



PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

MEETING

DATE: April 17, 2016

STAFF: Robert Brown, Community Development Director

SUBJECT: Draft General Plan 2035 - Review of Downtown Design Guidelines

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REQUESTED ACTION

Provide any desired direction to staff and the City Council regarding the Draft Downtown Design Guidelines.

BACKGROUND

The Planning Commission has reviewed and provided first-pass edits to all chapters of the Draft General Plan with the exception of the Draft Downtown Design Guidelines. The Guidelines are intended to supplant the design criteria currently found in the Downtown Specific Plan (DSP). The current DSP contains 152 design criteria in 26 pages (see Attachment 1). The criteria are very detailed, but not well illustrated, and are not generally not utilized by staff or applicants. In addition, these guidelines are not really guidelines since Section 19.16.040D of the Zoning Code's Downtown Overlay District states, "Proposed development, facade renovations and new uses shall be designed in compliance with the design guidelines provided by the Downtown Novato Specific Plan," which makes the "guidelines" mandatory.

In 2005 a subcommittee of the Design Review Commission, composed of Patrick MacLeamy and William Kelly, worked with staff to develop more succinct and better illustrated guidelines (see Attachment 2), which were never officially adopted by the City Council. A version of the DSP Design Guidelines and the 2005 Guidelines is included as Attachment 3 which compares the existing guidelines with corresponding criteria in the 2005 Guidelines.

Since the land use policies of the current Downtown Specific Plan are intended to be incorporated into the new General Plan as a focus area, the design guidelines in the DSP would be eliminated. Program LU 21a of the Draft General Plan calls for: "Updating and formally adopting Downtown Design Guidelines to articulate desired design criteria for site design, new construction, building renovations and additions, landscaping, and signs." Staff has recommended that the design guidelines prepared in 2005 be adopted by the City Council in conjunction with the new General Plan.

The Design Review Commission considered the 2005 Design Guidelines which are proposed for adoption at their meeting of November 16, 2016 (see Attachment 4 for meeting minutes. The following are staff recommended edits to the draft design guidelines based on DRC comments:

Comment	Staff Response	Proposed Edits	
		Existing text	Proposed Text
Add a reference in Downtown Design Guidelines III A1e (page 10) for the need for depth and relief on building facades along sidewalks (recessed doors, cornices, awnings, inset windows) to avoid a “flat” elevation.	Edits proposed to Guideline III 5 (page 14).	Downtown Design Guidelines III 5: Visual Interest. Building facades, particularly facades that face public spaces, shall include high quality design elements that provide visual interest from the ground level to the roof or cornice.	Downtown Design Guidelines III 5: Visual Interest. Building facades, particularly facades that face public spaces, shall include high quality design elements that provide visual interest from the ground level to the roof or cornice. <u>A sense of depth and visual relief should be provided through design elements such as recessed doors, cornices, awnings and inset windows to avoid a “flat” elevation.</u>
Modify Downtown Design Guideline III A9a Building Base (page 16) to not require raised display windows.	Edits proposed.	Downtown Design Guidelines III A9a: Building Base. The base of buildings should address the following design considerations: a. The base should serve to raise the interior display area up to view and protect the building and display windows from damage.	Downtown Design Guidelines III A9a: Building Base. The base of buildings should address the following design considerations: a. The base should serve to raise the interior display area up to view and protect the building and display windows from damage.
Add a provision in the Downtown Design Guidelines to discourage or preclude disruption of the pedestrian-oriented building facades on Grant Avenue with parking lots or parking structures.	Edits proposed to Downtown Design Guideline II C (page 6) and to Policy LU 25 Parking (page 2-31)	Downtown Design Guideline II C: Continuity of Streetscape/Parking Behind Buildings. The continuity of pedestrian oriented facilities and space along street frontages shall be maintained. Avoid, and where feasible, eliminate parking lots fronting the street(s). LU 25: Parking. Facilitate the provision of adequate parking, emphasizing a combination of public and private parking facilities. Parking should generally be located out of or screened from public view, but convenient to find via appropriate signage.	Downtown Design Guideline II C: Continuity of Streetscape/Parking Behind Buildings. The continuity of pedestrian oriented facilities and space along street frontages shall be maintained. Avoid, and where feasible, eliminate parking lots fronting the street(s) <u>and driveways across the public sidewalk along Grant Avenue and Redwood Boulevard.</u> LU 25: Parking. Facilitate the provision of adequate parking, emphasizing a combination of public and private parking facilities. Parking should generally be located out of or screened from public view, but convenient to find via appropriate signage. <u>Driveways crossing the public sidewalk along Grant Avenue and Redwood Boulevard are discouraged; access to parking is encouraged from side streets where feasible.</u>

ATTACHMENTS

1. Existing Downtown Specific Plan Design Guidelines
2. Proposed Downtown Design Guidelines
3. Comparison of existing DSP Design Guidelines with proposed Downtown Design Guidelines
4. November 16, 2016 Design Review Commission minutes

5. DESIGN GUIDELINES

This chapter includes guidelines for development and improvement in the Specific Plan area which are to be applied through the Design Review process, defined in Subchapter 19-17 of the City of Novato Zoning Ordinance. The guidelines apply to public as well as private projects and establish the physical design parameters for all of Downtown. They emphasize quality architecture and development, and place a high value on varied and distinctive building designs; sensitive treatment of historic resources; generous landscaping to accent buildings; and high quality materials and construction.

The purpose of these guidelines is to assist property owners, developers and designers in creating, projects which are consistent with a character the community wants to preserve and perpetuate. These policies are further intended for use by the City Staff, Design Review Committee and Planning Commission as criteria for evaluating the merits of new projects on a uniform basis. They should, therefore, facilitate communication between applicants and the City to expedite the design review process.

Novato is situated within a group of secluded valleys surrounded by a distinctive backdrop of rolling hills accented by dense mature tree growth, open meadows and creeks. The downtown area has evolved within the center of the valley. These features have created a unique, semi-rural setting which is somewhat visually isolated from neighboring communities.

The downtown area has developed with a variety of architectural styles, including early California mission, ranch, traditional and contemporary themes dating from the 1890's-70's. Evolution of the downtown has resulted in a balance of mostly local office, retail and service related businesses. As a small, mature, suburban town straddling a major transportation corridor, Novato has had to respond to constant pressure for change. However, it is important that future development maintain Novato's "small town" character, preserve an eclectic mix of architectural styles, and yet promote visual coordination and functional, attractive designs. Appropriate use of these guidelines should serve to motivate and encourage creativity within the limitations of site constraints and compatibility with these design guidelines.

Improvements to the downtown will most likely take place in the form of remodeling and restoration. As uses change and remodeling projects are proposed, owners are encouraged to upgrade their property consistent with the scale of the existing projects. Minor improvements are encouraged such as exterior painting, landscaping additions, street tree planting, mechanical equipment screening, sign upgrading, repair work, etc. These can have a very positive visual and marketing impact. In response to such improvements, it is hoped that all of the merchants and property owners will join in an effort to further enhance and revitalize the downtown.

The guidelines are presented in two categories. First, Overall Downtown Design Guidelines relate uniformly to the downtown area as a whole, and involve site planning, parking and circulation, architecture, signs, lighting, and landscaping. Second are Building Enhancement Standards, which are intended to guide building owners desiring to upgrade their existing improvements.

5.1 UD 11: OVERALL DOWNTOWN DESIGN GUIDELINES

The following guidelines shall be used for the review of both public and private projects requiring discretionary entitlement improvements.

UD 11.1: Site Planning

Site planning guidelines are listed below:

1. New or renovated buildings designated for first floor retail, particularly on Grant Avenue and Redwood Boulevard, shall front with windows and entryways to the street. Street frontage is not allowed for parking lots or building walls with no windows or entryways. Additionally, street frontage of retail shall not be interrupted by mid-block driveways.
2. Emphasis shall be placed on orientation of buildings, walkways and landscape amenities for the safety, clarity and convenience of pedestrian movement. Attractive walkways between adjacent properties shall be developed at points in addition to those at common street frontages to enhance direct pedestrian flow.
3. Site and landscape designs shall incorporate outdoor pedestrian use areas, with such amenities as trellises, shade trees, raised planters, landscaped berms and fountains to create useable, inviting, semi-protected rest areas. Such courtyards and plazas shall be visible from street corridors and major pedestrian access routes.
4. Clusters of smaller structures, or one "shell" structure with multiple facades and uses with courtyards and other pedestrian amenities are preferred to large buildings in new development. Ensure that all buildings, regardless of their height, are comfortable for people at ground level by relating wall and window heights to the height of people, providing windows, building setbacks, landscaping and things for pedestrians to look at for visual variety, and orienting signs to pedestrians. This concept is identified in this plan as the "village design" concept.
5. Siting of buildings shall take into consideration preserving views of Mt. Burdell, Big Rock Ridge, and other surrounding hillsides for people in buildings and on the streets. Solar orientation and wind exposure of the entry area and outdoor pedestrian use areas shall also be considered.
6. It is of primary importance to protect adjoining residential neighborhoods from the impact of noise, lighting, and privacy intrusion. Special attention shall be given through the design of effective residential buffering, including appropriate setbacks, landscaping, mounding and fencing to provide a gradual visual transition into adjacent neighborhoods. (Item 4 above is meant also to address this issue).
7. Trash enclosures, ground-mounted transformers, gas meters, backflow prevention devices and other equipment shall be kept out of front areas and carefully screened from view. Care shall be taken to avoid locating trash enclosures near the boundary of residential properties. In general, trash enclosures shall be consolidated, yet located so as to equalize the distances from the buildings served. Enclosures shall be positioned with direct access for collection trucks. Parking shall be prohibited within the enclosure access area. Concrete pads shall be provided within the enclosures, and the access area shall be reinforced to avoid damage by collection trucks. Gates and doors shall be made to withstand heavy use and abuse. Design, materials and colors shall be consistent with building architecture.

UD 11.2: Architecture

There are no consistent existing architectural themes within the Downtown, and particularly ones that unite (east) and (west) Grant Avenue. Existing conditions are briefly summarized below:

- East Grant/Old Town. East Grant buildings style include historic false front storefronts in the Victorian Era style, and the Mission Revival Style found primarily on (east) Grant Avenue and in Old Town. The Victorian influenced design generally includes horizontal wood cladding, vertically proportioned windows, and brick-a-brac ornament. The Mission Revival style employs stucco walls, recessed windows, curving parapets, and tile roofs. There are also some board and batten structures and corrugated metal structures characteristic of the early agricultural buildings in Novato.
- West Grant. Blockier International Style buildings are primarily located on (west) Grant. Buildings on (west) Grant Ave. are of more recent vintage, most dating from the 1950's and 1960's. Some buildings have been "modernized" with fins, unusual tilework, metal panels and other cladding which has robbed them of their original character.
- Industrial/Commercial - North of Old Town. The industrial area of Downtown north of Scown Lane has simple poured concrete or block buildings, wood warehouses designed with heavy timbers, and steel frame buildings, historically clad in corrugated metal. In recent years, designers have been inspired by industrial structures and materials, such as the two retail buildings with red, standing seam metal roofs, located in "Olive Plaza" on the east side of Redwood Boulevard, immediately north of Mulligan Lane. Unlike the galvanized material used in the Pini Mill, these new structures use panels with integral color. The vertical lines of the wall paneling also relate to the vertical board and batten of some older structures in this part of Downtown.

General design architectural guidelines are listed below:

1. Use the architectural styles discussed in this section as points of departure for design and design evaluation:
 - Historic architectural styles which have been identified in the Downtown or in the adjacent areas in Novato and Marin County are: Gothic Revival(s), Georgian Revival, Mission, Bungaloid, Mission Revival, Streamline Modern, Queen Anne Revival, Italianate, Spanish Colonial Revival, Greek Revival. (Appendix D contains a stylistic glossary and discussion of these styles.)
 - Examples of architectural styles or design found desirable by the DSPSC and/or from public comments at committee meetings or workshops include: Dr. Insomnia, Las Guitarras, Le Cut, Kapranos Construction office next to Dr. Insomnia with paseos, Courtyard Square, Tarassa Building (French Toast) and paseo, 1913 Old Bank Building, Solarium, Flat Iron, Cacti, City Hall/Church, Simmons House, Tresch House, Zunino House, Carlile House, Silva Kuser House, Postmasters House, Coldwell Banker corner Reichert and DeLong, and residence on Reichert south of Carlile House. Photographs of some of these styles are provided in this Specific Plan as examples. (See Section 5.3).
2. Preserve historic buildings. Remove alterations whose design and/or materials are not consistent with the underlying historic character of the building and its immediate surroundings. Uncover and repair original features. The buildings east of Redwood Boulevard which the Zoning Ordinance designates with the overlay classification Historic Preservation District cannot be altered without design review approval (see Figure 3).[\(27B\)](#)
3. Building height, bulk, style, period, proportions, materials and colors shall conform to local

design district guidelines.

4. Use of recessed entries, stepping of upper floor setbacks and varied roof lines consistent and coordinated with adjoining structures is strongly encouraged.
5. Roof materials shall be consistent with the residential character of the community with textured natural material such as shingles, slate or tile. Where flat roofs are required, they shall be architecturally screened from public areas. Flat roofs shall generally be covered with dark grey gravel.
6. Emphasis shall be placed on consistent use of architectural detailing *on all building elevations*, including fenestration, blending of materials, eaves, awnings and soffit treatments, shadow lines, etc., to avoid facing blank walls toward neighbors.
7. Mechanical equipment shall be enclosed within the building or architecturally screened from view. Generally, mechanical equipment shall not be permitted on roofs. Only when absolutely necessary, roof elements shall incorporate integral wells for the complete screening of all necessary roofmounted mechanical equipment. Roof penetrations for vents and ducts shall be grouped and combined in locations concealed from public view.
8. Visible wall and/or window-mounted air conditioning equipment is prohibited.
9. The use of awnings shall allow for individual expression of each business with compatible variations in color and graphics, compatible with the Downtown Style Guidelines. Multiple awnings shall be coordinated with variations emphasized or minimized depending on individual buildings where distinctive variations in size, color, placement and design may be important.

Encourage canvas awnings over display windows and store entries where they would not interfere with street trees or projecting signs. Awnings shall not extend over the public sidewalk more than 5 feet from the face of the building, and maintain an 8-foot vertical clearance over the sidewalk. Awnings shall slope downward on a straight angle, rather than a curve, except where the awning is placed within an arched opening in a building. Allow awnings over second story windows, if they extend no more than half way down the windows. Use colorful awnings to highlight individual stores. Individual awnings shall have a maximum of two colors, such as stripes. Prohibit vinyl awnings, back-lit awnings, and awnings with signs on the slope. Graphic imagery is acceptable on the sloping surface such as a logo unique to a business (not a franchise logo).

To avoid visual clutter, there shall be either an awning sign or a storefront sign but not both; lettering is allowed on the sides of awnings as a replacement for pedestrian-oriented hanging signs.

10. Storefront windows and displays are encouraged where compatible with surroundings.
11. Buildings located near street corners shall respond to their location by designing entries facing the corner, or by slightly recessing the first floor building face to create a small pedestrian use area.
12. Generally, restrict the number of paint colors in a project to three, with one color used for accents only. Many buildings in Downtown are painted in light, neutral colors. For accent and

detail colors, consider a range of rich, saturated colors such as brick red, deep blue/green, "Hunter" green and "Butternut" yellow.

13. Maintain the small town scale and pedestrian character of Downtown in the design of new storefronts and additions and modifications to existing buildings. Wall planes shall not extend in one continuous horizontal direction more than about 25 feet without an offset or interruption by a pilaster or structural frame, change in roof line or architectural materials.
14. Allow an increase in building height in the Downtown Specific Plan Area (Downtown Core, and the Mixed Use District) for mixed use projects in which housing is included and a top floor is used only for housing.[\(28\)](#)
15. Encourage decorative features, and fine, durable materials and detailing on building bulkheads, and around windows and doors where pedestrians can closely observe such features. Adapt such features from historical examples in Downtown Novato, where appropriate.
16. Encourage the use of industrial materials, such as metal panels with raised ribs in the North of Old Town area.
17. Consider murals on blank walls - public or private, subject to review by the Civic Arts Commission. Life-size, eye-tricking *trompe l'oeil* paintings shall be considered which use Novato history and the local setting as sources of inspiration. Murals may reference business activity by name only in an historical context.[\(29\)](#)
18. Install indirect lighting inside of storefront windows to creatively illuminate merchandise.
19. On-site outdoor furniture, telephone booths, ATM machines, kiosks and similar accessories shall be integrated into the architectural design of the principal structure they serve.
20. For mixed use development immediately fronting on Grant Avenue and Redwood Boulevard, prohibit residential balconies.

