

V. *Urban Design*

A. INTRODUCTION

Urban design refers to the physical form and development of a city from the individual neighborhood to the overall city scape. In the largest sense, urban design encompasses the physical elements which make up the City and its natural setting, and which make up the City's visual qualities. These elements are the City's relationship to neighboring cities and the surrounding natural environment, the City's principal focal points, and the City's major transportation corridors.

On a smaller scale urban design deals with the development patterns and characteristics of specific areas. These include the design of multi-family and single-family neighborhoods, the transition between neighborhoods, the design of commercial areas and the design and placement of various public improvements.

The goals and policies of Urban Design are in two sections: **City Image** and **Design**. City Image discusses focal points, corridors and gateways. Design discusses in detail the design of multi-family, single-family, duplex, and commercial areas.

B. CITY IMAGE

SETTING

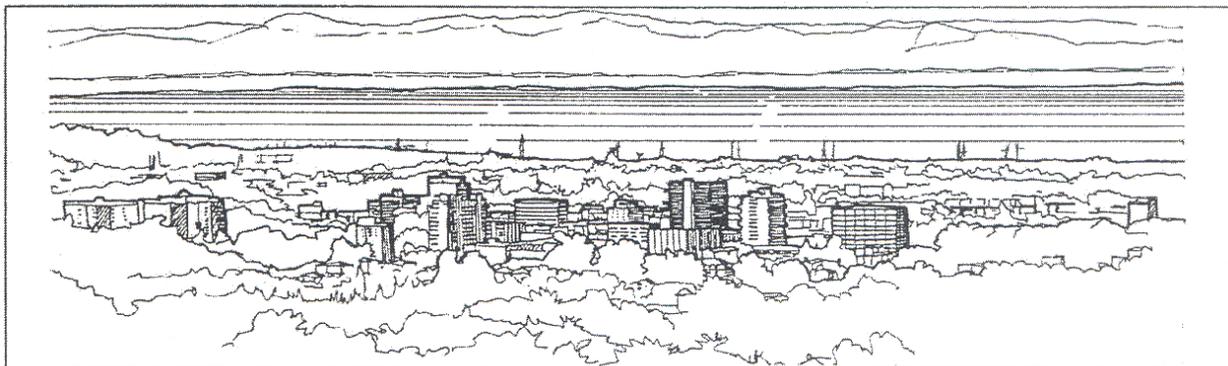
San Mateo is set between two dominant physical features: San Francisco Bay and the ridge of hills along the western border. The City has developed between these two features following early transportation corridors. Similar communities at the north and south boundaries also influence the City's development.

The City's image is composed of many things: distinct residential neighborhoods, major open spaces, tall buildings, major streets, distinct shopping areas, landscaping, the spatial arrangement

of buildings, and architectural styles. The first section of this report, dealing with urban design in the largest sense identifies the major focal points, corridors, and gateways that contribute to the City image.

FOCAL POINTS

Focal points provide orientation by serving as landmarks and designating important places. The Downtown is a recognizable focal point because of its density, tall buildings, retail, restaurant, and entertainment environment and historic character. Hillsdale Shopping Center is another focal point because of its great number of retail shops and large scale structures at an important intersection. The San Francisco Bay and western hills are natural focal points. The "Crossroads" office buildings at SR 92 and US 101 help to mark this important intersection. The Borel/Bovet offices stand just behind the SR 92 and El Camino Real intersection and denote the major office developments lining SR 92. The office development at Mariner's Island marks a focal point at the eastern edge of the City that visually relates to development in Foster City. Other significant buildings along El Camino Real also create isolated focal points.



Distant View of Downtown San Mateo

Focal points should be developed where they logically orient people and mark significant places. The taller buildings in the Downtown are an excellent example of this. Intersections that mark major business areas are also marking significant places within the City. Misplaced focal points detract from the intended emphasis on important places. Tall buildings intermittently spaced along a street suggest a special area when it may be just part of a commercial strip.

Many things can be done to strengthen major focal points. The Downtown Specific Plan includes requirements for ground floor retail, and the General Plan permits mixed uses and building heights of up to 75 feet in the Downtown. Hillsdale Mall could be strengthened by higher floor area ratios (the ratio of building floor area to lot area), visible retail uses (outward focusing), and a more consistent architectural or landscape treatment. The office development along SR 92 could be enhanced by permitting taller buildings up to 75 feet in height, altering higher floor area ratios and architectural and landscape treatments. Focal points can be discouraged in the middle sections of El Camino (SR 82) and many other commercial zones by changing the zoning to permit no high-rises or buildings with excessive bulk.

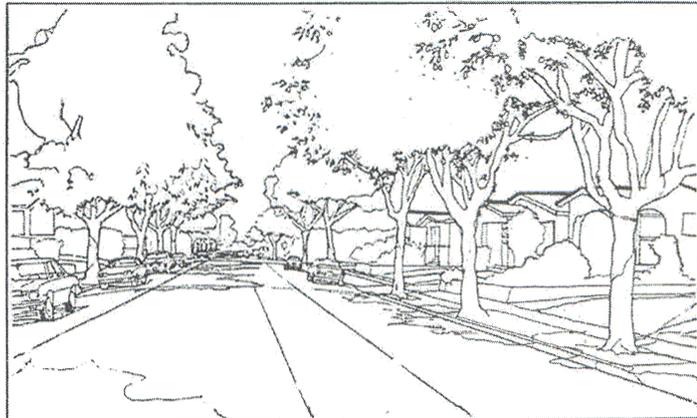
GATEWAYS

Gateways are the entry points to a city or specific area. They serve much the same function as a front door serves to a home, as both symbolic entry to the City and a boundary marker. Gateways should be located at major entry points or when there is a distinct change in character from one area to another. The change in character may be a change in traffic speed, a change in the scale of buildings, or change in the intensity of landscaping. Gateways would likely be located at the major City boundaries at the north and south end of El Camino Real, at the City boundaries on Mariner's Island Boulevard and J. Hart Clinton Drive where San Mateo meets Foster City, and at US 101 exit ramps on Peninsula Avenue, Third Avenue, and Hillsdale Boulevard because at these exits there is a major change in traffic speed and a sense of entering the City. Gateways also should be located at various entrances to the Downtown as this area is distinctly different from the areas surrounding it.

A gateway feature should be large enough to denote an entry point and should be illuminated at night. The gateway could be a significant landscape or architectural feature and should be built with high quality design and materials to give an appropriate image of the City. The materials used should emphasize the image and type of materials common to the area. A similar design feature or material should be common to all gateways so as to contribute to a unique and consistent San Mateo image.

CORRIDORS

Corridors are the way residents and visitors most commonly see the City. A well designed corridor should lead to a destination, provide a sense of orientation, be attractive and project a positive image of the City. Problems often seen on major and minor corridors include visual confusion from signs and architecture, inadequate or unmaintained landscaping and inconsistent building setbacks.



The major north/south corridors in the City are El Camino Real, US 101 and the railroad served by Caltrain. Major corridors that connect with US 101 are Third and Fourth avenues leading to and from Downtown and Hillsdale Boulevard connecting with Hillsdale Shopping Center. SR 92 is the other major east/west corridor. Minor corridors are generally heavily used arterial streets. In San Mateo these include Alameda de Las Pulgas, Peninsula Avenue, San Mateo Drive, Delaware Street, Norfolk Street, J. Hart Clinton Drive and Mariner's Island Boulevard.

