

# CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE

## SPECIAL MEETING

### **HOUSING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Dan Helix, Chair

Ron Leone, Committee Member

**4:45 p.m., Monday, September 28, 2015**

*(Please note earlier start time)*

**Building D, Permit Center Conference Room  
1950 Parkside Drive, Concord**

#### **ROLL CALL**

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD**

1. **DISCUSSION** – of Changeable Electronic Variable Message Signs (CEVMS). Report by Afsham Hamid, Associate Planner.
2. **DISCUSSION** – of Early California Architecture for the Downtown. Report by Joan Ryan, Senior Planner.
3. **ADJOURNMENT**

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and California Law, it is the policy of the City of Concord to offer its public programs, services and meetings in a manner that is readily accessible to everyone, including those with disabilities. If you are disabled and require a copy of a public hearing notice, or an agenda and/or agenda packet in an appropriate alternative format; or if you require other accommodation, please contact the ADA Coordinator at (925) 671-3361, at least five days in advance of the meeting. Advance notification within this guideline will enable the City to make reasonable arrangements to ensure accessibility.

---

Distribution: City Council  
Valerie Barone, City Manager  
Jovan Grogan, Deputy City Manager  
Mark Coon, City Attorney  
Victoria Walker, Community & Economic Development Director  
John Montagh, Economic Development & Housing Manager  
Laura Simpson, Planning Manager  
Joan Ryan, Senior Planner  
Afsham Hamid, Associate Planner  
Administrative Services

**REPORT TO COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON  
HOUSING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT****TO: HONORABLE COMMITTEE MEMBERS:**

DATE: September 28, 2015

**SUBJECT: DISCUSSION OF CHANGEABLE ELECTRONIC VARIABLE MESSAGE SIGNS  
(CEVMS)****Report in Brief:**

Planning staff has been asked to outline the process for amending the Sign Ordinance of the Development Code to allow a freeway-oriented Changeable Electronic Variable Message Sign (CEVMS) along the Interstate 680 corridor in Concord. The City's existing sign code under Chapter 18 prohibits both freeway oriented signs and electronic message display signs. Currently, there is no application pending for a CEVMS.

A CEVMS, also known as a digital billboard or electronic message board, is a very large structure focused towards highway traffic that typically contains a two-sided digital message screen. The digital message screen that projects the changeable advertisements and other messages is a standard 48 feet wide by 14 feet high. If an amendment to the City's sign regulations were approved to allow a CEVMS, it could be leased by a private property owner to an outdoor advertising agency or be managed directly by the property owner. Benefits to the City may include 1) new opportunities for promotional and/or commercial advertising for local businesses; 2) Public Service Announcements (PSA) of public safety, branding, tourism and downtown events, in limited quantities and timeframes, through a licensing agreement; 3) an annual fee to the City; and 4) utilizing the sign as a gateway feature for the City of Concord.

The request to amend the Development Code to allow one or more CEVMS types of signs is a multi-faceted issue with consideration needed to be given to safety issues, economic development benefits, new opportunities to advertise community events and tourism, aesthetic issues, and legal issues related to regulation of sign content and placement. A change in the City's sign regulations may require the creation of a special sign district, and would require review of equitability in terms of sign regulations, placement of the sign in respect to residential districts, and the process involved to allow such a sign.

This report provides an overview of the issues and the proposed rezoning process in order to gain feedback from the Housing and Economic Development Committee.

**Key Issues for Consideration:**

The Concord Municipal Code, 18.180.080 G 2, currently allows signage for private properties within 660 feet of a freeway; however, the sign must be oriented to the local street system and not visible from the freeway. Section 18.180.080 (C) prohibits electronic message display signs and variable intensity. This code

## DISCUSSION OF CHANGEABLE ELECTRONIC VARIABLE MESSAGE SIGNS (CEVMS)

September 28, 2015

Page 2

section also prohibits Brilliant Lights (18.180.080 D), any sign with brilliant lighting that conflicts or interferes with traffic, both vehicular and pedestrian, from a public safety standpoint or affects adjacent properties, because of shape, design, color or reflected light.

There are several key issues to address when considering amending the City's current regulations that prohibit freeway-oriented signs. These are discussed below.

### Legal Considerations:

Pursuant to established law regarding freedom of expression and the First Amendment, sign ordinances may regulate the time, placement and manner of signage only. Time means when a message may be displayed (e.g. certain hours of the day, lighted signs turned off at night); placement means where the message may be displayed, and manner means how the message is presented (static sign, sign size, on-site signs). For signs located on private property, restrictions that are placed on advertisements for legal products or services can present very serious First Amendment issues -- typical targets where Cities may wish to prohibit advertisement (signs) are: alcohol, tobacco, sexually-oriented businesses, and gambling establishments (State law prohibits obscene words and pictures). When a public entity is the owner of a property where advertising is allowed, content-based restrictions are legally allowable, unless a public forum of some kind has been created.

Sign regulations are similar to zoning regulations in that the primary stated purpose is to protect the health, safety, and general welfare of the public at large. A fundamental issue when considering a new type of sign regulation is whether the regulation advances substantial public interest. Sign regulations are upheld by courts for the following reasons: 1) as a traffic safety measure and 2) to improve the appearance through aesthetic regulations that are related to the general public welfare.

The City's current sign regulations, found in the Development Code Section 18.180.080, state that the purpose is to promote and enhance the aesthetic qualities of the City, and to provide minimum standards to safeguard life, health, property and public welfare. The City's current sign regulations allow on-site or on-premises signs, which are signs to direct attention to a business or service on the property where the sign is placed, such as a shopping center entrance sign. The sign code currently prohibits off-site or off-premises signs, which direct attention to a business, etc. at a location different from where the sign is located, such as billboards. If a CEVMS is leased on a private property, the sign would allow any commercial business in any location to promote and advertise, thus becoming an off-premise sign which is currently not allowed.

In one famous sign case, *Metromedia, Inc. v. City of San Diego*, 453 U.S. 490, 101 S. Ct. 2882 (1981) (Metromedia), the Supreme Court struck down a City ordinance that imposed substantial restrictions on outdoor signs. According to that case, allowing an off-premise sign on only one private property could be unfair for other similar businesses, which could result in a legal challenge. The City's current sign regulations do not allow freeway signs, so making an exception to allow one freeway sign on a private property may raise concerns about the fairness and equitability of the sign regulation as it should be applied equally to all Concord property owners located along I-680.

To address this concern and still provide for the desired limitation of CEVMS signs, the City would need to establish "sign overlay districts" in which any business could apply for an off-premise sign. As discussed below, it is possible those districts could be limited to certain freeway and/or highway corridors. In

## DISCUSSION OF CHANGEABLE ELECTRONIC VARIABLE MESSAGE SIGNS (CEVMS)

September 28, 2015

Page 3

addition, an off-premise sign that favors commercial speech over non-commercial speech would raise First Amendment issues. As a result, any sign ordinance would need to allow for “message substitution” so that unregulated non-commercial speech can replace commercial speech. It should also be noted that in the Metromedia case, the Supreme Court also found that billboards and other forms of outdoor signage are intended to divert, and do divert, a driver’s attention from the roadway, and that billboards are a traffic hazard.

### Amortization:

When considering a code amendment to allow a specific type of sign, a community also needs to evaluate impacts when a sign becomes outdated. A legally established sign which does not conform to the sign regulations is difficult and costly to remove, and State law requires that cities pay just compensation or a relocation agreement be executed. The City’s current sign regulations allow a non-conforming sign to remain as long as it is not expanded, moved or relocated other than to bring it into conformity with existing zoning.

### Safety:

Numerous studies have evaluated the effects of outdoor advertising on driver safety, with the more relevant research by Caltrans completed on October 2012 and the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) through the American Planning Association (APA). The Caltrans paper provides data from other studies and authors in regards to driver distraction. Both Caltrans and APA cites author Jerry Wachtel with The Veridian Group, “there is growing evidence that digital billboards distract drivers because these signs increase driver glance duration and the driver’s gaze is reflexively drawn to objects of different luminance in the visual field.” Findings from the APA report support the argument that while there is no definitive research showing increased crashes due to the presence of billboards or digital billboards, there is an increased crash risk based on research on the effects of billboards on driver attention and the effects of driver distraction on safety.

The PAS report notes that that expanded content of a dynamic sign (CEVMS) contributes to extended distraction from driving. The PAS study evaluates message duration, transition, impact of electronic messages, video signs, brightness standards and enforcement. PAS cites that specific approaches taken by jurisdictions to regulate the CEVMS signs vary greatly, depending on how each wants its community to appear. Some communities prohibit electronic signs while others allow such signage with varying levels of regulations.

### Economic Development:

One of the benefits of allowing a CEVMS is that some of the advertising time may be designated for the City of Concord for community messages, amber alerts, upcoming events at the Concord Pavilion, and special events such as those held at Todos Santos Plaza. However, it is likely that preference will be given to paid commercial advertisements over public announcements, and the extent of public service announcement may be significantly limited. If the process proceeds forward, allocation of public announcements in percentage of time in a twenty-four hour period should be carefully evaluated and negotiated.

There is also the benefit of providing a new opportunity for advertising for local Concord businesses. Because the sign is intended to be on leased private property, the space for advertisers will be on a market driven competitive basis. For example, restaurants, hotels, and other destinations from adjacent communities may want to advertise on the CEVMS to reach the I-680 audience. Within Constitutional free speech

## DISCUSSION OF CHANGEABLE ELECTRONIC VARIABLE MESSAGE SIGNS (CEVMS)

September 28, 2015

Page 4

protections, the sign may advertise all competitive businesses, retail and products, such as alcohol, hookah lounges and adult shops, including those from surrounding and distant communities.

In Cities where the CEVMS signage is allowed, it is a common requirement that an annual license fee be paid to the City from the sign vendor, estimated on the order of \$50,000 to \$60,000 per year. The monthly rent paid by the sign vendor could be quite substantial, at \$40,000 or more per month paid to the private property owner.

### Gateway Signs:

A CEVMS sign could include the name or logo of the City of Concord as part of the sign, potentially expanding the “branding” of the City to the larger highway traveling public. An example is included in Attachment 1, showing a CEVMS sign installed in the industrial area of the City of Benicia that includes static lettering copy of the “Benicia” logo over the digital message board. Under the current sign code, signs that are installed by the City for the purpose of announcing events or transmitting community information are exempt from a permit, provided they meet the current regulations. Because the CEVMS sign would be located outside of the public right-of-way, allowing a gateway sign on private property would impact the existing sign regulations as well as the public’s impression of Concord, if the aesthetic impacts from the sign and advertising do not represent the City well.

### Policy Issues:

If a CEVMS were to move forward, the larger issues of public policy to address are:

- Does the proposed CEVMS meet the purpose of the sign regulations?
- Allowing an off-premise sign on a private leased property.
- Regulation of content.
- Legal concerns of equitability.
- A public gateway sign on a private property.
- Evaluating the sign from a safety and traffic perspective.

### Signs on Private Property versus Public Property:

If the City of Concord wishes to move forward with new sign regulations with the intention of increasing the profile of the City along I-680, two approaches can be evaluated. The first option is to consider a family of signs for the City which would include a civic gateway sign, gateway signs along corridors, and wayfinding signs. This would be similar to applying a Master Sign Program for the City. The design of the signs can be part of a branding strategy that is consistently applied throughout special corridors and identifies Concord as a unique destination.

An alternative solution may be to allow the opportunity for one or more CEVMS signs a private property as part of a master sign program. The on-site sign messages would be limited to establishments within the shopping center or mall. In this manner, all commercial enterprises on the private property would have a fair opportunity to advertise and proliferation is kept under check. In other words, only tenants within

## DISCUSSION OF CHANGEABLE ELECTRONIC VARIABLE MESSAGE SIGNS (CEVMS)

September 28, 2015

Page 5

the shopping center (which are all Concord businesses) would be allowed to advertise their business and products on the CEVMS.

### Additional Factors to Consider Whether CEVMS is on Public or Private Property:

- Caltrans requirements for distance & location of signs
- Contra Costa County Airport Land Use Commission policies on light distraction and location of such sign within the airport influence area
- Requirements from California Manual on Informed Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD)
- Evaluation of brightness that may affect vehicular safety and residential areas

Caltrans sets regulations for outdoor signs along freeways. Based on regulations for outdoor Message Center Displays, a sign shall be located 660 feet from the right-of-way, maintain a 1,000 feet between signs, height limit of 25 feet and 60 feet in length. Currently, Caltrans has an electronic reader board sign adjacent to Willow Pass Shopping Center. Any additional sign would require approval through Caltrans. Additional regulations regarding illumination standards will also have to be evaluated prior to any code amendment.

### Examples from other Communities:

Staff contacted or visited local communities to better understand the aesthetics, location, and types of freeway-oriented signs. Two communities visited were Benicia and Martinez. Both communities recently approved digital signs along the I-680 north. In the case of Benicia, the sign is located in the industrial parkway zoning district. The sign has a static Benicia City logo topping a CEVMS. Staff observed eight changing images in this CEVMS with commercial advertisements from non-Benicia communities, including Fairfield Automall, Lake Tahoe Shakespeare Festival, Sonoma Raceway and the Oracle Arena. The Martinez sign is a double sided digital sign located along the Benicia Bridge.

Staff also contacted other Cities in the East Bay regarding regulations of digital signs, which include Walnut Creek, San Ramon, Oakland, Dublin, Pleasant Hill and Pleasanton. Pleasanton currently has one CEVMS only for the Pleasanton Fairgrounds Racetrack. The sign is located on the fairground property and advertises events at the fairground. In 1995, the Planning Commission for the City of Dublin approved a freestanding electronic reader board through a master sign program for the Volkswagen dealership on Interstate 580. In 2011, the dealership wanted to upgrade the sign to reflect current technology with full color images. However the application was denied due to public opposition. Pleasant Hill, Walnut Creek and San Ramon prohibit electronic signs and billboards as of right.

### The Code Amendment Process:

Several approaches may be considered to amend the existing sign regulations in the Development Code to allow CEVMS signage. One option is to amend the sign code and allow CEVMS signage along freeways within the City of Concord. CEVMS signage could then be located along I-680, Highway 242 and Highway 4. Future development in the Concord Reuse Area could then take advantage of a CEVMS to advertise new development.

## DISCUSSION OF CHANGEABLE ELECTRONIC VARIABLE MESSAGE SIGNS (CEVMS)

September 28, 2015

Page 6

Another approach would be to limit a CEVMS to only properties along I-680. The zoning districts along I-680, West Concord Mixed Use (WMX) and Regional Commercial (RC), are comprised of a mixture of commercial development, including the Sun Valley Shopping Center, numerous individual commercial businesses, and the Willows Shopping Center. Allowing a CEVMS for only one commercial and or retail business or property would not allow for an equal playing field among businesses and may not be legally defensible. If one sign is allowed, other businesses along the interstate may justifiably also request similar signage. Commercial businesses and strip mall developments that are on major roadways in the City of Concord may also request CEVMS signage in the form of a ground sign to advertise promotional or weekly specials. If this approach moves forward, then a comprehensive code amendment should evaluate digital signs for both on-premise and off-premise signs.

If a sign amendment proceeds, notice must be given within a 500 foot radius including residential districts. Input on this issue would be needed from residents in City of Pleasant Hill and the City of Concord through public hearings at the Planning Commission. Of concern to residents may be the brightness and illumination of CEVMS because they are on at all times of the day and night. Because conditions vary for daytime versus nighttime, any code amendment should evaluate brightness, legibility and contrast. During the day, the issue is reducing or minimizing glare and maintaining contrast between the sign face and the surroundings. At night, the issues are the degree of brightness and its impact on light trespassing into residential areas. In addition, enforcement standards for luminance and content will need to be evaluated.

### Proposed Schedule:

Pending the direction from the Housing & Economic Development Committee, the following is an outline of input from various commissions and public process that would need to take place prior to adoption of a sign code amendment:

Fall / Winter 2015:	Study Session Design Review Board
Fall / Winter 2015:	Study Session Planning Commission Review
Winter 2016:	Forum Chamber of Commerce and Small Business Association
Winter 2016:	Forum with local businesses, residents, sign companies
Spring 2016:	Final Design Review Board
Spring 2016:	Final Planning Commission Review with Draft Ordinance Language
Summer 2016:	City Council Review

The above schedule is an estimated timeline for review, based upon prior sign code amendments, public outreach and limited staff resources. The process involved may take multiple Study Sessions with the Design Review Board and Planning Commission. The timeline offered above is preliminary and will be refined to include any expanded scope.

### Fiscal Impact:

In prior reviews, staff found that cities such as Newark and Milpitas received an annual license fee of \$60,000 and \$50,000 per sign respectively, with negotiated increases on the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of installation. In order to allow public messages on a CEVMS, the City would be required to expend funds to

**DISCUSSION OF CHANGEABLE ELECTRONIC  
VARIABLE MESSAGE SIGNS (CEVMS)**

September 28, 2015

Page 7

design promotional pieces and to manage the messaging process. It is likely that the licensing fee cost would be fully expended in costs to prepare and manage the PSA messaging.

**Recommendation:**

Staff seeks guidance from the Committee as to whether there is desire in further researching and allowing CEVMS signage. If there is further interest, then what would be the overall goals in pursuing such a policy.

Prepared by: Afshan Hamid, AICP  
Associate Planner  
[afshan.hamid@cityofconcord.org](mailto:afshan.hamid@cityofconcord.org)

Reviewed by: John Montag  
Housing & Economic Development  
Manager  
[john.montagh@cityofconcord.org](mailto:john.montagh@cityofconcord.org)

Reviewed by: Suzanne Brown  
Senior Assistant City Attorney  
[suzanne.brown@cityofconcord.org](mailto:suzanne.brown@cityofconcord.org)

Reviewed by: Laura Simpson  
Planning Manager  
[laura.simpson@cityofconcord.org](mailto:laura.simpson@cityofconcord.org)



---

Jovan Grogan  
Deputy City Manager  
[jovan.grogan@cityofconcord.org](mailto:jovan.grogan@cityofconcord.org)

Enclosures:

Attachment 1: Images of CEVMS signs

Attachment 2: APA Zoning Practice: Is Your Community Ready for Digital Signage



Benicia gateway CEVMS sign



Benicia gateway sign I-680 north



Benicia gateway CEVMS sign



Benicia gateway sign I-680 north

# ZONING PRACTICE

April 2008

AMERICAN PLANNING ASSOCIATION



➔ ISSUE NUMBER FOUR

## PRACTICE SMART SIGN CODES

A large billboard advertisement is mounted on a building facade. The billboard has a dark background with a grid of small, light-colored, semi-circular shapes. The text 'Digital Signs: Context Matters' is written in a large, white, sans-serif font. A large, black, stylized number '4' is overlaid on the bottom right corner of the billboard. In the background, a tall, modern skyscraper is visible against a clear sky.

**Digital  
Signs:  
Context Matters**

**4**

# Looking Ahead: Regulating Digital Signs and Billboards

By Marya Morris, AICP

Cities and counties have always been challenged to keep their sign ordinances updated to address the latest in sign types and technologies.

Each new sign type that has come into use—for example, backlit awnings and electronic message centers—has prompted cities to amend their regulations in response to or in anticipation of an application to install such a sign.

The advent in the last several years of signs using digital video displays represents the latest, and perhaps the most compelling, challenge to cities trying to keep pace with signage technology. More so than any other type of sign technology that has come into use in the last 40 to 50 years, digital video displays on both off-premise (i.e., billboards) and on-premise signs raise very significant traffic safety considerations.

This issue of *Zoning Practice* covers current trends in the use of digital technology on off-premise billboards and on-premise signs. It recaps the latest research on the effects of

this type of changeable signage on traffic safety. It also discusses the use of digital video sign technology as a component of on-premise signs, including a list of ordinance provisions that municipalities should consider if they are going to permit this type of sign to be used. I use the phrase digital display or video display, but these devices are also referred to as LEDs or, collectively, as “dynamic signs.”

## BRIGHT BILLBOARDS

While digital technology is growing in use for on-premise signs, it is the proliferation of digital billboards that has triggered cities and counties to revise their sign ordinances to address this new type of display. Of the approximately half-million billboards currently lining U.S. roadways, only about 500 of them are digital. However, the industry's trade

group, the Outdoor Advertising Association of America, expects that number to grow by several hundred each year in the coming years. In 2008, digital billboards represent for the sign industry what the Comstock Lode must have represented for silver miners in 1858—seemingly limitless riches. The technology allows companies to rent a single billboard—or pole—to multiple advertisers. A billboard company in San Antonio, for example, estimated that annual revenue from one billboard that had been converted from a static image to a changeable digital image would increase tenfold, from \$300,000 to \$3 million just one year after it went digital.

It is very difficult for cities and counties to get billboards removed once they are in place. Billboard companies have made a concerted effort to get state legislation passed that limits or precludes the ability of local

Ⓢ A typology of moving-image signs. The variable message sign at the right uses a motor to switch among three different static images. Next, the electronic messageboard at Wrigley Field in Chicago displays scrolling text and simple images. The on-premise digital sign, pictured third from left, looks like a giant television screen, displaying a steady stream of video images. On the far right, this digital billboard cycles through a number of static video images at regularly timed intervals.



## ASK THE AUTHOR JOIN US ONLINE!

Go online from May 12 to 23 to participate in our “Ask the Author” forum, an interactive feature of Zoning Practice. Marya Morris, AICP, will be available to answer questions about this article. Go to the APA website at [www.planning.org](http://www.planning.org) and follow the links to the Ask the Author section. From there, just submit your questions about the article using the e-mail link. The author will reply, and Zoning Practice will post the answers cumulatively on the website for the benefit of all subscribers. This feature will be available for selected issues of Zoning Practice at announced times. After each online discussion is closed, the answers will be saved in an online archive available through the APA Zoning Practice web pages.

### About the Author

Marya Morris is a senior associate at Duncan Associates, a planning consulting firm specializing in land development regulations and infrastructure finance. [www.duncanassociates.com](http://www.duncanassociates.com)

governments to require removal of existing billboards through amortization. The only option left is paying cash compensation. The federal Highway Beautification Act, which was modified many years ago under industry pressure, also prohibits amortization and requires cash compensation for billboard removal.

With the amortization option unavailable, some cities and counties have struck deals with billboard companies requiring them to remove two boards for every new one they install. Other jurisdictions have established simple no-net-increase policies. Although many communities have had success with these approaches, in the

last few years the industry has devised a litigious tactic to secure new billboard permits. Billboard companies challenge the constitutionality of a sign provision, and when the ordinance is in legal limbo, they rush in to secure billboard permits.

The American Planning Association has joined Scenic America, the International Municipal Lawyers Association, and others in filing amicus curiae briefs in many of these cases to show the courts the industry’s pattern of conduct and deliberate strategy to circumvent local sign codes. A review in January 2006 found 113 such “shakedown” sign cases filed in the federal

courts since 1997, and eight filed in state courts in the same time period. For more information visit the APA Amicus Curiae webpage at [www.planning.org/amicusbriefs](http://www.planning.org/amicusbriefs).

The emergence of the highly lucrative digital billboards has also, however, given local governments some leverage to at least reduce the total number of billboards. Many of the applications cities are seeing for the video billboards are requests by companies to replace the static type with the new video displays in key locations. The added revenue potential from a digital format has proved to be enough of an incentive to get companies to agree to remove multiple static billboards in exchange for permits to install video display in certain locations.

In June 2007, Minnetonka, Minnesota, in the Twin Cities area, reached a settlement with Clear Channel in which the company agreed to

**The emergence of the highly lucrative digital billboards has given local governments some leverage to at least reduce the total number of billboards.**



Photos by David Morley

remove 15 of the 30 conventional static image billboards in the city in exchange for permission to install its digital billboards. The city will permit the company to install no more than eight dynamic signs at four to six locations.

The City of San Antonio amended its sign and billboard ordinance in December 2007 to require the removal of up to four static billboards in exchange for permission to install one digital display billboard in their place. Prior to that amendment the city had no provisions for digital sign technology, but it did already have a two-for-one replacement requirement. The city has developed a sliding scale that determines the number of billboards required to be removed in exchange for a single digital billboard. According to the scale, the number of digital signs permitted is determined by the total square footage of static billboard faces removed. Therefore, a billboard company will be required to demolish as few as three and as many as 19 billboards to get one new digital billboard structure placed or an existing static billboard face replaced.

#### IT DEPENDS ON YOUR DEFINITION OF 'DISTRACTING'

Digital signs are brighter and more distracting than any other type of sign. Other attention-grabbers, like strobe lights, mirrors, searchlights, and signs with moving parts, are typically prohibited (or allowed under very narrow circumstances) by even the most hands-off jurisdictions. The high visual impact of digital signs has prompted highway and traffic safety experts to try to quantify how drivers respond to such distractions. This research, which is summarized below, has been instrumental in helping cities craft new sign ordinances that address the specific characteristics of such signs, including how often the messages or images change, the degree of brightness, and their placement relative to residential areas.

The Federal Highway Administration is currently conducting a study on driver distraction and the safety or impact of new sign technologies on driver attention. The initial phase, which is slated to be completed by June 2008, will identify and evaluate the most significant issues and develop research methods needed to secure definitive results. The FHWA anticipates the second phase of the research study and final report will be completed in the latter part of calendar year 2009. Also, the Transportation Research Board (a branch of the National Science Foundation) has formed a subcommittee to examine research needs on electronic signs.



David Morley

Recent studies indicate that digital displays with continuous dynamic content are more distracting than other types of moving-image signs. Signs that work well in pedestrian-oriented areas might be inappropriate for busy highways.

Until a couple of years ago, one of the only studies on the effects of billboards and traffic safety was a 1980 survey of existing research on the subject prepared for the Federal Highway Administration (Wachtel and Netherton 1980). It did not, however, provide any concrete answers. The study noted “attempts to quantify the impact of roadside advertising on traffic safety

have not yielded conclusive results.” The authors found that courts typically rule on the side of disallowing billboards because of the “readily understood logic that a driver cannot be expected to give full attention to his driving tasks when he is reading a billboard.”

A 2006 study by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration that focused primarily on driver distractions inside the car (i.e., phone use, eating, and changing the radio station) concluded that any distraction of more than two seconds is a potential cause of crashes and near crashes.

