The value of a building should not be based solely on its own merits, but also on the contribution it makes in creating meaningful places for the public and particularly pedestrians.

Buildings in the Downtown Area and Station Area should feature high quality, durable materials. New buildings do not need to replicate specific historical styles or detailing, however they should relate well to the character of the surrounding buildings.

Goal 2.3.1

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.

Figure 2.3.1
A good example of contemporary in-fill.

Guidelines

A. Building elevations should reflect the uses occurring within the building.

B. As a general rule, align infill buildings with existing buildings along the street frontage.

C. Encourage the inclusion of colonnades, public spaces and outdoor dining.

D. A zero-foot setback is generally preferred in the downtown. This creates a continuous street façade.

E. Façades on in-fill buildings should be compatible with the existing building frontage.

Goal 2.3.2

Encourage continuous building frontages with minimum gaps so as not to undermine the spatial rhythm of the street corridor.

Figure 2.3.2
Example of a building that breaks the spatial rhythm of the street.

Guidelines

A. To the greatest extent feasible, downtown buildings should be built to the property line, when the property line is adjacent to the street. However, new development on the existing City Hall site may be set back from the property line at the discretion of the Design Review Board.

B. Divide buildings into increments or bays along the street frontage of about 50 feet. Wider buildings should be subdivided along the street elevation with columns, pilasters, change in material, varying parapet heights, or the like, to create a rhythm that breaks up the wall plane. The most common lot in core area Santa Rosa is 50 feet wide. Historically, the most common building width is also around 50 feet wide. By repeating this increment in new construction, a rhythm is created that relates to the historic pattern.

C. Incorporate special treatment which emphasizes the corner of buildings that occupy the corner of a block. While the general rule is for the building front to be placed at the back of the sidewalk, a cutaway or diagonal entry may be an effective approach.

D. Commercial buildings are encouraged to exhibit an urban character and compliment the mixed use and residential character of adjacent areas. The objective is for building design to reinforce active streets with visual interest for pedestrians and to avoid dull, scale less, inarticulate buildings that deaden the streetscape.

Goal 2.3.3

Provide multi-tenant, pedestrian-oriented development at the street level.

Figure 2.3.3
Example of a well designed multi-tenant, pedestrian-oriented development

Guidelines

A. Buildings should provide street-level, pedestrian-oriented uses on all street fronts.

B. Buildings design should encourage multi-tenant occupancy at the lower two floors.

C. Design buildings specifically for their sites. Repetitive or corporate building "trademark" designs used in other communities or other locations than Santa Rosa should not be used.

Goal 2.3.4

Accentuate the primary entrances of buildings.

Figure 2.3.4

Guidelines

A. 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.

B. Clearly identify entries to upper office or residential floors. Visitors will often park on-street or in a structure and approach the building from the street. Access should be readily apparent.

C. Primary building entrances should be accentuated. These entrances should be designed so that they are not easily confused with entrances into ground level businesses.

D. Provide entry doorways to ground floor establishments at least every 50 feet.

E. Design main entries to be prominent and easy to identify and distinguishable from the storefront. Recessed entries are encouraged.

F. Civic art and artistic crafting of building materials can help distinguish building entrances.

Goal 2.3.5

Encourage the inclusion of local character.

Figure 2.3.5
Hotel La Rose using locally quarried stone.

Guidelines

A. The use of quality local materials is encouraged local character should be included in the design.

B. Care should be taken to avoid nostalgic reproductions and use the materials in a meaningful manner.

Goal 2.3.6

Control on-site structure parking.

Figure 2.3.6
Example of structure parking above ground floor retail uses.

Guidelines

A. Parking should occur at interior courts or above or below grade. As much as possible, parking should be avoided at grade.

B. Where above ground structured parking is located at the perimeter of a building, this should be screened in such a way that cars are not visible from adjacent buildings or the street.

C. Above ground parking should be designed in such a way that neighboring buildings are not adversely affected by headlights.

D. For properties that are zoned with the Station Area Street Combining District, ground floor parking is not permitted within 20 feet of the street frontage or back of sidewalk, whichever is greater.

Goal 2.3.7

Encourage superior design with well-crafted and detailed building facades, particularly at the street level.

Figure 2.3.7

Guidelines

A. While supporting architectural diversity, extreme stylistic statements may not be appropriate unless there is an underlying thread of neighborhood compatibility. The desire to make your building different for the sake of difference is not enough. A building should be distinct in order to add richness to the neighborhood fabric. However, it should not simply scream at the neighboring buildings for attention.

B. Buildings should be built as high-quality, long-term components to the urban fabric.

C. Use high quality, durable and low maintenance materials in downtown buildings. This is particularly true of the first floor, where heavy use can damage materials and finishes. Preferred materials include: tile, brick, split faced concrete block, concrete cementitious horizontal siding, masonry veneer, and powder coated aluminum or traditional wood storefronts. Discouraged materials include: EIFS (exterior insulation and finish system) and vinyl siding.

D. Residential grade material(s) such as plywood or composite panel siding or composite siding need regular repainting and do not stand up well to the sun in our climate. When neglected, these materials become shabby. Additionally, their residential character is not consistent with the urban character of the Downtown.

E. Materials should be presented in horizontal bands. Building materials should be graduated with the heavier materials closer to the ground.

Goal 2.3.8

Create buildings that provide human scale.

Figure 2.3.8
Example of well proportioned building with weather protection.

Guidelines

A. Include features that articulate the upper floor wall plane, such as windows, balconies, awnings, etc. Recessed windows are encouraged as they create a sense of wall depth and add a shadow accent. When an upper floor(s) has a residential use, balconies or "continental" balconies add a valuable element to the streetscape as well as extending the volume of the unit to the outside.

