

COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT DESIGN GUIDELINES

For
*Ventura Boulevard/Kings Canyon
Road Corridor*



By

The Redevelopment Agency of the City of Fresno
In cooperation with the Planning Department of the City of Fresno

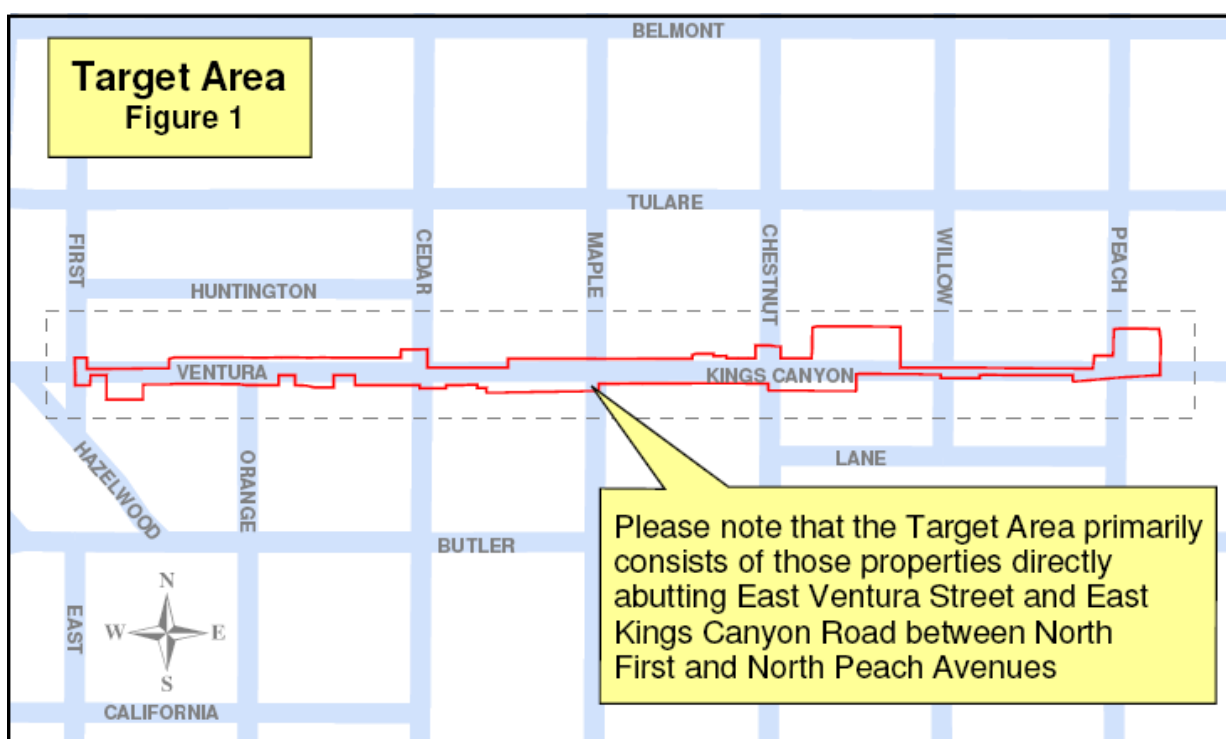
TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Purpose and Intent | 3 |
| Project Area Map..... | 3 |
| History..... | 3 |
| Vision..... | 4 |
| Mixed-Use Development..... | 4 |
| Building Location and Site Organization | |
| Building Placement..... | 8 |
| Access and Circulation..... | 10 |
| Parking..... | 11 |
| Landscaping and Screening..... | 11 |
| Fences, Hedges and Walls..... | 12 |
| Trash and Recycling Enclosures..... | 13 |
| Building Design | |
| Building Style and Theme..... | 14 |
| Building Scale..... | 14 |
| Building Materials..... | 15 |
| Windows..... | 16 |
| Security Screening and Window Grills..... | 16 |
| Lighting..... | 17 |
| Site and Building Signage..... | 18 |
| Footnotes..... | 19 |

