MULTI-FAMILY DEVELOPMENT POLICY

Contents

1 Introduction

1.1 Intent

Multi-family development continues to be a highly requested land use given the population growth and overall increasing economic development that is occurring throughout the Dallas-Ft. Worth area. The City desires high quality multi-family development within the City's boundaries that incorporates best planning and development practices; and considers site specific conditions, the surrounding natural and built environment, and the local neighborhoods. To achieve this goal, this policy illustrates design solutions and techniques for use in multi-family developments that are appropriate and preferred within Farmers Branch.

This policy establishes a consistent standard against which applications for multi-family development will be evaluated. The aim of this policy is not to stifle innovation or creativity, but to provide solutions to design challenges that will result in high quality multi-family development. Through application of this policy, new multi-family development will contribute to an attractive public realm with a sense of place, while also providing attractive and functional spaces for residents, and resulting high quality housing options that will be successful and sustainable over time.

1.2 How to Use This Document

This multi-family development policy is intended to supplement direction from the City's comprehensive plans and zoning regulations. The policy includes many recommendations ranging from locational considerations to site layout and building design elements. Applicants considering new multi-family development within Farmers Branch should review the policy in tandem with applicable comprehensive plans and zoning regulations, and incorporate the policy recommendations into proposed applications, as applicable.

While the City desires all policy recommendations within this document implemented, the City recognizes that site-specific conditions may cause the implementation of all recommendations to not be practical or possible. In these cases, the developer should provide a rationale (or justification) for why a policy recommendation cannot be implemented, and discuss design alternatives with staff.

When applications for rezoning are considered by the City, this policy will play a key role in the formulation of the staff recommendation, and the Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council's decision.

For ease of interpretation, consistent language has been used throughout this policy. Below is a list of common terms that found within this policy:

- The use of words such as "*shall*", "must" and "*is/are required*" signifies that these policy recommendations are required for implementation.
- The use of words such as "*should*", "*encouraged*" or "*may*" signifies that the City strongly encourages the policy or a similar technique that meets the spirit and intent of the policy be implemented.

1.3   Relationship to Other Plans and Ordinances

These polices are intended to supplement the City's comprehensive plans and zoning regulations. To achieve this, the following outlines how the multifamily development policy should be implemented relative to other City plans and ordinances:

- Where there is a conflict between this policy and existing zoning regulations, the existing zoning regulations shall prevail.
- As it relates to existing adopted comprehensive plans, this multi-family development policy will supplement policy recommendations included within the adopted comprehensive plans.
- For developments in which new zoning regulations are proposed, the proposed regulations shall incorporate the recommendations contained within this policy.

1.4   Attainable Multi-family Housing

Attainable housing, also referred to as affordable housing and/or work force housing, can be desirable forms of housing as it provides an additional housing choice for residents, particularly residents employed within the service, local government, and educational employment sectors. As single family and market rate rental housing costs continue to increase, the need for attainable housing – including attainable multi-family housing – will become more prevalent. Therefore, the city should continue to monitor housing options provided within the community and consider further defining what is meant by attainable housing. Until that occurs, a broader approach to accommodating attainable multi-family housing may need to be considered including but not limited to:

- lower costs for development and construction;
- fewer development amenities offered;
- reduction in development density;
- financial incentives; and/or
- developments which pursue third party financing options.

Where it is demonstrated that a proposed multi-family development will provide housing for Farmers Branch residents at an attainable price point, relief to certain policy recommendations may be necessary such as density (section 3), open space (4.2), and building materials, modulation/articulation and entrances (5.1, 5.2 and 5.4).

2   Location

When considering where to allow new multi-family developments, the creation of successful neighborhoods for the longer term should be at the forefront of the city's priorities, especially in areas where multi-family development is being introduced for the first time. Therefore, as new multi-family developments are proposed, the following shall be considered:

- Developments are near or adjacent to other existing (or planned) multi-family and/or residential uses, thereby promoting a sustainable neighborhood over time;
- In the case of multi-family being initially introduced within a given area, it should be feasible for additional multi-family or other residential uses to be accommodated within the same area in order to avoid "leap frog" and disconnected or isolated residential developments; and
- Proximity to larger employment centers and neighborhood retail services should be factored into siting new multi-family developments to support live/work/play neighborhood concepts.

Additionally, the city needs to be targeted in its approach and intentional when allowing new multi-family developments within the city. Below is a summary of specific geographic areas of the city where direction has been provided either through recently adopted comprehensive plans, specific City Council discussion and direction related to multi-family uses, and/or through the development of this policy.

