

Fulton/Lowell Design Guidelines

Prepared for

The Fulton/Lowell Specific Plan
Citizens Advisory Committee

Prepared by

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Summary

On June 3, 2002, the Fulton/ Lowell Specific Plan Implementation Committee, during a special meeting, unanimously approved the proposed revisions to the text of the Fulton/ Lowell Design Guidelines. During the same meeting, committee members requested that the "Guidelines" be enfolded into the Fulton/ Lowell Specific Plan as a set of illustrative, rather than prescriptive recommendations geared toward protecting the special identity of the Fulton/ Lowell area.

The aim is to provide creative approaches and solutions within a workable framework, rather than laying out a series of hard and fast standards. The ultimate goal of these guidelines is to provide compatibility between properties in the district and to enhance the aesthetics and function of the neighborhood.

The Fulton/Lowell Design Review Committee—a subcommittee of the Implementation Committee—is charged with reviewing applications for compliance with the guidelines. If there is disagreement with the Committee's recommendations, appeal can be made to the Planning and Development Department Director. As these standards are not prescriptive, they may be modified through the entitlement process in order to best serve the community if the Director finds that appropriate architectural design, screening, landscaping, and other operational measures have been provided to meet the overall intent of the guidelines.

Guidelines that focus on the "Uptown" area would remain as recommendations, yielding to the guidelines/streetscape being specifically designed for the cultural arts area in the Uptown Master Plan.

Special Issues

The guidelines strongly support the City's efforts in the following areas:

- remove blight through a comprehensive code enforcement program.
- adopt the Group Home Ordinance to better define and control various types of boarding, rooming, lodging house and residential care uses.
- adopt a Mixed Use Ordinance to provide innovative land use options for in-fill projects.

Major Guidelines

These guidelines address overall development, as well as specific residential, commercial, industrial, entryway, landscaping/streetscapes, and signage issues. The following guidelines are considered of overriding importance in guiding new development in the Fulton/Lowell community:

1. New construction within Fulton/Lowell generally involves development of new residential, commercial and office buildings on vacant parcels or in-fill sites. These Guidelines, however, should apply to all types of new construction within Fulton/Lowell such as schools and governmental and institutional uses.
2. Where new development is adjacent to historic structures, design should make use of similar attributes such as massing, roofline, setbacks from property lines, window types, and materials to ensure compatibility between older and newer development. Building additions can minimize adverse change to historic building fabric by:
 - recognizing the corresponding elements of shape, openings, roofline, materials and finish of the addition to the existing historic building fabric.
 - avoiding building additions that protrude from or otherwise alter the existing configuration of the front facade of an historic structure.
 - locating exterior stairways on, or as near as possible to, the rear facade.
3. The addition of garages or carports to residential properties should be built as freestanding structures and placed, to the extent possible, to the rear of the house. The shape, materials and paint schemes of these parking structures need to be consistent with corresponding qualities of the residential structure.
4. Where possible, new single family construction should reflect traditional cottage designs. Traditional styles such as California Bungalow, Craftsman, Colonial, Italian, and Spanish/Mission are encouraged. Cottage architecture refers to modest size houses on smaller lots (5,000 - 7,000 square feet). Cottage designs typically include front porches, columns on porch supports, no flat roofs, window and door trim, chimneys, balconies, bay windows, shutters, and other ornamentation.
5. Renovation and remodeling of existing structures, and construction of new buildings on infill sites should respect this character by maintaining the essence of the style of the adjacent block of homes.

6. The look of a neighborhood cluttered with fences of various heights and materials is disjointed, unfriendly and unattractive. The Fresno Zoning Ordinance prohibits front yard fencing within the required front yard setback at a height greater than 36", except wrought iron fencing which can be developed to a maximum height of 48". Front yard fencing, in many ways, defeats one of the primary goals of these Design Guidelines in that it discourages friendly neighborhood activities and a sense of community. The following guidelines suggest ways to help make necessary and approved fencing less of a detriment.
 - Fences should be semi-transparent and set back from the back of the sidewalk at least 18" to allow a planting area. This planting area will be kept in good condition. Fencing style should enhance the architectural style of the house.
 - Chain link fences in the front yard setback back area should strongly be discouraged. The only acceptable materials are wrought iron or wood. In addition to chain link, other unacceptable materials include particle board, plywood, and plastic.
 - Gates, if used, should be attractive and in keeping with the fence style.
 - Prohibit new, and eliminate existing over-height fences from all single family, multifamily, commercial, and industrial properties.
7. "Corporate architecture" and generic designs, such as architectural features displayed by chain stores and franchises, are discouraged, particularly when not in scale or out of character, with surrounding uses. The design of each project should address the goal to create a pedestrian scale atmosphere with quality architecture.
8. For store front improvements, use materials compatible in quality, color, texture, and dimension to those found on the building facade above or on storefronts in the same building. For new building construction, use exterior finishes that are compatible to those common in the immediate block.
9. **Avoid using colors that are disharmonious with colors used on adjacent buildings. Relate paint colors to the material color of the building. Contrasting colors with accent architectural details and entrances are encouraged.**
10. Existing buildings which do not currently comply with these guidelines are encouraged to make cosmetic changes such as repainting, adding new signage and lighting, installing awnings, adding architectural details, and removing unsafe and unsightly building features.

11. Entryway areas should be designed with special treatment to provide a sense of entry and spatial transition and to serve as initial information points for visitors (mini-parks with appropriate landscaping, orientation signs, and symbols or logos depicting Fresno's Central Area).
12. Freeway 180 is a dominant physical form for a large portion of Fulton/Lowell. The landscape treatment of this major new physical feature, including undercrossings, will be critical to minimizing its adverse impact on the character and cohesiveness of Fulton/Lowell. Caltrans should be encouraged to complete the landscaping plan for the multi-cultural causeway at San Pablo and Freeway 180 and to dedicate and landscape remaining remnant parcels along the freeway within the project area.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of these design guidelines is to protect the special identity of the Fulton/Lowell area. It is a manual designed to meet the needs of many users; property owners and merchants; architects and building contractors; vendors and craftsman; and other interested persons and organizations in the community. The guidelines are intended to:

- Improve the quality of physical changes.
- Protect existing architectural character.
- Act as a basis for objective decision making.
- Prevent incompatible new construction.

The design guidelines are illustrative rather than prescriptive. The guidelines, while attempting to be comprehensive in scope, certainly are not exhaustive in detail. The aim is to provide creative approaches and solutions within a workable framework, rather than laying out a series of hard and fast standards. The ultimate goal of these guidelines is to provide compatibility between properties in the district and to enhance the aesthetics and function of the neighborhood.

Administration

These design guidelines should be incorporated as part of the Fulton/Lowell Specific Plan. By including the guidelines in the Specific Plan, they will carry the weight of plan policy.

The Fulton/Lowell Design Review Committee is charged with reviewing applications for physical changes to property within the neighborhood. After applications or building permits are submitted, projects are referred by City staff to the Design Review Committee for a ruling as to whether the proposed project is consistent with these Design Guidelines.

If there is disagreement with the Design Review Committee's recommendations, appeal can be made to the City's Planning and Development Director. As these standards are not prescriptive, they may be modified through the development entitlement process in order to best serve the community's health, safety, and welfare, if the Director finds that appropriate architectural design, screening, landscaping, and other operational measures have been provided to meet the overall intent of the guidelines.

