

CHAPTER 10

DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR SITE FEATURES



Introduction

This chapter presents design guidelines for the treatment of site features. These include landscape elements as well as parking and service areas. Many of the design principles set forth in this chapter address considerations of buffering incompatible or visually obtrusive features and coordinating, or linking desired circulation systems. Others promote design that would be compatible with historic landscape traditions, while also accommodating changing uses and needs.

Topics Discussed in this Chapter:

1. Views
2. Landscape & Plant Materials
3. Site Retaining Walls
4. Cut-and-Fill
5. Fences
6. Building & Site Lighting
7. Residential Parking, Garages & Driveways
8. Public & Commercial Parking
9. Historic Accessory Structures
10. New Accessory Structures
11. Service Areas
12. Utilities
13. Snow Shedding
14. Accessibility

References:

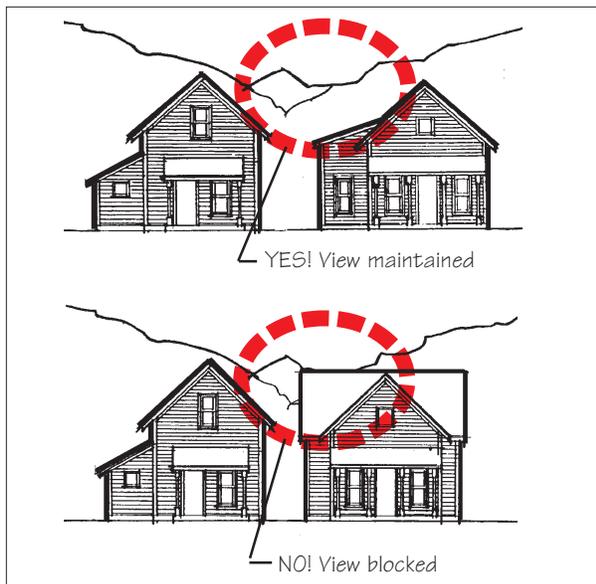
☞ See also Chapters 18.24, 18.30, 18.40, 18.42, 18.48, 18.50, 18.54 and 18.56 of the Truckee Municipal Code.

1. Views

Views to natural and historic features abound in Truckee and contribute to its unique setting. These view corridors should be respected. Maintaining views to the Truckee River from downtown is especially important.

A. Preserve views to significant features from the public way.

- 1) Site plans for new construction should include consideration of retaining view opportunities for future projects.
- 2) Landscaping is encouraged and, in some situations, may be required in order to mitigate other visual impacts. Such landscaping, when mature, should maintain existing views and solar access corridors.
- 3) See also the Truckee Development Code, chapter 18.24.040(B)(2) which provides more guidance on locating buildings to preserve views, vegetation and existing land forms.



Sloped roofs allow views along the side yard of a property. Such design elements are encouraged as methods of preserving view corridors.

2. Landscaping & Plant Materials

Traditionally, a simple palette of plant materials appeared in Truckee, in response both to the limited availability of varieties and to the restricted range of plants that would grow successfully in Truckee's climate. While some variety in the landscaping is anticipated on individual properties, the overall character should be in keeping with that seen historically. Where historic plantings survive, they should be preserved to the extent feasible.

Plant materials should be used to create continuity among buildings, especially in front yards and along the street edge. Plants should be adapted to the Truckee climate while also being compatible with the historic context. Consideration also should be given to the future care and maintenance requirements of these materials.

A. Preserve historic landscape features.

- 1) Existing on-site vegetation should be retained whenever possible and new landscaping should respect and incorporate existing landscape elements.
- 2) When trees must be removed, replace them with comparable plantings on the site.
- 3) Existing historic landscape features, such as fences, sidewalks and trees, should be preserved, and should be protected during construction.
- 4) Replacement plant materials should be similar in size or equivalent massing to the plants removed (e.g., a cluster of smaller new trees may be used to establish a massing similar to one large original tree).
- 5) See also the Truckee Development Code, chapter 18.30.080(A) which helps ensure the preservation of natural vegetation within the Town.

