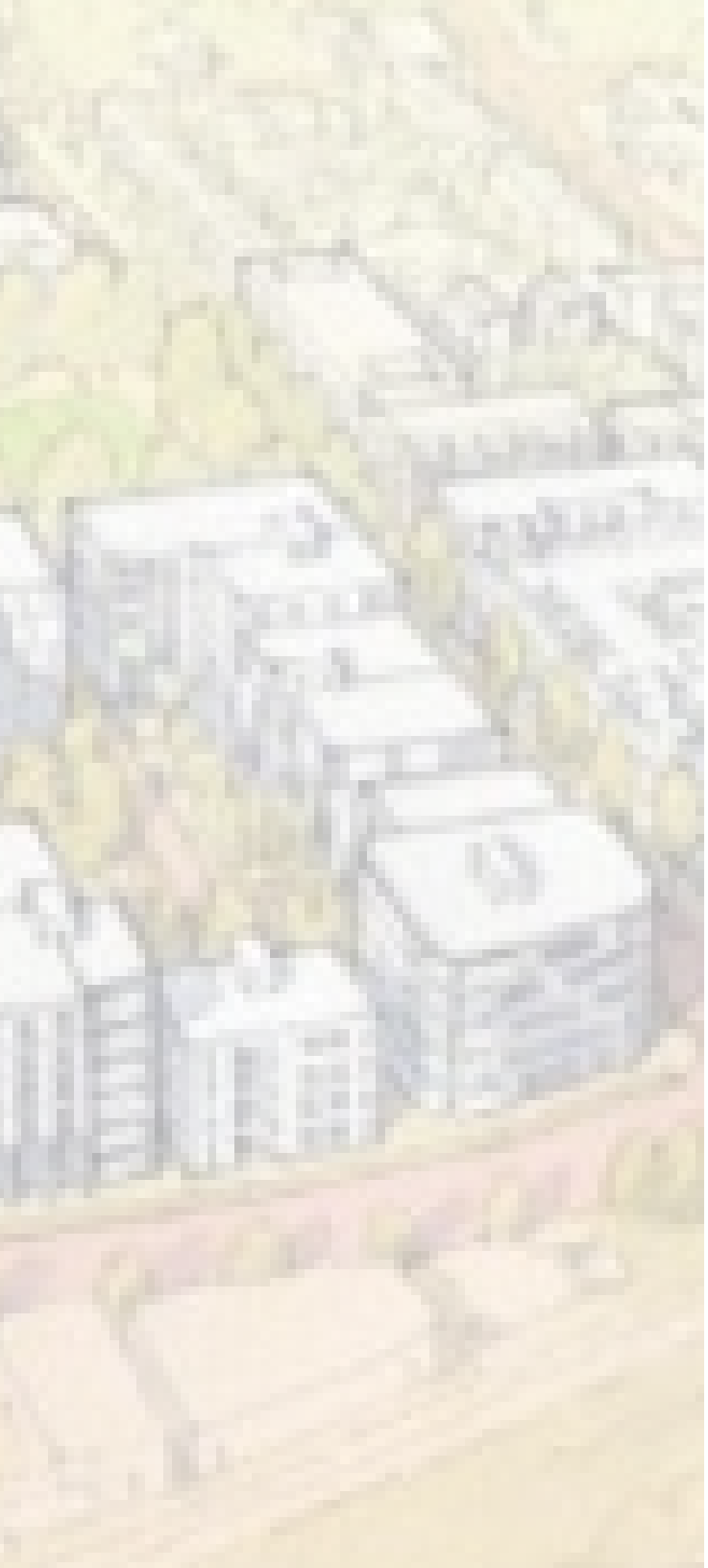
City of Goose Creek

Apartment Community Design Guidebook

As referenced in Section 151.130 R-5 Apartment District | September 2022



Building Better Multifamily Communities

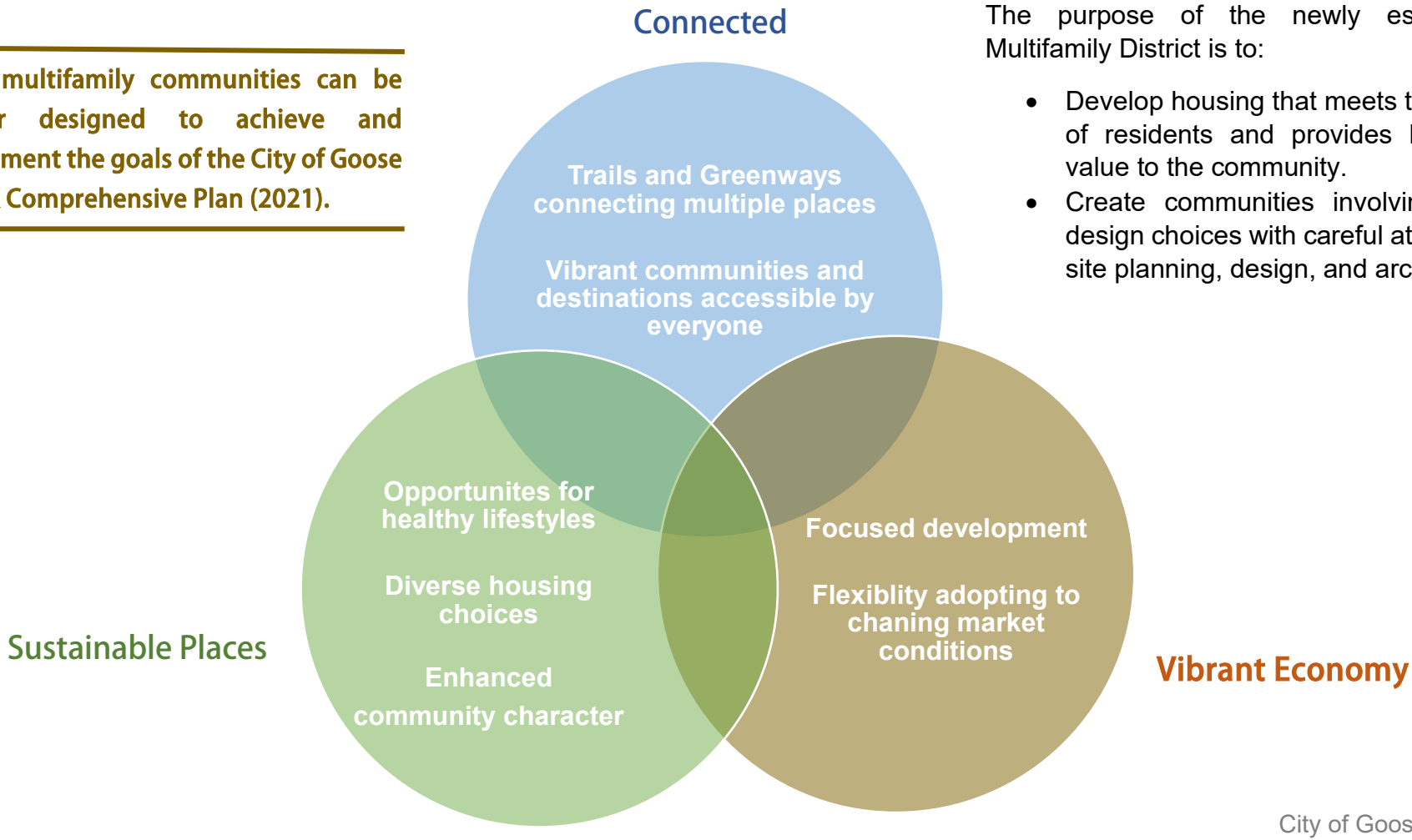
INTRODUCTION

Apartment developments are becoming common housing types in the City of Goose Creek, both as infill projects in older neighborhoods as well as large-scale new development in suburban areas. Apartment homes are an attractive housing choice for many. They can be more affordable than single-family detached homes in the same community and have reduced home maintenance responsibilities. As predominant trends in multifamily development have evolved and as this housing option has become an important housing choice within the city, recent developments have provided valuable examples of how design features and amenities make multifamily neighborhoods desirable places to live.

