

Chapter 3 DOWNTOWN DESIGN GUIDELINES

A. Introduction

For the purposes of these design guidelines the broader downtown is being addressed separately from the core or Old Town area (see Chapter 4 Old Town). The guidelines are focused on new infill development in this area of Downtown. Downtown Eureka has a mix of building character and facades from many eras for: retail, tourist serving shops, civic and cultural buildings, auto services and sales, restaurants, and hotels. The area is bounded by Broadway Street on the west and Y Street on the east, 1st Street on the north and generally 7th Street to the south.

Objective/ Purpose

Architectural variety and contemporary architecture is encouraged, however new buildings in the Downtown District will be designed to complement the existing and historic buildings in the proximity of the new project. Renovation of buildings that are a good representation of an era should follow the general renovation guidelines. Those buildings deemed to be historically significant by the Historic Preservation Commission should follow the Secretary of the Interiors Historic Preservation Guidelines.

Applicability

These guidelines apply to the Downtown portion of the Downtown/ Old Town Design Review district.

Traditional District Pattern

The Downtown district is characterized by dense development on smaller and mid-sized lots from one story to multistory masonry and wood frame buildings. Closer to the core, buildings are adjacent to the sidewalk, moving away from the core they may have parking in front or to the side of the main building. Many eras of architecture are found in this district.

Relationship to Other Documents & Chapters

Sign Standards

Development Standards

General Plan Policies

Tips for Applicants

Verify the operating hours of the Planning Department counter: 1(707) 441-4160.

Verify the zoning and Design Review overlay of your parcel.

If your project is in the redevelopment area, a Façade Improvement Program is available for financial assistance.

Acquire a Design Review checklist for your district.

Acquire the site plan and architectural application content checklists

Inquire about proposed development/ renovations of neighboring parcels. Is it possible to participate in a shared parking agreement with your neighbor/s?

Is the City planning street improvements in your area?

Determine if your building is considered historic by the Historic Preservation Commission.

Downtown Guidelines

New infill projects within this district should use quality materials and be designed in a manner which is compatible with the district context. Building scale and massing, roof heights and styles, and window orientation are all important and must be considered in the creation of new structures within the Downtown District. Designs inspired by historic architectural features found in the district are highly encouraged.

Site Planning

Site planning refers to how each building relates to the street, sidewalk, and neighboring buildings. The majority of building frontages should be built close to the sidewalk to create an active and interesting walking environment similar to the core of downtown.

Building Placements

The street level floor of an infill building should use a similar setback as the adjacent buildings on the block, either from back of sidewalk or with a landscape setback.

When providing a landscape setback, provide 4'-5' from sidewalk at base of building.

Corner store street level floor of any new building should be built at back of sidewalk on both sides of the corner.

Provide a landscaped setback to the rear of the lot to buffer those projects adjacent to residential uses.

Storefront and Entrance Location

Orient the main storefront entry to the street.

Additional storefront entries located at the side street or rear is encouraged where possible.

Develop both street elevations on corner buildings to provide visual interest to pedestrians.

Corner buildings will include storefront design features, such as window elements and cornices, on at least 50% of the side street wall.

Highly reflective or darkly tinted glass is unacceptable.

Unique personalization of individual tenant spaces is encouraged. This includes branded letter and logo styles, different colored storefront (but same style storefront), or different awning color or style.

Landscaping

Use landscaping to accent site entries, monument signage, and /or enhanced paving to establish a sense of arrival.

Accent site entries with flowering groundcover, shrubs, and trees at entry driveways.

Use planted areas and shaded walkways to reduce the visual impact of large building walls.

Incorporate vine plantings on long building walls that are adjacent to the streets to enhance and frame special architectural structures or soften long wall facades.

On larger lots, use a hierarchy of plantings with large canopy trees abutting the plazas and walkways and smaller scale trees and shrubs within the pedestrian plazas.

Provide long lasting permanent plantings that provide natural bird habitat and host beneficial insects.

A mix of materials is encouraged for onsite walkways and/or plazas.

Use water efficient/conserving irrigation systems, such as drip systems (except for lawn areas).

Design irrigation to not allow overspill onto adjacent impervious area such as walkways.

