



**Figure 3**  
Crape Myrtles both sides of NE 1<sup>st</sup> Street



**Figure 4**  
Sabal Palms also in ROW of Waldo Road

It is the trees in these examples that make the greatest statement. This is almost always the case, as trees have the ability to change the scale of the spaces they occupy. However, the shrubs and groundcovers also contribute to the appeal in a subtle but important way, by acting as a unifying element. There may also be an opportunity to take the ground covers and shrubs from the median into the right of way since their installation would not be affected by the utilities. This makes an even stronger impact when using native grasses and other less common planting materials.

Coordination with the private owners along the corridors can potentially create a stronger and more unified overall design. Since there is often no room for trees in the right of way, this may be the only opportunity in many cases. An example is the white crape myrtles along SW 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue (figure 5) that appear to belong to the private apartment complex.



**Figure 5**  
White crape myrtles planted in an apartment complex buffer to match the white crape myrtles in the median

## MEDIAN CLASSIFICATIONS

There are various scenarios when it comes to medians. These may range from high traffic multi-lane arterials through busy commercial settings, to low volume two-lane residential streets, to high-speed highways bridging cities across rural landscapes. Prior to developing a design, every median must be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. The guidelines presented here are to be applied with an understanding of the type of median being considered. The type of landscaping and the level of maintenance may vary significantly based on variables surrounding a specific median. In this document, medians will be classified based on aesthetic or design potential, and referred to as High, Medium, and Low design medians.

The aesthetic potential of a median is a function of how it is viewed by the public. The primary factors involved are:

1. Design Speed – Higher speed means less time to view the median from a vehicle.
2. Adjacency to an intersection - Signals allow for views while traffic is stopped.
3. Number of lanes – More lanes create greater separation from pedestrians and buildings.
4. Presence of buildings – Views from buildings close to the roadway are better than those from buildings separated by parking lots.
5. Presence of sidewalks and crosswalks – Walks provide greater pedestrian interaction.

Table 1 is an example of how medians could be scored to ensure consistency and objectivity. Because of the specific variables, it is the individual median that must be classified, not the street.

**Table 1 - Point Values for Five Median Variables**

Variable	Parameter	Points	Parameter	Points	Parameter	Points
Design Speed (mph)	Under 25	2	25–40	1	Over 40	0
Intersection Adjacent	Yes	2			No	0
Number of Lanes	Two-lane	2	Four-lane	1	Six and up	0
Building Present	Yes, w/ no separation	2	Yes, with separation	1	No Buildings	0
Walks	Sidewalks (SW) Crosswalks (CW)	2	Sidewalks only	1	No walks	0

**High Design Medians (7 – 10 pts)**

These medians represent only about five to ten percent of the city’s medians, but have the greatest amount of visibility and therefore the greatest potential for individual impact. The typical high design median is downtown with low speed two-lane streets, buildings overlooking the streets, and high pedestrian activity. A more detailed planting plan, sculptural elements, interesting hardscape at crossings, and rotated annuals for color, may all be appropriate here. Medians in this classification may warrant irrigation and a higher level of maintenance than typical medians in the city (see figures 6 and 7 for examples). Table 2 shows the scoring for the medians in figures 6 and 7. The total point values determine the appropriate designation as “high design median.”



**Figure 6**  
300 Block of SE 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue



**Figure 7**  
400 Block of NE 1<sup>st</sup> Street

**Table 2 - Point Values For High Design Medians**

Median	Speed		Intersection		Lanes		Buildings		SW / CW		Total
	Spd	Pts	Y/N	Pts	Num	Pts	Y/N	Pts	Y/N	Pts	
SE 2 Av	25	2	Y	2	2	2	Y	2	Y/Y	2	10
NE 1 St.	25	2	N	0	2	2	Y	2	Y/N	1	7

**Medium Design Medians (3 – 6 pts)**

This classification represents the majority of the medians (approximately 80 percent). They are typically on a four-lane collector road, with a 40-45 mile per hour speed limit, and with sidewalks and buildings separated from the road by parking. Although these are defined as being only medium design medians, their treatment has the greatest overall impact on the city's corridors. Four-lane roads bordered by parking lots have significant needs for trees to create scale and plants to provide interest. These corridors are generally quite long. This presents an opportunity for the coordination of the medians, where each is a single element contributing to an overall corridor design. Design standards will provide the greatest benefit in this situation (see figures 8 and 9 for examples). Table 3 shows the scoring for the medians in figures 8 and 9. The total point values determine the appropriate designation as "medium design median."



