

# Fort Sanders Neighborhood Conservation District Design Guidelines



These design guidelines were adopted by:  
Knoxville-Knox County Metropolitan Planning Commission on August 10, 2000  
Knoxville Historic Zoning Commission on July 20, 2000  
Knoxville City Council on September 13, 2000

# Fort Sanders Neighborhood Conservation District Design Guidelines

Prepared by  
The Knoxville-Knox County Metropolitan Planning Commission

These design guidelines and the creation of a Neighborhood Conservation District are outgrowths of the Fort Sanders Neighborhood Plan that was adopted by the Knoxville Knox County Metropolitan Planning Commission and the Knoxville City Council in the Spring of 2000.

One of the guiding principles of the plan was to designate a core area as a conservation district that recognized the architectural uniqueness and character of the Fort Sanders neighborhood. This document was prepared to realize that principle.



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# **The Fort Sanders Neighborhood Conservation District**

## **Section 1: INTRODUCTION**

## The Purpose of Design Guidelines

The purposes of the design guidelines are to:

- Foster development that is compatible with the historic buildings in the Fort Sanders neighborhood
- Promote sustainable neighborhood development
- Address dimensional constraints, that have resulted in requests for variances, while maintaining historic features, such as more shallow lot setbacks
- Provide guidance for decisions regarding the demolition of property

The guidelines are not intended to regulate how you may use your property. The underlying zoning regulates the uses associated with property. In the case of new development, lot coverage and height requirements are regulated by the underlying zoning. There are three critical elements in any zoning district that determine the intensity of development: lot coverage, parking requirements and open space.

In developing these guidelines, measures were taken to avoid requests for variances. These include reductions in yard requirements, reductions in parking stall width requirements, and various provisions for open space (for example, allowing porch dimensions to be

counted toward required open space).

With the future development of the Fort Sanders neighborhood, the relationship of lot coverage, parking area and open space that is established through these guidelines should not be compromised.

The Neighborhood Conservation District Design Guidelines apply only to the addition of space to an existing building, the construction of new buildings, or the demolition of existing buildings. Other changes, including such things as interior alterations, rewiring or plumbing, painting, the addition of artificial siding or roofing, even though they may require a building permit, will not require approval of the Knoxville Historic Zoning Commission.

Approval by the Knoxville Historic Zoning Commission is required if property owners in the Neighborhood Conservation District plan to make additions to existing buildings, construct new buildings or demolish existing buildings.

A Certificate of Appropriateness is required before an owner can obtain a building or demolition permit. To apply for a Certificate of Appropriateness, the owner should contact the Knoxville Historic Zoning Commission staff, who will review the project.

Over time, the intent is to create a pleasant, sound neighborhood, composed of

harmonious architecture — achieving a compatible blend of the old and new.

## Building Upon Tradition

Fort Sanders was originally known as West Knoxville. Its historic attributes were built over a 50-year period, starting in the 1880s. Its architecture includes fine examples of Queen Anne, Shingle, Craftsman and a number of Revival styles.

Fort Sanders was home to various businessmen, politicians and University of Tennessee faculty. It was also the neighborhood of James Agee who, in writing *A Death in the Family*, recalled “the houses corresponded; middle sized, gracefully fretted wood houses, built in the late nineties or early nineteen hundreds with small front and side and more spacious backyards, and trees in the yards and porches...”

During the 1920 to 1940-era, brick apartments, often designed in Mediterranean-Revival styles, were built west of 17th Street.

Most of the historic buildings have similar proportions, materials, features, and setbacks. Those design elements establish the principles for these guidelines.

