040329C

Hardscape

There are a significant number of medians and partial medians in the city that have no plantings at all. Most of these are where the median narrows down to accommodate a turn lane or is narrow simply due to right of way constraints. Many are solid gray concrete (figure 12), but most new construction utilizes a colored stamped concrete for any hardscape area inside of the curb (figure 13). This solution provides more visual interest than regular gray concrete. However, the use of actual bricks on sand is a more appealing treatment that would also be slightly more pervious to stormwater. Southwest 13th Street adjacent to the University of Florida has an example of the brick treatment (figure 14). Acknowledging that there is a higher cost for brick, selected streets should be considered for this treatment, e.g., University Avenue, the downtown commercial district, historic districts, etc.

Figure 12
Solid Gray Concrete on NW 39th Avenue

Figure 13
Stamped Concrete on NE 8th Avenue

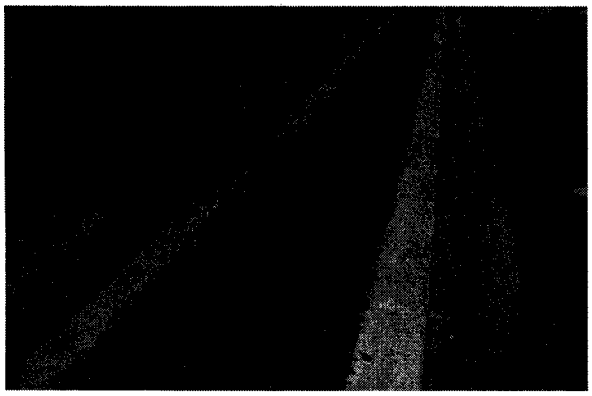


Figure 14
Brick Pavers on University Avenue

There are also examples of narrow medians that are planted with shrubs or ground covers (figures 15 and 16). Aesthetically, this is the preferable option. The entity responsible for the roadway (city, county, or FDOT) must weigh the greater appeal of planting these areas against the safety concerns of maintaining them.

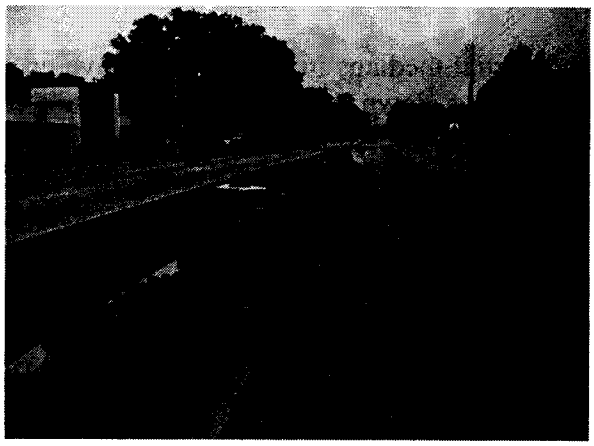


Figure 15
Narrow Median on Newberry Road

Figure 16
Narrow Median on NE 8th Avenue

A third option is one of treating narrow medians with a combination of hardscape and street trees (figures 17 and 18). Trees are introduced for scale and interest, while maintenance is minimized. This can be especially appropriate for areas like University Avenue adjacent the University of Florida where heavy pedestrian traffic crosses the medians.

Figure 17
Crape Myrtles in Hardscape (Ocala)

Figure 18
Elm in Hardscape on SE 3rd Street

Medians provide an important safety zone for pedestrians crossing a street. This crossing area offers an opportunity for design detail, even if it is nothing more than brick or concrete pavers. Any crossing through a median should be at grade to comply with appropriate Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Florida Building Code accessibility requirements (figures 19 and 20).

Figure 19
Grade Crosswalk on NE 1st Street

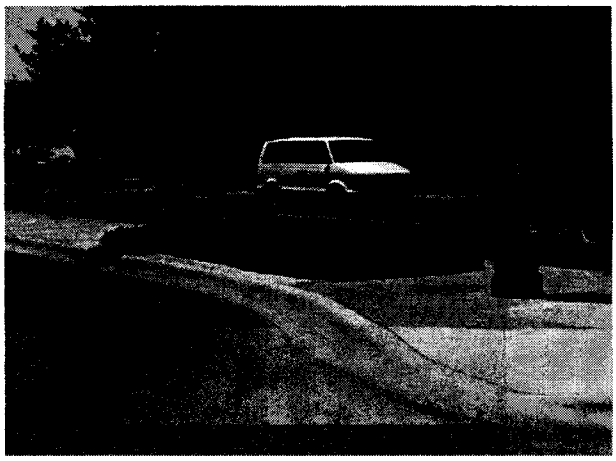


Figure 20
Hardscape Detail in Ocala

It is understood that the use of hardscape, in place of plant material, is a low maintenance option. However the example in figures 21 and 22 defy explanation.