US 101 AND SR 92

US 101 and SR 92 are designed for high speeds. There is no commercial or pedestrian access. US 101 is tightly fit between adjoining commercial and residential uses and partially screened by soundwalls or a thin, intermittent layer of landscaping. Signs, businesses and homes are visible creating a cluttered looking corridor. SR 92 is elevated through most of the eastern part of the City, later travels through deep cuts, and then climbs on top of hills in the western parts.

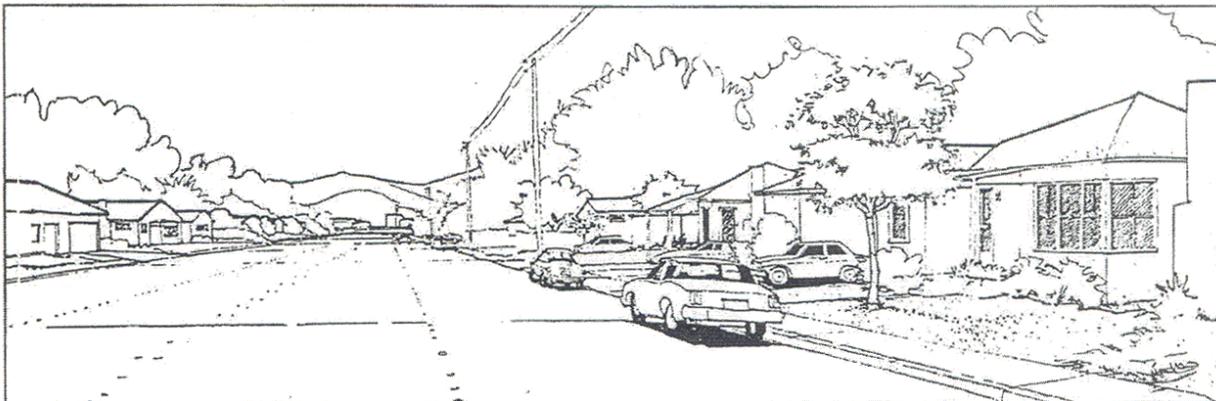
Visual confusion on US 101 would be reduced by controlling the quantity and size of signs. Soundwalls screen residential neighborhoods from the freeway. Stronger landscaping would provide an attractive corridor. Any improvements also should work to capture views of the City's focal points and take advantage of other vistas.

THIRD AND FOURTH AVENUE IN THE GATEWAY

Third and Fourth Avenue in the Gateway pass through residential districts as they connect US 101 with the Downtown. Their appearance would be improved by future development having consistent setbacks and building heights. A line of street trees can orient the street toward its destination as well as provide greenery. The Downtown Specific Plan currently includes a consistent setback for all new buildings and the requirement for planting of street trees. Design guidelines for the Gateway have been adopted to address pedestrian and vehicle entries, front porches, architectural features, landscaping, and street lighting.

HILLSDALE BOULEVARD

Hillsdale Boulevard provides direct access from US 101 to Hillsdale Shopping Center at El Camino Real. This four lane arterial street passes through a single family area. Any future improvements to this street could include street trees, lighting design, and adequate landscaping to help buffer residences from traffic.

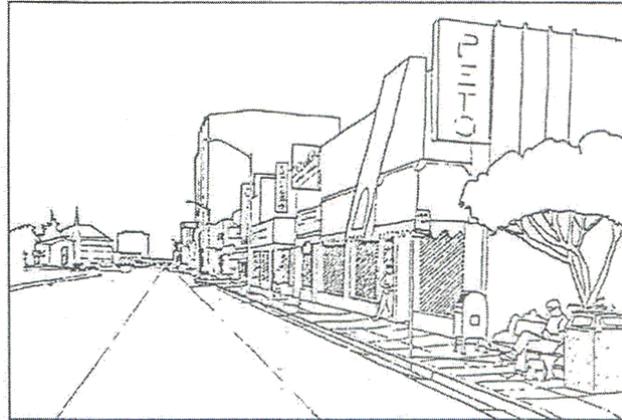


Hillsdale Boulevard looking west

EL CAMINO REAL

El Camino Real is the longest commercial corridor on the Peninsula. A mixture of retail, office and residential uses lines the street as it passes through San Mateo and other cities. In San Mateo the character changes several times because of changes in use and private improvements. El Camino Real north of Downtown is lined primarily with multi-family residences with only a few single-family homes. The street has four narrow lanes with many large trees. As El Camino Real enters the Downtown area it widens to six lanes, with high-rise office and retail uses creating an urban character.

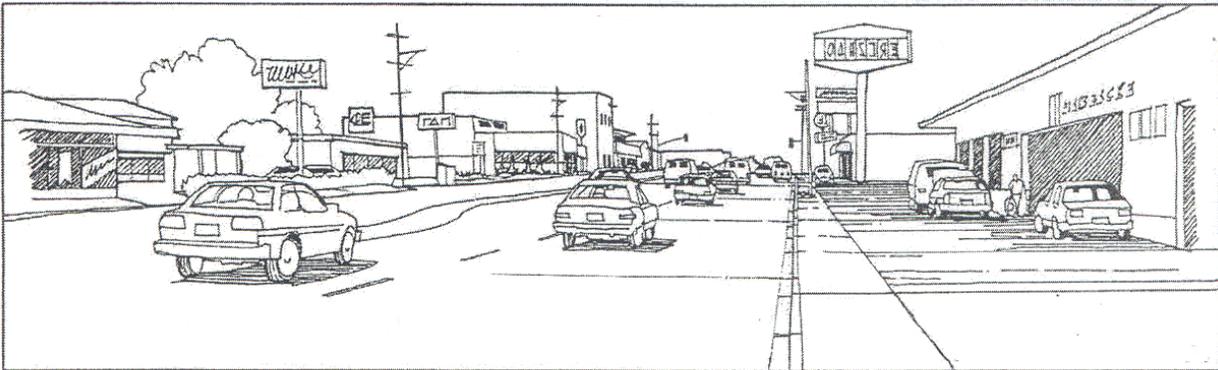
South of Central Park to SR 92 the street contains a mix of residential, retail and offices. For the most part buildings maintain a consistent property line setback with varying building heights, narrow sidewalks and minimal landscaping. South of SR 92, El Camino Real is a retail strip with a few office buildings mixed in. At Hillsdale Shopping Center the street



El Camino Real (SR 82) South of Central Park

takes on more of a freeway character due to the undercrossing of Hillsdale Boulevard. South of SR 92, building heights and setbacks vary throughout, sidewalks are narrow and landscaping is very minimal. Improvements have been made to this area including: locating utilities underground from SR 92 to 37th Avenue, removal of chain link fencing in the medians, and the addition of new decorative street lighting.

Overall, El Camino Real south of Central Park does not take on any particular character or image that is distinctive of San Mateo. Building heights and setbacks vary, and in some areas large parking lots front along El Camino Real leaving no definition of the street edge. Except for the northern areas of the street, landscaping is barely noticeable. Narrow sidewalks and no front setback in many areas discourage pedestrian activity and leave little room for landscaping. Street trees which could have the strongest visual effect are almost non-existent. All these problems lead to a feeling that the street lacks any continuity or connection with San Mateo's destination points.



