

Appendix A. Downtown Design Guidelines

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Appendix A. Downtown Design Guidelines

I. Introduction

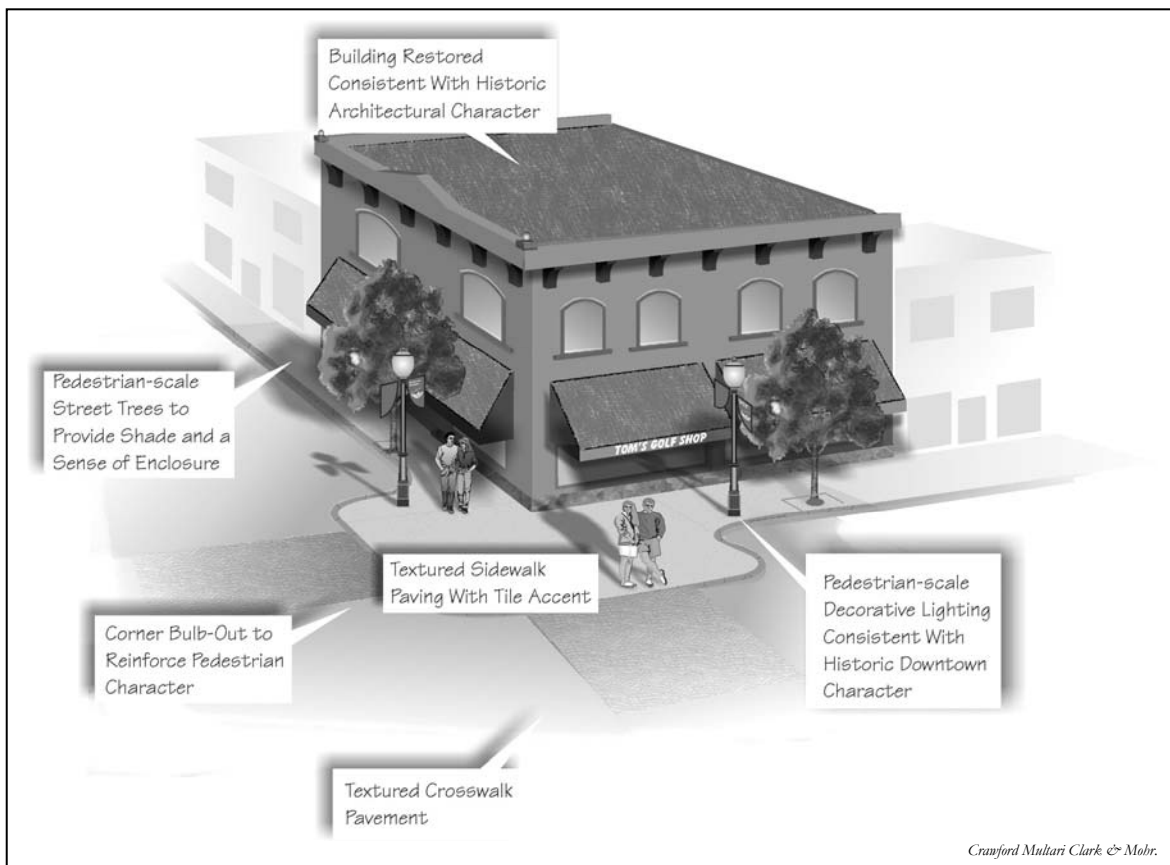
These design guidelines are intended to:

- assist in the revitalization of downtown Atascadero
- provide for infill commercial development of high architectural quality that is compatible with existing attractive buildings,
- promote the conservation and reuse of existing buildings with preferred design quality.

In general, preservation and rehabilitation efforts should aim toward protecting the essential architectural features of a commercial building that help to identify its individual style and thereby further its contribution to the character of the Downtown.

The design guidelines in this Chapter will be applied as part of the review of downtown projects (additions, remodeling, relocation, and construction) through the Design Review process or a discretionary land use permit. The design elements of each project (including site design, architecture, landscaping, signs, and parking design) will be reviewed.

The review authority may interpret these design guidelines with some flexibility in their application to specific projects, as not all design criteria may be workable or appropriate for each project. In some circumstances, one guideline may be relaxed to help comply with another guideline determined by the review authority to be more important in the particular case. The overall objective is that the intent and spirit of the design guidelines are followed.

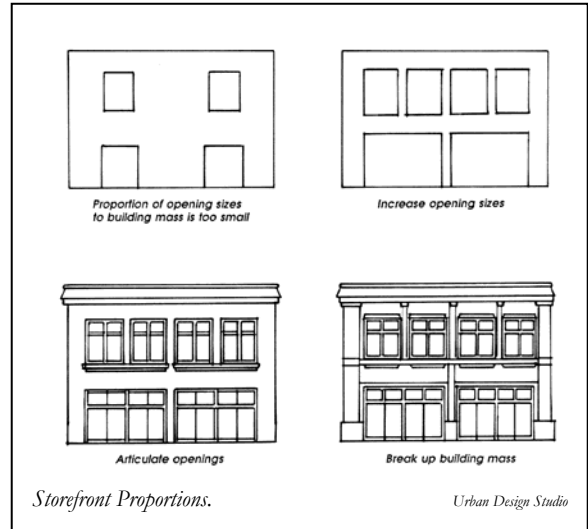


II. Site Organization & Orientation

The organization and orientation of downtown buildings and spaces is crucial in ensuring that downtown streets are welcoming and friendly to pedestrians. Active public spaces and streets that are heavily used by pedestrians are vital to the success of the downtown. High levels of pedestrian activity — shopping, eating, “people watching,” exercising, strolling, relaxing, walking from place to place — are valued and encouraged throughout the downtown. These activities create interest, provide a sense of safety on the street, and add to community image and identity. The following guidelines provide a framework for site layout for new projects.

