

# RETAIL ESTABLISHMENTS AND SHOPPING CENTERS ORDINANCE GUIDELINES



**VIRGINIA  
BEACH**

**A USER'S GUIDE FOR  
CITY OF VIRGINIA BEACH  
RETAIL ESTABLISHMENTS AND  
SHOPPING CENTERS ORDINANCE**



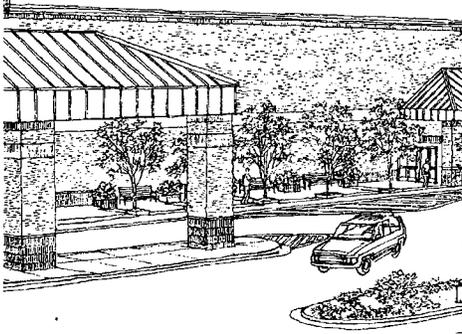
**PREPARED BY**

**DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING**

The purpose of this users guide is to provide a helpful way to understanding the specific as well as general information concerning this ordinance. Hopefully, this guide will provide you answers to frequently asked questions regarding the ordinance, and it is not to be used as a substitute for the requirements of the ordinance. Should there be any questions, please contact the Planning Department at (757) 427-4621

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**RETAIL ESTABLISHMENT:**

Any building used for the display and sale of merchandise, except of an incidental nature, to the general public at retail. The term shall also include eating and drinking establishments.

**SHOPPING CENTER:**

A group of two (2) or more retail or other commercial establishments, including those located on out parcels, having any or all of the following characteristics:

- The establishments are connected by party walls, partitions, canopies or similar features;
- Some or all of the establishments are located in separate buildings which are designed as a single commercial group sharing common parking areas and vehicular ways and which are connected by walkways or other access ways;
- The establishments are under the same management or association for the purpose of enforcing reciprocal agreements controlling management or parking
- The establishments are structurally designed in an integrated fashion around or along the sides of a promenade, walkway, concourse or courtyard.

**Introduction**

The City Of Virginia Beach finds that while retail establishments, whether in the form of single establishments or shopping centers, are critical to the continued economic vitality of the City and to the well-being of its citizens, they can also have significant aesthetic, economic, traffic-related and other impacts upon the community; because the viability of retail establishments depends in large part upon high visibility from public streets and location in busy areas of the City, their building and site design has an especially significant impact upon the character and attractiveness of the City in general and its streetscapes in particular; the protection and enhancement of the positive aesthetic qualities of the City, including its commercially developed areas, has a direct and substantial bearing upon its continued economic vitality, especially in light of the City's reliance upon the economic benefits provided by its tourism industry; and as noted by the Virginia General Assembly, the visual environment confronted by individuals in their daily routines has a profound effect on personal attitudes and productive capacities.



**CORNICE:** A projecting ornamental molding along the top of a wall or building that finishes or crowns it.

**PARAPETS:** A low wall along the edge of a roof.

**PORTICOS:** A covered entrance to a usually large building, which is supported by columns.

**FACADES:** The front or face of building.

**REVEALS:** A notch or cut into a façade to create a recess

**CANOPIES:** A hood suspended or projected over a door or window.

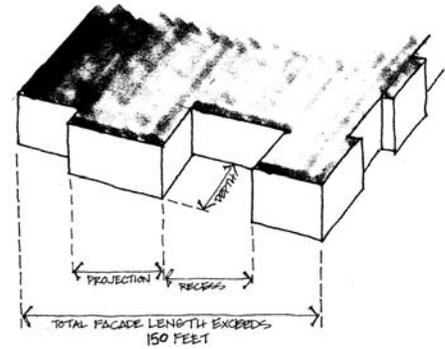
**ARCADES:** A covered passage with Shoppe's on one or both sides.

**OUTPARCEL:** A parcel located on the outside perimeter of a shopping center fronting a right of way. Out parcels are usually 1-2 acres in size and have cross access with main shopping center.

## Building Design

Facades should be articulated to reduce the massive scale and the one-dimensional appearance of large retail buildings and to provide visual interest. The overall intent is to encourage a more human scale. The following are desired:

Facades greater than 150 feet in length, measured horizontally, visible from a public street, should incorporate wall plane projections or recesses having a depth of at least 3 feet to break up the expansiveness of the exterior. All



recesses should be well lit to encourage a safe environment.

Fronts and sides of buildings oriented toward a public street should incorporate arcades, display windows, entry areas, awnings or other such features. Any side of a building oriented toward a public street or an internal street used by the public should incorporate display windows, false windows, awnings or other features to add visual interest.



Facades that do not face streets should incorporate a repeating pattern that includes color change, texture change and material change, each of which should be integral parts of the building -- not superficially applied trim, graphics, or paint. At least one of these elements shall repeat horizontally.

