2. Neighborhood Friendly Streets and Paths: Options for Throughfares

To achieve the goal of having neighborhood friendly streets and paths, the relationship of streets to neighborhoods must be considered. In Virginia counties using VDOT subdivision street standards, traffic engineering typically deals with capacity of roads. With the Neighborhood Model, the character and appearance of the street as well as the design speed and capacity must be factored into street design. Character and appearance are determined by streetscape elements, building front conditions, building use, and form. Capacity and design speeds are determined by local street design standards. Design speeds generally should be lower on subdivision streets than on arterials in the urban area.

Streetscape elements are important to neighborhood design. Trees, usually planted in grassy strips of land between the curb and the sidewalk, provide a softened appearance to streets and enhance the quality of the walk for pedestrians. Trees also provide a barrier between the pedestrian and a moving car. Where sidewalks abut a curb, trees can be planted adjacent to the sidewalk in the front yard to help create a similar effect.

The Neighborhood Model proposes that many street interconnections will be made, which should allow for narrower road widths than are currently used. Narrower road widths and on-street parking help to reduce travel speeds on roads, which can make neighborhoods safer. The following road types introduce elements of "character" into the urban road system. Part A of this section includes streets that fall within neighborhoods and extend from neighborhood to neighborhood. They are arranged from highest volume and width to lowest. Highways are outside of individual neighborhoods and are required for high speed regional traffic. They are represented in Part B of this section.

The Neighborhood Model proposes streets for the urban area that have lower design speeds than standard VDOT designs suggest. Certain road improvements may require substantially lower design speeds than the examples illustrate.
A. Neighborhood Thoroughfares

**Boulevard**

**Definition:** A boulevard is a multi-lane thoroughfare separated by several medians. A boulevard could transform a highway on the Fringe of a Development Area into an urban street in a General Area or Center.

**Features of Boulevards:**
- Suggested speed limit is 35 mph.
- Side medians can separate slower traffic and parking activity from the through-traffic in the center lanes. This arrangement creates an alternative to the “strip highway,” by allowing building frontages, sidewalks, and pedestrian activity up to the right of way.

**Suggested locations:** Centers, Cores, and where neighborhoods adjoin.
Fringe Boulevard

Definition: A fringe boulevard is a long-distance thoroughfare, traversing rural areas and fringes of neighborhoods. It can link neighborhoods to each other.

Features of Rural Boulevards:
- Suggested speed limit is 35 mph.
- Slower movement service lanes allow residences to be sited along the road.
- Where service lanes are used, a buffer should be provided between residences and the higher speed travel way.
- The main road should be kept relatively free of intersections.
- Intersections should occur primarily with the service lanes.

Suggested location: Fringes

Figure 6.10 shows a general design of a Rural Boulevard.
Avenue or Residential Boulevard

Definition:
An avenue or small residential boulevard has center medians that break the thoroughfare into discrete channels of movement.

Features of Avenues or Residential Boulevards:
- In Centers, the median may be wide enough to hold monuments (see Monument Avenue in Richmond, Virginia).
- In General Areas, medians may be planted formally with trees or landscaped informally, to create the appearance of a linear park.
- Suggested speed limit is 25 mph.

Suggested locations:
Centers and General Areas

Figure 6:11 illustrates an avenue or residential boulevard. Note: width illustrated is narrow and may need to be slightly wider to accommodate both moving and parked cars.
Drive

Definition: A drive is a bucolic roadway that defines the boundary between an urbanized and undeveloped area, as along a stream valley, park, promontory or where Development Area meets the Rural Area. It does not have curb and gutter. A pedestrian path or sidewalk parallels the roadway but is not immediately adjacent to it.

Features of Drives:
- Suggested speed limit is 25 mph within a Development Area and 35 mph outside a Development Area.
- A drive may be split with a center median. It may depend on the terrain or other landscape features such as streams or rock outcroppings.
- It may be asymmetrical; one side of the drive may have an urban character and the other may look more like a parkway.