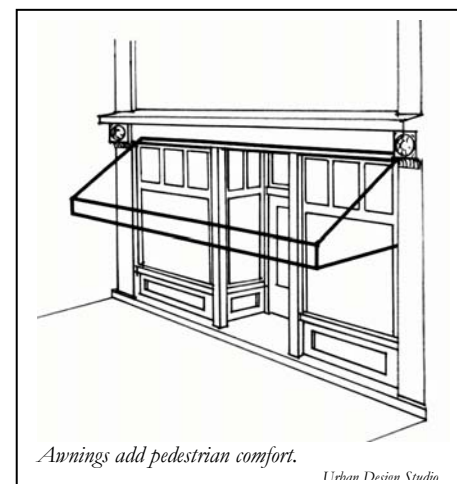
Orientation

1. Building facades, including storefronts, should be designed to orient to the street frontage, with the primary building entry also oriented toward the street.
2. Buildings on corners should include storefront design features for at least 50 percent of the wall area on the side street elevation.
3. Long, blank, unarticulated street wall facades are strongly discouraged unless unavoidable because of specific site circumstances. Monolithic street wall facades should be "broken" by vertical and horizontal articulation, characterized by:
 - Sculpted, carved or penetrated wall surfaces defined by recesses and reveals;
 - Breaks (reveals, recesses);
 - Window and door openings; or
 - Balconies, awnings and canopies.
4. Large unbroken facade surfaces should be avoided at the storefront level. This can be achieved in a number of ways including:
 - Dividing the facade into a series of display windows with smaller panes of glass;
 - Constructing the facade with small human scale materials such as brick or decorative tile along bulkheads;
 - Providing traditional recessed entries;
 - Careful sizing, placement and overall design of signage; and
 - Providing consistent door and window reveals.
5. Buildings along the creek should be designed to relate to the creek with decks, doors and windows facing the creek rather than blank walls.

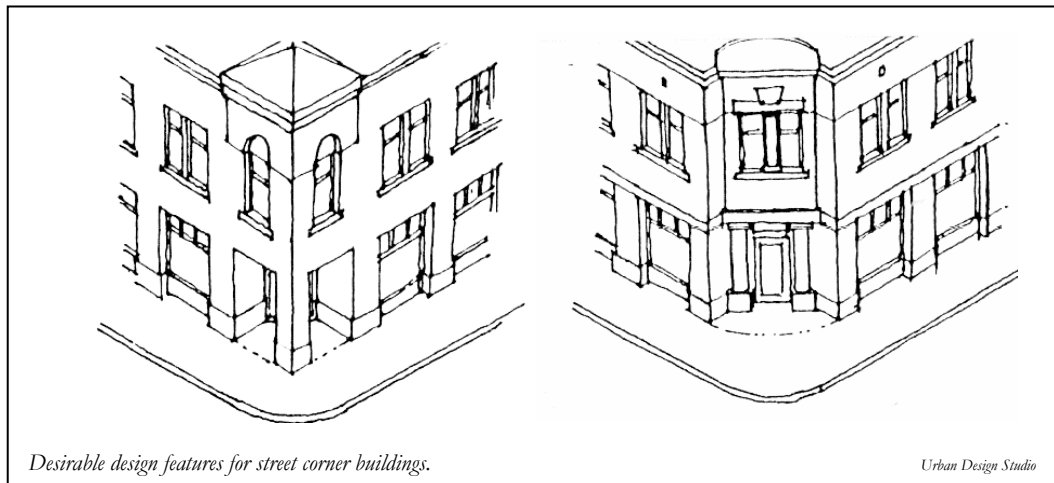


Street Edge

1. The first floor of new buildings should be placed directly at the front property line — abutting the sidewalk — unless variations are permitted by the City for plazas, public art, to retain existing trees, or other pedestrian-oriented purpose.
2. Canopies, trellises and other accessory structures that are relatively open and do not restrict pedestrian or vehicular movement may project over the right-of-way with City approval.
3. Any building located at a corner intersection should incorporate architectural features at the ground floor that emphasize the



importance of pedestrian movement. These may include building cut-offs, walk-through covered arcades, trellis structures and other elements that focus visual interest on the corners.

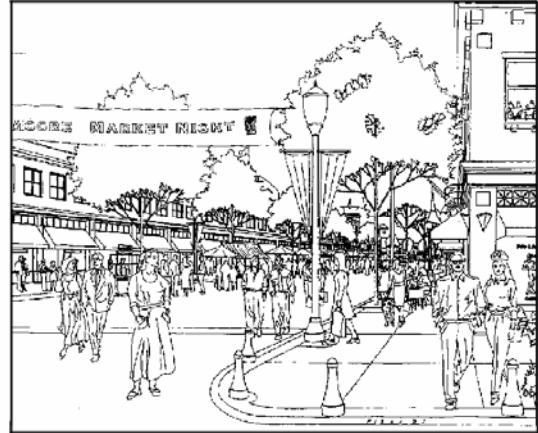


Public Spaces

Public space associated with buildings in the Downtown should provide an attractive transition from the outside to the inside of buildings, should be complementary to the buildings and should be supportive of pedestrian activity. These spaces should be designed as extensions of the public space of the sidewalk (e.g., by providing pedestrian amenities such as benches and fountains, and by continuing the pavement treatment of the sidewalk), to indicate that the space is available to all pedestrians.

