Parking Lot Design

Making Your Community a Vibrant Place to Live

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The planning and design of parking lots has long been a problem for many municipalities. Conflicts often arise when trying to strike a balance between the need for functional parking areas with ample parking space, and the need to create attractive parking areas which enhance the streetscape. Beauty and function do not have to be mutually exclusive in parking lot design. The two concepts can coexist quite well when it is decided that they are of equal importance. With a little imagination, parking lots can be transformed from unattractive, functional, asphalt spaces, into attractive, vibrant elements of your community. Through the use of creative landscape planting and design, innovative parking patterns and materials, lighting, berms, screens, and signage, the parking lots in your community can be vastly improved.

Why is an Innovative Parking Lot Design Program important to your municipality?

The parking enhancement techniques described above can do much to improve the appearance of parking lots in your municipality. Parking lots need not be viewed as necessary evils that detract from the appearance of the nonresidential areas of your town. Good parking lot design can alleviate congestion within the lot and can create a safer environment for the motorist and pedestrians. From a visual standpoint, well designed parking lots can actually contribute to the physical beauty of your town, producing interesting, varied, mixed use spaces that eliminate the visual monotony generally associated with parking lot design.

Interior parking lot landscaping not only adds greenery and interest to the lot, but acts to shade and cool the area during the warmer months. It also improves air quality by absorbing odors and impurities. It buffers the winds' impact, providing resistance to air flow; and improves traffic safety by guiding the circulation of cars and pedestrians through the lot.
One of the least costly and often most creative ways to screen a parking lot from view is to construct a screen or decorative false facade around the perimeter of the parking lot. These screens can actually be used to enhance the character or history of the region. Here is an example from Baltimore's Inner Harbor area.

Well designed parking lots can integrate parking areas into the overall streetscape. For example, shared parking lots with pedestrian accessways can link adjacent shopping centers, and office and industrial parks, creating interesting multi-use additions to your community.

Parking lots in your community can become vibrant places which serve pedestrians as well as cars, where social interaction is encouraged. Here is an example of a pocket park with tree shaded picnic facilities incorporated into the parking lot design of the Carnegie Center Office Complex, Princeton, New Jersey.
To implement a parking design improvement program, your municipality should first examine its municipal development ordinance to determine the status of current parking lot design regulations. Based on this review, your municipality will be able to determine what parking lot design issues are presently addressed by the existing ordinance and what issues need to be incorporated into the document to make it more effective.

Following an assessment of your parking lot design ordinance, the Monmouth County Planning Board can assist your municipality improve the design of existing or newly-created parking lots in the following ways:

- Assist your municipality in revising its existing parking lot ordinance to reflect the desired parking lot design improvements and help your municipality prepare an incremental parking lot design improvement plan.
- Provide technical assistance to enable your municipality to discover ways to improve the appearance of parking lots in your community.

For more information, please contact:

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