Division III
Section B

OFFICE GUIDELINES

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The majority of non-residential zones within Baltimore County allow for the construction of new office buildings. The RO, O-1, O-2, and OT are specifically designated for office use. In addition, the industrial zones (ML, MLR, MR, MH, SE) and business zones (BL, BM, or BR) also allow for the construction of new office buildings.

The purpose of this section is to provide general guidelines that will be used by the County to evaluate project design as required by the development review process. These guidelines were established to review office and flex warehouse type uses. The guidelines are advisory and should be used by the County, developer/builder, and residents.

This section has been divided into six elements which include the following:

- Site Planning
- Landscaping
- Open Space
- Circulation and Parking
- Signage and Lighting
- Building Features
SITE PLANNING

Locate the buildings, parking facilities, and accessory structures to utilize the existing topography and slopes.

a) The site plan design should take advantage of views, natural site drainage, preserve striking land forms and water features, and incorporate existing vegetation to the fullest extent possible.

b) The placements of buildings on a site should conform to the undisturbed land form. Use the existing vegetation on site to enhance the building locations or parking areas.

c) Organize buildings around natural or man made open space features.

The sloping terrain screens the parking area from adjacent uses.
Accessory structures, service areas and mechanical equipment should be designed as integral components of the site.

a) Screen and fence trash dumpsters, sheds and mechanical equipment with materials and design features that are the same as or complimentary to the building. Landscape treatment at these locations should act as a visual buffer.

b) Dumpsters should be located in areas that are functional, but not visually imposing from streets or residential areas.
Site Planning

Trash dumpster with some screening and no landscaping.

Screened trash dumpster in need of landscaping treatment.
The location of buildings should reinforce the street as a center of activity.

a) Locate the longest side of a building parallel to the public right-of-way. The front yard setback should not substantially (+5%) deviate from adjacent structures unless such structures do not conform to the overall area character.

b) The building orientation and design should reflect and contribute to the neighborhood character.

Landscaped sidewalk connection from parking lot to building entrance.

The front building facade is located near the public right-of-way to reinforce the street as a center of activity.
Site Planning

Provide and incorporate pedestrian access into the site and building design.

a) Landscaped, tree-lined walkways should be used as connections between buildings, buildings to streets or building to parking areas.

b) Incorporate recessed sitting areas into the walk or pathway system.

Tree-lined, lighted walkways connect parking area to building entrance.

Pedestrian access around perimeter of site provides access to interior site circulation.
Landscaping

LANDSCAPING

Landscaping should create and define street image, entranceways, screen storage and loading areas, provide buffers adjacent to residential uses, shade parking lots and integrate the building design with the site design.

a) Street trees, streetscape furnishings, and details should be used for continuity between project sites and for pedestrian access along streets.

b) Plantings at points of entry define and accent building and site access (pedestrian as well as vehicular).

c) Use vegetation to provide a natural screen and buffer commercial use from residential neighborhoods.

d) Plant shade trees along walkways through parking lots to visually interrupt the parking bays. Shade trees will also reduce heat and glare and help to define traffic patterns and movements.

Landscaped right-of-way with sidewalk between parking lot and street pavement.

Landscaped entrance median with monument sign.

Fenced and landscaped buffer area between residential and nonresidential uses.
Landscaping

Use planting diamonds in parking lots when medians between bays are not possible.

Landscaped median between parking bays.

Landscaping creates and defines street image.

Landscaping shades parking lots.
OPEN SPACE

Design the open space network and amenities as an integral part of the overall site plan to take advantage of landscaping features and undevelopable areas.

a) Provide small areas for active or passive use by employees such as picnic tables, benches, and other areas for sitting, eating or meeting.

b) Provide access to and views of the open space network. Take advantage of the space between buildings to include a courtyard or site feature.

c) Use undevelopable areas as open space features or as buffers between uses.
Open Space

Open space amenities are an integral part of the overall site plan.

Landscaped courtyard between buildings.
CIRCULATION AND PARKING

Circulation and parking should reinforce safe and efficient pedestrian and vehicular movement.

a) The main entrance serves as the dominant ingress and egress point into a development.

b) Curb cuts should be consolidated to the extent feasible or practical.

c) Access points into a development site should be located to minimize the impact on adjoining residential communities.

d) The vehicular access points should facilitate traffic movement through the site.

Transit should be an integral part of project circulation.

a) Where directed by the Maryland Transit Administration, Access by Design should be incorporated into the development.

b) The provision of bus shelters, or signs and pathways should be incorporated into the development.

The vehicular and pedestrian environment is improved with convenient sidewalk access to alternative transportation and the internal streets are lined with landscaping to delineate the circulation system.
Circulation and Parking

The landscaping and paving dimensions within the street rights-of-way provide a sense of identity and orientation.

a) The streetscape design and features should reflect those of the surrounding community. For example, boulevards should contain tall compact trees, commercial corridors should have tall canopy trees, and urban areas should have appropriate sidewalk furniture and tree placements.

b) Street widths should be designed to reflect existing patterns and hierarchy.

Plant trees within medians.

Flagpoles identify vehicular entrance point and site identification.
SIGNAGE AND LIGHTING

Signage serves as a focal point for information to identify the location and nature of a business.

a) Signage design should improve the visual continuity of the area; it should not serve as a distraction.

b) Illuminated signs will be allowed. External lighting should only be applied to the sign face.

c) The design and materials of a sign should complement and be similar to those used for the building.
Signage and Lighting

Lighting fixtures should be designed to provide continuity within the project as well as with the surrounding community.

a) Lighting standards adjacent to residential areas should not exceed 18 feet in height and should be designed to prevent spillover of light onto the adjoining residences.

b) The footcandles produced should be appropriate for the use proposed. The illumination of the building and site features (parking lots, walkways or entrances, etc.) should not exceed the needed level and appropriately sized for its purpose.

The parking area lighting fixtures are designed to only illuminate the parking lot area.
BUILDING FEATURES

Encourage architectural style of the building or buildings to be highly articulate and the design should complement existing residential uses and/or adjacent buildings.

Proportion:

Buildings designed to express the base, shaft and crown provide a sense of proportion and appear visually interesting.

Mass:

Vary and articulate building elements to visually and dimensionally interrupt the bulk of the building. Two ways to do this include highlighting entranceways and establishing focal points.

The bulk and general massing of a building should not significantly exceed the horizontal and vertical dimensions and volume of adjacent buildings in the surrounding area.

Scale:

Buildings should relate to surrounding development by designing tapering heights and stepbacks, repeating established patterns and modules and siting the building with similar setbacks.
Building Features

The scale of the building is reduced by the repetition of patterns and modules at each bay.

The roof is an integral part of the building design and is used to screen mechanical equipment.
Encourage intriguing design character through the creative use of materials and design details. Building elements create focal points and establish hierarchy.

Pattern:

Vary the window and wall relationship to reflect existing patterns prevalent within the community.

Detail:

The architectural character and stylistic features should be derived from examples of surrounding development and regional patterns.

The building entrance, base and window pattern are opportunities for special detail and accent.

Roof:

The roof treatment is an integral part of the building design and the design should incorporate the style and pitch of roofs found in the surrounding community.

Screen rooftop mechanical equipment or locate the equipment so that it is not visible.
Building Features

The wall and window relationships are varied.

The stylistic features of a building add detail and establish hierarchy.