

City of Sunnyvale

PARKING STRUCTURE DESIGN GUIDELINES



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1. INTRODUCTION



These guidelines are applicable to all stand-alone parking structures and parking structures incorporated within individual buildings or building complexes citywide.

Context

Design guidelines are used to ensure projects observe architectural and site planning principles so that new development is compatible with the surrounding neighborhood and the City overall. As many new projects are developed on infill sites and as developments have become more compact, parking structures, rather than surface parking, have become more common. The floor area and mass of the parking structures often equals that of the buildings that they serve and can have a significant visual impact on the overall development and the image of the City.

Parking structures also consume land, interrupt the street wall and can have a negative impact on street life if not integrated with other land uses such as street level retail, residential and commercial activities. Parking structures can also be visually overpowering if not well designed and sensitively sited.

Design guidelines provide the community, developers and decision-makers with the tools to understand and incorporate new development into the existing fabric of the City.

Purpose

These parking structure design guidelines are intended to accomplish the following:

- Ensure that new parking structures complement the scale and character of nearby development.
- Provide guidance to property owners, developers and design professionals in planning and designing parking structures.
- Establish a clear statement of community expectations in order to provide a greater degree of predictability and certainty about design expectations during project review.
- Provide a high level of design quality.
- Ensure that new parking structures are sensitive to the adjacent pedestrian environment and street character.

Community Expectations

- New parking structures will be subordinate to other buildings around them.
- Parking structures will be well integrated into other development within a project.
- Pedestrian access and orientation between a parking structure and other nearby development will be emphasized to enhance mobility and connectivity.
- High quality architectural design, materials and details will be expected.
- Unity of design treatment will be expected on all sides of parking structures.
- Parking structures will provide a positive contribution to the visual environment.
- A strong commitment will be made to integrate significant landscaping to buffer views of the structure and enhance the pedestrian environment.

2. DESIGN PRINCIPLES

The following principles have been used as touchstones for the development of individual parking structures and mixed use design guidelines. In the event that the specific guidelines do not clearly address a given condition, the Design Principles should be consulted for general direction. The Design Principles will be used by the planning staff and Planning Commission/City Council when evaluating parking structures in the City and when considering the acceptability of unique proposals that vary from the specific guidelines.

1. **Design parking structures to complement nearby structures.**

Parking structures should blend into their surrounding environment and not blatantly stand out as utilitarian structures.

2. **Subordinate parking structures to the primary buildings.**

Parking structures should be sited and designed to be less prominent than the buildings they serve.

3. **Enhance the pedestrian environment.**

Setbacks, ground floor materials and design should add to, not detract from, the pedestrian experience.

4. **Minimize vehicular/pedestrian conflicts.**

Vehicular access should be located and designed to give priority to important pedestrian movement patterns.

5. **Promote efficient site circulation and street access.**

Vehicular entry locations and queuing distances should be designed to avoid adverse traffic impacts on adjacent street movements and with on-site circulation

6. **Design parking structures with strong architectural integrity.**

Parking structures are expected to be more than utilitarian boxes and should have materials and details carried around all sides that are visible to the public or adjacent uses.

7. **Integrate substantial landscaping into all projects.**

Substantial landscaping is expected to buffer views of parking structures and provide a transition in scale between the structure and the adjacent city fabric.

8. **Minimize impacts to adjacent neighbors.**

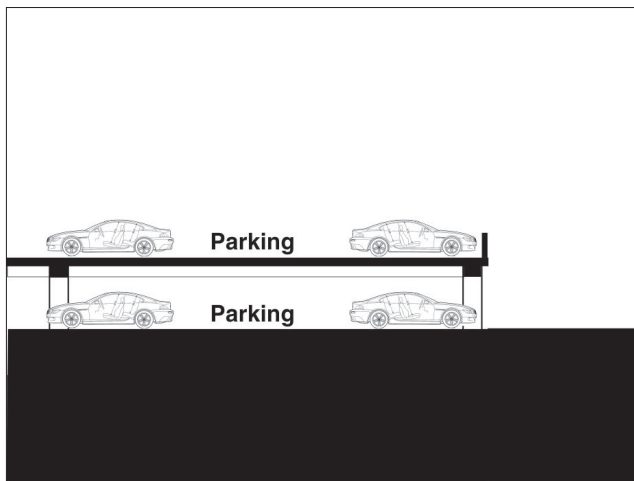
The location of parking structures and their design, including bulk, scale, materials and lighting, should seek to minimize negative impacts on adjacent uses and the public realm.

