

Commercial Districts Vision and Guidelines

for the

Town of Signal Mountain, TN

prepared by

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General Design Guidelines

Intent and Purpose

The purpose of these guidelines is to:

- Promote the civic welfare of the Town of Signal Mountain;
- Maintain and enhance the property values and taxable value of property in the Town;
- Provide for the protection and preservation of buildings, structures and places of historic value;
- Promote design that is compatible with the character of Signal Mountain as adopted in the 2008 Signal Mountain Town Plan and,
- Protect the Town and neighboring landowners from potential negative impacts that commercial developments may have on the environment and on the quality of life currently enjoyed by residents;

The Signal Mountain Town Plan adopted in 2008 identifies areas for future commercial development and redevelopment. The guidelines in the following pages address general conditions applicable to all of the identified commercial areas and for specific issues within some of individual commercial zones. All recommendations in these guidelines apply to the district boundaries as outlined in the 2008 Plan.

These guidelines will provide performance standards by which the Town can evaluate applications for development, and by which the actual performance of those operations and uses can be monitored by officials for compliance.

Setbacks and buffering requirements are to be governed by the pertinent Town zoning and building codes.

Developments Subject to Review*

The following types of improvements are subject to review for all categories of construction except single-family residential detached structures regardless of the dollar value of the project:

New construction including site improvements and signage

Moving a structure

Demolition or change in use for land, buildings or buildings and land

Planned unit developments

Definitions*

Appearance - The outward aspect visible to the public.

Applicant - The party whose has been assigned the rights by the Owner to seek approval from the Commission.

Appropriate - Sympathetic-Fitting the context of the site and the whole community.

Attractive - Having qualities that arouse interest and pleasure in the observer.

Berm - A raised form of earth to provide screening or to improve the aesthetic character.

Compatibility - Harmony in the appearance of two or more external design features in the same vicinity.

Commission - The Signal Mountain Design Review Commission.

Council - The Signal Mountain Town Council.

Harmony - A quality that represents an appropriate and congruent arrangement of parts, as in an arrangement of varied architectural and landscape elements.

Landscaping - Plant materials, topography, and other natural physical elements combined in relation to one another and to man-made structures.

* From existing Signal Mountain Design Review Commission Design Principles and Standards

Owner - The term Owner shall refer to the party which by rights and responsibilities conveyed through title, lease or rental agreement is charged with the responsibility of providing the improvements described in the Design Manual. In the absence of any agreement the Owner shall be defined as the person or entity who holds title to the land.

Proportion - The balanced relationship of parts of a building, landscape, structures, or buildings to each other and to the whole.

Public Amenity - An element which is attractive and accessible to the public.

Scale - Proportional relationship of the size of parts to one another and to the human figure.

Siting -the process of placing a building and its related elements on a piece of property.

Signage - The term includes all graphic elements such as letters, symbols, illustrations, figures, insignias, logos, or other devices employed to express a message or part thereof.

Shall - The term “shall” as used in the Design Manual indicates a requirement for adherence to the noted guidelines.

Should - The term “should” as used in the Design Manual indicates a strong desire by the Commission to have the Owner incorporate the noted ideas into the project. While not a mandatory requirement the user is strongly encouraged to follow the guidelines and the Commission will look at the overall cooperation of the Owner in final approval of plans where latitude is granted.

Streetscape - The scene as may be observed along a public street or way composed of natural and man-made components, including buildings, paving, planting, street hardware, and miscellaneous structures.

Town - The Town of Signal Mountain

General Standards for Commercial Development

Site

Site Plan. Each development subject to review will provide a site plan. The plan should show all elements in the proposed development. The plan should show how all of the proposed elements respond to the unique nature of the site. Careful attention should be paid to environmental conditions such as topography, vegetation, water bodies and wetlands, and soil conditions. The site plan should also consider the surrounding built environment and how the proposed elements in the design respond to those conditions.

Coordinated Future Development. In instances where a phased approach to the development of a parcel is proposed, a site plan that shows the future fully-built condition should be provided. The plan should show in detail the proposed current phase in addition to future building and road locations, pedestrian elements, general landscape elements and open space. The future development plan should also indicate the phasing of the development and show intermediate conditions as they will exist between phases.

Access and Movement. The site plan should show how the development relates to existing roads and pedestrian paths and how it will affect future traffic and access patterns. The plan should also show any connections between adjacent parcels. All facilities designed for accessing the site should be designed in a way to maximize vehicular and pedestrian safety, minimize curb cuts, allow for safe delivery and loading, and promote pedestrian activity in and through the site.

Pedestrian Facilities. Sidewalks and other pedestrian paths should be carefully designed to maximize ease of use and the safety of the user. Where possible, paths should be connected to larger pedestrian networks to and through other adjacent sites and the Town. Paths should be designed to comfortably accommodate two people walking abreast.

Building Orientation. All buildings should be oriented to promote ease of pedestrian access, to maximize preservation of the natural features of the site, and to break up large expanses of parking. Additionally, building orientation should consider the passive solar characteristics of the site to enable the building to function more efficiently.

Service Access. Service areas and equipment should be located to the rear or side of primary facades and should be heavily screened or otherwise hidden from primary approaches.

Public Space. It is important to consider the creation and placement of public spaces in commercial areas. These community gathering places such as plazas, “pocket parks”, small greens should be incorporated into developments wherever possible. These spaces bring social and leisure activities back into everyday life and combine them with daily commerce. These spaces can make a commercial area more family and pedestrian friendly and generally increase surrounding property values.

Structures

General Design. Buildings and structures shall be designed based on accepted architectural principles for scale, mass, rhythm and proportion. The height, width and proportions of a building should create a harmonious relationship with surrounding architectural and landscape elements. Elements such as setbacks, stormwater and accessibility are governed by pertinent Town zoning and building codes.

Architectural Styles. A number of architectural styles can be found within the community and may be deemed appropriate. In general the architecture should be reflective of the small-scaled mountain community in which it is located. The design should be responsive to both the natural and built environment.

Previously Developed Sites. The construction of new buildings on previously developed sites is strongly encouraged. In these instances, the sensitive placement of the building in relation to existing buildings, parking areas and service areas is of paramount importance.

Front Elevation. The primary facade of the building must be designed as the front of the building. The front of the building should contain the primary building entrance, and should provide maximum visual permeability (windows, display elements, etc). The front of the building should be visible from the primary approaches and provide maximum accessibility for pedestrians. The front façade should relate to pedestrians through the use of arcades, awnings, canopies, seating areas or recesses and projections that provide visual interest and shelter for building users.

Entrances. The building entrance should be clearly defined, easily accessible and memorable. The scale and design of the entrance area should relate to pedestrian scale and use.

Multi-Tenant Design. Buildings with multiple tenants should be designed to provide a cohesive overall design while providing clearly defined individual entrances for each tenant. Long, linear buildings should incorporate elements to break up lengthy facades, add visual interest and provide areas for common use.

Materials. All buildings should be constructed of durable materials such as stone, brick and wood. Materials should compliment the architectural style of the building, and contribute to the overall quality of the development. In instances where renovations of existing structures are proposed, the materials must compliment the existing building style and materials. In general the selection of materials should contribute to the overall woodlands character of the Town.

Equipment and Service Areas. Service and loading areas should be designed to be as small as possible for proper operations. Service areas should be designed to accommodate the maneuvering requirements of service vehicles without impacting the larger circulation patterns

Landscape

Landscape Plan. Each development subject to review will provide a landscape plan. The plan should show areas where existing vegetation has been preserved and indicate type, size, number and location of all new landscape and plant material. The plan should note trees that are in the public right of way that are to remain undisturbed by the private development. Buffering and general landscaping requirements are governed by pertinent Town zoning and building codes.

