

# City of Winter Park

# PARKING GARAGE DESIGN GUIDELINES

## STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

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The purpose of adopting Parking Garage Design Guidelines, within the Zoning Regulations, is to provide for architectural appeal and compatibility of the size, scale, intensity/mass and image of the parking garage structures with adjacent buildings and with the context of the surrounding area/neighborhood. Parking garages are significant buildings and the building facade treatment must be appropriately scaled and present a pedestrian friendly street image in order to compliment the commercial or multi-family project that it serves as well as be compatible and not detract from the character of the surrounding area. Additionally the interior of parking garage needs to be well lighted and attractive in order to provide a safe environment and one in which the users feel comfortable.

These Parking Garage Design Guidelines, within the Zoning Regulations, are supplementary to the other regulations within the Land Development Code and Building/Fire/Life Safety Codes of the City. All future parking garages shall comply in their design to the maximum extent possible with these guidelines. As to applicability, they shall apply to parking garages (multiple levels) and parking decks (single level) but shall not apply to underground parking structures (at least half the floor height below grade) and shall not apply to parking garages within the interior of projects that are not visible on the exterior.

The Zoning Regulations outline the process for administering these design guidelines. In summary, the city staff will make a determination as to whether the proposed plans for a parking garage structure conform to these design guidelines. Such determinations are then able to be appealed to the Planning and Zoning Board/City Commission or as will be more customary, the design will be part of a Conditional Use review. Economic impact shall not be deemed an adequate reason for non-compliance and shall not be a factor in any appeal or in determining the application of these requirements.

# GENERAL BUILDING ARRANGEMENT

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## **Build to line**

The street front facade of any parking garage structure shall be setback at least ten (10) feet from any street facing property line in order to provide land area for landscape screening unless the Zoning District provides for a lesser setback requirement or such lesser setback is approved via exception by the City Commission. If there is a desire to increase sidewalk width for enhanced pedestrian utility then some of that setback area may be utilized for added sidewalk width. In zoning districts with larger street front setbacks, those larger setbacks shall apply. Within the Central Business District area, the street setback may be reduced to five (5) feet.

If the parking garage contains a below grade or basement parking level(s) with exterior access driveway ramp (at least one-half below existing grade) then the street setback for that street side providing driveway ramp access to the below grade level(s) shall be a minimum of thirty (30) feet in order to provide grade/slope transition that is not excessively steep.

## **Parking garage orientation, access & design**

Parking garages should be located to the rear or side of the primary building such that the primary street frontage holds the principal building which then screens to the extent possible the parking structure. To the extent that a parking garage is serving existing building(s) or required by expansions to existing building(s) then this requirement may not apply. Liner buildings on the exterior of parking garages sides which face streets are encouraged but not required. Access points whenever possible should be on the secondary or side streets versus the primary frontage unless there are multiple access points and the setback to the parking garage from the primary street is at least sixty (60) feet from that right-of-way.

Access points should provide clear definition of the entry to the development. Unless specifically approved by the City, there shall be a minimum of two (2) entry and exit points shall be incorporated into the structure design. All ingress/egress points shall be designed to ensure adequate emergency vehicle access to the parking structure.

The interior of parking structures shall have a minimum floor to ceiling height of eight (8) feet and shall have signage indicating the clearance height.

# PARKING GARAGE FAÇADE TREATMENT

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The most important factor in the success and acceptance of parking garages in Winter Park is the exterior façade design treatment. How the parking garage looks on the exterior is just as vitally important to this community as how the facility functions on the interior. These parking garage design guidelines have been adopted primarily because the parking garage design community and development partner clients have placed economies of construction over architectural design.

Some members of the parking garage design community strive to produce the most cost efficient parking garage facilities for their clients that contain little or no architectural façade treatments other than stucco or alternating paint colors. That approach is not acceptable to the City of Winter Park. To that end, these guidelines for exterior façade treatments have been adopted in order to require the mandatory inclusion of exterior and interior design components. The concept that good design costs too much is not permitted as a grounds for appeal from these parking design guidelines as exterior and interior appearance is critically important for this community.

A parking garage is typically a precast concrete panel structure. If one does nothing to cover or screen the “bones” of the parking garage, then the result is parking garages that look like these pictures.



Example of minimal architectural treatment or interest



Example of precast concrete panels with minimal interest



Example of cost being the sole design motivation

## Parking garage façade treatment design elements

The goal for parking garage design in the City of Winter Park was set with the construction of the Rollins College/Sun Trust parking garage. On many occasions, subsequent parking garages have been permitted with conditions that they should be designed to “Sun Trust parking garage standards”. In order to achieve that outcome on the exterior of parking garages, there are five methods of incorporating elements within the design in order to achieve successful architectural facades on parking structures. Location and visibility is an important factor in the degree to which the full menu of façade design elements must be applied. However, with parking garages that front on streets or are largely visible from adjoining streets then the following sections outline those elements which shall be necessary for the approval of a parking garage structure within the City of Winter Park. In general then those exterior design plans shall include the following elements which are:

1. Architectural compatibility with the principal building(s) when appropriate;
2. Exterior landscaping to screen the structure within setback and streets;
3. Exterior façade coverings on the concrete panels;
4. Fenestration for the openings and control over the design of the openings; and
5. Exterior architectural articulation and color composition.

