

City of Plymouth Design Guidelines



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Introduction

This Design Guidelines document incorporates the Downtown Plymouth Combined Zone Design Review, Standards, and Guidelines (adopted September 2012 and amended with this document) and the new Mixed-Use and Multi-Family Design Standards together into one document. These Guidelines were adopted by the City Council on September 11, 2025 (Resolution No. 2025-20).

Additional Requirements

For properties located within the City's Scenic Corridor, which is generally defined as all parcels or lots that have a property line which is adjacent to Highway 49 or Shenandoah Road (east of HWY 49), please consult the City's Scenic Corridor Design Guidelines (adopted December 11, 2014) for additional requirements. The Scenic Corridor Design Guidelines, together with this document, form the design requirements for these properties. Please also refer to Chapter 19.66, Overlay Districts, for additional information.

We also recommend that you review the City's General Plan (adopted in 2009) for additional requirements that may apply to your project such as circulation requirements, permitted land uses, policies, and other information.

The City's General Plan, General Plan Land Use Map, Zoning Map, and Scenic Corridor Design Guidelines are all available on the Planning Department webpage (<https://cityofplymouth.org/planning/>).

Permit Requirements

It is the responsibility of each project applicant to review the requirements for permitting in the City. Most exterior improvements or new construction requires a permit from the Planning Department prior to the issuance of a Building Permit (or construction if a Building Permit is not required). The type of permit required varies based on the characteristics of the proposed project. Please review the permit requirements in Chapter 19.18, Design Review and Zoning Clearance, of the Municipal Code for more information.

Preliminary Review

Applicants may apply for a Preliminary Review prior to formal application of their project. This Preliminary Review allows the applicant to provide partial plans, sketches, conceptual plans, specific questions the applicant wishes to have an answer to, or a full plan set for review and comments by the City. This process can be helpful to the applicant by allowing the City to provide feedback prior to completion of the project plans.

Planning Staff

The Planning Staff is always available to assist you with your project. To contact a City Planner, please call (209) 245-6941.

Chapter 1: Downtown Plymouth Design Guidelines

Introduction

Unless exempt, the standards and guidelines contained within this Chapter shall apply to all projects within the Downtown Historic Overlay District (see Map below), defined in Section 19.66.020 of the Plymouth Municipal Code.

Boundary of Downtown Historic Overlay District



Structures of Historic Significance

When considering the approval of plans for a building which is itself a historic structure, or is inside of the DT combined zoning district, the Planning Commission shall consider its conformity with the features found either on the original building or on those typical of Plymouth's history. The following structures are deemed to have historical significance and are typical, in design features, of buildings which exemplify architecture of the 1840–1930 period:

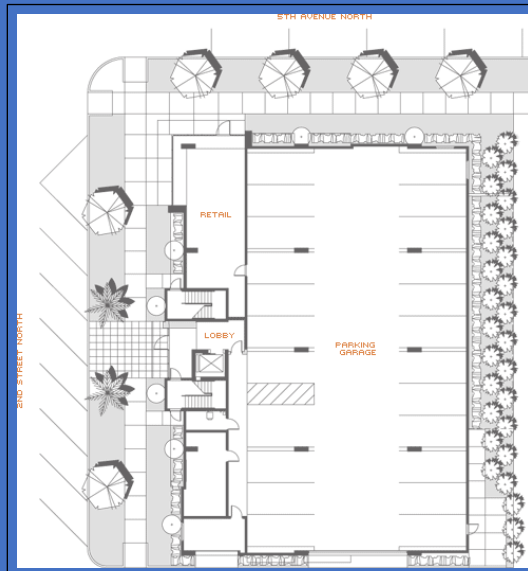
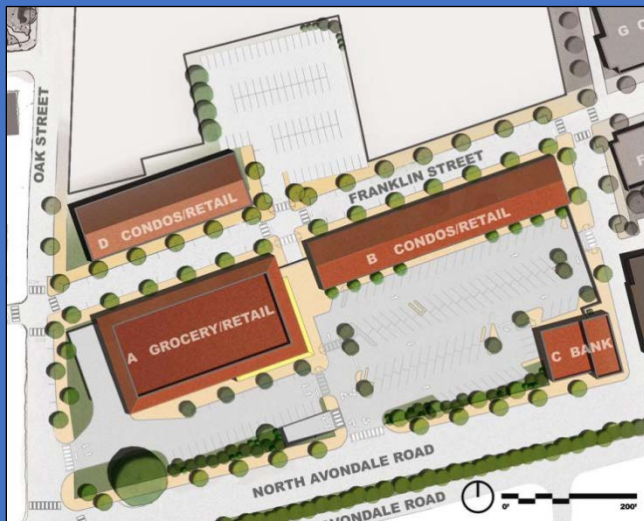
1. Oddfellows Hall of Lodge Hill
2. Masonic Temple, 9325 Main Street
3. Caucasian Hall, 9359 Main Street
4. Native Sons Hall, 18561 Main Street
5. Empire Store/Levaggi's Store, 9470 Main Street
6. Roos Building, 9486 Main Street
7. Burke Building, 9375, 9379, and 9383 Main Street

Site Planning

One of the objectives for Downtown Plymouth is to promote the development of an economically vital, historic village core that will become the commercial and cultural hub of northern Amador and southern El Dorado counties. Currently, there are several opportunity sites along Main Street where new commercial infill projects may be positive long-term improvements to the economic vitality of the Main Street area. In order to maintain and improve the character of Downtown Plymouth, infill development shall be designed to acknowledge and respond to the needs of pedestrians. Increased pedestrian use in a downtown can result in a significant upswing in the economic vitality of the area, particularly in areas with tourism opportunities.

Projects in the downtown area shall conform to the following site plan standards.

1. Orientation. New buildings or remodeled existing buildings within the downtown core shall be designed parallel with and directly adjacent to the sidewalk. This includes zero setbacks against the street and zero side yard setbacks, except at side yards/plaza spaces.
2. Storefronts. The street level of buildings should comprise mainly transparent storefronts and inviting entries.
3. Parking. Required parking shall be provided behind buildings or accommodated in public/private parking areas. Do not set buildings back from the right-of-way to accommodate parking.
4. Trash Enclosures. Trash enclosures shall be included in all projects, except for parcels without off-street parking. All trash enclosures shall be designed consistent with the following standards:
 - a. Trash enclosures shall be built of noncombustible materials (wood not permitted).
 - b. Materials/finishes shall relate to and be of same quality as materials used on the building.
 - c. Landscaping and screening shall be included to help visually buffer loading areas and enclosures.
 - d. Overhead screening is required when the enclosure is visible from multistoried buildings.



Examples of Site Plans with parking located behind the “Main Street” and buildings constructed with a zero front yard setback to activate the street.

Architectural Character

To reach the goal of developing a coherent and distinctive physical form and structure that reflects Plymouth’s small-town qualities while creating/maintaining a well-defined, pedestrian-oriented downtown, the architectural character of the buildings within Downtown Plymouth must be addressed. The height, width, scale, and massing of the buildings define relationships. Projects in the downtown area shall conform to the following design and development standards:

1. Overall Design Principles. The following standards apply to all projects.
 - a. New buildings shall include at least two architectural elements such as trim, recessed windows, arcades, canopies, cornices, recessed entry ways, projection, or tower elements.
 - b. All buildings which face a public street shall be designed so that there are no blank walls and shall meet the requirements of these standards. Architectural details or design shall be continued on all elevations that face a public street.
 - c. Larger, bulky, or long building walls shall be broken up by changes in height, wall plane, shadow relief, clustering, or other means.
 - d. Entries to buildings shall be clearly identifiable and shall act as a principal organizing element in the building design/massing.
 - e. Downtown buildings will have undulating façades and varying heights to provide added visual interest and human-scale niche areas for the downtown user.

