

1/21/03

Sacramento County
Design Guidelines and Review

Focus Group Workshop #1: Issues and Objectives

On January 21, 2003, 38 people attended the first of four focus group workshops to assist Sacramento County prepare design guidelines for commercial and industrial development. The first meeting agenda introduced participants to the process and provided an opportunity to discuss design issues and identify objectives. Participants worked as members of planning teams.



Above: Supervisor Don Nottoli welcomes participants and provides some policy background.

Summary of Key issues and Objectives

The planning teams identified three issues that they felt were critical to the successfully improving the image of commercial development. These included:

Think as a district.

- Theme districts with common streetscape features
- Align building setbacks, edges and connections in districts
- Make accommodations for a mix of uses
- Plan for improving neighborhood interface

Make things better for pedestrians.

- Emphasize the pedestrian's experience—particularly the edges of buildings and streets
- Park out of sight
- Connect parcels and districts to the neighborhoods

Expect better design.

- Signage should be scaled and designed to support overall district design concepts
- Expect corporate architecture to reflect higher community aspirations
- Balance design and density appropriately

In addition to design issues, the participants discussed how the design review process could be improved. There were five issues identified:

- Better coordination among County departments
- Improve the certainty of the review process outcome
- Pursue a review process that encourages a better result
- Provide early input for project sponsors
- Provide an opportunity for community input early in the process

The following pages include summaries of the planning teams' efforts to identify design issues and objectives the preparation of design guidelines should address. Team issues and objectives are organized by streetscape, site planning, architectural design, signage, and "other".



Team 1



STREETSCAPE

Issues

- Pedestrians are most important-than cars
- Roundabout as part of streetscape with bench and open space
- Tree-lined street community
- Good-tree lined streets-sidewalk setbacks
- Too much concrete-no pedestrian space
- No sidewalks, no pedestrian space
- Need of bike lanes

Objectives

- Traffic calming, landscaping, sidewalk setbacks
- Urban blight-ugly! Mass transit/pedestrian design/traffic circle/median strips
- People and cars-need balance, cars dominate, standardization of basic streetscape characteristics

SITE PLANNING

Issues

- Parking lot going toward street-site issue
- Utilities
- Big box-no use of pedestrian scale in site planning vs. mixed use-densified development (group 1 members expressed different opinions on this)
- Good site planning-use of corner lot lofts on top-multi-level

Objectives

- Safety-pedestrian and vehicular
- (Utilities) Screening
- Density objective-appropriate balance needed
- Urban design-creation is placemaking -objective

ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN

Issues

- *Mixed-use density-like design
- Very boxy
- Good shopping center with trees/use of parking
- CONTEXT-bad design-in midtown does not fit with community
- Shows continuity unique, good design (near pictures of Starbucks, KFC and smaller commercial building)

- Boxy, no design character (near picture of concrete office park type building with no windows) vs. unique design of office building (near picture of commercial building with facade of windows)

Objectives

- Objective-higher FAR allowances, use of mass transit
- Landscape
- Better eye appeal, unique, pedestrian scale-objective design guidelines
- Objective have design fit community

SIGNAGE

Issues

- Good signage/part of building (near picture of Bella Bru Café)
- Too big, out of context, increase quality
- Good signage goes with building (near picture of Borders bookstore)

Objectives

- *Scale/size-appropriate context needed by community
- Location/gateway marking objective-standards needed for marketing of businesses-balance needed
- Design objective-graphically pleasing design

Team 2



STREETSCAPE

Issues

- Landscaping
- “Scale of street” pattern (row)
- Pedestrian scale architecture at street
- Corner architecture

Objectives

- *Consistent urban edge (row)
- Street trees
- Pedestrian orientation

SITE PLANNING

Issues

- Mixed styles
- Congested site
- Back side of buildings toward street
- Urban edge flexibility
- Building setback
- Auto vs. pedestrians-driveways

Objectives

- *Landscaping, setbacks, pedestrian orientation
- Linkages to adjacent neighborhoods
- Pedestrian safety

ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN

Issues

- Massing/timeless
- Eye sores
- Scale and massing
- Setbacks
- Bad Street Level and massing (multi-story commercial building with dark street level base)

- Good street level (near picture of multi-story building with street level windows and covered entry)

Objectives

- *Appropriate massing and setback
- Qualify materials
- Complimentary colors

SIGNAGE

Issues

- Consistent signage
- Artistic signage
- Signage overkill

Objectives

- *Integrated with project, limited amount (near pictures of signage at shopping mall and strip shopping centers)

OTHER

Issues

- Fence types and locations (near pictures of various fencing styles)
- Transition commercial to residential
- Material storage in front (near picture of warehouse type building with fenced-in front lot filled with equipment)

Objectives

- *Better edges (transitions commercial to residential)
- Location/materials of fencing

Team 3



STREETSCAPE

Issues

- Lack of sidewalks
- No landscaping
- Inconsistent street trees
- Poor scale (signs, lights too tall)
- Pedestrian-vehicle interface (too close)
- Hot! Not enough trees

Objectives

- Parkway strips with consistent tree species
- Landscape corridors at new and infill projects
- Pedestrian amenities
- District-specific street trees

SITE PLANNING

Issues

- Parking lot design
- No connection/relationship with adjacent properties
- Lack of landscaping on “Grandfather” projects
- Pedestrian connections
- Building orientation
- Blend disparate uses together
- Defensible space

