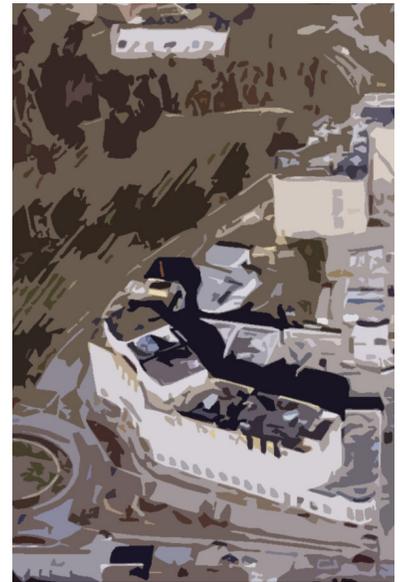


Annapolis Comprehensive Plan Future Development & Urban Design

Discussion of future development options should include a focus on urban design issues related to scale, texture, grain, and height. These concepts of form and land use apply to all development types, ranging from single-family estate to the urban center. The reliance upon land use regulation by use classification alone is not well suited for a city such as Annapolis that maintains many different community character types. This discussion paper analyzes residential and commercial design considerations that will eventually be incorporated into Chapter 3, Land Use and Urban Form.



Site design for both new development and infill redevelopment contributes to the overall community character. Many small elements (building materials, bulk, setbacks, facades, rooflines, landscaping, and parking) come together to create a development that is not only functional, but also add a design element to the existing community. By examining the basic elements in site design, there can be a greater understanding of how these elements play a role in establishing an overall character.

New Residential Development – Cluster Options

Since Annapolis is a built-out community, there are few options for large developments that are built as ‘greenfields’ or previously undeveloped sites. These are existing tracts of vacant land that can develop in an estate or suburban character type. These opportunities are few in number and their effect upon the City as a whole will be very limited. However, this is a niche that is worth analyzing since there is the possibility of adding additional greenfield sites through future annexations. In all future estate and suburban developments, clustering is recommended for residential development. For any parcel larger than five acres clustering is recommended as in **Table 3A, Subdivision Cluster Examples**.

In the past, standards for the amount of open space are determined during the negotiation process preceding plan approval. Another method for implementing open space requirements is the addition of the open space requirement minimum to the zoning ordinance. The requirement of a minimum amount of open space makes the process less stressful for all participants – the City, neighbors, and the developer. One of the more recent

Cluster development preserves open space and natural resources, while creating a unique sense of place. Residential clustering is recommended for all new suburban or estate developments.

Table 3A
Subdivision Cluster Examples

Cluster Subdivision District Examples	Lot Size	Open Space Ratio (OSR)	Max. Gross Density	Minimum Site Area
Estate	1 acre	0.7	0.25	10 acres
Suburban	20,000 SF	0.6	0.66	5 acres
Auto-Urban Single-Family	10,000 SF	0.25	2.17	5 acres

Table 3B
Estate Cluster-Level Options

Estate Open Space Subdivision Options	Lot Size	Open Space Ratio (OSR)	Max. Gross Density	Minimum Site Area
Preservation	1 acre	0.85	0.113	10 acres
Conservation	1 acre	0.7	0.25	10 acres
Cluster	1 acre	0.5	0.45	10 acres



subdivisions in the City, Hunt Meadows, is an example of a suburban cluster development. It is recommended that there be several options: a cluster, conservation, and preservation cluster. These options are illustrated in **Figure 3A, Cluster Development Examples**, and also included as an Estate-based example in **Table 3B, Estate Cluster-Level Options**.