In addition, the structural or architectural bay pattern of the building should be expressed on the exterior through the use of reveals, projecting ribs, or offsets to a minimum depth of at least 12 inches.

Any facade that is not visible from a public street or from a private internal street used by the public should be painted a coordinating color to complement the front and side facades.

In higher-intensity areas of the city, characterized by urban-type development, developers are encouraged to reduce the footprint of large retail establishments by designing a store with multiple levels.



**Variations in roof lines used through the use of parapets and height variations.**



**Combination of brick, texture concrete masonry.**



**The predominant exterior building material should be incorporated into the design of the facades.**

## **Roofs**

To add interest and reduce the massive scale of large buildings, variations in roof lines should be used through the use of overhanging eaves, parapets, pop outs, height variations and entrance features.

Parapets *shall* conceal flat roofs and all rooftop equipment such as heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) units from typical street level view. Such parapets should feature three dimensional cornice treatment (not a two dimensional superficial treatment).

## **Materials and Colors**

Exterior building materials for all portions of a building should be of high quality and should exceed the level of quality required by the Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code. Predominant exterior building materials should include any combination of brick, wood, stone, or tinted and textured concrete masonry.

The exterior building materials may include smooth-faced concrete block, tilt-up concrete panels, or pre-fabricated steel panels only when these materials have been incorporated into the overall design of the shopping facility in an architecturally pleasing fashion and reflect an overall appearance of a high-quality retail center.

The predominant exterior building material should be incorporated into the design of the facades facing public rights-of-way, utilizing the building material as a key means of developing variety in the facade.

Facade colors for all portions of the building should be low reflectance, subtle, neutral or earth tone colors (no primary colors). Building trim and accent areas may feature brighter colors, including primary colors.



**Entryway design using Arcades, Arches, Peaked Roofs and Parapets.**



**Entryway design using Recesses, Projections, Overhangs and Architectural details which are integrated into the building structure and design.**



**Monument Sign**

## Entryways

Entryway design elements and variations should give orientation to the building and produce an aesthetically pleasing character. The building *shall* have clearly defined, highly visible customer entrances featuring two or more of the following:

Canopies or porticos	Peaked roof forms
Overhangs	Arches
Recesses/projections	Display windows
Arcades	Outdoor patios
Raised corniced parapets over the door	
Architectural details such as tile work and moldings which are integrated into the building structure and design	
Integral landscaped areas and/or places for sitting (no self-standing	

## Signs

The style, size, color, and building material of all signs on the site should be coordinated, including signs for any out parcel development, on-site directional signs, and signs to be located on the face of any structure. Colors and materials should be in keeping with the colors used on the primary structure(s). Colors should be primarily neutral or earth tone (no primary colors). A limited amount of brighter accents (primary colors), such as those found in corporate logos, are acceptable.

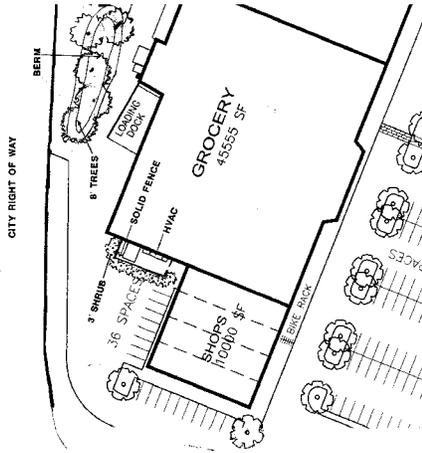
Ideally, any freestanding sign associated with a retail use should be monument style with a maximum height of 8 feet. A minimum of 75 square feet of landscaping, consisting of at least 50% evergreens, shall be included at the base of the sign. Sign materials should be durable, attractive and coordinated with materials used on the primary structure(s).

## Machines and Ground Level Mechanical Equipment

All outdoor display areas, including garden centers and any seasonal sales, **shall** be enclosed on all sides with high-quality fencing. Chain-link fences are strongly discouraged. All outdoor display areas **shall** be designated on the site plan and must not extend into parking areas.

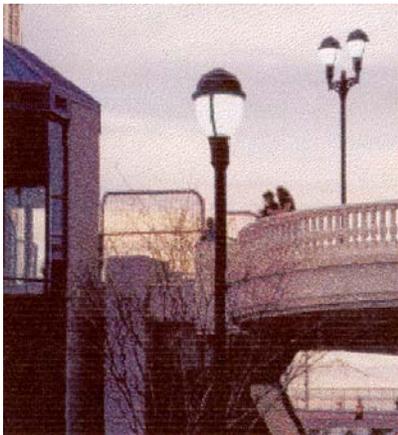
Vending machines **shall** not be visible from a public street. If vending machines are present, building facades should include an area screened from public streets but visible to security personnel.