UD 11.3: Parking and Circulation

Specific design guidelines for parking and circulation infrastructure in the Downtown (public and private) are listed below:

1. The majority of parking shall be located away from public view, but convenient to find via appropriate signage.
2. Long, straight uninterrupted rows of parking shall be avoided in favor of landscaped islands with no more than eight stalls in a row.
3. All parking areas shall be landscaped and provided with maintenance infrastructure (i.e., irrigation) as described in Section 11.6.4. While it is recognized that parking is constrained in the Downtown, there is no desire to have paved areas devoid of landscaping and tree canopy and their contribution to the microclimate and positive ambiance of the Downtown. Landscaping shall also include, where appropriate, view screening using vines and trellises and attractive shrubs and other plantings. Gravel and bark ground covers are to be avoided.[\(30\)](#)

4. All parking areas adjoining residential zoning districts shall be separated by a 5-foot minimum landscape buffer and a 6-foot solid wood fence or masonry wall. Preferable vegetation shall be evergreen trees spaced at 10 feet on center.
5. Parking spaces, curb-cuts, walks, ramps and signage for the accommodation of handicapped access, pursuant to state standards, shall be designed to integrate with the building architecture through the creative use of paving and building materials, landscaping, railing designs and signage systems. Handicapped access facilities shall be conveniently located adjacent to main building entrances in order to minimize the amount of contact with auto traffic.
6. Design provisions shall be made for proper repair and maintenance of paved surfaces.
7. Internal circulation and parking layout for all development shall avoid the backing of vehicles onto public streets.
8. All parking lots shall incorporate internally looped circulation systems where possible, so that drivers will not be dependent on public streets when making multiple passes through a parking lot.
9. Street access points shall be consolidated with shared access easements for adjacent commercial lots where possible to avoid multiple curb-cuts. On corner lots, curb cuts shall maintain a maximum separation from intersections.
10. Decorative, slip-resistant paving is encouraged for use on pedestrian walkways, which shall be grade separated from driveway and parking areas. Distinctive paving is also encouraged where these routes cross driveways.
11. Unobstructed visibility shall be maintained at all vehicular intersections and pedestrian crossings to assure safety.
12. Truck loading facilities shall be located off of major streets in such a manner as to avoid visual impact, noise impact to residential uses, and conflicts with pedestrian and normal vehicular traffic.
13. Bicycle racks shall be provided as appropriate for the nature and intensity of use.
14. Parking areas shall be graded, paved and drained to prevent storm water from running over public sidewalks and ponding on site.
15. Provide easily identified pedestrian drop-off points, close to building entries and linked to pedestrian walkways.
16. Where feasible, end row parking spaces shall be protected and screened from the turning movements of other vehicles with curbed landscape areas. (Development Standards Code Section 5-28.00863(d)).

 **UD 11.4: Sidewalks**

Improvements to sidewalks, particularly on Grant Avenue are essential to enhancement of the pedestrian character of Downtown. Street trees and other streetscape amenities are not necessarily funded under the City's Capital Improvements Program (see Chapter 6). While it would be desirable to include streetscape amenities in any program of funded street and sidewalks repairs, small areas needing concrete repair are allowed if funds for beautification are not available.

Specific Design Guidelines for sidewalk improvements are listed below:

11.4.1 Public Sidewalks and Improvements

1. Use removable pavers along curbs, where feasible, to accommodate electrical and water connections. Electricity may be used for mini-lights to be installed in trees, and water will be available for timed irrigation of trees and potential flower basket planters hung from light pole brackets.
2. Use sealed brick or pavers to accent entries into stores. For corner buildings, consider corner entries and enhanced paving such as the "Courtyard Square" building at the northeast corner of Grant and Reichert Avenues.
3. Repair sidewalks which have been raised by tree roots, for pedestrian safety.
4. "Bulb-out" sidewalks at corner crosswalks on Grant Avenue to provide areas for pedestrian circulation and sitting and to shorten street crossings for pedestrians and to encourage slower traffic speeds. This would best be accomplished in conjunction with planned reconstruction of the street (CIP project 93-012, discussed in Chapter 6) because lowering the street crown must anticipate the height of the curb of the bulbed-out sidewalks.

11.4.2 Sidewalk Cafes and Outdoor Dining

Outdoor eating areas often need protection from afternoon and evening winds along Grant Avenue during the summer. Some restaurant owners have found locations screened by walls or adjacent buildings. Examples include Cacti Restaurant on Grant at Fourth Street, Bongiovi Coffee on Grant, and the Las Guitarras restaurant on Reichert Avenue just north of Scown Lane. Opportunities also appear to exist in courtyards and adjacent to rear alleys north of Grant Ave. Encourage outdoor eating places that are visible from the street to enliven the Downtown.

1. Where there are no sidewalk bulb-outs, allow encroachments onto the public sidewalk for moveable outdoor café tables, shade umbrellas and seating, a distance from the face of the building only so far as to allow 5 feet of unobstructed access between the chairs and tables, and the curb or any other permanent obstacle such as a light pole, street tree, or waste receptacle.
2. Allow outdoor dining in sidewalk bulb-outs, as shown in Figure 38. Where feasible, use the landscaped areas in the bulb-outs to separate and screen the dining areas from the street and parking. Use hedges and other landscape materials, taking care not to block vehicular sight lines.
3. Install awnings or portable shade umbrellas to create an "outdoor room" for outdoor dining. Trees can also be used to create an a shady canopy, particularly in bulb-out areas.

4. Do not count public right-of-way encroachment area for outdoor eating for parking requirements.

11.4.3 Pedestrian Passageways

There are a few narrow passageways between the sidewalk on Grant Avenue and parking lots and courtyards behind buildings. On (east) Grant, some narrow "breezeways," "paseos," or narrow courtyards connect the sidewalk on the north side of the street with Scown Lane, the parallel alley to the north. However, there are no publicly-accessible pathways between Scown Lane and Sweetser Avenue.

Consequently, there is little interrelationship between businesses on (East) Grant Avenue and businesses in the North of Old Town area. Customers of businesses on Grant may not be customers of businesses on Sweetser. If they are, perhaps they drive between the two streets. But if they were to walk, they would use Machin or Reichert; Sherman Avenue does not extend north of Grant Avenue, resulting in a nearly 700 ft long block between Machin and Reichert.

Design guidelines for pedestrian passageways are:

1. Encourage private walkways between Grant and Scown, between Grant and Cain Lane, and between Scown and Sweetser. Such walkway improvements could be eligible for match funding under the proposed facade improvement program described in Chapter 6.
2. Encourage development of outdoor cafes in protected passageways or "breezeways" and protected courtyards. Strong west winds during summer afternoons can make outdoor dining uncomfortable along Grant Avenue (See Chapter 3). Adding outdoor dining to sidewalk, courtyard, or pedestrian passageways shall not require additional parking spaces above and beyond those required for the existing indoor dining area.

UD 11.5: Streetscape Elements

Benches, trash receptacles, bollards, newspaper racks, public telephones and bicycle racks all constitute the furniture of the street. These elements add scale and character and invite people to stop and enjoy the space rather than just pass through. The furniture shall be carefully selected to complement historic buildings in the area and also to be compatible with the newer building additions.

Specific design guidelines for streetscape elements are listed below:

1. Prohibit placement of private improvements in the public right-of-way in the Specific Plan Area, including - but not limited to - waste receptacles, benches, planters and bicycle racks, without approval of an encroachment permit. Generally, the City should be responsible for the selection and placement of such elements in the street right-of-way, although the City could specify particular components which could be purchased by property or business owners and installed with City approval.
2. Install benches where people enjoy sitting (wind-protected, both shady and sun-exposed areas, close to "people places" such as cafes and coffee shops). Benches can be "nested" into street bulb-outs. Avoid benches on sidewalks facing traffic, except at bus stops. Choose a standard design with a cast iron frame (see [Figure 39](#)). Customize the benches (and compatibly-designed

light poles and incorporate the City's logo (City Hall image) in cast iron components, if feasible.

3. Use consistent and compatible sidewalk features such as lamp poles, trash receptacles, benches, tree grates, fences and railings as specified (see Figure 39). Consider dark blue-green, "hunter green" as the preferred color for metal components of these features.
4. Use the lightpole standard which is based upon "torch" style lamps which were historically used in Old Town (see [Figure 40](#)). The lightpoles shall be placed in the sidewalk at close interval (e.g., 75 - 95 feet), and at a low height for pedestrians (e.g., 14 feet).
5. Install banners across streets which serve as entries to downtown. CIP funded project 96-018 has been approved for gateway banners rigged from cables attached to steel poles, which are compatible in design with historically-derived pedestrian light poles. Banners can advertise special and seasonal events, as well as year-round welcoming signs to Downtown.
6. Encourage artworks in the public right-of-way and as part of projects-public or private- subject to comment by the Civic Arts Commission.
7. Consider decorative, bold, paving on Sherman Avenue to strengthen the street's role as a civic plaza. The street is now closed for traffic during special events, such as the weekly Farmers' Market and the annual Art and Wine Festival, and would continue to be used for these and other purposes when the street is paved (see Figures 32 and 33).

UD 11.6: Landscaping

Specific landscaping guidelines for plant materials, street trees, planting near buildings, planting in parking areas and screening are listed below:

11.6.1: Plant Materials

1. All plant materials shall be served by a City approved automatic underground irrigation system. All backflow devices, controllers, and other irrigation elements shall be screened.
2. Healthy, mature on-site trees shall be preserved whenever possible. Improvements (buildings, paving, grading, etc.) under the drip line of existing trees shall be minimized. Existing trees shall be fenced off during project construction to prevent soil compaction, root damage, bumping, etc.
3. All new trees shall be double staked or provided with a greater support design.
4. Ground cover shall be spaced to ensure total infill within six months of planting.
5. Only live plant materials (not simulated) shall be used in landscaped areas (trees, shrubs, and ground cover).
6. Selection of plant materials shall be based on year-round beauty (deciduous color, spring flower, branching patterns) as well as form, texture, shape, and ultimate growth.

7. Plant species shall be tolerant of the local environmental-conditions and relatively free from pests and disease.
8. Plant species which are native or well-adapted to local climatic conditions are recommended because they require less water and maintenance.
9. All street trees shall be deep-rooted, canopy-type trees suited to urban conditions.
10. Upon adoption, refer to the new Novato Tree and Community Forest Ordinance for development standards for street trees and other tree-related issues.
11. Street trees and on-site front yard trees shall be a minimum of 24 inch box size with a minimum 1-1/2 inch diameter. All other on-site trees shall be a minimum of 15 gallon container size. Shrubs not used as ground cover shall be a minimum of five gallon container size.

11.6.2: Street Trees

The Background Report, Downtown Novato Specific Plan, Sept. 1994 describes the variety of street trees in the Downtown area, their condition and maintenance. The predominant sweetgum street trees are missing at some locations, and are causing invasive root problems where they still stand. Irrigation is lacking on Grant Ave.

1. Choose plant materials which can withstand tight urban spaces, pedestrian traffic, and potentially difficult soils conditions. Plants shall have non-invasive root structures, efficiency of water use, resistance to pests, disease, vehicle emissions and vandals, compatibility with building signs (avoiding obscuring the signs behind foliage), street/sidewalk lighting, building awnings and other features of the streetscape.
2. Install deep watering automatic irrigation for new and existing street trees and, where feasible, root barriers. Deep watering will help to discourage horizontal expansion of the tree roots, which frequently cause damage to streets, curbs and sidewalks.
3. Plant trees where they are missing to re-establish streetscape continuity. This would be a long term project to gradually remove sweetgums which are unhealthy and/or which are causing the buckling of sidewalks. In their place, a selected palette of deciduous street trees would be planted on Grant. (see below). Other streets would have different palettes in accordance with an updated Streetscape Master Plan.
4. The Specific Plan supersedes the City's Streetscape Master Plan. April, 1992, for the Specific Plan Area. Update the Streetscape Master Plan, as a general guide for landscape improvements along principal streets and highways in Novato, by incorporating the following recommendations for street trees along six streets in the Downtown. Trees have been chosen for their form, reliability, and maintainability:

Grant Avenue.

- Aristocrat Pear to infill and replace Sweetgums as they are gradually removed.
- Scarlet or Red Oak, as visually strong and spreading trees for bulb-out areas.

- Flowering Crabapples as accent trees in bulb-out areas.
- Linden, to continue the Lindens planted at Citibank.

Redwood Boulevard.

- Redwoods, Cork Oak and Tulip Trees are established. Tulip Trees should be used at locations where aphid droppings can be tolerated (droppings can be a nuisance on parked automobiles).

Sherman Avenue

- Scarlet Oak as the dominant canopy tree.
- Cork Oak as an evergreen background tree.
- Flowering Crabapple as a formal accent tree at the street entry.

De Long Avenue.

- Aristocrat Pear, Pin Oak, Linden, and Hornbeam as trees which are upright in character so as not to block views of City Hall and hills in the distance.

Cross Streets (Reichert, Machin).

- Trees used on Grant and Sherman, for continuity.
- Baywood Ash and Pistache where space allows (subject to street and drainage improvements) and variety and fall color is sought.

North of Old Town (Sweetser and Vallejo Avenues)

- Sweetgum trees already established on the north side of Sweetser, and Red Oak, Hackberry and Baywood Ash.
- Saratoga laurel and Swamp Myrtle as smaller evergreens which could be used to screen any unsightly industrial storage lots on Sweetser.
- Saratoga laurel and Swamp Myrtle as smaller evergreens to fit into tight spaces. Street trees may not be possible on Vallejo due to frequent curb cuts, and auto repair businesses.
- Baywood Ash on Vallejo, where space allows.

5. Discourage the use of planters in the public right-of-way, since sidewalks are narrow and planters may create obstacles for pedestrians and handicapped persons. Trees shall be placed in the ground, protected by tree grates, rather than in planters, and shall be automatically irrigated.

6. Encourage hanging flower planters on light poles, but only if automatically irrigated. Make hanging planters a project of a service club or another volunteer group.
7. Consider planting new trees in small islands or bulb-outs into the street rather than in the sidewalk in order to keep sidewalks as open as possible. Careful layout of parking could potentially avoid removal of on-street parking spaces for the trees.
8. Select distinctive canopy or accent trees for each potential Downtown gateway. Each gateway treatment shall acknowledge the surrounding landscape setting but also be distinctively different.
9. When trees which may be obscuring the visibility of signs have reached sufficient height above the sign to guarantee tree health and growth, lower limbs may be trimmed away, using the best arboricultural practices, to make signage visible. Topping of trees is strictly prohibited.

11.6.3: Planting Near Buildings

1. Landscaping shall generally be provided to screen downtown buildings from views of surrounding hillside homes.
2. Planting shall occur around building perimeters to reduce building scale and to integrate development into surrounding neighborhood.
3. Deciduous trees shall generally be utilized on southern and western exposures to screen summer sun and permit winter light.
4. On-site useable open space shall be provided for special amenities such as courts, plazas, walkways, planting, fountains, sculptures, arbors, trellises, etc. Open spaces shall generally be visible from fronting streets, accessible to pedestrians, and separated from the car. Such spaces need to be located near high use areas, such as building entries or storefronts.
5. Landscape structures shall be incorporated into the building design i.e., trellises, arbors and planters.
6. Landscaping shall accent building entries.
7. Plant materials shall be used to soften the hard building lines and bulk.
8. Plant materials shall be used to define outdoor eating areas and pedestrian paths between parking and building entries.
9. Adequate sight distance for motorists and pedestrians entering and exiting the site must be provided. Landscaping shall not interfere with circulation effectiveness.

11.6.4: Planting In Parking Areas

1. Areas adjacent to and within parking lots shall be landscaped to reduce the visual impact of automobiles. All unused areas of parking lots shall be landscaped. Landscape areas within parking lots shall not measure less than three feet in width, excluding curbs. Peripheral

landscaping shall be provided around the perimeter of parking lots in zones a minimum of five feet wide.