A 2004 study at the University of Toronto found that drivers make twice as many glances at active (i.e., video signs) than they do at passive (i.e., static) signs. All three of the moving sign types that were studied (video, scrolling text, and trivision) attracted more than twice as many glances as static signs. They also found that the drivers' glances at the active signs were longer in duration; 88 percent of glances were at least 0.75 seconds long. A duration of 0.75 seconds or longer is important because that is the amount of time required for a driver to react to a vehicle that is slowing down ahead. Video and scrolling text signs received the longest average maximum glance duration.

An earlier study also at the University of Toronto that was designed to determine whether video billboards distract drivers' attention from traffic signals found that drivers made roughly the same number of glances at traffic signals and street signs with and without full-motion video

**ORDINANCES AND ZONING REPORTS**

- ◆ City of Minnetonka, Minnesota. 2007. Staff report to city council recommending adoption of an ordinance regulating digital signs. June 25. Available at [www.eminnetonka.com/community\\_development/planning/show\\_project.cfm?link\\_id=Dynamic\\_Signs\\_Ordinance&cat\\_link\\_id=Planning](http://www.eminnetonka.com/community_development/planning/show_project.cfm?link_id=Dynamic_Signs_Ordinance&cat_link_id=Planning).
- ◆ City of San Antonio City Code, Chapter 28. Amendment Adding Provisions for Digital Signs. Last revised December 2, 2007. Available at <http://epay.sanantonio.gov/dsddocumentcentral/upload/SIGNsecDRAFTF.pdf>.
- ◆ City of Seattle, Land Use Code, Section 23.55.005 Signs, Video Display Methods. Last revised 2004. <http://clerk.ci.seattle.wa.us/~public/clrkhome.htm>.

billboards present. This may be interpreted to mean that while electronic billboards may be distracting, they do not appear to distract drivers from noticing traffic signs. This study also found that video signs entering the driver's line of sight directly in front of the vehicle (e.g., when the sign is situated at a curve) are very distracting.

A 2005 study by the Texas Transportation Institute of driver comprehension of sign messages that flash or change concluded that such signs are more distracting, less comprehensible, and require more reading time than do static images. While this research did not evaluate advertising-related signs, it does demonstrate that flashing signs require more of the driver's time and attention to comprehend the message. In the case of electronic billboards, this suggests that billboards that flash may require more time and attention to read than static ones.

The City of Seattle commissioned a report in 2001 to examine the relationship between

## Sign messages that flash or change are more distracting, less comprehensible, and require more reading time than do static images.

The Seattle study also found that drivers expend about 80 percent of their attention on driving-related tasks, leaving 20 percent of their attention for nonessential tasks, including reading signs. The report recommended the city use a "10-second rule" as the maximum display time for a video message.

### APPROACHES TO REGULATING DIGITAL DISPLAY SIGNS

Most cities and counties that have amended their sign ordinances to address the use of digital display on on-premise signs and billboards have done so in response to an application by a sign owner to install a new sign that uses the

ital video display signs while still permitting electronic message centers.

3) A relatively small number of sign ordinances have been amended to allow video display signs under narrowly prescribed circumstances and with numerous conditions.

For jurisdictions that want or need to allow them, the following section explains additional considerations that should be added to a sign ordinance to effectively regulate digital display signs.

**Sign type.** The ordinance must indicate whether the digital display can be used on off-premise billboards only, on on-premise signs only, or on both sign types.

Billboards with changeable digital images allow billboard companies to dramatically increase their revenue by renting the same sign face to multiple advertisers.



electronic signs with moving/flashing images and driver distraction. The study was conducted by Jerry Wachtel, who in 1980 had conducted the first-ever study on signs and traffic safety for the Federal Highway Administration.

The Seattle report concluded that electronic signs with moving images will distract drivers for longer durations (or intervals) than do electronic signs with no movement. The study also noted that the expanded content of a dynamic sign also contributes to extended distraction from driving. Specifically it found that signs that use two or more frames to tell a story are very distracting because drivers are involuntarily compelled to watch the story through to its conclusion.

technology or in response to a sign owner having replaced an existing sign face with a digital display. Some cities, like Minnetonka, were required by a court settlement with a billboard company to allow the technology. Although regulations for digital signs are still relatively new, we can group the regulatory approaches (or lack thereof) into three general categories:

- 1) Most sign ordinances are still silent on the issue of digital video displays, but almost all do regulate electronic message centers and also prohibit or restrict signs that move, flash, strobe, blink, or contain animation.
- 2) A smaller but growing number of sign ordinances contain a complete prohibition on dig-

**Definitions.** The definitions section must be updated to include a detailed definition of digital display signage and the sign's functional characteristics that could have an effect on traffic safety and community aesthetics.

**Zoning districts.** The ordinance should list the districts in which such signs are permitted and where they are prohibited. Such signs are commonly prohibited in neighborhood commercial districts, historic districts, special design districts, and scenic corridors, in close proximity to schools, and in residential districts. On the other end of the spectrum, East Dundee, Illinois, for example, expressly encourages digital video signs in two commercial overlay districts, but only a

## RESOURCES

- ◆ Beijer, D. and A. Smiley. 2005. "Observed Driver Glance Behavior at Roadside Advertising Signs," *Transportation Research Record*.
- ◆ Dudek, C. L. et al. 2005. "Impacts of Using Dynamic Features to Display Messages on Changeable Message Signs," Washington, D.C.: Operations Office of Travel Management: Federal Highway Administration.
- ◆ "Dynamic" Signage: Research Related To Driver Distraction and Ordinance Recommendations. Prepared by SRF Consulting Group, Inc. for the City of Minnetonka, Minnesota. June 7, 2007 ([www.digitalooh.org/digital/pdf/2007-minnetonka\\_digital-srf\\_consulting\\_reporto6-08-07.pdf](http://www.digitalooh.org/digital/pdf/2007-minnetonka_digital-srf_consulting_reporto6-08-07.pdf)).
- ◆ "The Impact of Driver Inattention on Near-Crash/Crash Risk: An Analysis Using the 100-Car Naturalistic Driving Study Data." 2006. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation. April.
- ◆ McBride, Sarah. "Seeing the Light: In Billboard War, Digital Signs Spark a Truce." *Wall Street Journal*. February 3, 2007.
- ◆ Smiley, A. et al. 2004. "Impact of Video Advertising on Driver Fixation Patterns." *Transportation Research Record*.
- ◆ *Unsafe at Any Speed: Billboards in the Digital Age*. 2007. Scenic America Issue Alert 2. Available at [www.scenic.org/pdfs/eb.pdf](http://www.scenic.org/pdfs/eb.pdf). The Scenic America website has a number of excellent resources for planners and citizens interested in regulating digital signage, including a downloadable PowerPoint presentation, research summaries, and model ordinances.
- ◆ Wachtel, J. and R. Netherton. 1980. "Safety and Environmental Design Considerations in the Use of Commercial Electronic Variable-Message Signage." Report No. FHWA-RD-80-051. Washington, D.C.: Federal Highway Administration.

few land uses—new car dealerships, multi-tenant retail centers, and amusement establishments—are permitted to have them.

**Placement and orientation.** A minimum spacing requirement between signs and residential areas should be considered, as should a provision requiring that the sign face be oriented away from residential areas and other scenic or sensitive areas. The Baker and Wolpert study recommended that dynamic signs be limited or prohibited at intersections, in demanding driving environments, and in places where they obstruct a driver's view. In Seattle, the sign face of on-premise digital signs must not be visible from a street, driveway, or surface parking area, nor may it be visible from a lot that is owned by a different person.

**Sign area.** For on-premise signage, many ordinances include a limit on the percentage of the sign face that can be used for digital display. Thirty percent is common although in some areas, such as entertainment districts, that proportion may be much higher.

**Illumination and brightness.** The ordinance should address the legibility and brightness of a sign both during the day and after dark. During the day the issue is reducing or minimizing glare and maintaining contrast between the sign face and the surrounding area. At night the issues are the degree of brightness and its impact on driver distraction and on light trespass into residential areas. In the study for the City of Minnetonka, researchers noted the challenge posed by this aspect of digital signs: "There is no objective definition of excessive brightness because the appropriate level of brightness depends on the environment within which the sign operates."

**Message duration and transition.** The ordinance must include a minimum duration of time that a single message must be displayed. Typically this is expressed in terms of seconds. The San Antonio billboard ordinance requires each image to remain static for at least eight seconds and that a change of image be accomplished within one second or less.

The city's ordinance requires any portion of the message that uses a video display method to have a minimum duration of two seconds and a maximum duration of five seconds. Further, it requires a 20-second "pause" in which a still image or blank screen is showed following every message that is shown on a video display.

**Public service announcements.** In exchange for permission to use digital displays, owners of billboards in Minnesota and San

Antonio have agreed to display emergency information such as Amber Alerts and emergency evacuation information. Such a requirement can be included in an ordinance or imposed as a condition of approval.

Whether undertaking a comprehensive revision of a sign ordinance or more limited, strategic amendments to address digital technology, there are other common provisions related to electronic and digital signage that should be revisited as part of the rewrite. At the top of the list would be updating standards for conventional electronic message centers to reflect the latest research regarding driver distraction and message duration. Also, the boilerplate provisions common to so many ordinances that prohibit signs that flash, are animated, or simulate motion should also be rethought. These provisions could conceivably be used to prohibit digital displays without additional regulations. The problem is that these characteristics are very rarely defined in the ordinance and remain open to interpretation. Also, whenever new regulations are being considered for digital billboards, jurisdictions should take the opportunity to draft new provisions to address digital technology for on-premise signs as well. And, finally, any time the sign ordinance goes into the shop for repair—whether to address digital signage or to make broader changes—is a good time to remove or revise any provisions that violate content neutrality rules.

## NEWS BRIEFS

SMART GROWTH TAKES A HIT  
IN MARYLAND

By Lora Lucero, AICP

The *Baltimore Sun* hit the nail on the head when it reported on March 12 "[t]he state's highest court declared that Maryland law does not require local governments to stick to their master plans or growth-management policies in making development decisions."

*Trail, et al. v. Terrapin Run, LLC, et al.* presented an important question for the court to address: What link is required between the community's adopted plan and the decision by the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) to grant or deny a request for a special exception? In a 4 to 3 vote, the majority concluded that Article 66B, the state planning law, is permissive in nature and plans are only advisory guides, so a strong link between plans and implementation is not required. The court affirmed the county's

## The majority concluded that the state planning law is permissive in nature and plans are only advisory guides, so a strong link between plans and implementation is not required.

approval of the special exception and determined that the “in harmony with” traditional standard in applications for special exceptions remains the standard, in the absence of specific legislative language to the contrary. The court’s decision is available at [www.planning.org/amicusbriefs/pdf/terrapinrundecision.pdf](http://www.planning.org/amicusbriefs/pdf/terrapinrundecision.pdf).

Terrapin Run, LLC, the developer, proposed to build an “active adult” community of 4,300 homes on 935 partially wooded acres in Allegany County, a rural area of mountainous Western Maryland. The land is primarily zoned District “A” (Agricultural, Forestry, and Mining), with a portion located in District “C” (Conservation). In addition to the homes, the developer proposed to build an equestrian center, a community building, and a 125,000-square-foot shopping center.

The residential density is 4.6 units per acre. A planner who testified at trial indicated that the density of the proposed development would approximate that of Kentlands, in Montgomery County. The initial phase of development would use individual septic tanks, but the project would eventually require its own sewage treatment plant. Significantly, the property is not located in one of Maryland’s priority funding areas.

The zoning ordinance divides Allegany County into urban and nonurban areas. “A” and “C” are classified as nonurban zoning districts. The zoning ordinance provides:

“Non-urban districts are designed to accommodate a number of non-urban land uses including agriculture, forestry, mining, extractive industries, wildlife habitat, outdoor recreation, and communication, transmission and transportation services, as well as to protect floodplain areas, steep slope areas, designated wetlands and habitat areas, and Public Supply Watersheds *from intense urban development.*” Allegany County Code, Chapter 141, Part 4 (Zoning) §141-5(B) (emphasis supplied).

Opponents to the project argued that the ZBA erred when it found that strict conformity with the plan was not required and that the proposed development would be “in harmony with” the Allegany County Comprehensive Plan

because Maryland Code (Article 66, § 1(k)) requires a special exception to be “in conformity with” the plan.

Gov. Martin O’Malley’s administration argued in its amicus brief that counties and municipalities are required to conform to the seven broad “visions” for growth in Maryland as listed below:

### § 1.01. Visions

- (1) Development is concentrated in suitable areas.
- (2) Sensitive areas are protected.
- (3) In rural areas, growth is directed to existing population centers and resource areas are protected.
- (4) Stewardship of the Chesapeake Bay and the land is a universal ethic.
- (5) Conservation of resources, including a reduction in resource consumption, is practiced.
- (6) To assure the achievement of items (1) through (5) of this section, economic growth is encouraged and regulatory mechanisms are streamlined.
- (7) Adequate public facilities and infrastructure under the control of the county or municipal corporation are available or planned in areas where growth is to occur.

APA and its Maryland Chapter jointly filed an amicus brief. We argued that “[p]lans are documents that describe public policies that the community intends to implement and not simply a rhetorical expression of the community’s desires.” APA’s position is that (1) the adopted comprehensive plan must be implemented; (2) effective implementation requires that the day-to-day decisions made by local officials be consistent with the adopted comprehensive plan; and (3) the court’s review of whether consistency is achieved should be more searching when local officials are acting in their administrative (quasi-judicial) capacity. APA’s amicus brief is available at [www.planning.org/amicusbriefs/pdf/terrapinrun.pdf](http://www.planning.org/amicusbriefs/pdf/terrapinrun.pdf).

The lengthy majority opinion (52 pages) recounts much of Maryland’s legislative history in statutory reforms. “[T]his case, in one sense is a continuation of legislative battles that began in the early 1990s, where representatives of the

environmental protection and professional land planning interests attempted to establish that the State, or State planners, should exercise greater control than theretofore enjoyed over most aspects of land use decision-making that then reposed in the local jurisdictions” (*Trail, et al. v. Terrapin Run, LLC, et al.*, 2008 WL 638691, p.1). The majority concludes that the “in harmony” standard is synonymous with “in conformity.” However, the three dissenting justices said the majority “sets special exception considerations on a lubricious path” (*Trail, et al. v. Terrapin Run, LLC, et al.*, Minority Opinion, p.13). The statutory amendments made by the legislature in 1970, and subsequent case law, buttresses the argument that a stricter linkage is required between the adopted plan and the grant of a special exception, the minority opined.

Richard Hall, Maryland secretary of planning and past president of the Maryland Chapter of APA, said: “We think this is a time when we need more smart, sustainable growth, not less.” The O’Malley administration is going to study the ruling before deciding whether to advance legislation to reverse the court’s decision.

*Lora Lucero, AICP, is editor of Planning & Environmental Law and staff liaison to APA’s amicus curiae committee.*

Cover concept by Lisa Barton.

Photos: Sign © iStockphoto.com/David McShane; Screen © iStockphoto.com/Alexey Khlobystov

### VOL. 25, NO. 4

**Zoning Practice is a monthly publication of the American Planning Association. Subscriptions are available for \$75 (U.S.) and \$100 (foreign). W. Paul Farmer, FAICP, Executive Director; William R. Klein, AICP, Director of Research.**

*Zoning Practice* (ISSN 1548-0135) is produced at APA. Jim Schwab, AICP, and David Morley, Editors; Julie Von Bergen, Assistant Editor; Lisa Barton, Design and Production.

Copyright ©2008 by American Planning Association, 122 S. Michigan Ave., Suite 1600, Chicago, IL 60603. The American Planning Association also has offices at 1776 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036; [www.planning.org](http://www.planning.org).

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or utilized in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the American Planning Association.

**Printed on recycled paper, including 50-70% recycled fiber and 10% postconsumer waste.**



**ZONINGPRACTICE**  
AMERICAN PLANNING ASSOCIATION

122 S. Michigan Ave.  
Suite 1600  
Chicago, IL 60603

1776 Massachusetts Ave., N.W.  
Washington D.C. 20036



IS YOUR COMMUNITY READY  
FOR DIGITAL SIGNAGE?

4

**REPORT TO COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON  
HOUSING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT****TO HONORABLE COMMITTEE MEMBERS:**

DATE: September 28, 2015

**SUBJECT: DISCUSSION OF EARLY CALIFORNIA ARCHITECTURE FOR THE DOWNTOWN****Report in Brief**

The Downtown Concord Specific Plan (Specific Plan) includes a chapter on Design Guidelines to provide guidance to property owners, developers, the City's Design Review Board and staff regarding the City's expectations for the architectural design of new development or exterior building remodel projects in the Specific Plan area. In the Specific Plan, a short-term implementation measure (Measure D-1A) directs that a study session will be conducted to discuss and explore the Early California Architecture theme with the intent of determining whether the City is interested in developing more defined Architectural Design Standards with the Early California theme for development within the downtown. This Study Session begins that discussion.

**Background**

The City Council unanimously adopted the Specific Plan on June 25, 2014, which includes a chapter on Design Guidelines that focuses on urban form, massing and character, ground floor treatment, relating facades to the public realm, vehicular access and building design including parking, servicing and private open space. The discussion of building character was general in nature and not overly prescriptive, encouraging high quality architecture, and other broader recommendations. The guidelines noted that a number of historic buildings in the project area exemplify Early California architecture. The guidelines in the Specific Plan identified desirable design elements that reflected the character of these historic buildings:

- Breaking up single large block buildings into a smaller series of buildings/variation in the facades to create a finer building grain fabric;
- Providing important roofline articulations/stepping back the top floors of buildings;
- Ensuring that the ground floor of a building relates to and enhances the public realm/streetscape;
- Providing deep reveals for window treatments;
- Incorporating balconies with permeable railings;
- Using a common materials palette; and
- Utilizing arcades along specific streets.

The focus of the guidelines (included as Attachment 1) was to provide guidance to property owners, developers, the City's Design Review Board and staff for evaluation of the architectural design of proposed projects in the Specific Plan area. The guidelines describe the desired urban form and massing, setbacks and ground floor treatment rather than a specific architectural style or theme to be used for new development and remodel projects. The scope, budget and timeline of the Specific Plan, did not allow for preparation of architectural Design Standards beyond these Design Guidelines. Instead, a short-term (2014-2017) Implementation measure (D-1A) was included to further explore the Early California architectural theme. Some

members of the City Council have voiced a desire to see stronger tools in place to ensure that the architecture of much new development in the downtown area aligns with an Early California architectural style. The Specific Plan boundary within the downtown is shown in Attachment 2.

The City's General Plan does refer to the North Todos Santos (NTS) Specific Plan, adopted by the City in 1985, noting that it is intended to protect the character of this historic neighborhood. The North Todos Santos area is generally bounded by Concord Avenue, Pacheco Street, Port Chicago Highway and Mt. Diablo High School on the north, and coincides with the North Todos Santos zoning district which is within the larger overall boundary for the Downtown Specific Plan. The Design Guidelines that evolved from the NTS Specific Plan are attached as Attachment 3. Additionally, the City has attached the Downtown Concord Urban Design book, adopted in March 1987, which presents policies for urban design, for use by developers, sponsors, and individuals "who have an interest in the quality of Concord's downtown environment" (Attachment 4).

## Discussion

The term Early California architecture can be viewed as a mixture of architectural influences that have combined over time, resulting in a variety and melding of architectural styles. The attached photo examples summarize the various architectural styles used in the early periods of California history for reference (Attachment 5) and discussion.

### Spanish Revival Architecture

Spanish Revival architecture emerged as a result of the Spanish mission sanctuaries that were established throughout California in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century, and was a revivalist architectural movement that began in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, drawing inspiration from the earlier missions. Common elements include arched corridors, long arcades and generous courtyards typically with a fountain, wide projecting eaves, and low sloping tile roofs. Materials including massive adobe walls, timber, stone, brick and tile typically represent the style. Terraced bell towers are often incorporated. Today, stucco walls, with arched door and window openings and tile roofs have become the standard Spanish Revival appearance and Salvio Pacheco Square, on the north side of Todos Santos Plaza, incorporates many elements of this style. The City of Santa Barbara is well known for its Spanish Revival architecture and has many excellent buildings that represent this style. The El Pueblo Viejo Design Guidelines for City of Santa Barbara have been attached for reference (Attachment 6).

### Monterey Colonial Architecture

The Monterey Colonial style verandas more than likely harkened back to the Spanish as well. This architectural style typically included adobe buildings, with low-pitched gable roofs, and a balcony overhanging the entrance door, cantilevered and supported by wood beams or posts. Most examples of the style use a mixture of wall materials. Stucco over the brick veneer can provide a rustic effect. The Don Salvio Pacheco Adobe at 1870 Adobe Street, known to be the first structure in Concord, is an example of this architecture.

### Victorian Architecture

The Victorian architectural style evolved in the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century and refers to the reign of Queen Victoria (1837-1901), however many of the recognized elements did not become popular until the late 1800s. A

variety of well-known styles emerged from the era including Queen Anne, Italianate and Gothic Revival styles. As the movement moved west to California, Victorian architecture generally described styles popular between 1860 and 1900 and the Queen Anne style came into fashion in the 1880s. These elaborate, brightly colored homes are the image most think of as a Victorian home. San Francisco is well known for its Victorian buildings, including the iconic “painted ladies”. Typical elements include two to three story large buildings with a one-story porch, wood or stone exterior, bay windows, ornamental brackets, cupolas, and a high degree of decorative trim detailing in vibrant colors. The historic Galindo House represents the style within Concord.

## Mission Revival

The Mission Revival style (1910-1940) originated in southern California and is similar to its “relative,” Spanish Revival. Common elements include a distinctive curved parapet, roof overhangs with visible rafters or roof brackets underneath, square towers, stucco cladding, red tile roofs, arched porticos, round arches and ornamental iron accents.

## Local Historical Examples

The Concord Historical Society maintains a map and tour on their website of 28 historic places in downtown Concord. <http://concordhistory.com/tour/> The City also maintains a map and listing of those sites and structures, which is attached as Attachment 7.

## Private Development

There may be certain challenges faced by developers with incorporating Early California architectural design into higher density office or multi-family projects and therefore staff has invited developers that have shown an interest in development within the City to attend this meeting to share any input they may have with respect to this subject.

## Next Steps

Staff seeks input and guidance from the Committee as to better defining this issue and requests direction on the following points:

- 1) Confirmation of architectural styles and elements that define Early California Architecture and whether there is a desire for preparation of a subsequent more specific architectural design guide, or design standards, and if so, begin to define the scope.
- 2) Define a boundary, either the entire Specific Plan area, or a subarea within the Specific Plan, that would be subject to new specific Development Guidelines or Standards if that is the chosen direction.
- 3) Types of development, i.e. thresholds you would consider, for projects that would be subject to any new architectural style requirements and whether those include more defined Design Guidelines (recommendations) or Architectural Design Standards (requirements). For example, types of development could include all new projects, or just commercial projects, projects of a certain

square footage and/or residential projects of a certain size, and setting similar thresholds for renovation or remodeling projects.

**Public Contact**

The agenda item was posted. Developers with an interest in the downtown have been notified.



Joyan Grogan  
Deputy City Manager  
[jovan.grogan@cityofconcord.org](mailto:jovan.grogan@cityofconcord.org)

Prepared by: Joan Ryan, AICP  
Senior Planner  
[joan.ryan@cityofconcord.org](mailto:joan.ryan@cityofconcord.org)

Reviewed by: Laura Simpson  
Planning Manager  
[laura.simpson@cityofconcord.org](mailto:laura.simpson@cityofconcord.org)

- Attachment 1 – Downtown Concord Specific Plan, Chapter 4: Design Guidelines, June 2014
- Attachment 2 – Downtown Concord Specific Plan Boundary
- Attachment 3 – Design Guidelines for the North Todos Santos Neighborhood, 1985
- Attachment 4 – Downtown Concord Urban Guidelines, dated March 1987
- Attachment 5 – Early California Architecture briefing
- Attachment 6 – City of Santa Barbara - El Pueblo Viejo Design Guidelines
- Attachment 7 – Concord Historical Sites and Structures map



# **DOWNTOWN CONCORD SPECIFIC PLAN**

## **Design Guidelines**

Adopted June 25, 2014



## 04 Design Guidelines

### 4.1 GENERAL INTENT

The general intent of this section is to provide a set of building development design guidelines to provide guidance to potential property owners, developers, and the City's design review/staff for determining the architectural character and building development for proposed projects. As the current City of Concord's Development Code has specific standards for height and FAR, as well as setback regulations, this chapter focuses on building character, how buildings should relate to the public realm, and address parking and servicing to ensure the strong pedestrian character of the Downtown and area around Todos Santos Plaza is maintained.



