

## **Chapter 7 – Downtown Neighborhood**

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

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  - 7.1 Purpose
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### **7.1 PURPOSE**

The intent of the Downtown Neighborhood is to provide for a variety of residential uses in an environment that is typically residential in character. This area serves as a transition to the predominantly single-family residential neighborhoods to the west and south.

The City’s Historic Resource Inventory identified some of the homes and sites in this area as having historic significance. Any development within this area should give careful attention to the preservation and rehabilitation of these historic resources. Please see Sections 7.6 and 7.7.3 for additional discussion of historic preservation issues and resources.

### **7.2 USES**

The uses in the Downtown Neighborhood, are those allowed in the zone districts of PA, R-3.5, R-2.5 and R-1.5, subject to the design guidelines of this Plan and of the Zoning Code.

### **7.3 ZONING DISTRICTS**

The existing zoning districts of PA, R-3.5, R-2.5, R-1.5 and DO shall remain on the Zoning Map within the Downtown Neighborhood area. Owners of individual parcels may apply for a rezoning, so long as the proposed density is within the density range specified in this chapter. Such rezoning requests will be considered by the Planning Commission on a case-by-case basis.

**7.4.1 DENSITY**

The allowable density range for the Downtown Neighborhood shall be 12 to 35 units per acre (equivalent to R-3.5 to R-1.5-DO zoning).

**7.5 DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS FOR THE DOWNTOWN NEIGHBORHOOD AREA**

All new development in the Downtown Neighborhood area shall be in accordance with the standards of the applicable zoning.

**7.6 HISTORIC RESIDENTIAL ARCHITECTURAL STYLES**

The following architectural styles are prevalent in the historic neighborhoods of Downtown Martinez:

**7.6.1 Italianate (1850s-1880s)**

The Italianate style is a wood-frame adaptation of stone structures built in 17<sup>th</sup> century Italy. Italianate houses are characterized by a low-pitched or flat roof with wide, overhanging and bracketed heavy supporting brackets under wide eaves. These two- to three-story wood-framed structures have a typically rectangular massing, often picturesquely arranged in imitation of Italian villas that were enlarged over generations. Generally, Italianate style structures have corniced eaves, angled bay windows and Corinthian-columned porches. Decoration is elaborate and may include paired brackets and cornices and even a square cupola. Traditional stone details were recreated in redwood or Douglas fir, using the manufactured trim that was becoming available in the period. Openings are tall and narrow, typically with double-hung windows with hood moldings and heavily molded doors.



In the Bay Area, a smaller version of the Italianate house was developed. A one-story building with front bay, bracketed cornice, pedimented window, simplified portico and raised first floor, the details are the same as the two-story type, but the overall proportions are different.



### **7.6.2 Stick/Eastlake (1860s-1890s)**

Stick-Eastlake structures were plain, simple and relatively modern. Because they lacked the ornamentation of other styles like the Queen Anne house, they did not last long during an era which delighted in fanciful adornments. Stick houses were characterized by a large, ornamental truss under the gable eaves of a house, and often included square bays, flat roof lines and free-style decorations. The Stick Style emphasizes straight lines and right angles. Flat, narrow boards are nailed to the outside of the building to repeat and reinforce the structural frame within. Diagonal braces parallel to the façade frame the front porch. The roof projects over the front of the house so that the gable end forms a separate plane. Rectangular bay windows, which are easier to construct, replace the slanted bay of the Italianate. The horizontal siding is reoriented to vertical and diagonal positions, especially around the bay window where the structure is exaggerated by the board and batten technique. Abundant redwood and Douglas fir supplies were carved with scrollsaw and jigsaw into intricate flat shapes.



A decorative variation on the Stick style, known as “Eastlake”, carried the exploration of the properties of wood to the three-dimensional. Knobs and newels turned out by chisel, lathe and gouge, and most closely resembling table legs, typify this architectural mode mistakenly named for British designer Charles Eastlake. The plan itself is usually reminiscent of its Italianate precursor.

### **7.6.3 Queen Anne Revival (1880s-1890s)**

Queen Anne buildings are characterized by complex roofs of fairly steep pitch; combinations of siding materials such as clapboard and patterned shingles; rounded and three-sided slant bays of one or more stories; towers and turrets; porches and balconies, sometimes rounded in configuration, and by the incorporation of ornamental elements such as turned wood columns and spindles, sawn bargeboards and brackets, stained and leaded glass, and molded plasterwork. Examples range from small, L-shaped cottages with a bay window on the projecting wing and a porch with a couple of columns and brackets on the perpendicular wing, to two-and-a-half-story “tower houses” with a profusion of architectural elements and ornamental embellishments. Carpenter Gothic was a variant that became quite popular with



wood-framed churches. Eastlake or Stick-influenced houses of this era are generally similar in massing, with squared bays and a linear, two-dimensional quality to their ornament.