Courtyards and Plazas

- Plazas should be designed to supplement, rather than detract from street activity.
- Plazas should be fronted by retail shops, restaurants, offices or other activity-generating uses; blank walls should be minimized adjacent to pedestrian spaces.
- Plazas should be designed with unimpeded lines-of-sight to and from the public sidewalk. Security fences, walls, and entry gates shall not block the sidewalk edge of the plaza or views into the plaza. At least 15 feet of building frontage should be transparent or visually penetrable to provide entry to and views into the plaza.
- Entries to the plaza, and storefront entries within the plaza, should be designed and lit so they do not create hiding places.
- Plazas should incorporate visual features such as public art or a fountain, to attract pedestrians.



RRM Design Group

- f. Shade trees or other elements providing relief from the sun should be incorporated within plazas, in a manner that does not impair pedestrian movement.
- g. Most of the plaza should have access to sunlight for the duration of daylight hours. A mix of direct sunlight and shade should be provided. No more than 30 percent of a plaza should be covered with a roof. Canopies, awnings, cantilevered overhangs, or balconies may project over the ground floor.
- h. Paving and furniture used in private plazas should complement streetscape elements used in the public right-of-way.
- i. Plazas, including all entrances and exits, should be fully illuminated one-half hour after sunset to one-half hour before sunrise to facilitate natural surveillance opportunities and to discourage undesirable activities. Lighting should be designed to help define, order and further develop the design concept of the space in a manner that appears welcoming to pedestrians.
- j. Signage or other mechanisms should identify that the plaza is available for public use during business hours.
- k. Landscaping for the plazas should provide special interest through plant materials with special foliage color, seasonal changes in plant habitat, scent, or floral display.

Public Art

The City was founded as California's first planned community in 1913 by E.G. Lewis who was inspired by the City Beautiful Movement. The City encourages the placement of public art in new and existing buildings, parks, streets and other development projects for the enjoyment of its citizens and visitors to further the development and public awareness of, and interest in, the visual arts and fine crafts to increase employment opportunities in the arts, and to encourage the integration of art into the architecture of the Downtown. The City's collection of art including sculptures, fountains, objects and murals will be a museum with no walls, no fees and no hours posted, accessible to everyone every day. New buildings are encouraged to include exterior art works that invite participation and interaction, reveal local culture or history, and capture or reinforce the unique character of the City, the downtown, or the site.

III. Building Design & Architecture

Interrelationships between individual buildings in the Downtown contribute to community identity, levels of pedestrian activity, and economic vitality. When architectural features (for example, entry spacing, window lines, and signs) of downtown buildings are complementary, the larger district image becomes more positive and unified. Building facades, in particular, influence cohesiveness, legibility and aesthetic pride; likewise, storefront design can encourage shopping, increase a sense of security, and generate pedestrian activity. Where commercial buildings are neighbors to residential buildings, consideration of scale, detail, and materials are even more important.

Mass and Scale

Building scale and massing can enhance the unique character and pedestrian-orientation of the Downtown. Smaller-scale buildings, or buildings perceived to be of small-scale, are most suitable to creating the desired atmosphere. Human-scaled buildings are comfortable and create a friendly atmosphere that enhances the marketability of downtowns. To this end, buildings—and their parts—should impart a sense of human scale and assume a reinforcing relationship with the sidewalk, street, and pedestrian activity. The relationship of the building elements to the overall building should create a clear set of meaningful relationships between the building and the elements and the elements to each other. The elements of the building should not appear as random or unrelated to each other.

The height and scale of new infill structures and alterations to existing structures should complement existing buildings and provide human scale and proportion. Infill structures should provide storefront windows, doors, entries, transoms, awnings, cornice treatments and other architectural features that complement existing structures, without duplicating a particular architectural style. The following are guidelines for building mass and scale.

General Design Principles

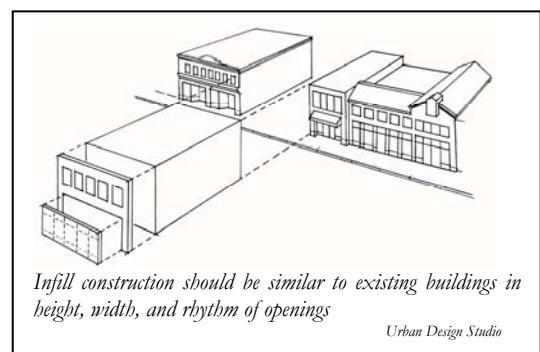
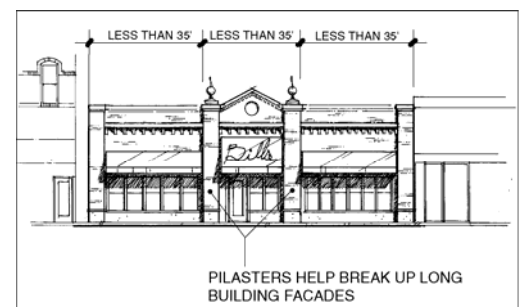
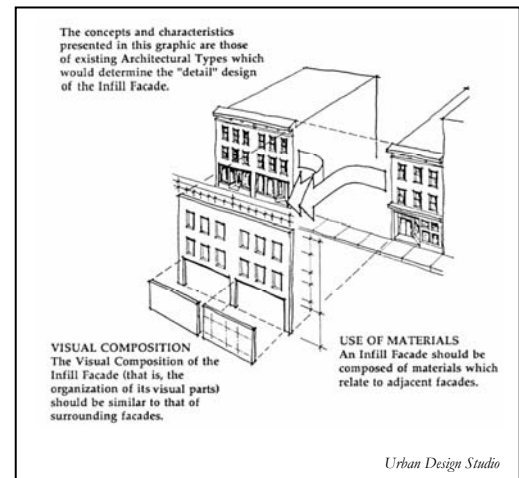
- New buildings and alterations to existing buildings should be designed with consideration of the characteristic proportions (relationship of height to width) of existing adjacent facades, as well as the rhythm, proportion and spacing of their existing door and window openings
- An infill building that is proposed to be much "wider" than the existing characteristic facades on the street should be designed with its facade divided into a series of appropriately proportioned "structural bays" or components, defined by a series of columns or masonry piers that frame windows, doors and bulkheads. Creating and reinforcing a facade rhythm helps tie the commercial street together visually and provides pedestrians with a standard measurement of their progress.
- The buildings in downtown Atascadero are mostly one-story, with some two-story. Two and three story buildings are preferred.