2. Canopy shade trees shall be planted in parking lots to achieve a minimum canopy coverage of 30 percent of the parking lot area at maturity.⁽³¹⁾
3. A minimum of five percent of the area within parking lots shall be landscaped with plant material.
4. Parking areas shall be screened from streets by using a combination of mounds, plant materials, low walls, fences, and by lowering the parking surface elevation. Screening of parking lots at street frontages shall have a minimum height of 3 feet above street grade.
5. Parking areas shall be designed and landscaped to minimize summer glare and the visual impact of large numbers of vehicles.
6. In addition to canopy trees, further reduction in glare and reflected heat from parking surfaces shall be accomplished by the use of arbors and overhangs.
7. No more than eight parking spaces shall be located in a row without a landscaped divider strip and canopy tree.
8. Concrete or masonry curbing (excluding asphaltic/concrete curbing) shall be installed around all landscaped areas to contain landscape material and to provide protection from vehicles.

11.6.5: Landscape Screening

There are unsightly outdoor storage lots, parking lots and vacant lots fronting on Grant Avenue and Reichert Avenue. Some are bordered by 6 foot high chain link fences. The lots present an unattractive face to visitors to Downtown, and interrupt the pedestrian experience.

The following policies encourage the screening of these eyesores (see also potential funding for landscape screening under Chapter 6 Facade Improvements Program):

1. Screen parking lots with substantially-built low wood fences, with heavy wire mesh between supports, which will act as a trellis for climbing plants. Fences approximately 3 feet to 3½ feet high will screen most parked cars yet allow views over to commercial businesses beyond (see example in [Figure 41](#)).
2. Encourage replacement of 6 foot high chain link fences with wood fences set back from the sidewalk a minimum of 18 inches, within which suitable durable and drought resistant shrubs shall be planted.

UD 11.7: Signage

Private signage in Downtown Novato, as in many downtown areas, currently lacks the character and quality necessary to support revitalization efforts. A variety of common problems can be found:

- Repetitive signage

- Signage too large for the building
- Crudely constructed and installed signage
- Individual signs poorly sized with respect to their surface of attachment
- Inappropriate signage for downtown environment
- Oversized signs with respect to the downtown pedestrian environment
- Visually chaotic temporary signage
- Old and outdated signs
- Board and Box signs unrelated to the architecture of the building
- Signage poorly related to background
- Inappropriate banner signs
- Too much information on a single sign

While few of the conditions and problems outlined above are exceptionally destructive to any single structure, the combination of problems contributes to an overall image which appears old, tired and is in marked contrast to many competing commercial centers. An overall improvement in private signage with well designed and imaginative graphics could do more than any other single element to improve the visual appearance of Downtown Novato.

The intent of the following signage guidelines is to assist downtown businesses in selecting appropriate signage and to allow downtown signage to be different from outlying commercial areas in recognition of its special role in a more pedestrian - oriented environment.

1. All signs must conform to the proposed amended Novato Sign Ordinance incorporating the Downtown Specific Plan area requirements. All signs shall be professionally designed and fabricated. Specially designed logos, symbols and icons shall be encouraged.
2. The design of all signs (including materials, colors, configuration and illumination) shall conform to the architectural style and period of the buildings they identify. Incompatible corporate logos or standardized script shall be avoided. With such a wide variety of materials to choose from, businesses are discouraged from using plastic signs which appear mass produced, and are encouraged to use more original interesting materials which enhance the unique visual quality of Downtown as pedestrian-friendly. Paper signs, except as temporary notices, are prohibited.
3. Free standing signs shall be designed in accordance with design guidelines, minimized in height, and integrated with the landscape by means of accent planting, the use of trees or other design elements.
4. The size, shape and location of all signs shall be compatible with the building proportions and features.
5. The preferred method of sign illumination involves use of soft exterior lighting, where the light source and all appurtenant devices are screened from public view. Internally illuminated cabinet signs are strongly discouraged. However, individual letter signs having internal illumination may be considered appropriate for larger buildings, and where consistent with local design guidelines.
6. Visible braces and other support devices shall be avoided, but, if required, shall be incorporated as a design feature.

7. Multi-tenant buildings shall all have master sign programs. Provisions shall be made for coordination of sign dimensions, materials, textures, colors, illumination, and method and location of mounting.
8. Signage shall be integrated with landscape elements such as walls, planters, and street furniture.

11.7.1: Public Informational Signs

There are no consistently designed public signs in Novato. Directional signs vary in size, design and location. There is a low wood monument sign provided by the Chamber of Commerce with a "Welcome to Novato" message, which is oriented to drivers proceeding west on De Long Avenue near Pini Mill.

1. Design a sign system to orient people and drivers to the important features of Novato, including Downtown, and public and private parking facilities in Downtown. The logo of the former Presbyterian Church building - now City Hall - shall be incorporated into directional signs, and place names.
2. Install banners across main streets at key points of entry into Downtown to draw visitors into Downtown (see Chapter 6 Capital Improvements Program funded project 96-018). Although the CIP program refers to "community banner poles," the banners are to emphasize entrances to Downtown from perimeter streets (especially De Long and Seventh). Potential locations for banners include across De Long between Reichert and Highway 101, across Sherman at De Long, across Reichert at De Long, across Machin at De Long, across Redwood at De Long, across Grant at Seventh, and across Redwood at Olive. (See Figure 32 Sherman Avenue Plaza Illustrative Plan and Figure 37 Potential West Grant Traffic Calming). The banners would be stretched from steel poles consistent in design with historically-derived light poles. Banners could change from a message of welcome to Downtown Novato to a notice of the annual Art and Wine Festival and many other Downtown and community events.
3. There are opportunities for vertical banners as optional hardware add-ons to street light fixtures. This provides for a rich assortment of inexpensive, high quality banners to be situated at street light locations where new lamp poles have been installed. Additionally, where horizontal banners are impossible to install due to street width (for example, at the intersection of Grant Avenue and Redwood Boulevard), the lamp posts installed at each corner of the intersection could hold vertical banners.
4. Support installation of electronic information kiosks which identify businesses in Downtown. These kiosks would be located on public sidewalks in proximity to parking areas.
5. Historical Signage: Historic buildings and structures shall be noted with signage. (Structures would include bridges, water towers or other built objects.) Important sites may also be noted. Signage shall be attached to the building or structure in a highly visible location, if such attachment would not cause damage to the building or detract from an historic feature, and if such attachment does not cause the public to intrude on private property (for example: to enter the front yard of a private residence to reach a sign attached to a house). If attachment would damage or detract, then placement would be freestanding as close to the building as possible. If attachment to the building causes public intrusion, then the signage shall be placed where visible on public property.


Ideally signs shall fall into a vertical viewing range of about 4 - 5 1/2 feet from the ground and letters shall be one-half inch high if viewed from about five feet away. The vertical height of the lettering shall increase one inch for every 10 feet of distance from the viewer.

The content of the signs shall ideally be kept to 150 words or less including titles. Texts longer than this will discourage most casual observers and might impede the sale of more detailed walking tour brochures. [Figure 42](#) shows a sample of sign content. The font and format of this signage shall match or complement other signage in the City, and/or California State Historical signage. The Historical Guild shall be contacted in the review and approval process for all historical signage.

Section 2.5.6 identifies Downtown Novato historic buildings and their sites with their present street numbers.

11.7.2: Commercial Signs

Business signs in Downtown Novato vary from wall-mounted, projecting, hanging blade, and free-standing. Some retail windows have so much signage that they are illegible, and mask any views of merchandise in the stores. Some signs are internally-illuminated box signs and others are externally-illuminated. Some are non-conforming because they are improperly mounted over the top of building parapets.

 IM 17 requires that the Novato Municipal Code be amended to include sign regulations for the Downtown that promote pedestrian-scale signs. The following guidelines are intended to supplement the sign regulations that will be contained in the Zoning Code.[\(32\)](#)

1. Design signs with lettering sized to be seen primarily by pedestrians and relatively slow-moving cars.
2. Item 2 was deleted.[\(33\)](#)
3. For historic buildings, consider historic wood signs, constructed of marine-grade plywood, or solid wood, bordered with trim.[\(34\)](#)
4. Projecting Sign Guidelines: Projecting signs shall be graphically designed for pedestrians and shall be allowed conditional upon adequate design quality. Projecting signs shall not be mounted above the sill line of the second floor of multi-story buildings. Sign supports shall be well designed and compatible with the design of the sign. Interior illuminated boxed display signs shall not be allowed. Icon signs using shapes or symbols uniquely suited to the business, creative shapes and three dimensional signs shall be encouraged. Exterior lighting of the projecting signs shall be encouraged.[\(35\)](#)
5. Prohibit any signage which displays a company/firm/product name, logo, symbols, icons, or other identifying commercial markings other than those of the occupant of the business to which it is attached. This would preclude any suppliers, etc., from subsidizing a sign which might include a tawdry advertisement, logo, etc.
6. Prohibit freestanding signs in the Specific Plan Area, except for properties designated General Commercial, subject to design review.

7. Prohibit free-standing commercial signs (including portable sidewalk A-frame signs) in the public sidewalk except for those associated with Downtown special events (i.e., sidewalk sales, farmers' market, etc.). Upon adoption of the revised Zoning Ordinance and enforcement of new sign provisions, provide written notice to Downtown merchants informing them that A-frame sidewalk signs are no longer permitted, except for Downtown special events, and provide a 90-day amnesty period for removal of A-frame signs without citation. After the 90-day period, portable sidewalk signs not associated with Downtown special events shall be prohibited.[\(36\)](#)
8. Window signs shall be restricted to 20 percent of the total window area. Signage shall consist of individual letters, logos or symbols applied to the glass surface. Neon signs with transparent backgrounds shall be allowed when hung inside the window glass line.[\(37\)](#)
9. Awning Sign Guidelines: To avoid visual clutter, restrict signage to either an awning sign or a storefront sign, but not both. The use of logos or symbols depicting the unique nature of a business are encouraged on the sloped face of awnings. Translucent awning materials which are lit from within and appear as large lighted sign boards shall be discouraged.[\(38\)](#)
10. Wall Sign Guidelines: Any building with exterior walls adjacent to a street, an alley or an off-street parking area on which it has frontage shall be allowed to have a wall sign in each of those locations. Wall signs may include individual solid letters, individual internally illuminated letters, a boxed display (i.e., a metal frame containing internal illumination and a facing material containing the lettering), a board sign (i.e., individual letters displayed on a flat surface which is then mounted to the building face) or lettering painted directly onto the building face. Solid or internally illuminated individual letters shall be encouraged. Boxed or board signs shall be discouraged. If internally illuminated boxed signs are used, light letters on a dark background shall be encouraged. Light colored backgrounds which make the sign appear larger shall be discouraged.[\(39\)](#)

UD 11.8: Lighting

Specific lighting guidelines are listed below:

1. In designated commercial districts, accent lighting for buildings and landscaping shall be designed to enhance the night time atmosphere.
2. Parking and walkway areas shall be illuminated by 1 foot candle minimum lighting to avoid dark spots and excessive dark/light ratios.
3. Only low level indirect lighting shall be used adjacent to residential properties. The level of lighting and location of light source shall not result in glare toward residential areas.
4. The approved lighting standard with modular add-on options for hanging flower baskets and public signage is VISCO #VI-C-C3-S/12'-0," 100 WHPS.
5. Any light source over 10 feet high shall incorporate a cut-off shield to prevent the light source from being directly visible from off site areas.
6. When seen from the outside, the lighting of interior spaces shall not brightly contrast with

adjacent buildings.

5.2 UD 12: BUILDING ENHANCEMENT STANDARDS

Many existing commercial buildings in Novato have distinctive architectural qualities which make important contributions to and compliment the "small town character" of the community. In many cases, these qualities could be further improved upon or emphasized in a variety of ways to their benefit. Improvements to building exteriors, landscaping, accessories, signs, utilities, and parking all add to the quality of downtown Novato. When considering such work, the following criteria shall be used as a guide:

UD 12.1: Building Design and Facades

Building design and facade improvements to existing storefronts and other property frontages, are important to enhance the pedestrian character of the Downtown. Opportunities for business and property owners to potentially obtain matching funding from the City to improve their building facades are described in Chapter 6. Facade Improvements Program.

1. Exterior building surfaces shall be cleaned and repainted as necessary.
2. Color schemes shall be harmonious with surrounding structures consistent with the architectural time period of the building.
3. Deteriorated siding, trim, doors, windows, awnings and roof materials shall be repaired or replaced.
4. Original architectural features, fixtures and hardware shall be retained or replaced with compatible elements.
5. Unnecessary non-original attachments to the building shall be removed (such as antennas, air conditioners, electrical conduits, etc.)
6. New siding, awnings, trim and accents shall be consistent with the basic design of the building as reflected in its style and period of construction as well as being compatible with other buildings in the neighborhood.
7. Proposed changes from the original design of the building shall be carried out consistently throughout the project and in a manner that compliments the original design.
8. Additions and alterations shall reflect the same basic design theme of the building including scale, style, form, materials and color.
9. Encourage periodic upgrades and changes to storefronts, such as changes to awnings every 5 years. Periodic changes reflect the competitive, industry-wide practice of enhancing storefronts to attract new customers and retain old ones.
10. Remodel building facades to make them more attractive, including removal of elements which mask underlying historic features. Replace worn windows and doors, cracked tiles and stucco. (See [Figure 43A](#) and [Figure 43B](#), an example of renovation of businesses at the southeast

corner of Second Street and Grant Avenue.) Such facade improvements would be eligible for matching funding under the proposed Facade Improvements Program discussed in Chapter 6.

UD 12.2: Landscaping

1. When landscaping exists, dead and obsolete plant materials, irrigation equipment and planter boxes shall be repaired or replaced.
2. Unnecessary or inappropriate pavement in landscaped areas shall be replaced with plant material.
3. Sidewalks shall be repaired wherever necessary to avoid accidents and preserve aesthetic qualities.
4. Special attention shall be directed to adding street trees, planting strips, pavement treatment and street furnishings to enhance the overall landscape setting in the neighborhood.
5. Refer to Figures 38, 39, 40 for coordinated street tree planting details and grates, decorative pavement patterns, trash receptacles, newspaper racks, outdoor lighting standards, bicycle racks and other decorative "streetscape" improvement details.

UD 12.3: Accessories

1. Deteriorated fencing, retaining walls, trash screens, etc., shall be repaired whenever necessary.
2. Accessories shall be of a style, material and color which are harmonious with the building architecture and the neighborhood character.
3. Screening shall be provided for outdoor storage areas, trash containers, air-conditioners and other unsightly equipment.

UD 12.4: Signs

1. Unneeded, obsolete, unsafe and deteriorated signs and other similar advertising devices shall be removed for safety and aesthetic reasons.
2. New signs shall be of appropriate type, size, style, material, location, color and method of lighting to harmonize with the building architectural theme and time period as well as the nature of the business conducted in the building.

UD 12.5: Utilities

1. Necessary utility lines, meters, boxes, transformers, antennas, conduits, etc. shall be installed in areas that will require the least alteration to the structural integrity and physical appearance of the building and which will be the least visible to outlying public areas.
2. Architectural screening shall be used to conceal publicly visible utilities and mechanical and electrical equipment.

UD 12.6: Parking

1. Pot holes and cracks in parking surfaces and pedestrian walks shall be repaired. Grease smudges shall be removed.
2. Worn and faded parking surface graphics (e.g., parking space lines, handicapped parking designations, etc.) shall be repainted and repaired where necessary.
3. Preserving and expanding parking shall be a primary consideration when planning changes to commercial property. Landscape solutions shall be integrated with existing or reconfigured parking whenever possible. A more efficient circulation and parking layout along with the addition of compact spaces can increase parking spaces and generate usable areas for landscaping to help screen and beautify parking.