South El Camino Real (SR 82)

The street appearance could be improved by providing a more coherent pattern of building height, setbacks and landscaping. Setbacks should be adequate to permit walkways and landscaping but should also keep the buildings close enough to define the street edge. Storefronts or restaurants facing the street provide interest and are signs of activity. Parking lots are rarely interesting and generally unattractive. Buildings should be oriented towards El Camino Real with parking and accessory uses located away from the street. Street trees can help unify the corridor by defining street edge and visually reducing paved areas. Undergrounding utilities and controlling signage will also reduce visual clutter.

In 2001, the City Council adopted the El Camino Real Master Plan. The Plan provides a vision for enhancements to El Camino Real from SR 92 to the Belmont border, which will further its role as a major traffic arterial, and provide infrastructure and guidelines to create a vibrant mixed-use community. The Master Plan includes a streetscape plan for public improvements such as landscaping the median, creating theme intersections with landscaping and street furniture, and recommendations for parking enhancements. Design guidelines address the character of private development along the corridor. Topics such as building facades, setbacks, building form, location of parking, and signage are discussed in the guidelines. The Master Plan identifies a range of land uses for El Camino Real from infill development to larger scale transit oriented development (TOD) around the Hillsdale and Hayward Park train stations. The Master Plan is consistent with the Bay Meadows Specific Plans adopted by the City Council in 1997 and 2005.

In addition, the City of San Mateo is participating in the Grand Boulevard Initiative which is a collaboration of cities, San Mateo and Santa Clara counties, and local and regional agencies to improve the performance, safety, and aesthetics of El Camino Real. The goal of the Grand Boulevard Initiative is “to produce a coordinated series of policy decisions that will be embraced by all jurisdictions, thereby helping El Camino Real to function and look better.” In addition, the initiative seeks to “transform El Camino Real into a boulevard that will stand as one of the highlights of our communities, successfully fulfilling its role as the Peninsula’s most important arterial, while bringing pride and unity to San Mateo and Santa Clara counties.” The City Council adopted Resolution No. 18 (2008) on April 7, 2008, endorsing the Guiding Principles of the Grand Boulevard Initiative, and incorporating them into future plans involving El Camino Real. The Guiding Principles are consistent with the El Camino Real Master Plan.

C. CITY IMAGE GOALS AND POLICIES

GOALS AND POLICIES

- GOAL 1:** Establish a positive and distinctive City image by taking advantage of the natural setting and by developing and improving focal points, gateways, and major corridors.
- GOAL 2:** Make El Camino Real (SR 82) a livable residential and successful commercial street that displays a positive image of San Mateo.

POLICES

- UD 1.1: Focal Points.** Emphasize and improve established focal points identified as the Downtown, Hillsdale Station Area, including the Caltrain Station and the Hillsdale Shopping Center, Bridgepointe, Hayward Park Caltrain Station and adjacent office development areas, the intersections of US 101 and SR 92 and SR 92 and El Camino Real (SR 82), and the SR 92 corridor. Encourage focal points by emphasizing a particular use, or feature, or through entry or landscape treatments. Focal points should be discouraged at inappropriate locations.

Significant places in the City should be emphasized. Treating them as focal points and making them more prominent by allowing concentrations of high buildings in designated areas, emphasizing a particular use, or a special landscape treatment accomplishes this. Tall or bulky buildings randomly placed confuse the most important areas of the City with other areas and should be avoided.

- UD 1.2: Preservation of Natural Focal Points.** Preserve and enhance views of and access to the foothills and the Bay through the design of new development consistent with the Shoreline Park Specific Plan. (See related policy C/OS-1.7)

By featuring the natural amenities of the foothills and Bay, San Mateo's identity can be strengthened. Where possible development should orient views and access to take advantage of these natural features.

- UD 1.3: Gateways.** Develop gateways by creating strong architectural or landscape features exhibiting the character of San Mateo at the following locations: entrances to the Downtown, the north and south ends of El Camino Real (SR 82), US 101 and Third Avenue, US 101 and Hillsdale Boulevard, and Mariner's Island Boulevard and J. Hart Clinton Drive at the border of Foster City.

By developing gateway features, the entries to the City will be identified. Gateways may be constructed in a variety of ways: a prominent landscape or architectural feature, a notable open area or possibly an arch to pass through. All gateways should have some common element or feature to give San Mateo a unique and consistent image.

UD 1.4: Signage. Maintain signage controls regulating the design, size, type, illumination and quantity of signs visible from corridors.

Signage is a main factor creating visual confusion along US 101 and El Camino Real. Revising the sign ordinance to control this has been a big step toward improving the image of San Mateo.

UD 1.5: Direct Corridors to Focal Points. Visually improve and direct toward focal points the major corridors of Third Avenue, Fourth Avenue, Hillsdale Boulevard and El Camino Real (SR 82) with the installation of street trees, street lights and consistent building setbacks.

As constructed, many major corridors lack a visual connection to the City's focal points. Improving this connection emphasizes the focal points and improves the appearance of these heavily traveled streets. Street trees, distinctive and aesthetic street lights and consistent building setbacks are the main ways to accomplish this. Further study may indicate that other public improvements and design standards will also improve the corridors.

UD 1.6: El Camino Real (SR 82) Ensure that new development and public improvements conform to the goals, policies, and guidelines established in the El Camino Real Master Plan to give El Camino Real an organized and appealing image. The street should maintain a landscaped residential character north of Downtown and allow mixed uses south of Ninth Avenue. The Guiding Principles of the Grand Boulevard Initiative shall be incorporated into future plans to be developed that involve El Camino Real in San Mateo.

El Camino Real is the dominant commercial and through street in the City. Much of the commercial image of San Mateo comes from this street. Because of the importance of El Camino Real, a Master Plan was adopted to improve it visually and economically. The Master Plan provides a vision for enhancements to El Camino Real from SR 92 to the Belmont border to further its role as a major traffic arterial, and provide infrastructure and guidelines to create a vibrant mixed-use community. It is extremely important that new private development and public improvements comply with the provisions contained in the Master Plan.

The Grand Boulevard Initiative has developed 10 Guiding Principles for El Camino Real that are based on common themes throughout various planning documents in the multiple jurisdictions in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties.

The Guiding Principles are: Target housing and job growth in strategic areas along the corridor; Encourage compact mixed-use development and high quality urban design and construction;

Create a pedestrian-oriented environment and improve streetscapes, ensuring full access to and between public areas and private developments; Develop a balanced multimodal corridor to maintain and improve mobility of people and vehicles along the corridor; Manage parking assets; Provide vibrant public spaces and gathering places; Preserve and accentuate unique and desirable community character and the existing quality of life in adjacent neighborhoods; Improve safety and public health; Strengthen pedestrian and bicycle connections within the corridor; and Pursue environmentally sustainable and economically viable development patterns.

These Guiding Principles are consistent with the adopted El Camino Real Master Plan, and are strategies that will be incorporated into future plans for improvements along El Camino Real.

UD 1.7: Minor Corridors. Provide visual and pedestrian improvements on arterial streets such as Alameda de Las Pulgas, Peninsula Avenue, San Mateo Drive, Delaware Street, Norfolk Street and Mariner's Island Boulevard.