PURPOSE AND INTENT

The purpose and intent of these guidelines is to establish a consistent and logical approach for the Redevelopment Agency of the City of Fresno (RDA) to follow when reviewing entitlement applications, façade remodels, new signage, and all other future development projects and plans within the part of the Southeast Fresno Revitalization Area Redevelopment Plan directly abutting East Ventura Street/East Kings Canyon Road between North First Street and North Peach Avenue (Target Area- See Figure 1). These guidelines are also intended to provide developers, property owners, and the general public with guidelines and requirements for developing vacant or underutilized property or remodeling existing properties within the Project Area. These guidelines may be waived or modified with approval from RDA when: design flexibility is beneficial to Plan Area; design promotes a diverse project; and, project is consistent with the Plan objective, adopted plans, and policies of the RDA and the City.

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HISTORY

Since the creation of the Fresno County Fairgrounds on present-day Ventura Street east of Fresno in 1884, the Ventura/Kings Canyon corridor has evolved as a primary transportation route to the areas east of the city. As the Southern Pacific Railroad extended out to Sunnyside along present-day Tulare Street, Ventura, as a county road, became the logical thoroughfare connecting Sunnyside residents to Fresno. When horse-car lines came to Fresno in the 1890s, Ventura was the primary east-bound route with its terminus at the fairgrounds. As the horse-car lines were eventually replaced by the electric street car operated by the Fresno Traction Company, the route shifted to eastward on Huntington Boulevard to Cedar, south on Cedar to Ventura, and then the remainder of the line ran along Ventura until its terminus in Sunnyside near Peach Avenue. This route, dubbed the Sunnyside Line, was in operation until 1931, the

first of the lines to cease operations. Thus, this was the first of the major transportation corridors in Fresno to become primarily dominated by the automobile. Evidence of this can be seen today by the large number of auto-related uses along the corridor. Historically, because Ventura was more of a thoroughfare connecting Fresno with the community of Sunnyside, it never truly had the feel of a downtown, pedestrian-oriented street.

VISION

The Ventura/Kings Canyon corridor is currently one of the City's most important thoroughfares linking southeast Fresno to downtown. It is currently a major transit corridor, with Fresno Area Express' (FAX) line 28 being the most heavily utilized bus line in the City of Fresno. The City's first bus rapid transit line is planned for the Ventura/Kings Canyon corridor bringing the possibility of fast, efficient, public transit to the area. Thus, the City of Fresno and the RDA envision the Ventura/Kings Canyon corridor as a transit corridor comprised of developments that are pedestrian and transit friendly. More specifically, the vision for the corridor is as follows:

1. Modify the urban form of the area to encourage walking, biking, and the use of public transportation while maintaining the integrity of older buildings that have architectural significant features.

MIXED USE DEVELOPMENT

There are several vacant and underutilized parcels located within the Project Area and this section is intended to guide the development of these properties.

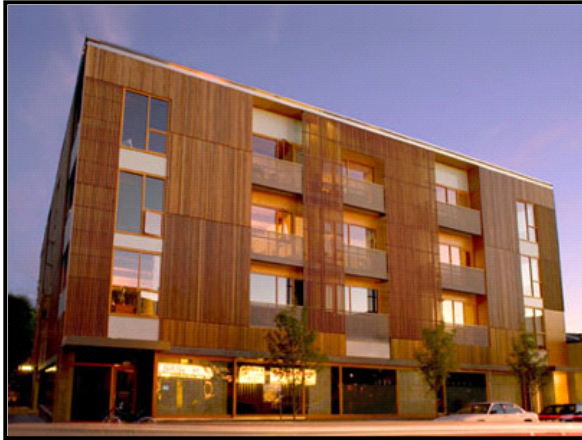
Residential/Commercial Mixed Use Projects

Residential/Commercial Mixed Use Project are defined within the Fresno Municipal Code (Section 12-306-N-51) as the following:

This concept / design, is a finite project within whose boundaries is a fully integrated mixture of residential uses with commercial and light industrial land uses, in both the horizontal and vertical axes, designed to offer and promote a user-friendly walking environment in a locale where residential uses are in close proximity to places of employment and commerce.