## Application of the parking garage design façade treatment requirements based on the location of the parking garage

The importance of these mandatory design elements depends in large part upon the location of the parking structure. There are situations where the parking garage structure is screened by linear exterior building components or located on a portion of the project that is less visible to the public.

Three such examples can be cited in Winter Park. The parking garage serving the office buildings at Morse Boulevard and Pennsylvania Avenue has the entire south and western sides screened and concealed by the buildings along Morse. The parking garage in the interior of the block serving the Village Park apartments on Denning Drive is similarly screened by buildings. The parking garage for the Paseo Apartment project (pictured below) is located in the rear corner distant from view from public right of ways.

In these types of circumstances and only in these situations, the City may, by specific approval, allow the use of more limited exterior façade design treatments than those outlined and required within these parking garage design guidelines. Designers should consult with the planning staff to determine whether the location criteria will apply that can result in less than a complete application of these design guidelines. Otherwise for parking garages facing public streets or visible thereto, the mandatory design elements within the guidelines shall be required.



Location is not visible from public streets so the exterior façade may exclude design treatment.



Interior location minimizes public visibility allowing landscape buffering alone to suffice.

## Architectural compatibility with the principal building(s)

A general design guideline that can be found in all jurisdictions is the desire to have some elements of architectural conformity between the principal building(s) and the parking garage. This is beneficial when done successfully. These design guidelines encourage designers to make attempts for architectural conformity as one of the design goals. For example, matching a brick veneer façade or stone façade from the principal building can provide beneficial architectural consistency. However, this design guideline is not a ‘be all-end all’. It also can be an excuse for doing nothing. One such example would be just using the same stucco or paint color as the principal building. The other design challenge is that while the principal building is typically broken up architecturally by windows, storefronts, signage, etc., the parking garage is a large monolithic structure that needs other design elements to achieve architectural interest.

One of the more successful examples of architectural compatibility is the Bank of America parking garage. These photos show examples of architectural compatibility done successfully (right).



Bank of America parking garage on New England Avenue which successfully incorporates common architectural elements and design within two separated buildings as shown above and below.



Steelhouse Apartments on Colonial Drive with parking garage shown in the photo to the right.



## Landscape screening of parking garages

One method to provide for the enhanced visual appeal of parking garages is to hide them from view with significant landscaping and trees. This can be a successful approach and a critical element in the total design package. However, landscape screening alone is not to be used in place of exterior façade treatments but to complement those design features.

Below are pictures of successful examples within Winter Park where the use of landscaping/trees successfully screens the view of the parking garage by landscape elements.



Mature oak trees screen the view of the garage



Landscape buffer screens an otherwise non-descript facade



Landscaping is one element in attractive look of the Sun Trust garage.



Significant landscape screening works to screen a very long wall façade of this parking garage

## Exterior façade coverings on the concrete panels

One of the most important design elements is to add “skin” to the concrete panel “bones” of the parking garage. These exterior façade coverings shall be brick, stone or other complimentary materials that provide a covering to concrete structure. Reliance solely on stucco, scored stucco and paint alone is NOT an acceptable exterior façade covering to meet this design objective. In addition, the ground level of the parking structure shall include a ‘water table’ or base element around the entire structure of architectural materials and interest other than the precast or block at least three to four (3-4) feet in height.

Included below are some pictures that illustrate this done successfully, along with other examples of design elements that are not permitted.



Articulation, color changes, expression lines and window grills combine successfully.



Exceptional window/opening treatments combine with cornice and color.



Cornice, expression lines, window boxes and window grills.



Planter boxes, window grills, protruded balconies and window framing provide the appearance of windows.

## **Fenestration for the openings & design of the openings**

The design of the openings on the exterior of parking garages and the fenestration and/or coverings for those openings is critically important. These design guidelines prohibit the use of wire cables as the sole barrier within openings. These design guidelines can permit railings covering only half of the openings but on a limited basis. The design goal is decorative grillwork added to the openings and fenestration to resemble windows to the maximum extent possible. This is an essential component of the design of parking garages in order to replicate a window pattern so it appears more as a building than as a parking structure. Behind the metal grillwork designers are encouraged to utilize a mesh screen to the maximum extent possible in order to provide a backdrop which will appear as if the opening is an actual window.

