





Design Principles *for* City of Alexandria

This document outlines a set of Design Principles to inform the planning and design of new buildings and provide guidance to the formal design review process.

Table of Contents

Background.....	3
Design Principles.....	9
Conservation/Preservation Principles.....	10
Urban Walkable Community Principles.....	13
Maintain Alexandria’s Urban Walkable Pattern	14
Maintain/Reinforce the Street Grid	15
Concentrate Active Uses on the Ground Floor.....	16
Scale the Buildings to the Pedestrian Way & Street	18
Scale the Building Entries to the Pedestrian	19
Provide a Landscaped Pedestrian Environment	20
Minimize the Impact of the Automobile.....	21
Site Planning Principles.....	23
Establish/Maintain the Streetwall.....	25
Provide Active Uses at the Ground Level	27
Locate Entries on Primary Streets.....	28
Buildings Should Respond to the Larger Urban Design Context	29
Building Design Principles.....	31
Provide Base/Middle/Top Building Hierarchy.....	33
Maintain the Small Parcel Scale	39
Provide Appropriate Transitions Between New/Existing Buildings...	40
Incorporate Multiple Architectural Rhythms in the Building Facades	41
Provide a Solid to Void Ratio Appropriate to Alexandria	42
Maintain the Small Building Scale	45
Maintain the Classic Vertical Proportions	46
Setback Tower or Vertical Elements from the Streetwall.....	48
Create a Skyline with Articulated Building Tops	50
Examples.....	52



BACKGROUND

Background

The Alexandria Visitor Experience

Visitors from the Immediate region and from around the country and the world, admire Alexandria's collection of distinct neighborhoods each with a significant and diverse history



Each of the neighborhoods is respected for:

- *Preserving historic and cultural assets*
- *Providing a pedestrian first environment*
- *Encouraging of Unique Shopping*
- *Incorporating Dining/Entertainment*
- *Establishing a sense of place*



Background

Alexandria Residents Also Enjoy Their Neighborhoods and View Their City as a Wonderful Place to Live and Work



The residents appreciate their neighborhoods for its:

- *Historic buildings and character*
- *Distinct & Intact Environment*
- *Urban Living with Quality Open Space*
- *Quality Lifestyle*
- *Unique Retail, Dining & Entertainment*
- *Recreational Opportunities*

Alexandria Design Principles

Background

Alexandria is Rooted in the Past with a Vision of the Future

Alexandria's challenge is not to find ways to grow to achieve a Vision, but rather, how to continue with smart growth while maintaining its existing character and qualities

Background

How Does Alexandria Maintain its Character and Life Style Qualities?

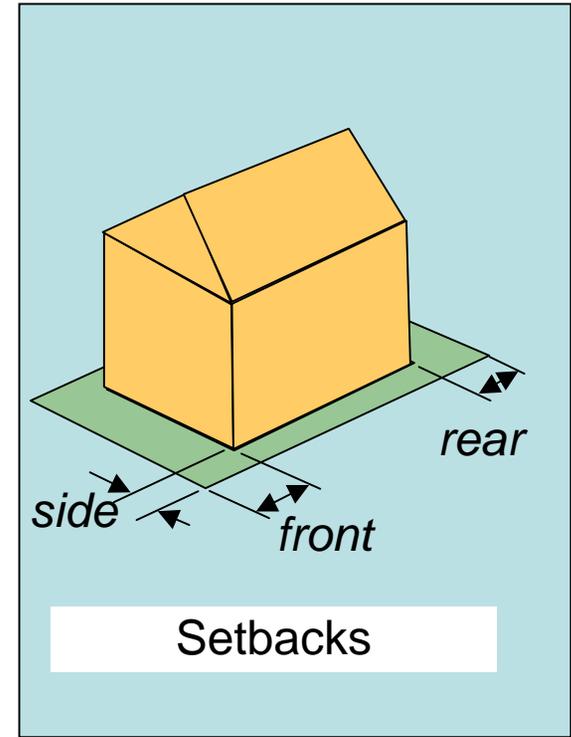
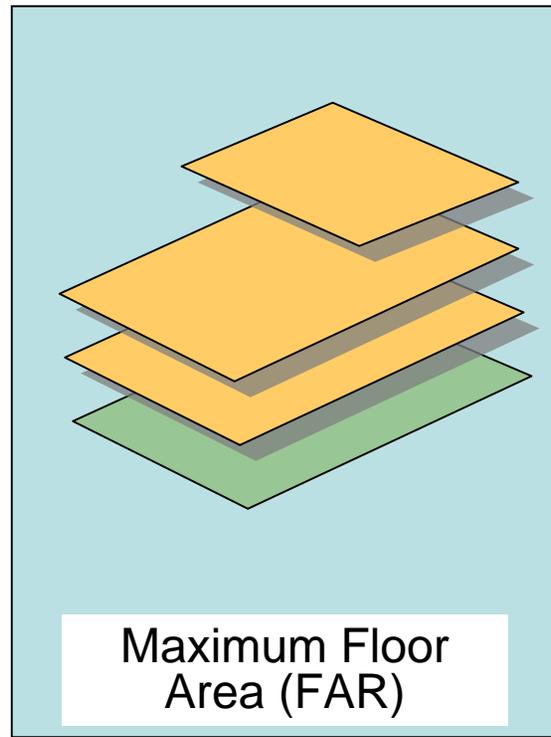
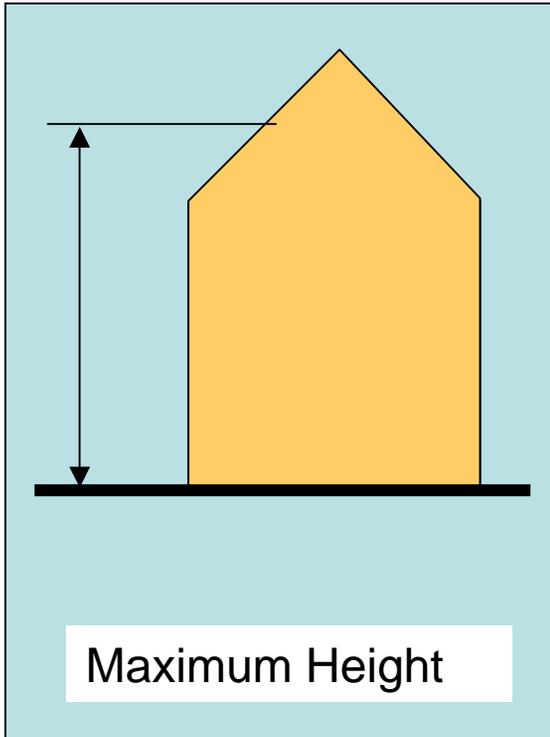
The Alexandria Character and Life Style Qualities Can Be Maintained by:

- Continuing to create neighborhood plans with community input that define the desired neighborhood character;
- Implementing the vision of the Neighborhood Small Area Plans;
- Maintaining the integrity of the historic districts; AND
- Assuring that new development follows basic Design Principles

This document outlines a set of Design Principles to inform the design of new buildings and provide guidance to the formal public design review process.

