Chapter 6

Community Facilities

PURPOSE

Community facilities include educational, cultural, protective, governmental and other uses strongly vested with public or social importance. Community facilities should set an example for sensitive site development practices and exceptional architecture. The purpose of design standards and guidelines contained within this section is to ensure that community facilities are compatible and contribute to the character of the street, neighborhood and larger community. These facilities should be designed to serve as key focal points within neighborhoods and communities.

In addition to buildings, this chapter also includes provisions for certain community utility infrastructure facilities, such as wireless facilities, electrical substations, phone switching stations and large equipment boxes. These types of facilities are critical to the community and the location may not always be flexible. Therefore, they should be designed to fit in within the context of their surroundings or screened from view when possible.

ORGANIZATION

The standards and guidelines provided in this chapter are divided into two sections: Site Design; and Architecture. The Site and Architecture sections are organized into subcategories (i.e. Site > Circulation). Each subcategory has one or more related design objectives. This design objective states what the community wants to achieve. Illustrations and photos provide visual examples of projects with the desired elements. Supporting the design objective is a series of design standards and design guidelines.

APPLICABILITY AND USE TYPES

The design objectives and standards within this chapter apply to community facilities at two different scales: local focus and regional focus, described in more detail on the following pages. The guidelines provided in this chapter are supplemental to those provided in Chapter 2, Community Design – guideline in both chapters apply and where conflicts exist provisions in this chapter apply.

Certain governmental entities such as federal and state governments and school districts cannot be required to comply with these design guidelines. However, City staff will work with these entities to encourage project design consistent with the provisions herein.

LOCAL FOCUS COMMUNITY FACILITY

Community Facilities with a local focus will generally serve clients or patrons within a service area of less than a mile - many clients or patrons of the facility will be within walking distance to the facility from their homes and the facility could serve one or two neighborhoods. Examples could include a day care center, a small fire station, a recreation building (within a park), a small park, elementary schools, middle schools, branch libraries, houses of worship (neighborhood scale), and community centers. Neighborhood park facilities would also be included in this category (when subject to design review). These facilities provide essential services for the neighborhoods in which they are located. While some of these facilities may serve an area larger than the surrounding community, it is generally agreed that they exist primarily to enrich the residential community.

Community center provides a central gathering place of neighborhood residents (courtesy LPA).

This neighborhood library occupies a renovated historic building to provide a neighborhood resource (Portland, Oregon).

REGIONAL FOCUS COMMUNITY FACILITY

Community Facilities with a regional focus will generally serve clients or patrons within a service area of several square miles, a city or a larger region. Uses in this category could include colleges, central libraries, city hall, high schools, courthouse, museums, hospitals, large churches, regional park facilities and cemeteries.

The Fairview City Hall provides a community facility that is integrated into the surrounding neighborhood's pedestrian system, while being accessible to the larger community (Fairview, Oregon).

This sports complex provides for a variety of facilities for sports and other group activities, such as an outdoor amphitheater (Temecula, California, Courtesy LPA).

This high school was built in a mixed use neighborhood adjacent to a light rail station, shopping center and housing (Gresham, Oregon).

JOINT USE FACILITIES

Community facilities should be fully integrated into the community and neighborhood fabric. Towards this end, mixed-use sites and joint-use facilities are encouraged. Examples include the following:

- Community facility adjacent to a park. The photo, to the right depicts a public library adjacent to a community park. This is a highly compatible arrangement, with the library creating frequent activity around the library, allowing the park to be easily monitored for safety and creating a pleasant environment for reading. A variety of other community facilities would be appropriate within or adjacent to a park, for example community centers or schools. If designed in a compatible manner, retail and residential uses adjacent to a park are also appropriate, creating active, safe environment.

- Library combined with residential and retail. The photo, to the right depicts an innovative project in Portland, Oregon that combines a library, apartments and a coffee shop within the same building. This combination represents an efficient use of land that contributes to the urban setting and provides a compatible mixture of land uses.

