

# CHAPTER FOUR: BUFORD HIGHWAY ARCHITECTURAL AND SITE DESIGN STANDARDS

The following standards address site design and building design for commercial, mixed-use and multi-family developments whose property is found within the Buford Highway Corridor Character area depicted on page 1-2. The Buford Highway Character Area is defined as the area that included those properties with a frontage on Buford Highway and Jimmy Carter Boulevard. Any subdivisions of property that is within the Buford Highway Character Area is still subject to ARB review. The standards apply to both new construction and rehabilitation of existing structures.

The purpose of these standards is to ensure that high quality development occurs in the Buford Highway Corridor. The Buford Highway corridor is located within the Norcross Downtown Development District and is adjacent to the Traditional Norcross area.

Buford Highway is a non-historic commercial and mixed-use corridor that is oriented to the automobile-traveling public. Over the last few years, the city has been working toward providing more accessibility for pedestrians along the corridor. Sidewalks and streetscape enhancements such as benches have been added to the public right-of-way. Through the following standards, the city hopes to improve the visual and functional environment of the corridor in order to create a more unified commercial streetscape, a place more accessible to pedestrians, and an area of high-quality development that contributes a positive “sense of place” to the city of Norcross.

These standards constitute the city’s definition of quality development for the Buford Highway corridor and will be used by the Architectural Review Board (ARB) to evaluate all new construction and rehabilitation of existing non-single-family residential construction on the corridor. For ease of use, the Buford Highway corridor is referred to as the “street” in the standards, unless explained otherwise.

## 4.1 Site Design & Landscaping

All work must also be in compliance with the Tree Ordinance (Section 106-46 Trees). Applicants should also refer to the LCI Town Center Study regarding "Streetscape Elements" included in the *Appendix*.

BH 001: Planned developments and multi-building complexes must have an integrated design regarding building placement, proportion of structures and circulation for vehicles and pedestrians.

BH 002: Site design for planned developments must attempt to create a "main-street" style with grouped buildings and streetscape treatments, rather than a strip of buildings organized in a linear fashion, when possible.

BH 003: If a building has its primary entrance facing an internal street or parking lot, the side and rear of the building that faces the highway must have a finished façade and be treated consistently with the primary façade.

BH 004: Vehicular and pedestrian linkages created between properties must be incorporated into developments to the extent possible by topography or other physical conditions.



This site utilizes planting islands and street trees which help enliven the pedestrian zone in front of the business enterprise.



Above left: This site utilizes pedestrian-friendly features such as on street parking, an outdoor cafe area and awnings covering benches. Above right: The introduction of green spaces into planned developments is visually pleasing and improves the quality of life for its users.



Mixed use of a development for both residential and business enterprises is encouraged. This type of high density development smartly utilizes sites to their full advantage.

BH 005: Pedestrian circulation must be an integral part of the site layout.

BH 006: Sidewalks must be provided along the street, within the site and along primary building frontages.

BH 007: All buildings and open space in each development must be connected to a pedestrian walkway system.



This multi-family complex is friendly to both pedestrians and motorists.



Steep grade changes between public right-of-way and private development require appropriate facilities for pedestrians.

- BH 008: Parking areas located to the side or rear of buildings are required.
- BH 009: Parking lots must be divided into smaller parking areas by planted tree islands or other landscape treatments. A rule of thumb will be, trees planted within and on the periphery of parking lots must be of sufficient canopy to provide shade to pedestrians and vehicles at maturity.
- BH 010: Parking lots must be designed to separate pedestrians from vehicles as possible from a design perspective. Protected pedestrian walkways within parking areas that lead to building entrances are required.
- BH 011: Parking for multi-family residential developments must be located at the side or rear of apartment buildings. Sidewalks must be provided for building entrances.
- BH 012: Decorative site elements and streetscape elements must be used within developments to provide visual continuity and to define special purpose areas.
- BH 013: The organization of a development must be reinforced by pedestrian-oriented streetscape-type improvements including benches, crosswalks, variety of materials and street trees.
- BH 014: Storm water detention areas or swales must have a natural appearance with appropriate landscape treatment that is part of the overall landscape plan of the site. If the detention area is directly visible from the street or in another highly visible location it is encouraged that a high quality focal point or entrance feature be created, if possible.



