



**Division III  
Section D**

# **OFFICE COMPATIBILITY**

Introduction .....	153
RO Compatibility .....	156
RO Urban Site .....	156
RO Suburban Site .....	160
O-1/O-2 Compatibility .....	164
OT Compatibility .....	168



## DEFINITION

Design **compatibility** is a similar relationship between the surrounding neighborhood's dominant design elements—site, landscape, and architectural features—and a proposed office development.

## INTENT

Development proposals will be evaluated according to each objective. However, variations from the objectives may be considered when compensated by design improvements which contribute to and benefit the overall environment. The examples are illustrative and not regulatory. Creative design solutions and alternatives are encouraged.

## OBJECTIVES (Sec. 32-4-402.(d))

- 1. Context:** “The arrangement and orientation of the proposed buildings and site improvements are patterned in a similar manner to those in the neighborhood.”
- 2. Building Placement:** “The building and parking layouts reinforce existing building and streetscape patterns and assure that the placement of buildings and parking lots have no adverse impact on the neighborhood.”
- 3. Site Circulation:** “The proposed streets are connected with the existing neighborhood road network wherever possible and the proposed sidewalks are located to support the functional patterns of the neighborhood.”
- 4. Open Space:** “The open spaces of the proposed development reinforce the open space patterns of the neighborhood in form and siting and complement existing open space systems.”

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*The first six objectives are illustrated with site plans for each zone.*

**5. Site Features:** “Locally significant features of the site such as distinctive buildings or vistas are integrated into the site design.”

**6. Landscaping:** “The proposed landscape design complements the neighborhood's landscape patterns and reinforces its functional qualities.”

**7. Accessory Structures:** “The exterior signs, site lighting and accessory structures support a uniform architectural theme and present a harmonious visual relationship with the surrounding neighborhood.”

**8. Building Detail:** “The scale, proportions, massing and detailing of the proposed buildings are in proportion to those existing in the neighborhood.”

NOTE: Objectives 7 and 8 are more challenging considerations and more difficult to succinctly illustrate. Scale, proportion and massing are key to proposing an acceptable solution. There is an understanding that the floor plate area and the floor to floor dimensions for commercial office development differs from typical single family detached construction. If such a site is adjacent to a residential neighborhood, then the main concern is with the reduction of apparent size and bulk. The architectural treatment of the facades can be manipulated to reduce the overall bulk. The accessory features of the site should be designed to blend in with the overall design theme.

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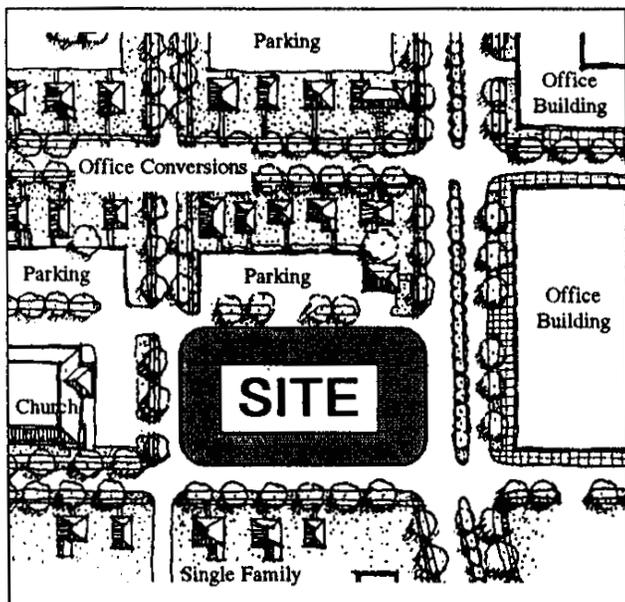
*The last two objectives are illustrated with site sections for each zone.*

# Introduction

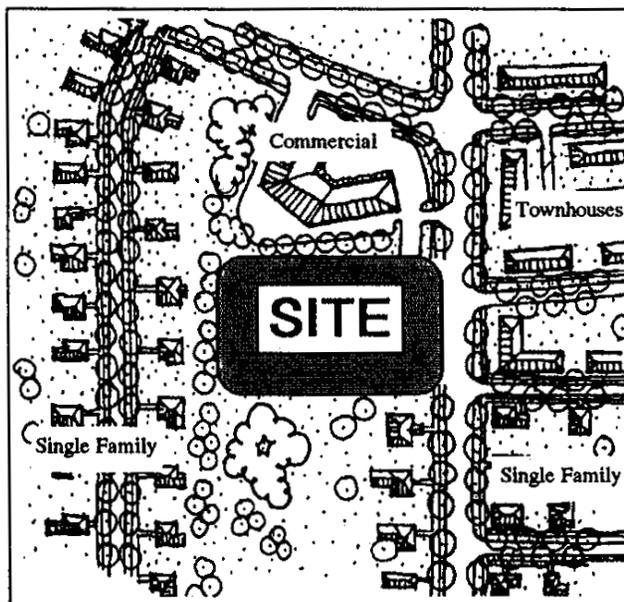
## LOCATIONS and CONTEXT for each SITE EXAMPLE

Each office site is located along a major arterial adjacent to commercial uses with neighborhoods to the rear and side of each example. Generally, each context is similar to many sites zoned for office uses in Baltimore County. Each site and design is hypothetical; any resemblance to an existing or proposed development is coincidence.

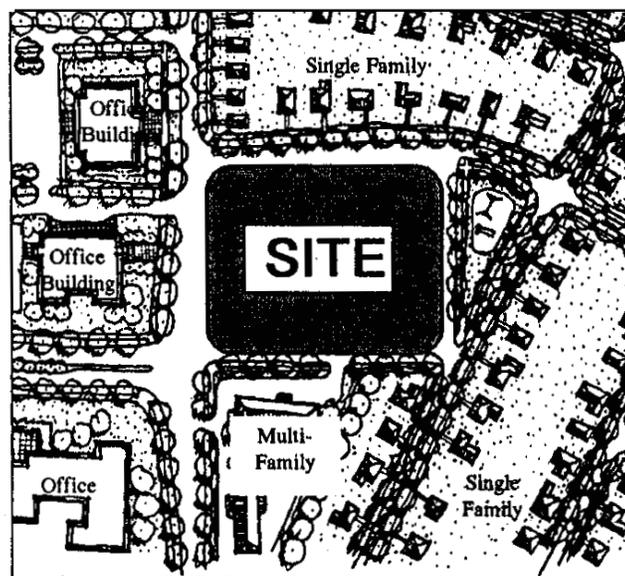
- RO 'URBAN' SITE



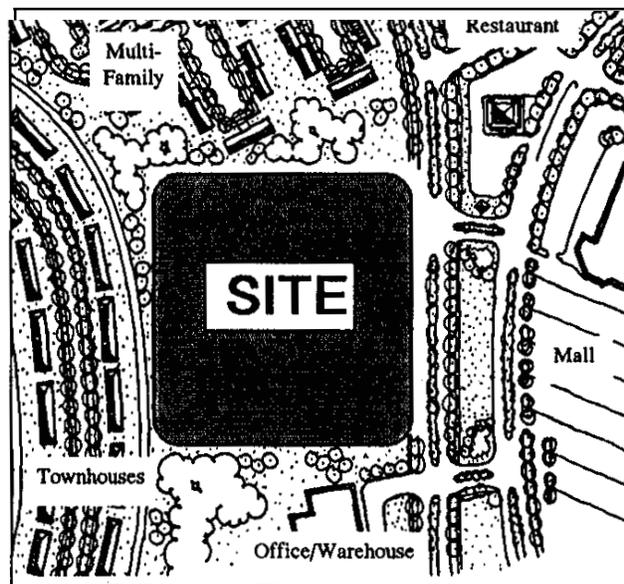
- RO 'SUBURBAN' SITE



- O-1/O-2 SITE



- OT SITE

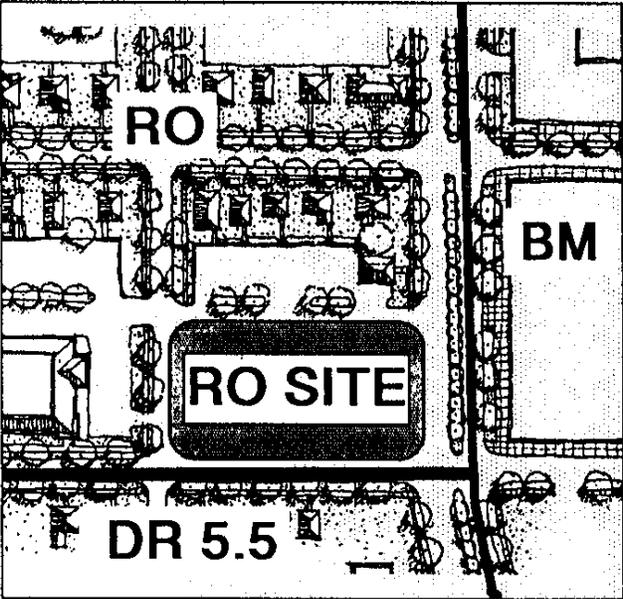


# Introduction

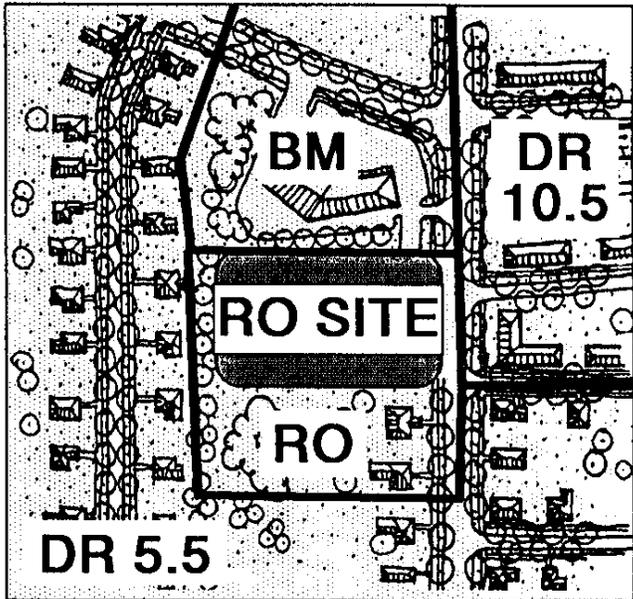
## ZONING CONTEXT for each SITE EXAMPLE

Each site is located adjacent to a Density Residential zone and a Business and/or Office zone. Generally, each zoning pattern is consistent with many sites zoned for office uses in Baltimore County.