The Fresno Municipal Code also states the following: *In order to assure that a pedestrian friendly environment is a major facet in the design of each project, the Director may use his/her discretion to modify the project design, including, but not limited to; requiring that all or a portion of the ground (street) level floor space be dedicated for other than residential uses being accessible from adjacent public and/or private sidewalks, requiring building, parking areas and open space orientation that encourages accessibility to pedestrians and separates pedestrians from vehicles, requiring dedicated foot paths, and requiring any other modification to project design that encourages pedestrian use while discouraging vehicular use of the project site, including its interaction with the surrounding street patterns and neighborhoods, and the City.*

Examples of mixed use development that may be appropriate for the Ventura/Kings Canyon Corridor:



All of the property within the Project Area is planned for commercial uses (either community commercial, neighborhood commercial, general heavy strip commercial, or office commercial), with the exception of some property within the Project Area between North Willow and North Peach Avenues. The City of Fresno allows Residential/ Commercial Mixed Use Development in all zone districts planned for all of the above mentioned planned land uses. Thus, almost all property within the Project Area can be developed as a Residential/Commercial Mixed Use Development. Those properties within the Project Area that are zoned something other than the commercial zone districts where these types of developments are allowed (C-P, C-1, C-2, C-3, C-4, C-5, C-6, and CC) can be rezoned to allow this type of development which is preferred by both the City of Fresno Planning and Development Department and the RDA.

Under the Residential/Commercial Mixed Use Ordinance, all property development standards are flexible. Below is a list of requirements typically required of a typical commercial development compared to a Residential/Commercial Mixed Use development on a parcel zoned C-6 (*General Heavy Commercial*). Please note that the requirements for a typical commercial development will vary depending on the zone district.

| Property Development Standards | Property Zoned C-6 Typical Commercial Development | Property Zoned C-6 Residential/Commercial Mixed Use Development |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| Population Density | New residential development is not allowed in the C-6 zone district unless it is a Residential/Mixed Use Development | This is flexible and depends on the size of the site and the site design/layout. As long as adequate amenities (i.e. open space, parking, etc.) are provided for the residents, the City will be flexible on the amount of residential units allowed. For example, the City has approved a mixed use project on a half-acre site that will have approximately 8,000 square feet of office/retail space with 10 residential units. |
| Building Height | 2 stories, not to exceed 35-feet unless a conditional use permit is submitted and approved. | The building height shall be a minimum of two stories, but not to exceed sixty (60) feet, or as provided for by Section 12-321 (Mid Rise And High Rise Buildings) of this Code). Buildings higher than 2-stories along the Ventura/Kings Canyon corridor are highly encouraged and will be allowed depending on the site layout and surrounding property. |
| Building Setbacks | On a major street, a minimum of a 10-foot building setback is required. When the property is adjacent to property zoned or planned for residential uses, side and rear yard setbacks are required. | This is flexible. The City allows and encourages mixed-use projects to have reduced building setbacks, especially along major streets, as long as the building(s) has windows and entrances directly abutting the sidewalk. A 3-foot sidewalk may be required in order to increase the width of the sidewalk and encourage pedestrian activity in front of the storefronts. |
| Landscape Setbacks | On a major street, a minimum of a 10-foot landscape setback is required | In order to encourage a walkable environment, the City allows and sometimes encourages a reduced landscape setback in mixed use developments in order to allow the proposed building(s) and entrances to be closer to the street. In place of this landscape setback, the City will require additional street trees (1 every 24 feet rather than 1 every 60 feet) |
| Lot coverage | There are no requirements in the C-6 | No requirements. Although in the C-6 zone district there is no maximum placed |

