

at the time of application for a land disturbance permit. Lighting plans must be submitted prior to the issuance of a building permit. See Chapter 7 and Chapter 18 of this Code for land disturbance and building permit procedures. All plans shall address and conform to all provisions set forth under Chapter 21, Article XI. Any numerical nonconformance to the standards contained within this Article shall require the submittal of a variance application in accordance with section 8-6.4 of this Code. Should a design not meet all of the non-numerical standards contained within this Article, then the proposed design must be submitted, for public hearing, to the Forsyth County Board of Commissioners for review and approval as an Alternate Design. In considering whether to approve such Alternate Design, the Board of Commissioners shall consider the Special Considerations set forth in section 8-5.5(F)(2)(b) of this Code.

21-11.5 **Site Design Standards.**

- (A) Any new development, building expansion, expansion of outdoor storage, outdoor display, or parking areas will trigger conformance of the entire property to current site design standards, including but not limited to landscape strips, parking islands, and any applicable screening.
- (B) Parking for commercial establishments shall be distributed along not less than two sides of the building exterior. Parking that fronts the main building entrance(s) shall have no more than sixty (60%) percent of the total number of parking spaces or 300 parking spaces, whichever is less.
- (C) New commercial developments and substantial improvements to existing commercial developments shall provide for pedestrian and automobile access connections between adjacent properties when feasible.
- (D) Sidewalks shall connect the rights-of-way with all non-residential main building entrance(s). Sidewalks shall be no less than five (5) feet in width. Sidewalks may be permitted within required landscape strips on a case-by-case basis upon thorough review of the landscape plan in order to still meet the intent of this Code and protect the public health, safety, and welfare.
- (E) Where pedestrian crossings cross parking areas and drives, decorative paving material (i.e., pavers, stamped or textured concrete, or color concrete) shall be used to delineate the pedestrian crossing.
- (F) Speed bumps are prohibited within commercial developments. Speed tables are permitted.
- (G) Retaining walls shall be faced with stone and brick when visible from the right-of-way.
- (H) **Landscaping.** The intent of this section is to require the integration of all landscape improvements with the overall project requirements. All plant materials shall be used to enhance the existing area, particularly as viewed from an adjacent right-of-way, and to mitigate development impacts. Landscape plans shall be submitted to the department for design review. The following is in addition to Ordinance No. 98 (Tree Protection and Replacement Ordinance) and shall be implemented:
 - (1) Plant materials shall be used as accent elements at roadside entryways to provide a definite sense of arrival to commercial properties. Plant materials shall consist of ground cover, herbaceous ornamentals, shrubs, understory, and/or overstory trees adjacent to the establishment's monument sign(s). These materials shall be clustered while maintaining adequate sight distance to and from the entryway. Entryway plantings shall be compatible with adjacent landscape areas in species selection and provide a cohesive transition between landscape plantings. All landscape areas shall incorporate a minimum of forty (40%) percent evergreen trees and shrubs within each area.
 - (2) All landscape areas shall incorporate a minimum of forty (40%) percent evergreen trees and shrubs within each area. All landscape areas shall also incorporate a minimum of twenty-five (25%) percent native plant material. Such plant material must be indigenous to the Southeastern U. S. and be approved by the County arborist.
 - (3) A minimum 25 foot wide landscape strip shall be provided along the proposed future rights-of-way and reservation lines of SR 20/Buford Highway from GA Highway 400, [extending west to the county line bordering Cherokee County, and east](#) to Twin Branches Road. A minimum 35 foot wide landscape strip shall be provided along the proposed future rights-of-way of Buford Highway from Twin Branches Road to the Chattahoochee River. In addition, fencing consistent with the composition and design criteria set forth below shall be installed within the landscape strip immediately adjacent to the proposed future rights-of-way of SR 20/Buford Highway.
 - (a) For all properties, fencing shall be four board style black fences consisting of a minimum one (1) inch thick, four (4) inch wide fence board affixed to four (4) inch posts spaced a maximum of ten (10) feet apart. The board fences shall be a minimum of four (4) feet and a maximum of six (6) feet in height. Natural stone or brick masonry columns may be used in the fence design. Fences shall be constructed using high quality materials in accordance with section 21-11.5(I) to ensure low repair and maintenance cost.