- West Side: Over 8,000 units of multi-family development have been entitled, of which some has yet to be constructed. During 2019, City Council advised that no new multi-family development should be entitled within the West Side.
- East Side: Six out of the eight sub-districts as provided for in the East Side Plan (adopted 2017), recommend high quality multi-family uses as an appropriate land use. However, given the approximate 1,100 acres that comprise the East Side, it will be important that recommendations included within this multi-family development policy are factored into rezoning proposals. While repositioning the city's East Side into an area that supports live, work and social opportunities, not all properties located within the six sub-districts are appropriate for multi-family development.
- Station Area/ IH-35E corridor: Multi-family development should continue to be supported within this area consistent with existing zoning regulations (Planned Development No. 86/Station Area Code) and the recently adopted IH-35E Corridor Vision Study (adopted 2021), thereby supportive of pedestrian and transit-oriented development in proximity to the existing DART light rail station.
- Four Corners: The area surrounding the intersection of Josey Lane and Valley View Lane, commonly referred to as the city's Four Corners, should be considered for new multi-family residential uses as recommended by the Four Corners study (adopted 2008) and reaffirmed by the Central Area Plan (adopted 2012). For existing retail businesses to remain successful for the longer term, as well as if the city is wanting to attract additional retail/commercial businesses to the area, more residents will be necessary to support additional buying power.

3 Density

Appropriate building density for multi-family developments should follow direction provided by the city's comprehensive plans and applicable zoning ordinances, as well as take into consideration the surrounding neighborhood context where appropriate. Adopted comprehensive planning policies which support maximizing development, more efficient use of land, promoting housing near employment opportunities, and having entertainment and retail uses available for social experiences, rely upon having higher density multi-family developments to assist with achieving these goals. Additionally, the increased residential densities assist with supporting new retail, restaurant and entertainment uses locating within a community because these types of businesses cannot sustain themselves based on daytime employment populations only. Conversely, in areas where single-family neighborhoods exist and smaller building scale is desired, lower multi-family densities or other forms of residential development may be more appropriate.

Therefore, given the locational considerations for new multi-family developments recommended earlier in this policy (section 2), combined with the city's adopted comprehensive planning policies, the following is recommended as it relates to building densities:

- Multi-family developments shall at a minimum, be built to a density ranging between 45 to 80 units per acre. Densities should be maximized in order to promote more efficient use of land and achieve other recommendations included in this policy.
- Multi-family proposals consisting of densities less than 45 units per acre, may be considered if:
    1. the development proposals are consistent with the other recommendations included within this policy;
    2. the development proposals advance attainable housing goals for the city; or
    3. should be reevaluated and considered for other types of residential developments, such as single-family attached (townhomes) and duplexes if contextually appropriate with other nearby land uses and building scale.
- "Garden style," lower density multi-family developments with surface parking are not the preferred development form given their inefficient and sprawled use of land, and because the site layout does not support an activated public realm with buildings defining the street nor promote long-term sustainable development.

4   Site Design

There are many factors that can influence successful sustainable developments over time. In the case of multi-family developments, building placement and design, the use of durable and aesthetically pleasing exterior materials (discussed in section 5), useable open space, enhanced landscaping, appropriately sited parking, and more, can collectively result higher quality developments which will be sustainable for the long term. Also, well-designed multi-family developments, which are integrated with the surrounding neighborhood area, contribute to the feeling of safety and security as experienced in the public realm. Therefore, the recommendations included within this section contribute to the development of well-designed sites that:

- Integrate into the existing neighborhood, and consider future planned land uses;
- Integrate non-residential uses vertically, or in some cases horizontally, to provide a mix of uses that support each other (where appropriate);
- Ensure appropriate connections between the public and private realm;
- Provide usable open space;
- Encourage pedestrian movement, and add to the safety of the pedestrian environment; and
- Minimize negative impacts of multi-family service areas.

4.1   Orientation

Multi-family sites should have an active relationship and orientation towards the street. Achieving an appropriate relationship with the street will improve the public realm by creating a safe and attractive streetscape that is integral to the neighborhood. Therefore, the following recommendations should be implemented including:

- Urban style multi-family development with higher densities, structured parking, and streetscape amenities is strongly encouraged thereby being the preferred development form.
- Buildings should be oriented towards the public street in order to better define a pedestrian-oriented street space.
- Setbacks from the adjacent street right-of-way should be minimized and designed to accommodate street trees, street furniture, wider sidewalks, and pedestrian lighting. Where ground floor units have individual entries and gardens (or "yardettes"), greater setbacks may be allowed.
- Primary building entrances facing the public street should be given the greatest emphasis because this conveys to pedestrians where to enter the building.
- "Garden style," lower density multi-family developments with surface parking are not the preferred development form given their inefficient and sprawled use of land, and because the site layout does not support an activated public realm with buildings defining the street nor promote long-term sustainable development.

