

DOCUMENT REVIEW AND PRELIMINARY APPROACH REPORT

Design Guidelines for
Commercial Districts & Multi-Unit Residential Projects
for the City of Pasadena

2 September 2008

I. Document Review. In an effort to gain a thorough understanding of the various existing design guidelines already adopted by the City of Pasadena as well as to identify portions of these guidelines that could be applied to a new set of design guidelines for neighborhood commercial and multi-family residential areas, Moule & Polyzoides reviewed the following documents:

1. Pasadena Citywide Design Principles

2. Central District Specific Plan

- A. Section 8 (Public Realm Design Guidelines)
- B. Section 9 (Private Realm Design Guidelines)
- C. Section 10 (Sub-District Design Guidelines)

3. East Pasadena Specific Plan

- A. Chapter 4 (Public Realm Design Standards and Guidelines)
- B. Chapter 5 (Design Guidelines for the Transit Station Site)
- C. Chapter 6 (Private Realm Development Standards and Guidelines)

4. Fair Oaks/Orange Grove Specific Plan

- A. Section 5.8 (Private Realm Design Guidelines)
- B. Section 5.9 (New Development)
- C. Section 5.10 (Rehabilitation or Additions to Existing Structures Identified as Historic/Architectural Resources)
- D. Section 5.11 (Minor Rehabilitation of Existing Structures)

5. South Fair Oaks Specific Plan

- A. Chapter 3 (Private Realm Component)

6. West Gateway Specific Plan

- A. Chapter IV (The Future – Design Guidelines)

7. East Colorado Blvd Specific Plan

- A. Chapter 6 (Design Guidelines)

8. North Lake Final Specific Plan

- A. Chapter D (Community Design)

9. East Washington Boulevard Proposed Streetscape Design Concept, Facade Improvement Program, and Design Guidelines

10. Lincoln Avenue Design, Land Use, & Market Study

- A. Section 3: Design Standards

11. Pasadena Playhouse District Streetscapes, Walkways & Alleys Plan
12. Old Pasadena Streetscapes and Alley Walkways Refined Concept Plan
13. City of Pasadena Window Guidelines (New Multi-Family Residential: City of Gardens; RM-Urban Development Standards)
14. Multi-Family Residential, City of Gardens (RM-16, RM-32, and RM-48 District zoning standards)
15. Consolidated Design Review Submittal Requirements (Multi-unit Residential Projects - City of Gardens)

II. Applicable Principles and Guidelines from Document Review. Based upon an extensive review of the documents listed above, Moule & Polyzoides identified the following principles and guidelines as being applicable to a new set of design guidelines for neighborhood commercial and multi-family residential areas not currently governed by any of the above documents. These principles and guidelines could form the basis of general principles at the beginning of the new architectural guidelines and/or comprise the basis for intent statements at the beginning of each guideline category (see section IV, Preliminary Outline for Proposed New Guidelines for Neighborhood Commercial and Multi-Family Residential Areas, below).

1. **Context.** Preserve Pasadena's character and scale, including its traditional urban design form as well as its natural and cultural history. Introduce new buildings and landscapes that are particular to Pasadena and contribute to an identifiable and coherent city form. Buildings should respond to the immediate area, as well as the larger City environment.

New development should integrate with and add interest to its surroundings, reinforcing functional and visual continuity while employing individual expression. Its scale, materials, massing, and architectural character should be compatible with its surroundings. When adjacent to historic structures, new development should respect the existing fabric and provide a meaningful transition between the old and the new. New development should also incorporate existing site conditions, such as mature trees and natural drainage courses.

New development should be of enduring quality and appropriate to its time and place. New residential development in existing residential neighborhoods should give special consideration to predominant architectural styles and features, materials, textures, and colors that are present in the neighborhood (to achieve a scale compatible with adjacent structures, architectural features present on existing adjacent structures should be complemented by elements in new construction that are similar in shape, size, and configuration). Where appropriate, new construction should follow the example set by nearby older buildings of architectural interest.

Historic buildings and structures should be reused and rehabilitated in order to protect Pasadena's important architectural heritage.

2. **Orient Buildings Towards the Street.** Buildings should be oriented to positively define public streets and public/communal open spaces. Internally focused residential developments should be discouraged.
3. **Massing.** Buildings should avoid large, blocky facades. Massing should be simple, place strong visual emphasis on the street, and be in scale with the width of the street. Buildings on corner lots should incorporate architectural elements that emphasize the corner (curved or angled facade, a corner entrance, etc.). Building volumes should maintain a compatible scale with their surroundings.

Multi-lot and entire-block projects should feature varied and articulated facades, individual openings to stores and offices, and appropriately scaled signs.

4. **Elevation Design.** Buildings should be designed to be attractive from all directions. Where rear or sides of buildings are visible from adjacent streets, these facades should receive equal design treatment as the front or main

facade. Walls should be articulated through the use of openings and building modulation to complement the structures' architectural style and harmonize with nearby structures. Avoid large blank walls adjacent to street frontages.