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| | zone district. | on lot coverage, in some zone districts, there is maximum lot coverage. In zone districts where there is a limit on lot coverage, this standard would be flexible for a proposed mixed use development. |
| Fences, Hedges and Walls | A solid masonry wall five (5) to six (6) feet in height is required along a property line between any outdoor storage or parking area and any residential district. (In addition, there shall be a six (6) foot high solid fence enclosing the storage yard on all its other property lines). | In most cases, a mixed use project will still require a solid masonry wall along a property line that adjoins residential property. |
| Off-Street Parking | <p>The general requirement for parking in this district is as follows: for all uses, except a grocery store and supermarket, there shall be at least one (1) square foot of off-street parking area for each one (1) square foot of floor area. This would equate to 22 parking stalls required for an 8,000 square foot building. Additional parking stalls are required for certain specific uses pursuant to Section 12-306-I-2 of the FMC.</p> <p>For residential uses, 1.5 parking stalls is required for each unit, one of which must be covered.</p> | The parking required for mixed use developments is very flexible. For example, the City of Fresno recently approved a mixed use project that would have required 37 parking spaces, but approved the project with just 26 parking stalls. The idea is that the since the development is more pedestrian friendly, and because there are already built in customers who live in the same building, more people will walk to the business than drive, thus less parking is needed. In general, the city will allow reduced parking for mixed projects that incorporate walkability into their design, but will generally still require at least one covered parking stall per residential unit. When reduced parking is requested, sit-down restaurants will not be allowed. Take-out restaurants will still be permitted. |
| Loading Spaces | For commercial buildings between 3,501 and 15,000 square feet, one loading space is required pursuant to Section 12-306-L of the FMC. | Depending on the site layout, property surrounding the subject site, and the operational statement submitted with the conditional use permit application, the City may be flexible with the loading zone requirement. |
| Open Space | A minimum of 25% | The City will allow less than the 25% open |

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| | open space on-site is required in accordance with Section 12-306-N-21(c) of the FMC when residential uses are proposed (please note that residential uses are only allowed in the C-6 zone district when a residential/commercial mixed use project is proposed). | space for a mixed use project if there is a neighborhood park within walking distance of the project site (within approximately a half-mile). The City will also allow less than 25% open space if the open space provided is highly usable and accessible to the residents of the development. For example, if a tot lot/play area, barbecue pit, benches, etc., are provided, the City will consider reducing the required open space area. |
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BUILDING LOCATION AND SITE ORGANIZATION

Building Placement

- Where pedestrian-oriented storefronts exist or should be established, the character of the street as a shopping area should be expressed by features such as display windows, individuality of shop frontages, awnings, canopies and signage. Some uses that do not normally require functional storefronts can still 'fit in' to an area where storefronts are expected, by using spandrel (opaque) glass.
- Buildings should be arranged to create functional public and private outdoor spaces, including sidewalks, patios, entryways, and courtyards.
- Locate structures to create continuity of frontage along the street face, by matching or reducing front and side setbacks in relation to adjacent structures.
- Buildings should be oriented toward the primary nearby street. Deep setbacks behind large expanses of parking areas or vacant land should be avoided (See figure below).



Preferred Setback



Discouraged Setback

- Pedestrian orientation must be considered in site planning, including building size and placement, circulation, and open space design. Provide adequate walkways without obstructions to pedestrian movement (i.e., curbs and steps), but separated from traffic.

- Buildings on corner lots should address both streets with windows, entryways, architectural detailing, and/or landscaping. If possible corner projects should provide some architectural element to anchor the corner. This can be accomplished by using a building feature element and/or strong landscaping features.



This project uses strong architectural elements to accentuate it's corner location.

- For projects where a large setback from the street exists, or is a functional requirement, provide elements to reduce the visual prominence of the parking from the street. Examples include greater landscaping, berms, architectural walls, 'micro-retail' spaces, etc.

A large setback was mitigated on this site by creating small retail elements adjacent to the street, which mask the parking lot and reinforce the streetscape



- For developments with frontages of 150 feet or more, monotonous facades should be avoided. This can be achieved by breaking up the building mass, in particular the roofline, and incorporating variety, articulation, vertical elements, color and material changes to add interest.