4.1.1   Mixed-use developments

Mixed-use developments primarily contain multi-family residential uses and at least one other land use (most often retail commercial or office), in either a vertical or horizontal configuration. Mixed-use

developments can add services and diversity to a residential neighborhood, and promote neighborhood vibrancy. When considering the appropriateness of mixed-use developments, the surrounding land uses and their long-term success should be considered, in addition to the following:

- Mixed-use developments should be considered along major corridors and at corner locations where there is increased visibility and traffic, or within defined mixed-use areas, such as the Station Area. Retail uses desire active street corridors with higher traffic volumes and increased visibility to attract customers from a larger trade area, in addition to residents residing within the mixed-use development.
- In order to reduce the occurrence of vacant retail or office spaces, mixed-use developments should not be located adjacent to secondary roadways. If a developer would like to locate the development adjacent to secondary roadways, then ground floor residential units could be designed to accommodate residential uses initially and later be converted to retail commercial or office uses.
- All uses proposed within the mixed-use development should be able to successfully exist if they were individually developed, in particular the multi-family residential use.

4.1.2 Ground floor uses

The provision of individual entrances for ground floor uses can improve the pedestrian environment and create pedestrian scale along the street or internal sidewalks of a site.

- Ground floor residential units should be raised above the street level to provide increased privacy for residents, while maintaining "eyes on the street".
- Entries to ground floor uses and individual residential units should be provided when the uses or units front a public street, private street, open space or sidewalk.

Mixed-use development can provide services to neighborhood residents and can help to activate the street. In this case ground floor commercial also wraps around structured parking.

- Entrances should be defined through the use of architectural details such as awnings, porches, recessed entrances, or lighting (see section 5.4).
- Landscaping and/or low level fencing (less than 4 feet in height) should be used to define the public and private realm. Chain link fencing shall not be permitted.

Individual entries for ground floor residential units can activate the street, make the area more pedestrian friendly, and increase pedestrian safety. Raising ground floor units, as in the picture above, contributes to increased privacy for residents.

4.1.3   Surrounding land uses

If an adjacent existing or planned land use is less intensive (i.e. single family residential, duplex or townhome) than the proposed multi-family use, a transition or buffer between uses should be provided. One or more of the following techniques should be applied to ensure an appropriate transition between the multi-family site and adjacent use(s):

- Setbacks from lot lines shared with the adjacent, less intensive uses, may be increased. This can decrease the impact of the scale of the multi-family development and maintain access to light and air for the adjacent property.
- Vertical modulation (section 5.2) may be used to decrease building massing.
- Increased landscaping or attractive screening methods between multi-family and the less intensive uses may be included in the design to create a physical separation.

4.2   Open Space

Open space provides the opportunity to activate the site for residents and the surrounding neighborhood. Open space can be provided as private open space if for the sole use of residents and their guests, or as public open space which is accessible to residents and the general public. While it is desirable for multi-family developments to provide a combination of both useable public and private open space, publicly accessible open spaces are preferred because it provides an amenity for the overall neighborhood in which the multi-family development is located. Regardless of how open space is provided (public, private or combination thereof), it is the goal of this policy to have 150 square feet of open space per dwelling unit provided, and that the open space is useable, appropriately designed for the scale of the development, and satisfies the need for where it is located. For sites located within the Station Area or within one-half (1/2) mile (i.e. 10-minute walk) of city-owned parks, it may be appropriate to consider developments with lesser amounts of open space.

4.2.1   Private open space

Private open space is often constructed as amenities for residents and their guests only, and may include but not be limited to, landscaped courtyards, shared patios/decks, barbeque areas, play structures, swimming pools, and green spaces. Private open spaces should be sited in a manner that encourages use and ensures accessibility to all residents. Additional recommendations related to designing private open space include:

- Open spaces should have a minimum dimension of 15 feet in any direction to ensure usability. Site-specific exceptions may be made to this requirement if an acceptable rationale is provided.
- The majority of private open spaces should provide active or passive amenities for residents. If the size of the development allows, a variety of amenities should be included in the site design.
- Private open spaces should be ADA compliant.
- Required setback areas or build-to-zone areas shall not count towards the open space requirement, unless they are a part of a private amenity such as a "yardette."
- Useable open space should be contiguous to create courtyard amenities and avoid incidental disconnected open spaces.