## Historic Forms

Features in pre-1940 housing that are significant in developing the guidelines:

- Bays, creating an added dimension along the street
- Porches, adding architectural rhythm
- Consistent foundation height
- Variation in design but consistency in proportions of windows and entrances
- Similar roof pitches
- Similar front yard space, framed by bays and porches
- Access from alleys to garages or parking
- Houses fronting the side street



# **The Fort Sanders Neighborhood Conservation District**

## **Section 2: THE DESIGN GUIDELINES**





## A. HEIGHT, SCALE & MASSING

*Because houses were typically developed during the same era, there is consistency in the proportions of the older buildings.*

*Three significant elements – similar height, bays extending toward the street, and porches – provide pleasant architectural rhythm. Those elements are important in designing infill housing and larger scale buildings. Apartment buildings created before 1940 often had proportions similar to the larger homes.*

1. **Foundation heights should be consistent with other pre-1940 buildings in the neighborhood.**
2. **Single-family detached infill housing should be proportional to other pre-1940 houses in terms of height and width.**
3. **With redevelopment of two or more lots for apartment, office, commercial or mixed use development, street-facing facades of new buildings should be broken up with bays or porches that are consistent with the dimensions of historic buildings in the neighborhood.**
4. **Apartment buildings shall have porches with an outside entrance from the street for every 50 to 75 feet of street frontage. Porches should be proportional to pre-1940 housing.**
5. **The height of new apartment, office and commercial buildings, including a mix of those uses within a building, shall be limited by the underlying zone. The front and side street yard provisions shall be the same as those for single-family detached construction for the first three stories. Upper stories shall be set back further from the street.**
6. **For the first 35 feet, buildings should have similar setbacks, bays and covered entrances that complement the historic architecture on the street.**
7. **Upper stories should be stepped back at least 8 feet. In addition to providing a pedestrian scale at street level, the landings should be used for balconies, providing open space to those who use the building. Proportional stepbacks would be expected for higher levels.**
8. **With such high rise development, parking should be provided under the structure or in a parking garage.**

## B. ROOFS

*Historic Fort Sanders houses have steep roofs, dormers, hipped roofs or other variations that enhance the neighborhood skyline.*

1. **Select a roof pitch that is in keeping with other pre-1940 houses of the neighborhood, not being less than an 8/12 pitch.**
2. **Use variations in the form of the roof above the second story such as gables at different angles, hipped roofs and dormers.**
3. **Use roofing materials that are in keeping with the historic development styles. Asphalt, shingle, tile, pressed metal and slate were used.**
4. **Darker shades of shingles were historically used and should be selected in new construction.**





## C. PORCHES

*Porches were universal in Fort Sanders. They are essential in providing architectural harmony along the street. They also served as a place to enjoy pleasant weather and to socialize. They continue to define the neighborhood, and provide security, offering a built-in neighborhood watch program.*

- 1. Provide porches with proportions and materials that complement pre-1940 housing. For clapboard type construction wood is the most appropriate primary material. Brick or cut stone are appropriate as foundations or in column supports.**
- 2. Porches should be no less than 6 feet deep and no more than 10 feet deep. They may be recessed behind the main setback line or alternatively can extend 10 feet into the front setback line.**
- 3. Porches and related features shall be counted in the open space calculations as follows:**
  - Porches: 3 times the floor space**
  - Wrought Iron Balconies: 100 square feet per opening (6-foot minimum width)**
  - Window Boxes: 25 square feet (per 3-foot width)**
- 4. In making additions to houses, up to three-fourths of a front porch may be enclosed with glass windows, leaving the open entry to the front door. (This provision does not apply to new construction.)**



## D. WALL MATERIALS

*Clapboard, shingle and brick were the main building materials in Fort Sanders. Stucco was occasionally used, typically in renovating houses in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.*

1. **Paint color is not regulated.**
2. **Clapboard (or clapboard-like materials such as aluminum or vinyl), shingle (or shingle-like material), or brick should be used.**
3. **Board and batten siding can be used on accessory buildings.**
4. **Quarried, square cut stone can be used on porches or other accents. Such stone should be used in constructing retaining walls.**
5. **In making additions to existing buildings, wall cladding should complement the original wall covering. Acceptable materials are clapboard, vinyl siding, cement fiber board, brick and stucco.**
6. **Materials that are not typical in pre-1940 construction should not be used. These include cinder block, “T-111” siding and stone facing.**



## E. WINDOWS AND ENTRANCES

*Windows were vertical in orientation and doors were generally wood with recessed panels or glass.*