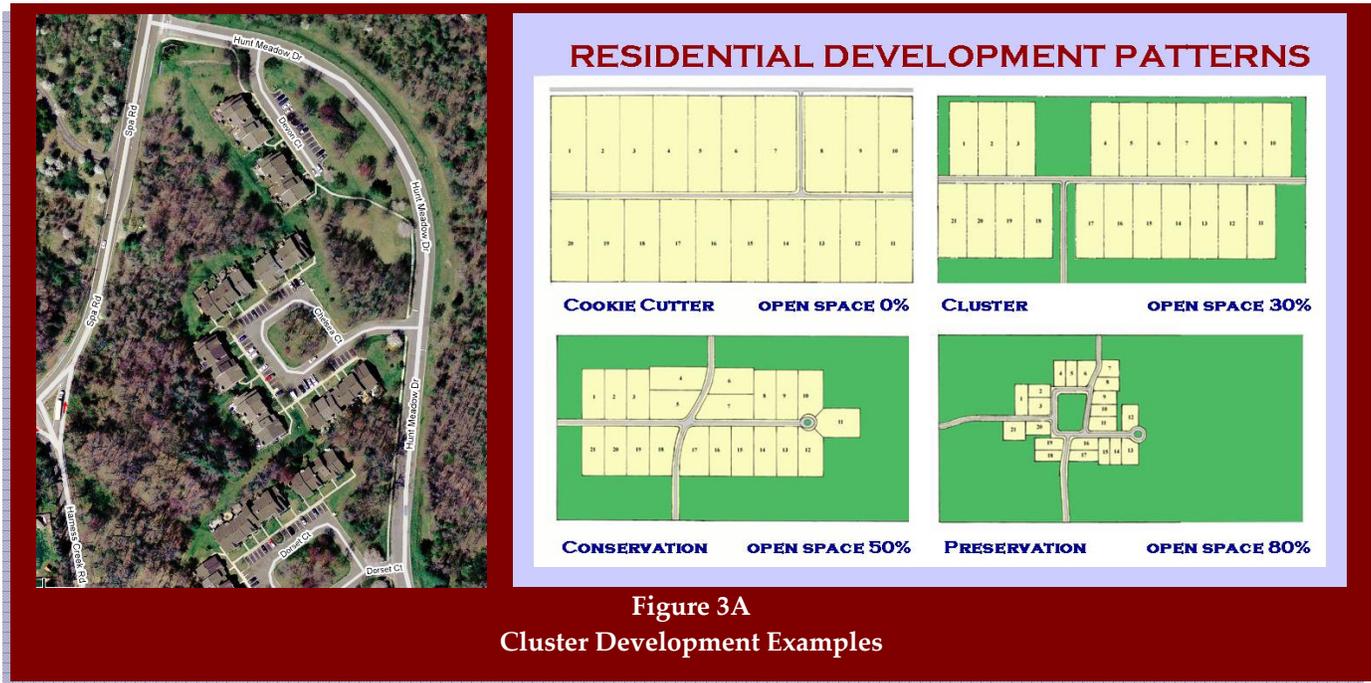


Figure 3A
Cluster Development Examples

The Citizen Advisory Committee will need to make some decisions related to cluster development. Which options should be advocated in the comprehensive plan documents? The second question relates to how much the City wants to push the most extreme cluster options. Also, should there be an emphasis on density incentives for the most preservation-oriented site designs?

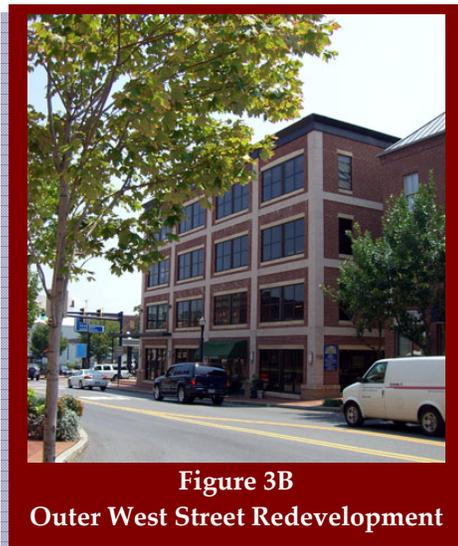


Figure 3B
Outer West Street Redevelopment

Mixed Use and Commercial Redevelopment- Structured Parking

The vast majority of the City’s growth will be through the redevelopment of generally auto-urban commercial property to one of the urban categories. Redevelopment is more difficult to plan for than greenfield development since there are many existing conditions to address. For example, the land will be very costly because it requires the purchase of existing development that often has an economic value that is considerable. Acquisition often involves added demolition costs and more expensive construction due to the congestion of streets and existing neighbors who need to be protected during construction. Creating a truly urban environment typically means that structured parking will need to be an integral portion of the development. The combination of all these factors means that proposed densities or intensities will have to be significantly higher than current densities in order for a redevelopment project to be financially feasible. While higher densities of residential development can be

