

# TOWN OF PLAINFIELD

## Residential Design Guidelines

### Section 1. Introduction

#### A. Intent.

Over the years, as more and more residential developments have been created in the suburban Indianapolis area, many of these developments have focussed on efficient construction methods for the individual dwelling units and the development of efficient site layouts. While efficiency may lead to the creation of more dwellings which are affordable to more families, an overabundance of efficiency can lead to a perception of many developments as having a cookie-cutter sameness in which many of the residential developments start to look alike, both from the interior and exterior. The perception of residential communities is primarily impacted by two critical elements: (i) architectural appearance / quality of the individual dwelling units; and, (ii) the site design of the overall development, whether the design is of a single family or two family subdivision or a multifamily complex.



Example of the Impact of Similar Architecture on a Streetscape



Example of Minimum Lot Size & Minimum Setback with Similarly Designed Homes

It is the intent of these guidelines to provide information to be considered by residential developers to accomplish two goals: first, to assist the Town of Plainfield in providing the mix of housing products which meet the market needs of the current and future residents of the Town of Plainfield; and, second, to provide residential communities, in a full range of price points, that utilize sound design principles so that all members of the Town of Plainfield will take a sense of pride in the developments.

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To accomplish these goals, the Town of Plainfield Residential Design Guidelines which follow are intended to: provide an overview of the architectural and site design issues; identify the primary areas of concern over each architectural and site design issue; and, provide a series of guidelines or options which may be used to address each architectural and site design issue. The items contained in these Residential Design Guidelines are not intended to be all-inclusive, but rather to establish a base-line which developers and home builders may use to create their own response to the outlined concerns.

**B. Architectural Appearance Issues.**

In recent years, many residential home builders have responded to citizen, neighborhood and plan commission concerns over the architectural appearance and quality issues by paying significant attention to the architectural details on the fronts of homes and, for the most part, have provided a wide range of housing products with attractive front elevations. In many cases, front elevations now include such architectural design features as: a percentage of brick; dormers; window shutters; door sidelights; door transoms; decorative window headers; and, the like. Residential home builders are encouraged to continue and expand upon this good work.



Example of: Brick; Dormers; Covered Front Porch; Decorative Door Surround; and, Side Load Garage.

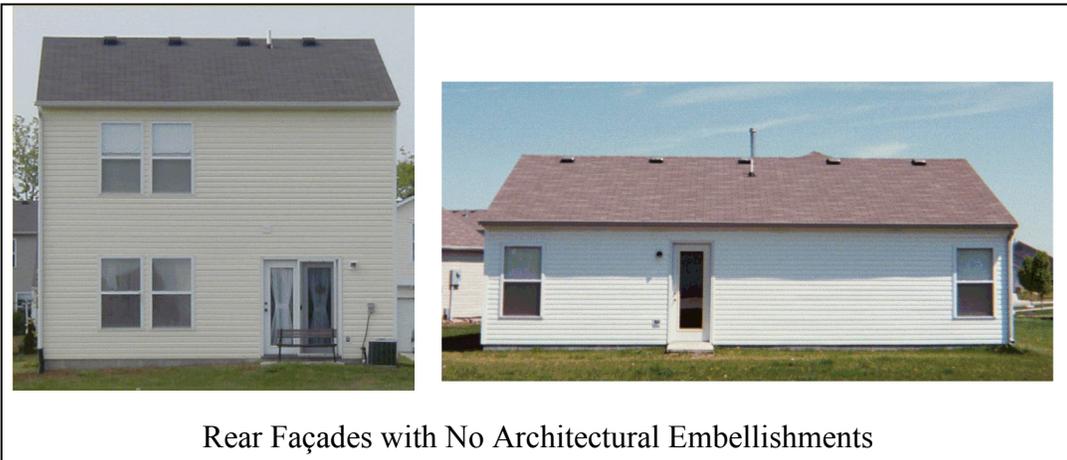


Front Porch, Shutters, Widow Grids, Door Sidelight and Door Transom

While the attention paid to the architectural detailing of the front facades of homes has been well received, architectural detailing of the side or rear facades often feature only a single architectural plain with little or no architectural embellishments. This lack of side or rear façade architectural embellishments is compounded by two issues which relate to the layout of the lots and the design of a subdivision or project. First, typical subdivision control ordinance regulations, in an effort to promote public safety and the efficient movement of traffic, prohibit direct access to individual single family, two family or multifamily dwellings from primary or secondary streets. Second, many developers attempt to create and sell their subdivision or project as an individual "community". Often, the effort to create an individual "community" fits with the subdivision control regulations, but when individual communities are created off of lesser traveled collector or local streets, the result is that the side or rear facades of the majority of the new homes,

which contain little or no architectural embellishments, are: (i) oriented toward the streets of the town; (ii) establish the primary views of the residential market in the town; and, (iii) impact the perception of the overall residential development within the town.

Many modern subdivisions or projects also include common areas or other activity areas as a focal point of the community and are used to market the subdivision or project as an attractive place to live and spend leisure time. The common areas or other activity areas are often designed and located within a block and surrounded by lots which back up to the common areas or other activity areas. As a result, a similar concern exists regarding common areas or other activity areas within a subdivision or project as exists along perimeter streets.