3. PARKING STRUCTURE TYPES

Parking structure sizes, shapes, layouts and designs vary considerably, but they generally fall within four common types.

Parking Deck

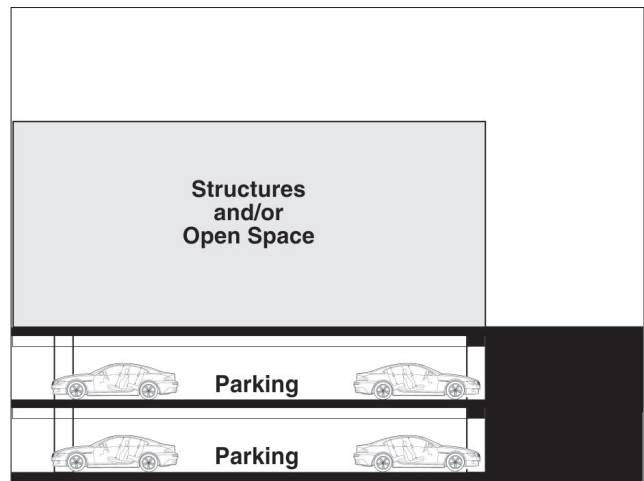
Parking decks are simple parking structures consisting of one at-grade parking level and one level above grade. They allow a reduction in the land area devoted to parking at a lower cost per stall than other types of parking structures. It has been effectively used in mixed use developments with grade-level parking devoted to commercial uses and the upper level reserved for residential units constructed over the commercial space.



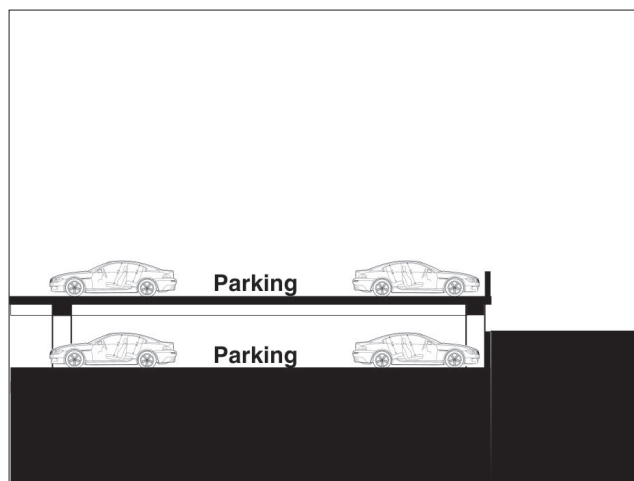
Parking Deck above grade

Underground Parking

Underground parking structures are located fully underground and are utilized in locations where the commercial first floor level of shops need to be at grade, such as retail shopping areas. It is the most expensive form of structured parking but usually the most visually unobtrusive.