B. Existing, native landscaping should be incorporated into the final landscape.

- 1) See also the Truckee Development Code, chapter 18.40.040(A)(3) which establishes a credit towards minimum landscape requirements when native plants are retained.

C. In new landscape designs, use plant materials that are compatible with the historic context of Truckee.

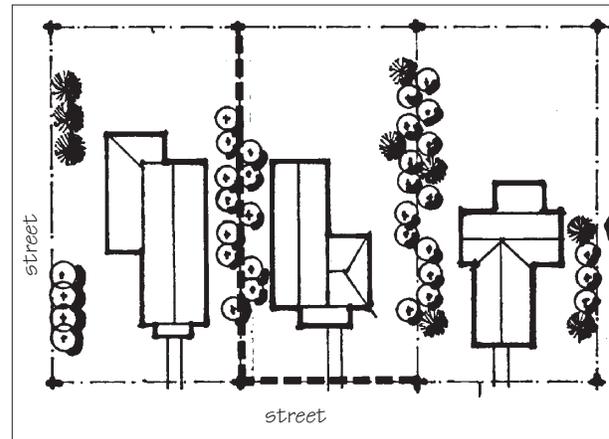
- 1) Landscaping schemes that are simple and subdued in character are encouraged.
- 2) Use plant materials in quantities and sizes that will have a meaningful impact in the early years of a project.
- 3) Hardy plant materials should be used to accent buildings, pedestrian areas, parking facilities and to provide shade.
- 4) Placement of plant materials should be used to establish a balanced relationship to buildings on and off site.

D. Use plant materials that are adapted to the Truckee climate.

- 1) Landscape designs should reflect a variety of deciduous and evergreen trees, shrubs, perennials and ground covers.
- 2) Plant materials should be selected for their structure, texture, color, ultimate growth characteristics and sense of unity with their surroundings.
- 3) A balance ratio of evergreen and deciduous plants should be planted.
- 4) Plant varieties that will survive the cold and snow loads should be used.
- 5) Shrubs, annuals and native plants in planter boxes (both fixed and free-standing) that are framed in natural wood or stone are encouraged.
- 6) See also the Truckee Development Code, chapter 18.42.080 for recommended plant materials.

E. When plant materials are used for screening they should be designed to function year-round.

- 1) When installed, these materials should be of a sufficient size and number to accomplish a screening effect year-round. For example, shrubs may be selected with a branch structure that will filter views in winter time, or mix evergreens with deciduous plants for a year-round effect.
- 2) Planting screens should include trees and shrubs. Ground covers and flowering perennials alone will not provide sufficient screening.
- 3) Plants should separate parking areas from buildings, walkways and rights-of-way.
- 4) See also the Truckee Development Code, chapter 18.30.110 which provides more information for screening and buffers between adjacent uses.



Maintain a landscaped edge along the edge of a site. This will help to define the road edge and provide a separation between pedestrian and vehicular areas and neighboring properties.

3. Site Retaining Walls

Stone retaining walls are used in some areas where steep slopes occur. Many of these have historic significance and should be preserved.

A. Preserve an original retaining wall.

- 1) Replace only those portions that are deteriorated beyond repair. Any replacement materials should match the original in color, texture, size and finish.
- 2) Do not introduce mortar into dry-stack retaining walls.
- 3) Painting an historic masonry retaining wall, or covering it with stucco or other cementitious coatings, is not appropriate.

B. Maintain the historic height, form and detailing of a retaining wall.

- 1) Increasing the height of a wall to create a privacy screen is inappropriate.
- 2) If additional screening is necessary, add planting materials or a fence.

C. Reduce water pressure on a retaining wall by improving drainage behind it.

- 1) Also provide drains in the wall to allow moisture to pass through it.

D. For a new retaining wall, use materials similar to those seen historically.

- 1) Natural rock or stone should be used for a new retaining wall.
- 2) Conventional unfinished concrete block is inappropriate.
- 3) Architectural block, with special texturing or color may be considered where it can be demonstrated that the result will appear to be in character with the area.

