

Plan Elements

This is the community's plan. Every element of the plan was developed based on input from residents and property owners. While there has not been total agreement on every issue, "Seagaters" have generally developed consensus on what the future of their community should be.

The action steps presented to implement the plan will require the ongoing effort and vigilance of the Seagate community.

The key to the success of the Seagate Neighborhood Plan is a strong, organized, unified neighborhood association. Every effort should be made by the neighborhood to create and maintain an organization, representative of property owners and residents alike, that presents a unified voice for the community.



Stakeholders work with city staff members during the planning process

Vision Statement

A successful community requires a shared vision of what it can be. Based on the feedback received throughout the planning process, a vision statement and five themes were developed. The vision statement that has guided the development of the plan is: **“Seagate is a cohesive, safe, environmentally sound, well-designed neighborhood that meets the daily needs of residents by promoting the history of the community, ensuring that development is compatible with neighborhood scale and character, and nurturing an environment that promotes community interaction and neighborhood pride.”**

Plan Themes

The major elements of the plan were developed through the public input process. At the first meeting, participants were asked to rank issues in order of importance. They were also asked to identify the strengths, problems, opportunities, and threats in the area. This feedback was used to identify major elements or themes that formed the plan. At the second meeting, the five elements were presented and participants were asked to refine these themes and to begin brainstorming ideas and solutions to address these concerns. The themes are interrelated and the supporting objectives listed under one particular theme may serve to meet the goals of multiple themes. These themes are:

- Traffic
- Crime, Safety, and Code Enforcement
- Infrastructure
- Environmental Resources/Protection
- Sense of Place

Traffic

Residents consistently identified traffic as a concern. Traffic issues include speed limits, number of collisions, pedestrian safety and lack of sidewalks, transit options, and traffic signal locations. Currently, local roads are operating under capacity. Greenville, Hinton, and Park Avenues operate at level of service “A.”

A Neighborhood Traffic Study was conducted concurrently with the neighborhood planning process. Vehicle speeds were studied as part of the Neighborhood Traffic Study and it was found that along most roads in the study area, vehicles were traveling above the posted speed limit of 35 miles per hour. As a result of the study, City Council approved lowering speed limits in the study area to 25 miles per hour at their April 3, 2007 meeting. The Neighborhood Traffic Study addresses additional specific short-term and long-term solutions to traffic safety issues. A copy of the Neighborhood Traffic Study is available under separate cover in the city’s Development Services Department.

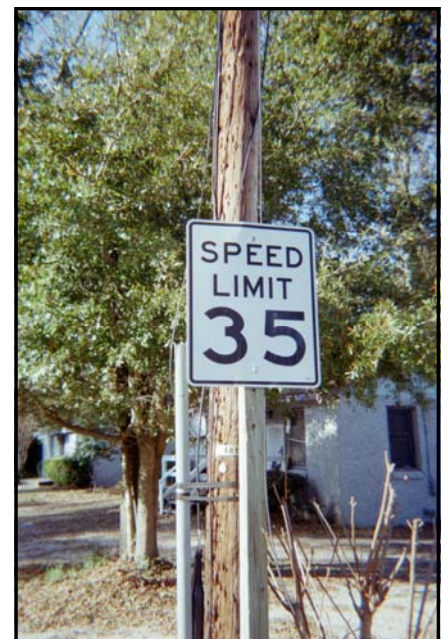
Below are the action steps recommended to address traffic concerns.

Goal: To promote safer, better-maintained travel routes that accommodate vehicular and non-vehicular modes of transportation.

Objective – Reduce Vehicle Trips – Providing safe alternatives to vehicle travel promotes community involvement and reduces environmental impacts.

Action Steps:

- I.1 Incorporate sidewalks and bike paths where possible to minimize vehicle trips.
- I.2 Support developments that are designed to accommodate convenient access to public transit (there is currently a WAVE Transit bus stop on Oleander at the arboretum).
- I.3 Support and promote interconnectivity among developments.
- I.4 Support and promote the results of the city’s Neighborhood Traffic Study.
- I.5 Install sidewalks and bike paths where sufficient right-of-way exists.
- I.6 Design new developments to share driveways where possible to reduce the number of curb cuts.