Guidelines that focus on the "Uptown" area (the commercial portion of the Fulton Redevelopment Project Area) would remain as recommended guidelines, yielding to the guidelines/streetscape being specifically designed for the cultural arts area in the Uptown Master Plan. If there are differences in design or disagreement between the guidelines and the Fulton Redevelopment Plan, please refer to the Fulton Redevelopment Plan.

A brochure summarizing these recommendations in an easy-to-use format should be developed to hand out to property owners or developers within the Fulton/Lowell area contemplating modifying their property.

Background and Fulton/Lowell Specific Plan

Fulton/Lowell is made up of two distinct sections divided by Divisadero Street - the residential section to the north and the mixed commercial/residential/industrial section to the south. The district is a vital, functioning part of the city. It is obvious that many residents and property owners are committed to the district's well-being and to the attractiveness of their particular piece of the neighborhood.

The northern area, known as "Lowell," is primarily residential and surrounded by the commercial corridors of Blackstone, Abby, Belmont, Broadway and Divisadero Avenues. Lowell Elementary School, the area's namesake, and Dickey Playground are the prominent landmarks. The number of historic structures has given rise to the designation of the West Lowell Historic Neighborhood, west of Park Avenue. The historic district further identifies several structures of historic interest, including seven which are on the local Register of Historic Places. Beyond its architecture, a hallmark of the neighborhood is substantial landscaping, especially street trees.

Significant problems include the issue of how to best provide security -- the random use of front yard fencing materials and designs degrades neighborhood appearance. Further, the mixing of single-family and small multi-family residential units weakens the neighborhood fabric. Commercial corridors suffer from visual clutter in terms of signage, public utilities, and street furniture. Trees which grace residential streets are absent along most commercial streets. Establishing an urban forest would go a long way toward making these streets more visually pleasing.

The area south of Divisadero is predominately non-residential characterized by a mix of commercial, office, group residential, and industrial uses including the Metropolitan Museum, Warnors Theater, Silvercrest Residence, Veteran's Memorial Auditorium, and the facilities for City, County, State, and Federal Governments.

Except for clusters of public and governmental uses and commercial development on the Fulton and Van Ness Corridors, land use consists primarily of strip commercial corridors in a "grid" pattern. Both physical and economic blight are evidenced by vacant storefronts and buildings. Numerous new or rehabilitated structures are interspersed with and impacted by blighted structures, aging or incomplete infrastructure, and underutilized properties.

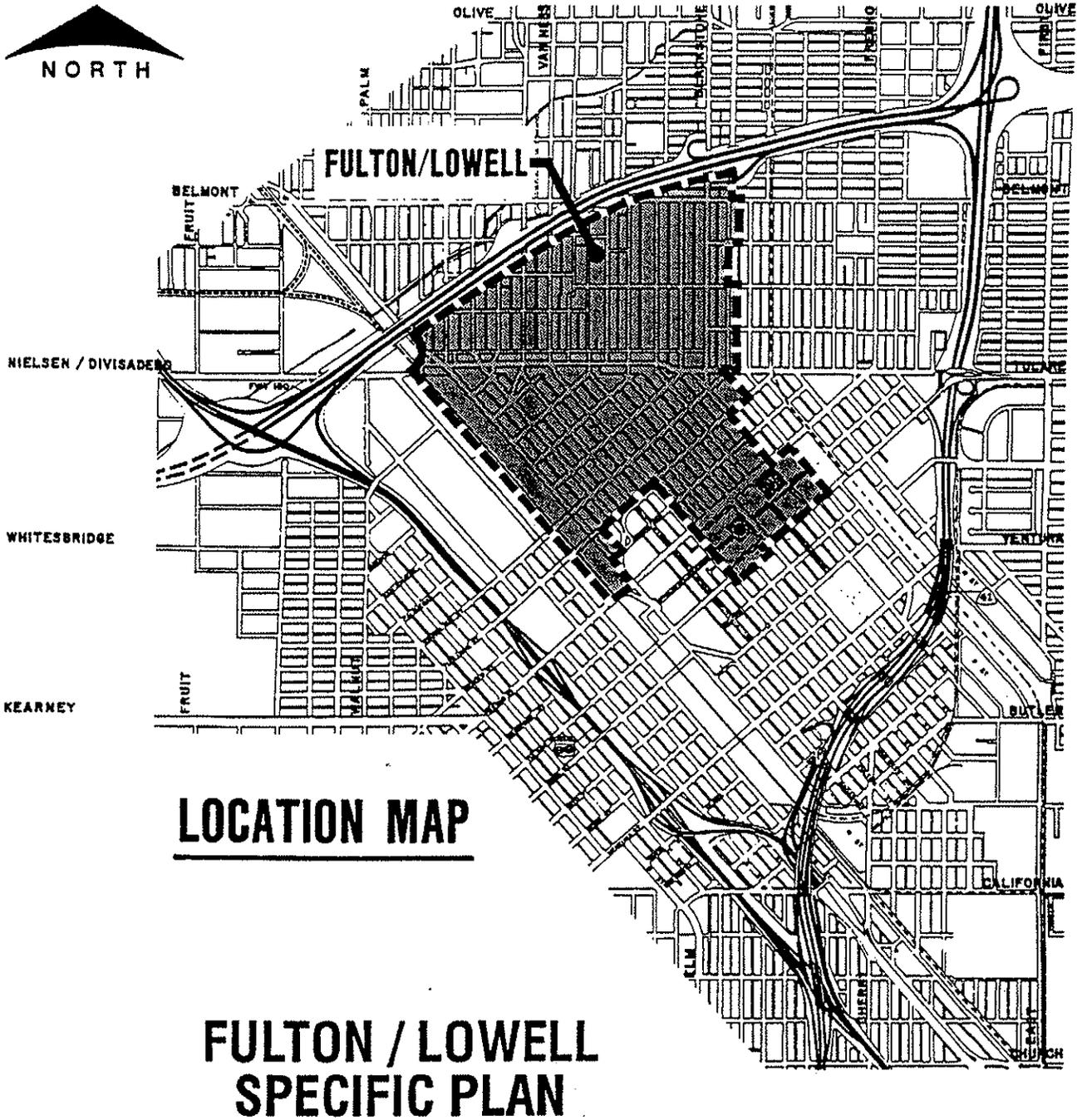
Much of the residential use is in the process of conversion to non-residential uses. Architecture within this southern section is variable both in age and in condition and includes several historic structures. While many individual structures are interesting and sound, a certain amount of visual clutter exists where architectural details are inconsistent and contrasting. Additions and ornamentation not true to the historic roots of the district detract from visual quality. A substantial amount of landscaping exists in the commercial core and adds greatly to the attractiveness of several major streets. Additional landscaping and streetscape enhancement would add even more to the attractiveness of the downtown core.

The Fulton/Lowell Specific Plan Area is approximately 493 acres in size (see Figure 1). Fulton/Lowell is an integral part of the Central Area which is the traditional "Downtown" of Fresno bounded by Freeways 99, 41, and 180.

The 1989 Central Area Community Plan envisions Fulton/Lowell as a multi-functional district containing lower density residential uses and numerous activity centers supportive of each other and the entire downtown area. Further study of the Central Area in 1992 resulted in the development of the Central Area Urban Design Strategy Plan by the Ratkovich Company. In Fulton/Lowell, the Strategy recommends the conservation and development of single-family neighborhoods north of Divisadero and the formulation of specific theme districts in the area to the south.