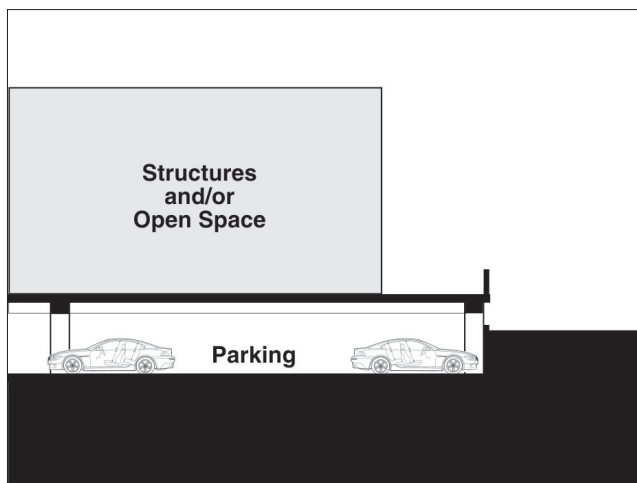
Underground Parking



Partial elevated deck

Podium Parking

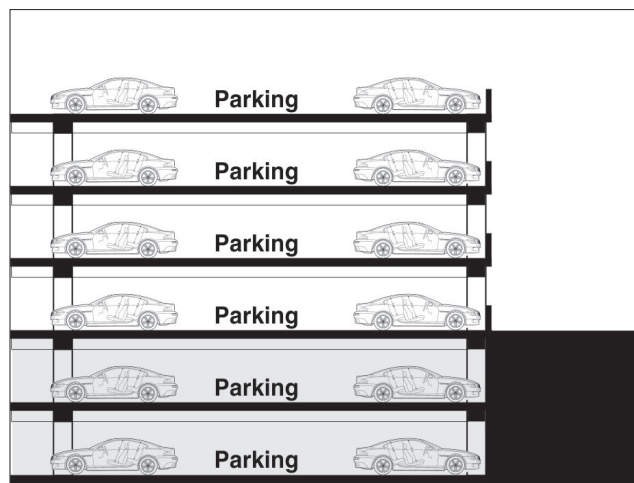
Podium parking structures are often part of residential or mixed use projects. They are usually located partially below grade but may be at grade if fronted by commercial uses or residential units. These structures generally have natural ventilation along their edges to reduce the costs of garage ventilation.



Podium Parking

Parking Garage

Parking garages are multi-story buildings served by interior ramps connecting the levels. All floors may be above grade, but some garages also incorporate below-grade levels.



Parking Garage

4. GENERAL DESIGN GUIDELINES

The following guidelines apply to all parking structures within the City of Sunnyvale. They should be reviewed and followed along with the guidelines set forth in this document for each specific parking structure type and each special contextual area.

General

1. Below-grade parking is encouraged with garage entries placed at the rear or sides of the project whenever possible. Garage entries should be recessed as much as possible from the building facade.
2. Where full below-grade parking is not feasible, consider placing some of the parking below grade (e.g., one or two floors) to reduce the size and bulk of the above-grade parking.
3. Automated mechanical parking systems may be considered. Benefits such as smaller space requirements, lower lighting needs and reduced ventilation requirements will factor into the decision. A Parking Management Plan will be required for approved mechanized parking systems.

Site Development

1. Above-grade parking structures will be expected to be located away from major street frontages unless it can be demonstrated that other locations are not viable.
2. Vehicular entries for parking structures should be placed on the street on which it will have the least negative impact.
3. The layout of a parking garage should take into account and be integrated with existing traffic circulation patterns of surrounding streets and/or internal site circulation systems. Entrances and exits should be located to minimize vehicles entering or exiting onto residential streets or busy intersections.
4. Pedestrian circulation should be delineated and separated from automobile circulation. The use of landscaping, walkways and decorative hardscape is encouraged to emphasize pedestrian areas.
5. Pedestrian routes from the parking structure lobby to the principal buildings served should provide an aesthetic transition compatible with the quality of the building.
6. Trash enclosures should not be placed adjacent to points of pedestrian or vehicular access. Any trash enclosure located within the footprint of the parking structure should be enclosed on four sides.



DESIGN INTENT

- Minimize circulation conflicts with the surrounding public street system.
- Minimize negative visual impacts on the public realm surrounding a parking structure.
- Integrate parking structures into the existing urban fabric and character of the surrounding area.
- Minimize vehicular/pedestrian conflicts.
- Minimize lighting, noise and negative visual impacts on adjacent uses, especially residential uses.

7. Locate and design vehicle entries so that they do not dominate the streetscape. Recess the garage vehicular entry portion of the facade or extend portions of the structure over the garage entry to help subordinate its impact.
8. Subordinate the garage entrance to the pedestrian entrance in terms of size, prominence on the streetscape, location and design emphasis.
9. Whenever possible, avoid vehicular entries along major pedestrian routes.
10. Minimize the number of curb cuts and locate them away from street intersections.
11. Provide sufficient vehicle queuing space on-site to avoid backups onto public thoroughfares. Pay particular attention to stacking and queuing space if there are entry gates or other impediments to smooth traffic flow.
12. Locate vehicular parking structure entries on a clear path and sequence from a building or drop off area, if one exists.
13. Minimize the visibility of parking structures from the public realm. Avoid corner locations whenever possible.
14. Parking structures should meet the minimum setback and landscape standards applicable to the zone in which the structure is located. Additional setbacks may be required.
15. Parking structures should generally not be located in close proximity to residential uses, schools or parks unless substantial setback, massing, screening and other mitigation measures are incorporated.
16. Structures that abut property zoned, used or designated in the General Plan for residential purposes shall provide a 15-foot minimum landscaped setback adjacent to that use. Greater setbacks may be required for taller structures.
17. All appurtenances (i.e., transformers, ventilation shafts, etc.) should be located outside of any required setback and should be screened from public view.