In the 1880s, a rowhouse version of the Queen Anne style emerged up in cities across the U.S and in the Bay Area., adapting the popularity of the picturesque to a broader range of budgets. The demands of a growing population for new housing were accommodated by a proliferation of Queen Anne cottages. The Queen Anne cottage is a one-story building dominated by an oversized gable, which may be shingled, framed with intricate bargeboard, pierced by flashed glass windows, stamped with a sunburst and topped with a proud finial. The gable overwhelms the front bay window, creating cur-away corners and a recessed porch. Special ornamentation evolved for each of these new features.

#### **7.6.4 American Foursquare/Classic Box (1890-1910)**

American Foursquare houses are recognized by their square proportions, often given a horizontal emphasis by roof or siding treatments; by the nearly always present hipped roof and dormer; and by a front porch either recessed or attached, spanning all or part of the façade. Columns suggestive of the classical orders, dentils and other traditional moldings, cornerboards treated as pilasters, and boxed cornices tied these homes to the tradition of the American Colonial Revival; they can also be referred to as a “Classic Box.” A front porch, often recessed into the façade, was a ubiquitous element.

Typical interior details include hefty ceiling beams, waist-high wainscoting, and classic columns in the archways – all in a dark finish. Hardwood floors with inlaid parquet border emphasized the regularity of the floor plan.



A smaller Bay Area style which grew out of the Colonial Revival genre is the Neoclassic Rowhouse. A one-story house on a raised foundation, with a hipped roof and dormer window, the Rowhouse shares many classic details with the Classic Box. Its form, however, is more reminiscent of its forebear, the Queen Anne Cottage. Although “rowhouse” suggests attached units, it is used here to mean detached houses built side by side, in a line. The front portico of the Classic Box is absorbed within the rectangular perimeter and the front door recessed to one side. On the same corner, the large peaked roof reaches out over the door and rests on one, two or three classical columns, which vary from square and chunky to turned and slender. The living room has a slanted or square bay with double-hung windows; where space allows, a modest bay also projects into the side yard. Narrow clapboard covers the Rowhouse, windows have wide, flat trim, and a terraced stoop flanks the front steps.

### **7.6.5 Craftsman Bungalow/California Bungalow (1905-1925)**

A new architectural ideal was being embraced by many Californians in early 20th century--one which valued hand crafts over the machine-made, stained rather than painted wood, and the principle that "nothing is beautiful that is also not functional." One realization of these ideals was the Craftsman bungalow, a house form that was typically one to two stories with gently pitched broad gables, one large gable covering the main portion of the house and often a second, lower gable, covering a porch. Equally important was the interior arrangement of space, which eliminated hallways to create open floor plans and incorporated stained woodwork throughout.



Californians were particularly receptive to Craftsman ideas of integrating the house with its natural surroundings, possible, in part, because of the mild California climate and abundance of natural materials. The California Bungalow is a builder’s simplification of the Craftsman bungalow, with stucco replacing wood shingles as the primary exterior finish and a generally simpler level of detail. The feature unique to the California Bungalow is the pair of broad, tapered “elephantine” columns supporting the small gable over the front porch. The bungalow has been referred to as California's first architectural export, variations of which were adapted by communities around the country. Examples can still be seen throughout Martinez and throughout the Bay Area today.

### **7.6.6 Mission Revival (c. 1915-1939)**

Mission Revival, popular all over the country after its introduction in 1893 at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, was particularly attractive to Californians looking for a simpler regional architecture. Romantic ideals of the Spanish-Mexican colonial period prevailed, however unfounded, and seemingly every California town erected a red-tile, white stucco Mission Revival building, often with neo-Moorish towers and round arches. Instead of adhering to authentic early-19th century colonial California examples, Mission Revival style was based more on Mediterranean traditions. These architectural motifs experienced renewed popularity throughout California, and the entire country, from the late 1910s through the 1930s as the Spanish Colonial Revival.



In its simplest form, Spanish styling is characterized by white (usually) stucco exteriors and red tile roofs, with an occasional arched opening. More elaborate examples incorporated grates and grilles of wood, wrought iron or plaster; extensive use of terra cotta and tile; and balconies and patios integrated into plans. Asymmetric massing uses features such as stair towers, projecting planes set off by corbelling, and a variety of window shapes and types.

## **7.7 AREA -SPECIFIC DESIGN STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES**

These standards are in addition to the general standards for new development contained in Chapter 10 of this Plan. Refer to Chapter 10 for general standards and guidelines that apply to the entire Downtown Specific Plan area and Section 3.5 for standards and guidelines for all residential structures in the Downtown Specific Plan Area.