Background

The Existing Zoning Ordinance Provides Guidance for Some Facets of Design



The existing Zoning Ordinance establishes certain design parameters such as the appropriate land use and the basic physical parameters, such as maximum height, maximum floor area and setbacks

The Design Principles

These Design Principles have been established for the areas of the community which are not governed by specific guidelines contained within neighborhood plans or Small Area Plans. The Design Principles augment the zoning ordinance and are organized in five areas to achieve quality buildings within a quality community.

The five areas are:

- Conservation/Preservation
- Building Design
- Urban Walkable Community
- Site Planning
- Community Benefit



*A Balanced Response to the Principles
is Required to Create a Quality Building
within a Quality Community*

**CONSERVATION/
PRESERVATION
PRINCIPLES**

Conservation/Preservation Principles

Conservation/Preservation



The preservation of the existing manmade historical and cultural assets is important to the future planning for the City and as a guiding principle for the design of new buildings.

It is important to preserve the existing natural community amenities that shape the physical look and the environmental quality of the community. Trees, natural features, wetlands and open space should be preserved to the greatest extent possible.



URBAN WALKABLE COMMUNITY PRINCIPLES

Urban Walkable Community Principles

The following are Principles designed to create an Urban Walkable Community:

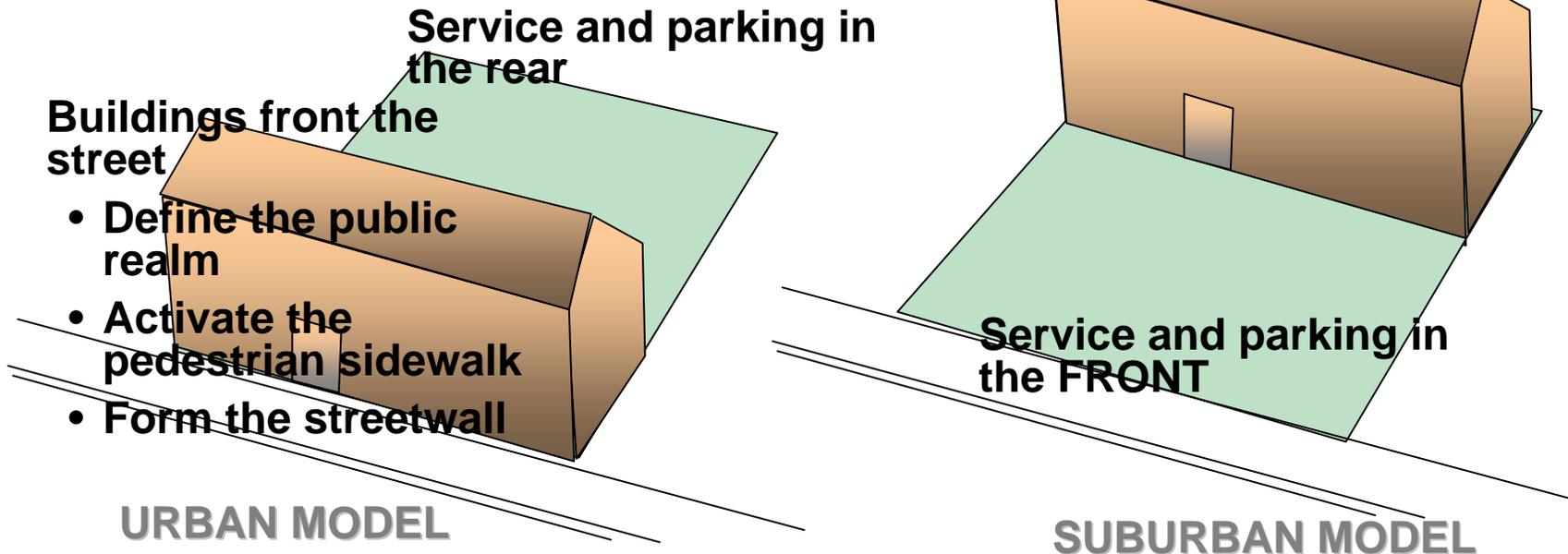
- Maintain Alexandria's Urban/Walkable (pedestrian first) Pattern
- Maintain/Reinforce the Street Grid
- Concentrate Active Uses on the Ground Floor
- Scale the Buildings to the Pedestrian Way and Street
- Scale to Building Entries to the Pedestrian
- Provide a Landscaped Pedestrian Environment
- Minimize the Impact of the Automobile

Urban Walkable Community Principles

Maintain Alexandria's Urban/Walkable Pattern

Alexandria was planned and developed on an urban model that promotes a walkable, pedestrian friendly street environment. Buildings are located at the edge of the sidewalk and building windows and facades provide interest for the pedestrian. The automobile parking

and vehicular service are located to the rear of the buildings away from the public realm of the street. This pattern is in stark contrast with the suburban model that places the automobile between the pedestrian and the retail buildings



- Buildings front the street**
- Define the public realm
 - Activate the pedestrian sidewalk
 - Form the streetwall