Development interest in Fulton/Lowell has evolved with emerging cultural arts and entertainment activities anchored by the historic Warnors Theater on the south and the Fresno Metropolitan Museum to the north. Also of importance is the "L" Street Historic District between Amador and Calaveras. The district is noted for renovation of several historic residences on "L" Street and the relocation of three historic residences from the Freeway 180 right-of-way, two of which have been restored.

Figure 1: Fulton Lowell Specific Plan Area



The following goals and accomplishments from the Fulton/Lowell Specific Plan were inspired by a strong desire to improve the living and working environment of Fulton/Lowell.

1. Improve the image, perception and physical environment.
2. Change residential mix and density to afford a healthy socioeconomic balance and full range of housing for neighborhood stability.
3. Increase landlord/resident participation.
4. Foster educational (Caesar Chavez Adult School) and recreational opportunities.
5. Improve commercial services.
6. Achieve historic preservation.
7. Develop an ongoing implementation plan and oversight committee.
8. Transform and expand the Fulton part of Fulton/Lowell into a cultural arts district.
9. Encourage growth and stability of the government center area.

The primary planning policies from the Specific Plan are:

1. Maximize the ability to serve downtown through preservation and reinvestment in the single-family character of the neighborhood.
2. The triangular area within the Fulton district bounded by the Union Pacific Railroad tracks, "L," Merced and Divisadero is to remain a mixed use district with emphasis on the arts and entertainment. The current street grid should remain with as many of the existing buildings preserved as possible. The main focus of this district is to be Fulton Street providing a linkage to the Tower District to the north.
3. Encourage smaller scale low-rise development within the Lowell area to infill vacant land.
4. Fulton should be reinforced to become the "Main Street" within the District.

The concept employed in the Specific Plan is that a transitional urban environment can be stabilized and developed to create a unique environment characterized by a diverse but compatible arrangement of residential, commercial, industrial, public, and mixed uses. Plan implementation requires the following actions:

North of Divisadero

5. Stabilize, maintain, and reenforce existing single family residential areas and do not allow new multiple-family developments.
6. Control multiple-family development by establishing a percentage ratio (40%) and specific locations for multiple-family development.

7. Establish mixed use categories (Level 1 and Level 2) to reflect land use demand and intensity of specific areas.
8. Designate specific commercial corridors for Mixed Use (Level 1) to protect single-family neighborhoods.
9. Restrict new multiple-family development to mixed use corridors as permitted by zoning to protect single-family neighborhoods and encourage mixed use.

South of Divisadero

10. Support and encourage planned urbanization, especially entertainment and cultural art developments, by designating the area for Mixed Use (Level 2) development.
11. Expand the Mixed Use (Level 2) designation to include the southwest side of "H" street, adjacent to the Union Pacific Railroad, to encourage supportive urban development to enhance major land uses such as the Warnors Theater and the Fresno Metropolitan Museum.
12. Pursue recommendations of the Central Area Community Plan and the Ratkovich Central Area Urban Design Strategy, especially in major activity centers, and monitor their progress in the Fulton/Lowell Area.

Special Issues

Blight Removal. Blight in Fulton/Lowell is characterized by a wide spectrum of physical and visual conditions including older residential, commercial, and light industrial areas with poor interface, conflicting land use conditions and circulation patterns. Numerous new or rehabilitated structures are impacted by blighted conditions of older structures, aging infrastructure, and under utilized properties.

North of Divisadero, blight is associated with the physical deterioration of structures that are neglected, vacant, or have been abandoned. A Building Quality Survey conducted by City staff indicated that approximately 79 percent of residential and 68 percent of nonresidential structures were in need of "major" rehabilitation. Unkept yards and storefronts, illegal fences, and unscreened outdoor storage contribute to visual blight in this area.

South of Divisadero, blight is primarily associated with neglected commercial storefronts, poorly maintained business/office buildings, boarded-up vacant buildings, vacant lots, and lack of street maintenance and landscaping.

In accordance with recommendations of the Central Area Task Force, the Fulton/Lowell Specific Plan Implementation Committee, and with Council confirmation, the City should take a proactive role in formulating an action/implementation plan to address visual blight problems.

The priorities of the visual blight cleanup program include:

- Improve the appearance and design of entryways and high visibility locations.
- Bring all Central Area properties to a clean or "neutral" state.
- Focus the cleanup on target areas and combine the effort with beautification techniques such as landscaping, painting, and screening.
- Clear vacant lots and better maintain blighted vacant buildings.

Boarding, Rooming, Lodging Houses, etc. Boarding houses have been a major concern in Fulton/Lowell and the adjacent Tower Specific Plan Area. A City staff study of group housing concluded that there is an over concentration of such houses in these areas. This fosters concern from residents that a high concentration of these homes, particularly in a small geographic area, adversely impacts the stability and welfare of adjacent neighborhoods.

The Design Guidelines support the control and regulation of group houses in Fulton/Lowell and strongly support the City's proposed Group Home Ordinance. The ordinance would require a conditional use permit for all boarding houses and establish a "sunset" clause that would permit an amortization period of one year for such uses operating without a conditional use permit after adoption of the ordinance. If existing homes are legal prior to the adoption of the Ordinance, but upon its adoption become nonconforming, they shall be subject to the provisions of Section 12-317 of the Fresno Municipal Code. An approved conditional use permit application is required for all group homes except those homes with six or fewer clients in a single-family residential structure and licensed by the state.

Relative to this section, the term "group homes" shall include a wide variety of shared housing arrangements such as boarding, rooming, lodging, special needs type housing, etc.

Mixed Uses. The Fulton/Lowell Specific Plan identifies two areas where more than one land use would be allowed on an individual site. The Commercial/Mixed Use Level 1 designation is recommended for commercial corridors on and north of Divisadero and west of Blackstone. It provides a lower intensity of land use which would only permit office and neighborhood type commercial uses from the R-P, C-P, and C-1 zone districts and select commercial uses from the C-5 district to be combined on the same site with residential uses.

To protect the “mixed use” environment of the Commercial Mixed/Use Level 1 designation, a conditional use permit will be required for all listed use in the C-1 or C-5 zone districts. Any new multifamily residential developments will be restricted to the Commercial/Mixed Use Level 1 designation and limited to the population density of the R-2 district.

The Commercial/Mixed Use Level 2 designation is recommended south of Divisadero to generate incentives and alternatives to encourage development of an area in transition. It will also provide more opportunity to implement the mixed use concept within the vast range of uses permitted in the Commercial, C-M and M-1 zone districts with an approved conditional use permit.

The Fulton/Lowell Specific Plan calls for adoption of a mixed use ordinance to control mixed use development within the project area and larger Central Area. Such an ordinance has not been prepared. These design guidelines will provide guidance for specific mixed use developments which must be approved by a conditional use permit. Without overall policies on mixed use, however, developers and the community may be reluctant to pursue this valuable land use option except on a case by case. Adoption of the mixed use ordinance remains a top priority.

Design Opportunities and Challenges

Listed below are examples of assets and challenges of the Fulton/Lowell neighborhood. The items are keyed to the attached photographs.