- (b) Individual lots of record within residential or agricultural districts are exempt from this requirement.
- (4) All landscape strips are required to contain a combination of vegetative ground cover, herbaceous ornamentals, and low to mid-level shrubs in addition to large canopy trees. Shrubs shall be a minimum of two (2) feet high every five (5) feet on center at time of planting. A minimum of three (3) canopy trees per fifty (50) linear feet is required. Each tree shall have a minimum two (2) inch caliper and be at least eight (8) feet high at time of installation. Tree and shrub placement may be grouped and staggered rather than following a regulated line along the road frontage. Trees shall count towards the tree density requirements as outlined in Ordinance 98 (Tree Protection and Replacement Ordinance).
- (5) For all lot corners abutting right-of-way on two sides, extending a minimum of fifty (50) linear feet from the corner point on each side paralleling the rights-of-way, a minimum of four (4) enhanced rows of plant material to include a combination of shrubs and perennials in addition to groundcover other than turf shall be required. Spacing of plant material shall be adequate to provide a dense, full appearance. These understory plantings shall be integrated with the canopy tree requirements.
- (6) If the developer opts to provide an additional five (5) feet to the landscape strip to satisfy Section 17-5.7(C) of this Code, then the total width of the front landscape strip shall be thirty (30) feet or forty (40) feet subject to Subsection (D)(3), above. A minimum of 10 feet of the required landscape strip, as applicable, shall be located behind utility easements so plant material will not be disturbed after installment.
- (7) Ground mounted equipment, such as power transformers and light poles, are prohibited within required landscape parking islands.
- (8) **Landscape Installation and Maintenance.** Certification by a registered landscape architect verifying that landscaping meets the standards of this code and the approved plans must be submitted. In addition, the contractor responsible for landscape installation must certify that all plant material has been installed per the approved plans. These certifications must be submitted prior to the approval of the as-built and/or final plat. The Property Owner shall be responsible for maintenance of required landscaping.
- (9) All dead and damaged plant material within landscaped areas must be replaced with a similar species within one month. If weather conditions are not appropriate for replanting, the property owner may postpone replacement for up to six (6) months. Replacement trees and shrubs shall be of similar size to the original installation size of the trees or shrubs being replaced.
- (10) **Performance Security.** When planting stock availability is low or weather conditions are not appropriate for planting new trees, shrubs, and/or perennials, the property owner may postpone planting for up to six (6) months, provided that performance security is posted with Forsyth County in accordance with the conform to the following specifications where applicable:
- (a) Security shall be submitted to the department with appropriate documentation showing stock availability and weather conditions necessitating the postponement of planting.
- (b) Security shall be in an amount equal to one hundred and ten (110%) percent of the cost of materials, installation, and guarantee, as demonstrated by a signed contract between the owner and a landscape contractor.
- (11) Notwithstanding any other provision in the UDC, the landscape strip requirements in the Buford Highway Overlay District, as applied to property located west of GA 400, may be administratively varied up to a twenty-five percent (25%) reduction, based upon the following:
- (a) Applicant may submit a variance application to the department for administrative approval by the director;
- (b) An administrative variance shall be issued if the following conditions are satisfied:
1. The spirit and intent of the Overlay is otherwise achieved by the reduced landscape strip;
 2. That for every linear foot of requested variance, the applicant shall be required to contribute landscaping recompense funds for expenditure on rights-of-way beautification within the Buford Highway Overlay District equivalent to four times the value of the portion of the landscape strip that is eliminated by the administrative variance. The required contribution shall be calculated multiplying the ratio of the perpendicular distance of the variance over the total required landscape strip depth times either \$62.50 (for a 25' required landscape strip) or \$87.50 (for a required 35' landscape strip) and further multiplied by the linear feet of landscape strip to which the administrative variance is applied. As a representative

