

UTILITY STRUCTURES AND MECHANICAL EQUIPMENT

GUIDELINES

General

- Utility and mechanical equipment acts as a hindrance to the street flow, therefore all utility and mechanical equipment should be out of view from the public street.
- All utility equipment requiring screening includes public works utility equipment, and equipment associated with the provision of electricity, gas, telephone, cable television, and water and includes, but is not limited to:
 - Surface-mounted transformers;
 - Pedestal-mounted terminal boxes;
 - Meter cabinets;
 - Traffic signal boxes;
 - Above ground water service equipment (i.e. air vac cans, sampling stations), irrigation equipment and back-flow preventers;
 - Fire sprinkler back-flow devices and valves;
 - Access doors and vents; and,
 - Any other above ground utility equipment.

Size

- Utility and mechanical equipment should not exceed the minimum required size for the building or purpose that it serves.
- Access easements should be provided to allow access to all equipment, vents and access doors, and to allow them to face away from sidewalks, streets and driveways.
- For single family residential subdivisions: The access easements should include both the minimum width required by the public utility for access and the width needed for the screening of the equipment; and
- One or more of the following methods of screening is encouraged:
 - Low walls, a minimum of six inches taller than the vents, access doors, or utility equipment to be screened, and which are architecturally treated to match the other on-site walls and covered with vines with a minimum size of five gallons, spaced ten feet on center or as otherwise approved by the Community Development Director or designee. Walls should comply with all applicable zoning requirements.
 - Landscaping that, upon installation, should screen a minimum of 75% of the vents, access doors, or utility equipment from view.
 - Artificial "rock" equipment covers that cover 100% of the utility equipment. These should be accented with natural boulders and landscaping.
 - Locating the utility equipment in an underground vault, as permitted by regulations.
 - Locating the utility equipment on a side street or on the side or rear of the project.
 - Any other option that may be available due to unique site or building design characteristics.

Location

- Site utility structures, such as transformers, should be located to the interior of blocks (behind buildings) or along the side of the buildings.
- Those utility structures located behind buildings should be accessed through the alley.
- By locating any utility wires and structures in the middle of a block, it allows for a less expensive means of dispensing utilities to all buildings and prevents the necessity to constantly tear up the public streets and sidewalks when repairs are needed.
- In areas that this is not possible, locating the utilities under the sidewalk would prevent traffic build-up on the street when repairs are necessary.
- HVAC equipment, utility meters, satellite dishes, permanent grills and other mechanical equipment should be located so as not to be visible from the street. They should be located to the interior of the block or on roofs and should not be visible from the street.
- Mechanical equipment should not vent to the street side of the building.
- Dryer vents should be located on the garage or the side or rear yard for townhouses and single family houses.
- Where there are subterranean parking garages, transformers should be integrated within the garage, accessible by a vertical hatch within the required setback from the interior of the building.
- Fire sprinkler back-flow devices and valves should be located a minimum of 20 feet from all property lines adjacent to public rights-of-way, within an approved underground vault, within an approved area of the building or behind a screening wall.
- Bollards should not be installed in conjunction with any new utility equipment or appurtenances, except with prior approval of the Community Development Director or designee.
- Location of equipment and screening should not interfere with or restrict Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements.
- Locations of equipment and screening should consider and provide for adequate and safe accessibility of personnel and identification of equipment.
- Where homeowners' associations are being proposed, utility equipment is encouraged to be located within common areas controlled by the homeowners' association.

Character

- If all attempts to prevent location of mechanical equipment on the street fails, then a fence or screening should surround all lighting and mechanical equipment where visible from streets.
- Above ground storage tanks should not be visible from the street.
- Chain link fencing is not an acceptable screening material.

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ELEMENTS



Image 1 - Installing the back-flow in the building basement or ground floor keeps it off of the street.



Image 2 - Mechanical and utility meter sheds help keep the equipment from being seen and also from being damaged.



Image 6 - Utility meter in an alley located behind a column to screen it from the street.



Image 3 - Utility meters located in an inlet off of an alley.

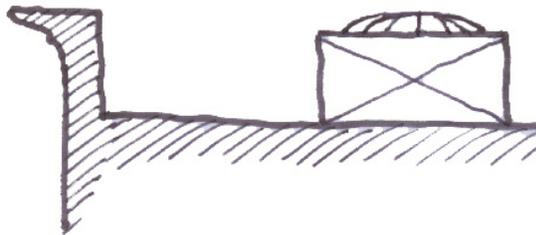


Image 4 - Screening mechanical equipment with the use of parapet walls on the roof of a building.

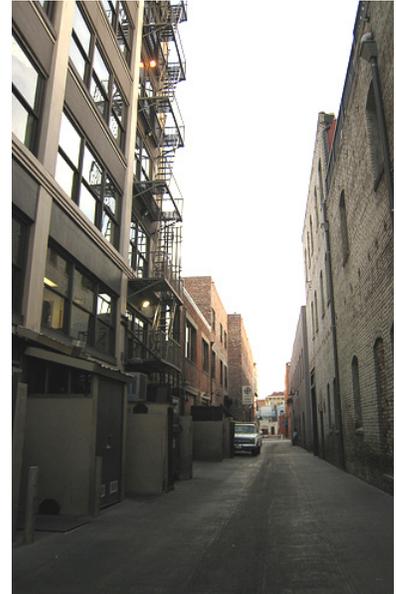


Image 7 - Mechanical equipment shed in an alley.

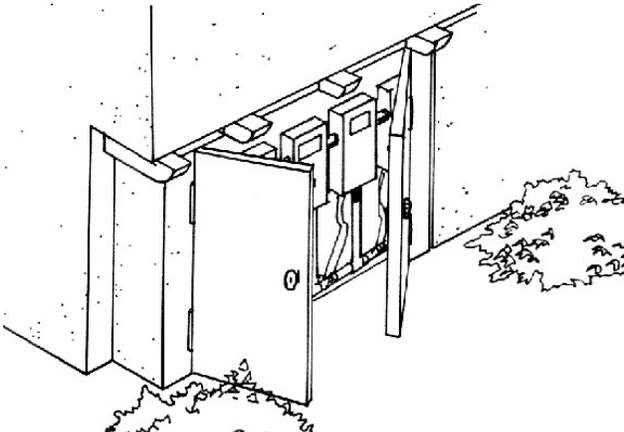


Image 5 - Utility meters built in a cove along the side of a building. (Town of Truckee, CA web site, <http://www.townoftruckee.com/DCCh024.html>.)



Image 8 - Utility meters placed along the side of a building.