

Chapter 4 – Downtown Core

This chapter defines the land uses, development standards and design standards and guidelines for the Downtown Core. This chapter is organized as follows:

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 - 4.1 Purpose
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4.1 PURPOSE

The Downtown Core is the cultural and historic heart of Martinez. The quality of Downtown Martinez’s historic buildings and the relationship between these buildings creates a historic urban fabric unparalleled in Contra Costa County. The positive image and economic health of Downtown Martinez are strongly influenced by this historic character, and its protection is an essential part of assuring Martinez’s economic health and growth in the future. The intent of this Specific Plan is to create and encourage opportunities for a variety of commercial, residential, entertainment and cultural uses, including retail, office, residential and visitor-serving uses. The Downtown Core encourages a concentration of uses that generate activity during evenings and weekends as well as on weekdays. The retail uses in this area are intended to serve many of the daily shopping needs of Downtown residents and employees, as well as the specialty shopping needs of citywide residents, regional shoppers, and tourists.

The Downtown Core is divided into two sub-areas, consisting of 1) properties with frontage on Main or Ferry Streets and 2) all other properties. Standards for properties with frontage on Main Street and Ferry Street, the Downtown’s historic retail streets, are intended to reinforce this historic pedestrian retail pattern by concentrating active retail uses along these streets. Because of the concentration of buildings on Main Street and Ferry Street that contribute to Downtown’s historic character, these properties also fall into the Downtown Historic Overlay District (see Chapter 6 of this Plan), which provides standards for rehabilitation and new construction that are intended to preserve and enhance the historic character of the Downtown. Local landmarks such as the City Hall Apartments building, the Bergamini Building, the Old State Theater, and the McMahon Building help to define the district’s character. Preservation and rehabilitation of such structures, along with careful and compatible design of new development, is important in maintaining the area’s character and unique sense of identity.

Standards for the outer portion of the Downtown Core, consisting of properties without frontage on Main Street or Ferry Street, are intended to create a mixed-use pattern of

residential, office, cultural and small-scale light industrial and manufacturing uses that is in keeping with the traditional fine-grained mix of uses typical of a traditional Downtown.

4.2 USES

The uses in the Downtown Core are those allowed in the CC zone district, subject to the design guidelines of this Plan and the general requirements of the Zoning Code.

4.3 ZONING DISTRICTS

The existing CC district in the Downtown Core shall remain, and shall be expanded to include the SC and LI zoned area north of downtown. The existing PA zoned area from the north side of Green Street south to Masonic shall also remain, as a transition from the commercial area to the residential area.

4.5 DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

All new development in the Downtown Core shall be accordance with the standards of the CC zone district for height, lot size, setbacks, etc. The CC District shall be amended to provide for a height limit of 40', or three stories, higher with a use permit, and a maximum density of 43 units per acre.

4.5.1 Maximizing Usage

In accordance with the “smart growth” principles stated in Section 1.3 of this Plan, the intent of the Downtown Core is to encourage two to three story buildings in the downtown, and to discourage one story buildings.

4.5.2 Parking

The majority of the Downtown Core falls within Martinez Parking District No. 1, in which nonresidential uses are not required to provide on-site parking. Residential uses must provide onsite parking in accordance with the standards of Chapter 22.34 of the Zoning Ordinance, and as allowed within the provisions of the Downtown Overlay district. Refer to Chapter 12 for additional off-street parking and loading requirements and standards.

4.5.3 Density

The basic density for residential shall be 29 units per acre, equivalent to R-1.5 zoning. The Planning Commission may approve up to a maximum density of 43 units per acre (equivalent to R-1.0 zoning), by use permit. In order to approve a density above the lower end of the density range, the Planning Commission would need to find that in

addition to meeting the above minimum requirements, the proposal is superior in terms of two or more of the following criteria:

- Design and appearance
- Minimizing impacts on adjacent public lands
- Providing onsite amenities for the future residents
- Preserving or creating view corridors.
- Utilizing green building practices to the maximum extent possible
- Providing a public amenity.

In order to approve a density at or near the upper end of the density range, the Planning Commission would need to find that the proposal is superior in terms of all or almost all of the above criteria.

4.6 DESIGN STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES

4.6.1 Character Defining Statement

The Downtown Core is the cultural, historic and retail center of Martinez and an attraction for the region beyond. Its significant signature buildings include the City Hall Apartments, Bank of Martinez, National Bank of Martinez, and the Hook, McMahan-Telfer, and Bergamini Buildings. Other culturally significant buildings in the District, such as Hilson’s Department Store and the Bell Telephone, Rankin, and McNamara-McMahon Buildings, have compromised their historic character through renovations. New construction should be in scale and architecturally harmonious with nearby historic buildings. The above listed signature buildings should be used for inspiration regarding design, form, detailing and site layout.

The design standards and guidelines for the Downtown Core are intended to enhance these signature buildings as well as their setting, since both buildings and context contribute to the character of a cohesive Downtown. In addition, the design standards and guidelines for the Downtown Core are intended to create a vibrant, pedestrian-friendly Downtown by encouraging pedestrian-oriented storefronts, human scaled spaces, and pedestrian amenities.

4.6.2 Site Design Standards

Building Orientation

Buildings should have strong street presence, with public entrances and activity areas oriented toward the street.

Setbacks

Commercial buildings should front directly onto public sidewalks with no intervening setback

Vehicular Access and Parking

On-site parking is discouraged, except for residential uses, and parking spaces should not have direct frontage on, nor vehicular access to or from Main Street or Ferry Street. Access points should be located on other streets.

Pedestrian Access

Primary access to buildings should be from the street or pedestrian walkways, not parking areas.

Site Furniture

Pedestrian amenities are encouraged, including benches, landscaped gathering areas, trash receptacles, etc. Design of improvements should be traditional and related to the signature buildings.