Creating great multifamily communities involves smart design choices and successful integration into the surrounding neighborhoods. All multifamily developments, regardless of size or location, benefit from careful attention to site planning, design, and architecture to ensure successful projects that meet the needs of residents and provide long-term value to the community.

In 2021, City Council amended the official zoning map to include the Multifamily District (R-5). The City of Goose Creek has prepared this design guidebook to focus attention on good multifamily dwelling design and make recommendations to future multifamily developments.

New multifamily communities can be better designed to achieve and implement the goals of the City of Goose Creek Comprehensive Plan (2021).



The purpose of the newly established Multifamily District is to:

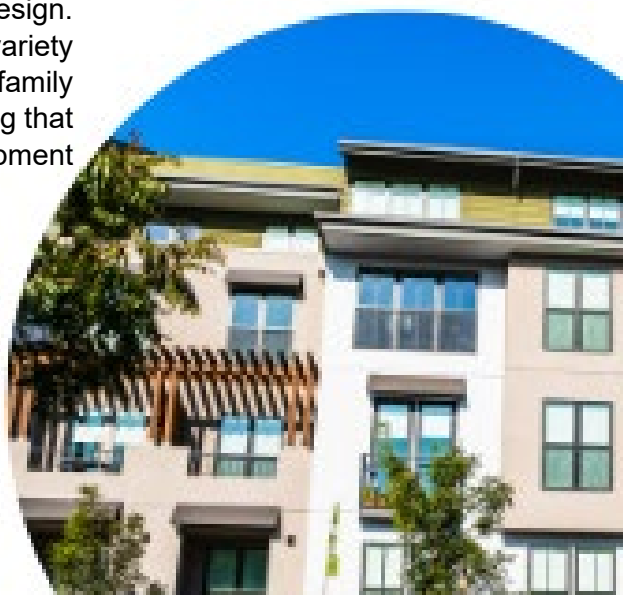
- Develop housing that meets the needs of residents and provides long-term value to the community.
- Create communities involving smart design choices with careful attention to site planning, design, and architecture.

