Cover art by Dyett & Bhatia.
URBAN DESIGN AND CIVIC SPACES

The design of streetscapes, parks, plazas, buildings, and the spaces that connect them is critical for how a place is used and experienced. Downtown Santa Rosa is laid out on a walkable street grid, featuring a network of parks and creekside trails and an array of historic buildings that reflect the city’s heritage and distinctive neighborhood identities. This chapter provides a design framework to guide new development in a way that complements these assets and provides a high-quality urban living and working environment. The policies, standards, and guidelines in this chapter seek to integrate new development into the Downtown fabric with a diversity of scales, designs, and textures and to create inviting public spaces that enrich the economic, social, and cultural life of the community.
URBAN DESIGN PRINCIPLES

The following principles form the foundation of the design framework, building upon the previous chapters and advancing the Vision for the Downtown Station Area and shall guide any future revisions to this framework. All projects implementing the DSASP are expected to achieve these principles through site planning and design.

- Create a distinctive sense of place for the Downtown Station Area that balances traditional character with a forward-looking identity, rooted in innovation, environmental sustainability, and quality of life.

- Develop walkable, interconnected, transit-oriented neighborhoods with pedestrian-scaled design features and a safe, engaging public realm.

- Take advantage of the natural amenities and scenic qualities of the Downtown Station Area with site design that incorporates natural features, protects sensitive habitats, promotes physical and visual connections to the creeks, preserves existing view corridors, and creates new vistas.

- Design accessible civic spaces and urban parks that function as focal points for the surrounding neighborhoods with public art, entertainment, and opportunities for passive and active recreation. Recognize that civic spaces that attract residents and visitors Downtown are essential for building vibrancy and sense of place.

- Require building designs to establish both variety and harmony across each single development and throughout the wider Downtown Station Area.

- Incorporate residential design principles that support the needs of families, people with low mobility, seniors, students, and first-time homebuyers.

- Ensure compatibility among existing uses, including resources with significant historic value, and new residential development with respect to design, scale, privacy, light, and noise.

- Design station and transit center facilities that convey a memorable entry into the community and blend with surrounding neighborhoods.

- Foster innovation and flexible design that can accommodate changing market forces and preferences over time.
PUBLIC REALM AND STREETSCAPES

The public realm encompasses all publicly visible and accessible areas in the Downtown Station Area. Memorable and lively downtowns have an inviting and enjoyable public realm, composed of streets that are central to sense of place, movement, and pedestrian comfort. General standards are provided for design of the pedestrian streetscape and create an approach for wayfinding and signage while specific standards establish active ground floor requirements, improving wayfinding and access, and creating new public recreational spaces.

PEDESTRIAN STREETSCAPES

Streets and right-of-way represent 28 percent of the Downtown Station Area and provide some of the greatest opportunities for placemaking. Creating a livable and active Downtown Station Area requires a pedestrian-friendly streetscape, one that encourages people to walk around and experience what the city has to offer. High quality design, neighborhood-identifying elements, and pedestrian safety and security are top priorities of a pedestrian streetscape and include features such as pedestrian-scaled street lighting, crosswalks enhanced for visibility, sidewalk furniture, wayfinding signage, and special event banners. Active ground floor frontages and public spaces are key to creating the vibrant character envisioned for the Downtown Station Area. Within the DSASP, active ground-level frontages are required areas shown in Map UDCS-1. In addition, certain public spaces, such as plazas and transit connection areas, shall be improved with amenities that facilitate an active street life and “eyes on the street.”

STANDARDS

DS-1

New development with frontage on streets in the Active Ground Floor Overlay shown on Map UDCS-1 shall provide design features that optimize the pedestrian experience. To comply with this requirement, developments with up to 90 linear feet of frontage must provide two or more of the following and developments with over 90 linear feet of frontage must provide three or more of the following:

- Awnings or overhangs over all ground floor entrances;
- One piece of street furniture for each 15 linear feet of street frontage, which may include seating, ornamental planting boxes, informational kiosks, bicycle racks, and trash/recycling receptacles integrated into front setbacks where sidewalk width is not sufficient to accommodate street furniture;
- Integrated public art in the form of a mural, sculpture, light display, or other original work of a permanent nature as defined in the City Code;
- At least 600 square feet of publicly accessible active or passive recreational space on-site, or in the form of a curbside parklet;
- A green/living wall of a size equivalent to at least 15 percent of the building façade as measured between 2 and 12 feet above the level of the sidewalk;
- An innovative alternative strategy for optimizing the pedestrian experience along streets in the Active Ground Floor Overlay not included on this list. Proposals shall be evaluated by staff and considered on a case-by-case basis. The proposal shall be permitted provided that, at the recommendation of staff and determination of the review authority, applicable DSASP Urban Design Principles and development standards are being met with the alternative strategy proposed.

