

**Comprehensive Plan 2001**

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**COMMUNITY IMAGE GUIDELINES**

## INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, land use decisions have been based on a two-dimensional view: the *type* of land use and the *location* of that land use. However, in recent years, cities throughout Texas and the nation have begun concentrating on what may be considered the third dimension: that is, the *appearance* of that land use. Specifically, the spatial compatibility of land uses in a community through urban design guidelines. Urban design is much more than mere beautification of a city. It is a complex process of ordering a community's natural and man-made features to establish a distinct visual image and identity -- a "sense of place" -- for the community.

Urban design principles strive to improve the quality of life, or "livability", within a city by enhancing the man-made environment and by creating new opportunities for social interaction among residents. Good urban design practices also help to create a legible development pattern, which makes the community understandable to residents and visitors alike. They often deal with the sensory response of people to the community's physical environment: its visual appearance, its aesthetic quality, and its spatial character. In short, the careful application of urban design principles in city planning may help to protect the quality of the environment (both natural and man-made), and the corresponding quality of life enjoyed by residents and visitors as a community changes over time.

Several major aspects of the City's physical or urban design that can enhance the land uses, and therefore, the image that the public has of Lufkin, which can contribute to making Lufkin a better place to live, work and play have been identified as follows:

- ◆ Gateway or entryway treatments;
- ◆ Residential subdivision design standards;
- ◆ Nonresidential development standards; and,
- ◆ Other considerations, including landscaped medians and utility line burial and/or relocation.

The physical design goals referenced within the Goals and Objectives component of the Comprehensive Plan are based upon input gained during the Plan preparation process, and they identify the desire to improve the physical quality and appearance of Lufkin. By considering the design of the City as a whole and by considering the design of specific sites or locations, enhancement of the overall image of the City can be achieved. The urban design considerations described should act as a guide for achieving such community design goals and objectives. The following discussion and recommendations address the physical components responsible for making positive changes in the appearance of the community, and for improving the community's image, land use compatibility and overall quality of life.

## GATEWAY TREATMENTS

Gateways, also known as entryways or portals, can provide a strong sense of arrival to, as well as a sense of departure from, the community. They are the first thing visitors see when they come into a community and the last impression visitors have when leaving, and they can provide a strong indication of a community's image if they are well-designed and prominent. The design of gateways, or entry points, into Lufkin should be guided by several factors. One of the most obvious factors is the number of people using a particular entry point. Out of all the roads that lead into Lufkin, four of the roadway facilities entering the City, U.S. Highway 59, Kurth Drive, State Highway 94 (Frank Street), Atkinson Drive, and U.S. Highway 69, are most heavily used. ***It is recommended that the City concentrate efforts for gateway construction along these major thoroughfares<sup>9-1</sup>.***

It should be noted that the design of gateways can be simple or complex, but the key is to develop an entry that provides a sense of identity for the City of Lufkin that is distinct and unique. Landscaping, lighting, paving patterns, art/sculptural elements, and a various types of earth forms can be used to

<sup>9-1</sup> Within the Downtown Revitalization Plan, it was recommended that primary and secondary gateways be constructed at strategic point leading into Downtown; this recommendation should be considered separate from the recommendation for gateway locations made herein.



ILLUSTRATION 9-1:  
Example of Gateway Treatments

enhance a simple sign that announces the City. **Illustration 9-1** shows examples of different gateways that achieve the desired result of successfully announcing the community.