How to use the guide

This guidebook is directed toward municipal officials and staff, architectural review board members, developers, realtors, and other people involved in the design of great communities. It is intended to serve as a primer on some of the major design elements of multifamily developments and impact design decisions have on the overall look and function of the community. The guidebook offers design recommendations to maximize the aesthetics and functionality of multifamily developments. It allows users to better understand how the City of Goose Creek approaches multifamily developments

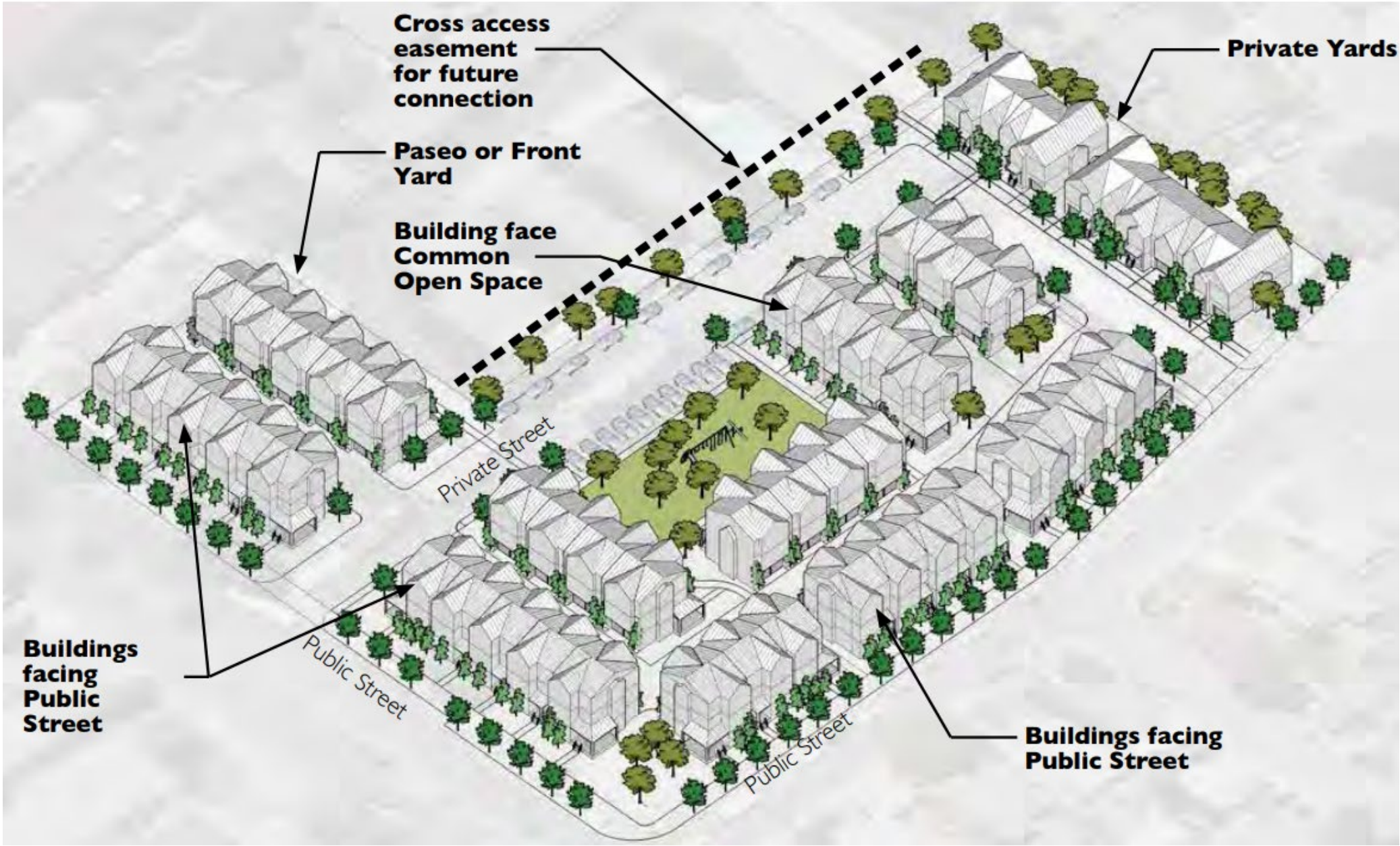
This first section provides an overview of multifamily developments in Goose Creek, looking at historic and current development patterns and their impact on a community. The second section explores how typical design elements influence the overall quality and success of a multifamily community and the impact of design decisions on the built environment and resident experience.

