

**APPENDIX E:
ACCESS MANAGEMENT BEST PRACTICES**

Appendix Access Management Practices

Addressing Access Management in Local Government Policies

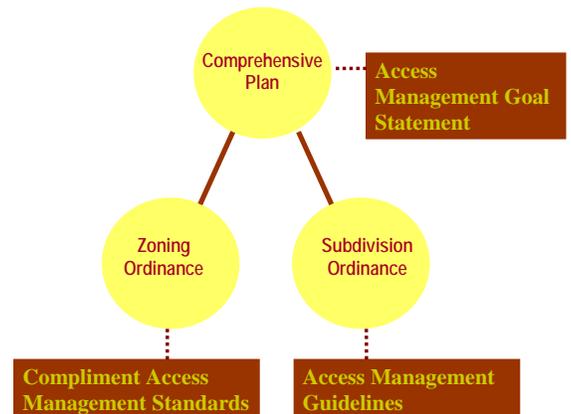
Effective access management requires planning as well as regulatory solutions. Communities that establish a policy framework that supports access management in local comprehensive plans, prepare corridor or access management plans for specific problem areas and encourage good site planning techniques will be better prepared to permit and manage access.

6.1 Local Government and Access Management

There are many ways in which planning documents and municipal codes can address access management issues and set the stage for an effective access management program. Local governments can accomplish access management as follows:

- 1 – Address access management in the transportation and land use elements of the comprehensive plan.
- 2 – Adopt an access management ordinance that establishes connection spacing, driveway design and corner clearance requirements for all major roadways, along with supporting land development regulations.
- 3 – Consider establishing a corridor overlay district for high priority arterial roadways (e.g. a new bypass or strategic state highway) that establishes a high degree of access control and supporting land development regulations. Small communities may choose this approach to focus on one key corridor, as opposed to a system-wide program.
- 4 – Promote the development of a supporting network of local and collector streets to provide alternative access off of major arterial roadways through subdivision regulations, development exactions, traffic impact studies, and capital improvement plans and programs.

Two of the most widely accepted methods are to reference a separate “Access Management Guidelines” or make broad policy statements concerning access management in their



comprehensive plans, thoroughfare plans and local municipal codes. These options are explained in further detail in the following sections.

6.2 Authority

Responsibilities granted by Chapter 213.001 of the Texas Municipal Code are for the purpose of promoting sound development of municipalities and promoting public health, safety, and welfare. Local Comprehensive Plans are the policy and decision making guide for future development and capital improvements in the municipality. It is also the correct document to identify the desired access management approach.

Municipalities also have the authority to practice access management through the rules and definitions of the State of Texas Local Government Code Chapter 212 "MUNICIPAL REGULATION OF SUBDIVISION AND PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT." Therein, Cities may adopt Access Management Plans as a part of the existing Subdivision and Zoning regulations or tailor sections of the ordinances to advance access management strategies.

6.3 The Comprehensive Plan

Responsibilities granted by Chapter 213.001 of the Texas Municipal Code are for the purpose of promoting sound development of municipalities and promoting public health, safety, and welfare. Local Comprehensive Plans are the policy and decision making guide for future development and capital improvements in the municipality. It is also the correct document to identify the desired access management approach.

The comprehensive plan and corridor studies provide the legal basis for access management by establishing the relationship between access management and the public health, safety, and welfare. In determining the validity of local regulatory actions, courts typically review whether the action is consistent with and based upon a local comprehensive plan (6). Access management policies in the comprehensive plan demonstrate an overall public commitment to managing access, rather than an arbitrary approach that singles out property owners for special treatment.

Core elements of a local comprehensive plan are those that relate to transportation, land use, and capital improvements. Most local governments include the following in the transportation element of their comprehensive plan:

1. A roadway classification system based on function (e.g., major arterial, minor arterial collector, local).
2. A map indicating the existing streets and roadways according to the adopted classification system.
3. A map indicating future transportation needs, including any new corridors and planned improvements to existing roadways.
4. A typical cross-section for each class of street/roadway.
5. Transportation goals, objectives and policies of the community.