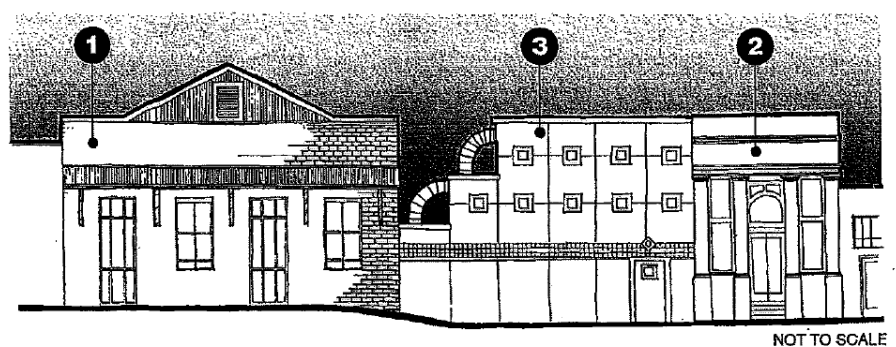
- f. Each building shall be defined with a base, body, and cap segment.

2. Massing and Articulation.

- a. Articulation of the building's façade and roofline will improve the compatibility of a larger building with smaller surrounding buildings.
- b. Stepbacks on a building shall be recessed at least 10 feet from the primary façade.



Building massing that meets the guidelines (above).



LEGEND

- ① Existing Brick Building on Main Street
- ② Existing Bank Building on Main Street
- ③ New Infill Building

This infill building shown, is an example of massing and articulation that is not allowed within the downtown.

- c. The overall mass of a building in Downtown Plymouth shall not be more than 20 percent larger than the facades of adjacent buildings. This includes new infill buildings or the renovation of existing buildings.

- 3. Height, Weight, Scale. The height of the buildings enclosing the adjacent street space influences the quality of the streetscape environment. Some variation in building height and width is acceptable, but consideration must be given to the height, width, and scale of adjoining and nearby buildings and building groups.

- a. A building's front (façade) elevation must not be more than 20 percent larger in area than adjacent buildings.
- b. Where off-street parking is provided between buildings, walls no more than 36-inches tall shall be provided between the parking area and the public sidewalk with landscaped planting strip with a minimum width of 36 inches in front of the wall.



- 4. Form. The most important element of a downtown building is its storefront façade. Since building façades greatly contribute to the overall downtown environment, special attention must be given to their architectural design.

- a. Walls shall be articulated with varied reveal patterns (control joints), material and texture and color changes, details, a change in place and direction, or other means. These and other measures create distinct shadow patterns in the façade, resulting in the increased perception of depth and variety.
- b. Wall surfaces facing the street shall not exceed 250 square feet or continuous runs greater than 40 feet without some form of articulation.
- c. Building façades shall have a balance of solid and transparent surfaces.
- d. At least 60 percent of ground-floor street-facing walls, shall include transparent window or door glazing. Where it is infeasible to provide glazing, such as a parking garage, trash room, mechanical room, or electrical room, landscaping with a minimum dimension of 18-inches in depth and a width



- equivalent to 70 percent of the wall shall be provided.
- e. The materials used on a building façade shall be consistent with the architectural style of the building. All façades must have vertical divisions at least every 20 feet.
 - f. Finish materials are limited to brick, stone, concrete, tile, etc., are required at the ground floors of buildings (façades), including column/pilaster bases and bulkheads.
 - g. Façades must include storefront windows and shall include a minimum of three (3) of the following features: trellises, arcades, canopies, awnings, roof overhangs, recessed entries, reveals, wainscot detailing, varied materials, and other architectural elements. These and other elements contribute to a building's overall character, provide visual diversity, and most importantly enhance pedestrian (human) scale.



Example of good storefront designs in Plymouth.

5. Building Materials and Colors (Allowed). Building materials and colors shall be high quality and/or natural, using:
 - a. Brick masonry, natural stone (such as granite or river rock), split-faced multicolored aggregate concrete block, or architectural terra cotta at building bases, column/pilaster bases, plinth clocks/blocks, and other architectural detailing.
 - b. Brick masonry in medium to light earth-toned colors for the building's base body and detailing.
 - c. Smooth-finished cement plaster in lighter muted shades as a building wall material.
 - d. Horizontal lap siding (wood, wood/cement composite).
 - e. Painted heavy timber (wood) beams, posts, balconies.
 - f. Fabric or metal awnings or canopies in colors which include dark forest green, burgundy, rust red, medium to dark blue, and black.

6. Prohibited Building Materials. The following materials are prohibited.

- a. Plywood or dimensional “framing” lumber.
- b. Corrugated Metal.
- c. Smooth concrete block.
- d. Fiberglass panels.
- e. Vinyl siding (flat siding, vinyl siding with wood grain materials would be allowed).
- f. Highly reflective and/or brightly colored materials.
- g. Roof materials (wood or composition shingles) used on building façades.



Enhanced streetscape.

Outdoor Retail Sales

The goal of the following standards is to animate the downtown environment by allowing the establishment of outdoor retail sales (as an augmentation to a retail business operating within the adjacent building) on limited portions of the public sidewalk subject to the minimum dimensional and performance standards detailed below to ensure outdoor retail design is functionally compatible with other needs and provides for the protection of the public health, safety, and welfare.

1. Outdoor Retail Sales. Outdoor retail sales (as an augmentation to a retail business operating within the adjacent building) are permitted on limited portions of the public sidewalk subject to compliance with the City’s Zoning Code and the following performance standards:

- a. Outdoor retail sales shall not obstruct sidewalk pedestrian traffic or create public health and safety hazards. Accordingly, all sidewalks shall maintain a 6-foot minimum clear dimension between the outside edge of any outdoor retail sales feature and any fixed element within the sidewalk right-of-way. The 6-foot minimum clear dimension may be measured from the outermost point of the outdoor retail sales feature as a radius of a circle.
- b. All applicants shall provide proof of insurance for the existing business and the applicant's ability to obtain a policy of general commercial liability insurance for the outdoor retail sales use.
- c. All outdoor retail sales shall be level with the sidewalk and handicap accessible.
- d. If decorative/accent lighting is incorporated into the outdoor retail sales, it shall meet all Municipal Code requirements.
- e. All outdoor retail sales shelves, tables, racks, and similar features shall be movable.

Landscape

Projects in the downtown area shall conform to the following landscape standards:

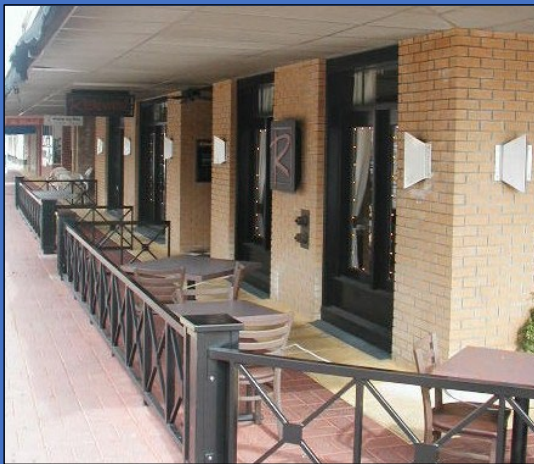
1. Landscape Requirements. Unless otherwise preempted by these Design Guidelines, the quantity and location of landscaping for new commercial projects shall be consistent with the requirements in the City's Zoning Code.
2. Outdoor Dining. New restaurants proposing outdoor dining shall be required to provide landscaping as required within the Municipal Code. However, reductions to the landscape standards may be considered as an exception if the outdoor dining area otherwise substantially complements the historic character of Downtown Plymouth through exemplary architecture and design.
3. Screening for Outdoor Dining. Screen walls at outdoor dining areas shall be scaled accordingly for visibility and safety and incorporate landscaping to soften appearance. The height of garden walls should be a maximum of 36 inches above the adjacent sidewalk.

Hardscape

The goal of the following standards is to ensure hardscaping that is compatible in scale and design with Downtown Plymouth. Hardscaping includes seating, lighting fixtures, special paving materials, public art, and similar features. It defines the pedestrian's experience of the public space along the sidewalk. Projects in the downtown area shall conform to the following hardscape standards:

1. If not yet improved, hardscaping and landscaping improvements shall be provided in the space between the curb and the building for any new development.