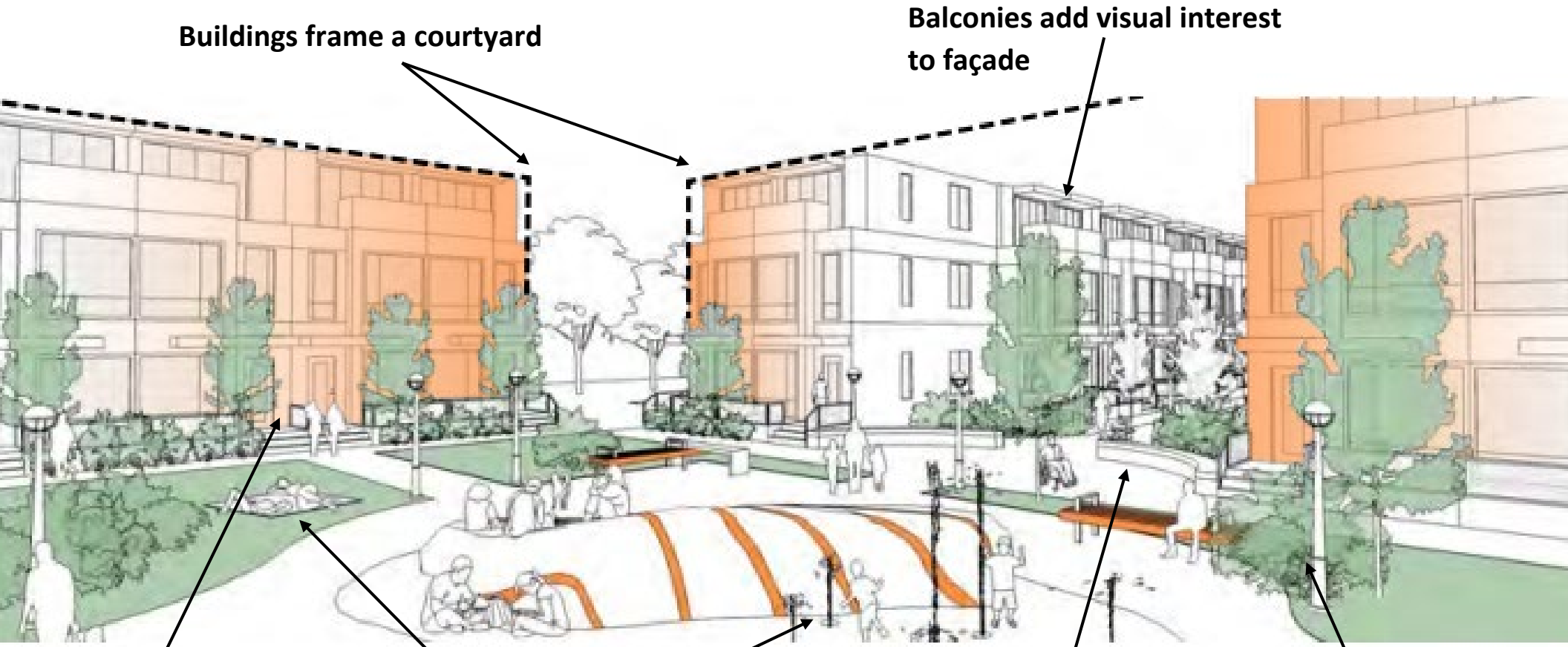
This section is offered to enhance the user's perspective of multifamily development design. The final section provides a variety of design solutions for multifamily communities while recognizing that every community and development site is unique.



MULTIFAMILY COMMUNITY DESIGN

The overall look, feel, and function of a multifamily community is dependent upon the interaction of individual design elements. Incorporating certain features, such as street trees and rear-loaded garages, into multifamily developments can be a challenge in part due to site topography, utility needs, cost considerations, or ordinance requirements. By incorporating the best practices described on the next two pages we can better meet the changing needs of residents and retain long-term value.


Cross access easement for future connection
Private Yards
Paseo or Front Yard
Building face Common Open Space
Private Street
Buildings facing Public Street
Public Street
Public Street
Buildings facing Public Street


Buildings frame a courtyard
Balconies add visual interest to façade
Entryways open to courtyard
Opportunities for active and passive recreation
Pedestrian circulation
Adequate site lighting that adds visual appeal

MULTIFAMILY DESIGN ELEMENTS

The following section describes common design elements in multifamily communities in Goose Creek. Though multifamily communities may be different, each of the design elements are integral to the overall site design. The reader will come away with a thorough understanding of how design trends, zoning requirements, and site-specific considerations influence the final housing product, overall site design, and general feel of the community. The following elements and their impacts on the appearance and function of the development are reviewed:

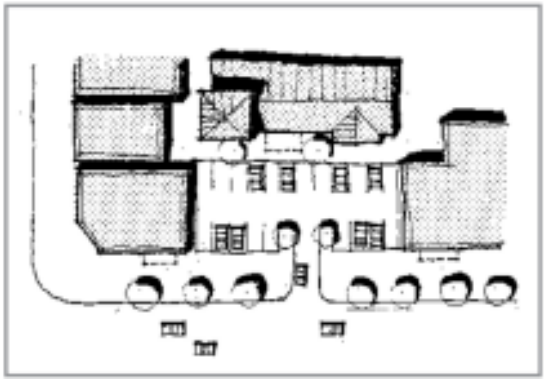
- Site planning and building siting
- Parking and vehicle location
- Pedestrian circulation
- Open space
- Landscaping
- Safety and security
- Screening
- Building and architectural design

Site Planning

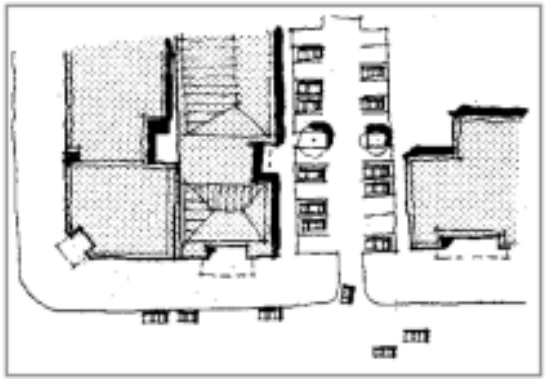
1. Units should be clustered to define public open spaces and activity areas.
    - Define, connect and activate pedestrian edges and public spaces and to locate convenient transit stops.
2. Parks and open space should be integrated into the overall design of the project.
    - Open space and recreational areas should be designed as an integral part of the project, not as an afterthought.
    - Open space areas should be planned as a community amenity.
    - Greater visual, pedestrian and bicycle connectivity use and access should be encouraged.
3. Buildings should be placed to create a street presence and enhance neighborhood character.
    - When adjacent to single family residences, side and rear setbacks shall allow for a sufficient planter area to buffer impacts and screen undesirable views.
4. Major intersections and corners should be treated as neighborhood/project entryways.
    - Unit/building configuration should maintain visual and physical connections.
    - Landscaping, public spaces and/or “gateway features” should be used to define the entryways into the project.
5. Entryway features should reflect the overall architectural identity or character of the development.
6. Natural topography should be integrated into site design to the extent feasible.