A variety of forms can break up what would otherwise be a large building mass, and also be used to "tell a visual story" about the neighborhood context.

Access and Circulation

- Pedestrian walkways should connect each primary entrance of a commercial building to adjacent parking lots, structures, or site amenities and public sidewalks. Pedestrian routes are required, by law, to be ADA accessible.



This parking lot walkway provides protection from cars and sun, while contributing a design feature to the site .

- Bicycle parking should be located close to, and with direct access to buildings.
- Access to parking lots should be generally provided from side streets.
- To the greatest extent feasible, common or shared service and delivery access should be provided for adjacent buildings.

Parking

- It is preferable in urban and infill locations to locate parking areas to the rear or side of the property or beneath buildings rather than along street frontages. Screening parking areas from views exterior to the site is encouraged.
- Collective and shared parking areas are strongly encouraged.
- Parking lot access should be generally provided from side streets.
- Landscaping and walkways should be provided between parking lots and public streets, right-of-ways, and pedestrian routes.
- Parking lot shading shall be required pursuant to the City of Fresno Performance Standards for Parking Lot Shading.
- Lighting in parking areas is a key design component. Lighting should avoid glare that affects adjacent properties. The design of the fixture and its height should be compatible with the overall site and building design.

- Parking areas visible from the street right-of-way should be screened from view with landscaping plants, berms, partial walls, or other types of architectural features such as colonnades and trellises.



Large unbroken expanses of asphalt are ugly and get extremely hot in the summer.



A Trellis and fence used effectively as screening for parked cars.

Landscaping and Screening

- The placement of air conditioning units, vents, antennas, satellite dishes, etc., on roofs, walls, or the ground shall be screened in an appropriate manner with materials consistent with the building design.
- Where there are unattractive elements that need to be screened, dense landscaping of plants and/or landscape vertical elements can provide the needed visual separation, without compromising security. Examples of elements that often need such screening include but are not limited to unattractive views, storage areas, stand alone unfinished or untreated trash enclosures, mechanical equipment, transformers, backflow devices and other similar elements.

Backflow devices are large and ugly and often must be located in prominent locations. Landscape is the most effective way to screen them from view. These plants allow access AND visual relief. Note the hydrant must be kept clear for emergency access



- Landscaping compatible with building design is encouraged. Trellises, arbors, cascading landscaping, vines and perimeter garden walls are encouraged.

- Where there is insufficient space for a typical planter, plants can still be used if carefully selected and trained.

Even though there is no place for a planter along the street in this particular location, plants are used effectively along the building edge itself.



- Where possible, existing mature trees shall be maintained and used in any new or revised site plan.
- Street trees shall be located as required by the City of Fresno (one for every 60-feet or one for every 24-feet, depending on the project and area).

Fences, Hedges and Walls

- The heights shall be per the most current building and municipal codes. Appropriate materials and design consistent with the architecture of the building shall be used.
- The uses of security fences, including wrought iron fences, which may promote a “fortress” environment, are discouraged. Variances for over height fences along the corridor shall not be supported.
- Where wrought iron is used, the pickets shall not have any sharpened spears as tops.
- Chain link fencing shall not be allowed anywhere within the Project Area. Existing chain-link fencing along the corridor will be required to be removed if modifications are proposed to the site.



Chain link fencing is unattractive and inappropriate on commercial frontages.

- For existing and proposed residential uses along the corridor, the use of walls or fencing as a buffer along street frontages are strongly discouraged unless previously existing. Pedestrian gates linking residential communities with the corridor will be required if the wall or fencing frontage is larger than 100 feet along Ventura/Kings Canyon.
- Inordinately long fences or walls should be broken up to allow for a change of design, materials, pilasters, and/or landscaping.

- Breaks in fencing and walls should be provided through the use of columns, landscaping, transparent sections, and/or different materials.
- Fencing, if proposed, should be screened to the greatest extent possible with landscaping to soften the appearance (i.e. climbing vines, shrubs, etc.)