E. Minimize the perceived scale and mass of a new retaining wall.

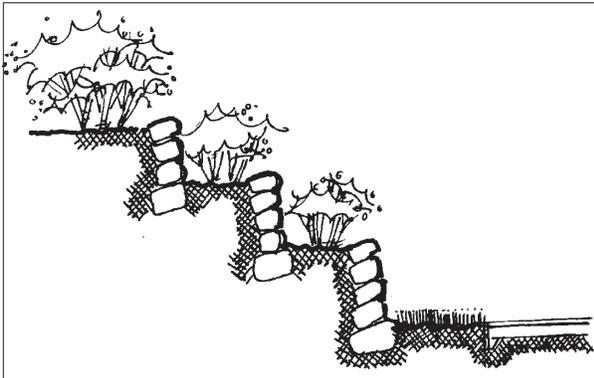
- 1) Where a wall is necessary, reflect the scale of traditional development and limit the width and height of a wall to the minimum necessary.
- 2) A wall that is less than four feet is encouraged.
- 3) Where the overall retaining height must be greater than four feet, use a series of terraces with short walls to maintain the traditional sense of a hillside where feasible.
- 4) Also consider varying the setback of individual wall to minimize the perceived overall width of a long wall.
- 5) Also consider varying the masonry pattern to provide variety in large walls.
- 6) See also the Truckee Development Code, chapter 18.30.120(F)(6) which provides more detail about retaining wall heights in conjunction with other Town setback requirements.

4. Cut-and-Fill

Site development may require cutting new driveways into relatively steep slopes along with substantial excavations for foundations. While basic engineering concerns are major issues in these cases, the visual impacts of these cuts can be significant. To the greatest extent possible, cutting-and-filling of sloping areas should be avoided but, where it must occur, the visual impacts should be minimized.

A. Minimize cut-and-fill excavation that would alter the perceived natural topography of the hillside.

- 1) Use earth berms, rock forms or stone retaining walls to minimize visual impacts of cuts. Hedges and fences may also be appropriate in some locations.
- 2) Simple rock walls that use native stone may be considered. Exposed gabions, large, continuous surfaces of smooth, raw concrete and related structures are inappropriate.
- 3) See also the Truckee Development Code, chapter 18.30.080 which helps prevent premature grading of the existing terrain.



Use earth berms, rock forms or stone retaining walls to minimize visual impacts of cuts. Hedges and fences may also be appropriate in some locations.

5. Fences

When used historically, fences were simple wood picket or metal. These were relatively low in height and had a "transparent" character, allowing views into yards and providing interest to pedestrians. A few historic fences survive and should be preserved. New fences should be compatible with the historic setting as well.

A. Preserve an original fence.

- 1) Replace only those portions that are deteriorated.
- 2) Typical historic fence types include: wood picket, wrought iron and twisted wire.
- 3) An historic wood fence should be protected against the weather with a painted finish.

B. A new fence should be similar in character to those seen historically.

- 1) A fence that defines a front yard is usually low to the ground and "transparent" in nature. A fence should not exceed four feet in height.
- 2) Solid, "stockade" fences do not allow views into front yards and are inappropriate.
- 3) A new wood fence should be painted.
- 4) Chain link, concrete block, unfaced concrete, plastic, fiberglass, plywood, slatted "snow" fences and mesh "construction" fences are inappropriate.
- 5) See also the Truckee Development Code, chapter 18.30.070(C) for fence height limitations that apply to residential zoning districts.



Historically, fences were low and had a degree of transparency. Original fences should be preserved and new ones should be designed to be in character.

6. Building & Site Lighting

Exterior lighting should be a subordinate element, so that the stars in the night sky are visible. Traditionally, exterior lights were simple in character. Most used incandescent lamps. These were relatively low in intensity and were shielded with simple shade devices. This tradition should be continued.

