



**CITY OF VIRGINIA BEACH
(1999) REPORT ON SENIOR HOUSE
SENIOR HOUSING FACILITY DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES
APPENDIX 2**

A. Preface

Senior housing facilities are designed to serve older adults in multifamily units. They are characterized by densities above those typically found in conventional multifamily dwelling structures. Senior housing facilities may include support facilities such as dining halls and emergency medical care facilities but are distinguished from hospitals and other similar treatment facilities by the absence of extended medical care capability.

These guidelines are an attempt to meet the needs of senior housing residents while encouraging an improved direction in senior housing facility development. The best approach is to use sound land use planning practice with the use of design and aesthetic elements. Good design and aesthetics can go a long way toward helping define the character of any development.

B. Development Application Process

The conditional use permit (CUP) application process provides opportunities for certain safeguards that reflect the intent of sound land use planning for senior housing. Special attention should be placed on these two opportunities.

1. Rezoning requests that involve a CUP request should be submitted as a conditional rezoning application.
2. Rezoning requests for apartment districts should reflect the lowest density apartment district necessary to achieve the desired result. In other words, avoid requesting A-36 zoning, when A-18 will suffice.
3. The minimum lot area for senior housing facilities located in non-residential zoning categories should be three (3) acres. However, city council may modify this guideline based on the number of units, lot configuration or development related amenities.
4. Every effort should be made to earmark a reasonable percentage of senior housing units to those who qualify for low and moderate income assistance as defined by the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

C. Site Selection Guidelines

Developers of senior housing facilities should strive to select sites that meet the guidelines identified here. The goal is to locate senior housing developments within areas that can provide a reasonable level of service to the residents of those units. These guidelines should be judiciously applied where appropriate and not used to restrict the development of this type of housing within any area.

1. The development should be located within reasonable proximity to useful services and facilities. These include banks, shopping centers, parks, libraries, and recreation areas, among others. Effort should be made to locate such facilities within reasonable walking distance to bus stops. This criterion is less critical for Assisted Living Facilities and Nursing Facilities.
2. Senior and/or Disabled developments should provide alternative transportation services where appropriate such as vans, buses or others modes of travel.
3. The development should be located within reasonable proximity to hospitals, medical offices and pharmacies.
4. The development should be located in aesthetically pleasing areas reasonably protected from excessive noise, air pollution and other negative physical influences.

D. Site Design Guidelines

Existing Natural Features

During the design process, existing natural characteristics of a site should be identified. Natural site features and land forms should be considered during site design and building placement. Natural site amenities may consist of a significant stand of trees, unusual topographic conditions, natural drainage patterns and similar natural features. These features should be preserved to the greatest degree possible. These features create a sense of place on undeveloped sites that can be expanded on during the development process. All significant views present within the development boundaries, both on and from a site, should be maintained and enhanced.

Access and Circulation

The provision of clear and convenient vehicular and non-vehicular access to all new senior housing developments is and should remain a high priority during the development process. Vehicular and pedestrian access should be distinct and clearly separated.

- 1| Access should be coordinated with or provided from the secondary street system or by cross-parcel access driveways whenever possible.
- 2| To minimize traffic conflicts, entrances and exits to a development should be consolidated and in one general location, a safe distance away from street intersections exhibiting high volumes of traffic. An internal circulation system should be utilized to provide access to uses within the development site.
- 3| Entrances and driveways should permit safe and convenient pedestrian crossing where they intersect sidewalk and other pedestrian access ways. A change in paving material to make the driver aware of the crossing is encouraged.
- 4| Where appropriate, pedestrian pathways, not necessarily associated with the public roadways(s) fronting the property, should be provided. Senior housing facilities located adjacent to existing or planned commercial areas should provide safe and convenient pedestrian access ways between the facilities and the commercial area. These access ways should be an adequate width with a landscaped strip that includes trees and lighting that is both safe and attractive.
- 5| Uses that are part of the operation of senior housing facilities, such as traffic areas and deliveries, should be located so as to not be disruptive to adjacent residential neighborhoods.

Parking Areas

The visual appearance of new parking lots is controlled in part by adopted ordinances regarding parking lot landscaping. However, there are additional location and circulation characteristics that can further improve the appearance and function of lots.

- 1| The parking area should be broken into separate subareas to avoid the `sea of asphalt' appearance. Parking areas should be situated so that they are buffered from the arterial highway by landscaping or other physical means and provide safe, well marked and well-lit access to the units.
- 2| Landscaping for the parking area should be strategically located to provide visual relief, shading of the lot, green areas, and screening while insuring that unobstructed lines-of-sight are maintained, both at the time of planting and when the plants have matured .

Landscaping

- 1| Senior housing facilities that adjoin areas planned for residential use should provide effective screening. Trash collection areas should be located in a way that significantly minimizes related noise and odor. Landscape plants should be provided as an effective buffer between such uses according to ordinance requirements.
- 2| Screening may include fences, walls, berms, hedgerows and massing of plant material. All enclosures should be designed with attractive, durable materials or be from a selection of hardy native plant materials. If walls are used, they should match the dominant material and color schemes used in the building. Design continuity should be maintained between the building, trash enclosure area, and the wall plane used for screening. Height and placement of the walls and fences should comply with zoning ordinance requirements.
- 3| When selecting the type, size and location of landscaping at critical areas such as intersections, parking lot crossways and driveways, always consider providing safe, unobstructed lines-of-sight for motorists that meet or exceed development standards. The size of the plants at planting and at maturity should be considered. Additionally, an inspection and maintenance schedule should be developed and adhered to insure that lines-of-sight are always adequate.

