



CITY OF WILLOWS MULTIPLE- FAMILY RESIDENTIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES

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Multiple-Family Residential Housing

Purpose:

Design Review is intended to promote high-quality design and well-built and maintained buildings, landscaping and public amenities in order to further the relationship between the appearance of buildings and structures, property values and the taxable value of property in the city.

These design guidelines will be used during the city's design review process to ensure new development reflects the community environment and character of the surrounding neighborhood. They are intended as a reference to assist the designer in understanding the City's goals and objectives for a high-quality multi-family residential development.

These guidelines will apply to all projects which do require design review approval. The guidelines address zoning districts to include R-P, R-2, R-3, CC, CG, CH. Land use designations as identified in the General Plan are Multi-family Residential (16-30 dwellings units per acre), Office Professional, (7-15 UPA) and General Commercial. (Medium or High Density UPA).

The guidelines are general and may be interpreted with some flexibility in their application to specific projects.

GOALS:

To develop multi-family housing that is compatible with the existing neighborhood structures and surrounding homes and provides "high quality design" and living environment

To develop multi-family housing that encourages residents to take pride and a sense of ownership in their neighborhood.

To encourage multiple-family projects which are safe, contribute to safer neighborhoods, and support Police and Fire Department efforts to promote public safety.

To enhance the public realm with attractive buildings and landscaping treatment along the City's streetscape.

To encourage energy efficient design.



SITE DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES

Existing Conditions/Site Constraints

1. Incorporate existing natural features such as trees, topography, creeks, and riparian vegetation into the site plan. These and similar natural elements should be considered when developing a site plan. Every effort should be made to preserve dominant elements, such as mature trees, for example. When trees must be removed mitigation may be required. Refer to Chapter 12.30 of the Municipal Code which governs tree removal and replacement issues.

2. Integrate new development carefully into existing neighborhoods.

3. For purposes of noise attenuation, early acoustical site planning is encouraged. State law and the General Plan regulate acceptable noise levels for both indoor and outdoor environments. Mitigate noise to stipulated levels. Use the structure of the home to shelter the private yards from noise. Use the building skin to reduce noise within homes to acceptable levels. The use of frontage roads with structures facing Transitional Streets and side-on treatment are all preferable to back-on treatment with walls or fences to block noise. Sound walls should be considered only after all other options have been exhausted.

4. When sound walls are found to be necessary along a street, locate them a minimum of 25 feet from the edge of the road and provide a significant landscaped buffer. Earth berms are encouraged to minimize the perceived height of the wall. Extend walls between buildings to create pockets of protected common space avoiding long continuous walls for the entire length of a project site.

5. When existing public amenities such as parks or school playgrounds are in the immediate vicinity, provide pedestrian access to take advantage of these features.



NEIGHBORHOOD AND STREET PATTERN

1. Locate multiple-family units close to the center of a neighborhood in order to place larger numbers of residents close to open space, commercial uses and potential transit stops.
2. Integrate multiple-family projects with pedestrian and bicycle circulation systems that extends to neighborhood centers, and to adjacent neighborhoods and shopping districts.
3. When duplexes, triplexes, or four plexes are developed within a single-family neighborhood, design the buildings to resemble a single family home. Provide individual front doors to each unit and interior stairs. Take design cues from existing single family homes in the neighborhood.
4. If a multiple-family project is located across the street from a single family neighborhood, orient the buildings to the street with individual entries, patio areas and landscaping facing the single family homes. Parking lot areas and carports should not be located along these street frontages.



SPACE HIERARCHY

It is important to clearly delineate public space (streets), communal space (common open space, play areas, laundries, etc.) and private space (dwelling and private yards). Residents feel uncomfortable when the public violates the communal space or when other residents intrude on the private spaces.

1. Make the distinction between public streets and project common open space clear enough so that residents and non-residents alike can see the division of space.
2. Locate common facilities such as laundries and play areas so they are clearly intended for the residents and are not public amenities.
3. Provide a visual buffer in the form of landscaping, privacy walls or semi-private patios between the interior of dwellings and sidewalks and common open spaces.