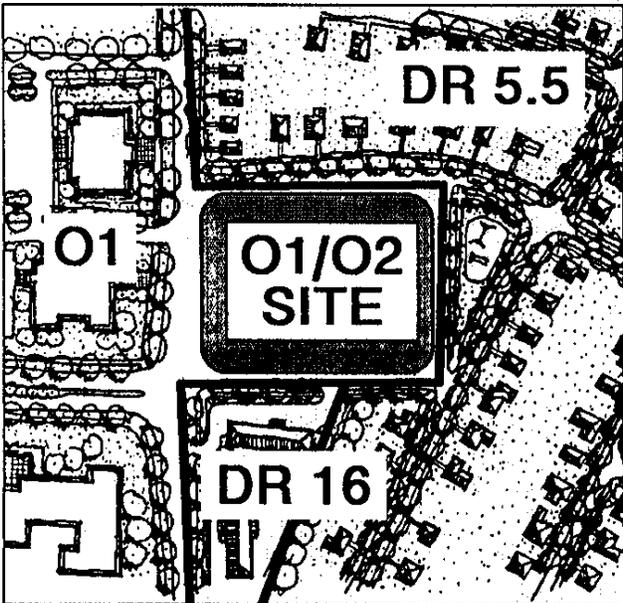
- RO 'URBAN' SITE



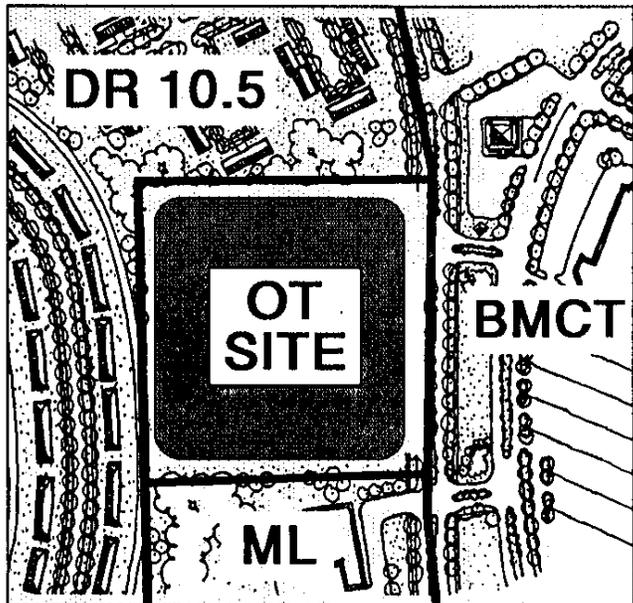
- RO 'SUBURBAN' SITE



- O-1/O-2 SITE



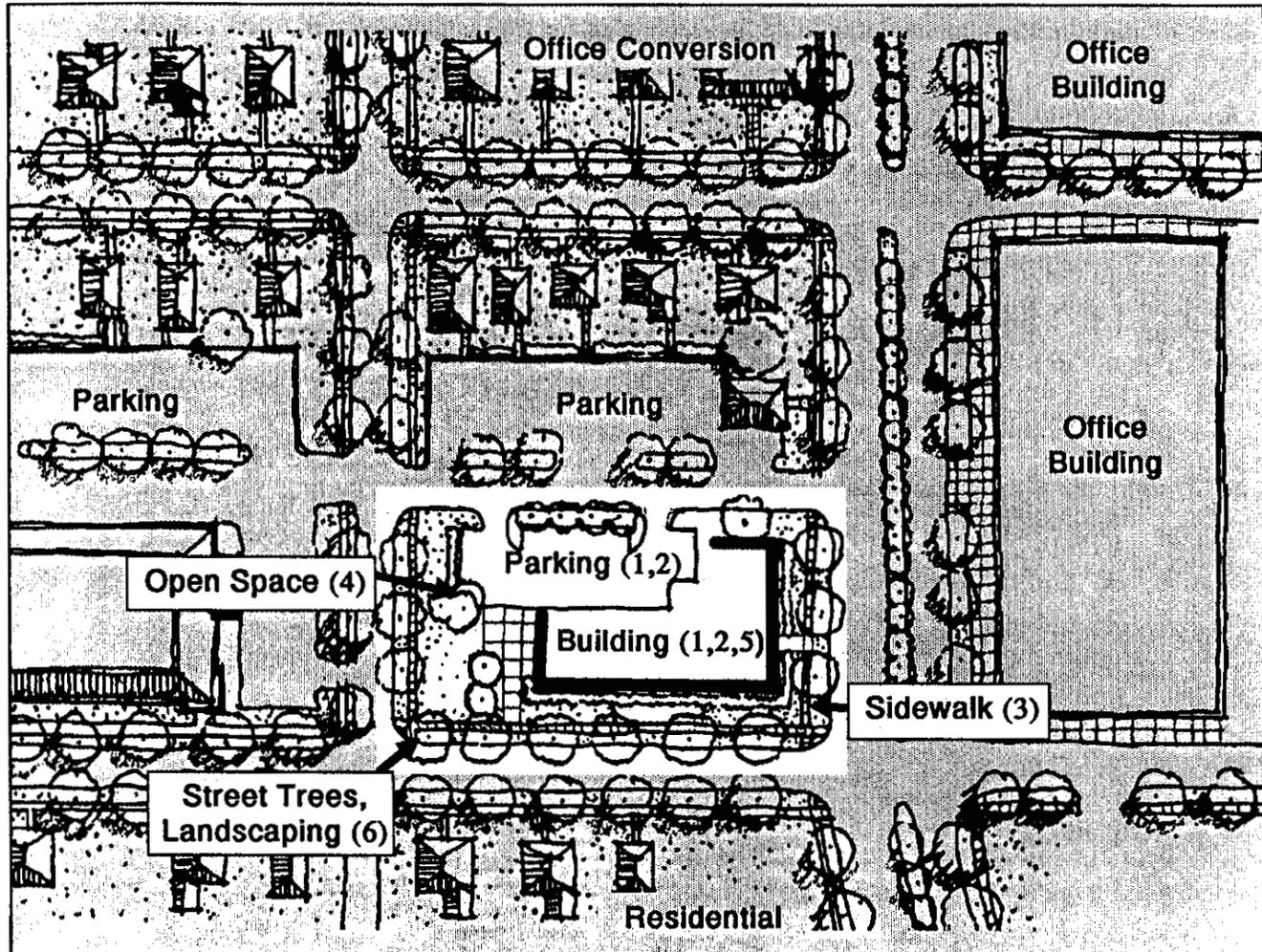
- OT SITE



# RO Compatibility

## • RO 'URBAN' SITE

COMPATIBLE



1. The building location and entry, parking, open space, and access points are patterned after those in the surrounding blocks.

2. The building is located near the street and faces the front of the site and the major arterial, while the parking area is near the alley with access along the rear yard. This pattern is repeated on the adjacent blocks.

3. The street pattern remains unchanged; vehicular access is maintained along the alley so that no curb cut fronts a single family house. The sidewalks ring the site as is found on the adjacent blocks.

4. The open space is accessible to the office building at the front and the residential neighborhood at the side of the site. The open space takes advantage of a corner to screen the parking area and buffer the building.

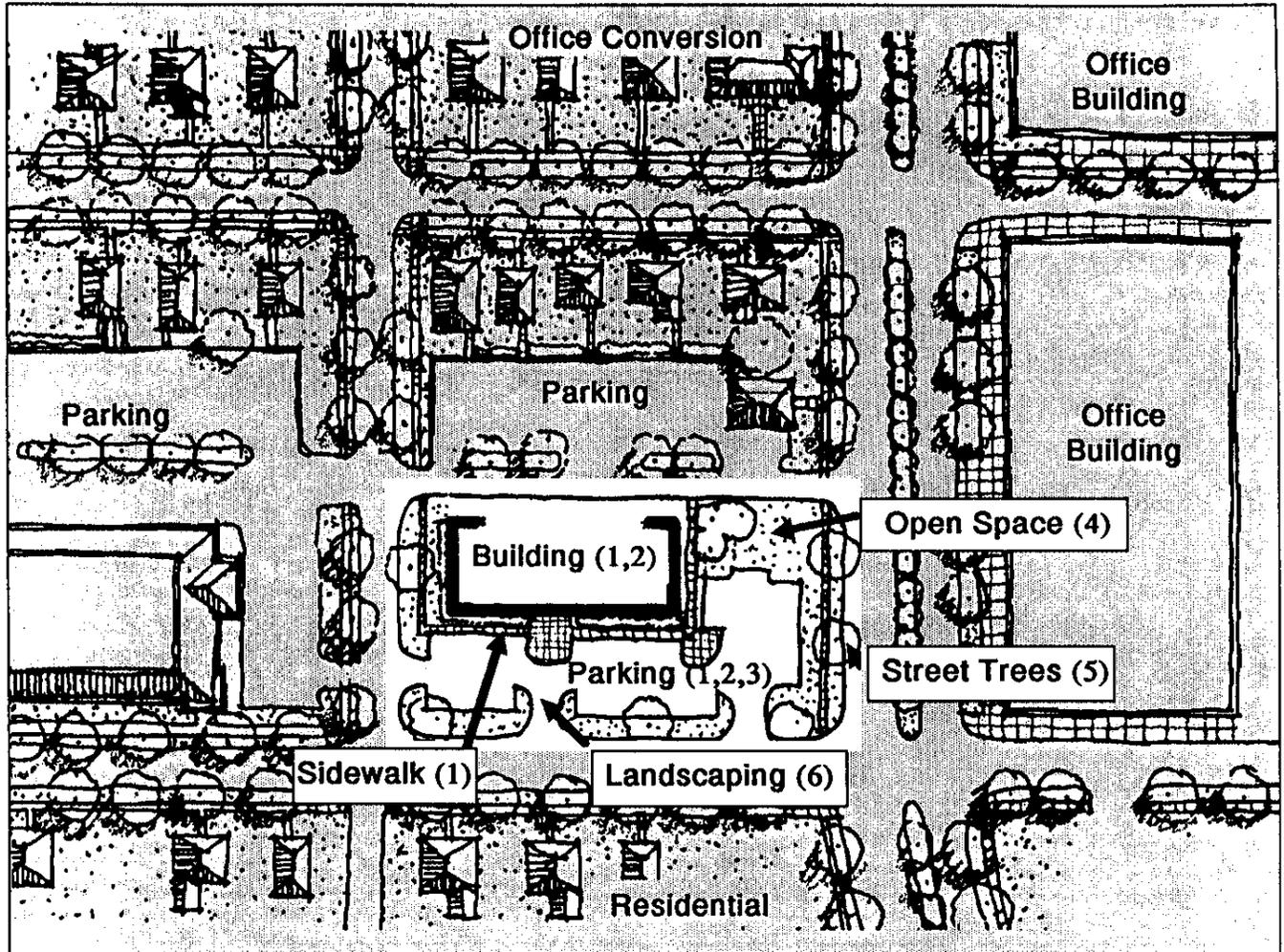
5. The significant features of this site, the alley, and the urban context are maintained and utilized. The building location reinforces the street wall along the major arterial and along the front of the site with a similar front yard setback as the single family houses.