Building Proportions

Maintain a clear visual distinction between upper story openings and street level storefront openings (windows and doors). There is usually a greater window area (70%) at the storefront level for pedestrians to have a better view of the merchandise displayed behind as opposed to upper stories with smaller window openings (40%).

Architectural Features

- Features such as balconies, open and enclosed turrets, finials and bay windows that help give human scale and interest to buildings are encouraged.
- Decorative ornamentation and the decorative use of color and integral color materials are encouraged. Architectural composition that employs ornamentation either abstract or representational, to help order the facade or emphasize the relative importance of different building elements is encouraged.



Architectural Elements/Materials

The types of materials and architectural elements incorporated into commercial buildings contribute to visual interest, community image, business identity and architectural quality. The following guidelines are intended to provide a framework for creating a cohesive commercial character while providing flexibility and promoting unique architectural features.

Entries and Doorways

a. The main entry to a building should emphasize the point of arrival in one or more of the following ways:

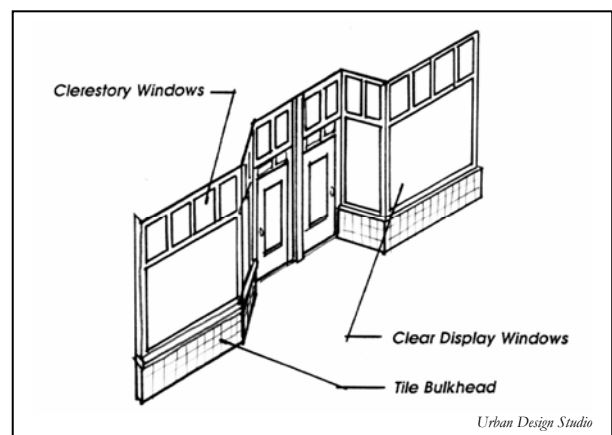
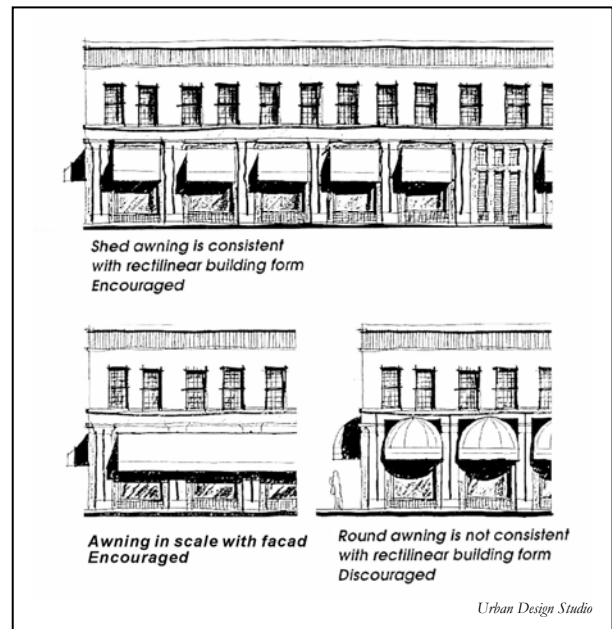
- placement of art or decorative detailing,
- turret or balcony over the entrance,
- change of material or detailing,
- greater concentration of ornaments,
- flanked columns, decorative fixtures or other details,
- recesses within a larger arched or cased decorative opening,
- a portico (formal porch) projecting from or set into the building face,
- changes in roofline, a tower, or a break in the surface of the subject wall, and/or
- architectural features above it,

Doors and Windows

- a. Doors to retail shops should contain a high percentage of glass in order to view the retail contents or be decorative.
- b. When windows are added or changed, it is important that the design be compatible with the facade theme of the block (streetscape).
- c. Use of clear glass (at least 88 percent light transmission) on the first floor is recommended.
- d. Storefront windows should be as large as possible and no closer than 18 inches from the ground (bulkhead height). By limiting the bulkhead height, the visibility to the storefront displays and retail interior is maximized. Maximum bulkhead heights for infill construction should be 36 inches.
- e. Introducing or changing the location or size of windows or other openings that alter the architectural rhythm or character of the original building is discouraged.
- f. Permanent, fixed security grates or grilles in front of windows are not permitted. Any necessary security grilles should be placed inside, behind the window display area.
- g. Traditional storefront transom windows should be retained whenever feasible. If the ceiling inside the structure has been lowered, the ceiling should be stepped up to meet the transom so that light will penetrate the interior of the building.

Awnings and Canopies

- a. Where the facade of a commercial building is divided into distinct structural bays (sections defined by vertical architectural elements, such as masonry piers), awnings should be placed within the vertical elements rather than overlapping them. The awning design should respond to the scale, proportion and rhythm created by these structural bay elements and *nestle* into the space created by the structural bay.



- b. Awning shape should relate to the window or door opening. Barrel-shaped awnings should be used to complement arched windows while square awnings should be used on rectangular windows.
- c. Awnings may not be internally illuminated.

Roofs

Roof materials and colors are important aspects of the overall building design. Materials and colors should be consistent with the architectural character of the building. Roof materials such as brightly colored roofing tiles or unfinished metal panel roofing should not be used.

