Planning & Zoning Department

TOWNHOME DESIGN STANDARDS

City of Goose Creek

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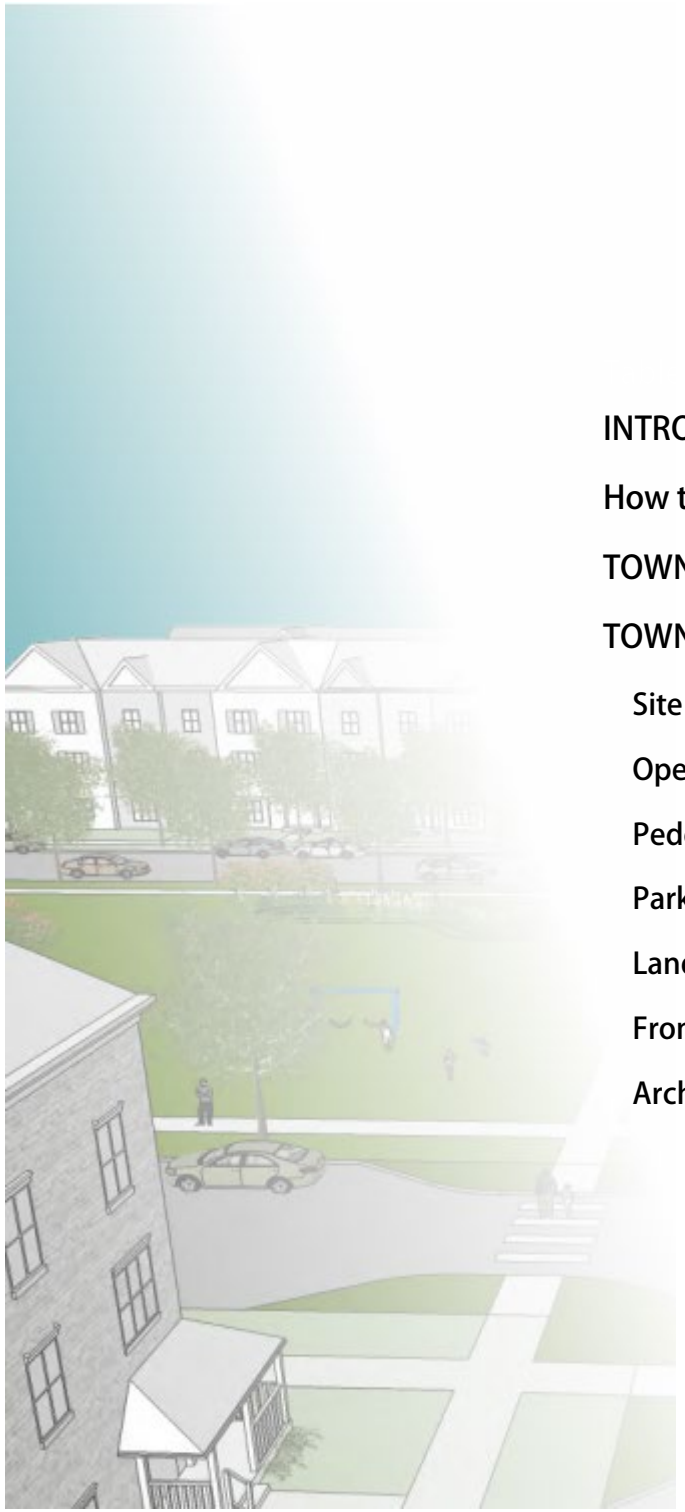

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Prepared by the Goose Creek Planning and Zoning Department

GOOSE CREEK CITY COUNCIL
Greg Habib, Mayor
Debra Green-Fletcher, Mayor Pro Tem
Jerry Tekac
Christopher Harmon
Gayla McSwain
Hannah Cox
Melissa Enos

GOOSE CREEK PLANNING COMMISSION
Judie Edwards, Chair
Heather Byrd, Vice Chair
Lisa Burdick
Gena Glaze
Anthony Jenkins
Josh Lily
Nick Matthews

STAFF
Natalie Zeigler, City Administrator
Brian Cook, Assistant City Administrator
Alexis Kiser, Special Projects Manager
Kendra Wise, Planning and Zoning Director
Brenda Moneer, Planner II
Joseph Morris, Planner II