Alternatively, this requirement can be satisfied through compliance with Policy LU-1.4 in the Land Use chapter.
Map UDCS-1: Special Design Considerations

- Gateway
- Preservation District
- Park/Open Space
- Downtown Transition
- Neighborhood Transition
- Creek and Trail Activation Area
- Active Ground Floor Overlay
- SMART Train
- Planning Area

Source: City of Santa Rosa, 2020; Dyett & Bhatia, 2020
DS-2 Properties with frontage on streets in the Active Ground Floor Overlay (Map UDCS-1) shall provide at least one primary pedestrian entrance or alternative design solution(s) that implements active ground floor goals as described in the 2020 Downtown Station Area Specific Plan, subject to approval by the review authority.

DS-3 Ground floor facades of non-residential development on streets in the Active Ground Floor Overlay (Map UDCS-1) shall have clear, untinted glass or other glazing material that allows views of indoor space between a height of two and seven feet above grade, shown on Figure UDCS-1.

DS-4 On streets in the Active Ground Floor Overlay (Map UDCS-1), parking shall be accessed from a side street or alley whenever possible.

DS-5 Crosswalk enhancements shall be installed at all intersections along and across streets in the Active Ground Floor Overlay (Map UDCS-1). This may include distinct paving, limited specialty pavers such as “bands” along crosswalk edges, decorative elements, stamped concrete or asphalt, and/or zebra-style paint.

DS-6 Neighborhood identification banners/signs shall be installed along all streets in the Active Ground Floor Overlay (Map UDCS-1). Special banners advertising events or exhibits shall replace neighborhood identification banners when appropriate.

DS-7 Buildings, signage, landscaping, street furniture, and on-street parking shall be designed to maintain adequate sight distance for pedestrians, cyclists and motorists at all intersections and driveways.

GUIDELINES

DG-1 Development in the Active Ground Floor Overlay (Map UDCS-1) should incorporate special features such as outdoor dining areas, seating, vendor displays, curbside parklets, and/or public art.

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

DG-3 Along streets in the Active Ground Floor Overlay (Map UDCS-1):

- Loading docks and exposed parking should not be allowed;
- Utilities and vehicular access points should be minimized;
- Curb cuts should be minimized and located where least likely to impede pedestrian circulation.

DG-4 Flowering plants and plants with bright colors should be incorporated on light fixtures and/or banner poles in the Active Ground Floor Overlay (Map UDCS-1).

CREEK AND TRAIL ACTIVATION

Santa Rosa Creek is a defining feature of Downtown Santa Rosa and the creekside multi-use trails that run along both banks provide important east-west connections throughout the Downtown Station Area. Considerable resources have been invested to enhance this important natural amenity for the community, including the completion of the Prince Memorial Greenway and construction of Prince Gateway Park. To further enhance pedestrian and bicyclist safety and comfort along the creek, the DSASP.
identifies locations and strategies that activate the creek corridor by encouraging public activity and placing “eyes on the creek” throughout the day and night.

The length of the creek has varied topography, vegetation, and adjacent land uses that make some areas better suited for creek and trail activation standards. These locations, shown on Map UDCS-1, all have easy access from streets, relatively flat terrain in the lots adjacent to the trails, and clear creek views unencumbered by trees and vegetation. Standards in the DSASP seek to encourage attractive design, improved connectivity, and uses that promote public activity to foster increased enjoyment of the creek corridor.

STANDARDS

**DS-8**

New development in the areas identified for creek and trail activation on Map UDCS-1 shall provide at least one activating use or at least two activating design features fronting the creek and trail as noted in Table UDCS-1 below to promote activity, heighten sense of security, and enhance the creek corridor as a public amenity.

**Table UDCS-1: Creek and Trail Activation Standards**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setback</th>
<th>OR</th>
<th>Distance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. A public space or plaza up to 5 percent of the total lot size with a minimum width of 30 feet</td>
<td>1. One piece of site furniture for each 100 linear feet of creek/trail frontage, which may include seating, informational kiosks, bicycle racks, and trash/recycling receptacles or outdoor fitness equipment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. A café, restaurant, brew pub, retail space or substantially similar use</td>
<td>2. Integrated public art in the form of a mural, sculpture, light display, or other original work of a permanent nature as defined in the City Code</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Interpretive signage related to Santa Rosa Creek and its riparian habitat</td>
<td>3. Interpretive signage related to Santa Rosa Creek and its riparian habitat</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**DS-9**

New buildings within 200 feet of the creek shall be constructed with at least one pedestrian entrance that faces the creek. Where stoop entrances to residential units are provided, these shall face the creek.