Crime, Safety, and Code Enforcement

Seagate was identified as a Transition Area in the Future Land Use Plan in part because of crime, safety, and maintenance issues. Stable neighborhoods have much lower incidences of public nuisance reports, minimum housing code violations, and junked vehicle reports than the Seagate area. Seagate also has a large concentration of rental units and therefore a higher degree of transience than would be expected with a greater number of owner-occupied structures. The more property owners are engaged, the greater reduction in crime, safety, and code enforcement problems the neighborhood will see.

During the input process, the Seagate identified specific issues including theft, vandalism, speeding and traffic violations, noise and a general need to “clean up” the neighborhood. Residents are concerned with yard trash and the decline of some properties in the area. An often-expressed concern was the lack of upkeep of rental properties and absentee landlord accountability.

Goal: To create a safer and better-maintained neighborhood that promotes a strong sense of community in the Seagate area.

Objective 1 – City Code Enforcement and Police Action – Promote and utilize city services to reduce crime, improve property maintenance, and educate citizens and business owners in the Seagate community on these issues.

Action Steps:

- I.1 Aggressively report code violations, public nuisances, and minimum housing code violations to code enforcement.
- I.2 Support increased police presence in the area to enforce speed limits, set up checkpoint stations, and monitor noise and parking violations.
- I.3 Utilize a neighborhood association to develop a strong working relationship with city code enforcement and police officers.

Taking simple steps, like bringing trash carts back from the curb immediate after pick-up, will help eliminate debris in the area.



Objective 2 – Community Involvement – Involve residents, property owners, and business owners in developing an environment that promotes community safety and neighborhood pride. Engaging absentee landlords and negligent property owners is essential to cleaning up the neighborhood.

Action Steps:

- 2.1 Report all crime activity and code violations when they occur.
- 2.2 Distribute a list of city resources and services to all property owners and residents.
- 2.3 Follow up with the assigned code enforcement or police officer for questions regarding resolutions to reported problems.
- 2.4 Establish a neighborhood association to notify absentee property owners of illegal activities and maintenance problems occurring on their property.
- 2.5 Establish a neighborhood association to encourage and organize the involvement of residents in neighborhood improvement efforts modeled after programs such as neighborhood watch or “eyes on the street” programs and “adopt-a-street” litter control.

Infrastructure

An aging sewer system, the poor condition of roads, lack of sidewalks, and lack of park space were listed as concerns regarding infrastructure; however, stormwater and drainage dominated the list. Lack of park space, sewer issues, and stormwater drainage problems are city-wide concerns and not unique to Seagate.

In 2006, Wilmington voters approved a parks bond to acquire and maintain park space. Bond funds have been allocated for the annexation areas, of which Seagate is part.

The city has adopted a Stormwater Master Plan that is being implemented through the capital improvements program. A drainage project along Dupree Drive is underway. Other identified drainage projects include Michelle Drive/Bradley Creek Southern Branch (proposed for construction in 2007-2008) and Greenville/White Avenue (proposed for construction in 2009-2010). The Wrightsville Avenue culvert is scheduled to be replaced and is in the planning and design stage and the Seagate drainage project at Greenville Loop Road and Oleander Drive was completed in 2006. The Stormwater Capital Improvements Implementation map is included as Appendix E. Representatives from the city's Stormwater Services Division participated in the community meetings and conducted a survey on the community preferences related to stormwater management. The results of this survey are available under separate cover within the city's Stormwater Services Division in the Public Services Department.

Goal: To maintain adequate infrastructure to support the needs of the area while proactively addressing future needs and resources.

Objective 1 – Stormwater and Drainage – support the ongoing efforts to improve stormwater management in the area.

Action Steps:

- I.1 Support the efforts of the city throughout the implementation of the stormwater capital improvements project.
- I.2 Limit impervious surface coverage and utilize pervious paving materials and other best management practices (BMPs).
- I.3 Provide green/open space, including expanded buffers and preservation of existing natural areas.
- I.4 Maximize the use of buffers and natural wetland functions for stormwater quality management.

Objective 2 – Park Space – Dedicate land for public park space.

Action Steps:

- 2.1 Encourage the dedication of vacant land (currently privately owned) located at the northwest

corner of the intersection of Greenville and Park Avenues for park space.