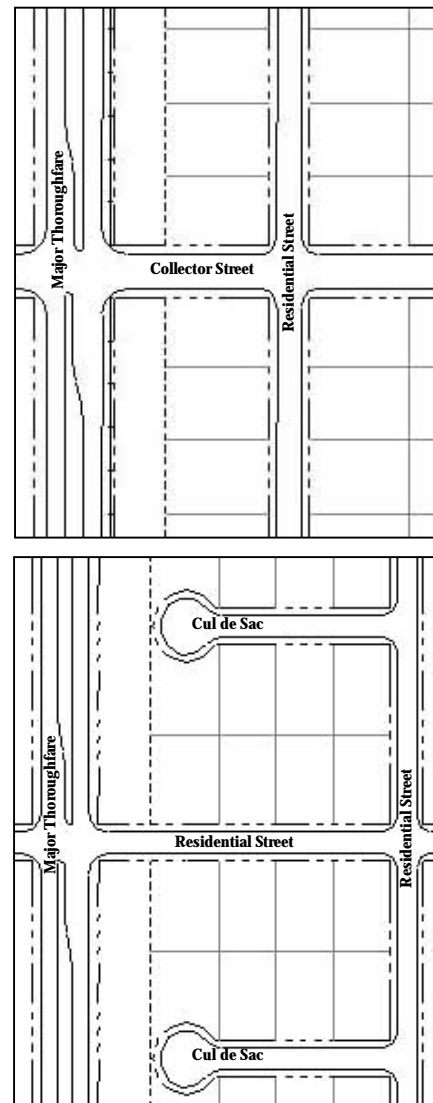
## RESIDENTIAL SUBDIVISION DESIGN STANDARDS

As discussed in detail in the *Housing Strategies* element, the design and character of residential neighborhoods is an important component of Lufkin's overall quality of life. As more property is developed into residential subdivisions, such design factors as entry features into subdivisions, screening,

lighting and landscaping, as well as the design layout of the subdivision itself, will be critical to the perception of Lufkin's residential neighborhoods. While the City should provide developers with options appropriate to the marketing of their subdivisions, the City may also wish to maintain some continuity between different residential subdivisions, especially those located along major thoroughfares. Older residential neighborhoods may need gradual improvements in such necessities as street maintenance and code enforcement, but newer residential subdivisions should include positive design elements that will add value, both aesthetic and monetary, to the homes constructed within them and to Lufkin as a whole.

A major consideration for the City in reviewing new residential developments should be the location of the proposed developments. As mentioned in the *Thoroughfare Plan* element, major roadways typically attract large volumes of traffic; therefore, it is not desirable to front residential lots directly onto these streets. Fronting residences on major thoroughfares will reduce efficiency of the thoroughfares due to the number of driveways, curb cuts and cross-streets, as well as the possibility of on-street parking in front of the houses.

Also, when a subdivision's layout produces lots fronting onto a major thoroughfare, there is ultimately pressure later on to convert these



**ILLUSTRATION 9-2:  
Lots Backing and Siding Onto a Major  
Thoroughfare**

residences into retail or commercial land uses. This can be seen in Lufkin today along some of the older roadways of the City, such as Frank Avenue and Raguet Street.

**Illustration 9-2** shows residential lot arrangements that are designed to protect not only the residences, but the capacity and function of the adjacent



**ILLUSTRATION 9-3:**  
Example of a Neighborhood With Homes Siding on a Major Thoroughfare

thoroughfares. One method of accomplishing a desirable thoroughfare/residential relationship is to design residential lots fronting onto a parallel residential street and backing onto the major thoroughfare. Another method, also shown by **Illustration 9-2**, is to use short cul-de-sac streets to create lots that do not have direct access onto a major thoroughfare. Cul-de-sac streets can be efficient methods in developing land, and they are very desirable for residents due to minimal traffic flows. The use of cul-de-sac streets alternated with through collector streets that intersect with a major thoroughfare tends to yield an efficient lot layout design, and this practice also maximizes thoroughfare capacity and efficiency. ***It is recommended that the City establish a policy that residential lots may not front or have direct access onto a major thoroughfare.*** Other methods of enhancing neighborhoods (e.g., use of street trees, sidewalks, etc.) are discussed within the *Housing Strategies* element.

## NONRESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

Specific site design items can help create attractive nonresidential land uses, and such items can usually be addressed by the private sector during the site development process. Often, much of what creates a better view from the road is simply better site design. The following are examples of site design elements or construction material usage that could enhance nonresidential development in Lufkin. These examples are intended for use along the major thoroughfares within Lufkin, specifically U.S. Highway 59, State Highway 94 (Frank Street), Atkinson Drive, and U.S. Highway 69. Further, these examples are written with the intent that they will be incorporated into the City's Zoning or Subdivision Regulations, as appropriate.