Landscaping

1. Landscape setbacks with a minimum dimension of five (5) feet (10 feet for trees) should be provided on all sides of the parking structure except where retail and/or activity uses are provided at the ground level.



2. The edges of any garage structure and vents into the garage visible above grade should be screened with evergreen plant materials. Earth berms and other techniques to tie the garage structure into the surrounding grade level should be considered.
3. Architectural treatments, artwork, lattices and other design features are encouraged for use on parking structures where blank walls occur. The design features should cover a minimum of 60% of the blank wall. If lattice is used, the material should be decorative and durable to enable vines to attach themselves for support.
4. Water conservation should be an important consideration when selecting a plant palette. Plant materials should be of California origin or drought tolerant species that are adaptable to the Sunnyvale climate. An automatic irrigation system should be designed to provide deep watering for trees, shrubs and vines along with moisture sensors to monitor and minimize water usage.

Plan Layout

1. Vehicle circulation within the parking structure should be continuous and uninterrupted at all levels. Dead-end parking aisles are not an acceptable solution to parking circulation unless all parking is designated as *Reserved Parking*. Where dead end aisles are unavoidable (e.g., for guest parking within a sloped ramp garage), provisions should be made for dedicated *No Parking* areas at the end of the aisle for easy turn around.
2. Interior pedestrian paths should be visible to drivers and delineated to differentiate them from vehicle travel aisles.
3. Maximum vehicle ramp grade should be 12 percent with minimum 10-12-foot long transitions at the top and bottom of the ramp.
4. Maximum vehicle ramp grade should be five (5) percent when parking on the ramp is permitted.
5. Elevator and stair shafts, mechanical rooms and similar visual disruptions should be located to minimize the blockage of views between drivers and pedestrians.
6. Pedestrian access should be designed to safely avoid pedestrian entry and exit of the garage via vehicular ramps and provide a minimum four (4)-foot wide pedestrian sidewalk along the side of every vehicular access driveway.
7. Internal garage layouts should make provisions for car sharing priority spaces and electrical charging stations.
8. Stall width and depth and aisle width should generally be in accordance with the City of Sunnyvale Zoning Code. However, parking stalls adjacent to a solid wall should be a minimum of 9.5 feet in width.
9. Parking structures should provide a minimum floor to ceiling height of eight (8) feet exclusive of structural elements and appurtenances. Additional height will be required per California Building Code for disabled access.
10. Tandem parking and mechanical lifts may be considered only when consistent with other City requirements.
11. Avoid garage vehicular exit locations where the glare of headlights on departing cars would have adverse impact on uses across the street.

Bicycle Parking

1. Except for public parking structures, bicycle parking should be provided in sheltered, secured facilities located on the project site and clearly signed.
2. Bicycle parking should be located on the level with the most convenient access and adjacent to a vehicular entry or have a separate protected and signed entrance.
3. Bicycle racks should be located within 100 feet of the project site. A variety of bicycle rack types and design are encouraged. Bicycle racks as art in public spaces may be considered, provided that the racks are still useable. Exact locations and design shall be subject to the approval of the Director of Community Development.

Architectural Design and Details

1. The design of all parking structures should be more than a rectangular utilitarian box composed of concrete or steel beams and columns. Variation in forms and detail along with high quality facing materials are expected where viewable by project users and the general public.
2. Special attention should be given to emphasizing the pedestrian entries of parking garages with special materials, landscaping, paving, architectural details and public art. One example of an enhanced entry is shown in the photograph below.



3. Parking structures with frontages on public streets will receive additional design review scrutiny and will be expected to include high quality materials and finishes on those facades. The incorporation of brick, stone and precast concrete are preferred choices. The integration of metal panels or metal mesh screens may be considered. The photographs to the right illustrate some of the materials that are strongly encouraged.
4. Exterior elevations should incorporate design components and materials utilized and compatible with the primary building(s).