**DS-10**

New development shall provide a pedestrian pathway of a minimum of 15 feet connecting the development to the creekside trail network every 600 feet along the river to enhance connectivity to the surrounding area.

**DS-11**

As development occurs in the creek and trail activation areas shown on Map UDCS-1, lighting should be provided consistent with the Santa Rosa Creek Design Guidelines.

**DS-12**

Blank facades at ground level and above should be avoided. Windows, doors and transparent openings are encouraged to provide “eyes on the creek” and heighten sense of security. To the extent feasible, surface and structured parking should not front onto the creek or trail.

Attractive design and activating uses will foster increased enjoyment of the creek corridor.
To create a vibrant, big city downtown core, the DSASP clusters taller buildings around Courthouse Square, where the tallest buildings exist today. Buildings step down in height from that location to integrate with the scale of surrounding neighborhoods.
WAYFINDING AND ACCESS

Design of the public realm can facilitate access for pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists while also enhancing sense of place. Distinctive gateways with design features such as signs, graphics, landscaping, and accent lighting at principal entry points into the Downtown Station Area will help announce a sense of arrival, reinforcing the city's identity and welcoming visitors and residents alike. While the grid pattern of Downtown's streets and the visibility of surrounding mountains can help with orientation, the addition of branded directional signage particularly in the Core and Station areas will improve wayfinding and build connections between destinations, including transit hubs, landmarks, and places of interest. Design features which activate pedestrian routes and enhance security are essential, particularly in the vicinity of transit stations and stops. (See also Chapter 3 Mobility for policies related to safety and security.)

GUIDELINES

**DG-5** Special gateway design, lighting, landscaping, signs, and/or structures should be provided at high visibility locations near major entry points into the Downtown Station Area as shown on Map UDCS-1.

**DG-6** Within the Core and Station areas, directional signage should be provided at key intersections in the Active Ground Floor Overlay indicating walking time estimates and the direction to key destinations.

**DG-7** Design of the Railroad Square/Depot Park should accommodate buses, taxis, ride hailing services, and drop-off/pick-up areas, with canopied waiting areas, seating, lighting, and real time bus information. A visible and direct pedestrian connection should be provided from the platform to the intermodal transfer area on the SMART site.

**DG-8** Building entrances, windows, and active uses on the SMART site should be oriented to the public promenade in order to more meaningfully engage with the public space and enhance sense of security.

**DG-9** Crime prevention strategies should be incorporated into the design of active street frontages, particularly in the vicinity of the SMART Downtown Station and the Downtown Transit Center, including lighting and design features which activate the space and minimize “lurking spaces.”
Outside of the Core area, a network of interconnected village centers, each with their own character, accommodate new high-density housing, retail, and other uses to create a complete neighborhood. Each village center is oriented around a community focal point, such as a park or public square called a “Civic Space.”
Map UDCS-2: Existing and Proposed Parks and Civic Spaces

Potential Urban Park/Civic Space

- Park
- Trail

SMART Rail

Undercrossing

Source: MTC, 2019; City of Santa Rosa, 2018; Dyett & Bhatia, 2020
PARKS AND PUBLIC SPACES

It is vital to the health of existing communities and the success of new residential and commercial development that the Downtown Station Area has well-designed and accessible public spaces. While there are currently a number of neighborhood parks in the area, an extensive creek and trail network, and several plazas, more public recreational space will be needed to accommodate the future demands of residents, employees, and visitors to the area. Public spaces strengthen sense of place as an essential expression of the community's unique character and contribute to a safe walkable and bikeable public realm. The integration of public art into public spaces should play a central role in building that sense of place through reinforcing landmarks and community identity. In addition to new public spaces, another key goal is to open up development and create publicly accessible routes to Santa Rosa Creek and Prince Memorial Greenway.

Because the Downtown Station Area is largely built out, there is limited opportunity to assemble land for new parks large enough to meet the City's standard for traditional neighborhood parks. The DSASP envisions the creation of new types of public recreational spaces that accommodate a flexible range of activities and amenities. The DSASP envisions the creation of large urban parks, called Civic Spaces, that provide flexible, publicly accessible space for a range of entertainment and activities as well as a network of diverse public spaces in various sizes, which may include: traditional neighborhood parks, multi-purpose plazas, rooftop green spaces, pocket parks, parklets and curbside parklets, and active or passive paseos. These spaces are envisioned on both municipally owned sites and privately owned publicly accessible spaces. Whether publicly or privately owned, all public spaces must collectively create an interconnected system that meets the needs of the surrounding neighborhood. Approximate locations for new urban parks and are shown in Map UDCS-2. Where parks currently exist, such as Courthouse Square or Railroad Depot Park, new programming, park expansion, or enhancements will be added. Together with high-quality, native landscaping and public art, each of these types of spaces can provide much needed opportunities for recreation and social interaction and contribute to the Downtown Station Area's positive identity and visual character.

