

*D e s i g n   O p t i o n s   M a n u a l*

**C   O   N   T   E   N   T   S**

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## INTRODUCTION

### Intent

Attracting customers is a central concern to all of the city's businesses. One of the best ways to attract is to be attractive - good design is good business. In addition, neighboring businesses can be hurt or helped by the appearance of the business next door as well as the surrounding neighborhood.

The City's key objective in preparing this manual is to provide design standards and guidelines that lead to a more attractive and vibrant business environment.

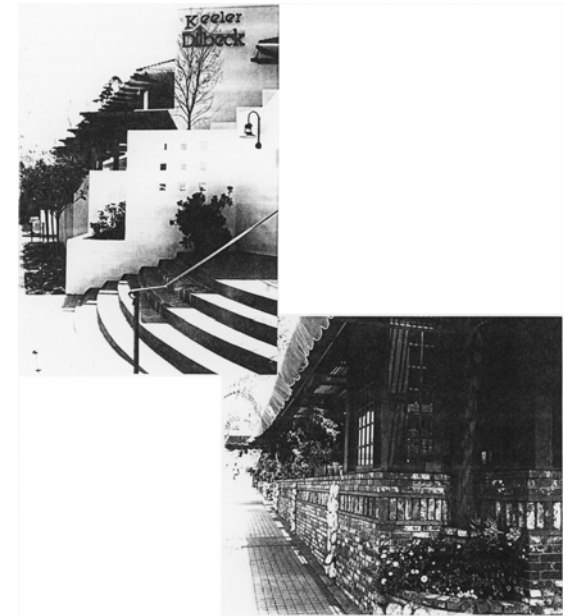
### Scope

Standards, or fixed requirements, are indicated in italics, and are summarized on a sheet inside the rear cover. The rest of the text consists of guidelines, which are suggestions that may be essential to good design for a particular project.

This manual is comprehensive, containing the standards and guidelines for a complete new commercial project. A companion manual, *Design Options for Small Projects*, should be consulted for facade remodels and other projects of limited scope. Projects involving only signs are regulated by a separate ordinance.

Even the smallest improvement of an existing property is welcome, and it is not the City's intent to require an increase in a project's scope through use of these standards and guidelines.

This manual implements the Foothill Boulevard Master Plan concepts of design. The primary concept is that of Districts to break up the Foothill Boulevard strip into a procession of places with individual identities like villages along a shared road. The village ideal derives its charm from informal groupings of individual buildings in a complex pattern of intimate open spaces. A village beckons its visitors to linger, even as it beckons them to press on and discover more. Its component places are varied and even idiosyncratic, yet there is an overall identity.



### The Village Ideal

## REQUIRED FINDINGS

1. The design and layout of the proposed development is consistent with the standards of this Chapter, and, to the appropriate extent, consistent with the guidelines contained in this Chapter;



*Even the simplest architecture involves a complex combination of elements to invite (or repel) the viewer.*

2. The design and layout of the proposed development will accommodate the functions and activities that are proposed for the property, will not unreasonably interfere with the use and enjoyment of neighboring property, and will not create traffic or pedestrian hazards;



*Varied building massing, careful detailing and use of materials and elements, and an inviting open space make walking down this street a rich experience.*

3. The architectural design of the proposed development is compatible with the character of the surrounding neighborhood, and all reasonable design efforts have been made to maintain the harmonious, orderly, and attractive development promoted by this Chapter and the General Plan; and

4. The design of the proposed development will provide a desirable environment for its occupants and visiting public as well as its neighbors and it is of aesthetically good composition, materials, texture, and color.



*A tower marks an arcade, and a roof deck is delightfully displayed, making these buildings easily read and inviting.*



## 1. DESIGN PRINCIPLES

*One reason new architecture can prove to be discordant is that fundamental principles of design are no longer usually observed. Mutual awareness of a few principles will assist in the design and review of all projects.*

- All projects should be reviewed in the context of basic design principles to achieve objective evaluation and harmonious fit into the urban context.

## A. Balance and Proportion

*Balance can be literal, involving similar masses or features. Subtle balance, involving dissimilar but well-proportioned masses or features, is encouraged. For example, balance can be achieved through interplay between an intense detail feature and a long rhythmic building mass.*

Building massing and site design should reinforce a sense of balance and proportion within the project and within the immediate boulevard context.



*This tower achieves a balance between horizontal and vertical when the entire block is considered, but is overpowering in connection with only the adjacent portion of the building.*



*The squat proportion of the ground floor relative to the floor above made even worse by the introduction of the awnings below the structural overhang.*

## B. Integrity and Completeness

*"As is the small, so is the great." Integrity is the reflection of the small elements in the overall design, and vice versa. A project is tied together through integrity and through appropriate completeness of detail on all elevations.*

Building and site design should have integrity to reinforce design features, and should provide detail and finish on each elevation as appropriate to its view.



*Integrity of forms is achieved through roof, window, and moulding design. Adequate detail is provided on the side to convey completeness.*



*Basic integrity is provided by the repetition of roof forms to step up to a higher building mass.*

## C. Vertical Graduation

*Vertical graduation can involve a reduction in scale at the upper portions of the building, often with increasing openness as well. This allows the building to achieve a strong building base and an attractive transition to the sky.*

Building massing and detailing should use vertical graduation as appropriate to the scale and character of the project and surroundings.