Assets of the neighborhood include:

1. Institutional users with strong ties to the community contribute to visual interest.
(Photo No. 1)
2. Adaptive reuse of older structures brings vitality and preserves visual heritage.
(Photo No. 2)
3. Pride of ownership; it is obvious that many residents care deeply for their neighborhood.
(Photo No. 3)
4. Interesting and well-preserved examples of the architecture of early Fresno.
(Photo No. 4)
5. Street trees add civility and beauty.
(Photo No. 5)
6. Efforts in unlikely locations bring beauty to the district.
(Photo No. 6)

7. Effective use of architectural detailing.
(Photo No. 7)

Challenges to the visual quality of the neighborhood include:

1. The indiscriminate mix of single- and multi-family residential units.
(Photo Nos. 8 and 9)
2. Architecturally inappropriate additions to existing structures and buildings are glaringly dissimilar. (Photo Nos. 10 and 11)
3. Detailing on structures do not respect the architectural proportions of the district.
(Photo Nos. 12, 13, and 14)
4. Random use of fencing at the street frontage.
(Photo No. 15)
5. Visual clutter from signage, especially from billboards and from signs blocking the public sidewalk. (Photo Nos. 16 and 17)
6. Lack of street trees and landscaping, especially in parking lots and in commercial corridors.
(Photo No. 18)
7. General maintenance needs of all types.
(Photo No. 19)
8. Public streets not completely developed.
(Photo No. 20)
9. Abandoned property.
(Photo No. 21)