This property features a modern interpretation of a traditional storefront that makes this multi-story building approachable and enjoyable by pedestrians.



The use of public art within commercial developments add a humanizing effect and enlivens the landscape.



This streetscape is pedestrian-friendly and also provides a visually pleasing corridor for motorists.



Attractive and high quality site features add significantly to the aesthetics of a site. This retaining wall with its ashlar masonry and plantings create a pleasing atmosphere for this parking lot.



This retail building utilizes a side parking lot and is still inviting to both pedestrians and motorists.

Planting islands are a useful tool in breaking up large expanses of parking. However, islands themselves are not enough. Trees must be planted in the islands with sufficient space for root growth. Trees must be of a mature size to provide shade to vehicles and pedestrians.



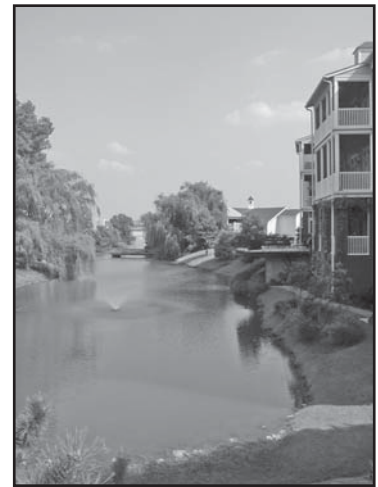
- BH 015: Landscaping must be used to create visual continuity throughout the site or development area.
- BH 016: The protection of existing mature trees on a site is encouraged. Trees must be retained, and protected during construction using standard tree protection measures and integrated into the development.
- BH 017: Vegetative buffers and planting yards are encouraged as part of a comprehensive streetscape treatment of walkways and roads within a development. Properties adjacent to residential uses must establish a landscaped buffer of at least fifteen (15) feet deep.
- BH 018: Landscape plantings must be used generously to soften the appearance of buildings from the street. Foundation plantings are required to soften the edges of a building. The fullness and height of landscape must be appropriately scaled to the building or site. Also consider the presence of utilities (above and underground) when planning for landscaping.
- BH 019: Medium to large canopy trees are encouraged whenever possible.
- BH 020: The planting of native plants and tree species are required because of their inherent hardiness for local conditions and their low maintenance requirements.

<p><b>Recommended Height Planting Standards for Green Spaces:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overhead wires present - Small native trees</li> <li>• Overhead wires absent - Large native hardwood trees</li> </ul>									
<p><b>Recommended Width Planting Standards for Green Spaces:</b></p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td><u>Green Space Width</u></td> <td><u>Recommended Trees</u></td> </tr> <tr> <td>• 10 feet or greater</td> <td>• Large Deciduous Trees</td> </tr> <tr> <td>• 5 to 10 feet</td> <td>• Medium Deciduous Trees</td> </tr> <tr> <td>• Less than 5 feet</td> <td>• Small Deciduous or Flowering Trees</td> </tr> </table>		<u>Green Space Width</u>	<u>Recommended Trees</u>	• 10 feet or greater	• Large Deciduous Trees	• 5 to 10 feet	• Medium Deciduous Trees	• Less than 5 feet	• Small Deciduous or Flowering Trees
<u>Green Space Width</u>	<u>Recommended Trees</u>								
• 10 feet or greater	• Large Deciduous Trees								
• 5 to 10 feet	• Medium Deciduous Trees								
• Less than 5 feet	• Small Deciduous or Flowering Trees								
<p><b>Recommended Native Evergreen Street Trees</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Latin Name</u> • <u>Common Name</u></li> <li>• Juniperus virginiana • Eastern Red Cedar</li> <li>• Ilex Opaca • American Holly</li> </ul>									

<p><b>Recommended Native Small Deciduous or Flowering Street Trees</b></p> <p><u>Latin Name</u> • <u>Common Name</u></p> <p>Amelanchier canadensis • Serviceberry</p> <p>Carpinus caroliniana • Musclewood/Hornbeam</p> <p>Cercis canadensis • Redbud</p> <p>Chionanthus virginicus • Fringetree</p> <p>Cornus florida • Dogwood</p> <p>Crataegus phaenopyrum • Washington Hawthorn</p> <p>Oxydendrum arboreum • Sourwood</p> <p>Ostrya virginiana • Hophornbeam</p> <p>Lagerstroemia indica • Crepe Myrtle</p>
---

