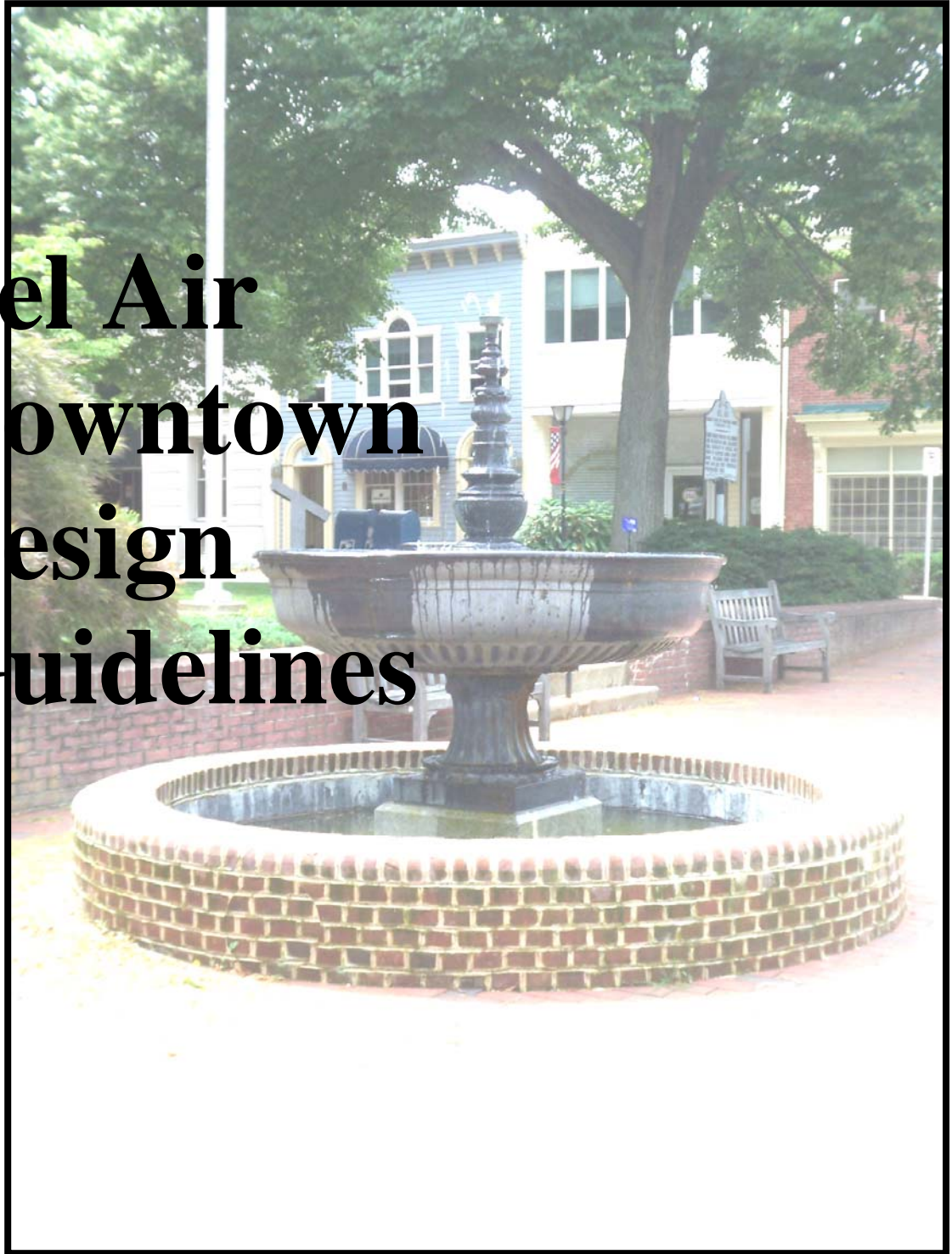


Bel Air Downtown Design Guidelines



Design Committee
Downtown Bel Air Alliance
2009



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OBJECTIVES

This manual does not seek to replace existing development codes, but to direct and suggest elements which will bring together a successful, compatible downtown environment. In addition, it will provide guidelines to assist Business Owners, Property Owners, Town staff, Consultants, and the Planning Commission when reviewing proposals for private properties within the downtown area.

