
ROUTE 12 CORRIDOR PLANNING COUNCIL

Site Layout Guidelines for Corridor Development



Prepared By:

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Route 12 Corridor Planning Council Site Layout Guidelines

INTRODUCTION

This is a joint corridor planning report prepared cooperatively by representatives from the Villages of Deer Park, Kildeer, Lake Zurich, Hawthorn Woods and North Barrington; Ela Township; and the Lake County Department of Planning, Building and Development; with the assistance of the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission.

Rand Road Yesterday and Today

The Rand Road corridor within the boundaries of Ela Township overlaps unincorporated land and the territory of five villages. This jurisdictional pattern presents a multiplicity of land use regulations within a relatively small area. Historically, residential development has been the primary land use pattern in this portion of Lake County. In recent years, however, increased population in Western Lake County, a concomitant increase in vehicular traffic along Rand Road and economic prosperity have all contributed to an accelerating trend of large-scale non-residential development in the area. In light of this increasing development pressure, leaders from the five villages have recognized that a joint-municipal approach to corridor land use planning would facilitate orderly growth along the corridor.

Formulation of Route 12 Corridor Planning Council

Representatives from Ela Township and the participating villages agreed in 1997 to convene a series of meetings to discuss shared strategies to enhance development along the portion of Rand Road within Ela Township. Representatives from the Lake County Planning Department and the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission were also invited to participate in the discussion. This group is referred to collectively as the Route 12 Corridor Planning Council.

The Corridor Vision

From the outset, Council members shared the vision of Rand Road as a gateway to and from Southwestern Lake County. The “gateway” concept becomes even more relevant as an ever-increasing number of motorists travel the Rand Road corridor on a daily basis. Formation of the Council presents an opportunity to harness this unique geographic characteristic. In turn, coordinated land use planning strategies can help foster in residents and visitors alike a “sense of place”. This collaborative effort could also help ensure that the Rand Road corridor stands out as an example of Lake County development at its best.

Establishment of Priorities

Meetings over the first two years focused attention on particular physical aspects of corridor development that merit improvement. Several development aspects were identified as presenting a significant impact on the physical character of corridor development, including landscaping, setbacks, signage, architecture and building height. It was recognized that treatment of all such aspects would involve considerable time and resources. Accordingly, the Council agreed to prioritize these issues for discussion, in order to establish a planning strategy that was both timely and manageable.

Site Layout Guidelines

Of the preceding aspects, corridor site layout has been established as the fourth priority for discussion. Site layout helps define the fabric of the urban environment; as elements such as parking, retention basins, buildings, and open space can be designed in a manner that reflects and promotes the aesthetic values of member communities. When designed in accordance with such aesthetic conventions, site layout elements can even complement or enhance a property's appearance. As such, corridor site layout guidelines represent an opportunity to "showcase" development within member communities along Rand Road.

Implementation of Site Layout Guidelines

These corridor design guidelines are intended to be implemented primarily through the local development review and approval process. Lake County and the five member villages all regulate development, in part, through the conditional use permit and planned unit development (PUD) process. Additionally, member villages review new development proposals in the context of annexations. All such processes allow the imposition of reasonable conditions on new development along the Route 12 Corridor. Member communities have agreed, accordingly, to incorporate these guidelines into the process of reviewing new development along Rand Road.

It is also envisioned that each member community will disseminate these guidelines to developers in order to encourage them to incorporate the guidelines into their development plans.

PROCESS OF FORMULATING SITE LAYOUT GUIDELINES

Initially, it was agreed that corridor site layout should create a pleasant visual experience for passing motorists and for visitors circulating within corridor developments.

The Council in turn established an action plan to identify site layout characteristics that tend to support this goal. From these characteristics, the Council would formulate a series of “visual performance standards”, or site layout guidelines intended to promote the desired effect for passing motorists and individuals visiting corridor developments. Ultimately, these guidelines could be used by the County and member villages in reviewing development plans.

Visual Preference Survey

In early 2004, Lake County representatives conducted a photographic survey of the site layouts along various existing corridor developments throughout the metro Chicago area. The results of this fieldwork formed the basis of a “visual preference survey”, designed to address aesthetic aspects of architecture. The Council had already successfully used this “visual preference survey” technique to establish a series of landscaping guidelines in 2000, sign guidelines in 2002, and architecture guidelines in 2003.

Specifically, after selecting a series of photographs representing a broad range of site layout conventions, Lake County representatives presented these photographs to the Council. Council members were then invited to discuss the photographs with their village commissioners and trustees and to rank the various site layout images in order of aesthetic preference. Council members were also asked to explain their aesthetic preferences.

Formulation of Site Layout Guidelines

Upon receipt and tabulation of the survey results, Lake County representatives identified site layout characteristics that the respondents repeatedly rejected, and site layout characteristic that the respondents ranked highly.

From the reaction of the survey respondents, clear preference patterns emerged. These preference patterns were distilled into site layout guidelines, which could then be incorporated directly into plan reviews.

For example, images depicting wide open sections of parking lots with sparse plantings elicited a consistently negative reaction from the survey respondents, whereas images depicting parking lots with well distributed landscaping drew consistently high scores. This preference pattern led to the conclusion that “large, unbroken, wide open sections of parking” are discouraged; whereas “parking lots that contain sufficient landscaping to visually soften views” are encouraged. This site layout guideline could then be utilized in creating a more aesthetically pleasing development pattern along Rand Road.

SITE LAYOUT GUIDELINES

The site layout guidelines are organized into four categories, based on major areas of concern elicited among survey respondents: Parking Layout; Retention/Detention; Building Arrangement; and Open Space.

These guidelines are not all-inclusive; future discussions are intended to elicit additional guidelines. The Council also retains the option to refine existing guidelines, when appropriate.