This requirement then also controls the amount of openings, as substantially opened sides which reveal the visibility of vehicles parked within the garage are not permitted under these guidelines. Prohibited are entire sides or substantial lengths of parking garage walls designed to be open with no fenestration. Prohibited are long runs of openings that do not conform to or replicate a window or storefront pattern. Prohibited is metal grillwork within the openings that do not replicate a window or storefront pattern.

The openings should be larger on the ground floor in order to replicate storefront windows and smaller on the upper levels in order to replicate the size of windows. Based upon the local Building Code interpretation in Winter Park, the opening requirement for non-mechanically ventilated garages can be met by calculating the entire area of openings and discounting any de minimus covering that is accomplished by addition of railings, grillwork or mesh screening.

## Exterior architectural articulation & color composition

There shall be architectural articulation on all sides of the parking structure visible from a public right-of-way. The articulation shall be of architectural materials and interest other than the precast concrete or block and shall extend at least six (6) inches from the precast or block structure.

In order to provide aesthetic interest, the exterior shall contain a variety of materials and colors. Below are some pictures that illustrate this done successfully of design elements not permitted.



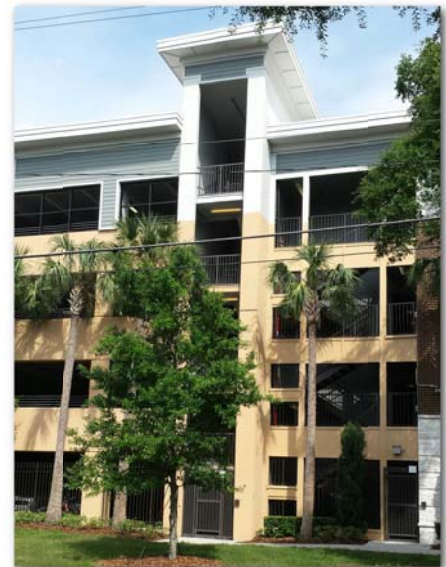
Building wall articulation (in's and out's) and color variation adds to the visual appeal.



Cornice, expression line and larger ground floor windows resembling storefront windows add to the visual appeal.



Articulation and color variation adds to the visual appeal.



Articulation of the stair tower adds to visual appeal.

# INTERIOR PARKING GARAGE TREATMENTS

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The interior of parking structures must be well lighted and provide a sense of safety and an inviting environment for the users. Typically as a cost control feature, the interior of parking garages are simply the grey unadorned concrete flooring, ceiling, columns and retaining walls with minimal lighting. The interior environment can be made much more inviting and allow for increased safety and illumination except that designers do not wish to incur those costs. As a result the interior of most parking garages resembles that of an unfinished basement. In order to provide for the safety and illumination benefits all parking garage interiors shall comply with the following design requirements:

1. Interior side walls, columns and retaining walls as well as all columns shall be painted a light color to improve illumination and safety.
2. All exposed mechanical equipment and piping should be painted to match the interior of the structure.



**Above:** Well-lighted interior provides a safe and inviting environment.

**Left:** Decorative colorful artwork.

**Above & below right:**  
Note painted columns and side walls.



# GOOD FAÇADE TREATMENT EXAMPLES

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Successful articulation, color variation and window treatment for openings.



Successful articulation, color variation and window treatment for openings.



Architecture originality masks the function as a parking garage.



Sun Trust garage with cornice, color, window boxes, fenestration of the opening and landscape buffering combine successfully.



WP Towers garage with cornice, articulation, stair tower, window fenestration, planter boxes and opening framing details combine successfully.



Kansas City Library which shows that a parking garage can look like anything you want it to look like.

# AWNINGS & CANOPIES

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Awnings or Canopies are another exterior design feature that is encouraged to make the parking garage look more like a habitable building. They can be strategically placed over the garage openings to create the appearance of windows in a systematic method or awnings can be placed over the ground level opening or garage entry/exit. Awning and canopies are also encouraged over the pedestrian stair and elevator access points as a practical method for rain and sun protection.

Below are examples where this has been accomplished successfully.



Awnings over the ground floor openings create the look of storefronts.



Awnings or shutters over upper floor opening create the look of an office building.

# Rooftop stair tower and elevator design

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While the rooftops of parking garages are the last resort for parkers, that exterior environment and visual appeal is also an important element for successful parking garage design. Too often the rooftop stair tower and elevator is nothing more than a concrete appendage with a level number painted on the side. But with some architectural interest and paint those elements can be attractive features to the rooftop level.

These design guidelines shall require that the rooftop elevator and stair tower elements include architectural features such as pitched roofs, architectural materials in a fashion that compliments the overall style of the project/parking garage. Painting on the exterior of these elevator/stair towers can make a significant difference. Murals or artwork of a non-advertising nature are encouraged to be painted on the elevator stair tower interior facing walls in order to make the rooftop or interior parking garage environment more interesting and appealing. Below are pictures of the do's and don'ts for rooftops.