A. Exterior building lights should be functional and be in harmony with surrounding buildings.

- 1) Lights should not attract unnecessary attention to any one building.
- 2) External light fixtures should be simple in design and compatible with and complementary to the style of the building. They may also be contemporary, compatible designs.
- 3) Traditional materials such as baked enamel or porcelain, oxidized copper and cast iron should be used.
- 4) Steel, anodized aluminum or wood should be used for light standards.
- 5) Individual building lights should be secondary; whereas, the lighting of buildings should not detract from the primary lighting system which provides street and walkway illumination.
- 6) Lighting chaos and energy waste should be avoided.

B. Minimize the visual impacts of site and architectural lighting.

- 1) Indirect lighting should be used whenever possible so that the light source is hidden from direct view.
- 2) Unshielded, high intensity light sources and those that direct light upward are inappropriate.
- 3) Shield lighting that is associated with service areas and parking lots.
- 4) See also the Truckee Development Code, chapter 18.30.060(D) for exterior lighting shielding requirements.

7. Residential Parking, Garages & Driveways

Although not a part of the early street scene of Truckee, the automobile and its associated storage is a part of contemporary life. In all cases, the visual impacts of parking—which includes driveways, garages and garage doors—should be minimized. On-site parking should be subordinate to other uses and the front yards should not appear to be a parking area.

A. Avoid parking in the front yard.

- 1) Traditionally, front yards were not used as paved parking lots, and instead, yards provided views to facades and open space.
- 2) A parking pad located in the front of a residence is inappropriate.

B. A parking area for a commercial use in a residential setting should be located to the side or rear of a lot, and detached from the main structure.

C. A garage should not dominate the street scene.

- 1) A garage should be subordinate to the primary structure on the site.



When parking in the front yard can not be avoided, it should be subordinate to other uses.

D. A detached garage is preferred.

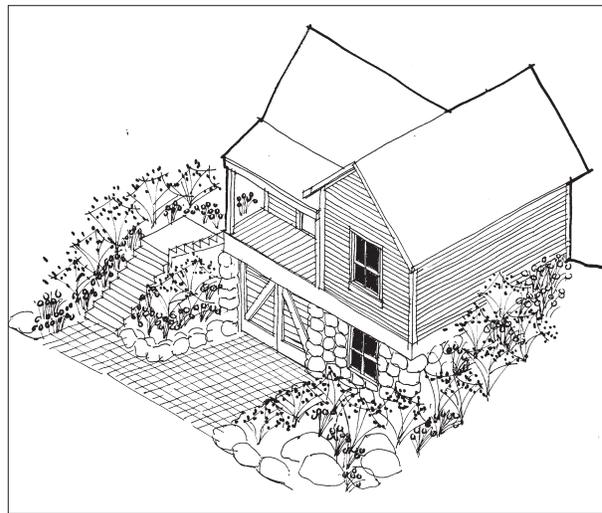
- 1) In order to minimize the impact of a garage on the street scene, locate it to the rear of the building. Setting a garage back substantially from the primary building front, may also be considered.
- 2) This will help reduce the perceived mass of the overall development.
- 3) The material and detailing of a detached garage should be utilitarian, to be compatible with other historic accessory structures.
- 4) See also the Truckee Development Code, chapter 18.48.080(j) for the dimensional requirements of a residential garage.

E. When a garage must be attached, the percentage of building front allocated to it should be minimized.

- 1) A garage door should be designed to minimize the apparent width of the opening. Use materials on the door that are similar to that of wall surface of the primary structure. This will make it read as an integral part of the structure. Wood clad garage doors are preferred.
- 2) When necessary, an attached garage should be detailed as part of the primary building.

F. Use paving materials that will minimize the impact a driveway will have on a streetscape.

- 1) Exposed aggregate concrete, gravel or chip and seal are appropriate paving materials.
- 2) Consider providing only ribbon strips of paving. This will reduce visual impacts—as well as allow more drainage through soils.
- 3) Plain asphalt or black top is not allowed.
- 4) Use materials that are not impervious to water and will not create runoff into the street or onto adjacent properties.
- 5) Consider sharing a single drive and curb cut where multiple driveways are needed.
- 6) See also the Truckee Development Code, chapter 18.48.080 for specific requirements related to driveways and site access.