Objectives

- Reciprocal parking agreements
- Evergreen screen between uses
- Look at bigger picture of neighborhood
- Lower parking ratio standards
- Re-use commercial sites as mixed use sites

ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN

Issues

- Lack of relationship to site
- Lack of pedestrian scale-too monumental
- Corporate architecture
- Piecemeal architecture
- Material selection/lack of durability
- Non-climate responsive

Objectives

- More emphasis on building entry
- Building design should compliment positive surroundings
- Design with climate in mind
- Make design team visit the site

SIGNAGE

Issues

- Billboards
- Lack of scale
- Transparent window signs
- Sandwich boards

Objectives

- Big signs s/b (sandwich boards?) proportional and in only certain land use designations
- Relocate billboards to proper spots
- Address signs
- Enforce ordinance-raise fines!
- Applied graphic is part of architecture-in scale
- Allow neon in appropriate districts

OTHER

Issues

- Trash enclosures
- Utility screens
- Razor wire (?)
- Bus stops of poor quality

Objectives

- Effective regulatory interface-
- ADA
- Storm water control/management
- Landscaping
- Detention of water
- Seem at cross purposes

Team 4



STREETSCAPE

Issues

- Lack of sidewalks
- Lack of continuous sidewalks
- Unpleasant and unsafe
- Tree canopy and shading
- Streets are too wide

Objectives

- Sidewalks-preferably separated on all major commercial corridors
- Continuous sidewalks
- *More aesthetically pleasing with landscaping
- Better tree canopy
- Continuity on main thoroughfares
- Narrow streets to make more community friendly

SITE PLANNING

Issues

- Buildings too far from major streets
- Hodgepodge of building frontage and architecture and materials
- Parking lot landscaping
- Poorly designed parking lots
- Sites are auto dominated
- No examples of mixed use design

Objectives

- Move buildings closer to street
- Parking behind stores
- Transit stops
- Add public spaces
- *Design standards and themes by corridor (decided by community and business owners)
- Upgrade landscaping in existing parking lots
- Design review of parking lot circulation

- Encourage mixed-use

ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN

Issues

- Franchise architecture i.e. building is sign
- Big box and lack of building articulation
- Lack of quality and diverse building materials
- Lack of pedestrian amenities (i.e. landscaping, shading, seating, crosswalks through parking lots)

Objectives

- *Design encouraged to compliment flavor of community
- Continuity in design for neighborhood centers to establish sense of place-have consistent themes

SIGNAGE

Issues

- Billboards
- Too many businesses on one sign-driver confusion
- Lack of continuity
- Incompatible architecture between sign and building
- High speeds on corridors requires bigger signs

Objectives

- Phase out billboards especially in communities
- Establish sense of place through other means i.e. pennants, streetscape instead of so much signage
- *Better site layout to address need for signage of each business
- Require compatible sign architecture with building

OTHER

Issues

- Lack of coordination between county departments
- New urbanism does not necessarily work for today's larger uses (example: Home Depot on Fulton Ave.)
- Poor interface with residential and commercial
- Poor treatment for trash containers and utilities
- Lack of pedestrian access and movement at intersections, parking lots and streets

Objectives

- *Have different areas/streets for "big box" type uses and establish areas for small pedestrian-oriented commercial uses (similar to Midtown)
- Provide less impact to residential neighbors
- Design loading docks away from residential
- Do not let this process become a weapon to fight entitlements

Team 5



STREETSCAPE

Issues

- Good example of food office design, landscaping obscures parking (near picture of heavily landscaped office building)
- Good example of good design, landscaping obscures parking (near picture of office building where landscape screens parking lot)
- Utilities, needs to go underground-sidewalk quits
- Need traffic calming and landscaping

Objectives

- Put parking out of sight
- Traffic calming measures (traffic circle),
- Landscaping in median

SITE PLANNING

Issues

- Overdeveloped, too dense, poor access (near picture of Lyon Village)
- Poor pedestrian access and circulation (near picture showing hedges near bad sidewalk)
- Over developed, too dense (near picture of large commercial buildings and parking lot)
- Good, good pedestrian access, visually pleasing, ADA OK? (near picture of sidewalk with cafe tables and umbrellas)
- Visually pleasing, good parking, step in right direction (picture of Starbucks)

Objectives

- Good vehicle access
- Good pedestrian access and circulation
- Standards for auto sale lots

ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN

Issues

- Old, bad design, ugly (near pictures of parking lot and street without landscaping)
- Good example of good design and good site planning, parking behind and out of site

Objectives

- *Unified theme

- Materials that are pleasing
- Standards for auto sales lots

SIGNAGE

Issues

- Size of sign relative to building (near picture of KFC)
- Need we say anything (near picture of Family Fitness billboard)
- Unobtrusive sign at eye level (near picture of bermed and wooded landscaping near street, small building sign)
- Too big, ugly, believe it or not this is legal signage (near picture of Park West Place sign)

Objectives

- Regulate size of signs relative to building/support
- No billboards
- Current sign ordinance applied to “grandfathers”

OTHER

Issues

- Exposed utilities
- Visible garbage cans
- SMUD poles
- D8 Cat needed here
- Sam’s Club-rear loading docks

Objectives

- Mask, hide (utilities, garbage cans)
- Interface with neighborhoods
- Enforce landscape maintenance codes