Buildings in the rear

Service and parking in the FRONT

URBAN MODEL

SUBURBAN MODEL

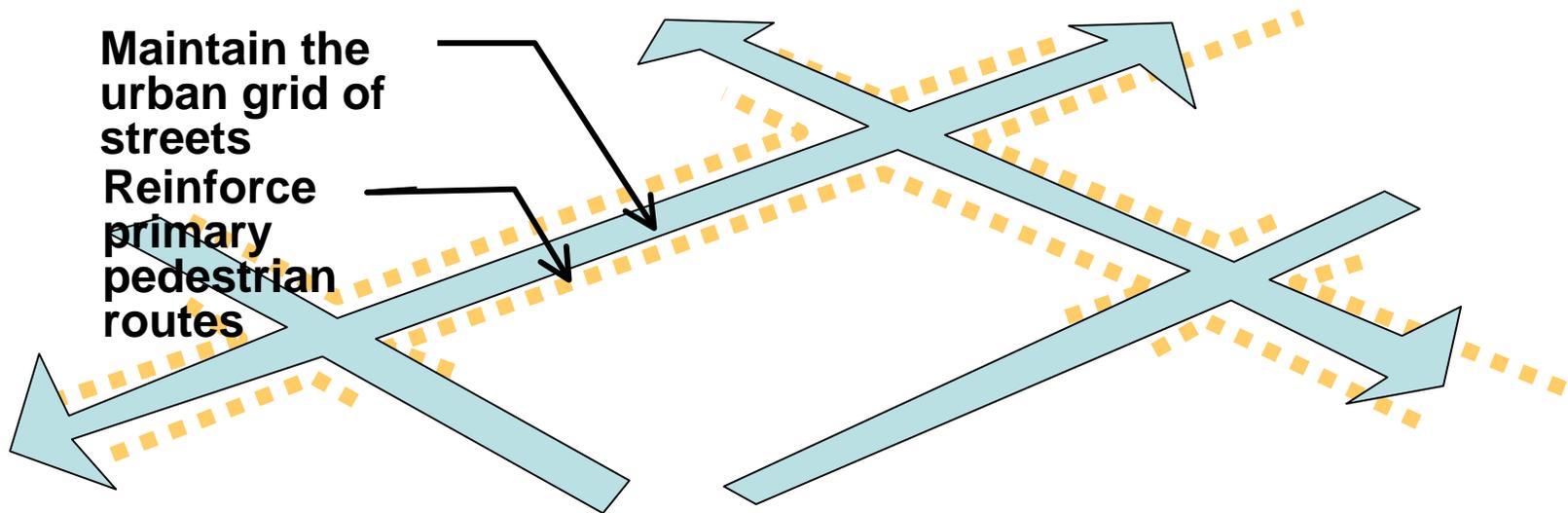
Urban Walkable Community Principles

Maintain/Reinforce the Street Grid

Alexandria's urban model is based upon a grid of interconnected streets that in turn create land blocks and parcels for development. That traditional urban block planning process should be maintained, preserved or established in newly developed areas.

The City will define the primary streets to be maintained as the principle pedestrian routes.

Retail uses shall be the principle ground floor use all primary pedestrian streets.



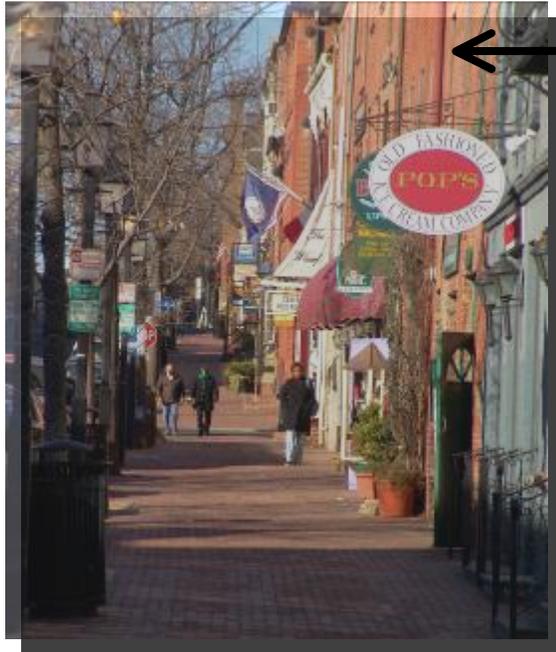
Urban Walkable Community Principles

Concentrate Active Uses on the Ground Floor

Active uses should be encouraged in buildings adjacent to the sidewalks to provide interest for the pedestrian as they move through the neighborhood. Service and office uses are encouraged

to be located on upper levels.

Residential entries and living areas are encouraged to face the street, Mews entries are discouraged.



Encourage active uses
- adjacent to sidewalk

Discourage ground
floor office & service

Site residential entries
and living areas on
street

Discourage "mews"
entries

Discourage auto
access & service from
primary streets -



Urban Walkable Community Principles

Concentrate Active Uses on the Ground Floor

Examples that demonstrate a good relationship between the building face, the building entry and the public sidewalk

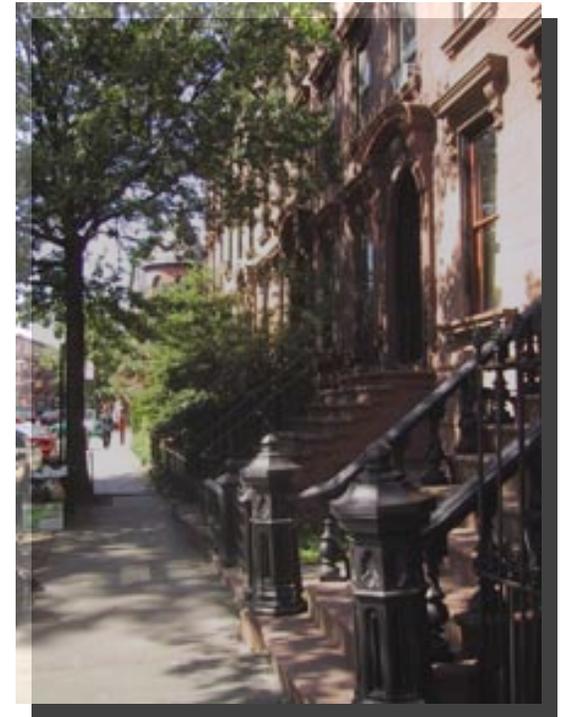


Urban Walkable Community Principles

Scale the Buildings to the Pedestrian Way and Street

Buildings should be scaled to meet the sidewalk and the street in a positive manner. Where appropriate, activities such as outdoor dining are encouraged to create additional activity and life on the street.

