Site elements are critical to the feel and function of existing development and new development alike. These important components should reflect and reinforce the desired character for each sub-area. Site edges can define individual corridor vision by presenting a distinct and unified look. Decisions regarding building placement, parking arrangement and incorporation of other site features discussed in this chapter can serve to unify parcels individually developed over time.

In addition, large site development projects should also include streetscape improvements. These improvements are considered as those architectural or functional facilities or structures that occur on site but are not part of the building. They are elements that encourage and facilitate human interaction with the built environment. Examples include, but are not limited to: fountains, sculptures, benches and tables, and vendor areas. These improvements should be designed to be consistent with all requirements listed above, and will be reviewed for aesthetic functionality and compatibility with town character.

Landscaped parking, historically styled lighting and a comprehensive sign system help this new development's site relate to the overall vision for the corridor.

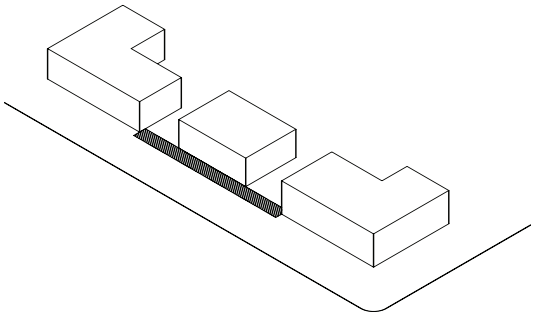
The use of indigenous building forms, retention of mature site trees, and landscaped parking areas add character to this office complex.

A. Setback

Setback is generally defined as the space between a building and the property line. Standard setbacks create continuity between parcels. Setback is a critical element for the realization of Smithfield's corridor vision.

1. Relate setbacks of new construction to zoning requirements and attempt to limit setback variation to 20 percent of average setback of existing appropriate development on a street for both residential and non-residential development. Current setback zoning should be modified from 40 feet to 20 feet.
2. Limit setbacks at major intersections to the minimum allowed by the Zoning Ordinance so that the architecture can help define the area.
3. Strive for contiguous building arrangement along the street face, and avoid large breaks between buildings in identified development sites.
4. Provide breaks in large developments and building masses to allow pedestrian connections between developments.
5. Use compact building arrangements to reduce the feeling of seas of parking, encourage pedestrian activity and define space.

Along the South Church Street corridor, setback conditions vary as shown in the two examples above. On the west side of the street (left), front site parking and varied setbacks lack visual continuity. On the east side (right), this residential block has a consistent setback.



New construction should respect the prevailing setback of existing buildings.

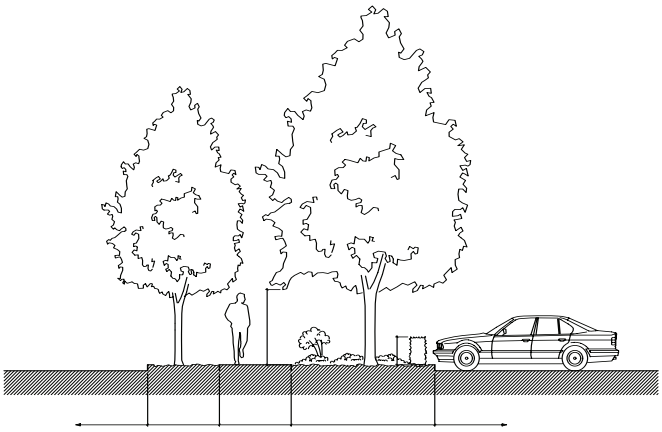
B. Parking

Automobiles are so much a part of everyday life that space needs to be made for them wherever people live, work, and play. The goal of these parking guidelines is provide adequate, convenient but unobtrusive parking.