*The smaller-scale elements at the upper portion, including balusters framing into the sky, create the effect of vertical graduation.*



*The stepping back of the upper floor creates a vertical graduation, as do the small windows above the large primary storefront panels.*

## D. Transition

*Use of elements such as substantial entry alcoves, garden structures, overhangs, and well-related glazing and landscaping, achieve a rich and inviting transition between indoor and outdoor areas.*

Building and landscaping elements should exploit opportunities for transitional elements.



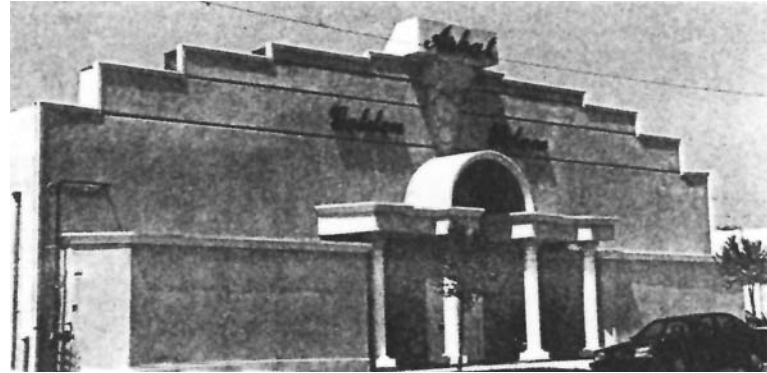
*Entry arcades and porches may be used in front of or alongside buildings, also screening parking from street view.*



## E. Limited Symmetry

*Asymmetrical overall massing and open space design support an informal village setting and help a substantial building fit within the context of a block. Self-contained buildings ("islands") and inappropriate monumentality are thus avoided. However, symmetry limited to small buildings or small areas of larger buildings is not disruptive.*

Overall symmetry should be avoided for a building with a front elevation of more than 30 feet.



*For all but the smallest buildings, a strong expression of overall symmetry creates a monumentality that is disruptive within a block.*



*This building is so small that its symmetry could not be disruptive. The higher pilaster on the right is an interesting asymmetrical feature, forming a transition to the higher neighboring building.*

## F. Limited Repetition

*The repetition of building bays, row trees, or other major building and landscape elements is valuable for the achievement of rhythm and sense of place. However, the perception of repeated elements changes from pleasant order to monotony if the sequence is too long.*

The repetition of bays or other major elements should generally not exceed seven in number in order to avoid monotony.



*While the scale and massing of the building work well, the repetition of stark building bays along the street continues for too long, creating a regimented feeling along the street.*







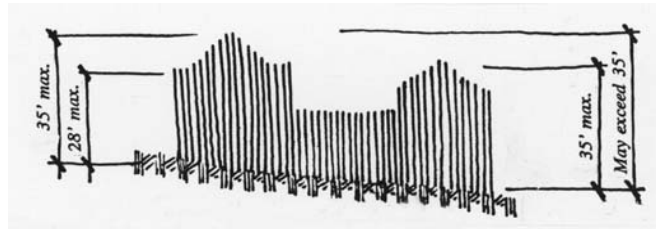
## 2. B U I L D I N G E N V E L O P E

*Beyond the Design Principles in Section 1, sensitive design should relate to the terrain, views, and the varied context of the Districts and site. The village ideal combines small scale with variety. Part of that variety is punctuation by accent and focal elements, such as bell towers. Exceptions to the height limit encourage such features. Other regulations protect the traditional small scale of building massing.*

*Through the guidelines, horizontality and verticality are encouraged to vary between districts. In West Gateway and Downtown east of Commonwealth, horizontal scale predominates, defining an open character. However, in Old Town and Downtown west of Commonwealth, a horizontally dominant project could disrupt the more intense vertical rhythm already in place.*

- Building design shall protect the traditional small scale of the business districts, while incorporating appropriate articulation and hierarchy of masses and spaces.

## A. Maximum Building Height



- ° 35 feet - to highest point on the building, and
- ° 28 feet - to the top of the building wall,

both as measured from the nearest adjacent finish grade, except that fill exceeding 3 feet shall be counted as part of the building height.

This method of measurement avoids a penalty for buildings which step with the terrain.

## B. Exceptions to the Height Limit

Architectural extensions of up to 50 feet in height are allowed for an area of up to 10% of a building's floor area, provided that the horizontal dimension of each individual extension does not exceed 20% of the corresponding building dimension.



*The architectural extension of the central tower gives focus and character to the building.*

## C. Angle-Plane Limit

Any project abutting a single-family residential zone shall comply with R-1 building bulk limits.

## D. Massing

### 1. Proportions: Horizontal to Vertical

*West Gateway and Downtown east of Commonwealth:*

Horizontal mass and vertical accents are encouraged.

*Old Town and Downtown west of Commonwealth:*

Vertical mass and horizontal accents are encouraged.



*Horizontal massing dominates these West Gateway structures, despite significant vertical elements.*

### 2. Length and Width

No building facade or roof mass should extend for more than 75 feet without substantial relief of wall and roof planes.