Existing Trees/Plants. The preservation of existing landscape and plant materials is strongly encouraged. Reusing and transplanting materials from and within the site is also encouraged.

Ground Covers. Where used, ground covers should be plant materials such as grasses, perennials, shrubs or turf. Mulches, rock and gravels should be discouraged.

Street Trees. Trees should be planted a minimum of 2 feet from the edges of roads, parking lots and sidewalks. Trees near intersections should be located so as to not obstruct a clear sight triangle as defined by the Town Engineer. Trees should be used to shade hardscaped surfaces, define travel corridors, provide a visual buffer between roads and parking areas, and provide shade for pedestrians. Tree wells should be a minimum of 4' x 8'.

Parking Lot Screening. Lots should be screened by the use of trees and vegetation, berms, low walls or other landscape features. These elements should be designed in such a way as to provide maximum screening of parking while still allowing buildings on the site to be visible.

Equipment and Service Screening. Screening of service areas should be accomplished with fences, walls, berms or landscaping. The elements used in screening should compliment the main structure through the use of common materials, details, and proportion. Screening materials should be durable and require minimal maintenance to maintain proper appearance.

Parking Lot Planting. Off-street parking areas shall have at least five (5) square feet of interior landscaping for each parking space excluding those spaces abutting a landscaped perimeter or spaces that are directly served by an aisle abutting and running parallel to such a perimeter. Each lot requires at least one tree per nine spaces to be located no more than 5 feet from the lot.

Material Selection. Native, drought tolerant plants are recommended for all landscape purposes. High maintenance materials that require extensive irrigation should be avoided. For parking lots and sidewalks, plants that produce dripping sap, and fruit or seeds that could cause property damage or harm to pedestrians should be avoided.

Parking & Circulation

Parking Location. All parking areas should be directly related to the commercial buildings or public spaces that they serve. Large expanses of parking should be avoided. For uses that require larger number of spaces, a series of smaller parking areas should be arrayed around the area being served. Parking areas should be separated from buildings or other structures by sidewalks and landscaping. No more than ten contiguous parking spaces are recommended.

Interior Roads. Roads within the development should be designed to a minimum safe width to promote the calming of traffic and pedestrian safety and to reduce impermeable surfaces. Internal roads should accommodate parking on both sides where possible. Where possible service traffic and customer circulation should be segregated.

Orientation. Parking areas should be coordinated with the overall circulation pattern of the site plan and should consider building entrances, public spaces and pedestrian facilities.

Pedestrian Facilities. All sidewalks and pedestrian facilities should be designed to comfortably accommodate two people walking abreast. They should provide for movement, access and activity appropriate to their location.

Shared Parking. Parking areas should be designed in a way that provides for the maximum use of the minimum number of spaces. Neighboring businesses that operate at different peak hours should consider using the same parking areas.

Materials. Parking areas should be constructed of high-quality, durable materials that require minimal maintenance. Preference should be given to permeable paving materials that reduce the strain on stormwater facilities. Sidewalks should be constructed of durable materials- pervious paving is acceptable and preferable in most cases.

Lighting

We recommend that the Town consider adopting the IESNA Model Lighting Ordinance for Commercial Areas.

Lighting Plan. Each development subject to review will provide a lighting plan. The plan should show the type, size, number and location of all lighting elements as well as a photometric diagram.

Luminaires. All lighting fixtures should be cut-off fixtures to minimize sky glow and reduce glare.

Pole and Fixture Design. All lighting masts and fixtures should be designed to fit the scale of their purpose. In all cases minimizing the height of the fixtures should be a main goal. In most cases, providing more, lower intensity fixtures will provide more even, attractive lighting than will fewer higher-powered fixtures.

Light Pollution. Lighting should be directed onto the site, and should not spillover into adjacent properties.

Parking and Interior Roads. Lighting should illuminate roadway and parking bays. Fixtures should be aimed and shielded to prevent glare and light trespass. Lighting fixtures should be coordinated with the placement of landscaping and structures to compliment the overall site design.

Pedestrian Lighting. Pedestrian lighting elements should be at a human scale, where lighting of the path is the key concern. Pathway lighting and low bollard fixtures are preferred. Ornamental pedestrian fixtures 10-12 feet in height are also acceptable. The design of the fixtures should compliment the overall design of the development.

Structures. Architectural accent lighting should be low-intensity. All architectural lighting should be aimed and shielded so that light is directed only onto the building. In general, downlighting of facades is preferable to uplighting to prevent sky glow.

Signage

(Note: the Town of Signal Mountain is currently producing an ordinance to regulate signs throughout the town. We recommend close coordination between that document and these guidelines to ensure the quality of the future sign elements in the commercial districts.)

Signage Plan. Each development subject to review will provide a signage plan. The plan should show the type, size, number and location of all sign elements.

Location. Signs for individual businesses should be integrated into the façade. The size and shape of the signs should be compatible with the overall design of the building. Signs should not obscure architectural details on the façade. Signs should be installed on vertical surfaces and not project higher than the roofline. Ground mounted signs be incorporated into the overall landscaping plan and should be located as close as feasible to the ground (maximum 3' high).

Consistency. Signs within a development should maintain a high level of visual consistency with the architecture of the building and between separate signs. This can be achieved through color, materials and lighting.

Design. Simple shapes are preferred for all signage.

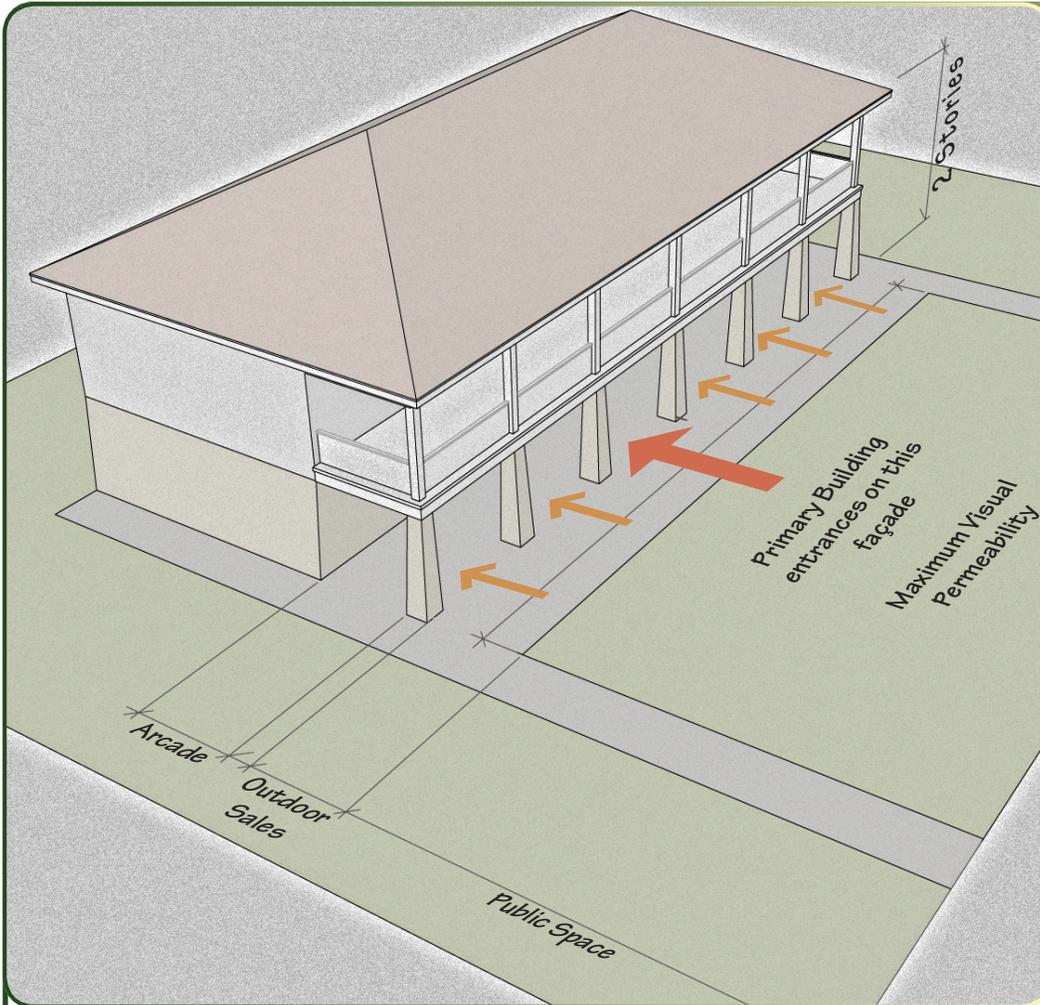
Size. Signage should maintain a modest scale. To fulfill their function, signs need to be large enough to be legible, however, oversize signage can create distractions for motorists and otherwise create nuisances for adjacent property owners.