1. Window proportions and symmetry should be similar to the pre-1940 styles in the neighborhood.
2. Windows should be double hung, sash windows. Vinyl or metal-clad windows may be used in place of wood frame windows.
2. Egress windows will have to be designed to comply with fire/building code provisions.
3. Accent windows are appropriate with new construction
4. Double hung sash windows are recommended for two to three-story new construction
5. Variations of double hung windows should be considered in relation to the design of new buildings. Inserts are acceptable to mimic traditional window forms.
6. The proportions of upper level windows should not exceed the proportion of the first level.
7. Upper level windows should be provided and aligned with doors.
8. There should be at least 50% transparency, that is created by windows or french doors and balconies, on the recessed breaks between sections of buildings, including buildings joined together.
9. Entrances to the building should be provided from the street, using doors that have similar proportions and features to pre-1940 architecture.
10. When parking areas are provided behind buildings, rear entrances are also allowed.
11. Wrought iron balconies are appropriate accents on stucco or brick
12. Window boxes are appropriate in all types of recommended construction.



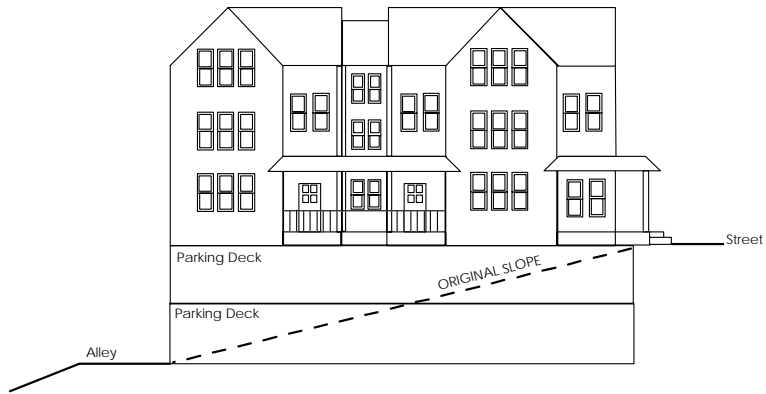
## **F. PARKING**

*When cars first became available, parking was typically on-street or off the alley, providing a pedestrian orientation to the neighborhood.*

1. In new building construction, the front yard space shall not be used for parking. Do not break up curbs or sidewalks to provide street access.
2. Provide parking access off the alley or off a side street.
3. Plant one native shade tree for every 50 feet of lot width, adjacent to or as islands within the parking area. An oak or maple are examples of native shade trees. The minimum space for a tree planting area is 7' x 7'; open space, composed of grass or other natural ground cover, should be at least three times the space devoted to tree planting areas within the parking lot.
4. In constructing residential parking, 8.5-foot stall widths and 24 foot wide lane widths may be used for 90° angled parking lots.
5. On-street parking may be counted in fulfilling the off-street parking requirements, provided a parking permit program is created.
6. By providing parking under the structure, the required lot area may be reduced 200 square feet for each interior parking space. This is an existing zoning provision.
7. Surface parking area shall always be to the rear of the building.
8. Primary or secondary entrances to the building from parking areas are allowable.

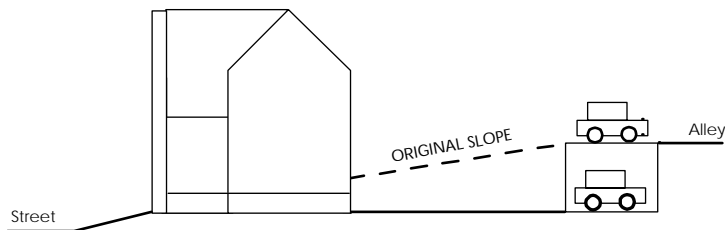
## An Example of Parking Alternatives on Slopes