### 3. Facade Orientation and Modulation (see also Open Space, Section 4)

For facades over 30 feet in length and fronting Foothill Boulevard:

- ° at least 50% of the entire facade should be oriented in a true east-west direction; and
- ° no more than 75% of the facade should share the same plane.



*This Downtown building is of vertical proportions, moderated by the horizontality of the attached arcades*

## E. Roof Form

### 1. Slope

Sloping roofs should be used for at least part of any building, especially where building length exceeds 75 feet. However, mansard roofs are discouraged in first-story locations.

Shallow pitches and deep overhangs are encouraged. An increase of roof pitch with increased building height is appropriate.



*This longstanding commercial building features complex roof forms more commonly seen on residential structures.*



*The use of pitched roofs visibly fronting and extending back over the vast and invisible main roof, are effective in bringing an inviting appearance to a converted supermarket.*

### 2. Balancing Forms

Sloping roof forms should be balanced with vertical and horizontal roof elements such as towers and parapets. Balance is considered with regard to the building's boulevard context as well as its individual design.



*The parapet extensions break up what might otherwise be a monotonous roofline.*

### 3. Decks

Usable roof decks are encouraged when expressed as a subordinate roof form.

### 4. Screening

Roof-mounted mechanical equipment shall be screened from public view from adjacent public thoroughfares by integral roof and/or parapet components, and properly located and screened to minimize noise.



### 3. B U I L D I N G R E F I N E M E N T

*Refining details ensure a sense of warmth, interest, and place. Tasteful variation of style and elements makes the pedestrian not just a viewer, but a participant.*

- A mix of architectural styles throughout the Boulevard is encouraged, provided that a project's compatibility with surrounding development is attained. The goal of compatibility does not either encourage or preclude stylistic uniformity between sites.
- Enrichment of Boulevard places is strongly encouraged through use of features to enhance the rhythm, facade depth, and detailed interest of the Boulevard.

## A. Style

1. A project is not limited to a particular style, provided that the project is consistent with the provisions of this chapter.

2. Franchise chain stores or other similar uses which utilize fixed or standard building designs shall provide modified designs as necessary to conform to the standards and guidelines set forth in this Chapter.

## B. Facade Elements

### 1. Elements of Interest

Elements which add delight and interest to perception of buildings from close range should be used where appropriate to the underlying building and use, including:

- articulated bays
- awnings (segmented)
- cornices and mouldings
- recessed windows & doors
- open facades
- transoms; high ceilings
- detailed bulkhead treatment
- raised planters
- balconies
- decorative grillwork



*Many elements lend charm to a small entry.*

*Hanging lights over the public sidewalk make it part of the store's setting and give it variety.*



### 2. Rhythm

A rhythm of structural bay widths should be expressed, especially where there is a rhythm established by nearby buildings. Self-contained and disruptive treatments such as ribbon windows are prohibited.



*It only takes a limited number of finely detailed projecting bays to give a sense of rhythm.*

3. Glazing and Display

- a. A large portion of the ground floor building facade shall be glazed where appropriate to the use or location.
- b. No storage areas or mechanical equipment shall be located within 3 feet of the windows unless suitably screened.
- c. Decorative lighting of display windows is encouraged, but high-intensity lighting, such as neon perimeter strips, is not allowed.



*The festoons and "hanging" glass set this building apart.*



*Higher glazed areas are appropriately used in the larger building. The use of transom windows makes the interior more pleasant while making the exterior more inviting and better proportioned.*

4. Depth

Visible parapet edges and openings within walls should be deep enough to allow the building surface to be perceived as more than a flat plane.



*An extreme example of the visual problems created by visibly two-dimensional structure.*

5. Sky Edge

Cornices on parapets, and exposed rafter tails and finely detailed trim on eaves, are strongly encouraged.



*The view of the underside of the building and arcade roofs benefits from rhythmic, detailed elements within a generous overhang depth.*

6. Exterior Building Lighting and Signage

Exterior lighting mounted upon the building shall be subject to design review, and shall be of minimal intensity, except where oriented toward outdoor areas as security lighting. Please refer to Section 7 and the Sign Ordinance for sign standards and guidelines.

7. Utility Fixtures

Exterior wall-mounted equipment and utility meters shall be concealed by the project design to the extent possible, and not visible from the public right of way.

**C. Building Colors and Materials**

1. Color Palette (inside rear cover)

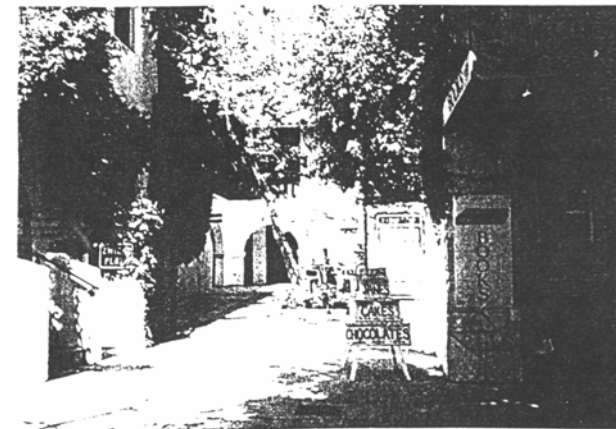
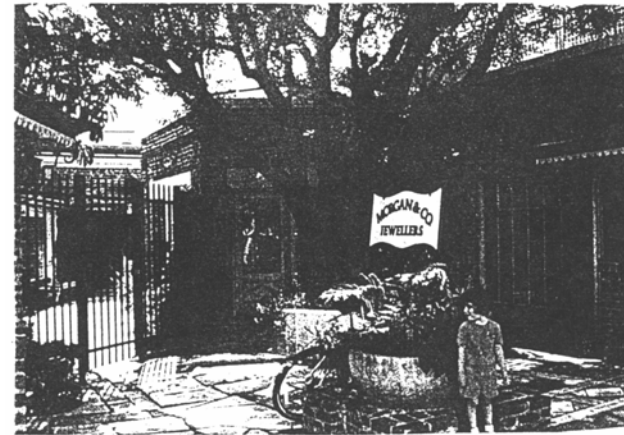
Building colors should be consistent with the acceptable ranges illustrated by the official color palette for the District. Generally, the color palette for the Old Town District allows more intense colors than are allowed elsewhere.