Other Advertising Elements. Features other than signs that are designed to attract attention are discouraged. Flags, banners, and inflatable figures can distract motorists and otherwise create nuisances for adjacent property owners.

Commercial Center Recommendations

In addition to the general guidelines, the following guidelines are recommended for the Commercial Center District. The Town's adopted land use plan calls for the creation of a commercial town center on either side of Taft Highway between Albert Road and Cauthen Way. The following guidelines would help ensure that future development in this area will contribute to the creation of a true town center. While these recommendations pertain specifically to the existing Commercial District, they could be adapted for other commercial nodes such as the former Middle School site and any future Shackleford Ridge Road commercial district.

There are a number of potential building orientations permissible within in the district based on the currently adopted zoning and building codes. Exterior building materials shall be of comparable aesthetic quality on all sides. Regardless of configuration, each façade of the building is required to respond to a specific edge condition. In addition to the rear façade (which is to be used for service) there are a potential of four edge conditions: fronting public spaces, fronting parking lots, fronting interior streets with parking, and highway/major corridor frontage. The following guidelines outline requirements for each frontage condition.



A. Facades fronting public space

-Ground floor facades that face public space shall have arcades (an outdoor space located under a roof or overhang supported by columns or arches) provided for the full length of the facade. These areas should be programmed for outdoor sales and service and should be extensions of the sales/service floor into which patrons are allowed free access.

-Adequate space must be provided in front of the building to accommodate outdoor dining, sidewalk sales, etc. Areas for outdoor sales of products should be extensions of the sales/service floor into which patrons are allowed free access.

-Maximum visual permeability should be provided through the use of doors, windows, or open air spaces.

-Two story buildings are preferred, with the possibilities of office and housing on the upper level.

-The materials and qualities of the public space should be extended up to the building facade.

-The main entrance(s) of building should be located on the public space side of the building.

-Repeating patterns of materials, colors, surface textures and physical elements should be used to add interest and variety to a large façade.

-Building facade colors shall be non-reflective, subtle, neutral, or earth tone.

-The relationship of the height of windows and doors to their width should be visually compatible with the architectural style of the building and with that of its neighbors.

B. Facades fronting interior streets with parking

-Ground floor facades shall have arcades provided for the full length of the façade. These areas should be programmed for outdoor sales and service and should be extensions of the sales/service floor into which patrons are allowed free access.

-There shall be a minimum 10' from building face to any parking spot. The 10' buffer can be sidewalk or landscaping or both.

-Repeating patterns of materials, colors, surface textures and physical elements should be used to add interest and variety to a large façade.

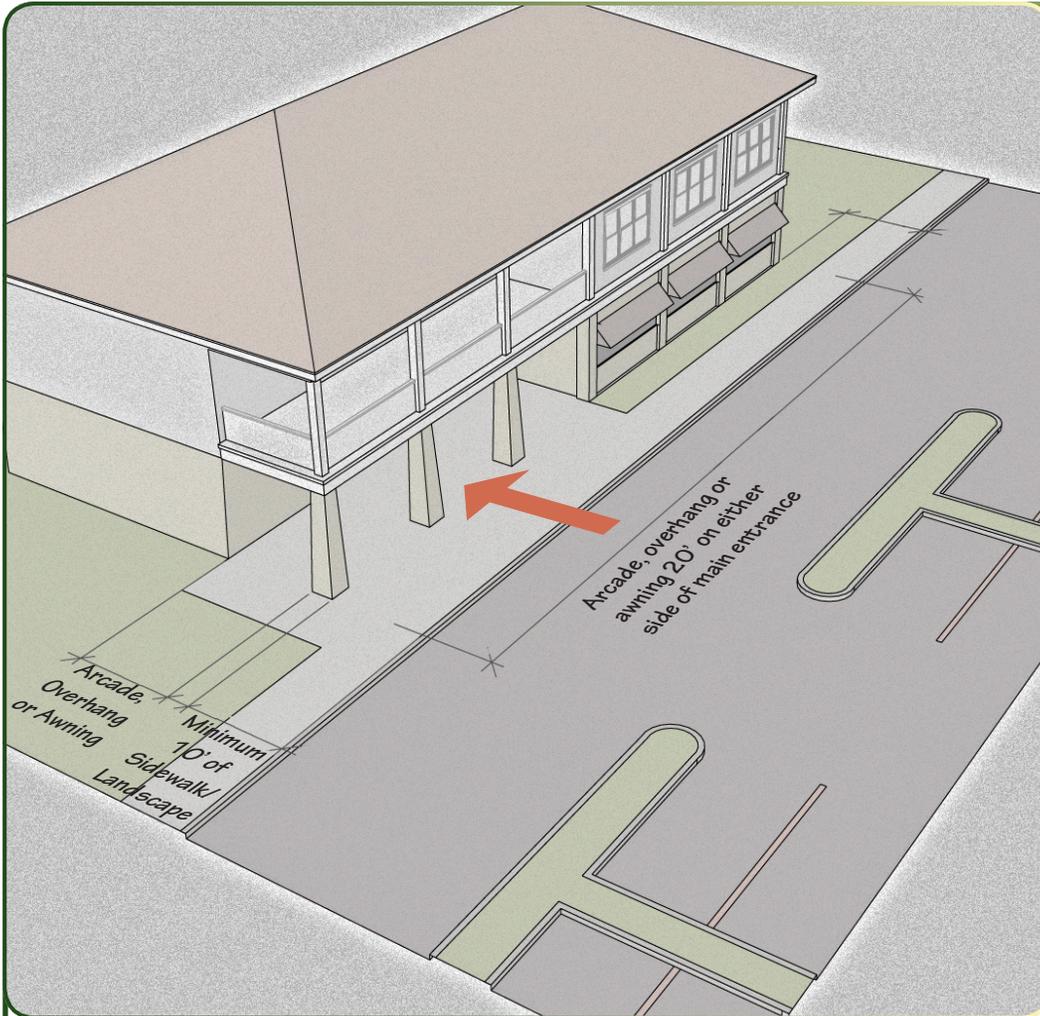
-Two story buildings are preferred, with the possibilities of office and housing on the upper level.

-Building facade colors shall be non-reflective, subtle, neutral, or earth tone.

-The facade should provide maximum visual permeability and access through the use of properly sized doors and windows.