GOALS AND POLICIES

GOAL UDCS-1: A diverse range of public spaces at different scales and sizes throughout the Downtown Station Area to provide outdoor recreation and relaxation opportunities for residents, workers, and visitors.

POLICIES

UDCS-1.1 Provide for multi-purpose plazas, rooftop green spaces, pocket parks, active or passive paseos, and parklets and curbside parklets to complement existing neighborhood and community parks throughout the Downtown Station Area.

UDCS-1.2 Plan, design, and construct a Civic Space on the Railroad Depot Park site and in Courthouse Square, consistent with the guidelines below.

UDCS-1.3 As private development occurs, explore opportunities to create additional Civic Spaces at the locations shown on Map UDCS-2, consistent with the guidelines below.

UDCS-1.4 Establish a return to source policy and require that all park impact fees collected Downtown are used for park and recreational space facilities in the Downtown Station Area.

UDCS-1.5 Allow residential and multi-family projects in the Downtown Station Area to construct publicly accessible, but privately owned and maintained parks and plazas in lieu of park impact fees provided that the facility:

- has a minimum dimension of 15,000 square feet;
- is accessible to the public from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. seven days per week;
- is restricted for park and recreation purposes by recorded covenant which runs with the land;
- provides a minimum of four of the elements listed in Table UDCS-2.
UDCS-1.6 Require that curbside parklets be designed to National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) standards.

GUIDELINES
DG-10 Design of public spaces should:

- have size and programming as outlined in Table UDCS-1.
- be lined with active uses at-grade and located near building entrances, windows, outdoor seating, patios, or balconies that overlook park spaces, and other areas with strong pedestrian activity.
- be completely visible from at least one street frontage and as feasible, be at least 50% visible from a secondary street frontage.
- be primarily defined by adjacent buildings, which will contribute to the unity and environmental quality of the space.
- be oriented to maximize sunlight access throughout the day and provide uses that take advantage of the sunny location (e.g. cafés and patios). Encourage south-facing parks and plazas, as they maximize the space’s exposure to direct sunlight.
- generally be located at the same grade level as the public sidewalk. Where changes in grade are an important element of the overall design and programming, clear and direct access from the public sidewalk should be accommodated, and universal accessibility provided.
- reflect the design and placemaking elements of the surrounding area through the use of architectural styles, signage, colors, textures, materials and other elements.
- be constructed with low impact and permeable paving materials to efficiently manage the stormwater and minimize the area’s heat island effect.

DG-11 Provide temporary restroom facilities that cater to the needs of families and seniors during public events.

DG-12 Paseos should be open to traffic only for loading and unloading purposes and should include pedestrian-scaled lighting to enhance sense of security.

A system of public spaces, diverse in their size and types, will enhance Downtown’s sense of place.
Visualizations:

**Santa Rosa Avenue at Mill Street (facing south)**

*Existing Conditions (2020)*

Improvements would focus new, high-density development along a high frequency transit corridor in order to build connections, increase vibrancy, and promote walking, biking and transit use over single-occupant vehicles. Some streets will be reconfigured as multi-modal streets with priority for transit and an activated public realm featuring bicycle lanes, wide sidewalks, plazas, parklets, and roof-top green spaces. Mid-rise buildings would frame the street, giving it character and scale, with new development seamlessly transitioning to existing neighborhoods.
SITE AND BUILDING DESIGN

The siting of a building and composition of its façade can create visual interest, stimulate pedestrian activity, and contribute to an attractive environment. Building details and articulation can establish both variety and harmony within a single development, among adjacent buildings, and within the Downtown Station Area. New development will complement existing neighborhoods, and a variety of building types and styles will help define the area as an interesting place to live, work, and spend time. Pedestrian-oriented design and a strong relationship with an active public realm will be a defining characteristic throughout the Downtown Station Area. To build cohesive and complete neighborhoods, the DSASP provides standards and guidelines for building placement and transitions; building design; ground level design; environmental sustainability; and trees and landscaping.

