

Chapter V

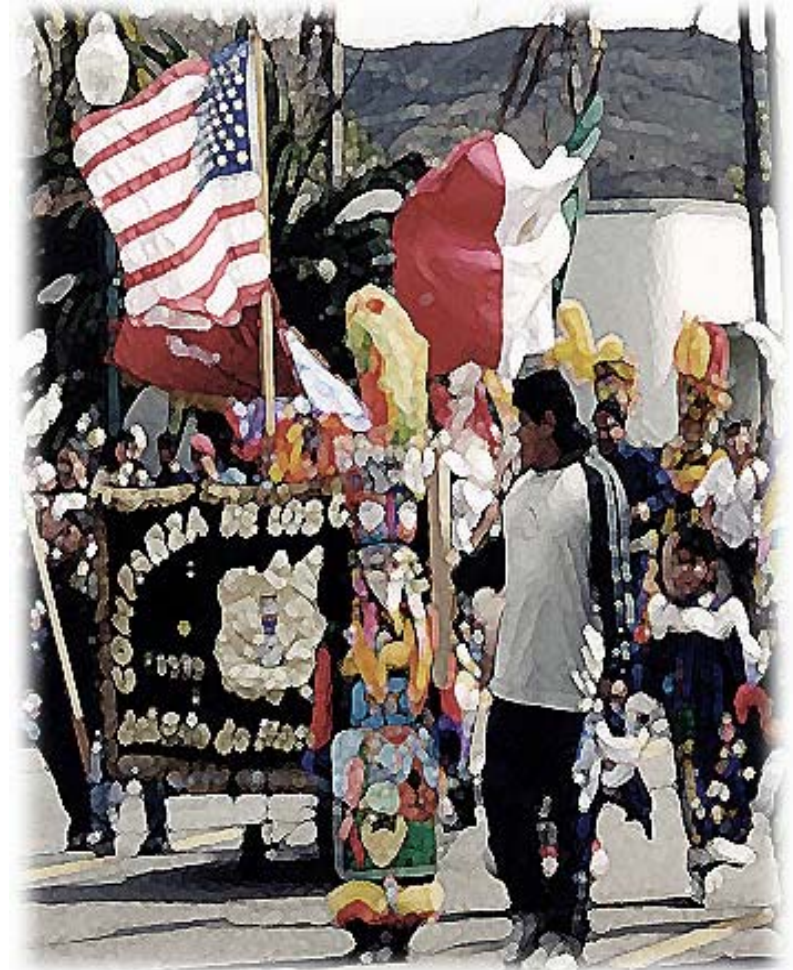
Downtown Commercial

A. Introduction

The Downtown Commercial guidelines are intended to provide design direction for new development proposals, additions, and rehabilitation/renovation of existing structures within the downtown district of San Juan Capistrano. The guidelines promote high standards in site planning, architectural design and landscaping and take into consideration the eclectic historic mixture of architectural styles within the area as well as the pedestrian-oriented character of the district.

These guidelines implement the Design Principles set forth in Chapter 1. They supplement and should be utilized in conjunction with the General Commercial design guidelines – Chapter 4.

Swallow's Day Parade in Downtown



B. General Design Objectives

The design of all development projects within the Downtown should:

- Reinforce and enhance the City's downtown as one of the primary focal points of the community
- Contribute to the existing pedestrian-oriented "village-like" environment
- Complement the scale, proportion and character of development in the surrounding area
- Establish attractive, inviting, imaginative and functional site arrangement of buildings and parking areas, and a high quality architectural and landscape design which provides proper access, visibility and identity
- Provide stylistically diverse and creative architectural design solutions which convey a sense of timelessness and elegance
- Preserve and incorporate natural amenities unique to the site into the project development proposal
- Preserve and incorporate structures which are distinctive due to their age, cultural significance, or unique architectural style into the project
- Maintain hillside views to the greatest extent possible