Flat or gable roofs with parapets are preferred. Long, unbroken, horizontal rooflines are discouraged except when consistent with a particular historical style. Roof details, including dormers, towers, chimneys, and clerestory windows are encouraged. Exposed structural elements (beams, trusses, frames, rafter “tails,” etc.) are encouraged. Elements such as parapet caps, projecting cornices and corner details should be used to define the edge of flat roofs.

Grillwork/Metalwork and Other Details

There are a number of details, often thought of as mundane, which may be incorporated into the design to add a degree of visual richness and interest while meeting functional needs. Such details include the following items:

- a. Light fixtures, wall mounted or hung with decorative metal brackets.
- b. Metal grillwork, at vent openings or as decorative features at windows, doorways or gates.
- c. Decorative scuppers, catches and down-spouts, preferably of copper.
- d. Balconies, rails, finials, corbels, plaques, etc.
- e. Flag or banner pole brackets.

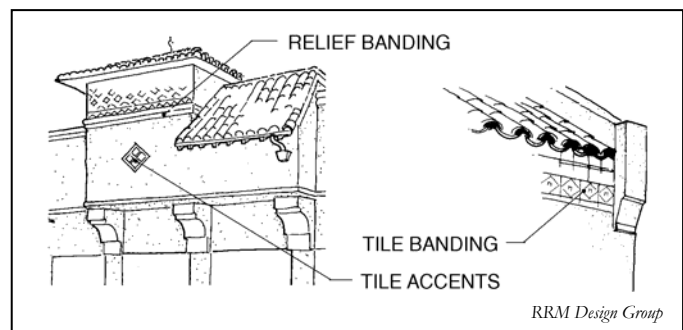
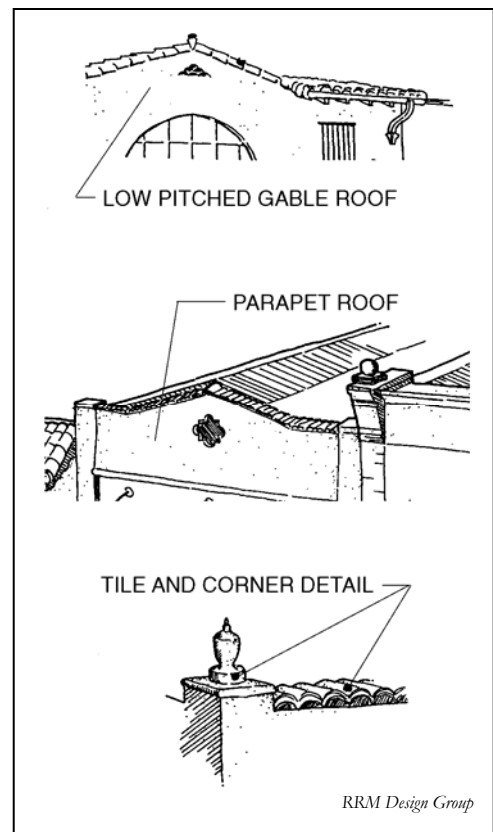
Exterior Walls and Materials

The exterior wall design elements of commercial buildings involve two aspects — color and texture. Materials with integral color such as hard smooth troweled plaster, brick, tile and stone are encouraged. If the building's exterior design is complicated, with many design features, the wall texture should be simple and subdued. However, if the building design is simple (perhaps more monolithic), a finely textured material, such as patterned masonry, can greatly enrich the building's overall character.

Storefront materials should complement the materials used on significant adjacent buildings. The following materials are considered appropriate for commercial buildings within Atascadero. The number of different wall materials used on any one building should be kept to a minimum.

- clear glass
- glass block (transom)
- exterior plaster
- new or used face-brick
- cut stone, rusticated block (cast stone)
- ceramic tiles (bulkhead)
- clapboard (where appropriate)

The following exterior building materials are



considered inappropriate in Downtown Atascadero commercial areas and are discouraged:

- Mirror glass and heavily tinted glass. (see Zoning Ordinance for restrictions)
- Windows with false divisions (i.e., a window where the glass continues uninterrupted behind a surface mounted mullion)
- Vinyl and aluminum siding
- Painted or baked enamel metal awnings
- Rough “Spanish lace” stucco finish
- Unpainted plywood
- Corrugated sheet metal
- Corrugated fiberglass
- Exposed concrete block without integral color

A coordinated color scheme that responds to the style of the structure should be developed for each building. Painted trim colors should complement base colors. The colors of signing, awnings, planters, accent materials and primary façade colors should all be considered.

Lighting

- a. Lighting should be designed as an integral part of the overall site and building design. It should contribute to and help define the character and the spaces created by the building and its site development. The design should have a conscious purpose of helping to strengthen the constituent elements of the design through means such as highlighting areas of the site that are more important or by picking out areas of the site that have a different character from the rest of the site. Lighting should complement architectural elements, changes in material of the ground plane and landscaping. The intensity, color placement of the light and the placement and design of the light fixtures should be part of this effort.
- b. Lighting should be used to provide illumination for the security and safety of on-site areas such as entrances, exits, parking, loading, pathways, and working areas.
- c. Lighting should be provided for the pedestrian to create a sense of welcoming on the public sidewalk, that the pedestrian is literally being accompanied by light. Providing a greater number of softer light sources is strongly encouraged over having only a few very bright lights.
- d. The design of light fixtures and their structural supports should be architecturally compatible with the main buildings on the site. Illuminators should be integrated within the architectural design for the buildings.
- e. As a security device, lighting should be adequate but not overly bright. Building entrances should be well lighted. The lighting should be designed so that the lighting is an attractive element in its own right, acting as a public amenity.
- f. All lighting should be shielded to confine light spread within the site boundaries. Lighting should be provided from one-half hour after sunset to one-half hour before sunrise at all exits, entrances, loading areas, parking lots, plazas, and alleys. An average of one foot candle evenly distributed across the site is a suggested minimum; with up to two foot candles at entrances, exits and loading areas.
- g. The following lighting fixtures and lamps are considered inappropriate in Downtown Atascadero commercial areas and are discouraged:
 - Mercury vapor lights (metal halide or high-pressure sodium lamps are preferable for most applications)
 - Fluorescent light tubes that are exposed without filtering lenses