Masonry wall screened by landscaping to decrease visual monotony

- Fencing should not account for more than 50% of the total lot dimension fronting on the main corridor.
- Solid fencing, walls, large hedges, or other similar barriers exceeding four (4') feet in height are generally discouraged adjacent to Ventura/Kings Canyon.

Trash and Recycling Enclosures

- All enclosures are to be constructed of masonry walls and fitted with metal gates as required by the City of Fresno Public Works Standards. The use of other materials may be allowed only after review and approval by the RDA and City.
- The location of the enclosures shall not be permitted where it can be seen along any street frontage.
- Where possible, allow for planting around the enclosure to minimize the visual impact. The planting shall not interfere with the operation of the City of Fresno Solid Waste Department truck's access to the dumpsters. Refer to City of Fresno requirements for clear heights.



A good example of a trash enclosures that is screened from public view.

BUILDING DESIGN

Building Style and Theme

- New buildings which clearly represent a significant architectural style or theme are encouraged. Variety in architectural elements and materials which promote the uniqueness of a building is strongly encouraged.
- Corporate identity in design themes should be secondary to consistency of the architecture or scale of the surrounding neighborhood or the cohesiveness of the shopping center design.
- Shopping centers shall be unified with a thematic design and be consistent in the type of materials, scale, and architectural features utilized.
- New buildings should compliment surrounding buildings in terms of scale, design, and context, but should be unique in nature. Mimicry of architectural periods of the past is discouraged.
- New residential uses shall be in compliance with the City of Fresno Infill Residential Design Guidelines.

Building Scale

- New and existing projects shall relate to the surrounding *existing or emerging* context with respect to building scale, mass, setbacks, and articulation.
- Projects located at nodes [intersections of major streets] are encouraged to provide prominent visual landmarks such as a projecting tower, promenade, arcade, or other pedestrian-oriented feature to accentuate the corner. These types of 'signature' elements can help anchor a node and give it a unique identity and sense of place.



- Long facades should be designed with sufficient building articulation and landscaping to break them up into smaller visual elements. Long expanses of uninterrupted wall area, unbroken roof forms, and box-like structures should be avoided.

- Street elevations should contain appropriate features to provide visual interest, including posts or columns, wainscoting, decorative tiles, shutters, window boxes and other pedestrian level details. On new buildings, the use of windows on street elevations is required.
- Buildings should be stepped down at upper levels in areas with a relatively smaller-scale character. There should be a scale transition between intensified land uses and adjoining lower intensity land uses.
- New projects proposed adjacent to the portion of the corridor containing single family residential uses and small-scale multiple family residential uses shall be sensitive to the interface of the two uses. Big-box developments are not considered appropriate adjacent to these types of residential uses. On such projects, parking areas shall be located behind all proposed buildings, utilizing the alleys for access, where alley access is available.
- A shopping center type of project should either have a unified and consistent theme, or it should be visually 'broken up' into separate cohesive visual elements. Even where the approach is a unified theme, units clustered into one structure should have some variation in setback, staggered roof planes, or other adjustments to avoid a monotonous or overpowering institutional appearance. Unarticulated and windowless walls are strongly discouraged. Landscape can also be used to soften walls where fire codes or other constraints eliminate or reduce allowable windows. Variation in parapet height can add some visual interest to a street elevation.
- For a small project, this may be limited to stepping up and down; for a larger project, a more three dimensional effect would be appropriate.
- Projects should be designed to respect the privacy of surrounding uses. Upper story windows, terraces that provide privacy intruding views into adjacent yards are discouraged. Mitigation may include landscape elements, architectural screening elements, or limiting uses or windows on building sides which abut residential areas.
- For modifications to existing residential uses, any additions shall be of the same architectural style and scale of the existing building, and shall maintain the integrity of the original structure in terms of scale and massing. For second story additions, the addition shall be significantly recessed back from the main structure.

Building Materials

- New projects or modifications to existing buildings shall utilize a combination of materials and finishes which are sustainable and articulate a higher quality appearance.
- For existing buildings, any changes to the exterior finish shall be architecturally compatible with the existing building while promoting good design.
- The combination of different types of materials on building facades is encouraged in the design of new projects.