These Guidelines were developed by the Bel Air Downtown Alliance Design Committee with input from the Town of Bel Air, private business and property owners and design professionals.

The Design Committee recognizes that “Architectural design through the Main Street program encourages the utilization and enhancement of the quality design components that remain in each individual building” and “Design elements also include window displays, signs, street lighting, sidewalks, public amenities and landscaping.” The Design Committee developed these guidelines to encourage property owners and developers to incorporate quality design and materials in all proposed projects with the district

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

The guidelines are intended to uphold the following basic design principles:

- Strengthen the Bel Air Town Center or Central Business District’s image through appropriate architectural detailing.
- Encourage greater architectural continuity and cohesiveness.
- Protect and enhance the traditional character of the downtown and encourage the preservation or adaptive reuse of historic structures
- Create a pedestrian-oriented and human-scaled environment.
- Protect the existing historic fabric as structures undergo changes.
- Incorporate the principles of sustainable development, sustainable design, and sustainable building practices.
- Provide for appropriate landscaping, site amenities and public spaces.
- Promote businesses through attractive signage, which is appropriate for Bel Air’s character.

STANDARDS

Bench (Main Street)

6'-0" Bench

Victor Stanley

Classic Finish CS- 138

Finish: VS- Black



Backless Bench (Secondary Streets)

6'-0" Bench

Victor Stanley

Classic Series CS-

Finish: VS- Black



Bench (Bond Street)

5'-0" Bench

Country Casual

Windsor

#4402



Backless Bench (Bond Street)

5'-0" Bench

Country Casual

Banbury

#4311



Waste Receptacle

Victor Stanley

Iron Sites S- 424

36 Gallons

Finish: VS- Black

Street & Parking Lighting

Holophane
Wadsworth
Grandville Luminaries
17" Diameter Base
12' - 0" Height
36" Cross arm
Finish: Black



Security Bollards

Holophane
Columbia Series
#BOL/C43/13-CA/BK
Finish: Black



Bicycle Racks

Belson Outdoors
4-1/2" O.D. Bollard Bike Rack
BOL450-2R-IG-P
Finish: Black



Lighted Bollards

Holophane
Columbia Series
#BOL/C44/13/LW-CA/BK
Finish: Black

Bond & Secondary Street Paving

Concrete Pavers

Nicolock

4" x 8" x 2 3/8"

Autumn Blend



Bond Street Paving

Brick Pavers

Glen Gary

Extruded Paver

Finish: Autumn Haze



Main Street

Zelkova serrata - Japanese Zelkova

Gleditsia triacanthos – Honeylocust

Acer rubrum - Red Maple



Bond Street

Chionanthus virginicus –White Fringe

Tilia cordata – Little Leaf Linden

Gleditsia triacanthos – Honeylocust

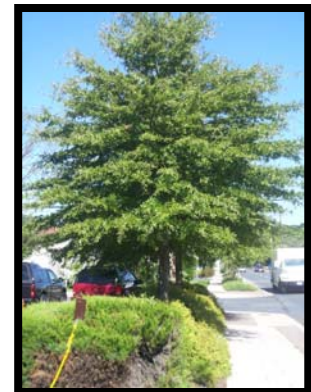


US Route 1 (Baltimore Pike)

Koelreuteria paniculata -Golden Rain

Gleditsia triacanthos - Honeylocust

Sophora japonica - Japanese Pagoda



Secondary Streets (Lee, Pennsylvania, etc.)

