

specifically deal with construction noise, but for the most part these issues are not specifically design issues. The most common postconstruction noise complaints are associated with highway or traffic noise. Numerous steps can be taken to influence traffic noise, but only a few of them are at the disposal of site designers. The site designer's options to influence highway noise include lower speed limits, roadways laid out so as to reduce starting and stopping, and minimum grades. In practice, vegetation makes a fairly poor noise screen. The best practice is to use grading—that is, to raise or lower the road surface. Sound barriers have had success but may also create other problems with sound “reflecting” off the wall or creating “valleys” of poor air quality. Perhaps the best approach is a vegetated slope that provides numerous absorbing surfaces and the mass to screen noise even though such screens require space (Fig. 3.7). Where there is inadequate space or distance between the source and the impacted site, it may be necessary to use structural sound barriers (Fig. 3.8).

If berms are used to screen a view, careful planning and field measurement must be undertaken to assure that the area is effectively obstructed. The screening of an unwanted view may be easily accomplished by using berms and plant materials, but effective buffering requires some planning and evaluation. Often greater effectiveness can be achieved for a lower cost by staggering the islands and mixing the plant materials by size and species. This approach is generally



Figure 3.7 Photograph of a berm between a highway and a residential development.