Salvio Street, 1930's



Todos Santos Plaza, 1915

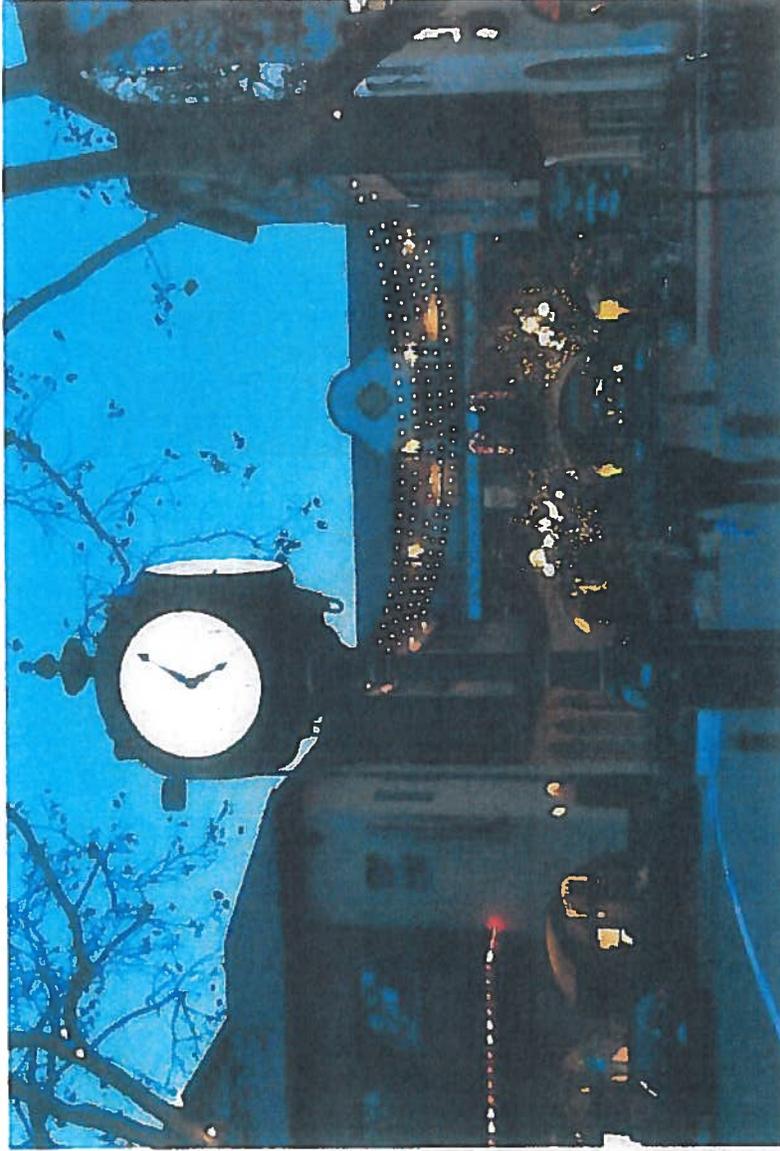
## DOWNTOWN CONCORD SPECIFIC PLAN

### 4.2 URBAN FORM, MASSING AND CHARACTER

The urban form around Todos Santos is defined by buildings ranging from low rise/single story to three stories and has active ground floor uses that support the activity and vitality of the park. Higher density office commercial is predominantly situated near the BART station and Clayton Road. These tall buildings provide a sense of skyline to the City, become an important commercial focus and surround Todos Santos Plaza on three sides, creating a low rise/pedestrian center to the City.

The project area is characterized by a strong square/rectangular street grid that is highly walkable. In areas where the grid has been aggregated into larger blocks to accommodate higher density and larger footprint buildings (such as at the Park & Shop Shopping Center and near the BART Station), pedestrian walkability and accessibility decrease, creating a strong disconnection from the surrounding area. It is notable that the Central Business District and Retail Center have a strong correlation between generally larger building footprints and larger block size, whereas the residential districts and downtown core exhibit smaller buildings and smaller block sizes and increase walkability.

The project area is marked by a number of historic buildings that exemplify early central California architecture. Their character is defined not only stylistically, but through key elements that the following design guidelines will illustrate. These generally include but are not limited to the following:



Todos Santos Plaza looking toward Salvio Pacheco Square

- Breaking up single large block buildings into a smaller series of buildings/variation in the facades to create a finer building grain fabric
- Providing important roofline articulations/stepping back the top floors of buildings
- Ensuring the ground floor of buildings relate and enhance the public realm/streetscape
- Providing deep reveals for window treatments
- Incorporating balconies with permeable railings
- Use of a common materials palette
- Use of arcades along specific streets

**TODOS SANTOS PLAZA**

The building form and fabric around Todos Santos Plaza and the adjacent area helps define the pedestrian character of the downtown. The small scale and fine grain fabric is an asset that new infill development should follow.



Salvio Pacheco

**BART STATION AREA**

The BART station and associated track creates a significant divide within the urban form of the city, where higher density commercial programs exist on the northern side, while single family residential exists to the south.



BART Station Area

The larger parcels around the BART station allow for higher density development, but the proposed density should be appropriately massed, including stepping back the top floors of buildings, creating variation within facades of buildings, and creating strong visual building breaks.

High quality architecture should be expected here, as this is a major gateway into the City and the Downtown. Buildings that surround the proposed BART plaza should be planned and designed in a cohesive manner, with entries and ground floor uses that are accessible to pedestrians and transit users.

**PARK & SHOP AREA**

As this area redevelops, establishing a building form that promotes pedestrian activity, is inviting and is built at a pedestrian-scale will be critical to ensuring success for this area. Allowing buildings to relate to the street will be important, as well as promoting a strong streetscape to help modulate the speed of traffic along Willow Pass and Clayton Road.



Existing Park + Shop parking and retail

### 4.3 DESIGN GUIDELINES

#### BUILDING SETBACK

##### Intent

Buildings on side and cross streets can create a more intimate scale and help hold the street volume. Setbacks on these streets are not desired except in the case of residential streets or ground floors with residential use where a private zone between public and private areas is desired. The following guidelines elaborate these conditions.

Buildings with minimal setbacks have a special relationship with the sidewalk and street. In these cases, buildings frame the street and form a well-defined street edge. Activities within the building, if seen, particularly at ground level, can provide visual interest and a degree of safety to passersby. Activities outside the building, such as outdoor dining, can enliven adjacent sidewalks. These are desirable attributes in areas with high levels of activity such as the downtown and station area.



Minimal setback and transparent facade, Sacramento, CA



Pasadena Old Town



Landscaped setback and raised entry provides privacy

**Guidelines**

Buildings located on all streets in the Project Area shall maintain setbacks as required by the City Zoning Codes.

Steps, stoops, porches, patios, and terraces should be allowed in the building setback zone, particularly on residential buildings where ground floor activity is important.

In residential neighborhoods with low scale buildings, the front setback shall be landscaped to enhance the street character and complement the neighborhood identity.

In case of corner lots in residential neighborhoods, the minimum permeable surface of the combined area of the front and street sideyard setback zones facing the streets should be 75 percent. These setbacks shall be landscaped to enhance the street character.

When possible, ground floor retail space should be setback a minimum of 2 feet and a maximum of 5 feet to provide for outdoor seating opportunities by way of wider sidewalks.

Building setbacks should be landscaped to ensure privacy in case of residential ground floor use.

All new developments on primary streets should build to zero front lot line with exceptions for any usable, publicly-accessible, at grade open space such as small plaza, pocket park, or a pedestrian alley.

Buildings should be sensitive to the scale and character of adjacent buildings on rear property lines.

Buildings should complement the low-scale, horizontal character of the Specific Plan area, and ensure a basic horizontal articulation, by differentiating the ground floor from the upper floors or roof.

Buildings should consider sun shading as part of a modulation and articulation strategy.

Buildings downtown should maintain a tight and varied rhythm of façades compatible with the existing character. In particular, they should relate to the typical 50 foot wide parcel width through building vertical modulation and façade articulation to avoid flat, long walls along the street frontage. Such techniques could include the use of change in façade rhythm, façade recesses, or change in materials or color.

# DOWNTOWN CONCORD SPECIFIC PLAN

## GROUND FLOOR TREATMENT

### Commercial Ground Floor

#### Intent

Active, pedestrian-oriented, inviting ground floor retail is an essential component in the creation of a vibrant district and neighborhood.

#### Guidelines

All ground floor retail should have a primary entry from the sidewalk or from a forecourt or courtyard that has direct access to a sidewalk.

Individual storefronts shall be clearly defined by architectural elements, such as piers and separations of glass.

Commercial buildings are recommended to meet the sidewalk with an interactive ground floor use, or a transition landscaped setback, or a pocket plaza, to contribute positively to the pedestrian experience.

Ground floor retail with multiple tenants should be designed to have clear distinction between individual storefronts, entire building façade, and adjacent properties.

For larger retail tenants, entries should generally occur at a minimum of every 50 feet. In-line retail stores should generally have entries every 25 feet.

Recessed doorways for retail uses are allowed, and they should be a minimum of 2 feet in depth. Recessed doorways provide cover for pedestrians and customers in bad weather; they help identify the location of store entrances, provide a clear area for out-swinging doors, and offer the opportunity for interesting paving patterns, signage, and displays.

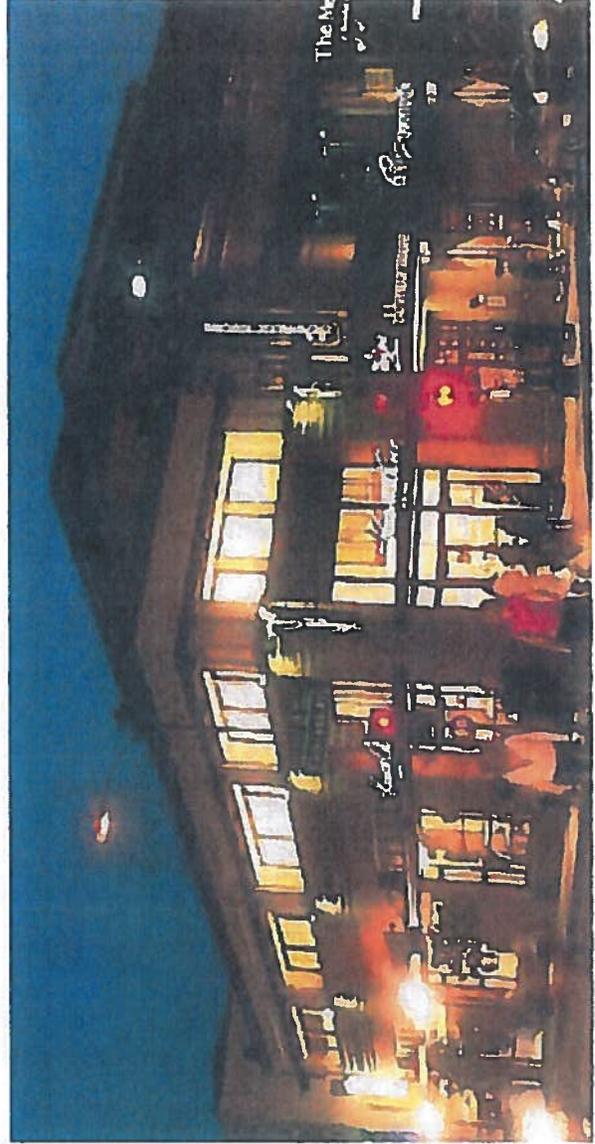
Retail frontage, whether ground or upper floor, must be clear vision glass; no heavily tinted or mirrored glass is permitted.

Storefronts should remain un-shuttered at night and provide clear views of interior spaces lit from within.

Storefront windows should provide deep merchandising zones that allow for changeable and dimensional displays. The windows should not be completely obscured with display cases that prevent customers and pedestrians from seeing inside.



Boutique retail alley



Transparent retail facade

**Residential Ground Floor**

**Intent**

The character of the building's ground floor determines the overall quality of the street level pedestrian experience. Residential ground floor use adds vibrancy and life at the street and plaza level and ensures "eyes" on the street as an important aspect for public safety.

**Guidelines**

Units located at ground level shall have their ground floor elevated a minimum of 18 inches above the street level for privacy, provided that local accessibility codes are met.

Internal active uses, such as community rooms, fitness center, daycare facilities and sales centers, should be placed at the ground level along the street.

Multiple entries at street level are encouraged where possible.

Direct-access residential units are recommended on primarily residential streets.

Stoops and landscaping create inviting, usable transition spaces. Stoops and entry steps from the street are encouraged for individual unit street entries, consistent with local accessibility requirements. Stoops could extend in to the building setback zone but shall not encroach into the public right-of-way.

For larger residential buildings with shared entries, entry should be through prominent entry lobbies or a courtyard facing the street. Setback at entries is encouraged.

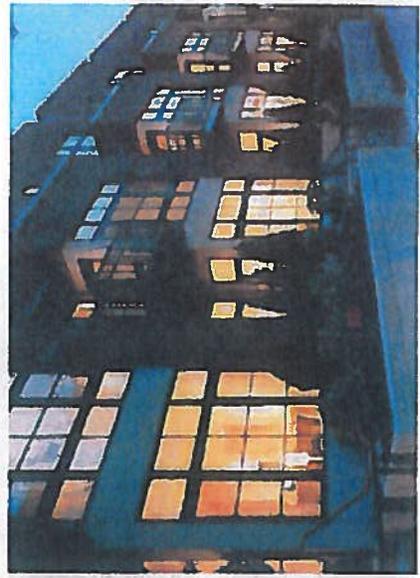
Entries should be prominent and visually distinctive from the rest of the façade with creative use of scale, materials, glazing, projecting or recessed forms, architectural details, color, and/or awnings.

Breaks in the ground floor for vehicular and service entries should be minimized.

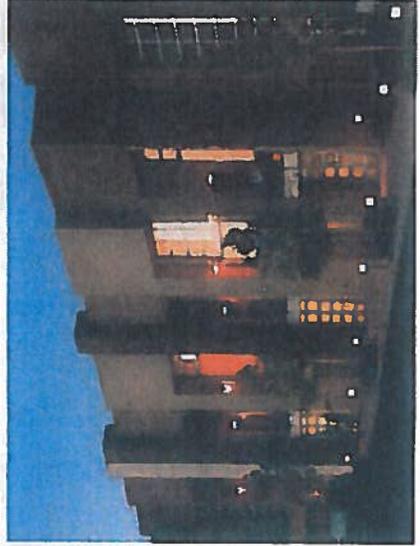
Multi-unit residential buildings are encouraged to introduce openings along the public street that provide visual or physical access to courtyards. Such openings add an element of surprise and interest at the street level.



Wisteria development, Concord, CA



Townhomes



Townhomes

**Blank Wall Treatment**

**Intent**

Treatment of blank walls should ensure pedestrian comfort, safety and interest.

**Guidelines**

Unavoidable blank walls enhanced with architectural detailing, material texture, landscape treatment or art work shall be no longer than a maximum length of 50 feet.

Unavoidable blank walls along public streets, besides being detailed, shall be provided with additional special lighting to ensure safety and comfort during night time.

Blank wall including solid doors should be avoided wherever possible.

Unavoidable blank walls on the ground floor along public streets and open spaces should be treated to create a pleasant visual experience. This treatment could be in the form of either:

- installing vertical trellis in front of the wall with climbing vines or plant materials,
- setting the wall back and providing a landscaped or planter bed in front of the wall, including plant materials that could grow to obscure or screen the wall's surface
- providing art (mosaic, mural, decorative masonry pattern, sculpture, relief, etc.) over a substantial portion of the blank wall surface,



**Sculptural facade treatment**

- employing indentations, or other means of breaking up the wall's surface,
- providing a canopy, horizontal trellis or other pedestrian-oriented features that add visual interest

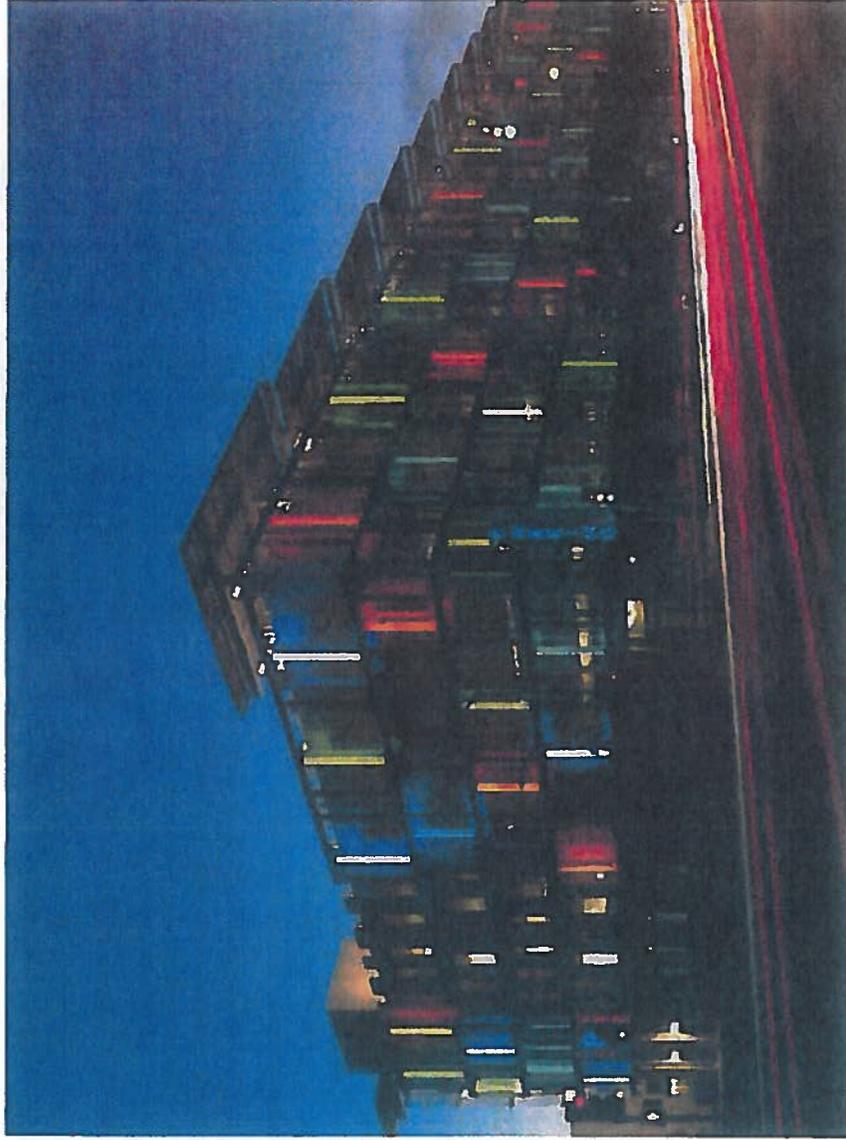
**Vehicular Access**

To minimize disruption to primary pedestrian-oriented streets, garage entrances should be generally located in alleys or side streets.

Garage entrances adjacent to sidewalk should be screened with landscaping techniques or should be treated as an opportunity for public art (Figure 3.51).

In mixed-use developments, in order to minimize curb cuts, shared ramps for both retail and residential uses are encouraged. In shared ramp conditions, secure access for residential parking should be provided.

In order to minimize curb-cuts, multi-unit residential buildings should consolidate their parking entries and exits to a single entry.



Santa Monica Civic Center Parking Garage facade

## DOWNTOWN CONCORD SPECIFIC PLAN

### Residential/Mixed Use Building Design

#### Intent

Residential/mixed use buildings represent the largest amount of new program in the Project area. Therefore these new buildings should conform to key aspects of massing, pedestrian scale and promotion of ground floor usage. These elements are essential to creating a livable and vibrant Downtown.

#### Guidelines

Multi-unit buildings should depict a rhythm and scale that relates to the surrounding buildings. In case of adjacent buildings being smaller in scale, such as single-family units, the multi-unit buildings should maintain the scale of the adjacent buildings on the street front. It should place the bulk of the building mass away from the street towards the center of the block.

Multi-unit buildings should have modulation in massing to avoid a box-like structure. Creating terraces, recessing windows and use of step backs create distinct smaller volumes.

Multi-unit buildings should articulate their facade to avoid a flat, monotonous appearance. Use of projecting building elements, windows or balconies helps break the façade and reduce the apparent size of the building.

Primary facades of new buildings should be compatible with surrounding buildings in relation to the width and proportions of elements like front porches, stoops, overhangs, projected components and roofs.

Roofs should be treated as the fifth façade of the building since they play a major role in the appearance and character of a building. Level changes of the roof help soften the mass of the building.

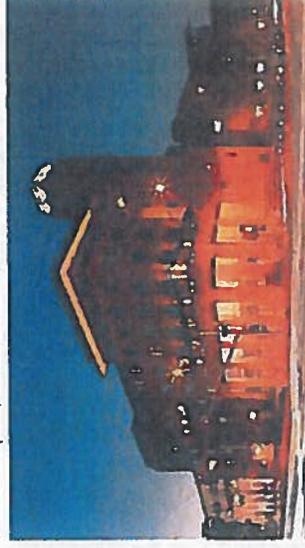
The scale, proportions and placement of the architectural details on all new building facades should be compatible with the overall aesthetics of the surrounding buildings.

Buildings on corner lots should articulate both their street-facing facades. Facade treatment and openings on both these exposed surfaces should be designed to optimize the greater street visibility and accessibility to sunlight and air.

Wherever possible, corner lot buildings are encouraged to include a corner entry.



Paseo Chapala, Santa Barbara, CA



Residential building reflecting early California architectural style



Mixed-Use Housing, Santa Monica, CA

**Commercial Building Design**

**Intent**

Large commercial buildings should be detailed to integrate well in its surrounding context.

**Guidelines**

Commercial buildings with a large mass should be broken down in to smaller distinct volumes to avoid a box-like structure.

Long, continuous facades should be articulated with architectural elements and wall plane projections or recesses to reduce the massive scale and uniform physical appearance.

Expression of the structural elements and bays of the building on the façade is encouraged. Windows, wall panels, and pilasters should be based on a module derived from the building's structural bay spacing.

Street-level frontage adjacent to public streets or open spaces should be articulated with entrances, lobbies, storefront windows and displays to enliven the public realm experience.

Commercial buildings are encouraged to have variations in rooflines to enhance the distinct massing.

**Mechanical Equipment**

Mechanical equipment on top of the buildings should be screened from both pedestrian and adjacent rooftop views. The screen should be designed to be architecturally integrated as part of the roofscape or the building facade.

Intensive or extensive green roofs that help reduce storm water run-off should be explored for all rooftops.

**Utilities**

All utilities in conjunction with new residential and commercial development should be placed underground.

Above ground meters, boxes and other utility equipment should be screened from public view through use of landscaping or by integrating into the overall building design



Facade articulation, Portland, OR



Facade articulation, San Francisco, CA

# DOWNTOWN CONCORD SPECIFIC PLAN

## 4.4 PARKING AND SERVICING

### PARKING STRUCTURES AND GARAGE ENTRANCES

#### Intent

Due to their scale and treatment, parking structures are very often a disruptive element in the urban fabric. It is important to locate and access parking structures and residential garages such that the overall pedestrian flow and experience on the public streets is not compromised.

Parking podiums and below ground parking are encouraged as a way to screen large volumes for parking for residential and commercial developments.

#### Guidelines

Parking structure lighting shall provide adequate security, but openings shall be screened and controlled so as not to disturb surrounding residences and streets from garage lighting at night.

Gates for podium parking/parking garages should be opaque and match the building in terms of aesthetic character

Parking garage driveways should not be placed on major pedestrian streets (e.g. Grant Street)

Parking garages and surface parking areas should be screened from pedestrian areas (streets and open spaces) with landscaping, liner uses such as retail, lobbies, community uses, or residential units. All service areas must be screened and not placed along major pedestrian streets or access ways.

Surface parking should be visually attractive, address security and safety concerns, retain existing mature trees and incorporate canopy trees for shade.



Kettner rowhouse, San Diego, CA



Magnolia Row driveway, Oakland, CA

#### 4.5 PRIVATE OPEN SPACE

The provision and treatment of private open space on individual parcels can enhance the character of public streets and sidewalks and private development. It can add to available public open space in the area.

The Specific Plan encourages use of the following guidelines when incorporating open space in private developments.

##### Guidelines

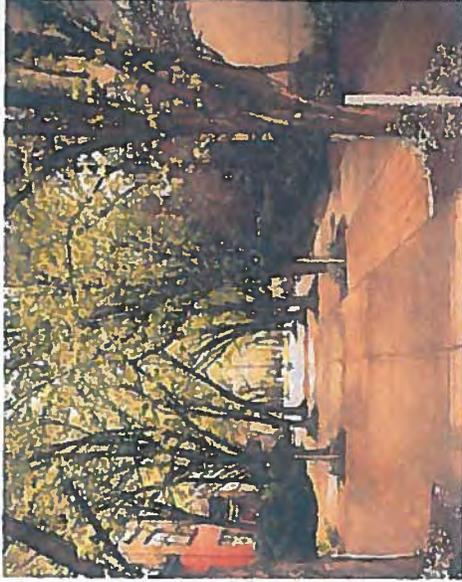
Private and/or common open spaces are encouraged as part of building modulation and articulation to enhance building facades.

Private developments should provide accessible and usable common open space for building occupants and/or the general public.

For residential developments, private open space should be designed as an extension of the indoor living area, providing an area that is usable and has some degree of privacy.

Landscaping in setback areas should define and enhance pedestrian and open space areas. It should provide visual interest to streets and sidewalks, particularly where building facades are long.

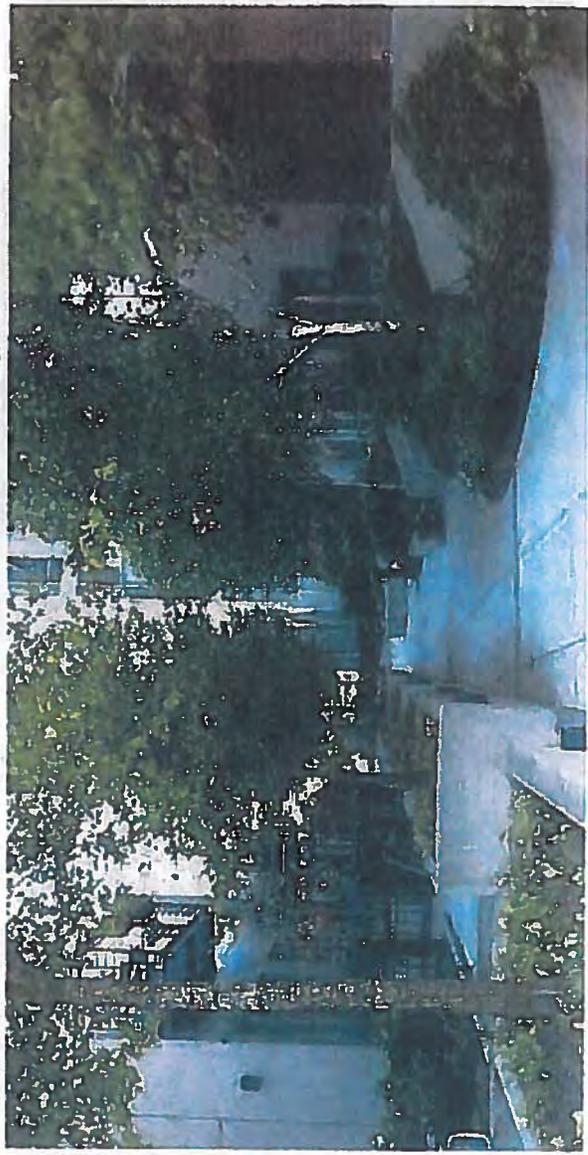
Landscaping of private open spaces should be attractive, durable and drought resistant (see Section Sustainable Practices-Landscape Guidelines for details)



Mid-block access, Portland, OR



Mission Creek housing, San Francisco, CA



Shared courtyard, Portland, OR

## DOWNTOWN CONCORD SPECIFIC PLAN

### 4.6 SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES

Sustainable practices for new construction support community and environmental well-being by utilizing finite resources in a responsible way, creating healthy environments for building inhabitants and minimizing impacts to both natural systems and existing utilities (i.e. water, wastewater and energy systems). The City of Concord supports sustainable practices through its 2013 Climate Action Plan.