PARKING LAYOUT

- Parking lots that contain sufficient landscaping (both peripheral and island) so as to visually soften views of buildings and parked automobiles are encouraged



Preferred: Landscaped islands with liberally distributed foliage

- Landscape islands that balance low-growth species with trees are encouraged

PARKING LAYOUT

- Individual parking lot landscape islands that are of sufficient area to accommodate a variety of plant species are encouraged



Discouraged: Narrow landscape islands, minimally planted

- Minimally planted landscape strips are discouraged
- In addition to site perimeter open space buffers, parking lot landscaping is encouraged when incorporated within the interior and periphery of parking lots at a threshold of at least 15%

PARKING LAYOUT

- Parking lot landscaping that balances deciduous and evergreen plantings to ensure year-round foliage is encouraged, consistent with the Route 12 Corridor Planning Council Landscaping Guidelines



Preferred: Balance of plantings

- Clustered sections of parking, separated by buildings and/or landscaping, are encouraged

PARKING LAYOUT

- Large, unbroken, “wide open” sections of parking are discouraged



Discouraged: Large unbroken parking areas

PARKING LAYOUT

- The integration of transit stops into retail centers is encouraged



Encouraged: Sheltered transit stops

DETENTION/RETENTION

- Detention/Retention Facilities complemented by recreational amenities (e.g. trails, picnic areas, etc.) are encouraged



Preferred: Trail integrated into retention area

- Natural vegetative materials are encouraged in the design of any necessary barriers to a retention/detention facility; fencing, guardrails or walls are appropriate only when ornamental and architecturally compatible with the overall site architecture

DETENTION/RETENTION

- Retention/detention facility shorelines with uniform slopes, even or squared contours, and simple geometric perimeters are discouraged



Discouraged: Squared, man-made shorelines

- Plain grass retention/detention buffers are discouraged

DETENTION/RETENTION

- Retention/detention facility shorelines that emphasize naturalized slopes, contours and perimeters are encouraged

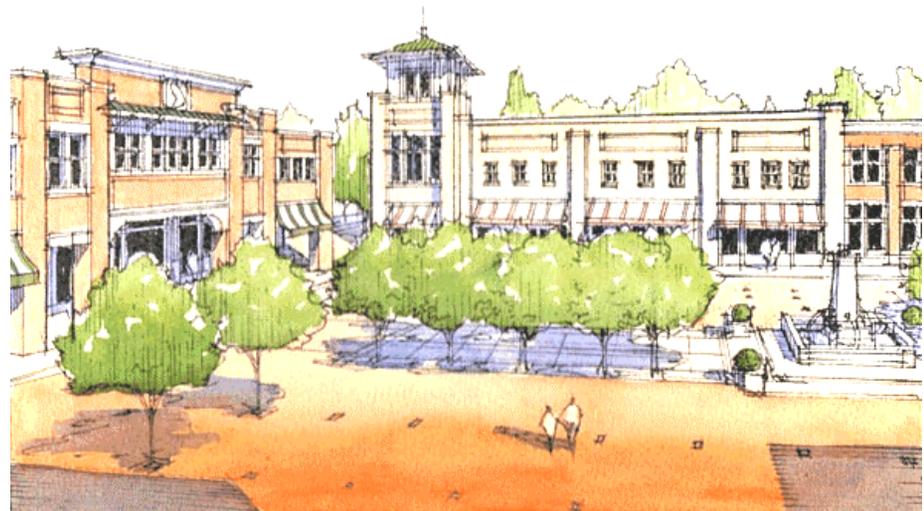


Encouraged: Natural contour to retention area

- Retention (wet-bottom) facilities are encouraged
- The arrangement of native vegetation within and around retention/detention facilities is encouraged
- Shared retention sites are encouraged

BUILDING ARRANGEMENT

- “Village Square” or courtyard building arrangements are encouraged, when incorporating recreational or park-like settings



Preferred: Buildings surrounding recreational amenities

BUILDING ARRANGEMENT

- Site layouts featuring pedestrian or road circulation between buildings are encouraged



Preferred: Building arrangement encourages pedestrian circulation

BUILDING ARRANGEMENT

- Single-user “Big Box” buildings are discouraged



Discouraged: Monolithic scale

BUILDING ARRANGEMENT

- Clustered buildings, in town-like or “Main Street” settings, are encouraged when complementary in architectural design, consistent with the Route 12 Corridor Planning Council Architectural Guidelines



Encouraged: Main-Street Character

BUILDING ARRANGEMENT

- Varied building setbacks are encouraged



Encouraged: Buildings set at varying distance from ROW

OPEN SPACE

- Open space areas featuring recreational amenities (e.g. benches, walkways) are encouraged



Preferred: Open space designed with amenities

- The incorporation of open space into “Village Square” or courtyard building arrangements is encouraged

OPEN SPACE

- Open space areas that incorporate dense or mature vegetation are encouraged



Encouraged: Dense arrangement of landscaping material

- Open space areas that incorporate variations in topography are encouraged

OPEN SPACE

- Flat, sparsely planted open space areas are discouraged



Discouraged: Flat, sparsely vegetated open space

- Small, dispersed “strip” or marginal open space areas are discouraged

OPEN SPACE

- Perimeter open space that incorporate buffer-like improvements, such as berms and dense plantings and other similar features are encouraged, consistent with the Route 12 Corridor Planning Council Landscaping Guidelines



Encouraged: Densely planted perimeter open space buffer

- Large, concentrated open space is encouraged

OPEN SPACE

- Where possible, integrating portions of open space areas into larger bike and/or pedestrian path networks is encouraged



Encouraged: Bike and pedestrian path integrated into open space