To a lesser extent, the same architectural concern has been expressed for all lots within a single family or two family subdivision. This concern is magnified as the size of the block increases or the size of the individual lots decreases.

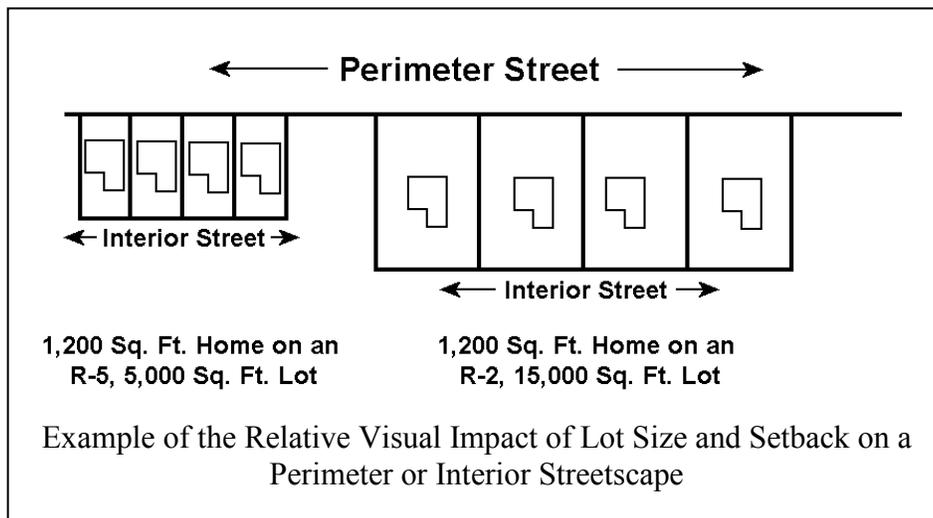
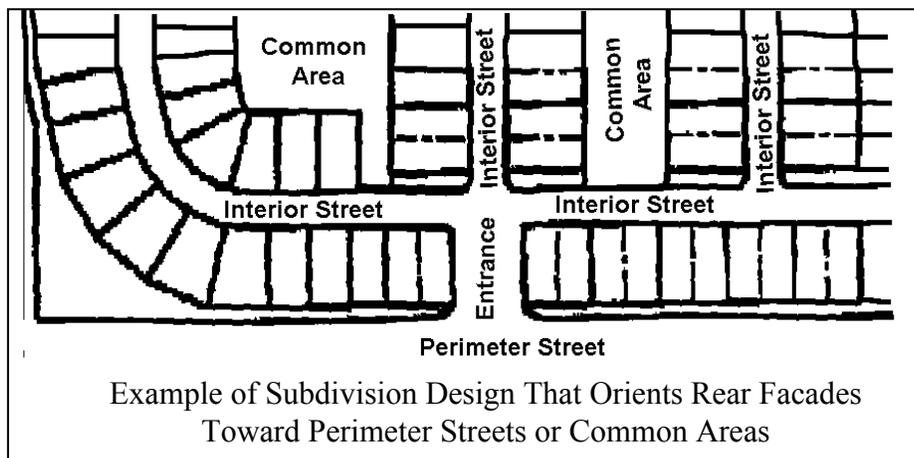


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C. Site Design Issues.

Partially in an effort to off-set increased costs associated with: the architectural design features or embellishments used to address the architectural appearance issues discussed above; and, construction costs of streets, utilities and lot preparation, many subdivisions are developed with the minimum lot size available and with the homes located at the minimum front setback. The use of minimum size lots and minimum setbacks, if developed with appropriate architectural styles, streetscape details and attention to on-site amenities, can be used to create a very attractive community. However, if minimum lot sizes and setbacks are coupled with only a handful of home designs that offer little or no architectural variation, or with no on-site amenities or ill-suited on-site amenities, internal streetscapes can soon become a negative element of the development.

The Town of Plainfield Residential Design Guidelines are provided in an effort to present some alternatives for consideration to address the site design issues identified herein.



D. Conclusion.

The combination of the architectural appearance issues and the site design issues, if not appropriately addressed, can lead to the monotonous repetition of similar appearing dwellings which can create a perception of low quality. The Town of Plainfield encourages developers to be creative in the architectural appearance of a home and the site design of a development to address the concerns and perceptions outlined above in a manner that will result in a favorable impact on the new developments as well as the overall perception of the Town.

In an effort to promote the order and general welfare of the Town of Plainfield, the Plan Commission of the Town of Plainfield encourages residential developers to consider the design features contained in these Residential Design Guidelines for each residential development proposed within the Town of Plainfield. It is recognized that the design features contained in these Residential Design Guidelines cannot and do not represent all forms of acceptable design treatments which may be utilized by a developer to achieve the desired impact. The Plan Commission (in its recommendations regarding petitions for zone map change and determinations regarding subdivision layout) and Town Council (in its determinations regarding zone map changes) are encouraged to review a development proposal for compliance with the spirit and intent of the design features outlined in these Residential Design Guidelines.