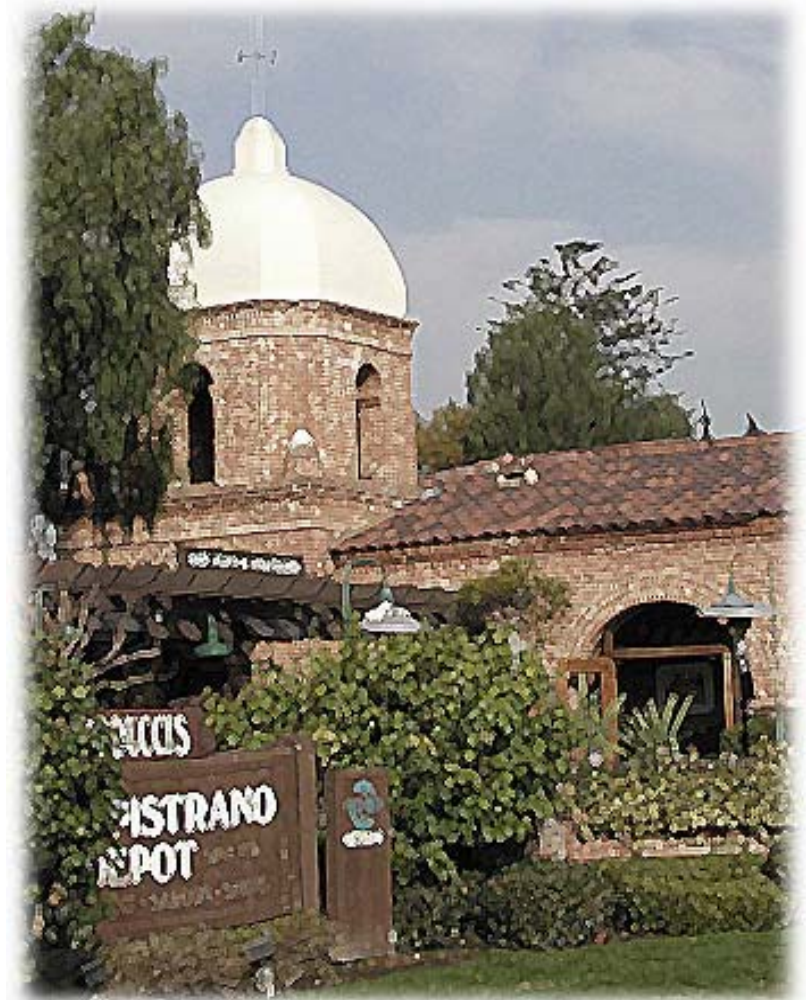
Downtown



C. Site Planning

- a. The site arrangement of structures, parking, circulation areas and open spaces should recognize the particular characteristics of the site and should relate to the surrounding built environment in pattern, function, scale, character and materials.
- b. Siting of buildings along street frontages is encouraged. Zero or minimal building setbacks should be considered, where appropriate.
- c. Continuity of pedestrian oriented activities along street frontages is encouraged. Avoid disrupting the pedestrian experience by parking lots and blank walls.
- d. Storefronts and major building entries should be oriented towards streets, courtyards or plazas. Avoid placement of "dead spaces" such as storage areas along street frontages.
- e. Modulate building massing to accommodate pedestrian plazas, landscaping, seating areas and public art along the street wall and at prominent intersections.
- f. Locate parking at the rear of lots and devote all parking lot areas not specifically required for parking spaces or circulation to landscaping.
- g. Create pedestrian paseos to parking lots which are located behind buildings.

Capistrano Depot



D. Architectural Guidelines

1. Architectural Imagery

- Architectural Style

New infill developments and renovation of existing structures in the downtown district must be respectful of their surroundings. An informal character and sense of individuality is desired to preserve the ambiance and historic integrity of downtown San Juan Capistrano.

High quality, creative architecture that complements “historic” structures may be integrated within the urban fabric if designed appropriately. Such design concepts will be evaluated and may be permitted, if found appropriate for the project site and district context, on a case-by-case basis.

- Scale

The scale of new buildings should be generally consistent with existing structures in the area. Structures which incorporate building elements with “human scale” proportions are encouraged.

Incorporating landscaping and architectural detailing at the lower level of buildings could be used as a design technique to diminish the overall impact of larger structures and soften their appearance. The height of new infill development should complement that of existing surrounding buildings.

- Rhythm - Facade Framework/ Components

Building element repetition establishes a rhythm, creates patterns and alignments that visually link buildings, provides for individual building storefront identity and contributes in the establishment of a pedestrian scale environment.

Care should be given in designing a project to establish or maintain “rhythm” while avoiding monotony. This can be accomplished by arranging repeated major building elements into manageable groups. Repetition of existing facade modules and components (e.g. bulkheads, arches, arcades, and balconies) is strongly encouraged in infill project design.

a range of appropriate styles are encouraged



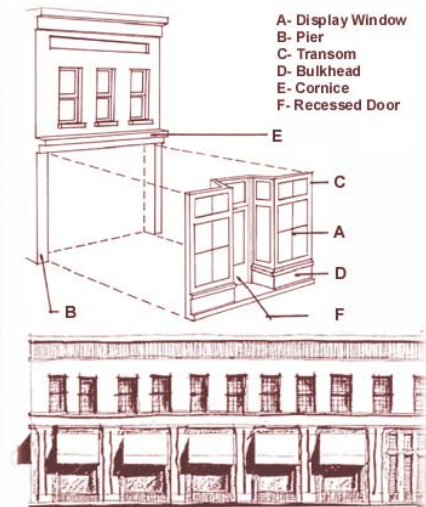
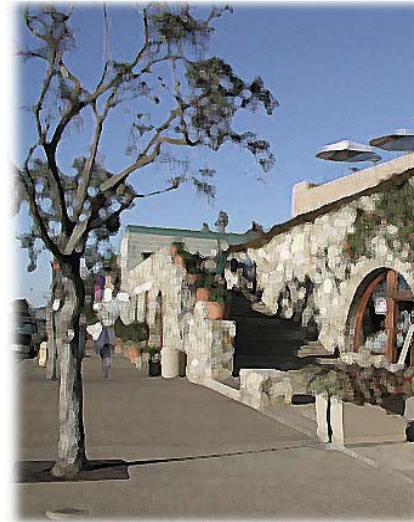
- The Pedestrian Experience

Unarticulated and solid wall surfaces degrade the quality of the pedestrian experience. Buildings facing pedestrian streets and plazas should incorporate design features that provide visual interest at the street and plaza levels.

Building facades, and storefronts should be designed to enhance the visibility of merchandise and store related activities by pedestrians. Outdoor activity areas such as plazas and dining areas should be visible to the passing pedestrians.

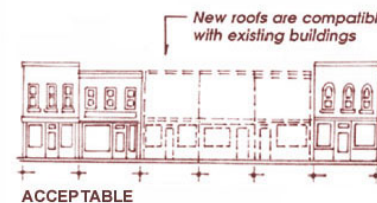
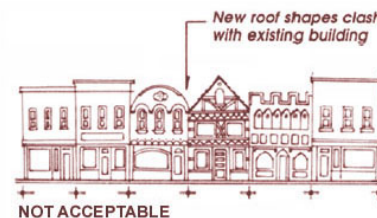
- Distinction between Upper and Lower Floors/ Storefront transparency

The design of first floor commercial buildings should be based on a high ratio of void (windows) to solid (wall) areas. The lower building level (storefront) should be predominantly comprised of transparent surfaces to foster pedestrian activity and accommodate retail-merchandising needs.



2. Building Form and Mass

- The form and mass of new buildings should create a pleasing transition to surrounding development and relate to the scale of adjacent structures.
- Existing building proportions should be reflected in the design of new infill development.
- The façade of infill development that extends over a significant portion of the “blockface” should be either divided into a series of appropriately proportioned “structural bays” or incorporate architectural components which relate to the proportions of existing building facades.
- Building façade design should complement downtown’s pedestrian scale environment. This can be achieved by increasing the degree of building detail at the street level, articulating individual floor levels with horizontal bands and by proper use of color.



- e. Taller buildings should be made less imposing by incorporating horizontal massing offsets.
- f. Long, blank, unarticulated street wall facades are strongly discouraged. Provision of vertical and horizontal articulation is recommended by:
 - wall surface offsets (reveals, cornices, recesses)
 - window and door openings
 - balconies, awnings and canopies
- g. The predominance of transparent surface (window and door) to solid surface (wall) ratio along the street level elevations is encouraged.