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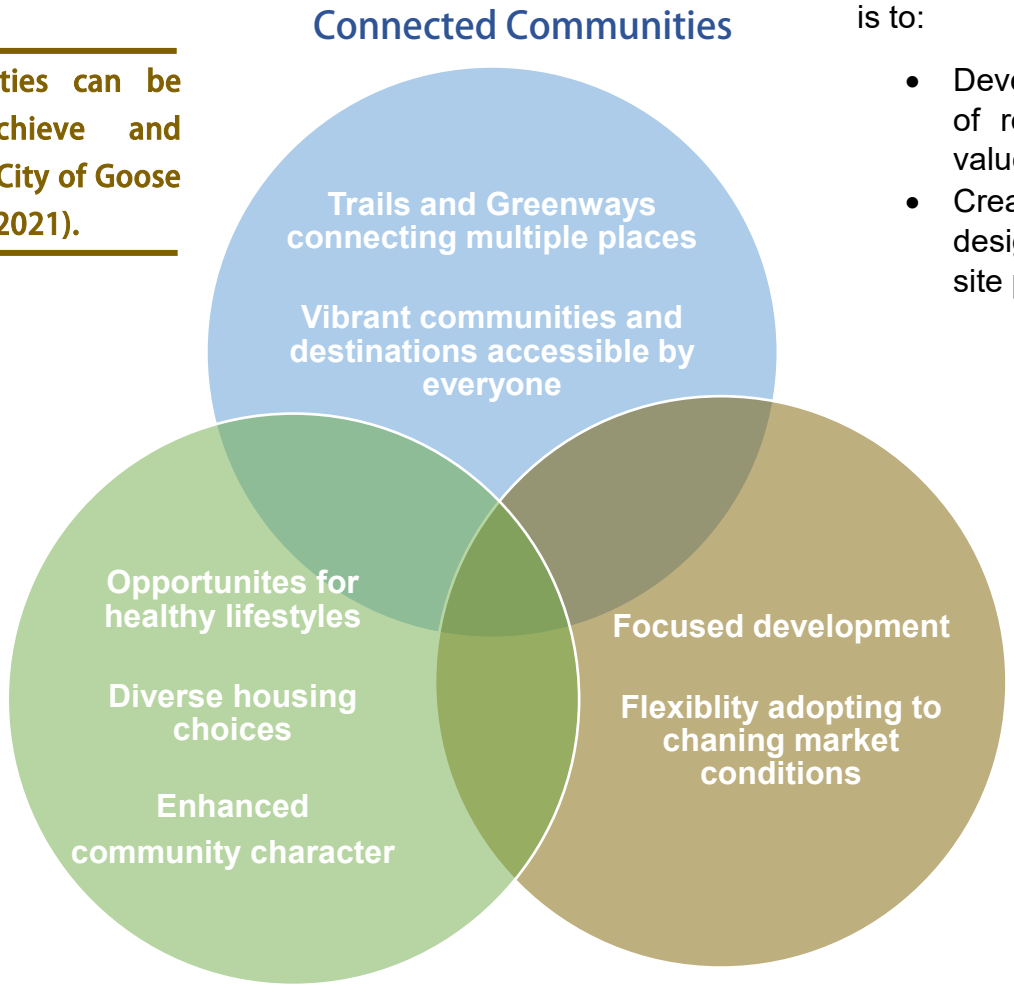
INTRODUCTION

Townhouse developments are a common housing type in the City of Goose Creek, both as higher density infill projects in older neighborhoods as well as large-scale new development in suburban areas. Townhouses are an attractive housing choice for many. They can be more affordable than single-family detached homes in the same community and have reduced home maintenance responsibilities. As predominant trends in townhouse development have evolved and as townhouses have become an important housing choice within the city, recent developments have provided valuable examples of how design features and amenities make townhouse neighborhoods desirable places to live.

Creating great townhouse communities involves smart design choices and successful integration into the surrounding neighborhoods. All townhouse developments, regardless of size or location, benefit from careful attention to site planning, design, and architecture to ensure successful projects that meet the needs of residents and provide long-term value to the community.

Townhome developments are permissible in the Residential Mixed (RM), Village Node (VN), and Employment Campus (EC) districts. Depending on the zoning district, townhome developments may be considered a special exception or a conditional use. The City of Goose Creek has prepared this design guidebook to focus attention on good townhouse design and make recommendations to future townhome developments.