- 2.2 Encourage dedication of open/park space as part of new private developments in excess of the city's minimum requirements.
- 2.3 Pursue local historic landmark designation for the Wilmington-Wrightsville Beach trolley path.
- 2.4 Encourage the dedication of land along Bradley Creek (that is currently private) for public access to the water, including passive and active recreation areas.

Objective 3 – Sidewalks and Bikepaths – Support installation of pedestrian and non-motorized transportation amenities throughout the area.

Action Steps:

- 3.1 Install sidewalks and bikepaths where sufficient right-of-way exists.
- 3.2 Include sufficient pedestrian circulation to facilitate community interaction.
- 3.3 Extend the existing bikepath along Park Avenue, including the Bradley Creek crossing..
- 3.4 Utilize and promote existing resources such as the River to Sea Bikeway.



Environmental Resources/Protection

Environmental issues ranked high on the list of stakeholder concerns. Of particular interest is the protection of Bradley Creek and the Bradley Creek watershed. In addition to water quality, other specific issues identified through the public input process include litter and trash on the streets, preservation of existing green space, lack of green space, the amount of impervious surface coverage in the area, and the effects of the recent sewer leaks. Protection of the environment is closely tied to infrastructure, especially stormwater management.

The study area is in the Bradley Creek watershed and contains several wetland resources that are subject to the city's Conservation Overlay District Requirements. Bradley Creek was recently rated as only "partially supporting of its intended use" due to degraded water quality. Any development in the study area, particularly along Bradley Creek, should incorporate site-sensitive designs that consider water quality impacts. The remaining wetland resources should be preserved to the greatest extent possible for their habitat and water quality value as well as for passive recreation.

The Wilmington-New Hanover County Land Classification Map classifies Seagate as part of the Watershed Resource Protection area. According to the CAMA Plan, impervious surface coverage should be limited to 25% in Watershed Resource Protection areas unless projects are "exceptionally designed" (as defined by Article 10 of the city's Land Development Code).

Goal: To protect and preserve existing natural resources in Seagate, including maintaining and improving water quality, dedicating public open space, and reducing human impacts.

Objective I – Keep Seagate Clean and Green – Reduce the amount of litter and garbage that is improperly disposed of and improve the landscape.

Action Steps:

- I.1 Report illegal dumping. Utilize a neighborhood-watch or "eyes on the street" format to monitor dumping, particularly on Circular Drive.
- I.2 Utilize a neighborhood association to monitor improper storage/disposal of residential refuse and report violations.
- I.3 Remove trash carts from rights-of-way as soon as possible on collection days.
- I.4 Utilize existing services offered by the city to pick up bulky items, extra refuse that does not fit in trash carts, curbside recycling, and yard waste.
- I.5 Report violations of the city's solid waste code.
- I.6 Compost yard waste and mulch leaves and grass clippings. Do not mix non-organic items (plastic, cans, building materials, etcetera) with yard waste. Keep leaves and yard waste from washing into ditches and storm drains.

Sense of Place

“Sense of place” is the most far-reaching element in the plan. It is also the most controversial issue and the one on which opinions varied the most. Specific issues identified through the community input process included the desire to build a sense of community, lack of owner-occupancy and number of rental units, determining appropriate density, building and site design, preservation, and recognition of history.

The population of Wilmington, like the rest of the country, is growing. While population grows, the amount of land we have remains constant. Given the need for housing generated by this population growth, the tendency to sprawl puts a significant strain on our economy and our environment. We must proceed carefully and make deliberate choices about the use of our finite amount of land.* The need for all housing types is evident throughout the city. The Seagate area is a transitioning area and it is unrealistic to expect that change will not occur. It is reasonable, however, to expect these changes to appropriately reflect Seagate’s character, history, and sense of place. Given the rising cost of land and scarcity of vacant land, the pressure to infill and redevelop the Seagate area is not likely to diminish. It is crucial that redevelopment occur in a manner that is suitable for the community while still meeting the market demands of the region.

Higher density is not a new development pattern. This pattern is evident downtown, in historic neighborhoods such as Carolina Place, Chestnut Heights, and even in Seagate. In fact, nationwide, 40 percent of existing housing units are attached or multi-family (US Census Bureau, 2000). Allowing zoning options can increase choices available to homebuyers. As demographics shift, the need for smaller homes and smaller lots increases city-wide. Provisions for sufficient open spaces, nearby consumer services and mix of uses, sufficient infrastructure, and convenient transit service must be taken into account when considering density increases. Moderate densities can be achieved through an interesting combination of housing types and designs, including cottages, bungalows, duplexes, and townhouses that enhances a community. The key to creating density that is appealing, high-quality, and compatible with the character of the neighborhood is to plan and design it well. The way density is perceived has less to do with the actual number of units per acre than how well the built environment is designed. This section contains examples of preferred development patterns that, if followed, will result in new developments that are compatible with the character of Seagate, regardless of density.

