

Chapter Six: Commercial District

6.1 What is a Commercial District?

The Commercial District contains a variety of citywide and regional retail uses, as well as offices, businesses, personal services and high density multi-family dwellings as supporting uses within the district. Most of the retail uses in this district depend on auto access to and from major roadways to support and sustain their business activity.

6.2 Defining Commercial Districts

The Commercial District may be functionally defined by the area that has proximity and access to and from major roadways such as arterials, expressways, and freeways. Visibility from and access to these major roadways is a defining feature. Commercial Districts are typically located at the intersections of arterial streets, to form a commercial center or along a major roadway forming a commercial corridor.

Boundaries for the Commercial District would include features such as highways, arterial and collector streets and geographic features such as creeks or lakes that create distinct edges. In the developed areas of Columbia, the boundary for a Commercial District may be defined by the transition from predominantly commercial and office uses to residential areas.

Office and high density multi-family residences should be included as part of high intensity mixed use developments, or in areas within the District with limited exposure and access to major roadways. Office use may be appropriate as a transition between commercial uses within the district when next to the Neighborhood District.

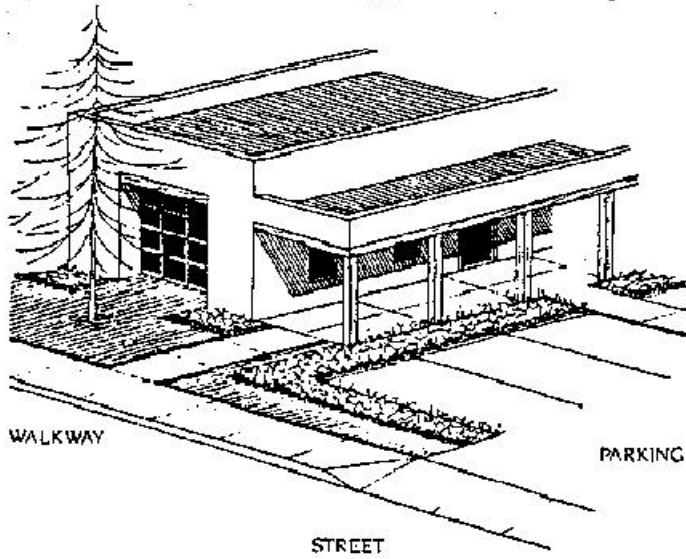
6.3 Commercial District Principle(s)

To ensure commercial development that is compatible with the adjacent land uses, appropriate to the traffic flow pattern and access available, and will be supported by existing or planned infrastructure.

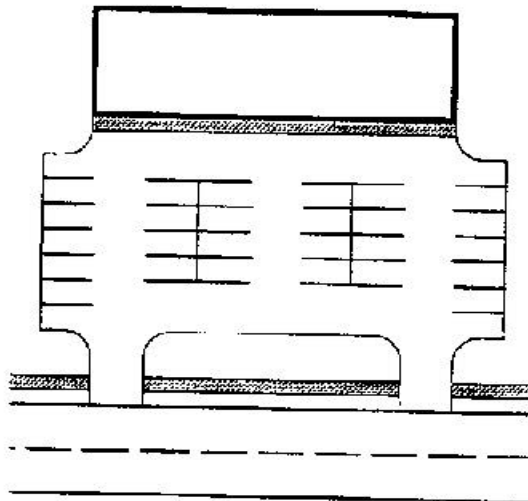
6.4 Commercial District Policies

1. Provide for large multi-tenant commercial centers with internal traffic circulation at appropriate locations at the intersections of arterial streets and at interchanges with limited access roadways.
2. Development in commercial districts will be encouraged to locate buildings so that a percentage of the building front(s) is directly adjacent to the street and provide a pedestrian-oriented site design.
3. Support the transition of existing, auto-oriented strip commercial areas to compact and connected mixed uses with pedestrian connections between businesses and neighborhoods.
4. Encourage new multi-tenant strip commercial centers of sufficient size to accommodate convenience and specialty retail, fast food restaurants, and auto oriented businesses.