Sidewalks should be scaled to the pedestrian and the activities and uses that occur along the street. On street parking is encouraged to slow the speed of vehicles and protect the pedestrian from moving traffic



Urban Walkable Community Principles

Scale the Building Entries to the Pedestrian



Inappropriate entry designed for the automobile

Building entries should be scaled to the pedestrian with the design and importance of the entry reflecting the character of the building use, e.g., retail, hotel residential, public, institutional



Appropriate residential entries
Alexandria Design Principles



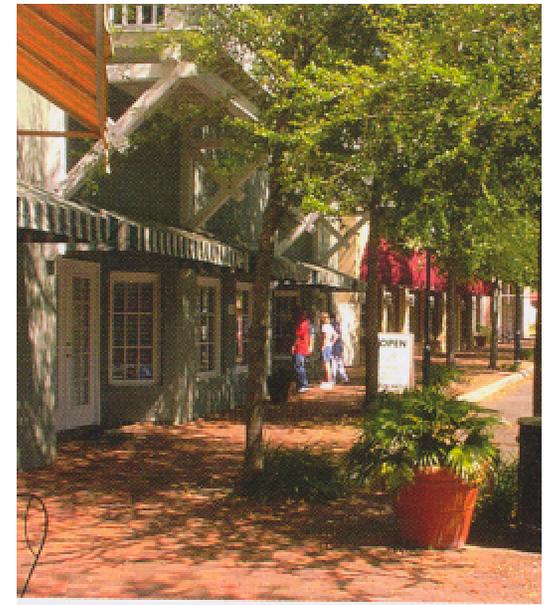
An appropriate public entry

Urban Walkable Community Principles

Provide a Landscaped Pedestrian Environment

Sidewalks should include an inviting public landscaped, pedestrian environment (the streetscape) along the length of the pedestrian way . Private buildings should incorporate landscape in their facades or as open space as appropriate while

maintaining the urban streetwall. The streetscape should include pedestrian amenities that provide interest, comfort and scale such as: benches, awnings, planters, lighting and drinking fountains



Urban Walkable Community Principles

Minimize the Impact of the Automobile

The impact of the automobile on the sidewalk should be minimized. Strategies to minimize the automobile include:

- Extending sidewalks at the intersections to slow the cars and shorten pedestrian crossing distances
- Providing enhanced pedestrian crossings
- Locating parking and service entries on minor streets
- Screen parking lots/garages with active uses

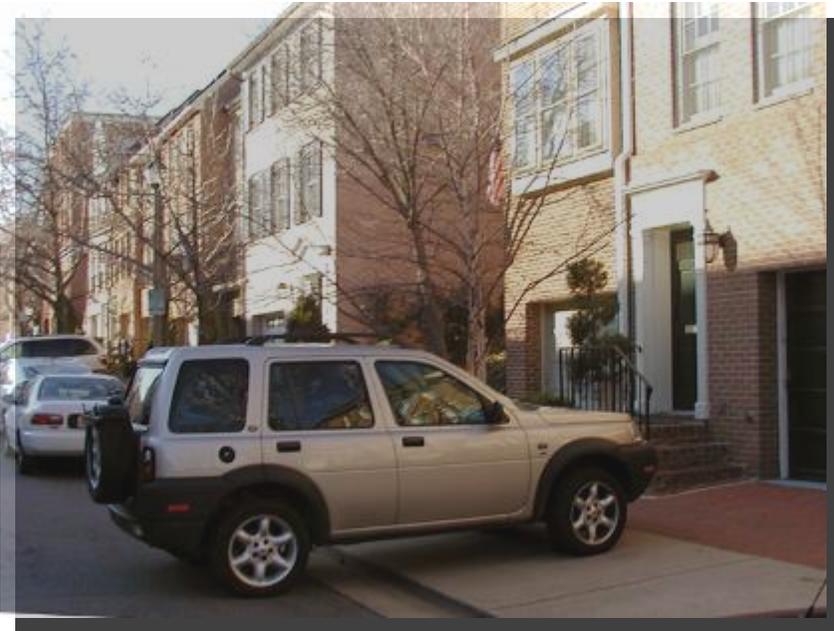


Urban Walkable Community Principles

Minimize the Impact of the Automobile

The visual impact of the automobile on the street and front façade should be minimized. Access to service and parking from the primary streets should be discouraged. Parking and service are encouraged to be located

in rear of side accessed automobile courts or located beneath or in the rear of the building so as not to visually impact the primary street façade.



Negative impact of the automobile



Auto courtyard

SITE PLANNING PRINCIPLES

Site Planning Principles

The following are Principles designed to guide the placement of buildings on the site:

- Establish/Maintain the Streetwall
- Provide Active Uses at the Ground Floor
- Locate Entries on Primary Streets
- Create Buildings that Respond to the Larger Urban Design Context

Site Planning Principles

Establish and Maintain the “Streetwall”

The “streetwall” is defined as the continuous line of building facades that face the public street and sometimes defined as the “public realm.” The streetwall should generally be continuous and located on the front property line adjacent to the sidewalk.

The streetwall focuses the active uses at the ground level to ensure pedestrian interest. Offices, service uses and other secondary spaces are encouraged to be located on upper building levels.



Site Planning Principles

Establish and Maintain the “Streetwall”

The height of the streetwall is generally proportional to the width of the street and the sidewalk.

Taller building elements such as “towers are” generally set back from the street wall to minimize their visually impact on the pedestrian way.