To be workable, any plan needs to incorporate change and development as well as preservation. Development will continue to occur; successful communities are not static. Effective involvement requires persistence, flexibility, vision, and a sustained presence from all residents and property owners.



Havasu City, AZ 2.0 units / acre



Boulder, CO 12.5 units / acre

These two photos illustrate that, no matter the geographic location, the character of the built environment is often more important than the actual densities of developments. The design of dwelling units, the provision of open space, tree coverage, and the location and design of parking may contribute to the character of an area in greater measure.

Photos from *Visualizing Density*.

* Campoli, Julie and Alex S, MacLean. *Visualizing Density*. Lincoln Institute of Land Policy. 2007.

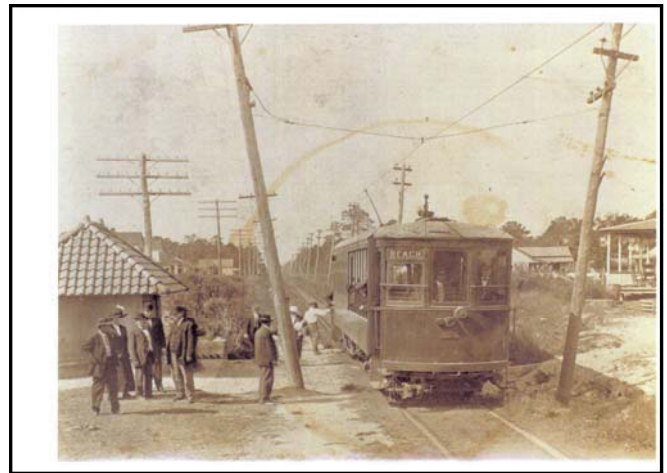
Goal: To maintain the unique character and sense of place within the Seagate community while recognizing that redevelopment and infill are critical to the survival of the community. Ensure that new development is compatible with character of the area.

Objective 1 – History and Preservation –

Promote and protect existing historic resources and tell the Seagate story.

Action Steps:

- 1.1 Identify historically significant buildings and sites, including historic homes, the site of The Hub, the Wilmington-Wrightsville Beach trolley path, and other sites of interest. Develop and implement a signage program to recognize significant buildings and sites.
- 1.2 Pursue the recreation of the Seagate Station as was done in the Audubon neighborhood.



Seagate Station, circa 1918. Photo courtesy of New Hanover County Library.

Objective 2 – Community Involvement – Create an environment that promotes community interaction and neighborhood pride. Engaging absentee landlords and renters/tenants as well as owner-occupants in the community is critical to fostering a sense of neighborhood pride.

Action Steps:

- 2.1 Create and maintain a neighborhood association that solicits the participation of all residents and property owners.
- 2.2 Find examples of other neighborhoods, such as Sunset Park and Audubon, with similar characteristics that have maintained community involvement and pride.
- 2.3 Actively engage tenants and absentee landlords in the community, ensuring that they know about community issues and events.
- 2.4 Develop a periodic neighborhood publication, published and distributed by the community, to keep community members up to date on local events and issues.

Objective 3 – Rezoning and Density – Utilize the zoning map amendment process and the associated public hearing process to insure that new development is consistent with the character and development of the area.

Action Steps:

- 3.1 Support development/redevelopment for property as zoned, or support only conditional district rezoning in accordance with the *Recommended Land Use Map* (Appendix D).
- 3.2 Support development/redevelopment that promotes the vitality and stability of the neighborhood.