2. Glazing Color

Glazing should be transparent or only slightly tinted at the ground floor, and mirror glazing should be not be used on any floor.

3. Materials

Natural materials such as wood, brick, stone, and rock are encouraged, along with detailed materials such as wrought iron and shingles.





## O P E N   S P A C E

*Open spaces create the primary public environment of any city. These spaces can link together in a procession that allows and encourages people to congregate, stroll, explore, or pause and reflect, perhaps over a meal.*

*The edges of the open space are critical to its definition. Building setbacks and front facade orientation are basic to an attractive and inviting streetscape. Variation of these elements will provide depth and perspective to the Boulevard.*

*Courtyards, terraces, paving to supplement the public sidewalk width, and diverse places will work together with the Boulevard's public improvements as they vary between Districts. In creating a procession of useful and interesting open spaces, site design should take into account the diagonal orientation of the Boulevard as an opportunity for the creation of dynamic spaces.*

- The small, human scale of commercial density along the Boulevard shall be maintained.
- The dynamic created by the special diagonal orientation of the Boulevard shall be reinforced.
- A varied and linked procession of interesting, accessible, visible and hidden spaces which reinforce commercial uses is encouraged.



*"Garden open to the public" in Monterey*

### A. Maximum Lot Coverage

Building area shall not comprise more than 50% of the lot area. For the purposes of this section, building area includes all enclosed roofed areas, and all parking areas with a roof 4 feet or more above natural grade.

### B. Minimum Lot Area

Minimum area for newly created lots shall be 2,500 square feet. Individual condominium parcels shall not be deemed lots for the purposes of this requirement.

### C. Front Facade Orientation and Modulation

(see also *Building Envelope, Section 2*)

For facades over 30 feet in length and fronting Foothill Boulevard:

- at least 50% of the entire facade should be oriented in a true east-west direction; and

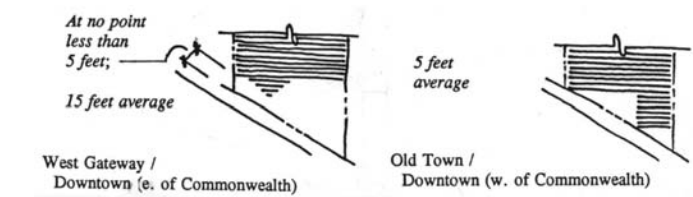
### D. Setbacks

Setback areas shall be completely dedicated to landscaping and pedestrian areas, except for the minimum necessary driving aisles. Design within setback areas is found under Section 6, Landscaping.

#### 1. Front and Exterior Side Minimum Setbacks: 5 feet average

For each two feet of building height exceeding 15 feet, one additional foot of setback shall be provided. No more than 60 feet of wall length above the height of 15 feet is allowed within 40 feet of a front or exterior side property line.

A significant portion of the front setback should relate to the depth of the lot, so that deeper lots will have enhanced distinction between the streetfront and the deepest setback area.



#### 2. Rear and Interior Side Setbacks

Adjacent to commercial zone:

5 feet minimum at rear; no minimum at side

Adjacent to residential use or zone:

Setbacks per R-1 standards

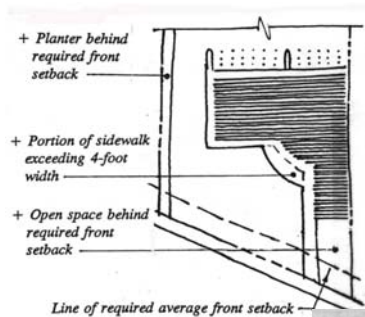
## E. Open Space Area

### 1. Required Open Space Area:

- West Gateway/Downtown (east of Commonwealth): 10% of lot area minimum
- Old Town/Downtown (west of Commonwealth): 5% of lot area minimum

Open-air roofed areas may be included. Required setbacks, required landscaping areas within parking lots, and areas used for parking and/or vehicular access shall not be counted toward required open space.

Lots under 5,000 square feet in area are not required to meet the open space area standard.



*This entry court to a theater provides good exposure for other businesses benefitting from the adjacency.*

### 2. Bonus Open Space Area

Areas to be counted at 125% of their actual area shall be:

- visible from the primary frontage street,
- within 100 feet of the primary frontage street, and
- no more than 50% of the lot frontage.

