

Section 1 Introduction and Visions

1.1 Planning Visions

1.1.1 Planning

Preservation of Straus Park's existing natural beauty and heritage was the design team's first priority. Our "vision" was to preserve and enhance the best of the site while designing the finest planned community possible.

The second step in creating Straus Park was to seek public feedback on what the community wanted. Armed with public input and our initial vision of preserving Straus' best we examined examples of other successful communities. Neighborhoods from New England to Florida were studied to find the best elements being offered. The best elements were then applied to Straus.

The third step was to ensure that Straus Park was open to everyone that common areas felt public, and Straus was inviting from US 64.

The last step was to have the plan respond to the unique character of the site: Maintain the large open spaces for the public, allow higher density on gentle slopes and low density on steeper slopes, and lastly, avoid disturbance of sensitive ecological areas.

The design team made up of the owner and some of the finest planners, architects, and engineers went to work with the goal of creating the very best community possible. The final result is a community based upon sustainable principles of lasting ideas and materials while preserving and protecting the environment and ecosystems of Straus.

1.1.2 Architecture

The architecture sought after for Straus Park and described in this manual has been called Mountain Park Architecture due to the cultural context and the character of the Straus Park site. This architecture is the expression of the intent to integrate sensitively the buildings of Straus Park in the beautiful natural environment of the site and to relate them in an unaffected manner to the rich indigenous and formal architectural heritage of the region.

Mountain Park Architecture does not seek to repeat a historical style. It can be pointed out, however, that the English Arts and Crafts Movement and, especially, the early 20th century eclectic style, generally called "Tudor," but with much American Craftsman Style and Shingle Style borrowing, are its predecessors and best references. Many fine examples of these styles are represented in the estates and the neighborhoods of Asheville and its surroundings. A further source of reference is the indigenous Appalachian mountain culture of the region in particular; the "informal" and "romantic" character of these styles with their irregular shapes makes a sharp and important contrast with the contemporaneous and more formal American Colonial Revival Style.

Mountain Park Architecture is distinguished by its irregular, non-symmetrical shapes, the integrative relationships with the topography, and the tactile textures and contrasting colors of the applied natural materials. Buildings designed in this manner have connotations of medieval English imagery from rural cottages to manor houses most with prominent roofs capes. Although these cottages and houses emphasize the apparent mass of the exterior walls, there is by the design and formation of the windows a generous degree of transparency between the outside and

the main interior spaces.

The irregular massing of Mountain Park Architecture, as opposed to symmetrical and formal massing, allows for flexibility in adaptation to the mountainous sites and also breaks the roof profiles and creates differentiation and complexity of appearance. The resulting character of the volume treatment adds to the picturesque quality of the building silhouette. Irregular massing also provides the opportunity to create a hierarchy of interior spaces and makes them legible on the exterior of the building shape

Mountain Park Architecture is rural, domestic, and inclusive in character. It aspires, by the nature of the chosen points of reference and their application to the specifics of Straus Park, to create an environment which is evocative and rich in experience.

Many housing sites (land parcels) are situated between two approximately parallel streets or back up on adjacent properties. Therefore visual (aesthetic) characteristics for all sides of the house and attached garage are important.

1.1.3 Landscape Architecture

Mountain Park Landscape, as envisioned by the landscape architect, seeks to “create landscape without evidence of man’s role in its creation” using the timeless principles of natural design.

Native plants should be used whenever possible. No single plant or site element should draw attention to it but unify and enrich the whole scene. The use of bright colors, formal arrangements, exotic or foreign elements should be avoided. Informal, non-symmetrical arrangements with natural materials and colors should be used. Landscape architectural designs should emphasize and mirror the natural beauty of Straus Park and the Blue Ridge Mountain environment.

Section 2 General Guidelines

2.1 Streetscapes

Streetscapes at Straus Park vary to reflect each neighborhood's personality and to respect physical land constraints. Streets were intentionally depressed into the ground to create the illusion that the roads disappear and blend with the adjacent landscape. The street patterns were developed to interconnect and flow together generating neighborhood cohesion. Roads were also placed, whenever possible, within previously cleared areas to minimize tree removal. Lastly, the streets are intended to be pedestrian friendly by using greenways or sidewalks whenever possible.