1. Construct parking lots that reinforce the desired street wall of buildings.
2. The number and width of curb cuts should be the minimum necessary for effective on- and off-site traffic circulation. Whenever possible, curb cuts shall be combined with adjacent entrances.
3. Where existing parking lots are located on the street, screen such lots from the street and from adjoining development, using low fences or walls, or year-round plantings.
4. Site a portion of parking out of view. Generally, site a minimum of 20-40 percent of parking to the rear and sides of buildings.
5. Reduce the scale of parking lots by:
   a. Dividing parking lots into modules or multiple smaller lots using techniques such as the natural topography, logically placed landscaped pedestrian paths to destinations, and by linear aisles of plantings. Avoid large expanses of asphalt.
   b. Reducing the amount of parking lots through such methods as shared parking among complementary uses, creation of overflow lots and the provision of pull-in spaces in front of shops. These techniques may require some flexibility when applying parking standards.
6. Accommodate pedestrian needs within parking areas by:
   a. Providing clear pedestrian paths and crossings from parking spaces to main entrances and to the street.
   b. Planning parking so that it least interferes with appropriate pedestrian access and connections to adjoining developments.
   c. Within developments, identify a complete internal pedestrian pathway system linking all buildings, parking and green spaces.
7. Site grading should promote pedestrian and vehicular connectivity between adjacent sites.
8. Pave parking areas with concrete, asphalt, or other similar material.
9. The use of gravel or other similar material for parking areas is not allowed in the ECO districts.
10. Concrete curb and gutter or alternative stormwater management approved by the Planning Commission is required around the perimeter of all driveways and parking areas and should be designed so drainage does not interfere with pedestrian traffic.
11. If needed in the future, design any detached parking structures to be architecturally compatible with their setting or to be screened by other buildings or by landscaping. If it fronts on a street or pedestrian path, design the street level facade with storefronts, display windows, bay divisions, and other pedestrian oriented features.
12. Bicycle parking facilities should be provided within areas where significant bicycle traffic is anticipated. They should be located in designated areas close to buildings and pedestrian paths. The design, materials, and color of the bicycle racks should coordinate with other site elements and should be well-lit for night time uses.
13. Reduce the visibility of residential garages by:
   a. Not allowing a garage to become the primary architectural feature when a development is viewed from the street, especially for attached housing.
   b. Placing garages behind the building setback, preferably facing to the side or rear of attached housing.
   c. Placing garages and parking in the rear with alley access.

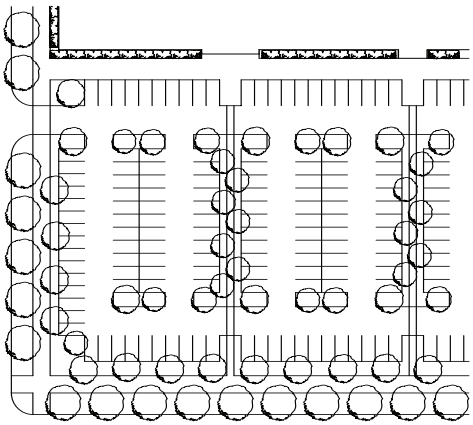
The parking lot at the Smithfield Center uses a variety of plantings to screen its parking lot.

Nose-in parking directly in front of merchants lessens the size of standard parking lots.



Street and site trees can work together to provide screening for and shade in large parking lots.

Changes in grade can be used to minimize the visual impact of parking.



This site parking plan shows appropriate placement of trees in a large parking lot.

A deep setback with mature street trees focuses attention away from front site parking.

C. Paving and Sidewalks

1. Design pedestrian pathways within a site to serve as a link between adjacent sites, connecting all buildings, parking areas and green spaces. Ensure that these pathways connect to any nearby public pedestrian pathway.
2. Add designated, separate sidewalks with planted areas through large parking lots.
3. Provide crosswalks at points of vehicular access routes and in front of building entrances.
4. Design crosswalks to highlight their visibility by slightly raising them, by making them wider, by constructing them of materials other than asphalt or by using bulb-out corners that reduce their length.
5. Ensure that new sidewalk paving materials are compatible with the character of the area. Scored concrete with broom finishes, colored, exposed aggregate concrete, and brick or unit pavers are examples of appropriate applications. Avoid large expanses of bright white or gray concrete surfaces.
6. Provide passageways within large building masses, particularly shopping centers, that allow pedestrians to pass through en route to their final destination.

This well-lit sidewalk safely connects pedestrians through the parking lot to the shopping center beyond.

Clearly marked crosswalks are a necessity in shopping centers and other large developments.

A change in pavement draws attention to this pedestrian crossing which becomes a passageway between the buildings to a nearby neighborhood.

D. Landscaping and Open Space

Landscaping has many roles. It provides scale and enclosure; it provides shade and buffers; and it creates cool, inviting gathering places. It can reinforce connections between neighborhoods, as well as being the barrier to unsightly views.

There is a strong commitment in Smithfield to preserving the indigenous landscape of the town. Leaving the landscape as unchanged as possible where development occurs helps retain the town's sense of place. Residents have come to expect to see the views and vistas that reflect the area's natural heritage and provide a pleasing local environment.