5.3 DESIGN GALLERY OF PHOTOS



[1 - Representative Architectural Styles](#)



[2- Representative Architectural Styles](#)



[3 - Representative Architectural Styles](#)



[4 - Representative Architectural Styles](#)



[5 - Rep. Arch. Styles, Paseos, Inviting Facades, Mixed Use, Second Story Details](#)



[6 - Rep. Arch. Styles, Paseos, Inviting Facades, Mixed Use, Second Story Details](#)



[7 - Western Facade Types](#)



[8 - Western Facade Types](#)



[9 - Representative Architectural Styles](#)



[10 - Representative Architectural Styles](#)



[11 - Little Awnings and Signage Details](#)



[12 - Signage Details - Simple Store Front](#)



[13 - Western Facade Types](#)



[14 - Western Facade Types](#)



[15 - Western Facade Type](#)



[16 - Pedestrian Scale Facades](#)



17 - Facade Details



18 - Second Story Shades Sidewalk



19 - Lighted Paseo



20 - Paseo with Mixed Use and Farm Equipment



21 - Paseo



22 - Paseo



23 - Paseo and Courtyard



24 - Paseo, Courtyard, Street Furniture



25 - Signs, Banners, Mixed Use Second Floor



26 - Street Tree Treatment with River Rock



[27 - Tree Grate](#)



[28 - Tree Grate](#)



[29 - Street Tree Treatment with Brick and Flowers](#)



[30 - Tree Grate, Water Fountains, Information Sign, Planters](#)



[31 - Sidewalk Pavers and Entry to Stores](#)



[32 - Sidewalk Pavers with Utility Inset](#)



[33 - Pavers in Corner Bulb-Out](#)



[34 - Pavers with Water Feature](#)



[35 - Corner Pavers, Lighted Plaza Entry, No Curb](#)



[36 - Pavers, Decorative Fencing, Street Furniture, Utility Insets](#)



[37 - Hanging Signage](#)



[38 - Hanging Signage](#)



[39 - Directory Signage](#)



[40 - Directory Signage](#)



[41 - Historic Signage](#)



[42 - Historic Signage](#)



[43 - Historic Group Signage](#)



[44 - Paseo, Directory, Living Sculpture, Bird House](#)



[45 - Art and Planters](#)



[46 - Art and Planters](#)



[47 - Wall Mural](#)



[48 - Wall Mural](#)



[49 - Wall Mural](#)



[50 - Wall Mural](#)



[51 - Wall Mural](#)



[52 - Wall Mural](#)



[53 - Wall Mural](#)



[54 - Wall Mural](#)



[55 - Wall Mural](#)



[56 - Planters and Bollards](#)



[57 - Accent Planters](#)



[58 - Village Design Concept](#)



[59 - Village Design Concept](#)



[60 - Village Design Concept](#)



[61 - Village Design Concept](#)

[● Return to Downtown Novato Specific Plan Home](#)

DOWNTOWN NOVATO DESIGN GUIDELINES



September 7, 2005 and revised March 1, 2016



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I. INTRODUCTION

Downtown Novato is the social, commercial and historic heart of the community. The pattern of development and the variety of architectural styles of its building stock reflect Novato’s growth from the beginning of the 19th century to the present. Due to the character of growth and the changes in commercial and social activity throughout its history, the Downtown offers numerous opportunities for new development of underdeveloped and undeveloped properties. In recognition of the opportunities for advancing the commercial, social and historic uniqueness of Downtown Novato contained in the City’s General Plan the community adopted the Downtown Novato Specific Plan and the Downtown Novato Redevelopment Plan; two planning tools intended to facilitate public and private redevelopment throughout the Downtown.

In addition to the general redevelopment guidance provided in the Downtown Novato Specific Plan and the Downtown Novato Redevelopment Plan, design guidelines are an important reference tool to insure that each new construction project is of the highest quality and provides a positive contribution to the Downtown’s built environment.

These Design Guidelines are intended to guide site and architecture design for new buildings, additions and renovations of existing buildings to optimize the look and function of each building and its aesthetic and functional contribution to the greater Downtown area. The day to day application of these Guidelines is intended to clarify the City’s design objectives and expectations for development and redevelopment within the Downtown. To this end, these



Guidelines are intended to be utilized by project sponsors, the public, City staff, and the decision making authority when considering the merits of a project’s design. By following applicable criteria contained within these Design Guidelines a project’s proponent(s) can anticipate expedited Design Review and approval. City staff and decision-makers will evaluate the proposed project based on these Design Guidelines. If applicants propose to deviate from the Guidelines, they should identify in writing how their proposed solution meets the intent of the Guidelines and/or results in a better project design.

Through careful use of text and graphics, these Design Guidelines are intended to promote a distinctive and cohesive application of high quality design principles and materials applicable to site design, building architecture, and landscaping. Further, these Design Guidelines include design direction for the renovation of and/or the addition to existing structures including structures identified for their historic significance. Lastly, woven throughout these Design Guidelines are design principles and examples that convey a commitment to maximizing the “pedestrian experience” throughout Downtown Novato. Please carefully consider these Guidelines while planning your next project in Downtown Novato.

General Design Objectives

1. Provide the business and/or development community with a clear and comprehensive set of architectural design criteria applicable to the Downtown.
2. Create a very attractive and vibrant downtown through the physical design of structures and space, and maximum pedestrian access to and use of commercial

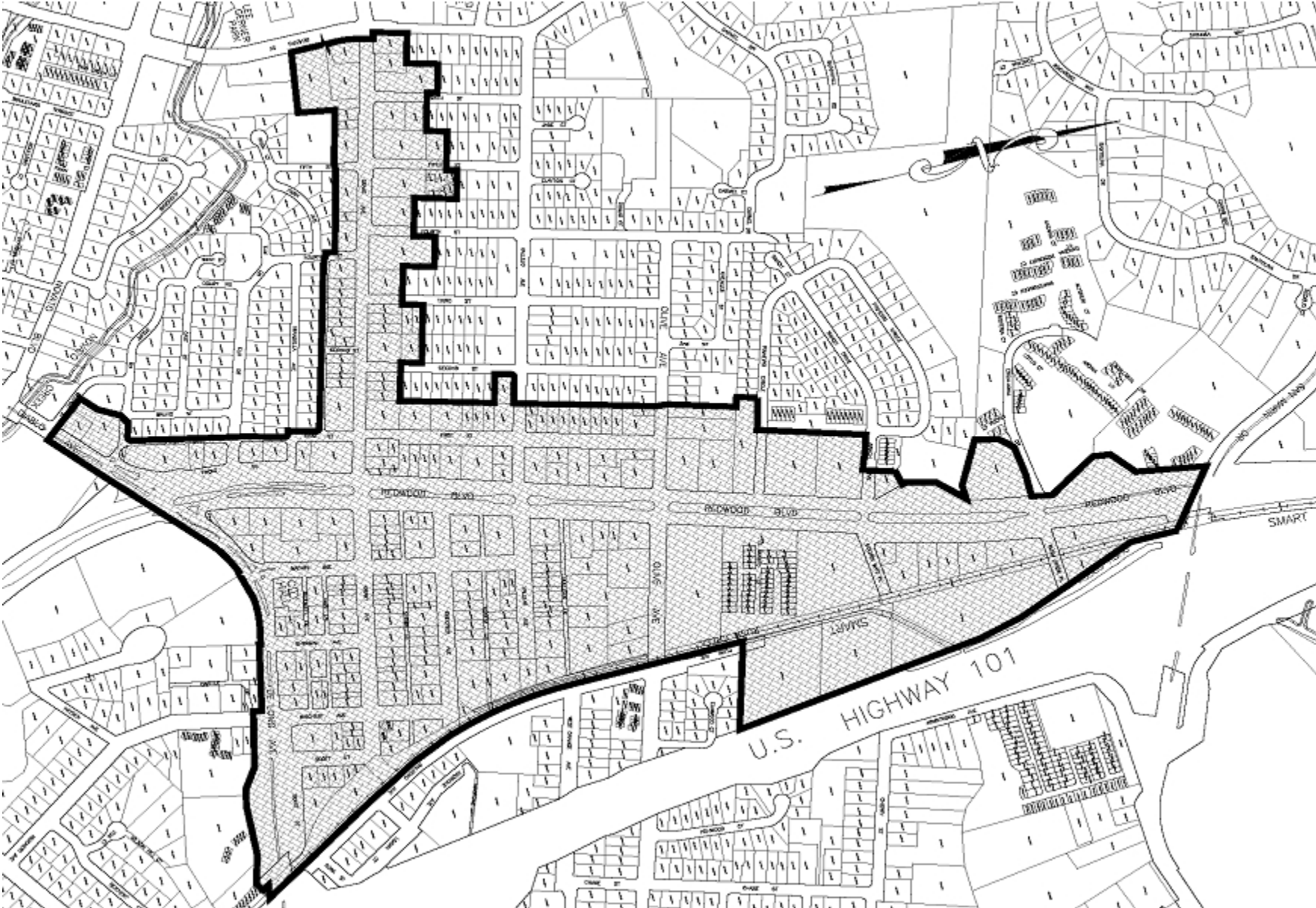


and public spaces.

- 3. Facilitate pedestrian friendly spaces through appropriate site and architectural design including measures to mitigate negative impacts associated with automobile circulation, loading/unloading and parking.
- 4. Preserve and invigorate structures that are distinctive due to their age, historical or cultural importance or architectural character.
- 5. Ensure that all new buildings, additions and renovations incorporate outstanding architectural design and detailing that includes high quality finish materials.



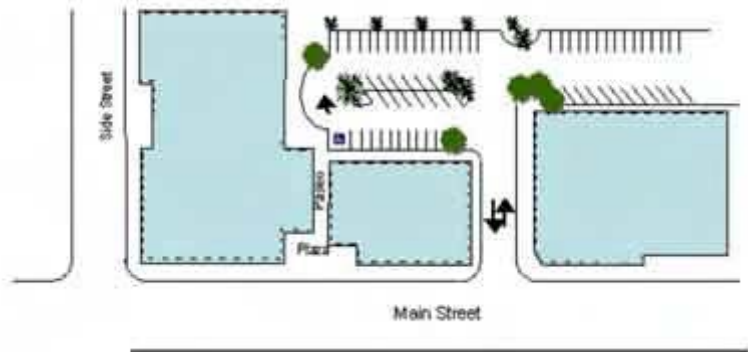
Exhibit 1 - Design Guidelines Applicable Planning Area



II. SITE DESIGN GUIDELINES

- A. Pedestrian Experience: Site designs should coordinate with surrounding conditions, while maximizing the pedestrian experience through the arrangement of structures, and well integrated pedestrian and vehicle circulation systems.

- B. Street Frontage: Siting of buildings at the street frontages is strongly encouraged. Building designs that achieve no setback or minimal building setback from the street should be pursued.



- C. Continuity of Streetscape/Parking behind buildings: The continuity of pedestrian oriented facilities and space along street frontages shall be maintained. Avoid and, where feasible, eliminate parking lots fronting the street(s).

Organize parking at the rear of buildings to maintain the continuity of pedestrian spaces and uses along the street.

D. Pedestrian Serving Spaces: Building elevations and features that serve pedestrians including storefronts and entries should be oriented towards streets and accompanying pedestrian areas such as courtyards, plazas and paseos. Blank walls, loading doors, trash enclosures, storage areas, utility vaults and other inactive or unattractive uses should be avoided in these same areas.

E. Use of Plazas, Courtyards and Paseos:

1. Where the intent is to provide active outdoor area, courtyards, plazas and paseos can be considered provided they maintain a strong sense of continuity with the overall pedestrian activity along the affected streetscape.
2. Plazas, courtyards and paseos may be incorporated where they facilitate appropriate building massing and/or improve access to the sides and rear of buildings. Additionally, paseos may be incorporated to facilitate improved pedestrian access to parking lots located behind buildings.



- 3. Plazas and courtyards should incorporate ample seating opportunities. When proposed, raised planters and fountains should incorporate seating.
- 4. Paseos provide common side and/or rear access between buildings, and should incorporate adequate design detailing (doors and/or windows , and accompanying trim, tile mosaics, wall fountains, etc.) that make them inviting for pedestrians.
- 5. Landscaping, art, decorative lighting and/or fixtures, decorative paving, and ample seating should be incorporated wherever appropriate within plazas, courtyards and paseos.



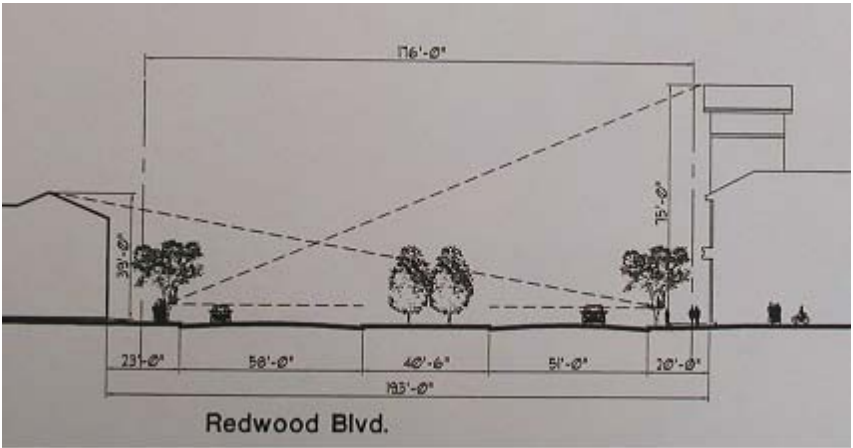
III. ARCHITECTURAL GUIDELINES

A. New Construction

- 1. Building Mass and Form: The mass and form of new buildings shall employ the following design principals:
 - a. The mass and form of new buildings shall provide a coordinated and unassuming transition with adjacent and/or surrounding buildings.
 - b. The wider a building is, the taller it may be. Tall narrow buildings are discouraged.



- c. The mass and form of new buildings and additions should be proportional to the street width i.e. the wider the street, the greater the opportunity is to increase the mass, including height, of a building(s).



wider streets expand opportunities to increase building mass and height

- d. For large in-fill projects that comprise a significant portion of a block, the building facade(s) should be visually divided into two or more individual storefronts, e.g., 25' storefront modules.
- e. Well defined building edges at adjacent buildings shall be incorporated to clearly distinguish each building's individual storefront, including upper floors.



- 2. Proportion and Scale: To provide proportion and scale in new buildings, draw upon the following design principals:
 - a. The proportions and scale of existing adjacent and/or surrounding buildings shall be respected in the design of new buildings.



- b. To maintain a less imposing appearance, taller buildings should include horizontal design elements (clerestory, transoms, trim band between floors, balconies etc). For two+ story buildings, a well composed tablature or clerestory is a fundamental way to "cap" the first floor.
- c. Where a more massive/taller building(s) is proposed, it may be accommodated through the use of gradated and/or regressive upper levels or stories at the front, sides and/or rear.

clerestory
"caps" 1st floor



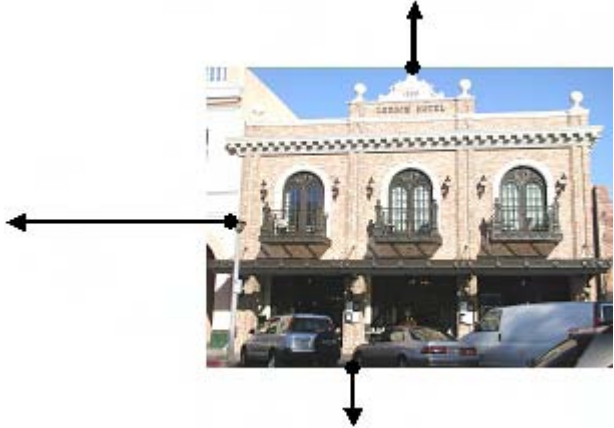
- d. The visual scale of a building is reduced and its proportions are enhanced through a careful and balanced arrangement of building components or modules both at the ground floor and upper levels; said modules shall be adequately articulated to distinguish them from the larger structure.



arrangement of 2nd story windows distinguishes it from 1st floor retail uses

- e. Architectural detailing at every level of a building's facade is an important technique to diminish a building's apparent overall size and mass. Often, it is the added detailing at the upper limits of a building's facade that most effectively reduce it's overall visual scale.

- f. The proportions and scale of a building's facade(s) should visually enhance the pedestrian experience. This can be achieved by applying an appropriate degree of design detailing and finish at every level (one or more stories) of a building, including the cornice or roof.



3. Rhythm of Facade(s): The following design techniques shall be considered to establish a rhythm to the facade of individual and/or adjacent buildings/storefronts:
- a. Attractive repeating forms in the facade create a visually interesting rhythm that serves to break up the scale of a building(s).
 - b. Elements of comparative scale (width, height, massing) serve to visually link a network of buildings for the pedestrian while preserving the opportunity to apply creative detailing to distinguish individual storefronts.
 - c. Rhythm of the design can be accomplished by repeating major building modules in distinguishable segments at the first floor. For two+ story buildings, the major rhythm generated by the building modules established at the first floor should be balanced or complemented in the upper stories through thoughtful composition of vertical and horizontal design elements (windows, french doors, balconies, cornices and/or roofs etc).
 - d. Each storefront can introduce a customized sub-rhythm through the composition of details (doors, windows,



rhythm of ground floor modules is complemented through the balance and design of 2nd story elements (french doors & balconies, decorated frieze, roof etc).