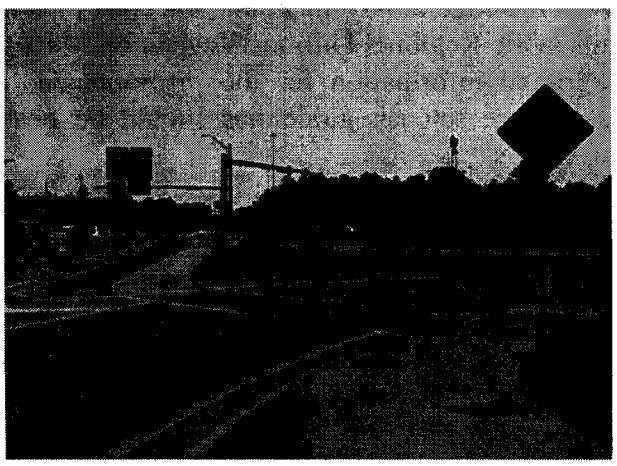


Figure 21
Stamped Concrete at the intersection of Williston Road

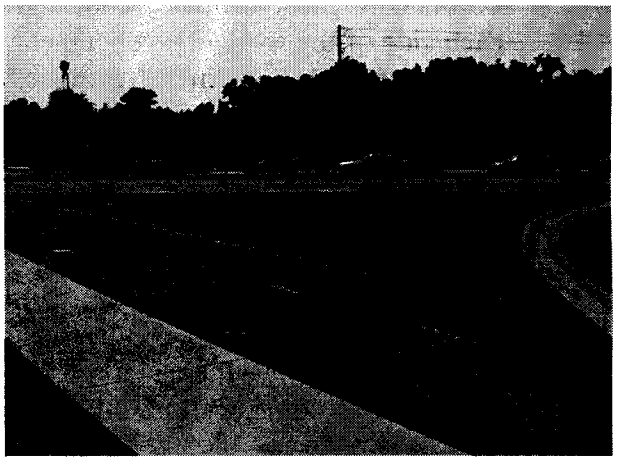
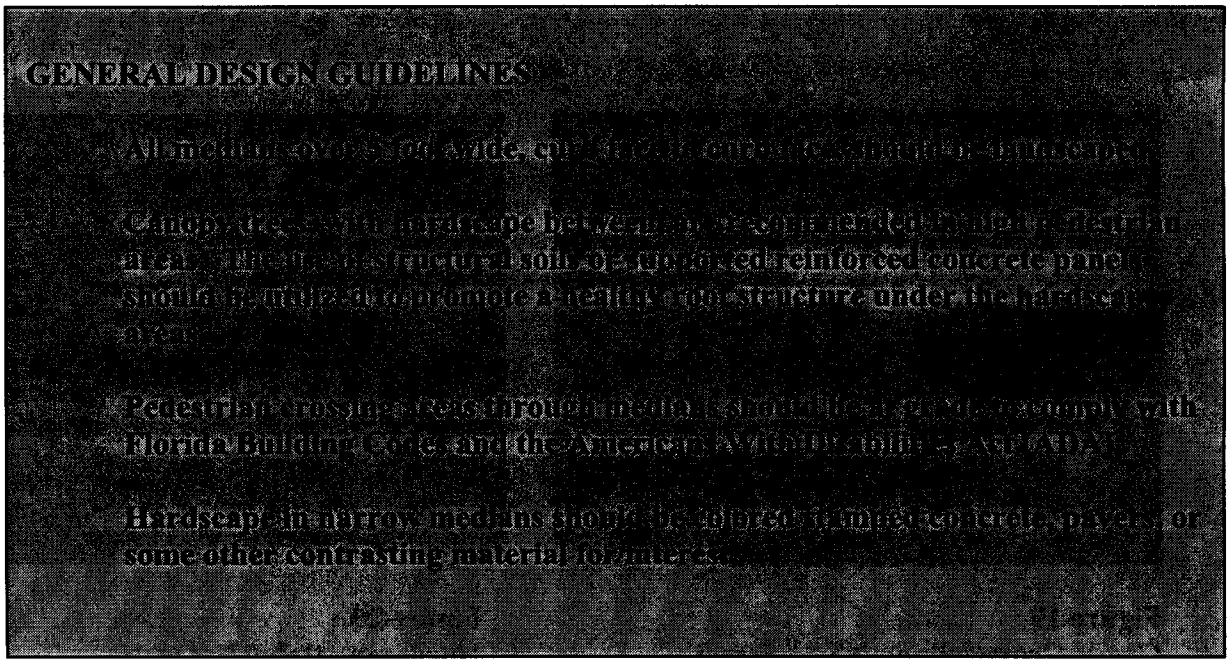
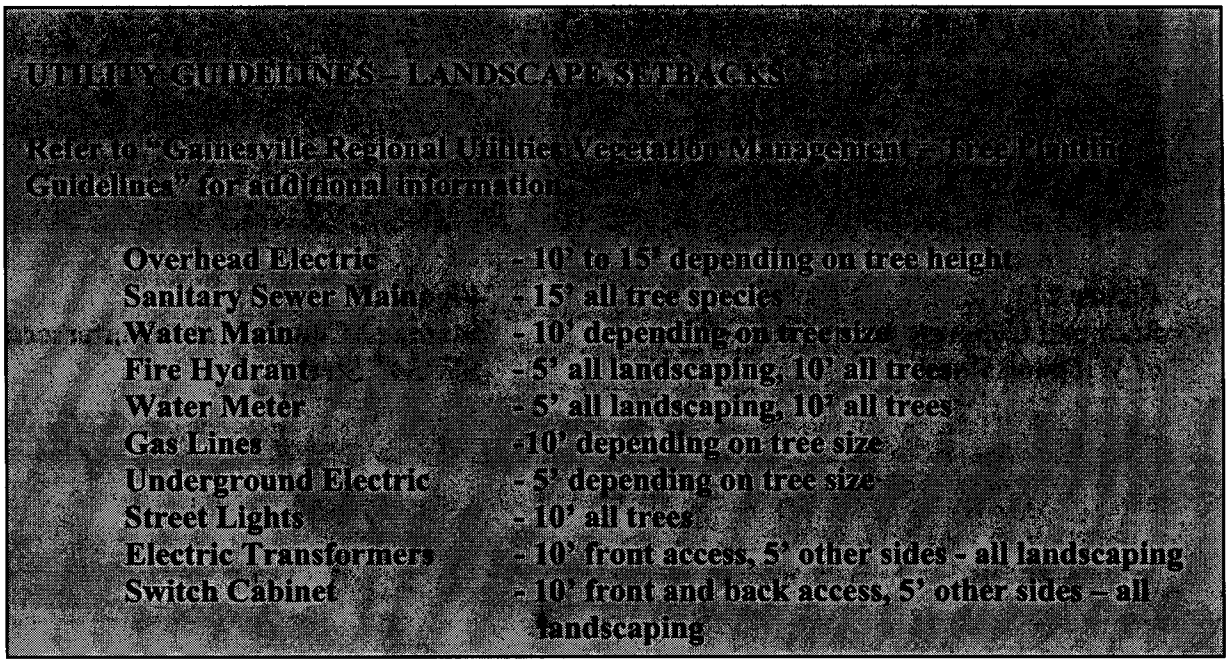