- 5. Building Proportions and Human-Scale Design.** Fashion a building's overall appearance on a clear and pleasing set of proportions that exhibit a sense of order and emphasize the human scale. Overall building proportions and openings should be designed to the scale of the pedestrian, including establishing a rhythm of vertical elements along the street-level facade and creating visual interest at the street/sidewalk level.
- 6. Pedestrian-Friendly Frontages.** Establish a comfortable transition between the exterior and interior of a building. Use porches and stoops to communicate a sense of arrival and provide opportunities for informal social interaction. Elevate ground floor residential units above the street elevation to foster privacy. Provide architectural detailing that is visible to pedestrians (recessed doors and windows, moldings, pilasters, grillwork, awnings, attractive signs, etc.), particularly along the ground floor.
- 7. Building Entrances.** Provide well-marked, articulated building entrances that are oriented directly towards streets and public open spaces. Buildings that front multiple streets should provide a main entrance along each street. Residential lobbies should be oriented towards and accessible from the major street frontage, and be directly accessible from a public sidewalk.
- 8. Windows.** Retail buildings should provide windows at street level with a majority of the street frontage being comprised of storefront and display windows. Window and doorframes should be of a material and profile appropriate to the design of an individual building. Clear (transparent) glass should be used in windows and doors, particularly on the ground floor.
- 9. Building Materials and Finishes.** High-quality construction that exhibits permanence and quality should be encouraged and each new building should be regarded as a long-term addition to the city fabric. Examples of preferred building materials include smooth stucco finish, brick or brick veneer, cut stone, tile, terra cotta or ceramic roof tiles, steel or wrought iron grill work, and canvas awnings. Discourage materials that are highly reflective.
- 10. Public and Communal Open Space.** Open spaces should function as outdoor rooms. They should be defined by buildings and landscape, be proportioned to their surroundings, be amenable to outdoor occupation, use, and activity, and should create pleasant microclimates. The provision of focal points (especially water features) or opportunities for civic art should be encouraged.
- 11. Parking.** Locate parking garages and surface lots behind buildings or interior to a block. Strongly discourage parking lots or garages at street corners. Screen views of cars from public view and adjacent sensitive land uses (if security is a concern, parking lots should be designed to allow view corridors into the parking lots from adjacent streets and alleys). Use landscaping and plant large canopy trees to minimize expansive paving areas of surface lots. Minimize curb cuts and locate driveways at the edge of a parcel rather than in the center of the parcel.
- 12. Services and Utilities.** Locate service, loading, and storage areas away from public streets, public open spaces, and adjacent sensitive uses. Avoid locating noise and odor-generating functions in areas that may create a nuisance for adjacent properties. Provide access to service and loading areas from the rear of the lot or from an alley, where present.

Ventilation, heating, air conditioning equipment, should be screened from public view. Screening should be compatible with the overall building design and should avoid the use of inferior or incompatible materials (wood lattice, etc).
- 13. Lighting.** Light and glare should be shielded from shining onto adjacent properties. Lighting should be integrated into the overall building design in a manner that complements the architectural style of the building. Lighting should appropriately accent and articulate the building design. Exposed conduit is highly discouraged.

14. **Signage.** Pedestrian-oriented signs are encouraged. Signs should be clear and visible to people on the sidewalk as well as to those in automobiles. Signs should be unique and original and should convey what is there (the name of the shop, where the parking is, the street number, when a shop is open). Examples of permitted sign types include projecting blade signs, wall signs, architectural canopy signs, and opaque panels with illumination limited to “push-through” letters and graphics. Signs should not block windows. Transformers, boxes, raceways, and conduits should be concealed.
15. **Walls and Fences.** Materials, finishes, and colors for walls should complement the materials and design of the primary building. Walls and fences are discouraged unless they are needed for screening, to create a sense of street edge, or for security purposes.
16. **Landscaping.** Vertical planting should be used to soften blank walls and discourage graffiti. Outdoor spaces should be defined with trellises, plants, potted plants, and trees. Landscapes should be particular to Pasadena and compatible with the adjacent streetscape.
17. **Security Grills.** The use of security grills on the exterior facades of buildings should be minimized.
18. **Historic Resources.** Buildings identified as historic/architectural resources in the resources survey should be recognized for their reuse potential.
19. **Rehabilitation of Existing Structures.** The appearance of most of the existing structures may be upgraded with simple improvements (such as creating a base on a blank facade with paint or ceramic tile, screening parking areas, adding trees to parking lots, and planting along walls and store fronts). Seismic upgrading or the addition of plumbing should be conducted in the interior, if possible, or thoughtfully integrated into the overall facade design.

III. Questions Raised as a Result of the Document Review Process

1. **Provide creative architectural solutions that acknowledge the surrounding context without direct mimicry of historical styles.** This statement appears in several of the documents that were reviewed in section I above (for instance, the Citywide Design Principles, Central District Specific Plan, East Colorado Boulevard Specific Plan). Should this statement apply to all areas of Pasadena? For example, should direct mimicry of architectural styles in Pasadena’s more historic, primarily single-family residential scaled neighborhoods be discouraged? Instead, perhaps the architectural guidelines should suggest that buildings be designed according to the correct proportions, materials, colors, and detailing of a particular style – whether the style be Craftsman, Spanish Revival, Modern, etc. The goal should be, per the Citywide Design Guidelines, to “avoid nostalgic misrepresentations that confuse the relationships among buildings over time.”
2. **Specificity.** The design guidelines that were reviewed in section I above are, for the most part, general in nature - with the exception of the Lincoln Avenue Design, Land Use, & Market Study, which gives a fairly detailed description of retail buildings, including recommended dimensions. Providing specifics in terms of proportion, detailing, etc. should help dispel some of the misrepresentations that occur when historic styles are improperly applied. Areas that could use more specificity include:
 - A. How much open space should be allowed along a street frontage?
 - B. What are the architectural characteristics of human-scaled design?
 - C. What are the architectural characteristics of some of Pasadena’s predominant architectural styles (proportions, materials, colors)?
3. **Other Issues that Need Further Development.** Issues identified in the Summary Report of Tour of Recently Built Commercial and Multi-Unit Residential Projects. Note that some of these issues are absent from the existing guidelines, while others simply need further development or more emphasis.