-The relationship of the height of windows and doors to their width should be visually compatible with the architectural style of the building and with that of its neighbors.





C. Facades fronting parking lots

- Canopies, overhangs or arcades must be provided for 20' on either side of any entrance. Materials should be durable and low-maintenance.
- There should be a minimum of 10' from the parking area to building face. This 10' buffer must contain a sidewalk, but can also incorporate landscaping. The buffer must extend for the full length of the facade.
- Repeating patterns of materials, colors, surface textures and physical elements should be used to add interest and variety to a large façade.
- Building facade colors shall be non-reflective, subtle, neutral, or earth tone.
- The relationship of the height of windows and doors to their width should be visually compatible with the architectural style of the building and with that of its neighbors.

D. Facades fronting Highway/ Major Corridor

-Building facades facing a right of way shall have buildings wall offsets, including projections and recesses, every 40 feet to provide architectural and visual interest and variety.

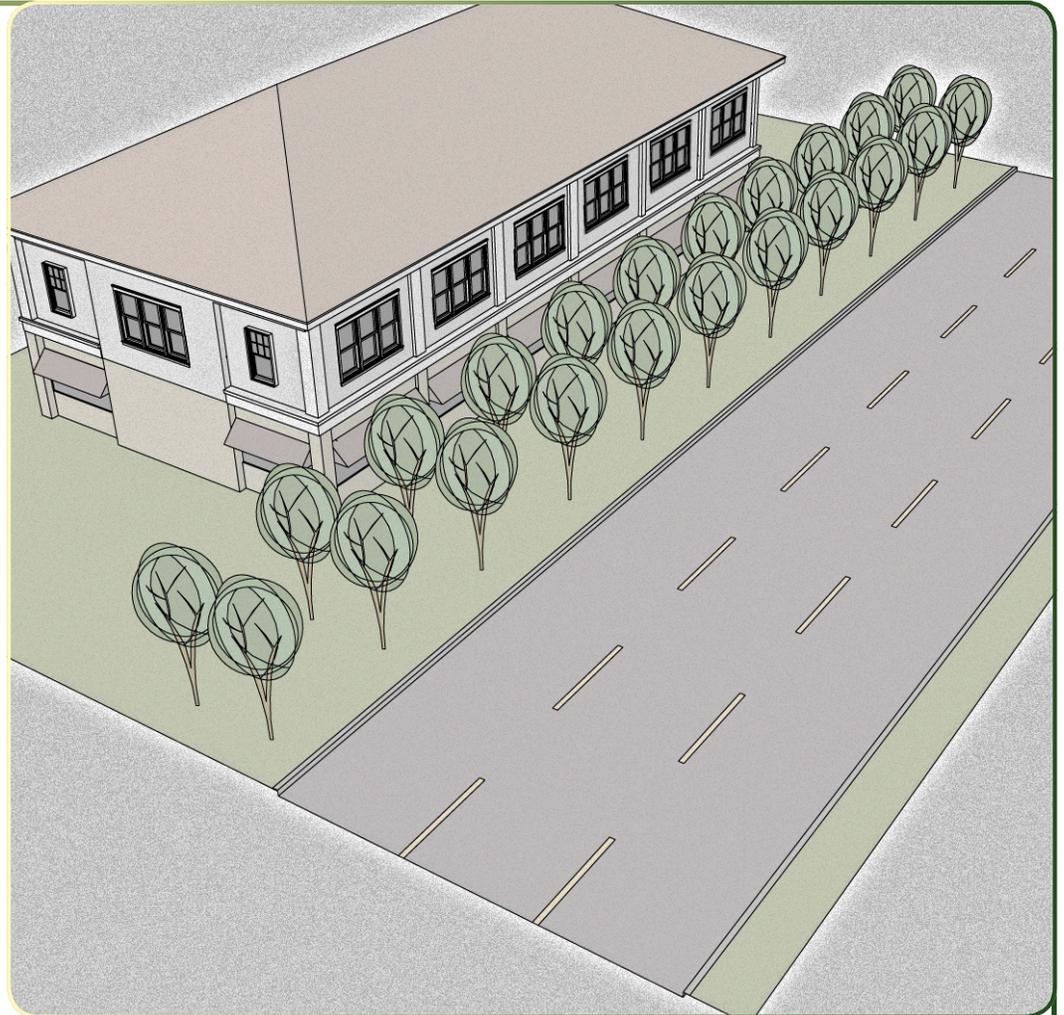
-Maximum visual permeability is encouraged.

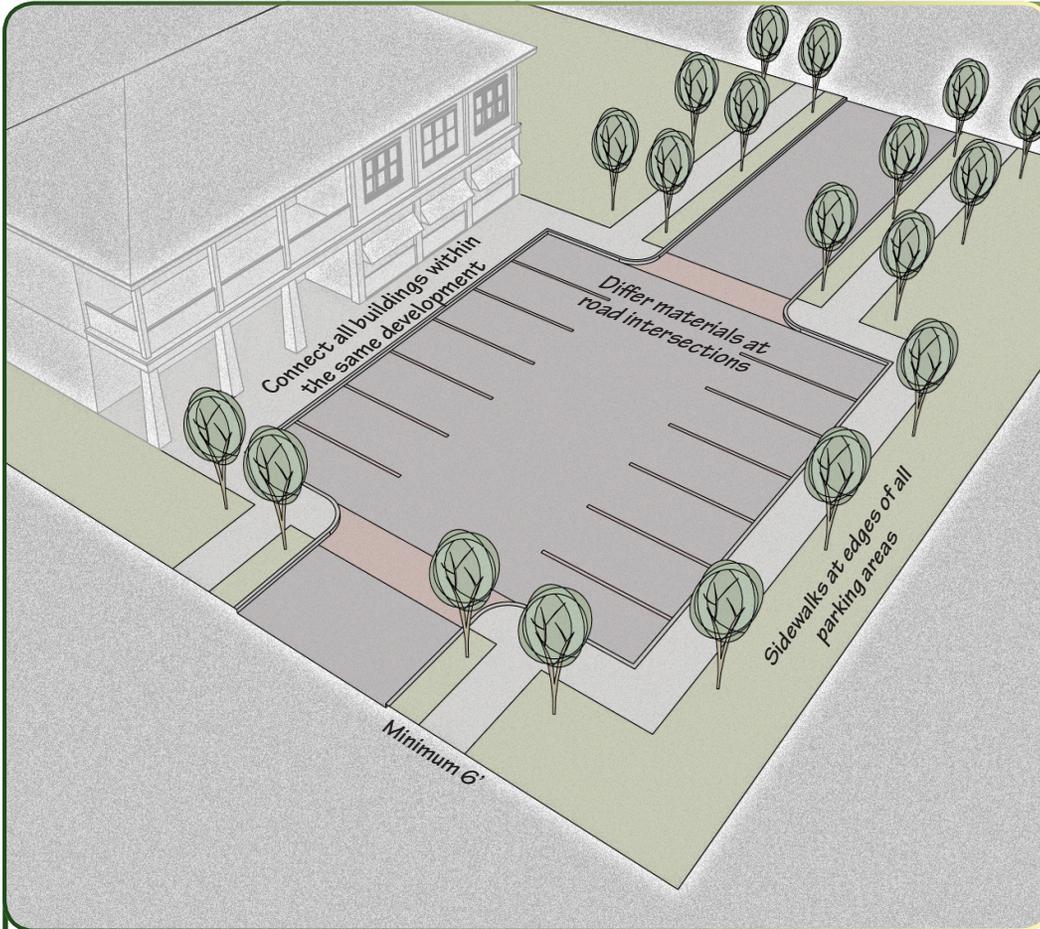
-Repeating patterns of materials, colors, surface textures and physical elements should be used to add interest and variety to a large façade.