Parking and Vehicle Location

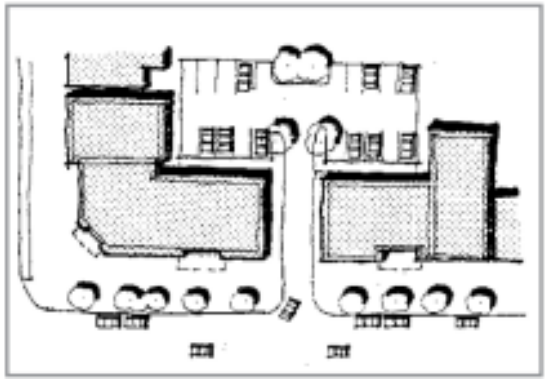
The visual prominence of vehicles shall be minimized by generally siting parking areas to the rear or side of the property rather than along street frontages and screening parking areas from views exterior to the site. Parking shall be designed to minimize potential pedestrian conflicts. Planning for safer and efficient movement of vehicles and pedestrians can result in an aesthetically appealing site with less impervious surface and increased open space. In addition, pedestrian ingress and egress provides opportunities for increased transit use and interaction with the community.



Discouraged



Acceptable



Preferred

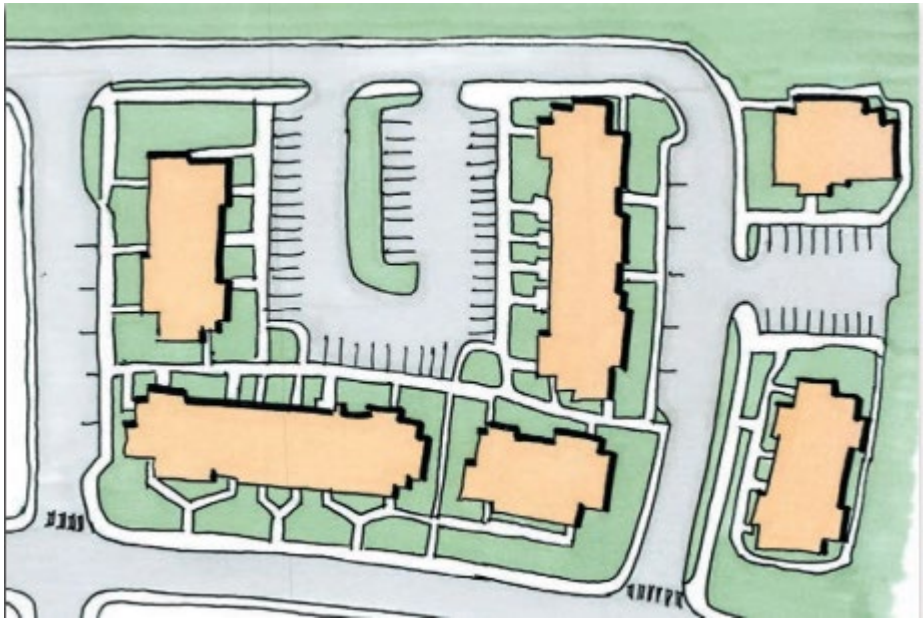
Dedicated parking for electric vehicle charging and for bicycles is strongly encouraged in multifamily developments.

- Surface parking lots should be located away from the adjacent public roadways, to the rear of (or beneath) buildings where possible. Parking areas should not be located adjacent to public roadways.
- Parking and vehicle access should be located away from street corners.
- Landscaping and walkways should be provided between buildings and paved parking areas. Parking directly against buildings is strongly discouraged.
- Parking areas visible from the street right-of-way should be screened from view with landscaping or other types of visual barriers.
- Parking areas should be buffered from adjacent residential properties. Landscaping should be provided adjacent to and within parking areas to screen vehicles from view.

- Multiple smaller parking lots are preferred over single, large lots to minimize the expansive appearance of parking fields.
- Storage for boats, recreational vehicles, and trailers, as well as storage sheds, should be fully enclosed when visible from the street or active adjacent uses.
- Guest and handicap parking should be evenly and conveniently distributed throughout the project.

Pedestrian Circulation

Multi-unit structures that are adjacent to a public street should encourage residents to actively engage with that street through a variety of design elements. In addition to improving the visual quality of the streetscape, design elements should allow residents to see and be seen from the street, enhancing neighborhood interaction and improving safety.



- Pedestrian planning should be given priority to vehicular access and provide easy pedestrian access to public bicycle/pedestrian ways, neighborhood centers and transit stops. Pedestrian routes should be as obvious, direct and simple as possible.
- Pedestrian access should not be limited to vehicle access locations. Provide separated pedestrian access points wherever possible. Sidewalks should not be combined with or be part of driveways.
- Pedestrian paths of travel should be separated from auto circulation routes. Where pedestrian circulation crosses vehicular routes, a change in grade, materials, textures or colors should be provided to emphasize the conflict point and improve its visibility and safety.
- All likely pedestrian routes should be considered in the design phase to eliminate “short cuts” which damage landscape areas.
- Pedestrian pathways should include amenities such as trellises, trees, or other landscaping. Lighting should be provided for safety and visual access.