3. Building Materials and Colors

- a. Exterior building materials should complement those used in the surrounding area. Use of the following materials is encouraged within Downtown San Juan Capistrano:
 - stucco (smooth or textured)
 - brick
 - granite
 - marble
 - stone
 - wood
- b. Accent materials should be used to highlight building features and provide visual interest. The following building materials may be utilized in the Downtown district:
 - Brick
 - Concrete
 - Stone
 - Wood
 - Glass block (storefront and transom only)

transparent wall surfaces along the street level are encouraged

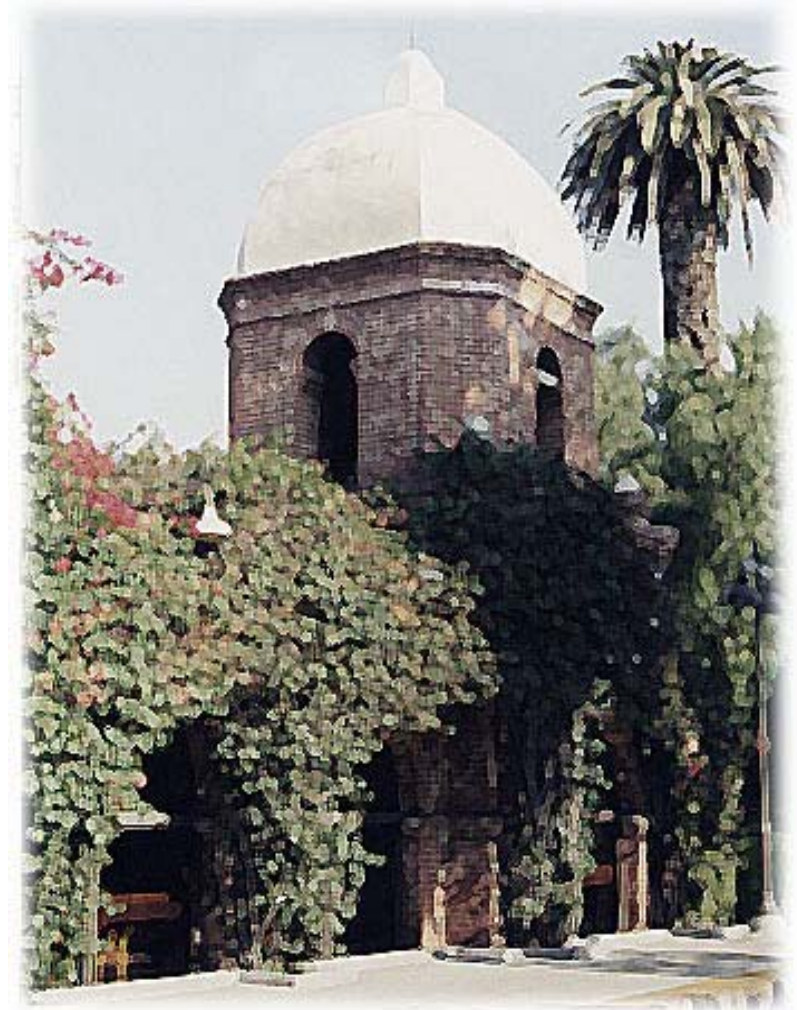


- Tile, (bulkhead, wall enclosures and fenestration)
 - Copper
 - Painted Metal
 - Wrought Iron
 - Fabric Awnings
- c. The architectural style, building materials, building features and details, building size, orientation and context should be the primary contributing factors in the selection of building colors. The following are recommended for buildings in the Downtown district:
- Subtle/muted colors on larger and simpler buildings
 - Use of more intense colors on small buildings
 - Contrasting or more intense colors to accent architectural details and entrances
 - Color palettes harmonious with those found in the surrounding area
- d. Use of building materials such as brick, stone, and copper in their natural finish color is encouraged.

4. Roofs and Upper Story Details

- a. High quality roof materials, complementary and appropriate to the proposed building style, shall be utilized as part of the building design.
- b. Flat roofs are generally discouraged unless the flat roof is “authentic” to the selected architectural style.
- c. Roof-mounted mechanical or utility equipment should be architecturally integrated within the overall building design.
- d. The design and finish of chimneys, roof flashing, rain gutters, downspouts, vents and other roof protrusions should complement the overall architectural theme.

building design features and materials should complement the overall architectural theme

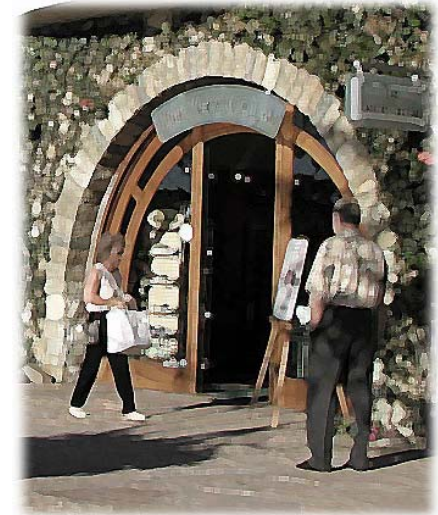


5. Entrances/ Storefronts

- a. Main building entries should be emphasized by utilizing one or more of the following design techniques:
 - Recessed or projecting architectural features such as porticos, storefront bays, towers etc.
 - Landscaping planters, paving or other hardscape details
 - Roofline changes
- b. Provision of a prominent corner entry to buildings located at street intersections is recommended.
- c. The design of corner buildings should provide storefront features or other transparent surfaces on at least 50% of the lower level street side elevation.
- d. Use of high quality door design, storefronts and hardware details is encouraged. Appropriate door types include:
 - Traditional solid wood doors
 - Wood and glass panel doors
 - Metal and wood frame storefronts
- e. Doors for retail shops should include a high percentage of glass area.

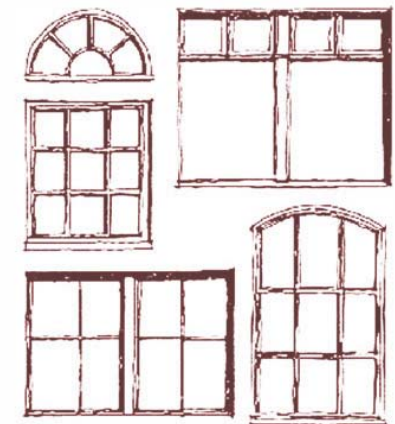


A- BUILT-IN PLANTERS
B- ENHANCED PAVING



6. Windows

- a. Traditional, rather than freeform window shapes, are preferred. Multi-paned windows are encouraged. Use of clear glass (at least 88% light transmission) on first floor storefronts is recommended.
- b. The storefront window design should maximize visibility of displays and interior retail spaces. The average storefront bulkhead height in the downtown district (18-inches) should be considered in the design of storefront elevations. Maximum bulkhead heights for new construction should not exceed 36 inches.