These streets are heavily used arterials that bring people into the neighborhoods. They often are responsible for projecting an image of San Mateo's residential areas. Improvements should include street trees, landscaping and methods to better accommodate pedestrians and bicycles.

UD 1.8: Railroad Corridor. Improve the railroad corridor to create a positive City image as identified in the San Mateo Rail Corridor Transit-Oriented Development Plan. Develop design guidelines that address views, landscaping, screening, and treatment of buildings along the corridor and community identity of train stations. Encourage the maximum potential of Hillsdale Caltrain Station as major transit hub through implementation of the Hillsdale Station Area Plan. Encourage development around the Hayward Park Station that maximizes its potential as a local transit hub. Ensure that the new design of the Hillsdale and Hayward Park Caltrain Stations contribute to the character of the surrounding neighborhoods while respecting their regional and local context and that they have strong civic identity.

The railroad corridor is similar to the freeways in that it is the only view many Bay Area residents have of San Mateo. In the past many developments have turned their back on the railroad. This policy directs that the railroad corridor should be given a priority similar to that of major street corridors.

D. DESIGN

SETTING

San Mateo's neighborhoods help make it a great city. San Mateo is a place where walking is comfortable, where residents identify not just with their own homes but also with their neighborhood, and where people are proud of where they live and work. The City's residential stock is approximately half single family dwellings and half multi-family. Single family homeowners are remodeling their dwellings to add second stories or constructing completely new dwellings on their property. In addition, many new developments contain mixed-use buildings or combine residential and non-residential uses in close proximity to each other. As a result, the design of new buildings and remodeled dwellings is critical to maintaining the character of existing neighborhoods and providing graceful transitions between neighborhoods of differing densities, while also providing desirable housing choices and work environments for all who live and work in San Mateo.

The City of San Mateo has adopted design guidelines for development proposals that are located within Specific Plan or Master Plan areas including: Downtown Specific Plan; Mariner's Island Specific Plan; Shoreline Park Specific Plan; Bay Meadows I and II; the San Mateo Rail Corridor Transit-Oriented Development Plan; El Camino Real Master Plan; and the Downtown Retail Core and Historic District Design Guidelines. Specific design criteria and standards for these areas are contained in the various documents. In addition, the City has developed design guidelines for single family dwellings, two-family dwellings (duplex); multifamily dwellings; and commercial areas. These guidelines apply citywide and are summarized in the following sections of the Urban Design Element.

SUSTAINABLE DESIGN

Since many goals and policies of the General Plan promote San Mateo as a sustainable city, it is important to recognize that site layout and the design of buildings are major factors in meeting the objectives of sustainable design. Sustainability starts in the early design stages of a development. The location and orientation of structures on a parcel are critical in order to take full advantage of solar opportunities and shading, and preserve natural resources such as mature vegetation. Construction materials should be chosen to maximize energy efficiency and use recycled materials whenever possible. High efficiency heating and cooling equipment and appliances can reduce water use, maximize energy efficiency, and improve indoor air quality. Drought tolerant landscaping and the use of pervious paving materials can also reduce water waste and runoff into the Bay.

As previously discussed in the General Plan, the [City prepared a Climate Action Plan \(CAP\) as a comprehensive strategy to respond to the challenge of climate change.](#) ~~City's Sustainable~~

~~Initiatives Plan (SIP) was accepted by City Council on June 2, 2008.~~ Part of the implementation of the SIP-CAP calls for non-traditional building designs elements to be allowed if necessary to support on-site renewable energy systems. ~~the design and construction of buildings to meet specific Green Point Rated System and USGBC LEED standards for residential and non-residential developments, respectively.~~ In adopting allowing for sustainable building elements to be included standards for in civic buildings, commercial, residential and mixed use projects, the City will be formalizing its commitment to creating a greener, more sustainable city that will enhance the lives of current employees, residents and future generations to come. The City's adopted design guidelines for new development are intended to be compatible with the goals, policies, and standards contained in the SIP-CAP and subsequent implementation measures.

SINGLE FAMILY DWELLINGS

For several years leading up to the development of the Single-Family Dwelling Guidelines there were concerns that many additions to single-family houses were out of character with the neighborhood. Residents stated that the additions: were bulkier than their neighbors, not visually compatible with existing dwellings, resulted in a loss of privacy for neighbors, created impacts on views and major landscaping, and were otherwise inappropriate in their neighborhood. In 2001, the City Council adopted the Single-Family Design Guidelines, and required planning applications and public review for substantial removal of existing homes and construction of new single family dwellings, and for second story additions to existing single family dwellings. The Design Guidelines were revised in 2006 to address additional issues that arose during the public review process for single family dwellings. These Design Guidelines are structured to address the variety of neighborhood types in San Mateo.

When developing proposals for new or expanded single family dwellings, the homeowner should consider the character of the neighborhood, the relationship of the dwelling to the neighborhood, and specific elements of design.

NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER

The shape of a house, its arrangement of doors and windows, its roof style, and its architectural style all make up the character of a building and contribute to the collective appearance of the neighborhood. There are many architectural elements that contribute to the character of an individual house and the neighborhood and it is important to look at the neighborhood when preparing design options. Some of the most common elements are: setback from the street; parking and garage patterns; arrangement of major building forms; the architectural style of a house or houses in the neighborhood; number of stories in the area; location of entries and windows (including window types); roof forms; building materials; landscaping; and if there are historic buildings or features.

RELATIONSHIP TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD

A single building out of context with its neighbors can appear disruptive. It is important to recognize patterns and building forms that may be common to a neighborhood to maintain or enhance the neighborhood's most important visual qualities. The pattern of building setbacks often establishes a pleasing architectural rhythm to a block. This pattern should be respected even if it is greater than the minimum setback contained in the zoning code.

The location of garages and the appearance of driveways can have a great effect on the appearance of a neighborhood. Changes to the location, size, and appearance of the garage would affect an established pattern of these features in the neighborhood. The widths of driveways in a neighborhood also help to create a cohesive pattern in a given area. Changing a driveway may affect the neighborhood pattern of landscaping versus hardscape area, result in removal of street trees, and impact the amount of on-street parking in the area.

Building entries, windows, and front porches are also important components of neighborhood design. Front walkways, front doors, and porches that face the street are common to most San Mateo neighborhoods. Front doors and windows that are visible from the street also make for safer neighborhoods by keeping 'eyes on the street' and by providing opportunities for socializing with neighbors.

ELEMENTS OF DESIGN

The architectural elements of a house can affect its apparent mass, architectural character, and the visual quality of the neighborhood. The placement of architectural elements can also impact the privacy of neighbors. Along with the building footprint, the scale of buildings in the neighborhood should be observed and respected when designing an addition or a new dwelling.

A common way to add on to a house in San Mateo is by constructing a second-story addition. A second-story addition should be designed to be compatible with neighboring houses. Stepping back second-story additions from the side and rear property lines increases available light into neighboring properties and helps protect privacy between neighbors. The location of the second story addition over the house and the roof design will also affect the appearance of a dwelling and the neighborhood.

The location of the second-story on the property may affect privacy by creating sight lines into adjacent homes. Additions should respect adjacent neighbor privacy through careful planning of window locations, balconies and second-story decks, use of landscaping, and other architectural solutions. In addition, it is important to recognize established views from the primary living areas of neighboring houses and to design additions to minimize blockage of those views.

