

# BUSINESS DISTRICT DESIGN GUIDELINES

Des Plaines, Illinois

Prepared for the **City of Des Plaines**

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## **Section 4: Site Planning**

### **Business District Design Guidelines**

### SITE PLANNING GUIDELINES

Building location, scale, height and massing are varied in Downtown with buildings ranging in height from one to ten stories. Several streets have consistent “streetwalls” where buildings are placed at or near the property line. In some Downtown blocks and along much of Oakton and Lee Streets, building placement and location is inconsistent.

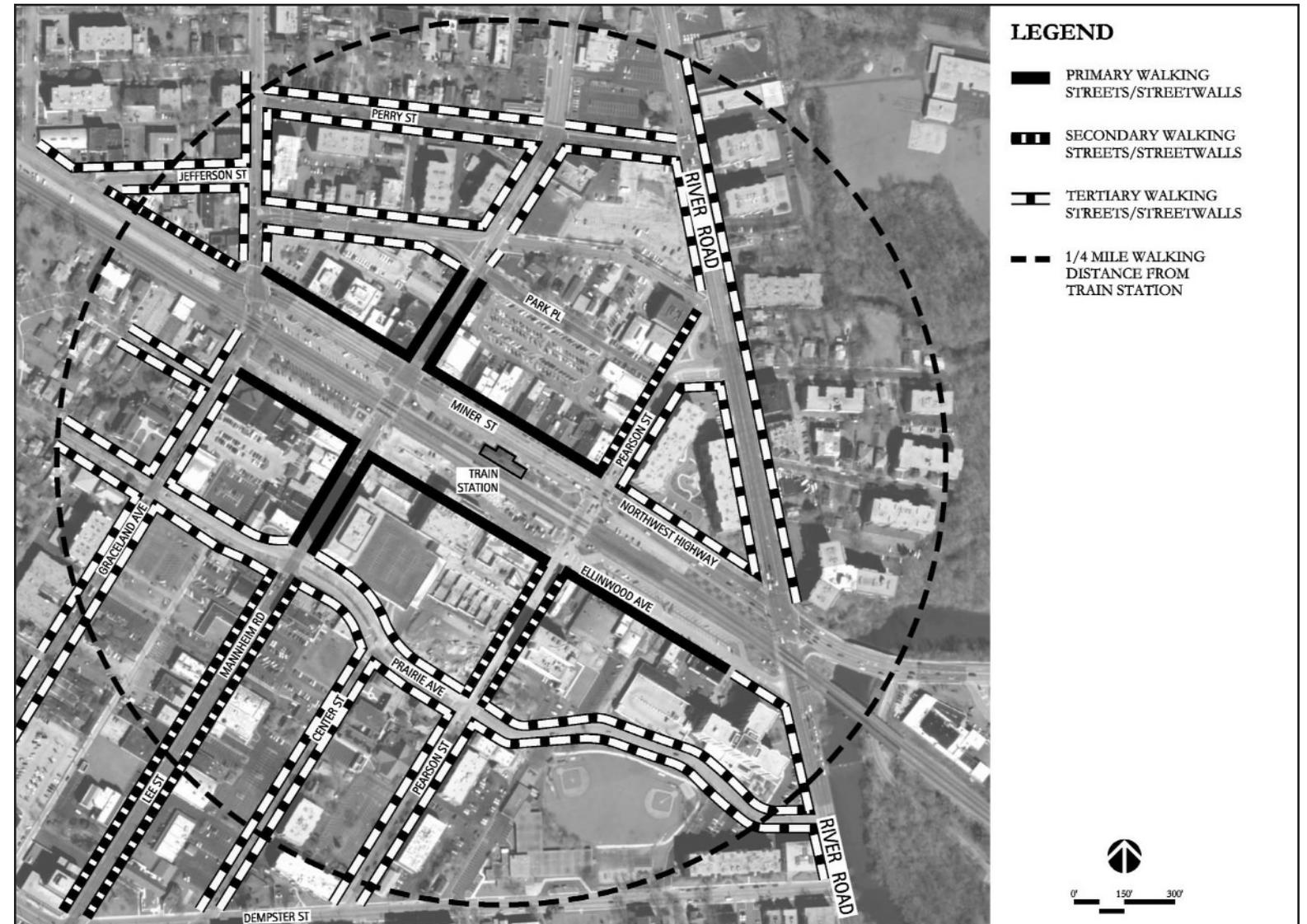
#### Downtown

There are approximately seven streets that run through Downtown. Several of these streets, mostly in the central core, have consistent “streetwalls” whereby buildings are placed at or near sidewalks with minimal disruptions from driveways and parking lots. The following streets should be considered key Downtown walking and shopping streets:

- Miner Street between Pearson St. and Graceland Ave.
- Lee Street between Prairie Ave. and Park Place.
- Ellinwood Avenue between River Road and Graceland Ave.

#### Oakton and Lee Streets

Building location is varied along Oakton and Lee Streets. Some buildings are sited along the street with little or no setback while others are setback further with parking in front. Some stand-alone buildings surrounded by parking also exist. Varied building locations create an inconsistent street wall and reinforce the auto oriented character of Oakton and Lee Streets. In some cases, it also makes it difficult to see and/or access buildings.