1. Provide landscaping within parking areas by:
   a. Separating parking aisles with medians planted with shade trees along the length of the islands.
   b. Including pedestrian walkways with planted medians to reinforce connectivity and separate pedestrians from vehicular traffic.
   c. Avoiding isolated islands of single trees and instead providing landscaped tree aisles between every other row of cars.
   d. Using shade trees of sufficient number and size at maturity to shade a substantial portion of the lot. Consider orientations that would provide the greatest shade during summer months. Smaller, more decorative trees can be used closest to buildings.
2. The majority of the open space should be located at the perimeter of the site where it is visible and it should be of sufficient width and depth to provide adequate contrast to any adjoining site parking.
3. Planting zones should be consolidated into areas large enough to give a natural character to a site. Incorporate clustered groupings of native plant species (trees, shrubs and flowers) that match the context and scale of the project.
4. Planted areas should also be located along the public boundaries of the site, within parking areas, along drainage or stormwater management areas, around buildings, and at building entries.
5. The existing topography should be preserved intact as much as possible to minimize disruptions in drainage, preserve natural land forms and existing vegetation and retain such features as mature woods and riparian areas.

   Refer to the **Zoning Ordinance, Article 3.R Section D: Tree Protection** for specific guidance on the preservation of site trees.
6. Take landscape design references from surrounding natural land forms and vegetation and use species appropriate for site conditions including available sunlight, water and root and canopy space.
7. Use trees, shrubs and other landscaping features to provide screens for service areas, parking and utilities.
9. Use large specimen street trees along pedestrian routes to provide shade and to define edges.
10. In the core of larger commercial and office centers, street trees and more formal urban plantings organized around public open spaces are recommended.
11. Consider using landscaping areas that also provide storm water treatment, such as rain gardens.
12. Place auxiliary structures and new landscaping in such a way as to preserve scenic views from main and arterial highways, existing structures, and natural areas.
13. All sites should include an underground irrigation system.

A rare evergreen was preserved during new construction due to careful site planning.

Landscaping can enhance the appearance of franchise architecture.

Raised beds with low walls provide planting space for flowering trees and additional seating in this gathering place.

These plantings provide a buffer and tie into the natural landscape beyond.

Street furniture and lighting are essential components of this greenspace.

Increase visual interest by adding seasonal color and evergreen under-plantings to retained mature site trees.

E. Fences, Walls, Berms and Screens

1. Fences are discouraged along the highway right-of-way and should be set back from the right-of-way to allow a clear area for utilities and landscaping.
2. Choose high-quality materials and designs using materials such as brick, stone, metal, and wood.
3. Avoid untreated wood, chain-link or wire fences, concrete block walls, or other utilitarian fences.
4. Consider selecting materials used elsewhere on the property or the structures within the site.
5. Use a scale and level of ornateness of the design of any new walls and fences that relate to the scale and ornateness of the building within the site. Use simpler designs on small lots.
6. Avoid exceeding the average height of other fences and walls of surrounding properties.
7. When walls or fences stretch longer than 50 feet, use designs with texture and modulation to provide a regular rhythm without being monotonous.
   a. For example, use vertical piers (generally spaced no more than 25 feet apart) of a different material or width or height.
   b. Plantings and street trees should be used in conjunction with a wall or fence to break up a long expanse.
8. Use paint or opaque stains on pressure treated or unpainted wooden fences.
9. Fence stringers (the structural framing of the fence) should be located facing the interior of the subject lot, with the finished side facing out away from the subject property.
10. Fences at intersections and driveways should comply with Town requirements for site distance. (See Zoning Ordinance for detailed requirements.)
11. Transitional screening should consist of a densely planted buffer strip to provide an adequate visual screen. The screen should be of appropriate plant materials to form an effective buffer for all seasons. Mature vegetation should be retained in such areas and supplemented as necessary by new vegetation to screen sight lines.

Large expanses of wall or fence should be given visual interest through the use of plantings or articulated design

Walls and plantings can be used to define public-private boundaries.

F. Lighting

1. Use low-intensity, concealed source, shielded, clear white or amber luminaires, in accordance with Town's ECO district lighting requirements, to provide better lighting and prevent unwanted glare.
2. Reasonable levels of accent lighting to accentuate architectural character may be appropriate in individual instances when it is shielded and is not aimed towards neighboring properties, sidewalks, pathways, driveways, or public right-of-ways in such a manner as to distract travel.
3. Decorative, low-intensity, non-concealed source lighting may be acceptable in some instances for the definition of vehicular or pedestrian ways.
4. Coordinate the lighting plan with the landscape plan to ensure pedestrian areas are well-lit and that any conflict between trees and light fixtures is avoided.
5. Light pedestrian areas with appropriately scaled poles and luminaires. Their heights are typically ten to fourteen feet.
6. Blinking, fluctuating, or moving light are not allowed on the corridors.

Site lighting should be human-scaled and of a design compatible with the buildings on-site.

7. Lighting of signs is restricted to not more than one (1) 150-watt light per sign faces over forty (40) square feet and no more than two (2) 150-watt lights per sign faces over forty (40) square feet.
8. Gasoline station/convenience store aprons and canopies should utilize fully shielded lighting fixtures with the bottom of lens flush with canopy.