Pedestrian Oriented Site Designs

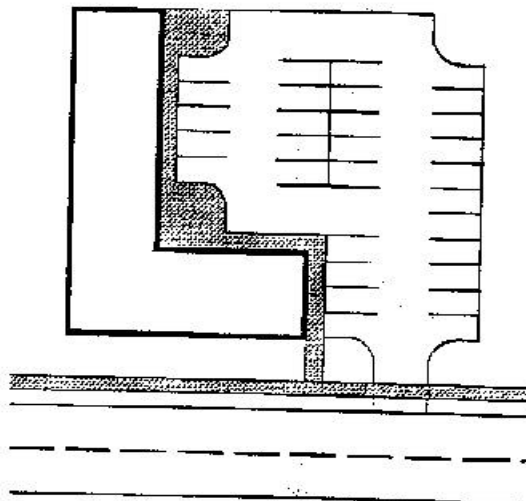


Pedestrian orientation of building with a continuous walkway from the street to the building entrance



Traditional auto-oriented site design

- Building sited at back of lot
- Pedestrians must walk through parking lot
- Creates the perception of a wide, fast street corridor



Pedestrian-friendly site design

- Building sited near street
- Convenient pedestrian access provided
- Street corridor perceived as narrower

5. Large retail establishments should be located in planned multi-tenant community or regional scale shopping centers. Large retail developments should provide pedestrian, bicycle and transit access, and any necessary off-site traffic improvements needed to serve the development.
6. Encourage planned commercial developments that provide the individual entrepreneur the opportunity to develop a private business on an individual basis as both owner and occupant.
7. Encourage connections between commercial developments by providing for shared access, shared parking, and shared signage.
8. Support subarea plans for the redevelopment of older commercial corridors.
9. Commercial districts should be accessible to transit riders, pedestrians, and bicyclists and accommodate bus shelters/transfer facilities, where appropriate.

6.5 Compatible Uses and Densities

Commercial Districts should be developed in such a way as to protect and use the large public investment in the streets, highways, and support infrastructure. Commercial traffic should not produce a burden on the street network that significantly reduces the carrying capacity of the roadways. Likewise, a higher density for all development within the district would concentrate high intensity business activities and promote the efficient development of areas served by existing infrastructure.

Along arterial roadways, shopping centers that group individual businesses into attractive and organized developments should be the models. The development of individual businesses on a single lot with inadequate arterial frontage is not appropriate, unless driveway access onto the arterial is shared with adjacent uses, or all access to and from the site is provided by a local or collector street.

All land uses, public and private, with the exception of some residential uses, may be appropriate to be located within this district.

A. Uses/Densities

There are uses that by the nature and scale of the commercial activity should generally be located only within the Commercial District. These uses include:

- a. Retail businesses > 40,000 square feet
- b. Shopping Center/Strip Mall > 70,000 square feet
- c. Fast food restaurants
- d. Auto sales and repair services
- e. Motels

B. Compatibility Guidelines

The following compatibility guidelines should apply to the planning and development of all uses within a Commercial District:

1. All development within the Commercial District will be compatible with the provisions of any applicable watershed and development resolutions adopted by the City Council.
2. The side or back lot lines for all commercial uses should not abut any residential lot, except high density multi-family, unless separated by a natural feature such as a greenbelt, ravine, or undisturbed groups of trees that provide a significant buffer. Large lots with sufficient depth to provide an adequate rear yard buffer may be acceptable.
3. No residential uses, with the exception of high density multi-family dwellings, should be located within a Commercial District. Existing single family residences and duplexes should be considered transitional uses in the Commercial District.
4. Lots or tracts with arterial frontage should provide shared access across the lot lines including joint-use driveways. Shared access should be encouraged along arterial streets.
5. All commercial and office uses next to Neighborhood Districts, Open Space/Greenbelts or the City Center should be a planned zoning district (O-P or C-P);
6. Sufficient street frontage should be provided so that appropriate spacing exists for driveways on to an arterial street, especially if access to the arterial will be by driveway. Driveways should be designed to serve all uses within the development. Joint use driveways and cross easements are encouraged;
7. Within a district a system of internal streets or parking aisles is desirable to provide access and connectivity between uses without relying upon the arterial street;
8. Controlled access onto arterial streets. Driveways should be appropriately spaced based upon accepted traffic engineering standards, with no more than two driveways per lot. Driveways should not be located within the operational area of an intersection which is signalized or will require signalization at a future date;
9. All street locations should be appropriately spaced from any arterial intersection based upon accepted traffic engineering standards. Streets should not be located within the operational area of an existing or future signalized intersection;
10. Developments with driveways onto arterials that would meet warrants for signalization are not compatible, and should be served by a public street;