Cladrastis lutea – Yellowwood

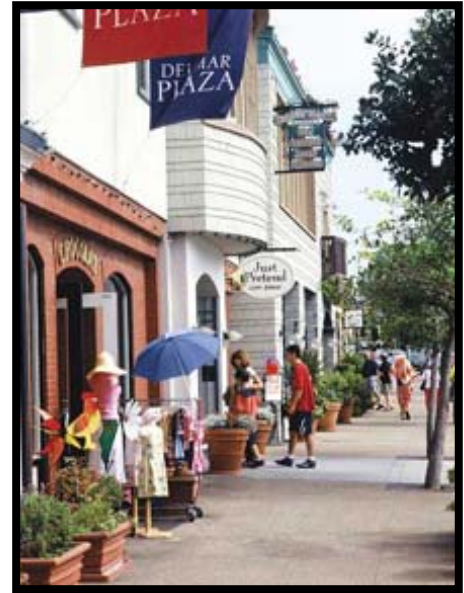
Amelanchier canadensis – Serviceberry

Gleditsia triacanthos - Honeylocust

PREFERENCES

ARCHITECTURE

The construction of new buildings and rehabilitation of existing structures is important to continue the economic vitality of Bel Air. These new/ rehabbed buildings should be compatible with the existing more traditional buildings which successfully incorporate arrangement and function of elements and materials. New structures should be sympathetic and compatible with the surrounding buildings in terms of mass, scale, height, façade rhythm, placement of doors and windows, color and use of materials and should avoid the appearance of imitations



- Designers should familiarize themselves with the design elements and details used on older buildings in the Bel Air area and should incorporate updated versions of these older designs.
- Side and rear building facades should have a comparable level of design detail and finish compatible with the front façade, particularly if they are visible from streets, adjacent parking areas, or residential areas.
- Standard corporate and/ or franchise style architecture is not acceptable. Chain store architecture must be compatible with surrounding architectural styles and materials.

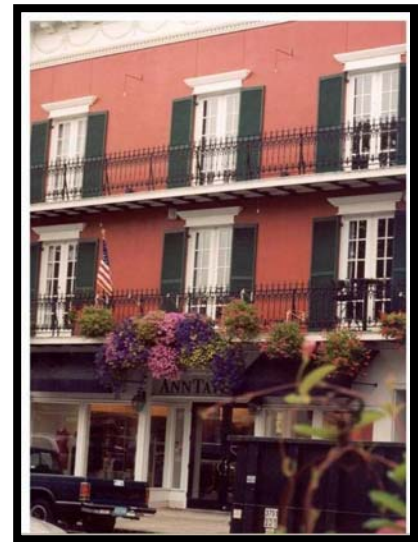
Architectural Facades

- Large undifferentiated wall planes are strongly discouraged. Significant horizontal and vertical articulation should be expressed on all sides of a building visible from pedestrian viewpoints through:
 - Variation of roof eave line or roof structure,
 - Change in wall plane,
 - Full roof with overhang,
 - Recessed entries and doors,
 - Covered walkways, trellises, and/or architectural awnings,
 - Architectural details consistent with style.
- Building mass can be reduced on structures with multiple stories by “stepping back” the upper story. A reduced upper story floor area and building mass can allow for attractive balconies and outdoor spaces.



Windows

- Wood frames and sills should be used to enhance openings and add additional relief. They should be proportional to the framed glass area (e.g. a larger window should have thicker framing members).
- Clear glazing is strongly recommended. Reflective glazing and tinting is discouraged.
- In general, upper stories should have a window to wall area proportion that is smaller than that of ground floor storefront.
- The use of security grilles on windows is discouraged as they communicate a message of high crime and are difficult to integrate into the building design.
- Contemporary floor- to-ceiling glass display windows are discouraged.
- Window design should be consistent with overall design of the building
- Windows and doors should follow the traditional rhythm on individual streets. Front walls must have window and door openings to maintain pedestrian and visual interest along the sidewalk.



Doors

- Doors should be consistent with the predominant architectural style of the building.
- Providing rear pedestrian entrances via alleys and parking lots is encouraged. Improvements to rear facades may include signs, landscaping, and awnings, but should not compete with front façade.



DETAILS

Architectural details should be used with the appropriate style within the downtown area. The style is defined by the character defining elements felt to be desirable building components and should be used appropriately. The scale of the building elements, especially at the ground floor level, should be kept at human-scale using small parts and accents. Where the façade is divided into distinct store fronts, it is desirable to cover portions of the façade with an arcade or awning.

Architectural- Materials

- Materials that are consistent with local vernacular architecture, as well as indigenous to the area/ region are desired.
- Limit the variety of building materials to be consistent with the adjacent structures.
- Materials should be in harmony and with adjacent buildings and traditional character of the Town Center.
- Wood, fiber cement or other composite materials are encouraged.
- Drivet, aluminum siding, light gauge vinyl siding, and split face block are discouraged.