### Development with Underground Parking



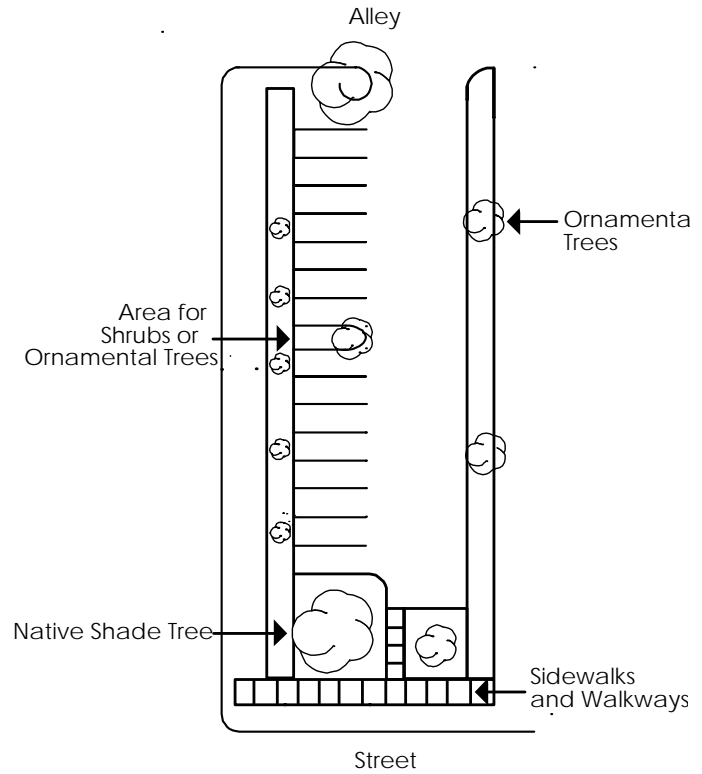
**Note:**

By providing parking under the structure, the required lot area can be reduced 200 square feet for each interior parking space.



### Development with Deck Parking off of the Alley

## An Example of Single-Lot Parking Development



## G. LANDSCAPING, FENCING & RETAINING WALLS

*Front yards in the neighborhood had oak, maples and magnolia trees and houses were framed by shrubbery. With trees on both sides of the street, there was shaded canopy over the sidewalks, making a walk through the neighborhood pleasant even on hot summer days. Fences were not used often in Fort Sanders. As James Agee observed, "The yards ran into each other."*

1. Plant one native shade tree (e.g. oak or maple) and one ornamental tree (e.g. dogwood) in both the front and rear yards for every 50 feet of lot width.
2. Plant shrubs near new buildings to complement the foundation height, windows and entries. Select species and a distance from the building that will not hard foundation materials.
3. Use waist-high wrought iron or similar appearing materials if front yard fences are constructed.
4. Privacy fences and hedges can be established in the rear yard.
5. Keeping with tradition, low, square cut stone, poured concrete or brick walls should be used in constructing retaining walls.





## H. ADDITIONS TO EXISTING BUILDINGS



1. Additions should be made to the rear or side of the building.
2. Lot coverage up to 50% is allowed with parking under the structure.
3. Transitional space shall be provided between the addition and the existing structure. This should include a courtyard (200 square feet minimum), and a connecting structure (e.g. porch or breezeway). The wall of the new connecting structure should not be continuous with the wall of the existing building, but have a minimum 4' x 6' indentation.
4. Bays at least two feet in depth shall be provided for 50% of the side facade.
5. Windows or French doors and balconies shall provide 10% to 20% transparency on the sides of buildings.
6. In the case of corner lots, bays composing 50% of the side addition should extend 5 feet into the side yard setback.
7. As an alternative to demolition, existing houses can be joined together for apartment development.
8. Expansion to a vacant side yard or side lot is acceptable.
9. Expansion to the front with a bay and/or a porch is acceptable.