ORIENTATION

1. Multiple-family developments should be easy to navigate through in a logical, common sense manner. Give thought to how a visitor will enter the site, park the car, if any, and find a particular unit.
2. Provide orientation maps when a development does not follow an easy to comprehend street pattern.
3. Clearly identify each building and dwelling unit to assist visitors and emergency respondents. Note: illuminated addressees are required by the Zoning Code.
4. Building orientation should be optimized for heat gain, shading, day lighting and natural ventilation.
5. Provide shading on east, west and south walls with overhangs, awning or deciduous trees.
6. Design buildings, sidewalks, pathways, streets and crossings to encourage walking and bicycling. Sidewalks should connect to existing city streets. Refer to City of Willows Bicycle Master Plan.



SECURITY THROUGH DESIGN

Formal surveillance is undertaken by police, caretakers and security guards. Equally important is informal surveillance, which involves the casual observation of neighbors, children, and visitors by residents as they go about their daily lives. It can be facilitated by the positioning of windows and gardens, the location and design of pathways and play areas, the quality of lighting and landscaping, and the avoidance both of large, ambiguous spaces and of small, secluded ones.

The feeling that others will see if help is necessary reassures residents that they are not alone and this encourages use of communal areas. This, in turn, improves security because intruders will rarely trespass if they think they are being observed.



1. Orient dwellings and windows of frequently used rooms (living and dining rooms) to overlook common open space.
2. Locate parking areas such that the walk from parking to the dwellings is short and direct as possible, and provided with adequate lighting.
3. Ensure that the entry to each dwelling is visible from at least one other dwelling.
4. Child play areas shall be located and taken into consideration, so there is a safe buffer between the public roadway and the child play area.
5. Limit the height of solid fencing between private yards and common open spaces to 4.5 feet in height. If a six foot fence is desired, the top 18 inches should allow for vision in and out of the yard.
6. Provide semi-private spaces at the entries to units in the form a small sitting area with a low fence, a porch or a balcony. Such spaces provide a transition from public to private space, which encourages residents to take “ownership” of the fronts of their units and to engage in casual socialization and interaction with neighbors. The more time residents spend in the public realm, the greater the number of "eyes on the street" and the smaller the likelihood of crime in the area.
7. Design the site so that “shortcut” pedestrian access through the site is discouraged. This will enhance the sense of community and security.
8. Avoid outdoor areas that are between or behind buildings that have little or no surveillance. These spaces with ambiguous “ownership” should be placed within the control of individual units.



COMMON OPEN SPACE

1. Incorporate common open spaces into a site plan as a primary design feature. The open spaces should not be remnant spaces or space left over after the buildings are placed on the site.
2. Provide common useable open space for all multiple family projects.
3. Provide between 70%-80% of the common open space as a landscaped or garden area, with the remaining area in hardscape. Common open space should contain landscaped areas as well as hardscape areas that encourage social interaction.



4. Utilize all weather surfacing within the hardscape area such as concrete or pavers, and include features to encourage social interaction such as: benches, low walls for sitting, shade structures, a structure for community mailboxes, a laundry facility.

5. Create a sense of enclosure for the common open space, for example with the dwellings the space serves and/or with low walls or fences, and/or with landscaping such as hedges or trees. The common spaces should have a parking area bordering no more than one side of the space. A common space should be visible by as many of the dwellings it serves as possible. Residents are more likely to respect and protect a common space when their perception is that it “belongs” to them.

6. Use landscaping, building placement and fencing to create gateways to a common open space. This creates a distinction between the public realm and the semiprivate nature of the open space.

7. When a multiple-family project exceeds 20 units, with two (or more) bedroom units (unless it is a restricted Senior project), open space accommodation should be made for a minimum of two common open space areas, one for adults and one for a child play area. Each area should be furnished appropriately for its user group.

8. When a multiple-family project exceeds 100 units, (unless it is a restricted senior project) accommodation should be made for a minimum of three common open spaces areas, one for adults, one for teenagers, and one for younger children. Each area should be furnished appropriately.

9. Include play equipment for children under the age of five in child play areas. The play area should be visible to as many units as possible to provide casual surveillance. Separate the play area from traffic. Provide benches or picnic tables for adults that are accompanying younger children.

10. Include a paved area with basketball hoop and benches in teenager play areas. As a group, teenagers can be noisy. To minimize conflicts avoid locating the teen play area directly adjacent to units, the child play area, or adult open space.