Taller streetwall on wider streets

Site Planning Principles

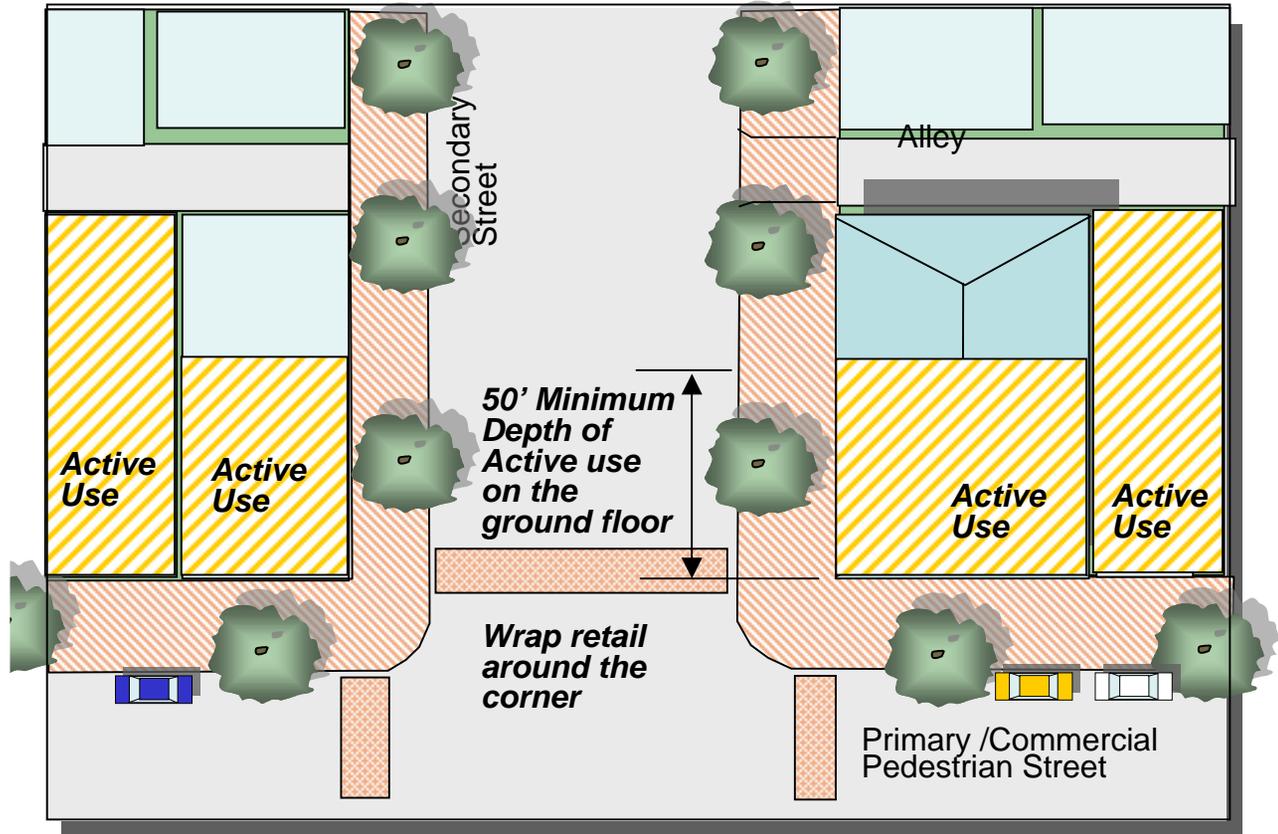
Provide Active Uses at the Ground Level

Locate the active uses along the streetwall at the ground level.

Active uses should be “wrapped” around the corner at the secondary streets for a minimum of 50ft.



Retail wrapped around the corner



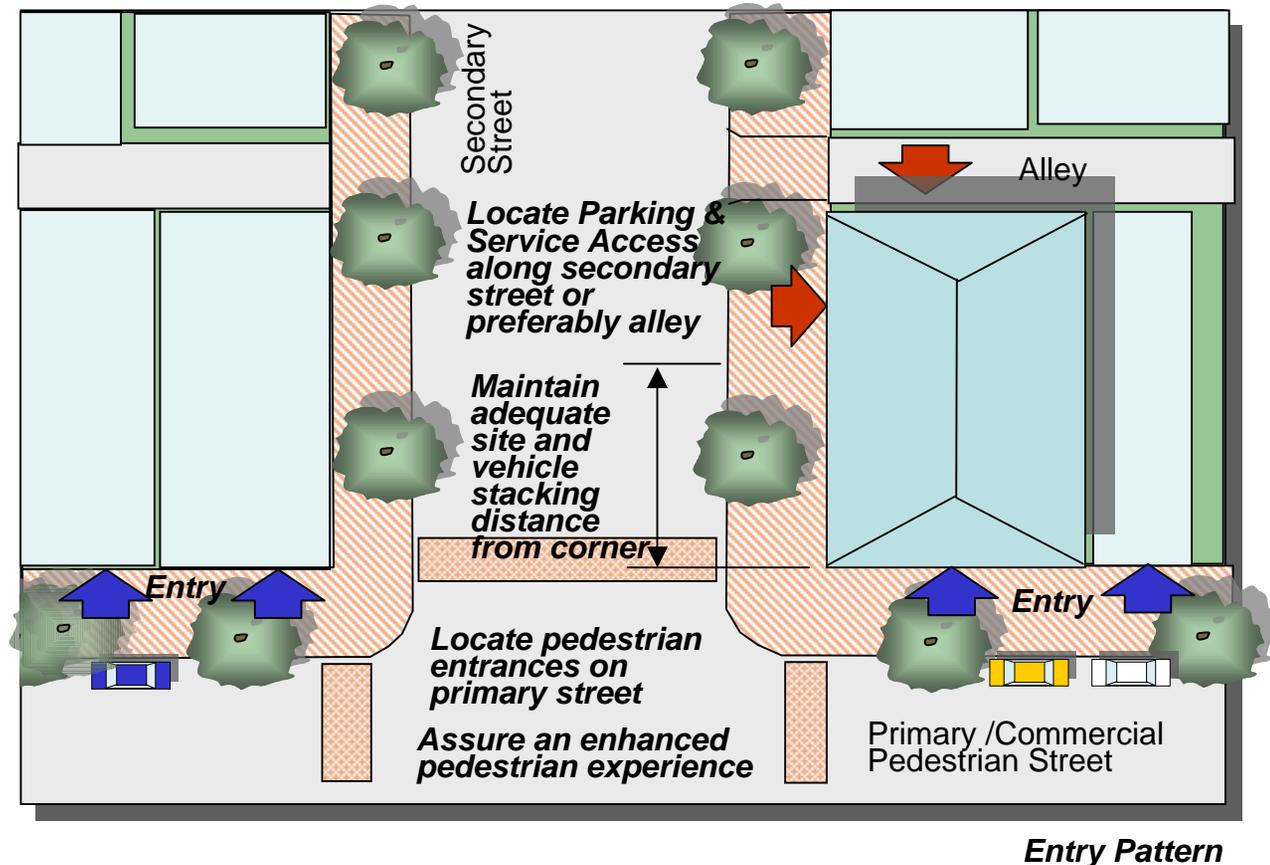
Active Use Pattern

Site Planning Principles

Locate Entries on Primary Streets

Locate the primary active use entries on the primary pedestrian street.

Locate the service and parking entries on the secondary street or alley.



Site Planning Principles

Create Buildings that Respond to the Larger Urban Design Context

Buildings located on corner sites, courtyards or at the end of axial views have special opportunities to express these conditions in the architecture



Corner Sites

Corner sites offer special opportunities for the location of entries and, where appropriate, to recognize the corner the location with special architectural features.



Site Planning Principles

Create Buildings that Respond to the Larger Urban Design Context

Axial Relationships

Buildings and terminate axes provide opportunities for special architectural treatment.