SIMPLE WINDOW SHAPES
ARE RECOMMENDED

- c. Window designs which permit additional light penetration within building spaces (e.g. transom and clerestory windows) are encouraged.
- d. The location of new and replacement windows should take into consideration existing “blockface” window patterns.
- e. Adding or replacing windows without any regard for the existing architectural rhythm or character of the original building is prohibited.
- f. Sliding or casement windows which can provide large openings and add interest to adjacent pedestrian areas should be provided where appropriate. Such window treatments are especially encouraged for restaurant uses.
- g. Window details could add to the architectural variety along street frontages. Use of the following window enhancements should be considered:
 - Tile borders
 - Colored window framing
 - Shutters
 - Plant-on relief features
 - Iron or wooden grills
 - Dormers
 - Projecting bay windows
 - Window boxes
 - Window pop-outs
 - Deep recesses
- h. Security grilles along street frontages are discouraged unless integrated within the overall architectural theme.

window design should add to the architectural variety, serve display needs, and permit light penetration



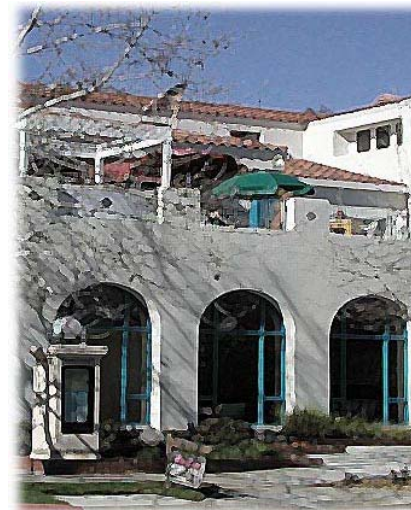
7. Awnings and Canopies

- Awnings should be designed to complement the building architecture.
- Fabric or metal awnings could be used to enhance the visual appearance of buildings.
- Where the facade is divided into distinct structural bays, awnings should be placed between vertical elements. The awning design should respond to the scale, proportion and rhythm created by the structural bays.
- Awnings constructed of durable, commercial grade fabrics are encouraged. Awning frames and supports should be treated to prevent corrosion. Glossy plastic awnings are prohibited.



8. Exterior Stairways

- Stairway projections which complement the architectural massing and form of the building are encouraged.
- Stairway design should be consistent with the overall architectural theme. Where appropriate, decorative features such as tile risers and rails may be utilized to create visual interest.



9. Balconies and Rooftop outdoor areas

- Inclusion of balconies and rooftop outdoor areas in the overall building design is encouraged. The design of such spaces should complement the overall architectural theme in terms of location, size, and detail.



10. Focal Elements

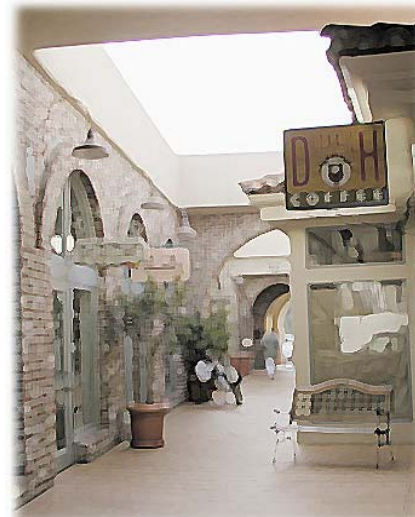
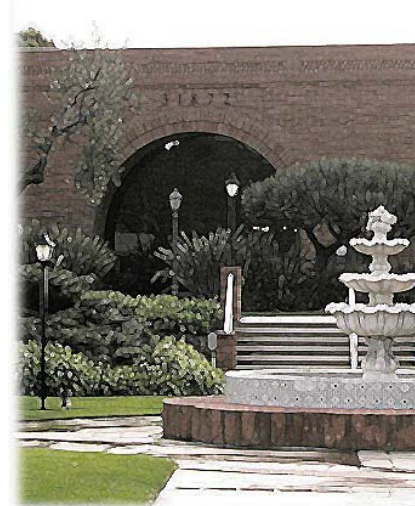
- Architectural elements such as towers, spires, domes etc, add visual interest to the urban fabric and could serve as focal/orientation community landmarks. Inclusion of such building elements in the design of new projects will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

11. Arcades

- Arcades could positively contribute towards fulfilling visual and functional building needs. They can take a stylistically traditional appearance or may be introduced as a clean-line “sculptural” design element. Regardless of the selected style, care must be taken to ensure that the design of arcades appears “authentic” to the selected architectural theme.
- The massing of all arcade components should be proportional to its overall size.
- Archways should be designed with semi-circular or slightly flat arcs.
- Column size must relate in scale to the building. The column height should be approximately 4-5 times the width of the column.
- The use of column bases, capitals and bands is encouraged when use of such details is “authentic” to the selected architectural style and positively contributes to the proposed building design.