<p><b>Recommended Native Large/Medium Deciduous Street Trees:</b></p> <p><u>Latin Name</u> • <u>Common Name</u></p> <p>Acer barbatum • Southern Sugar Maple</p> <p>Acer rubrum • Red Maple</p> <p>Acer saccharinum • Silver Maple</p> <p>Fagus grandifolia • American Beech</p> <p>Fraxinus americana • White Ash</p> <p>Fraxinus pennsylvanica • Green Ash</p> <p>Plantanus occidentalis • Sycamore</p> <p>Quercus alba • White Oak</p> <p>Quercus falcata • Southern Red Oak</p> <p>Quercus laurifolia • Darlington Oak</p> <p>Quercus nigra • Water Oak</p> <p>Quercus phellos • Willow Oak</p> <p>Quercus shumardii • Shumard Oak</p>
---

Retention ponds, as seen above, can be attractively landscaped and made an important site feature of developments. Creative solutions such as this are encouraged.





This drainage feature (A) features rock outcroppings, trees and plantings and has become an important site feature of this development. Trees and other landscaping compositions can be used to disrupt and “treat” an otherwise blank facade (B). Entrance features (C) that are attractively landscaped make the development inviting and also add important green space to commercial corridors.

## 4.2 Building Mass, Scale and Form

- BH 021: Two story buildings are encouraged, but not required.
- BH 022: Structures taller than two stories in height (to the top of the roof line) will be considered on a case by case basis.
- BH 023: Human scale must be created by building massing and form, as well as the use of canopies, arcades, street-level display windows, raised landscape planters, pedestrian level lighting, and building material treatments at the base of the building.
- BH 024: Buildings designed at prominent locations or sites must be treated as landmark buildings and be designed with special architectural treatments that are compatible with other landmark buildings in Norcross in terms of scale, form and materials. Special consideration will be given to such landmark buildings in the community.
- BH 025: Pitched and sloped roof lines are required for all buildings, including gasoline service station canopies.
- BH 026: Pitched roof massing must be proportionate to the scale of the façade.
- BH 027: Roofs in view of the street or other public way must be maintained in an obviously attractive manner or must be visually screened.



This pitched roof is out of scale to the facade of the building and should consist of a more shallow pitch.



This attempt at facade articulation (roof balustrade, pilasters and shutters) has created a cluttered, unattractive appearance.

## 4.3 Exterior Wall

- BH 028: Roof parapets must be designed to provide visual diversity. Parapets shall include architectural features at least every 100 linear feet. The minimum height of design features shall be one (1) foot and may be provided in height offset or façade projections such as porticoes, towers, or gable features.
- BH 029: All building facades must be designed to have a recognizable base and fascia/cornice.
- BH 030: Buildings facades must be articulated to break up expanses of exterior wall. Facade articulation can be provided by the application of varying materials, façade offsets and landscaping. Architectural ornamentation may be applied but must not be the only element to break up a mass of continuous wall. The maximum allowable unbroken facade distance for each building or side of building visible from the right-of-way shall be twenty (20) feet.
- BH 031: Multi-family residential buildings must be designed to provide façade articulation, including the use of façade projections, changes in siding texture or material, use of detail such as trim and brackets, or the addition of windows, porches or balconies.
- BH 032: Rear and side facades of buildings that face a street, parking lot or public way must be of finished quality. These alternate facades must address the street through façade articulation, material selection or openings, or they may be attractively screened with landscaping, as appropriate. Service doors or open bays must be screened or designed as part of the overall building.
- BH 033: Building elements and façade details must be proportional to the scale of the building.
- BH 034: Gutters and downspouts that are specifically designed for the task must be used; the use of PVC conduit, piping and other such materials that are not specifically designed as gutters or downspouts is prohibited.



(A) This is a good example of a multi-family development with appropriate facade articulation utilizing brick, clapboard siding, residential-scale windows, bay extensions and porches. (B) This multi-story retail/office building has clearly divided storefronts and good facade articulation. (C) This franchise building uses various facade treatments that enlivens its appearance. Attractive landscaping at the entrance is also a positive feature of the site. (D) Even large buildings can break up expansive facades with good design, as this building demonstrates. scale non-residential building it is important to use articulation that is appropriately scaled, as in this example.