# Site Planning

## BUSINESS DISTRICT DESIGN GUIDELINES

### Building Scale & Massing

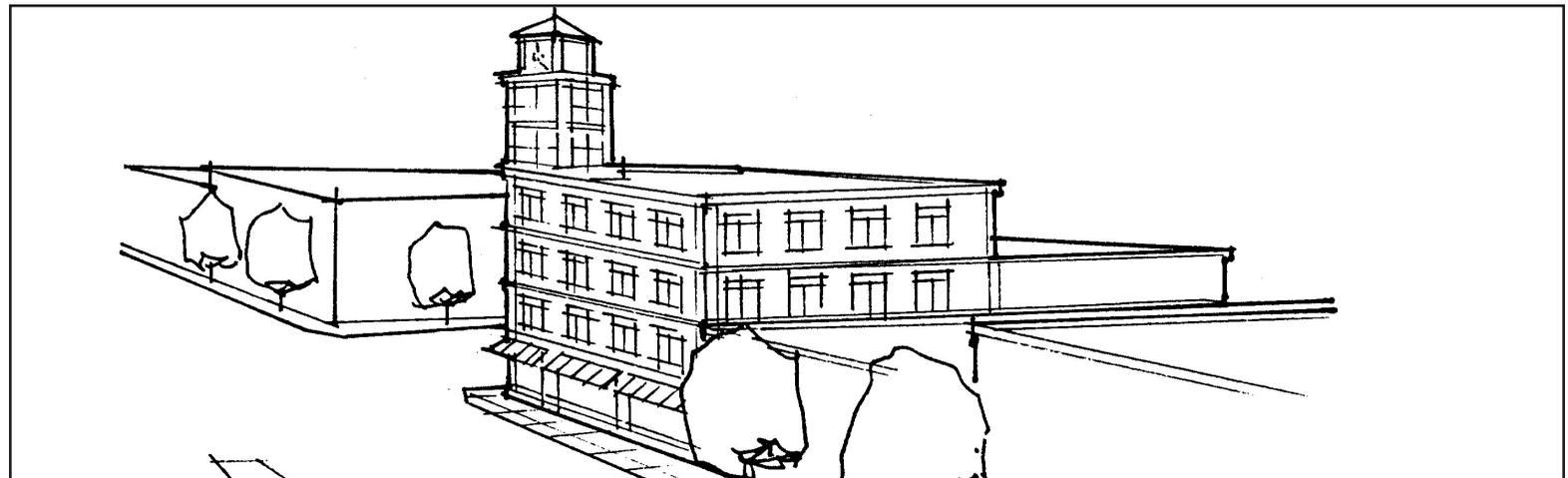
Building scale is generally consistent along Oakton and Lee Streets. Most buildings are one story and front the street with little or no setback. Buildings along some portions of the streets are massed appropriately with a mix of single-story and two-story buildings. However, along other portions buildings are set back from the street with parking in front, strip shopping centers, large freestanding restaurants, no street walls and parking in between buildings.

Parts of Oakton and Lee Streets contain large-scale commercial uses. Oakton's west end near Mannheim Road contains the Oaks Shopping Center with big-box and other accessory retail uses. Oakton near River Road contains a Walgreen's, gas stations, and other uses. These uses have large setbacks with parking in front.



*Typical Downtown Streetwall.*

- Buildings should be set back no farther than ten feet along Oakton and Lee to maintain the streetwall.
- In Downtown, new construction along primary walking streets should have a zero setback from the front property line whenever possible to reinforce the streetwall. Existing buildings set back from the sidewalk should include landscaping and fencing to maintain the streetwall and enhance the pedestrian experience as much as possible.
- Multi-story buildings should be constructed to respect adjacent buildings in terms of height, scale and proportion.
- Spatial gaps created in the streetwall by parking or other non-pedestrian areas should be minimized.
- In Downtown, gangways and narrow alleys between buildings should be avoided.
- Where gangways and narrow alleys exist between buildings for pedestrian access, they should be gated with decorative fencing and/or arches, lit with decorative fixtures, and clearly signed for visibility and security.
- Corner buildings should especially be placed at property lines to hold or frame the site along both street frontages.