BUILDING PLACEMENT AND TRANSITIONS

Building placement and bulk throughout the Downtown Station Area are governed by several factors, including land use, location, adjacent uses and development standards (height, Floor Area Ratio, etc.). Setback standards help establish the desired character of the land use, as described in Chapter 2, without limiting the capacity of private development. Building massing in any infill development must consider the scale and nature of the adjacent uses. This section establishes goals and standards for building placement and bulk, with special attention paid to areas where infill development is near existing residential neighborhoods. Together with intensity limits and other building and site design standards, the standards presented here will ensure context-sensitive design throughout the Downtown Station Area.
In general, transitional standards apply where development immediately abuts uses designated as Preservation Districts or Low Density Residential, Low-Medium Density Residential, and Medium Density Residential land use designations. The intent of transitional standards is to ensure that new development fits into existing neighborhoods with a cohesive urban form, to provide transition between higher-density and lower-density neighborhoods, and to facilitate new infill development within an existing area that does not have an established cohesive urban character or to improve upon it. Setback and street frontage standards also ensure a continuously active and engaging street frontage in select locations, supporting the vibrancy of the Downtown Station Area’s public spaces. The DSASP establishes two different transition edges ensure that adequate daylight and neighborhood scale are achieved: Downtown Transition and Neighborhood Transition.

**STANDARDS**

**DS-13** Building placement shall comply with the standards shown in Table UDCS-3.

**Table UDCS-3: Building Placement Standards**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setback</th>
<th>Distance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Front Setback (Non-Residential Ground Floor)</td>
<td>0-10 feet (min/max)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Front Setback (Residential Ground Floor)</td>
<td>5-12 feet (min/max)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Street Side Setback</td>
<td>0-10 feet (min/max)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interior Side Setback(^1)</td>
<td>0 feet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rear Setback(^1)^(^2)</td>
<td>10 feet</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Where adjacent to residential designations (LDR, MLDR, or MDR), see Map UDCS-1 for applicable standard.
2. Minimum 0-foot rear yard setback, except for 5 feet when abutting LDR or MLDR residential designations.

**DS-14** The additional standards listed in Table UDCS-4 shall apply for development of properties in the Neighborhood Transition zones shown on Map UDCS-1.

**Table UDCS-4: Neighborhood Transition Standards**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setback</th>
<th>Seventh Street, Ninth Street, Riley Street, Cherry Street, B Street, and Sonoma Avenue</th>
<th>Santa Rosa Avenue, E Street, and College Avenue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Front setback</td>
<td>6-10 feet (min/max) with trees, shrubs, and groundcovers per requirements of Zoning Code Chapter 20-34.</td>
<td>Buildings must step back from the rear a minimum of 10 feet above the third floor and a minimum of 20 feet above the sixth floor. Above 6 stories, buildings must maintain a daylight plane of 45 degrees as shown in Figure UDCS-2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stepback</td>
<td>Buildings must step back from the street frontage a minimum of 10 feet above the third floor. Above 6 stories, buildings must maintain a daylight plane of 45 degrees as shown in Figure UDCS-2.</td>
<td>Buildings must step back from the rear a minimum of 10 feet above the third floor and a minimum of 20 feet above the sixth floor. Above 6 stories, buildings must maintain a daylight plane of 45 degrees as shown in Figure UDCS-2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ground floors</td>
<td>Residential and mixed-use projects located across the street from single-family neighborhoods shall orient the buildings to the street with individual entries, patio areas and landscaping facing the single-family homes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surface parking</td>
<td>Surface parking areas are not permitted between the sidewalk and the building façade.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Minimum side setback of 5 feet required if abutting existing low-density residential structure.
Buildings in the Downtown Transition zones shown on Map UDCS-1 shall step back a minimum of 6 feet, or a lesser distance as approved by the review authority, above the fifth floor along the frontage of Fourth and Fifth Streets.

GUIDELINES

DG-12  Mid-block connections and walkways should be integrated with building entrances, transit stops, plazas and parks.

DG-13  Locate entrances and upper-story windows such that they look out onto and, at night, cast light onto, sidewalks and pedestrian paths.

DG-14  Primary and side street building facades should incorporate ground floor and upper floor transparency standards consistent with Design Guidelines.
BUILDING DESIGN

Building design shapes a building’s character and dictates how a building relates to the public realm. The composition of a facade can create visual interest and ensure pedestrian orientation and building details and articulation can both create design variety and establish harmony within a development or among adjacent buildings. While ground floor design has an immediate impact on the pedestrian experience, it is essential that the entire building is designed in such a way that promotes building and neighborhood integrity. Building massing, scale, and overall design must be compatible with its height and use, as well as contribute to the Downtown Station Area’s identity and character.

As infill sites are redeveloped and the core expands, the DSASP seeks to establish a diversity in building design and appearance, while retaining the pedestrian scale, compatibility with surrounding neighborhoods, and unified public realm established in recent developments. The following policies, together with the development standards and design guidelines, work to ensure high quality design for the Downtown Station Area.