Eligible areas are:

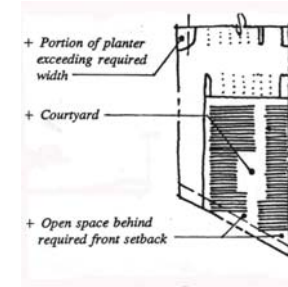
- pedestrian plazas;
- courts; and
- supporting landscaped areas outside of required setbacks.

### 3. Outdoor Merchandise Displays

Outdoor merchandise displays are encouraged if attractive, and are subject to approval by the Director of Community Development. Guidelines for outdoor displays are:

- the display should be less than 100 square feet in area per business;
- any adjacent sidewalk should retain at least 4 feet in width; and
- no packaged goods should be displayed.

Larger displays are necessary and acceptable for nursery goods, Christmas tree sales, and vehicle sales.



## F. Access

Pedestrian walkways should be provided where feasible and appropriate to circulations patterns within the project and to other properties. The width of any principal private walkway fronting a building should be no less than 10% of the depth of the building. Enclosing walls and fences between adjacent commercial properties are discouraged except for a legitimate screening purpose.



*This connection between Plaza de la Cañada and small businesses on Rinetti provides mutually beneficial visibility and access.*



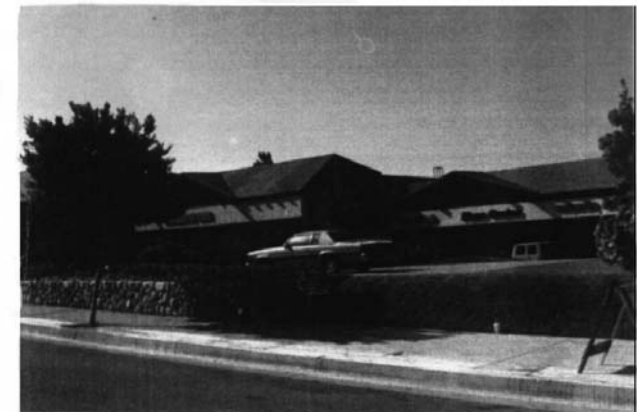
## 5. P A R K I N G

*Where possible, sufficient on-site parking prevents spillover effects on streets and neighboring properties. Visual effects of parking areas are minimized through siting and screening provisions.*

- Adequate parking shall be provided to the extent possible, while maximizing landuse efficiency, security, and high visual quality.



*This parking structure uses the downslope from Foothill effectively, allowing efficiency without enclosure.*



*This parking on the downslope side of Foothill is needlessly prominent; it would have been partially hidden from the street if it had been on grade with the stores.*

## A. Parking Location and Type

### 1. Access

Curb cuts, subject to Public Works approval, shall be minimized in number and placed as far as feasible away from intersections.

Where feasible, access should be taken from a secondary route such as an alley or easement.

### 2. Surface Parking Location

Old Town District &  
Downtown District (west of Commonwealth):

Offstreet parking shall not be placed between buildings and Foothill Boulevard. Where parking is to the side of the building, it shall be separated from Foothill Boulevard by a minimum 20-foot deep landscaped strip.

West Gateway District & Downtown District (east of Commonwealth):

Commercial uses closely fronting the street, with parking behind, are encouraged. However, parking outside of the required building setbacks shall be allowed to front buildings, provided that at least an 8-foot landscaped buffer is provided along the street frontage, and that each of the following findings can be made that:

- the parking is screened to mitigate aesthetic view problems and utilizes slope effectively for that purpose; and
- the parking location does not unduly interfere with the pattern of building visibility, vitality, and pedestrian circulation.

### 3. Subterranean Parking Enclosure

Rather than be completely underground, commercial parking lots should take advantage of the area's natural slope and be exposed on one or more sides where feasible. Residential parking should be enclosed, however, and provided with individual secured access.

Subterranean parking shall be subject to review and comment by the Public Safety Commission for the purpose of maximizing security.



*Parking is in front of this shopping center, but is subordinate to the varied plantings in front and the high building mass to the rear.*

## B. Parking Design

### 1. Parking Ratios

The minimum number of parking spaces shall be provided and permanently maintained per the requirements of a separate ordinance. (See Parking Attachment, inside rear cover).

### 2. Parking Reductions

Reciprocal access and shared parking are encouraged for small lot development where provision of required parking on-site is found to be unduly inefficient or disruptive. The total parking count obtained through such means and any on-site parking shall not be less than the basic code requirement. Shared surface parking is encouraged, within 300 feet of the entry to a commercial use, where uses have complementary peak hours.

Reductions are allowed to accommodate improvement of existing lots. (See following subsection 3.)



*Parking to the side of this building is obscured by the building's landscaped entry structure.*

### C. Existing Parking Lots

Many properties have parking which is below current standards. This is allowed to continue ("grandfathered" status), and is generally not affected by remodeling projects. However, parking improvements can be required under certain circumstances, as follows.

#### 1. Quantity

Parking can be required to be increased if:

- The building area is expanded. New parking per current standards is required for the additional area only.
- A change in use occurs which results in a higher parking requirement. New parking per current standards is required for the difference between the quantity required for the new use and what the current code would have required for the previous use.

#### 2. Function and Appearance

Existing parking lots can be required to be upgraded for projects involving work valuation of more than 50% of the assessed value of the existing improvements. Improvement of landscaping, circulation, safety, and/or pedestrian access are the objectives of this provision.

