2.4 Site and Building Design

Building Placement and Transitions

1. Arrange buildings to define, connect, and activate sidewalks and public spaces.

2. Mid-block connections and walkways should be integrated with building entrances, transit stops, plazas and parks.

3. Locate entrances and upper-story windows such that they look out onto and, at night, cast light onto, sidewalks and pedestrian paths.

4. Improve the setback area along the residential street frontages with trees and planting to enhance the landscape quality and the character of the existing residential street.

5. Design spaces that balance privacy and safety with access to air and sunlight. Prioritize south facing green space opportunities.

6. Encourage positive transitions in scale and character at the interface between residential and nonresidential land uses.

7. To establish continuity between land uses, all new developments in the Downtown Station Area, regardless of size or use, should reflect a similar urban form that is human-scale and pedestrian-oriented, with strong physical and visual connections to fronting streets.

Building Architecture

8. Surrounding buildings establish the context for the design of new buildings. Whether new buildings are detailed in a historical, contemporary or eclectic manner, incorporating similar rhythm and proportions found in adjacent buildings improves the compatibility between new and old.

9. Building design should encourage multi-tenant occupancy at the lower two floors.

10. Building design should include elements of local character and use high quality, durable local materials.

11. All buildings should contain the three traditional parts of a building: a base, a mid section, and a top. While a tower (typically above 100 feet) may not have a distinct top feature, the building design should distinguish the pedestrian-oriented base portion from the massing above.
11. Corner buildings should have distinct architectural features and defined building entrances on both street frontages or an architecturally distinct corner entrance, as shown in Figure 32.

12. Window design should be varied to reflect the different components of a building (ground floor lobbies, stair towers, office suites, or residential units).

Building façades should be constructed of high quality and durable materials such as stone, brick, tile, wood, glass, and metal. Use of stucco should be minimized and aluminum mesh is discouraged as a balcony material. Ground floor should use high quality material with texture.

13. Colors should be harmonious; however, color contrast is encouraged to create contrast and accentuate architectural forms and features.

**Upper Story Design**

14. Recessed and projected balconies should be introduced as part of a composition that contributes to the scale and proportion of the residential building façades.

15. Upper-story stepbacks should incorporate features that activate the setback areas, such as balconies, terraces, living roofs, and greenery.

16. Design roofs to be an integral part of the overall building design and to complement neighboring roofs.

17. Incorporate usable outdoor terraces and rooftop gardens that overlook the street and provide visual interest.

18. Coordinate tower placement with other towers on the same block and adjacent blocks to maximize access to sunlight and views; minimize loss of sky view from the public realm; and contribute to an elegant skyline profile.

19. Incorporate creative elements into buildings for both functional and aesthetic purposes, such as vertical gardens, which provide aesthetic interest while aiding in temperature control.

20. The following guidelines should be applied to new development along freeway frontages to avoid a wall-like effect and to reflect the high quality design standards of Santa Rosa.
   - Design buildings visible from the freeway to maintain quality architectural articulation and finishes around all visible sides of the building.
- Use articulation to break down the building massing, using upper story step backs and other techniques. Avoid light colors for walls and roofs that would create a monolithic appearance and/or result in a stark contrast to the natural environment. Where light roof materials are used, screening shall be incorporated into the building design such that the roof is not visible from the freeway.
- Incorporate iconic architectural elements and corner treatments such as a tower, landmark roof form, or enhanced fenestration creating a focal point on the building façade.

**Ground Level Design**

21. Entrances to residential, office or other upper-story uses should be clearly distinguishable in form and location from ground-floor commercial entrances and must face a street or courtyard.

22. Large buildings which front multiple streets should provide multiple entrances. Building entrances which connect to a central lobby should be distributed on different street facing facades.

23. In commercial and mixed-use developments, incorporate plazas, awnings, porticoes, and other architectural elements to identify entrances and break up the vertical massing and add visual interest at the street level.

24. Incorporate frequent entries and ample transparency with visible activity on all publicly exposed façades of commercial and mixed-use buildings.

25. On corner lots where one side is in the Active Ground Floor Overlay (Map-2), ground floor activating strategies should wrap the building so that they are also applied to the ground floor frontage along the intersecting street.

26. Ground floor retail spaces should be designed to accommodate a variety of uses.

27. Opaque windows or windows covered with blinds should be avoided at the ground level in commercial developments.

28. Include at least two steps up to a porch or entry to enhance the separation of the private area from the adjacent street public areas, except for units designated for disabled or senior use, which should avoid entry steps.
Residential ground floor facades and roof forms should be articulated such that individual residential units are differentiated from each other and from the overall massing of the building with stoops, porches, recessed windows, and/or bay windows.

29. Incorporate landscaping, fencing, raised or recessed entries, and other features to delineate residential property from the public realm.

30. Residential developments should be designed to maximize sunlight, privacy, ventilation, and scenic views from living areas.

31. Townhouse development should incorporate landscaping in the required setbacks.

32. Generally, a minimum of one pedestrian building entry should be provided for each 50 feet of residential street frontage.

33. Minimize the potential for noise disturbances to the greatest extent possible in residential developments by taking into account: window placement of adjoining buildings, the location of balconies and outdoor spaces relative to bedroom windows, and the location of trash collection facilities relative to residences.

34. Common recreational spaces, green spaces, landscaping, and amenities should be designed to encourage interaction among occupants.

Figure 38. Example of a detailed façade at street level.