Brick



Precast Concrete



Cast-in-place concrete incorporating precast concrete elements

Lighting

1. Parking garages should utilize full spectrum lighting to increase safety and comfort. The placement of fixtures should be designed to minimize light pollution from the garage.
2. Utilize shielded fixtures to minimize light pollution and glare from both within and outside the garage.
3. Design lighting levels for the unique circumstances and location of the garage. Higher levels are recommended for remote areas subject to security considerations (e.g., stairways, elevators and pedestrian access points). In general, minimum lighting levels should be equal to the following illumination levels measured at 30 inches from the finished floor:

	Horizontal Illumination (footcandles)
Vehicle entrance	40
Vehicle exit	20
Stairwells, exit lobbies	20
Parking areas	
General parking areas	6
Minimum at bumper walls	2
Ramps and corners	
Roof and surface	2
<i>Source: Parking Structures: Planning, Design, Construction, Maintenance and Repair - Second Edition - Chrest/Smith/Bhuyan</i>	

4. Interior walls and ceilings should be painted a light color to improve illumination.
5. All mechanical equipment and piping should be painted to match the interior of the structure.

Security

1. For public safety, non-gated secured parking structures should provide natural surveillance by providing high visibility into the structure from adjacent activity and public areas.
2. Locate and design elevators and stairways to allow internal and external visibility.

Noise

1. Parking structures shall be constructed and operated in compliance with the City's Operating Standards regulating noise (Section 19.42.030 of the Zoning Code). Special attention should be given to the mitigation of noise from the following sources:
 - *Mechanical equipment*
 - *Car door opening and shutting*
 - *Engine startup*
 - *Auto horns*
 - *Auto alarms*
 - *Tire squealing*
 - *Building construction*
2. Locate parking structures as far away as feasible from adjacent residential uses and other noise sensitive areas.
3. Locate vehicular parking entries as far away from residential uses as feasible.
4. Locate pedestrian entries and walkways as far away from adjacent residential uses as possible, unless the parking serves the residential use.
5. Provide solid and/or landscape buffers between parking structures and residential development when there is inadequate site area to sufficiently separate the uses to mitigate noise intrusions.
6. Locate all stationary noise-generating equipment, such as ventilation fans, air compressors and portable power generators, as far away as possible from businesses, residences or other noise-sensitive land uses.
7. All noise generating equipment exposed to the exterior shall be muffled with sound absorbing materials to minimize noise impacts on adjacent properties.
8. Paving surfaces within parking structures should be designed to reduce tire squeal.

5. SPECIAL CONTEXTUAL GUIDELINES

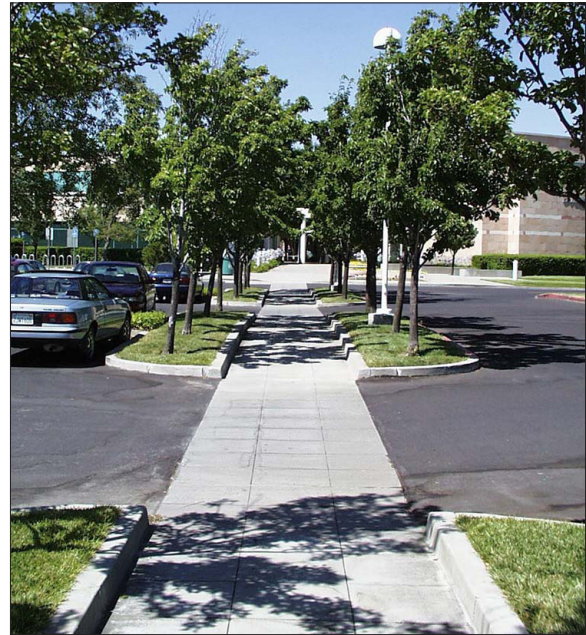
All four parking structure types are potentially suitable for use with a wide range of uses within the City of Sunnyvale. However, there are special concerns that need to be addressed for parking structures within the City's main use areas.

OFFICE PARKS

1. The location and design of above-grade parking structures should minimize the traffic and visual impacts on surrounding public streets.
2. Facades of above-grade parking structures should be strongly related to the design of the buildings that they serve in order to create a visually unified building complex.
3. Where above-grade parking structures are located adjacent to public streets, pedestrian ways or open spaces, provide a minimum of a 15 foot landscaped setback between the structure and adjacent public areas (see example below).



4. Protected and landscaped pedestrian connections should be provided between parking structures and all buildings served. One example is shown in the photo below.



5. Parking structures should emphasize pedestrian entries to assist users in identifying their location when they leave the served buildings. These entries should be related to the facades of the served buildings.



DOWNTOWN

1. Provide ground floor retail space along streets where there are adjacent or nearby commercial frontages. Where immediate retail development may not be feasible, provide space for the potential to add viable commercial uses to the frontage. A minimum clear ceiling height of 18 feet and a minimum depth of 20 feet should be provided.