**An Example of an Addition with Transition Space and Underground Parking on a Corner Lot**





## I. PLACEMENT ON THE LOT

*Fort Sanders lots are narrow and deep.*

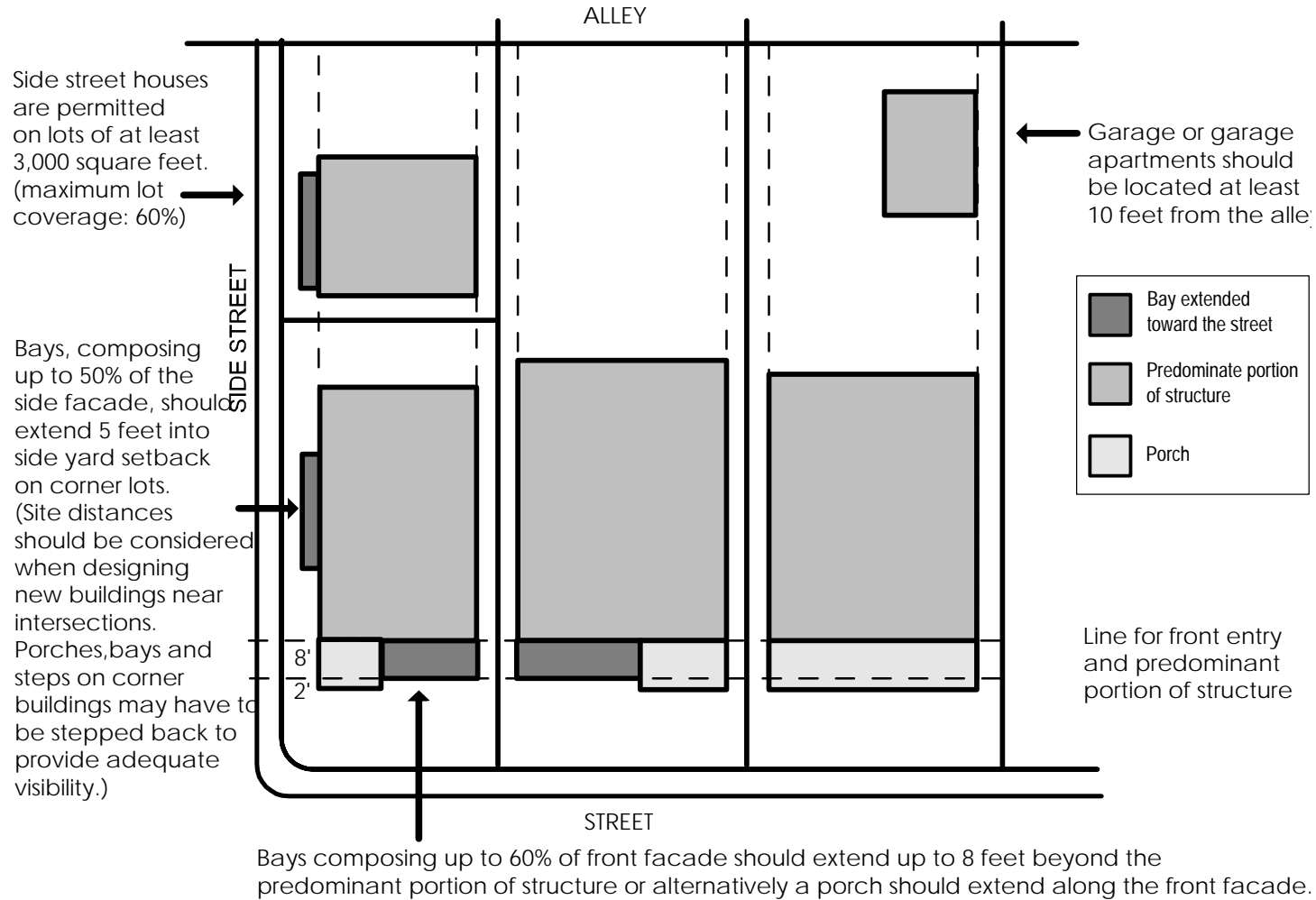
*Fifty feet by 140 feet dimensions are typical. The relationship to the street is critical in maintaining a pedestrian scale in the neighborhood. On most streets, the original setbacks were from 20 to 25 feet away from the sidewalk, less than 10 feet away from side lot lines and, in the cases of corner lots, often less than 10 feet away from the side street. Such distances were taken into account in preparing these guidelines.*

### Traditional Lot Development

*These provisions would typically apply to infill development, including one-to four-unit housing, small office, or commercial buildings on 'traditional'-size lots (defined as generally 50 feet in width).*