-Building facade colors shall be non-reflective, subtle, neutral, or earth tone.

-The relationship of the height of windows and doors to their width should be visually compatible with the architectural style of the building and with that of its neighbors.

-Extensive tree planting between the building and Highways/
Major Corridors are encouraged to help supplement the Town's efforts to reestablish the woodland nature of the district.



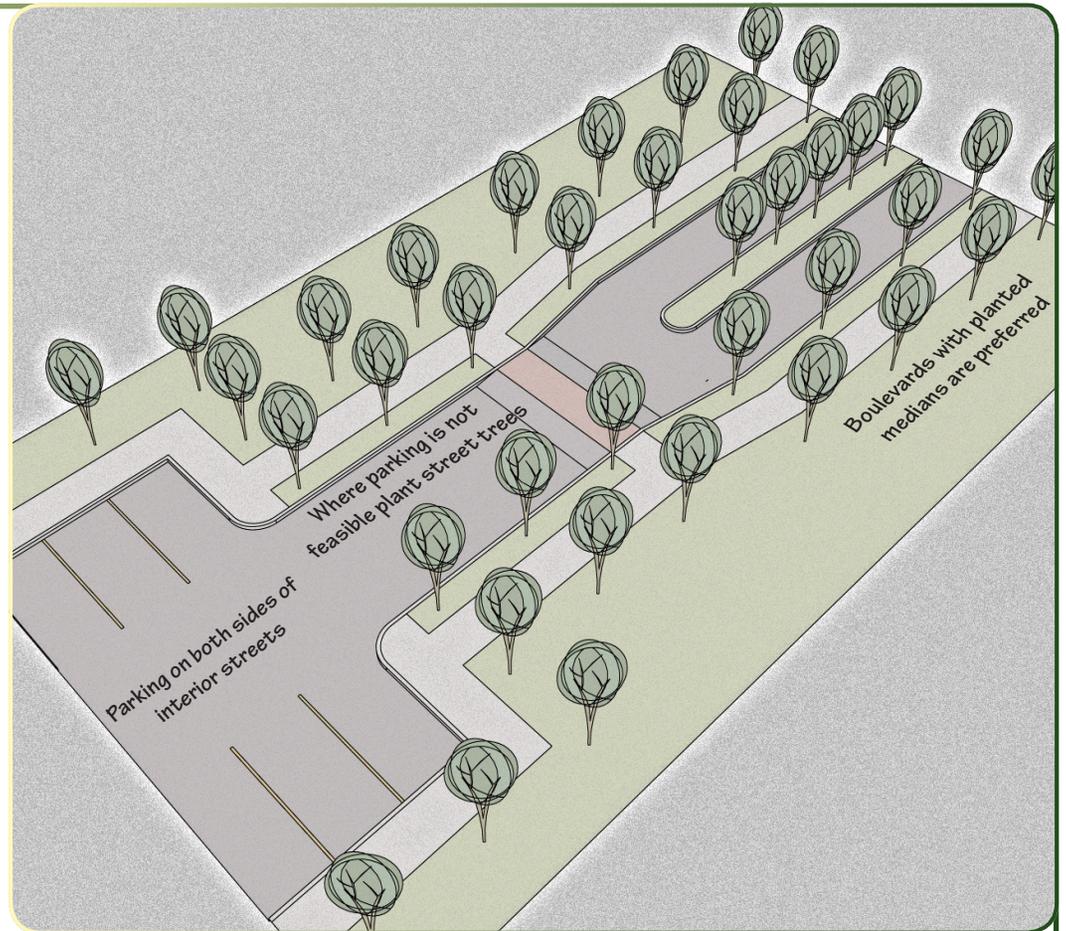


Sidewalks

- Minimum width of sidewalk is 6' except where specified otherwise
- Materials should be durable and low-maintenance. Concrete, brick paver and stone are all acceptable materials. Sidewalks must not be constructed of asphalt.
- Where sidewalks cross interior streets, the walk shall be extended across the street and accented through the use of alternate paving materials and /or raising the sidewalk above street level.
- Shall be provided at all edges between parking spaces and buildings
- Shall connect all buildings within the same development.
- Where feasible, sidewalks should connect to other pedestrian networks on adjacent sites.

Interior Streets

- Maximum single lane width of 11'.
- Where feasible parking should be provided on both sides of all interior streets.
- Parking areas should provide safe, convenient, and efficient access for vehicles and pedestrians.
- They should be distributed around large buildings in order to shorten the distance to other buildings and public sidewalks and to reduce the overall scale of the paved surface.
- Where parking is not feasible, street trees should be planted on both sides of each street on 25' centers.





Conceptual Town Center Plan

Conceptual Town Center Plan

In the development of design recommendations that will help to establish a town center, it is helpful to envision a future state of existence. It was decided to apply the recommended commercial center guidelines to an existing commercial district in the Town to illustrate their visibility and appropriateness. There are an almost infinite number of ways that this district could be developed to create a town center.

In the public process one potential development scenario was vetted. The diagram shows how the existing site can be developed over time to create a town center with supporting commercial development. The plan is contingent upon adherence to the design principles set forth. This diagram shows how that scenario responds to the design guidelines.

A - Building frontage on public space. These facades are designed to help activate the public space and provide areas for the public to gather for recreational and commercial purposes.

B- Building frontage on interior streets with parking. These facades are designed to provide welcoming entrances to businesses and to provide pleasant and safe pedestrian environments.

C- Building frontage on parking lots. These facades are designed to provide welcoming entrances to businesses and to provide pleasant and safe pedestrian environments.

D- Building frontage on Taft Highway. These facades are designed to showcase a quality built environment that is pleasing to both patrons and those passing through the Town.

E- Building frontage for service. These facades are designed to accommodate the necessary service requirements of the tenants.

1- Interior streets with parking. These streets are designed to accommodate auto access to the site and are designed in such a way as to mitigate the requirement for large expanses of parking and encourage pedestrian activity through the site.

2- Interior streets as boulevards. These streets are designed to accommodate auto access through the site while establishing an attractive visual environment and promoting safe and pleasant pedestrian activity through the site.

Public Realm Improvements

Design guidelines are developed to guide private property owners in the design and development of their land. However, the built environment consists not only of private developments, but of public improvements as well. The following section outlines some general conditions and ideas that the Town should consider to improve the appearance, connectivity and safety of its commercial areas.

General Recommendations

It should be a continuing goal of the Town to connect its commercial and civic center through a network of pedestrian facilities.

The Town should strive to define the public realm by maintaining a high level of quality and consistency in common design elements such as pedestrian lighting, seating and recycling/waste receptacles.

Landscaping in the public realm should be introduced in such a way as to embrace and reinforce the woodland nature of the Town.

The Town should engage the Tennessee Department of Transportation in an ongoing dialogue with regard to more town-friendly travel lane widths, curb cuts, intersections, landscaping, turn lanes, crosswalks and parking.

