

There are any number of successful projects throughout the country that have adopted this approach to development. Restricting the amount of land to be disturbed—that is, limiting the disturbance to barely more than the footprint of the building—can contribute a great deal to the character and value of a site. Such projects generally include a requirement to use native material and natural exterior finishes to enhance the sense of minimal site disturbances and natural appearance. While adhering to these principles would enhance nearly any project's development, doing so is imperative for developments to be marketed as “natural.”

Using grade changes effectively

Variations in grade can serve many purposes in site design. Beyond providing well-thought-out transitions from one elevation to another, grading may be used to reduce noise and to provide a visual separation between features or adjacent properties. The separation provided by a change in grade implies a greater distance between objects than may actually exist. Designers can incorporate grade differences and use this perception of distance to increase visual interest and to create a feeling of expanse that may not otherwise exist.

A low-planted berm between buildings, for example, tends to give a feeling of greater distance when viewed from inside either of the buildings. The berm shown in Fig. 3.5 has effectively screened the residential area from an adjacent highway. Even in areas with little natural relief, subtle combinations of



Figure 3.5 Photograph of a berm.