New townhome communities can be better designed to achieve and implement the goals of the City of Goose Creek Comprehensive Plan (2021).



The purpose of the townhome developments is to:

- Develop housing that meets the needs of residents and provides long-term value to the community.
- Create communities involving smart design choices with careful attention to site planning, design, and architecture.

How to use the guide

This guidebook is directed toward municipal officials and staff, developers, realtors, and other people involved in the design of great communities. It is intended to serve as a primer on some of the major design elements of townhouse developments and to impact design decisions have on the overall look and function of the community. The guidebook offers design recommendations to maximize the aesthetics and functionality of townhouse developments. It allows users to better understand how the City of Goose Creek approaches townhome developments from the start of the development

This first section provides an overview of townhouse developments in Goose Creek, looking at historic and current development patterns and their impact on a community. The second section explores how typical design elements influence the overall quality and success of a townhouse community and the impact of design decisions on the built environment and resident experience.

This section is offered to enhance the user's perspective of townhouse development design. The final section provides a variety of design solutions for townhouse communities while recognizing that every community and development site is unique.

TOWNHOUSE COMMUNITY DESIGN

The overall look, feel, and function of a townhouse community is dependent upon the interaction of individual design elements. Incorporating certain features, such as street trees and rear-loaded garages, into townhouse developments can be a challenge in part due to site topography, utility needs, cost considerations, or ordinance requirements. By incorporating the best practices described on the next two pages, we can better meet the changing needs of residents and retain long-term value.

Place housing units on central greens

Homes facing green space build a sense of community and enhance a sense of safety.

Build active parks

Central greens provide areas for recreation and community gathering. Amenities, such as playgrounds and seating, activate the space and attract residents.

Line front yards and streets with street trees

Trees create canopies that provide cooling shade to pedestrians, homes, and cars; beautify the streetscape; and reduce traffic speeds. They also provide a buffer distancing pedestrians from moving traffic.

Pair front-loaded garages

Paired single-car-wide garages and driveways consolidate green spaces in front yards for street trees and landscaping.

Enhance architectural details

Articulated building façades, including entrances, windows, garage doors, and a mix of building materials, create visual interest and a more varied streetscape.

Build community with porches

Front porches encourage interaction between neighbors and help establish connected communities.

Naturalize stormwater management

Planted stormwater basins improve infiltration and water quality. Bump-outs and verges offer opportunities for bioswales or rain gardens.

Provide pedestrian safety

Bump-outs define parking rows, shorten crossing distances for pedestrians, and increase green space. Painted crosswalks at every street intersection provide better visibility for pedestrians and slow drivers in the neighborhood.

Limit block size

Shorter blocks help to slow traffic and limit building massing while providing breaks between building rows.

Create a connected pedestrian network

All streets in a townhouse community should have integrated and well-connected sidewalk systems to provide access to internal site destinations and connect to the larger community.

Permit on-street parking

On-street parking gives guests and residents flexible locations to park and slows traffic speeds.

Locate garages along alleys

Detached rear-loaded garages give private backyard open space to homes and can increase interior living square footage.

Integrate rear-loaded alley systems

Alleys provide access for rear-loaded garages to open up front yard areas for landscaping and street amenities. Alleys should be narrower than roadways and can be lined with pavers rather than curbing.

TOWNHOUSE DESIGN ELEMENTS

The following section describes common design elements in townhouse communities in Goose Creek. Though townhouse communities may be different, each of the design elements are integral to the overall site design. The reader will come away with a thorough understanding of how design trends, zoning requirements, and site-specific considerations influence the final housing product, overall site design, and general feel of the community. The following elements and their impacts on the appearance and function of the development are reviewed:

- Site design
- Open space and recreation
- Pedestrian circulation
- Parking
- Landscaping and street trees
- Front yard areas
- Architecture and building massing