6. The street trees reinforce the neighborhoods principal landscape design component. The landscaping in the front yard reinforces the landscaping across the street.

# RO Compatibility

## • RO 'URBAN' SITE

NOT COMPATIBLE

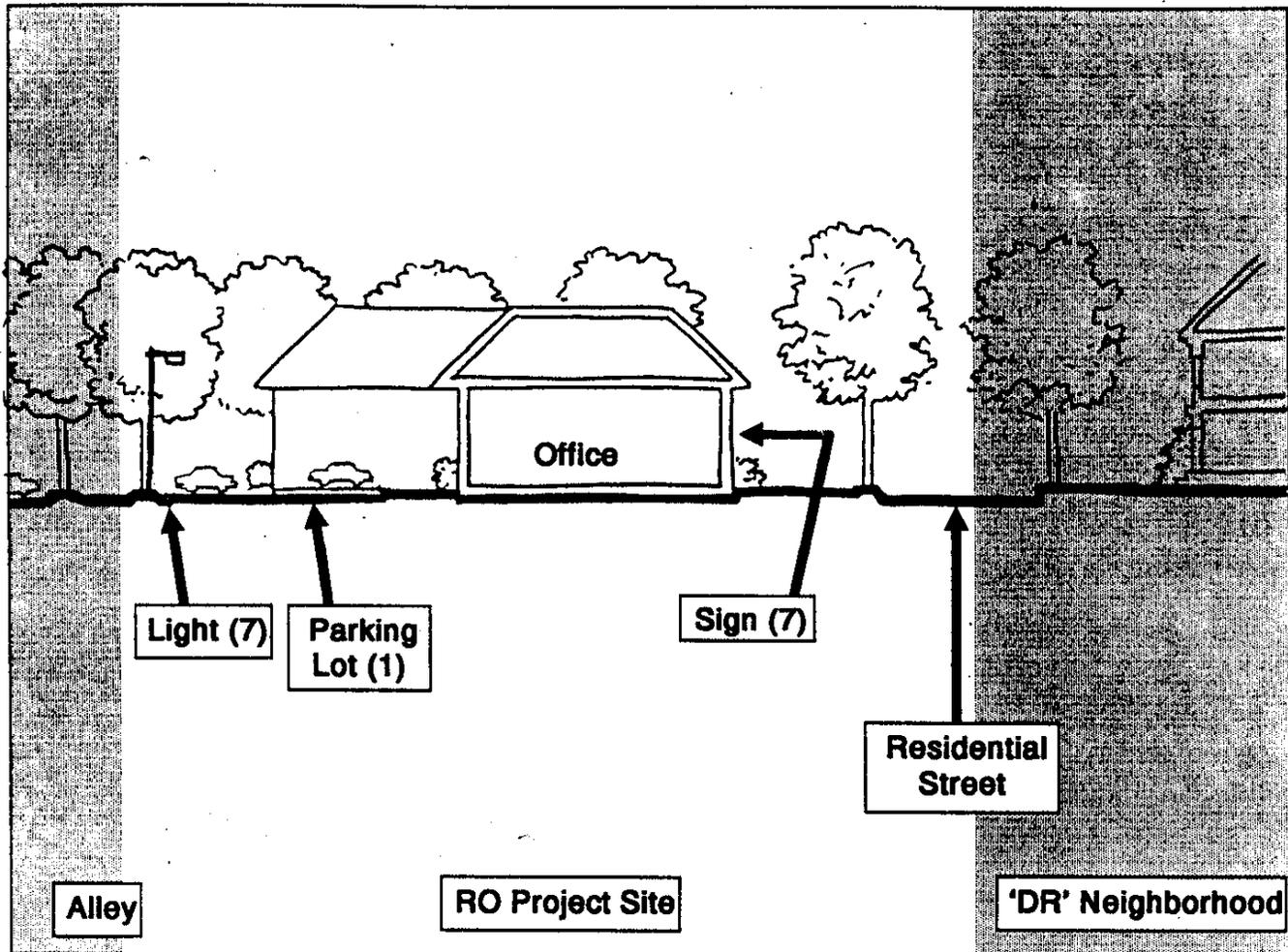


1. The building, parking and sidewalk locations are arranged in a dissimilar order from the other sites in the neighborhood.
2. The parking area located in front of the building directly faces the neighborhood. The building, located at the rear of the site, does not maintain a similar setback to the other buildings on the surrounding blocks.
3. The proposed development does change the existing street hierarchy. The parking area has all of its access locations along the principal street frontage instead of at the rear of the site along the alley.
4. The available open space at the side and rear yards is isolated from the building entrance and the neighborhood.
5. The significant features of this site, the alley and the urban context, are not utilized nor reinforced in this site design.
6. The few street trees do not reinforce the street tree pattern of the neighborhood. The parking area in the front yard does not allow for landscaping similar to the landscaped front yards of the adjacent buildings.

# RO Compatibility

## • RO 'URBAN' SITE

COMPATIBLE



7. The identification sign for this building is wall-mounted. No freestanding signs are placed along the street, across from the single family houses.

Site lighting for the parking lot is at the rear of the site—not facing the adjacent residential uses. The height of the light standard does not exceed the top of the roof line.

8. The building's one story does not exceed the height of the two-story houses and the design of the building includes a hip roof.

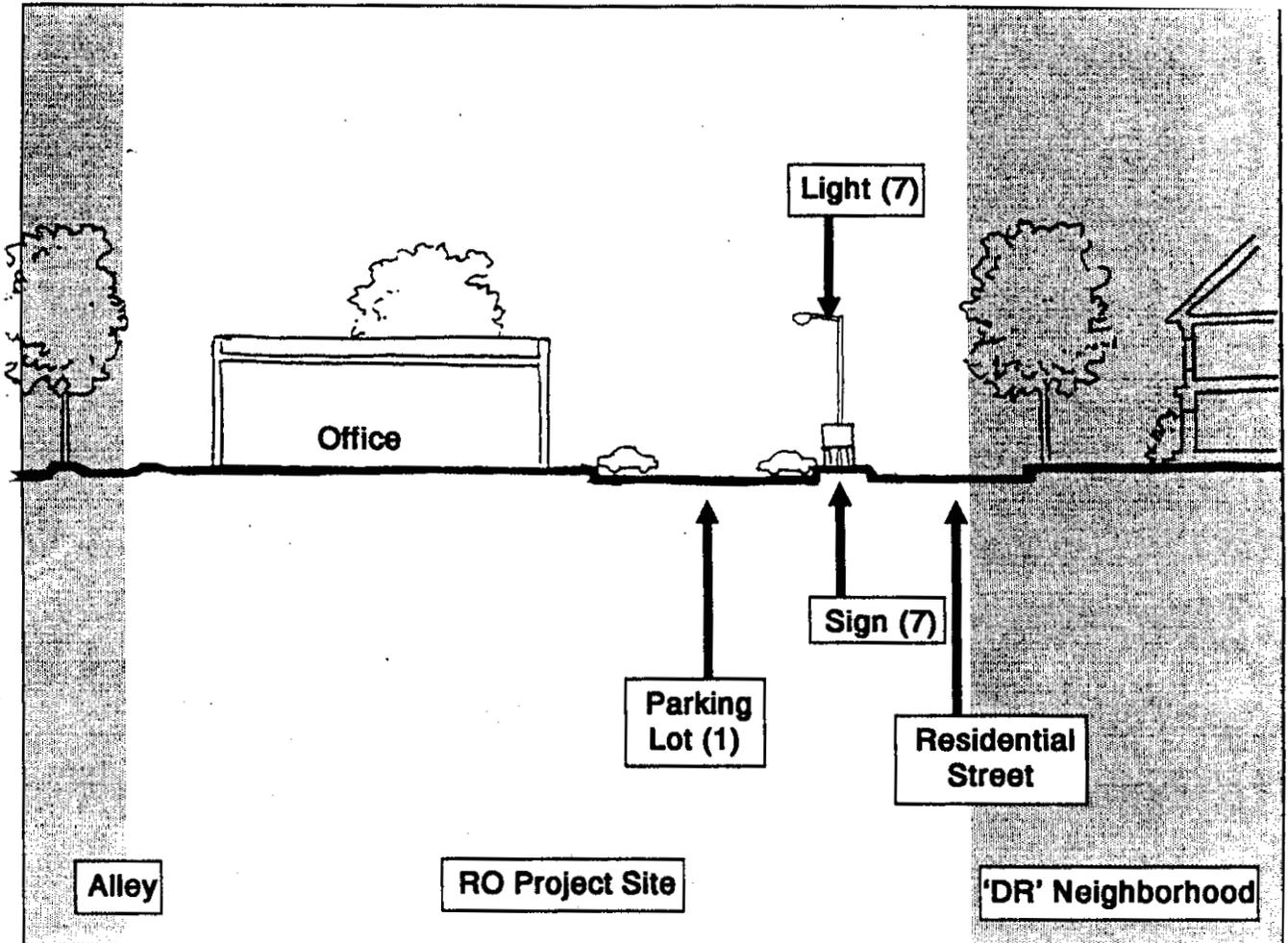
Although not illustrated, if all the adjacent houses have brick facades, the use of brick as part of the building design is strongly encouraged so that the design is more in "character" with the neighborhood.

As a general rule, repeating similar details or materials is advantageous if the overall neighborhood attractively uses a consistent design detail or building material, for example: a roof overhang or windows with panes.

# RO Compatibility

## • RO 'URBAN' SITE

NOT COMPATIBLE



7. The freestanding sign along the right-of-way that is shared with the houses is not desirable for achieving compatibility.

The light standard in the parking area faces away from the neighborhood, however, a shorter standard may be more appropriate.

Any accessory structure, such as an enclosure for a trash dumpster, should be located along the alley, out of view from the neighborhood.

8. The roof design is not in keeping with the design treatment of the neighborhood. Even if a pitched roof is not desired, a sloped parapet or detailed cornice along the building perimeter is strongly encouraged for compatibility.