Ground floor retail example

2. Where garages are at or near a street frontage next to lower structures fronting the street, step back upper garage levels above the height of the adjacent buildings.



Stepped back garage example

3. For large multi-level garages, provide an electronic parking space tracker that allows users to know the number of available parking spaces on each level.

EL CAMINO REAL

1. Above-grade parking structures should be separated from the frontage on El Camino Real a minimum of 60 feet and be buffered from view by active uses or extensive landscaping suitable to the El Camino Real frontage.
2. The location of above-grade parking structures facing other street frontages without active uses placed between the garage and the street is strongly discouraged. When buffering uses along the street are not possible, setbacks from other adjacent streets should be a minimum of 15 feet with substantial landscaping to buffer views of the garage.
3. Parking structures located adjacent to properties containing or designated in the General Plan for residential use is strongly discouraged. If other locations are not viable, consideration will be given to parking structures that are setback a minimum of 20 feet from the residential area, are limited to a maximum height of 30 feet or three (3) stories and contain buffer landscaping.

RESIDENTIAL AREAS

1. Parking structures with floor levels greater than five (5) feet above grade are strongly discouraged in residential areas.
2. Parking structures should be surrounded by dense landscaping to buffer views of the structure and block views of garage lighting from resident and public view.
3. Parking structures should be located to minimize noise impacts on residential units.
4. The goal of the garage design should be to blend with the surrounding landscaping and not stand out as individual buildings.

COMMERCIAL AREAS ADJACENT TO RESIDENTIAL

1. Parking structures located adjacent to properties containing or designated in the General Plan for residential use is strongly discouraged. If other locations are not viable, consideration will be given to parking structures that are setback a minimum of 20 feet from the residential area, are limited to a maximum height of 30 feet or three (3) stories and contain buffer landscaping.

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6. PARKING DECK GUIDELINES

Site Development

1. Locate stairs in visible locations adjacent to pedestrian sidewalks and walkways.



Landscaping

1. Landscaping should be utilized at parking deck edges to screen the structure.



DESIGN INTENT

- Integrate parking structures into the landscape environment.
- Minimize building bulk.
- Facilitate vehicular and pedestrian circulation between the parking levels and grade.

2. Trellises, landscaping and other features are encouraged on the upper level to screen views of the cars from the upper floors of adjacent buildings.



Plan Layout

1. Locate the lowest parking level partially below grade, if possible, to minimize the height and length of access ramps and to reduce the height and bulk of the structure.



2. Wherever possible, allow for natural light to penetrate into the below grade parking space in some areas for orientation and safety.



Architectural Design and Details

1. Minimize architectural features in favor of blending the structure into the landscape environment.

7. UNDERGROUND PARKING GUIDELINES

Site Development

1. Locate entries away from the street frontage, when-ever possible, to avoid cavernous paved areas adjacent to high traffic pedestrian areas.
2. Where vehicular entries are located along pedestrian paths, change sidewalk and driveway paving to alert pedestrians to a change in the sidewalk dual use.



3. Where entry/exit stairs are not within a building above, locate them conveniently near pedestrian walkways, and provide landscaping and details to make them visually inviting.



4. Fully submerged underground parking is encouraged, especially if located adjacent to pedestrian corridors. Partially above-ground structures may be considered if combined with other uses.
5. Obstructions blocking drivers' views of pedestrians should be avoided.



DESIGN INTENT

- Minimize vehicular conflicts with pedestrian movements.
- Provide attractive vehicular entries.
- Provide an attractive pedestrian entry and exit experience.

Landscaping

1. Provide substantial landscaping on the top of structures where they serve as courtyards or plazas.
2. Soil mounding and planting pockets should be used to avoid tall planter box areas placed on top of the structure.



Landscaping on garage top with limited walls is desirable



Landscaping on garage top with tall planters is not desirable

Architectural Design and Details

1. Provide landscaping, articulated building facades or other decorative features along the edges of garage access ramps to soften the garage entry experience



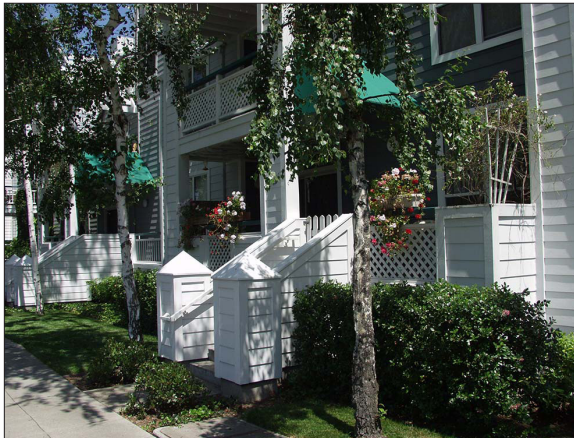
8. PODIUM GUIDELINES

Site Development

1. Locate entries to at-grade podium garage structures well off of street fronts. Where that is not possible, recess the entry from the front face of the building, as shown in the photo below.