The transportation element should also include a section that describes the principles and benefits of access management. This section would describe how access management carries out the physical and policy objectives of the transportation plan and protects public safety. Policy statements in the transportation element of the comprehensive plan that support access management as well as efficient and stable land use patterns include:

1. Public roadways are to be planned, designed and managed to preserve their functional integrity.
2. Allowable levels of access will be established for each functional classification of roadway to preserve the safe and efficient operation of the major roadways.
3. Direct access to major roadways will not be permitted where alternative access is available.
4. Access connections to major arterials that may be considered for future signalization must conform to a uniform one-half mile spacing unless it can be demonstrated that an intersection deviating from this interval can be signalized without interfering with traffic operations or safety.
5. A thoroughfare map will be adopted that indicates all existing and potential signalized locations.
6. A nontraversable, landscaped median will be provided on all new multilane major arterials. Undivided roadways and roadways with a continuous two-way, left-turn lane will be considered for reconstruction when the volume exceeds 24,000 vehicles per day.
7. Unsignalized median openings will be designed as directional openings.
8. New driveway connections will not be located within the functional distance of an intersection.

Policies to include in the land use element of the comprehensive plan in support of efficient and stable land use patterns as well as to support the objectives of access management include:

1. Access to land development along major arterial roadways shall be preserved through the use of parallel roads, side streets, and cross access easements connecting adjacent developments.
2. Properties under the same ownership, consolidated for development, or part of phased development plans shall be considered one property for the purposes of access management. Access points to such developments shall be the minimum necessary to provide reasonable access, and not the maximum available, for that property frontage.

3. New residential subdivisions shall include an internal street layout that connects to the streets of surrounding developments to accommodate travel demand between adjacent neighborhoods, without the need to use the major thoroughfare system.
4. Residential subdivisions abutting arterial roadways shall be designed so that street connections conform with access spacing standards for those roadways. Streets between those points shall be cul-de-sacs with pedestrian and bicycle connections to be arterial wherever feasible to preserve bicycle and pedestrian mobility. Where the street pattern is discontinuous within the subdivision, continuity shall be maintained for pedestrian and bicycle movement.
5. Commercial development shall be encouraged to share common access connections as well as to provide a convenient system of interparcel circulation so that customers as well as delivery and service vehicles can move between the sites without using the abutting public roadway.
6. Zoning and subdivision actions shall discourage shallow commercial strip development where most, or all, access is directed to the abutting major public roadway.
7. Commercial office and retail will be encouraged to develop activity centers schematically illustrated as the preferred pattern in Figure 6.3-1. This land use arrangement facilitates pedestrian circulation between businesses, eliminates the need for vehicles to use the public street when moving from one establishment to another, increases the corner clearance between driveways and the intersection, and improves safety and intersection operations by reducing the occurrence of conflicts within close proximity of the intersection.

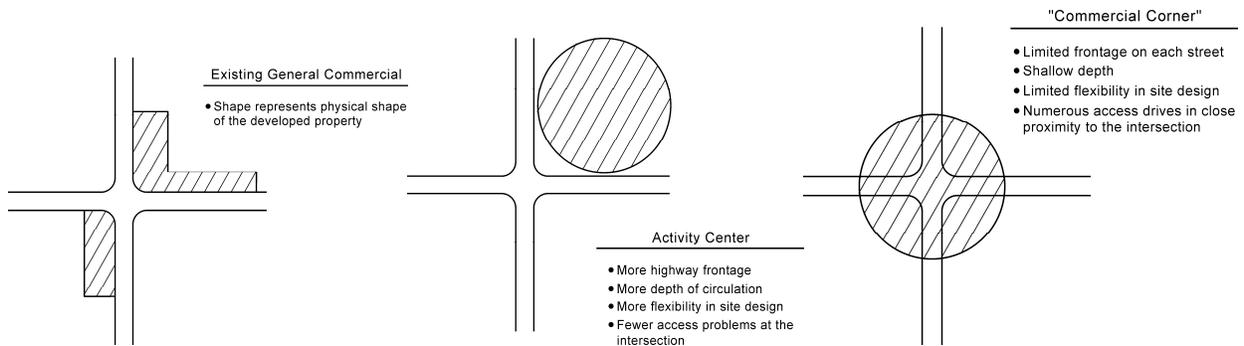


Figure 6.3-1 Activity Centers

6.4 Subdivision Ordinance

Communities' access management policies may be codified by the State of Texas Local Government Code Chapter 212 "Municipal Regulation of Subdivisions and Property Development." Herein, "Municipalities may adopt rules governing plats and subdivisions of land within the municipality's jurisdiction (including ETJ) to promote the health, safety, morals or general welfare of the municipality and the safe, orderly and healthful development of the municipality."

Therefore, municipalities may choose to adopt "traffic access management guidelines" by ordinance as part of the Subdivision Ordinance. Typically, these standards would be available for the general public as a separate or stand alone document, but the official codification of these standards would be found in the Subdivision Ordinance. See **below** for an example of an Access Management Ordinance.

