestrians as they move about from building to building or from building to vehicular parking areas.

- 3. Landscaping will be employed to provide areas of shade and to define pedestrian circulation ways. As pedestrians approach buildings, landscaping should serve to bring scale of the building to the pedestrian level while complementing the architectural design and other hardscape features such as plazas, steps, walls, fountains, etc.
- 4. A variation of landscape materials should be utilized to create visual interest and seasonal color including canopy trees, flowering trees, evergreen trees, evergreen and deciduous shrubs, and evergreen ground covers. All landscaping shall meet or exceed the minimum requirements of the Zoning Ordinance.
- 5. The use of site appurtenances integrated with pedestrian use areas is strongly encouraged to promote a useable and enjoyable setting. Such elements include benches, tables, trash receptacles, fountains, drinking fountains, pedestrian scale lighting, planters, etc.