Architectural- Accessories

- Walls and fences should be designed to be compatible with the surrounding landscape and architectural features of the building.
- Walls and fences should be designed to increase the shadow pattern so as not to create a continuous blank wall and to achieve a reduction in mass.
- Chain link fencing, security wire, and razor wire are discouraged.
- Wrought Iron, steel and aluminum fencing are encouraged.
- PVC, wood and chain link fencing is strongly discouraged and security and razor wire is prohibited.



Awnings

- Awnings are used to provide shade, visual interest and information about the business.
- Awnings and canopies should fit within the transom area and be visually contained within the building framework of columns and other architectural trim.
- The awning and canopies should be compatible with the building and/or window in material, scale, proportion, and color.
- Avoid internally illuminated awning.



Ornamental Fence/ Railing

Ornamental fences and railings should be designed to be compatible with the surrounding landscapes and architectural features of the building.

- Chain link fencing, security wire and razor wire are not allowed.
- Landscaping should be used to soften the appearance of fencing and railing.
- Fencing and railing should follow the terrain on slopes in a stepped fashion and not impede or divert the flow of water in drainage ways.



Architectural- Colors

There are an unlimited number of colors and color combinations, and the appropriateness of any given color or combination for a particular building will depend on a number of factors, including, architectural style and detail, building materials, building size, and building context.

- In general, use no more than three colors on a façade, including natural colors, such as unpainted stone or brick.
- Color changes should generally occur at a change in building plane.
- Use contrasting colors to accent architectural details, window trim, and entrances.



- Exterior colors should be compatible with the surrounding character of the district and adjacent buildings.
- Where compatible, building colors should reflect the basic colors of the architectural style or period of the building. Historic color palettes based on research, old photography, and historic records is strongly encouraged.

Architectural- Lighting

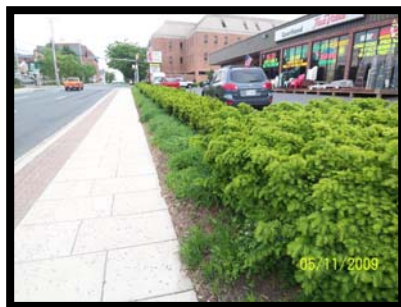
- Down- directed, exterior lighting should be designed as part of the overall architectural style of the building and should highlight interesting architectural features. The lighting of full facades or roofs is discouraged.
- Lighting should not produce glare or spill over onto adjacent properties from interior or exterior of stores and buildings. The latest technical and operational energy conservation concepts should be considered in lighting design.



LANDSCAPE

Landscape and Container Plantings

Landscaping should be an integral part of the overall design concept. A carefully planned landscape is able to serve more than one function for the site as well as the streetscape. The Town of Bel Air Development Regulations, Landscaping (Article 10) outlines the minimum standard landscaping requirements.



- Existing features such as mature trees and shrub masses, should be recognized, preserved, and incorporated into the design.
- The use of native plants and natural landscaping is strongly encouraged. For guidance on plant selection and approved plant materials, refer to the approved plant list in the Town’s Development Code.
- Landscaping should be used to create boundaries between buildings, different developments, and incompatible uses.
- The landscaping design of a new project or renovation should blend with the dominant existing or planned streetscape and character of the area.
- The plant and site materials should be selected based on the context of their environment.
- Along streets and alleys; plant materials must be selected and placed to avoid blocking sight lines at intersections and curb cuts.



PUBLIC AMENITIES



Public spaces are places for people to gather, relax, and recreate. Providing such spaces draws visitors and patrons to an area. Public amenities can include such items as walks, parks, plazas, fountains, public art, benches, and play equipment. The spaces can be as big as a public park or as small as the niche of an alley or street. Focal Points and public amenities are encouraged in the design of public spaces.

Projects should provide site amenities and other design features that encourage pedestrian utilization, including benches, seating areas, public art, bicycle racks, and lighting. Pedestrian style lighting should compliment the surrounding built and natural environment. It should be subtle yet bright enough to provide security and provide an attractive evening use. The location of site amenities should not interfere with pedestrian movement. Public spaces should include a variety of appropriately designed pedestrian amenities that may include the following:

- Benches and Seating – Creative benches and planters with integrated seating are encouraged.
- Site Furniture – Should be simple in design and not detract from the surroundings.
- Wind Resistant Umbrellas – Encouraged to create shade areas and to minimize heat build up.
- Trash and Recycling Receptacles – Should be appropriately sized and located not to interfere with pedestrian circulation or design.
- Container Plantings – In compact spaces and areas of abundant paving, container planting is encouraged to soften the space.
- Cigarette Receptacles – Should be located in open environments and should be enclosed in containers.
- Bike Racks – Should be located in areas that do not conflict with pedestrian and/or vehicular movement.
- Kiosks - Directing pedestrians to local amenities and displaying community information.
- Drinking Fountains – Housed in simple easily identifiable design which blends with its surroundings.
- Magazine/ News Racks – Should be located in enclosures that reflect their surroundings

SIGNAGE & GRAPHICS

This section provides basic design guidance for all signs, regardless of specific type or location within Bel Air. This section addresses issues related to sign legibility, placement, color, materials, and illumination. These guidelines are intended to encourage quality signs that add to and support the style of their district.

Sign Placement & Legibility

- A brief message should be used whenever possible. The fewer the words, the more effective the message. Businesses with long names are encouraged to use generic identification (e.g. “Cleaners”) rather than force too many words into the allowed sign area.



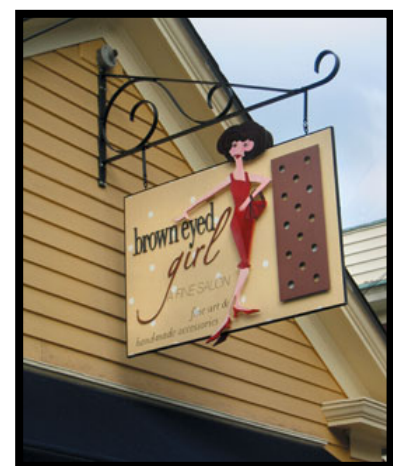
- The number of lettering styles should be limited in order to increase legibility. A general rule to follow is to limit the number of letter styles to no more than two for small signs (generally up to ten square feet) and three for large signs.
- When multiple tenants share a development site, signs should be integrated as one unit to create shared identity for the property or be located and designed as a unified package so that sign messages do not visually compete with each other.
- Signs should be designed to relate to the architectural features of the building on which they are located.



- Signs should be placed consistent with the proportions of the building's façade.
- Signs should not be located so that they cover or interrupt the architectural details or ornamentation of a building's façade.
- Signs should not project above the edge of the rooflines and should not obstruct windows and/or doorways.



- Repetitious signage information on the same building frontage should be avoided.
- Too many colors overwhelm the viewer's ability to process quickly what the sign is communicating. Limit use of accent colors to increase legibility. Colors should be limited to no more than three on a single sign.
- Bright day-glo (fluorescent) colors are to be avoided as they are not compatible with the traditional character of the downtown.
- Materials should be selected with consideration for the architectural design of the building's façade. Sign materials and scale should complement the architecture and materials of the structure.
- Sign materials should be durable. Paper and cloth signs are not suitable for outside because they deteriorate quickly.



- Individually mounted internally illuminated channel letters, and internally illuminated plastic faced cabinets signs are strongly discouraged.

- Consider if the sign needs to be lighted at all. Lights in the window display may be sufficient to identify the business. This is particularly true if good window graphics are used.
- Other than “open” signs, digital or electronically lit messages of any kind or signs of the same effect are prohibited.
- It is best to illuminate the sign by a shielded external source of light because the sign will appear to be better integrated with the building’s architecture.
- When ever external lighting fixtures are used, care shall be taken to properly shield the light source and direct the light down to preserve the night sky.
- Blinking, rotating, flashing, or reflecting lights are prohibited.



Building Mounted Signs

- A wall sign should be located where the architectural features or details of the building suggest a location, size, or shape for the sign. The best location for a wall sign is generally a band or blank area between the storefront and the parapet.
- Wall signs should not project from the surface upon which they are attached more than this is required for construction purposes and in no case more than 6 inches.
- Wall signs and “ghost” sign painted directly on a structure may be appropriate in some cases.
- A wall sign should be located where the architectural features or details of the building suggest a location, size, or shape for the sign. The best location for a wall sign is generally a band or blank area between the storefront and the parapet.