2. For residential development, place unit entries at the street front with stoops to provide a finished face to the garage podium.



3. Provide well articulated and gradual stair transitions between grade level and the podium level.



DESIGN INTENT

- Integrate exposed podium walls into the building facades.
- Provide smooth transitions between the ground plane and the garage.
- Diminish the feeling of a garage base to the development.

Landscaping

1. Provide landscape plantings and/or berms to screen podium edges.



Architectural Design and Details

1. Limit the height of the garage wall above grade to a maximum five (5) feet in all cases where it is exposed to any street or pedestrian area.
2. Provide building overhangs, where possible, to subordinate the garage wall to the building facade, as shown in the photo example below.



3. Consider allowing natural light to penetrate into the below-grade parking space to benefit orientation and safety.
4. Utilize materials and details to match the building for all exposed podium walls.
5. Visually integrate the parking structure with building volumes above.

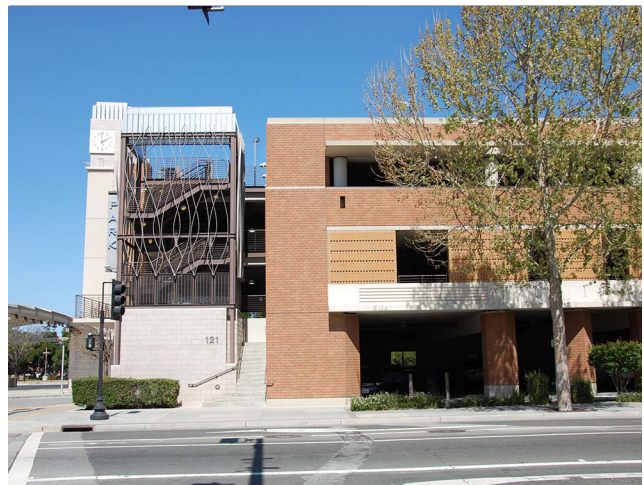
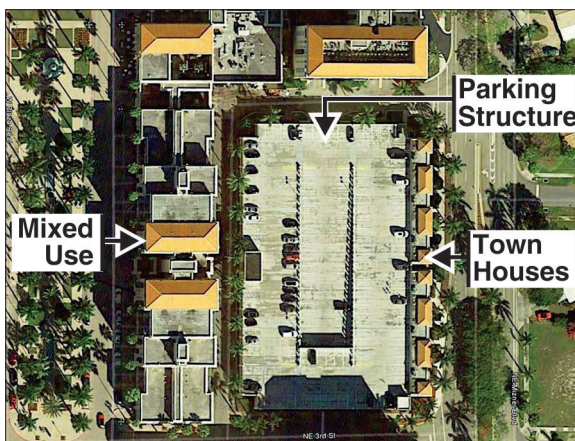
9. PARKING GARAGE GUIDELINES

Site Development

1. Commercial space or pedestrian-oriented uses are strongly encouraged on parking garage ground floors facing a main or secondary street where commercial/retail space is adjacent. A minimum ground floor clearance height of 18 feet should be provided.
2. Where actively used space is not feasible, substantial landscaping and/or public art should be utilized to improve the visual and pedestrian environment. Public art in the form of large-scale wrapping of the sides of the parking garage with durable material and/or use of color may be considered as a method to improve the visual surroundings of the parking garage.



3. Parking garages should be capable of supporting alternative uses on the ground floor and be built as low as possible, where possible, adjacent to the street.
4. Where possible, the narrow dimension of parking garages should front streets.
5. Lining street frontages of parking structures with residential townhomes or commercial uses is encouraged to maintain a strong pedestrian environment. Commercial storefronts should have a minimum depth of 20 feet with greater depths preferred.



DESIGN INTENT

- Integrate parking garages into the urban design fabric of the area.
- Minimize the utilitarian appearance of the structures.