Group plants according to water needs.

Replace dead or dying plants in a timely manner.

Pedestrian Amenities

Provide walkways through and within the parcels.

Provide a walkway at the rear of buildings adjacent to parking lots.
Provide pedestrian areas including seating, trash receptacles and lighting

Refuse Storage Areas

Screen trash receptacles and recycle containers and other mechanical equipment. Use the same materials as in the buildings, or a 6' high wooden fence.

Landscape the publicly visible edge/s of the trash enclosure.

Circulation and Parking

Circulation and parking guidelines are focused on reducing the dominance of parking areas, and to visually buffer parking lots from the street.

1) Driveway Location

Minimize driveways on the primary street; consolidate them or place driveways and access points on a secondary street when feasible.

Or locate parking lot entries on side streets or alleys.

Parking Location

Parking lots should not be located between storefront and property line adjacent to primary (most heavily trafficked) streets.

Locate parking lots to the rear or sides of buildings where feasible.

Where feasible, rear parking lots should be designed to connect to each other to reduce driveways and curb cuts.

Do not locate parking lots at street intersections.

Parking lots should accommodate motorcycle and bicycle parking.

Parking Lot Landscaping

Private parking lots with street frontage should be:

Attractively landscaped with 5' planting strips including trees and low shrubs.

Screened on the peripheral edge by a hedge or masonry garden wall no taller than three feet located at the sidewalk.

Landscape with locally compatible, climate appropriate vegetation

Use transparent landscaping to provide safe walking environments. Height limit of hedges should be two to three feet.

Parking Lot Lighting

Provide low level downward directed lighting to protect the night sky.

Use pedestrian scale lighting no taller than 18 feet.

Practice energy conservation in lighting with the use of efficient lamps and timed operating hours.

Architectural Compatibility

New buildings as infill development in the downtown should strive to use modern interpretations of the building character of the neighborhood. Architectural compatibility incorporates the rhythm of the components and forms of neighboring buildings to help create a harmonious relationship to other buildings on the street. The design of the new buildings should use elements of historic buildings for massing; roof forms and pitches; siding materials and orientation; and window types and arrangements.

Renovations and restorations to historic buildings should seek to be true to the original architecture of the historic building subject to the renovation. Restorations to those buildings deemed to be historically significant by the Historic Preservation Commission shall follow the Secretary of the Interiors Historic Preservation Guidelines for exteriors.

1) Building Massing- Infill

Building massing refers to the bulk of a building created by the exterior walls. The Downtown buildings include an eclectic mix of building sizes and eras, with a range of heights and bulks.

Building designs should consider the mass and rhythm of the wall planes of other buildings (existing or planned) on the block.

Locate, site, and mass buildings to minimize or retain current shadow effects.

Avoid long rectangular boxes by dividing the building into segments with varied wall setbacks and/or pop-outs.

Break up a long horizontal roof plane with a change in roof height or orientation.

Building Scale -Infill

Building scale refers to the proportion of one building to another. "Pedestrian" or "human" scale incorporates building elements that relate to the human body or are comprehensible to us.

Use the current size, height and scale of the neighboring buildings on the block and in the district as a whole as a general guideline of how large to make the infill building.

Do not create a building which will dominate the surrounding built environment.

New buildings may only be one story taller than the neighboring building to avoid stark elevation changes.

New buildings are limited to a maximum of 3 stories. Use the scale of the different floor plates of neighboring buildings on the block.

Façade Materials

Use a combination of materials which echo the Downtown architectural materials and placements.

Recommended wall materials

Wood
clapboard siding (cement or wood)
clear glass
glass block
stucco/exterior plaster
masonry
new or used face-brick
ceramic tiles
Finished corrugated metal
board and batten

Unacceptable wall materials

imitation masonry (e.g. imitation, rusticated block) of any kind
reflective or opaque glass
imitation stone or flagstone parquet
rough sawn or "natural" (d i s h e d) wood
"pecky" cedar
used brick with no fired face (salvaged from interior walls)
imitation wood siding
coarsely finished "rough-sawn" on rustic materials (e.g. wood shakes, barn wood, or T-111 siding)
plastic panels vertical siding

Façade Proportions

Provide visual interest with varied façade elevations.