12. Plazas/ Courtyards/ Paseos

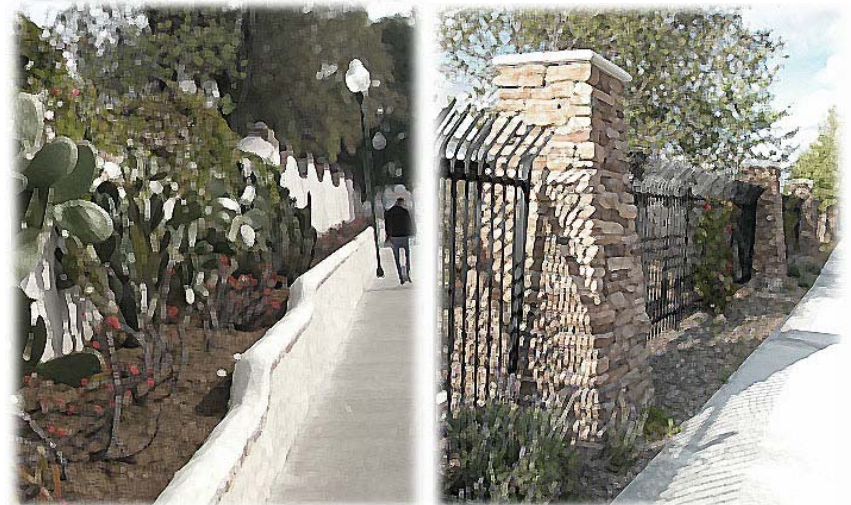
- Plazas and courtyards are encouraged within downtown San Juan Capistrano. Ample seating should be provided within plaza areas.
- Inclusion of a visual focal point such as a fountain or public art within plaza/courtyard areas is recommended.
- Paseos should be designed as an integral part of the project. Provision of alcoves, plazas and courtyards along paseos’ edges or at their terminus points is encouraged.



- d. Paseos should be of adequate width to accommodate anticipated functions, including but not limited to access, circulation, light and ventilation.
- e. Landscaping, art, decorative lighting fixtures, enhanced paving, and seating should be included within the paseo design to enhance the pedestrian experience within its space.
- f. Display windows and business entrances should be provided along paseos to foster pedestrian activity and use.

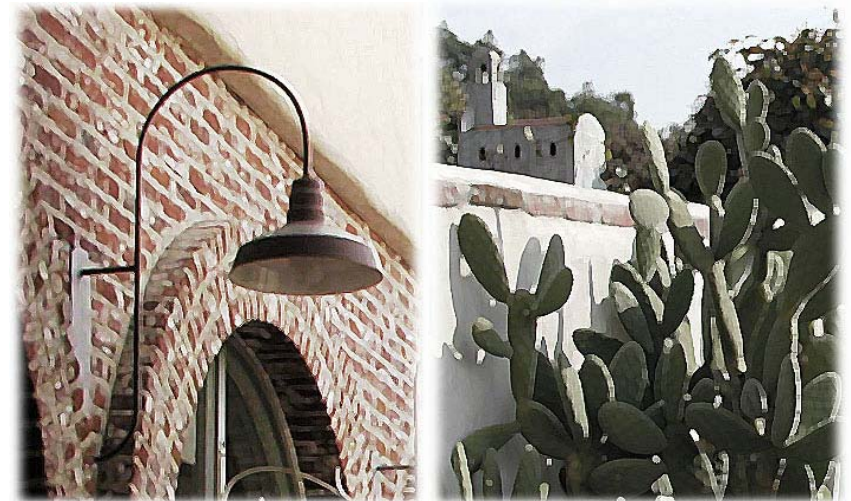
13. Walls and Fences

- a. Wall and fence enclosure design should be addressed as part of the overall development concept.
- b. The selected wall and fence design concept should consider and preserve scenic views available to the community, to the greatest extent possible.
- c. Where appropriate to the selected architectural style and project location, stucco or brick wall enclosures, enhanced with decorative inset tiles, ornamental metal fencing, entry gates, or planters are encouraged.



14. Other Building Elements/Details

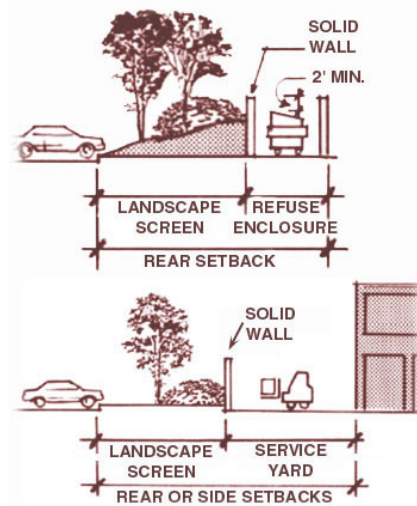
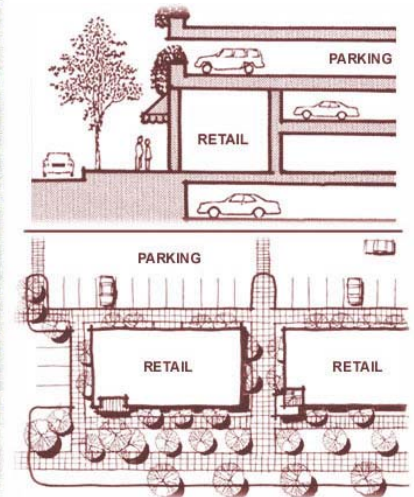
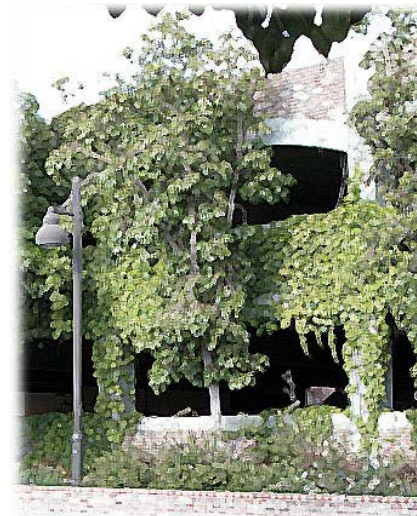
- a. A number of functional building elements may be incorporated into the building design to add visual richness and interest. Such elements include the following fixtures and details:
 - Light fixtures
 - Metal grille work
 - Decorative scuppers, catches and downspouts
 - Balconies, rails, finials, corbels, plaques, etc.
 - Flag or banner pole brackets
 - Fire sprinkler standpipe enclosures and hose bib covers
 - Security devices



- b. Gutters and downspouts should be concealed, unless designed as an architectural feature.
- c. The design of accessory elements such as mailboxes, benches, trash enclosures, newspaper racks, and security gates should compliment the architectural style of the project.
- d. Refuse containers and service facilities should be screened from view by solid masonry wall enclosures. Landscaping (shrubs and vines) should be provided adjacent to the enclosures to minimize adverse visual impacts and deter graffiti.

15. Parking Structures

- a. Elevators and stairs should be located along the perimeter of parking structures.
- b. Shops, offices or other “live” commercial spaces or uses should be incorporated on the ground level or adjacent to parking structures to the greatest extent possible.
- c. Landscaping should be provided adjacent to wall surfaces.
- d. Parking structure interiors, including structural supports and ceilings shall be painted off-white.