Buildings at End of Vistas

Closed Vistas

Buildings that interrupt vistas have special opportunities to utilize archways or other architectural features to ensure a continuity of the vista beyond the building



Arch at Closed Vista

BUILDING DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Building Design Principles

- **Provide Base/Middle/Top Building Hierarchy**
- **Maintain the Small Parcel Scale**
- **Provide Appropriate Transitions Between New/Existing Buildings**
- **Incorporate Multiple Architectural Rhythms in the Building Facades**
- **Provide a “Solid-Void Ratio” appropriate to Alexandria**
- **Maintain the Small Building Scale**
- **Maintain the Classic Vertical Proportions**
- **Setback Tower or Vertical Elements from the Streetwall**
- **Create a Skyline with Articulated Building Tops**

Building Design Principles

Provide Base/Middle/Top Hierarchy

Traditional buildings, and those of Alexandria's past, are visually organized with three basic elements the "base", the "middle", and the "top."

The "base" is generally two to five stories high and is scaled and detailed for appreciation by the pedestrian. The "base" includes the building entries, retail facades and show windows, awnings and porte-cocheres designed together to anchor the building to the ground.

The "middle" of the building contains the building's primary uses and generally visually repeats an architectural theme or rhythmic pattern(s).

The "top" terminates the building at the sky with an architectural cornice or special building elements.

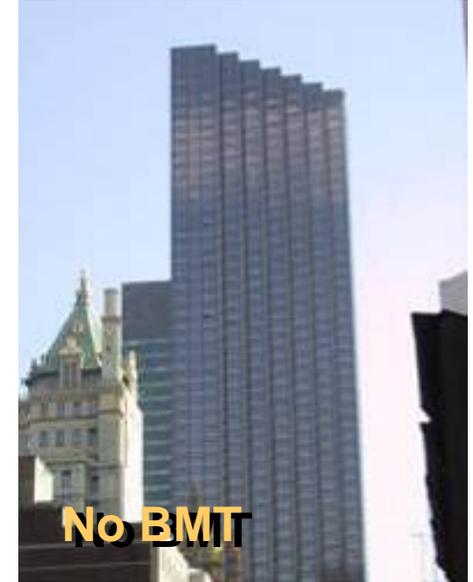


Building Design Principles

Provide Base/Middle/Top Hierarchy



Building with base, middle & top



Buildings without a base, middle & top lack strong pedestrian places at the ground and do not provide pleasing skylines

Building Design Principles

Provide Base/Middle/Top Hierarchy

The Base

The base should include scaled elements that relate to the pedestrian. The elements may include building entries, porte-cocheres, canopies, awnings, courtyards, and elements of pedestrian interest such as retail stores, storefront show windows and landscape elements. Materials used in the base should be high quality and durable as they are subject to touch.

The base typically contains pedestrian building entries, parking access & egress and provisions for building services. In mixed-use districts where retail is appropriate on the ground floor, the building's base or first floor façade should be located on the property line – typically at the back of the sidewalk,



The height of the base is typically proportionate to the overall height of the streetwall, and in taller streetwalls may include one to five floors.

Building Design Principles

Provide Base/Middle/Top Hierarchy

The Base

Frequently, the base is distinguished from the "middle" portion of the facade by a slight change in plane, changes in materials, proportions and scale, and/or a cornice or architectural banding element.



Active Engaged Base



Unfriendly Pedestrian Base



Detached, Inactive Base

Alexandria Design Principles

Building Design Principles

Provide Base/Middle/Top Hierarchy

The Middle



The “middle” of the building should include the expression of the primary building uses, e.g. residential, office.

The “middle” of the building should include multiple architectural rhythms derived through step backs, changes in plane, changes in materials or colors, window types, window sizes, pairing or multiples of windows, oriel windows and by shutters and other detailing.

Building Design Principles

Provide Base/Middle/Top Hierarchy

The Top

The building tops should be designed to create an interesting terminus with the sky

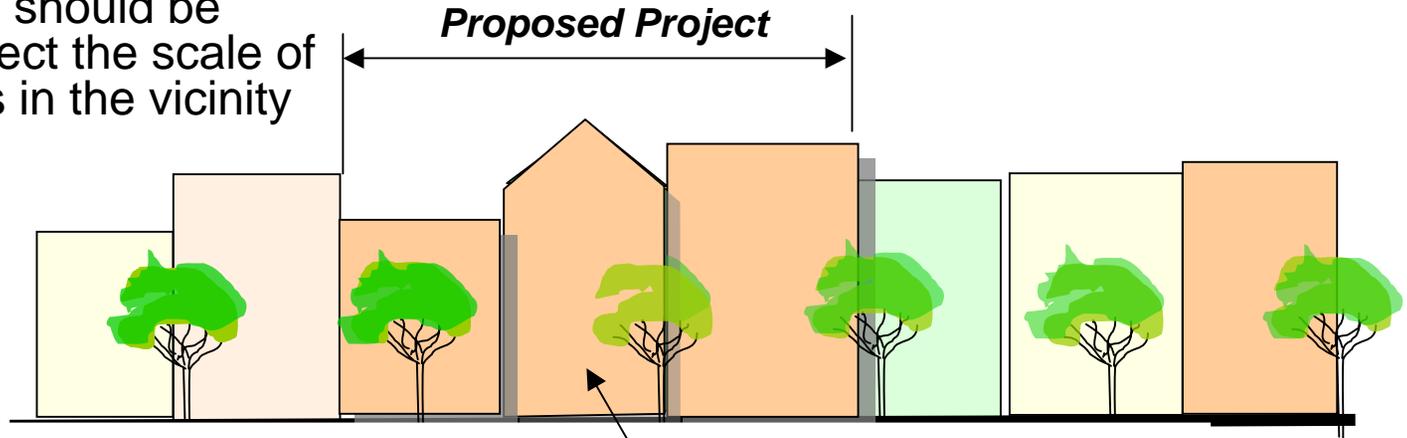


Alexandria Design Principles

Building Design Principles

Maintain the Small Parcel Scale

The Streetwall for large building sites assembled from multiple parcels should be designed to reflect the scale of typical buildings in the vicinity



One large project that is designed to reflect the existing scale of the neighborhood