Sustainable practices address: 1) the environmental impacts of site development and building construction; and 2) the long-term environmental impacts of the operation of buildings resulting in the emission of greenhouse gases (GHGs), in particular carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), which is causing the global climate to change. Currently, there are excellent tools to measure ways to reduce environmental impacts caused by building construction, and new tools are emerging to measure greenhouse gas emissions caused by building operations over the long term.

To address impacts caused by construction, the U.S. Green Building Council's (USGBC) Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) rating system measures specific site development and new building construction methods related to environmental issues, such as energy savings, water efficiency, CO<sub>2</sub> emissions reduction, improved indoor environmental quality and stewardship of resources and sensitivity to their impacts.

To address GHG emissions, the world's leading green building organizations have agreed to adopt a common global language for the measurement of the carbon footprint of buildings. The "common carbon metric" will be piloted by the leading green building rating tools. This should lead to the cost-effective GHG mitigation potential of buildings, which account for around 40% of the world's energy use and 33% of global GHG emissions.

#### MEASUREMENT TOOLS

##### Development and Construction Tools

The LEED program has performance levels from "Certified" to "Platinum" and rating systems that address different types of construction and building operation, including LEED for Neighborhood Development, LEED for New Construction, and LEED for existing buildings, operations and maintenance. Many municipalities in the Bay Area have adopted Green Building Ordinances that require certain levels of LEED certification for different types of projects.

The Specific Plan proposes that all new development in the Project Area meet LEED Silver Standards



Stormwater management and green street

**Greenhouse Gases/Carbon Tools**

The 2030 Challenge is an initiative by Edward Mazria and Architecture 2030 asking the global architecture and construction community to adopt a series of greenhouse gas reduction targets for new and renovated buildings. In response to the global-warming crisis, the 2030 Challenge's mission is to rapidly transform the US and global Building Sector from the major contributor of greenhouse gas emissions to a central part of the solution to the global-warming crisis.

The "carbon metric" measurement device is currently being developed and will be integrated into the LEED program in the future.

**Initiatives**

Local and regional initiatives address sustainable development and reduction of greenhouse gases.

**Local Initiatives**

The City of Concord published a Climate Action Plan (CAP) in 2013. The CAP includes recommendations for environmentally responsible development and ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The CAP's recommendations for sustainable building and development practices refer to a phased program for submittals of Green Building Checklists related to development projects. The CAP also recommends early adoption of the California Green Building Code.

**Guidelines**

LEED certification, at a silver level or higher, should be required for the types of projects listed below. The applicable LEED® versions of performance standards are: LEED®- v3 (2009) New Construction; LEED®- v3 (2009) Core and Shell; LEED®- v3 (2009) Schools; and LEED®- v3 (2009) Commercial Interiors. LEED certification, at a silver level or higher, should be required for:

Newly constructed (Residential) occupancy buildings with three or more dwelling units;

- Newly constructed commercial buildings occupancies including among others office, professional and service type transactions and occupancies including among others display or sale of merchandise such as department stores, retail stores, wholesale stores, markets and sales rooms) that are 5,000 gross square feet or more;
- New first-time build-outs of commercial interiors that are 20,000 gross square feet or more in buildings of Group B and M occupancies; and
- Major alterations that are 20,000 gross square feet or more in existing buildings of where interior finishes are removed and significant upgrades to structural and mechanical, electrical and/or plumbing systems are proposed.

- Because the development of larger parcels provides the ability to incorporate cost effective carbon reduction features and renewable energy sources, development projects over 4 acres of land should have more stringent sustainability requirements and GHG reduction targets. These could include being certified at a LEED ND (neighborhood development) level of gold, and mandating a phased reduction of GHG emissions over a period of time, such as those prescribed in the 2030 Challenge.
- Because green building standards are constantly evolving, the requirements in this section should be reviewed and updated on a regular basis of at least every two years.

## DOWNTOWN CONCORD SPECIFIC PLAN

### Solar Access Guidelines

Building design should consider floor-to-ceiling height and floor plan depth to allow natural light deeper into the interior.

Buildings should reduce use of daytime artificial lighting through design elements, such as bigger wall openings, light shelves, clerestory lighting, skylights, and translucent wall materials.

Buildings should allow for flexibility to regulate the amount of direct sunlight into the interiors. Louvered wall openings or shading devices like bris soleils help control solar gain and check overheating. Bris soleils, which are permanent sun-shading elements, extend from the sun-facing facade of a building, in the form of horizontal or vertical projections depending on sun orientation, to cut out the sun's direct rays, help protect windows from excessive solar light and heat and reduce glare within.

Where appropriate, buildings should incorporate arcades, trellis and appropriate tree planting to screen and mitigate south and west sun exposure during summer. This guideline would not apply where buildings have a minimum setback and street trees provide adequate shade.

To maximize use of solar energy, buildings should consider integrating photovoltaic panels on roofs.

### Stormwater and Wastewater Management Guidelines

Buildings should incorporate intensive or extensive green roofs in their design. Green roofs harvest rain water that can be recycled for plant irrigation or for some domestic uses. Green roofs are also effective in cutting-back on the cooling load of the air-conditioning system of the building and reducing the heat island effect from the roof surface.

Projects should use porous material on driveways and parking lots to minimize stormwater run-off from paved surfaces.

Effective stormwater management techniques are recommended. Such techniques could include bioswales on surface parking lots and rain gardens in landscaped areas.



Roof photovoltaics, light shelf and green roof



Street lighting examples

### Landscaping Guidelines

Planting plans should support passive heating and cooling of buildings and outdoor spaces.

Regional native and drought resistant plant species are encouraged as planting material.

Provision of efficient irrigation system is recommended, consistent with the City's Municipal Code Chapter 12.44 "Water-Efficient Landscaping".

### Lighting Guidelines

Energy-efficient and color-balanced outdoor lighting, at the lowest lighting levels possible, are encouraged to provide for safe pedestrian and auto circulation.

Glare into dwelling units and light pollution into the night sky should be minimized by use of fixtures with low cut-off angles.

Improvements should use ENERGY STAR-qualified fixtures to reduce a building's energy consumption.

Installation of high-efficiency lighting systems with advanced lighting control, including motion sensors tied to dimmable lighting controls, are recommended.

### Green Building Material Guidelines

The reuse and recycle of construction and demolition materials is recommended. The use of demolition materials as a base course for a parking lot keeps materials out of landfills and reduces costs.

The use of products with identifiable recycled content, including post-industrial content with a preference for post-consumer content, are encouraged.

Building materials, components, and systems found locally or regionally should be used, thereby saving energy and resources in transportation.

Layouts with adequate space to facilitate recycling collection and to incorporate a solid waste management program, preventing waste generation, are recommended.

The use of material from renewable sources is encouraged.



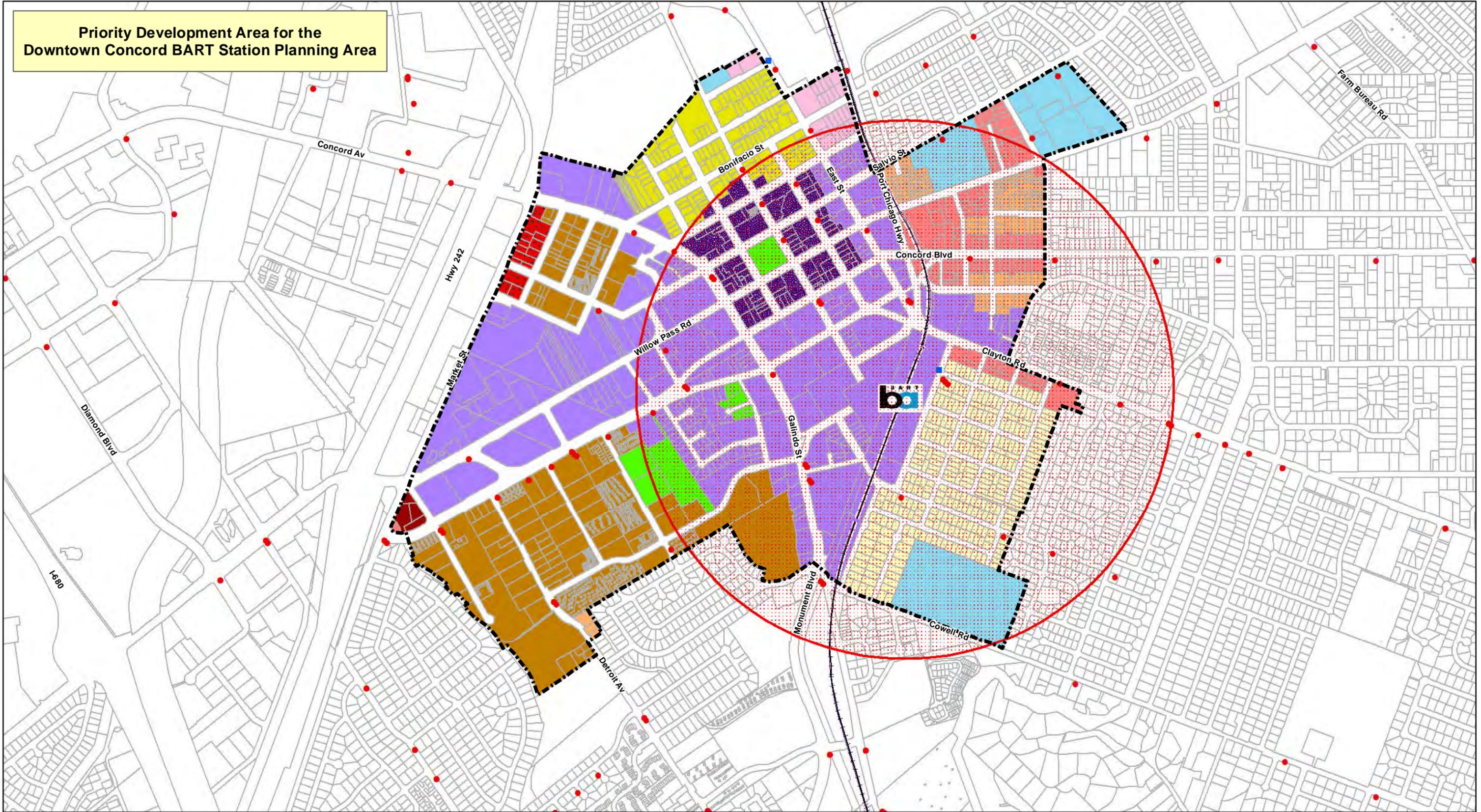


# DOWNTOWN CONCORD SPECIFIC PLAN



Fig. 3.12 Illustrative Plan - Phase 1

**Priority Development Area for the  
Downtown Concord BART Station Planning Area**



**Disclaimer.**  
Although every reasonable effort has been made to assure the accuracy of this data, the City of Concord makes no warranty, representation or guaranty as to the content, sequence, accuracy, timeliness or completeness of any of the data provided herein and explicitly disclaims any representations and warranties, including, without limitation, the implied warranties of merchantability and fitness for a particular purpose. The City of Concord assumes no liability for any errors, omissions, or inaccuracies in the information provided regardless of how caused and assumes no liability for any decisions made or actions taken or not taken by the user of the data in reliance upon any information or data furnished hereunder. Because the GIS data provided is not warranted to be up-to-date, the user should check with the City staff for updated information.

**Legend**

- PriorityDevelopmentAreaNew
- Half Mile Radius of BART
- BART Station
- MTC Bus Data**
- Bus Stop by Agency**
- The County Connection
- TriDelta Transit

**GP 2030**

- Rural Residential (RR)
- Low Density Residential (LDR)
- Medium Density Residential (MDR)
- High Density Residential (HDR)
- North Todos Santos (NTS)

- Community Office (CO)
- Commercial Mixed Use (CMU)
- Neighborhood Commerical (NC)
- Regional Commerical (RC)
- Service Commerical (SC)
- Downtown Pedestrian (DTPD)

- Downtown Mixed Use (DTMU)
- West Concord Mixed Use (WCMU)
- Business Park (BP)
- Industrial Mixed Use (IMU)
- Heavy Industrial (HI)
- CRP neighborhood and village districts

- CRP non-residential development districts
- CRP TOD districts
- CRP open space
- Military (MIL)
- Public/Quasi-Public (PQP)
- Hospital/Medical Center (PQPHMC)

- Open Space (OS)
- Parks and Recreation (P)
- Rural Conservation (RCON)
- Wetlands/Resource Conservation (WRC)
- Unclassified (U)



## DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR THE NORTH TODOS SANTOS NEIGHBORHOOD

PURPOSE

The North Todos Santos Neighborhood is comprised largely of residential structures which date from a fifty-year period of 1880-1930. Architectural styles include Italiante, Queen Anne, Craftsman, Bungalow, Mission, and others, mostly applied to houses of modest scale.

The purpose of these guidelines is to assure that new development of multi-family and office buildings will fit comfortably into the neighborhood without overwhelming the older buildings. It is desirable to see new buildings blend into the existing environment. The late 19th- and early 20th-century buildings will set the norm. However, the guidelines are not intended to suppress good contemporary design using appropriate and economical material, nor are they intended to encourage cheap historical imitations. A statement from the "Todos Santos Design Vocabulary" (which was developed for areas to the south of this neighborhood) is appropriate here also:

"Absolute uniformity, nor historical re-creation of a singular style, is not the aim. Quite the opposite. It is a highly contextual aim--to weave or knit together old and yet-to-come buildings into a whole environment."

GUIDELINES

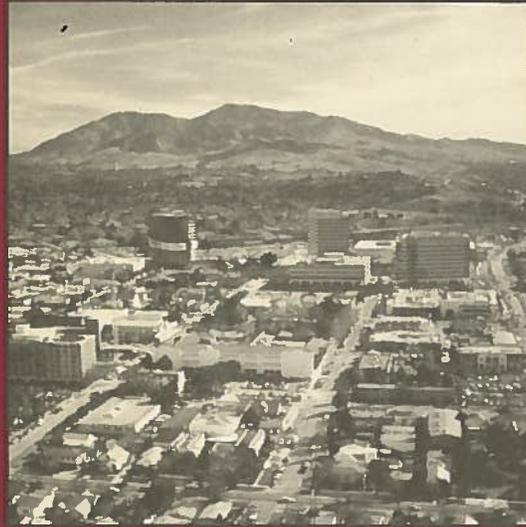
1. Building Mass -
  - a) Large projects should be articulated in units of residential scale, either as separate buildings or as distance wing elements; residential scale will be particularly important near site boundaries and street.
  - b) Wall lengths greater than 50 feet should be interrupted by projections, indentations, or changes of direction.
  - c) Effects of relatively high, non-residential floor-to-ceiling heights should be offset by "scale-giving" elements such as porches, trellises, window projections, and lowered cornice or fascia lines.
2. Roof Forms -
  - a) Gable or hip roofs are most appropriate. Complex forms, such as combinations of gables and hips, may help reduce the apparent scale of large buildings.

- b) Mansard, shed, and flat roofs are discouraged.
  - c) On street facades of multi-story buildings, it will generally be appropriate for the roof to slope away from the street in order to reduce the apparent mass.
3. Windows - Especially along street facades and other highly visible walls, windows should be used as sculptural elements, with expressed sills, lentils, or other trim. Such historical elements as bay windows and French doors may be used to good effect.
4. Building Entries - Entries should be used as important design features, to suggest "welcoming, domestic" qualities. Residential scale should be maintained in the design of entry features.
5. Decorative Elements -
- a) Details such as mouldings, brackets, projecting rafters, etc., are encouraged. Inspiration should be drawn from examples of buildings existing in the neighborhood.
  - b) Elements and materials should be appropriately scaled to the mass of the proposed building.
6. Landscaping -
- a) Landscape materials and arrangements should reflect a traditional residential character.
  - b) Landscaping will extend to the curb line. Shade trees will be required along the street edge.
  - c) Where parking areas are exposed to view from a street, shrubbery will be used to minimize the view of parked cars and pavement. Parking areas will be required to be screened along all property line perimeters using trees, shrubs, or vines as appropriate.

DOWNTOWN  
CONCORD

---

---



---

URBAN DESIGN

---

M A R C H 1 9 8 7

CONCORD CALIFORNIA

DOWNTOWN  
CONCORD

---

---



---

---

URBAN DESIGN

---

---



# CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
INTRODUCTION	3
DOWNTOWN CONCORD	4
STREETSCAPE CONCEPTS	6
DEVELOPMENT CONTROLS	10
TRANSPORTATION CONCEPTS	14
ART OPPORTUNITIES	18
BUILDING PRESERVATION	20
URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES	22
DESIGN REVIEW PROCESS	50
CREDITS	56



*Todos Santos Plaza with The Fire House in the background at Grant Street and Willow Pass Road.*

---

# I NTRODUCTION

“Downtown Concord Urban Design” is a book dedicated to the achievement of excellence in the environment of downtown Concord, California. It presents ideas about the character of downtown, policies for urban design, and procedures for review of downtown building projects. It is to be used by the City’s elected officials, professional staff, and public Commissions and Boards. And it is to be used by private developers, institutional sponsors, and individuals who have an interest in the quality of Concord’s downtown environment.

The book addresses the physical environment on several levels: generally and specifically, quantitatively and qualitatively. Urban design issues are depicted on maps, discussed in text, and illustrated in photographs and drawings. The book considers issues such as the form and texture of public streets, sidewalks, and open spaces. It distinguishes the predominantly pedestrian from the predominantly vehicular environments. It talks about the location of strategic activities, such as retail shops, offices, hotels, cultural facilities, and housing. It provides guidance for shaping open space and treating landscape. It proposes specific and general design guidelines for the architecture of buildings in the downtown.

The book is intended to be a guide to provide direction and it is intended to be modified as conditions warrant. It is not a specific plan, a zoning ordinance, or a building code (information concerning these and other legal documents of the City of Concord can be obtained upon request from the appropriate administrative departments of the City). It invites change and refinement as experience with its use suggests new concepts or invalidates old ones. It does not require development to occur at a specified rate, but provides guidance for change at whatever rate the City deems appropriate.

Perhaps the most important element of the book is that it suggests an image for the future of downtown Concord. Through the numerous illustrations, maps, notes, and guidelines, the book creates a perceptible and unique urban character, which will become evident through the cumulative effect of completed downtown improvements.

# DOWNTOWN CONCORD

In recent years, downtown Concord has been changing from a small town center within a suburban community to a small urban center within the growing Contra Costa County region. Because of Concord's location and role within the central Contra Costa County area, the trend will probably be for the downtown to continue to change in the decades to come. This change necessitates new perceptions of the character of downtown. What should this character or image be?

Until now, Concord's image has been that of a small town. The form of downtown has been defined by small scale buildings, low site utilization, and architectural idioms from Victorian and Spanish Colonial influences. A new downtown must keep what is good and familiar from the past, while permitting and incorporating new ingredients.

A new image calls for a new interpretation of what a small California city can be. America's urban prototypes (e.g. 19th century industrial cities such as San Francisco, Chicago, or Cleveland) are not appropriate as models for Concord's future. A new image for Concord can be found in an emerging California urbanism which responds to lifestyles of the western United States, the climate of California, the post-industrial information age, and the history and geography of Concord. Many people in Concord have expressed their conceptualizations of this new urbanism in the numerous public forums that were held during the planning and preparation of this book.

The new image will have a downtown that will be green with trees, lawns, and flowering plants. Todos Santos Plaza, its neighboring blocks, and the Bank of America office campus will provide extensive landscaped pedestrian spaces on eight

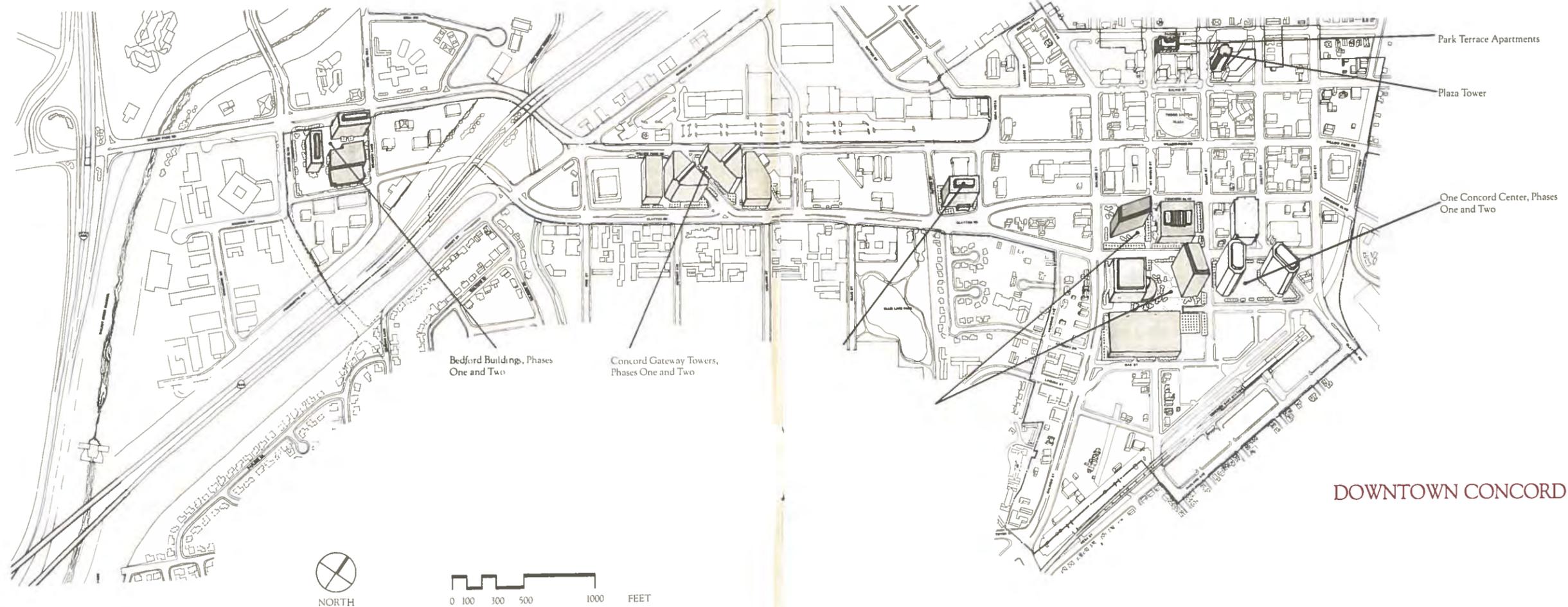


The plan depicts a pedestrian environment at the core of downtown, bordered on most of three sides by higher density buildings.

city blocks in the downtown core. These green spaces will be defined by continuous colonnades at the street level of buildings along Grant, Salvio, and Galindo Streets. Grant Street will be specially designed for pedestrians, with limited vehicular access connecting Todos Santos Plaza to the BART station. It will be lined with shops and cafes and will feature outdoor art and fountains.

Buildings around Todos Santos Plaza will remain low in height. Taller structures will be clustered around the BART station. New and old buildings will house shops, restaurants, hotels, offices, theaters, and housing in an exciting downtown with a relaxed and humane atmosphere.

The map shows a view of downtown Concord in 1985. It registers the image of downtown at a point in time, to be used as a yardstick for comparison with the transitions of the downtown environment in later years.