achieved with at-grade parking, it requires much taller buildings and the requisite parking fields would consume nearly all the land. This is not an ideal design solution for urban areas that seek to retain pedestrian-scale qualities and character. **Figure 3B, Outer West Street Redevelopment**, illustrates a recent site that may typify future infill redevelopment. In the downtown, what is hidden by both topography and existing buildings is the parking structure, as depicted in **Figure 3C, Main Street**.

*Mixed Use and Commercial
Redevelopment – Character Terms*

The new high intensity buildings that have been built in recent years meet the mixed use desires the City advocated in the 1998 Comprehensive Plan. There are specialized architectural terms that allow very precise description of character. Scale is a relative measure of the size of buildings. Texture or grain size describes the architectural interest of the buildings in terms like smooth and rough. A variation on this is the building grain, how finely its façade is broken up into elements of interest that alter the mass of the block face or building. The new buildings have been controversial because they have a very different scale, texture, and grain size even though intensities are not that different. The new buildings are many times larger both in height and length, with a building approaching the dimension of a block face in downtown with nearly double the height. Thus, these buildings are at a very different scale than the historic center of Annapolis, which is the image most residents hold as a standard. The street face façade of downtown is composed of a number of small scale buildings, each somewhat different. This creates a texture that can be described as fine grained. The architecture of 1901 West Street is very large grained even in the attempt to create a more interesting façade. The change in material and staggering of the building plain fails to break-up the scale of the building.

The infill development in urban high, urban commercial, or urban center does not have to retain a large-scale, course-grained character of these recent buildings. There are several approaches that can be used to alter the impact of these intense urban intensities and make them a better match with the City’s historic urban fabric. Inner West Street suggests one approach, which is to reduce the scale of the building to smaller, individualized projects. Each project is on a lot that takes up only a portion of the block with the possibility of increasing intensity through the occasional parking structure. Inner West Street had a fabric of buildings that set the scale of development. This will be difficult to do in much of



**Figure 3C
Main Street**

Scale is a relative measure of the size of buildings. Texture or grain size describes the architectural interest of the buildings in terms like smooth and rough. A variation on this is the building grain, how finely its façade is broken up into elements of interest that alter the mass of the block face or building. The new buildings have been controversial because they have a very different scale, texture, and grain size even though intensities are not that different.



Figure 3D
Staggered Setbacks

Outer West Street where shopping centers and automobile dealerships have much larger parcels with no existing buildings that would be retained. Where there are small freestanding uses, this mode is feasible. However, any pedestrian-scaled, mixed-use designs would require City investment in structured parking or transit. These transportation investments would have to be part of the project mix because many buildings would not easily be able to provide the parking on a very small lot. The small lot also imposes constraints on the market, as each building needs a specific user. This could lead to a long period of isolated new buildings. Another option besides large parking structures is the ability to use a mix of below-grade and at-grade parking. However, this can impact the street-level pedestrian precinct by reducing the transparency into pedestrian-level uses that are important to the success of an urban streetscape.



Figure 3E
Alternating Heights and Setbacks

Urban Design Case Study – Mizner Park, FL

There are several approaches to a larger building structure. In one, the architect creates a façade that attempts to mimic the smaller scale of multiple buildings even though the reality is the building is really a single building. A skilled architect can achieve this with variations in material, staggering the building setback and variations in windows and other architectural details. The risk is that it appears, in less skilled hands, as a large building with phony elements.

A more promising effort uses staggered building setbacks at different levels, varying heights, and architectural detailing to create a softer building. While still identifiable as a single building, it provides the interest typical of a smaller scale. Figures 3D to 3F are from Mizner Park in Boca Raton, Florida. In **Figure 3D, Staggered Setbacks**, several techniques are used on a building containing retail and office with a parking

structure to the rear. The building is of a constant height in both stories and feet. The ground level has a nearly constant setback with an arcade, which provides continuity at the pedestrian level and a horizontal band that is a unifying element. The upper floors have significant staggered setbacks, regular pattern of areas having no setback, and areas with a medium or deep setback. This is not a trivial couple of feet, but enough to create a corner office with two window walls. The greater setback is for elevator courts that create a special space. These access courts are also emphasized at the ground level façade to further articulate the façade and provide identity.