Open Space

Residential projects should be designed to maximize opportunities for creating usable, attractive, and integrated open space. Open space areas should be linked among adjacent developments to allow shared open space opportunities, with a goal of providing contiguous regional open spaces and greenbelts. Usable, attractive and functional open space and landscaping provide for a pleasant and sustainable living environment, which ultimately contributes to property values.

- Multi-unit projects should be organized around usable common space. The site plan for each multi-unit project should address both active and passive open space uses. Open spaces consisting of playgrounds, pools, picnic areas, tot lots, community rooms, etc. should be provided as appropriate for the ages and number of residents. Unless otherwise identified as an “adults only” or “senior” project, recreation areas for children should be provided.
- Common areas should be accessible from all buildings and connected by a comprehensive, on-site pedestrian circulation system. Common open space recreation areas, plazas and courtyards should be located and landscaped to take advantage of solar orientation, provide protection from wind and afford shade.
- It is recommended that each dwelling unit have a usable outdoor space designed for the exclusive use of that dwelling unit at grade or in the form of a balcony for upper story dwellings. Private usable open space should be directly accessible from buildings and be of such size as to offer a reasonable outdoor living opportunity.

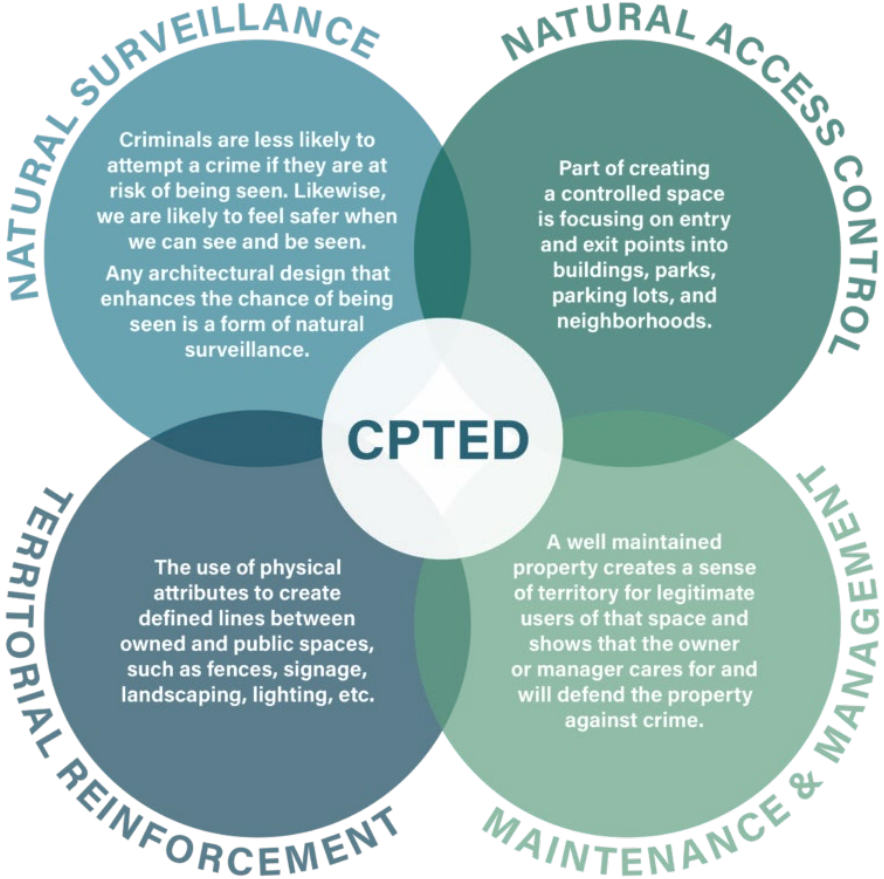
Landscaping

A variety of landscaping plants and materials can contribute to the visual interest of a neighborhood. Landscaping elements should be selected not only with consideration for the style of the multi-unit structures but should also complement the landscaping of other buildings on the block.

- Exterior site design and landscaping should provide functional recreational spaces and/or community site amenities.
- Encourage the use of creative landscape design to create visual interest and reduce conflicts between different land uses.
- Street-facing elevations should have landscaping adjacent to their foundation. Landscaped area may be along the edge of a porch instead of the foundation.
- Landscaping compatible with building design is encouraged. Trellises, arbors, cascading landscaping, vines and perimeter garden walls are encouraged.
- Landscaping should be in scale and compatible with the project and adjacent land uses.
- Existing trees and vegetation should be preserved and incorporated into the design wherever possible.

Safety and Security

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) should be incorporated into a design in order to enhance the quality of life and reduce both the incidence and fear of crime. Appropriate natural access control features that delineate where the general public should not enter without an invitation. For example, a low fence or hedge can indicate that people should not enter an open space except through a gate. Access control should not limit visibility of passive surveillance.



In site planning and design, the following should **be avoided**:

- Entrapment areas, where a person could become trapped with no exit route. Provide two means of egress from all outdoor spaces. Ensure entrapment conditions are avoided in the design of rooftop decks.
- Areas that are dark or not visible from a public space or right-of-way.
- Vegetation and fences that restrict visibility into occupiable open space, pathways and building entries.
- Buildings, vegetation or other objects (e.g., a storage enclosure) that block visibility into a space or provide places to hide.
- Screens or landscaping that block motorists' views of pedestrians crossing streets, driveways and vehicular circulation areas.