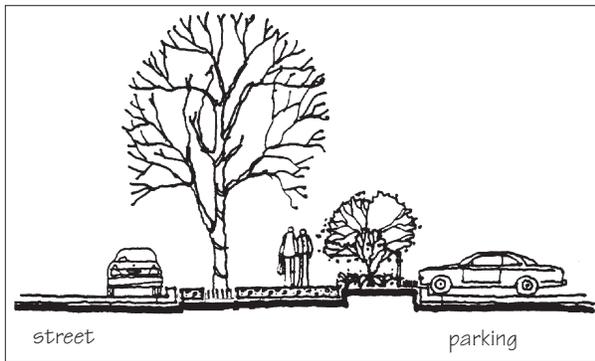
Use materials on the door that are similar to that of wall surface of the primary structure. This will make it read as an integral part of the structure. Wood clad garage doors are preferred.

8. Public & Commercial Parking

Public parking lots were not a part of Truckee's early history either. The visual impacts of features associated with storage of automobiles, including driveways, garages and parking lots should be minimized. Care should also be taken to provide pedestrian circulation that is separate from, and does not conflict with, vehicular circulation.

A. Screen a parking area from view from the street.

- 1) Parking and circulation areas should be screened from public streets by combinations of low walls, berms, plant materials and changes in grade.
- 2) See also the Truckee Development Code, chapter 18.50.050 which provides more guidance for parking lot design, including circulation and landscaping.
- 3) See also the Truckee Development Code, chapter 18.40.040 which provides landscaping requirements for parking lot perimeters and interiors, as well as for buffers.



Where a parking lot abuts a public sidewalk, provide a buffer.



Where a parking lot abuts a public sidewalk, provide a visual buffer. This may be a landscaped strip or planter. Use a combination of trees and shrubs to create a landscape buffer.



On a sloped site, terrace parking areas to follow the existing topography.

B. Design a parking area to be accessed from the rear of a site, rather than from the street.

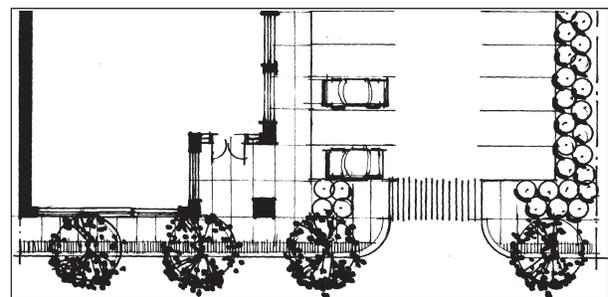
- 1) Parking placed along the side or rear of a site, or within a complex of buildings, allows project architecture and the beauty of the landscaped open space to take precedence.
- 2) See also the Truckee Development Code, chapter 18.48.080 for site access requirements.
- 3) See also the Truckee Development Code, chapter 18.50 for more guidance to parking lot design.

C. Minimize the visual impact that large areas of parking create.

- 1) Minimize the surface area of paving and consider using materials that blend with the natural colors and textures of the region. Options to consider are: modular pavers, gravel and grasscrete.
- 2) Large expanses of black-top or concrete are inappropriate.
- 3) When large parking lots are necessary, increase landscaping to screen the lot, and consider dividing the lot into smaller components. Provide landscaped "islands" in the interiors of lots. These may double as snow storage zones in winter months.
- 4) See also the Truckee Development Code, chapter 18.40.040 which provides landscaping requirements for parking lot interiors.
- 5) See also the Truckee Development Code, chapter 18.450 for parking lot design guidance.

D. On a sloped site, terrace parking areas to follow the existing topography.

- 1) Orient parking areas to fit within the topography. Placing a driving lane parallel to a site contour will reduce the need for cut-and-fill.
- 2) Use landscaping in terraced areas between parking lots.



Where a parking lot shares a site with a building, place the parking at the rear of the site or beside the building.

