

## **DESIGN STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES**

### **Cherrywood Neighborhood Association (CNA)**

< Cherrywood.Org > March 2005

CNA in 1999 deliberately worked out a neighborhood vision that yielded consensus on the characteristics of our community that we hoped to retain and foster. The Design Standards described in this document outline those characteristics that relate to the physical development of the neighborhood. The accompanying Design Guidelines offer more practical examples and suggestions for applying the Standards in the design of improvements and new construction.

Some elements discussed here have been codified in the Upper Boggy Creek Neighborhood Plan, but the Guidelines are mostly voluntary. CNA is a residents' association rather than a homeowners' association. We have no enforcement authority. CNA simply tries to discover (and rediscover) and promote consensual community interests. Whether you are an absentee owner, a resident owner, a tenant, or a local investor, we believe following the Guidelines will improve the value of your property and our quality of life. Developers, builders, and owners generally find that complying ends up serving their self-interest as well. Much of CNA's actual "leverage" flows from good will.

Occasionally CNA's approval may be critical. When a property owner petitions the Board of Adjustment for a variance, or otherwise seeks City approval, CNA may play a formal role. If so, CNA's Planning & Zoning Committee will support a petition if the applicant agrees to meet our Design Guidelines, and if neighbors register no strong objection.

To help, we append to these Guidelines a "NEIGHBOR SURVEY" form. It can be used by project proposers to: (a) familiarize nearby owners and residents of a project's potential impacts; (b) discover concerns and problems; and (c) solicit neighbors' ideas about the design. Or it can be used to document neighbors' support or opposition as needed.

CNA's first responsibility is to our membership. If a question does not involve the whole neighborhood, CNA's practice is to weigh most heavily the views of nearby residents. Where tenants and owners differ, we try to reconcile contending positions according to our Guidelines.

#### Useful Websites:

**CNA home page: [Cherrywood.Org](http://Cherrywood.Org)**

**On the CNA Menu (at screen left) choose:**

- **Community Vision**
- **Development Standards & Design Guidelines**
- **Upper Boggy Creek Neighborhood Plan**

**City of Austin, Neighborhood Planning and Zoning:**

< <http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/planning/> >

## Part 1: DESIGN STANDARDS

Important values our members hold, and concerns they commonly express, are summarized below. Specific Design Guidelines may be relevant to more than one Standard. Good design if anything is multifunctional.

- 1. Fire Safety.** Structures constructed with combustible materials that are built close to one another allow blazes to spread easily and quickly. Fire walls or nonflammable construction materials should be used where this danger occurs.
- 2. Security against Intruders.** Placement of landscaping, fences, and new construction should maximize visibility for Police patrols. Additional suggestions are on CNA's site at: [Cherrywood.Org](http://Cherrywood.Org) | Security
- 3. "Eyes on the Street."** Architectural features should be incorporated to facilitate neighborliness and make it easier for neighbors to look out for one another. Lighting, street windows, front sitting porches, and garages set back further than front facades; all illustrate elements that achieve this.
- 4. Subdued Parking.** Sufficient off-street parking to the side or rear to accommodate a building's planned use should be provided. Any intended dependence on curbside parking should be limited to one's own adjacent curb space.
- 5. Pedestrian Safety.** Planting should not overhang the street where branches may impede pedestrians, bicyclists, or drivers. Nor should pedestrians be forced into traffic where planting impedes the right-of-way between your property and the curb. Moreover trees and bushes should not be planted where they block existing sidewalks, or are likely to interfere with future sidewalks. CNA envisions a sidewalk plan that will aid in determining where to avoid planting.



Many Cherrywood streets feature off-street parking and mature vegetation, characteristics that support pedestrian traffic. Space between retaining walls and streets allows for car doors to open (right), and a future sidewalk, if needed.

*Guideline illustrated: 6.5*





Planting slightly away from the building helps with maintenance and pest control. Low shrubs allow “eyes on the street.” *Illustrated: 6.1, 6.2, 6.4*



Insensitive design can have serious negative effects on the neighborhood.