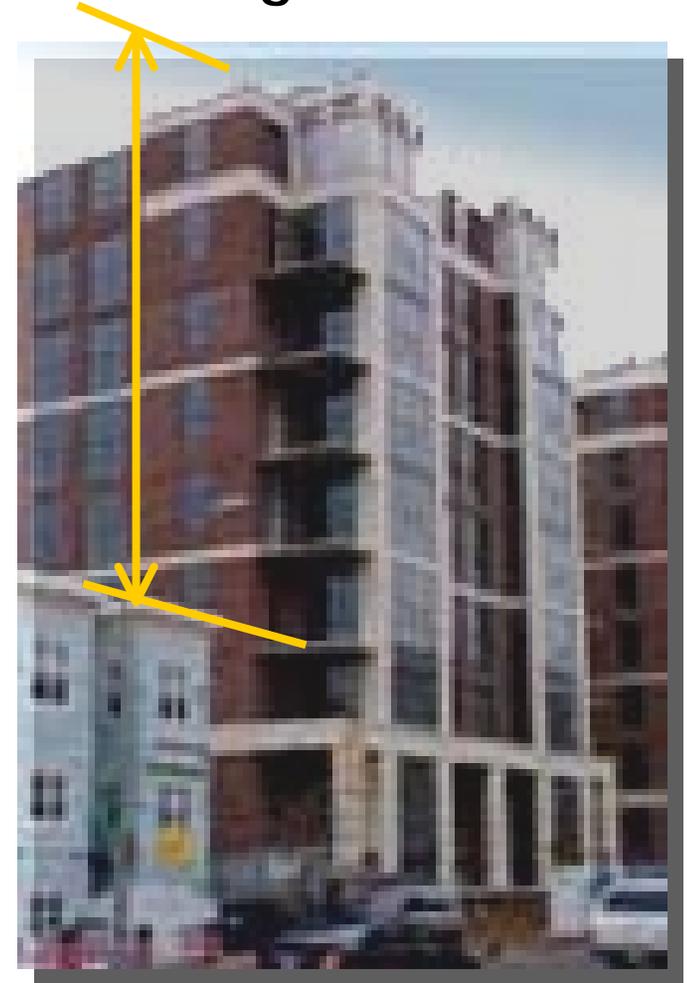
Building Design Principles

Provide Appropriate Transitions Between Buildings

Appropriate transitions should be provided between new buildings and the surrounding existing buildings. Appropriate transitions can be made through multiple height buildings, step ups or step downs, etc.



Appropriate Transition



Inappropriate Transition

Building Design Principles

Multiple Architectural Rhythms in the Building Facades



The building should include multiple architectural rhythms to assure visual interest in the building façade.

Interesting rhythms can be developed through the use of:

- Multiple types, shapes, and groupings of windows
- Façade step backs or changes in plane
- Changes in materials or colors
- Oriel & bay windows
- Balconies
- Shutters, awnings and other architectural detailing

Building Design Principles

Provide “Solid to Void Ratio” Appropriate to Alexandria



Inappropriate all glass facade

The primary building walls should utilize a solid material such as masonry to emulate a traditional load bearing walls. Individual or groups of windows are then placed within the wall.

Typically there should be more solid wall than window opening to maintain the traditional Alexandria character.

Metal curtain walls may be used to provide a tax cents or in special locations.

Mirrored and/or deeply colored glass should be avoided



Appropriate balance of Solid to Void



Appropriate balance of Solid to Void

Building Design Principles

Provide “Solid to Void Ratio” Appropriate to Alexandria



Appropriate balance of Solid to Void



Appropriate balance of Solid to Void



Appropriate balance of Solid to Void

Alexandria Design Principles

Building Design Principles

Provide “Solid to Void Ratio” Appropriate to Alexandria



Appropriate example of glass accent



Inappropriate example solid to void for Alexandria

Glass curtain walls or metal walls panels may be used as accents in the overall design.



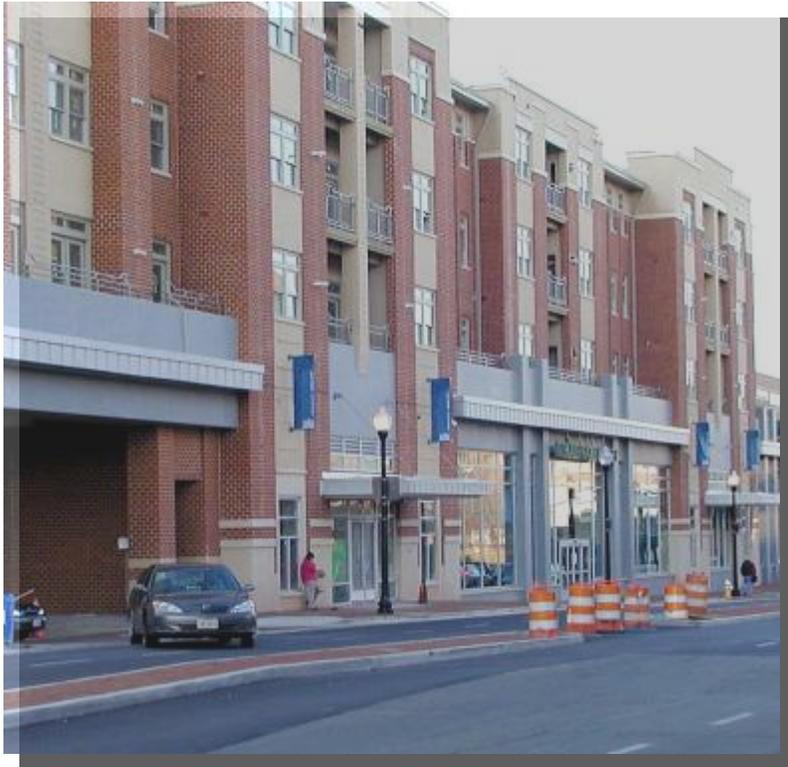
Appropriate example of glass accent

Building Design Principles

Maintain the Small Building Scale

Alexandria's urban pattern and scale has been derived from a tradition of small land parcels. While today the practice of consolidating small land parcels provides for efficiency, the small visual scale of the city and neighborhoods should be maintained.

The streetwall should reflect the traditional neighborhood small lot scale and neighborhood context



Large project with streetwall reflecting a smaller scale



Large project with streetwall reflecting a smaller scale

Building Design Principles

Maintain the Classic Vertical Proportions



Façade with Vertical Proportions

The classic proportion windows in Alexandria are vertical in proportion.

Windows in new buildings should maintain vertical proportion including the internal muntins and mullions within the window frame.