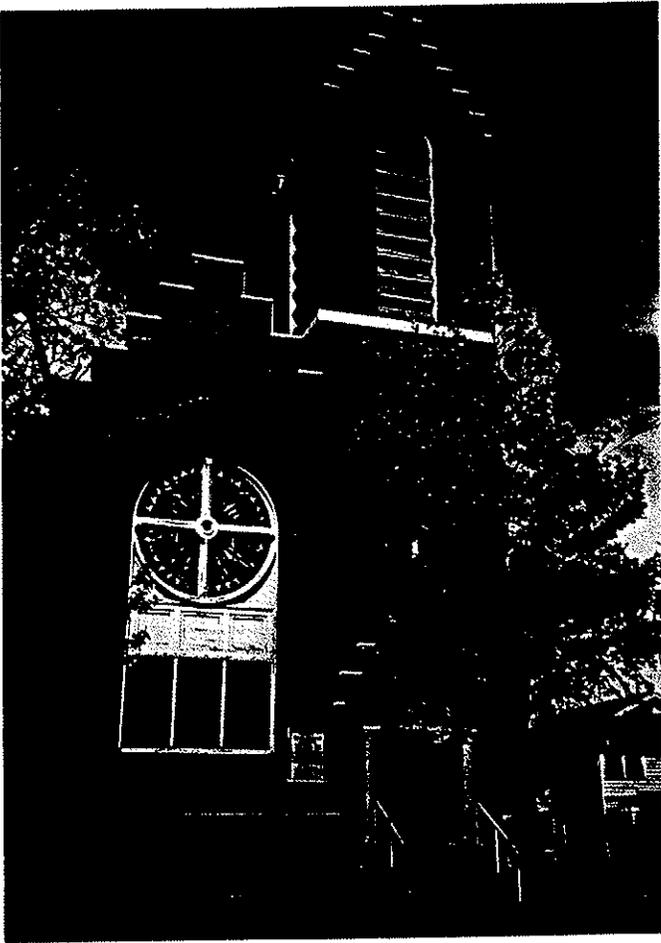


Photo No. 1

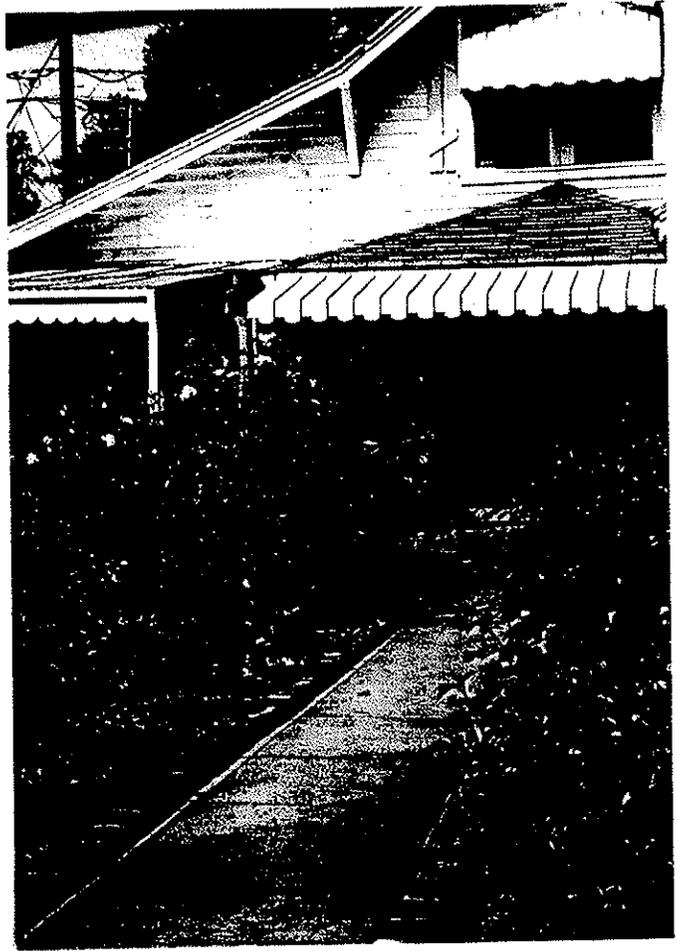


Photo No. 2



Photo No. 3

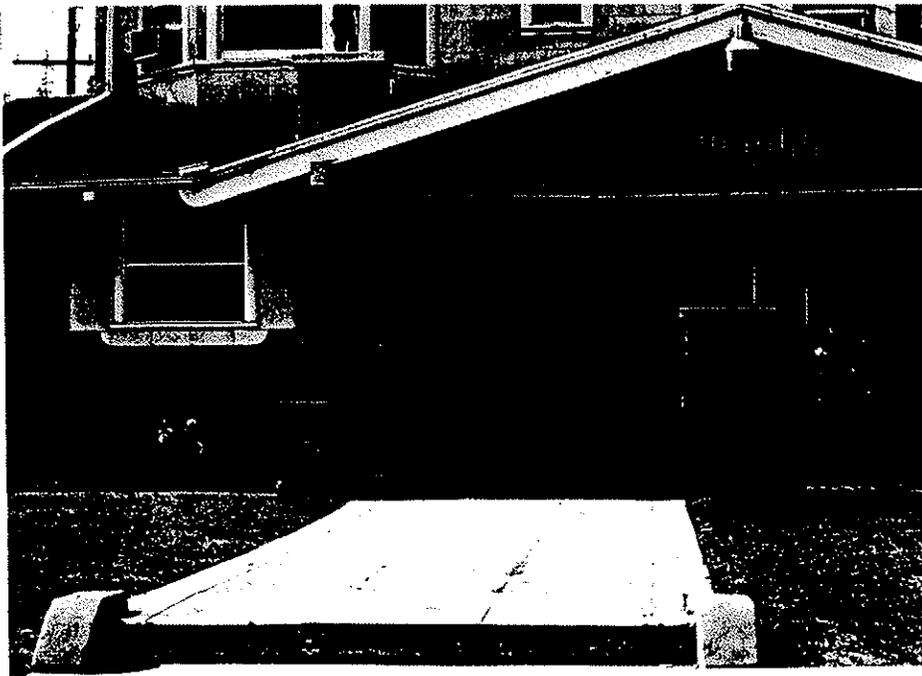


Photo No. 4



Photo No. 5



Photo No. 6

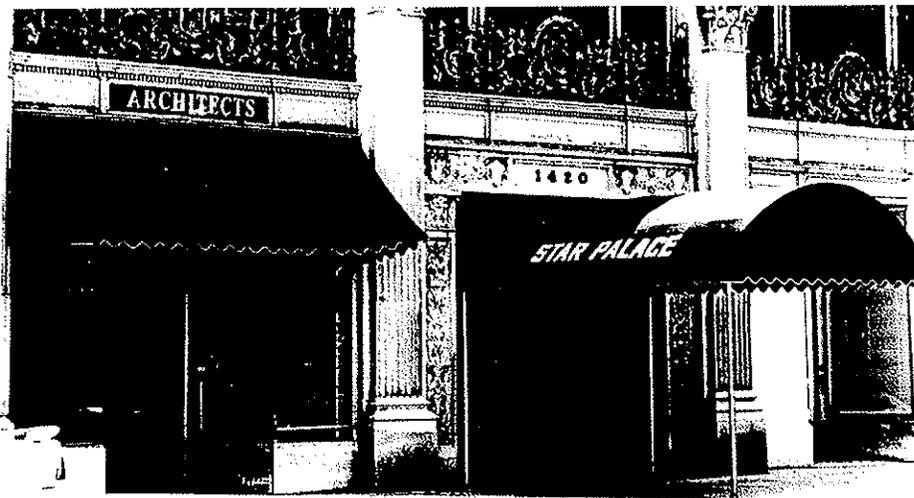


Photo No. 7



Photo No. 8



Photo No. 9



Photo No. 10



Photo No. 12



Photo No. 11



Photo No. 13



Photo No. 15



Photo No. 14



Photo No. 16



Photo No. 18



Photo No. 17



Photo No. 19



Photo No. 20

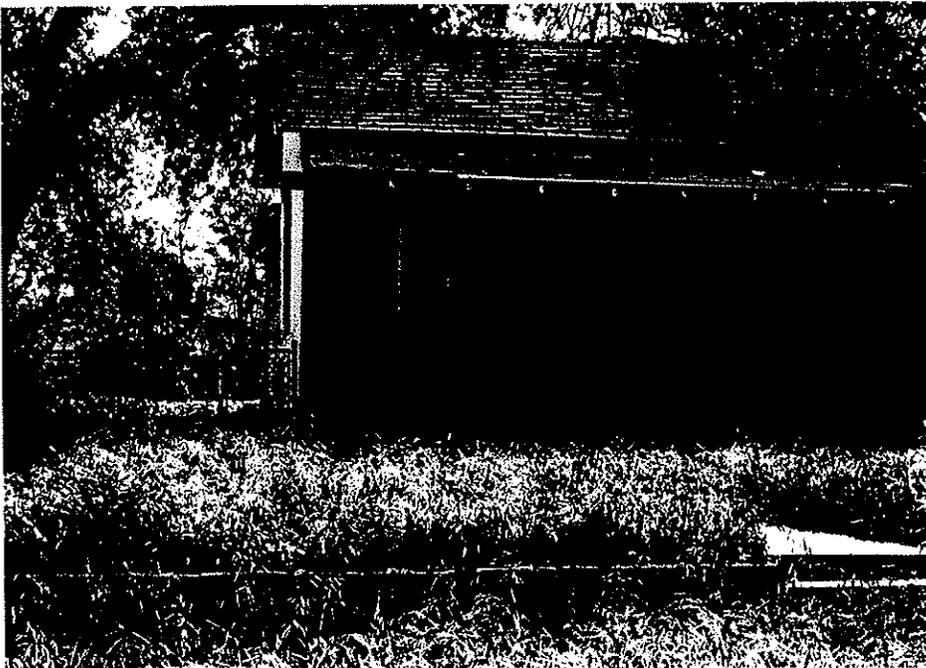


Photo No. 21

2.0 OVERALL DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

The following general guidelines apply to all development within Fulton/Lowell. Building materials which contribute to the district's historic building fabric need to be conserved through actions appropriate to each situation, whether it be preservation, rehabilitation, repair or regular maintenance.

1. New construction within Fulton/Lowell generally involves development of new residential, commercial and office buildings on vacant parcels or in-fill sites. These Guidelines, however, should apply to all types of new construction within Fulton/Lowell, such as schools and governmental and institutional uses.
2. The predominant exterior building materials found in Fulton/Lowell are stucco and horizontal wood siding. Exterior building materials to be avoided include:
 - rough-hewn or rustic wood siding.
 - diagonal wood siding.
 - plywood.
 - used brick, small ceramic tile and other building materials and fixtures customarily used in residential interiors.
 - plaster or stucco finish work which uses rounded edges and/or swirls.
3. Glazing solutions to be avoided include:
 - mirror, highly-reflective or dark-tinted glazing.
 - glazing in office buildings where transparency will be less than 50 percent.
 - storefront or residential glazing which is less than 90 percent transparent.
4. The use of awnings, sun screens, interior shades and exterior landscaping are proven and preferred alternatives to the use of tinted or reflective glazing.
5. The dominant configuration of virtually all buildings in Fulton/Lowell is rectangular. Accordingly, new buildings should avoid other configurations, such as circles, rounds, wedges, and other kinds of irregular shapes. Exceptions may be justified in special situations, included those dictated by street layout or at major intersections.

6. New buildings located in established commercial areas should be constructed to the front and side property lines so that the block face of the entire street frontage will exist without gaps, "left over" spaces or curb cuts for driveways. The variance process should be used, if necessary and appropriate, to allow buildings to be constructed on property lines. The intent is to maximize pedestrian use, enjoyment and amenity associated with the district's storefronts and retail commercial streets.
7. Where new development is adjacent to historic structures, design should make use of similar attributes such as massing, roofline, setbacks from property lines, window types, and materials to ensure compatibility between older and newer development. Building additions can minimize adverse change to historic building fabric by:
 - recognizing the corresponding elements of shape, openings, roofline, materials and finish of the addition to the existing historic building fabric.
 - avoiding building additions that protrude from or otherwise alter the existing configuration of the front facade of an historic structure.
 - locating exterior stairways on, or as near as possible to, the rear facade.
8. The following criteria apply to the district's existing "court" developments:
 - any change or modification to any exterior feature should consist of identical design and application for each unit.
 - no intrusions, screening or blockage of the central court space are permitted.
 - signing for court office developments is to be low key, directory-type, consisting of uniform format, type style and size, colors and materials.
9. Residential and commercial buildings should be painted or otherwise finished in a light body color. The use of dark and intense colors is reserved for trim and decorative elements. The use of dark paint or dark-value finishes as the primary building body color is to be avoided.
10. In the case of historic buildings, regular maintenance and repair of exterior building materials is critical to retention of original color values. Changes to original building materials and color will diminish the structure's historical significance.

11. The addition of garages or carports to residential properties should be built as freestanding structures and placed, to the extent possible, to the rear of the house. The shape, materials and paint schemes of these parking structures need to be consistent with corresponding qualities of the residential structure.
12. Chain link fences or cinder block walls are inappropriate within front or side yards of residential or commercial properties. (This guideline does not apply to commercial cinder block or precast concrete walls which are finished with stucco.)

3.0 RESIDENTIAL GUIDELINES

Residential guidelines are divided into two major areas: new construction and renovation, and special issues.

New Construction and Renovation

The housing stock is varied but overall there is a consistent feeling created by the mass and architecture of buildings and how they sit on their lots. Additions to existing buildings and new units constructed on vacant property should respect and enhance this consistency since it is a major factor in maintaining the neighborhood quality. The Central Area, of which the Lowell neighborhood represents the major residential component, is the heart of the architectural heritage of the City. The majority of homes in Lowell are not individually significant, but as a group they set a style that characterizes the neighborhood.