DUPLEX DWELLINGS

In addition to the Single-Family Dwelling Design Guidelines, the City Council adopted Duplex Design Guidelines in 2004. Duplex zoned areas are typically located near single family neighborhoods and provide a transition to higher density neighborhoods. The Guidelines address how a building's size, architectural character, and relationship to the street and nearby structures contribute to successful neighborhoods. Many of the issues and guidelines are similar to those contained in the Single-Family Dwelling Design Guidelines.

In duplex neighborhoods, parcels are often 40 to 60 feet wide which can lead to buildings that are long and narrow and appear out of scale with established neighborhoods. Many elements can affect how a building can appear compatible with its neighborhood such as building mass and envelope, scale of the structure, architectural style, roof forms, materials, and detailing. Architectural features such as bay windows, entries and chimneys can be used to visually divide a building into smaller sections. Buildings can also achieve the architectural proportions common to these neighborhoods by dividing walls and roofs into smaller sections. Many neighborhoods have roof patterns that are distinctive and repeatable.

Front walkways, doors and porches that face the street are common in residential neighborhoods. Visible front entries and porches improve street security and create a 'human scaled' appearance to a building.

Pavement intended for parking and vehicle circulation can easily overwhelm duplex parcels. Excessive paving also increases urban water runoff. Portions of the paved area not necessary for circulation could be landscaped to break up the appearance of the paved area. In some cases, vehicle circulation areas can be designed for multiple uses through the use of specialty paving accompanied by landscaping.

As with other design elements, the neighborhood context provides direction for the choice of building materials for compatibility within a given neighborhood. The design of building additions should respect adjacent neighbors' privacy through careful planning of window and balcony locations, use of landscaping, and the use of architectural solutions. Door and window styles also establish an architectural rhythm for a neighborhood.

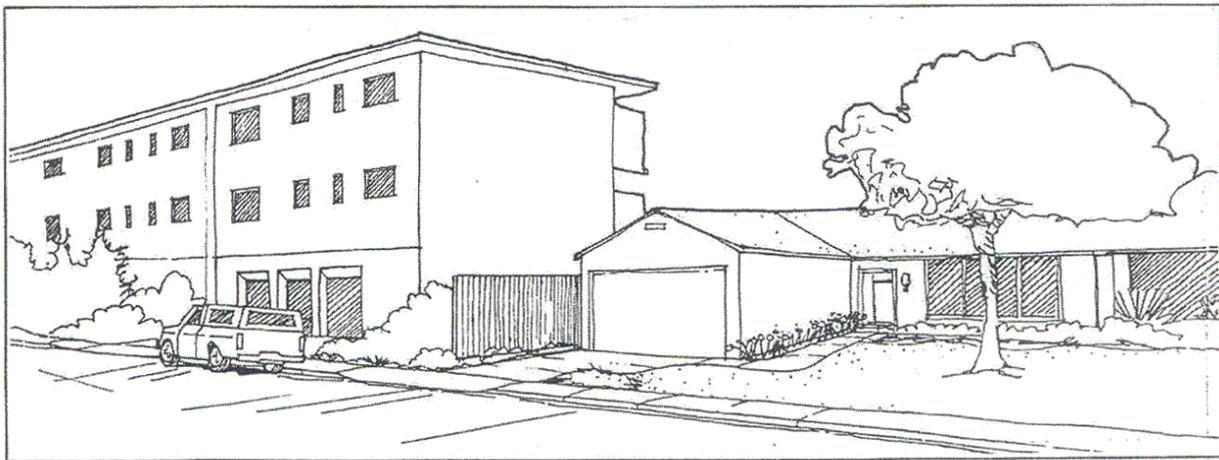
MULTI-FAMILY HOUSING

In multi-family zoned areas, property is often redeveloped from lower density housing to multi-family housing by combining two or more parcels to enable the construction of a larger development. These larger projects can significantly alter the character of a neighborhood. Recognizing that the character of the neighborhood is one of the most important parts of a residential area, the City adopted Multi Family Design Guidelines in 1994. Several factors contribute to the character of residential areas: the scale of the buildings, the materials used in construction, the style of the buildings, the relationship of the buildings to the street and the landscaping and open space.

SCALE OF BUILDINGS

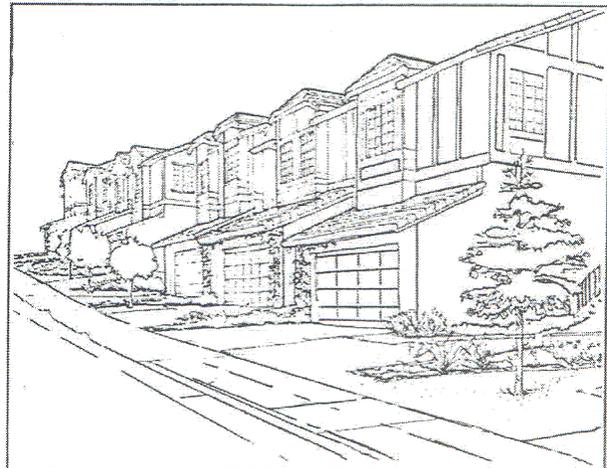
The scale refers to the height, width and bulk of the buildings. Single-family homes and small multi-family buildings which dominate many of these zones are typically one or two stories in height and range in width from 25 to 60 feet. The height, width and spacing between the buildings establishes a scale and rhythm of building for the neighborhood.

The zoning code encourages large scale development by permitting higher densities as parcel size increases. As parcels are combined, larger buildings with more units are built. As a result, the scale of the neighborhood is often destroyed.



Single and multi-family buildings with conflicting scales

When a building maintains the rhythm and proportion of the neighborhood by visually breaking up the building face it complements and strengthens the neighborhood. This can be accomplished by stepping the building back, providing cut-outs in the building facade, providing bay windows or changing the roof line. The scale could be further matched by providing a reduced street-wall height along the street frontage to match the neighborhood.