Based on the limitations posed by existing parking areas, the Director of Community Development may allow a reduction in required parking of up to 10% in order to facilitate the landscaping and pedestrian access improvements.

### 3. Landscaping

Please refer to Section 6B, Parking Lot Landscaping, and Downtown Village Specific Plan.

### 4. Parking Area Layout and Dimensions

(see Zoning Code for basic dimensions)

Additional minimum width adjacent to obstruction: 2 feet

Overhang allowed (maximum): 1'-6", provided that no walkway or planter area is thereby reduced to less than 5 feet in width

Backup aisle: 24' minimum (perpendicular parking)

Maximum slope of parking stalls and aisles: 5%

Additional stall sizes and backup dimensions: see Attachment, inside rear cover.

### 5. Drive-through Service

Drive-through lanes shall be a minimum 10 feet wide. Length from the service window to the point of ingress shall be provided according to the Parking Attachment (inside the rear cover). The drive-through lane shall not encroach upon parking spaces or their back-up areas, and should be sloped down to the window.





## 6. LANDSCAPING

*Provide effective plantings and open space amenities to enhance the use of the Districts and to relate to the distinct scale and character of each District.*



## A. Setback Areas

### 1. Landscape/Hardscape

The entire required front yard and exterior side yard setback shall be landscaped for the full width and depth of the building. Decorative paving may be considered part of this landscaping.

### 2. Walls

No wall within a required street-facing setback area shall exceed 3'-6" in height. Walls of less than 2 feet in height, allowing for seating, are encouraged.

## B. Parking Lot Landscaping (see Parking Attachment, inside rear cover)

1. Parking areas shall be screened with berms, shrubs, and/or landscaped walls, and shall utilize downslope grading where possible for screening effect.

### 2. Interior Parking Lot Landscaping Areas (minimum):

- one planter at each end of each parking aisle
- one additional planter area for each ten (10) parking spaces.

Except as required for vehicular movement, planter lengths shall equal the adjacent parking space lengths. Planters shall average at least 5 feet in inside width.

All remaining areas not used for a functional aspect of the parking area shall be landscaped. Where deemed appropriate in design review, clustered landscaping areas within the parking lot may be substituted for the prescribed planters.

### 3. Interior Parking Lot Landscaping Materials:

At least one tree shall be provided per each prescribed planter. Where clustering is allowed as an alternative planter configuration, the number of trees shall correspond to that of the standard configuration. At least 25% of the trees shall be of 24" box size or greater at planting, and no tree of less than 15-gallon size shall contribute to the requirement.

At least 75% of the required trees shall be of species having a mature canopy index of at least 500. The canopy index is the product of the canopy width multiplied by the tree height (in feet).

## C. Screening Adjacent to Residences

1. Trees and shrubs should be planted as necessary to protect or screen adjoining residential properties.

2. For projects abutting a residential zone, an appropriately located six (6) foot high screening wall, of solid concrete, brick, or stone, is required. The wall shall be of finished appearance on both sides, and shall have any length exceeding 25 feet broken up through landscaping, substantial reveals or pilasters, and/or other means.

## D. Amenities

Amenities such as trellises, arbors, benches, tables, chairs, planters, fountains, and trash receptacles shall be included where appropriate to the project size and land use.



### **E. Plant Palettes** (inside rear cover)

In order to emphasize the difference between districts, the plant palettes contain more finely textured, detailed plants in the Old Town District and the Downtown District west of Commonwealth, and plants with more large-scale expression for the longer views common to the West Gateway District and the Downtown District east of Commonwealth. Each project should incorporate exceptions for variety's sake.

Ease of maintenance, and water conservation through plant selections and grouping by water needs, shall be primary objectives of the landscaping plan, and compliance with Section XX.xx of the Municipal Code (Water Conservation) shall be attained.

### **F. Planting Sizes and Quantities**

Specimen plantings fronting the street are required, consisting of at least one 24-inch box or greater tree:

- per each 25 feet of parking lot street frontage, and
- per each 1,000 square feet of open space fronting a building.

Required specimen plantings may be clustered as deemed appropriate through design review.

### **G. Street Trees**

Street trees shall be provided and continuously maintained by the property owner, per the requirements of the Director of Public Works.

### **H. Irrigation and Maintenance**

1. An automatic timed underground irrigation system shall be provided for all planter areas.
2. All planting areas shall be permanently maintained with proper care, weeding, pruning, irrigation, and plant replacement as needed to comply with approved landscaping plans.

### **I. Site Lighting**

1. Exterior lighting for parking and pedestrian walkways shall provide for safety and security, without excessive light levels or glare.
2. Accent lighting of buildings and landscaping is encouraged as both an asset to the business and to the visual environment.

### **J. Service and Utilities**

1. Ground-oriented building service equipment shall not be visible from the public right of way and shall be located for easily accessible service and screened to minimize noise to neighboring properties.
2. Utility service lines shall comply with the Underground Utilities Ordinance.
3. Each development shall provide at least one refuse area, generally at least 10 square feet per 1,000 square feet of building area, as follows:
  - a. All refuse storage areas must be accessible for pickup, and shall be situated at the rear or side of the building as feasible, out of public view.
  - b. Each storage area and the access to it shall be smooth, level concrete, and provided with a water line, drain, and self-closing gate.
  - c. Each refuse area shall be screened by plantings and a minimum 6-foot high wall constructed of decorative block or other non-flammable material complementary to the project.