STANDARDS

**DS-16**

Buildings shall include architectural design features that create visual interest and avoid a large-scale, bulky or “box-like” appearance, shown in Figure UDCS-3. Different ways that this requirement may be met include but are not limited to those listed below.

1. Variety in Wall Plane. Exterior building walls vary in depth and/or direction. Building walls exhibit offsets, recesses, or projections with significant depth, or a repeated pattern of offsets, recesses, or projections of smaller depth.

2. Variety in Height or Roof Forms. Building height is varied so that a significant portion of the building has a noticeable change in height; or roof forms are varied over different portions of the building through changes in pitch, plane, and orientation.

Buildings shall include a distinct base, mid-section, and top as shown in these images. These buildings also incorporate a variety of façade materials and articulation.
3. Incorporation of Architectural Detail or Vegetative Elements into Façade Design. The building façades incorporate details such as window trim, window recesses, cornices, belt courses, changes in material, or other design elements, including landscaped terraces or green/living walls, in an integrated composition. The use of materials, textures, and colors enhance architectural interest and emphasize details and changes in plane.

DS-17 Buildings shall maintain the façade’s degree of architectural articulation and consistent finishes on all sides.

DS-18 Street-facing residential units should be designed such that windows of primary living areas face the street.

DS-19 Development on lots over 60,000 square feet in size shall comply with tower separation requirements shown on Figure UDCS-4. Residential towers over 100 feet tall shall be separated from other towers by a minimum of 100 feet as measured from the closest point of the face of one tower to the next, while non-residential towers over 100 feet tall shall be separated by a minimum of 80 feet, measured similarly.

DS-20 Development on First Street or Third Street between A Street and D Street in the Core Area shall not cast shadows covering more than 25 percent of Courthouse Square for more than three hours between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. Pacific Standard Time (between late October and early April), or for more than four hours between 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Pacific Daylight Time (between early April and late October). See Shadow Study, Figure UDCS-5 on the following page.
Figure UDCS-7: Corner Building Entrances

GUIDELINES

**DG-15**
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, as shown in Figure UDCS-3.

**DG-16**
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 UDCS-7.

**DG-17**
Window design should be varied to reflect the different components of a building (ground floor lobbies, stair towers, office suites, or residential units).

**DG-18**
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.
### DG-19
Colors should be harmonious; however, color contrast is encouraged to create contrast and accentuate architectural forms and features.

### DG-20
Design spaces that balance privacy and safety with access to air and sunlight. Prioritize south facing green space opportunities.

### DG-21
Recessed and projected balconies should be introduced as part of a composition that contributes to the scale and proportion of the residential building façades.

### DG-22
Upper-story stepbacks should incorporate features that activate the setback areas, such as balconies, terraces, living roofs, and greenery.

### DG-23
Design roofs to be an integral part of the overall building design and to complement neighboring roofs.

### DG-24
Incorporate usable outdoor terraces and rooftop gardens that overlook the street and provide visual interest.

### DG-25
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.

### DG-26
Incorporate creative elements into buildings for both functional and aesthetic purposes, such as vertical gardens, which provide aesthetic interest while aiding in temperature control.

### DG-27
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

Building design at the ground level is especially critical in an urban area with pedestrian traffic and active uses. New development of all types should support a continuously engaging public realm. Ground level commercial establishments should contribute to the pedestrian oriented nature of the Downtown Station Area and encourage individual storefronts to establish unique identity through façade articulation and creative design. Where residential uses are located on the ground floor, the ground floor building design must engage with public realm and contribute to a comfortable and inviting pedestrian experience while still maintaining privacy for residents. Flexible design that can accommodate both residential and commercial uses at the ground floor, and which can be reconfigured relatively easily from one land use to the other is encouraged, so as to allow for adaptation to economic conditions and/or demographic shifts over time.

STANDARDS

**DS-22**  Primary building entries, either individual or shared, shall be prominent and easy to identify; shall face a public street or paseo; and shall incorporate a projection (porch, stoop, bay window, etc.), recess, or combination of porch or recess.

**DS-23**  Architectural features at the ground level such as porches and stoops may project up to 6 feet into the required setbacks but cannot encroach into the public right-of-way without a variance. Architectural features such as balconies, bay windows, and awnings may project up to 6 feet over the property line, if located at least 10 feet above sidewalk grade.

**DS-24**  Buildings shall be constructed at the required front setback for at least 70 percent of linear street frontage. This build-to-line requirement may be modified or waived if entry courtyards, plazas, entries, outdoor eating and display areas, or mature Heritage trees are located between the build-to line and building, provided that the buildings are built to the edge of the courtyard, plaza, dining, or landscaped area.