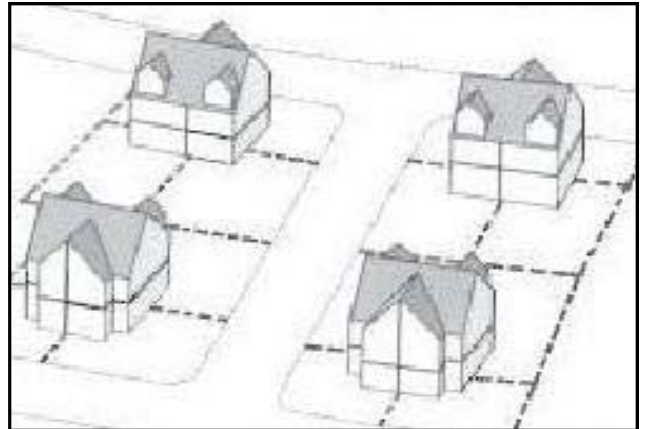
- 3.3 Consider neighborhood-scale mixed-use and park space on the large parcel between Park and Wrightsville Avenues (the purple area on the *Recommended Land Uses* map).

Objective 4 – Community Design – Utilize context-sensitive design to insure that new development is consistent and compatible with existing development.

Action Steps:

- 4.1 Encourage new residential development that provides opportunities for community interaction through the use of elements such as sidewalks, architectural features (porches, windows, side- or rear-loading garages, etcetera), and building orientation.
- 4.2 Orient new developments toward and address the primary street. Residential parking lots are discouraged. Do not locate parking, including garages, in the front of buildings or within the front yard setback in any configuration. Design garages to be side- or rear loading. Front facades should not be dominated by garages nor should garages project beyond the front plane of the dwelling unit. Where possible, design units to utilize shared driveways or alleys.

- 4.3 Design new construction to include architectural details that add interest. It is not necessary to replicate existing building styles in order to maintain neighborhood character, although generic, non-descript architecture that does not consider the context of the area is discouraged.



Even quadplexes can be designed to reflect a single family character.

- 4.4 Design new residences to reflect the single-family character of the area. This continuity of character is delivered through the design of individual buildings as well as through the comprehensive design of the entire site. Consider the following elements:

- Setbacks—situate dwelling units on lots with shallow setbacks, as typical in the community, rather than deep setbacks.
- Roofs—design roof pitches and rooflines that are similar to the predominantly occurring roof pitch in the area.
- Building Materials—utilize traditional building materials such as clapboard or materials such as fiber cement board that convey authentic materials instead of vinyl.
- Fenestration—use windows and doors to clearly indicate the front of the dwelling and ensure that there are no blank facades facing streets.
- Orientation—clearly orient new dwellings toward the main road.

- 4.5 Preserve and maintain existing vegetation where possible. Provide landscaping for new construction beyond minimum Land Development Code requirements where possible.
- 4.6 Pursue adoption of a neighborhood overlay district to guide the design of new residential and/or commercial construction.
- 4.7 Pursue adoption of a Seagate Overlay District to codify design regulations for commercial development along Oleander Drive.

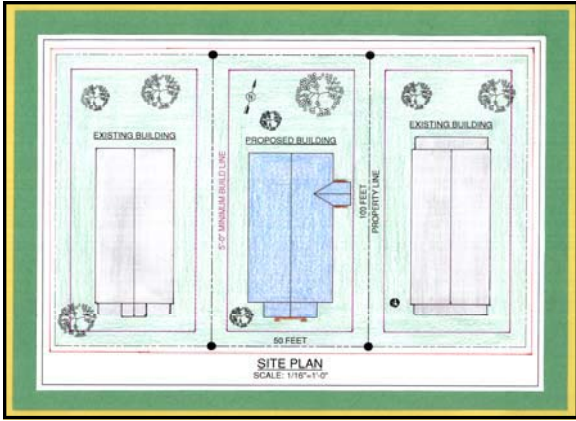


Streetyard landscaping beyond minimum requirements is encouraged. Architectural details, such as porches, and sidewalks encourage community interaction.

Encouraged and Discouraged Elements

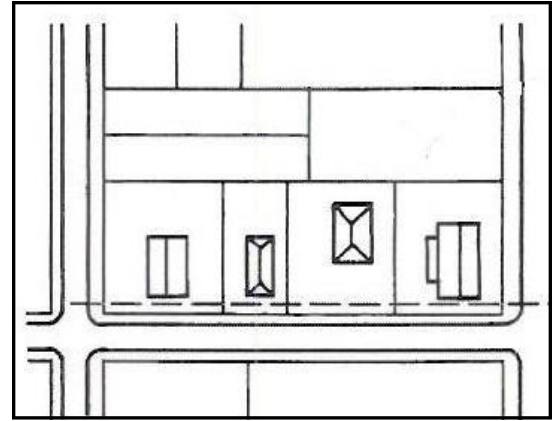
Setbacks

Encouraged



Design new buildings with shallow rather than deep setbacks that are consistent with the predominantly occurring setbacks in the immediate vicinity. Drawing courtesy of Thomas Denton.