2. If not yet improved, pedestrian amenities (benches, outdoor seating, pedestrian-scaled lighting, clear windows, varied textures, materials, etc.) shall be provided along the building frontage, when feasible, for new development.
3. Pedestrian amenities shall also be provided along the entire building frontage of the side streets to the property line or alley/property line.
4. Outdoor furniture and fixtures shall be located where they will not conflict with circulation patterns.
5. Outdoor furniture and fixtures shall be of similar colors of the building.
6. Outdoor furniture and fixtures shall be of a sturdy construction that include wood, metal, or other recycled materials, to withstand abuse.
7. All exterior vending machines are prohibited.
8. No signs are allowed on, or as a part of, any outdoor furniture.
9. All utility boxes shall be installed fully underground or incorporated into the building design through screening.
10. Accent materials shall be used within sidewalks, patios, entrance courts, crosswalks, handicap ramps, and vehicular turn aisles.



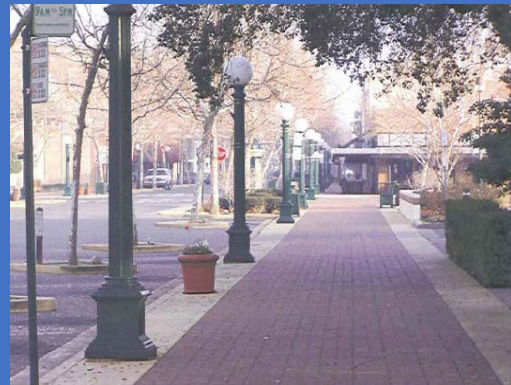
Hardscape examples.

Streetscape

One of the established objectives for Plymouth is to create a well-defined, pedestrian-oriented “village core,” which serves as the center of the commercial, civic, and cultural life of Plymouth and surrounding areas. What defines this quality is the type, style, configuration, and detail contained in the streetscape elements, specifically the sidewalks, lighting, and street furniture (such as benches, trash containers, bicycle racks, flower pots, drinking fountains, etc.). Projects in the downtown area shall conform to the following streetscape standards:

1. Pedestrian Oriented Streetscape. Future streetscape improvements shall be pedestrian-oriented and include effective uses of lighting, street furniture, and landscaping.
2. Paving. Sidewalks, curbs, and paving design shall utilize historic paving/sidewalk patterns through downtown, stamped crosswalks, and colored concrete. Sidewalks shall be smooth and continuous along storefronts and must be repaired if damaged. When required, new sidewalk materials, finish, and pattern shall match existing adjacent sidewalks.
3. Streetscape Elements. The style of materials for streetscape elements (i.e., lighting, benches, planters, etc.) shall be chosen for historical authenticity and consistency with Plymouth’s character. The streetscape elements shall be made of materials that are durable and low maintenance.
4. Lighting. Both on- and off-site lighting standards shall use high-pressure sodium or LED fixtures, which are more energy efficient than metal halide, mercury vapor, fluorescent, or incandescent fixtures.

Enhanced streetscape examples.



Parking

When new commercial projects are proposed in the downtown area, the required parking should be located and configured so that the desired pedestrian-oriented streetscape envisioned for Plymouth is not hindered. Projects in the downtown area shall conform to the following parking standards:

1. Shared parking between commercial uses is encouraged.
2. Parking lots should be designed so that pedestrians walk parallel to moving cars, and drive aisles should be perpendicular to buildings.
3. Locate off-street parking behind buildings with access from side or back streets or at mid- block breaks.
4. When off-street parking lots adjacent to sidewalks and between buildings are developed, they shall be screened with low walls that are a maximum of three feet high and/or landscaping that is dimensional to replicate the rhythm of the buildings on the block.

5. On-street parking must be reserved for customers, while alley or remote parking areas shall be used by employees.
6. Development of off-street parking lots in front of downtown buildings is not allowed.

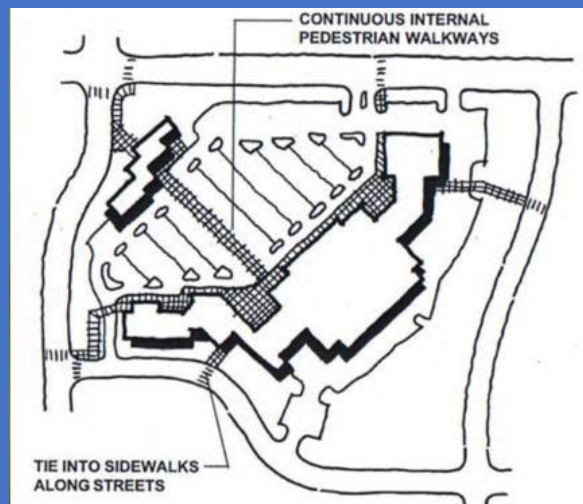
Access

To ensure that automobiles, bicycles, and ultimately pedestrians can move safely and easily between the public right-of-way, parking lots, sidewalks, and buildings, the following standards shall be incorporated into new commercial projects. Vehicle, bicycle, and pedestrian circulation shall comply with the following standards:

1. Primary pedestrian access to all buildings shall be through an entry on the street side.
2. Vehicle and pedestrian circulation patterns shall be as simple and obvious as possible.
3. Circulation shall be designed to avoid all conflict between vehicles and people.
4. Accessibility and safety (non-slip surfaces) shall be provided.
5. Bicycle routes shall be marked and not travel on pedestrian sidewalks or pathways.
6. Pedestrian paths shall be separated from automobile circulation routes.
7. Paving materials with color/texture/pattern must be an integral part of the design where in the right-of-way.
8. Varied paving materials shall occur at the overlap of pedestrian and vehicular areas.
9. Pedestrian paths shall include trees, lighting, overhead trellises, and sitting areas,.
10. A lighted route must be provided from buildings to parking areas.
11. Pedestrian alleys shall be aligned with mid-block crosswalks where possible.



Examples of pedestrian walkways.