**6. Neighborhood Scale and Character.** For residential streets, windowless walls, tall fences, storage of vehicles or supplies, unkempt appearance or any similarly incongruous non-residential features visible from the street should be avoided. For commercial locations along main streets, architectural features with a “neighborhood shop” flavor are encouraged. For comfort everywhere, people outside should be shielded from the hot sun. Elements such as shade trees, arbors, trellises, deep overhangs and covered open porches not only provide functional use of space but also lend a scale and character compatible with the neighborhood.

**7. Sustainable Design and Construction.** It is best to plan and design construction that provides for current residents’ needs while also enabling future generations to provide for theirs. “Green” design elements, construction techniques and building materials, as well as rainwater harvesting, use of recycled materials, runoff management, provision of shade, landscaping, and other features and measures friendly to the environment, all are strongly encouraged. For more information, see the City of Austin’s Green Building Program: < <http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/greenbuilder/> >

**8. Intended Use.** Rental units, home offices, home businesses, studios, etc. are encouraged to locate in residential blocks as long as they are residential in character, generate no more traffic than a normal residence, and produce no excessive noise. Along our main streets, we welcome businesses (especially ones drawing customers from nearby blocks) that cause no problem traffic, parking, noise, or other negative impacts on residences. We invite our businesses to join in the life of our community.



This block’s mature trees, human scale and front porches create a pleasant environment for neighborhood interaction – a stark contrast to the corner lot (right), where a large expanse of parking isolates the house from the street front. *Standards illustrated: 2-Security, 3-Community, 4-Parking*



## Part 2: DESIGN GUIDELINES

Tastes differ. Consensus on general values is more readily achieved than agreement on specifics. But these Guidelines describe design elements that foster the Design Standards. Specific Standards each might promote are shown in *italics*.

### 1. Entry Doors

- 1.1. Make the entryway visible from the street. *2-Security 3-Community*
- 1.2. Provide vision glass in the door, or in adjacent fixed glass or window(s), to facilitate visual contact with visitors. *2-Security 3-Community*
- 1.3. Protect visitors from the elements. *3-Community*
- 1.4. Make the house number easily visible from the street. *2-Security 3-Community*
- 1.5. Provide a place other than your US Mailbox to leave newsletters, notes and notices. *3-Community*

### 2. Porches

- 2.1. Shield a porch from the sun and rain. *3-Community 6-Character*
- 2.2. Make it wide and deep enough to protect visitors from the elements, and to provide sitting space. *3-Community 6-Character*

### 3. Windows

- 3.1. In the spirit of “Eyes on the Street,” position windows, and glass in the entry door, to make the street(s) visible from the residence. *2-Security 3-Community*



Portico shields visitors from the elements.  
*Guidelines illustrated: 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 2.1, 2.2, 3.1*



Hospitable porch with swing.  
*Guidelines illustrated: 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 2.1, 2.2, 3.1*



Large porch and windows create a connection with the street and neighborhood.  
*Guidelines illustrated: 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 2.1, 2.2, 3.1*

## 4. Fences

- 4.1. Avoid privacy fencing in the front yard. It makes the street invisible from the front door. And it obscures security officers' view into the rear of the property.  
*2-Security 3-Community*

## 5. Lighting

- 5.1. Consider neighbors' interest and comfort when choosing and installing exterior lighting. Choose exterior lighting with no visible lamp (bulb). The International Dark-Sky Assn's handout is especially helpful: < <http://www.darksky.org/handouts/gnol.html> >.  
*3-Community*
- 5.2. Select exterior lighting that both enhances security and is aesthetically pleasing.  
*2-Security 3-Community*



This neighborhood-friendly security lighting does not cast glare next door at night (above) – and is unobtrusive when not in use in daylight (right).

*Guidelines illustrated: 5.1. 5.2. 5.3*



When necessary along the street, an open fence allows breezes, security vision.