Mechanical or HVAC equipment **shall** not be installed at ground level along any portion of a building facing a public or internal street unless such location is necessitated by the nature and design of the building it serves. A solid fence or wall and native plants shall screen such equipment. Shrubs **shall** be at least three (3) feet high, and trees must be at least six (6) feet high, at planting. Plants must be spaced as directed by the City's Landscaping, Screening and Buffering Specifications and Standards, be maintained at all times in good condition and must not be trimmed to a height lower than the mechanical equipment they screen.



**A solid fence or wall and native plants shall screen HVAC equipment.**

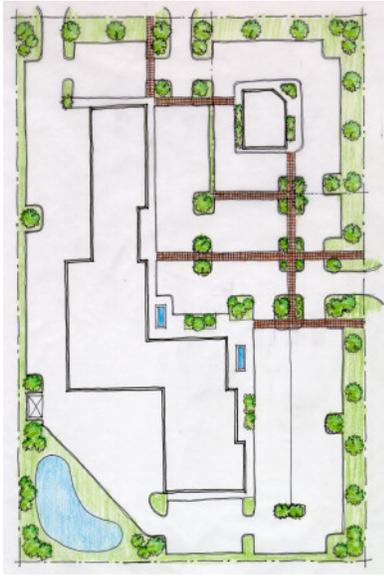
**Shrubs shall be at least three (3) feet high, and trees must be at least six (6) feet high, at planting.**



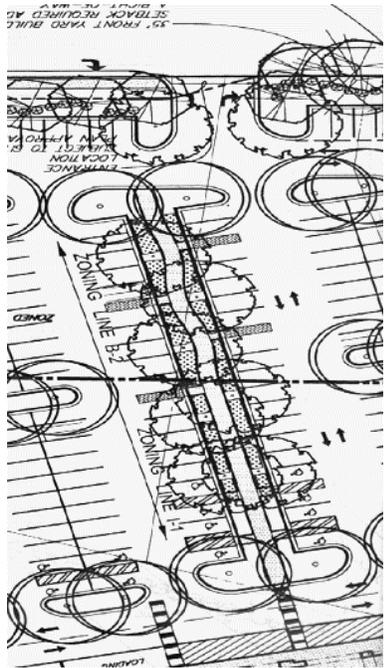
**The use of pedestrian level lighting should be considered along any pedestrian walkways**

## Lighting

All outdoor lighting should be coordinated as to style, material and color. Neutral and earth tone color (no primary colors) lighting fixtures are encouraged. Lighting throughout the site should overlap, creating an even level of illumination throughout the parking area. The use of pedestrian level lighting should be considered along any pedestrian walkways.



Sites exceeding five (5) acres in size, shall have a 30' setback, heavily landscaped with a 3' berm.



Pedestrian walkways.

## Shopping Center Site Layout

Buildings on shopping center out parcels *shall* be located so as to encourage pedestrian traffic and highlight architectural details of the buildings. No parking *shall* be located on out parcel sites between such buildings and public streets.

For retail establishments and shopping centers on sites exceeding five (5) acres in size, there *shall* be no buildings, parking surfaces or other aboveground improvements, except as follows, within thirty (30) feet of a public street. The area within such setback *shall* contain a heavily landscaped berm having a minimum height of three (3) feet measured from the level of the abutting public street. There may be a reduction in the thirty (30) foot setback to no less than ten (10) feet, provided that heavy landscaping and other features, such as brick walls, are located so as to reduce the visual impact of the parking lot from the abutting public street.

## Parking

Vehicular parking areas should be distributed around at least three (3) sides of retail buildings in order to reduce the overall scale of the paved parking surface.

The vehicular circulation system, which provides access to the parking area, *shall* be designed to reduce the number of vehicular conflicts to a minimum. Adequate stacking for vehicles *shall* be provided at the access points from the parking area.

Pedestrian walkways *shall* provide access from the parking area to the primary building in such manner that pedestrian using walkways will be required to traverse the vehicular parking aisle to the minimum extent possible. Such walkways *shall* be located so that no customer entrance is farther than one hundred (100) feet from the nearest walkway. The walkways *shall* feature adjoining landscaped areas that include trees, shrubs, benches, flowerbeds, ground cover or similar materials to enhance the appearance of the walkway areas. Walkways *shall* be readily distinguishable from driving surfaces where they traverse such surfaces through the use of durable, low-maintenance surface materials such as pavers, bricks, scored concrete or similar architectural treatments.

