

Chapter 7-Design Principles

The quality of development is important to residents and property owners in and near Pantops. During the public input process, the public expressed a desire for high quality development and viewshed protection for Monticello and the City of Charlottesville. They suggested that more environmentally friendly and sustainable site development, such as low impact development occur and green roofs be used. They liked the landscaping requirements related to the Entrance Corridor and endorsed the neighborhood streetscape recommended in the Neighborhood Model. Citizens asked that new design principles help Pantops to create its own visual character, rather than be an emulation of other parts of the County. Most important in Pantops is that new development and redevelopment happen in a compact, sustainable manner that works with the natural topography, not reshapes it.

This section of the plan establishes basic principles and direction for design in Pantops for all development proposals, including by-right proposals. As more detailed planning work is completed, both in Pantops and other County master Plans, more specific design guidelines will be developed for Pantops.

VIEWSHED PROTECTION

Views from several vantage points are important to Pantops, including views from the City of Charlottesville, within Pantops, and fringe areas including the Southwest Mountains Rural Historic District. Views from Monticello to Pantops are extremely valuable to the County because of the role Monticello plays in Albemarle County and national history. This master plan recommends that developers be cognizant of the need to protect these viewsheds when rezoning and developing site plans.

As part of a future set of design guidelines for Pantops, consideration should be given to creating height restrictions in areas of high visibility and where a proposed height would negatively impact a historic viewshed or one or more scenic qualities of the neighborhood to avoid skylighting of buildings. County lighting regulations should be evaluated to identify any changes appropriate for Pantops, given its visibility from Monticello and topography within the neighborhood.

Until a set of design guidelines is created, developers are requested to consult and incorporate **Monticello Viewshed Guidelines** into new development proposals. These guidelines were provided by the Thomas Jefferson Foundation and address priority view protection areas, parking lots, colors, facades, roofs, and landscaping. They are provided below:

Monticello Viewshed Guidelines for Developers

1. Monticello is renowned for its vistas. Those from three areas are paramount:
 - a. From the northwest terrace (elevation 871 feet). This promenade is where visitors exit from the house tour and begin to explore the landscape.
 - b. From the shuttle bus stop northeast of the house.

- c. From the “First Roundabout,” the uppermost road that encircles the house. This primary pedestrian road is approximately a half-mile in circumference.
2. Parking lots are best concealed when located on the far side of the building (as viewed from Monticello) and the area broken up by plantings.
3. Building facades are less intrusive if articulated and not monolithic.
4. Earth-tone colors such as reddish-brown brick help to soften the visual impact of a building. If not adopted for the street side, consider it for the back of the building if it faces Monticello.
5. Dark roofs (black, gray) are preferred. Expansive flat roofs can be camouflaged by mottled patches of light and dark stone.
6. Screening by a long narrow border of trees of a single species should be avoided.
7. Consider a canopy of lofty trees (such as tulip poplars) to screen out development if the vista from Monticello is angled down on the site. The lower limbs of the trees can be pruned to open ground-level views while protecting the vista from Monticello.
8. The lighting of buildings and parking areas should be shielded to eliminate glare.

To assist with by-right development and with legislative reviews, the County will work to establish a more formal process to incorporate these guidelines as part of the development review process

ENTRANCE CORRIDORS

Route 250 and Route 20 within Pantops are Entrance Corridors which lead to historic landmarks in the City of Charlottesville as well as in Albemarle County. At present there are no architectural and landscaping guidelines specific to the Pantops area. Until specific entrance corridor guidelines for Route 250 and Route 20 in Pantops are developed, the Master Plan recommends the following:

Route 250 East

- From Route 250 East at the I-64 interchange, transition from the Rural Area into the development area by providing a landscape buffer or additional landscaping into the Development Area west to Worrell Drive on the south and Pantops Mountain Road at Westminster Canterbury on the north.
- From Worrell Drive and Pantops Mountain Road, provide an urban character with shallower setbacks and a building orientation to Route 250. This treatment should continue into the City of Charlottesville.
- Setbacks along Route 250 should allow for ornamental trees on-site with shrubbery augmenting lawns.
- Street trees should be located within the right of way.
- Asphalt pedestrian paths or concrete sidewalks of at least 8 feet in width should be provided on both sides of Route 250 East. Planting strips of at least 8 feet in width for street trees should be provided between the curb and the sidewalk or path.