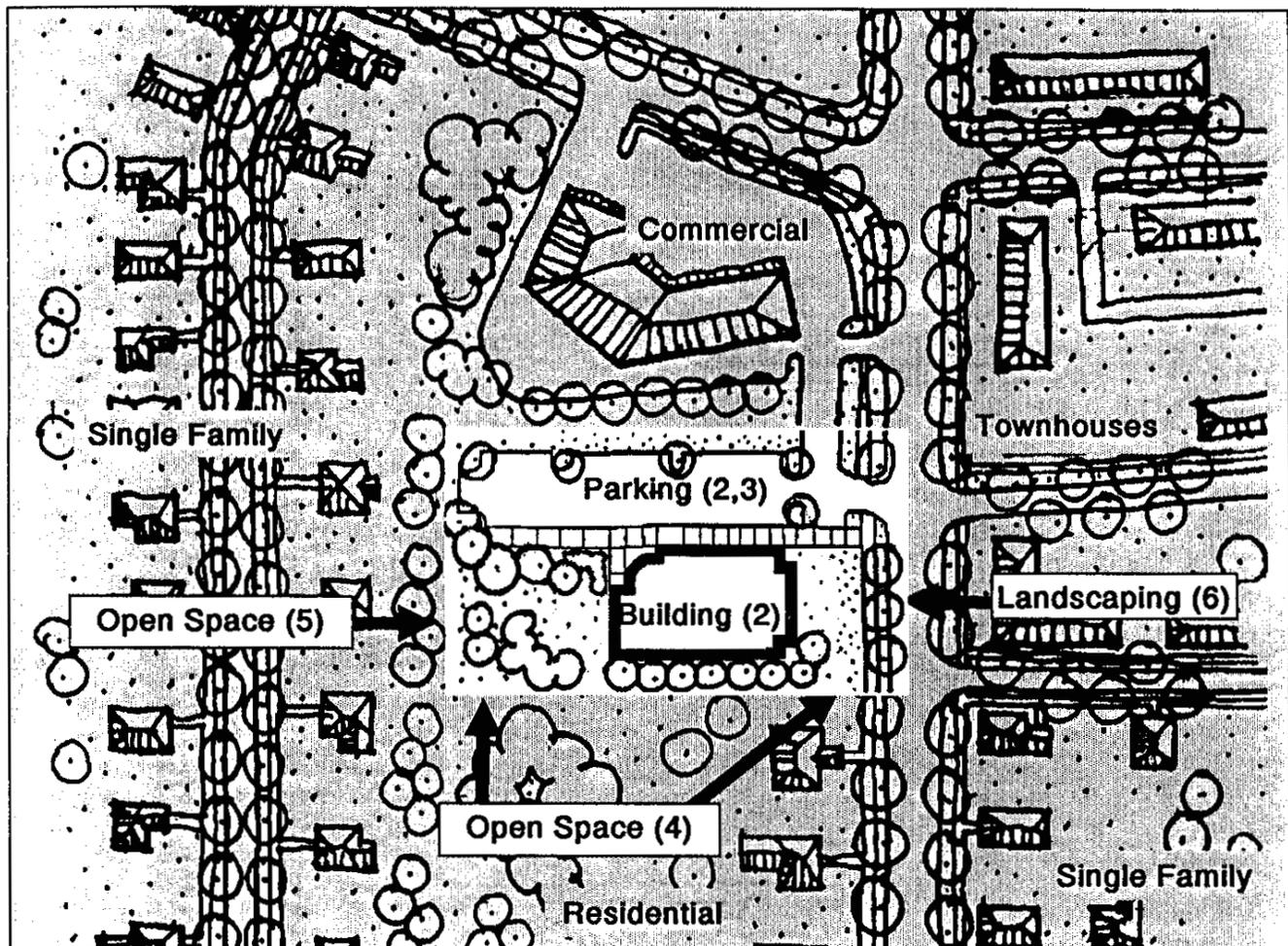
Compatibility can be achieved by use of similar window styles, wall materials, color, and building textures.

As a guideline, reduce the building bulk by avoiding long continuous, uninterrupted facades, particularly when adjacent to detached housing.

# RO Compatibility

## • RO 'SUBURBAN' SITE

COMPATIBLE



1. The building location, open space, sidewalk, and front yard setback are patterned similar to the development in the surrounding neighborhood.

2. The building is located at the front of the site facing the major arterial as found in the neighborhood and unlike the adjacent commercial structure. The parking lot is screened from the neighborhood by the building and the open space. The parking lot is also connected to the adjacent commercial lot to limit the number of curb cuts along the major arterial.

3. The street pattern remains the same; the proposed site development does not alter the existing vehicular

pattern. The vehicular entry lines up with the existing street across the way.

4. The open space is at the rear of the site and becomes part of the overall rear yard open area within the neighborhood.

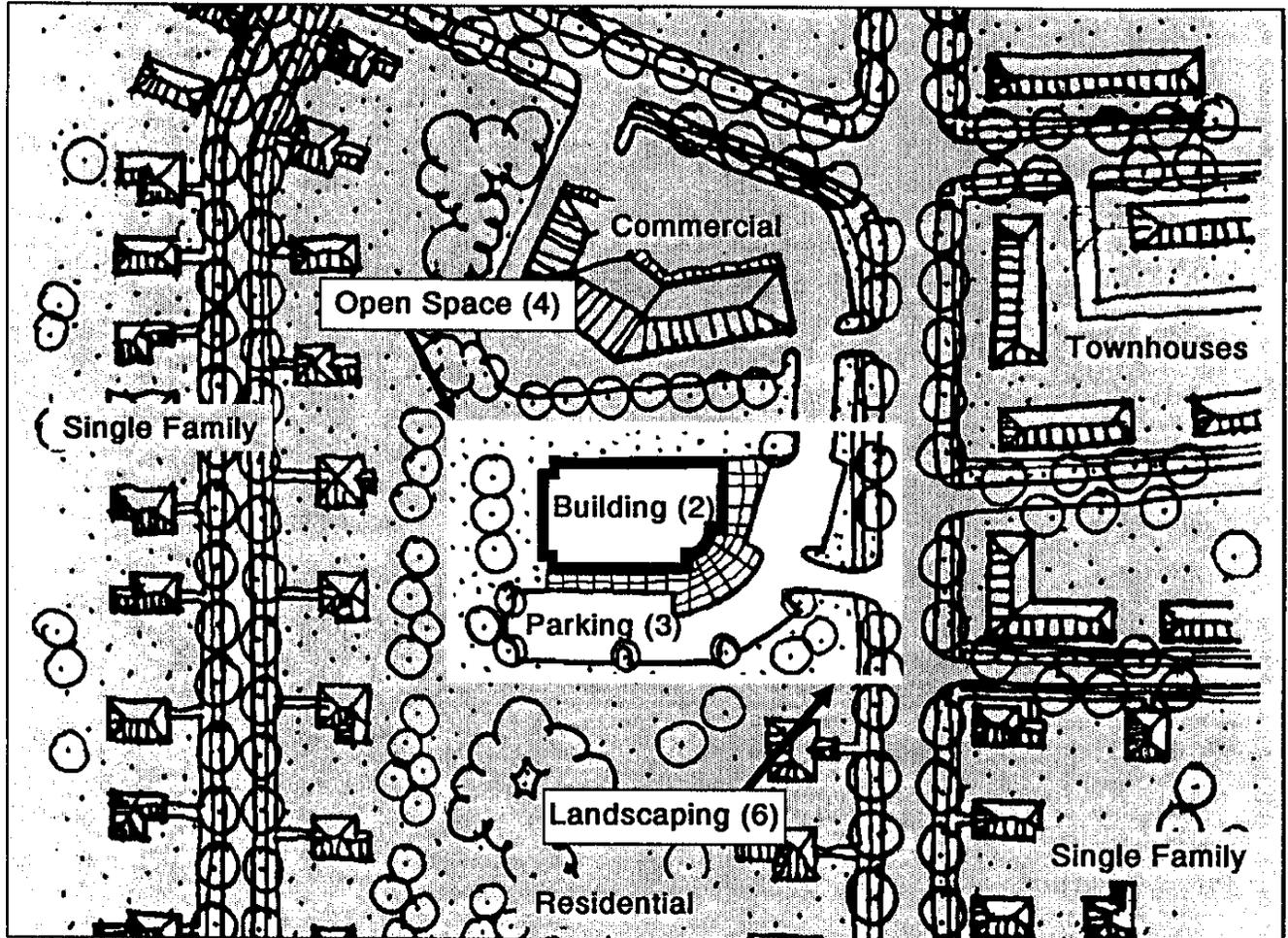
5. The significant feature of this site, the rear yard open space, is preserved.

6. The front yard is landscaped with street trees as found along the major arterial and the sidewalk connects the neighborhood to the office and commercial sites. The building and parking lot are landscaped to buffer the uses from the neighborhood.

# RO Compatibility

## • RO 'SUBURBAN' SITE

NOT COMPATIBLE



1. The building and parking area locations are arranged in a dissimilar order from the existing neighborhood pattern.
2. The building is located in a similar manner as the commercial development which is unrelated to the surrounding neighborhoods. The parking lot design locates all of the spaces in the front yard which disrupts the continuity of the buildings located at the front of the lots along the street.
3. The parking lot is connected to the adjacent site. The street pattern remains essentially the same; however, the one curb cut does not line up with

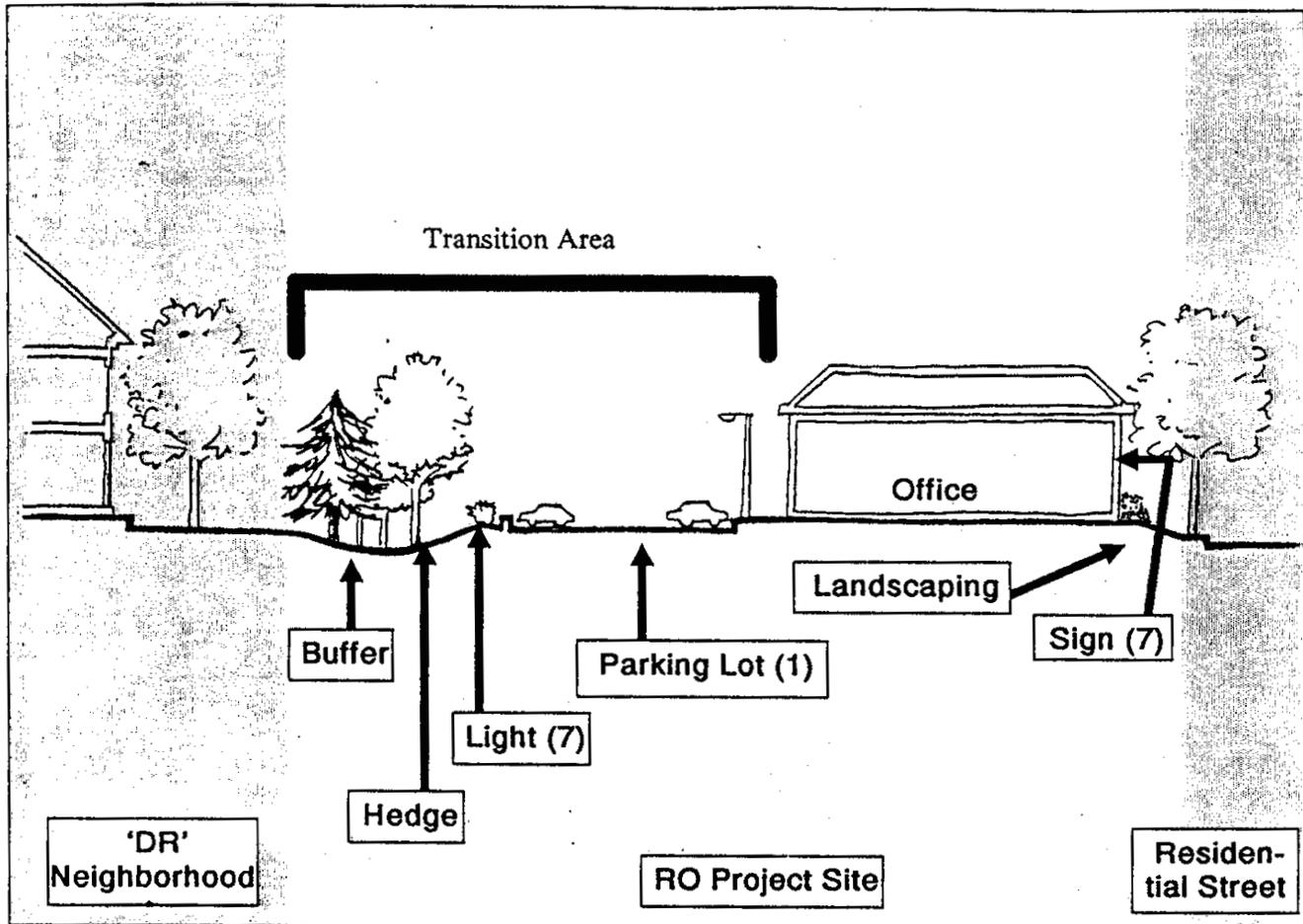
the street across the way.