6.5 Zoning Ordinances

Zoning Ordinances may compliment the "traffic access management guidelines" by establishing lot standards (minimums and possibly maximums) that correspond appropriately with the access criteria. For example, if the subdivision criteria states that the first median cut from an intersection shall be no closer that 750' from the centerline of the intersection, the zoning standards for the adjacent property(s) should have the minimum depth and width to allow for orderly growth. Similarly, with the driveways spacing, if the first driveway cut shall be no closer than 100' from the centerline of the intersection, than the zoning standards for the adjacent property(s) should have the minimum depth and width to compliment. See **Appendix B** for an example of an Access Management Ordinance that establishes minimum lot widths.

6.6 Thoroughfare Planning

Access management programs should not only strive to limit and control access to major arterial roadways. It is equally important to provide local and collector streets that can accommodate access to development. Roadway functional classification systems in transportation plans call for local and collector roads to provide more access to property than arterial roadways. Therefore, a supporting system of local and collector roads should be provided along arterial roadways where development is desired.

Benefits of an adequate supporting street system include improved accessibility of corridor businesses to abutting neighborhoods, more compact development patterns, and reduced need for individual driveway access to the principal roadway. Local streets also provide alternative routes for short local trips, thereby reducing traffic congestion on the arterial.

Regulatory Techniques that Support Access Management

- Regulate driveway spacing, sight distance and corner clearance;
- Requirements for joint and cross access, driveway consolidation, interparcel connections, and unified access and circulation plans (including regulations for shopping center outparcels);
- Limit the number of driveways per existing parcel on developing corridors;
- Increase the minimum lot frontage along major thoroughfares.
- Encourage joint access and parking lot cross access.
- Review lot splits to prevent access problems.
- Minimize commercial strip zoning and promote mixed use and flexible zoning.
- Require measurements of building setbacks from future right-of-way lines.
- Promote unified circulation and parking plans.
- Traffic impact assessment requirements and procedures, that are keyed to access management requirements;
- Redevelopment or "change in use" criteria for bringing existing situations into conformance when there is a change in use;

Existing local street systems can provide an initial framework for a corridor access management plan. Where they are not adequate, then the plan could identify preferred future locations. Side streets may be laid out in a general grid pattern or branch out to accommodate terrain or other natural features. A system of parallel roads or service roads could run behind corridor properties with side streets intersecting the arterial at reasonable spacing intervals. Frontage roads often connect too close to an intersection, creating new access problems.

Ideally, major arterial roadways would not accommodate low volume, individual driveways. Instead, minor arterial and collector roadways could be planned to intersect the arterial roadways at regular intervals to coordinate with desired spacing of median openings and signals. Unsignalized local streets or high volume access points could connect to the arterial at intervals that conform to connection spacing standards, and commercial driveways could be primarily focused onto local and collector streets.

Model Municipal Access Management Ordinance

Minimum Connection Spacing Along Major Thoroughfares

The minimum distance between driveways, alleys, service drives, streets, or other roadway facilities along a major thoroughfare shall not be less than the distances shown in table 1 below for the posted speed limit on the major thoroughfare. Major thoroughfares are the roadways designated on the City of (insert city) Thoroughfare Plan. The minimum distance between driveways, alleys, service drives, streets or other roadway facilities is measured along the edge of the travel way from closest edge of pavement of the first access connection to the closest edge of pavement of the second access connection including corner clearance. This is illustrated in figure 1.

Minimum Connection Spacing	
Posted Speed (mph)	Distance (ft)
≤ 30	200
35	250
40	305
45	360
≥ 50	425