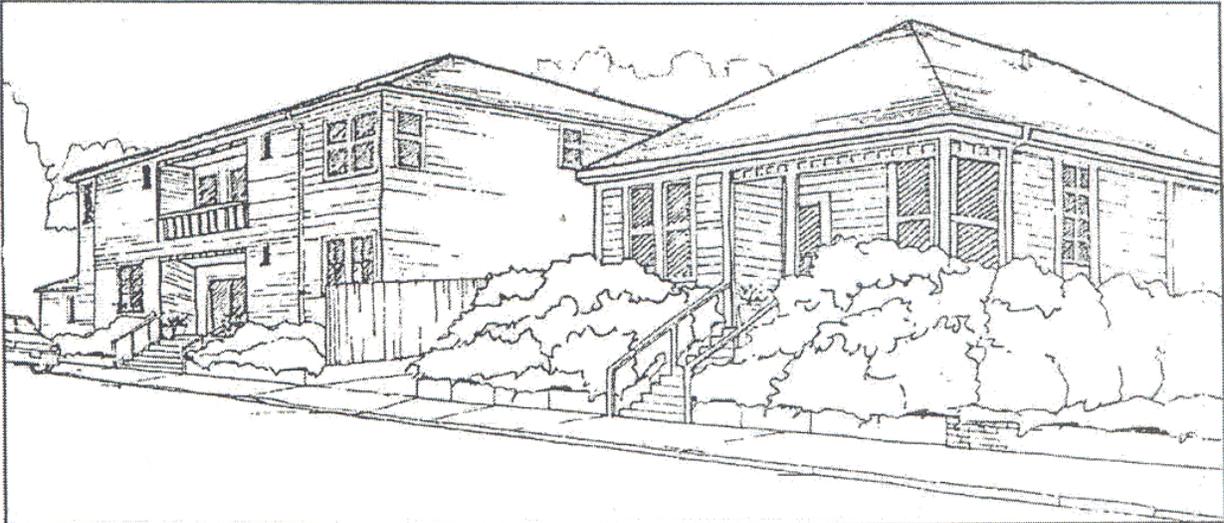


Multi-family housing with divided facades

BUILDING STYLE AND MATERIALS

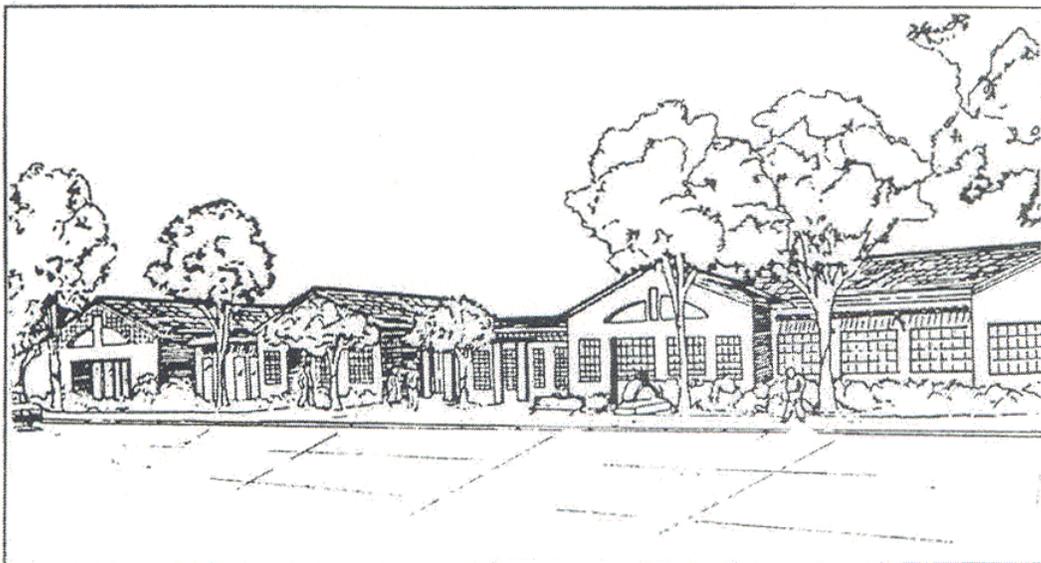
The style of building architecture, quality of construction and type of exterior building materials can have an effect on how a building fits in to a neighborhood. In neighborhoods where most buildings utilize the same type of materials or style of architecture, new development should respect the style of the buildings and use similar materials. Doing this strengthens the

character of the area. In areas where there is a greater mix of styles or materials, this becomes less important.



Single and multi-family buildings with similar materials and architectural style

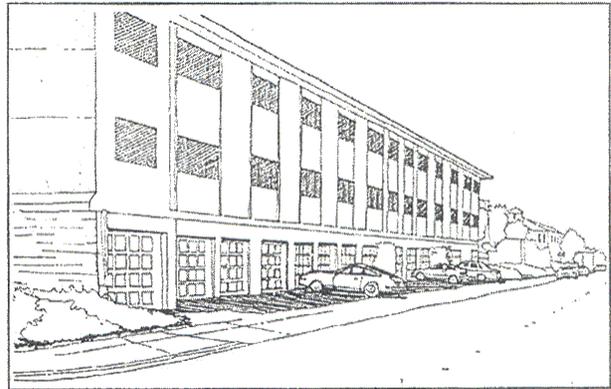
The San Mateo Senior Center completed in July, 1990, has been constructed with several design features that make it complement the character of the surrounding single-family neighborhood. The mass of the building has been broken up into several smaller forms that are similar in size to the adjacent houses, the building has roof slopes and window treatments common to the area, and siding, roof and trim materials are similar to those found in the neighborhood.



San Mateo Senior Center

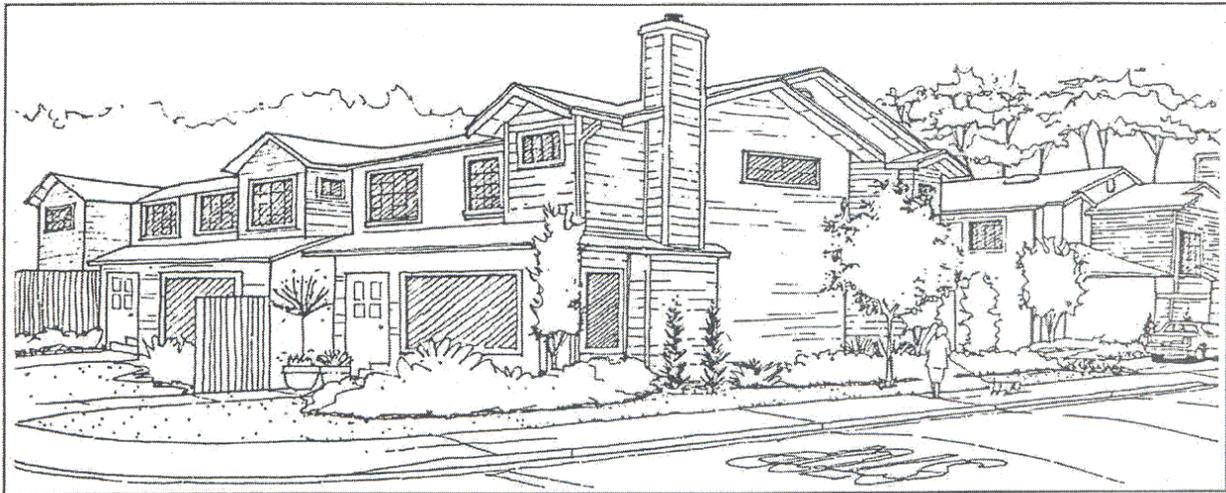
RELATIONSHIP OF BUILDING TO THE STREET

Single-family homes in San Mateo have living levels on the first and second floors, with the garage within the main building or free standing at the rear of the property. Ground floor building walls typically have windows and other forms of facade details, making a residential presence very obvious. When a multi-family building provides parking on the ground floor with living levels above, ground floor walls are often blank. Living areas are separated from the ground level, gardens and the street, creating a more anonymous character.



Building with only garages on the ground floor

A residential character at street level can be achieved by locating parking underground or at the rear of the parcel, providing adequate architectural detailing of the ground level, or providing individual dwelling entrances at the street level to give each unit contact with the ground level and gardens.



Multi-family building with ground level living areas

LANDSCAPING AND OPEN SPACE

San Mateo's strong landscaped character is formed by mature street trees and ample building setbacks. Varied building forms and glimpses of side and rear gardens also add to the quality of landscaping. Multi-family projects with required open space often meet their open space requirement with only minimal building setbacks and balconies. Both types offer little garden space for private use or public view. Better open space could be provided by varying building

forms to create useable courtyard and garden space, by more closely defining the quality of required open space or by not permitting required open space in the setback areas.