Mississippi/Palisades District



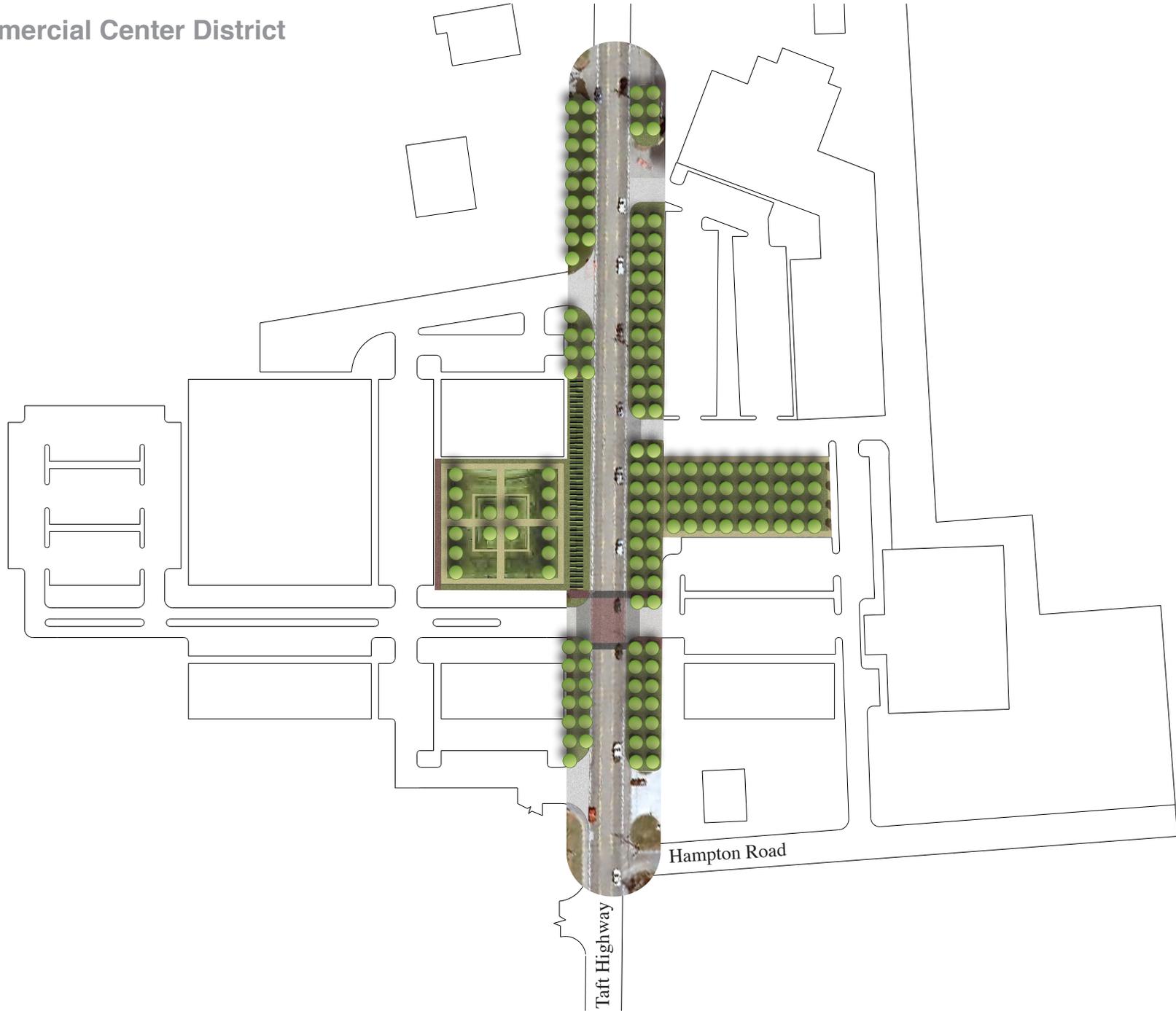
Mississippi/Palisades District

There is a need for a gateway treatment to reinforce the sense of arrival at this entrance to the Town. There is also a need to mitigate the auto-dominant nature of the commercial district on either side of the highway. It is understood that this is a state route and that coordination and cooperation with TDOT will be necessary for any improvements in the district.

The most feasible location is a possible gateway median treatment to the south of Signal Mountain Boulevard. In this section there is ample width within the road bed, and generous right of way on either side of the road.

The combination of land owners, scarce and disjointed ROW and road profile render further significant public improvements to the area problematic. However, a tremendous impact could be made on the visual appearance and motorist and pedestrian safety through the introduction of a modest landscaped median in the area between Palisades Drive and Signal Mountain Road.

Commercial Center District



Commercial Center District

The possibility of creating an attractive commercial center along the Taft Highway Corridor zoned commercial is dependant upon the cooperation and coordination of the Town, private land owners and the TDOT.

It should be the goal of the Town to re-introduce natural elements into the district. In specific, the right-of-way along Taft highway should be heavily planted with trees. This planting will reinforce the woodland characteristic of the community and provide needed traffic calming. Tree species should be selected such that the canopy develops at a height that provides shade while providing for maximum visibility of business within the development.

In the event that this area is selected as the site for a Signal Mountain Town Commercial Center, the quality of public space is essential. Public spaces can be programmed for active recreational use and gatherings or as passive space that is heavily landscaped. Active spaces should be large enough to accommodate large gatherings, but also be designed in such a way that smaller, more intimate gatherings can be accommodated with equal grace. All public spaces should be connected to each other, buildings within the development, and the larger community through a pedestrian network. This network should be heavily landscaped and lit with appropriately sized and attractive pedestrian lighting.

Implementation Mechanisms

Creating plans, guidelines and recommendations are a necessary first step for any town or city that wants to have some measure of influence over how, when and where development proceeds, but they are just the first step. Of at least equal importance are the tools, mechanisms and precedents that a town can bring into play when seeking to implement its plans. These exist in great variety and can be creatively applied by local government.

Perhaps the most common set of implementation mechanisms towns and cities use to have a say in growth and development are those enacted into law or adopted as government regulations. Zoning laws are a good example of this type mechanism. Another more flexible method is when government adopts design guidelines and delegates a group of citizens to make well-considered recommendations to a local government body about the appropriateness of a development. For the most part government supports these recommendations but this method does involve a process of give and take and dialogue between government and the property owner or developer. The Town of Signal Mountain uses both methods.

A third type of mechanism involves using incentives to encourage developers and property owners to create or provide certain features or qualities in their development. For example, sometimes developers are allowed to develop a site more densely if they provide high quality open or public space as part of the development. They may be allowed to reduce a setback if certain types of fencing or screening are installed. Certain government fees may be waived if a developer offers more than is required when it comes to minimum requirements such as landscaping.

A fourth type of mechanism is often characterized as public-private partnerships and often involves innovative and unconventional solutions. For these to work, government and private developers/property owners consider how they can craft a solution that results in each getting some of what they want and bringing what each does best to a project. Sometimes, non-profit organizations or foundations play roles in these scenarios. The outcomes are beneficial to both the public and private sectors. Here are a few examples:

- Miller Plaza in downtown Chattanooga is owned by the non-profit RiverCity Company and was purchased with this intent by a local foundation. RiverCity agreed to operate and maintain the Plaza as a public park but can use funds generated by park-based events and reaps any benefits of leasing commercial space to businesses that want a location next to the park.
- Kingsport, TN created a redevelopment district in a run-down section of its riverfront where it wants to attract mixed-use commercial development. It secured state funding to help with intersection improvements and when a developer is attracted, the city will provide a public park and other public amenity improvements from the increased property taxes the area will generate once developed.
- The primary private owners of the Bluff View Arts District in downtown Chattanooga wanted to reclaim the over-grown rocky bluff between the district and the River but this land was owned by the city of Chattanooga. The city agreed to transfer the property to the private owner with the agreement the owner would create a high quality sculpture garden on the site and the City agreed to provide ongoing grounds maintenance for the site.