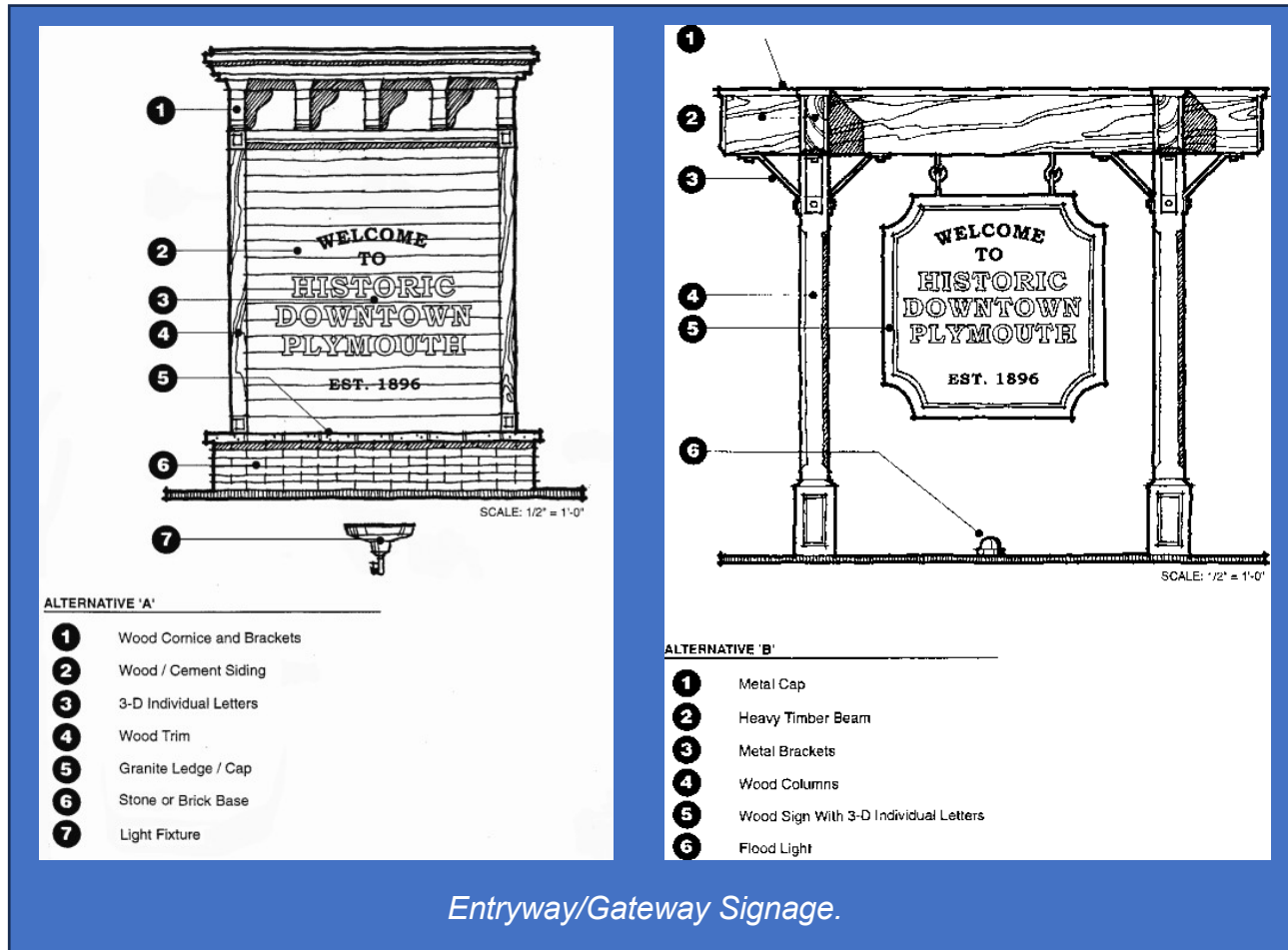
Signage

Entry and Gateway Signage

Significant entry and gateway statements are instrumental in establishing both physical boundaries and a sense of local identity and pride in the small downtowns of rural communities. Strategically placed at intersections surrounding the downtown area, entry and gateway signage will draw residents and tourists alike to Downtown Plymouth. Entry and gateway signage shall conform to the following standards:

1. The site planning of gateway features shall be developed concurrently with the long-term design of the intersection(s) and/or median(s) where they will be located.
2. All gateway elements/features shall be designed using the form, materials, colors, and textures that represent the architectural character of Plymouth.
3. Gateway elements/signs shall be emphasized significantly at the primary entrances to Main Street and convey the following hierarchy of elements/features to visitors:
 - a. Major entry features/signs must be visible to traffic traveling in all directions. The element/sign may comprise multiple elements located at the four corners of an intersection.
 - b. Secondary gateway elements/signs shall be smaller than primary gateway features, but larger than typical directional or street signage. The features must be effective for slow-moving auto traffic and pedestrians alike, with ample detail and appropriate materials. Physical design objectives for the

- primary gateway elements shall also be applied to secondary elements.
- c. Intersections along Main Street shall reinforce the edges of Downtown Plymouth. Elements such as information kiosks, thematic bollards, historic light standards with thematic banners, street signage, new paving patterns in intersections, and streetscape items at/near intersections must be employed to increase the cohesiveness and unity of downtown.

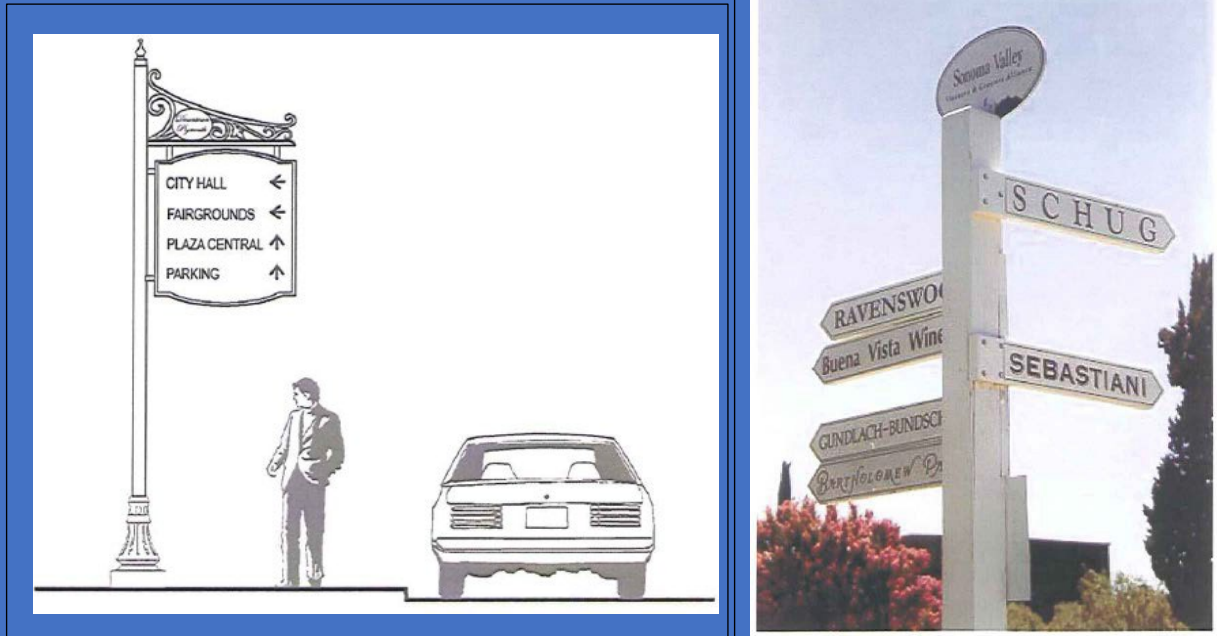


Wayfinding and Directional Signage

Wayfinding or directional signage is a beneficial way to guide the traveling public and visitors to specific locations within the city as well as serve as a kiosk for several destinations or tourist spots. Wayfinding and directional signage shall conform to the following standards:

1. Directional signage shall be designed as part of the 1920s architectural theme that exists in Downtown Plymouth.
2. The signage shall include a grouping of several businesses or tourist destinations to prevent the proliferation of individual directional signs.

3. Directional signage shall be designed so that it can be easily read by the traveling public as well as by pedestrians.



Wayfinding/Directional Signage.