### Signage

#### *Purpose:*

- ◆ Ensure that signage identifies nonresidential uses without creating confusion, unsightliness or visual obscurity of adjacent properties.
- ◆ Provide a more unified, organized streetscape through more consistent signage.
- ◆ Reduce visual clutter and improve visual character along roadways.



**ILLUSTRATION 9-4:**  
Examples of Monument Signs

- ◆ Encourage shared signage to reduce the number of signs.

*Guidelines for Consideration:*

- ◆ Preserve and enhance the community's image by reducing the number of signs along major corridors and by strengthening limitations on signage along major travel corridors (e.g., height, size, spacing, number, etc.).
- ◆ Encourage monument-style signage<sup>9-2</sup>, except within certain designated areas (e.g., where sight

<sup>9-2</sup> A monument sign refers to a sign with a continuous base that is approximately the same width as the actual sign face, with the signage generally attached directly to the base.

visibility is limited, such as along U.S. Highway 69). The maximum allowable height for a monument sign, including the base, should be between six (6') and eight feet (8').

- ◆ Temporary signage should be limited, and permitting time periods should be enforced.
- ◆ Freestanding "pole signs" should still be permitted, but the City should provide incentives for monument signage.
- ◆ Additional billboard signs should be not be permitted.
- ◆ Through the design review process, ensure that signage is compatible with corresponding buildings and the general surroundings. Signage should not interfere with sight visibility when entering or leaving the site.

## Screening and Location of Outside Storage Areas

*Purpose:*

- ◆ Improve appearance of the community from public streets and neighboring properties.
- ◆ Limit the view of storage areas from public places.
- ◆ Prevent public access to storage areas.



**ILLUSTRATION 9-5:**  
**Example of an Unscreened Outside Storage Area Located at the Front of the Building**

*Guidelines for Consideration:*

- ◆ Outside storage areas should not face onto or be visible from a major thoroughfare, wherever possible.
- ◆ Outside storage areas should not be placed in front of buildings, unless screening devices are used.
- ◆ When outside storage areas are located within a front or side yard, they should be screened from adjacent properties and public rights-of-way with a screening device (e.g., either brick/masonry walls, earth berms, mature landscaping, etc.). A six-foot minimum height is recommended for screening devices. Chain link fencing should not be allowed for screening outside storage areas.
- ◆ Where possible, screening should match the predominant exterior finish material(s) used for the primary structure on the lot.
- ◆ Relocation of existing outside storage areas that are currently visible from a major thoroughfare should be encouraged, whenever possible.

## Screening of Refuse Containers

*Purpose:*

- ◆ Improve the appearance of the community from public streets and neighboring properties.
- ◆ Limit the view of storage areas from public places.
- ◆ Prevent public access to refuse containers (i.e., dumpsters and recycling containers).

*Guidelines for Consideration:*

- ◆ Refuse containers should not face onto or be visible from a major thoroughfare, wherever possible.



**ILLUSTRATION 9-6:**  
**Example of a Screened Refuse Container**

- ◆ Refuse containers should not be placed in front of buildings, unless screening devices are used.
- ◆ Refuse containers should not be placed within required parking spaces.
- ◆ Refuse containers should be located away from adjacent residential areas.
- ◆ When refuse containers are placed where they are visible from a major thoroughfare, they should be screened from adjacent properties and public rights-of-way with a screening device (e.g., either brick/masonry walls, earth berms, mature landscaping, etc.) A six-foot minimum height is recommended for screening devices. The screening should provide complete enclosure of the refuse container on three sides. A securable metal gate to control access to the receptacle should also be provided. Chain link fencing should not be allowed for screening refuse containers.
- ◆ Where possible, screening should match the predominant exterior finish material(s) used for the primary structure on the lot.
- ◆ Relocation of existing outside storage areas that are currently visible from a major thoroughfare should be encouraged, whenever possible.