## 7. SIGNS :

### Highlights from Separate Code Chapter

*By their very purpose, signs are conspicuous elements within the commercial environment. They may successfully beckon customers to the businesses, or may engage in strident competition which ultimately degrades the setting and business climate. The policies for sign design, contained in Chapter 11.11 of the City's Municipal Code, cover a broad scope of concerns, combining control mechanisms and incentives for desired design characteristics.*

*The options for sign design addressed in this manual are supplementary to the sign code. Please refer to that code for detailed information. Following are the general policies from that ordinance:*

- Advertising clutter shall be minimized, and effectiveness of allowed signage maximized.
- Design integrity and harmony with the underlying structure and nearby signs shall be required.
- Flexibility shall be allowed in the interest of creative design and commercial viability.
- Identity of the Foothill Boulevard Districts shall be enhanced.

## A. Types of Signs

### 1. Wall Signs

Wall signs are the dominant type of sign in the community, whether or not they are the most effective or attractive choice for a particular location. The ordinance encourages freestanding letters mounted to a building projection, as well as raised letters of the same color as the underlying wall. These are both dramatic and intriguing sign treatments.

Alignment of wall signs is a concern in multi-tenant uses, and top-edge alignment with neighboring signs is required.



### 2. Projecting Signs

Projecting signs are appropriate for many locations, accenting the architecture as a discreet element, and allowing clear legibility from far down the street as long as adjacent signs are adequately separated from each other.

Because they are punctuating elements and in need of visual support, they should be of vertical proportion. Beyond a 2-foot width, a minimum vertical-to-horizontal proportion of 2:1 is required.



### 3. Awning Signs

Awning signs are encouraged, either as primary signs, or as small valance signs which are not counted toward a maximum allowable number or area of signs.

### 4. Ground Signs

Ground signs 6 feet or less in height are allowed, with landscaped bases required. The materials allowed are somewhat more restrictive than other signs, given the location within the viewer's height. All freestanding signs are considered ground signs, regardless of whether they extend along a solid base, or are constructed upon one or more poles.



### 5. Window Signs

Permanent window signs are encouraged as pedestrian-oriented information about the business. Such signs are not counted toward limits on area or number of signs as long as they are no more than four feet above grade and

lettering does not exceed 6 inches in height.

## **B. Size, Number and Placement Highlights**

### 1. Size

The ordinance limits sign area in general as well as by sign type.

### 2. Number

Aside from bonus signs and ground signs, each business may have no more than two signs.

### 3. Placement

Among the provisions are limitations on sign extension above an eaveline, a reduction of allowed area for signs higher than 12 feet, and a minimum margin requirement around a sign.

### 4. Bonuses

The ordinance's limits on sign area can be raised through bonuses to compensate for certain site conditions, and other bonuses to encourage desired design characteristics (see Typestyle under the next section). Another bonus provision is to allow additional small pedestrian-oriented signs: hanging signs, signs on awning valances, and window signs.

## **C. Appearance Guidelines Highlights**

### 1. Form/Materials

The primary concern is with glossy plastic materials, which are not allowed. Durable materials are particular sought for use in ground signs, with their high exposure to traffic.

### 2. Color

A palette of recommended colors assists in the goal of color compatibility with surroudings.

### 3. Illumination

Glare is avoided through limiting neon to areas more than 7 feet above grade. Internal illumination is prohibited from La Cañada Boulevard to Alta Canyada Road, to enhance the special character of the Old Town District.

### 4. Typestyle/Graphics

More than any other design characteristic, the layout of type can provide for a bonus. In this way, signs with thin letter strokes are encouraged, as are signs with widely spaced letters. Appendages to letters are not counted toward sign area, allowing stylized flourishes to enrich the sign.



## DEFINITIONS

**Amenities** - see Open Space Amenities

**Appendages to letters** - portions above or below the body, as the tail of a "p" or the mast of a "b"

**Architectural extension** - a tower or other tall element serving an architectural purpose

**Articulated bays** - short segments of storefront (usually 15'-25') separated by highly visible columns

**Awning valance** - the vertical trim piece sometimes included around the bottom of an awning

**Awning signs** - any sign applied to or integral to an awning

**Awnings** - projecting roof elements not supported by any horizontal building structure

**Balance** - an impression that the various components of a design are related well to each other in terms of size, placement, orientation, and/or color

**Balconies** - projecting elements with a decorative or functional floor

**Bay width** - the span between columns along a building face

**Bonus signs** - encouraged signs which are not counted in the total allowable number of signs

**Bonus open space area** - encouraged open space which is counted as more than its actual area

**Box (size)** - the size of a tree's container when sold, if boxed

**Bulkhead** - the lowest portion of a storefront, separate from the upper glass

**Canopy index** - a tree's height multiplied by its canopy width

**Clustered landscaping areas** - areas in which the major elements are clustered together

**Color Palette** - an adopted selection of recommended colors

**Commercial** - retail or office use

**Completeness** - an appropriate level of finish and detail on all building sides

**Cornice** - a detailed trim strip at or near the top of a wall

**Court** - an open area enclosed on at least two sides by building walls

**Design review** - review by the Design Review Board, required of most commercial and institutional projects

**Design Review Ordinance** - the ordinance establishing the Design Review Board and procedures

**Director of Community Development** - the person of that title, or his or her designee

**District** - one of the five portions of Foothill Boulevard as designated in the Foothill Boulevard Master Plan: West Gateway, The Link, Old Town, Downtown, and Michigan Hill