E. Building Additions and Renovation Guidelines

Buildings are often altered by owners or shopkeepers in an effort to “keep up with changing times” or to “update a tired image.” Unfortunately, such changes often result in gradual but severe erosion of the original character of the building and architectural cohesion of the Downtown area. Renovation and or restoration of such structures to their original condition provides an excellent means of maintaining and reinforcing the historic character of Downtown, increases property values in the area, and provides inspiration to other property owners and designers to undertake similar efforts.

When an existing structure in the Downtown district is proposed to be renovated or expanded, the work should respect the original design character of the structure and should comply with the design guidelines in this section. In addition, renovation of all structures of historic significance should follow *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties and associated Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring and Reconstructing Historic Buildings*, published by the U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service.

1. Preserve Traditional Features and Decoration

- a. Existing design elements including, building proportions, details, materials and fenestration should be considered when additions or building renovations could affect a building's exterior appearance.
- b. When a building is proposed to be refurbished, original architectural details should not be wasted. If enough of them remain, they should be restored based on the original building design. If only a few remain, they should be incorporated as design features in the new design. In either case, the design of any improvements should evolve from and emphasize original building features.
- c. All existing historic building detailing should be preserved.



2. Removal of Elements Inconsistent with Original Façade

- a. Restoration of buildings is strongly encouraged.
- b. Building elements which are incompatible with the original facade design should be removed.
- c. Aluminum canopies have a "tacked on" appearance and are inconsistent with the desirable high quality design character of Downtown San Juan Capistrano. Existing canopies should be removed and, if appropriate, replaced with fabric awnings, consistent in design with the architectural style of the building.

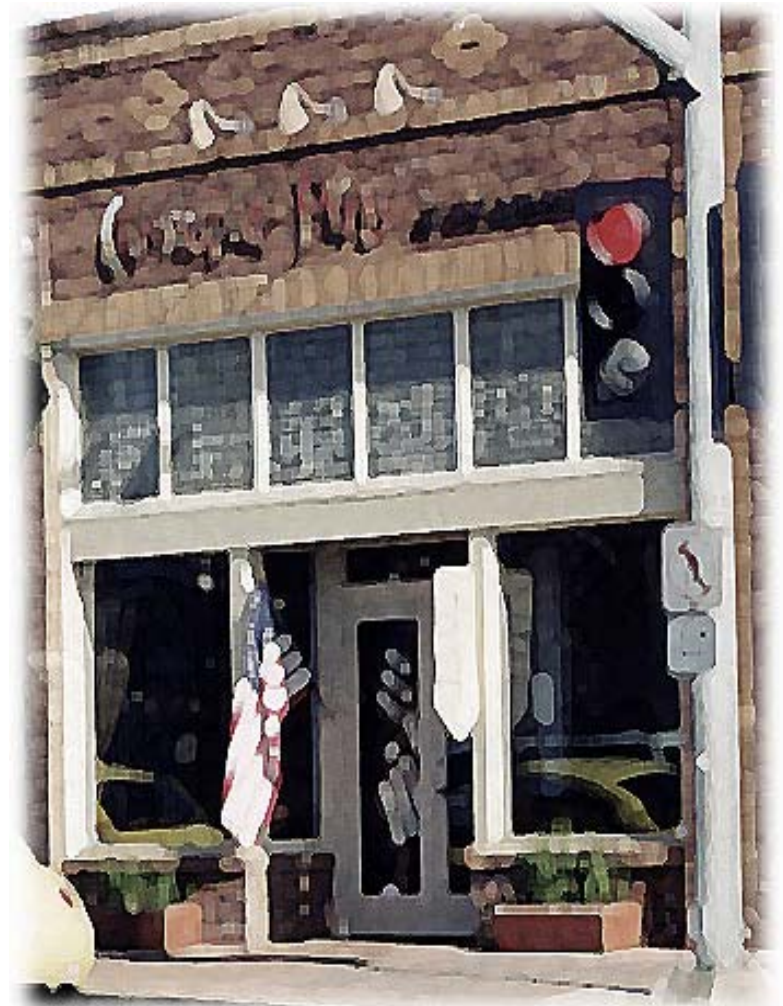
3. Storefront Renovation

- a. Original storefronts should be preserved and repaired.
- b. In cases where some remodeling has occurred and only a portion of the original storefront remains, the storefront should be repaired. Historic details/materials should be maintained where possible and extensively deteriorated or missing details/parts should be replaced with new reproductions of the original ones.
- c. Where extensive remodeling has occurred and the original storefront is completely missing, the storefront should be reconstructed based upon historical, pictorial and other physical documentation. If that is not practical, the design of the new storefront should be designed to be compatible with the size, scale, and proportions, of the existing structure.

4. Additions to Existing Structures

- a. The design of any proposed addition(s) should be generally consistent with and should complement the scale, proportions, and massing of the original structure.
- b. The design of new additions should be "current interpretations" of the existing buildings. The main characteristics of the existing structure should be incorporated into the addition's design by using modern construction methods. This may include the extension of

restoration of original storefronts is encouraged



architectural lines from the existing structure to the addition; repetition of window and entrance spacing; use of harmonious colors and materials; and the inclusion of similar architectural details (i.e., window/door trim, lighting fixtures, tile/brick decoration).

- c. New additions should be designed in a manner that could allow their removal, if desired in the future, without impairing the essential form and integrity of the original structure.

5. Seismic Retrofitting

- a. Seismic retrofitting improvements should receive the same care and forethought as any other building modification. The design of exterior seismic retrofitting improvements should be concealed to minimize negative impacts on the building's appearance, to the greatest extent possible.