COMMERCIAL AREAS

Commercial streets represent a large part of the image of San Mateo. Visual character and pedestrian activity are two general but very important qualities that contribute to the livability and vitality of a commercial street. The following are factors that contribute to these qualities.

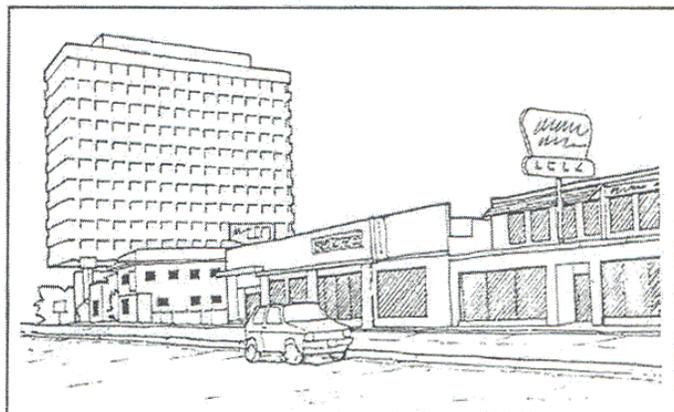
SITTING

How the building, parking and pedestrian spaces are oriented on a site can have a strong effect on its appearance and use.



Retail shops located at the street property line

A building that sits at or near the street property line provides visual interest for drivers and pedestrians and a sense of street enclosure. Parking should be located towards the rear of the parcel, helping to buffer the commercial areas from adjoining residential uses. Buildings that are located at the rear of the parcel typically feature a parking lot along the street. The parking lot is generally unattractive. It also eliminates any desire for on street parking, reducing any pedestrian activity on the sidewalk. The street also develops much more visual clutter due to varied building setbacks, more exposed building faces and the need for free-standing signage adjacent to the street.



Buildings with large variation in form

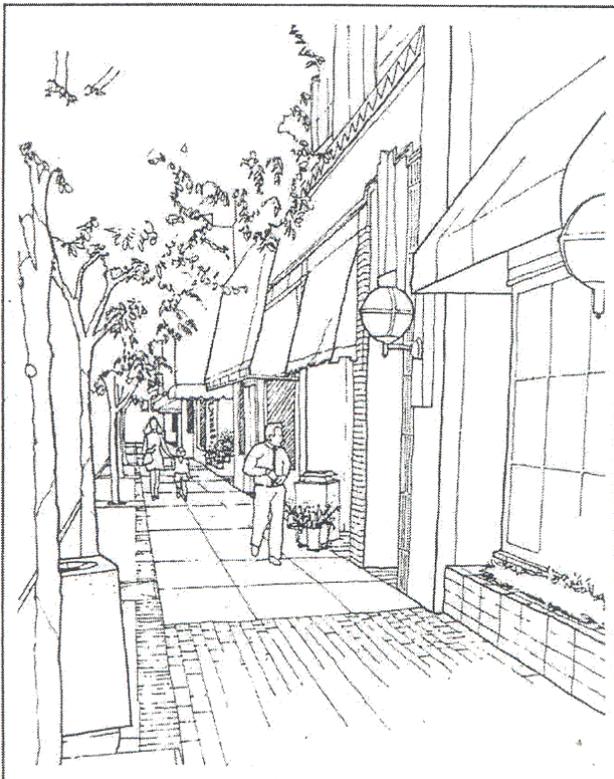
FORM

The quality of a street is composed of an aggregation of all its pieces. Each building has the ability to contribute to the visual character or detract from it. A street with buildings of greatly varying heights and widths appears confusing. Larger buildings appear more important and smaller buildings appear out of place. Buildings that have generally the same proportions can have variation in size, style and design but will still be perceived as being organized as a whole. A larger building may visually fit with smaller buildings if it adopts the form or spacing of the facade width and height set up by neighboring buildings. This can be done by providing breaks in the street facade or building form, or by adopting a window or detailing pattern common to the area.

San Mateo's commercial areas are generally not dominated by a particular style but have a variety of designs that can work together. When a style is introduced that has a very strong individual character, such as a trademark roof design or large symbolic arches, it detracts from the surrounding structures and stands out. As more of these types of structures are added, more visual clutter is created as each competes for attention. Buildings with a particular corporate image are also less adaptable to change over time, as their style often dictates a particular use or service.

ACTIVITY

People are obviously a necessary part of any successful commercial area. The presence of people attracts others and adds to the excitement of the area. The design of commercial areas should include provisions to make people want to be there and be seen.



People are attracted by comfortable spaces and interesting things to look at and do. As stated above, placing the building toward the front property line near on-street parking helps create activity on the sidewalk. The sidewalk, however, must be wide enough to comfortably accommodate pedestrians. Many sidewalks are too narrow for commercial areas, particularly when they are shared by utility poles, fire hydrants and news boxes. Pedestrians also need places to sit, protection from the sun by trees or awnings and interesting things to look at. Building materials that provide interest at close range should be used where people walk next to buildings. Buildings with glass on the first floor display retail goods or show how the ground floor is used. Blank

walls should be avoided at street level. The design of the ground level should always consider the needs of pedestrians.

ART IN PUBLIC PLACES

In June of 2005, the City Council adopted Ordinance 2005 – 13, adding Chapter 23.60 to the San Mateo Municipal Code Regarding Art In Public Places. This code chapter establishes the Art in Public Places Program which: recognizes that cultural and artistic resources enhance the quality of life for individuals living in, working in, and visiting the City; states that balanced development of cultural and artistic resources preserves and improves the quality of the urban environment and increases property values; recognizes the need to develop alternative sources for cultural and artistic outlets as development and urbanization diminishes these resources; and promotes the general welfare through balancing the community’s physical growth and revitalization and its cultural and artistic resources.

This Code chapter establishes a requirement that new commercial and multi-family residential projects valued at three million dollars or more provide for publicly visible art. This requirement may be satisfied by either installing art on site, or by paying a fee in lieu of providing artwork on a given development site.

This Code also calls for the establishment of the City of San Mateo Civic Arts Committee, which is charged with implementing the City’s Art in Public Places program. This includes approving individual requests to install art as part of private development projects, as required by Chapter 23.60. A criterion for review of artwork includes its location, aesthetic quality and harmony with the proposed development and adjacent properties, and public accessibility. The Committee shall also make recommendations to the City Council regarding the use of funds which are paid in lieu of providing art work as part of private development projects.

E. DESIGN - GOALS AND POLICIES

GOALS AND POLICIES

GOAL 3: Maintain and enhance the existing character and physical quality of residential neighborhoods through the appropriate design of new housing and additions.

GOAL 4: Improve the visual character, livability and vitality of commercial areas.

POLICIES

UD 2.1: Multi-Family Design. Ensure that new multi-family developments substantially conform to the City's Multi-family and Small Lot Multi-family Design Guidelines that address the preservation and enhancement of neighborhood character through building scale, materials, architectural style, quality of construction, open space, location of parking and lot size.

The building scale, materials, style, open space, location of parking and lot size are factors that have been identified that affect the quality of residential areas.

UD 2.2: Building Scale. Ensure that new multi-family developments respect the existing scale of the neighboring buildings by providing a change in the building face at spacings common to existing buildings and by stepping down building height towards the street to more closely match the height of existing buildings.