Window Graphics

- Window signs should not cover more than 20 percent of the area of each window.
- Window signs should be primarily individual letters placed on the interior surface of the window and intended to be viewed from outside.
- Glass mounted graphic logos may also be applied as long as they comply with the 20 percent limitation,



Projecting Signs

This is the encouraged style. Good for buildings that lack sign boards on flat surfaces.

- The use of small, two-sided pedestrian oriented signs is strongly encouraged.
- Projecting signs should be used for ground floor uses only. On a multi-storied building, the sign should be suspended between the bottom of the second story windowsills and the top of the doors or windows of the first story. On a one-story building, the top of the sign should be in line with the lowest point in the roof.
- Projecting signs should be hung perpendicular to the face of the building.
- Internal illumination of projecting signs is discouraged.



Hanging Signs and Banners

- Where overhangs or covered walkways exist, pedestrian oriented hanging signs are encouraged. Signs should be hung over the pedestrian right-of-way consistent with the Town Code.
- Hanging signs should be simple in design and not used to compete with existing signage at the site, such as wall signs.
- Banners hung from businesses or lights should be sized and hung in compliance with the Town code.
- Banners should employ designs and color schemes that are as simple as possible. If words are used, no more than a few should be used.
- The number of lettering styles (different fonts, upper/lower case, italic) on the banner and the number of pictorial elements should be limited to no more than two.
- One illustration style should be used on the banner with no more than three colors to avoid conflicting graphics.



Figurative Signs

- Signs, which advertise the occupant business through the use of graphic or crafted symbols, such as shoes, keys, glasses, or books, are encouraged. Figurative signs may be incorporated into any of the allowable sign types identified above.

GREEN DESIGN

Pervious Paving

Sidewalks, walkways, and pathways should be of permeable surfaces whenever possible. Surface containment that reduces water runoff from hard surfaces should always be addressed.



Materials

The use of sustainable building materials is encouraged.

Sustainable building materials are those that improve the energy efficiency of a building and that incorporate recycled material's, such as steel or recycled insulation materials in order to reduce material intensity, and in the case of wood products, are harvested from sustainably managed forests and are made from rapidly renewable plant materials, such as bamboo or cork. Products that use toxic binders should be avoided. Building materials that are produced locally (within 500 miles) will minimize the impact to the environment by minimizing transportation.

Native Plantings

Native plant material that is suitable to the climate, soils, and local average rainfall is desired from a maintenance and sustainable perspective. Invasive species and exotic plants are inconsistent with the regional landscape. If non-natives are necessary due to site conditions, plants that are water efficient are preferred.



High Reflective Color/Green Roofs

Materials for roofs, parking, and other paving should be lighter in color to contain high values of solar reflectivity. This will reduce the “heat island effect” when darker materials absorb the sun’s solar rays and lower ambient temperatures. The result is a reduced cooling cost and less stress on HVAC equipment. Green roofs and trees in the parking lot will achieve more toward the goal of lower energy consumption.

Windows

Windows are part of a building system and can affect a building’s overall energy performance. The use of sustainable practices are encouraged and include minimizing the total amount of glazing, selecting windows with low U-values, low Solar Heat Gain Coefficients (SHGC), and low-E coatings, spectrally selected glazing, or other technologies that reduce heat transmission through the glass, using light tubes to bring natural light to interior spaces, and using sun-blocking screens or shades on south and west facing windows to cut heat gain in the summer.

Regional Materials

A majority of materials should be produced, manufactured or assembled within 500 miles as indicated by the illustration. This will result in a reduced carbon footprint for the project and demand less in cost for construction.



Lighting

Light trespass from the development site to improve night sky access and reduce impact on nocturnal environments is encouraged. This can be accomplished by installing appropriate lamp types, installing sharp cut-off fixtures with shielding and keeping up-lighting and architectural illumination area directed and to a minimum.

Minimize Impervious Surface

Impervious surface should be minimized through the use of permeable materials, grass pavers and innovative storm water management. Landscape planting and ‘soft’ paving should be maximized to the extent possible.



REFERENCES

Development Regulations, Town of Bel Air

Comprehensive Plan, Town of Bel Air

Landscape Manual, Town of Bel Air

Historic Preservation Commission Design Guidelines

Design Guidelines for Rehabilitation, Maintenance and New Construction, Town of Bel Air

Revitalizing Downtown, Main Street National Trust

National Main Street Center Design Manual Series