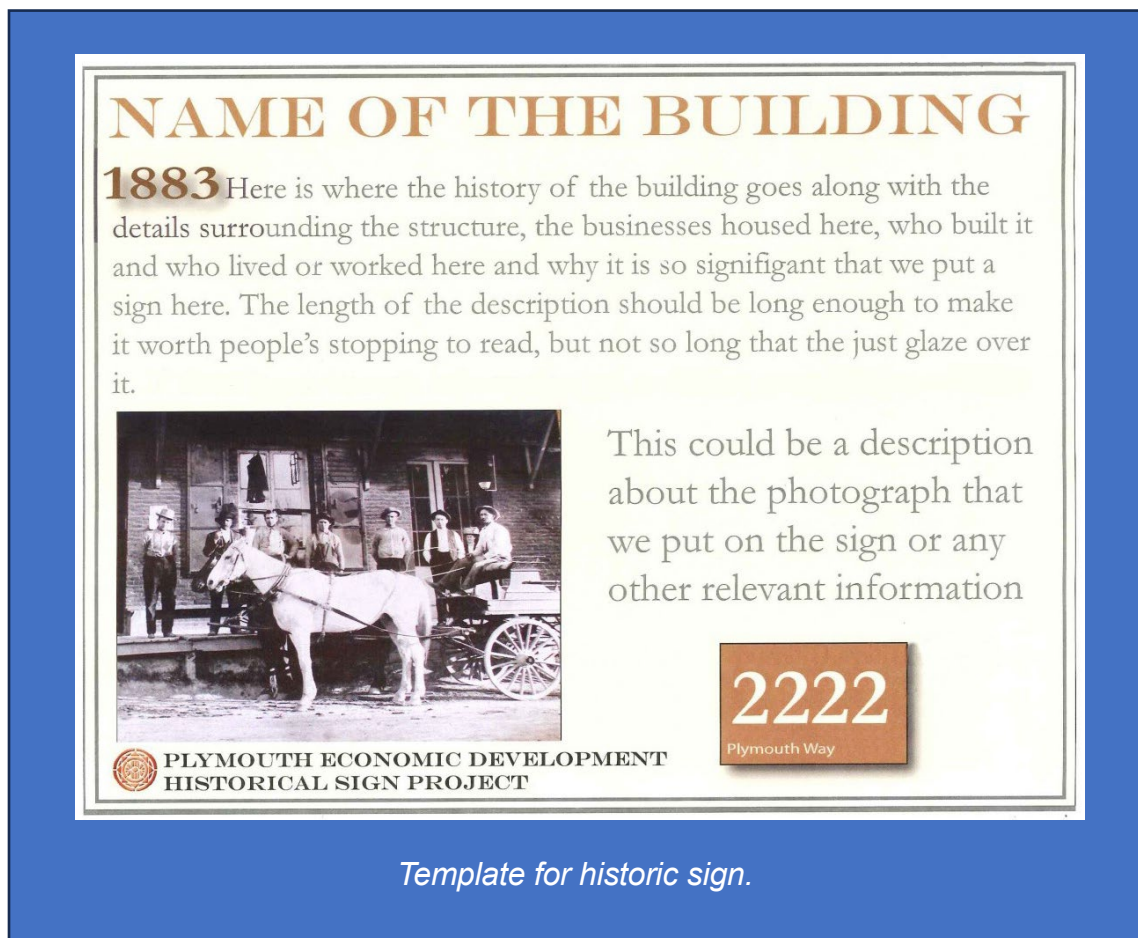
Historic Signage

Historic signage is a valuable tool used to showcase the historical significance of components within a city. This signage informs visiting tourists of interesting facts about a city's history as well as reminds local citizens of their city's origin. Historic signage shall conform to the following standards:

1. Historic signs shall be no larger than 12 by 24 inches.
2. Signs placed outdoors should be lacquer coated or protected in a like manner to prevent weather damage.
3. Signs are to be framed with wood or metal with a natural wood appearance that represents the architectural character of Plymouth.
4. The historic sign should contain the following elements as shown in the example below:
 - a. The name of the building should be prominently displayed across the top of the sign in a bold, distinguished font.
 - b. The year of the building's construction should be included below the

name of the building, followed by a detailed history of the building and its function in the community. The description should fit within the area noted on the template.

- c. A photograph of the building in its early days should be incorporated below the description, along with a caption that provides the reader with some relevant information.
- d. A box containing the building's address should be displayed in the bottom right corner of the sign.



Storefront Signage

Signage is an important part of any downtown area, especially commercially oriented signs. It is important that downtown signage relate to the architectural character of buildings, be oriented to pedestrians, and enhance the overall downtown image. Storefront signage shall conform to the following standards:

1. Signs shall be constructed from wood, material with a natural wood appearance, concrete, metal, screen print on canvas awnings, or painted graphics on building surfaces. Other materials may be approved by the Community Development Director on a case-by-case basis.

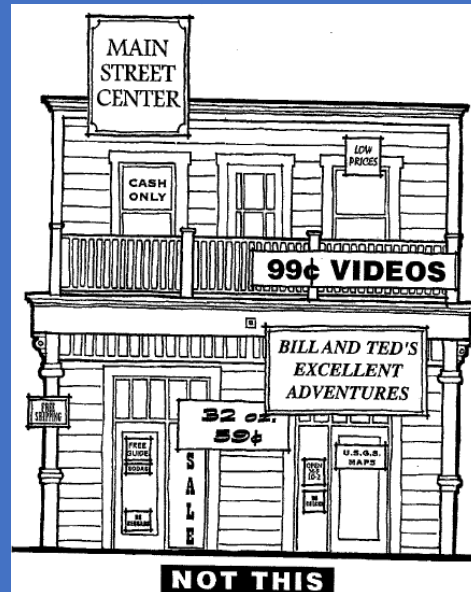
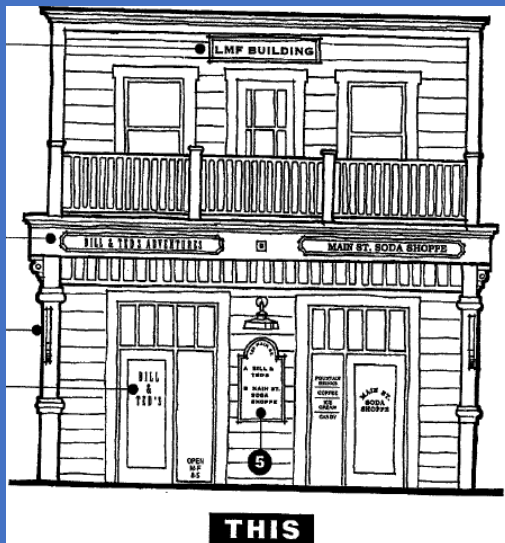
2. Sign size shall not exceed the maximum dimensions defined in the Zoning Code.
3. Commercial signs, posters, or banners on windows are may not exceed 25% of the glazed area.
4. Signs shall be illuminated by means of either external lighting with fixtures that complement the sign and shield pedestrians or by halo lighting that individually illuminates opaque letters from behind. Internal illumination of signs is prohibited in all circumstances.
5. Backlit awnings are prohibited if they illuminate signage that is mounted or attached on the awning.
6. All conductors, transformers, and other equipment necessary for signs shall be concealed. Mounting hardware for signs shall be made inconspicuous. Fasteners, bolts, and clips for signs shall be made of noncorroding and stain-free materials.
7. Signs should relate proportionally to building elements, be an integral component of design, and complement the building façade.
8. Detached signs placed in front of buildings within the public right-of-way are permitted on limited portions of the public sidewalk within Downtown Plymouth subject to compliance with the following application procedures and performance standards:
 - a. Signs and banners shall not obstruct sidewalk pedestrian traffic or create public health and safety hazards. Accordingly, all sidewalks shall maintain an 8-foot minimum clear dimension between any sign and any fixed element within the sidewalk right-of-way.
 - b. The character of each sign, including the type/style, should reflect the nature of the business and be of high quality.
9. No signs or advertisement should project beyond the building eave lines.
10. Signage elements should incorporate materials, colors, and shapes that appropriately reflect the building's architecture. Sign materials and design shall be compatible with and complementary to the structures and areas that they identify.
11. Signage should be constructed of high-quality, low-maintenance, and long-lasting materials.
12. Signs should be clear, concise, and informative.
13. Attached wall signs must be incorporated into the building architecture and

should not extend beyond roof eave lines.

14. Wording or signs should not include the product sold, except as part of the tenant's trade name.
15. Signs should be simple and easy to read. This includes color, style, and sizing of letters. Lettering styles and logos that reflect the nature of the business work best.
16. The overall design of the sign should be compatible with the building's architectural character.
17. Suggested sign types include three-dimensional and individual letters, hanging signs, window signs, icon/graphic/logo signs, external light signs, and awning signs.
18. Avoid internally illuminated box signs, signs located above roof or parapet lines, signs that advertise the price of merchandise the business offers versus advertising the business type itself, permanent banner signs, posters, and painted window signs.
19. Businesses should have at least two signs attached to the building: (1) primary sign located in the auto zone visibly oriented toward the street; and (2) smaller, secondary sign(s) located in the pedestrian zone intended to be viewed by passing pedestrians.
20. The following signs are prohibited:
 - a. Roof signs, pole signs, neon signs, and flat plastic backlit signs
 - b. Flashing, moving, or animated illumination on signs
 - c. Billboards
 - d. Large signs that dominate a building façade







Good sign design versus bad sign design.

Chapter 2: Mixed-Use Objective Development Standards

Purpose

The purpose of the Mixed-Use Objective Design and Development Standards contained in this chapter is to provide building and site design requirements for mixed-used development projects, that are measurable, verifiable, easy to interpret, and allows decision makers to approve or disapprove projects without discretion. The objective design standards contained within this section are derived from the Plymouth Zoning Code and the Downtown Plymouth Combined Zone Design Guidelines. The mixed-use objective design standards will implement General Plan Land Use Element Goals and objectives.

Applicability

The provisions of this chapter apply to all new and rehabilitated mixed-use development projects as well as projects that qualify for streamlined, ministerial processing per the Housing Accountability Act (HAA). Eligible residential projects shall comply with all objective development standards of this Chapter, development standards of the Plymouth Municipal Code, the Downtown Plymouth Combined Zone Design Standards and Guidelines, and the Plymouth Scenic Corridor Design Standards.

Site Planning

Site planning refers to the arrangement of, and relationships between buildings, parking areas, common and private open space, landscaping, and pedestrian connections. The site planning topics in this chapter include site layout, building placement, parking access, pedestrian circulation and access, landscaping, and common and private open space.