Suggested location:
Fringes

Figure 6:12 illustrates a Drive.
Main Street
(Commercial Street)

Definition: A main street or commercial street accommodates two-way traffic and parallel parking. Diagonal parking may be allowed and is appropriate for commercial buildings with ground-floor retail space.

Features of Main Streets:
- Main streets have raised curbs and closed storm drainage.
- Sidewalks are adjacent to curbs at a typical width of 10 – 18 feet.
- Trees can block views to storefronts and are therefore not always desirable. When used, they should be in planters and have clear trunks and high canopies. A single species generally should be used and a series should be planted in alignment.
- Street furniture is desirable.
- Suggested speed limit is 15-25 mph.

Suggested location:
Centers and Cores

Figure 6:13 illustrates a “Main Street” or Commercial Street in a Center.
Neighborhood Street or Road

**Definition:** A neighborhood street or road is a local slow-movement thoroughfare. A neighborhood street is urban in character and a road is rural in character.

**Features of Streets**
- Streets have an “urban” cross section which includes curb, gutter, street trees, and sidewalks.
- Streets are used to establish an “urban form” which supports densities of 3 dwelling units per acre or greater.
- Parallel parking is allowed along the shoulder of streets.
- Building fronts are aligned with small setbacks.
- Drainage system is closed.
- Suggested speed limit is 20 m.p.h.

**Appropriate location:**
Fringe, General Areas and Centers

**Features of Roads:**
- Roads use a “rural” cross-section which includes open drainage ditches and no curbs.
- Paths instead of sidewalks are used adjacent to the drainage ditches.
- Setbacks can be irregular.
- Roads are used to characterize a more “rural form” and are used in areas with very low traffic volume.
- Roads are the “exception” rather than the rule in the Development Areas.

**Suggested location:**
Fringes.
Way (Small Street also known as a Queuing Street)

**Definition:** A way is narrower than a street or road; it is designed for “yield” movements.

**Features of Ways**
- Suggested speed limit is 15 mph.
- They may be one- or two-way.
- They are never striped.
- One car must pull over to allow for oncoming traffic to pass.
- Ways are appropriate for minor neighborhood streets; however, they should extend for no more than two to three continuous blocks before ending at a T-intersection.

**Suggested location:**
Fringes and General Areas; at Centers on a limited basis
Alley

**Definition:** An alley is a narrow access at the rear of lots providing for service areas and access to parking and utility easements. Alleys accommodate yield movement.

**Features of Commercial Alleys:**
- Commercial alleys have no sidewalks and little landscaping.
- They should be paved to accommodate trucks and dumpsters.
- Inverted crowns provide for center drainage in alleys.

**Appropriate locations:**
Centers and Cores

**Features of Residential Alleys:**
- Residential alleys have no sidewalks.
- They should accommodate low-lying landscaping.
- The surface may be paved or, in low density areas, gravel.
- The surface should be 10 – 14 feet in width with a right-of-way of 20 – 24 feet in order to accommodate utility easements.
- Garages and fences may be built at the right-of-way line.

**Suggested location:**
Fringes and General Areas
B. Other Thoroughfares

Highway

Definition: Highways are existing long-distance corridors designed for rapid-speed, high-volume traffic flow. As such, they serve more than the Development Areas. Within the Development Areas, the Neighborhood Model calls for them to be altered to become more neighborhood-friendly streets such as boulevards. Examples are U.S. Route 29 and U.S. Route 250.

Desired Features:
- Highways should be kept relatively free of intersections, driveways, and adjacent buildings.
- Highways should be buffered from adjacent development by a landscape strip.
- As a highway approaches a Center area, it can transform into a boulevard.
- A variation of a highway is a Rural Boulevard.
- Design speed varies.

Suggested location:
Rural Areas. Acts as corridor to connect neighborhoods.