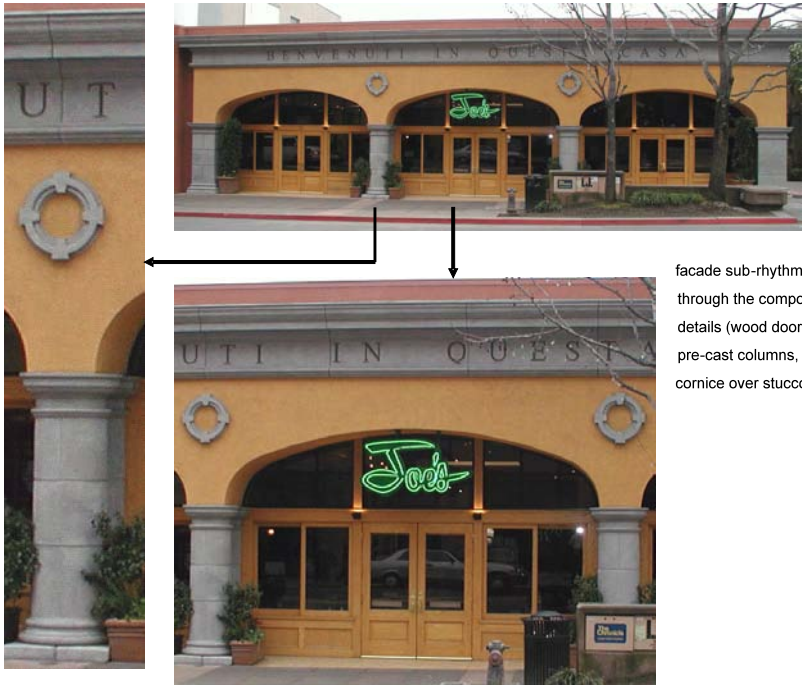
transom windows, decorative friezes, canopies or awnings, balconies etc) as well as the materials used in their construction (stucco, stone, tile, wood, metal, glass, etc).

- 4. **Architectural Style:** A range of architectural styles are acceptable in the Downtown. However, new buildings or individual storefronts shall employ, consistently, from ground level to roof, one style of architecture for all visible elevations (front, side, rear). Examples of acceptable architectural styles include Gothic Revival(s), Queen Anne, Mission, Streamline Modern, Italianate, Spanish Colonial Revival, etc. An eclectic mix of architectural styles (two or more) within a building or storefront facade is not appropriate.

Please note that new buildings, building renovations and building additions within the Downtown Historic Overlay District shall comply with the provisions of the Novato Zoning Ordinance, Chapter 19 of the Novato Municipal Code.

- 5. **Visual Interest:** Building facades, particularly facades that face public spaces, shall include high quality design elements that provide visual interest from the ground level to the roof or cornice.

- 6. **Visibility:** The first floor of buildings/storefronts shall be designed with a predominance of open and/or transparent surfaces to facilitate pedestrian encounters with



facade sub-rhythm enhanced through the composition of details (wood doors/windows, pre-cast columns, frieze and cornice over stucco body).

high quality design and trim elements visible from the ground to cornice



retail merchandise and other store activities. Additionally, outdoor plazas and dining areas should be designed with visibility from surrounding pedestrian walkways.

7. **Storefronts:** Attractive and functional storefronts should be provided by addressing key design principals, including:

- a. Storefront display windows should be large and of clear transparent glass.
- b. Storefronts should be designed in a repeating rhythm along the sidewalk to facilitate pedestrian movement and interaction.
- c. Building facades with three or more storefronts may vary base materials, entry locations or awning/canopy design.
- d. Operable display windows are encouraged when feasible.

8. **Entrances:** Entries should be visually emphasized by applying additional design principals and features, including, but not limited to:

- a. Entries should be recessed from the facade.
- b. Entries should be accentuated by framing them with projecting decorative piers or columns.



open-air storefront for dining with recessed/transparent entry



storefronts in a repeated rhythm cater to pedestrian movement

e.g., fluted support columns or trim, detailed pediment, etc. of wood, tile, brick, stone etc.

- c. Awnings or canopies should be considered over entries.

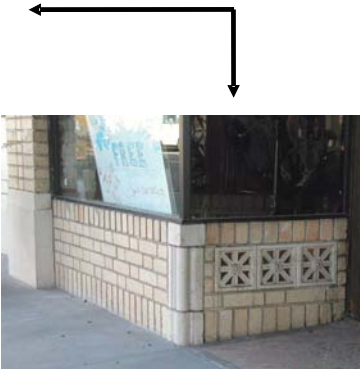
9. **Building Base:** The base of buildings should address the following design considerations:

- a. The base should serve to raise the interior display area up to view and protect the building and display windows from damage.
- b. A building's base shall be made of an attractive and durable material(s), including but not limited to dimensioned stone, brick, marble, granite, ceramic tile and wood. The selected base material(s) shall complement materials used in the upper facade.
- c. If the base and facade are composed of matching materials, the base can be distinguished by changing the pattern/orientation of the materials, e.g., stone, brick, tile, or adding other accents.
- d. For a base proposed of wood, smooth-finished, recessed panels are an appropriate solution.
- e. Where vents are needed at the base, they shall be of a decorative material and design (ceramic, iron, brass).

entry is accentuated with a stainless steel column, canopy and transom



bases of durable, decorative tile and brick with decorative tile vents



10. Roofs and Upper Story Details

a. Cornices should be appropriately decorated to cap the building, complement its scale, and contribute to the visual interest of the streetscape and skyline. For multiple story facades, horizontal moldings should be used between floors to differentiate the storefront from the upper floors.

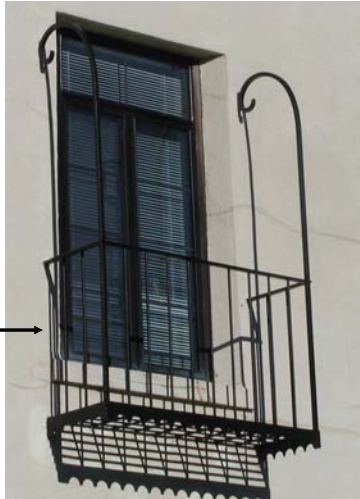


decorative roof designs and finish elements at a building's upper limits serve to maintain its scale and provide visual interest.

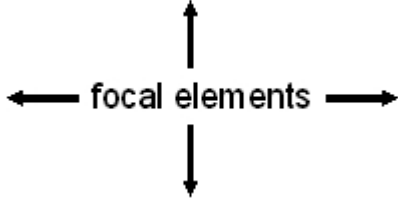


b. The eaves of gable and/or hipped roofs should be decorated with brackets, trim, and/or molding.

c. Decorative accent elements that are consistent with the architectural style of a building should be applied to complement the building's scale and add interest to the facade. Typical elements include ornamental medallions, grills, iron brackets and rods, lights, flags, scuppers, leader heads with appropriately finished downspouts etc.



11. Focal elements: Architectural features like projecting roof parapets, bell/clock towers, copulas, elaborated chimney tops, spires, etc., can enhance a building’s visual interest, and serve as reference points for pedestrians. These types of elements should be considered on a building-by-building basis.



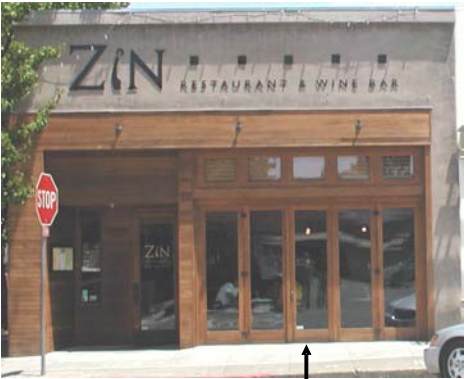
12. Franchise or Corporate Motifs: Franchise or corporate style architecture, including signature building designs, sign designs and highly contrasting color schemes are strongly discouraged.

13. Windows:

- a. Glazing at storefront display areas should be maximized as appropriate to showcase merchandise.
- b. Typical residential divided-light windows are not recommend for use at storefronts.
- c. Where divided light windows are desired, 'true divided light' windows are required, or if simulated dividers are used they must be on both sides of the glass.
- d. Clear glazing shall be used at the storefront: reflective glazing is not acceptable. Stained glass panels may be used as accents or at transoms. Tinted glazing is not recommended at the street level.
- e. Operable windows are encouraged where possible, including ground floor locations where food will be served.
- f. The design of windows above the ground floor should provide adequate enhancement features, including but not limited to:
 - tile borders
 - colored framing
 - deep wall recesses
 - projecting/bay window
 - pedimented and/or decorative trim and sills
 - shutters
 - iron grills
 - dormers



maximum glazing for retail display



operable wood windows enhance look and function of space



true divided lights throughout storefront
examples of window enhancements



14. Awnings and Canopies: When proposed, awnings and canopies should address the following design and functional considerations:

- a. Awnings and canopies should be designed to enhance pedestrian interface with respective storefront windows and entries, including providing shade and protection from rain.
- b. The size and shape of awnings and canopies should complement the architectural composition of a facade, including its scale, proportions and rhythm e.g. storefront bays, entry(s) and building edges.
- c. Awnings and canopies should not dominate or overwhelm the facade.
- d. Awnings and canopies should be set back from a building's edges.
- e. For wide buildings, one continuous awning that extends across the entire facade should be avoided. Separate, but matching awnings should be applied that serve to distinguish the bays and entry(s) that comprise a wide facade.
- f. Awnings and canopies applied on upper stories should be limited to the areas above doors and windows.
- g. The materials and colors used in the construction of awnings or canopies (fabric, metal, glass etc) should be durable and complement the building's finish. Glossy and plastic awnings are strongly discouraged.



awnings and canopies that provide cover and compliment the architectural composition of the storefront



Individual, matching awnings serve to distinguish bay windows and entry



- h. Adequate detailing, including the appearance of the underside, of awnings and canopies shall be addressed through their design.
- i. Awnings and canopies should serve to further complement a building's design, and not be introduced as a substitute for good architecture.

15. Stairways:

- a. Stairway entries proposed within ground floor storefronts shall be arranged to complement the architectural rhythm and sub-rhythm of the facade.
- b. If visible, stairway designs should incorporate materials consistent with the building's architectural style, e.g., tile risers, stone treads, iron hand rails etc.
- c. Exposed stringer stairways are discouraged. However, if proposed, the stringers and, corresponding support columns shall be completely wrapped and trimmed with materials consistent with the building's finish. Exposed railing shall be appropriately detailed (decorative balustrade, newel etc.); for durability, use of decorative metal is encouraged.

canopy and awning that provide adequate detailing



stairway adjacent to paseo is appropriately enclosed and trimmed with material (brick) consistent with the building

16. Balconies and Rooftop Use Areas:

- a. Balconies and rooftop use areas are encouraged provided their location, proportions, and detailing complement the building architecture.
- b. Exposed railing shall be appropriately detailed; for durability, use of decorative metal is encouraged.



↑ well proportioned and detailed balconies ↑

17. Building Materials: Exterior building materials should coincide with the architectural style of the structure. Use of the following materials is encouraged for the exterior finish of buildings within the Downtown:

- brick
- smooth wood
- stone
- marble
- granite
- stucco (smooth or hand textured)

Complimentary but contrasting materials should be used to highlight building design elements, trim and details. Accent materials include, but are not limited to:

- brick
- concrete and plaster
- stone
- wood
- glass/glass block



complementary but contrasting materials (stone, stucco and smooth wood trim) provide a distinctive, attractive finish to a façade

- tile
- forged metal/wrought iron
- copper
- painted metal
- metal and fabric awnings
- metal and glass canopies

18. Colors: In addition to the inherent colors of unpainted finish materials, the following paint color considerations are recommended for buildings in the Downtown:

- a. The color scheme should complement a building's architectural style.
- b. The color value of any unpainted finish materials (stone, brick etc.) and details (tile, metal, colored glass etc.) should be factored in with the selection of paint colors.
- c. Where appropriate, paint schemes should incorporate a base color, a wall color, a trim color that is a shade lighter or darker than the wall color, and an accent color(s) for architectural details.
- d. Trim colors can either be lighter or shades darker than the wall color.
- e. Accent colors for architectural details may be brighter or a contrasting color to the wall color.

19. Walls and Fences Wall and fence enclosures should be designed as an integral component of the overall building concept including scale,



accent elements made of tile, forged metal, glass, and canvas provide a rich contrast to the finish materials of a building that serve to expand upon an architectural style

an appropriate color scheme provides a complementary base color, wall color, trim color, and an accent color for architectural details



materials, decorative elements (e.g. ornamental metal, inset tile, planters etc.) and color.



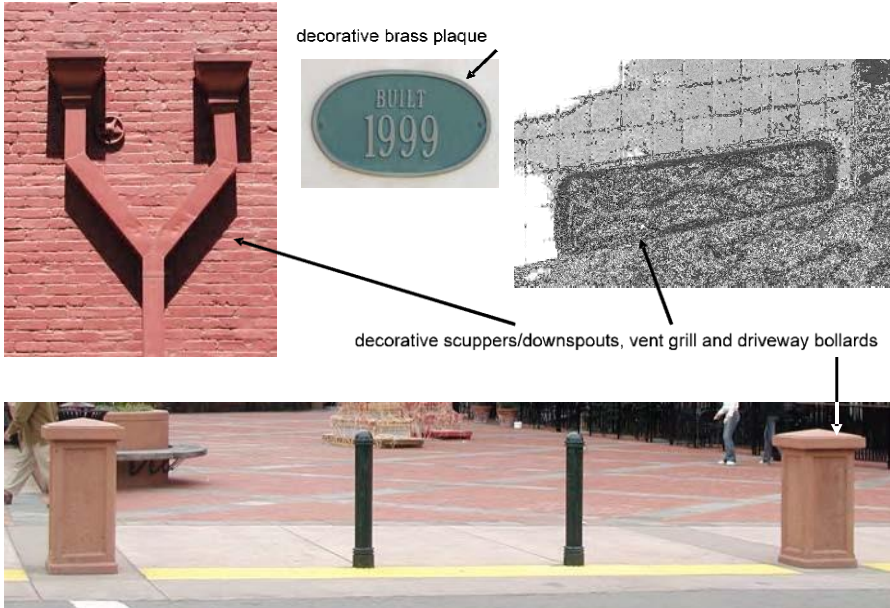
wall articulated with posts and metal railing

20. Ancillary Building Components

Design techniques should be employed to conceal utility lines, meters, security devices, vents and other functional components from view. However, functional components that cannot be feasibly concealed should be integrated into the building design to add visual richness. Functional components offered in decorative styles include, but are not limited to:

- roof scuppers, catches and down spouts
- metal grilles at vent openings
- security devices and lighting
- fire sprinkler standpipe and hose bib enclosures
- address/plaques

Mechanical Equipment: mechanical systems, including roof mounted systems, are to be screened from view, preferably by architecturally consistent screen walls or parapet wall(s), and/or by location.



decorative brass plaque

decorative scuppers/downspouts, vent grill and driveway bollards

21. Consideration of Adjoining Residential Neighborhoods

It is of primary importance to protect adjoining residential neighborhoods from the impact of noise, lighting, and privacy intrusion. Special attention shall be given through the design of effective residential buffering, including appropriate setbacks, landscaping, mounding and fencing to provide a gradual visual transition into adjacent neighborhoods

Care shall be taken to avoid locating trash enclosures near the boundary of residential properties. In general, trash enclosures shall be consolidated, yet located so as to equalize the distances from the buildings served. Enclosures shall be positioned with direct access for collection trucks. Parking shall be prohibited within the enclosure access area. Concrete pads shall be provided within the enclosures, and the access area shall be reinforced to avoid damage by collection trucks. Gates and doors shall be made to withstand heavy use and abuse.



where visible, trash enclosures should be designed and finished in material(s) consistent with adjacent buildings, and incorporate landscape screening where feasible



B. Building Renovations and Additions

- 1. Preserve Original Features and Decoration: The value of preserving existing design elements including, building proportions, finish materials, trim, doors, windows, and fixtures should be considered when undertaking building renovations and/or additions.
- 2. Removal of Elements Inconsistent with Original Facade: If a building’s original design elements are determined to be of historic and/or architectural significance, subsequently applied features that are incompatible should be removed.
- 3. Storefront Renovation: When it is determined that a building facade is historically significant due to its contribution to the Downtown’s architectural heritage any alteration shall retain or incorporate the essential elements and details of the original facade. Contemporary interpretations and replications of original building elements (windows, plaster trim work, wood, details, etc.) may be considered provided they offer an equivalent visual quality and improved durability.
- 4. Additions to Existing Structures: Addition(s) should be consistent with the scale, proportions, and massing of the original structure. Additionally, exterior finish materials and details should be consistent with the existing building.



three remodeled storefronts due to fire retain composition and detailing of the original storefront



- 5. Awnings, Doors, Windows: For buildings determined to be of historical significance, the design of replacement awnings, doors and windows should be compatible with the historical character and design of the building.