**DS-25**  The minimum floor-to-ceiling height of the ground floor commercial space shall be a minimum of 12 feet, or a lesser height subject to approval by the review authority, as shown in Figure UDCS-8.

![Plantings, clear demarcation of private space, and placement of doors and windows are used to activate the ground floor of residential buildings.](image)

![Figure UDCS-8: Ground Floor Standards](image)
The depth of ground floor commercial space shall be sufficient to encourage small scale, or larger, commercial retail tenancies.

No walls facing streets may run in a continuous plane for more than 20 feet without an opening. Openings fulfilling this requirement shall have transparent glazing and provide views into work areas, display areas, sales areas, lobbies, or similar active spaces, or into window displays that are at least three feet deep. The maximum length of the blank wall may be 30 feet for retail establishments with a gross floor area of 25,000 square feet or greater, as shown in Figure UDCS-9.

Franchise architecture that is generic in nature, intended to be repeated on a mass-scale throughout a large region without consideration of and adaptation to local visual or cultural context, is prohibited unless doing so would violate State or federal law.

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.

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.

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

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

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

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.

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

Residential developments should be designed to maximize sunlight, privacy, ventilation, and scenic views from living areas.
DG-37 Townhouse development should incorporate landscaping in the required setbacks.

DG-38 Generally, a minimum of one pedestrian building entry should be provided for each 50 feet of residential street frontage.

DG-39 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.

DG-40 Common recreational spaces, green spaces, landscaping, and amenities should be designed to encourage interaction among occupants.

**PARKING**

The design and location of parking, service and loading areas is critical to maintaining the Downtown Station Area’s continuous pedestrian-oriented environment. This section addresses how new development can minimize the impacts of these needed Downtown, both visually and in terms of access. (For policies related to parking management, please see Chapter 3, Goal MOB-6).

**STANDARDS**

DS-29 Surface parking is not permitted between the sidewalk and building façade on streets in the Active Ground Floor Overlay.

DS-30 Bicycle parking for visitors shall be located as close to the primary entrance as possible and shall be readily accessible and visible from the street level.

DS-3 Loading and service areas shall not be visible from streets in the Active Ground Floor Overlay and shall be located at the rear of a property, in structures, or in the interior of blocks, as shown in Figure UDCS-10.

**GUIDELINES**

DG-41 Parking areas should generally be below grade, in a podium, or “wrapped” with uses to reduce the visual impact. Where not feasible, surface parking should be located behind buildings.

DG-42 Wherever possible, entrances to parking lots, structures, or podiums should be located along the side of a building and accessed from an alley or a driveway along the side of the property.

DG-43 Design of parking lots, structures, or podiums should prioritize personal safety and security with pedestrian-friendly sidewalks, open stairwells, adequate nighttime lighting, direct sight lines, and regular upkeep.

DG-44 Establish shared parking spaces that serve two or more separate developments, particularly when developments have different operation hours.

DG-45 The minimum distance between vehicular entries along a street frontage should be 75 feet and entries be located in a manner that minimizes pedestrian/auto conflicts.
Sustainability strategies to be employed downtown include efficiencies in structure design; energy usage and water consumption; reduction of waste; improving and maintaining indoor environmental quality for the comfort and health of occupants; and the optimization of operations and maintenance systems. Benefits of green buildings include natural resource conservation, energy efficiency, improved health of employees and residents, and increased economic vitality.

**Environmental Sustainability**

Environmentally sustainable development focuses on a “whole systems” approach to the siting, orientation, design, construction, operation, maintenance, renovation, and demolition of buildings and landscapes. Green building strategies to be employed downtown include efficiencies in structure design; energy usage and water consumption; reduction of waste; improving and maintaining indoor environmental quality for the comfort and health of occupants; and the optimization of operations and maintenance systems. Benefits of green buildings include natural resource conservation, energy efficiency, improved health of employees and residents, and increased economic vitality.

**DG-46**  Encourage curb-space designated for short-term pickup and drop-off in support of delivery, taxi and ride-hailing services.

**DG-47**  Loading areas should not be more than 30 feet from a building’s service entrance.

**DG-48**  Life cycle heating and cooling costs for potential building materials to maximize energy conservation. Incorporate screens, ventilated windows, green roofs, shade structures and shade trees along facades, rooftops and surface parking lots to minimize heat gain effects should be considered.

**DG-49**  Operable windows that allow natural ventilation and potentially eliminate the need for mechanical ventilation should be provided except where prohibited for the purpose of mitigating human health risk. If mechanical systems are necessary, use energy-efficient and low emission heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems.

