

INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE

A. These design guidelines provide direction to designers as well as establish criteria for review of projects.

The purpose of the design guidelines is to provide a clear set of design policies to project sponsors such as developers, property owners, architects, designers and public agencies including City projects. These are the primary design criteria which the city staff, boards and commissions and the City Council will use to evaluate project proposals. These guidelines apply to all projects that require design review, including most new buildings, the design of subdivisions, infill development; and public improvements such as streets. Some single family houses, as allowed by the Zoning Code, are not required to incorporate the design preferences included in these guidelines.

B. A purpose of the design guidelines is to implement the Urban Design Element of Santa Rosa's General Plan.

The Santa Rosa 2020: General Plan envisions: "Santa Rosa's downtown as the heart of the City in year 2020. The scale of downtown relates to the pedestrian through ground-floor commercial, wide sidewalks, benches, street trees, and trash and recycling bins. Entertainment uses, offices, and restaurants provide a vibrant economic base for the downtown, which draws residents and visitors both in the daytime and in the evening.

The City also features safe, liveable

neighborhoods. Residents are able to walk comfortably from their homes to local markets and convenience services. Neighborhood parks provide youth and adults with varied recreational options. The physical form of a neighborhood—the character and pattern of streets, the land use pattern, the quality of public spaces, the landscape and natural features and the massing of materials of its built form—contributes significantly to its livability and long term success as a neighborhood."

Santa Rosa also features districts that build on their unique natural and historical features to achieve identity. Newer neighborhoods feature distinct architectural identities, while street and path connections provide linkages between different areas. New development respects the City's natural setting, located between the Sonoma Mountains and Laguna de Santa Rosa, and builds on its landscape qualities".

C. These design guidelines are intended to supplement and enhance design concepts that promote "Superior Design" by exhibiting thoughtful relationships in the following areas: Site; Natural and built Environment; Architecture; Landscaping; Placemaking/Livability; and Sustainability.

The phrase "Superior Design" is used throughout the guidelines. It is the desire of the City to upgrade the design quality of projects from "adequate" to "superior" that in large

part led to the creation of this document. While Superior Design is difficult to define, the following table “Framework of Design Review” identifies the goals, review criteria and findings for approval that an overall design concept must address. A key finding is that the design concept promotes “Superior Design” by reflecting thoughtful considerations and responses to the parameters outlined in the Framework of Design Review. Applicants shall prepare a written response to the Framework’s review criteria as part of the Design Review application.

If an applicant or designer follows the Framework of Design Review, and the project is consistent with the design guidelines contained within this document, the City will consider the resulting design to be “Superior” and the project will be granted Design Review approval.

D. These guidelines represent the City’s design preferences.

In order for projects to receive discretionary approvals, it is expected that the guidelines will be followed. Adherence to the guidelines, however, is not meant to stifle design creativity. An applicant/designer may propose an alternate approach to a guideline(s). In that case, it shall be the responsibility of the applicant/designer to demonstrate to City staff, boards and commissions how the proposal creates an equal or higher level of design quality than the guideline(s) would provide. Early review of projects with the Design Review Board and/ or the Planning Commission at a conceptual level of detail is encouraged to receive feedback prior to investing a large amount of time and money.

E. These guidelines address the most common building types.

The guidelines do not address every type of building. When a project is being designed or reviewed and it is not specifically covered by the guidelines, the applicant should use the guidelines for the building type most closely resembling the type proposed, with adjustments as appropriate.

F. One of the purposes of these guidelines is to facilitate Santa Rosa’s transition from a community with development predominantly occurring at the periphery, to one where infill on vacant lots and increased density of the Core Area becomes more prominent.

In recent years most of the development in Santa Rosa has been new subdivisions, new shopping centers and new business parks outside of the Core Area. As a result, most of the design guidelines were oriented toward such projects.

With the introduction of the voter approved 20 year Urban Growth Boundary in 1996, Santa Rosa began making a transition from peripheral to inner development. While direction is still provided for peripheral development, these guidelines emphasize the Core Area and the importance of harmonizing new development with surrounding neighborhoods.

G. These Design Guidelines incorporate such traditional development patterns as: pedestrian oriented residential neighborhoods organized around centers that include mixed uses and open space; interconnected street systems; a variety of home

sizes within a neighborhood; and mixed uses in the downtown area.

These and other features often found in our older neighborhoods and downtown areas are advantageous in that they provide for: a greater dispersal of traffic which will reduce congestion; better connections between neighborhoods; an improved pedestrian environment that will encourage residents to walk, bicycle and use public transit; and a more active and economically viable downtown.