IV. LANDSCAPING GUIDELINES

- A. Purpose of Landscaping: The type and arrangement of landscaping should serve to soften hard scape elements while preserving functional areas for pedestrian gatherings.



replacement awning respects building edge, and limits of transom above



landscaping type/arrangement softens hardscape and preserves space for pedestrian gatherings



- B. Plant Selection: Use of climbing vines, flowering plants, arbors, trellises and container planting is encouraged. Tree selection should include careful consideration of their characteristics (large, small, evergreen, deciduous, leaf and litter, shape, etc.) in conjunction with the setting and intended use of surrounding space.
- C. Container Plants: Container plants in decorative, durable, and functional planters (e.g., provide seating, separation of seating areas and pedestrian walkways, etc.) should be incorporated to enhance the street frontage, courtyards, and plazas.
- D. Irrigation and Drainage: Planter areas should incorporate permanent drainage and automatic irrigation systems.
- E. Tree Planting Measures: All trees in paved areas should be provided with deep root barriers, automatic irrigation and City Standard metal grates. Trees lining walkways and within plazas and courtyards should include metal grates to facilitate foot traffic.
- F. Lighting: Freestanding lighting for plazas, courtyards, parking areas and paseos should complement light fixtures applied to the corresponding building(s).



use of climbing vines with a trellis provides a lush backdrop for a paseo and outdoor seating



attractive containers/plants enhance the appearance of courtyards and sidewalk seating



plaza lighting consistent with other building fixtures



tree grate facilitates foot traffic

V. SIGNS

A. General Sign Design Criteria:

- 1. Signs shall conform with the rhythm, scale and proportions of the facade, including signs applied to awnings and canopies.
- 2. Sign placement should avoid blocking or extending over architectural elements of a facade, including over and/or above roof eaves and cornices/edges.
- 3. Electrical supply equipment e.g. conduit, junction boxes etc. shall not be visible.
- 4. Signs shall comply with applicable requirements contained in the Novato Zoning Code, Division 19.32.



signs that respect the rhythm, scale and proportions of the architecture



B. Wall Signs:

- 1. Wall signs shall be centered above the storefront, and within recessed or framed areas, if any.
- 2. Interior illuminated channel lettering and sign boxes with illuminated backgrounds are strongly discouraged.
- 3. Decorative (goose neck) spot lighting or back lighting (halo illumination) of individual letters is appropriate.
- 4. Spot lighting fixtures should eliminate or shield against "off-sign" glare.
- 5. Use of individual letters ("pin mounted" or other) is encouraged.
- 6. In building facades that include multiple storefronts, consistent, lasting materials, including materials for mounting and lighting, consistent letter size, and consistent locations (vertically and horizontally, where feasible) should be used.



attractive spot lighting



appropriately centered wall signs within recessed and framed areas, where applicable



C. Projecting (Blade) Signs:

1. Blade signs with minimal text that principally display the business’s logo, or a graphic that depicts the business’s product line(s) and/or service(s) are encouraged. Three-dimensional graphics are appropriate.
2. Both a decorative sign and appropriately detailed supporting bracket(s) shall be utilized.
3. Signs constructed of painted or unpainted wood and/or metal are encouraged. Use of dimensioned metal, forged metal or wrought iron for support brackets is encouraged.
4. If sign lighting is desired, spot lighting verses interior illumination is strongly recommended.



textured, painted wood



forged metal brackets



uniform format draws pedestrian attention



D. Window Signs:

1. Signs should only consist of letters or graphics applied directly to the glass.
2. To the extent feasible, signs should avoid the obstructing of pedestrian views into a storefront.
3. Use of brilliant colors should be avoided or strictly limited.
4. Neon signs are discouraged.

window signs that maintain views into the storefront



E. Canopy and Overhang Signs:

- 1. Use of individual lettering mounted on top of a canopy(s) is appropriate; sign boxes in this location are discouraged.
- 2. Individual letters applied to the face of a canopy(s) are appropriate. Signs should be centered within trim detailing (recessed panels etc) of a canopy's face, if any.
- 3. Both a decorative sign(s) and appropriately detailed suspension system(s) shall be utilized for suspended signs.
- 4. Suspended signs constructed of painted or unpainted wood and/or metal are encouraged. Use of a metal suspension systems e.g., decorative chain and/or decorative metal rods is encouraged; wire and rope are discouraged.



good use of top mounted lettering and face mounted, individual lettering on canopies



suspended sign of painted wood



painted wood overhanging signs



decorative metal overhanging sign

F. Awning Signs:

- 1. Sign copy should be centered on an awning(s) and limited in size e.g. not more than 10% of the sloping face of an awning.
- 2. Only logos or symbols depicting the nature of the business should be applied to the sloped face of awnings. Any additional sign text should be applied to an awning's valance.
- 3. Indirect, spot lighting (gooseneck or other decorative fixtures), of ground floor awnings is appropriate; internal illumination of awning signs is discouraged.
- 4. Signs applied to awnings above the ground floor (awnings over 2nd story windows etc.) are discouraged.

G. Freestanding Signs: Freestanding and/or monument signs are discouraged.



VI. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Judy Arnold
Pat Eklund
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COMPARISON OF DOWNTOWN SPECIFIC PLAN DESIGN GUIDELINES WITH 2005 DOWNTOWN DESIGN GUIDELINES

(Note: References to 2005 Design Guidelines are shown in bold [e.g. **II.C**])

5.1 UD 11: OVERALL DOWNTOWN DESIGN GUIDELINES

The following guidelines shall be used for the review of both public and private projects requiring discretionary entitlement improvements.

UD 11.1: Site Planning

Site planning guidelines are listed below:

1. New or renovated buildings designated for first floor retail, particularly on Grant Avenue and Redwood Boulevard, shall front with windows and entryways to the street. Street frontage is not allowed for parking lots or building walls with no windows or entryways. Additionally, street frontage of retail shall not be interrupted by mid-block driveways. **II.C, II.D**
2. Emphasis shall be placed on orientation of buildings, walkways and landscape amenities for the safety, clarity and convenience of pedestrian movement. Attractive walkways between adjacent properties shall be developed at points in addition to those at common street frontages to enhance direct pedestrian flow. **II.A, II.E**
3. Site and landscape designs shall incorporate outdoor pedestrian use areas, with such amenities as trellises, shade trees, raised planters, landscaped berms and fountains to create useable, inviting, semi-protected rest areas. Such courtyards and plazas shall be visible from street corridors and major pedestrian access routes. **II.E**
4. Clusters of smaller structures, or one "shell" structure with multiple facades and uses with courtyards and other pedestrian amenities are preferred to large buildings in new development. Ensure that all buildings, regardless of their height, are comfortable for people at ground level by relating wall and window heights to the height of people, providing windows, building setbacks, landscaping and things for pedestrians to look at for visual variety, and orienting signs to pedestrians. This concept is identified in this plan as the "village design" concept. **III.A. 1.d, III.A.2, III.A.3, III.A.5, III.A.6, III.A.7**
5. Siting of buildings shall take into consideration preserving views of Mt. Burdell, Big Rock Ridge, and other surrounding hillsides for people in buildings and on the streets. Solar orientation and wind exposure of the entry area and outdoor pedestrian use areas shall also be considered.

6. It is of primary importance to protect adjoining residential neighborhoods from the impact of noise, lighting, and privacy intrusion. Special attention shall be given through the design of effective residential buffering, including appropriate setbacks, landscaping, mounding and fencing to provide a gradual visual transition into adjacent neighborhoods. (Item 4 above is meant also to address this issue).
7. Trash enclosures, ground-mounted transformers, gas meters, backflow prevention devices and other equipment shall be kept out of front areas and carefully screened from view. Care shall be taken to avoid locating trash enclosures near the boundary of residential properties. In general, trash enclosures shall be consolidated, yet located so as to equalize the distances from the buildings served. Enclosures shall be positioned with direct access for collection trucks. Parking shall be prohibited within the enclosure access area. Concrete pads shall be provided within the enclosures, and the access area shall be reinforced to avoid damage by collection trucks. Gates and doors shall be made to withstand heavy use and abuse. Design, materials and colors shall be consistent with building architecture. **II.D, III.A.20**

UD 11.2: Architecture

There are no consistent existing architectural themes within the Downtown, and particularly ones that unite (east) and (west) Grant Avenue. Existing conditions are briefly summarized below:

- East Grant/Old Town. East Grant buildings style include historic false front storefronts in the Victorian Era style, and the Mission Revival Style found primarily on (east) Grant Avenue and in Old Town. The Victorian influenced design generally includes horizontal wood cladding, vertically proportioned windows, and brick-a-brac ornament. The Mission Revival style employs stucco walls, recessed windows, curving parapets, and tile roofs. There are also some board and batten structures and corrugated metal structures characteristic of the early agricultural buildings in Novato.
- West Grant. Blockier International Style buildings are primarily located on (west) Grant. Buildings on (west) Grant Ave. are of more recent vintage, most dating from the 1950's and 1960's. Some buildings have been "modernized" with fins, unusual tilework, metal panels and other cladding which has robbed them of their original character.
- Industrial/Commercial - North of Old Town. The industrial area of Downtown north of Scown Lane has simple poured concrete or block buildings, wood warehouses designed with heavy timbers, and steel frame buildings, historically clad in corrugated metal. In recent years, designers have been inspired by industrial structures and materials, such as the two retail buildings with red, standing seam metal roofs, located in "Olive Plaza" on the east side of Redwood Boulevard, immediately north of Mulligan Lane. Unlike the galvanized material used in the Pini Mill, these new

structures use panels with integral color. The vertical lines of the wall paneling also relate to the vertical board and batten of some older structures in this part of Downtown.

General design architectural guidelines are listed below:

1. Use the architectural styles discussed in this section as points of departure for design and design evaluation:

Historic architectural styles which have been identified in the Downtown or in the adjacent areas in Novato and Marin County are: Gothic Revival(s), Georgian Revival, Mission, Bungalow, Mission Revival, Streamline Modern, Queen Anne Revival, Italianate, Spanish Colonial Revival, Greek Revival. (Appendix D contains a stylistic glossary and discussion of these styles.)

Examples of architectural styles or design found desirable by the DSPSC and/or from public comments at committee meetings or workshops include: Dr. Insomnia, Las Guitarras, Le Cut, Kapranos Construction office next to Dr. Insomnia with paseos, Courtyard Square, Tarassa Building (French Toast) and paseo, 1913 Old Bank Building, Solarium, Flat Iron, Cacti, City Hall/Church, Simmons House, Tresch House, Zunino House, Carlile House, Silva Kuser House, Postmasters House, Coldwell Banker corner Reichert and DeLong, and residence on Reichert south of Carlile House. Photographs of some of these styles are provided in this Specific Plan as examples. (See Section 5.3).

III.A.4

2. Preserve historic buildings. Remove alterations whose design and/or materials are not consistent with the underlying historic character of the building and its immediate surroundings. Uncover and repair original features. The buildings east of Redwood Boulevard which the Zoning Ordinance designates with the overlay classification Historic Preservation District cannot be altered without design review approval (see Figure 3). **III.B.1, III.B.2, III.B.3, III.A.4**
3. Building height, bulk, style, period, proportions, materials and colors shall conform to local design district guidelines. **III.A.4**
4. Use of recessed entries, stepping of upper floor setbacks and varied roof lines consistent and coordinated with adjoining structures is strongly encouraged. **III.A.8, III.A.1.a, III.A.2**
5. Roof materials shall be consistent with the residential character of the community with textured natural material such as shingles, slate or tile. Where flat roofs are required, they shall be architecturally screened from public areas. Flat roofs shall generally be covered with dark grey gravel.

6. Emphasis shall be placed on consistent use of architectural detailing *on all building elevations*, including fenestration, blending of materials, eaves, awnings and soffit treatments, shadow lines, etc., to avoid facing blank walls toward neighbors.

III.A.2.e, III.A.5

7. Mechanical equipment shall be enclosed within the building or architecturally screened from view. Generally, mechanical equipment shall not be permitted on roofs. Only when absolutely necessary, roof elements shall incorporate integral wells for the complete screening of all necessary roofmounted mechanical equipment. Roof penetrations for vents and ducts shall be grouped and combined in locations concealed from public view. **III.A.20**
8. Visible wall and/or window-mounted air conditioning equipment is prohibited.
9. The use of awnings shall allow for individual expression of each business with compatible variations in color and graphics, compatible with the Downtown Style Guidelines. Multiple awnings shall be coordinated with variations emphasized or minimized depending on individual buildings where distinctive variations in size, color, placement and design may be important.

Encourage canvas awnings over display windows and store entries where they would not interfere with street trees or projecting signs. Awnings shall not extend over the public sidewalk more than 5 feet from the face of the building, and maintain an 8-foot vertical clearance over the sidewalk. Awnings shall slope downward on a straight angle, rather than a curve, except where the awning is placed within an arched opening in a building. Allow awnings over second story windows, if they extend no more than half way down the windows. Use colorful awnings to highlight individual stores. Individual awnings shall have a maximum of two colors, such as stripes. Prohibit vinyl awnings, back-lit awnings, and awnings with signs on the slope. Graphic imagery is acceptable on the sloping surface such as a logo unique to a business (not a franchise logo).

To avoid visual clutter, there shall be either an awning sign or a storefront sign but not both; lettering is allowed on the sides of awnings as a replacement for pedestrian-oriented hanging signs. **III.A.14**

10. Storefront windows and displays are encouraged where compatible with surroundings. **III.A.7**
11. Buildings located near street corners shall respond to their location by designing entries facing the corner, or by slightly recessing the first floor building face to create a small pedestrian use area. **III.A.8 (sort of)**
12. Generally, restrict the number of paint colors in a project to three, with one color used for accents only. Many buildings in Downtown are painted in light, neutral colors. For

accent and detail colors, consider a range of rich, saturated colors such as brick red, deep blue/green, "Hunter" green and "Butternut" yellow. **III.A.18**

13. Maintain the small town scale and pedestrian character of Downtown in the design of new storefronts and additions and modifications to existing buildings. Wall planes shall not extend in one continuous horizontal direction more than about 25 feet without an offset or interruption by a pilaster or structural frame, change in roof line or architectural materials. **III.A.1.d, III.A.3**
14. Allow an increase in building height in the Downtown Specific Plan Area (Downtown Core, and the Mixed Use District) for mixed use projects in which housing is included and a top floor is used only for housing.
15. Encourage decorative features, and fine, durable materials and detailing on building bulkheads, and around windows and doors where pedestrians can closely observe such features. Adapt such features from historical examples in Downtown Novato, where appropriate. **III.A.8, III.A.9, III.A.13, III.A.17**
16. Encourage the use of industrial materials, such as metal panels with raised ribs in the North of Old Town area.
17. Consider murals on blank walls - public or private, subject to review by the Civic Arts Commission. Life-size, eye-tricking *trompe l'oeil* paintings shall be considered which use Novato history and the local setting as sources of inspiration. Murals may reference business activity by name only in an historical context. **III.A.5 (sort of)**
18. Install indirect lighting inside of storefront windows to creatively illuminate merchandise.
19. On-site outdoor furniture, telephone booths, ATM machines, kiosks and similar accessories shall be integrated into the architectural design of the principal structure they serve.
20. For mixed use development immediately fronting on Grant Avenue and Redwood Boulevard, prohibit residential balconies. **III.A.16**

UD 11.3: Parking and Circulation

Specific design guidelines for parking and circulation infrastructure in the Downtown (public and private) are listed below:

1. The majority of parking shall be located away from public view, but convenient to find via appropriate signage. **II.C**

ATTACHMENT 3

2. Long, straight uninterrupted rows of parking shall be avoided in favor of landscaped islands with no more than eight stalls in a row.
3. All parking areas shall be landscaped and provided with maintenance infrastructure (i.e., irrigation) as described in Section 11.6.4. While it is recognized that parking is constrained in the Downtown, there is no desire to have paved areas devoid of landscaping and tree canopy and their contribution to the microclimate and positive ambiance of the Downtown. Landscaping shall also include, where appropriate, view screening using vines and trellises and attractive shrubs and other plantings. Gravel and bark ground covers are to be avoided.(30)
4. All parking areas adjoining residential zoning districts shall be separated by a 5-foot minimum landscape buffer and a 6-foot solid wood fence or masonry wall. Preferable vegetation shall be evergreen trees spaced at 10 feet on center.
5. Parking spaces, curb-cuts, walks, ramps and signage for the accommodation of handicapped access, pursuant to state standards, shall be designed to integrate with the building architecture through the creative use of paving and building materials, landscaping, railing designs and signage systems. Handicapped access facilities shall be conveniently located adjacent to main building entrances in order to minimize the amount of contact with auto traffic.
6. Design provisions shall be made for proper repair and maintenance of paved surfaces.
7. Internal circulation and parking layout for all development shall avoid the backing of vehicles onto public streets.
8. All parking lots shall incorporate internally looped circulation systems where possible, so that drivers will not be dependent on public streets when making multiple passes through a parking lot.
9. Street access points shall be consolidated with shared access easements for adjacent commercial lots where possible to avoid multiple curb-cuts. On corner lots, curb cuts shall maintain a maximum separation from intersections.
10. Decorative, slip-resistant paving is encouraged for use on pedestrian walkways, which shall be grade separated from driveway and parking areas. Distinctive paving is also encouraged where these routes cross driveways.
11. Unobstructed visibility shall be maintained at all vehicular intersections and pedestrian crossings to assure safety.
12. Truck loading facilities shall be located off of major streets in such a manner as to avoid visual impact, noise impact to residential uses, and conflicts with pedestrian and normal vehicular traffic.