Other types of innovative mechanisms include:

- Property swaps between the public and private sector
- Temporary easements for outdoor dining, canopies or parking
- Reversionary clauses, allowing government to reclaim land it contributes to the development if a development changes use or ownership
- Long term leases of land or buildings by government to assist in development that serves particular public purposes or priorities
- Partnering with a private owner to provide government or non-profit maintenance of space serving the public good
- Government assisting with the capital provision of public amenities in a private development such as greenways, public art, sidewalks and/or parking
- The city could negotiate a right of first refusal from a property owner should decide to sell a development the city partnered in to allow the city to purchase all or part of the improved site if it so desired to protect its original investment
- Deed restrictions as appropriate

The Town of Signal Mountain has two areas of opportunity when it comes to roles that local government might need to play to ensure that high quality commercial districts happen over time in districts the city is targeting for possible future commercial development and redevelopment. These opportunity areas are the provision of high quality public space consistent with town centers (most likely in the Taft Highway Commercial District), and the change over time in roads and intersections that enhance the quality of commercial districts (the Mississippi-Palisades District and Taft Highway Commercial District). It will most likely require some innovative negotiations and partnerships to make these happen.

Two recommendations are offered in light of these opportunities. One is to suggest that the Town create a task force of local citizens and one or more TDOT representatives to begin exploring circumstances that could lead to alterations to Taft Highway in the commercial district and to Ridgeway as show in the plan illustrations on pages 22 and 24 in this document. Topics for discussion should include options for traffic calming, planted medians, on-street parking, new signalized intersections, cross-walks, curb cuts, sidewalks and street tree planting.

The second is to create a task force to study relevant successful examples of public private partnerships for the provision of public space such as parks, greens and plazas in town centers and town commercial districts. In this case, when a developer may emerge for commercial space of significant size in the Town, city leaders will have relevant examples to point to and will be in a stronger position to take a partnership role in meeting the Town's needs for high quality public space interspersed with commercial development.

Appendix A: Public Comments

Signal Mtn. Commercial District Vision Plan and Guideline Recommendations Public Meeting, Signal Mtn. Town Hall, March 25, 2010.

Below is the transcript of comments posted by attendees on flip charts at the public meeting. If a comment was worded the same way more than once, the number of times it was made is to the right of the item.

Taft Highway District

1. List the physical qualities and characteristics you'd like this district to have.

- An environment where people can come together
- Play area for kids
- Space suitable for gatherings
- Provide pedestrian access and gathering place
- Town square or circle that traffic goes around
- Make area place to visit and spend time, not just run errands
- Town resident gathering place
- A central public place
- Benches
- Bike racks
- Sidewalks (2)
- Bike paths
- Fit for pedestrians and bicycles
- More green planting sidewalks
- More friendly to non-motorized traffic
- Dedicated space for pedestrian movements, i.e. sidewalks or paths
- Very friendly to pedestrians and cyclists, with good connectivity to residential areas
- Pedestrian/bike access that does NOT interfere with the flow through vehicular traffic, most still get around by auto
- Pedestrian crossings needed across Taft – bridges for walkers/bikes
- Pedestrian friendly
- Pedestrian friendly/bicycle friendly (better than at Ashland Terrace)
- Walking space

- Greener parking lots
- Can we have a green street yard and still get visibility for existing businesses?
- Green spaces
- Trees
- Screening
- Lots of green trees, shrubs, grass, native plants
- Everything done helps environment doesn't hurt it
- Vegetation, more buildings that are more organic in design – natural materials, high windows, water feature that moves
- Planting areas of a natural shape – no perfect rectangles, etc.
- Mountain laurel in profusion
- Greenery/shade
- Water features – creek
- Lots of greenspaces & trees with natural mountainy feel
- Environmentally friendly – permeable paving, natural materials, etc.
- Trees – Lanes
- Many more trees (2)
- Use attractive landscaping to separate commercial from street
- Plant trees, limit asphalt
- Easily accessible open spaces and green spaces
- No connectivity to recently commercially zoned Signal Mtn. Middle School
- Access to SMAC
- Connect district to town hall, SMMS site and swimming pool
- Connectivity
- Connectivity (pedestrian and bike) to town center and Mississippi Districts
- Low profile for buildings
- Small signs
- Trimming in Mtn. stone
- A sense of permanence by use of brick or stone
- Break up facades so that building scale – looks smaller scale
- Look natural, be consistent in architecture and signage – eliminate pole signs
- Designs should not become outdated
- Would like to see Alpine type aesthetics
- Arts & crafts style
- No-cookie cutter signs

- Mixed used part to town hall area
- Mountain Stone façade required
- Think Hilton Head Island commercial development, it's forced to blend in.
- Cohesive look but not boring – allow for variety of good design
- Architectural, not strip mall buildings
- High quality construction and public areas
- Smaller boutique size shop, not big box feel
- Two story retail below with office above
- Use Mtn. stone
- Something more attractive than what's there – looks like suburban sprawl
- Natural mountain look architecture – not New England towns
- Natural materials for construction
- No strip center appearance
- Rustic architectural
- Buildings that watch town character, more stone, use of natural appearing material
- Blend in with surroundings
- Narrow Taft Highway
- Traffic calming on Taft Highway
- Curbcuts/intersections coordinated and reduced in #
- Walkabout traffic calming
- Slow down vehicle traffic
- Encourage use of battery powered vehicles
- Reduction of traffic speed along Taft through use of greenway connectivity
- Eliminate the one street feeling
- Slow traffic/lots of planting
- Multi-use parking
- Parking behind main buildings
- Parking needs to be spread out so the walk to business won't be too far
- Parking lots that disappear
- Sufficient parking (landscaping is nice but commercial property is worthless w/o adequate parking)

2. Does the proposed concept fit your idea of a town center for Signal Mtn? Why? (See page 18)

- Yes, I like it
- Concept is good – would current owners improve their buildings & parking lots toward this look?
- Greening up and re-organizing buildings is critical
- Pedestrian access and gathering area – good
- This is already a huge meeting area. Simply needs to be beautified and your ideas are great.
- Landscaping with lots of greenery crucial
- Greenspace is good – use native trees and shrubs (won't require as much maintenance)
- Better concept than recently proposed commercial explosion!! – less infringement on residences
- Yes, but why not think of the town hall property as a possibility for enhancement as civic space as well
- Awesome! I like green space as anchor for the town center. I like keeping commercial buildings close to highway so they don't intrude on residents, adding trees to huge parking lot.
- Yes I like a town center – more green plants
- Make it all so attractive that new businesses will come in to fill our empty storefronts
- Yes, the public space! Yes, the green space
- A pedestrian friendly “gathering place” – not too imposing on neighbors – VERY Important, looks more natural with less parking lot
- Yes – I like this idea. I do not want a straight shot development all on Taft Highway
- Yes, it pretty much does. Has open, public space, trees and unobtrusive parking. BUT how do we do this in a way that benefits both town and landowners?
- I like the phase approach – first phase funds next, etc.
- Opening and softening plaza
- Yes but the common area needs a purpose
- It has an intimate feel and it would be nice to go to one place for most shopping
- I would love our town to feel and look more beautiful
- Yes – too bad the planning commission turned it down!
- Yes – I like the idea of a town center. Signal Mtn. photos were so boring and flat, examples of other towns, greenery and buildings beautiful
- Enhance existing first
- It gives an order that brings a feeling that it has been here and will be here
- Yes. I'm glad to keep commercial size limited and greener.
- Yes – central open space – expanded commercial space broken up with landscaping and parking
- Provides gathering place for town pedestrian traffic.
- I like the concept of moving Signal Crossing buildings away from Taft Hwy with parking in back and green space in front.
- I do not like the look of everything on Taft Highway. I like this look.

