3.1 INTRODUCTION

The Army Installation Design Guide process depends upon the development of visual goals and objectives and the identification of visual elements. Goals and objectives provide the desired visual context of the installation (Fig. 3.1).

Basic design principles are used to assess, define, and classify visual elements. This assessment becomes the design criteria used to determine the visual character of the installation. These design criteria are used for design decisions in the review of existing visual context and determination of project recommendation.

3.2 GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

3.2.1 Background and Rationale. Fort Bliss is a Department of Defense (DoD) flagship installation. Its essential character is a product of three factors:

- Mission
- History
- Region
These factors play a major role in shaping the visual environment of the installation. The following narrative describes each factor and the manner in which it influences this IDG’s goals, objectives and recommendations for the installation’s aesthetic and functional characteristics.

3.2.1.1 Mission: Fort Bliss is a Power Projection Platform, and in this role, it trains, sustains, mobilizes and deploys members of the joint team. The installation conducts global, full spectrum operations in support of the national military strategy, and provides for the well-being of the regional military community. Fort Bliss is led by adaptive, innovative professionals, and the installation’s culture is shaped by discipline, learning and advanced technology.

The desired visual image consistent with the Fort Bliss mission is open, uncluttered and efficient, characterized by an orderly layout of technically sophisticated buildings and structures.

3.2.1.2 History: The original historical role of Fort Bliss as an infantry and cavalry post is still very much in evidence in the parade ground area. This connection with an earlier time suggests an outpost, which has provided a secure past and promises an enduring future.

Visually, the installation’s history is expressed by images of traditional architecture using solid masonry materials and familiar forms such as pitched roofs and verandas. The impression is of a secure but welcoming environment of human-scaled buildings surrounding pleasant green spaces.

The Historic District at Fort Bliss is listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) in recognition of both its history and its historic architectural styles. Maintaining the installation’s NRHP status is an important design defining element for both new construction and extant buildings in the District.

3.2.1.3 Region: The image of Fort Bliss is strongly shaped by the climate, culture and geography of the region. Like an oasis in the harsh, southwestern desert, the installation provides a welcome refuge from its hot, dry, mountainous surroundings.

Pockets of green shade scattered through the installation visually express the oasis landscape form. The cultural influence of the southwest is manifested by Spanish style
buildings with tile roofs, stucco walls and climatically appropriate features such as verandas, arcades and courtyards.

3.2.2 **Goal 1: Enhance the aesthetic character of Fort Bliss by leveraging the visual contributions of its mission, history and region.**

**Objective:** Promote harmonious functional and aesthetic relationships within each visual zone by utilizing specific visual elements associated with the installation’s mission, history and region in new construction and renovation projects.

**Recommendation 1:** Identify specific, desirable characteristics of appropriate architectural styles and elements for each visual zone. Develop and implement a plan to maximize the use of these styles and elements within each zone.

**Recommendation 2:** Maximize use of styles and climatically appropriate features such as verandas and arcades (where suitable), based on visual zone.

**Recommendation 3:** Develop and implement plans to ensure continued NRHP eligibility for the installation’s Historic District through continued use of design approaches (for both extant and new District buildings) that pay homage to the timeless character of that visual zone.

3.2.3 **Goal 2: Provide an environment that is sensitive to natural elements such as topography, vegetation, light, water and views.**

3.2.4 **Objective:** Develop and implement an installation-wide strategy to provide shade and enhance visual impact of the installation.

**Recommendation 1:** Identify landscape themes for each visual area.

**Recommendation 2:** Landscape highly visible locations, entrance gates, primary circulation systems and areas with high concentrations of people.

**Recommendation 3:** Develop and implement a Xeriscaping Management Plan.

**Recommendation 4:** Develop and implement plan to deploy street trees throughout the installation.
Chapter 4 of the Army Installation Design Standards, Model IDG discusses the goals, objectives, and recommendations process and gives examples.

3.3 IDENTIFICATION AND CLASSIFICATION OF VISUAL ELEMENTS

Basic design principles define visual elements and assess their character. The assessment and classification of visual elements follows basic design principles describing "good" and "not so good" design. Their assessment becomes the design criteria used to determine the visual character of the installation.