- Fluorescent lamps without non-color corrected bulbs (color correction may also be accomplished by a color-correcting lens)
- h. Focus light downward. A good rule of thumb is to make sure that direct light shines a minimum of 20 degrees below a horizontal plane and in no case above the horizontal plane.
- i. Test installations for glare. After installation, check to make sure that glare will not be a problem for neighbors, pedestrians, or motorists.
- j. Illuminate signs from above, not below.
- k. Avoid reflective surfaces beneath down-lit signs.

Rear Entrances

Rear entrance design should consider a number of issues. In general, the rear entrance must respond to the same needs as the storefront, but at a reduced scale. It must also meet the functional service needs of the business, including providing a loading area. Since these two functions are often in conflict, the design of the rear entrance must be carefully planned. A particular concern is the storage and disposal of refuse. All trash cans, dumpsters, and other containers must be hidden and screened from public view. Exterior utilities must be screened. Regular maintenance is extremely important.

The design of a rear entrance should be appropriate to its surroundings. The visual character of rear facades, alleys, and parking lots is relatively casual and utilitarian, especially when compared to formal street facades. In this context, a refined or grand design can look out of place. The design should instead be pleasantly inviting, and architecturally compatible with the front, but very simple in detail.



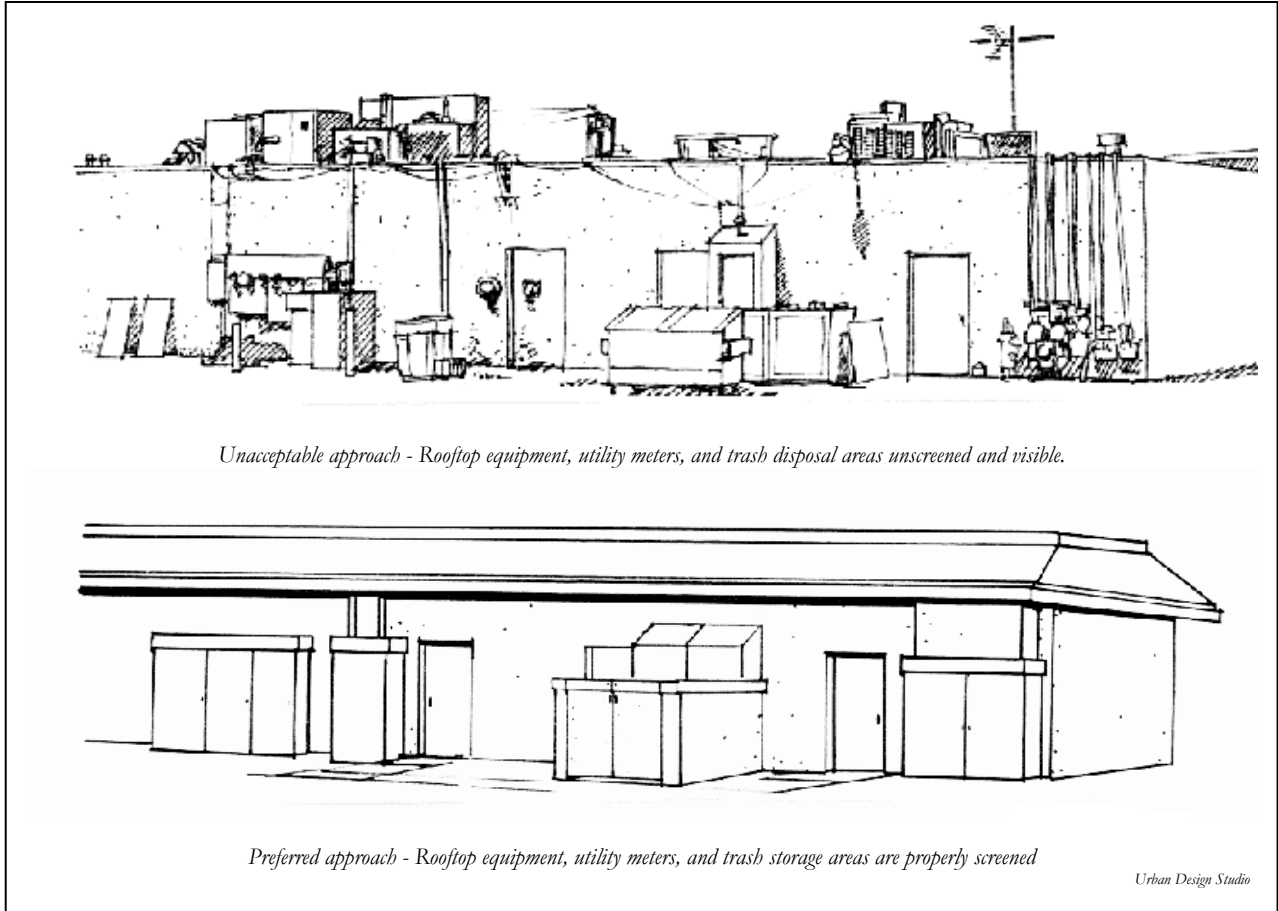
- a. An awning can soften a rear facade and provide a pleasant protected space.
- b. The rear entry door should be wood and glass similar to the front door. Special security glass (i.e. wire imbedded) is allowed.
- c. Security lighting should be modest and should focus on the rear entry door.
- d. Selective use of tree plantings, potted plants and other landscaping can subtly improve a rear facade.
- e. Refuse containers and service facilities must be screened from view by solid walls according to the Zoning Ordinance. Use landscaping (shrubs and vines) to screen walls and help deter graffiti.