- Acceptable finishes and materials include stucco, brick, stone, corrugated metal, finished metal, concrete, and glass. Unacceptable materials include siding made out of any unsustainable materials such as plywood or particleboard (i.e. T-111).
- Buildings with a stucco finish shall present a smooth, undulating trowel or float sand finish. Rough textured stucco, such as skip trowel or Spanish lace, is considered unacceptable unless currently existing.
- Buildings utilizing metal siding may use a variety of types of metal but shall be presented with a design that is architecturally and aesthetically pleasing.
- For existing and proposed residential structures, a compatibility report will be required to ensure cohesiveness with the surrounding neighborhood.⁴
- Any changes to the existing siding or finish of a residential structure are required to be in accordance with the City of Fresno Residential Infill Design Guidelines.

Windows

- Existing windows shall be preserved to the extent possible and their removal is strongly discouraged.
- On existing buildings, any proposed windows shall match those that are existing, unless all are being replaced.
- Buildings facades shall be designed to address the street, rather than acting as self-contained projects. New buildings shall have a minimum of 50% of the street-facing façade covered with windows to encourage “eyes on the street”. Windows on new buildings for commercial uses shall be transparent rather than opaque for greater visibility to the street.

Security Screening and Window Grills

- New projects and modifications to existing buildings shall incorporate building security through architectural elements, building design and placement appropriate to the use and location along the corridor.



These screening measures are illustrated more as architectural features and draw visual interest to the building rather than giving a “prison-like” appearance.



The use of security screening is not necessarily discouraged if incorporated to add architectural interest to the building. This can be achieved by using different shapes and designs as well as mounting the structure on the interior. Simple exterior-mounted tubular window grills are strongly discouraged.



Such extensive window and door screening without providing any architectural interest does not provide the pedestrian with a sense of security and is strongly discouraged.

Lighting

- Building lighting should be architecturally integrated with the building style, materials and colors.

- Surface-mounted lights should be selected and located to not produce unwanted glare either on the property, to the street, or to adjoining properties. The typical 'wall-mounted box' security fixture is unattractive, produces significant glare, and adds no enhancement to the appearance of a building at night and thus are strongly discouraged.
- Lighting of buildings should be designed in such a way as to not only provide for security, but also create a pleasing nighttime appearance.
- Parking lot lighting fixtures shall be shielded and directed away from adjacent residential properties while providing an element of architectural interest. Standard pole lights should be avoided and are discouraged.
- Exterior lighting within the parking area, pedestrian circulation, loading areas, etc., shall be designed to provide adequate levels of lighting for the purpose of pedestrian safety.
- Architectural styling of exterior light fixtures whether by light poles, building mounted fixtures, bollards, etc. shall be either selected or designed to aesthetically integrate with the architecture of the building.
- Decorative wall-mounted lighting along the street frontage is encouraged to provide a sense of security for pedestrians. This lighting shall compliment the architectural style of the building.