3.4 DESIGN PRINCIPLES

The visual inventory and analysis requires an understanding of basic design principles. The primary principles are listed below.

1. **Scale** - The proportional relationship of humans and site elements to the surrounding environment. The scale should result in a comfortable relationship for the user and will vary as space, size and activities vary (Fig. 3.4a).

2. **Form** - The size and shape of mass. Individual forms should be designed to complement one another and the environment. Forms should support the function of the space.

3. **Function** – The purpose for which a space is used. Function is gauged by the degree to which the space serves its intended purpose.

4. **Color** – All elements of the visual environment have color. The use and arrangement of colors greatly determine the visual impact of all elements. It should be noted that the Directorate of Environment (DOE) maintains a palette of historic color schemes to be used within the Historic District (Appendix L).

5. **Texture** – All elements of the visual environment have texture. The use and blending of textures greatly impact the visual environment.

6. **Materials** – All materials used should work well with the environmental conditions of the site and blend in with the surrounding context.
7. **Unity** – All elements of the visual environment should blend to complement one another. Repetition of scale, form, color, and texture results in a unified visual impression.

8. **Framing** – All views include a ground plane, side planes, and overhead plane. The relationship of planes changes as the individual moves through the environment.

9. **Axis** – An axis is a linear progression of space connecting two or more dominant features (Fig 3.4b).

10. **Terminus** – A terminus is the end of an axis and is typically defined by a dominant feature such as a building (Fig. 3.4b).

11. **Balance** – Visual elements are composed to be symmetrical or asymmetrical. In either case, visual elements should be sized and located to provide visual balance (Fig. 3.4c).

12. **Sustainability** - Practicing the principles of sustainable design in the planning, design, construction, and operation of infrastructure and facilities is a smart business practice (See Appendix D).

### 3.5 VISUAL ELEMENTS

An installation’s visual elements, described below, encompass a myriad of physical and environmental impacts. This Army Installation Design Guide provides guidance on how to recognize the visual impacts of the installation and how to improve upon them if warranted.

1. **Natural Characteristics** - Regional and site characteristics that have been preserved and enhanced as a part of the installation.

2. **Edges and Boundaries** - Edges and boundaries define and differentiate functional spaces. Linear elements such as walls, fences, or trees create separation of use and activities.

3. **Buildings and Structures** - Typically the most dominant features of an installation. Their location and design characteristics determine the primary visual image (Figure 3.5a).

4. **Activity Nodes** - Centers of activity that attract people on a daily basis.

*Figure 3.5a - Buildings are dominant features.*
5. **Landmarks** - Visually or historically prominent features such as towers, statues, static displays, or buildings that provide identity and orientation of place (Figure 3.5b). Fort Bliss has a rich visual heritage in its Historic District and surrounding viewsheds. Structures from seven distinct historical periods are found on the installation.

6. **Entrances and Gates** - Provide the first and last impression of the installation.

7. **Circulation System** - Includes streets, railroad tracks, trails, sidewalks, parking lots, driveways, delivery areas, and bicycle paths. The circulation system utilizes a large amount of space and creates significant visual impact.

8. **Trees and Other Vegetation** - Trees and other vegetation frame views, provide visual screens, shade, color, and interest in the installation.

9. **Street Trees** - Street trees soften, complement, and define the road hierarchy, and improve the overall visual quality of the installation (Figure 3.5c).

10. **Views and Vistas** - Scenic and attractive views and vistas should be enhanced. Unattractive views should be screened.

11. **Open Spaces** - Open space areas create visual impact and can be designed to either separate or integrate adjacent uses. An example of this is the Parade Ground in the Historic District.
12. **Signage** - A coordinated installation signage plan, addressing both exterior and interior signage, should be developed to facilitate circulation and provide useful information.

- **Utility Corridors** - Utilities should be in corridors and unsightly above ground utilities minimized.

- **Other Elements** - Visual elements other than those above may occur within an installation and should be noted.