Landscaping

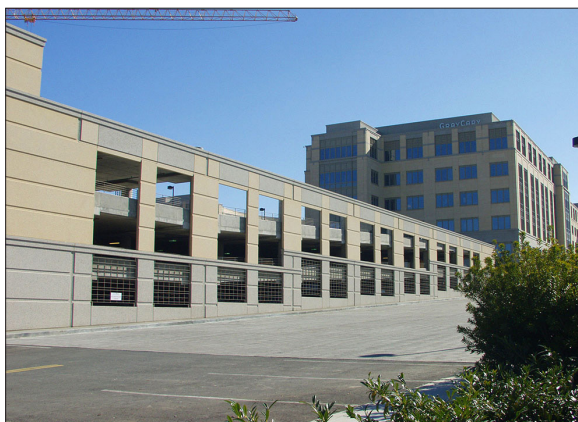
1. Unless active uses line a garage face, the structure should be setback from streets a minimum of 10 feet with pedestrian areas and landscaping used to screen the lower floor and break up the mass of the structure.

Plan Layout

1. Both vehicular and pedestrian entries should be well defined and attractive.
2. Access points to the parking structure for pedestrians should be located to avoid pedestrian/vehicle conflicts.
3. Elevators and stairs should be located along the exterior periphery of the building, preferably on a street side, and oriented so that the elevator lobby is visible from the street at each level. The use of glass or other similar transparent material on enclosed stairs and on the back of the elevator cab and shaft is encouraged to allow maximum surveillance from the exterior.



4. Flat floors are encouraged on outer tiers of above-grade garages since they facilitate conversion to other uses in the future and allow a design that relates to other nearby buildings. Avoid sloped ramps on the exterior such as those shown on the example below.



Architectural Design and Details

1. The height and mass of the garage should be consistent with the urban design fabric within which the structure is located. It should not be taller than the predominant height of nearby structures.
2. Some below-grade parking is encouraged to lower the overall height of parking garages over three levels.
3. Where a parking garage abuts a street, the visual impact of the garage should be minimized by treating the facade like an occupied building, such as in the example below where garage openings are designed to relate to the size and pattern of windows on the adjacent building.



4. Facade treatments should relate to the architecture of the primary structures on the site and should incorporate materials and architectural details from those buildings.
5. Avoid blank wall treatments. Where they are unavoidable, provide landscaping and/or public art work on the walls. Green wall options are encouraged for west and south facing elevations.



6. Pedestrian entrances to a parking garage should be identified through pronounced massing, increased detail, material changes, entry elements emphasis and signage.



8. A wall or other screening device of sufficient height to screen parked vehicles should be provided at each parking level. Alternatively, perforated metal screens, louvers or other perforated wall treatments may be considered on a case-by-case basis to screen views of parked cars.
9. Blend parking garages with the urban environment by using architectural elements such as:
- *Multiple punched-in window openings between structural columns.*
 - *Horizontal trims such as bands and cornices.*
 - *Vertical pilasters between structural columns.*
 - *Stone or marble trims and details at street level.*

10. Metal mesh or glass panels to form an outer facade for the structure may be considered if it is in keeping with the structures' setting in the urban fabric. Two examples are shown in the photos below.



11. Parking garages should be designed with exterior materials that are harmonious with surrounding buildings, and if part of a building complex, compatible with the exterior materials of the buildings they serve.
12. The exterior design of parking garages should have an open-air design with the first floor (ground level) walls being a maximum of three (3) feet high (except for shear walls).
13. Exterior elevations should be designed to minimize untreated facades. Long expanses of shear walls are not permitted.
14. Avoid non-transparent stair enclosures

15. The design treatment should be varied around the perimeter of the parking garage while maintaining an overall unity of treatment. Special attention should be given to the corners of the garage. See the photo below for one example of this variation.



16. Predominant exterior building materials should include any combination of brick, stone, stucco, metal or textured concrete masonry units. Bare or painted concrete as the only exterior facade material may be considered if architecturally treated with nice scoring or detailing, covered with perforated metal panels or other similar means to screen the concrete.
17. The softening of garage corners is encouraged.



18. The addition to infill treatment of open rectangular openings at each building bay is encouraged.



19. The addition of solar panels and trellis shade elements on parking garage top levels is strongly encouraged.
20. The use of roof tops for green roofs, rainwater collection for landscaping and recreation uses is also encouraged.