B. Design buildings to contribute to an interesting streetscape. Interest can be created by including "human scale" elements which give one a sense of his or her relationship to a structure, details such as: balconies, awnings, canopies, arcades, wall insets, reveals, etc.

C. Buildings should be designed with a variety of scales, creating a scale and level of detail at the street level appropriate to the pedestrian.

D. Clearly articulating different uses at lower building levels will aid in creating a sense of human scale in mid-rise buildings. Addressing human scale may further be achieved through architectural detailing and variation in the three dimensional character of the building mass as it rises skyward. Monolithic, vertical extrusions of a maximum building footprint are strongly discouraged.

E. Individual storefronts within the rhythm of the building are encouraged.

F. Where existing adjacent buildings have a consistent massing, this should be reinforced.

Goal 2.3.9

Encourage buildings with active and open facades that interest those walking by and create an active pedestrian oriented streetscape.

Figure 2.3.9

Guidelines

A. Do not stylize or add ornament to buildings in a garish, conspicuous manner in order to call attention to the building without regard for the context of the surrounding neighborhood.

B. It is important in the downtown to encourage pedestrians with interesting storefronts and activities that can be seen through glass. Blank walls discourage pedestrian activity.

Goal 2.3.10

To encourage buildings that will accommodate a variety of uses over time to permit the natural evolution that takes place in a city center.

Figure 2.3.10
Example of a building originally designed for office uses which has since been converted to senior housing.

Guidelines

A. A building is at the end of its lifespan when factors including operation or maintenance costs, repair or reconstruction costs, pressure for more flexible spaces, among other things, outweigh the cost of building a similar building.

B. Buildings should have built-in flexibility to their design and recognize that buildings frequently undergo alterations to conform to uses not considered in the original design.

C. Consideration should be given to floor-to-floor heights and structural grids as they may impact possible future uses.

D. Preservation and adaptive reuse of significant historic buildings is more desirable than replacement.

E. Buildings date the historical development of the city. It is important that any mimicry of past architectural styles not be exercised in such a way that the historical records become confused.

Goal 2.3.11

Encourage buildings that minimize energy consumption.

Figure 2.3.11
Solar tube collectors as an architectural element.

Guidelines

A. Integrate attached structures and equipment such as solar heat collector panels, antennas, large satellite dishes, and so on, into the project architecture or screen from view.

B. Building elevations should respond to their solar orientation.

C. Shading devices should be architecturally integrated to block unwanted sun (seasonally and at daily times of peak solar gain).

D. Facades should not necessarily be fenestrated or shaded the same on all elevations.

E. Light shelves and transom windows can provide shading as well as bring daylight deeper into building interiors.

F. Better daylighting reduces HVAC loads.

Goal 2.3.12

Incorporate sustainable building principles into all new development.

Figure 2.3.12
Example of a project that utilized native trees and extended eaves for natural cooling.

Guidelines

A. Site and building design that improves energy efficiency is encouraged. Incorporate natural cooling and passive solar heating. This may include extended eaves, window overhangs, awnings and tree placement for natural cooling, and building and window orientation to take advantage of passive solar heating.

B. Use of green or sustainable building materials, including recycled content materials that are consistent with the underlying architectural style and character of the building are encouraged.

C. Green site design is encouraged. Utilize native trees and plants where possible, incorporating permeable paving and designing resource-efficient landscapes and gardens.

Goal 2.3.13

Reduce the appearance of a building's scale and streetscape presence, help control wind at the ground floor and create a continuous street wall edge.

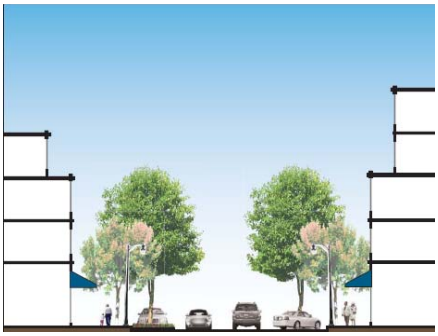

Figure 2.3.13

Guidelines

A. New development should provide a minimum of a six-foot building step back to ensure a visual break in multi-story structures along key streets within the Station Area. Features such as open balconies can project into the step back while still providing the visual break. Consideration should be given to surrounding buildings and the step backs provided on those buildings. A "cookie-cutter" design, with numerous buildings along one frontage stepping back at exactly the same point should be avoided. Step backs should be provided on buildings that have frontage on the following streets:

- Step back above the third floor:

  Fourth Street – Highway 101 to E Street
  Mendocino Avenue – College Avenue to Fourth Street
  Sixth / A / Seventh Street Corridor – Highway 101 to Humboldt Street
  Fourth Street – Railroad X-ing to Highway 101
  Sixth Street – Playhouse to Highway 101
  Wilson Street – Ninth Street to Third Street
  B Street – Healdsburg Avenue to Seventh Street
  Healdsburg Avenue – College Avenue to B Street
  Railroad Street – Third Street to Santa Rosa Creek
  Cleveland Avenue – College Avenue to Ninth Street
  West Ninth Street – Dutton Avenue to Wilson Street
  Sebastopol Road – Dutton Avenue to Olive Street
  Dutton Avenue – College Avenue to Sebastopol Road
  West Third Street – Imwalle Gardens to Highway 101

- Step back above the fifth floor:

  Third Street – Highway 101 to E Street
  B Street – Seventh Street to First Street
  Santa Rosa Avenue – Sonoma Avenue to Third Street
  First Street – B Street to Santa Rosa Avenue