To create an attractive, welcoming, safe, and active interface between private development and the public realm, buildings and site design shall meet the following objective criteria:

1. Building Orientation.
 - a. Mixed-use projects comply with the development standards for the zoning district in which it is located.
 - b. The street level of buildings should comprise mainly transparent storefronts and inviting entries.
 - c. Buildings shall be oriented towards the public right-of-way.
 - d. Exterior stairwells shall be oriented away from the public right-of-way.
 - e. Loading and services areas shall be located behind the building and not visible from the public right-of-way.
 - f. Corner sites shall be designed with a building frontage on both streets with corner treatments.

2. Corner Parcel Orientation. Corner parcels are parcels that have frontage on more than two public streets which connect at the intersection of two public streets and shall comply with the following:
 - a. Buildings on corner parcels shall front on both parcels facing a public right-of-way.
 - b. At the corner, buildings shall continue without breaking.
 - c. Tower Element or open space with a minimum dimension of 16 feet and minimum area of 450 square feet, which accommodates either a publicly accessible courtyard/plaza, water feature, or outdoor dining or outdoor seating area with landscaping.

Circulation

To provide pedestrians, vehicles, and cyclists with safe and efficient site access and circulation, site design shall meet the following objective criteria:

1. Parking Areas.
 - a. Parking lots shall be designed so that pedestrians walk parallel to moving cars, and drive aisles should be perpendicular to buildings.
 - b. Parking shall be located behind buildings with access from side or back streets or at mid-block breaks.
 - c. When off-street parking lots adjacent to sidewalks and between buildings are developed, they shall be screened with low walls that are a maximum of three feet high or landscaping that reaches a height of three feet at maturity.
 - d. Development of off-street parking lots in front of downtown buildings is not allowed.
 - e. Parking shall not be located within any setback areas.
2. Pedestrian Circulation.
 - a. Primary pedestrian access to all buildings shall be through an entry on the street side.
 - b. Pedestrian paths shall be separated from automobile circulation routes.

Architectural Elements

To create a sense of place with buildings that are cohesive, well-crafted, and enhance the public's experience, buildings shall be designed to meet the following objective standards.

1. Buildings on Corner Parcels. Buildings That are two stories in height shall include at least one of the following features within 15 feet from each edge of the building

corner. Corner buildings that are three or more stories in height shall incorporate a minimum of two of the following features within 15 feet from each edge of the building corner:

- a. Change in primary wall material and color;
- b. Change in height of more than four feet;
- c. Change in wall plane of a minimum depth of two feet;
- d. Entry to ground floor retail or primary building entrance; and/or
- e. Different fenestration pattern from the primary façade.

2. Massing. Mixed-use buildings in the downtown area shall conform to the following:

- a. The overall façade area of a building in Downtown Plymouth shall not be more than 20 percent larger than the facades of adjacent buildings. This includes new infill buildings and the renovation of existing buildings.

3. Height, Weight, Scale. The height of the buildings enclosing the adjacent street space influences the quality of the streetscape environment. Some variation in building height and width is acceptable, but consideration must be given to the height, width, and scale of adjoining and nearby buildings and building groups. Buildings shall conform to the following:

- a. New buildings shall be a maximum of 16 feet taller than adjacent buildings.

4. Form. The most important element of a downtown building is its storefront façade. Since building façades greatly contribute to the overall downtown environment, special attention must be given to their architectural design. Building design shall comply with the following:

- a. Large surface expanses on walls shall be articulated with varied reveal patterns (control joints), material and texture and color changes, details, a change in place and direction, or other means. These and other measures create distinct shadow patterns in the façade, resulting in the increased perception of depth and variety.
- b. Wall surfaces facing the street shall not exceed 250 square feet or continuous runs greater than 40 feet without some form of articulation.
- c. Building façades shall have a balance of solid and transparent surfaces.
- d. For the ground-floor façade area, a minimum of 50 percent shall contain transparent windows and/or doors.
- e. All façades must have clearly defined vertical divisions at plus or minus 15- to 30-foot



intervals.

- f. In addition to windows, façades must include a minimum of three (3) articulating features such as trellises, arcades, canopies, awnings, roof overhangs, recessed entries, reveals, wainscot detailing, varied materials, and other architectural elements. These and other elements contribute to a building's overall character, provide visual diversity, and most importantly enhance pedestrian (human) scale.



Building has pedestrian elements such as storefronts, windows, commercial tenant entrances, and awnings. There is also a defined base and cap for the building.

- 5. Colors and Materials. The following requirements apply to exterior colors and materials.
 - a. The primary wall finish material shall be wood or wood/cement composite horizontal lap siding, stone, brick, stucco, fiber cement or other cementitious material, or stone. Painted heavy timber (wood) beams, posts, details in overhangs, balconies, etc., where appropriate to the architectural style of the building.
 - b. All building components such as vents, gutters, downspouts, flashing, panel covers, conduits, etc. shall be painted to match the adjacent color.
 - c. Residential buildings shall incorporate a minimum of two building materials on each building elevation. Trim does not count as the second material.
 - d. Buildings shall include a color palette that consists of at least two body colors and one accent color (not including roof color).
 - e. The following materials are prohibited:

- i. Plywood or dimensional “framing” lumber.
- ii. Metal siding (type used in metal buildings).
- iii. Smooth concrete block.
- iv. Fiberglass panels.
- v. Vinyl siding (flat siding, vinyl siding with wood grain materials would be allowed).
- vi. Highly reflective and/or brightly colored materials.
- vii. Roof materials (wood or composition shingles) used on building façades.

Building Equipment and Service Areas

To minimize sound, allow for easy access, and to reduce visual impacts on nearby residential dwellings or businesses and the public realm, building equipment, utilities and services areas shall be located and designed to meet the following.

1. Trash Enclosures. Trash enclosures shall meet the following requirements.
 - a. Trash enclosures shall be included in all projects, except for parcels without off-street parking.
 - b. Trash enclosures shall be located away from residential dwellings, to the extent possible.
 - c. Trash enclosures shall be fully enclosed on all four sides and have a roof.
 - d. Trash enclosures shall be built of noncombustible materials (wood not permitted).
 - e. Trash enclosures shall be painted to match the building(s) and should have landscaping around the enclosure.
 - f. Trash enclosures should be constructed with siding to match the main siding of the building and painted to match.
2. Screening. Service areas and trash disposal areas shall be screened from public view by being located behind a building or oriented away from the public street.
3. Utilities. Antennas, electric and water meters, satellite dishes (wider than 18 inches), power transformers, fire risers, and similar equipment shall be contained within the building. If inclusion in the building is not possible, they shall be screened from view with fencing, landscaping or equipment enclosures.

4. Vending Machines. All exterior vending machines are prohibited.
5. Mechanical Equipment. Mechanical equipment shall be screened from view and shall comply with the following:
 - a. HVAC equipment shall not be placed in windows.
 - b. All roof mounted equipment shall be screened from view by a parapet wall, integrated into the design of the building, which is taller than the equipment located behind it.
 - c. Ground mounted HVAC equipment shall be located where it is not visible from the public right-of-way.



Landscape

Projects in the downtown area shall conform to the following landscape standards:

1. Landscaping. Landscaping shall be provided all outdoor areas that are not specifically used for parking, driveways, walkways, patios, or other outdoor amenities.
2. Fencing Materials. Chain link fences and unfinished cinderblock walls shall be prohibited.
3. Species. Evergreen trees and shrubs shall be used when landscaping is used for screening.
4. Pedestrian Paths. Pedestrian paths shall include trees, lighting, overhead trellises, and sitting areas.
5. Lighting. A lighted route must be provided from buildings to parking areas.

Hardscape

Hardscaping includes seating, lighting fixtures, special paving materials, public art, and similar features. It defines the pedestrian's experience of the public space along the sidewalk. Projects in the downtown area shall conform to the following hardscape standards:

1. Amenities. If not yet improved, pedestrian amenities (benches, outdoor seating, pedestrian-scaled lighting, clear windows, varied textures,

materials, etc.) shall be provided along the public right-of-way.