example, the calculation for landscaping recompense shall be based upon the following model. [The required 25' landscape strip per the Overlay is estimated to cost \$62.50 per linear foot and the 35' landscape strip per the Overlay is estimated to cost \$87.50 per linear foot. If an applicant has 100 feet of frontage, then it is estimated that landscaping for the 25' landscape strip will cost \$6,250 to install (\$62.50 x 100). If an applicant seeks a six foot and three inch variance (6'3") variance along the entire frontage, this would equate to \$15.60 in landscaping savings (\$62.50 x .25). Applying the four times (4x) multiplier to \$15.60 yields a \$62.50 per linear foot recompense contribution for the frontage, thereby requiring the applicant to recompense the County \$6,250 (\$62.50 x 100 feet), in addition to installing the eighteen foot and nine inches (18'9") landscape strip along the frontage. Under this hypothetical scenario, the result would be an estimated cost of \$4,687.50 to install the eighteen foot and nine inches (18'9") of landscaping along the frontage (\$46.785 x 100), as well as a \$6,250 recompense contribution to the County, resulting in a total expenditure of \$10,937.50.]

3. If a variance is sought that would reduce the landscape strip to less than eighteen feet and nine inches (18'9") for a required twenty-five (25) foot landscape strip or less than twenty-six and three inches (26'3") for a required thirty-five (35) foot landscape strip, then that additional variance reduction must be pursued in accord with those procedures set forth in section 8-6.3 and 8-6.4 of the UDC, respectively.

(I) **Fencing.**

- (1) Fence materials shall be comprised of treated lumber, fiber cement, or steel.
- (2) Chain link fencing is prohibited for all property lines along SR 20/Buford Highway. Black or brown vinyl coated chain link fencing may be allowed along the sides and rear of property fronting SR20/Buford Highway, but not those property lines bordering or within view of residential property, if the chain link fencing is screened with evergreen trees, shrubs, and/or decorative fencing for the full length and height of the fence.
- (3) For permitted open air businesses, no chain link fence shall be visible from the right-of-way.

- (J) **Civic Space.** The inclusion of civic space in future site development is highly desired. Examples of civic space include, but are not limited to a passive or active park, pocket park, square, plaza, playground, as well as the inclusion of public art installations.

21-11.6 **Architectural Design Standards.** The architectural design standards established herein apply to all commercial development. They are intended to achieve a base level of quality for architectural and landscape design that is responsive to its context and contributes to the overall character of the Overlay District. The architectural criteria listed below establish minimum design standards for buildings within the Overlay District in order to reduce the impacts of commercial development on adjacent properties. The highest quality of architectural design and innovation is encouraged. These standards are in addition to the design criteria contained in Chapter 12 of this Code.

- (A) **Commercial Building Materials and Architectural Treatments.** The following design standards, guidelines, and enhancements are established to create a sense of architectural consistency throughout the Overlay District and to ensure high quality architectural design.

- (1) Exterior building materials on all commercial development shall consist of a minimum of seventy-five (75%) percent per vertical wall plane of brick, natural or pre-cast stone, and/or glass. If multiple establishments are contained within one contiguous structure, the percentage pertains to the entire façade rather than individual façade fronts.
- (2) Accent wall materials on all commercial development shall not exceed twenty-five (25%) percent per vertical wall plane. Accent building materials include, but are not limited to, stucco, cementitious and wood siding, and architectural grade metal. If multiple establishments are contained within one contiguous structure, the percentage pertains to the entire façade rather than individual façade fronts. Smooth, split face and/or rib faced concrete masonry units, aluminum siding, vinyl siding, tile, tilt/precast concrete, and corrugated steel are prohibited.
- (3) The principal entry area of a building, or if in a shopping center the largest tenant or a central location of a group of buildings, shall be articulated and should express greater architectural detail than other portions of the building. Entries shall include at least three of the following or similar architectural elements:
 - (a) Overhangs
 - (b) Canopies
 - (c) Recesses/projections