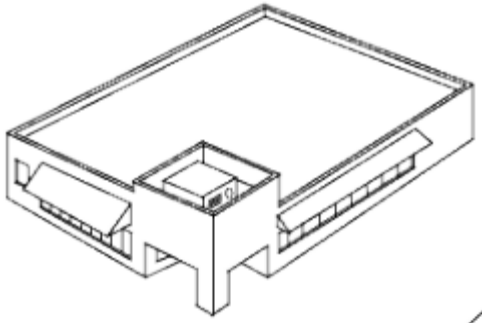
Screening

Services and storage, including garbage collection, recycling, fire and utilities should be planned. Trash enclosure location, dimensions and design shall comply with current City standards.

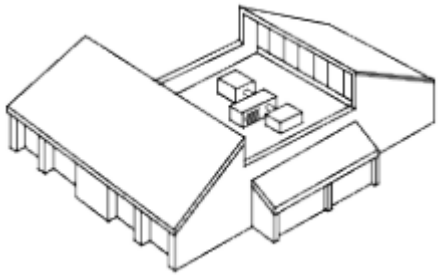
- All refuse containers shall be placed within screened storage areas or enclosures. In addition to the required screening, artwork such as paint schemes or coverings that help to blend the equipment into the background may also be utilized.
- Refuse containers should be conveniently located throughout the project, yet sufficiently buffered from project entries, main building entries and main pedestrian paths.
- Enclosures should be located to provide easy accessibility for users, adequate room for servicing by refuse trucks and should not hinder visibility for vehicle circulation.
- Enclosure materials and colors should be consistent with, and complimentary to, building materials and finishes.
- Landscaping should be provided on all non-accessible sides of trash enclosures.
- Ground-mounted mechanical equipment must be located and screened to minimize visual and noise impacts to pedestrians on streets and adjoining properties.
- Roof-mounted mechanical equipment must be located and screened so the equipment is not visible from the ground level of adjacent streets. Match the color of roof mounted equipment with the exposed color of the roof to minimize visual impacts when equipment is visible from higher elevations nearby.

Example of refuse collection screening.

Example of screening utility meters.

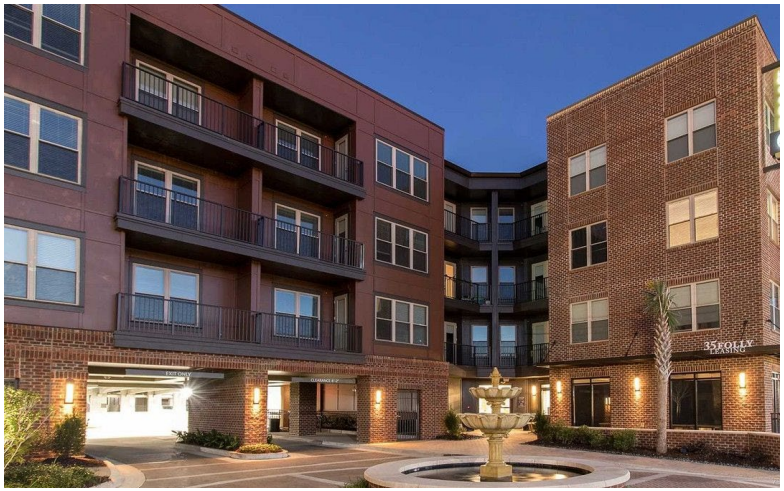


Example of screening of roof mounted equipment.



Building and Architectural Design

The architectural design of the building should intend to provide a welcoming entry to residential buildings, provide a visually interesting roofline, achieve architectural scale that is compatible with the size and visual massing of development envisioned within the zoning classification, add visual interest and sense of quality and craftsmanship to building facades, and enhance the pedestrian experience.



Recommended design elements to consider

The overall character of the development should be defined through the use of a consistent design concept and should incorporate the architectural embellishments commonly associated with that style.

Architectural design concepts of neighboring projects should be considered. The project may adopt a consistent or contrasting approach.

Architectural elements such as varied roof forms, articulation of the facade, breaks in the roof, walls with texture materials and ornamental details, and landscaping should be incorporated to add visual interest.

Architectural elements such as fenestrations and recessed planes should be incorporated into façade design. Large areas of flat, blank wall and lack of treatment are strongly discouraged.

Roof height, pitch, ridgelines and roof materials should be varied to create visual interest and avoid repetition. Architectural style should be considered when designing the roof plan.

Building entry zones should be clearly defined through the use, or combined use, of elements such as accent paving, accent planting, colored pots and bollards.

Architectural detail such as windows, awnings, trellises, balconies, patios, landscape planters and material changes at the street level should be used to soften the edge of the building and enhance pedestrian scale.

High quality and durable materials, such as stone, brick and cementitious siding, are encouraged.

Use of color should be consistent with the overall architectural style or theme of the project.

Rear and side elevations of units/buildings facing a major street should be given particular emphasis.

Side and back walls of units/ buildings on corners should include treatment on walls facing the street and should incorporate design features such as pop-outs, variation in building mass, and window placement.