Stormwater Management as Landscape Features

- 1| Whenever possible, stormwater retention and detention systems are encouraged to be designed as open space or landscape amenities or located adjacent to the highway right-of-way. Grass swales should be used to accommodate surface drainage when possible.
- 2| When structural systems are provided, plant material should be used to soften the appearance. The design of the system should blend in with the natural site features and become a design element of the overall development.
- 3| Nonstructural systems can be of a variety of landscape plant materials which include ground cover, low to mid-height shrubs or a combination thereof.
- 4| Where possible, fountains and other amenities should be included as part of an attractive stormwater management feature to complement the overall site design of the facility.

Lighting

All outdoor lighting should provide a safe and attractive environment for drivers and pedestrians. Outdoor lighting should be designed to avoid glare intruding into adjacent residential area.

Signs

All signs should be clearly marked, attractive and consistent in color and theme with the primary building.

Setback and Building Location

This section describes how senior housing structures should be situated on a development parcel when located in relationship to the roadway.

- 1| Where opportunities present themselves, structures should be sited to create courtyards or open spaces that promote a "sense of place" or a human scale for the development. Particular attention should be directed at the appearance of the buildings from the arterial highway created by the way in which the buildings are sited. The "barracks" appearance should be avoided.
- 2| Where appearances depend on the character of the surrounding development, buildings should be generally oriented within a well-landscaped green area. The height, bulk, and architecture of these structures should convey a sense of openness, ensuring substantial sunlight access.
- 3| Buildings should be oriented to the street and designed and scaled to accommodate safe and convenient pedestrian movement.
- 4| Usable open space areas should be included as part of the development and where possible, be strategically located with adjacent open space areas such as a residential area or an arterial highway that would allow future transit stops.

E. Building Design Guidelines

Of paramount concern is the actual design of the building in relationship to surrounding buildings and the surrounding area. Good site design cannot compensate for poor building design nor can good building design compensate for poor site design. Both are interrelated. This section provides some guidance regarding the principles of building design that should be utilized in planning a building or other structure.

Compatibility

The relationship of a building to its surroundings, both natural and built, is important to its success. That relationship is primarily conveyed through the scale, mass, height, and proportion utilized in the design.

- 1| Scale is vital to achieving compatibility. The three most important aspects of scale to achieve compatibility are: 1. The ratio of the parts of a structure to the entire structure, 2. The structure's size in relationship to its surroundings, and 3. The structure's size in relationship to an individual.

- 2| The mass, or overall size, and height of the structure should be appropriate to the surroundings. The closer the building or structure is to the highway, the less the mass and height should be. One way to accomplish this is by using a staggered tiered or “wedding cake” design. The effort is to create an easily recognizable and memorable “place.” Increase in mass should be accompanied by an increase in the quality of the site design, including amenities and landscaping.
- 3| Proportion is the relationship on one dimension to another. Good proportion is expressed by each component of a building (height to width of a door, for example); the relationship of each component to each other (wall to window, for example) and the ratio of building mass to the spaces around it.

Other Building Design Elements

This section will focus on various aspects of building design that should be addressed for any structure.

- 1| All elevations visible from a roadway should be of equal quality in design, detail and material. Visual interest should be provided through window and door details, varied rooflines, consistent textures and color, etc. In the case of several buildings, staggered placement of the buildings can create that interest.
- 2| Materials used on structures should be long-lasting, attractive, and high quality. Cinder block, large expanses of vinyl siding, and plywood sidings are some examples of inappropriate materials.
- 3| Like material, color should be more sensitive to the character of the surrounding area. Color should be less intense, blending with the surrounding landscape, and not obtrusive. The appropriate design of the building itself should be sufficient to attract the necessary attention; color should only be an accent.
- 4| The building should possess details that are pedestrian in nature. Architectural details should be included in the design of buildings that are scaled to the pedestrian, that draw the pedestrian's eye, and that creates a memory of the building and the place. Amenity features such as public plazas, staggered buildings, gazebos, fountains, circular passenger drop-off points and distinctive architecture should be included in the design of senior housing development.
- 5| Lighting of buildings should be designed as an integral part of the building's architecture to be as unobtrusive as possible. This lighting especially on the rear of buildings should be designed and placed so that it does not direct or reflect any illumination into residential areas.
- 6| The height, bulk, and architecture of structures should convey a sense of openness, ensuring substantial sunlight access.
- 7| Applicants are encouraged to provide areas for growing flowers or vegetables. These areas may include, but are not limited to, courtyards that have small, raised garden plots that are constructed to allow ease of access for those residents with limited movement who may require wheelchairs or walkers.
- 8| Facilities such as small playgrounds should be provided for visiting children.