Table 1

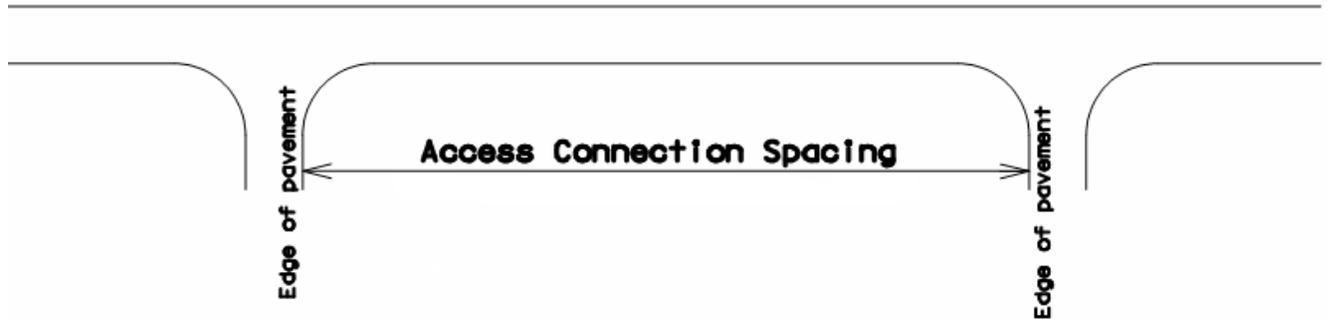


Figure 1

Joint and Cross Access

Adjacent commercial or office properties and major traffic generators (i.e. shopping plazas, office parks) shall provide a cross access drive and pedestrian access way to allow circulation between sites. This requirement shall also apply to a building site that abuts an existing developed property unless the decision making body finds that this would be impractical.

Property owners shall:

1. Record an easement in the public records of (insert city) allowing cross access to and from the adjacent properties;
2. Agree that any pre-existing driveways provided for access in the interim shall be closed and eliminated after construction of the joint use driveway; and
3. Record a joint maintenance agreement in the public records of (insert city) defining maintenance responsibilities of property owners that share the joint use driveway and cross access system.

Requirements for Unified Access and Circulation

1. In the interest of promoting unified access and circulation systems, development sites under the same ownership or consolidated for the purposes of development and comprised of more than one building site shall be considered unified parcels. This shall also apply to phased development plans. Accordingly, the following requirements shall apply:
 - a. The number of connections permitted shall be the minimum number necessary to provide reasonable access to the overall site and not the maximum available for that frontage.
 - b. All easements and agreements required under the above shall be provided.
 - c. Access to outparcels shall be internalized using the shared circulation system and designed to avoid excessive movement across parking aisles or queuing across surrounding parking and driving aisles.
2. Where abutting properties are in different ownership and not part of an overall development plan, cooperation between the various owners in development of a unified access and

circulation system is encouraged. Abutting properties shall not be required to provide unified access and circulation until they are developed or are redeveloped.

Access to Homes and Subdivisions

When a residential development is proposed that would abut an arterial or major collector roadway, it shall be designed to provide lots abutting the roadway with access from an interior local road or frontage road. Direct driveway access to individual one and two family dwellings from arterial and major collector roadways shall be avoided. All other reasonable access alternatives shall be investigated and judged unacceptable by the City Engineer before direct residential driveway access on an arterial or major collector is permitted.

Redevelopment Requirements

1. Properties with access connections which do not meet the requirements above shall be brought into compliance to the extent possible when modifications to the roadway are made or when a change in use results in one or more of the following conditions:
 - a. When a connection permit is required.
 - b. When site plan review is required.
 - c. When a site experiences an increase of twenty percent (20%) or greater in peak hour trips or 100 vehicles per hour in the peak hour, whichever is less, as determined by one of the following methods:
 - (1) An estimation based on the ITE Trip Generation Manual (latest edition) for typical land uses, or
 - (2) Traffic counts made at similar traffic generators located in (insert city), or
 - (3) Actual traffic monitoring conducted during the peak hour of the adjacent roadway traffic for the property.
2. If the principal activity on a parcel with access connections which do not meet the regulations of the above is discontinued for a period of one year or more, then that parcel must comply with all applicable access requirements of the above to the extent possible.

Corridor Access Management Overlay Zones

(Insert city) may designate segments of a roadway corridor for the purpose of developing corridor access management plans that apply special access management requirements to the corridor. The purpose of this designation is to develop a specific plan for the roadway system, including, but not limited to, median openings, signal location, access connections and cross access and joint access requirements for adjacent developments that reduces access problems on major thoroughfares and advances sustainable development patterns in conformance with the desired character of the (insert city) and the Comprehensive Plan. Corridor access management overlay zones do not supercede underlying land use and zoning provisions, but provide additional requirements for designated areas.

Minimum Lot Frontage

The minimum lot frontage for access to a major thoroughfare shall not be less than the lot width shown in table 2. Major thoroughfares are the roadways designated on the (insert city) Thoroughfare Plan.

Minimum Lot Frontage	
Posted Speed (MPH)	Lot Width
< 30	225
35	275

40	330
45	385
≥ 50	450

Table 2

A greater lot width may be required for driveways greater than twenty-five (25) feet or requiring more than one access connection to the major thoroughfare.

A lesser lot width may be provided for lots with common access easements and shared access driveways.