The articulation and detailing of building elevations should be simple and decorative elements should not be over exaggerated.

The street level floors should be clearly distinguishable from the upper floors.

Maintain the general alignment of horizontal features on a building front.

Typical elements that align include: window moldings, tops of display windows, cornices, copings and parapets at the tops of buildings.

Windows & Doors

Use a similar pattern of window and door placements as the existing neighboring buildings in Old Town or on the block.

Main entry to a building shall be emphasized in one or more of the following ways:

Flanked columns, decorative fixtures or other details;

Recessed within larger arched or cased decorative opening;

Covered by means of a portico (formal porch) or canopy projecting from or set into the building face (refer to zoning guidelines for allowable projections);

Punctuated by means of a change in the rooflines, a tower, or a break in the surface of the subject wall.

Corner buildings may provide a prominent corner entrance to street level shops.

Both street elevations on corner buildings should receive architectural treatments to provide visual interest to pedestrians.

Storefronts should be:

recessed in a manner which complements the existing neighboring entries, or;

sheltered by an awning, arcade structure, or canopy, and;

Set back no deeper than five feet.

Awnings and Canopies

The design dimensions of canopies and awnings must follow the standards specified in the zoning code (section_____).

Use the same color awnings on a single building with a simple design on the valance flap, with each shop identity in similar colors to the others.

Awnings should be well-maintained, washed regularly and replaced when faded or torn.

Awnings should be located within, and not overlap, vertical elements such as masonry piers

Roof Styles

Roofs may be flat with a parapet wall, [or] sloped, or pitched with a gable or hip. Visible portions of the roof should be sheathed with a roofing material complementary to the surrounding buildings.

Encouraged roof materials are:

standing seam metal roofs

Asphaltic materials

new sustainable waterproofing materials

asphaltic shingles

clay or cement tile

Unacceptable roof materials:

crushed stone

shake

brightly colored tile (orange, blue, etc.)

corrugated fiberglass

Avoid geodesic, domelike, mansard, or chalet style roofs.

Screen, cover, or hide roof-mounted mechanical or utility equipment with the use of a parapet wall or other structure matching the architectural integrity of the building.

Lighting

Provide accent light on the building, such as for signs, at entries, or cast on special features. The lighting must not produce glare or overwhelm the building exterior.

Illuminate exterior walls with downward-directed light fixtures.

Use light fixtures which are architecturally compatible with the building.
Prevent off-site glare or light spills, and preserve the night sky.

Façade Restoration

Retain and restore original elements. If damage or deterioration is too severe, the element should be recreated using original materials to match the design, color, texture and important design features.

New facades should complement the historic architectural quality and fabric as prescribed.

New buildings that cheaply replicate historic buildings are not acceptable.

Corporate Chain Architecture

This type of building and tenant will be designed to fit the scale and character of the district in which it is located. The building can be true to the color scheme of the tenant but should customize the exterior design, and the use of new, innovative, or whimsical designs are encouraged.

Corporate signage may not dominate the façade. The sign should be in careful proportion to the wall space.

Use unique or interesting roof forms to establish the overall character. **Mansard roofs are strongly discouraged.**

Use an interesting mix of materials (a minimum of 2) and colors.

Use figurative style signs when feasible (described below).

Design an attractive drive-through façade consistent with the other facades.

Signs

The following guidelines discuss the appropriate styles, colors, and lighting for signage for Downtown Eureka. These guidelines apply to new infill development as well as historic buildings alike.

1) Color and Materials

Use contrast to increase the legibility of signs. Light letters on a dark background or dark letters on a light background are most legible.

Use sign colors, which complement the colors used on the structures and the project as a whole.

Use sign materials compatible with the design of the façade.

Do not paint signs directly on brick facades in historic districts.

Wood (carved, sandblasted, etched, and properly sealed, primed and painted, or stained).

Metal (formed, etched, cast, engraved, and properly primed and painted or factory-coated to protect against corrosion).

Plastic limited to the sign board

Stucco or plaster

Styles of Signs

Appropriate signs for the Downtown include pole, small monument, wall, window, awning, figurative, and neon.