**DG-50**  Lighting fixtures should be selected to maximize energy efficiency and minimize light pollution through reduced glare, light clutter and poorly directed lighting sources.

**DG-51**  Signage and wayfinding should be provided in commercial and residential developments to increase public awareness of electric vehicles and bicycles and support existing users.

**DG-52**  “Smart systems” that collect and employ data to control building operational systems, including lighting, heating, ventilation and air conditioning, security, and other systems should be incorporated in all new development.

**DG-53**  Evergreen shrubs and trees should be used as screening devices along property lines, around mechanical equipment, and to obscure grillwork and fencing associated with service areas and parking garages.

**DG-54**  Tree species planted in or adjacent to the public right of way should be appropriate for urban environments. Shallow root species with the potential to damage sidewalks and utility infrastructure should be avoided, as should trees that drop fruit.
HISTORIC RESOURCES

The Downtown Station Area contains some of Santa Rosa’s most prominent historic resources, which contribute to a distinct sense of place for residents and visitors. Santa Rosa’s rich architectural heritage spans many periods, with nineteenth-century Gothic, Greek Revival and Italianate houses, turn-of-the-century Stick/Eastlake styles, early twentieth century Craftsman and California bungalows, 1920s Spanish Revival, and 1930s Art Deco buildings. Properties that are officially designated on historic registers include Luther Burbank House and Garden, Hotel La Rose, the Old Post Office, Rosenburg’s Department Store, DeTurk Round Barn, the Rosenburg Building, and several other beloved landmarks.

The City’s Cultural Heritage Survey, originally completed in 1977 and updated in 1989, identifies six historic preservation districts and seven historic buildings in the Downtown Station Area. Santa Rosa’s preservation districts are areas that have special historic significance or represent one or more architectural periods or styles typical to the city’s history. The Historic (-H) combining district of the Zoning Code applies to all designated preservation districts, including Railroad Square, Saint Rose, Cherry Street, Olive Park, the West End, and a portion of Burbank Gardens. All properties within the designated preservation districts remain subject to standards for site planning and development, including height limits and setbacks, and directs procedural requirements to the Historic and Cultural Preservation Ordinance.

While the General Plan and City Code provide a robust framework for the protection and preservation of designated historic resources, as shown in Map UDCS-2, there are many properties in the Downtown Station Area that are over fifty years old but have not yet been evaluated for historic significance. Currently, properties are evaluated on a case-by-case basis as development is proposed. The DSASP calls for a comprehensive update to the Cultural Heritage Survey that considers “age-eligible” properties and applies current best practices for evaluation to provide clarity for future Downtown development and streamline the project approval process. Properties designated as historic resources may be eligible for federal tax credits or loans to assist with rehabilitation or adaptive reuse. Historic preservation can also be achieved with other strategies as well, including interpretive programs that celebrate the contributions of local figures, movements, and events.
GOALS AND POLICIES

GOAL UDCS-2: Historic resources that enhance Downtown character and sense of place.

POLICIES

UDCS-2.1 Preserve and enhance historic resources within the Downtown Station Area while accommodating significant new development and intensification of uses.

UDCS-2.2 Maintain review procedures for projects that could potentially affect designated historic resources or preservation districts.

UDCS-2.3 Prepare an historic context statement and conduct a comprehensive historic resources survey of age-eligible properties in the Downtown Station Area. The context statement should consider Downtown Station Area development through at least 1980, so that it can remain relevant for some years before requiring an update.

UDCS-2.4 Provide information on incentives to encourage rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of historic properties, consistent with Secretary of the Interior Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.

UDCS-2.5 Incorporate elements of historic-age buildings into new projects to impart heritage and character where feasible and not in conflict with promoting Downtown development and housing affordability.

UDCS-2.6 Partner with the Museum of Sonoma County and local business, community, cultural, and historic organizations to establish and operate interpretive programs, such as walking/audio tours or a “story pole,” permanent displays and signage; informational pamphlets; banners; and special events celebrating local history.

ADAPTIVE REUSE

Adaptive Reuse is the process of repurposing buildings that have outlived their original purposes for different uses or functions while at the same time retaining their historic features. This allows structures to retain their historic integrity while providing for occupants’ modern needs.
Map UDCS-3: Age-Eligible Properties

- Opportunity Area
- 50+ Years Old (1870-1969)
- 45-49 Years Old (1970-1974)
- Not Yet Age-Eligible as of 2019 (1975-2016)

Undercrossing
SMART Rail

Year built dates are based on available Sonoma County Assessor data, provided by the City of Santa Rosa.

Source: City of Santa Rosa, 2020; Page & Turnbull, 2019; Dyett & Bhatia, 2020