DOWNTOWN CONCORD

# STREETSCAPE CONCEPTS

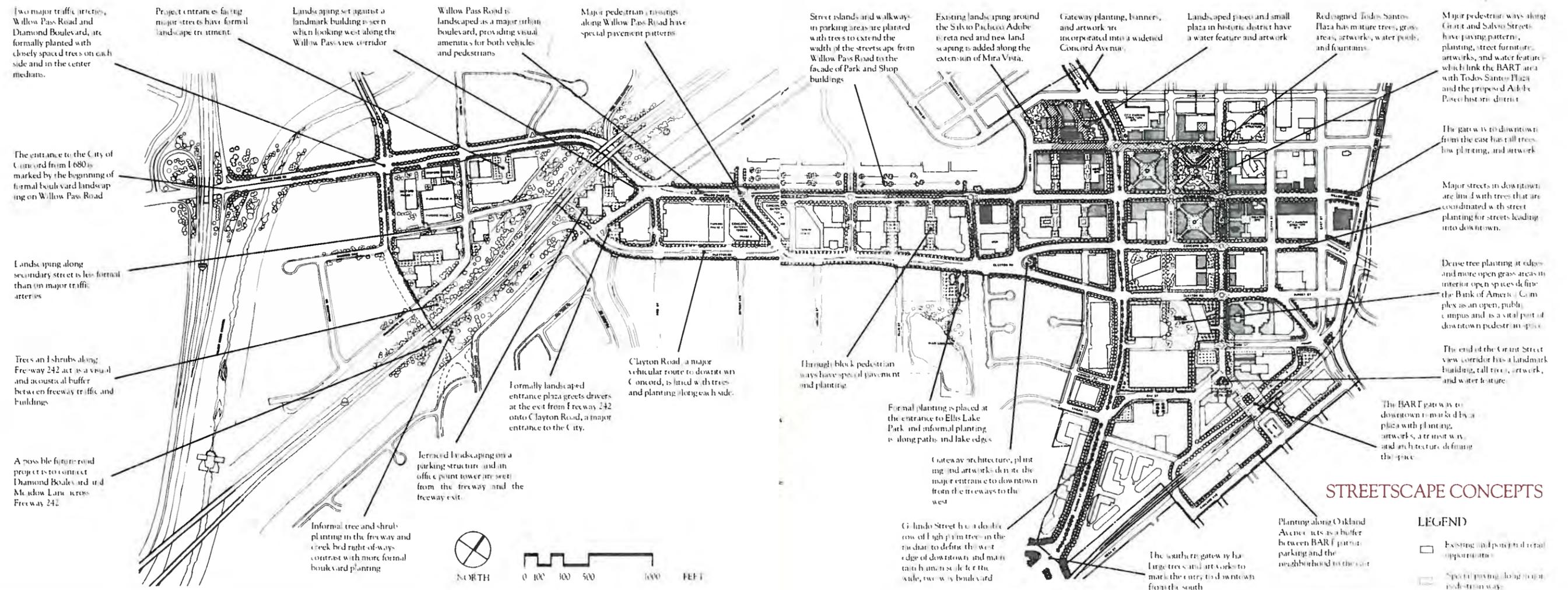
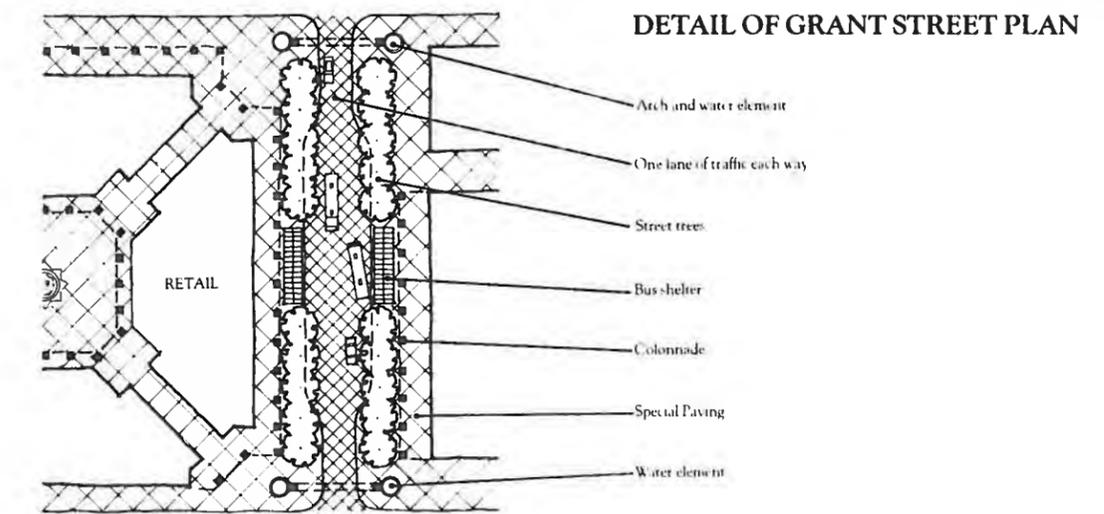
**T**he Streetscape Concepts map illustrates perhaps the most important ideas of the urban design book, the ideas concerning the design treatment of streets, sidewalks, and public open spaces. The design of the urban streetscape is the best measure for judging the quality of a downtown and understanding the attitude of a city's inhabitants towards its urban environment.

The map illustrates seven primary concepts:

1. Streets are landscaped with trees along sidewalks and in traffic medians. The tree planting concept conforms to other street planting plans prepared for the City.

2. The Clayton/Willow Pass Corridor is conceived as a major boulevard, providing a formal and stately entrance and exit to the City. Galindo Street (and Concord Avenue) is treated similarly as a boulevard through downtown and as a gateway from the north and south.

3. Major entrances to downtown are demarcated by gateways. The locations of major gateways are shown and suggestions are made for their design treatment.



4. Grant Street is a major pedestrian promenade extending from Todos Santos Plaza to the BART station. It has special paving on sidewalks and at street intersections. Custom designed lighting, street furniture, and public art will provide a festive character. The street will be lined with retail and restaurant activities. Short-term, on-street parking can act as a buffer between wide sidewalks and relatively narrow streetbeds. Grant Street could be the route of a public shuttle service utilizing a small jitney or streetcar, although it will not be a transit mall.

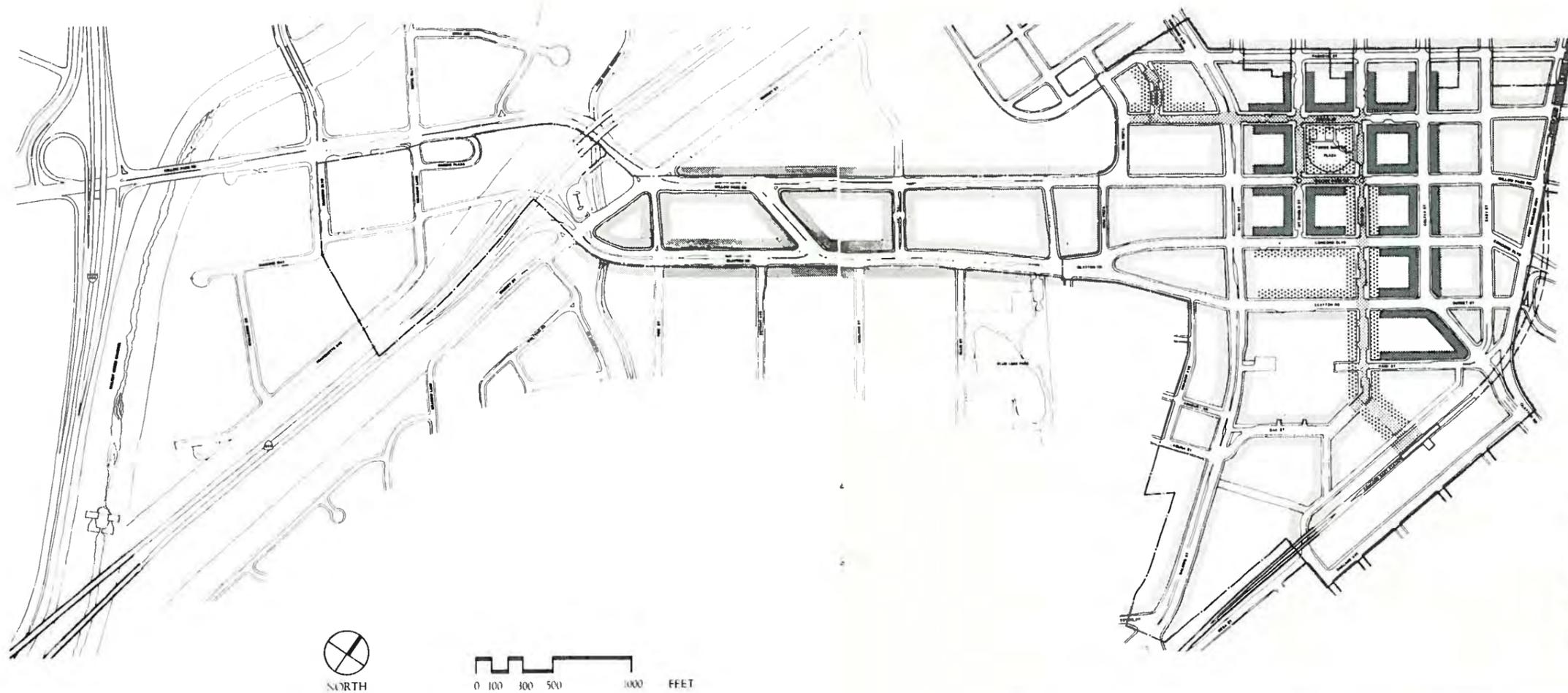


A view to the west down Salvio Street with Todos Santos Plaza in the middle-ground.

5. Suggestions are given for new public open spaces. The BART plaza, the "Adobe Paseo" at the Associates Bank and Chamber of Commerce blocks, and the retail courtyards adjacent to Todos Santos Plaza are a few of the more important spaces.
6. Streetlighting in the downtown is a system of compatible standards, fixtures, and lamps. Lighting for pedestrian ways, for streets and parking areas, and for buildings and landscaping are conceived as a unified design.
7. Finally, the Streetscape Concepts map illustrates a set of appropriate building footprints for downtown blocks. The footprints work with building setbacks and design guidelines to shape open spaces and to create the downtown streetscape.



A festival at Todos Santos Plaza as seen from Salvio and Grant Streets, showing the pedestrian emphasis of the streetscape.



**STREETLIGHTS & PAVING**

LEGEND

-  Low lights — 5 feet high
-  Tall light — 30 feet high
-  Low and tall lights
-  Special paving along major pedestrian way

# DEVELOPMENT CONTROLS

The Development Controls map illustrates downtown zoning controls for building heights and setbacks. It uses symbols and annotations to explain concepts for the design of downtown development. Locations for major open spaces, arcades and colonnades, downtown gateways, and buildings are identified.

Development around Todos Santos Plaza is to be dense and urban, but relatively low in height at 55 feet maximum. The area north of the Concord BART Station is to have the tallest buildings in the downtown at a maximum of 200 feet. Between Todos Santos Plaza and the BART station, buildings are to be of medium height and density, with heights from 70 to 140 feet, in order to make a transition between the two different areas. A special height zone with a maximum height of 110 feet has been created along the west side of Galindo Street, south of Clayton Road, to ease the transition between the downtown and a residential area immediately to the west. The Clayton Road and Willow Pass Road corridor, between downtown and Freeway 242, is also to have buildings of medium height and density, with a maximum height of 140 feet, to serve as an urban pathway into downtown.



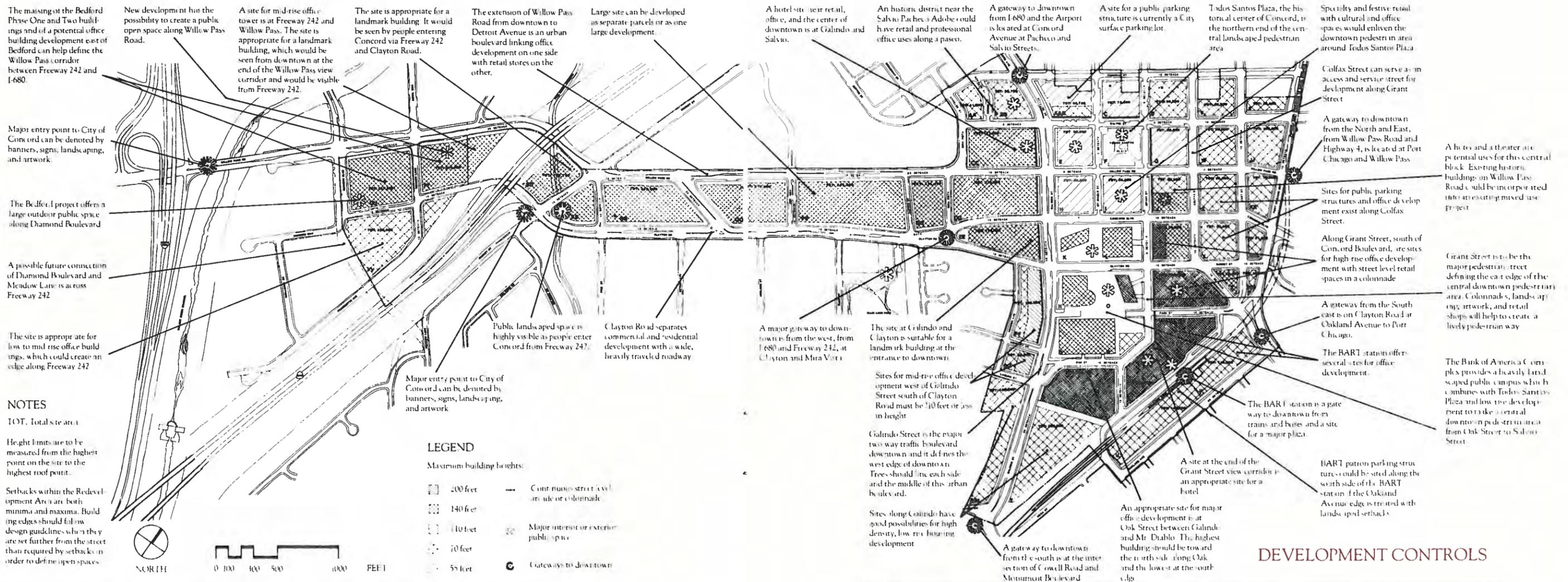
A view from the downtown along Clayton Road to the east, with Freeway 242 in the distance.

Setbacks are minimal in the core of the downtown, the area near Grant, Salvio, Galindo, and Oak Streets. The area bounded by these streets has low buildings and taller buildings with significant open space at the Bank of America campus to the south. The streets immediately surrounding this core have minimal setbacks, from zero to ten feet, to help create an urban environment.

Setbacks are minimal in the core of the downtown, the area near Grant, Salvio, Galindo, and Oak Streets. The area bounded by these streets has low buildings and taller buildings with significant open space at the Bank of America campus to the south. The streets immediately surrounding this core have minimal setbacks, from zero to ten feet, to help create an urban environment.



The urban design study model of downtown, looking south from Todos Santos Plaza to the BART station.

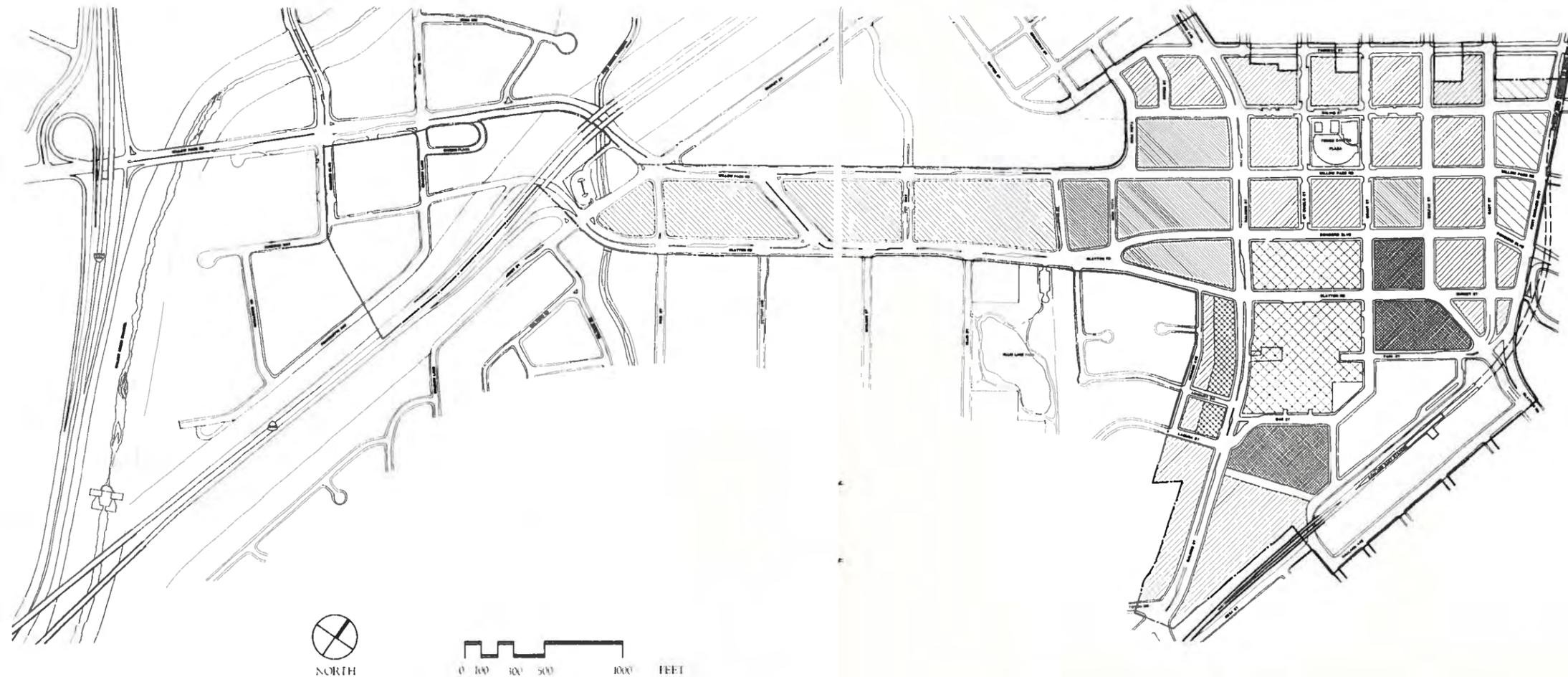


Galindo Street is the exception with a 20 foot setback, which is appropriate for the streetscape of a major boulevard through the center of downtown. As one moves further from the core of downtown, minor streets have 15 foot setbacks and major streets, such as Clayton Road, Willow Pass Road, and Concord Avenue, have setbacks from 15 to 25 feet.

Special features of the downtown and items worthy of note are indicated on the development controls map with symbols and written annotations. Arcades and colonnades are specified for building edges at grade around the core area, along Galindo, Salvio, Grant, and Oak Streets. Gateways to the downtown, major public open space locations, and descriptions of desired development concepts for important sites are included.



The renovated Perry House is now a restaurant and The Old Fire House and City Hall Building (beyond) is the Chamber of Commerce and Visitor's Bureau.



### FLOOR AREA RATIOS

#### LEGEND

The Floor Area Ratio (FAR) equals the maximum ratio of Gross Floor Area to Net Lot Area. Gross Floor Area includes parking levels at and above grade.


The maximum floor area ratios (FAR's) in the downtown, which are a measurement of the intensity of development, follow the heights indicated on the Development Controls map. The floor area ratio of a project is the gross building area of a development divided by the net site area, including parking levels at and above grade (see the Downtown Business District section of the City of Concord Zoning Ordinance). The highest FAR permitted is 5.0, for parcels near the BART station at the south end of Grant Street. The next highest FAR is 4.0, located mainly along Clayton Road from Freeway 242 to Galindo. An FAR of 3.0 is the maximum allowed on blocks around Todos Santos Plaza, and the Bank of America project is designated as 2.5. The lowest maximum FAR is 1.0, shown for blocks in the northeast part of downtown.



Downtown from the north, showing lower development near Todos Santos Plaza in the foreground and higher development near the BART station in the background.

# TRANSPORTATION CONCEPTS

**D**owntown Concord needs a roadway system, parking, and a public transportation network that is continually improved to handle traffic effectively. A transportation plan and a construction program have been developed to respond to this need. Public funding sources for these improvements have been identified, but it will also take substantial funding commitments from the developers of the downtown properties to implement the program properly. Further information about the plan can be obtained from the City Department of Public Works.

The study area used in the transportation analysis includes all of downtown Concord and extends westerly to the Freeway 242 interchanges. A summary of the traffic volumes in downtown Concord follows:

Traffic Volumes--ADT (Average Daily Traffic)	1983	2000	Increase
Traffic generated in area:	87,000	181,000	94,000 (108%)
Through traffic:	88,000	107,000	19,000 (22%)
Total traffic:	175,000	288,000	113,000 (65%)

Downtown Concord is well served by public transit in comparison to most other suburban centers in the Bay Area. BART attracts a significant number of transit trips to destinations outside the study area, but does not serve a large number of trips with origins or destinations within the downtown study area. With the construction of new offices in downtown Concord, an increase in reverse commuting on BART can be expected.

Downtown Concord has good bus service operated by the Central Contra Costa Transit Authority. A major increase in bus usage to the downtown area will help reduce parking needs. The bus routes should avoid small downtown pedestrian streets and should follow the one-way street couplets and major boulevards as much as possible. Salvio, Grant, and Mt. Diablo Streets should be avoided, whereas Galindo-Concord Avenue, Willow Pass, Clayton Road, and the one-way couplets of Concord Clayton, Bonifacio-Pacheco, and East Port Chicago can be heavily routed.

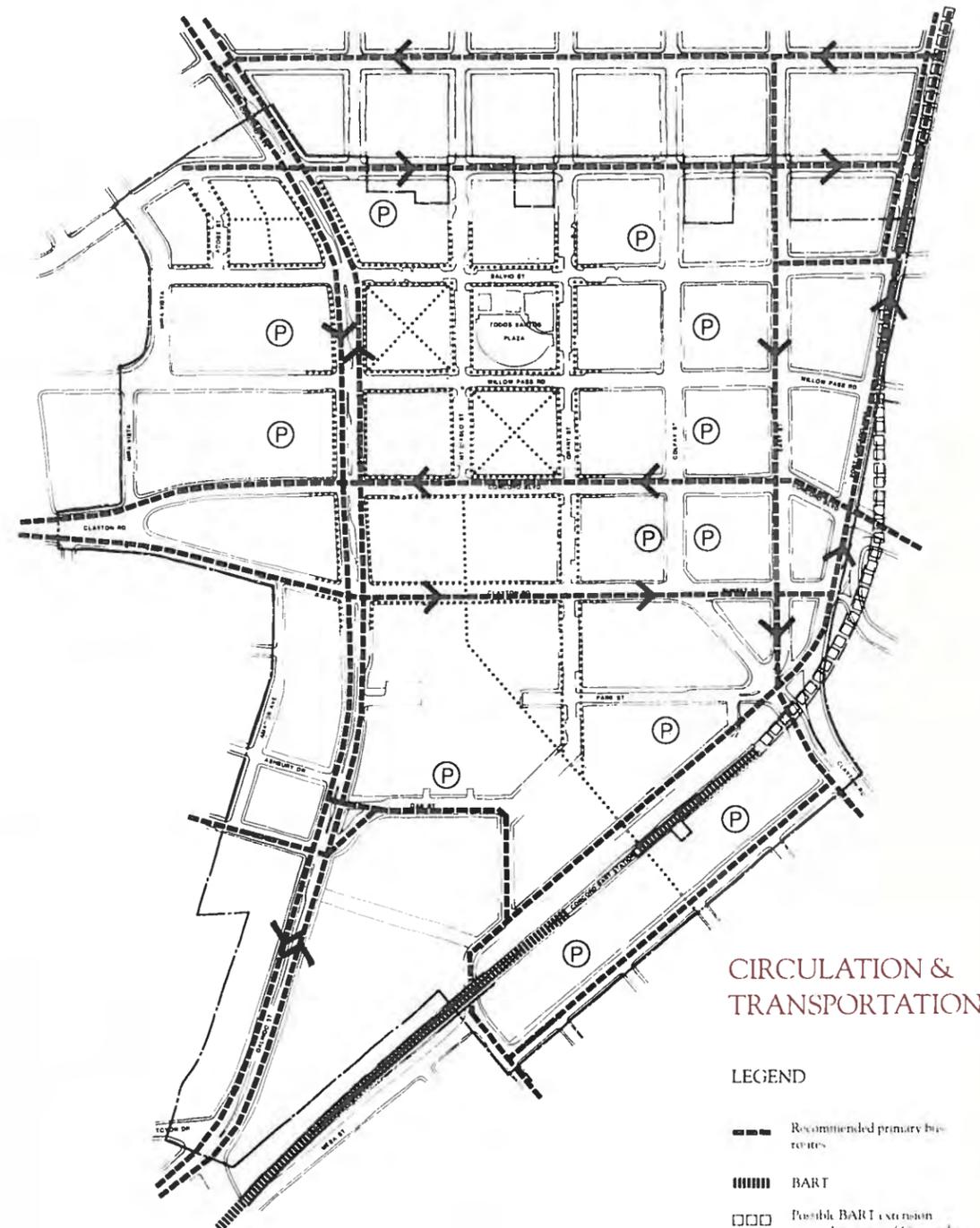
There appears to be good potential for reducing auto trips during peak hours by a transporta-

tion systems management (TSM) program of staggered work hours, carpools, vanpools, and priority parking policies. To this end the City has adopted a TSM ordinance (Ordinance No. 85-44), which requires the developers of projects of a certain size (e.g. 100 or more employee trips at peak hour) to submit a TSM Plan and execute a TSM Agreement with the City. The preliminary TSM Plan is submitted along with the developer's project application to the City Planning Department. The plan would include: the designation of a Transportation Systems Coordinator for the project, tenant/employee transportation surveys and vehicular trip forecasts, and strategies to reduce peak hour congestion. The TSM Agreement is signed and recorded after project approval and before occupancy. The agreement includes the terms between the City and the project sponsor for operating the project's TSM program.

Even with increased transit usage and a good TSM program, the expected increase in automobile traffic will require the City's proposed street improvements, which are shown on the street improvement map. In addition to these improvements, there will be minor modifications to some existing streets, such as removal of curb-side parking, striping changes, and traffic signal improvements. City provided parking will also be needed near the core area of downtown to augment project specific parking. Potential sites north of Salvio, west of Galindo and east of Colfax have been identified as potential locations for city parking structures.

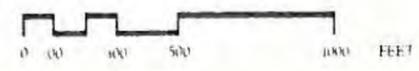


A train in the Concord BART station with recently completed tall buildings seen beyond.