Private open space can provide a variety of amenities for residents that add to the vibrancy and sense of community within a multi-family site.

4.2.2   Public open space

As mentioned previously, publicly accessible open spaces are preferred because it provides an amenity for the overall neighborhood in which the multi-family development is located, in addition to serving the needs of the development's residents. Examples of public open space include but are not limited to plazas, open space areas for active and/or passive use, sidewalk, hike and bike trails, and amenities that are provided on the site and privately maintained but are accessible to the general public. That being said, publicly accessible open space areas such as hike and bike trails and public parks that are dedicated to the City may be considered, if agreeable by the City. Additional recommendations related to designing public open space include:

- Public open spaces should be highly visible from adjacent public streets and easily accessible by the general public.
- Public open spaces should be a minimum of size of 15 feet in any direction to ensure usability; however, exceptions to this could be made for sidewalks. Site-specific exceptions may be made to this requirement if an acceptable rationale is provided.
- Inclusion of street furniture and appropriate lighting within public open space is encouraged to ensure usability and safety.
- Sidewalks and hike and bike trails provided as public open space shall meet all applicable City standards.
- Public open space shall be ADA compliant.
- Useable open space should be contiguous to create courtyard amenities and avoid incidental disconnected open spaces.

4.3 Parking

The City encourages structured parking be provided for all new multi-family developments. Structured parking is a more efficient use of land than surface parking, and allows for increased densities and open space amenities being provided on a site. In site-specific cases where the City deems it appropriate, surface parking may be considered to meet some, or in rare cases all, of the parking requirement for a site; however, the design and placement of surface parking shall be in accordance with this policy. When considering where to locate parking, the following shall be considered:


Public open space can enhance a neighborhood by providing improved connections and increased greenspace.

- Access points to parking should be from the least adjacent busy street, and located away from the main building entrance.
- If a street is used for direct access to parking, the number and width of access points should be minimized. Additionally, shared access with adjacent sites shall be provided, and the developer shall have the responsibility of coordinating the access.
- Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles should be considered in parking design, where feasible controlled access, surveillance cameras, and appropriate lighting are installed to deter crime and increase safety within parking areas.
- If a new multi-family site is located within one city block of a transit stop or station, the developer is encouraged to consider the level of projected transit use in the provision of parking for the site.

4.3.1 Structured Parking

In order to improve the overall aesthetics of the development, structured parking shall be designed and sited so that views of the structure (including views of vehicle undercarriages) are minimized from adjacent streets and other public spaces. This can be achieved by:

- Wrapping the structure with residential units (and/or nonresidential uses if provided).
- Not having the structure span the entire frontage of any street; if the structure has to be visible, then the portion of the structure that abuts the street should be minimized.
- Screening the structure through the use of landscaping or architectural enhancements which may include: artwork; grillwork; green screens; taller perimeter walls for each parking deck; special building materials; or other treatment that enhances the pedestrian environment and hides the vehicle undercarriages.
- Incorporating complementary architectural elements from the other primary building(s) on the site into the structured parking's exterior design.
- Having the entrances to the structures designed and sited so that the entrance does not negatively impact the character of the building and dominate the adjacent streetscape, yet the entrances should be clearly visible especially if public parking is provided within the structure.
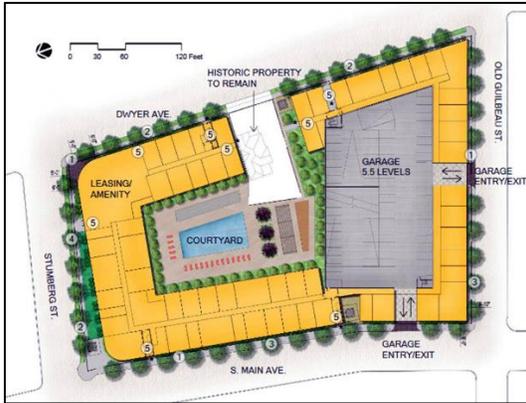
Structured parking that is wrapped by multi-family units allows for efficient use of land, requires less screening techniques, and results minimal views of the structure from adjacent streets.

Where structured parking is adjacent to an open space or sidewalk, the addition of screening and landscaping can add visual interest.