In Figures 3D and 3E, two views are shown of a block face that is a single building. The building ranges from three to seven stories in height so that there are multiple apparent building heights in the block. In this case, the mix of uses is commercial on the ground floor with condominium apartments above. This façade also involves an arcade to serve as a unifying element at the pedestrian or commercial level. Staggered setbacks are also used, but in a more complex manner. There are areas where the top floor is set back so as to be difficult to see, lessening the apparent height (**Figure 3E, Alternating Heights and Setbacks**). The building is irregularly divided into blocks in contrast to the regular pattern in Figure 3D. There is also a far richer architectural detailing in small stepping of the building and balconies that both protrude and create recessed areas.

In **Figure 3F, Architectural Detailing**, the increased architectural detailing becomes more obvious. All the windows have an architectural trim around the window as opposed to a flush window with only a sill, as seen in Figure 3E. In addition, a small section, one window bay, is set forward to the top of the second floor (Figure 3E). There is a two-story section with a height that is nearly three stories in height. The adjoining unit is a full three stories with a slightly different height. The roof lines use similar caps to provide an additional unifying element. In addition, a pitched roof is used to provide an additional design element where portions of the building are set back on the top floor. This is seen in the left-hand building where the third floor is set way back, giving the building a two-story appearance. In fact, there is a large balcony hidden by what appears to be the top of a two-story section.

The use of multiple building heights is a good way to reduce the impact of large scale building on the neighborhood or to make it seem to be a scale that is more in keeping with the traditional City core. In some cases, there may only be a modest stepping back of higher stories. In others, the lower level may be separate buildings. **Figure 3G, Screening Effect of Buildings**, shows a ten-story building that is the tallest building in Mizner Park and is fully visible only when looking down a pedestrian street. From other directions it is masked by the other buildings in the development. This is an excellent way to permit a much taller building without creating major scale problems.

Urban Design Case Study – Sugar Land, TX

A very different approach involves a mix of buildings with different heights and scales. This requires that the project as a whole be designed



Figure 3F
Architectural Detailing



Figure 3G
Screening Effect of Buildings



Figure 3H
Building Transitions

with buildings of different height, creating a range of spaces from sidewalks to plazas.

The advantage of this system is that it creates a context for multiple buildings to be built to different needs. The land can be divided into blocks or portions of blocks with different uses built to suit. Figures 3H and 3I are pictures of the Sugar Land Town Center in Sugar Land, Texas. There are buildings that range in size from two to nine stories with extensive streetscape design. A massive central parking garage provides for most of the parking. The main streets, however, are designed with angled street parking.



Figure 3I
Sugar Land City Hall

Figure 3H, Building Transitions, shows a street with the outer edge being two-story buildings that make a transition to other areas where intensities may be much lower. This creates a progressive, but moderate, increase to the most intensive spaces. This illustration shows very blocky buildings that are massive compared to the human-scaled streetscape. However, note that the architecture breaks up the building on the right with significant shifts in both materials and façade design to reduce the large scale.

City Hall, a three-story building, is set in a plaza with a fountain near the center of the Town Center (**Figure 3I, Sugar Land City Hall**). The pitched roof and clock tower greatly adds to the impact of this building. This creates a sense of place in the center of the development. It is flanked by buildings of six, nine, and five stories to provide enclosure to the space. There are also a few one-story kiosks to provide more activity in the plaza.



Figure 3J
Layered Buildings

Materials can vary as can be seen in **Figure 3J, Layered Buildings**. This building moves away from the brick and glass design that was seen in Figures 3H and 3I to stone and stucco. This building also switches from a smooth textured façade to a much rougher texture with almost cornice-like trim that strongly provides a separation between the ground and upper stories. Each floor has an intricate window detail and the middle two floors have balconies that create heavy shadows and roughen the façade. The top floor uses a different window pattern, the cornice, and skyline variation to cap the building.