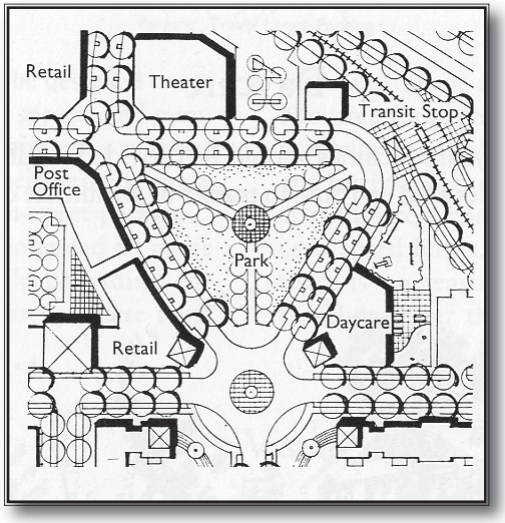
- Police station included within an apartment complex. The photo, to the right illustrates a police station adjacent to light-rail station and housed within an apartment complex adjacent to other retail uses. This provides a convenient and friendly location for neighborhood residents to interact with police and helps the police department with outreach activities.

SITE DESIGN

Intent – Provide an inviting, accessible, functional and safe environment where the needs of the visiting public are emphasized. Community facilities primary use is to accommodate public services and provide gathering places. Development should be visually appealing from the street and adjacent residential neighborhoods. All forms of transportation, including pedestrian, bicycle, transit and vehicular modes should be accommodated. A clear separation of vehicular and pedestrian areas should be provided. Community facilities should be comfortable and safe in all seasons and hours of the day. Public buildings should interface with plazas, parks and other open space areas.

The Site Design section features the following categories:

- Circulation
- Public Spaces/Pedestrian Amenities
- Parking
- Landscaping
- Minimizing Negative Visual Impacts of Community Infrastructure


Retail
Theater
Transit Stop
Post Office
Park
Daycare
Retail

SITE DESIGN > CIRCULATION

DESIGN OBJECTIVE

Develop a circulation system that provide full public access to community facilities by providing a safe and functional vehicular environment and, most importantly, providing a safe environment for those walking, using bicycles, and transit.

DESCRIPTION

To ensure a safe and active streetscape, site plans should ensure that the pedestrian is the priority. Community facilities need to be accessible to a wide spectrum of the public, many who do not have access to automobiles.

Do This: *Special paving identifies shared pedestrian vehicle area for this community center building (Sacramento, California).*

Don't Do This: *Although clearly delineated this pathway winds through a large parking lot with no physical protection provided to pedestrians from vehicular traffic such as a raised walkway, landscaping, special paving or other techniques (Citrus Heights, California).*

Where regional bicycle facilities exist (e.g. recreational trails or bike lanes along public streets), they should be connected to and continued through the project site and easily accessible.

A clearly defined and attractive pedestrian path is provided to the front door of this community building. (Temecula, California)

DESIGN GUIDELINES

1. Create safe and comfortable environments for pedestrian and bicyclists to access community facilities by the following measures:
   - Identify pedestrian and bicycle routes with grade-separated pathways, use of special pavers, scored surfaces, planter strips and/or bollards;
   - Provide additional sidewalk width at all building entries;
   - Use an entry plaza at primary entrances, which include benches, landscaping, bicycle parking and shade;
   - Fully integrate ADA facilities into site design; and
   - Integrate bicycle parking into the design of the project to ensure high visibility.

Bicycle parking is provided adjacent to this school in a visible and secure location. (Gresham, Oregon)

An entry plaza is provided for this community building defined with architectural elements, a raised paved area and bollards. (Courtesy LPA)

2. Increase convenience of transit users, paying particular attention to ADA accessibility, through the following measures:
   - Consider bringing public transit into project sites for convenient drop-off of clients/patrons;
   - Provide easy access from transit stops to the front door of buildings;
   - Provide a separate loading area for facilities that have a high number of transit users (e.g. schools). Conflicts with pedestrians arriving to facility should be minimized; and
   - Consider lighted transit stops and shelters at community facilities for safety.

Mills Station in Rancho Cordova, California provides a pleasant plaza adjacent to the transit stop.

In San Luis Obispo, California, this transit shelter connects to the public sidewalk system and the sidewalk system of the adjacent property.

This urban example in Portland, Oregon brings transit into the middle of two university buildings.

SITE DESIGN > PUBLIC SPACES / PEDESTRIAN AMENITIES

DESIGN OBJECTIVE

Create safe, pleasant and active streets and public spaces that are scaled to the type of community facility.