## Pedestrian Access

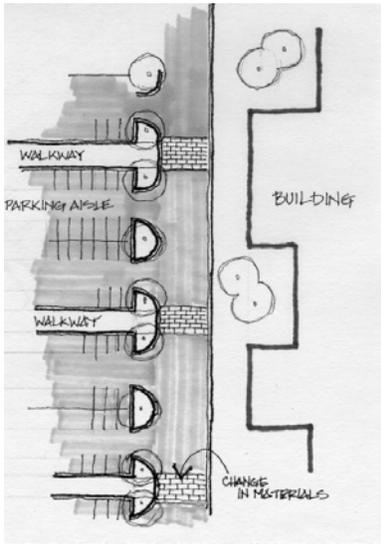
Sidewalks are required along public rights-of-way in accordance with Public Works Engineering Specifications and Standards.

Continuous internal pedestrian walkways, no less than five feet in width, **shall** be provided from the public sidewalk or right-of-way to the principal customer entrance of all principal buildings on the site. Out parcels **shall** be connected to each other, to the main shopping center and to the public sidewalk system by pedestrian walkways

Walkways **shall** connect focal points of pedestrian activity such as, transit stops, street crossings, building and store entry points, and parking areas.

The walkways should feature adjoining landscaped areas that include trees, shrubs, benches, flower beds, ground covers or other such materials to enhance the appearance of the walkway areas and must have adequate lighting. This landscaping **shall** be credited toward the parking lot landscaping requirements.

Entrances **shall** include weather protection features such as awnings or arcades having a width at least double that of the doorways over which they are locate



**Continuous internal pedestrian walkways.**



**Provision of bike racks is encouraged. Bike racks should be in a well-lighted area and placed in a location visible from the entrance and/or parking area.**



## Central Features and community spaces

Retail sites should offer attractive and inviting pedestrian scale features, spaces and amenities. Entrances and parking lots *shall* be configured to be functional and inviting with walkways conveniently tied to logical destinations. Transit stops and drop-off/pick-up points should be integrated into the site. Pedestrian ways should be anchored by special design features such as towers, arcades, porticos, pedestrian light fixtures, planter walls and other architectural elements that define circulation ways and outdoor spaces.

Each retail establishment containing over 100,000 square feet and each shopping center containing 5 acres or more *shall* provide at least two of the following:

- Patio/seating area
- Pedestrian plaza with benches
- Window shopping walkway
- Outdoor playground area (needs to be carefully located for safety)
- Kiosk area
- Water feature or storm water management facility with amenities such as fountains, benches, walking trails, pedestrian furniture or lighting
- Clock Tower
- Outdoor sculpture

All such features and community spaces *shall* connect to internal or public walkways and, if present, to the bikeway network, and *shall* be constructed of materials of at least equal quality to that of the principal materials of the building and landscape.



**Clock Tower**



**Water feature with amenities such as fountains, benches and landscaping.**

## Landscaping and buffering

In addition to meeting the minimum City requirements for parking lot landscaping, foundation landscaping and buffering, it is recommended that retail establishments also provide the following:

Any loading operations within view of a residential, office, or apartment zoning district or a public right-of-way *shall* be screened by a landscaped berm or a solid wall with landscaping on the outside

Large parking areas should be enhanced with additional landscaping. Creative site design, to include preservation of existing stands of trees and clustered landscaped areas, is encouraged over symmetrical rows of small landscaped islands.

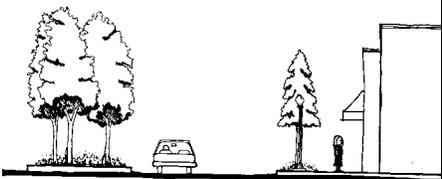
Sites with existing trees and vegetation along the street frontage should retain those landscape features and integrate them into the landscape plan for the center

To the greatest extent possible, 25 % of the landscaping *shall* be evergreen species.

To the greatest extent possible, landscape islands *shall* be designed so that plant material is not located on the first one (1) foot of the edge of the island, where it is most likely to be trampled by individuals exiting and entering parked vehicles. Such edge *shall* be mulched or paved with porous paving material



**Large parking areas should be enhanced with clustered landscaped areas and additional landscaping.**



**Sites with existing trees and vegetation along the street frontage should retain those landscape features and integrate them into the landscape plan for the center.**

## **Storm water Management Facility Ponds**



**A natural landscaped storm water management facility.**

On-site storm water management facility ponds should be attractively landscaped amenities. Wetlands benching, fountains, and the incorporation of walking trails and pedestrian benches around the perimeter of the ponds are all encouraged. Lighting of these areas is also encouraged for safety.

The use of chain link fencing to enclose storm water management ponds is strongly discouraged.

To the greatest degree possible, storm water management should utilize existing regional storm water management facilities.



**Wetlands benching, and pedestrian benches around the perimeter of the ponds.**