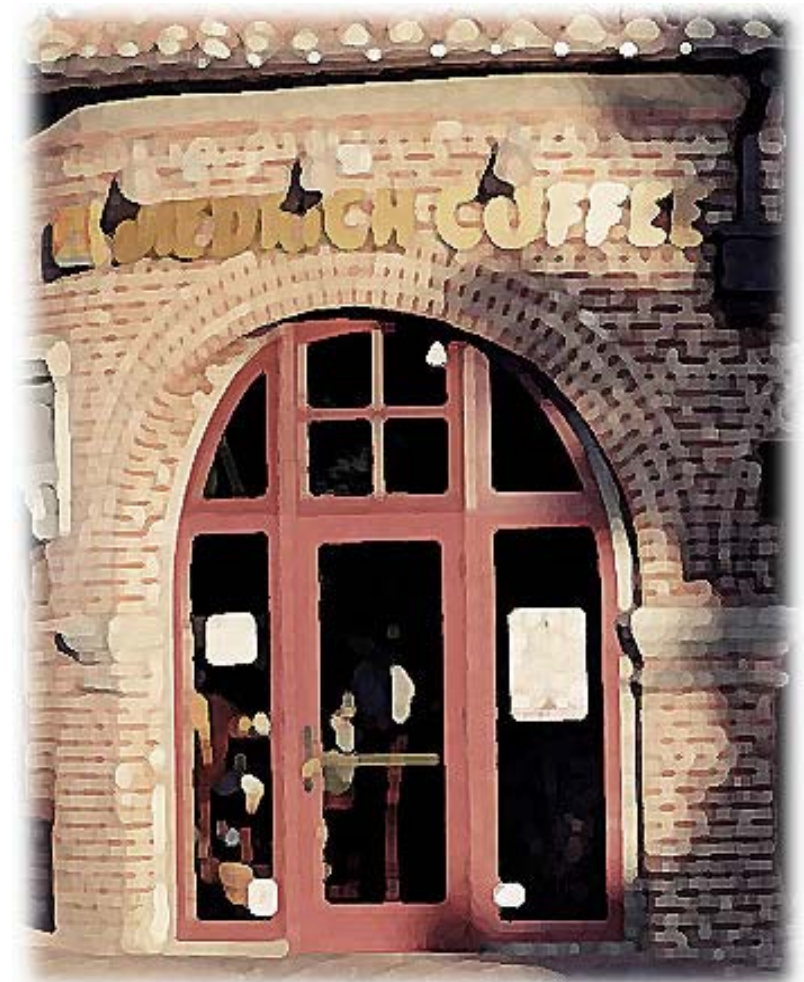
6. Replacement of Building Components

- a. When the exact original construction materials are not available for use in repairs or additions to an existing structure, care should be taken to match the original building materials' thickness, color and texture as closely as possible with available materials. In general, use of simulated replacement materials such as artificial stone is discouraged.

7. Window Replacement

- a. The original window openings should be retained, whenever possible. If the existing ceiling has been lowered, the dropped ceiling should be pulled back from the original window opening.
- b. The original windows and frames should be restored, if possible. Missing or severely deteriorated window and frame components should be replaced.
- c. Altered window opening(s) should be restored to their original configuration. Blocking of window and door openings should be avoided.

***use of construction materials,
authentic to the architectural style,
is encouraged***



- d. When windows are replaced, the original window size, shape, design details and type should be considered in their replacement and use of a similar windows are strongly recommended.

replacement of original doors and windows with similar ones is recommended

8. Awnings

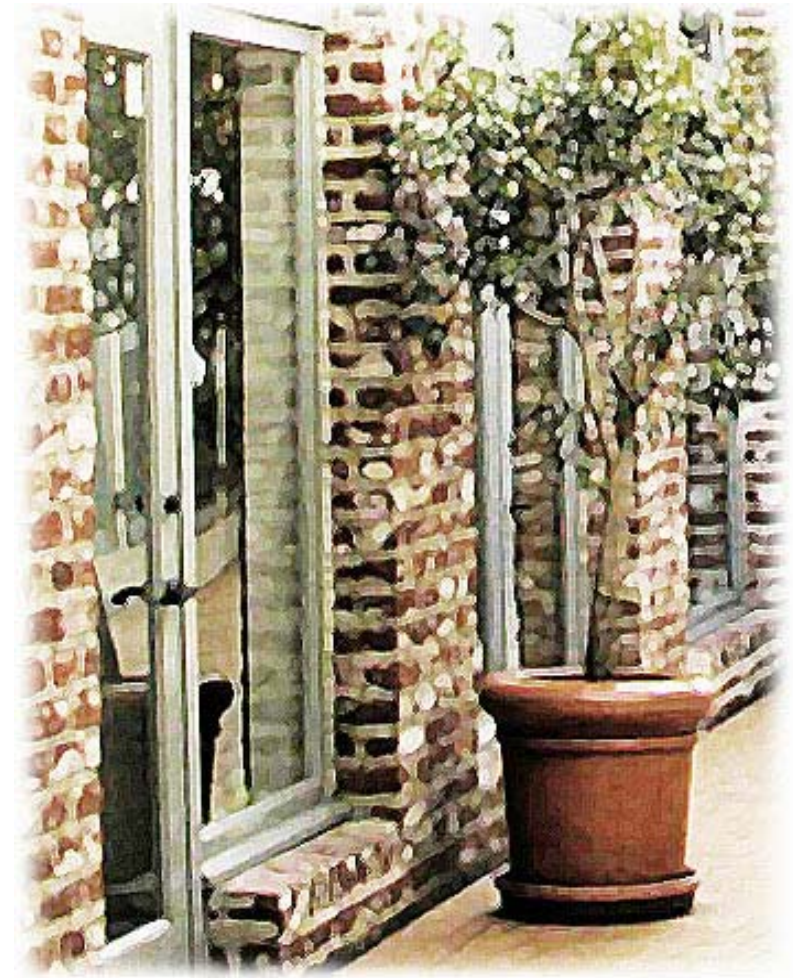
- a. Original awning hardware should be retained if repairable.
- b. Use of angled fabric awnings is most appropriate for older storefronts and preferred over hooped or box styles.

9. Door Replacement

- a. Original doors and door hardware should be retained, repaired and refinished.
- b. The design of replacement doors should be compatible with the historical character and design of the structure.
- c. Rear building entry treatment should reflect the overall architectural building theme.