*Conceptual corner building framing site corners.*

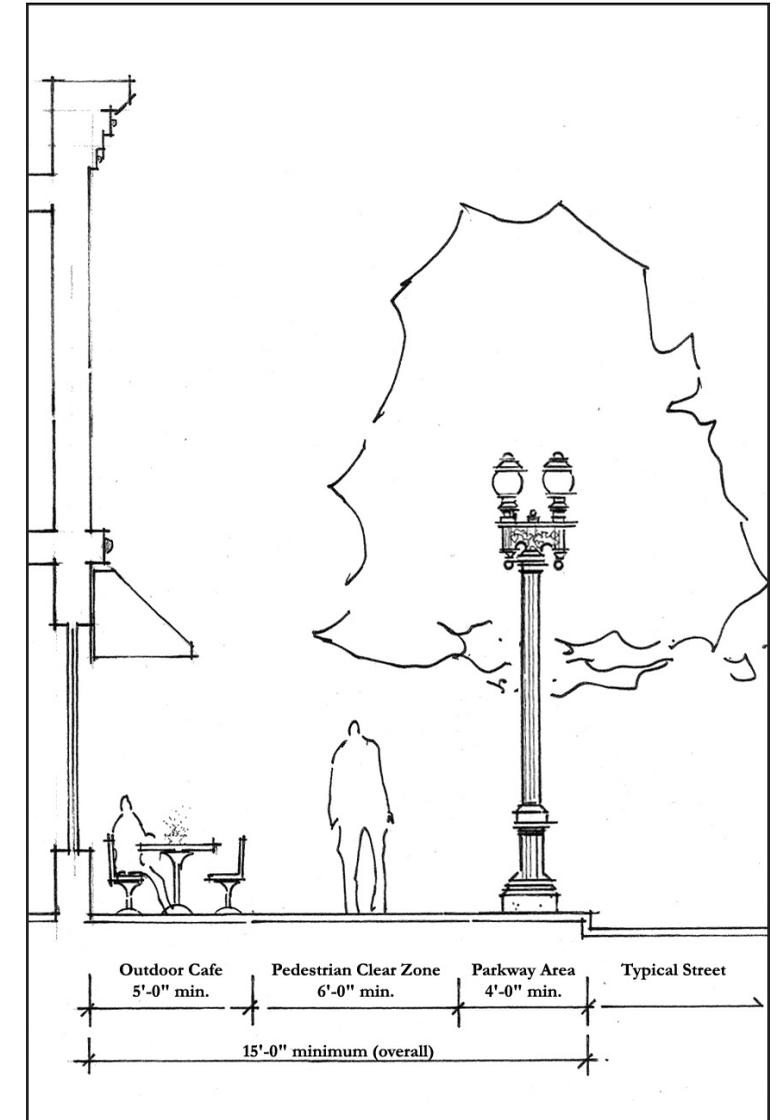
- Outdoor seating areas for cafes and restaurants should allow at least five feet of sidewalk clear space to maintain proper pedestrian circulation. Six feet is recommended. Seating areas should be framed with decorative fencing, walls and/or planters that incorporate landscaping.
- Large scale buildings should be massed appropriately to their surroundings. Landscaping, consistent setbacks and other design elements should be incorporated into the building and site design to provide relief to building scale and parking lots.
- Landscaping and decorative fences should be used to extend the appearance of the streetwall on sites with large building setbacks.
- When a building is setback five feet or more, landscaping should be encouraged to provide a buffer.
- Building sites should be planned to provide adequate planting including planting in and around parking areas.
- Where natural or existing topographic patterns contribute to the attractiveness and utility of a development, they should be preserved and enhanced. Modification to topography will be permitted where it contributes to good appearance, but in all cases care should be taken to avoid drainage or grade problems on adjoining sites.



*Gangways and narrow alleys between buildings are unattractive and can create safety issues.*



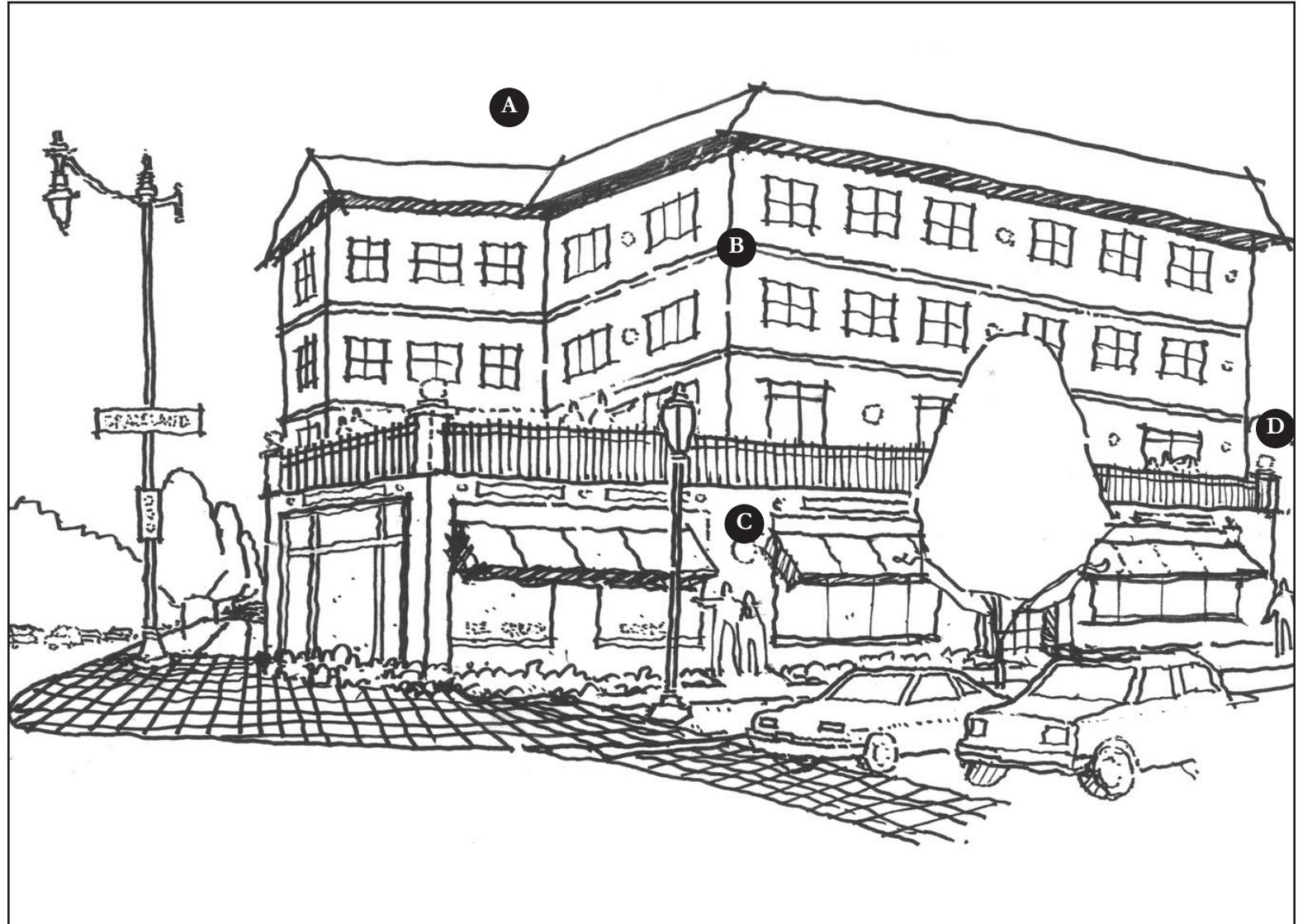
*If needed for pedestrian access, gangways and narrow alleys between buildings should be clearly defined.*