H. The present document is intended to be the principal one governing design related issues.

Santa Rosa has many documents that deal with design, including, among others: the General Plan, Area Plans, the Zoning Code; the Water Efficient Landscape Policy and City Council policies. These typically are general in nature. In contrast, the present guidelines are more focused on design and in general are more specific than the other documents mentioned above. The guidelines are intended as the primary authority for design issues but they should be used in conjunction with other City regulations.

These guidelines are intended to supplement, not replace, any project specific guidelines or standards that may have been adopted in conjunction with the approval of any area plan, specific plan, or project related Policy Statement. Such specific guidelines will remain in force, and will govern over these Design Guidelines if specific conflicting provisions are identified. In cases where no specific conflict exists, the project specific guidelines and these Guidelines must both be addressed.

ORGANIZATION

These guidelines are organized as follows:

Section 1- Neighborhood Design

Section 2- Core Area

Section 3- Residential, Commercial & Industrial Outside the Core Area

Section 4- Special Design Considerations

Appendix

Section 1- Neighborhood Design

Neighborhood Design focuses on design issues at the neighborhood scale, including: the structure of a neighborhood; how to organize different land uses within a neighborhood; and the preferred circulation system within a neighborhood.

Section 2- Core Area

In the Core Area, particularly Downtown, uses within buildings change over time. It is therefore critically important that the design of the public realm (the streetscape, the building facades and the location of parking) supports this evolution. This section identifies key components that support a vibrant, pedestrian oriented Downtown and includes guidelines to encourage development in a way to produce such a result.

Section 3- Residential, Commercial & Industrial Outside the Core Area

Outside of the Core Area, the type of project is fundamental to the design of the proposed development. This section includes guidelines for residential, commercial and industrial projects. Each section is divided into Goals,

Site Planning Guidelines and Building Design Guidelines.

Section 4- Special Design Considerations

There are many considerations which influence designs. One of the most important is the streetscape. Public streets usually occupy the largest part of the public realm we experience in our daily lives. Where a street is located, the path it follows, its dimensions and other factors to be discussed will often have more to do with how the public perceives a project or a neighborhood than any other aspect of its design. If a project is within a historic district, special considerations may have to be given to historic buildings and/or other historic factors in the project design. Hill-sides require special attention as do infill projects. This section considers these and other special conditions which should be taken into account in the design of a project.

Appendix

The Appendix includes some of the City documents that may have to be considered in the design of a project. In some cases these documents are referred to herein, and are included for convenience.

FORMAT & FONTS

Goals and guidelines printed in this document use “Gills Sans” font. Titles use a “**Gill Sans**” bold font. Commentary on guidelines use “*Gill Sans*” in an italic style.

This document is expected to be a “living” publication and it employs a three ring binder/ loose-leaf format to facilitate revisions. Comments and suggestions are welcomed and should be forwarded to:

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FRAMEWORK OF DESIGN REVIEW:

All projects promote Superior Design by exhibiting thoughtful relationships in the following areas:

Site; Architecture; Landscaping; Placemaking / Livability; and Sustainability.

Project design is also consistent with the Design Guidelines.

GOAL:	REVIEW CRITERIA:	FINDINGS FOR APPROVAL:
<i>Promote Superior Design through thoughtful response to the following:</i>	<i>What is the design concept and how does it relate to:</i>	<i>Design concept reflects thoughtful consideration and contextual response; promotes Superior Design</i>
Site: Natural and Built Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Design appropriate for its location and use - Natural features of the site - Connectivity to vehicular, transit, bicycle and pedestrian networks - Respect for historical neighborhood, where occurs 	Response to, integration and/or incorporation with the natural and built environments as an expression of the design concept.
Architecture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Form; Massing - Originality and/or Innovation of building form - Materials; Details - Innovative use of real material - Identifiable and meaningful expression of the building's function 	Use of form, massing, materials and detailing as an expression of the design concept.
Landscaping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Integration of plant and tree materials with site conditions - Use of planting and landscape walls to create outdoor rooms - Retention and maximization of heritage trees on site - Design appropriate for the architecture and scale of the site 	Articulation and definition of spaces with appropriate landscape materials as an expression of the design concept.
Placemaking / Livability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conveyance of a perception and preference for human spaces - Creation or reinforcement of focal points or nodes of activity. - Relationship and connectivity between human spaces 	Site plan, landscaping, building design and placement that creates, contributes and/or reinforces sense of place or establishes a suitable and dignified living environment as an expression of the design concept.
Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Site Resources - Water Conservation - Energy Efficiency - Materials - Air Quality 	Promotes responsible and sustainable use of resources and/or promotes healthier lifestyles as an expression of the design concept.
Overall Design Concept	<i>Thoughtful, integrated design; also consistent with the Design Guidelines</i>	<i>Approval</i>