### **7.7.1 Downtown Neighborhood Character Defining Statement**

The character of the Downtown Neighborhood is defined by its existing historic residential buildings. The overall look of the area should remain that of a historic residential neighborhood. More contemporary construction that does not conform to this vision should not be approved.. This is primarily an area for residential uses, including semi- and/or fully-attached single-family homes, , and small multifamily structures. The scale of small lot residential development is important, and the consolidation of individual lots to create larger projects is not in character with this district. Existing buildings should be retained, adapted and reused for residential or other permitted land uses where the building is structurally sound and not in a state of total disrepair. New construction, where warranted, should respect and complement the district’s historic residences in design, scale and placement.

### **7.7.2 Site Planning**

#### **Building Orientation**

- a) Buildings should have a traditional residential orientation to the street.
- b) In new buildings, the first floor building levels should be set slightly above the sidewalk level (up to 5 feet) to create a sense of transition from the public space to the private realm.
- c) Privacy between residences should be preserved by offsetting windows from existing windows on the adjacent properties.

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

- a) Access should be via residential driveways with parking situated toward the rear and side of the lot. No parking is allowed in front of the building.
- b) The width of driveways should not exceed 12 feet, while providing adequate room to maneuver vehicles.
- c) Hollywood drives (middle planting strips) and open pavers are encouraged for residential driveways.

**Pedestrian Access**

- a) Front entries for residential uses should be clearly identified by elements such as porches or stoops.
- b) Entry walks from the sidewalk to the front door should reflect the residential character of the district. The width of entry walks should not exceed five feet.

**Site Furniture**

As the primary character of the Downtown Neighborhood is residential, outdoor pedestrian amenities such as residential type seating should be provided in private open spaces such as front porches and rear yards.

**7.7.3 Architecture**

**Style**

- a) Existing buildings should be restored to and maintained at their original appearance.
- b) New buildings should use a consistent architectural style for the structure and all elements relating to it, including trellises, carports, roof forms, windows and detailing.
- c) While specific architectural styles are not dictated, several styles predominate in the Downtown Neighborhood District (see Section 7.6). These styles create the architectural vernacular of the District and should be reflected in the architecture of new projects.
- d) The rehabilitation of an older building should work toward restoring the original architecture of the building, rather than covering it over with a new style.
- e) An addition to an existing building should be designed to reflect and blend with the existing design of the structure.
- f) The design of auxiliary structures (detached garages, sheds, etc.) should be architecturally similar to the main structure.
- g) Porches and roofs for a new building should be compatible with the existing patterns in the neighborhood.

**Scale**

- a) New buildings should respect the overall massing scale of the neighborhood.
- b) Long blank walls should be avoided.

**Detailing**

- a) New detailing on existing buildings should be accurate to the original detailing of the building.
- b) New buildings should use detailing reflective of the signature buildings in the district.

**Roof Design**

The typical roof in this area should be a pitched design reflective of nearby residences.

### **Porches**

Porches define a semipublic area that transitions between the public street and the private interior.

- a) Existing porches should be preserved.
- b) Adding new porches to historic structures or enclosing existing porches is strongly discouraged.
- c) Elevated porches are strongly encouraged in new residential structures.
- d) Porches should be an integral element of the building design and not appear added on. Elements that should be consistent between the porch and the main structure include roof slope and architectural details such as columns, balusters, balustrade and brackets.

### **Windows**

- a) All windows on a building should be related in operating type, proportion and trim. Unifying elements such as common headers and sills are encouraged.
- b) Existing, historically correct windows should be preserved in place.
- c) Aluminum sliding windows are not in keeping with the area’s character, and their replacement with windows more in keeping with the area’s historic character, such as wooden double-hung windows, is encouraged.

### **Colors and Materials**

- a) Predominant materials should be stucco, wood siding, shingle roofing, and wood framed windows and doors.
- b) Colors should be appropriate to the style and period of the building. For example, Craftsman styles use muted earth tones, while Victorian styles use brighter, more contrasting colors.

## **7.7.4 Landscaping**

### **Plant Types**

Plant types should be typical of residential plantings, with limited lawn in the front yard, foundation shrubbery, and limited use of small-scale trees as accents.

### **Scale**

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

### **Relationship to Development**

- a) Plantings should be arranged to frame the architecture, provide a green carpet between the street and the building, and soften the view of the building foundation.
- b) The public parkway along the street should be landscaped.
- c) Pathways, pergolas and trellises that are in character with the architectural style of the house are encouraged to add shade and interest.

**Hardscape**

- a) Paving should be on a small scale and limited to walkways, driveways, and rear yard parking areas.
- b) Varied paving textures and/or elevation changes should be used to define entrances, pedestrian areas, and crosswalks.

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR REHABILITATION  
OF HISTORIC RESIDENTIAL PROPERTIES**

McAlester, Virginia and Lee. *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1988).

Prentice, Helaine Kaplan and Blair Prentice. *Rehab Right: How to Realize the Full Value of Your Old House* (Berkeley, Ten Speed Press, 1986).