Vary roof lines
Provide a variety of building materials for visual interest
Break-up façade, vertically and horizontally, with building materials and setbacks
Corner articulation
Create an area for pedestrian scale amenities including benches, street trees, and lighting
Include on street parking
Provide a sidewalk next to the building
Provide parking entrance along a secondary street with main parking lot to the rear of building

ARCHITECTURAL STYLE STANDARDS

The City of Goose Creek Comprehensive Plan calls for a cohesive and attractive built environment in harmony with both the natural and built environments. New residential construction is to reflect the high level of quality of existing planned communities.

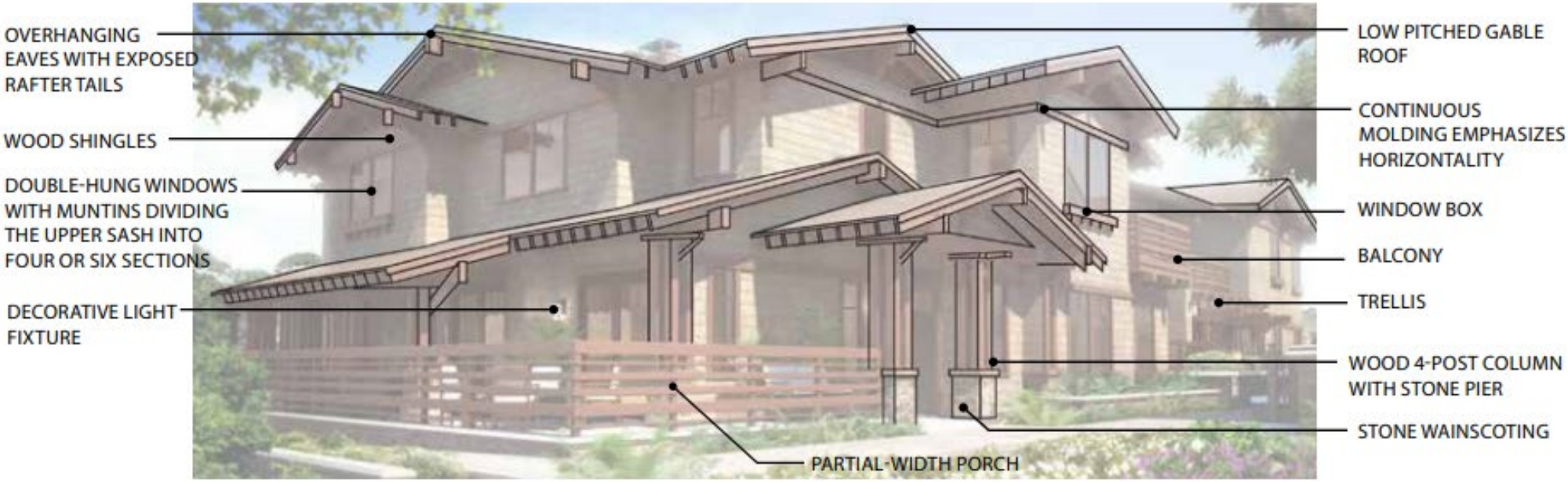
The articulation of cohesive architectural elements plays a key role in creating a positive community identity. A balance between authenticity of style and contemporary interpretations of historic elements is key to achieving an attractive multifamily community. The following section identifies three architectural styles which are commonly used in the region, as well as aspirations for the future built environment of Goose Creek. The preferred styles identified through the community engagement process are as follows:

- **Craftsman**
- **American Traditional**
- **Contemporary Farmhouse**
- **Modern**

It is the policy of Goose Creek to encourage a diversity of architectural expression. Alternative styles will be considered by the Architectural Review Board, but these styles are most commonly seen.

Craftsman

As indicated in the accompanying illustrative diagram, recognizable elements include the artful use of wood and natural materials, low-pitched gabled or hipped roofs, horizontal orientation and earth-toned colors. Common design elements also include exposed rafters and beams under eaves, decorative brackets and fasteners, full- or partial-width porches and large columns or piers. Though this style exhibits a horizontal emphasis, vertical architectural elements are often deployed to accentuate corners and entrances. Period Craftsman residences often featured exterior cladding of wood shingles or clapboard siding and details such as extended lintels and decorative lighting with geometric detailing.



American Traditional

The American Traditional style represents a blending of traditional American styles including Cottage, Cape Cod and Farmhouse. Simple and classic elements characterize the style including rectangular forms, wide front porches, decorative shutters, dormers, and wood siding. The style represents a traditional interpretation of the rural farmhouse. Color blocking is usually subtle with white or gray shades comprising the body of the home with light or dark shutters providing contrast. Classical detailing often includes decorative attic vents and simple columns.

Contemporary Farmhouse

An interpretation of rural residential forms and materials, the Contemporary Farmhouse style reflects the regional agricultural history as well as commercial structures in Goose Creek. Playful elements such as shed roofs, bright color blocking, and contemporary versions of farm structures such as barns and silos are typical. Roofs are medium to high-pitched, and simple detailing may include porches and wall-mounted gooseneck lights.

Modern

Modern is a contemporary style derived from utilitarian precedents, utilizing block forms, contrasting colors, and eclectic combinations of materials in modern compositions. This style projects a minimalist, clean aesthetic. Simple rectangular shapes and forms are combined within horizontal and vertical planes to create dynamic lines. Flat roofs reinforce the rectangular shapes and provide an opportunity for outdoor deck areas. Accents are simple and modest, usually taking the form of trellis elements.