This multi-family building is an example of a facade without significant facade articulation. It also features vinyl siding which is prohibited in the district.



This building presents an unsuccessful attempt at facade articulation.

## 4.4 Building Materials & Color

Materials chosen for the exterior of a building are a significant component in the appearance and “feel” of a building. Certain materials have an air of permanence, such as brick and stone. Wood is a natural material that can be utilized in a variety of finishes for different looks. Wood can also last indefinitely with periodic repair and repainting as long as it is kept free from moisture.

As new technologies emerge in the building industry, materials may be introduced that resemble traditional building materials in appearance, especially regarding exterior cladding. New, composite materials (typically a combination of wood and plastic fibers) may be considered for use in the DDD as long as they can meet or exceed the performance of the material they are imitating. It is important that alternate materials closely replicate original materials in size, texture, profile and surface treatment. Well-known alternate materials that do not perform well over time, and that do not replicate the appearance of historic materials, include vinyl and metal siding. Metal siding can corrode or dent, and vinyl can melt, crack and distort as it contracts and expands with changes in temperature. Metal and vinyl siding are not permanent replacement materials and require yearly maintenance. Synthetic stucco systems (foam backed panels with applied stucco veneer) are another material that does not conform to the durability, texture or surface treatment of traditional stucco. Significant attention must be given to the application of stucco for it to perform appropriately.

Permitted Building Materials:	Prohibited Building Materials:
➤ Brick	➤ Plain concrete block
➤ Stone	➤ Mirrored glass
➤ Wood siding	➤ Metal siding
➤ Wooden shingles	➤ Vinyl siding

Permitted Building Materials Through Design Review:
➤ Plaster
➤ Stucco
➤ Synthetic Stucco Systems
➤ Composite Materials
➤ Concrete block that is scored and textured (limited use only)

- BH 035: Approved primary building materials include brick, tile masonry and stone. Primary building materials considered on a case-by-case basis include concrete that is textured or scored, split-faced block, stucco (including stucco with a smooth cementitious finish and synthetic stucco), and Hardi-Plank equivalent for siding.
- BH 036: Secondary building materials that are acceptable include pre-cast masonry (for trim and cornice elements only), Gypsum Reinforced Fiber Concrete (GFRC—for trim elements only), and metal (for lintels, beams, trim elements and ornamentation).
- BH 037: Building materials that are prohibited include metal and aluminum siding, simulated brick, plain concrete block (CMU) and mirrored glass. Portable buildings are prohibited.
- BH 038: Approved roofing materials for pitched roofs include metal standing seam, composition shingles that are uniform in color and appearance, and other shingle materials that approximate the appearance of slate, tile or metal. Matte, natural surfaces are encouraged. Polished, glossy or reflective surfaces are prohibited.
- BH 039: Materials for windows that are acceptable include: anodized aluminum, wood, clad wood, vinyl and steel.
- BH 040: Awnings must be made of weather-resistant cloth or an equivalent, vinyl, metal or glass.
- BH 041: Neutral traditional building color palettes are encouraged. Colors should blend with neighboring buildings.
- BH 042: Chosen colors must be from an approved color palette and are approved by the ARB on a case-by-case basis. Approved color palettes include: 1) "Victorian" by Sherwin-Williams; 2) "Arts & Crafts" by Sherwin-Williams; 3) "Historic Colors" by Porter Paints; & 4) "Sunshades" by Porter Paints.
- BH 043: The painting of masonry is prohibited, unless the building is using a grade of masonry that would need to be painted for waterproofing purposes. The painting of masonry that does not need paint for waterproofing will cause spalling and scaling of the masonry material.



The use of artificial stucco for buildings on Buford Highway is prohibited and will generally be approved only in exceptional situations to be determined by the ARB.