1. New construction and renovation should respect the character of the neighborhood by limiting the height of buildings to no more than 110 percent of the taller residential building adjacent to the new property, and no less than 90 percent of the shorter.
2. New construction and renovation will comply with requirements of the zoning ordinance regarding sideyard and backyard separation from adjacent neighbors. On larger lots, larger landscaped areas between buildings is encouraged to buffer and screen adjacent neighbors.
3. Garages should be located a minimum of five feet behind the face of the main structure and/or accessed from alleys where practical (side entrance garages excepted).
4. The Fresno Municipal Code defines a "carport" as a "...permanent roofed structure..." and therefore the use of temporary carports such as pipe and canvas type structures shall not be allowed within the area.
5. Front porches and balconies help break up building mass and are encouraged.

6. Where possible, new single family construction should reflect traditional cottage designs. Traditional styles such as California Bungalow, Craftsman, Colonial, Italian, and Spanish/Mission are encouraged. Cottage architecture refers to modest size houses on smaller lots (5,000 - 7,000 square feet). Cottage designs typically include front porches, columns on porch supports, no flat roofs, window and door trim, chimneys, balconies, bay windows, shutters, and other ornamentation.
7. Front setbacks from the street shall be as required in the zoning ordinance. Front yards that encourage friendly neighborhood interaction are encouraged. Design options to encourage interaction include shade trees, front porches, front seating areas, and parking options that remove vehicles as the central feature of the frontyard and streetscape.
8. Renovation and remodeling of existing structures, and construction of new buildings on infill sites should respect this character by maintaining the essence of the style of the adjacent block of homes. Architectural details that preserve and enhance this “essence of style” include:
 - Roof pitch, eaves, and materials: tile, shake (as permitted by fire codes), medium to dark colored composition shingle. Not encouraged: alpine pitches, novelty styles. Visible flat roofs, tar paper/rock not acceptable.
 - Rolled roofs shall not exceed a 1 to 12 inch pitch, if visible.
 - Building materials: Materials should be compatible with the those existing in the adjacent block of homes. Not encouraged: “attached” materials such as T-111 siding.
 - Covered front porches are encouraged on buildings of appropriate style. Exterior staircases to second floor units are not encouraged.
 - Colors compatible with colors on houses in the adjacent blocks. Brighter, intense colors should be limited to small trim areas. Darker colors used on the south and west- facing sides of the house will tend to chip and peel more quickly and are discouraged.
9. Automatic landscape sprinkler systems should be required for new multiple-family development or major rehabilitation of residential units (25 percent of units or greater) within multiple-family development.

Architectural Details

10. Small architectural details play a large part in the personalization of one's home and are encouraged as long as they are in keeping with the feeling of the block and neighborhood. These details include:
- Awnings: Colors should be compatible with both the neighborhood and the house itself. Awnings torn or in need of paint can be a distraction from an otherwise attractive home, so attention to the repair of awnings is paramount.
 - Signage: In general, permanent signs are not allowed on residential property. Temporary signs for garage sales, political candidates and the like should be displayed for no more time than is required and promptly removed.

Lighting

11. Appropriate lighting can enhance the appearance of a neighborhood while simultaneously providing a sense of security and safety. Lighting can also help define public and private areas and make it possible to use outdoor living space after nightfall. Guidelines for lighting include:
- Residential lighting fixtures should be scaled to be in keeping with the residential nature of the neighborhood.
 - Lighting should be designed to make front yards more livable and to allow neighbors to gather to socialize in the evening hours.
 - Lighting fixtures should complement the architectural style of the home in terms of both color and historical style. Industrial-type fixtures are discouraged. Fixtures attached to the home and complementing its style are preferred.
 - 'Yard Lights' are discouraged in this district, and eave-mounted spotlights should be limited to the rear yards and used only to illuminate after-dark activities. The light from these spotlights should be shielded or aimed to eliminate glare escaping into neighbor's yards and windows.
 - Decorative holiday lighting is encouraged, but should be removed after the holiday passes.

Front Yard Fencing

12. The look of a neighborhood cluttered with fences of various heights and materials is disjointed, unfriendly and unattractive. The Fresno Zoning Ordinance prohibits front yard fencing within the required front yard setback at a height greater than 36", unless wrought iron fencing, which shall not exceed 48". Front yard fencing, in many ways, defeats one of the primary goals of these Design Guidelines in that it discourages friendly neighborhood activities and a sense of community. The following guidelines suggest ways to help make necessary and approved fencing less of a detriment.
- Fences should be semi-transparent and set back from the back of the sidewalk at least 18" to allow a planting area. This planting area will be kept in good condition. Fencing style should enhance the architectural style of the house.
 - In no case should chain link fences in the front yard setback be allowed. The only acceptable materials are wrought iron or wood. In addition to chain link, other unacceptable materials include particle board, plywood, and plastic.
 - Gates, if used, should be attractive and in keeping with the fence style.
 - Prohibit new, and eliminate existing over-height fences from all single family, multifamily, commercial, and industrial properties.

4.0 COMMERCIAL/INDUSTRIAL GUIDELINES

With exception of many vacant lots scattered throughout Fulton/Lowell's commercial areas, the ultimate pattern for build-out of the district is well established. Elements and features of site development which merit special attention are:

Site Planning

1. Projects should include well defined entries. Walls, signage, paving, site furnishings, and planting help to create interesting entrances.
2. Site plans should provide adequate automobile access while eliminating unnecessary driveway entrances. Access should be coordinated with features of other properties.
3. Off-street parking areas should be screened and illuminated so as to minimize visual and audible intrusions. This is especially important when commercial developments extend into or abut a residential neighborhood, or when new higher-density residential construction is built next to existing lower-density residential uses.
4. Parking should not dominate a site adjacent to the street. Parking should be located in areas away from the street where possible, with pedestrian ways connecting parking areas with the street. Exceptions to this standard are for common parking lots and parking structures.
5. Buildings should generally be located close to the street and designed to strengthen street scene, integrating public and private spaces.
6. Buildings should be designed to be viewed from all sides.
7. Mechanical equipment should be screened and not visible from ground level or from neighbors, especially residential uses. Placement, material, and color of equipment screens should be compatible with the building architecture.

No mechanical equipment on front elevation (period).

Design and Materials

8. "Corporate architecture" and generic designs, such as architectural features displayed by chain stores and franchises, are discouraged. The design of each project should address the goal to create a pedestrian scale atmosphere with quality architecture.
9. Encourage new commercial development to be designed with continuous building facades along street frontages and with a high percentage of site coverage.
10. Encourage the reuse and/ or construction of mid- to high-rise buildings downtown and discourage inappropriate one-story structures.
11. The height of new buildings should be within the range of heights found on the immediate block. Buildings at the ends of blocks can be higher or similar in height to buildings on adjoining corners.
12. Maintain the alignment of facades fronting upon the immediate block
13. For store front improvements, use materials compatible in quality, color, texture, and dimension to those found on the building facade above or on storefronts in the same building. Metal siding visible from the street is not acceptable.
14. Avoid using colors that are disharmonious with colors used on adjacent buildings. Relate paint colors to the material color of the building. Contrasting colors with accent architectural details and entrances are encouraged.
15. Place awnings at the top of windows, not over piers or parts of the facade wall. Material, color and shape should relate to that of other awnings along the immediate block.
16. For new additions:
 - Avoid placing the addition so as to obscure the primary facade of the existing building. Minimize the loss of historic material on exterior walls.
 - The scale of the addition should be compatible with the original building.
17. Articulated storefronts, rather than blank walls, should face onto streets. Corner buildings may be taller and should include additional detailing such as pedestrian pass throughs, angled entries, large store fronts, and ornamentation.