*Typical outdoor cafe and sidewalk cross-section.*

### DOWNTOWN CORNER DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT

- A. Mixed-use development “holding corner” with zero setbacks on both streets.
- B. Upper floor residential with terrace.
- C. First floor has active commercial use with traditional storefront architecture, including sign bands, awnings, large windows and low kneewalls.
- D. Parking and service located on non-primary commercial street.



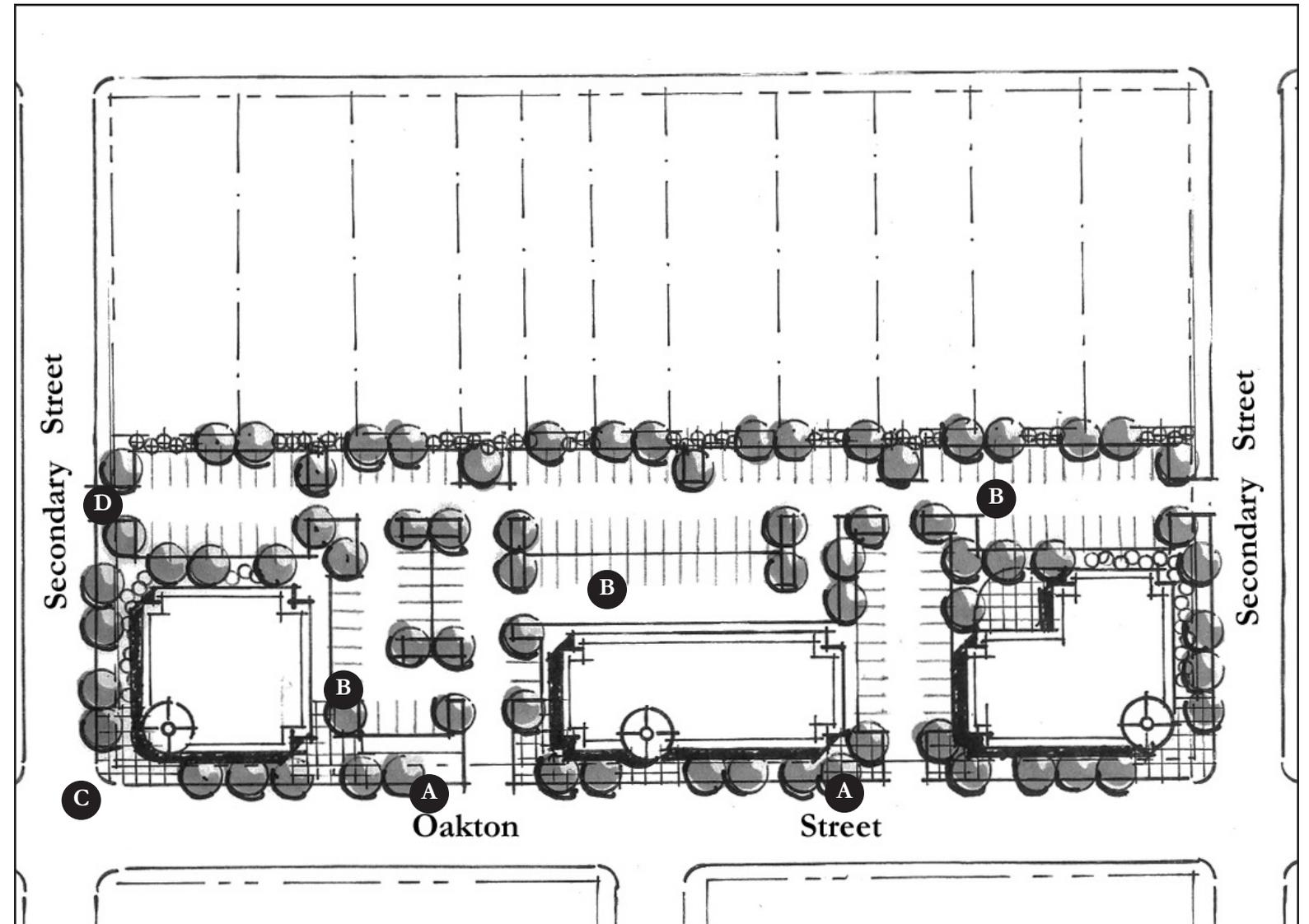
*Downtown Development Concept*

### OAKTON DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT

- A. Consolidated and shared driveways minimize curb cuts.
- B. Parking placed behind and to side of buildings.
- C. Buildings reinforce streetwall and hold corners.