DESCRIPTION

Pedestrian areas should be useable, provide a visual amenity, and be an integral part of the community facility. Where possible, community facilities should be integrated into park sites. Public courts, plazas and squares are encouraged. Pedestrians should be protected from the elements, to encourage use of community facilities during inclement weather. Street furniture, such as benches, lamps and landscape planters should be provided. The scale and characteristics of public space should be appropriate to the site, buildings and type of community facility.

Do This: *Public square provided with seating and lawn area. (Mission Viejo, California, Courtesy LPA)*

Don't Do This: *Community building at a park with minimal landscaping; unidentified pedestrian access; and unwelcoming seating area. (Fair Oaks, California)*

DESIGN GUIDELINES

1. Create safe, attractive and functional gathering places, by providing:
   - Courtyards, squares, forecourts and plazas with seating areas adjacent to active adjacent ground-floor uses;
   - Use weather protection above or along sidewalks as building elements appropriate to the design of the structure (awnings, building projections, porches, etc.) or as free-standing site elements; and/or
   - Public art and public art that incorporates seating (e.g. fountain).

Public art provided at transit station. (Rancho Cordova, California)

Covered pathway adjacent to public open space area. (Citrus Heights, California)

Seating and tables provided near community building. (Mission Viejo, California, Courtesy LPA)

SITE DESIGN > PARKING

DESIGN OBJECTIVE

Design parking areas to respect the pedestrian user, particularly where large commercial or passenger vehicles need to be accommodated.

DESCRIPTION

Parking areas for community facilities are usually large enough to accommodate cars, trucks and buses, which can make them insensitive to the human scale. Noise, light, heat and exhaust odors are commonly associate with parking. These effects can be mitigated by good design.

Do This: *A portion of the parking area can double as a plaza between two community facilities on this site plan. (Mission Viejo, California, Courtesy LPA)*

Don't Do This: *Parking area lacks landscaping. (Citrus Heights, California)*

DESIGN GUIDELINES

1. Design parking lots of community facilities with the following characteristics:
   - Avoid and/or mitigate large expanses of parking, especially surface parking lots;
   - Place parking to the side or behind buildings to allow direct access to the building from the public sidewalk;
   - Provide safe/comfortable routes through parking areas through the use of landscaping, special pavers and other design elements; and
   - Provide continuous landscaped areas to improve the visual and environmental quality.

2. Provide parking areas for large vehicles (e.g. buses) that do not create hazardous or unpleasant conditions for pedestrians, as follows:
   - Consider providing transit/bus drop-off areas that are separate from the primary building entrances, but are conveniently located; and
   - Provide parking for larger vehicles behind building or otherwise locate to reduce conflicts with the pedestrian environment.

Well designed landscaped areas within this parking lot (Elk Grove, California).

Parking placed to the side of this community building to provide public entrance at the sidewalk (Forest Grove, Oregon).

SITE DESIGN > LANDSCAPING

DESIGN OBJECTIVE

Use landscaping to enhance character and visual quality of community facilities.

DESCRIPTION

Landscaping should be used to enhance the pedestrian experience, complement building architecture, minimize environmental impacts of development and unify elements on the site. A mix of landscaping treatments and techniques can provide appropriate separation between adjacent properties, screen objectionable views, provide visual relief, and create weather protection.

Do This: *Library facility built within existing grove of trees (Sacramento County, California).*

Don't Do This: *Church parking lot provide very little landscaping and no define d path between the public sidewalk and the church. (Fair Oaks, California)*

DESIGN GUIDELINES

1. Community Facilities should set an example of best development practices and consider innovative solutions to minimizing impervious surfaces, such as:
   - Retaining existing significant trees on development sites;
   - Planting trees that will grow to providing extensive tree canopy to intercept rain-water;
   - Use of bioswales or other on-site water retention facilities in parking lots;
   - Use of permeable paving surfaces to reduce parking lot water run-off;
   - Use landscaped areas for water quality -improvement and retention.

2. Use landscaping to enhance the pedestrian experience:
   - Soften large building walls and screen objectionable views with landscaping;
   - Provide shade with trees and structural elements;
   - Use combination of landscape, paving elements, furniture, lighting and other elements to create dynamic visually interesting outdoor spaces.

AVOID

- Removing significant trees.
- Unsightly storm-water facilities (concrete basins, no landscaping, chain-link fences, etc.)