Cues for appropriate lighting styles can be found in Smithfield's historic district.

G. Signs

See Article 3.R Section L of the Smithfield Zoning Ordinance for detailed sign regulation information.

1. A unified and comprehensive sign/graphics plan is required for all new developments in the ECO district, and strongly encouraged for existing development.
2. Place signs so that they do not obstruct architectural elements and details that define the design of the building or interfere with life safety concerns.
3. New signs should be of a size and design comparable to existing signs on adjacent properties that have been identified as compatible with the Town's character. Installation of new signs should respect visibility of signs for all adjacent businesses.
4. Use colors, shapes, graphics, lettering, and appropriate materials that complement the materials and color scheme of the building, including accent and trim colors.
5. Three-dimensional metal or channel-set individual letters are required for flat wall signs on a commercial/retail facade unless the building design incorporates a wooden sign band.
6. Use a minimal number of colors per sign where possible. Avoid jarring overly bright color schemes.
7. Exterior illumination of signs is covered in the preceding section on Lighting.
8. Exterior neon is discouraged.
9. Illumination of any sign shall not be directed toward any residential area or adjacent street.
10. Encourage the use of monument signs with accent landscaping at the base along corridors.
11. Internally lit signs shall use an opaque background so only letters are lit.
12. Flashing signs are prohibited.
13. No sign shall be higher than the eave line or parapet wall of any building for which the sign is proposed.

Monument signs are appropriate along Smithfield's entrance corridors.

Multi-tenant monument signs provide a cohesive look and can be easily updated.

This brick multi-tenant sign uses materials that coordinate well with the shopping center it serves.

This stone sign with a wood insert clearly marks the entrance to a housing development.

Single-colored channel set lettering presents a unified appearance.

Metal lettering is a distinctive feature on this converted corridor building.

Coordinated channel set lettering is mounted above awnings in this example.

This sign band features individual channel set lettering styles mounted on the same baseline.

Three dimensional metal lettering coordinates with the building's decorative details.

Flat wooden signs give individual character to these buildings.

Coordinated pedestrian signage within a large shopping center.

Street-level storefronts with channel set signage.

A directory sign identifies building tenants.

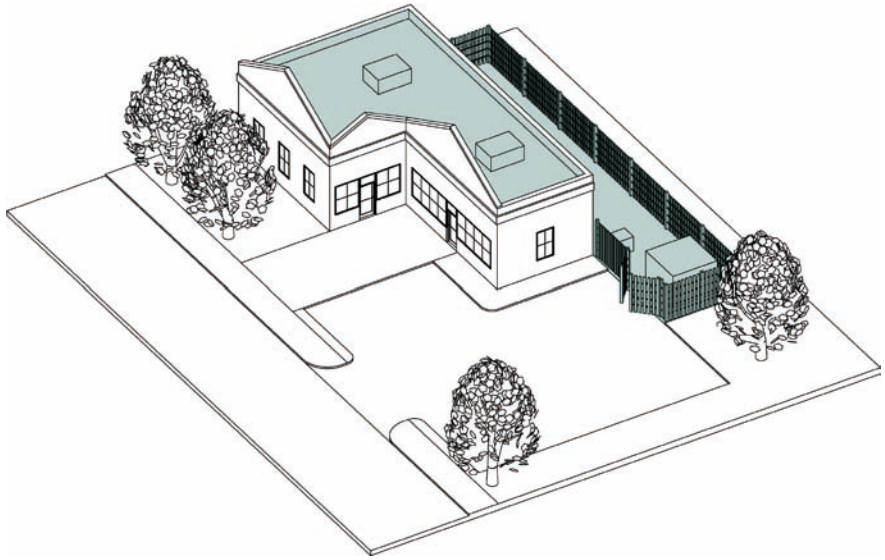
Sign bands should be used to integrate signage into the architecture of retail and commercial buildings. Proper placement of such signage is shown above.

H. Service Areas and Appurtenances

1. Locate utilities to minimize their visual impact from the street and adjoining developments.
2. Screen and landscape dumpsters with wood board, solid barrier wall, or dense evergreen plants when multiple sides of a building are visible from external or internal roadways and adjacent properties.
3. Place utilities underground if at all possible or locate behind buildings.
4. Screen service areas, loading docks, and fleet parking areas that are visible from streets or adjoining development with berms, landscaping, structures or fences.
5. Site noise-generating features away from neighboring properties especially residences, or use noise barriers or other means of reducing the impact.
6. Screen roof-top communications and mechanical equipment.

Large evergreen trees screen mechanical equipment from adjacent roads in this development.

A dumpster is screened from view in an enclosure that repeats the design elements of the associated main building.



Whether on rooftops or the least visible facade of a building, mechanical equipment, storage areas and other appurtenances should be screened from view.