9. Historic Accessory Structures

Accessory structures are a part of the design traditions of downtown Truckee. They include garages, carriage houses, barns and sheds. Because accessory structures help interpret how an entire lot was used historically, their preservation is strongly encouraged.

A. If an existing accessory structure has historic significance, then its preservation is encouraged.

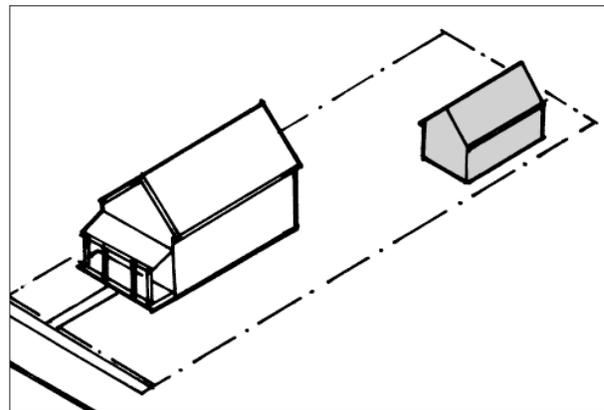
- 1) When treating an historic accessory building, respect its character-defining features such as its primary facade and roof materials, roof form, windows, doors and architectural details.
- 2) Avoid moving an historic accessory structure from its original location.

B. If an existing accessory structure is beyond repair, then replacing it in-kind is encouraged.

- 1) An exact reconstruction of the accessory structure is not necessary. However, the replacement should be compatible with the overall character of the historic structure, while accommodating new uses.



If an existing accessory structure has historic significance, then its preservation is encouraged.



Locate an accessory structure to the rear of a lot.

10. New Accessory Structures

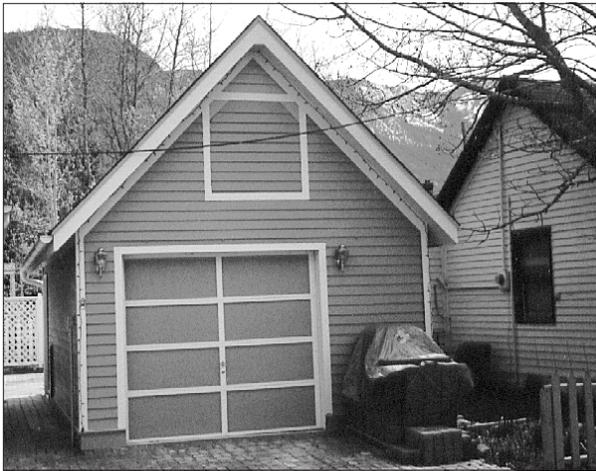
A new accessory structure should be subordinate to the primary structure on a site.

A. Locate an accessory structure to the rear of a lot.

- 1) Locating an accessory structure to the side of a primary structure, but set back substantially may also be considered.
- 2) See also the Truckee Development Code, chapter 18.30.120, Table 3-3, which provides setback requirements for residential accessory uses and structures.

B. Construct an accessory structure that is subordinate in size and character with the primary building.

- 1) In general, accessory structures should be unobtrusive and not compete visually with the house. While the roof line does not have to match the house, it is best that it not vary significantly.



An accessory structure should be similar in character to those seen traditionally. Basic rectangular forms, with hip, gable or shed roofs, are appropriate.



Trash areas for commercial uses should be screened from view, using a fence, hedge or enclosure.

- 2) An accessory structure should remain subordinate, in terms of mass, size and height, to the primary structure.

C. An accessory structure should be similar in character to those seen traditionally.

- 1) Basic rectangular forms, with hip, gable or shed roofs, are appropriate.

D. Maintain the traditional range of building materials seen on accessory structures.

- 1) Appropriate siding materials for secondary buildings include: unpainted or stained wood siding, wood planks, vertical board and batten siding or corrugated metal.
- 2) These materials should be utilitarian in appearance. The use of muted, natural colors and finishes is particularly encouraged.

E. Maintain the simple detailing found on accessory structures.

- 1) Ornate detailing on an accessory structure is inappropriate.
- 2) Avoid details that may give an outbuilding a residential appearance. Accessory structures should not mimic primary structures.