2. Outdoor Furniture. Outdoor furniture and fixtures shall be located where they will not conflict with circulation patterns.
3. Outdoor Materials. Outdoor furniture and fixtures shall be constructed of wood, metal, or other recycled materials with similar durability.
4. No signs are allowed on, or as a part of, any outdoor furniture.

Access

To ensure that automobiles, bicycles, and ultimately pedestrians can move safely and easily between the public right-of-way, parking lots, sidewalks, and buildings, the following standards shall be incorporated into mixed-use developments. Vehicle, bicycle, and pedestrian circulation shall comply with the following standards:

1. Primary pedestrian access to all buildings shall be through an entry on the street side.
2. Vehicle and pedestrian circulation patterns shall be as simple and obvious as possible.
3. Circulation shall be designed to avoid all conflict between vehicles and people.
4. Accessibility and safety (non-slip surfaces) shall be provided.
5. Bicycle routes shall be marked and not travel on pedestrian sidewalks or pathways.
6. Pedestrian paths shall be separated from automobile circulation routes.
7. Paving materials with color/texture/pattern must be an integral part of the design where in the right-of-way.
8. Varied paving materials shall occur at the overlap of pedestrian and vehicular areas.
9. Pedestrian paths shall include trees, lighting, overhead trellises, and sitting areas.
10. A lighted route must be provided from buildings to parking areas.
11. Pedestrian alleys shall be aligned with mid-block crosswalks where possible.

Chapter 3: Multi-Family Objective Design Standards

Purpose

The purpose of these design standards is to provide the public, building and design professionals, and decision-makers with objective criteria for eligible multi-family residential development in the City. The intent is to provide clear design direction that enhances Plymouth's character and sense of place, respects existing neighborhood compatibility and privacy, and ensures a high-quality living environment.

Applicability

The provisions of this chapter apply to all new and rehabilitated multi-family residential developments (with two or more dwelling units) as well as projects that qualify for streamlined, ministerial processing per the Housing Accountability Act (HAA), and which meet the definition of "housing development projects" under California Government Code §69988.5(h)(2). Eligible residential projects shall comply with all objective development standards of this Chapter, development standards of the Plymouth Municipal Code, the Downtown Plymouth Combined Zone Design Standards and Guidelines, and the Plymouth Scenic Corridor Design Standards.

Site Planning

Site planning refers to the arrangement of, and relationships between buildings, parking areas, common and private open space, landscaping, and pedestrian connections. The site planning topics in this chapter include site layout, building placement, parking access, pedestrian circulation and access, landscaping, and common and private open space.

To create an attractive, welcoming, safe, and active interface between private development and the public realm, buildings and site design shall meet the following objective criteria:

1. Building Orientation.
 - a. Buildings shall be oriented towards the public right-of-way.
 - b. Exterior stairwells shall be oriented away from the public right-of-way. For safety and security, exterior stairwells shall face interior spaces, such as plazas and gathering areas, parking areas, and pedestrian pathways and shall not be separated from these areas by fences, or walls taller than three feet.
 - c. Pedestrian entries shall be included on all first floor units which face the public right-of-way. These entrances shall provide direct access to the street.

- d. Street facing residential units shall have covered front entries with a minimum recess or projection of 48 square feet in area.
- e. Loading and services areas shall be located behind the building and not visible from the public right-of-way.
- f. Corner sites shall be designed with a building frontage on both streets with corner treatments.
- g. All building setbacks established for Zoning District in which the parcel is located shall apply to the project.



Building is oriented towards the street and includes recessed pedestrian entrances on the first floor as well as second floor balconies.

2. Corner Parcel Orientation. Corner parcels are parcels that have frontage on more than two public streets which connect at the intersection of two public streets and shall comply with the following:
 - a. Buildings on corner parcels shall front on both parcels facing a public right-Of-fway.
 - b. At the corner, buildings shall continue without breaking.
 - c. Tower Element or open space with a minimum dimension of 16 feet and minimum area of 450 square feet, which accommodates either a publicly accessible courtyard/plaza, water feature, or outdoor seating with landscaping.

3. Parking and Vehicle Access.

- a. Developments containing five or more units, shall not have garage doors which face a public street. Garages shall be oriented toward an alley or internal parking area or roadway.
- b. Parking lots and carports shall be oriented so that they are behind the building and are not visible from the public right-of-way.
- c. When access to underground parking or a parking lot from the public right-of-way is necessary, no more than 30 percent of the street frontage shall be devoted to the opening for access.
- d. Parking shall not be located within the front yard setback.

Circulation

To provide pedestrians, vehicles, and cyclists with safe and efficient site access and circulation, site design shall meet the following objective criteria:

1. Pedestrian Pathways.

- a. All structures, entries, facilities, amenities, and parking areas shall be internally connected with pedestrian pathways with a minimum width of four feet.
- b. Pedestrian pathways shall connect to the public sidewalk along each street frontage.
- c. Pedestrian pathways shall be separated from roads and parking areas by a physical barrier, such as a grade-separation, of six inches or more or a raised planting strip.

2. Parking Areas.

- a. All parking areas shall be internally connected and shall use shared driveways within the development.
- b. Parking shall not be located within the front yard setback.

Architectural Elements

To create a sense of place with buildings that are cohesive, well-crafted, and enhance the public's experience, buildings shall be designed to meet the following objective standards.

1. Buildings on Corner Parcels. Buildings that are two stories in height shall include at least one of the following features within 15 feet from each edge of the building corner. Corner buildings that are three or more stories in height shall incorporate a minimum of two of the following features within 15 feet from each edge of the building corner:

- a. Change in primary wall material and color;
- b. Change in height of more than four feet;
- c. Change in wall plane of a minimum depth of two feet;
- d. Entry to ground floor retail or primary building entrance; and/or
- e. Different fenestration pattern from the primary façade.

2. Design. Each building shall be defined with a base, body, and cap segment.



Building has no defined base, body or cap. Building faces public right-of-way and has no articulation and is a flat wall with no interest.

3. End Units. End Units are those where the side of a building ends at a public street. End units shall include the following features on their side elevations:

- a. A minimum of 15 percent fenestration area; and
- b. At least one facade modulation with a minimum depth of 18 inches and a minimum width of two feet.



This end unit faces the public right-of-way and does not meet the above requirements due to lack of windows (fenestration). Utility boxes and mechanical equipment are also facing the street which is not

4. Windows and Doors. The design of windows and doors are required to:
 - a. At least 60 percent of the ground floor, street facing walls of non-residential units (such as management offices, fitness centers, storage, utility cabinets, mechanical rooms, or other non residential amenities) shall include transparent window or door glazing. Where it is infeasible to provide glazing, such as a parking garage, trash room, mechanical room, or electrical room, landscaping with a minimum dimension of 18-inches in depth and a width equivalent to 70 percent of the wall shall be provided.
 - b. Windows and doors shall either be trimmed or recessed. When trimmed, the trim material shall not be less than three and one-half inches in width by three quarters of an inch in depth when protruding from the wall. Foam trim molding is prohibited on the ground floor. When recessed, the building's primary siding material shall cover the recessed edge faces and wrap toward the interior face of the window glazing or door face by not less than three inches in depth.

5. Colors and Materials. The following requirements apply to exterior colors and materials.
 - a. The primary wall finish material shall be wood or wood/cement composite horizontal lap siding, stone, brick, stucco, fiber cement or other cementitious material, or stone.
 - b. The following materials are prohibited:
 - i. Plywood or dimensional "framing" lumber.
 - ii. Metal siding (type used in metal buildings).
 - iii. Smooth concrete block.
 - iv. Fiberglass panels.
 - v. Vinyl siding (flat siding, vinyl siding with wood grain materials would be allowed).
 - vi. Highly reflective and/or brightly colored materials.
 - vii. Roof materials (wood or composition shingles) used on building façades.
 - c. Residential buildings shall incorporate a minimum of two building materials on each building elevation. Trim does not count as the second material.
 - d. Buildings shall include a color palette that consists of at least two body colors and one accent color (not including roof color).
 - e. Multi-family buildings (such as apartments or condominiums) with two or more residential structures shall include a minimum of two-color palettes

and shall not use the same palette on more than 70 percent of the residential structures.