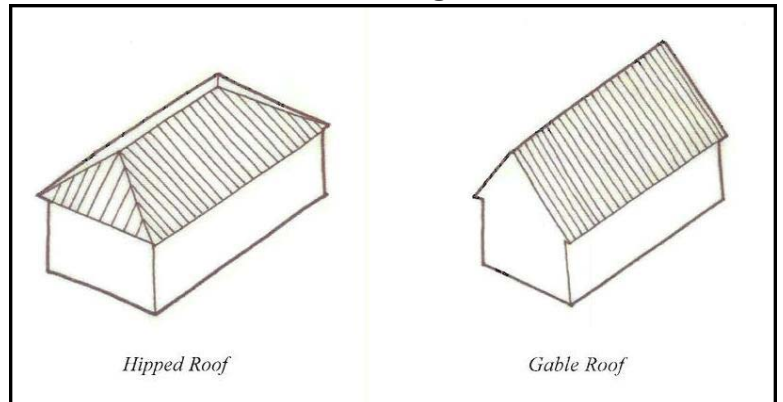
Discouraged



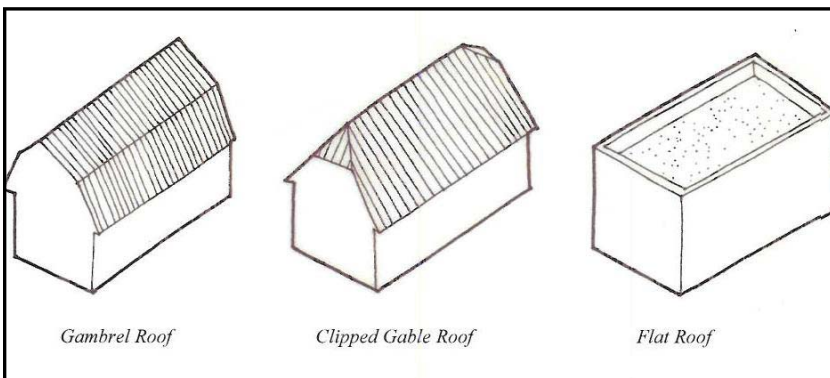
Building setbacks should not be too deep, but should align with the predominantly occurring setbacks in the immediate vicinity.

Roofs

Encouraged



Discouraged



New dwelling units should incorporate rooflines and roof pitches that match the predominantly occurring forms in the area. In Seagate, gable and hipped roofs are the most commonly occurring rooflines.