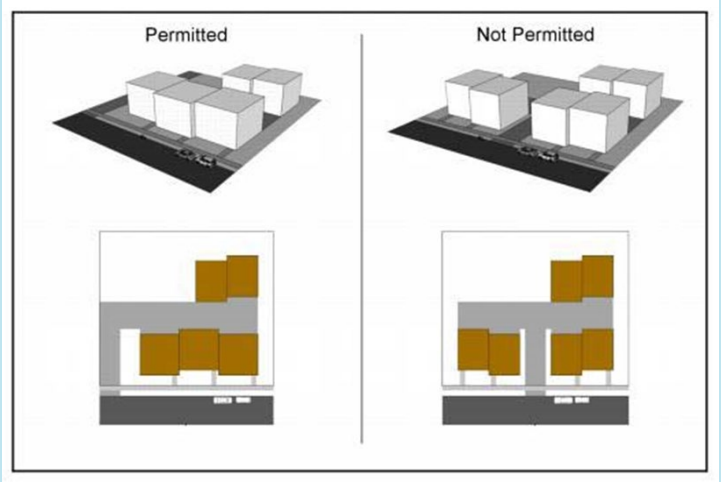
Site design

Design townhouse sites to have both an external orientation to the streetscape and an internal orientation to the residential environment with unifying open space and pedestrian pathways. Design emphasis should be given to the pedestrian, rather than the auto environment, through placement of parking in a less prominent location (to the rear of the building, rather than in front).

Site layout should observe principles of “natural surveillance,” “natural access control” and “territorial reinforcement” by arranging circulation systems, parking areas, sidewalks and open space to give the perception of being a residential and controlled space in which illegal activity will be observed and reported. Lighting and landscaping should allow for safety and visibility of public and semi-public areas.

Please note the following standards from the Goose Creek Zoning Ordinance:

- All units shall be designed as rear alley loaded or enclosed front or rear parking under the unit, or a combination of both.
- No greater than six (6) attached units.
- Articulation within the building façade shall be considered through the inclusion of features such as porches, porticos, balconies, bay windows, rooflines, and building material type.
- Berms or brick/masonry walls shall be installed to buffer noise and views where townhomes are adjacent to external primary roadways.
- Homes facing central green space for recreation, nature garden, community gatherings, and the like are strongly encouraged.
- All units adjacent primary roadways shall have a 10-foot buffer consisting of 2 canopy trees, 4 understory trees, and 15 shrubs per 100 LF of buffer yard.
- Shall meet the standards described in these design guidelines.



Open space and recreation

Open spaces and parkland can play an important role in the lifestyle of the townhouse resident and serve as the recreation and play areas for homes with limited to no private lawn. Typically, open space requirement is met through perimeter buffer areas, stormwater facilities, or in environmentally sensitive areas such as stream corridors, steep slope areas, or wooded areas where development is restricted. More active types of open space in townhouse developments include walking trails, gathering spaces, central greens, recreation areas, and playgrounds.

Gathering spaces

Gathering spaces are often placed in the development at prominent locations near intersections and focal points, such as around shared mailboxes or in central greens surrounded by houses. These spaces include improvements, such as seating areas and gazebos, and feature attractive landscaping.

Walking trails

With an increasing emphasis on walking as a healthy lifestyle habit, walking trails are a popular feature in all types of developments. Trails can serve as part of the townhouse development's pedestrian circulation system and also connect with other trails and sidewalks within the surrounding community.

Central greens

Central greens serve many purposes depending on their size, topography, and density and types of plantings. Central greens are often found in courtyard-style developments, and guest parking is often provided around the green space.

Recreation areas & playgrounds

Many townhouse developments have playground facilities for children. A few developments contain other forms of active recreation such as tennis courts and swimming pools, although this is increasingly less common in newer development proposals.

Pedestrian circulation

A complete pedestrian circulation system involves sidewalks, pathways, and crosswalks to provide safe access from all housing units to desired locations within the development: mailboxes, recreation facilities and open space amenities, guest parking, and community centers. Additionally, the pedestrian system allows safe access to locations outside of the development including existing sidewalk and trail systems, nearby schools, parks, retail stores, and transit facilities. Sidewalks are the core element in a safe pedestrian circulation system.

Sidewalks are either directly adjacent to the curb and roadway or separated from the roadway by a verge (meaning a grass strip). Verge widths should be generally no less than 8 feet. Verges are beneficial in creating a buffer between the pedestrian and moving traffic along the street. They also serve as a location to plant street trees, which provide shade along sidewalk networks, increasing pedestrian comfort and improving the appearance of the front yard area.