- D. Access also on secondary street to reduce turning movements on/off of Oakton Street and to allow neighborhood traffic to directly access site without traveling onto Oakton Street.



*Multiple curb cuts on Oakton should be consolidated.*



*Oakton Street - Full Block Development Concept*

# Site Planning

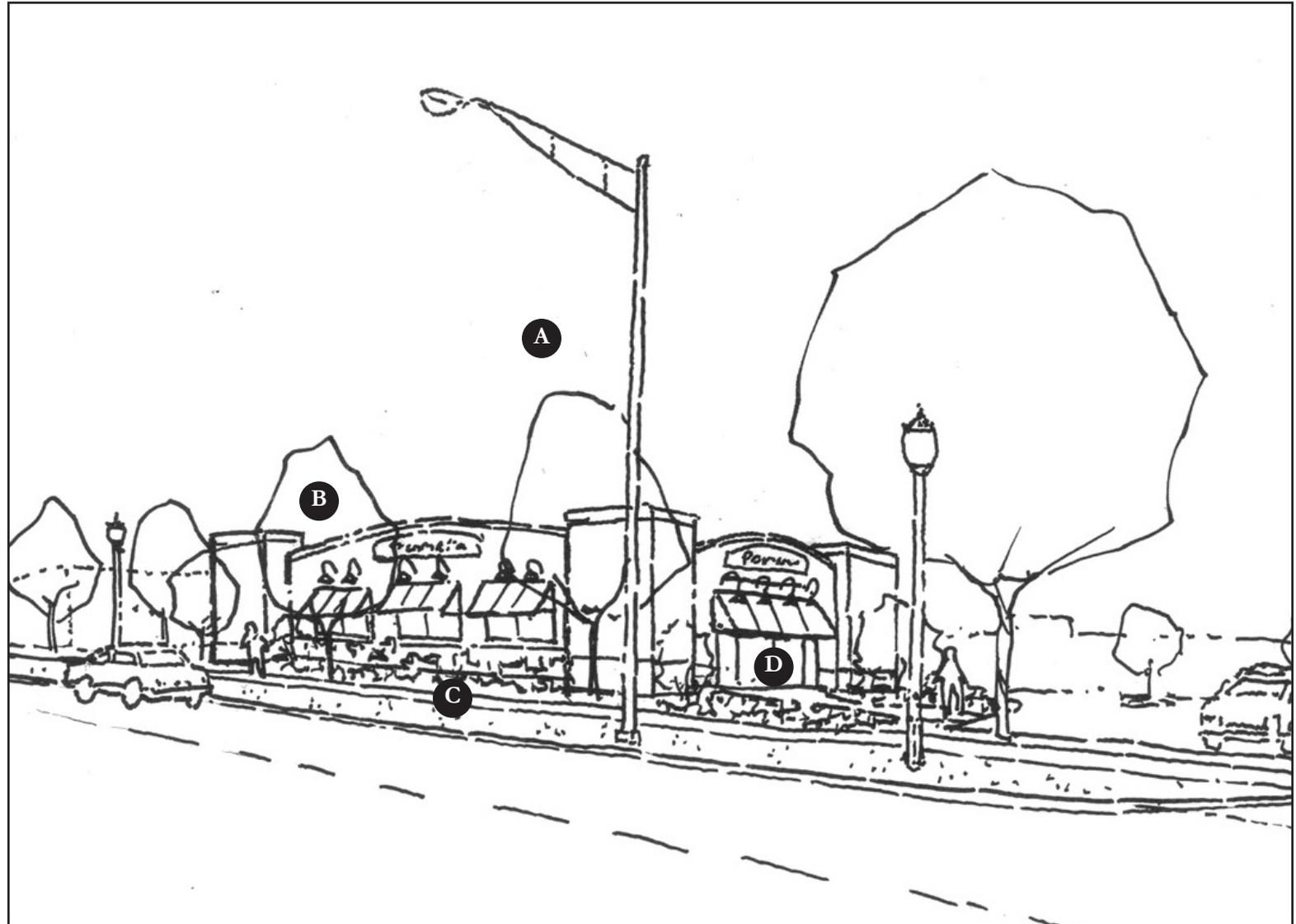
## BUSINESS DISTRICT DESIGN GUIDELINES

### OAKTON DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT

- A. Outlot parcel developed within existing large parking lot.
- B. Existing street trees supplemented with new large caliper trees. New trees placed not to obscure storefronts.
- C. Frontage landscaping added along sidewalks.
- D. Visually interesting commercial building design with traditional awnings and decorative lights.