- Entrances to buildings should be provided from Route 250 East to allow the pedestrian access from the sidewalk.

Route 20

- From the development area boundary on the north to Elks Drive on the west and Fontana Drive on the east, transition from a rural character to a suburban character using landscape treatments with rural suburban features.
- From Elks Drive and Fontana Drive to Route 250, provide an urban character with shallower setbacks and a building orientation to Route 20.
- Concrete sidewalks of at least 8 feet in width should be provided on both sides of Route 20 from Elks Drive and Fontana Drive to Route 20. Planting strips of at least 8 feet in width for street trees should be provided between the curb and the sidewalk or path.
- Street trees should be located in the right of way.

Design guidelines for entrance corridors in Pantops should also include:

- **Gateway treatments** including signage & landscaping at entry points into Pantops
- **Underground utilities** or utilities that are completely screened from view if undergrounding is not possible.
- **Sign** guidelines for uniformity and to provide sense of identity to Pantops.

“GREEN” DEVELOPMENT

The Pantops Master Plan emphasizes the need for green building design, low impact design, and sustainable building practices. These techniques are part of the County’s efforts towards sustainability. Sustainability is a concept that recognizes that natural systems are essential to providing both economic needs and quality of life. As each Development Area is master planned, the question of what sustainability truly means and how the most important natural systems can be protected in that portion of the County should be answered.

In Pantops, sustainability means having residential, employment, shopping, and recreational opportunities in close proximity and walkable. It means greater respect for the Development Areas resources, especially the Rivanna River, which serves several open space functions as a *natural* resource that provides aquatic habitat and floodplain; as a *scenic* resource that is designated a Virginia Scenic River; and as *historic* resource with evidence of canal locks remaining from the days when it was a major transportation route. It means employing building techniques that minimize environmental impacts or using green roofs to help provide for stormwater management.

Sustainable development means that environmental features are preserved to the extent possible, when balancing other goals for high quality development. For example, stream corridors should not be piped; rather, they should be managed to provide open space, pocket parks, and water features. Some channels will require engineering intervention of one type or another, such as limited piping, channel engineering and ponding as part

of development; however such intervention should be viewed as the exception and not the rule.

DESIGN AND THE NEIGHBORHOOD MODEL

When it was adopted, the Neighborhood Model (NMD) provided a set of design approaches that are very relevant to Pantops. Principles of particular importance are:

- Site planning that respects terrain
- Relegated parking
- A pedestrian orientation
- Mixed-use areas
- Mixed housing types and affordability
- Interconnectivity
- Redevelopment
- Clear boundaries with the rural areas

Of these principles, a pedestrian orientation, interconnectivity, and a mixture of housing types/affordability, and mixed-use areas have already been discussed in other sections of the Pantops Master Plan, including Chapter 4-Land Use and Places. Recommendations related to the other principles are made below.

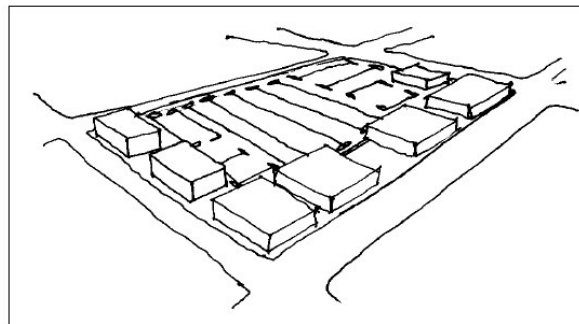
Site Planning that Respects Terrain

Pantops is a very hilly part of the urban area. Many parts of it have already been regraded such that the original topography is no longer evident. To achieve the goals of compact development and density in the development areas, it has always been known that a certain amount of grading will be necessary. The amount of grading and the quality of regraded slopes are the most important aspects for new development.