4. The open space is located around the perimeter of the site which does not reinforce the significant open space along the rear yards of the adjacent neighborhood.
5. The significant feature of this site, the rear yard open space, has been reduced in this scheme.
6. The street trees do maintain the neighborhood pattern, however, additional landscaping would help to buffer the building and parking area from the neighborhood.

# RO Compatibility

## • RO 'SUBURBAN' SITE

COMPATIBLE



7. A wall-mounted sign is located on the building facade facing the street to identify the project. Free-standing signs are not used on this project site.

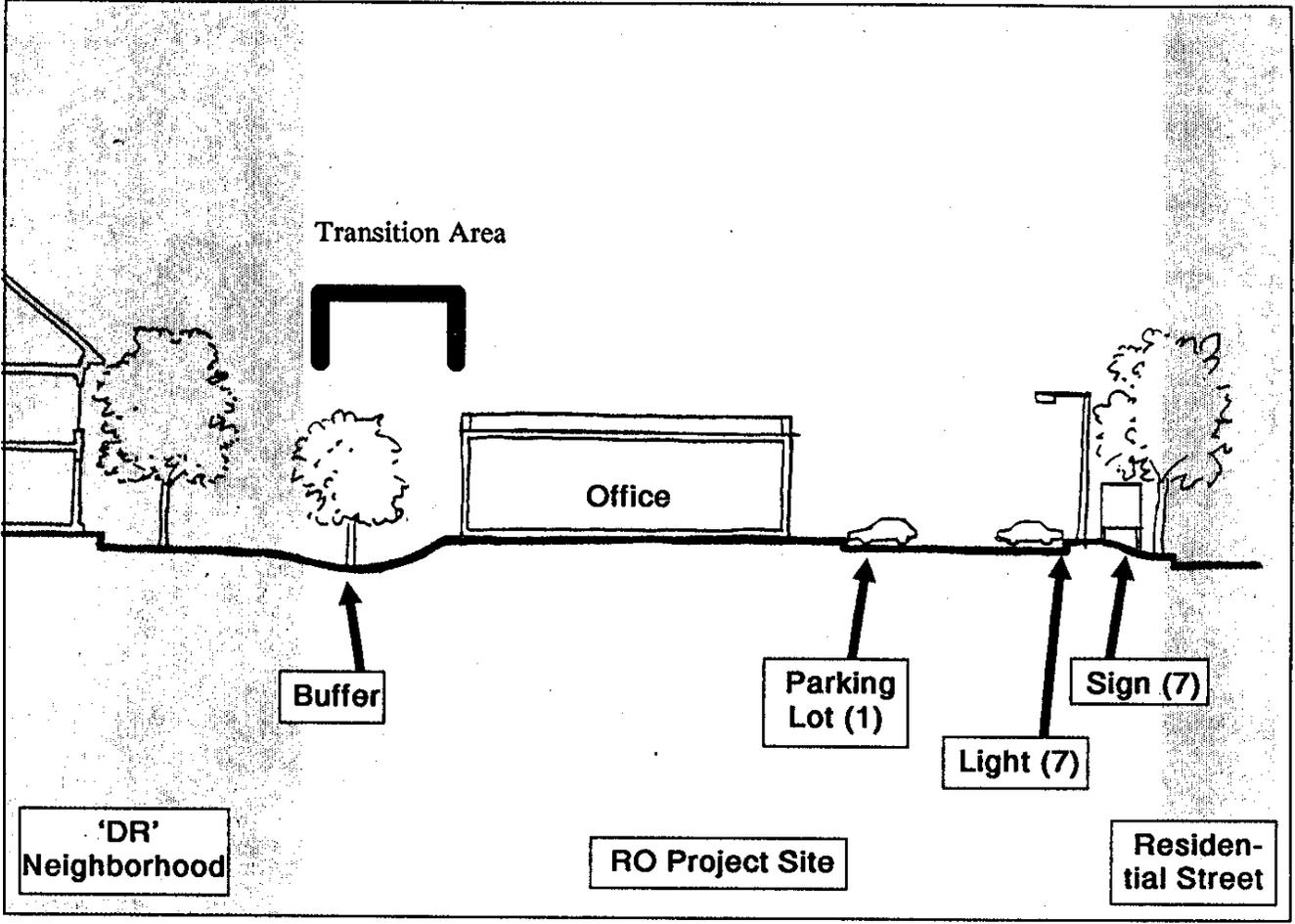
The light standards for the parking lot are located to face the building to avoid glare into the neighborhood.

8. The building scale is visually reduced with the setbacks at the corners and the generous front yard setback. Also, by locating the short side of the building along the street, which is a similar building placement as the adjacent single family detached houses, the placement repeats the pattern previously established.

# RO Compatibility

• RO 'SUBURBAN' SITE

NOT COMPATIBLE



7. The freestanding exterior sign is in view of the adjacent residential uses and townhouses across the street; signage should be limited to the building wall. The parking lot light fixtures should be low level fixtures and located near the building to avoid glare into the neighborhood.

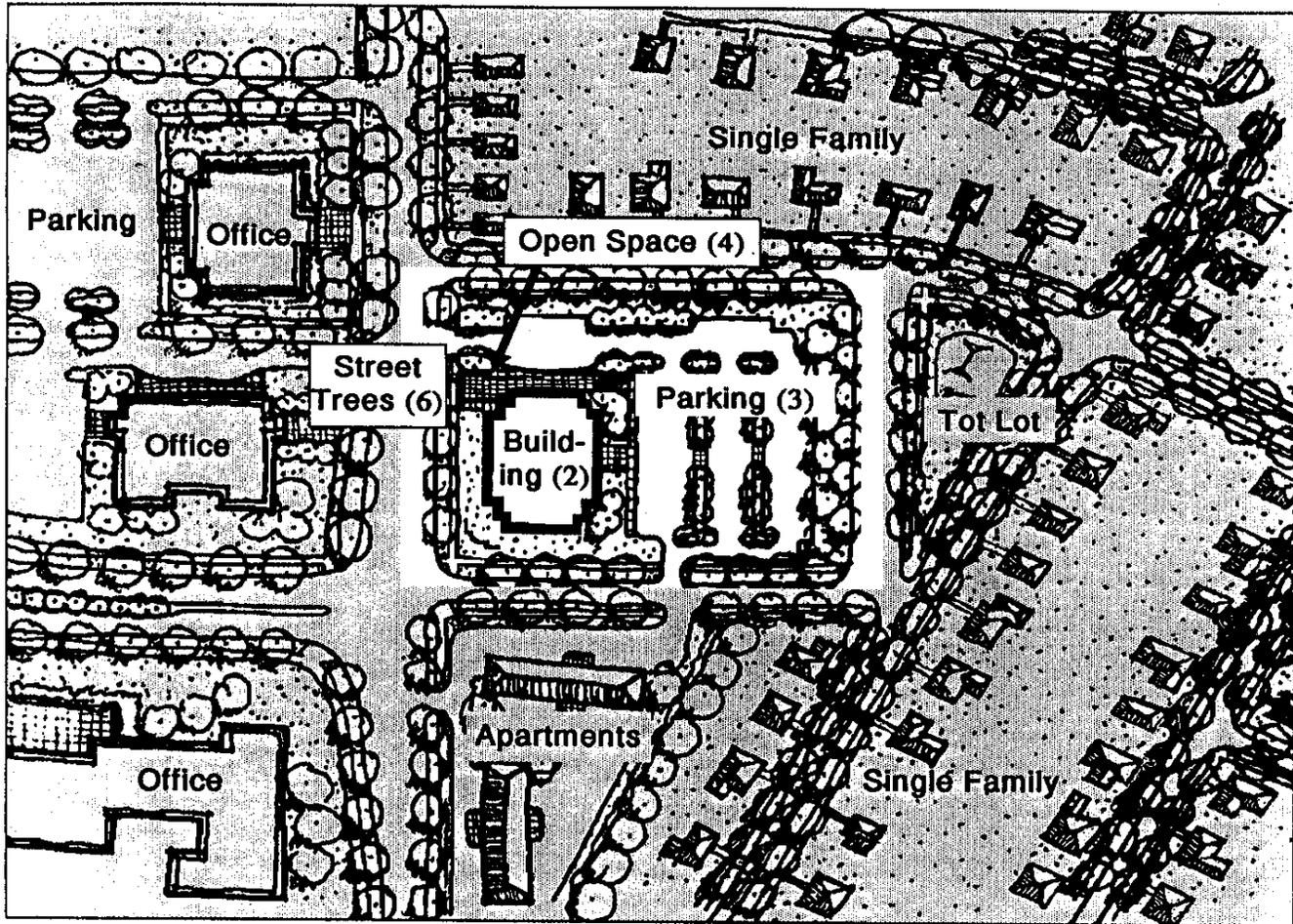
8. The building roof design does not utilize a dominant design detail within the adjacent neighborhoods.

Restraint should be used in the number of different building materials selected for the project. Building materials similar to those in predominant use on the street are encouraged.

# O-1 and O-2 Compatibility

## • O-1/O-2 SITE

COMPATIBLE



1. The arrangement and orientation of the site development proposal is similar to the office building developments across the street and is designed to minimize the impact on the adjacent neighborhood.