Community buildings within a park setting with a pervious roadway surface (Courtesy LPA).

Landscaping element used as part of building architecture and pervious pavement used in parking area (Mission Viejo, California, Courtesy LPA).

Landscaped area is framed by this community building (Brea, California, Courtesy LPA).

SITE DESIGN > MINIMIZING NEGATIVE VISUAL IMPACTS OF COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

DESIGN OBJECTIVE

Integrate design of community facility infrastructure into adjacent neighborhoods and screen equipment from view.

DESCRIPTION

The community needs to accommodate such uses as cell towers, electrical substations, phone switching stations and similar types of community facilities. The visual and acoustic impacts of community facilities should be minimized.

Do This: *Equipment placed within a structure scaled to the neighborhood. (Rancho Cordova, California).*

Don't Do This: *Equipment exposed to view from roadway and surrounded by razor wire. (Rancho Cordova, California)*

DESIGN GUIDELINES

1. The negative visual aspects of community facility infrastructure should be minimized, as follows:
   - Use landscaping, fences or decorative walls can help screen objectionable views and sounds from adjacent property owners and the general public;
   - Avoid the use of chain-link and razor wire;
   - Solid walls or fencing, compatibly designed structures and landscaping are preferred enclosures.

This entry sign is used to block view of metal utility box from street. (Rancho Cordova, California)

2. When possible, facilities should be housed in buildings that blend with surrounding architecture (For example, in a residential neighborhood smaller equipment could blend into landscaping and larger equipment could be placed inside buildings which look like small homes).

3. The visual impact of cellular and other towers should be minimized by:
   - Integrating the antenna equipment into existing architectural elements where possible (i.e. church steeples, water towers, tower elements of buildings, chimneys, building roofs, etc.);
   - Camouflage towers with techniques such as paint color and tower design (i.e. design to look like a flagpole, tree, or other technique);
   - Screen base equipment with landscaping and/or disguise them as buildings that are architecturally compatible with surrounding development.

ARCHITECTURE

Intent – Promote architectural design that enhances the character of Rancho Cordova. Community facilities have a unique responsibility to be visually consistent with the surrounding neighborhoods and to create a pleasant built environment.

- Style and Design Details


DAVIS

ARCHITECTURE > STYLE AND DESIGN DETAILS > ENTRIES

DESIGN OBJECTIVE

Entryways should be clearly visible and recognizable from the street and appear open and inviting to the pedestrian.

DESCRIPTION

The primary entry into buildings should be clearly recognized from the street. Additional architectural details such as sidelights or *transoms* surrounding doorways are encouraged. Transparency between the interior of community facilities and the sidewalk is encouraged to create visibility from the street.

Do This: *The entry to police station is easily accessible from sidewalk and has friendly architecture. (Harrington Park, New Jersey)*

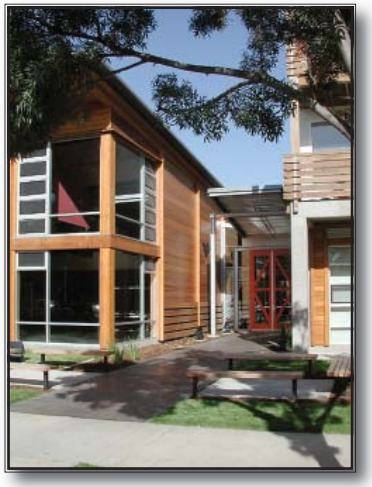
Don't Do This: *Pubic entry to this fire station is difficult to find. (Sacramento, California)*

DESIGN GUIDELINES

1. Consider the following design features to articulate individual and common entryways:
   - Differentiated roof, awning, or portico;
   - Project or recess entries from their surrounding building façades;
   - Provide detailed doors and doorways with ornate hardware, transoms, sidelights window surrounds;
   - Use windows within entry doorways equivalent in size to 50 percent of door surface area;
   - Separate entries from the street by semi-private transition areas such as porches, terraces, stoops or canopy-covered doorways raised above street grade.

Entry with significant portico extending to sidewalk. (Helena, Arizona)

Entry emphasized with building architecture and lighting. (courtesy LPA)



This community center provides and entry courtyard accessible from the adjacent public sidewalk. (San Jose, California)