Unacceptable example with no architectural design elements.



Successful incorporation of architecture for the stairway element.



Pitch roof, roof tile and architectural design elements combine successfully.



Pitch roof, roof tile and architectural design elements combine successfully.

# Lighting

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Lighting can enhance or detract from the appearance of the parking structure and be distracting to pedestrians and motorists if used improperly. On the exterior of the parking garage it should be used sparingly to accent signage, entrances, architectural details, and enhance the overall appearance of the property. Lights should be shielded and directed away from the view of pedestrians and motorists. Lighting within the interior levels of the parking structure and within the stairwells shall be at levels necessary for the safety and security of the users and designers are encouraged to design to exceed those levels in order to create a safe and inviting interior environment. Lighting on the top open rooftop level shall consist of lights including fixtures no higher than sixteen (16) feet above the floor level and shall be mounted on the interior (not exterior) areas of the rooftop level.



Low height poles and fixtures reduce the off-site rooftop visibility of rooftop lighting. Directional fixtures reduce light spread and meet “dark sky” requirements.

## Signage and Other Provisions

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Mechanical equipment, such as air conditioning units, satellite dish antennas or emergency generators, placed on roof tops or at grade must be hidden or screened from view by architectural elements compatible with the building design as per the Winter Park Land Development Code. If placed on a roof top, the equipment should be positioned near the center of the roof to reduce as much visibility of it as possible. Solid waste containers or dumpsters shall also be screened from view of surrounding properties, and plans for new construction must show the location of containers for solid waste disposal per the Winter Park Land Development Code.

Building Signage is also one of the most prominent visual elements on the street that affects the aesthetic appeal of the parking garage building. Appropriate signage is coordinated and adds interest and variety to the streetscape and parking garage façade, while enlivening the street scene.

# PARKING MANAGEMENT PLAN

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The construction of any parking garage shall require the submission and approval by the City of a Parking Management Plan (PMP). The PMP shall include, at a minimum, the following elements:

1. The PMP shall include any method of charging for use of the parking structure and the proposed charges to be incurred for use of the parking garage. Without the express approval of the City, the parking garage shall not charge any fees in any manner to park within the parking garage or include charges to tenants for the ability to park within the parking garage. Any proposal to change for parking either directly or indirectly with tenant leases shall include the method by which visitors to the residential units or customers/clients to the businesses shall be entitled to park without payment of fees so that such visitors/customers/clients are not incentivized to park off-site on streets or other properties.
2. The PMP shall also include and require the City approval of signage and the location of such signage that reserves parking for specific tenant business usage. The City may require that such reserved parking signage provide for the public use of those spaces at nights or on weekends when such businesses are closed in order to facilitate the public benefit of the parking structure.
3. The PMP shall also include the contacts for the property management company responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of the parking structure. Any dangerous or unsightly conditions such as trash, broken glass or graffiti shall be remedied with 48 hours of contact from the City or the failure to remedy shall be immediate grounds for action by the Code Enforcement Board.

It shall be the responsibility of the Owner(s) of the parking structure to request approval of any amendment to the PMP and no changes to the operations of the parking garage shall be undertaken without such consent.

Both the Owner(s) of the parking structure and the City may seek amendments or changes to the PMP. The City may seek changes to the PMP when the operation of the parking garage creates situations that adversely affect the City or other property owners.

# COMPREHENSIVE PLAN GUIDANCE

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There are several policies within the Comprehensive Plan that relate to parking garages. Aside from the traditional setbacks that apply to all buildings, Policy 1-3.8.2 requires that above grade parking garages must be at least 100 feet from any single family or low density residential property. Also Policy 1-2.1.4, Policy 1-2.1.6 and Policy 1-3.8.2 require that the floor area of above grade parking garages shall be included in Floor Area Ratio and Lot Coverage calculations. However, public parking garages owned by the City or the portion of parking provided in excess of the parking requirements for a building project may be excluded from the floor area ratio calculation by the City Commission in order to encourage projects to provide parking in excess of the minimum code requirements. The definition of private parking garages is as follows:

## **Private parking garage**

Any parking structure, above grade, within which parking is provided as required by the parking requirements of the Land Development Code to meet the code requirements for the private (non-public) use of building space, be it for retail, office, restaurant, residential uses, etc. Regardless of the fact that the “public” uses the parking garage spaces as customers, clients, residents, visitors, or employees; if the parking space floor area is necessary to meet the code requirements, it is defined as private parking. Where a building project provides parking in excess of code requirements and such parking is open and available to the public without restriction, that pro-rata share of the parking garage floor area may be defined as public parking for the purposes of this provision, if approved by the City Commission and deed restricted as public parking as defined in the public parking garage provision of this Comprehensive Plan.