4.3.2   Surface Parking

The amount of surface parking provided should be minimized. Additionally, the following techniques should be incorporated when siting the surface parking:

- Be contiguously sited so that it may be repurposed to other uses in the future.
- Not be located between the buildings and the street, with the exception of minimal amounts of parking to accommodate short-term deliveries and leasing centers.
- Not be located adjacent to street corners in order to allow the buildings to be the prominent feature that defines the street corner.
- Incorporate the use of permeable pavers in order to increase site permeability, improve storm water quality, and provide enhanced architectural design aesthetics.

4.4   Landscaping

The strategic use of landscaping on a site can improve the overall development aesthetics, screen unwanted views, and help integrate the development into the surrounding neighborhood. All multi-family developments shall be required to meet the landscaping requirements of the applicable zoning ordinance. The recommendations below provide additional direction related to placement of landscaping on a site to improve overall aesthetics:

- Provide increased landscaping over and above any applicable zoning requirements, where space allows.
- Enhance entryways, in particular those located adjacent to the public realm.
- Enhance private and public open spaces.
- Enhance areas within a site such as: along sidewalks and roadways; near individual units and amenity spaces; or adjacent to individual parking garages.
- Screen exposed building foundations, building utilities, and service areas (see section 4.7).

- Incorporate CPTED recommendations regarding landscaping to enhance safety on the site such as: avoiding having lighting covered by foliage; and avoiding the use of large rocks as groundcover that could be used to break windows or cause property damage.
- Used in conjunction with other screening methods (such as screening walls and fences) along rear and side property lines where a separation between the multi-family development and adjacent properties are desired.

Landscaping enhances the area between individual residential units and the amenity space provided for residents.

Landscaping may be used to screen undesirable features such as exposed building foundations.

4.5   Sidewalks

Sidewalks provided throughout a multi-family development can enhance the development's overall usability by providing more efficient pedestrian connections within the development and to the surrounding neighborhood. Therefore, sidewalks should:

- Provide connections between buildings, open spaces/amenities, and parking areas.
- Provide connections to the sidewalks located within the adjacent public street space (i.e. street right-of-way).
- Be compliant with accessibility requirements.

Sidewalks between the private and public realm provide neighborhood connections.

Internal sidewalks provide connections between parking, amenities, and buildings.

4.6   Lighting

Multi-family developments should be lit in a manner that provides for the safety and security of residents particularly at nighttime, while at the same time aiming to reduce light pollution. Therefore, multi-family developments should:

- Be well lit to promote safety and security, including illuminating sidewalks, parking areas, and open spaces areas – dark areas are discouraged.
- Have downward cast light fixtures, including within parking areas.
- Incorporate wall-mounted, lower level fixtures which are preferable to maintain a human scale.
- Be complimentary to the building and site design.

4.7   Service areas

Service areas include loading docks, dumpsters, recycling areas, electrical panels, and mechanical equipment areas that are all necessary components of multi-family developments which can potentially have negative implications on adjacent properties and nearby surrounding neighborhoods. However, the potential impacts of these services can be mitigated through the implementation of the recommendations below:

- Service areas shall not be visible from public streets and open space areas where possible.
- Service areas should be accessible from adjacent alleys (if provided) or other service drive aisles, particularly if located towards the rear of a site.
- Service areas, including garbage, recycling, and mechanical equipment, shall be screened in accordance with applicable zoning regulations.
- Loading areas should be sited to avoid unloading/loading operations occurring within fire lanes, and be accessible to accommodate larger delivery vehicles.

Garbage facilities should be screened from view.

5   Building Design

The design of multi-family buildings should ensure visual interest, appropriate scale, and durability over time in order to convey a higher level of quality design and construction integrity. To help meet this goal, the tools outlined below should be incorporated into multi-family building design:

- Utilize preferred recommended densities (section 3) that promote efficient use of land and urban building form;
- Encourage architectural variety through the use of different building materials and colors which add visual interest, and enhance the character of the streetscape and surrounding neighborhood;
- Incorporate design scale that is appropriate given surrounding current developments and future planned land uses within the neighborhood; and
- Promote functional building construction that is durable over time.