2.1.1 Parkside, Lakeside and Mountain Park Homes

The streetscape for the Parkside, Lakeside and Mountain Park homes has a uniform, cohesive residential expression: the placement of trees, streetlights, fences and porches follows a more defined rhythmic urban pattern reflective of neighborhoods of old. Houses and porches are located closer to the sidewalks and streets to further encourage social interaction. Streets have curbs and gutters with sidewalks and street-tree plantings that help unify the neighborhoods.

2.1.2 Mountain Homes

The streetscape for the Mountain homes is a winding natural low impact "mountain roadscape" expression reflective of a rural scene. Streets are visually subordinate to the naturally planted road "edges" and the dominant woodland landscape. Lighting and signage merely assist with directional travel and safety. Plantings look as if they "had always been part of this mountain lane scenery." The roads are reminiscent of the Blue Ridge Parkway.

2.1.3 Mixed Uses

The streetscape for the Mixed Uses areas has a public and urban feel. They are linked to the other neighborhoods by Straus Parkway, common areas and pedestrian greenways. The streetscapes are characterized by a commercial public appearance with wider walks, parking and public plazas. Street trees and site elements are urban in nature but still embrace the natural surroundings.

2.1.4 Special Uses

The streetscape for the Special Uses areas has a public feel, as required by the specific function, and an urban feel as a specific function requires. They are unlinked to specific neighborhoods.

2.2 Architectural and Landscape Character

2.2.1 General Guidelines

2.2.1.1 Parkside, Lakeside and Mountain Park Homes

The Buildings of Straus Park are to be what has been called Mountain Park Architecture (see 1.1.2 Architecture). The overall shape of the Parkside, Lakeside and Mountain Park Homes in the Mountain Park style should be determined equally by the roof shape and location of the upper floor within the gabled roof, and by the foundation shape and treatment required by the topography at each type of site.

Parkside, Lakeside and Mountain Park Homes should be predominantly side gabled with a steeply pitched, front-facing, crossing gable. Less often they may be hipped with front-facing gables. The gables shall contain the upper floor rooms, with the addition of steeply pitched dormers as needed. Multiple, sometimes overlapping, front gables may be used to meet the plan requirements for interior spaces as well as for entrances, porches, and balconies. Foundation walls should be treated as part of an overall theme of material and contrast.

Exterior walls should be one to one-and-a-half story in height; wall plate heights may be varied within each home and from home to home; gable ends may overhang lower stories. Walls should be clad with wood weatherboards, wood shingles, stucco, stone or brick. Most homes should incorporate more than one type of material for contrast. The applied colors are to be muted and organic.

Entrances, which may be separate from or combined with covered porches, should be simple, sheltered doorways incorporating heavy doors and broad, stone-like trim. Windows should be tall and narrow, most often casement type, less often double hung, and, in inhabited rooms, arranged wherever possible in groups of three or more, often in single or multi-story bays.

Covered porches are to be developed under the main roof of the house, frequently at side or corner locations. The floors of both covered and uncovered porches should be supported by walls or piers clad with continuous or contrasting wall materials. Columns, posts, rails balusters, newels and stairs should be constructed using simple, relatively un-worked, large, solid or built-up members.

Chimneys should be massive, elaborated, tall and prominent, whether constructed of masonry or clad in another wall material over wood framing. They are to be characterized by bottom-to-top contrast in wall materials and may be patterned and articulated as multiple shafts, with elaborate terminations. All miscellaneous exterior elements and or fixtures, such as roof vents, Sun Tunnel skylights, mechanical and electrical installations must be located away from street facades and hidden from public view. The Environmental Control Committee must approve any such elements and/or fixtures. Each situation will be reviewed on an individual basis.

The landscape character of Straus Park is described and named and called “mountain park landscape”. The overall character of the Parkside, Lakeside and Mountain Park Homes is governed by a more cohesive, uniform, tree-lined, “neighbor friendly” streetscape. Fences, street lighting, porches and walkways support and encourage pedestrian use and social interaction.