18. Long unbroken horizontal roof lines are discouraged except when consistent with a particular historical style.
19. Roof details, including towers, chimneys, and clerestory windows are encouraged.
20. Roof materials and colors are important aspects of the overall building design. Materials and colors should be consistent with the architectural building character.
21. Appropriate materials for pitched roofs may include, but are not limited to, mission tile, metal/standing seam, clay in integrally colored tile, concrete tile, or composition shingle.
22. Roof materials such as brightly colored roofing tiles, corrugated fiberglass, or unfinished metal panel roofing should not be used.
23. Flat roofs visible from the street are unacceptable.
24. Architectural details should be used to enhance buildings and adjacent pedestrian spaces by adding color, shadows, and interesting forms. Ornamental tile accents and stucco relief are examples.
25. Building materials and color are important aspects of the overall building design. Materials and colors should reflect natural, rich, high quality materials. Appropriate materials for walls and facades include, but are not limited to:
 - stucco
 - stone
 - glass
 - brick
 - antiqued metal
 - cement plaster or synthetic plaster
 - concrete with a finish/texture appropriate to the building/s design
 - heavy timber construction used in trellises, roof overhangs, balconies and other architectural elements
26. Use of reflective materials, including unfinished metal, T-111 siding, or non-textured block is unacceptable. Metal buildings or metal facades are unacceptable, except in areas either planned for “industrial” or “commercial/mixed use level 1 or 2” uses, or within existing M-1 and M-2 zone districts.

27. Existing buildings which do not currently comply with these guidelines are encouraged to make cosmetic changes such as repainting, adding new signage and lighting, installing awnings, adding architectural details, and removing unsafe and unsightly building features.

Architectural Details

28. Larger projects should include focal points to generate a sense of special identification. Plazas, landscaping, fountain work, textured pavement, and taller building features may be used to create focal points.
29. Rear and side yard areas should be designed and treated as “people spaces” and not merely as required space for trash collection bins, outdoor storage and off-street parking. Rear and side walls of new buildings should have doors, windows and entrances located with the needs of customers, clients and the general public in mind.
30. Promote the design of outdoor environments that attract people for daytime and nighttime activities through the creative use of street furniture, signage, lighting and urban landscape features.
31. Provide incentives for developers to locate activity areas and design amenities in new public or private developments, including open space, retail shops, and sidewalk cafes, especially along pedestrian mall spaces.
32. Create points of attraction representing diversified interests which may include public artwork, exhibit areas, kiosks, concession stands, specialty restaurants and shops along walkways and within defined spaces.
33. Smaller, free-standing structures such as flower markets and newspaper stands are encouraged.
34. Discourage the use of exterior security gates which give the area a feeling of danger and detract from the attractiveness of the building. Retractable security gates are available that may be placed behind the storefront and do not alter the appearance of the exterior of the building.

35. Provide incentives to support developments that propose to integrate parking structure facilities with buildings or that provide other creative parking facility alternatives that minimize the use of open, surface parking areas such as underground parking, remote parking with shuttle delivery service, valet or stacked parking or by establishing parking districts.
36. The ground floor areas of parking structures should contain active, pedestrian-oriented and/ or service commercial spaces and be architecturally integrated with the rest of the structures.

5.0 ENTRYWAYS

1. Any proposal to modify a street or alley within Fulton/Lowell should be reviewed as follows:
 - where an alley exists, or where vehicular access exists or can be provided from a side street, no curb cuts should be permitted on a property's primary frontage
 - alleys should not be vacated or abandoned by the City unless a showing can be made that the continuing existence of the alley poses endangerment to the community's health, safety and basic welfare
 - consistent with the above, and to the extent possible, curb cuts should be removed and curb lines restored when appropriate opportunities arise (there is a change in use requiring permit approval, or there is preparation of a new plan for a street).
2. Parking lots should be allowed only on an interim basis along major entryway routes, or any major street, unless permanent and well-maintained perimeter landscaping/screening techniques are utilized to provide visual continuity.
3. Certain key access routes--such as Van Ness/Fulton, Divisadero, Tulare, Fresno, Blackstone/Abby--should receive a greater emphasis on streetscape improvements to identify them as special gateways.
4. Entryway areas should be designed with special treatment to provide a sense of entry and spatial transition and to serve as initial information points for visitors (mini-parks with appropriate landscaping, orientation signs, and symbols or logos depicting Fresno's Central Area).
5. A unique signage program should be developed to help visitors and residents tell that they are in the Fulton-Lowell neighborhood. These signs could be in several forms such as larger signs at the major entrances to the neighborhood or unique symbols added to standard street signage.
6. Public right of way of all major streets should be improved with street trees, landscaping, and special sidewalk treatments where feasible.
 - Street trees should be provided at a ratio of no fewer than four trees per 100 linear feet of frontage. The required trees can be clustered to accommodate driveways, building entrances, and other design features.

7. Properties fronting on major streets should be improved with landscaped setbacks and design standards developed to achieve continuity of facade treatment and street furniture.
8. Where feasible, the public right-of-way of all major streets within "target" areas or special districts of the Central Area should be improved with street trees, landscaping, and special sidewalk treatments, especially as determined by the Central Area Streetscape Design Improvement Plan recommendations
9. Public transportation should not only provide a needed service for commuters, residents, shoppers and visitors, but should contribute to the quality of the streetscape.
10. The streetscape of properties fronting onto major streets should be improved with landscaped setbacks and design standards developed to achieve continuity of facade treatments and street furniture.
11. Where appropriate, local streets should be developed as "urban parkways" with landscaping and pedestrian spaces to be share a with parking and loading areas which serve vehicular and/ or transit vehicles as needed.

6.0 OPEN SPACE, LANDSCAPING AND STREETSCAPES

The pleasant landscaping of many of the homes and public open space uses in the district set the tone for an attractive and welcoming neighborhood. Existing public open space is primarily concentrated in the Lowell schoolyard and in vacant parcels scattered within the neighborhood. In addition, the Dickey Playground is a neighborhood focus for active recreation. The following guidelines can help achieve the best possible landscape with the most efficient outlay of energy, time and money.

Private Open Space

1. Landscaping on private property should be maintained in good condition and health. Dead and dying plants should be removed and replaced.
2. Plants added to the landscape should be suitable to the weather and soil conditions of the neighborhood. In most cases, low-maintenance, water-conserving plants make the best choice.
3. Encourage the use of winter rye grass or other types of evergreen grasses within visible lawns of all developments in the area.
4. For security sake, tall shrubs should not be planted against buildings. Rather, shrubs less than knee high and trees which bush out at least shoulder high should be planted near structures.
5. Decks, patios, and walkways all eliminate turf and/or plant area and reduce the need for irrigation and maintenance. If patio space is added, trees should be planted on the south or west side to shade the space.
6. Design modifications to individual residences that encourage front-yard use include front yard seating, sensitive lighting for evening use, removal of front yard fencing, and planting and maintaining shade trees.
7. When off-site improvements are required for residential construction, the selection, sizing and spacing of street trees should be reviewed on the basis of existing streetscape. Where the residential streetscape contains few trees, or where several species exist, then the City's adopted list of street trees should be used.