2. The building is located near the street and towards the front of the site with a lawn and open area between the building and the sidewalk.

3. The parking area is at the rear of the site and the street pattern remains unchanged. Vehicular access is provided across from an adjacent drive and along the street adjacent to the apartments. Access is not provided across from any single family house.

4. The open space is located in front of the building near the entry with ease of access along the sidewalk for pedestrians.

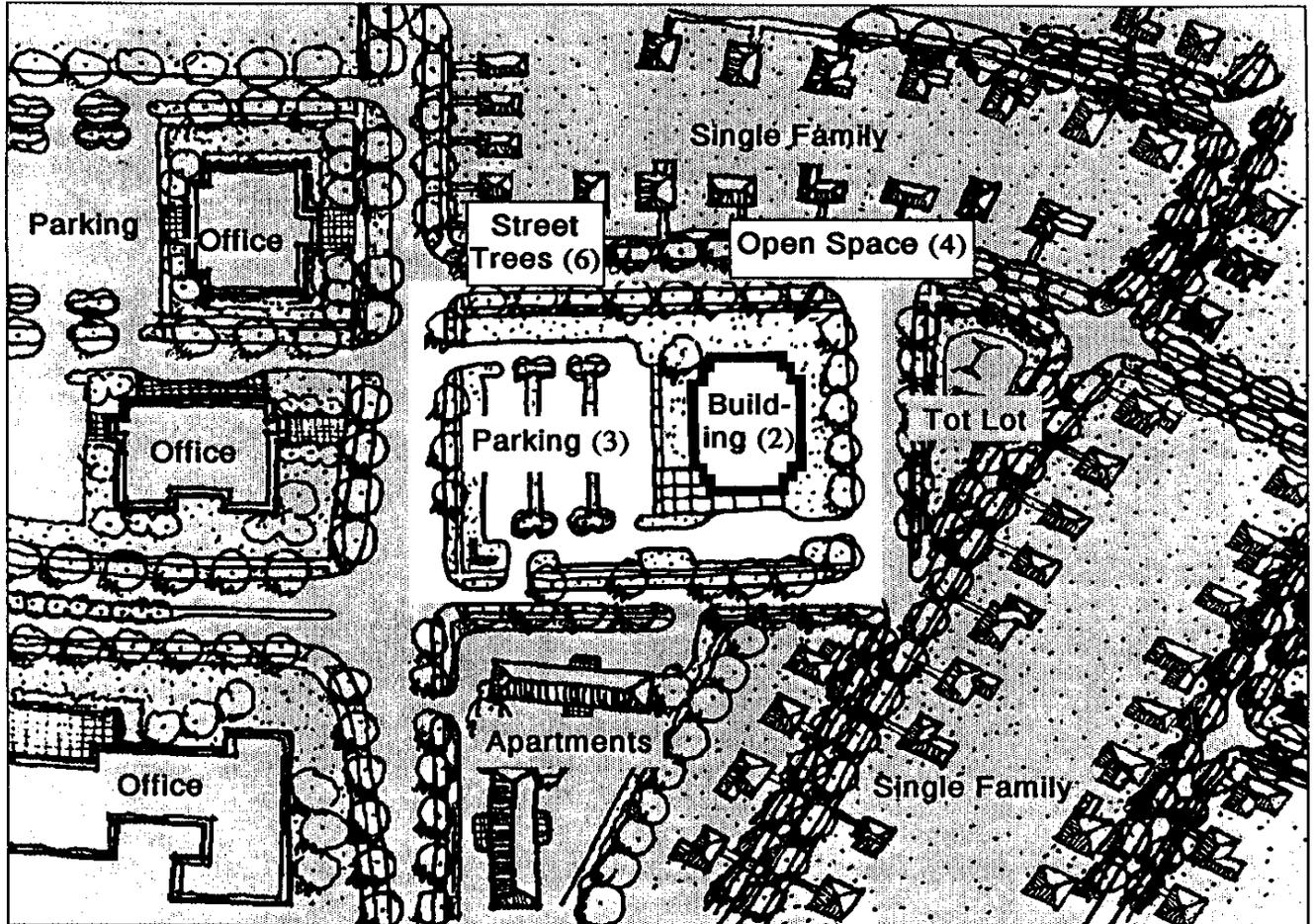
5. The significant features of this site, the major arterial and adjacent tot lot are utilized and buffered, respectively. The building location reinforces the linear pattern of buildings along the major arterial. The double row of trees at the rear of the site not only buffers the tot lot, but expands the adjacent open area.

6. The street trees reinforce the neighborhoods' landscape design component. The double row of trees at the rear of the site adjacent to the tot lot provides an additional buffer.

# O-1 and O-2 Compatibility

• O-1/O-2 SITE

NOT COMPATIBLE



1. The locations of the building and parking area are arranged in a dissimilar order from the other office sites across the street.

2. The building is located at the rear of the site, closest to the adjacent single family houses; it is separated from the major arterial by the parking lot.

3. The parking area is located near the front of the site and vehicular access is on the major arterial. However, access is also provided at the rear of the site which is not compatible or appropriate.

4. The open space is located at the rear of the site. Although this area provides an additional buffer it may be best located near the building entry.

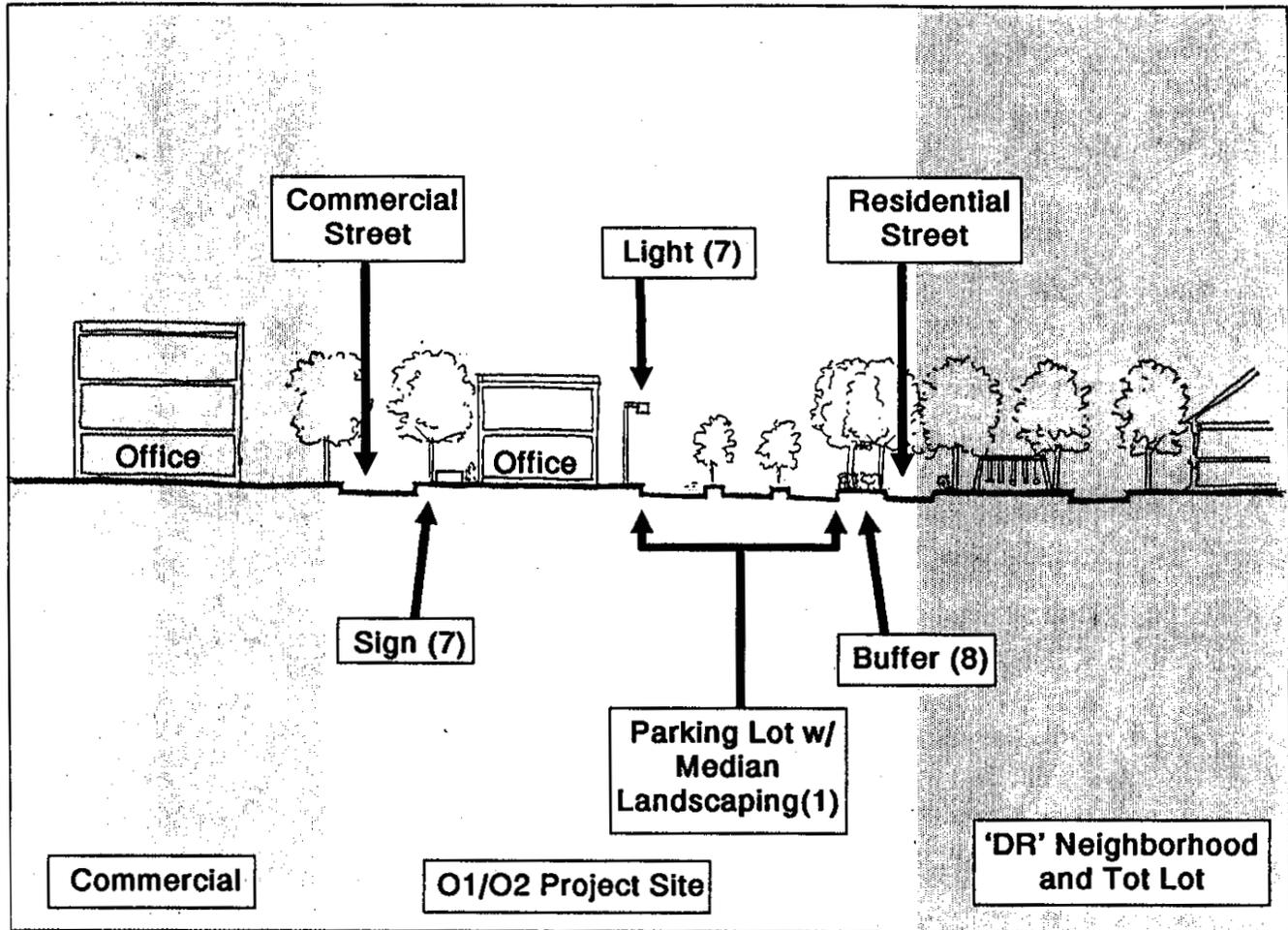
5. The significant features of this site, the major arterial and tot lot, are disregarded. The parking lot frontage at the front of the site limits the view of the building from the street. The building location and rear vehicular access encroaches into the tot lot area.

6. The street trees do maintain the neighborhood pattern, however, additional landscaping would help to buffer the building and parking area from the neighborhood.