## Materials for Nonresidential Structures

### *Purpose:*

- ◆ Ensure that nonresidential areas do not have a negative impact upon adjacent residential areas/uses.
- ◆ Ensure that the visual image projected along Lufkin's major roadways reflects on the City in a positive way.
- ◆ Ensure that nonresidential structures remain attractive and contribute to the positive visual image of the City for a long period of time.



**ILLUSTRATION 9-7:  
Example of Masonry and Metal Facades on  
Nonresidential Structures**

- ◆ Ensure the aesthetic value of non-residential land uses, especially those that are larger in scale.

*Guidelines for Consideration:*

- ◆ Require all future non-residential buildings (except industrial uses) constructed along any of the specified major thoroughfares within Lufkin to be 100 percent masonry on the front façade. If the side and/or rear facades are also visible from a major thoroughfare, they must also be 100 percent masonry<sup>9-3</sup>.
- ◆ The use of any material other than masonry for the facades of non-residential buildings along these thoroughfares may be allowed through a Conditional Use Permit.



**ILLUSTRATION 9-8:**  
**Example of a Positive Relationship Between a Nonresidential Use and a Roadway Using Wide Setbacks, Berming and Screening**

- ◆ Ensure compatibility between residential and nonresidential uses.

*Guidelines for Consideration:*

- ◆ Require additional setbacks and landscape treatments when commercial or industrial uses are adjacent to residential areas.
- ◆ Require architectural elevations and develop standards for quality treatment of all sides of nonresidential buildings that are adjacent to residential areas.
- ◆ Require screening walls and landscaping, if necessary.

## Nonresidential Buffers and Screening

*Purpose:*

- ◆ Ensure that nonresidential areas do not have a negative impact upon adjacent residential areas/uses.

<sup>9-3</sup> It should be noted that the building itself can be constructed of metal with a veneer of masonry on applicable facades.

## Landscaping

The City currently has requirements related to landscaping of nonresidential development (excluding the downtown area). The standards for the amount of landscaping required is related to the size of the building site of the nonresidential use as follows:

- ◆ Up to 40,000 square feet - 5% of the area not covered by a building or structure.
- ◆ 40,001 to 200,000 square feet - 7.5% of the area not covered by a building or structure.
- ◆ Over 200,000 square feet - 10% of the area not covered by a building or structure.



**ILLUSTRATION 9-9:**  
Example of Landscaping of a Nonresidential Land Use

These standards are adequate in terms of the amount of landscaping. However, the City should establish one standard percentage for all nonresidential lot sizes, and instead focus on the *location* of the landscaping. For enhancing the visual quality of nonresidential uses, landscaping is most important at the front of the building. Therefore, *it is recommended that the City establish*

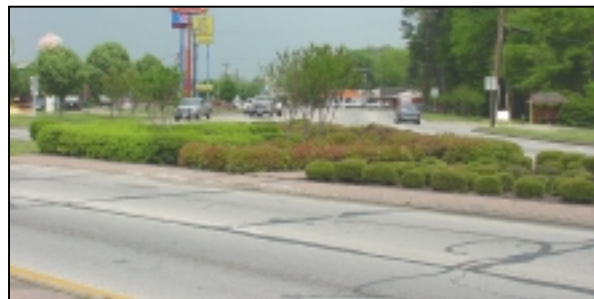
*the following standard: 15% of the front yard area of all nonresidential uses should be landscaped.*

In addition, for lots between 30,001 and 40,000 square feet, only six tree credits are required. For lots over 40,000 square feet, only 3 tree credits per 20,000 square feet (almost half an acre) are required. *It is recommended that the City's current tree requirements be slightly increased.*

## OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

### Landscaped Medians

Landscaped medians not only positively contribute to the visual appearance of a community, but also increase the safety of local thoroughfares by limiting the number of left turns allowed (thereby helping traffic flow) and protect residential areas by limiting access. The City has recently begun a program of constructing medians and incorporating landscaping materials within them. This has already begun to make a positive visual difference along the improved



**ILLUSTRATION 9-10:**  
Example of a Landscaped Median

roadways, as **Illustration 9-10** shows. *It is recommended that the City continue to incorporate medians and landscaping within targeted thoroughfares, wherever possible. It is further recommended that whenever significant new roadways (e.g., the extension of Whitehouse Drive to the southeast) are constructed, landscaped medians should be incorporated as part of the initial construction.* It should be noted that Kurth Drive has a median wherein the City could incorporate landscaping elements; this should be one of the priority roadways, especially because this would further enhance revitalization efforts within the Kurth Drive area (refer to the *Future Land Use Plan* for specific recommendations regarding Kurth Drive).