Figure 22
Stamped Concrete at the intersection of SW 34th Street



Utilities

Both above and below ground utilities must be considered when planting any median. Fortunately, most utilities are located between the edge of pavement and the right of way line on each side of the road. The document, "Gainesville Regional Utilities Vegetation Management – Tree Planting Guidelines," provides background information for the recommended setbacks shown in the following utility guidelines. These setback guidelines should be evaluated to determine the impact on future tree-planting efforts.



PLANTING DESIGN

Size and Maintenance

The mature size of a plant and its ability to thrive under the given environmental conditions of a particular site (sustainability) are the key considerations for planting design. Visual clearance requirements dictate the maximum height of the plant material. Planting shrubs that must be sheared to maintain the height requirement unnecessarily increases maintenance costs. For safety reasons, it is better not to depend on maintenance to maintain a specific height as shown in figures 23 and 24.

Figure 23
Overgrown Junipers on Newberry Road

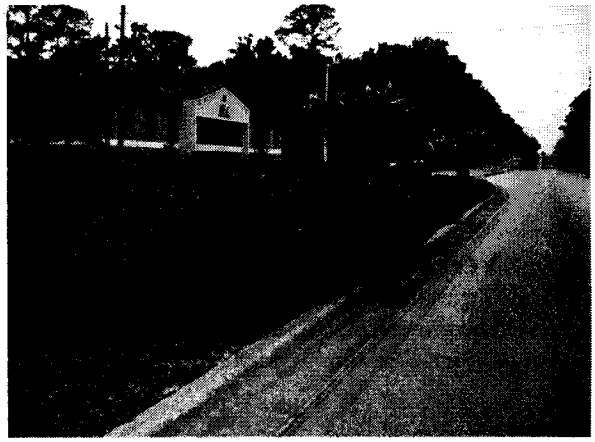


Figure 24
Pittosporum gets too large if not pruned

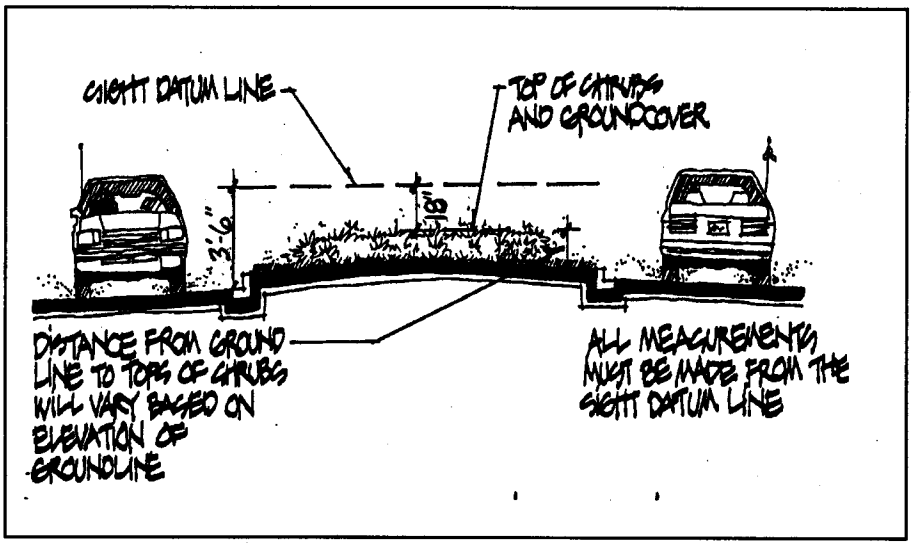
Vertical Clear Zone

Vertical clearance is necessary to provide visibility of on-coming traffic across medians. In FDOT guidelines, this applies to the entire length of the median. Vertical clearance standards may vary by municipality, but most are some variation of FDOT design guidelines. Alachua County follows FDOT Guidelines for vertical clearance.

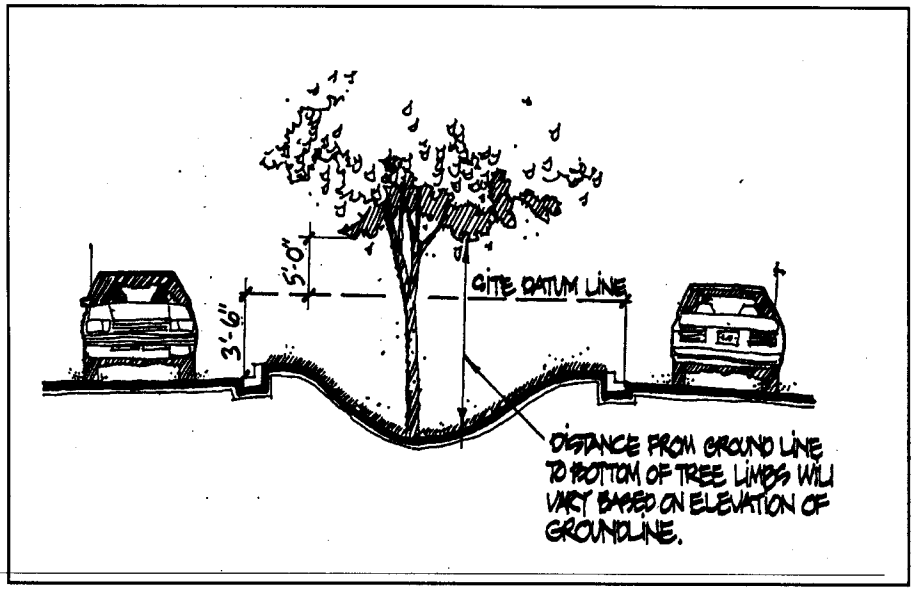
VERTICAL CLEAR ZONE GUIDELINES

The vertical clear zone is defined as between 2 feet and 8.5 feet above the roadway, based on a sight datum line 3.5 feet above the roadway at each vehicle. See the illustrations below. Note that the datum line is dimensioned from the asphalt. Curbed medians or medians with berms necessitate lower plant heights.

For FDOT roads, the vertical clear zone must be maintained the entire length of the median. For lower speed urban medians, exceptions to this guideline may be made on a case-by-case basis.



Vertical Clearance
Illustration from the 1995 *Florida Highway Landscape Guide*
The dimensions of this illustration have been altered to match the 2002 *FDOT Roadway Design Standards*, Index 546.



Vertical Clearance
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