*Vacant site within Oaks Shopping Center parking lot.*



*Oakton Street - Shopping Center - Infill Development Concept*

### OAKTON IMPROVEMENT CONCEPT

- A. Architectural detail and interest added to building, possibly with sign board or trim.
- B. Outdoor seating area with tables, umbrellas and landscaping.
- C. Landscaping added to overall site to soften harsh appearance.
- D. Pole sign replaced with attractive monument sign at ground level.



Oaks Shopping Center



Oakton Street - Site Improvement Concept

# Site Planning

## BUSINESS DISTRICT DESIGN GUIDELINES

### Parking Lots

In Downtown, parking lots are generally located in optimal locations behind or to the side of buildings with adequate access. Some parking lots that front on key streets or along the railroad tracks need to be screened with fencing and landscaping.

- In Downtown and along Oakton Street, parking spaces and lots should be located at the rear of a building when possible. Parking lots that front the street are discouraged. Shared parking between businesses and uses is encouraged wherever possible.

- Parking curb cuts along Downtown streets and Oakton and Lee Streets should be minimized. Individual businesses are encouraged to share access points.
- Parking and site lighting should minimize glare on surrounding properties and should be coordinated in style and color with adjacent properties and the City's decorative street lighting fixtures.
- Parking areas should be treated with elements to screen the areas from public view where feasible, such as wall extensions, plantings, berms or other means. Parking lots screened with landscaping should meet or exceed Des Plaines Landscape Ordinance requirements.



*Parking lot needs landscaping and fencing.*



*Parking lots located behind buildings.*



*Parking lots should be easily accessible when located behind buildings.*



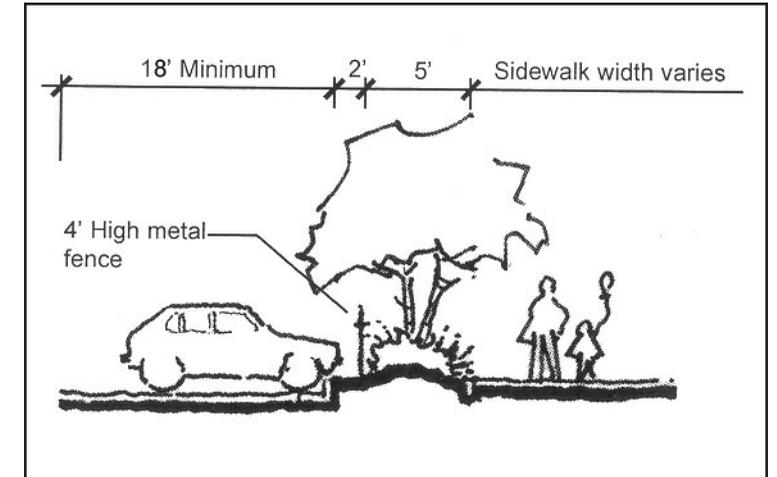
*Parking areas along Oakton Street should be screened with decorative fencing and landscaping.*

- Decorative and seasonal plantings, evergreens, trees and standard decorative fencing should be considered when improving or installing parking lots. Consideration should be taken so sight lines are not obscured.
- Minimum planting areas should be as follows: Every parking lot in every zoning district shall have 5% of its area devoted to planting areas. Areas required for side yards, front yards, or rear yards, should not be counted as planting areas.

Every parking lot with 8 or more parking spaces in a row, should have a barrier type poured concrete curbed planter island at each end of each row of parking spaces. Such planter island should be a minimum of 100 square feet. The maximum number of cars in a row should not exceed 25 without a fire break or cross drive.



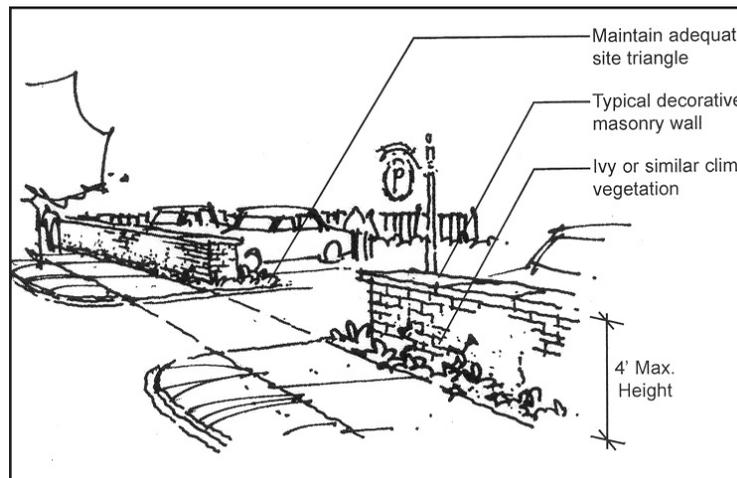
*Parking lot lacking fencing and landscaping along the street.*