8. When off-site improvements are required for non-residential construction, or in the case of a public works project, tree selection and/or modification to existing landscaping should be considered on the basis of preparation and approval of a specific landscaping plan.
9. Surface parking lots should be landscaped according to recommendations within the Fulton-Lowell Specific Plan to reduce adverse visual and environmental impacts of large areas of paving.

Public Open Space

10. Establish and maintain a system of open spaces in a variety of scales, ranging from Court House Park and Eaton Plaza, to private courtyards within office and retail building groups.
11. Encourage coordination between the City Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department and the Fresno Unified School District to provide convenient, well-equipped playgrounds near residential neighborhoods and employment centers.
12. Outdoor environments that attract people for daytime and nighttime activities should be promoted through the creative use of street furniture, signage, lighting, and urban landscape features.
13. Major activity centers should be linked through a series of landscaped linear and pocket spaces along streets and walkways that enhance and encourage pedestrian use.
14. Any permit application or proposal to make public area improvements should specifically address existing street trees and other principal landscaping features. Existing stands of mature street trees need to be maintained, just as with other elements of public infrastructure such as street lights, streets and sidewalks, landscaped medians and underground utilities. Where there is loss, there should be replacement; where there is damage, there should be repair.
15. Encourage the planting of plants material that provides seasonal color and texture such as flowering annuals or perennials within the area's public rights-of-way.

16. Freeway 180 is a dominant physical form for a large portion of Fulton/Lowell. The landscape treatment of this major new physical feature, including undercrossings, will be critical to minimizing its adverse impact on the character and cohesiveness of Fulton/Lowell. Caltrans should be encouraged to complete the landscaping plan for the multi-cultural causeway at San Pablo and Freeway 180 and to dedicate and landscape remaining remnant parcels along the freeway within the project area.

7.0 STREET FURNITURE AND SIGNS

The character of a given area is significantly defined by the visual qualities attributed to the mix of buildings and other structures such as street furniture and signage which compete for the viewer's attention. For example, street furniture such as street lights, public benches, trash receptacles, planters, etc., can provide needed unifying elements to an otherwise chaotic streetscape.

Relative to the Fulton/ Lowell, there are several examples of oversized advertising structures in relationship to surrounding buildings that add to the area's visual clutter. Often, these signs have not been properly maintained or have garish advertising copy that significantly contributes to the visual blight of the area. And in some cases, these signs may compromise public safety.

In order to enhance the visual experience and public safety of persons walking or driving along Fulton/ Lowell's streets, the following criteria will be referenced when planning locations and approving designs for street furniture and signage within the area.

Street Furniture

1. The continued presence of movable street furniture such as trash receptacles, newspaper racks and planter tubs, should be phased out where appropriate. Although new installations of movable street furniture should be prohibited, new permanent installations of such structures shall be reviewed by the Design Review Committee for continuity, scale, public safety, etc.
2. Replacement or upgrading of street furniture such as street lights and traffic signals should be tied to the scale, function and character of the surrounding street environment to be served. A single standard should not be imposed throughout the district. For example, Divisadero and San Pablo are very different kinds of streets in terms of pedestrian use and the enjoyment of sidewalk and public spaces.

While it may be appropriate to install mast arms on traffic signals at major intersections on Divisadero, such treatment would be excessive and inappropriate on San Pablo Between Highway 180 and Divisadero. Accordingly, prior to any installation of street furniture, the review and comment of the Design Review Committee shall be sought.

Signage

3. In general, except for the “bright lights” theater and entertainment area that encompass property on either side of Fulton, northwest of Calaveras, it is the intent of the Design Guidelines to reduce the size and intensity of signage within the area to a scale that is more compatible with pedestrian oriented traffic. Rather than being reviewed from an automobile that is passing by, pedestrian oriented signage can be significantly reduced in size while still being visible from a sidewalk located within the close vicinity of the building for which the sign is intended to serve.

Appropriate Types of Signage

4. Listed below are examples of appropriate signage that are appropriate within the area:
 - professionally prepared window signs with painted or applied vinyl letters.
 - projecting signs that do not extend beyond the eaves (subject to municipal code requirements).
 - icon or logo signs.
 - wall signs consisting of applied individual letters.
 - awnings with business names applied to the valence (one per frontage).
 - hand crafted, wall mounted and hanging signs (subject to municipal code requirements) kiosks and information booths, particularly if located near pedestrian gathering areas and parking lots.
5. Moreover, the Fulton/Lowell Specific Plan designates several areas where commercial and residential uses will be allowed to exist in close proximity to each other, or on the same site. The residential component of the Plan’s mixed use designations could be adversely impacted if commercial signs are installed without consideration of their visual impacts on the residents of such developments. In order to protect the character of these mixed uses areas, the following types of signs will be strongly encouraged:
 - wall or hanging signs of an appropriate size (in scale with nearby buildings) particularly favorable are wood constructed, professionally finished durable signs with painted or carved lettering.
 - combining the names of more than one business on a single sign should be encouraged.

- prefer small wall sign adjacent to front entrance, or if glass door exists, a sign with painted or applied vinyl letters.
- freestanding signs should be restricted to a low monument-type of sign having a maximum height of four-feet (three-foot high sign on a one-foot base), set back a minimum distance of five-feet from the site's property line.
- only one freestanding sign per street frontage. (A single sign may list more than one business establishment.)
- signs should incorporate similar co-compatible material as used on the site's buildings.
- where lighting is incorporated in the sign, only indirect or defused backlighting shall be used.

Inappropriate Signage that Should Not be Approved

6. With the exception of the loosely defined "bright lights" area, the following types of new signs are inappropriate and thus, should not be considered:
 - pole signs.
 - sidewalk signs.
 - roof top signs.
 - projecting signs which extend above the roofline.
 - paper or fabric signs, unless for market uses where location, format, letter style and schedule for changing content of message are approved in advance and adhered to.
 - fluorescent or day-glow signs.
 - signs with moving or flashing letters or objects.
 - signs which cover or compete with architectural detail.

Special Signage Considerations

7. Within Fulton/ Lowell, there are residential areas where non-residential uses are permitted. For example, schools and churches are permitted within residentially zoned areas. Signage for these types of uses will be reviewed and approved in accordance with the provisions of the Fresno Municipal Code.

8. In the case of the “bright lights” area, rather than being restrictive with the use of materials and design as indicated by the sign criterial noted above, signs that utilize some neon, flashing or automated components would contribute to the overall ambiance and excitement of a theater/ entertainment district. Although, signs within this special subarea of Fulton/ Lowell must conform with current city codes, the consideration of the role that signage plays in the city’s entertainment areas may facilitate the development of more flexible codes relative to these areas at a future date.

9. The Fulton/Lowell Specific Plan designates both Fulton and Van Ness as “special collector” streets. This designation recognizes the architectural and historical character of the structures along these streets which should be preserved. It should be noted that many of these structures were initially developed as stately residences which have since been converted to “house” various commercial and institutional uses. In order to preserve and enhance the special character of these streets, signage shall be restricted to the following:
 - wall signs as previously described.
 - freestanding monument signs as previously described.

11.0 APPENDICES

- Appendix 1: Social/Economic Data
- Appendix 2: Land Use and Zoning Information
- Appendix 3: Powell Supplementary Historic Building Survey Data
- Appendix 4: Letters of Request and Development Department Recommendations
- Appendix 5: Related Plan Amendments to the Central Area Community Plan and Tower District Specific Plan
- Appendix 6: Ordinance Adopting Draft Fulton/Lowell Specific and Amending Tower Specific Plan and Resolution Amending the Central Area Community Plan