## CIRCULATION & TRANSPORTATION

- LEGEND
- Recommended primary bus routes
  - ==== BART
  - Possible BART extension to northern area of Concord
  - ..... Major pedestrian circulation
  - (P) Possible sites for downtown public and private parking structures



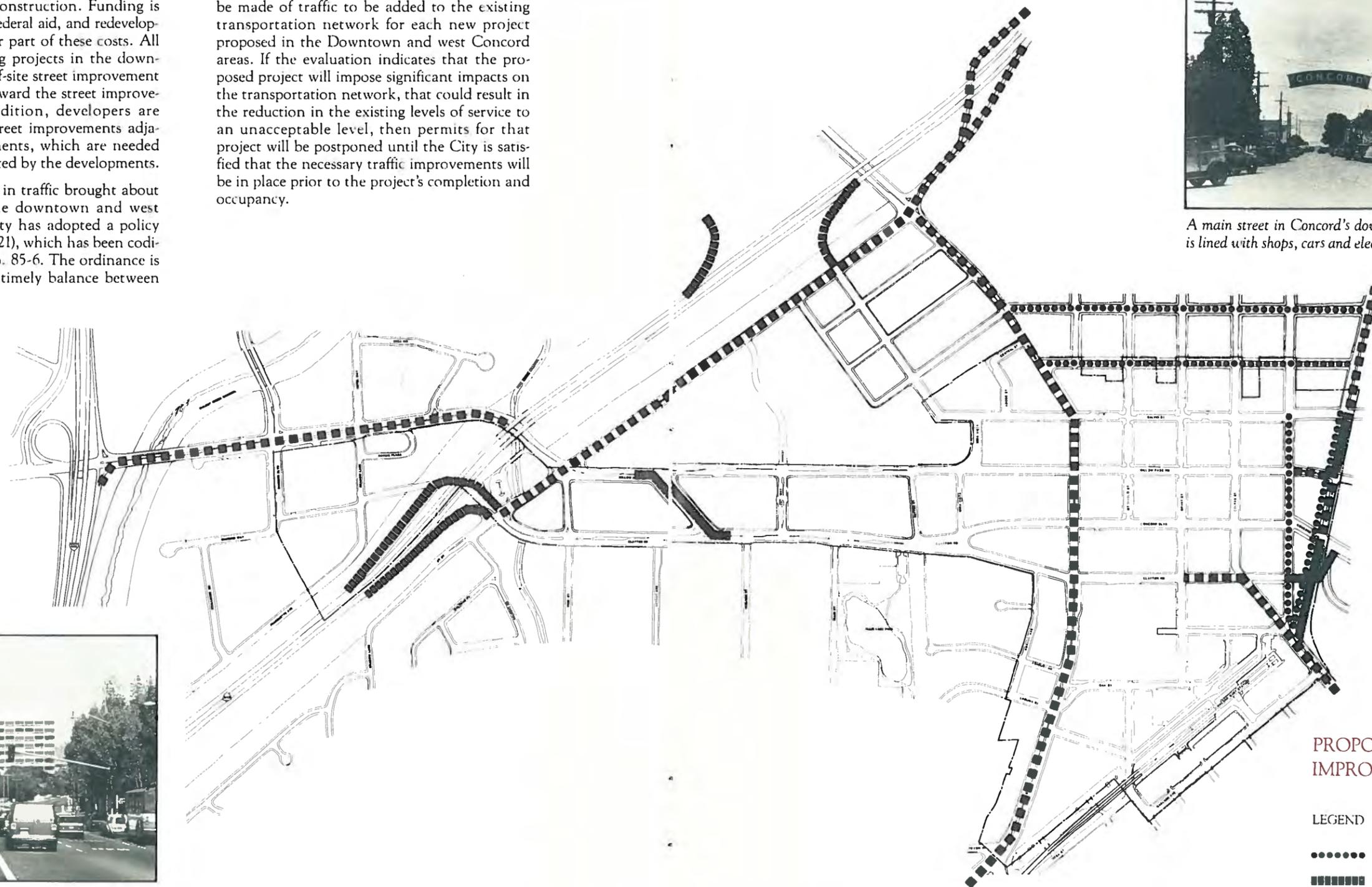
Studies of arterial streets and freeway access were made to determine approximate costs of land acquisition and construction. Funding is available from gas tax, federal aid, and redevelopment sources to pay for part of these costs. All developers constructing projects in the downtown are charged an off-site street improvement fee, which is applied toward the street improvement program. In addition, developers are required to build all street improvements adjacent to their developments, which are needed to handle traffic generated by the developments.

Because of the increase in traffic brought about by development in the downtown and west Concord areas, the City has adopted a policy (Policy and Procedure 121), which has been codified into Ordinance No. 85-6. The ordinance is intended to provide a timely balance between

land development and transportation improvements. The ordinance requires that an evaluation be made of traffic to be added to the existing transportation network for each new project proposed in the Downtown and west Concord areas. If the evaluation indicates that the proposed project will impose significant impacts on the transportation network, that could result in the reduction in the existing levels of service to an unacceptable level, then permits for that project will be postponed until the City is satisfied that the necessary traffic improvements will be in place prior to the project's completion and occupancy.



A main street in Concord's downtown of the 1940's is lined with shops, cars and electrical lines.



**PROPOSED STREET IMPROVEMENTS**

**LEGEND**

- ..... New one-way street completions
- New roadways and ramps
- - - - - Roadway and intersection widening



A view of downtown on Clayton Road, the major street to downtown from Freeway 242.

# ART OPPORTUNITIES

An important part of this book is a public art program. Downtown Concord can be unique among cities in the region through a diligent effort to incorporate public art into the downtown. Artwork can be located outdoors along pedestrian ways, in public plazas, as well as in the courtyards, setbacks, and plazas of private developments. Indoors, art can be located in lobbies and in other major public building spaces.

Publicly sponsored outdoor art in downtown would be concentrated along Grant Street from the BART station to Todos Santos Plaza and from the plaza west along Salvio Street to Adobe Street. Within this area elements of the streetscape, such as paving, tree grates, fixtures, furniture, lighting, and equipment could be subjects for art competitions. Individual or repetitive items designed through the art program should be compatible with the palette of current streetscape elements around Todos Santos Plaza, which are to be extended throughout the downtown. In addition to the design of parts of the streetscape, specific works of art (e.g., sculpture, murals, and constructions) could be purchased or commissioned for visually prominent locations.

Major gateways to the downtown are important locations for publicly sponsored art. In some or all of these locations, art in the form of constructions, sculpture, lighting, or graphics could be used in conjunction with landscaping to create memorable entrances to the downtown.

The Concord City Council has envisioned that public and private buildings, constructed in the downtown, would have interior and exterior public art as part of the development effort. Artwork could be placed in lobbies and other public indoor spaces, as well as in exterior spaces such as gardens and plazas. The subjects of such art may include traditional sculpture or painting and may also extend to paving patterns and materials, wall murals, waterworks, hangings, and other constructions.

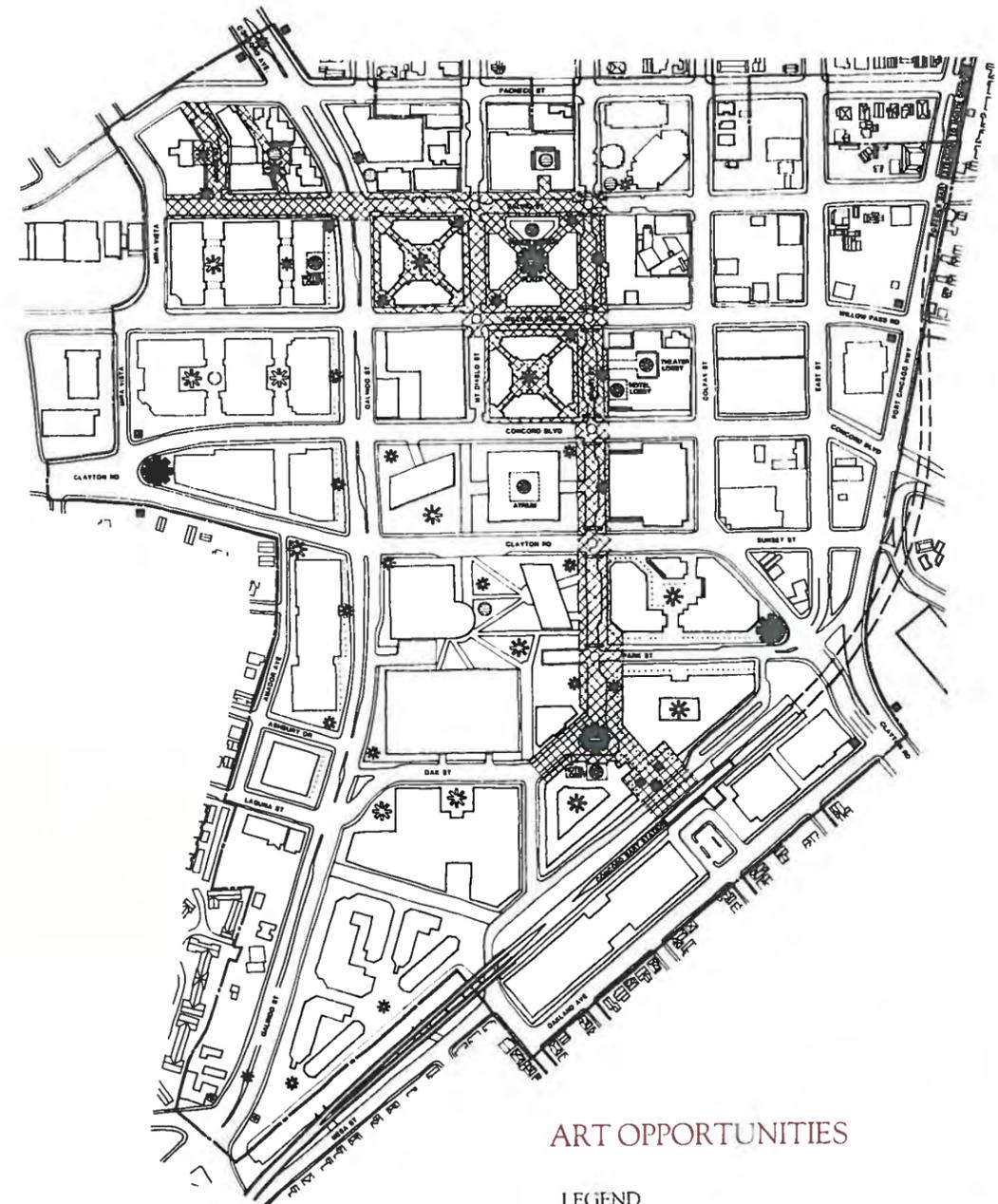
The City of Concord has adopted an ordinance which levies "one-half of one percent for art in public places" (Ordinance No. 85-13). The ordinance enables the City to collect one-half of one percent of the construction budget of each development in the downtown for public art. The Redevelopment Agency has also pledged one percent of its yearly tax increment revenue as well as one-half of one percent of its tax allocation bond proceeds for art in public places

within the Redevelopment Project Area (Resolution No. 85-294). The Concord Arts Committee will advise the City's Visual Arts Coordinator on the implementation of the Art in Public Places program. The final approval of all art in public places programs will be given by the City Council, upon receiving recommendations from the Concord Arts Committee.

Publicly sponsored art for this program can be acquired through direct purchase, direct commission, or as the result of design competitions. It is hoped that this major program of public art will generate great excitement and civic interest in the downtown and provide a continuing forum for discussion of the downtown environment.



A tile rosette set into the street at the intersection of Willow Pass Road and Mount Diablo Street.



## ART OPPORTUNITIES

### LEGEND

- Major art work (public)
- \* Significant art work (public)
- Significant art work (private)
- ⊙ Interior art work (private)
- ⊕ Water feature
- ⊗ Major art work with water feature
- Gateways to Downtown
- ⊘ Arterials (on Grant Street)
- Vertical surface art (exterior)
- Vertical surface art (interior)
- ⊞ Major pedestrian areas



# BUILDING PRESERVATION

Concord has a commitment to preserve the important heritage of its downtown built environment. The map designates buildings and areas to be enhanced and preserved. The buildings shown on the map are both new and old, some of which have historic and architectural significance. Three categories of buildings are designated: newer buildings, older buildings, and buildings that are relatively old and small, which could possibly be moved.

The newer downtown buildings are mostly large projects built in the last two decades, which will exist for at least several generations. The buildings include: (1) Heritage, (2) Plaza Tower, (3) City Parking Garage at Salvio and Colfax Streets, (4) Salvio Pacheco Square, (5) Park Terrace Apartments, (6) Bank of America, Concord Main Office, (7) Bank of America, Concord Center complex, (8) One Concord Center, phase one and in the future, phase two, (9) Pacific Telephone Switching Building, (10) Professional Office Building at Salvio and East Streets, (11) The Presbyterian Church buildings at Salvio and Colfax Streets, and (12) The Concord BART Station.

Some of the older buildings have historic or architectural significance and some do not. The buildings are listed with their historic name first, where appropriate, and their current use in parentheses: (1) The Foscett Building (TR's Restaurant), (2) The Old Fire House and City Hall Building (Chamber of Commerce), (3) The Perry House (restaurant building at Galindo and Salvio Streets), (4) The Salvio Pacheco Adobe (Associates National Bank), (5) The Fire House at Willow Pass Road and Grant Street, (7) The Veterans' Hall, (8) The Mackenzie-Collins House at Salvio between East and Port Chicago, and (9) The Keller House on Clayton Road near Sutter Street.

The third category of buildings shown on the map are relatively old and small buildings, which may have historic or architectural significance and which could possibly be moved into historic building areas. The category includes: (1) The Ivy House and (2) The Masonic Temple.

Two potential historic building areas have been identified within the Central Concord Redevelopment Project Area. Other potential areas also exist, which are near downtown and outside the Redevelopment Area. The two areas within the Redevelopment Area, which are indicated on

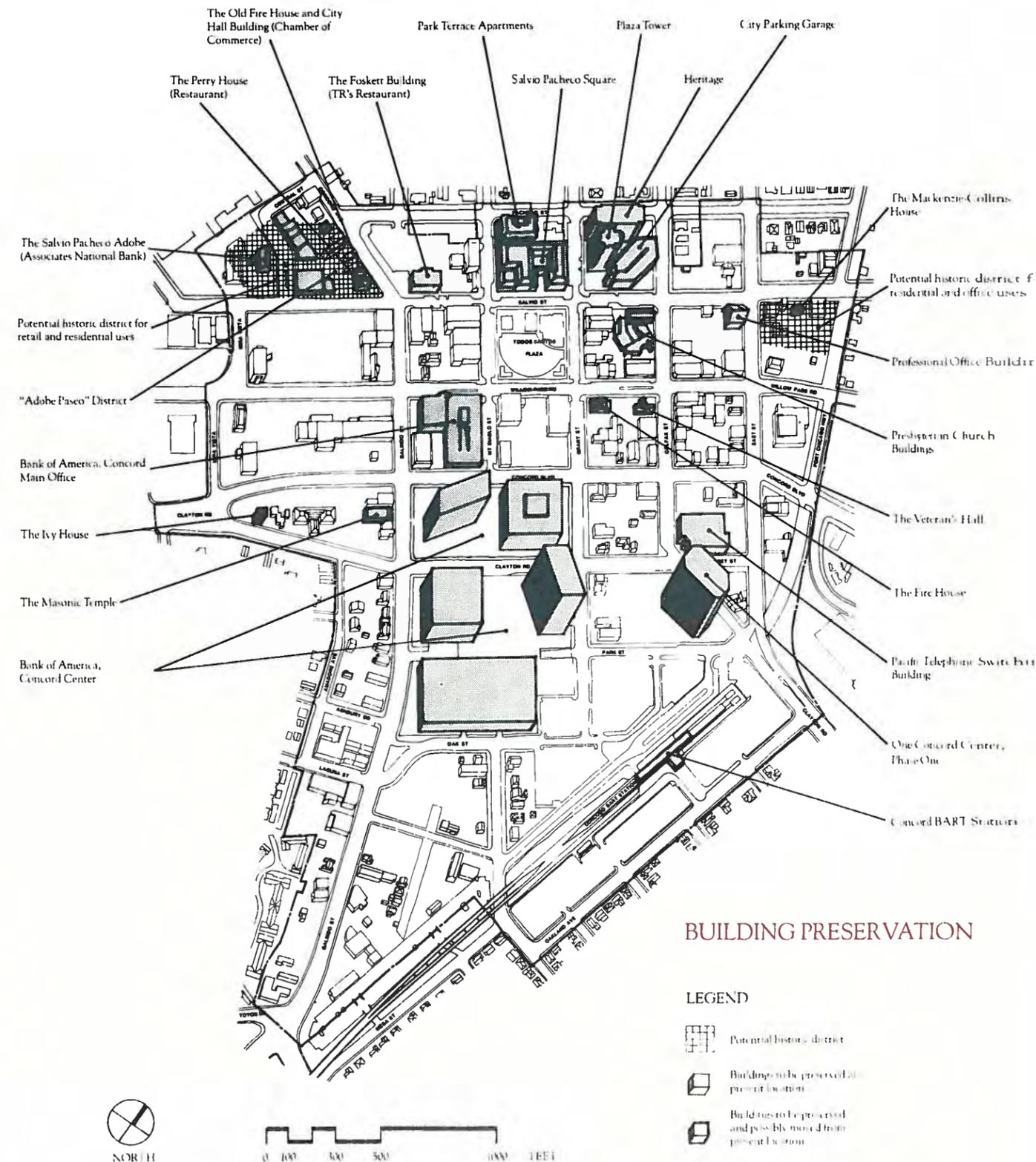
the map are: (1) The "Adobe Paseo" area, bounded by Concord Avenue, Salvio, Adobe, and Central Streets, which is suitable for retail and office uses, and (2) a half-block area on the south side of Salvio Street, bounded by East Street and Port Chicago Highway, which is suitable for residential and office uses.



The Foscett Building at Salvio and Galindo Streets before renovation.



The Foscett Building after renovation with new streetlighting, streetscape elements, and a fountain.



## BUILDING PRESERVATION

### LEGEND

-  Potential historic district
-  Buildings to be preserved at present location
-  Buildings to be preserved and possibly moved from present location

# URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES

---

**T**he Urban Design Guidelines set forth standards to be used in the creation and public review of building and open space designs. The guidelines apply to private developers and their architects as well as to public sponsors who propose designs for the downtown. The guidelines are the most detailed design policy instruments that a community can create short of creating designs. The Design Guidelines sometimes give quantifiable standards, but more often they are qualitative and require judgement in their application.

The guidelines are a combination of recommendations specific to Concord and recommendations which are common to the design of urban areas throughout the western world. Guidelines such as “Todos Santos Plaza” and “Streetlighting” refer specifically to downtown Concord, whereas “City Outdoor Rooms” and “Bases of Tall Buildings” are applicable to many urban environments.

The Design Guidelines are a manifestation of the community’s intentions for its urban environment. They are a tool to evaluate development proposals submitted to the City. They are to be used by Concord public bodies: the Redevelopment Agency, the Planning Commission, and the Design Review Board.

The Design Guidelines should not be a static body of standards, but rather should evolve over time as experience validates some guidelines over others, and as new situations require new guidelines. The body of guidelines need not necessarily be applied as a whole to all projects; particular guidelines and groups of guidelines will be relevant to particular projects or sites.

The use of Design Guidelines is not a substitute for design talent or good intentions on the part of a sponsor. In addition to the guidelines, the City must also communicate a desire to have the highest quality of design from professionals proposing environmental change in the downtown.



*The urban design study model of downtown looking to the northeast.*

---

**E**ach guideline has a statement followed by a discussion of the guideline's purpose, nature, and application. Many guidelines use diagrams and photographs to illustrate design ideas. The titles of the guidelines, as they appear in pairs, are:

HISTORIC ELEMENTS  
BUILDING CONTEXT

DEFINITION OF PLAZAS  
TODOS SANTOS PLAZA

BUILDING SETBACKS  
CITY OUTDOOR ROOMS

BULK OF TALL BUILDINGS  
BASES OF TALL BUILDINGS

BUILDING MATERIALS  
COLOR OF TALL BUILDINGS

STREET LEVEL USES  
SIDEWALK LANDSCAPE

SIDEWALK HARDSCAPE  
BUILDING SIGNAGE

ARCADES AND COLONNADES  
SIDEWALK CANOPIES

STREETLIGHTING  
BUILDING LIGHTING

WATER FEATURES  
ART IN PUBLIC SPACES

SITE UTILITIES  
PEDESTRIAN CIRCULATION

PARKING GARAGE HEIGHT  
PARKING GARAGE TREATMENT

PARKING GARAGE ROOFS  
BUILDING ROOFS

---

# HISTORIC ELEMENTS

New building projects shall respect the architectural heritage of existing buildings in scale and form.

## Discussion:

Downtown Concord's architectural history dates back to the early days of California. Older buildings display design concepts of the Spanish Colonial and Victorian eras of California history. This heritage should be respected by new development in both scale and form. While the City does not intend new buildings to be imitations or copies of period architecture, the generic principles of early California architecture can foster design continuity in the downtown.

These generic principles are based on ideas that are intrinsic to California's climate and lifestyles. These principles, manifested in historic architectural expressions, are still valued today as examples of architectural quality. Many guidelines in this book deal with such principles. For example, arcades and colonnades are specified for parts of the downtown, fountains and water features are encouraged, and the use of building materials with "substance" is discussed.

This guideline is intended to help developers and designers understand the City's concern about historic continuity. For a more detailed discussion of Concord's architectural heritage, see the report entitled: "Todos Santos Design Vocabulary", published in 1979 by the Concord City Planning Department and the Concord Redevelopment Agency.



*The moving of the Keller House before renovation.*



*The Keller House after renovation at its new site on Clayton Road.*

---

# BUILDING CONTEXT

New buildings shall be designed to be compatible with existing adjacent buildings.

## Discussion:

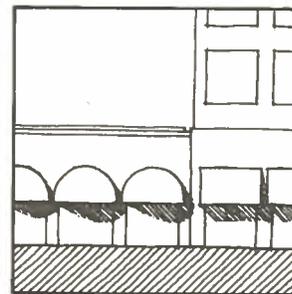
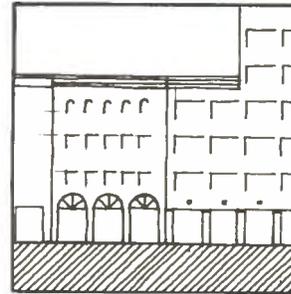
The existing buildings of a city provide references for the design of new ones. To the extent that the height, scale, and texture of the new buildings respond to what is already there, the city is continuously knitted together. Conversely, disregard of the existing building pattern tends to fragment the city and reduce its coherence.

Architectural devices can be used to provide transitions between the old and the new. Such devices include aligning cornice lines, continuing a pattern of wall openings, using similar materials, and relating overall building proportions.

The scale of modern buildings can often be very different from older, existing ones. Therefore, this guideline cannot be applied arbitrarily or dogmatically, but must be used with sensitivity and discretion.



*New and old buildings coexist around Todos Santos Plaza.*



---

# DEFINITION OF PLAZAS

Plazas and courtyards shall be defined on at least three sides with buildings, walls, or landscaping.

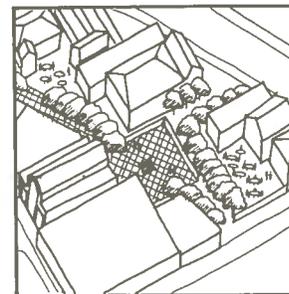
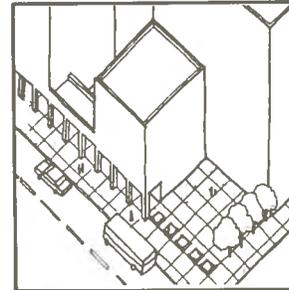
## Discussion:

Open spaces, plazas, and courtyards in cities are defined by their edges. If the edges are weak, the spaces seem amorphous and lack focus. The most memorable and successful open spaces are well defined by building facades, arcades, garden walls, bosks of trees, or other elements having strong character and clear geometry. Examples of historically successful spaces of this type are Piazza San Marco in Venice, Rockefeller Plaza in New York, and Union Square in San Francisco. Concord has fine examples in Todos Santos Plaza and the courtyard of Salvio Pacheco Square. It is difficult to find successful urban spaces that lack this definition. In fact, without such definition we cannot recognize that the space exists.

Definition and enrichment within open spaces can be achieved by the use of landscape, hardscape, and water features. Fountains, pools, and defined waterways can be combined with planting and paved areas to visually and functionally enliven urban open spaces. Attention should be given to the patterns of sunlight and shadow in open spaces, created by the elements defining each space.



*A small plaza is defined within Salvio Pacheco Square.*



---

# TODOS SANTOS PLAZA

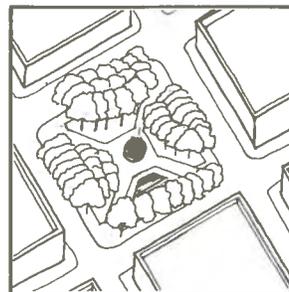
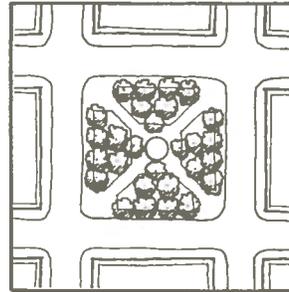
Buildings facing Todos Santos Plaza shall be perceived to create continuous facades along the four frontages and at the four corners which bound the plaza. The buildings shall have cornices which have a minimum number of height changes, which are approximately the same height as Salvio Pacheco Square, and which in no case are less than 30 feet in height at the street edges. Facades shall have breaks only for defined plazas at mid-block and only for 25% or less of a block's length.

## Discussion:

Todos Santos Plaza is the historic core of downtown Concord. As such, rigorous attention should be given to guiding the form of development around it. Facades, cornice lines and heights of buildings around the plaza need to be carefully controlled in order to define the plaza clearly.



*The facade of Salvio Pacheco Square defines the north side of Todos Santos Plaza.*



---

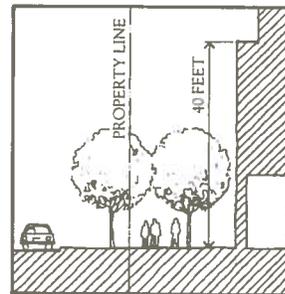
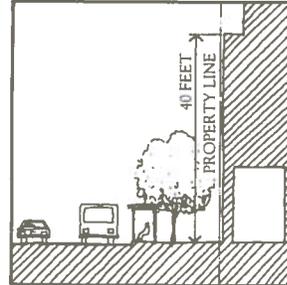
# BUILDING SETBACKS

Required building setbacks from property lines, as set forth in the Zoning Ordinance for the Downtown Business District, shall be considered maxima and minima. On streets with required setbacks of zero or ten feet, street facades shall be at the setback lines for at least the first 40 feet of their height and for at least 75% of their length.

## Discussion:

The intention of this guideline is to give definition to street spaces. The guideline provides for a relatively constant 40 foot height at setback lines, where buildings are at least 40 feet tall. Above that height, buildings may rise vertically, step back, or otherwise vary in shape and distance from the setbacks. For each block frontage the building facades will be at the setback line for 75% or more of their length. The establishment of cornice heights and limits on breaks in facades serve to integrate the architecture of downtown and to carefully shape public outdoor spaces.

For building facades on streets with zero setbacks, retail shops with or without arcades and colonnades are intended to occur at street level. It is paramount for the vitality of downtown streets that blank walls not be at the pedestrian level along streets with zero setbacks. Where setbacks are ten feet or more, landscaping can be combined with facade treatments to create a favorable pedestrian environment, especially in areas where retail uses are inappropriate.