## 4.5 Entrances, Awnings & Windows

- BH 044: The primary public entrance of a building must face a street, such as Buford Highway or a private interior street. Pedestrian accessibility for this primary entrance must be addressed with a sidewalk or walkway.
- BH 045: The primary entrance of a building must be clearly defined with architectural treatments such as canopies, overhangs or porticos.
- BH 046: Buildings must incorporate pedestrian scale features such as landscaping, first floor storefronts, windows or awnings.
- BH 047: Solid, structural entrance canopies are required over cloth or vinyl awnings.
- BH 048: Awnings should match the size, shape and scale of the opening they are topping.
- BH 049: Awnings must provide eight (8) feet of clearance for pedestrians below. No ground-mounted supports are allowed for awnings.
- BH 050: Window glass with light transmission at approximately 90% is required for ground story or storefront windows.



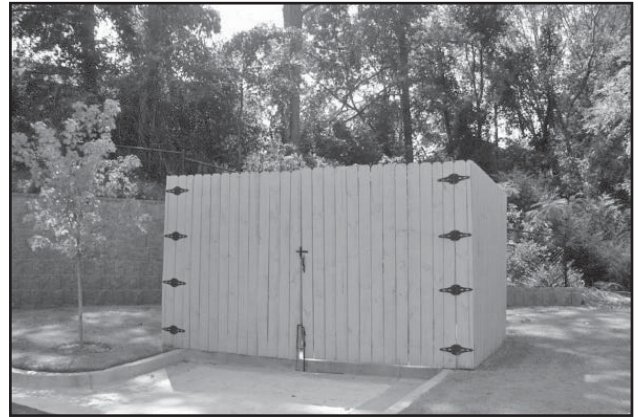
These awnings are appropriately scaled to the pedestrian and are unique to the store helping provide definition of individual businesses. Creativity in awnings is encouraged.

## 4.6 Mechanical Systems & Services

- BH 051: All mechanical equipment and service areas must be screened from public view, including rooftop equipment, with the use of opaque fencing or landscape screening.
- BH 052: Fences or walls built as a screen must be a minimum of six (6) feet tall. Wall or fence heights, if taller than seven feet, must be approved by the ARB.
- BH 053: Fences or masonry walls used to visually screen service areas must be compatible with the exterior of the principal building and cannot be made of concrete block or another unfinished building material.
- BH 054: Service areas (dumpster areas) must be placed away from any residential-used property.



This metal building facade is inappropriate for Buford Highway, however the plantings are a good example of landscape screening that is naturally-looking.



This dumpster has been appropriately screened with proper fencing that is well painted and maintained.

## 4.7 Lighting

Refer to the *Appendix* for guidance regarding “Streetscape Elements” from the LCI Study.

- BH 055: All exterior light sources must be directed and shielded, including security lights.
- BH 056: Pedestrian-scaled lighting must be provided along walkways in developments where appropriate.
- BH 057: Lighting that is adjacent to building entrances and windows in multi-family residential buildings must be small in scale or screened to prevent glare in neighboring units.
- BH 058: No flashing, animated or intermittent lighting must be visible from the exterior of the building.



(left) The lighting and signage along this rehabilitated factory building are pedestrian in scale and create a friendly environment. (right) Concrete bases for light poles must be properly sunk into the ground, screened by vegetation, or covered with a more attractive veneer.



This street light found along Buford Highway is in keeping with the lighting standards established by the city.

## 4.8 Signage

All local sign ordinances apply; these standards provide additional design standards.

BH 059: The size, location and design of attached signage must be compatible with the scale, size and appearance of the building.

BH 060: Ground-mounted signs must be monument signs. Pole signs are prohibited. Materials used in both sign and support structures must reflect the building being served.

BH 061: Internally illuminated signs, neon signs and electronic signboards are prohibited.

BH 062: External illumination of signage is required.



(left) Typical franchise signage can be smaller in scale and sheathed to create a monumental sign in keeping with the goals of the Buford Highway character area. (right) Examples of inappropriate signage include pole-mounted signs, roof-mounted signs and temporary signs that have become, in effect, permanent.



This monumental sign located on Buford Highway outside of the city of Norcross is an attractive alternative to plastic signage.

## 4.9 Outdoor Spaces

BH 063: The creation of usable outdoor public spaces is required. These spaces may be hard surfaced but must include seating and landscaping. Trees that provide shade are required.

BH 064: Assigned outdoor play space in multi-family residential communities is required. Pedestrian walkways must be provided for safe access.



This communal space at a commercial development is a popular place for shoppers.



A common area at a multi-family development features a gazebo. Such elements enliven developments and help attract potential residents.