

DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS CHECKLIST

LANDSCAPING – *Landscaping can make or break a development.*

Landscaping is not a Secondary Consideration

Good landscaping is critical to the quality of any project. Consider how landscaping and planting will be handled from the very beginning of the design process. Avoid considering landscaping as an “extra” that can be added in at the end of the project or, worse, eliminated in the name of cost control.

Plantings

Provide as rich a variety of plantings – trees, shrubs, groundcover, and grass areas – as possible. Anticipate mature sizes and avoid crowding trees, shrubs and buildings. Use hardy, native species of trees and plants that are well suited to the project location and are easy to water and maintain.

Appropriate Plantings

Consider how the landscape will be used by project occupants and specify appropriate plantings. In general, assume heavy use in all landscaped areas. Avoid delicate plants and shrubs in heavily trafficked areas, especially in locations where they can be trampled by children. Instead, consider such plantings in areas that are out of the main traffic flow (e.g., as privacy planting next to buildings). Avoid providing only grass areas for children to play in. Consider a mix of grass and paved areas instead. Also, consider raising or otherwise protecting grass areas that are not meant for play.

Paved Areas

Recognize that some paved area will be necessary in family housing to facilitate children’s play. However, large, empty paved areas should be avoided. Consider using alternative landscape approaches – plantings and grass – to break these areas up into smaller functional units.

Edges

Where planted areas, other than lawns, meet hard surfaces include some form of raised edge to contain the soil and discourage cutting across the bed. Consider designing the edges so they can also serve as outdoor seating areas.

Outdoor Seating

Outdoor seating should be an integral part of any landscape plan and should be thoughtfully designed and located. Avoid simply scattering seats at random through the site. Consider what the seating looks at and what looks at it. Consider how the seating is oriented with respect to the sun and breezes and whether it needs protection from rain or wind. Avoid “one type fits all” solutions, particularly in larger projects. Consider providing different seating for different users.

Paths

Pedestrian paths and walkways are critical to the smooth functioning of any affordable housing project, particularly larger, multi-unit developments. Consider the wide range of uses that any path must accommodate – children, adults, bicycles, skate boards, shopping carts, walkers, pets, furniture moving, etc. – and design with this range of uses in mind. Avoid paths that are too narrow to accommodate multiple users at the same time. Consider rounded corners at all intersections and direction changes, especially in projects with children. Ensure that paths are well lighted so that users can see where they are going and be seen by other people. Consider designing path edges so that they encourage users to stay on the path and not trample on adjacent plantings (e.g. through changes in slope or materials or by providing raised edges). Remember that the shortest route from point A to point B is usually a straight line. Avoid forcing people to follow circuitous routes to their destinations or be prepared for the new, unplanned paths that will inevitably appear to accommodate occupant use patterns.

Storage

Provide adequate space to store landscape maintenance equipment and materials.