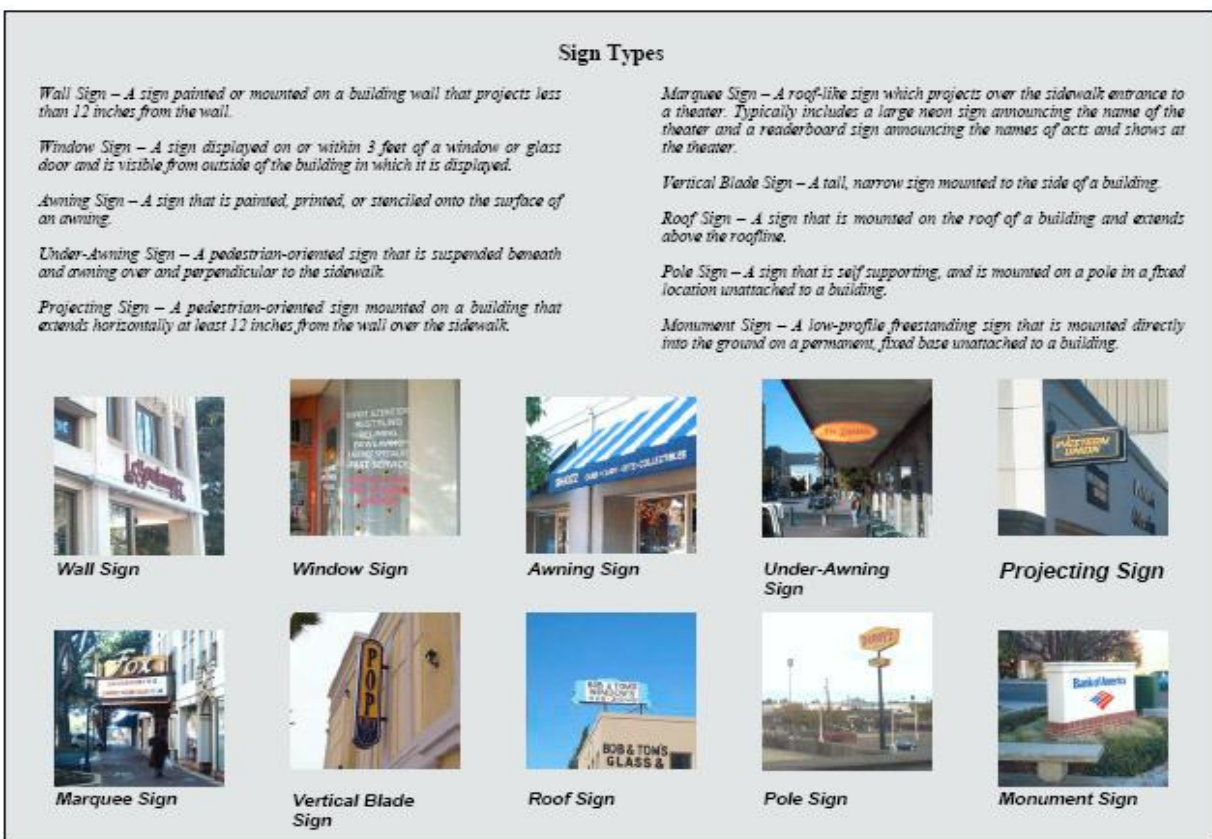


The lighting on this building matches the architectural style of the building while functioning to highlight the signage and provide light for passing pedestrians.

SITE AND BUILDING SIGNAGE

- Signage should be as unobtrusive as is feasible for function, and complement the overall site design and building architecture.
- All signs shall be for direction and identification only. Advertising signs with copy other than business name are not permitted.

- All painted, advertising-type signage onto the building (i.e. windows, doors, walls, roof, etc.) shall not be permitted without special permission after review and approval by the RDA and City of Fresno.
- Roof-top signs shall not be permitted along the corridor.
- Wall signs should be decorative in nature and match the architectural style of the building. Plastic wall-mounted box-lit signs are strongly discouraged.
- New pole signs are inappropriate for a transit and pedestrian corridor and are thus prohibited. At the time of modifications to existing buildings, the removal of any existing pole signs is strongly encouraged.



¹ In addition, the RDA will use these guidelines in negotiating development related agreements such as Owner Participation Agreement (OPA), Commercial Façade Improvement Program, and Disposition and Development Agreements (DDA).

² These guidelines do not modify any plans, policies or codes that affect properties within the Project Area. All proposed development and redevelopment of property within the Project Area shall comply with the Fresno Municipal Code, the Roosevelt Community Plan, the 2025 Fresno General Plan, Southeast Fresno Revitalization Area Redevelopment Plan, the Butler Willow Specific Plan, and any other applicable plans, policies, and standards.

³ Any inconsistency between these guidelines and any other plan of code is unintentional and will be deemed inapplicable.

⁴ Refer to the City of Fresno, Residential Infill Design Guidelines for any modifications to existing residential structures as well as any proposed new residential uses.