Alterations — Restoration & Remodeling

Renovating or remodeling downtown buildings provides an excellent means of maintaining and reinforcing the character and image desired in Atascadero. Renovation and expansion not only increases property values in the area but also serves as an inspiration to other property owners and designers to make similar efforts.

When an existing structure is to be renovated or added to, care should be taken to complete the work in a manner that respects the original design character of the structure. The following design guidelines are to be implemented where appropriate and whenever a structure is to be renovated or expanded.

In addition, restoration and remodeling of commercial structures of historic significance in the City should follow *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings*, published by the U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service.

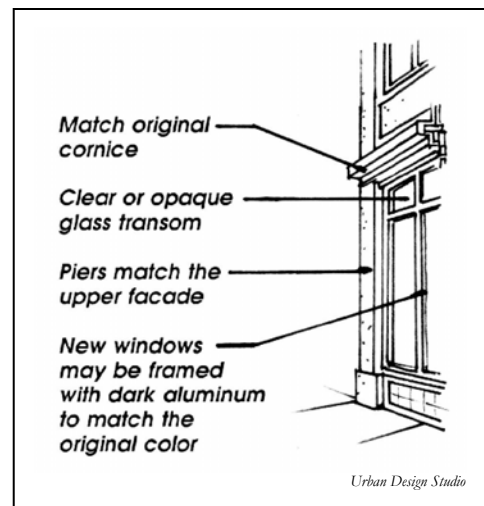


Traditional Features & Decoration

- Sensitive response to existing materials, details, proportions, as well as patterns of materials and openings is required when any such work will affect the appearance of an existing building's exterior.
- Storefront remodeling often retains original decorative details only as visual "leftovers" or simply covers them. If a building is to be refurbished, these forgotten details should not be wasted. If enough of them remain, they can be restored as part of the original design. If only a few remain, they can be incorporated as design features in a new storefront. In either case, the design of any improvements should grow out of the remaining traditional details and create a harmonious background which emphasizes them.

Removal of Elements Inconsistent with Original Facade

Existing building elements incompatible with the original facade design should be removed. These include: excessive use of exterior embellishments and "modernized" elements (metal grilles, oversized molding cornices or rusticated materials, etc.). Buildings are often altered over time by owners or shopkeepers to "keep up with changing times" or to "remake a tired image." Unfortunately, such changes are often done in a "tack on" manner and result in gradual but severe erosion of original character and cohesion of the commercial area.

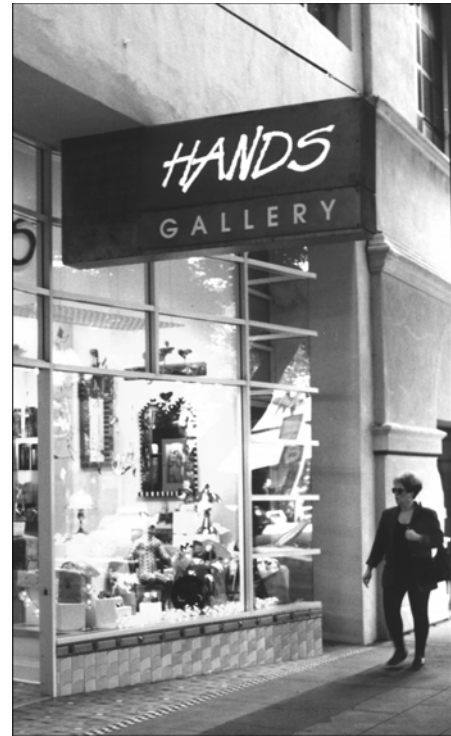


Storefront Renovation

- a. Where the original storefront remains (little or no remodeling has occurred), it should be preserved and repaired with as little alteration as possible.
- b. Where only part of the original storefront remains (limited remodeling has occurred), the storefront should be repaired, maintaining historic materials where possible, including the replacement of extensively deteriorated or missing parts with new parts based upon surviving examples of transoms, bulkheads, pilasters, signs, etc.
- c. Where the original storefront is completely missing (extensive remodeling has occurred), the first priority is to reconstruct the storefront based upon historical, pictorial and physical documentation. If that is not practical, the design of the new storefront should be compatible with the size, scale, proportion, material and color of the existing structure.

Additions to Existing Structures

- a. The design of a proposed addition should follow the general scale, proportion, massing and detailing of the original structure and should result in a harmonious—rather than stark—contrast.
- b. Additions should be interpretations of the existing buildings, with the main characteristics of the existing structure incorporated using modern construction methods. This may include: the extension of architectural lines from the existing structure to the addition; repetition of window and entrance spacing; use of harmonizing colors and materials; and the inclusion of similar, yet distinct, architectural details (i.e., window and door trim, lighting fixtures, tile or brick decoration, etc.).
- c. Additions should be designed so that if the addition were to be removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the original structure would be unimpaired.