---

# CITY OUTDOOR ROOMS

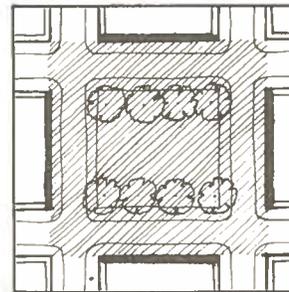
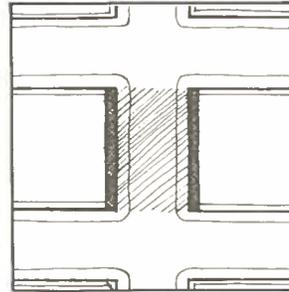
Since streets and plazas are a city's outdoor rooms, building facades shall perform a civic role as the walls of the rooms.

## Discussion:

Facades are part of the public realm of the downtown and, in fact, are the walls of public open spaces. Facades need to be compatible with nearby buildings and to reflect the nature, size, and character of outdoor rooms, which vary from narrow streets to large urban open spaces. While it is not possible to specify what this role may require of a particular building facade in a particular place, this guideline is intended to remind designers that the exteriors of their buildings have a larger role than just reflecting interior functions. This guideline challenges architects to step outside their particular project and consider building design within the larger urban design context.



*Facades of 1908 buildings clearly define the public space of Main Street, Concord.*



---

# BULK OF TALL BUILDINGS

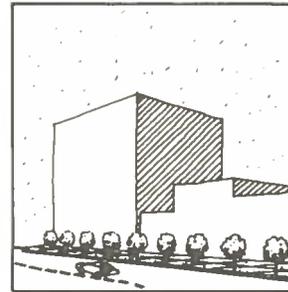
The bulk of tall buildings shall be minimized by articulating the mass with changes of plane, stepped terraces, and other architectural means.

## Discussion:

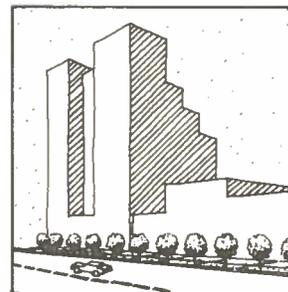
Tall buildings can appear to loom over the city due to their bulk, particularly the recent generation of office buildings with large floor plates. Bulky buildings can block views to hills around the city and block sunlight to plazas within the downtown. These effects can be mitigated, or eliminated, by design strategies that break up the mass by articulation of wall planes. The tops of these buildings, including the roofline and the facades of the top floors, should also be given design consideration because they become prominent visual features of the City's skyline.



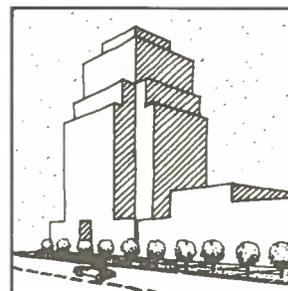
*Stepped-backs and material changes minimize bulk in a new office tower on Clayton Road.*



UNDESIRABLE



DESIRABLE



DESIRABLE

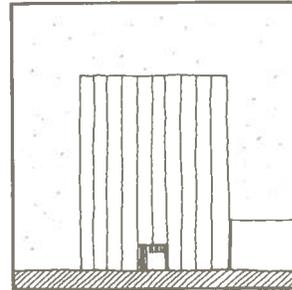
---

# BASES OF BUILDINGS

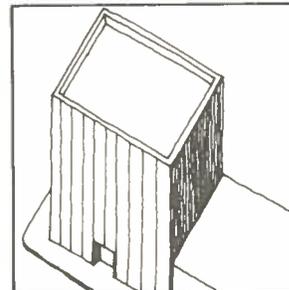
The bases of tall buildings shall be designed to relate to the streetscape and the environment of pedestrians.

## Discussion:

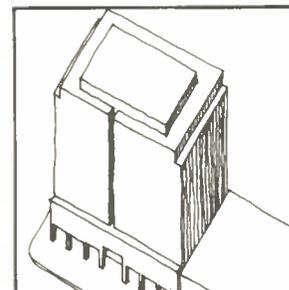
The bases of tall buildings, usually the first two or three floors, are experienced by pedestrians at close distance. The base of a building belongs to the streetscape, not to the skyline. The lower floors should reflect these conditions in design solutions which emphasize color, texture, and other treatments of visual interest at the pedestrian scale. This is the place for colonnades, awnings, rich materials, signs, special amenities, and small scale design elements. This is not the place for the more generalized curtain wall patterns that are often used on the upper stories of tall buildings.



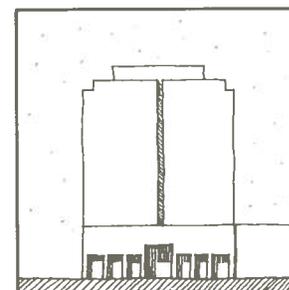
UNDESIRABLE



UNDESIRABLE



DESIRABLE



DESIRABLE

---

# BUILDING MATERIALS

Materials that are permanent, durable, and compatible with the architectural character and history of Concord shall be used on building facades in downtown.

## Discussion:

Buildings in downtown should have substance and durability in reality as well as in appearance. Materials like brick, stone, tile, stucco, and some forms of concrete have connotations of permanence and substance that are appreciated by urban citizens. These materials are also part of the vernacular of early California architecture, which comprises much of downtown Concord's heritage. Conversely, many metal and glass curtain walls have a surface reflectivity and undulation which to many people denote a flimsy or temporary quality.

Glass should be used carefully with other exterior materials. Special attention should be paid to glass color and reflectivity, surface curvature, opening sizes, color and material of frames, and changes of plane between glass and other exterior materials. Walls which are glazed for more than fifty percent of their surface area are discouraged. Glazing should not have reflective coatings applied to exterior glazing surfaces.



*Some of the recent tall buildings have non-reflective and light colored materials.*

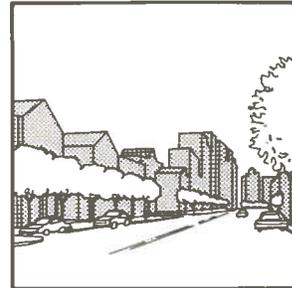
---

## COLOR OF TALL BUILDINGS

Light to medium values of color shall be used on the exterior of tall buildings, especially above the third floor.

### Discussion:

Dark buildings appear ominous on the skyline and may seem more massive than they actually are. Dark colors absorb light and increase heat gain. Conversely, lighter shades of color on tall structures can visually reduce their mass, make the downtown appear brighter and more cheerful, and help reduce cooling loads.



UNDESIRABLE



DESIRABLE

---

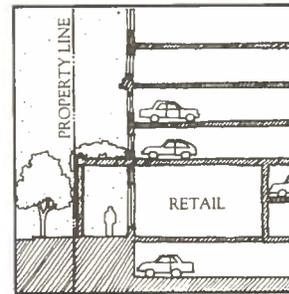
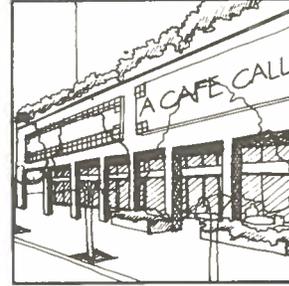
# S T R E E T L E V E L U S E S

Retail stores, restaurants, services, and other high intensity pedestrian uses shall be placed on the ground levels of all buildings fronting major pedestrian streets.

## Discussion:

The ground floors of buildings should have the most active uses. The ground level is where people walk and drive, and where people expect to find the goods and services they need. If street frontages are active, then the city is vibrant. Conversely, blank facades, open parking garages, and non-active uses at grade level produce dull and dangerous places.

Not every street can be lined with shops, but streets like Grant, Salvio, Mt. Diablo, and Willow Pass should have a preponderance of retail activity. Secondary and minor pedestrian streets might have retail activities only at the corners or occasionally at important places in the middle of the block. Certain kinds of office space, such as insurance brokers or travel agents, are also appropriate in locations where retail stores may not be economically possible.



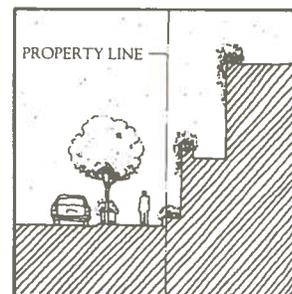
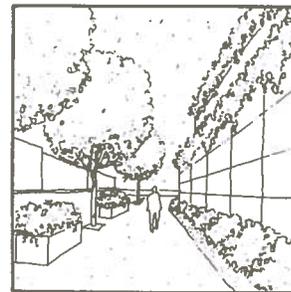
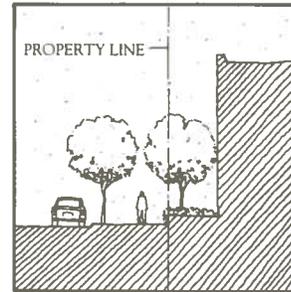
---

# SIDEWALK LANDSCAPE

On streets where ground floor retail or office uses are not economically possible or appropriate, pedestrian ways shall be enhanced with planting, art, and special architectural treatments.

## Discussion:

Major arterials and minor streets may have significant pedestrian traffic, even though few shops or restaurants may be located along them. Pedestrian comfort and civic amenity should therefore be a prime design consideration. Blank walls without special treatment at street level along a pedestrian way should be avoided; amenities, including landscaping, art, and architectural treatments, can occur in various ways where blank walls occur. Landscaping can include ground covers, climbing plants, shrubs, and trees.



---

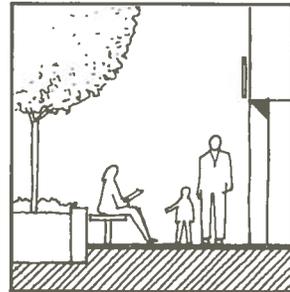
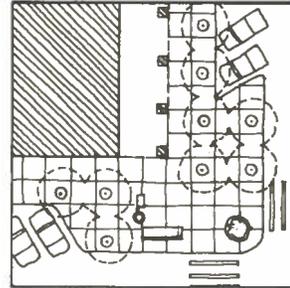
# S IDE WALK H ARDSCAPE

Sidewalk hardscape elements of the Todos Santos Plaza area, such as pavers, planters, bollards, and benches, shall be used for public streetscape in the core area of downtown. Private projects adjoining public streets and plazas shall use hardscape elements which are compatible with public streetscape elements.

## Discussion:

Streetscape design is critically important to the quality of downtown. This guideline is meant to promote design continuity in the pedestrian hardscape of the downtown. Building heights and styles may vary within downtown, but the consistent use of hardscape elements can supply part of the “glue” that holds a district together.

Street hardscape should be used with other streetscape elements, such as colonnades and landscaping, to unify the BART Station and Todos Santos Plaza areas into one downtown. Elements currently in the design vocabulary of the hardscape around Todos Santos Plaza could be expanded to include such items as shelters, trash receptacles, newspaper racks, newsstands, and information kiosks.



---

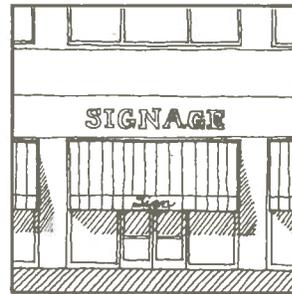
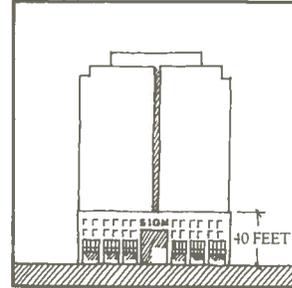
## BUILDING SIGNAGE

The location of signs on buildings shall be limited to the first 40 feet in height above street level, except for a maximum of two building identification signs at the parapet level of taller buildings. Building identification signage shall be integrated with the design of a building's base and top. Retail signage shall adhere to a design program for the building's storefronts.

### Discussion:

Signs located above the first few levels of a building facade are often an advertisement for the distant viewer rather than an informative and vital part of a cityscape. In order to be seen by the distant viewer, the size, color, and lighting of building signs are often out of character with the building facades and are detrimental to the City's skyline. Therefore, signs at the top of buildings for identification should be carefully integrated with the scale, color, and articulation of the building design.

Signs can add vitality to a streetscape or plaza when incorporated in building facades at the first few levels above the street. Retail shops, walk-in offices, public entrances, and building names can provide an exciting mix of signs to be seen by pedestrians and vehicular passers-by. However, it is important that design of signage be controlled at a project scale, so that it is integrated with specific building design as well as streetscape design. To achieve design control of retail signage at building storefronts, developers and their architects should require specific designs from individual tenants and a system of signage rules and criteria for inclusion in tenant leases.



---

# A RCADES AND COLONNADES

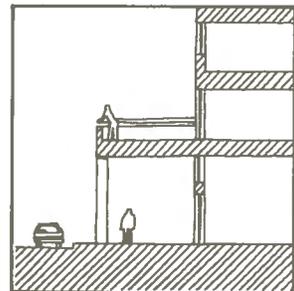
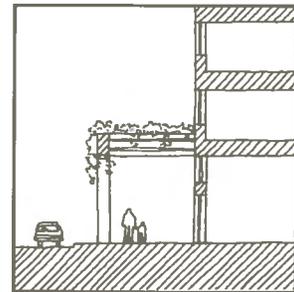
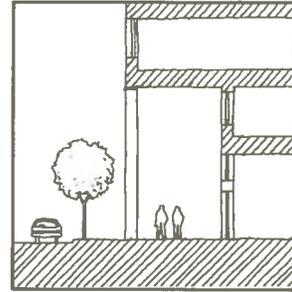
Pedestrian areas and sidewalks in the downtown shall have arcades and colonnades wherever possible. The map in the “Development Controls” section indicates recommended locations of continuous street level colonnades around the core pedestrian area of downtown.

## Discussion:

The quality of a city’s design is determined to a great extent by how it is experienced by pedestrians. In Concord, where the climate is warm and sunny, pedestrian comfort can be greatly increased by using architectural devices such as covered arcades and colonnades at the first story of buildings. In addition to weather protection, these devices can bring appropriate scale to shopping and business activities, highlight retail goods and services, and create an environment of comfort, enjoyment, and civic pride.



*An arcade offers relief to pedestrians from heat, rain, and traffic.*



---

# SIDEWALK CANOPIES

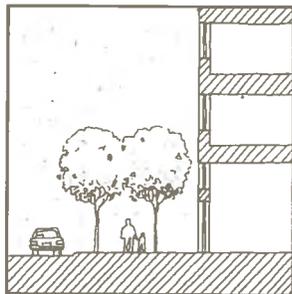
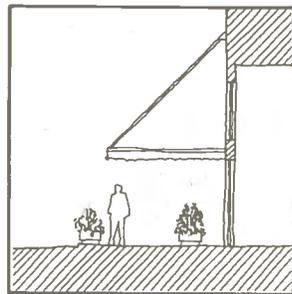
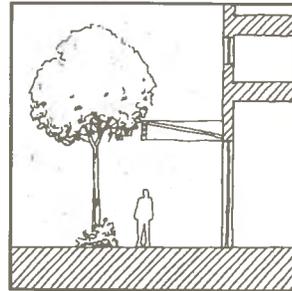
In locations where building arcades and colonnades are inappropriate because of the nature of the street or the building uses, pedestrian areas and sidewalks shall be enlivened with awnings, trellises, landscaping, and other means to create full or partial canopies over pedestrian ways.

## Discussion:

Not every street has the activity or importance to justify major architectural gestures such as arcades or colonnades. However, even minor building frontages should address the sidewalks with the pedestrian and streetscape in mind. Awnings over entrances, decorative features on walls, landscaped planters, trees, and similar treatments can make the streetlife and appearance of the City attractive and vital. Fabric awnings and glazed canopies are encouraged and metal awnings are discouraged.



*A planted trellis over the sidewalk provides a protective canopy for pedestrians.*



---

# S T R E E T L I G H T I N G

The two types of streetlights currently in use around Todos Santos Plaza shall be used throughout the larger downtown area, including the BART Station area and Galindo Street.

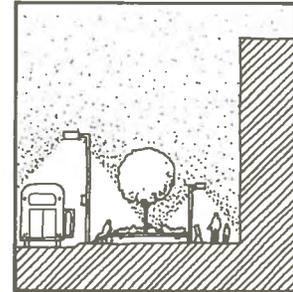
## Discussion:

All public street and pedestrian lighting in the downtown should be compatible in style, fixture color, and lamp color. The light fixtures will help to give the downtown streetscape a unified appearance during the day and distinctive lighting at night. The lights recently installed around Todos Santos Plaza have dark blue standards and sodium vapor lamps. Public fixtures installed in other sections of the downtown should be identical to or compatible with these fixtures.

The two types of fixtures currently used at Todos Santos Plaza are a low, seven to ten foot high, pedestrian standard and a tall, twenty to thirty foot high, street and surface parking area standard. Other types of public and private fixtures, which could be added to the two basic streetlight fixtures, are lights to highlight landscaping, fountains, and works of art.



*High and low streetlights are part of the streetscape design of north Grant Street.*



---

# BUILDING LIGHTING

Within building projects, exterior lighting for pedestrian areas, building facades, parking garages, landscape elements, and design features shall be complementary in style, color, and lamping with public street and pedestrian lighting.

## Discussion:

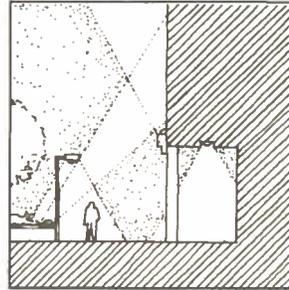
The purpose of this guideline is to encourage an abundance of high quality outdoor lighting to give the downtown vitality and sparkle at night. Each project must share in this enterprise. It is not necessary to duplicate light fixtures used by the City, but fixtures proposed for building exteriors must work effectively with streetlighting.

Building lighting includes storefront display lights, public lobby lighting, illumination of signs, and special feature lighting such as high-lighting facades and tops of buildings. Street level lighting of a building can augment City streetlights in many ways, for example, by accenting a sidewalk, a colonnade, or the vault of an arcade.

Parking garage lighting must be shielded from public view as much as possible, especially from street level vantage points. Placing fixtures back from the street edge and behind spandrels and beams can be combined with a dark ceiling color to minimize the views of lights on intermediate levels. For the roof of a garage, light standards can be kept as short as possible and supplementary lighting can be added to the interior surfaces of parapet walls. In all cases, specified lenses, reflectors, and shields of light fixtures should reduce direct views of garage lighting.



*Lighting on the building wall will illuminate the arcade interior as well as the sidewalk.*



---

# WATER FEATURES

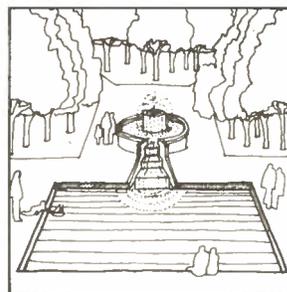
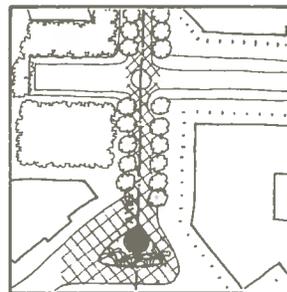
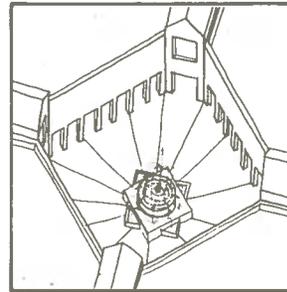
Water features such as pools, sprays, fountains, and sculptures shall be provided in outdoor public spaces, as appropriate. Water features shall not be isolated elements in the landscape, but shall be integrated functionally and visually with the overall design of plazas and courtyards.

## Discussion:

Water seems to be a universal “good” in outdoor spaces. People respond positively to pools, fountains, and other water features. Water features are also a traditional element in early California architecture. In addition, running water provides acoustical masking of traffic noise and evaporative cooling in hot weather.



*The fountain at Galindo and Salvia enlivens a pedestrian corner.*



---

# A RT IN PUBLIC SPACES

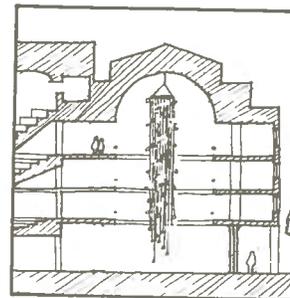
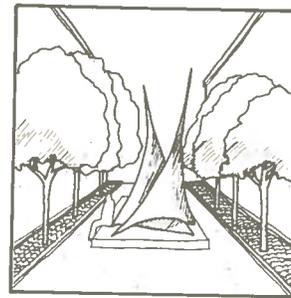
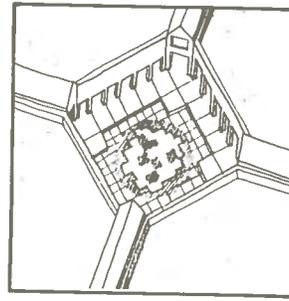
Works of art shall be included in the development of major outdoor and indoor public spaces.

## Discussion:

It is the City's intention that public art become a main feature of downtown Concord. Murals, hangings, mosaics, sculpture, flags, banners, light and water events increase the usage and enjoyment of downtown public spaces. Programs have been established which will provide works of art within public spaces of both privately and publicly funded building projects. The purpose of this guideline is to alert building sponsors to the City's desire that art be a part of at least the public portions of their projects.



*A work of art in the street at Todos Santos Plaza.*



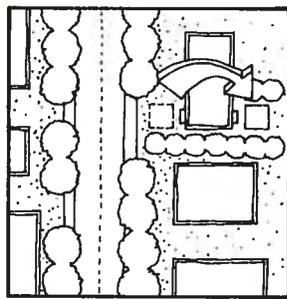
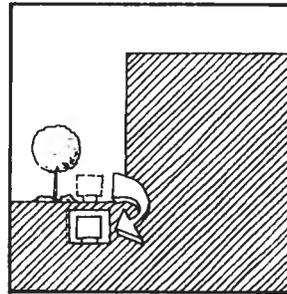
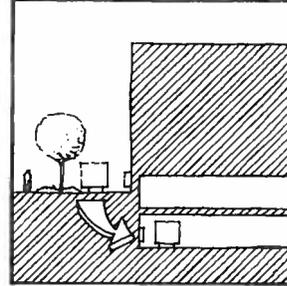
---

# S I T E U T I L I T I E S

Utilities shall be minimally visible and minimally audible from sidewalks and other public pedestrian ways.

## Discussion:

Transformer vaults, condensers, electrical and gas meters, as well as overhead transmission lines, can have detrimental effects on the public environment when they are placed in visible and audible locations. Careful siting and design treatment can minimize the detrimental effects of utilities. Siting and design ideas include placing transformer vaults and utility lines underground or within parking garages, placing equipment away from public spaces, and using landscaping to screen views of utility items.



---

# P EDESTRIAN CIRCULATION

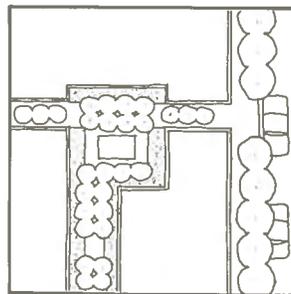
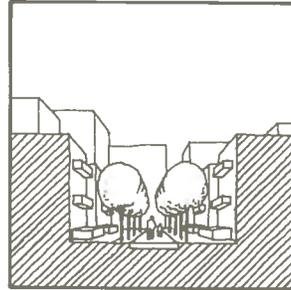
Pedestrian ways which are not contiguous to streets shall include amenities suitable to a pedestrian environment.

## Discussion:

Pedestrian paths separate from streets should have a design treatment that is particular to a walking environment. The scale and landscaping of the spaces should relate to the individual person and small groups of people walking and sitting. Surrounding buildings should be designed to respect the privacy of interior uses which are adjacent to pedestrian ways, especially for residential uses. Hardscape and softscape treatments of pedestrian ways should be appropriate to the urban or suburban character of the setting.



*Pedestrians walking through the landscaped campus of Bank of America, Concord Center.*



---

# PARKING GARAGE HEIGHT

Parking garages shall be as low as possible, especially at street edges. The height of a parking garage shall not be greater than 45 feet above grade, unless it is surrounded for its full height by non-parking uses.

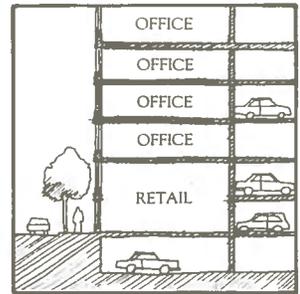
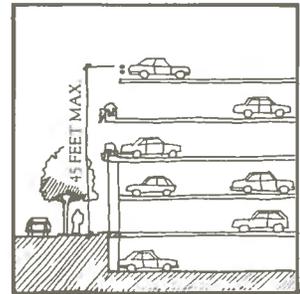
## Discussion:

Parking garages are a necessary convenience for the life of a downtown, but their visual impact should be minimized to the greatest extent possible. The major public views of buildings by pedestrians and motorists are from the street, and therefore the primary area of visibility of parking garages is at street edges. Structured parking can be built underground or enclosed within other uses to minimize its visibility from the street.

Underground parking levels may be used in addition to the height permitted above grade to make a larger overall structure. If parking levels above grade are enclosed for their full height within a building or building complex, then there is no parking height restriction, except as defined in the City's zoning ordinance. A building enclosure at the street edges of a parking garage can include retail, office, housing, and other non-parking uses.



*The Bank of America parking garage is four levels above grade and about 45 feet tall.*



---

# PARKING GARAGE TREATMENT

Parking garage facades shall be enhanced with design treatments and street level uses, as stated in the “Street Level Uses” and “Sidewalk Landscape” guidelines, to improve their appearance and minimize their bulk. Exterior materials shall be harmonious with surrounding buildings, especially adjacent buildings of the same development project.

## Discussion:

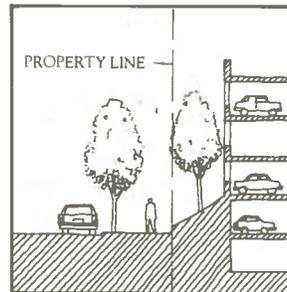
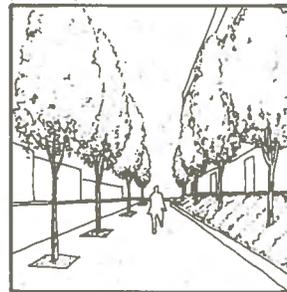
The architectural treatment of parking garages is important for the downtown streetscape, since garages are seen primarily by street level pedestrians and motorists. The placement of retail shops along street frontages with colonnades, awnings, and controlled retail signage is the most effective treatment to enrich the grade and second levels of a parking garage.