13. Bicycle racks shall be provided as appropriate for the nature and intensity of use.
14. Parking areas shall be graded, paved and drained to prevent storm water from running over public sidewalks and ponding on site.
15. Provide easily identified pedestrian drop-off points, close to building entries and linked to pedestrian walkways.
16. Where feasible, end row parking spaces shall be protected and screened from the turning movements of other vehicles with curbed landscape areas. (Development Standards Code Section 5-28.00863(d)).

UD 11.4: Sidewalks

Improvements to sidewalks, particularly on Grant Avenue are essential to enhancement of the pedestrian character of Downtown. Street trees and other streetscape amenities are not necessarily funded under the City's Capital Improvements Program (see Chapter 6). While it would be desirable to include streetscape amenities in any program of funded street and sidewalks repairs, small areas needing concrete repair are allowed if funds for beautification are not available.

Specific Design Guidelines for sidewalk improvements are listed below:

11.4.1 Public Sidewalks and Improvements

1. Use removable pavers along curbs, where feasible, to accommodate electrical and water connections. Electricity may be used for mini-lights to be installed in trees, and water will be available for timed irrigation of trees and potential flower basket planters hung from light pole brackets.
2. Use sealed brick or pavers to accent entries into stores. For corner buildings, consider corner entries and enhanced paving such as the "Courtyard Square" building at the northeast corner of Grant and Reichert Avenues.
3. Repair sidewalks which have been raised by tree roots, for pedestrian safety.
4. "Bulb-out" sidewalks at corner crosswalks on Grant Avenue to provide areas for pedestrian circulation and sitting and to shorten street crossings for pedestrians and to encourage slower traffic speeds. This would best be accomplished in conjunction with planned reconstruction of the street (CIP project 93-012, discussed in Chapter 6) because lowering the street crown must anticipate the height of the curb of the bulbed-out sidewalks.

11.4.2 Sidewalk Cafes and Outdoor Dining

Outdoor eating areas often need protection from afternoon and evening winds along Grant Avenue during the summer. Some restaurant owners have found locations screened by walls or adjacent buildings. Examples include Cacti Restaurant on Grant at Fourth Street, Bongiovi Coffee on Grant, and the Las Guitarras restaurant on Reichert Avenue just north of Scown Lane. Opportunities also appear to exist in courtyards and adjacent to rear alleys north of Grant Ave. Encourage outdoor eating places that are visible from the street to enliven the Downtown.

1. Where there are no sidewalk bulb-outs, allow encroachments onto the public sidewalk for moveable outdoor café tables, shade umbrellas and seating, a distance from the face of the building only so far as to allow 5 feet of unobstructed access between the chairs and tables, and the curb or any other permanent obstacle such as a light pole, street tree, or waste receptacle.
2. Allow outdoor dining in sidewalk bulb-outs, as shown in Figure 38. Where feasible, use the landscaped areas in the bulb-outs to separate and screen the dining areas from the street and parking. Use hedges and other landscape materials, taking care not to block vehicular sight lines.
3. Install awnings or portable shade umbrellas to create an "outdoor room" for outdoor dining. Trees can also be used to create an a shady canopy, particularly in bulb-out areas.
4. Do not count public right-of-way encroachment area for outdoor eating for parking requirements.

11.4.3 Pedestrian Passageways

There are a few narrow passageways between the sidewalk on Grant Avenue and parking lots and courtyards behind buildings. On (east) Grant, some narrow "breezeways," "paseos," or narrow courtyards connect the sidewalk on the north side of the street with Scown Lane, the parallel alley to the north. However, there are no publicly-accessible pathways between Scown Lane and Sweetser Avenue.

Consequently, there is little interrelationship between businesses on (East) Grant Avenue and businesses in the North of Old Town area. Customers of businesses on Grant may not be customers of businesses on Sweetser. If they are, perhaps they drive between the two streets. But if they were to walk, they would use Machin or Reichert; Sherman Avenue does not extend north of Grant Avenue, resulting in a nearly 700 ft long block between Machin and Reichert.

Design guidelines for pedestrian passageways are:

1. Encourage private walkways between Grant and Scown, between Grant and Cain Lane, and between Scown and Sweetser. Such walkway improvements could be eligible for match funding under the proposed facade improvement program described in Chapter 6. **III.A.E (sort of), LU 30**
2. Encourage development of outdoor cafes in protected passageways or "breezeways" and protected courtyards. Strong west winds during summer afternoons can make outdoor dining uncomfortable along Grant Avenue (See Chapter 3). Adding outdoor dining to sidewalk, courtyard, or pedestrian passageways shall not require additional parking spaces above and beyond those required for the existing indoor dining area. **III.A.E (sort of)**

UD 11.5: Streetscape Elements

Benches, trash receptacles, bollards, newspaper racks, public telephones and bicycle racks all constitute the furniture of the street. These elements add scale and character and invite people to stop and enjoy the space rather than just pass through. The furniture shall be carefully selected to complement historic buildings in the area and also to be compatible with the newer building additions.

Specific design guidelines for streetscape elements are listed below: **III.A.E.5 (sort of)**

1. Prohibit placement of private improvements in the public right-of-way in the Specific Plan Area, including - but not limited to - waste receptacles, benches, planters and bicycle racks, without approval of an encroachment permit. Generally, the City should be responsible for the selection and placement of such elements in the street right-of-way, although the City could specify particular components which could be purchased by property or business owners and installed with City approval.
2. Install benches where people enjoy sitting (wind-protected, both shady and sun-exposed areas, close to "people places" such as cafes and coffee shops). Benches can be "nested" into street bulb-outs. Avoid benches on sidewalks facing traffic, except at bus stops. Choose a standard design with a cast iron frame (see Figure 39). Customize the benches (and compatibly-designed light poles and incorporate the City's logo (City Hall image) in cast iron components, if feasible.
3. Use consistent and compatible sidewalk features such as lamp poles, trash receptacles, benches, tree grates, fences and railings as specified (see Figure 39). Consider dark blue-green, "hunter green" as the preferred color for metal components of these features.
4. Use the lightpole standard which is based upon "torch" style lamps which were historically used in Old Town (see Figure 40). The lightpoles shall be placed in the sidewalk at close interval (e.g., 75 - 95 feet), and at a low height for pedestrians (e.g., 14 feet).

5. Install banners across streets which serve as entries to downtown. CIP funded project 96-018 has been approved for gateway banners rigged from cables attached to steel poles, which are compatible in design with historically-derived pedestrian light poles. Banners can advertise special and seasonal events, as well as year-round welcoming signs to Downtown.
6. Encourage artworks in the public right-of-way and as part of projects-public or private- subject to comment by the Civic Arts Commission.
7. Consider decorative, bold, paving on Sherman Avenue to strengthen the street's role as a civic plaza. The street is now closed for traffic during special events, such as the weekly Farmers' Market and the annual Art and Wine Festival, and would continue to be used for these and other purposes when the street is paved (see Figures 32 and 33).

UD 11.6: Landscaping

Specific landscaping guidelines for plant materials, street trees, planting near buildings, planting in parking areas and screening are listed below:

11.6.1: Plant Materials

1. All plant materials shall be served by a City approved automatic underground irrigation system. All backflow devices, controllers, and other irrigation elements shall be screened. **IV.D, IV.E**
2. Healthy, mature on-site trees shall be preserved whenever possible. Improvements (buildings, paving, grading, etc.) under the drip line of existing trees shall be minimized. Existing trees shall be fenced off during project construction to prevent soil compaction, root damage, bumping, etc.
3. All new trees shall be double staked or provided with a greater support design.
4. Ground cover shall be spaced to ensure total infill within six months of planting.
5. Only live plant materials (not simulated) shall be used in landscaped areas (trees, shrubs, and ground cover).
6. Selection of plant materials shall be based on year-round beauty (deciduous color, spring flower, branching patterns) as well as form, texture, shape, and ultimate growth. **IV.B**
7. Plant species shall be tolerant of the local environmental-conditions and relatively free from pests and disease. **IV.B**

8. Plant species which are native or well-adapted to local climatic conditions are recommended because they require less water and maintenance.
9. All street trees shall be deep-rooted, canopy-type trees suited to urban conditions.

IV.B

10. Upon adoption, refer to the new Novato Tree and Community Forest Ordinance for development standards for street trees and other tree-related issues.
11. Street trees and on-site front yard trees shall be a minimum of 24 inch box size with a minimum 1-1/2 inch diameter. All other on-site trees shall be a minimum of 15 gallon container size. Shrubs not used as ground cover shall be a minimum of five gallon container size.

11.6.2: Street Trees

The Background Report, Downtown Novato Specific Plan, Sept. 1994 describes the variety of street trees in the Downtown area, their condition and maintenance. The predominant sweetgum street trees are missing at some locations, and are causing invasive root problems where they still stand. Irrigation is lacking on Grant Ave.

1. Choose plant materials which can withstand tight urban spaces, pedestrian traffic, and potentially difficult soils conditions. Plants shall have non-invasive root structures, efficiency of water use, resistance to pests, disease, vehicle emissions and vandals, compatibility with building signs (avoiding obscuring the signs behind foliage), street/sidewalk lighting, building awnings and other features of the streetscape. **IV.B, IV.E**
2. Install deep watering automatic irrigation for new and existing street trees and, where feasible, root barriers. Deep watering will help to discourage horizontal expansion of the tree roots, which frequently cause damage to streets, curbs and sidewalks. **IV.E**
3. Plant trees where they are missing to re-establish streetscape continuity. This would be a long term project to gradually remove sweetgums which are unhealthy and/or which are causing the buckling of sidewalks. In their place, a selected palette of deciduous street trees would be planted on Grant. (see below). Other streets would have different palettes in accordance with an updated Streetscape Master Plan.
4. The Specific Plan supersedes the City's Streetscape Master Plan. April, 1992, for the Specific Plan Area. Update the Streetscape Master Plan, as a general guide for landscape improvements along principal streets and highways in Novato, by incorporating the following recommendations for street trees along six streets in the Downtown. Trees have been chosen for their form, reliability, and maintainability:

Grant Avenue.

- Aristocrat Pear to infill and replace Sweetgums as they are gradually removed.
- Scarlet or Red Oak, as visually strong and spreading trees for bulb-out areas.
- Flowering Crabapples as accent trees in bulb-out areas.
- Linden, to continue the Lindens planted at Citibank.

Redwood Boulevard.

- Redwoods, Cork Oak and Tulip Trees are established. Tulip Trees should be used at locations where aphid droppings can be tolerated (droppings can be a nuisance on parked automobiles).

Sherman Avenue

- Scarlet Oak as the dominant canopy tree.
- Cork Oak as an evergreen background tree.
- Flowering Crabapple as a formal accent tree at the street entry.

De Long Avenue.

- Aristocrat Pear, Pin Oak, Linden, and Hornbeam as trees which are upright in character so as not to block views of City Hall and hills in the distance.

Cross Streets (Reichert, Machin).

- Trees used on Grant and Sherman, for continuity.
- Baywood Ash and Pistache where space allows (subject to street and drainage improvements) and variety and fall color is sought.

North of Old Town (Sweetser and Vallejo Avenues)

- Sweetgum trees already established on the north side of Sweetser, and Red Oak, Hackberry and Baywood Ash.
- Saratoga laurel and Swamp Myrtle as smaller evergreens which could be used to screen any unsightly industrial storage lots on Sweetser.
- Saratoga laurel and Swamp Myrtle as smaller evergreens to fit into tight spaces. Street trees may not be possible on Vallejo due to frequent curb cuts, and auto repair businesses.
- Baywood Ash on Vallejo, where space allows.

5. Discourage the use of planters in the public right-of-way, since sidewalks are narrow and planters may create obstacles for pedestrians and handicapped persons. Trees shall be placed in the ground, protected by tree grates, rather than in planters, and shall be automatically irrigated.

6. Encourage hanging flower planters on light poles, but only if automatically irrigated. Make hanging planters a project of a service club or another volunteer group.
7. Consider planting new trees in small islands or bulb-outs into the street rather than in the sidewalk in order to keep sidewalks as open as possible. Careful layout of parking could potentially avoid removal of on-street parking spaces for the trees.
8. Select distinctive canopy or accent trees for each potential Downtown gateway. Each gateway treatment shall acknowledge the surrounding landscape setting but also be distinctively different.
9. When trees which may be obscuring the visibility of signs have reached sufficient height above the sign to guarantee tree health and growth, lower limbs may be trimmed away, using the best arboricultural practices, to make signage visible. Topping of trees is strictly prohibited.

11.6.3: Planting Near Buildings

1. Landscaping shall generally be provided to screen downtown buildings from views of surrounding hillside homes.
2. Planting shall occur around building perimeters to reduce building scale and to integrate development into surrounding neighborhood. **IV.A**
3. Deciduous trees shall generally be utilized on southern and western exposures to screen summer sun and permit winter light. **IV.B**
4. On-site useable open space shall be provided for special amenities such as courts, plazas, walkways, planting, fountains, sculptures, arbors, trellises, etc. Open spaces shall generally be visible from fronting streets, accessible to pedestrians, and separated from the car. Such spaces need to be located near high use areas, such as building entries or storefronts. **IV.B**
5. Landscape structures shall be incorporated into the building design i.e., trellises, arbors and planters. **IV.B, II.E.3, II.E.5**
6. Landscaping shall accent building entries.
7. Plant materials shall be used to soften the hard building lines and bulk. **IV.A**
8. Plant materials shall be used to define outdoor eating areas and pedestrian paths between parking and building entries. **IV.C, II.E.3, II.E.5**
9. Adequate sight distance for motorists and pedestrians entering and exiting the site must be provided. Landscaping shall not interfere with circulation effectiveness.

11.6.4: Planting In Parking Areas

1. Areas adjacent to and within parking lots shall be landscaped to reduce the visual impact of automobiles. All unused areas of parking lots shall be landscaped. Landscape areas within parking lots shall not measure less than three feet in width, excluding curbs. Peripheral landscaping shall be provided around the perimeter of parking lots in zones a minimum of five feet wide.
2. Canopy shade trees shall be planted in parking lots to achieve a minimum canopy coverage of 30 percent of the parking lot area at maturity.(31)
3. A minimum of five percent of the area within parking lots shall be landscaped with plant material.
4. Parking areas shall be screened from streets by using a combination of mounds, plant materials, low walls, fences, and by lowering the parking surface elevation. Screening of parking lots at street frontages shall have a minimum height of 3 feet above street grade.
5. Parking areas shall be designed and landscaped to minimize summer glare and the visual impact of large numbers of vehicles.
6. In addition to canopy trees, further reduction in glare and reflected heat from parking surfaces shall be accomplished by the use of arbors and overhangs.
7. No more than eight parking spaces shall be located in a row without a landscaped divider strip and canopy tree.
8. Concrete or masonry curbing (excluding asphaltic/concrete curbing) shall be installed around all landscaped areas to contain landscape material and to provide protection from vehicles.