The landscape site elements and plantings reflect and reinforce this concept of Mountain Park landscape and architecture. Plantings may be a bit more uniform, i.e., a landscape where evenly spaced street trees and hedges are appropriate especially along the Mountain Park Home streetscapes. Yet the plantings in and around the homes shall be more informal and natural in appearance.

Plantings in the Mountain Park Homes areas shall create and define outdoor private, semi-private

and public common green spaces, thus creating a greater degree of personal privacy for interior spaces and encouraging use of more public spaces.

Plantings should add variety and beauty to the whole scene linking the man-made environment with the natural environment.

2.2.1.2 Mountainside Homes

Due to the nature of the steep and wooded sites, the Mountainside Homes on the higher elevations of Straus Park are sited with less density than the neighborhood homes. Therefore, the Mountainside Homes may have a higher degree of individuality in their design and their siting. These homes should be carefully designed with sensitivity to the existing natural environment and care in the actual siting of the building in the landscape.

The buildings of Straus Park are to be what has been called Mountain Park Architecture (see 1.1.2 Architecture). In accordance with this eclectic style, the Mountainside Homes should have an informal and irregular design (as opposed to a symmetrical composition) with a picturesque, romantic quality of appearance. The styles within this context, which may be most appropriate as references, are the domestic versions of what is called Medieval (Post-medieval English, Shingle, Richardsonian Romanesque and Tudor) and Arts and Crafts (Prairie or Craftsman).

Specifically, the roofs of the Mountainside Homes should be hipped, gabled, or a combination thereof, with upper floor rooms located within the roof volume. The exterior walls should be clad with natural materials. The applied colors should be muted and organic. All miscellaneous exterior elements and/or fixtures, such as roof vents, Sun Tunnel skylights, mechanical, and electrical installations must be located away from the street facades and hidden from public view. The Environmental Control Committee must approve any such elements and/or fixtures. Each situation will be reviewed on an individual basis.

The overall character of the Mountain Homes' landscape is expressed through and governed by the existing natural site features such as the woodland, under story vegetation, steep slopes, rock outcroppings, coves, streams, sun/shade aspects, views and wildlife. These features form and determine the site planning, i.e., how the homes are settled into the landscape and become an integral part of the overall landscape character surrounding the Mountain Homes and their planned site elements.

The roads are rural in character, downplaying the impact of vehicular traffic and creating a "woodland" feeling to the built environment. Native and ecologically compatible plant species planted in large drifts knit the "edge" where the open spaces along the roadway and the woodlands meet.

The clearing of trees and site vegetation, as well as the altering of the existing landforms, is kept to an absolute minimum. The planning design should be "restrained, understated and less is more". Native or ecologically appropriate plant species are used to heal the scars incurred by site clearing and grading. The Mountain Homes' final appearance is to "always been there" by integrating with the natural landscape.

2.2.1.3 Mixed Uses

The Mixed Use buildings incorporate the retail, office and apartment living functions within Straus Park. These functions may all occur integrated within singular buildings and/or occur individually as mono-functional building types. The buildings of Straus Park are to be what has

been described as Mountain Park Architecture (see para. 1.1.2 Architecture). The overall shape of the Mixed Use buildings in the Mountain Park style should be determined equally by the roof shape and location of the upper floor within the gabled roof, and by the entrance shape and treatment at the street level.

Mixed Use buildings may be side gabled or hipped with a steeply pitched, front-facing, crossing gable. The gables may contain the upper floor rooms, with the addition of steeply pitched dormers as needed. Multiple, sometimes overlapping, front gables are to be used to meet the plan requirements for interior spaces as well as for entrances. Roof overhangs; recesses in the building volumes, and canopies define covered outdoor spaces for activities such as window-shopping, sidewalk café seating, etc. All entrances should be covered and designed to signify their public-customer service function. The public entrances of the offices and the shops as well as the window openings at street level should be generous in size to provide a high degree of transparency between building interior and the streetscape. Lobbies should be located and designed appropriate to their function and provide ease and comfort of entry or departure.