- 1. The front yard set back should be the same distance as the majority of pre-1940 houses on the block.**
- 2. With parking under the structure, the minimum rear yard setback is 15 feet.**
- 3. Porches should extend 8 to 10 feet into the front yard setback. Steps needed to reach the front of a porch may also extend into the front yard.**
- 4. Bays, composing up to 50% of the side facade, should extend 5 feet into side yard setback on corner lots.\***
- 5. Bays, composing up to 60% of the front façade, should extend up to 8 feet beyond the predominant portion of the structure or alternatively a porch should extend along the front facade.\***  
**\*NOTE:**  
This is a recognized exception to Article 5, Section 6B of the *Knoxville Zoning Ordinance*.
- 6. Site distances should be considered when designing new buildings near intersections. Porches, bays and steps on corner buildings may have to be stepped back to provide adequate visibility.**
- 7. Side street houses are permitted on lots of at least 5,000 square feet (lot coverage maximum of 60%).**
- 8. Garages or garage apartments should be located at least 10 feet from the alley, to provide proper turning radius for the automobile.**

# Traditional Lot Development



## An Example of Corner Lot Development on a Traditional Size Lot



1. Setback established in line with other houses on the street
2. Bay extends beyond front yard setback
3. Porches create rhythm along the street

4. Bays add extra dimension and visual appeal on side street
5. Underground parking provides a means to fit the structures on the property

6. Dormers, gables and hipped roofs complement historic features
7. Foundation height is consistent
8. Yard trees add to the pleasant street scene



*On Clinch Avenue between 16<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Streets, setbacks were historically greater than most other lots in Fort Sanders.*

## Large Lot Development

*These provisions would typically apply to multi-family, office, commercial, or mixed-use development on large lots. The purposes are to maintain compatible building proportions to historic development and create additional parking areas to the rear of a new building.*

1. The minimum front yard set back is 20 feet. The line is defined by the predominant portion of the building and would typically have an entrance from the street.

### NOTE:

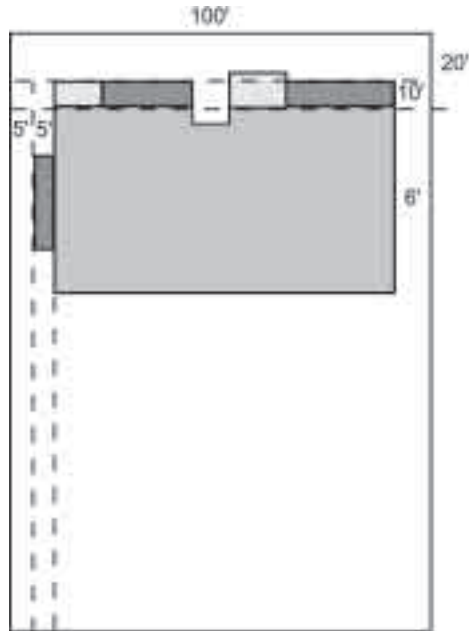
The exception to this provision is the north side of Laurel Avenue between 11<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Streets and the north side of Clinch Avenue between 16<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Streets, where setbacks were historically greater. The existing zoning setback of 25 feet shall apply in these blocks.

2. With underground parking, the minimum rear yard setback is 15 feet.
3. Bays should extend up to 5 feet for 50% of the side facade on corner lots.
4. For interior lot development, bays composing up to 50% of the front facade should extend beyond the front setback line.
5. On interior lots, one-story porches should be provided to complement historic development. Porches may extend 10 feet beyond the front setback line.
4. On interior lots, a break in the front facade shall be provided to simulate the spacing of historic buildings, with a minimum size of 6 feet wide and 5 feet deep.
5. Primary or secondary entrances to the building from parking areas are allowable.
6. Multi-family or office development along Clinch Avenue between 17<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Streets should be designed to complement the brick, early 20<sup>th</sup> century revival styles along the street.

