

## **Chapter 5 – Civic**

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

- 5 Civic
  - 5.1 Purpose
  - 5.2 Uses
  - 5.5 Development Standards
  - 5.6 Design Standards and Guidelines

### **5.1 PURPOSE**

The intent of the Civic area is to provide a center for the existing functions and future expansion of the Contra Costa County government, including administrative, judicial and correctional facilities, and for federal, state and local civic facilities.

Because of the concentration of buildings on Court Street that contribute to Downtown’s historic character, a portion of the Civic area also falls into the Downtown Historic Overlay area, which provides standards for rehabilitation and new construction that are intended to preserve and enhance the historic character of the Downtown; see Chapter 7 of this Plan. Several landmarks that are either on or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places give considerable character to this area. These include the County Finance Building, County Courthouse, Post Office, Veterans’ Memorial Hall and Martinez Library. 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.



*Veterans’ Memorial Hall*



*Martinez Library*

## **5.2 USES**

The uses of the Civic area shall be those allowed in the Civic Zoning District, subject to the design guidelines of this Plan, and the general provisions of the Zoning Code.

## **5.5 DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS FOR THE CIVIC DISTRICT**

### **5.5.1 General**

All new development within the Civic area shall be in accordance with the standards of the Civic zone district for floor area, setbacks, heights, etc.

### **5.5.2 Parking**

Refer to Chapter 12 for off-street parking requirements and standards. Portions of the area are dominated by large surface parking lots, and the use of shared parking structures or decks is encouraged if additional parking is to be provided.

## **5.6 DESIGN STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES**

### **5.6.1 Character Defining Statement**

The Civic area is the governmental and judicial center of Contra Costa County. Commercial and service uses are intended to be limited to those that are incidental to, and for the convenience of, the governmental and judicial uses. The significant, signature buildings that define this area include several historic structures: the County Finance Building, County Courthouse, Post Office, Veterans' Memorial Hall and Martinez Library. This area also includes contemporary buildings which may have historic references in detailing, massing, and fenestration. The area's historic buildings should be respected and complemented in any adjacent architecture. While taller buildings are anticipated in this area, respecting pedestrian scale is important. One example of how this can be accomplished is by stepping building heights from lower at the street to higher beyond. The signature buildings listed above should be used for inspiration regarding design, form, detailing and site layout.

### **5.6.2 Site Design Standards and Guidelines**

#### **Building Orientation**

Building orientation shall provide for at least one significant street entrance elevation. Other frontages shall have a pedestrian scale and incorporate landscaping.

#### **Vehicular Access and Parking**

- 1) Parking shall typically be provided in parking garages with limited numbers of common access points.

- 2) On site parking (lots and structures) shall be located to the rear of the building.
- 3) Parking shall be accessed from public streets other than Court Street.

**Pedestrian Access**

- 1) Primary access to buildings shall be from the street or pedestrian walkways, not parking areas.
- 2) Pedestrian access through buildings in this district is encouraged where security considerations allow.

**Site Furniture**

Pedestrian amenities are encouraged, including benches, landscaped gathering areas, trash receptacles, etc.

**5.6.3 Architecture**

**Style**

- 1) Existing buildings of historic merit should be restored or maintained in a style that reflects the original appearance of the building.
- 2) New buildings in this district should exhibit a modern “formality” befitting government and judicial uses. Government buildings should exhibit a formal character through contemporary architectural forms. The architectural style of new buildings should have a contemporary appearance but utilize elements that complement the historic character of Martinez, using the signature buildings as a source of design inspiration. Refer to Chapter 6, Downtown Historic Overlay District, for more information on historic architectural styles.

**Scale**

The portion of buildings and improvements with an orientation to pedestrian spaces should be at a pedestrian scale. Other parts of buildings, which do not include pedestrian spaces, may be larger or taller in scale.

**Entry Location and Treatment**

Building massing should highlight the location of building entries. Primary pedestrian entries should be clearly expressed and should be recessed or framed by a sheltering element such as an awning, arcade, porch or portico. Greater height may be used to accentuate entries in the form of tower elements, tall openings, or a central mass at an entry plaza.

**Roof Design**

Roof design should reflect and complement significant buildings in the area.

**Detailing**

Detailing of existing buildings should be accurate to the original style of the building. New buildings should use detailing reflective of the signature buildings in the area .

**Colors and Materials**

Muted earth tones and traditional materials such as stone, masonry or stucco should prevail, with brighter colors limited to trim areas.

**5.6.4 Landscaping**

**Plant Types**

Plant types may be drawn from a broad plant palette, but should be suitable for the climate and exposure in which they are to be placed. Plant selection should be in accordance with Section 22.35.040 of the Zoning Code.

**Scale**

Pedestrian scale plantings should prevail, with larger plantings used as accents.

**Hardscape**

Paved areas may draw from a broad range of materials, designs and finishes that are complementary to the building architecture.