Parking

The placement of garages and driveways in townhouse developments can significantly impact the visual aesthetic of the building façade, front yard and streetscape design, pedestrian safety, street tree placement, and availability of on street parking. The Townhome District Ordinance states, “all units shall be designed as rear alley loaded or enclosed front or rear parking under the unit, or a combination of both.” Front parking drives should be long enough to avoid vehicle overhangs onto sidewalks.

The location of guest parking for developments is often provided in common parking lots around central greens or landscape islands or in dispersed rows of perpendicular parking stalls placed along main roadways throughout the development. In developments with alley-loaded garages, guest parking is provided by on-street parallel parking.

Alley-Loaded

Strongly Recommended Acceptable Designs

Attached rear-loaded garages

Detached rear-loaded garages

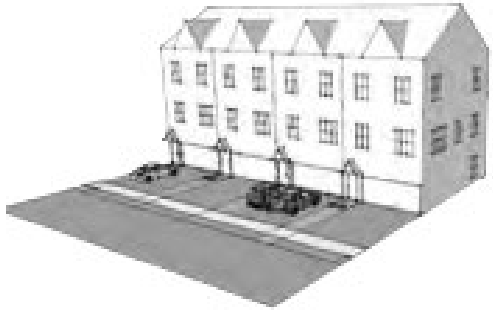
Alley-only access with walkup front yards

Front-Loaded

Front-loaded parking must be covered. Alley-loaded is preferred.
Front- loaded driveways must be long enough to prevent vehicle overhangs.

One car garage, front loaded

Two car garage, front loaded



Because garage doors have a significant impact on overall site aesthetics, designs that soften the visual impact of garages is encouraged. For example, garages colored to complement the façade materials and including windows/paneling are recommended.

Landscaping and street trees

Landscaping provides color and accent to buildings, creates buffering along property lines and around utilities, improves stormwater control and air quality, and provides shade for homes, cars, and pedestrians.

Developments should provide landscaping to enhance the aesthetic character of the development and the neighborhood while reducing impacts on drainage systems and natural habitats.

Property Buffers

Buffers should be used in between surrounding properties and within the development to minimize sight lines. Berms or brick/masonry walls shall be installed to buffer noise and views where townhomes are adjacent to external primary roadways.

Street trees

A continuous network of street trees within townhouse developments creates an overhead canopy, a pleasant streetscape, and a walkable environment. Townhouses without front-loading driveways often have a greater number of street trees, either in the front yards or in the verge.

Internal Screening

Due to the density of townhouse communities, it is important to use landscaping to create privacy for homeowners, such as using tree buffers to separate back decks.

Yard and Foundation

The selection of ornamental trees and shrubs in the front yard is important to complement building architecture and present a unified look. Yard and foundation plantings also help to define the front doors and help to easily identify individual residences.

Front yard areas

The front yard area of any development defines the overall aesthetic and feel of the community. Front yard design is dependent upon the placement and width of driveways, the overall size and architecture of the townhouse building, the internal road network, pedestrian amenities, and landscaping. Front yards should enhance pedestrian infrastructure when possible.

Architecture and building massing

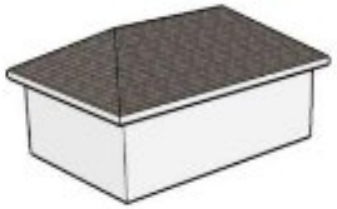
Well-articulated buildings provide visual interest and definition that lends cadence to the streetscape. Articulation within the building façade—meaning variation in the look and structure often achieved through the inclusion of porches, porticos, balconies, bay windows, roof lines, and building material type—is important in townhouse buildings because of the dominant width of the façade.

According to the Townhouse District ordinance, articulation within the building façade shall be considered through the inclusion of features such as porches, porticos, balconies, bay windows, roof lines, and building material type.

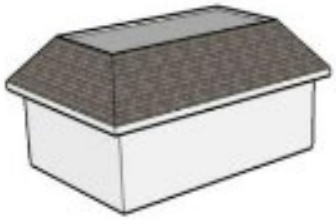
Recommended architectural elements

Roof Forms

Gable



Hip



Mansard

Shed

Examples of roof forms.

Example of dormers.

Example of deep roof overhangs and brackets.

Example of corbels (which are generally thicker than brackets).

Examples of cornice, soffit and fascia details.