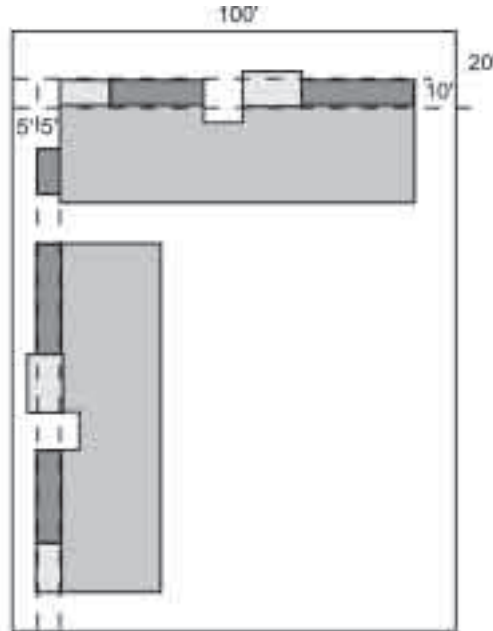
## Large Lot Development

Large lots are typically composed of combined lots that were traditionally 50 feet wide. Consequently, most large lots are at least 100 feet wide.

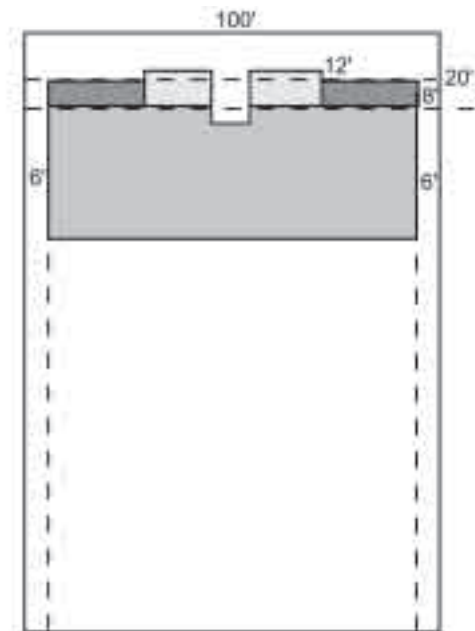
**Corner Lot Development 1**



**Corner Lot Development 2**

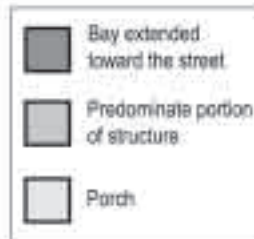


**Interior Lot Development**



**For Corner Lot Development:**

Bays should extend up to 5 feet for 50% of the side facade.



**For Interior Lot Development:**

- Bays composing up to 50% of the front facade should extend beyond the front setback line.
- One story porches should be provided to complement historic development. Porches may extend 10' beyond the front setback line.
- A break in the front facade shall be provided to simulate the spacing of historic buildings (minimum size: 6' wide, 5' deep).

## An Example of Interior Lot Development



1. Front yard space (consistent with historical houses)
2. Porches are a good proportion for the new apartment
3. Parking provided underground and to the rear
4. Balconies provide pleasant space and can be counted in the open space calculation
5. Window design is consistent with pre-1940 patterns
6. Breaks in the floor elevations are harmonious with older housing
7. Glass enclosed porch retains “open air” feeling
8. Gables and bays add visual interest and allow for significant use toward the street.



## J. DEMOLITION

*Property owners may demolish structures in the NC-1 District that the Knoxville Historic Zoning Commission (HZC) finds to be non-contributing to the district. A report, dated July/August 2000, establishes the location of non-contributing structures at the time that the NC-1 district was under consideration.*

**In the future, the Historic Zoning Commission shall take the following into account in making their determination about whether or not a building may be demolished.**

**1. PHYSICAL CONDITION:**

**The HZC may allow demolition if a building has been condemned by the City of Knoxville for structural reasons, or if the HZC finds that structural problems and associated costs to address the problems warrant demolition; the decision shall be based on an assessment by a licensed structural engineer or architect.**

**2. ARCHITECTURAL INTEGRITY:**

**The HZC may allow demolition if the original design is so compromised that historic architectural integrity is lost and cannot, in the Commission's view, be reasonably re-established.**

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**M P C**

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