Traditional Window Proportions

*Traditional
Vertical
Proportions*

Building Design Principles

Maintain the Classic Vertical Proportions



Inappropriate Horizontal Banding

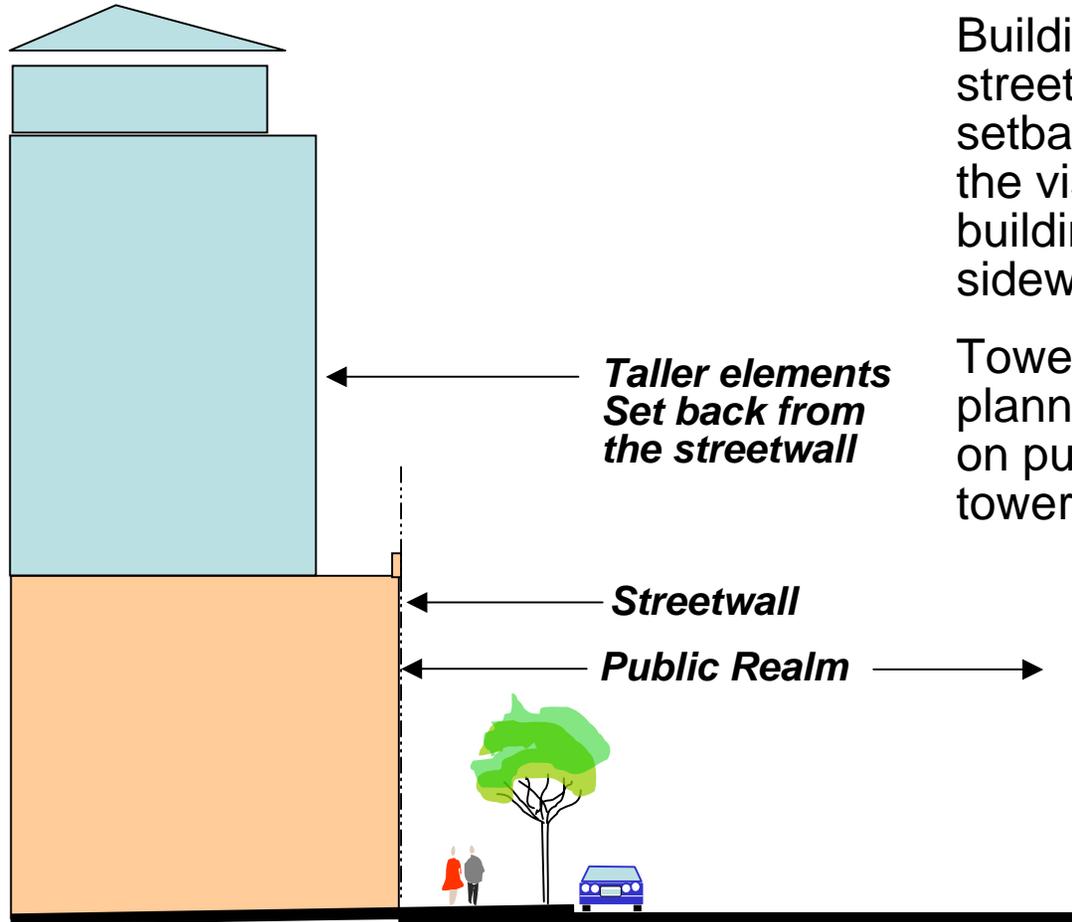


Inappropriate Horizontal Banding

The horizontal banding of windows and/or a regular horizontal expression of floor slabs should be avoided.

Building Design Principles

Setback Tower or Vertical Elements from the Streetwall



Building elements taller than the streetwall should generally be setback from the base to reduce the visual mass of the taller building from the street and the sidewalk

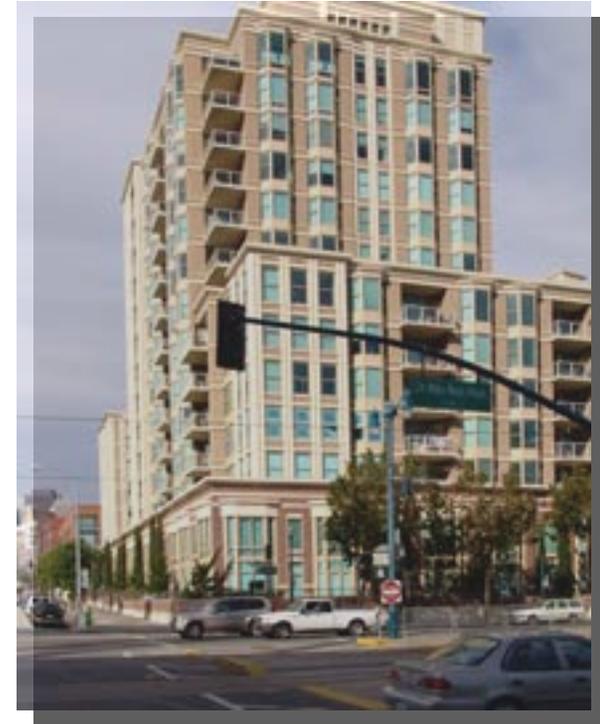
Tower Elements should be planned to minimize shadows cast on public spaces and on adjacent towers

Building Design Principles

Setback Tower or Vertical Elements from the Streetwall



Tower set back from the streetwall



Tower set back from the streetwall



Building Elements Back from Streetwall

Alexandria Design Principles

Building Design Principles

Create a Skyline with Articulated Tower Tops



Distinctive Tower Top



Geometric Tops on Tower Elements

The top of a building tower terminates the building at the sky, and defines a skyline for the city.

Towers should be placed to allow views between towers and allow sunshine to penetrate to the lower building levels and the street below.

The building top achieves its character through the design of cornices, step backs, changes in scale, geometric elements and materials or textures.

Building Design Principles

Create a Skyline with Articulated Tower Tops



Distinctive Tower Top



Articulated Tower Top



Historic Gothic Articulated Tower Top

PROJECT EXAMPLES

Examples

The following are examples of buildings that have recently been approved utilizing the Design Principles



Carlyle Trammell Crow Office



Alexandria Design Principles



Millrace Apartments

Examples

The following are examples of buildings that have recently been approved utilizing the Design Principles



Mark Center



Post Properties – Carlyle Block O



Lincolnia



Hennage Mixed-Use



Victory Center

Alexandria Design Principles