**Downtown** - the District of Foothill Boulevard extending from Verdugo Boulevard east to Hampton Road

**Eave** - the portion of a sloped roof which overhangs the wall

**Exposed rafter tails** - the expression of a roof structure in an eave treatment

**Facade Orientation & Modulation** - the direction of a building wall, and the manner in which it is broken into varying surface depths and/or directions

**Glazing** - glass used in a building

**Ground Sign** - any freestanding sign separate from the building

**Guidelines** - regulatory language which is intended for the guidance of the designer as well as the reviewing body, and is not necessarily mandatory. Guidelines are applied on a case-by-case basis as appropriate to the particular circumstances. Guidelines commonly use "should" rather than "shall" statements.

**Integrity** - the strong relation between parts of the building and the whole.

**Interior Parking Lot** - a parking lot, including landscaping areas within it, but excluding landscaping areas between the parking lot and the street.

**Landscaping** - areas devoted to vegetation and to paved areas for pedestrian movement and use exclusive from vehicular movements and service access.

**Mansard roofs** - sloped roofs which do not terminate into other sloped roofs or outside-facing building walls; such roofs usually conceal flat roofs.

**Maximum Building Height** - the building height as measured from the lowest finish grade adjacent to the building wall to the highest portion of the building perpendicular to the building wall from the measured grade point.

**Old Town District** - the District of Foothill Boulevard extending from Alta Canyada Boulevard east to Verdugo Boulevard.

**Open space amenities** - items which enhance the landscaping, usually by making it more comfortable or accessible to humans. Such items include benches, fountains, statuary, chimes, and other features.

**Open facade** - a facade which is openable to the point that there is little or no separation between the interior and the exterior of the building.

**Open Space Area** - the amount of each site required to be devoted to open space other than parking and service.

**Outdoor Display** - a display of a business' goods or services, placed outside the building.

**Overhang** - the extension of a roof structure beyond the exterior building wall.

**Parapet** - the extension of an exterior building wall above the roof structure.

**Pedestrian plazas** - open space areas separate from vehicular access and of sufficient width to be perceived as gathering places rather than merely circulation paths.

**Plant Palette** - a list of encouraged plant species, adopted by separate resolution.

**Planter** - an area devoted to vegetation and closely bounded by paving, building walls, garden walls, or other edge features.

**Projecting Sign** - a sign which is not oriented parallel to the building surface upon which it is mounted.

**Proportion** - the relationship between the size of different components of a building.

**Raised planter** - a planter with the soil surface at a higher level than that of the surrounding grade.

**Recessed windows & doors** - windows and doors which are placed far enough behind the building plane that an impression of depth is created from exterior view.

**Rhythm** - a pattern established by major building elements spaced at somewhat regular intervals, allowing the viewer the pleasant feeling of order.

**Scale** - size relative to the viewer or relative to another object.

**Screening** - blocking of a potentially disruptive object from sensitive surroundings, or blocking of disruptive surroundings from a potentially sensitive object.

**Setback** - the portion of a lot along a particular frontage, required to remain free of construction.

**Sloping roof** - a roof with a slope which is apparent to view.

**Specimen planting** - a planting which is of substantial initial size and which has the potential to serve as a major site feature.

**Standards** - regulation which is mandatory. Standards commonly use "shall" rather than "should" statements.

**Symmetry** - mirror-image likeness between right and left sides of an object.

**Transition** - use of elements which form an intermediate feature linking the interior of a building with the grounds.

**Transoms** - separate windows above the top of the door, or above windows of such height.

**24" box size** - a substantial standard size for a nursery shrub or tree.

**Vertical Graduation** - the use of increasingly delicate or open design features to allow a building facade to graduate in an aesthetically pleasing way from a more massive base to the interface with the sky.

**Wall Signs** - signs which are mounted or painted onto the wall of a building and parallel to it.

**West Gateway** - the District of Foothill Boulevard extending from the western City boundary to Leata Lane.

**Window Signs** - signs which are mounted or painted onto windows.

## **A C K N O W L E D G M E N T S**

### **By Authority of the La Cañada Flintridge City Council, February 21, 1995:**

David A. Spence, Mayor  
Carol Liu, Mayor Pro Tem  
James T. Edwards  
Joan C. Feehan  
John W. Hastings

### **Design Options Committee**

Connie Ledendecker, Chair  
Jeanne Edwards  
Rahla Hall  
Steven Lohr  
Ron Youra

### **City Staff**

Gabrielle Pryor, City Manager  
Craig Ewing, Director of Community Development  
Roger Cantrell, Planner  
Marsha Harris, Planner  
Mirna Stanley, Planning Secretary

### **Reviewing Agencies**

Planning Commission  
Business Support and Development Committee  
Design Review Board

**The Design Options Committee thanks Roger Cantrell for his innovative guidance.**