# O-1 and O-2 Compatibility

- O-1/O-2 SITE

COMPATIBLE



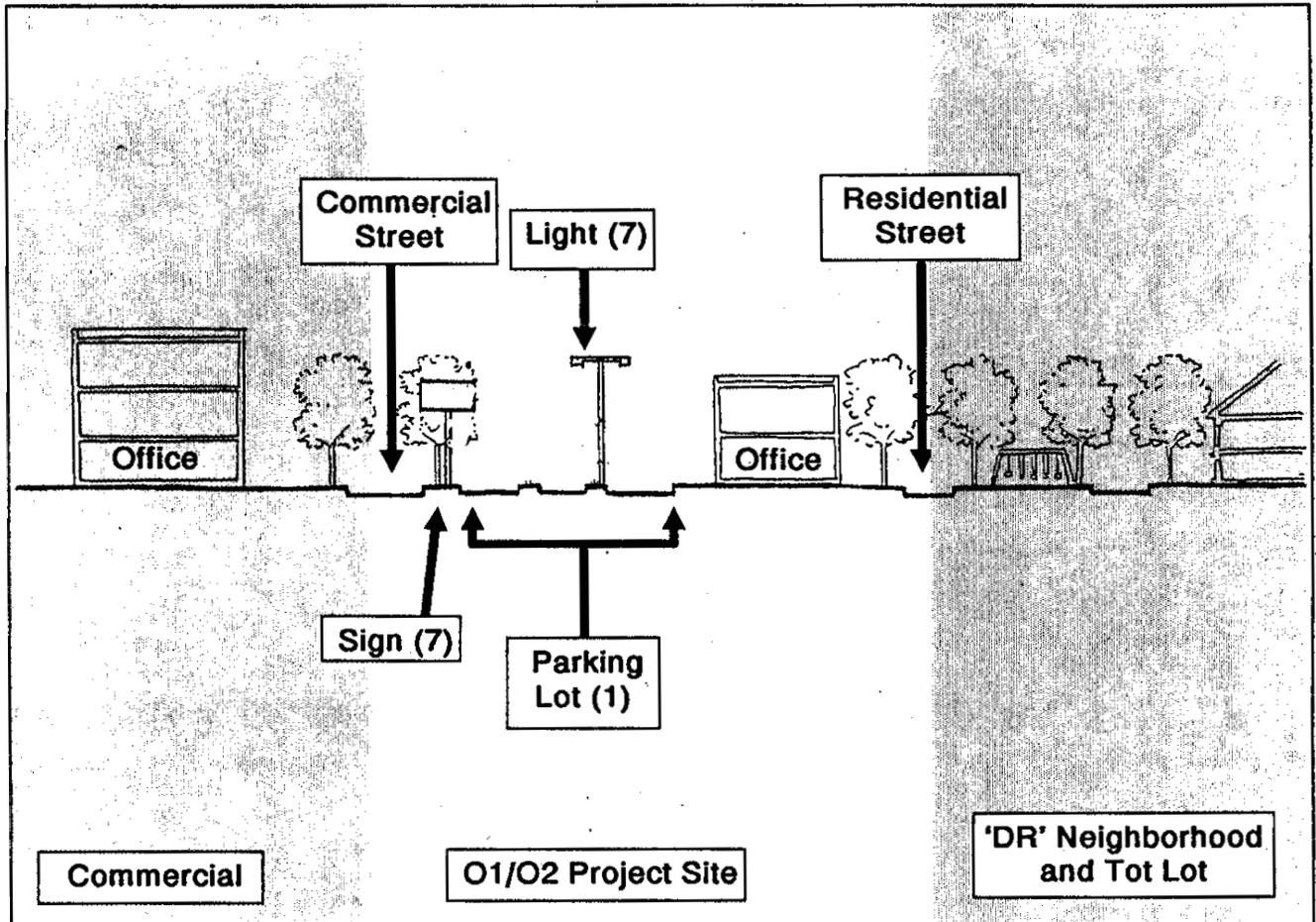
7. The freestanding sign is integrated into the landscape, faces the major road and is not adjacent to the single family houses. The light fixtures for the parking lot do not exceed the height of the trees so that the light does not shine into the neighborhood.

8. The landscaping along the perimeter of the site and within the parking lots works to screen the building from the neighborhood. Also, the landscaping screens the massing of the structure.

# O-1 and O-2 Compatibility

- O-1/O-2 SITE

NOT COMPATIBLE



7. The freestanding sign facing the major road is not integrated into the landscape and is out of scale with the adjacent office developments.

The light fixtures for the parking lot should not exceed the height of the trees so that the light does not shine into the neighborhood.

Any proposed accessory structure should be screened from view from the adjacent neighborhood.

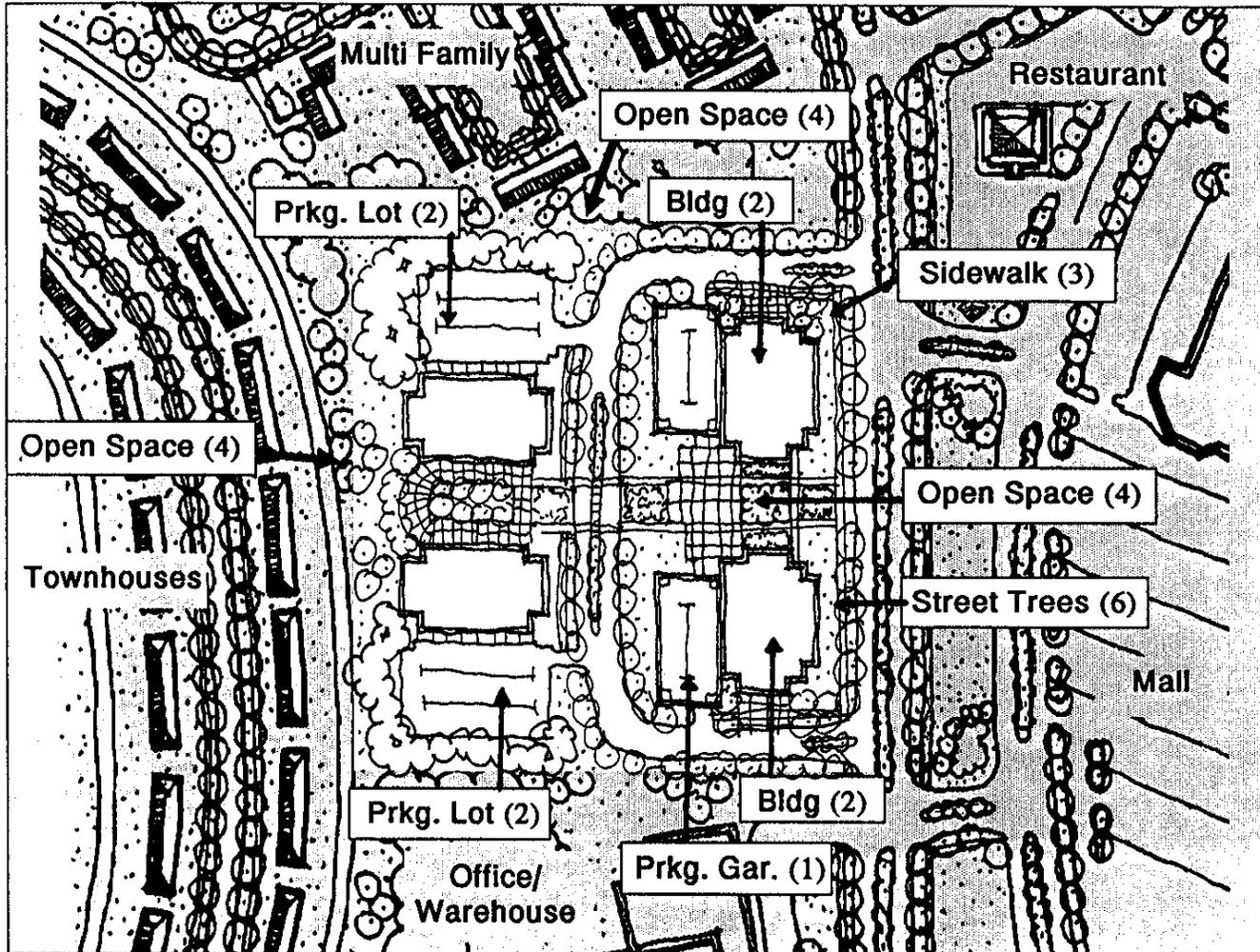
8. The office building is located at the rear of the site, closest to the neighborhood and tot lot with very little landscaping or screening.

NOTE: There may be differing opinions regarding the placement of the building and parking lot. Some may prefer that the parking lot be closest to the main transportation artery. However, in the suggested compatible design, the vehicular access points are located away from single family neighborhoods.

# OT Compatibility

## • OT SITE

COMPATIBLE



1. The buildings and parking structures form a campus setting to minimize the ground coverage and allow significant open areas around the perimeter of the site particularly near the residential neighborhoods.

2. The buildings are near the main arterial and along the internal circulation route and the parking lots are at the periphery.

3. The internal road is only connected to the boulevard to avoid impacting the adjacent neighborhoods. It would be preferable if the top entry lined up with the existing entrance to the mall.

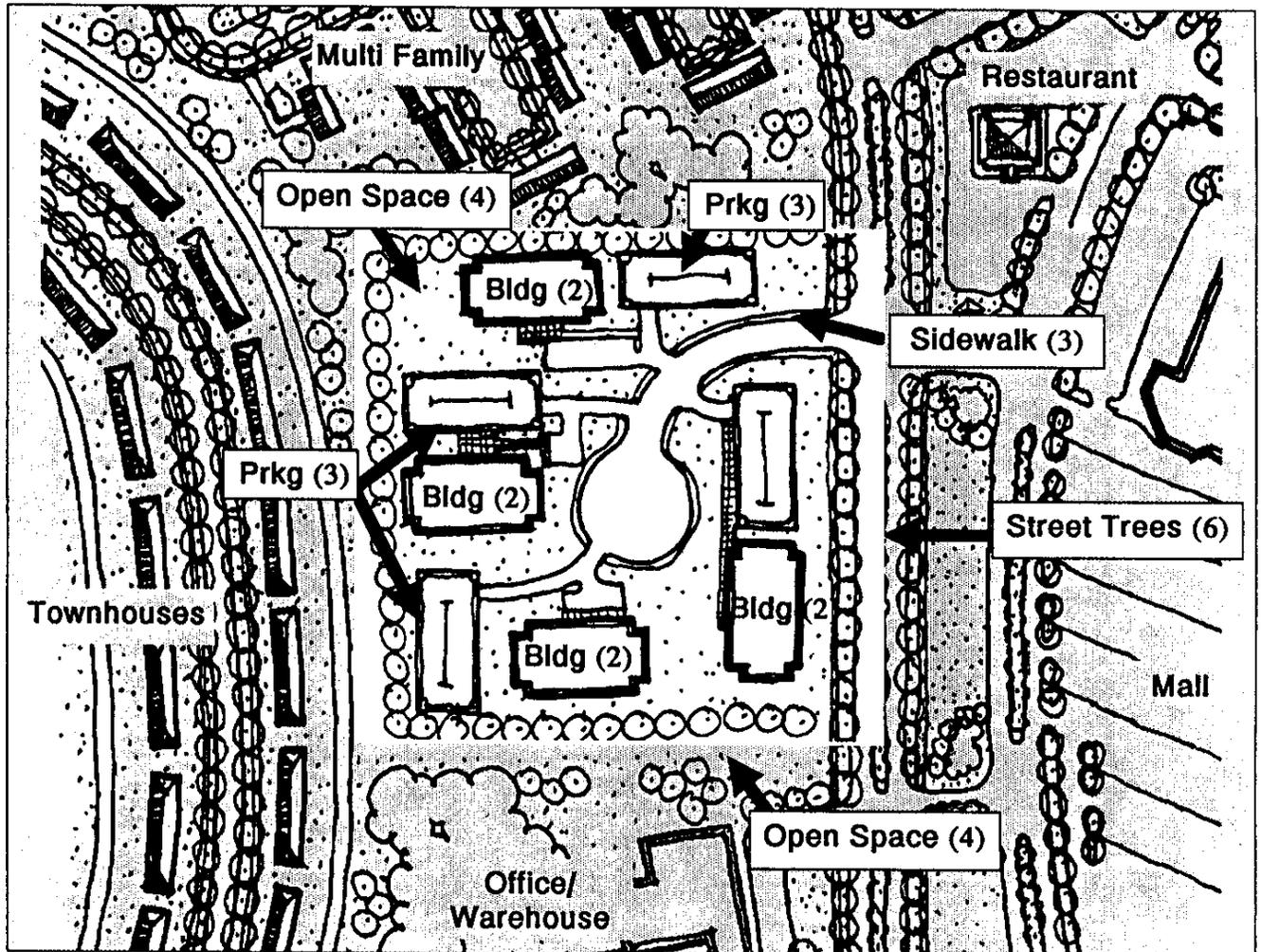
4. The open space is a central organizing element of the site and smaller open spaces are located adjacent to the existing open spaces next to the neighborhood.