**Figure 8**  
3400 Block of North Main Street



**Figure 9**  
4000 Block of NW 13<sup>th</sup> Street

**Table 3 - Point Values for Medium Design Medians**

Median	Speed		Intersection		Lanes		Buildings		SW / CW		Total
	Spd	Pts	Y/N	Pts	Num	Pts	Y/N	Pts	Y/N	Pts	
Main St.	45	0	N	0	4	1	Y(S)	1	Y/N	1	3
NW13 <sup>th</sup> St	45	0	Y	2	4	1	Y(S)	1	Y/N	1	5

**Low Design Medians (0 – 2 pts)**

These medians are typically high speed four to six lane arterials, heading out of town with no sidewalks and few homes or businesses along the right of way. They only make up 10 to 20 percent of the medians, but as these roads head into town, they are important gateways into Gainesville. From a design standpoint, where low design medians are also gateways, the median’s impact must work almost exclusively for high speed vehicular traffic. Where low design medians are not gateways, the reality is the potential for landscape sponsorship is minimal. These are medians that are almost all currently of turf grass. The greatest benefit here may be in finding planting strategies that lessen maintenance costs: examples would be wildflowers or new low maintenance groundcovers (see figures 10 and 11 for examples). Table 4 shows the scoring for the medians in figures 10 and 11. The total point values determine the appropriate designation as “low design median.”



**Figure 10**  
441 South of Gainesville



**Figure 11**  
Waldo Road North of Gainesville

**Table 4 - Median Point Values Low Design Medians**

Median	Speed		Intersection		Lanes		Buildings		SW / CW		Total
	Spd	Pts	Y/N	Pts	Num	Pts	Y/N	Pts	Y/N	Pts	
S. 441	55	0	N	0	4	1	N	0	N/N	0	0
Waldo	55	0	N	0	4	1	N	0	N/N	0	0

## **GENERAL DESIGN**

### **Design Development**

Medians within the project area are currently designed by a number of entities, primarily the public agencies that have ownership.

State Roads - The Florida Department of Transportation, FDOT, has specific guidelines for the planting of medians. Local landscape contractor, West Farms, currently administers the "Adopt-a-Median" program with FDOT. Typical median designs have been developed for West Farms by a landscape architect and have been approved by FDOT. The use of pre-approved plans facilitates the process for this program. Medians on state roads that are not part of the Adopt-a-Median program are typically planted in turf grasses. Safety and ease of maintenance are the primary factors for FDOT designs.

County Roads - The medians on county roads are typically designed by the county horticulturalist. The biggest design consideration for Alachua County is safety, since FDOT guidelines are followed for the majority of their medians. Drought tolerance and the reduction of mowing requirements are also major considerations.

City Roads - The City Recreation and Parks Department develops the majority of the median designs for city roads. Landscape architects, in conjunction with commercial development, beautification grants or the City Beautification Board, also design city medians.

### **Right of Way Plantings and Sidewalks**

Right of Way (ROW) plantings have many of the same considerations as median plantings, especially in the areas of maintenance, vertical clear zones within vision triangles, and plant species selection. The difference is that in the ROW there is a greater degree of conflict with utilities, a stronger relationship with pedestrians, and greater storm water considerations with roadside swales.

### **Overlay District Considerations**

Part of evaluating each median on a case-by-case basis may be the consideration of its inclusion in an Overlay District, as referenced in the Gainesville Land Development Code. For example, if a road traverses or borders an area designated for historical preservation, research could be carried out to determine if a special or unique median landscape treatment is appropriate. In this case, a median design may benefit from a review by the Historic Preservation Board for its knowledge and insights into the area.

#### **OVERLAY DISTRICT GUIDELINE**

**When designing a median, check with the Gainesville Planning Department to see if the median falls within a designated Overlay District. Some Overlay Districts, i.e., Historic Preservation, may dictate special design considerations.**