- f. Multi-family attached units (such as townhouses, rowhouses, triplex, or fourplex) with four or more units shall have a minimum of three color palettes and shall not use the same palette on more than 50 percent of the units.
 - g. Carports shall be painted with a color used in the palette for the project.
 - h. Detached garages shall be painted the same color as the primary dwelling unit or if located within a bank of garages (more than two) shall be painted with a color used in the palette for the project.
 - i. All building components such as vents, gutters, downspouts, flashing, panel covers, conduits, etc. shall be painted to match the adjacent color.
6. Massing and Articulation. To create a human-scale environment and buildings that are compatible with and enhance the surrounding area, building design shall meet the following objective criteria:
- a. Massing Breaks. Buildings shall have major massing breaks at least every 40 feet along any street frontage or publicly visible area or minor massing breaks every 30 feet by incorporating at least one of the listed features.
 - b. Major massing breaks are:
 - i. Stepping back at least 51 percent of the upper floors by a minimum of 10 feet for at least 70 percent of the facade;
 - ii. Recessed or projected covered entries with a minimum area of 24 square feet;
 - iii. Exterior arcades or other ground floor building recessions that provide sheltered walkways within the building footprint with a minimum width of eight feet; and
 - iv. Ground floor courtyards within the building footprint with a minimum area of 48 square feet.
 - c. Minor massing breaks are:
 - i. Doors and windows recessed by a minimum of three inches;
 - ii. Variations in wall plane (projection or recess) by a minimum of two feet in depth for at least 30 percent of the facade;
 - iii. Vertical elements, such as pilasters, that protrude a minimum of one foot from the wall surface and extend the full height of the structure; and
 - iv. Any of the major massing breaks noted above can be double counted as a minor massing break, so long as it is located within the 30-foot section.



Small apartment complex designed with building breaks with larger buildings separated from smaller apartment buildings with varying height.

- d. Rooflines shall be vertically articulated at least every 48-feet along the street frontage through one of the following techniques:
 - i. A change in wall or roof height of a minimum four feet;
 - ii. A change in roof pitch or form; or
 - iii. The inclusion of dormers, gables, parapets, and/or varying cornices.

- e. Buildings two stories or taller and wider than 30 feet shall be designed to differentiate the ground floor, middle body, and top floor or cornice/parapet cap. Each of these elements shall be distinguished from one another through use of one of the following techniques:
 - i. Variation in building modulation for a minimum 70 percent of the length of the façade, through changes in wall planes that protrude and/or recess with a minimum dimension of four feet;
 - ii. Balconies or habitable projections with a minimum two feet in depth for a minimum 25 percent of the length of the façade;
 - iii. Variation in façade articulation, through horizontal and/or vertical recesses or projections at least four inches in depth or a pattern or grouping of windows, panels, or bay windows;
 - iv. Variation in fenestration, through at least two of the following: size, proportion or pattern; or
 - v. Variation in façade material, through at least two of the following: size, texture, pattern, or color.



Building includes two materials (stucco and stonework) and variations in façade articulation which meets the requirements of these Guidelines. Building also has a defined base (accent trim) and second floor with a cornice as required. However, exterior stairwells from the second floor do not meet the regulations in these Guidelines. The exterior stairwells take away from the overall attractive design of the building.

Building Entries and Garages

To create an attractive, welcoming, safe, and active interface between private development and the public realm, buildings and site design shall meet the following objective criteria:

1. Building Entries. Building entries shall comply with the following:
 - a. Residential units that are not adjacent to the street shall have front entries that are oriented to common areas such as paseos, courtyards, parking areas, and active landscape areas.
 - b. Multi-tenant buildings positioned along the street shall orient the main front entry to the street. These entries shall incorporate at least one of the following:
 - i. A change in roof form or pitch (such as a gable) that extends a minimum of one foot past the sides of the door jam;
 - ii. An increase in roof height of at least one foot to accentuate the entry; or
 - iii. Wood, stone, tile, or brick accent materials covering a minimum of 30 percent of the entryway wall surface area, inclusive of windows and doors.
 - c. Street facing residential units shall have covered front entries with a minimum recess or projection of 48 square feet in area.
2. Stairwells. Exterior stairwells shall comply with the following:

- a. Exterior stairwells shall not be oriented to the street.
- b. For safety and security, exterior stairwells shall face interior spaces, such as plazas and gathering areas, parking areas, and pedestrian pathways and shall not be separated from these areas by landscaping, fences, or walls taller than three feet.



Building with several exterior stairwells oriented towards the street. Building also has little articulation and does not meet the requirements of these Guidelines.

- 3. Garages. Garage doors shall comply with the following:
 - a. For projects containing five or more units, garage doors shall not face a public street(s) but may be oriented toward an alley or a private street/driveway that is internal to the project.
 - b. All garage doors (visible from the public right-of-way) shall be recessed a minimum of six inches from the surrounding building wall and shall include trim of at least one and a half inches in depth.



Development with more than five units which has the front entry facing the street and garage access located behind the units (and blocked from view from the public right-of-way) with access off a private internal driveway. Each entry also has a defined entrance with a recessed area.

Circulation

To provide pedestrians, vehicles, and cyclists with safe and efficient site access and circulation, site design shall meet the following objective criteria:

1. Pedestrian Pathways. All structures, entries, facilities, amenities, and parking areas shall be internally connected with pedestrian pathways with a minimum width of four feet.
2. Sidewalk Connections. Pedestrian pathways shall connect to the public sidewalk along each street frontage.
3. Barriers. Pedestrian pathways shall be separated from roads and parking areas by a physical barrier, such as a grade-separation, of six inches or more or a raised planting strip.
4. Parking Areas. All parking areas shall be internally connected and shall use shared driveways within the development.

Open Space and Common Areas

To ensure that residents and visitors have access to usable open space and common facilities that provide recreational opportunities, promote a safe environment, and enhance the pedestrian experience, common area and open space design shall meet the following objective requirements:

1. Landscaping. Landscaping shall be provided all outdoor areas that are not specifically used for parking, driveways, walkways, patios, or other outdoor amenities.
2. Paving. Paved areas shall not exceed 50 percent of the required front or street side setback area.

3. Fencing Materials. Chain link fences and unfinished cinderblock walls shall be prohibited.
4. Private Open Space. All ground floor residential units and a minimum of 51 percent of the upper floor residential units shall include a balcony, patio, porch, or stoop. This feature shall be a minimum 48 square feet in area. Fractional calculations shall be rounded up.
5. Street Trees. Street trees shall be planted at a rate of 30 feet on center and shall be a minimum of 36" box size.

Building Equipment and Service Areas

To minimize sound, allow for easy access, and to reduce visual impacts on nearby residential dwellings or businesses and the public realm, building equipment, utilities and services areas shall be located and designed to meet the following.

1. Screening. Service areas and trash disposal areas shall be screened from public view by being located behind a building or oriented away from the public street.
2. Utilities. Antennas, electric and water meters, satellite dishes (wider than 18 inches), power transformers, fire risers, and similar equipment shall be contained within the building. If inclusion in the building is not possible, they shall be screened from view with fencing, landscaping or equipment enclosures.
3. Mechanical Equipment. Mechanical equipment shall be screened from view and shall comply with the following:
 - a. HVAC equipment shall not be placed in windows.
 - b. All roof mounted equipment shall be screened from view by a parapet wall, integrated into the design of the building, which is taller than the equipment located behind it.
 - c. Ground mounted HVAC equipment shall be located where it is not visible from the public right-of-way.
4. Trash Enclosure Requirements. For developments with five or more units, all trash shall be located within the building (in a trash room) or an enclosure. Individual carts for each unit shall not be allowed.
5. Trash Enclosures. Trash enclosures shall meet the following requirements:
 - a. Trash enclosures shall be incorporated into the layout of the parking area allowing for access by the City's service provider.
 - b. Trash enclosures shall be fully enclosed on all four sides and have a roof.
 - c. Trash enclosures shall be located away from residential dwellings, to the extent possible.
 - d. Trash enclosures shall be built of noncombustible materials (wood not permitted).

- e. Trash enclosures shall be painted to match the building(s) and should have landscaping around the enclosure.
- f. Trash enclosures should have siding to match the main siding of the building.



Trash enclosure constructed with metal and vinyl siding, with roof and siding to match the main building.