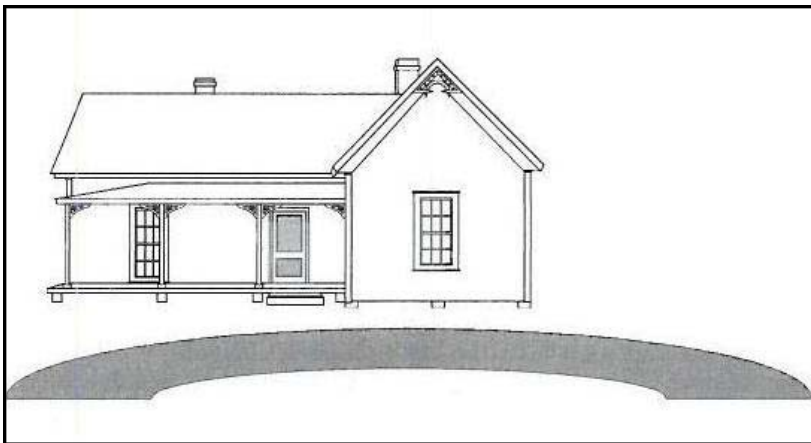
Parking, Driveways, and Garages

Discouraged

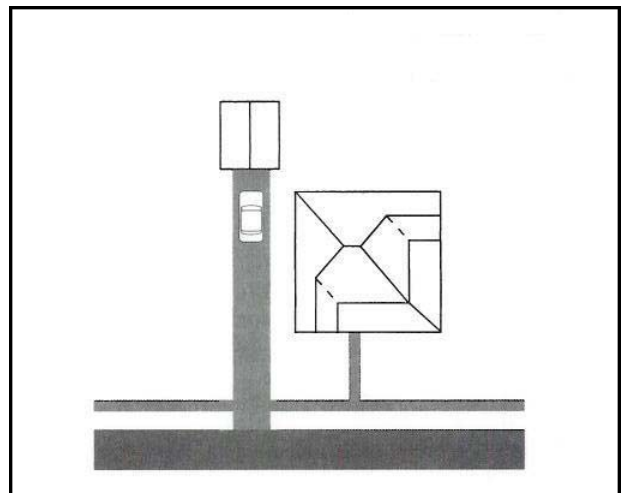
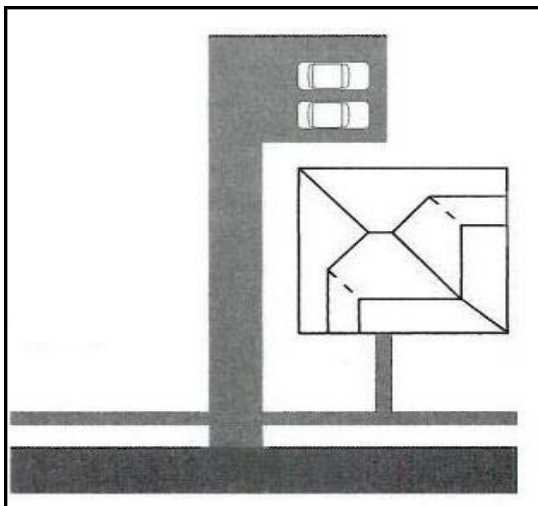


Do not locate parking, driveways, or garages in front of dwelling units.

Discouraged

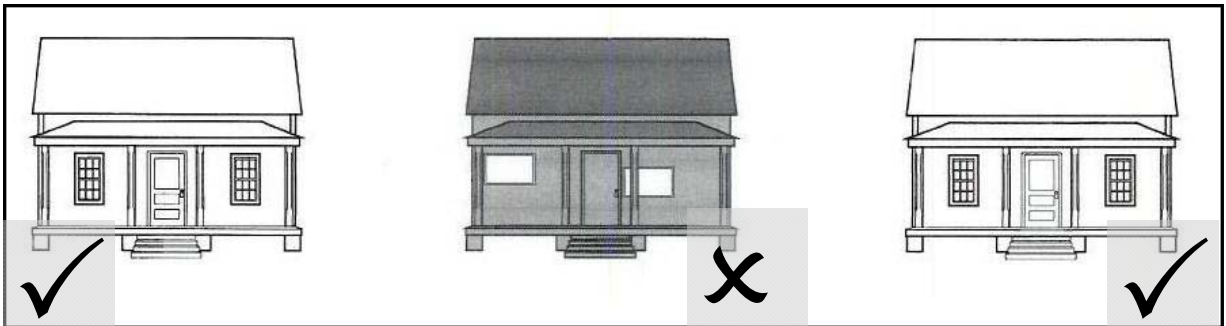


Encouraged



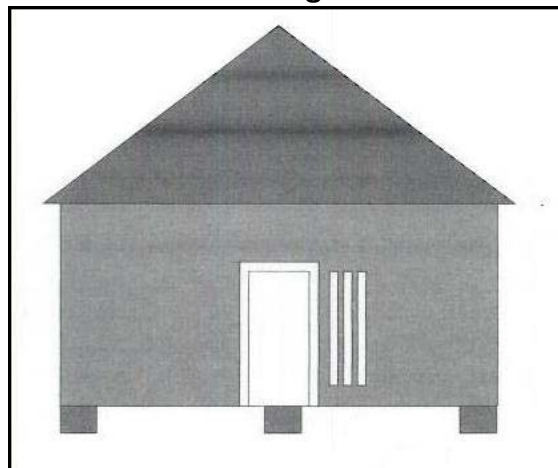
Locate parking and garages to the rear of dwelling units.