11. Service Areas

Service areas include places for loading as well as storage for trash, recycling containers, snow, firewood and site maintenance equipment. Many of these require access year-round and should therefore be carefully planned as an integral part of a site. At the same time, the visual impacts of service areas should be minimized. When laying out a site, adequate provision should be made for service areas. They should not simply be located in “left over” side yards, for example.

A. Service areas should not be visible from major pedestrian ways.

- 1) Locate a service area along the rear of a site, when feasible.
- 2) Trash areas, including large waste containers or dumpsters, should also be screened from view, using a fence, hedge or enclosure. For a larger storage area, consider using a shed to enclose it.

- 3) Consideration should be given to wintertime snow and ice buildup that could otherwise impede access to receptacles.
- 4) Combine service areas with those of other properties, when feasible.
- 5) See also the Truckee Development Code, chapter 18.24.040(B)(7) for more guidance regarding trash storage areas.

12. Utilities

Utilities that serve properties may include telephone and electrical lines, electrical transformers, ventilation systems, gas meters, propane tanks, air conditioners and telecommunication systems. Adequate space should be planned in a project from the outset and they should be designed such that their visual impacts are minimized.

A. Minimize the visual impacts of utilities and service equipment.

- 1) Locate utilities at the rear of a property and screen them.
- 2) Minimize the visual impacts of exhaust systems by integrating them into the building design.
- 3) Any utility device or piece of service equipment should have a matte or non-reflective finish and be integrated with the building colors.
- 4) See also the Truckee Development Code, chapter 18.30.160 for guidance on the undergrounding of utilities.
- 5) See also the Truckee Development Code, chapter 18.24.040(B)(7) for more guidance regarding the screening of utility equipment.

B. Screen rooftop appurtenances, such as mechanical equipment and antennas, from view.

- 1) See also the Truckee Development Code, chapter 18.24.040(C)(3) for more guidance.

C. Solar devices should not block views or significantly detract from the setting.

- 1) See also the Truckee Development Code, chapter 18.30.140 which provides guidelines for the placement and screening of solar equipment.

13. Snow Shedding

New buildings should minimize the potential negative impacts of snow shedding patterns on adjacent properties and pedestrian ways.

A. Provide for safe snow shedding and removal.

- 1) Commercial buildings with metal-clad roofs should have snow guards, brakes or other devices to prevent snow and ice shedding onto public ways.
- 2) Locate decks, courtyards and pedestrian ways such that snow shedding hazards are minimized.
- 3) Place crickets or other snow guard devices in such a way that they do not alter the form of the roof as seen from the street.
- 4) See also the Truckee Development Code, chapter 18.30.130 which provides snow storage area requirements for all developments with off-street parking except single-family dwellings, secondary residential units and duplexes.



Place crickets or other snow guard devices in such a way that they do not alter the form of the roof as seen from the street.

14. Accessibility

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) mandates that places of public accommodation be accessible to all users.

A. The guidelines introduced in this document should not prevent or inhibit compliance with accessibility laws.

- 1) All new construction should comply completely with the ADA.
- 2) Owners of historic properties also should comply to the fullest extent, while also preserving the integrity of the of the character-defining features of a building.
- 3) Special provisions for historic buildings exist in Federal and State accessibility laws that allow for some alternative design solutions.
- 4) Consult with the State Historic Preservation Office for more information regarding compliance or alternative design solutions for accessibility in an historic structure.

15. Newspaper Racks

Newspaper racks, when clustered at a corner or along sidewalks, can impede pedestrian activity and obscure the storefronts behind them. Their visual impact should be minimized.

A. Minimize the visual impacts of newspaper racks.

- 1) Newspaper racks will be grouped and screened by a specialty enclosure. The design of the enclosure is to be consistent with the building materials guidelines for new buildings.
- 2) A newspaper rack should be painted in a muted color.
- 3) The specialty enclosure should not impede access to crosswalks or on-street parking and should not be located at corners or on crowded pedestrian ways.