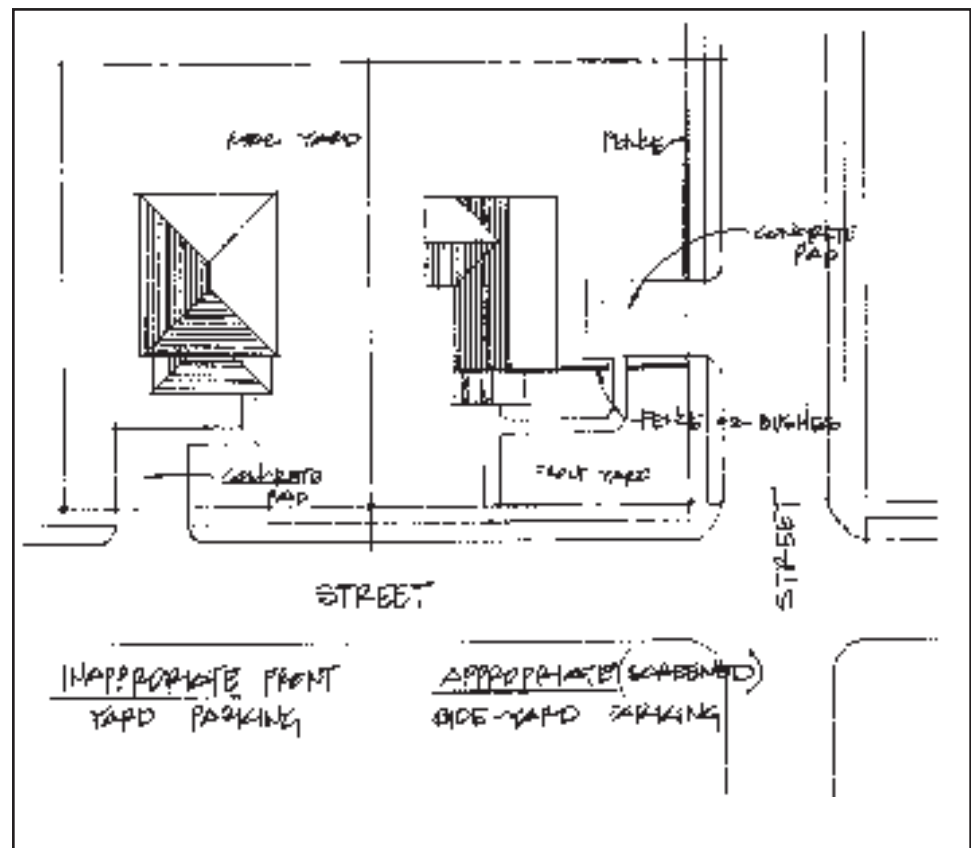




# Alleys, Driveways And Off-Street Parking

The prevalence of the automobile in contemporary society has resulted in increased pressures to accommodate more vehicles in the City’s historic districts. Because many of these historic neighborhoods and areas were developed prior to the widespread introduction of automobiles, many lots do not include driveways and off-street parking areas that are accessed from the street frontage of the properties. Vehicular access in many historic neighborhoods is achieved through mid-block alleys that were dedicated to the City and became the place to construct carriage houses and garages. Many of these alleys originally were dirt paths and, in time, were replaced with brick, gravel, and concrete for improved access. Carriage houses and garages were built over time and traditionally were constructed on the rear property line with direct access to the alley. In some cases, garages were oriented perpendicular to the alley and a small parking area was created on the lot to avoid blockage of the alley. These “alleyscapes” are an important part of the character of St. Joseph and should be maintained and preserved.

Due to the condition of many alleys and a desire for convenient access, residential property owners may contemplate adding a driveway or parking pad in their front or side yard area to accommodate off-street parking needs. Care must be taken to ensure that driveway installation and expansion does not result in the loss of important landscape features on the site such as mature trees, retaining walls, and iron fencing.



# Alleys, Driveways And Off-Street Parking



St. Joseph Landmark Commission

Replacement of grass lawns and vegetation with concrete, asphalt, or gravel will result in the gradual diminishment of green space that plays an integral role in defining the character of the City's historic districts. Efforts should be made to screen these features with appropriate shrubbery, fencing, or other suitable landscaping and to position driveways and off-street parking areas to the sides or rear of buildings so that they do not detrimentally impact the historic streetscape.

Parking lots are potentially the most damaging and problematic of all off-street parking accommodations. Traditionally, parking lots have been characterized by large expanses of concrete or asphalt that had little in the way of planting or other screening to soften their presence in the landscape. Designed appropriately with the use of screening in the form of trees, plantings, and fencing, parking lots can be successfully integrated into a sensitive historic environment with minimal adverse impact. Guidelines contained in this section are intended to screen, enhance, and beautify parking areas, and provide for a more attractive pedestrian environment.

The proper permits must be obtained from the City of St. Joseph prior to making a curb cut in a City right-of-way for a driveway or off-street parking area. Parking lot design standards are contained within Section 31-053 of the Zoning Ordinance of the City of St. Joseph and must be satisfied for all new parking lot installations.

## Alleys, Driveways and Off-Street Parking: Guidelines

1. Retain historic alleys and their historic paving materials.
2. Locate garages in alleys and maintain the same orientation and setback as found on the block.
3. Retain historic driveway configurations and materials whenever possible.
4. Construct new driveways to conform to the configuration, width, location, and materials of existing driveways in the historic district.
5. Locate new driveways and off-street parking areas in residential neighborhoods in the rear yards of properties. If possible, provide access via an existing alley. If this is not possible, driveways and parking areas should be placed in the least visible portion of the lot and appropriately screened with plantings and/or fencing. Avoid the placement of parking areas to the front of the established building line.
6. Avoid creating large off-street parking areas in residential neighborhoods that occupy the majority of the yard area and contribute to the loss of green space and the erosion of the historic district's residential character.



Parking lots such as this one found on 7<sup>th</sup> Street in Downtown St. Joseph, are too often characterized by large expanses of concrete with no plantings or screening at their edges to soften their presence in the streetscape.



# Alleys, Driveways And Off-Street Parking

## **Alleys, Driveways and Off-Street Parking: Guidelines continued**

7. Avoid the destruction of mature plantings and other historic site features such as retaining walls and iron fencing in creating new parking areas, whenever possible. Incorporate said features into the design scheme. Provide for protection of mature trees during construction by avoiding trenching or other ground disturbance within the canopy area of the tree at a minimum. It is also advisable to avoid soil compaction within this critical root zone area.
8. Pave parking areas with one of the following materials: concrete, concrete pavers, brick, asphalt, or gravel. Loose paving materials should be contained with an edging material such as a low brick retaining wall or concrete curbing. Natural finish landscape timbers are not appropriate edging materials in the City's historic district.
9. Utilize a low planting hedge or masonry wall (not to exceed 36" in height) along the street frontage of all parking lots. Avoid plantings within the designated site triangles at parking lot entrances to ensure safety of egress. The landscape element will screen automobile wheels, bumpers, and paving, thereby eliminating the harshest visual impacts of the automobile without compromising surveillance and safety.
10. Secure the proper permits from the City for constructing curb cuts in the public right-of-way for driveway and parking lot installations. Follow design and construction standards for parking lots as outlined in Section 31-053 of the Zoning Ordinance of the City of St. Joseph.
11. Follow guidelines for EXTERIOR LIGHTING in illuminating parking areas.
12. Design lighting levels for safety. Avoid spilling light onto adjacent properties.