**ILLUSTRATION 9-11:**  
Example of a Median With Trees and Pervious Cover

When roadways with state designations are targeted for improvement (i.e., widening), *the Texas Department of Transportation should be lobbied to help improve the visual quality of these state roadways.* Funding for landscaping can often be provided as a

percentage of the overall cost of the roadway improvement. **Illustration 9-12** shows a Texas highway with landscaping elements and a narrow landscaped median.



**ILLUSTRATION 9-12:**  
Example of a Landscaped Texas Highway

## Underground Utility Lines

Within the Downtown Revitalization Plan, burying and/or relocating utility lines within strategic areas of Downtown Lufkin was discussed. Although this can be an expensive proposition, the City has the opportunity to bury or relocate Downtown utility lines (to the back of existing buildings) in conjunction with the TEA-21 grant improvements.

Utility lines are a basic necessity of urban life. However, the City can alleviate some of the negative visual impact they may have by targeting specific major roadways and concentrating burial or relocation efforts along them. *It is recommended that the City prioritize heavily used thoroughfares and allocate funds annually to bury/relocate lines along*

*them* This could be done for a specific length of the roadway where visual quality is most significant, for example along State Highway 94 as it enters the City. In addition, as roadways throughout the City are improved, burial or relocation could be part of the overall improvement cost.

## IN SUMMARY

The visual image of a community can greatly impact the way in which a community is perceived by both visitors and citizens. Much of the discussion within this section pertains to Lufkin's major transportation corridors; these are especially significant to how the City is viewed by people traveling to and through Lufkin. The recommendations contained within this section, which are outlined in **Table 9-1**, are intended to help Lufkin maintain and enhance its overall character so that the City will continue to be recognized as a community of quality in the future.

**Table 9-1:  
SPECIFIC COMMUNITY IMAGE RECOMMENDATIONS**

<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>Target Time Period</b>
1.) It is recommended that the City concentrate efforts for gateway construction along major thoroughfares such as U.S. Highway 59, Kurth Drive, State Highway 94 (Frank Street), State Highway 103 (Atkinson Drive), and U.S. Highway 69. It is also recommended that the City consider Kurth Drive as one of the first corridors to improve.	On-Going/Annual
2.) It is recommended that the City establish a policy that residential lots may not front or have direct access onto a major thoroughfare.	2002 (Immediate)
3.) The City's regulations pertaining to nonresidential development requirements along major thoroughfares (e.g., U.S. Highway 59, State Highway 94, State Highway 103, and U.S. Highway 69) should be reviewed, and recommendations contained herein should be incorporated where applicable, specifically regarding landscaping, signage, screening (specifically of open storage and refuse containers), nonresidential building materials, and buffering techniques.	2002 (Immediate)
4.) It is recommended that the City establish the following standard for landscaping: 15% of the front yard area of all nonresidential uses should be landscaped.	2002 (Immediate)
5.) It is recommended that the City's current tree requirements be slightly increased.	2002 (Immediate)
6.) It is recommended that the City continue to incorporate medians and landscaping within targeted existing thoroughfares, wherever possible.	When Applicable
7.) It is recommended that whenever new roadways are constructed, landscaped medians should be incorporated as part of the initial construction.	When Applicable
8.) The Texas Department of Transportation should be lobbied by the City to help improve the visual quality of state roadways whenever they are improved.	When Applicable
9.) It is recommended that the City prioritize heavily used thoroughfares and allocate funds annually to bury/relocate utility lines along them.	On-Going/Long-Range