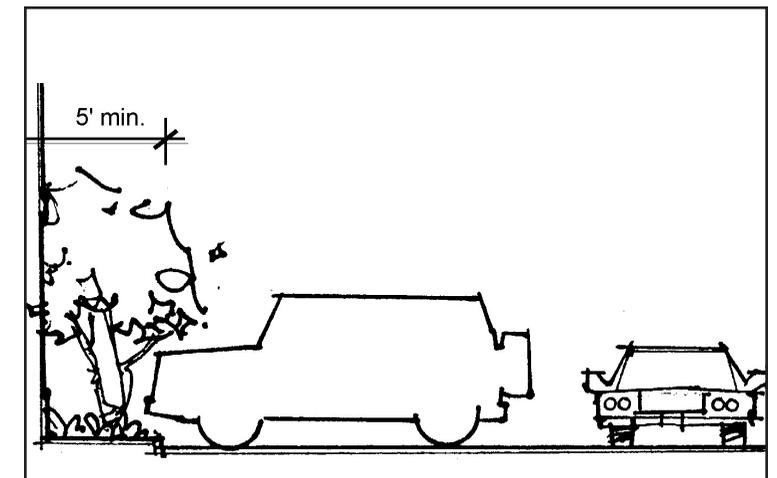
*Parking lot screening/ landscaping concept with decorative fence.*

### Site Lighting

- Exterior lighting should enhance the building design and the adjoining landscape. Lighting standards and fixtures should be of a design and size compatible with the building and adjacent areas. Lighting should be restrained in design, and excessive brightness and brilliant colors avoided.



*Parking lot screening concept with masonry wall.*



*Parking lot landscape screening concept adjacent to building.*

# Site Planning

## BUSINESS DISTRICT DESIGN GUIDELINES

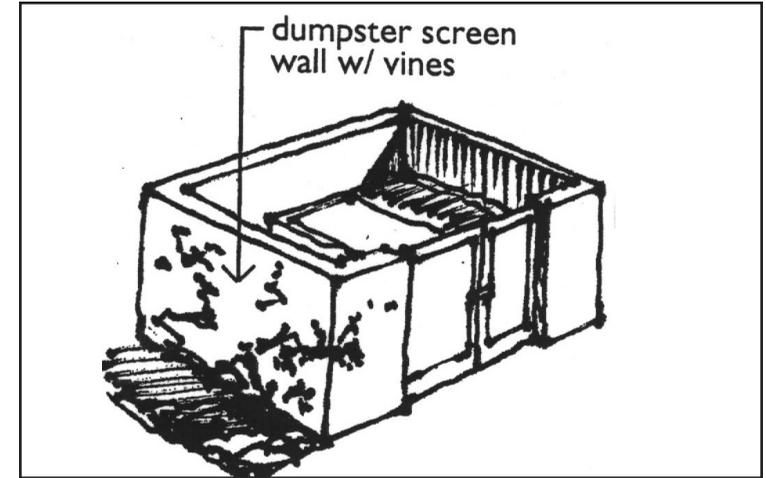
### Service Areas

Service areas behind buildings are not always designed in a manner consistent with the fronts or sides of a structure. Trash, utility and storage areas are visible from streets and parking lots in some locations within Downtown and along Oakton and Lee Streets. Trash areas/dumpsters behind buildings are randomly located and not screened, are unattractive and create potential conflicts with pedestrians and automobiles. Utility areas also need to be screened.

- Service areas and storage yards should be screened from public view.
- Service areas should be designed to fit within a site and screened from views with walls, fencing, landscaping or other materials that complement adjacent buildings and provide screening in all seasons.
- Single loading, service, and utility areas for businesses are discouraged. Shared service areas should be considered for ease of maintenance and improved aesthetics as well as the potential to create new site area for landscaping and/or parking spaces.
- Utility lines should be installed underground where feasible.