Most exterior walls should be one-and-a-half story in height, and may be clad with stucco, stone or brick. Walls should incorporate more than one type of material for contrast and foundations should be treated as part of the overall theme of material and contrast. The applied colors are to be muted and organic.

Windows should be tall and narrow, most often casement type, less often double hung, and, in inhabited rooms, arranged wherever possible in groups of three or more, single or multistory bays are encouraged.

Chimneys should be massive, elaborated, tall and prominent, whether constructed of masonry or clad in another wall material over wood framing. They are to be characterized by bottom-to-top contrast in wall materials and may be patterned and articulated as multiple shafts with terminations. Miscellaneous exterior elements and/or fixtures, such as roof vents, Sun Tunnel skylights, mechanical, and electrical installations, must be located away from the street facades and hidden from public view. The Environmental Control Committee must approve any such elements and/or fixtures. Each situation will be reviewed on an individual basis. Commercial signage is limited to the main level area and should compliment the overall building design and the public signage system of Straus Park.

The overall character of this area will have a more commercial/retail public feeling. The buildings become larger in scale and more public in their expression and the landscape character follows suit. Yet the plants should still reflect a natural, informal planting scene. The landscaping should help soften and integrate the buildings into the natural surroundings.

2.2.1.4 Special Uses

The buildings of Straus Park are to be what has been called Mountain Park Architecture (see 1.1.2 Architecture). Due to the size, public nature, and location in Straus Park, the buildings of Special Uses (Straus Ridge Condominiums, Lake House, Pump Houses, etc .) are to be prominent representatives of the Mountain Park theme.¹ The appearance of these buildings should be determined by their massing and roof shape, the location of an upper floor (or floors) within the roof, and by the treatment of the entrances and the porches in relationship to the site and street.

¹ For condominium lot possible restrictions associated with Phase 5 or other structures within Straus Ridge see City of Brevard Unified Development Ordinance, Chapter 4, § 4-F.3 and in particular sub-paragraphs b, c and d.

Special Use buildings may be hipped and/or side gabled with a steeply pitched, front-facing, crossing gable. The gables should contain the upper floor rooms, with the addition of steeply pitched dormers as needed. Multiple, sometimes overlapping, front gables may be used to meet the plan requirements for interior spaces as well as for entrances, porches and balconies. Parapet gables should be considered for prominent locations.

Walls may be clad with wood weatherboards, wood shingles, stucco, stone, or brick and should incorporate more than one type of material for contrast. The applied colors are to be muted and organic; many different colors may be used. Porches and terraces are to be prominent in design and in their locations relative to the building and site. The floors of both porches and terraces must be supported by walls and/or piers, which are conceived, as well as the foundation walls, as an integrated part of the overall exterior wall treatment.

Entrances may be combined with porches or porte-cocheres and should be appropriate in scale and executed to their public function. The windows should be tall and narrow, most often casement type, less often double hung, and, in inhabited rooms, arranged in groups of three or more, in single or multi-story bays where possible.

Chimneys should be massive, elaborate, tall and prominent, whether constructed of masonry or clad in another wall material over wood framing. They are to be characterized by bottom-to-top contrast in wall materials and may be patterned and articulated as multiple shafts with elaborate terminations.

All miscellaneous exterior elements and/or fixtures, such as roof vents, Sun Tunnel skylights, mechanical, and electrical installations, must be located away from street facades and hidden from public view. The Environmental Control Committee must approve any such elements and/or fixtures. Each situation will be reviewed on an individual basis. All ancillary structures are to be designed and located to complement the main building and to be non-disturbing to the users and the public. All signage must be conceived and executed as an integral element of the building design and be complimentary to the signage concept of Straus Park.

The overall character of this area becomes more civic, grander in scale and more prominent due to building sizes, proportions and site locations. The landscape character of the Special Uses should reinforce and reflect this unique expression.

Site plantings soften the impact of pavement, buildings and parking, yet support and reinforce pedestrian/bicycle circulation routes and define views. Additionally, it assists in creating and defining “people places”, providing shade and screening site utility elements while highlighting and complimenting the Mountain Park Architecture as a link to the existing natural landscape.