Window/Door Openings and Orientation

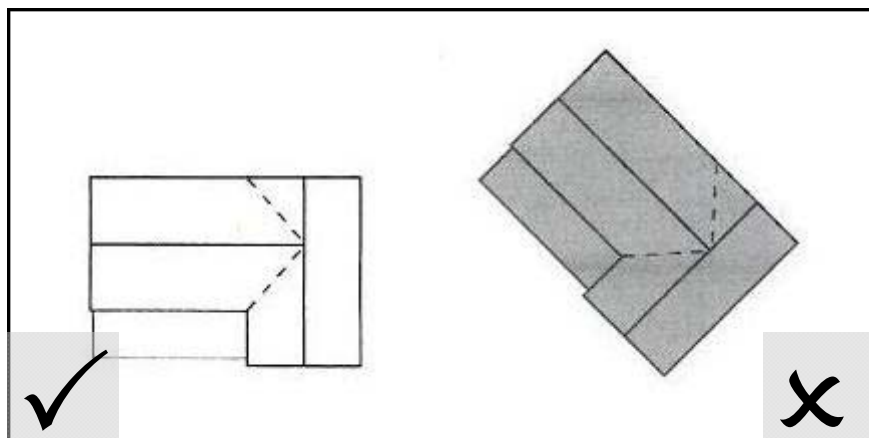


Arrange windows and doors to reflect the character of the traditional houses in the neighborhood.

Discouraged



Place windows and doors so that they clearly define the front of a dwelling unit.



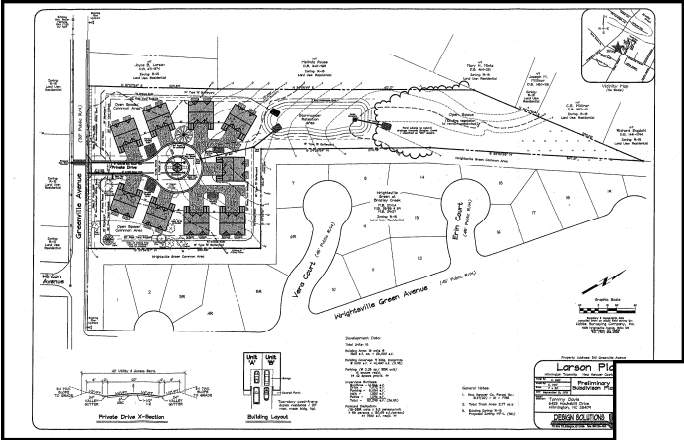
Orient dwellings toward the main road.

Discouraged

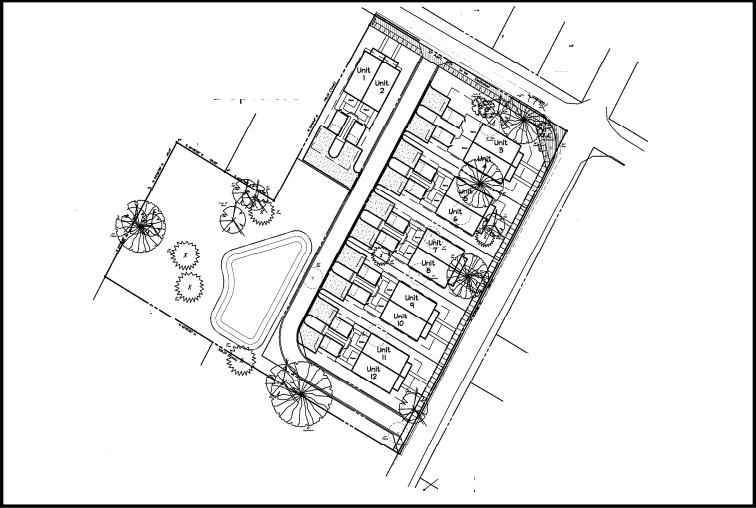
These duplexes incorporate several discouraged elements, including front loading garages that project beyond the front plane of the dwelling unit, limited architectural details, and orientation around a cul-de-sac rather than toward the main road.



Discouraged



Encouraged



Encouraged



This plan for duplexes incorporates an alley for shared access rather than individual driveways, garages and parking to the rear of the dwelling units, and dwelling units that are oriented toward the main streets.

These duplexes incorporate encouraged elements, include details such as porches to provide architectural interest and single-family character, limited front setbacks, orientation toward the main road and shared driveway to provide parking behind the buildings.