Neighborhoods in San Mateo have a building scale that is formed by facade widths of about 30 to 50 feet and the spaces between the buildings. New construction can visually fit into a neighborhood when it recognizes and adopts this scale. This can be accomplished by stepping a building back a few feet every 30 to 50 feet, adding cut-outs in the building facade, providing bay windows, changing the roof line and height, or adopting a window or detailing pattern common to the area.

UD 2.3: Style and Materials. Encourage the design of new multi-family developments in areas with a dominant building style or dominant type of exterior building materials to complement the style and incorporate the common materials of the area.

The type of building style and materials used can have an effect on how a building fits in with a neighborhood. In neighborhoods where the type of materials or styles of architecture are very homogeneous, new development should respect the style of the buildings and use similar materials. Doing this strengthens the character of the area.

UD 2.4: Multi-Family Parking. Encourage new multi-family developments to place parking underground or towards the rear of the parcel to avoid blank, ground floor walls and to screen views of parking from the street.

When buildings have a blank wall or row of garages on the ground floor it creates an anonymous, non-residential character. By encouraging parking to be underground or at the rear of the parcel, living space or dwelling unit entrances and windows can be located on the ground floor. Adequate architectural detailing of the ground level can also improve the relationship of the building to the street.

UD 2.5: Multi-Family Open Space. Require that a portion of required open space be useable for passive or active recreation.

Multi-family open space requirements are often met with minimal setbacks and small private balconies. In some projects there is little useable open space. By redefining required open space, multi-family developments will more often meet the open space needs of the residents and add to the quality of the neighborhood.

UD 2.6: Orient Buildings Toward the Street. Encourage commercial development to be located at the street in retail areas to encourage pedestrian activity and the use of on-street parking. Locate required parking towards the side and rear of parcels.

Buildings that are located towards the rear of a parcel with parking in front create a cluttered appearance from free standing signage, parking areas and many exposed building faces. They also discourage pedestrian activity by placing a parking lot between the street/sidewalk and the building. Buildings located at the street provide visual interest for motorists and pedestrians, encourage pedestrian activity by being located next to the sidewalk and on-street parking, and provide a sense of street enclosure. Placing the parking towards the rear of the parcel also helps to buffer adjoining residential uses.

UD 2.7: Respect Existing Scale. Encourage new commercial development to respect the scale of surrounding buildings by providing breaks in the building face at spacings common to buildings in the area and by stepping back upper floors.

A street composed of buildings with greatly varying height and width proportions appears confusing. Larger buildings appear more important and smaller buildings appear out of place. Larger buildings may be successfully added if they adopt the scale of neighboring building forms by providing breaks in the building facade, or by adopting a window or detailing pattern common to the area.

UD 2.8: Trademark Building Forms. Discourage 'signature' or trademark building forms or colors where they would contribute to the visual clutter of the area.

Trademark building forms and colors detract from other buildings by unnecessarily standing out. These should not be permitted if they cause visual clutter.

UD 2.9: Pedestrian Oriented Design. On retail commercial projects, designate pedestrian activity as a priority through the design and provision of adequate sidewalk widths, locating windows along ground floor street facades, trees and awnings, and human scale construction materials and features.

UD 2.10: Outdoor Display and Eating. To add visual interest and activity to commercial areas, encourage the outdoor display of plants, books and food, and restaurant seating areas.

UD 2.11: Vendors. Encourage outdoor food and plant vendors in the Downtown.

Attracting people is an essential key to any commercial area. Inclusion of the items discussed in policies 2.9 through 2.11 will make a more lively environment by encouraging pedestrian activity. These improvements will make commercial areas more comfortable to walk through and interesting to be in. In 1994, the City adopted zoning code regulations for outdoor seating and display of retail goods.

UD 2.12: Single-Family Design. Ensure that new single family dwellings and second story additions to single family dwellings substantially conform to the City's Single-Family Design Guidelines that address the preservation and enhancement of neighborhood character through building scale, materials, architectural style and details, privacy, and preservation of views.

The building scale, materials, architectural style, details of construction, privacy concerns, and views are factors that have been identified that affect the quality of residential neighborhoods.

UD 2.13: Duplex Design. Ensure that duplex dwellings substantially conform to the City's Duplex Design Guidelines that address the preservation and enhancement of neighborhood character through building scale, materials, architectural style and details, privacy, and open space.

The building scale, materials, architectural style, details of construction, privacy concerns, and open space are factors that have been identified that affect the quality of duplex neighborhoods.

UD 2.14: Sustainable Design and Building Construction. Require new development and building alterations to conform with the City's ~~Sustainable Initiatives Plan~~[Climate Action Plan](#) and subsequent City Council adopted goals, policies, and standards pertaining to sustainable building [design and](#) construction.

UD 2.15: Integrate Sustainable Design. Encourage integration of sustainable design features and elements into the building early in the design process. Important considerations include:

- a. Use of recycled, sustainably harvested, or locally sourced building materials such as siding, paving, decking, and insulation.
- b. Preservation and/or adaptive reuse of structures is preferred over demolition. Recycle and reuse materials on-site from dismantling and/or demolition of a building or site improvements as much as possible.
- c. Consideration of heat reflecting roof systems to reduce roof heat gain. Balance the benefits of light colored roofs with aesthetics.

UD 2.16: Design and Placement of Solar Access and Panels. Encourage applicants to incorporate solar energy systems into their projects. Building owners can minimize

non-renewable heating and cooling methods and maximize solar heat gain by using solar panels and innovative building design features such as the use of overhangs, having south-facing windows and planting trees that provide shade. Important considerations in the design and placement of solar panels include:

- a. Building placement and adjacencies should be considered such that they do not unreasonably affect the solar access on neighboring residential properties.
- b. Solar panels and other roof-mounted equipment should be integrated into building design so as not to detract from the appearance of a home and reduce obtrusiveness.
- c. Roof mounted solar energy equipment and panel should be located below ridgelines and on sides of roof away from street view wherever possible. Non-glare and non-reflective type panels should be utilized.
- a.d. The design and placement of roof-mounted solar panels should account for the heights of existing trees and future growth. This applies to both trees on-site and on neighboring properties, including Heritage Trees and street trees,

It is important to recognize that site layout, building design, and the construction of buildings are major factors in meeting the objectives of sustainable design. ~~City regulations dictate that the design and construction of buildings meet specific Green Point Rated System and USGBC LEED standards for residential and non-residential developments. These standards may be met in many ways.~~ The integration of sustainable design features should occur early in the design process in order to fully consider available options and technologies. This includes the location, ~~and~~ orientation and placement of structures on a parcel are critical in order to take full advantage of solar opportunities and shading. The placement of windows, porches and overhanging eaves are important for solar conservation. Non-traditional building design elements may be necessary to support on-site solar or other on-site renewable energy systems, and should be considered while balancing the aesthetics of the project in relation to the neighboring context. Deciduous trees should be planted on the south and west sides of buildings to provide shade in summer and maximize sun exposure in winter. Construction materials should be chosen to maximize energy efficiency and use recycled materials whenever possible. High efficiency heating and cooling equipment and appliances can reduce water use, improve the way energy is used, and improve indoor air quality. Drought tolerant landscaping and the use of pervious paving materials can also reduce water waste and runoff into the Bay.