*Dumpsters without screening behind buildings.*



*Dumpster screening concept.*



*Service areas should be screened where feasible.*



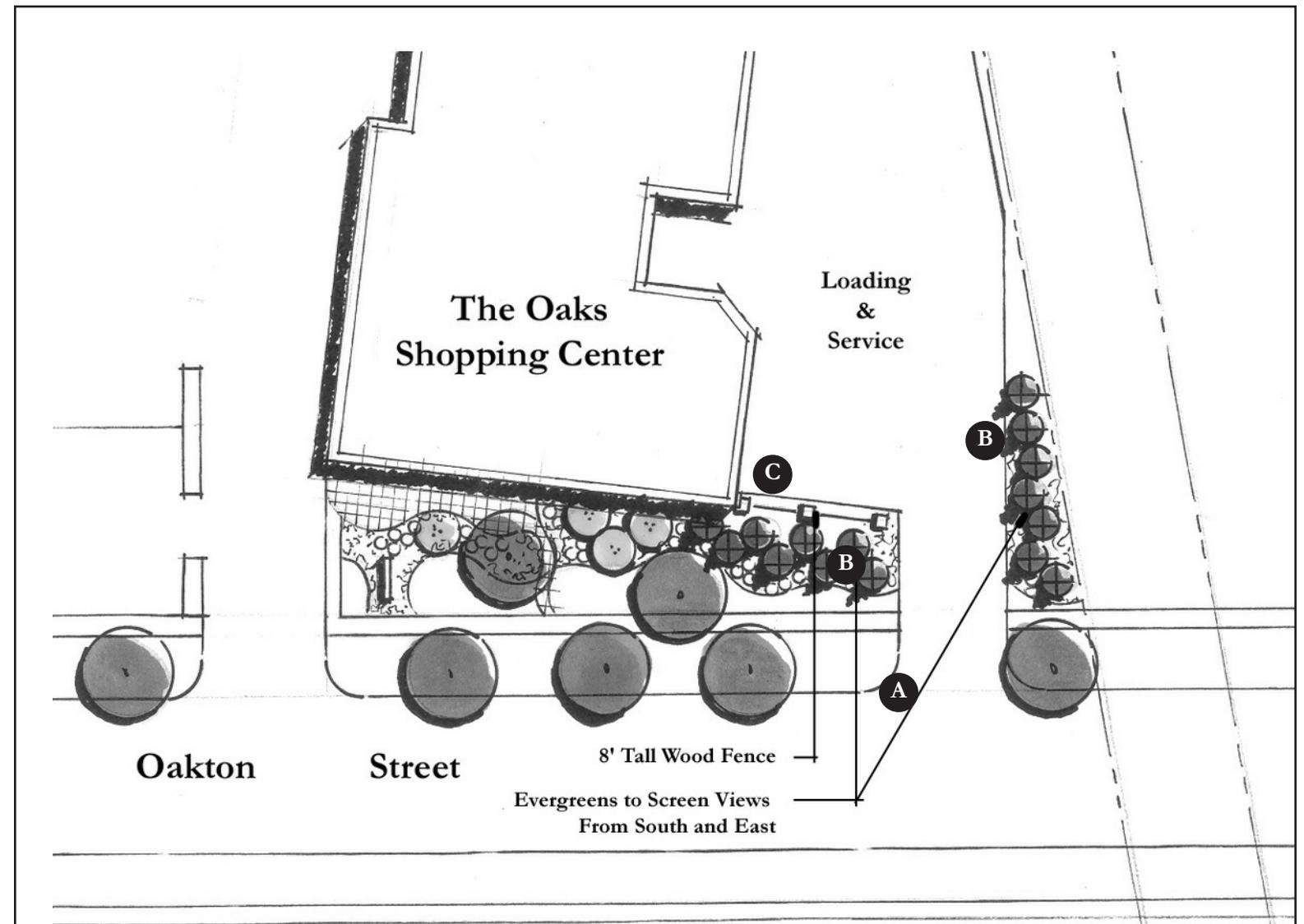
*Utilities for new development should be installed underground where feasible..*

## OAKTON IMPROVEMENT CONCEPT

- A. Entrance drive configured to screen loading and service areas.
- B. Landscaping added to provide interest and screen rear of site.
- C. Fencing added to screen area from sidewalk.



*Dumpsters clutter the site and are visible from the street.*



*Oakton Street - Site Improvement Concept*

# Site Planning

## BUSINESS DISTRICT DESIGN GUIDELINES

### Site Signage

Some site signage within Downtown is oversized and hard to read. Site signage along Oakton and Lee Streets is generally garish, excessive, and hard to read. Some sites along Oakton and Lee Streets have large signs that display numerous business names/information and have potential for consolidation. There is no consistent placement of signage along Oakton and Lee Streets or consistent design theme.

- Site signage in Downtown and along Oakton and Lee Streets should be minimal and designed to reduce visual clutter and make it easy for both pedestrians and motorists to see.
- As businesses replace existing signs and as new businesses open, site signage should consist of monument signs. Sign height should be restricted to five to eight feet above grade, dependent on lot size, to reduce visual clutter.
- Site signage should be limited to the business name and logo. Text regarding advertising, sales and services should be limited.
- Changing text signs, electronic moving signs, and temporary moveable signs are prohibited.



*Unattractive signage, including temporary signs with low quality materials.*



*Site signage along Oakton.*



*Unattractive, hard to read site signage along Oakton.*



*Site signage along Oakton.*

### DOWNTOWN SIGNAGE CONCEPT

- A. Sign placed perpendicular to roadway for easier viewing by passing pedestrians and motorists.
- B. Overall height and size reduced to open up views to building and sidewalk.
- C. Hierarchy of text heights created with site name larger than individual businesses.
- C. More contrast between text and background created to improve readability.
- C. Amount of information is limited on the sign.



*Library Plaza sign.*



*New Sign Concept*