Generally, do not place signs in a way that covers or interrupts the architectural details of the building.

Monument Signs

Monument signs are limited to 5' tall.

Place the sign perpendicular to the street in the setback area.

Design the monument to relate to the project whether through similar materials, color or lettering style.

Monuments should be well proportioned and in scale with the project.

Use architectural elements such as; a frame, columns, pilasters, or cornices.

Monument signs can be internally lit, but only the lettering should be lit.

Accent the sign with landscaping at its base. The landscaping shall not grow to obstruct the sign face.

Pole Signs

The maximum height is 12'

Place the sign perpendicular to the street.

Pole signs should be in scale to the project and the district.

Use interesting architectural forms into the sign portion when feasible.

Accent the sign with landscaping at its base; providing the landscape does not grow to obstruct the sign face (i.e. trees will need to be pruned).

Wall Signs

Place signs consistent with the proportions and scale of the elements comprising the structure's façade.

The best location for a wall sign is generally a band or blank area between the first and second floors of a building.

Establish visual continuity among store fronts by placing new signs consistent with sign locations on adjacent buildings.

On a multi-storied building, the sign should be suspended between the bottom of the second story window sills and the top of the doors or windows of the ground floor. On a one-story building, the top of the sign should be above/at top of doors/windows.

Decorative iron and wood brackets that support projecting signs are encouraged.

To avoid damaging brick and stonework, brackets should be designed so that they can be bolted into masonry joints when possible.

Painted wall signs should be professionally designed and installed and should not dominate the entire wall. (This does not apply to artists murals). Do not paint over historic wall signs with a new sign.

Window

Window signs, permanent or temporary, should not cover more than 25% of the area of each window.

White or gold lettering are the most prominent and legible.

Use the business name and a brief message whenever possible, such as the text identifying the type of product or service (e.g., “clothier” or “attorney”) or pertinent information (e.g., “reservations required”).

Use the fewest words to create a more effective sign. A sign with a brief, succinct message is easier to read and looks more attractive.

Give letters and words ample space between each letter.

Letters should not occupy more than 75% of sign panel area.

Limit the number of lettering styles in order to increase legibility.

Avoid hard-to-read, faddish or bizarre, overly intricate typefaces and symbols. (this does not apply to historic signs)

Symbols and logos are encouraged.

Awning

The shape, design, and color of awnings should be carefully designed to coordinate with, and not dominate, the architectural style of the building.

On a building with multiple tenants the awnings may be the same color and style, or they may be different if that building façade segment is also different.

Text copy should be limited to the name of the business only.

Letter color should be compatible with and contrast with the awning and the building color scheme.

In pedestrian-oriented areas, signs should be placed close to the store entrance and should orient to the sidewalk instead of motorists.

Comment [Comm Dev1]: In wall sign section

The bottom of awning signs should maintain at least a 10-foot pedestrian clearance from the sidewalk level.

Comment [Comm Dev2]: In projecting sign section

Provide removable valances and end panels to accommodate future changes in sign copy.

Do not paint cloth awnings in order to change sign copy, as this will decrease the fire resistant/retardant properties of the treated canvas.

Figurative (3 dimensional)

These are signs that advertise the occupant business through the use of graphic or crafted symbols, such as shoes, keys, glasses, or books and are encouraged.

Use only one projecting sign per business.

Use pictographic images for unique individualized character.

Figurative signs may be incorporated into any of the allowable sign types identified herein.

Neon Signs

Limit neon signs to windows or entrance walls.

Sign Lighting

The most appropriate type of sign illumination in the downtown is internal illuminated or direct lighting.

Signs should be lighted only to the minimum level required for nighttime readability.

Use attached downward directed lighting for a wall sign area only, to better integrate signs with the building's architecture.

Monuments may be lit with a ground mounted light source that is upward directed, but only illuminate the sign board.

Properly shield the light source to prevent glare from spilling over into residential areas and any public right-of-way.

Back-lighted, solid letters are preferred to internally illuminated letter signs.

Neon signs should use subtle custom neon tubing incorporated into the sign face, similar to historic signs in the district.