First and foremost, development should be adapted to the topography and natural setting of the County rather than doing excessive cut, fill, and grading. Imaginative and sensitive designs are encouraged. Buildings and parking lots should fit existing grades to the extent possible while allowing for interconnections to adjoining parcels. Where grading is necessary, reconstructed slopes should not be severe. They should be attractive, functional and easy to maintain. Where retaining walls are used, they should be four –to-five feet tall and terraced.

Relegated Parking

To help create a better pedestrian and building orientation, parking lots should be relegated from the street. Relegated parking places parking lots and areas behind or to the side of a building which faces a street. In areas that are to look more urban, on corner lots, the building should be placed on the corner, rather than placing parking on a corner. Where



parking lots are visible from streets, use of street walls and vegetation can help to diminish the appearance of the parking area and draw more attention to the buildings and building entrances.

In most cases, existing development in Pantops along major roads contains parking lots between the building and the street. Moving the parking lots to the side or rear of buildings or providing parking structures in Core and Center Urban Mixed Use areas can occur through redevelopment.

Redevelopment

Much of the Route 250 corridor has been developed and redevelopment is occurring to change the appearance of this corridor. Opportunities to improve design along the corridor exist and the recommendations of this plan should guide the form of that redevelopment. The same is true with some existing shopping centers in the Pantops Area. The example below shows how a shopping center similar to Pantops Shopping Center was redeveloped:



Figure 6:100 Existing Site Plan of Eastover Shopping Center. It is dominated by a parking lot, which is rarely more than half full.

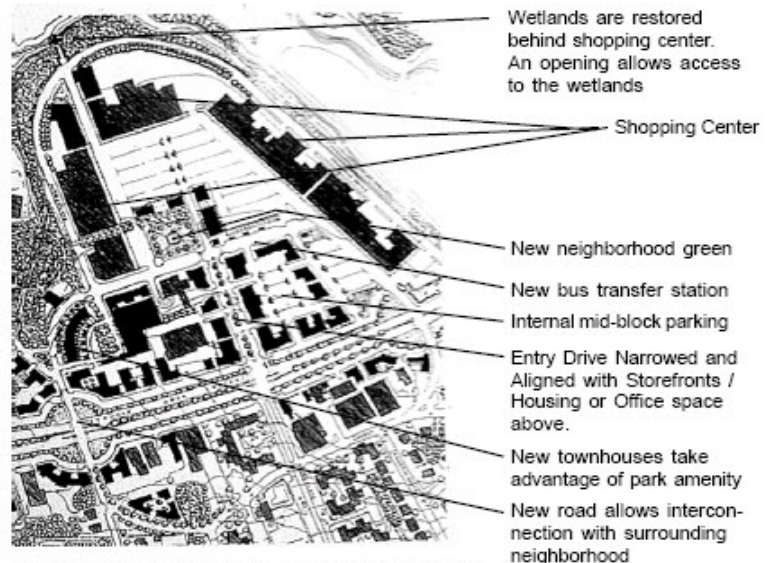


Figure 6:101 Proposed Site Plan of Eastover Shopping Center after redevelopment. Images courtesy of Neal I. Payton

To redevelop the shopping center, the developer:

1. Changed the facade
2. Added upper level apartments or offices
3. Modified the parking lot to make streets
4. Added sidewalks and street trees
5. Added curbside parking
6. Oriented the buildings to the newly created streets
7. Added green space
8. Added a bus stop or transfer station
9. Added a parking garage
10. Provided a community meeting place

Clear Boundaries with the Rural Areas

Pantops abuts the rural areas of the County along the northern and eastern borders of the Development Area. Surrounding this border are existing large lot residential developments and undeveloped areas. Most of these edges of the Pantops Development Area have been designated as open space on the Framework Plan. In some areas, the edge has been designated Neighborhood Density and would be expected to develop at the lowest end of the density range for that land use designation with no additional treatments (buffers or landscaping) to the Rural Area edge expected.