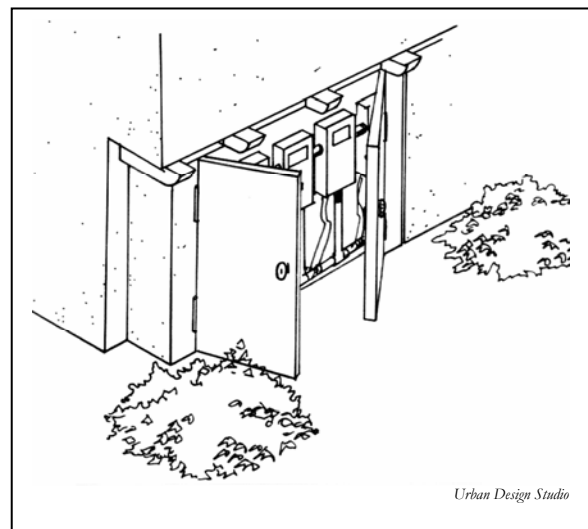


Seismic Retrofitting

Where structural improvements for seismic retrofitting affect the building exterior, such improvements should be done with care and consideration for the impact on appearance of the building. Where possible, such work should be concealed. Where this is not possible, the improvements should be planned to carefully integrate into the existing building design.

Equipment & Utilities

1. All mechanical or utility equipment, whether on the roof, ground or side of building must be screened from view, above or below. The method of screening should be architecturally integrated with the structure in terms of materials, color, shape and size. The design of the screening should be done in concert with and as a part of the design of the building, rather than as an afterthought.
2. Roof mounted mechanical or utility equipment must be screened according to the Zoning Ordinance. The method of screening should be architecturally integrated with the structure in terms of materials, color, shape and size. It is preferable to screen equipment with solid building elements (e.g. parapet wall) instead of after-the-fact add-on screening (e.g.

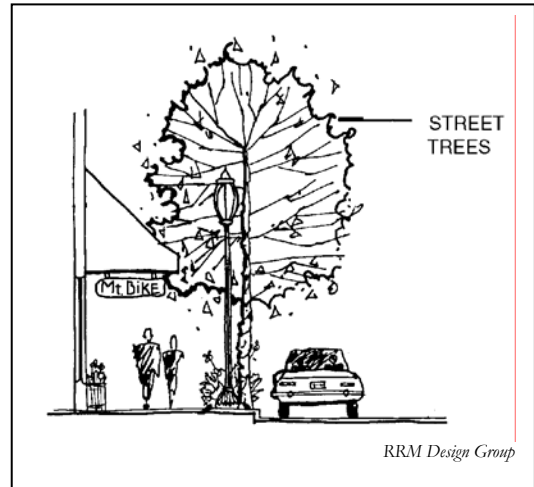


wood or metal slats).

3. Air conditioning units placed in individual windows and window transom areas are *strongly* discouraged.

IV. Landscape Design

1. While the City is interested in all areas meeting the minimum requirements stated here, locations with high public visibility or which are developed for public use are more stringently regulated.
2. The design of all landscapes and irrigation systems should be of professional quality.
3. Focal points, such as gateways, project entries, street corners and prominent intersections, and architectural entries should be highlighted by specimen trees, special paving, and other upgraded landscape materials.
4. Initial project layout and design should recognize the desirability of preserving healthy mature trees.
5. Landscaped areas should be a major component of any parking area.
6. Landscaping shall be placed to enhance landscape vistas to hills, recreation areas and open space.
7. Landscaping shall be selected and placed so as to maximize resource conscious design such as reducing ambient temperatures, providing shade and conserving water.
8. Street and pathway plantings shall provide visual linkage and continuity to the Downtown through the repetitious use of plant materials and walls. Plant materials, in this way, lend an organizing character to the pathways they serve providing repetition of hardscape and plant materials to promote the development of a coherent integrated and unified Downtown.
9. The character of planted areas near Atascadero Creek shall respect this context. "Transition" areas shall be planted between ornamental and indigenous plant communities.
10. Fencing and accessory structures visible from the public street shall be compatible with the architecture. The following materials are unacceptable:
 - Chain link fence
 - Chicken wire
 - Corrugated plastic or fiberglass panels
 - Plastic webbing, reeded or straw-like materials
11. Redesign or alteration of an existing approved project may require modification of an existing landscape due to hardscape deterioration, too many or too few plant materials, etc.
12. Areas that do not contribute to the enhancement of a project should be screened. Trash collection and storage areas shall be located with minimum public visibility or shall be screened with plant materials. Landscaping shall also be used to screen the following: backflow prevention devices, irrigation



controllers, parking areas, loading and service areas, public utility service equipment, and other mechanical equipment.

13. Street trees should be planted to enhance the areas image, and create a strong sense of identity and unity regardless of the architectural condition or variance.

V. Signs

Sign Materials

1. Traditionally, downtown signs were often individual gold-leafed wooden letters. This sign type would be equally appropriate today on many of Downtown Atascadero's buildings, as would many other sign materials such as enameled metal, neon tubing, painted wood, cast bronzed or colored fabric. 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 quality of downtown.
2. Paper signs are not allowed, except as temporary notices.
3. Fabric signs are not allowed, except for awning signs and decorative pennants.
4. Sign materials should be carefully chosen to complement the character of the business identified and the buildings they are mounted on.
5. Every sign should be carefully designed and conscientiously maintained for its lifetime.

Sign Lighting

Merchants are encouraged to light their signs in the evening. Light will not only make identification of businesses easier but will add vitality to the area. Externally illuminated signs are encouraged. Internally illuminated signs are discouraged except for those of neon or for individual letters.

Window Displays

Merchandise and other displays within storefront windows are another means of attracting attention to the interior of a store, and although they do not constitute a sign in the sense of identifying a name, they do give the passing pedestrian an image of the business inside. Like any other sign, window displays should be carefully designed to show a business off to its best advantage.

Window Graphics Design

Window graphics provide an opportunity to produce creative signage that draws attention toward the interior of a business and provides useful information concerning the business (e.g., services, product lines, store hours). Commonly, window graphics depict a business name or logo in gold letters. White or light color lettering also works well as it contrasts with the windows that normally appear dark. For the same reason dark colored lettering is often difficult to read.