SEMI-PRIVATE OPEN SPACE

1. Provide each unit with a minimum of 40 square feet of semi-private open space directly adjacent to the unit. It is not intended for the space to have a privacy (6 foot) wall. The intent is to provide a balcony on units above the ground level and a small patio area on the ground level.
2. These semi-private spaces should feature an open rail, low wall, or hedge or other element that defines the space but permits the resident to have a presence on the street or open space.
3. These semi-private spaces shall not require noise protection.

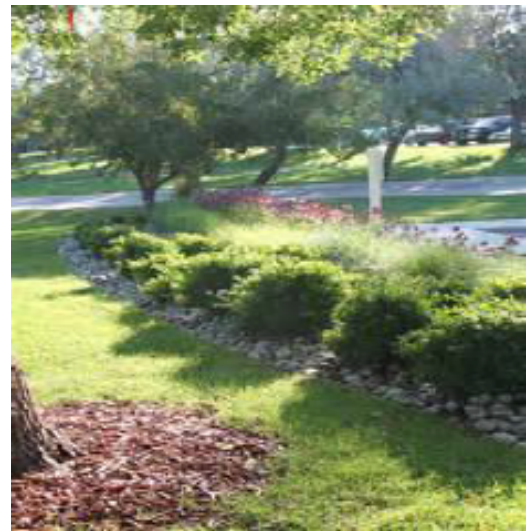


PEDESTRIAN CIRCULATION

1. Provide sidewalks from dwellings to all common facilities such as; laundry, play areas, trash dumpsters, parking, and in accordance with the current building codes.
2. Locate sidewalks so that adults will walk through common open spaces on the way to common facilities such as laundries.

LANDSCAPING AND SITE IMPROVEMENTS

1. Water all common areas using an automatic irrigation system.
2. Refer to the City's Master Tree List regarding street trees.
3. Avoid the use of ivy as a ground cover as it creates a habitat attractive to rats.
4. Encourage the use of landscaping to provide privacy screening when possible.
5. Along public street frontage provide a landscaped area between the curb and sidewalk that is planted with ground cover and street trees. In mixed use and urban settings a contiguous sidewalk with tree wells may be used when on-street parking is adjacent to the sidewalk.



6. Provide shade trees throughout the parking area with at least one tree for each six parking spaces.
7. Consider the use of low masonry walls to contain planting areas at common open spaces. These walls also may find use as informal seating areas.
8. Provide outdoor seating at the following locations: common open spaces, child play areas, teenage play areas, laundry rooms and along heavily used sidewalks.
9. Consider providing some picnic tables both for outdoor eating and writing.
10. Multi-family projects shall have a strong entry sequence typified by accent entry landscaping. Driveways at project entries shall be landscaped with flowering shrubs, annual color, ground cover and flowering trees. At least four flowering trees at a minimum size of 24 inch box shall be planted at the project entry.
11. Fencing
 - a. If perimeter project fencing is utilized along public streets, use decorative iron, prepainted welded steel, concrete wall, or wood picket fencing.
 - b. The use of barbed wire or razor wire at the tops of fences is unacceptable.
 - c. Fencing that encloses semi-private patio areas should be consistent with the architecture of the buildings.



PARKING

1. Provide for parking in small lots reasonably close to the dwellings they serve and within sight of some of the dwellings. Provide required parking on-site.
2. Choose shrubs and trees for parking lots and locate them such that the landscaping does not provide hiding places.
3. Carports and parking areas should be located and/or screened so that headlights do not shine into living areas.
4. Parking lots should be internalized behind buildings and oriented away from street front age. Large undivided parking lots and long parking drives are discouraged.



LIGHTING

1. Provide lighting for safety and security at all common areas that have regular night time use.
2. Light should be even, without glare and dark spots in accordance with city standards.
3. Provide pedestrian scale light standards for on-sight streets, parking areas, and common areas that do not exceed 14 feet in height.



COMMON FACILITIES & AMENITIES

1. Mailboxes
 - a. Consider mail delivery early in the design process.
 - b. In multiple-family developments provide Community Mailbox Units (CMUs).
 - c. Locate CMUs in sheltered a location with night time lighting to permit mail pickup in inclement weather and at night. Locate CMUs in a location that is centralized and easy to get to for the residents. Consider coordinating with other common facilities such as laundry rooms.
2. Laundry room

A laundry room should:

 - a. Be in a centralized location within view of a least one dwelling.
 - b. Include a table for folding laundry, seating and trash receptacles; and
 - c. Include two separated entries into the laundry facility. Residents, particularly women, may be reluctant to use a laundry facility at night without a second means of egress.
3. Common Buildings

In larger projects (of more than 100 units) a common building that provides space for meetings is encouraged. Other uses may be combined in this structure, such as laundry, rental management offices, and mailboxes.