3. Does the proposed concept fit your idea of a town center for Signal Mtn? Why not?

- Can this be done given the logistics involved in multiple private property owners?
- Town Center – “public space.” Relocate existing baseball fields and use town property for town center. Doesn’t cause an economic impact to purchase existing commercial property.
- Use our town center for the major center
- Pedestrian connections not clearly defined
- I don’t know what would motivate the Powell-Willinghams to put in a square????
- Would like to see town center concentrated around public buildings – town hall, pool, library, etc. Could also have “light” commercial, coffee shop, etc.
- Why couldn’t a town center be created at the existing town hall property?
- Need to have a “complete street” streetscape
- Too little space for town center.
- We need a plan no matter what, town shouldn’t expect private property owners to develop a town center.
- Concerned the high amount of traffic in the future will not make this a good town center.
- How about a town center at town hall?
- Need to tie any new town center in commercial area to reworked town center around government buildings/pool/playhouse
- Town center should be on town property(+2)
- Existing greenspace needs respect and incorporation into a park
- Why not use the existing town hall/police station/pool, ball fields, playhouse, etc. area for a town center and add shops to it?
- Design shown too square with hard lines – softer flowing lines more suitable for the natural setting.
- Large building shown is out of scale with others – make it smaller or break up façade to look like multiple shops.
- Limited to only existing commercial
- The two sides of the road will need several pedestrian connections or we’ll need very fast pedestrians
- Concept fits idea only if space is sufficient. Centers of town are an agricultural idea
- Town center should be slow with emphasis on pedestrians and tree borders along businesses
- Stream will be destroyed further – could incorporate stream flowing into “gazing pool.”
- Primarily commercial, no churches or gov’t buildings
- Looks good but what if land owner opposes? Better start with land city already owns.
- Crossroad appears that it would interfere with traffic on Taft. Elevated or tunnel crossing would be better, especially for pedestrian/ bike traffic.
- Need good connection (vehicular/pedestrian/cycle) between commercial and town hall areas. Have greenspace/event gathering area on town property.
- A Hwy runs thru it cutting off any walking mall (Boulder, Co) or southern courthouse square integrity.

Mississippi – Signal Mtn. Road – Palisades Commercial District

1. List the physical qualities and characteristics you'd like this area to have.

- Shade trees in all parking lots
- Mtn. Laurel/Rhododendron
- Lots of landscaping
- Trees/shrubs
- Street trees
- Do things in ways which are ecologically helpful, not hurtful
- Greenery added
- Bicycle friendly – pedestrian friendly
- Safe for kids to walk – promotes walking and biking
- Pedestrian/bicycle friendly
- Easy movements – sidewalks
- Pedestrian friendly
- Bike lanes (+1)
- Convenient pedestrian and bike access without compromising vehicular flow
- Pedestrian friendly
- Pedestrian and bicycle paths access
- Sidewalks (4)
- Connectivity to plaza district through use of greenway
- Connect SM/Mississippi retail to Taft/CVS retail with sidewalk
- Connect the shops on the north side to and from Miss. and Signal Mtn. Blvd.
- Pedestrian connectivity
- Pedestrian connections perhaps to allow shared parking (particularly Pastaria)
- “Old Town” look...mission/arts district
- Unified architecture – no pole signs
- Should set the atmosphere for entire town since it makes the first impression to visitors
- Mountain rock in building
- Attractive building fronts
- Consistent material composition of facades
- Buildings of stone/wood
- Rock facades
- Building fronts that are consistent with town character (stone, wood, et.)
- Varied looks – fit into Mtn. look

- Commercial buildings low profile to fit into SM.
 - High quality construction, well-maintained. Some buildings in such bad shape should be torn down and rebuilt in period style
 - Restaurants
 - Neighborhood-like (not a “processed” business district)
 - More cohesive look – maybe directional signage to both commercial and other uses – Alexian, MACC, schools)
 - Small-scale shops, restaurants, services
 - Consistent lighting standards
 - Welcoming entrance gateways so SM (+1)Mtn. feel – welcoming gateway
 - Smaller, mixed-use quality
 - We need a sense of arrival in the town
 - Better, improved look
 - Building style – stone, brick
 - “Old Town” feel in architecture and landscaping
 - Some of the more contemporary design elements – bright colors, diagonal cedar boards
 - Keep it form based – low buildings, possibly more residential feel for commercial structures
 - Uniformity, especially signage
 - Old buildings torn down and rebuilt
 - Boutiques, eating and retail
 - Appropriate parking/traffic signaling
 - Narrow Taft – pedestrian friendly (+1)
 - Parking divided by greenery
 - Parking in rear
 - A road “edge” if possible, separation between road and parking
 - Concealed parking
 - Parking not backing into highway
2. What would you like to stay the same about this district?
- Low profile is good – low intensity commercial as there are congestion problems
 - Love outside eating at Pasteria
 - Like the size/scale of structures
 - Love the green park spaces (Place for Christmas train display)
 - Keep old look in buildings – new buildings to look old
 - Leave a historic feel with modern attributes
 - The mix of retail

- Pharmacy awnings
- Mayberry look
- Number of commercial properties
- Small mixed use – quaint
- The buildings/businesses need to continue using the existing topography. Don't level blocks for business redesign
- Retain, become entry to the town
- Green space between East Palisades Drive and Palisades Drive
- Entryway for town (+1)
- Convenient through-access on Ridgway

3. What would you like to change about it?

- More access on foot (sidewalks) or by bike
- Get rid of gas station/repair building
- Re-model cleaners – shabby looking and no parking
- Re-do intersection
- Require any remodel of buildings that back on MS to have more attractive look if regs permit
- Intersection of 5 roads improved
- Reduce number of roads
- Stop turns across traffic into/out of CVS
- Safer and easier ways to drive in and out
- Need a place for children to play
- Connect the parks to Signal Pt.
- Improve parking on Taft and Mississippi
- Pedestrian and bicycle friendly (+3)
- Landscaping (+1)
- Slow traffic for safer pedestrian crossing (+1)
- Needs something to unify buildings/make a cohesive whole-landscaping, common signage, etc.
- Five points intersection needs to be more safe
- Fix the dysfunctional traffic pattern (one way-street needs to go-MS)
- Redesign the five-points intersection
- The intersection of Carlin-MS and Taft must be re-worked
- Most buildings need a facelift
- Parking is a hazard in several areas
- Sidewalks, sidewalks, sidewalks

- Sidewalks on Palisades
- Sidewalk connecting back into the Old Town area – is close enough to walk for many residents
- Is it possible to connect sidewalk on James to Maryland Ave to connect residential to commercial?
- Setbacks (+1)
- Landscaping – trees
- CVS parking needs to change – too dangerous
- Parking
- Parking on Ridgeway moved beside or behind to allow for walkways (planted)
- Gathering spots
- Parking is problematic – pull into street, not clearly defined at cleaners
- A roundabout on Palisades Dr to enter and exit from CVS
- Transfer station should be moved to allow for commercial development (+3)
- New business where Ronnie’s garage was
- Mountain rock
- Better visibility (signage) for buildings off the highway
- Enough parking to make retail viable (shared parking district?)
- Roundabout at 5/6 lane intersection
- Close some roads north of Taft
- Change CVS façade and parking to be more “mountainy” smaller-town feel and natural setting
- Improve stores and service station north of Taft Highway
- Traffic hazard at CVS/Signal Mtn. Blvd intersection
- No Pole signs
- Create a gateway here that helps set tone/feel for the town
- Simplify traffic intersection
- Add sidewalks, trees and interesting artwork
- Remodel cleaners to look better
- Connectivity – walkable
- The trees by CVS
- Signage improved
- Consider moving transfer station

Appendix B: Location Map of Commercial Districts

 Commercial District