*Guidelines illustrated: 4.1*



## 6. Landscaping

- 6.1. Avoid shrubbery that lowers visibility of the street. *2-Security 3-Community*
- 6.2. Avoid shrubbery that lowers visibility of oncoming traffic at intersections. *2-Security 5-Pedestrians*
- 6.3. Avoid shrubbery that blocks pedestrian right-of-way. *2-Security 3-Community*
- 6.4. Plant shrubbery away from buildings (to foil critter or insect pests, and protect finishes). *7-Sustainability*
- 6.5. Allow a setback for retaining walls along the street. *5-Pedestrians*
- 6.6. Locate new trees away from utility lines. *1-Fire 6-Character 7-Sustainability*
- 6.7. Preserve existing trees. *3-Community 7-Sustainability*
- 6.8. Use native and xerophytic plants adaptable to our dry climate. *7-Sustainability*

## 7. Environmental facilities

- 7.1. Follow Austin's Green Building Program. <<http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/greenbuilder/>> An interesting companion site is Seattle's "Green Home Remodel: Healthy Homes for a Healthy Environment." <<http://www.seattle.gov/sustainablebuilding/greenhome.htm>> *7-Sustainability*
- 7.2. Follow AE's home energy tips. <<http://www.austinenergy.com/Residential/index.htm>> *7-Sustainability*
- 7.3. Leave standing as many trees as possible. *3-Community 7-Sustainability*
- 7.4. Maximize pervious cover. *7-Sustainability*



Landscaping should accommodate sidewalks and visibility (above), not force pedestrians into the street (inset). Retaining walls should be set back (below) to allow for parked cars and pedestrians. *Guidelines illustrated: 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.5*



Preserving existing trees (above) benefits the homeowner, neighbors and the environment. Pervious paving (below) reduces the rainwater run-off flowing to creeks and storm sewers. *Guidelines illustrated: 6.7, 7.3, 7.4*





## 8. Parking

- 8.1. Locate garage or open-air parking in the rear of the property, accessible from an alley if available. *4-Parking 6-Character*
- 8.2. Pave parking spaces and driveway with semi-pervious ribbon drives or pavers where practical and where allowed by City Code (CNA can help get a favorable determination).  
*7-Sustainability*

## 9. Setbacks

- 9.1. Only seek a variance from City Code where the result will be: (a) fewer cars parked both on street and in the front setback area, *and/or* (b) construction of a porch in the front setback area, but which *always* result in (c) other Guidelines not being compromised. *3-Community 4-Parking 6-Character*



Rear parking accessed by a drive (above) is clearly preferable to using the front yard as a parking lot (right), or making a garage the focus of the street-facing façade (below).

*Guideline illustrated: 8.1*



Cherrywood Neighborhood Association  
NEIGHBOR SURVEY  
< cherrywood.org >

This form might be used *informally* to share plans for a contemplated project with neighbors, and to relay their feelings and concerns back to the Proposer; and *formally* to document data CNA might need to intervene officially in a City approval process.

Informally, timely approval works wonders. Factors that often are overlooked include how a project will impact breeze, drainage, fire safety, light, parking, privacy, security, and trees. As Ben Franklin reminds, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." Early in the process, ideas can be suggested. Concerns can be addressed. Problems can be anticipated. Solutions may be easier to find. While too many cooks may spoil the soup, several guests make a feast.

Everyone given this form to fill out should be provided a copy of the CNA Design Guidelines - available on-line at **cherrywood.org**.

Formally, it sometimes is necessary to approach the City and/or the Cherrywood Neighborhood Association (CNA) to secure a building permit, Plan amendment, permission to remove a tree, relaxation of a restrictive covenant, variance, or zoning change. In some cases, owners within 300 feet are notified, and a hearing scheduled. CNA's purpose is not to duplicate what others do. It is to encourage implementation of our Guidelines. These outline construction standards people living in this neighborhood have found to be desirable.

**1** PROPOSER: What is to be constructed?  
(Please attach a description as well as site plan, additional drawings, or photos)

What is the address of the project?

Name of Proposer :

Address / Phone / E-mail:

**2** RESPONDENT:  
I am fully aware of the protect and its impact(s), if any, on my site and I have been provided a copy of the CNA Design Guidelines (approved by the Membership April 2004).

I approve     I approve with conditions     I disapprove    Date:

Comments (please write overleaf, or attach):

Name:

Signature:

Address:

Owner / owner-resident / tenant?