4. Refuse Containers

- a. When dumpsters are to be used, designers should coordinate with the refuse pickup provider to determine the size and number of dumpsters required. When individual garbage cans are used, they must either fit in the garage or into a special enclosure.
- b. When there are five or more units, provide dumpsters for garbage collection within a City approved enclosure.
- c. Shield all dumpsters within an enclosure a minimum of six feet tall. Allow adequate size to accommodate the needed dumpsters and recycling containers. All enclosures and gates should be detailed to withstand heavy use. Provide wheel stops or curbs to prevent dumpsters from banging into walls of enclosure.
- d. Encourage the use of recycling within the enclosure allowing for stacking recycling crates (in small projects) and recycling dumpsters (in large projects).
- e. Locate dumpsters sufficiently far from units to reduce to minimum problems with offensive odors.
- f. Provide an opening so that pedestrians can access the dumpsters without opening the large gates.
- g. Provide lighting at trash enclosures for night time security and use.



5. Storage

Provide outdoor storage units for such items as barbecues, bicycles, big wheels, etc. which otherwise would tend to accumulate on balconies and patio areas. 60 cubic feet of storage volume per dwelling unit should be provided for as a minimum.

Storage units should be covered and capable of being locked. They should be constructed of materials similar to that used for the units. Prefabricated steel storage units such as those sold at the local home center are not appropriate.



6. Outdoor meters, transformers, and flues

- a. Make allowance for electrical transformer locations.
- b. Make allowances for gas and electric meters and heaters. Consider enclosures or rooms for these items to screen them from the public view.
- c. Combine plumbing vents and water

heater/furnace flues to minimize the visual blight frequently seen on rooftops.

7. General

All site features including; trash enclosures, fencing, light fixtures, mailboxes, laundry and facilities utility screens, should be architecturally compatible with the main structures and must be screened from view.

Utility meters and equipment must be placed in locations which are not exposed to view from the street or they must be suitably screened.

All screening devices are to be compatible with the architecture and color of the adjacent structures.



BUILDING DESIGN GUIDELINES

A. FORM AND MATERIALS

1. Break up the mass of larger structures with articulation of the form, use of color and the use of multiple materials, including: horizontal wood, cement fiber and composite siding, vertical wood siding, stucco, wood shingles, real and cultured masonry.

B. When panel siding is used, provide 5/8" thick minimum and the use of battens which are nominal 2x material. 3/8" and 1/2" panel siding often does not stay flat.

C. When wood trim is used, provide nominal 2x material or other approved material. 1x wood trim does not stand up well to sun exposure in this climate.

D. Avoid dressing up fronts of building with higher quality materials and switching to less expensive siding material on the sides and back. Design all four sides of buildings with quality materials.

E. Within mixed income developments, provide the same level of detailing and materials on the affordable units as on the market rate units.



B. ENTRANCES

1. Orient the main entrance of each unit or the building to the street or to a common open area.
2. Entries to the units should be clearly identified, protected from the weather and provided with lighting for night time safety and security.

C. MASSING ARTICULATION

1. Incorporate features such as balconies, cantilevers, dormers, bay windows, patios, entries, accent materials, etc. to provide articulation and interest.
2. Provide wood trim or stucco surrounds at window and door openings. Windows set in stucco without any trim or surround are discouraged.



D. PERSONALIZATION

1. Provide opportunities for the residents to add their own personal touches to the exterior of their units. For example, by using planter boxes or hooks for hanging plants and by providing space for a chair and/or bench and potted plants. This allows residents to personalize their own unit which helps to create a greater sense of community.



E. GARAGE/CARPORTS

1. Design garages or carports with an architectural treatment that derives from the main buildings in terms of materials, detailing, roof materials and colors.
2. Locate garages or carports so as to minimize their impact from the public street. The main buildings should be the dominant visual statement along the public streetscape. Prefabricated carports are not allowed.
3. Carports, detached garaged and accessory structures should be designed as an integral part of the architecture of projects. They should be similar in materials, color and detail to the principal structures of a development.