5.1   Exterior Building Materials

Buildings constructed today will likely stand many decades, and the use of proven and tested durable building materials is imperative to ensure building longevity without significant deterioration of quality or value over time. Additionally, best construction practices should be used in tandem with local and national building construction standards, in order to accomplish the quality construction desired and reducing building maintenance. The aforementioned can also be achieved through the use of a variety of building materials without deterring creative and attractive building design. Therefore, the following recommendations should be implemented for multi-family developments to promote quality building construction and attractive design:

- Use of two or more proven and tested durable exterior building materials should be used (minimum 30-year warranty preferred) in order to promote design creativity and achieving sustainable building construction for the longer term.
- Inclusion of quality, durable construction materials such as masonry, brick or stone is strongly encouraged.
- Lighter exterior building materials should be used above heavier and sturdier materials which serve as the base of the structure from a design perspective.
- Incorporation of details to add visual interest such as decorative molding, brackets, trim, railings, and lattice work is also encouraged.

Incorporation of a variety of durable building materials adds to the aesthetics and longevity of the building.

5.2   Building Modulation and Articulation

Modulation is the stepping back or projecting forward of portions of a building facade, with specified intervals of building width and depth. A*rticulation* is the enhancement of a building façade through inclusion of features such as varying rooflines, chimneys, enhanced building entrances, and distinctive window patterns. The use of both techniques should be used in building design to help break up the building mass, provide visual interest, and appropriately scale a building to surrounding developments. Therefore, the following recommendations should be considered when designing multi-family developments:

- Vertical and horizontal building modulation should create a noticeable change in the façade, and be incorporated in all facades facing public streets, open spaces, and parking areas. Modulations should also be associated with a change in color and/or building material.
- Balconies should not be used to meet vertical modulation requirements unless they are integrated within the building's overall architectural design, such as recessed balconies. Balconies that appear to be tacked on to the façade do not qualify as vertical modulation.
- Articulation design elements including the roofline should complement the building modulation. If non-residential uses are provided on the ground floor, then the building design should incorporate a distinctive ground level design, with complementary articulation of middle floors.
- Stairwells and building corridors should be enclosed and climate controlled for the safety and comfort of residents, as well as to protect them from the elements.

Vertical modulation and articulation of the roofline, together with changes in building materials, adds interest to this multi-family building.
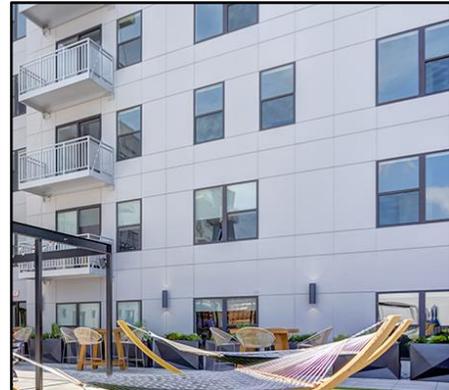
5.3   Windows

To provide visual interest to the overall building as a whole, as well as promote increased safety and security for pedestrians and residential units at the ground level, the placement of windows should be carefully considered when designing multi-family buildings. Therefore, the following recommendations should be implemented:

- Repeating distinctive window patterns are encouraged complementary to the building's modulation.
- Windows should be designed to recess or project from the façade, and/or be enhanced by a contrasting color or building material.
- Ground floor building design should consider the following with respect to window placement:
    o Windows facing the street should be transparent and comprise a minimum of 35% to 45% of the ground floor wall area for residential uses facing public streets or open spaces. For non-residential uses facing public streets or open spaces, the windows should comprise a minimum 60% of the ground floor wall area.
    o Side building facades, or façades interior to the development such as a courtyard, may have less window coverage.

The contrasting building color surrounding the windows enhances the overall building aesthetics.

Windows above are not recessed or projecting from the façade. This window treatment is not preferred.

5.4   Entrances

Building entrances facing the public street should be given the greatest emphasis because this conveys to pedestrians where to enter the building. Therefore, the following should be considered when designing building entrances:

- Principal entrances to the building, such as those which provide access to leasing/sales centers, individual residential units, and elevators, should be located facing the primary adjacent street and clearly distinguished from other building entrances.
- Signage and addressing should be attractively designed to enhance the building entrance (per the City's applicable signage requirements).
- In order to distinguish entrances, one or more of the enhancements below should be included with the entrance design:
    o Enhanced paving;

- o   Distinctive architectural lighting;
- o   Artwork, preferably within the public realm;
- o   Enhanced landscaping, see section 4.4;
- o   Usable public open space, see section 4.2.2; or
- o   Other potential enhancements.

Main entrance has additional windows, awning and distinctive lighting to create interest.

Distinctive architecture, additional landscaping and signage enhance the entrance.