11.6.5: Landscape Screening

There are unsightly outdoor storage lots, parking lots and vacant lots fronting on Grant Avenue and Reichert Avenue. Some are bordered by 6 foot high chain link fences. The lots present an unattractive face to visitors to Downtown, and interrupt the pedestrian experience.

The following policies encourage the screening of these eyesores (see also potential funding for landscape screening under Chapter 6 Facade Improvements Program):

1. Screen parking lots with substantially-built low wood fences, with heavy wire mesh between supports, which will act as a trellis for climbing plants. Fences approximately 3 feet to 3½ feet high will screen most parked cars yet allow views over to commercial businesses beyond (see example in Figure 41).

2. Encourage replacement of 6 foot high chain link fences with wood fences set back from the sidewalk a minimum of 18 inches, within which suitable durable and drought resistant shrubs shall be planted.

UD 11.7: Signage

Private signage in Downtown Novato, as in many downtown areas, currently lacks the character and quality necessary to support revitalization efforts. A variety of common problems can be found:

- Repetitive signage
- Signage too large for the building
- Crudely constructed and installed signage
- Individual signs poorly sized with respect to their surface of attachment
- Inappropriate signage for downtown environment
- Oversized signs with respect to the downtown pedestrian environment
- Visually chaotic temporary signage
- Old and outdated signs
- Board and Box signs unrelated to the architecture of the building
- Signage poorly related to background
- Inappropriate banner signs
- Too much information on a single sign

While few of the conditions and problems outlined above are exceptionally destructive to any single structure, the combination of problems contributes to an overall image which appears old, tired and is in marked contrast to many competing commercial centers. An overall improvement in private signage with well designed and imaginative graphics could do more than any other single element to improve the visual appearance of Downtown Novato.

The intent of the following signage guidelines is to assist downtown businesses in selecting appropriate signage and to allow downtown signage to be different from outlying commercial areas in recognition of its special role in a more pedestrian - oriented environment.

1. All signs must conform to the proposed amended Novato Sign Ordinance incorporating the Downtown Specific Plan area requirements. All signs shall be professionally designed and fabricated. Specially designed logos, symbols and icons shall be encouraged. **V.A.4**
2. The design of all signs (including materials, colors, configuration and illumination) shall conform to the architectural style and period of the buildings they identify. Incompatible corporate logos or standardized script shall be avoided. With such a wide variety of materials to choose from, businesses are discouraged from using

plastic signs which appear mass produced, and are encouraged to use more original interesting materials which enhance the unique visual quality of Downtown as pedestrian-friendly. Paper signs, except as temporary notices, are prohibited. **V.A.1, V generally**

3. Free standing signs shall be designed in accordance with design guidelines, minimized in height, and integrated with the landscape by means of accent planting, the use of trees or other design elements. **V.G**
4. The size, shape and location of all signs shall be compatible with the building proportions and features. **V.A.1**
5. The preferred method of sign illumination involves use of soft exterior lighting, where the light source and all appurtenant devices are screened from public view. Internally illuminated cabinet signs are strongly discouraged. However, individual letter signs having internal illumination may be considered appropriate for larger buildings, and where consistent with local design guidelines. **V.A.3, V.B.2, V.B.3, V.C.4**
6. Visible braces and other support devices shall be avoided, but, if required, shall be incorporated as a design feature. **V.C.3, V.E.3, V.E.4**
7. Multi-tenant buildings shall all have master sign programs. Provisions shall be made for coordination of sign dimensions, materials, textures, colors, illumination, and method and location of mounting. **V.B.6**
8. Signage shall be integrated with landscape elements such as walls, planters, and street furniture.

11.7.1: Public Informational Signs

There are no consistently designed public signs in Novato. Directional signs vary in size, design and location. There is a low wood monument sign provided by the Chamber of Commerce with a "Welcome to Novato" message, which is oriented to drivers proceeding west on De Long Avenue near Pini Mill.

1. Design a sign system to orient people and drivers to the important features of Novato, including Downtown, and public and private parking facilities in Downtown. The logo of the former Presbyterian Church building - now City Hall - shall be incorporated into directional signs, and place names.
2. Install banners across main streets at key points of entry into Downtown to draw visitors into Downtown (see Chapter 6 Capital Improvements Program funded project 96-018). Although the CIP program refers to "community banner poles," the banners are to emphasize entrances to Downtown from perimeter streets (especially De Long

and Seventh). Potential locations for banners include across De Long between Reichert and Highway 101, across Sherman at De Long, across Reichert at De Long, across Machin at De Long, across Redwood at De Long, across Grant at Seventh, and across Redwood at Olive. (See Figure 32 Sherman Avenue Plaza Illustrative Plan and Figure 37 Potential West Grant Traffic Calming). The banners would be stretched from steel poles consistent in design with historically-derived light poles. Banners could change from a message of welcome to Downtown Novato to a notice of the annual Art and Wine Festival and many other Downtown and community events.

3. There are opportunities for vertical banners as optional hardware add-ons to street light fixtures. This provides for a rich assortment of inexpensive, high quality banners to be situated at street light locations where new lamp poles have been installed. Additionally, where horizontal banners are impossible to install due to street width (for example, at the intersection of Grant Avenue and Redwood Boulevard), the lamp posts installed at each corner of the intersection could hold vertical banners.
4. Support installation of electronic information kiosks which identify businesses in Downtown. These kiosks would be located on public sidewalks in proximity to parking areas.
5. Historical Signage: Historic buildings and structures shall be noted with signage. (Structures would include bridges, water towers or other built objects.) Important sites may also be noted. Signage shall be attached to the building or structure in a highly visible location, if such attachment would not cause damage to the building or detract from an historic feature, and if such attachment does not cause the public to intrude on private property (for example: to enter the front yard of a private residence to reach a sign attached to a house). If attachment would damage or detract, then placement would be freestanding as close to the building as possible. If attachment to the building causes public intrusion, then the signage shall be placed where visible on public property.

Ideally signs shall fall into a vertical viewing range of about 4 - 5 1/2 feet from the ground and letters shall be one-half inch high if viewed from about five feet away. The vertical height of the lettering shall increase one inch for every 10 feet of distance from the viewer.

The content of the signs shall ideally be kept to 150 words or less including titles. Texts longer than this will discourage most casual observers and might impede the sale of more detailed walking tour brochures. Figure 42 shows a sample of sign content. The font and format of this signage shall match or complement other signage in the City, and/or California State Historical signage. The Historical Guild shall be contacted in the review and approval process for all historical signage.

Section 2.5.6 identifies Downtown Novato historic buildings and their sites with their present street numbers.

11.7.2: Commercial Signs

Business signs in Downtown Novato vary from wall-mounted, projecting, hanging blade, and freestanding. Some retail windows have so much signage that they are illegible, and mask any views of merchandise in the stores. Some signs are internally-illuminated box signs and others are externally illuminated. Some are non-conforming because they are improperly mounted over the top of building parapets.

IM 17 requires that the Novato Municipal Code be amended to include sign regulations for the Downtown that promote pedestrian-scale signs. The following guidelines are intended to supplement the sign regulations that will be contained in the Zoning Code.

1. Design signs with lettering sized to be seen primarily by pedestrians and relatively slow moving cars. **V.C.1, V.D.2**
2. Item 2 was deleted.
3. For historic buildings, consider historic wood signs, constructed of marine-grade plywood, or solid wood, bordered with trim. **V.C.3, V.E.4**
4. Projecting Sign Guidelines: Projecting signs shall be graphically designed for pedestrians and shall be allowed conditional upon adequate design quality. Projecting signs shall not be mounted above the sill line of the second floor of multi-story buildings. Sign supports shall be well designed and compatible with the design of the sign. Interior illuminated boxed display signs shall not be allowed. Icon signs using shapes or symbols uniquely suited to the business, creative shapes and three dimensional signs shall be encouraged. Exterior lighting of the projecting signs shall be encouraged. **V.C**
5. Prohibit any signage which displays a company/firm/product name, logo, symbols, icons, or other identifying commercial markings other than those of the occupant of the business to which it is attached. This would preclude any suppliers, etc., from subsidizing a sign which might include a tawdry advertisement, logo, etc. **V.C.1, V.F.1**
6. Prohibit freestanding signs in the Specific Plan Area, except for properties designated General Commercial, subject to design review. **V.G**
7. Prohibit free-standing commercial signs (including portable sidewalk A-frame signs) in the public sidewalk except for those associated with Downtown special events (i.e., sidewalk sales, farmers' market, etc.). Upon adoption of the revised Zoning Ordinance and enforcement of new sign provisions, provide written notice to Downtown merchants informing them that A-frame sidewalk signs are no longer permitted, except for Downtown special events, and provide a 90-day amnesty period for

removal of A-frame signs without citation. After the 90-day period, portable sidewalk signs not associated with Downtown special events shall be prohibited. **V.G**

8. Window signs shall be restricted to 20 percent of the total window area. Signage shall consist of individual letters, logos or symbols applied to the glass surface. Neon signs with transparent backgrounds shall be allowed when hung inside the window glass line. **V.D**
9. Awning Sign Guidelines: To avoid visual clutter, restrict signage to either an awning sign or a storefront sign, but not both. The use of logos or symbols depicting the unique nature of a business are encouraged on the sloped face of awnings. Translucent awning materials which are lit from within and appear as large lighted sign boards shall be discouraged. **V.F**
10. Wall Sign Guidelines: Any building with exterior walls adjacent to a street, an alley or an off-street parking area on which it has frontage shall be allowed to have a wall sign in each of those locations. Wall signs may include individual solid letters, individual internally illuminated letters, a boxed display (i.e., a metal frame containing internal illumination and a facing material containing the lettering), a board sign (i.e., individual letters displayed on a flat surface which is then mounted to the building face) or lettering painted directly onto the building face. Solid or internally illuminated individual letters shall be encouraged. Boxed or board signs shall be discouraged. If internally illuminated boxed signs are used, light letters on a dark background shall be encouraged. Light colored backgrounds which make the sign appear larger shall be discouraged. **V.B**

UD 11.8: Lighting

Specific lighting guidelines are listed below:

1. In designated commercial districts, accent lighting for buildings and landscaping shall be designed to enhance the night time atmosphere.
2. Parking and walkway areas shall be illuminated by 1 foot candle minimum lighting to avoid dark spots and excessive dark/light ratios.
3. Only low level indirect lighting shall be used adjacent to residential properties. The level of lighting and location of light source shall not result in glare toward residential areas.
4. The approved lighting standard with modular add-on options for hanging flower baskets and public signage is VISCO #VI-C-C3-S/12'-0," 100 WHPS.
5. Any light source over 10 feet high shall incorporate a cut-off shield to prevent the light source from being directly visible from off site areas.

6. When seen from the outside, the lighting of interior spaces shall not brightly contrast with adjacent buildings.

5.2 UD 12: BUILDING ENHANCEMENT STANDARDS

Many existing commercial buildings in Novato have distinctive architectural qualities which make important contributions to and compliment the "small town character" of the community. In many cases, these qualities could be further improved upon or emphasized in a variety of ways to their benefit. Improvements to building exteriors, landscaping, accessories, signs, utilities, and parking all add to the quality of downtown Novato. When considering such work, the following criteria shall be used as a guide:

UD 12.1: Building Design and Facades

Building design and facade improvements to existing storefronts and other property frontages, are important to enhance the pedestrian character of the Downtown. Opportunities for business and property owners to potentially obtain matching funding from the City to improve their building facades are described in Chapter 6. Facade Improvements Program.

1. Exterior building surfaces shall be cleaned and repainted as necessary.
2. Color schemes shall be harmonious with surrounding structures consistent with the architectural time period of the building.
3. Deteriorated siding, trim, doors, windows, awnings and roof materials shall be repaired or replaced.
4. Original architectural features, fixtures and hardware shall be retained or replaced with compatible elements. **III.B.1**
5. Unnecessary non-original attachments to the building shall be removed (such as antennas, air conditioners,. electrical conduits, etc.)
6. New siding, awnings, trim and accents shall be consistent with the basic design of the building as reflected in its style and period of construction as well as being compatible with other buildings in the neighborhood. **III.B.3**
7. Proposed changes from the original design of the building shall be carried out consistently throughout the project and in a manner that compliments the original design.
8. Additions and alterations shall reflect the same basic design theme of the building including scale, style, form, materials and color. **III.B.4**

9. Encourage periodic upgrades and changes to storefronts, such as changes to awnings every 5 years. Periodic changes reflect the competitive, industry-wide practice of enhancing storefronts to attract new customers and retain old ones.
10. Remodel building facades to make them more attractive, including removal of elements which mask underlying historic features. Replace worn windows and doors, cracked tiles and stucco. (See [Figure 43A](#) and [Figure 43B](#), an example of renovation of businesses at the southeast corner of Second Street and Grant Avenue.) Such facade improvements would be eligible for matching funding under the proposed Facade Improvements Program discussed in Chapter 6.

UD 12.2: Landscaping

1. When landscaping exists, dead and obsolete plant materials, irrigation equipment and planter boxes shall be repaired or replaced.
2. Unnecessary or inappropriate pavement in landscaped areas shall be replaced with plant material.
3. Sidewalks shall be repaired wherever necessary to avoid accidents and preserve aesthetic qualities.
4. Special attention shall be directed to adding street trees, planting strips, pavement treatment and street furnishings to enhance the overall landscape setting in the neighborhood.
5. Refer to Figures 38, 39, 40 for coordinated street tree planting details and grates, decorative pavement patterns, trash receptacles, newspaper racks, outdoor lighting standards, bicycle racks and other decorative "streetscape" improvement details.

UD 12.3: Accessories

1. Deteriorated fencing, retaining walls, trash screens, etc., shall be repaired whenever necessary.
2. Accessories shall be of a style, material and color which are harmonious with the building architecture and the neighborhood character.
3. Screening shall be provided for outdoor storage areas, trash containers, air-conditioners and other unsightly equipment.

UD 12.4: Signs

1. Unneeded, obsolete, unsafe and deteriorated signs and other similar advertising devices shall be removed for safety and aesthetic reasons.

2. New signs shall be of appropriate type, size, style, material, location, color and method of lighting to harmonize with the building architectural theme and time period as well as the nature of the business conducted in the building.

UD 12.5: Utilities

1. Necessary utility lines, meters, boxes, transformers, antennas, conduits, etc. shall be installed in areas that will require the least alteration to the structural integrity and physical appearance of the building and which will be the least visible to outlying public areas.
2. Architectural screening shall be used to conceal publicly visible utilities and mechanical and electrical equipment.

UD 12.6: Parking

1. Pot holes and cracks in parking surfaces and pedestrian walks shall be repaired. Grease smudges shall be removed.
2. Worn and faded parking surface graphics (e.g., parking space lines, handicapped parking designations, etc.) shall be repainted and repaired where necessary.
3. Preserving and expanding parking shall be a primary consideration when planning changes to commercial property. Landscape solutions shall be integrated with existing or reconfigured parking whenever possible. A more efficient circulation and parking layout along with the addition of compact spaces can increase parking spaces and generate usable areas for landscaping to help screen and beautify parking.

Attachment 4

2. NOVATO GENERAL PLAN 2035 (BB)

Commissioners provided the following feedback on the Draft 2035 General Plan:

- The Draft Plan is complete, well-organized, attractive and well-written.
- Policy LU-14 Entertainment and Cultural Facilities (page 2-29): Incorporate plazas to the list of desired entertainment and cultural facilities in the downtown.
- Policy LU-15 Civic Center (page 2-29): Include repurposing of the surrounding historic structures owned by the City in the proposed Civic Center.
- Policy LU 26 Railroad Depot (page 2-31): Suggest possible uses for the former Railroad Depot building.
- Policy CC 12 Compatibility of Development with Surroundings (page 2-45): Add programs calling for the preparation of design guidelines for parking lots and street landscaping.
- Program EL 15c Ridgeline Map (page 3-28): Endorsed the need to determine ridgelines which are scenic resources to determine applicability of the Hillside/Ridgeline Ordinance.
- Downtown Design Guidelines III A1e (page 10): Add a reference to the need for depth and relief on building facades along the sidewalk (recessed doors, cornices, awnings, inset windows) to avoid a “flat” elevation.
- Downtown Design Guidelines IIIA9a Building Base (page 16): Concern this guideline calling for raised display window areas is too prescriptive, and relates too much to very traditional storefront design.
- Downtown Design Guidelines or General Plan: There should be a criteria included that discourages or precludes disruption of the pedestrian-oriented building facades on Grant Avenue with parking lots or parking structures.