Landscaping is also effective. If a garage is set back from the property line, then berms, trees, and climbing plants along the street can screen views of open parking garages. If built at the property line, stepping back of upper floors and placing planters along floor edges can improve appearance and reduce apparent size. Planting at the top edge softens a structure’s profile as seen from the street.

Building materials and the scale of exterior openings should be compatible with buildings in the same development project and should fit with surrounding architecture. Features such as windows, cornices, and one or two story colonnades can help to achieve compatibility. Openings at street level for vehicular access should avoid crossing major pedestrian paths.



*The treatment of the parking garage includes shops at street level, glazed openings, and trellises.*



---

## PARKING GARAGE ROOFS

Roofs of parking garages, which can be seen from tall buildings, elevated highways, BART trains, and other high vantage points shall be treated to make them as visually attractive as possible.

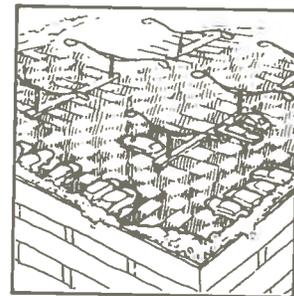
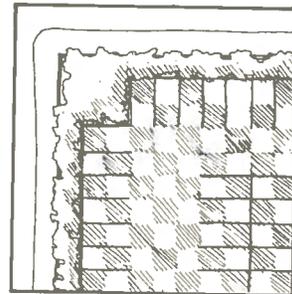
### Discussion:

Planting, lighting, shading devices, and paving are elements that can be used to improve the visual quality of parking garage roofs. The use of planters with trees and shrubs, particularly at the edges of a structure, can soften the appearance of a roof, while also providing needed shade for pedestrians and parked cars. Trellis structures can offer additional shade and amenity. Paving with patterns of color can visually enliven large surface areas. Good lighting can improve safety and also be a visual amenity.

This guideline can apply to parking garages below grade as well as above grade. The roof of a structure below grade is often an urban public open space. As such, the roof should be treated as a plaza or courtyard with spatial definition, planting and hardscape of a quality befitting its urban public role.



*The City parking garage has a painted pattern on its roof.*



---

# BUILDING ROOFS

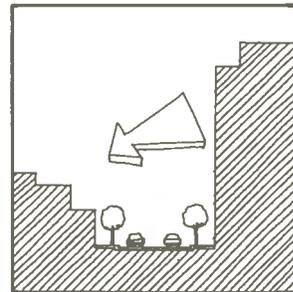
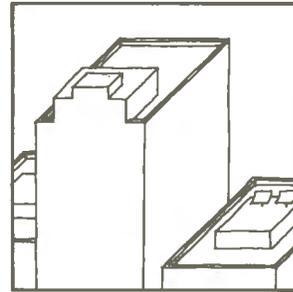
The design of a building roof shall be integrated with the overall design of a building and shall enhance the surrounding downtown roofscape.

## Discussion:

As an individual building in the downtown needs to be designed within its streetscape context, so a building roof should be designed within its roofscape context. Roofs of buildings are often the repository of mechanical and electrical equipment, such as antennae, condensers, ducts, cooling towers, and elevator penthouses. When seen from the street, from buildings, or other vantage points, especially when proximate, building roofs with numerous indiscriminately placed pieces of equipment can be quite ugly. It is important to incorporate the various elements of a roof into the building design, so that the building is perceived as a unified design, regardless of the height of the viewer's vantage point. Elements of a roof design requiring design consideration can include flat or sloped roofing materials, parapet walls, equipment, and elevator penthouses. Special features might also be present, such as a helipad, a large dish antenna, a landscaped deck, or accent lighting for the top of the building.



*Salvo Pacheco Square has a varied roofscape with equipment nestled between sloping roof sections.*



# DESIGN REVIEW PROCESS

---

## **T**HE PROCESS AND THE REQUIREMENTS

Design review for the Downtown Business District of Concord is performed by the City's Design Review Board (DRB), which is assisted by City staff, primarily the Planning Department. Review of individual projects occurs at five stages in the design process and the DRB relies upon assistance from the City staff at each stage. City decisions result from the continuous interaction of project development entities, design professionals, the Design Review Board, Redevelopment Agency Board/City Council members, and the City staff. Design review submissions are made to the Planning Department.

Design review focuses attention upon architectural, planning, and urban design issues within the processes of city redevelopment. Many people with varying agendas and schedules are involved in planning and implementation of downtown development projects. In large projects the complexity can be staggering, the duration long, and the actors numerous. The Design Review Process has been established in order to have an efficient and effective method to assess architectural design from project inception to completion. The process allows the City to ensure excellent design quality in the downtown, both in individual projects and in the total environment.

Some projects require full design review, some require a limited review process, and some do not require review at all. Development entities should check with the Planning Department to determine the extent of design review requirements for each proposal. Renovation projects with no spaces or surfaces accessible or visible to the public are exempt from design review. Small projects, such as retail tenant remodeling, and projects with minimal exterior and public interior work, may require limited design review.

The review process consists of five stages of review with a "milestone" event at the end of each stage. The stages correspond to phases of the standard architectural design process, from first concepts to final construction. The First Milestone is at the end of Conceptual Design, which occurs midway through the Schematic Design phase. The Second Milestone is at the end of the Schematic Design phase. The third is at the completion of the Design Development phase,

the point at which all major design and cost decisions should have been made for a project. The milestone for the fourth stage is at the end of Construction Documents and the milestone for the fifth stage is at the end of construction.

The First Milestone review by the Design Review Board (DRB), "Conceptual Review," is not mandatory, unless assistance is sought from the Redevelopment Agency by the developer of a proposed project. For projects seeking Agency assistance, the First Milestone review may follow an Exclusive Right To Negotiate with the Agency and must precede the signing of a Disposition and Development Agreement (DDA) between the Agency and the developer. The DDA includes a provision which states that all required City approvals must be obtained for a project by the developer. The plan submitted to the DRB for the first milestone review and included in the DDA is called the "Preliminary Development Plan." The role of the DRB in the First Milestone review is to make comments in an advisory capacity. The DRB comments may or may not be incorporated into the Preliminary Development Plan.

The Second Milestone is a review of the Schematic Design drawings and is known as the "Preliminary Review." It is undertaken regardless of the existence of a DDA. This stage normally takes place prior to Use Permit approval by the Planning Commission. As in the case of the First Milestone, there is no approval of these plans by the DRB. Comments are made by the DRB members in order to convey their thoughts regarding the proposed design and to provide direction for further development of the plans. The Board may recommend that more than one preliminary review session be held prior to the Third Milestone review of a project.

The Third Milestone is known as the "Final Review" (or "Formal Review") of the project plans at the end of the Design Development phase. This is a required City approval, determined by a vote of a quorum of the DRB members. The Third Milestone review follows the granting of a Use Permit by the Planning Commission. The plans approved by the Planning Commission and the DRB are called the "Final Development

---

Plan” by the Redevelopment Agency, for DDA purposes. As conditions of its final approval, the DRB may stipulate specific design details to be approved by the DRB at a subsequent meeting or by the Planning Department staff. Examples of such items are the final landscape plans and proposed facade materials.

The Fourth and Fifth Milestones, the “Design Check” and the “Construction Check,” are performed primarily by City staff with the DRB only reviewing specific design items. The Fourth Milestone check is completed prior to the City’s issuance of the Building Permit and the Fifth Milestone check is completed prior to the City’s issuance of the Certificate of Final Completion and Occupancy.

The scale of drawings for design review submissions are listed for each stage. The drawings must be submitted at 100% of the listed scale, and perspective drawings must have an image which is at least 9” by 12”. For large projects, which occupy a site with the equivalent of more than one downtown block, drawings of a scale smaller than the listed requirements may be submitted with prior written approval by the Planning Department. The Design Review Application with a complete checklist of requirements may be obtained from the Planning Department.



*A presentation and public comment are heard in a review session with the City Council.*

---

## **F**IRST MILESTONE: CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

The review of the first design submission to the City is the Conceptual Review. The Conceptual Review corresponds approximately to 50% completion of a project's Schematic Design phase. The First Milestone review is required by the City only if a development proposal requires Redevelopment Agency assistance. The "Preliminary Development Plan" is the name of the plan submitted to the DRB for review and subsequently included in the DDA. The submission requirements include, but are not limited to:

1. Site plan at not smaller than 1" = 20' scale (1:240).
2. Ground floor plan with proximate site area at not smaller than 1" = 8' scale (1:96).
3. Above and below ground floor plans including a roof plan at not smaller than 1" = 8' scale.
4. At least two project sections and two elevations at not smaller than 1" = 8' scale.
5. One exterior, constructed, two-point perspective drawing from a street level viewpoint with the image contained within a 60 degree cone of vision.
6. Tabulation of areas of major exterior and public interior spaces and tabulation of parking spaces by size and type of space.
7. Dimensions of site, parking areas, buildings, and setbacks.



*A view towards the east and downtown, looking down Willow Pass and Clayton Roads.*

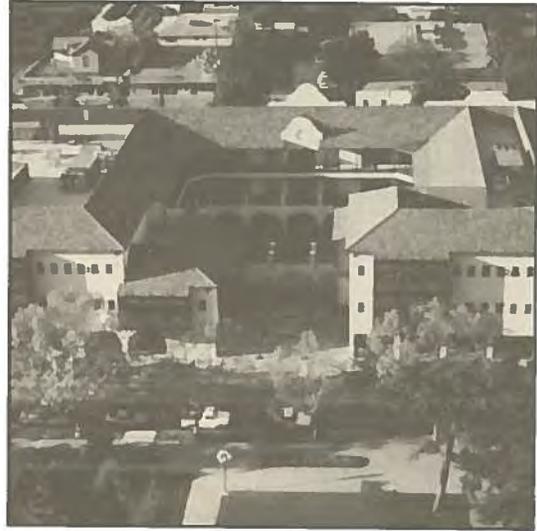
---

# S

## SECOND MILESTONE: PRELIMINARY REVIEW

The Preliminary Review submission is a set of completed Schematic Design materials, including the required items listed below. The review normally takes place prior to Use Permit approval by the Planning Commission. The DRB can recommend that more than one session be held for this review. The submission requirements include, but are not limited to:

1. Site plan at not smaller than 1"=20' scale (1:240).
2. Ground floor plan with proximate site area not smaller than 1"=8' scale (1:96).
3. Above and below ground floor plans including a roof plan at not smaller than 1"=8' scale.
4. At least two project sections and two exterior elevations at not smaller than 1"=8' scale.
5. Two exterior perspective drawings, at least one of which has a street level viewpoint, and, if applicable, one interior perspective drawing of a major public space. The perspectives shall be constructed, two-point drawings; the interior view can be a one-point or two-point. The drawing images shall be within a 60 degree cone of vision.
6. Tabulation of areas of major exterior and public interior spaces and tabulation of parking spaces by size and type of space.
7. Dimensions of site, parking areas, buildings, setbacks, exterior spaces, and major public indoor spaces.
8. Material and color selections for exterior walls, exterior hardscape, walls and floors of major interior public spaces.
9. Landscape plan with preliminary plant selections at not smaller than 1"=20' scale.
10. Outline specifications.

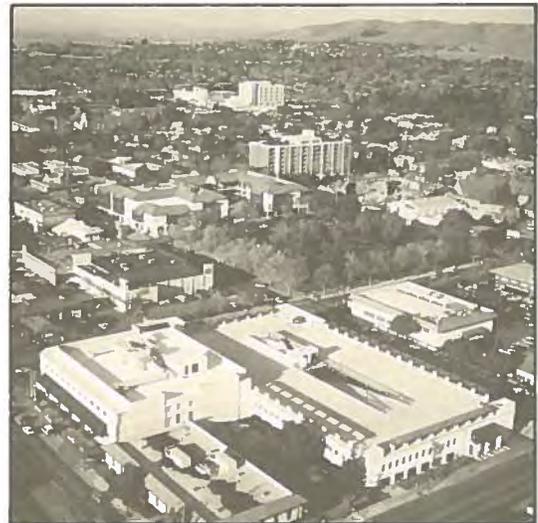


*A well-defined urban plaza in Salvio Pacheco Square, facing Todos Santos Plaza.*

## T HIRD MILESTONE: FINAL REVIEW

Final Review occurs at the end of the Design Development phase of architectural design, at which time all major design and cost decisions for a project should have been made. The design submission for Final Review includes a completed set of the architect's Design Development materials, which update and supplement the Second Milestone requirements (contact the Planning Department for a complete list of requirements):

1. Update Second Milestone: Preliminary Review site plan requirement.
2. Update Second Milestone: Preliminary Review ground floor plan requirement.
3. Update Second Milestone: Preliminary Review requirement for floor and roof plans.
4. Update Second Milestone: Preliminary Review requirements for sections and elevations plus all remaining exterior elevations at not smaller than 1" = 8' scale (1:96).
5. Update Second Milestone: Preliminary Review perspective drawings requirement.
6. Update Second Milestone: Preliminary Review requirement for tabulation of areas and parking spaces.
7. Update Second Milestone: Preliminary Review dimensions requirement.
8. Update Second Milestone: Preliminary Review requirements for material selection plus material and color boards of exterior walls and major interior public spaces, as well as exterior hardscape at the ground plane, at visible roofs, and at usable roof decks. A mock-up panel of each major exterior building wall treatment, in model form at a scale from 1" = 8' (1:96) to 1" = 1' (1:12), may be required by the Planning Department.
9. Update Second Milestone: Preliminary Review requirement for landscape plus landscape sections and elevations at not smaller than 1" = 8' scale, including hardscape, lighting, equipment, furnishings, and planting for on-site and off-site improvements.
10. Update Second Milestone: Preliminary Review requirement for outline specifications, updated and more detailed.
11. Reflected ceiling plans, including soffits, of exterior and major public interior spaces at not smaller than 1" = 8' scale. Spaces such as arcades, colonnades, lobbies, malls, courtyards, and galleries should be included.
12. Interior elevations of major public interior spaces at not smaller than 1" = 8" scale.
13. Graphics and signage: locations, schedules, and samples or manufacturer's literature for exterior and interior public spaces, including parking garage and building identification signs.
14. Lighting schedules with samples or manufacturer's literature for exterior and interior public spaces and parking garages. Lighting locations are to be shown on landscape plans, reflected ceiling plans, and elevations.



*An aerial view of Todos Santos Plaza from the Southwest with the Concord Main Office of Bank of America in the foreground.*

---

## **F**OURTH MILESTONE: DESIGN CHECK

The Fourth Milestone: Design Check, occurs at the completion of the Construction Documents phase. The Design Check is performed by the Planning Department, except for specific elements of the submission which may also be checked by the Design Review Board. If the Redevelopment Agency is involved in the project with a DDA, then the Agency will help the Planning Department perform the Design Check. Completed Construction Documents, including final landscape plans, are submitted to the Planning Department and they are checked for conformance with the Third Milestone review. The reviewed documents are given to the Building Department for plan check approval and issuance of a Building Permit. For a development with multiple, phased construction contracts, several Building Permits might be issued, necessitating a Design Check for each permit.

Submission requirements for the Design Check are a complete set of Construction Documents for the construction work being considered, in addition to clarification drawings and text for changes in the design since the Final Review of the Third Milestone.

## **F**IFTH MILESTONE: CONSTRUCTION CHECK

Issuance by the City of the Certificate of Final Completion and Occupancy for a development project is contingent upon a Construction Check by the Planning Department. If the Redevelopment Agency is involved in the project with a DDA, then the Agency will help the Planning Department perform the Construction Check. Change orders will be reviewed and site visits made by the Planning Department for the Construction Check.

Submission requirements for the Fifth Milestone: Construction Check, include construction Change Orders, which affect the appearance or use of the exterior and public interior portions of a project. Clarification drawings and text explaining design changes made since the Fourth Milestone: Design Check, will be submitted upon request of the Planning Department.

For projects over 50,000 gross square feet of built floor area, design review will include approval of a full-scale mock-up of the major exterior wall system, built on the project site. The mock-

up will include the actual materials, finishes, and colors to be used on the project. Approval will be necessary before construction of the exterior wall system commences.

---

# C R E D I T S

## City Council and Redevelopment Agency Board

Ron Mullin, Mayor  
Colleen Coll, Vice Mayor and Agency Chair  
June Bulman, Agency Vice Chair  
Diane Longshore  
Steve Weir

## Design Review Board

November 1986:

David Goldin, Chair  
William Richardson  
John Nicol  
Michael Pastrick  
Shadrick Small\*

Former Members Since  
January 1984:

Carl Campos  
Don Rose  
Frank Mighetto  
Joseph Calibrigo  
Charles Carpenter  
Christine Callahan\*  
Lynette Keihl\*  
Ward Pynn\*  
Theodora Shea\*

\*Representatives of the Planning Commission  
serving in rotation.

## City Staff

Bill Waterhouse, Director of Redevelopment  
Peter Hirano, Planning Director

## ELS/Elbasani & Logan Architects

Donn Logan, Principal  
Frank Fuller, Project Architect

*Photograph on back cover: Downtown Concord as the 1940's center of a primarily agricultural community, seen from the southeast.*



CONCORD CALIFORNIA

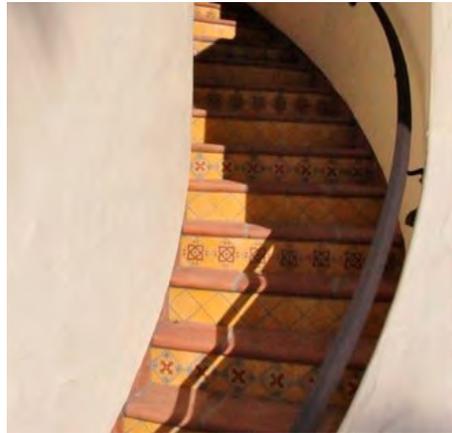
# EARLY CALIFORNIA ARCHITECTURE

# SPANISH REVIVAL

The Spanish Revival Style was an architectural movement that began in the late 19th century for a colonial style's revivalism and reinterpretation, which drew inspiration from the late 18th and early 19th century Spanish missions in California. This architecture style has been considered to be the regional vernacular architecture style of Southwestern United States, especially in California.

Spanish Revival replicated much of the original Spanish Architecture style's aesthetic, which includes enclosed courtyard, massive adobe wall, tile roofing, and outdoor shade arcades.

Some of the structures in City of Concord that uses Spanish/ Mission Revival Style architecture are the Todos Santos Square in the north side of the Todos Santos Plaza.



Painted Tile



Arches



Arcade



Ornamental Iron work



Tower-like Chimney



Wooden Door



White Stucco Exterior Wall



Terracota Roof Tile



Courtyard

# MONTEREY COLONIAL



Cantilever on 2nd Level



Low-pitch Gable Roof



Wood Material on the Cantilever



Adobe Wall

Monterey Colonial Architecture is an architecture style that originated in California. Larkin House, made by a Boston merchant is widely considered as the first of the Monterey Colonial Style.

Monterey Colonial has distinct characteristics, which includes low-pitched gable roof, sometimes displayed different material on the first, the usage of wood post in the balcony and second floor and cantilevered second floor balcony.

The known building that uses Monterey Colonial style in Concord are the Pacheco Adobe House, which is the first structure in Concord.

# VICTORIAN

Victorian Architecture refers to architecture style that were used during the reign of Queen Victoria in Britain. This architecture style was brought to United States around 1860s and become very popular at that time.

Many of the city in California adopted Victorian architecture for their building. Some of the city includes San Francisco, Eureka and Alameda.

Victorian Architecture can be divided into several sub-category such as Queen Anne, Italianate, Shingle, and several other. Some of the main characteristic of Victorian architecture including but not limited to ornamental bracket and low roofs (italianate), bay window, steep roof, round or square tower (Queen Anne) and continuous wood shingle, porches, cross gable and irregular roof line (Shingle). Most of Victorian Architecture share material similarity, where they used wood as the main material.



Low Roof of Italianate



Queen Anne's Steep Roof



Shingle Cross Gable



Ornamental Bracket



Round/Square Tower



Shingle Style Porch



Side Bay Window



Queen Anne Bay Window



Irregular Roof Line

# MISSION REVIVAL



Smoot Stucco



Arched Entry and Window



Arcade



Quatrefoil Window



Exposed Rafter



Gabled Tile Roof

Mission revival is an architecture style that emerged in late 19th Century, which inspired by early Hispanic Mission architecture style in California. This style emerged as a response of the actual mission's fading condition and restoration, which in turn bring nostalgia to the public.

Mission Revival replicated much of the original Mission style's aesthetic, which includes enclosed courtyard, massive adobe wall, tile roofing, and outdoor shade arcades, while integrating these characteristic with more modern material to improve the structure's strength. Mission Revival style bear many resemblance to Spanish Revival. Some of the shared characteristic between these two style includes the outdoor shade arcade and courtyard.

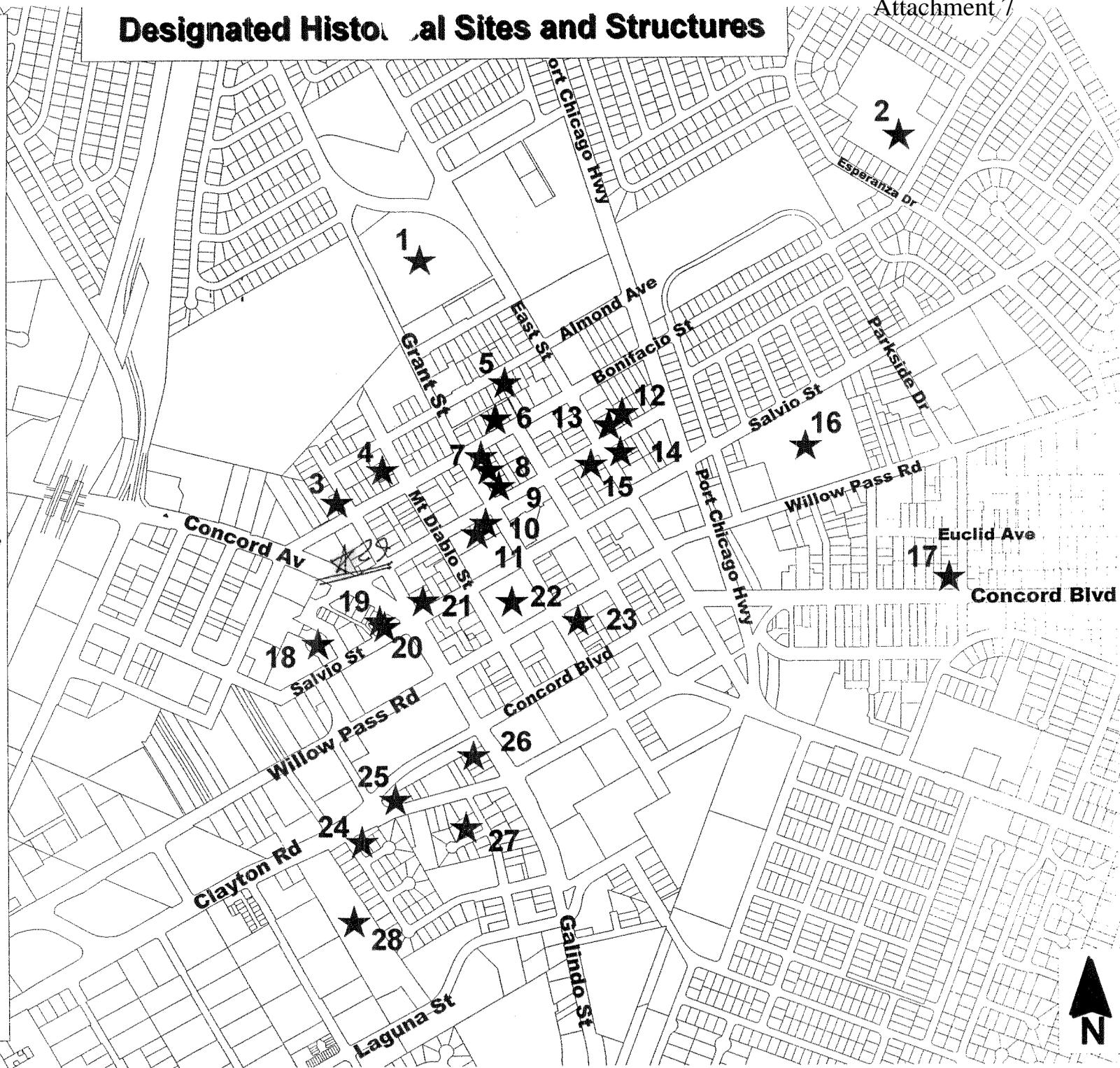
## Attachment 6 – City of Santa Barbara - El Pueblo Viejo Design Guidelines

This attachment is too large to include in the “Discussion of Early California Architecture for the Downtown” so the link to this sight is available at the website below:

[https://www.dropbox.com/s/8fe2077o4kbofes/Att%204-CitySantaBarbaraEPV\\_Guidelines.pdf?dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/s/8fe2077o4kbofes/Att%204-CitySantaBarbaraEPV_Guidelines.pdf?dl=0)

# Designated Historical Sites and Structures

- 1. Mt Diablo High School
- 2. Maltby Mansion
- 3. Kelly House
- 4. Webb-Soto House
- 5. Nunez House
- 6. Bolla House
- 7. Alves House
- 8. Neustaedter House
- 9. Bibber House
- 10. 1930s Apartment House (Rosal Apartments)
- 11. Elworthy-Keller
- 12. Ginochio-Accinelli House
- 13. Elworthy House
- 14. Barnett House
- 15. Maltby-McKinnon House
- 16. Concord Elementary School
- 17. Gieselhart House
- 18. Salvio Pacheco Adobe
- 19. Old Fire House
- 20. Perry House
- 21. Foskett-Elworthy Bldg
- 22. Todos Santos Plaza
- 23. County Fire House
- 24. Eddy House
- 25. Ivey House
- 26. Masonic Hall
- 27. Francisco Galindo Home
- 28. Keller House



29. BEEBE HOUSE