5. The significant features of this site are the tree groupings in the rear yard and the tree-lined boulevard. The tree groupings are used to maintain the buffer adjacent to the residential areas. The boulevard character is reinforced by the internal road that maintains the tree-lined character.

6. The landscape treatment on the site buffers the neighborhoods and enhances the project's design.

• OT SITE

NOT COMPATIBLE



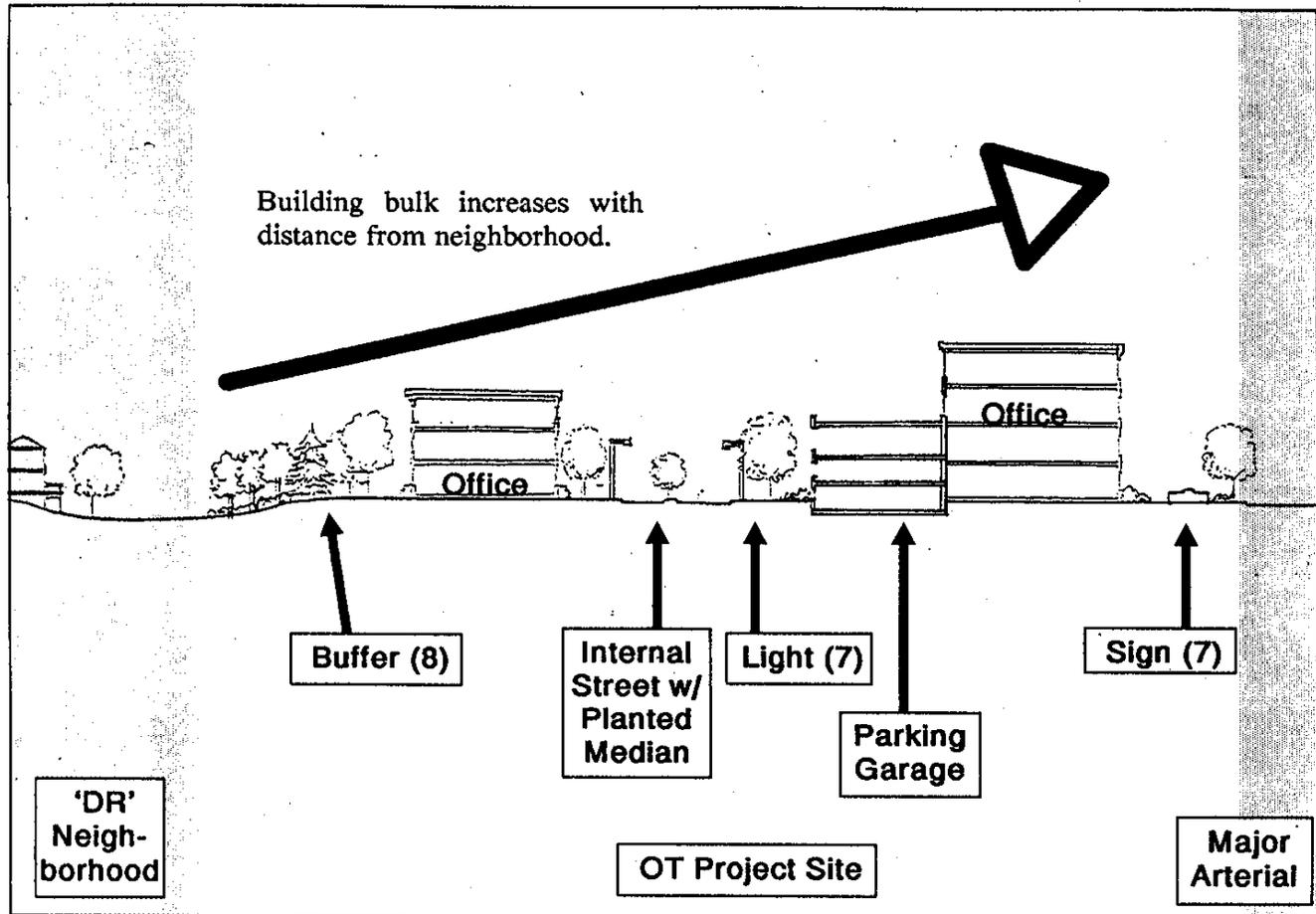
1. The arrangement of the buildings and parking garages are internalized and located at the edges of the site which is not similar to the orientation of buildings in the adjacent neighborhood.
2. The locations of the buildings and parking garages along the perimeter of the site places the bulk of development adjacent to the neighborhood; this layout may not have a positive impact on the neighborhoods.
3. The cul-de-sac on the site serves to internalize the road network and further works to isolate the development from the major arterial. However, it does not impact the neighborhood traffic pattern.

4. The open spaces on this site are the leftover spaces between structures and are not connected to the adjacent open spaces.
5. The significant features of this site are the tree groupings at the rear of the site and the tree-lined boulevard. The tree groupings have been removed and the cul-de-sac is not in the same character as the tree-lined boulevard.
6. The minimum landscape treatment does little more than form an edge around the site and does not attempt to integrate the adjacent landscape features.

# OT Compatibility

## • OT SITE

COMPATIBLE



7. The street and parking lighting for the project is internal to the site. The signage is limited to the entry identification sign and building identification wall signs. These features have no impact on the adjacent neighborhood.

Any accessory structure should be integrated into the overall site plan and be screened from the neighborhood.

The largest buildings on the site are located away from the townhouse neighborhood.

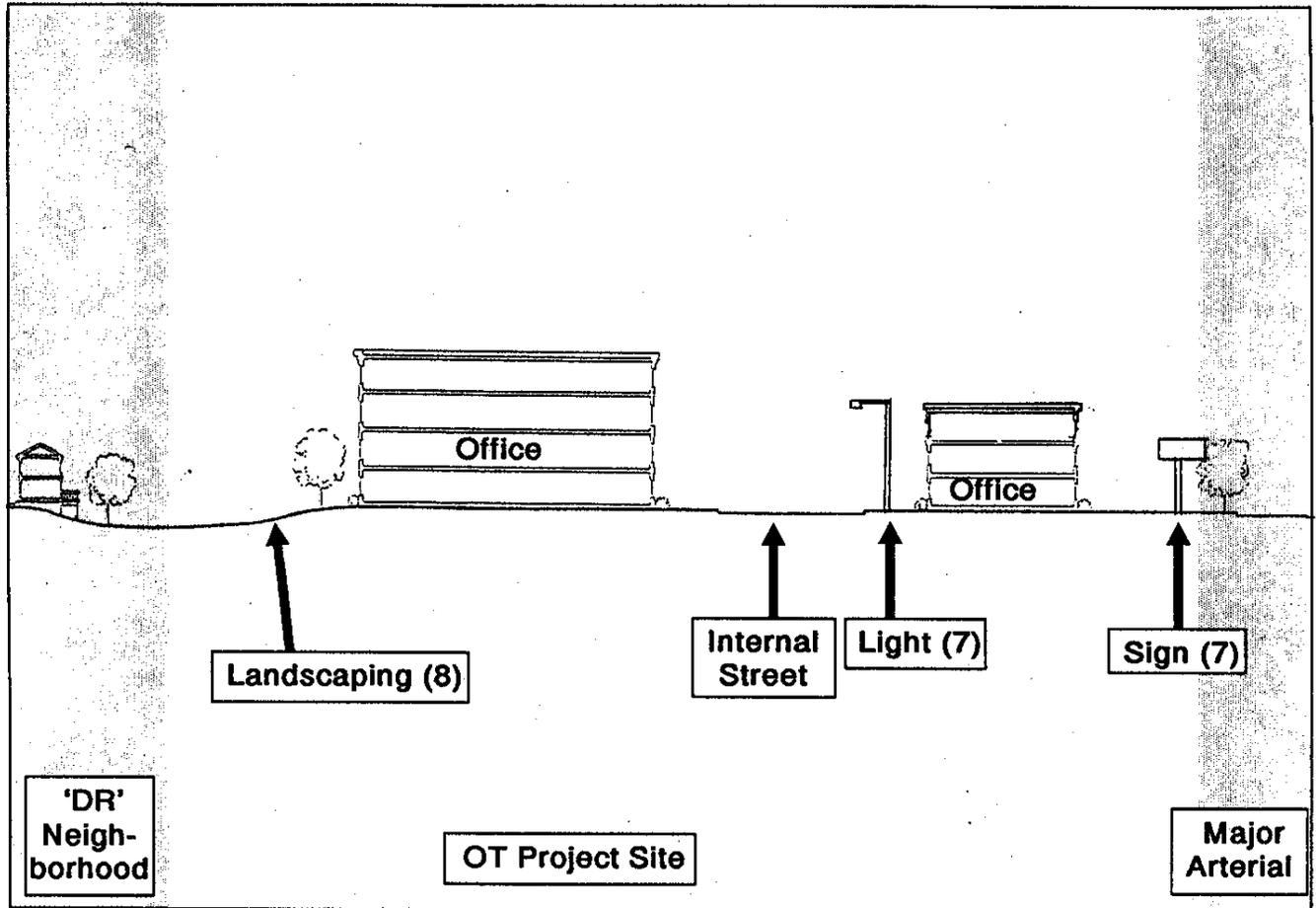
8. Minimize the visual impact of the structure with the use of landscape features and design details similar to those used on the office buildings. A multi-level parking garage is not part of the Baltimore County residential landscape and provides a unique challenge for compatibility.

Locate service and loading zones to minimize visibility of these areas from the neighborhood and public streets. Buffer these zones with generous landscape features and/or screening that is in scale with the development project and neighborhood.

# OT Compatibility

• OT SITE

NOT COMPATIBLE



7. The lighting for the project is internal to the site. The signage is limited to the entry identification sign and building identification wall signs. These appear not to propose a compatibility conflict.

Any accessory structure should be integrated into the overall site plan and be screened from the neighborhood.

8. The largest building on the site is located closest to the townhouse neighborhood. Whenever possible, the greatest building bulk should be located away from the neighborhood. As a general rule, the site design should transition the greatest bulk and height away from the neighborhood.