10. Repair and Cleaning

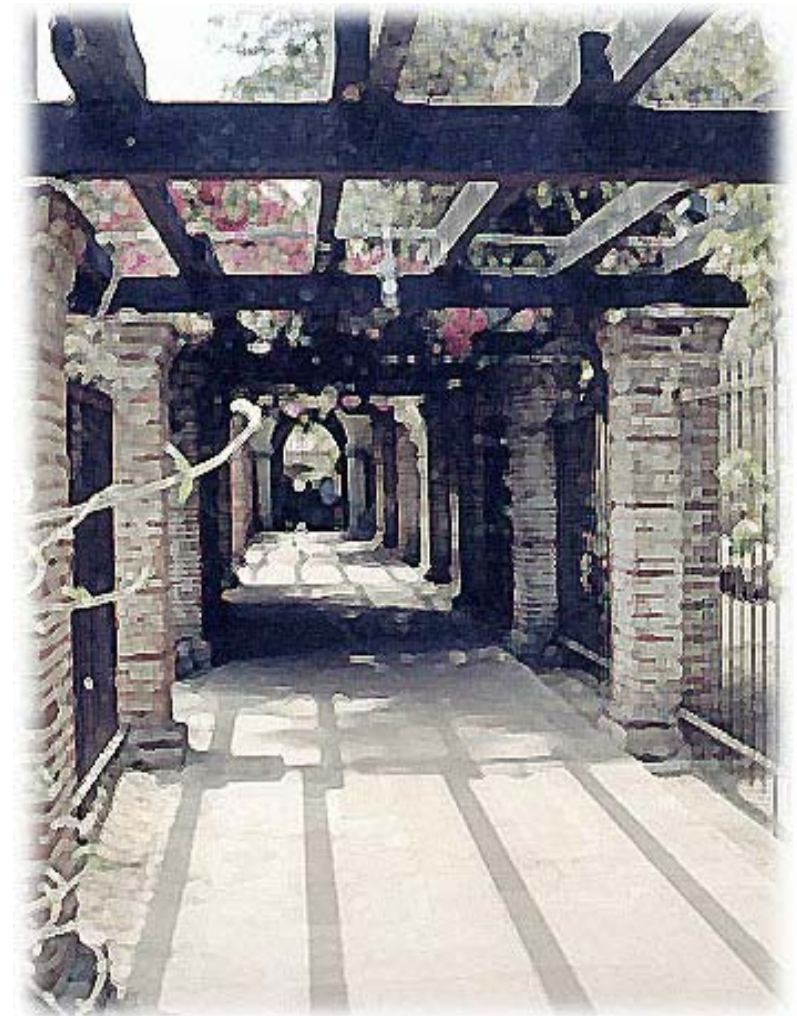
- a. Building surface cleaning should be undertaken by the gentlest means possible. Sandblasting and other harsh cleaning methods that may damage historic building materials should be avoided.
- b. Waterproofing and graffiti proofing sealers should be used after cleaning and repair.



F. Landscaping

- a. Use of native planting, vines, flowering plants, arbors, trellises and container planting is encouraged.
- b. Inclusion of courtyards, gardens, and fountains in the overall project design is encouraged. Landscaping within courtyards should include a balance of hardscape and landscape materials. Emphasis should be placed on California and Mediterranean landscapes and gardens
- c. Boxed and container plants in decorative ceramic, terra cotta, wood, or stucco planters should be used to enhance street frontages, plazas and courtyards.
- d. Planters may be incorporated into seating and stair areas. Such planters should be open to the earth below and should incorporate permanent irrigation systems.
- e. All trees in paved areas should be provided with “Deep Root” barriers automatic irrigation and metal grates.

Mission arbour



G. Lighting

- a. Lighting fixture design should contribute towards establishing a festive atmosphere, improve safety and enhance identification of businesses.
- b. Lighting fixtures should be designed to complement the project architecture.
- c. Wall mounted lights should be utilized to the greatest extent possible to minimize the total number of freestanding light standards.

light fixtures should be compatible with building design



2. Awning Signs

- a. Awning sign copy shall be centered on the awning. The sign copy should be limited to the business name and logo. The sign size should be in proportion with the awning.

3. Banners

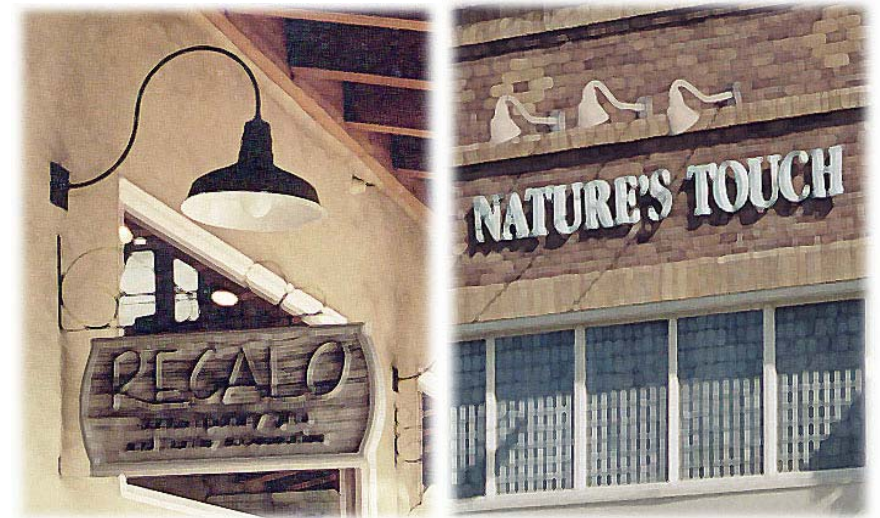
- a. Banners should be kept in good condition and should be replaced when deterioration occurs.

4. Projecting (Blade) Signs

- a. Use of projecting business identification signage at pedestrian oriented areas is encouraged.
- b. Decorative sign support brackets, complementary to the sign design, are recommended

5. Wall Signs

- a. Wall sign colors should positively contribute to the historic character of the Downtown district.
- b. Externally illuminated wall signs are recommended.
- c. Wall murals should not serve advertising purposes. Wall mural designs will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.



6. Window Signs

- a. Window signs should be visually pleasing and should enhance the storefront design.
- b. Window signs primarily target pedestrian traffic and should be placed at eye level

7. Freestanding Signs

- a. Pole signs are not permitted in the downtown area. Use of creative monument sign designs, in keeping with existing architectural styles and the historic character of the district, are encouraged.

8. Directory Signs

- a. Directory signage should be provided within projects and along public pedestrian areas throughout the downtown district.

