

CITY OF ALBANY

# SAN PABLO AVENUE DESIGN GUIDELINES

*The San Pablo Avenue Urban Design Concept Plan was prepared for the City of Albany in 1989 by Freedman Tung & Bottomley, Urban Design Consultants. The plan contains recommendations for the design of private development and for street design.*

*This document, "San Pablo Avenue Design Guidelines", contains guidelines for private property development only. The document is based on the recommendations of the Urban Design Plan. City response to Urban Design Plan recommendations for street design will occur separately and at a later date. The full text of the Urban Design Plan is available from the Albany Planning Department.*

*These guidelines were adopted by City Council Resolution No. 93-4 on January 19, 1993. Where any differences exist between the Urban Design Plan and this document, the language of this adopted document will prevail.*

## I. INTRODUCTION TO THE URBAN DESIGN PLAN:

The San Pablo Avenue Urban Design Concept Plan is as much about district revitalization as it is about physical form. It establishes a vision for a new type of commercial district, the "Retail Boulevard", as a substitute for the typical commercial strip. It proposes ways to weave this district into the fabric of Albany so it is a source of pride to the community, perhaps even excitement.

Creating a special commercial environment is essential in order to attract regional investment from competing locations. But the Retail Boulevard concept reflects an even more basic fact: Improving San Pablo Avenue's economic potential, particularly for retailing, hinges on making it a place that has the qualities associated with the City of Albany.

San Pablo Avenue's general patterns of development and use are typical of the commercial strip, a street oriented to "shopping by car". Signs and parking lots are prominent. Many businesses are convenience-based ("quick-stop") or provide goods and services actually related to automobiles. In contrast, a street like Solano Avenue is oriented to "shopping on foot". The scale is more intimate. There is less through-traffic. Store windows, signs, and businesses are oriented to pedestrians.

San Pablo and Solano are Albany's only two commercial streets, and the distinction between them is important. To be most successful, each should be the best possible commercial street of its kind. Today, San Pablo Avenue provides only the most basic requirements for shopping by car: visibility of businesses over a considerable distance, through signage, and direct access to parking areas. Special features or amenities that add identity and attract additional business are few.

## II. SAN PABLO AVENUE URBAN DESIGN AND REVITALIZATION STRATEGY:

Three major objectives will be pursued to improve the overall appearance and commercial vitality of San Pablo Avenue. The first addresses the need to improve commercial strips generally, as environments for "shopping by car". The other two focus on ways to tailor the physical form of San Pablo Avenue to reflect Albany's idiosyncrasies, its special places and its potentially special places.

### OBJECTIVE 1.        **CREATE A "RETAIL BOULEVARD" THAT REFLECTS THE QUALITY OF ALBANY.**

Characteristics of a Retail Boulevard. The most positive image for a big, wide street is a that of a "boulevard". Boulevards typically have distinctive buildings, attractive and relatively uniform plant materials, and a grand scale. Successful retail environments have color, activity, exuberance, and special locations. "Shopping by car" requires excellent visibility, access, and visual cues. New and renovated buildings and street improvements along San Pablo Avenue should combine to create a physical environment that has all of these characteristics.

If San Pablo Avenue were someday to become a Retail Boulevard as envisioned by this Plan, attractive and interesting free-standing buildings would form a consistent commercial frontage. Dense groves of trees would screen parking areas in between. Towers or other unique roof features would identify building entrances from a distance. Special landmarks would define vistas and the location of Solano Avenue and other major destinations. Storefronts would be bold, colorful, and clearly visible from a car. Sidewalk areas would appear to be wider and more gracious, lined by flowering trees that screen parked cars.

If San Pablo Avenue were someday to be re-established as a light-rail transportation corridor, it would be ready to function much as it did up to and through World War II. The present guidelines will help reinforce the historic pattern of a dense concentration of retail business with high density housing located within easy walking distance. As reliance on autos is reduced over time, existing buildings could remain in place, while excess parking areas should become the sites of additional retail and residential activities. Another post-auto use of parking lots might be to create spaces for public enjoyment, similar to the small park at Solano and Peralta.

The Role of Design Guidelines and Street Improvements. The whole of the Retail Boulevard must be greater than the sum of its parts. Design guidelines must set higher standards for new development and renovations so they create a better overall district, not just a better looking mini-mall here and a better looking shopping center there. The goal is creation of a single, large, commercial area, that shares customers as well as a common physical environment.

Street improvements should be dramatic contributions to Albany's community character. They should also support San Pablo Avenue's auto-oriented commercial environment by accenting buildings and businesses, not hiding them.

**OBJECTIVE 2.      DEFINE THE SOLANO AVENUE INTERSECTION AS THE CENTER OF AN IDENTIFIABLE COMMERCIAL DISTRICT.**

Two Districts Meet. A strongly defined center will add identity to Albany's portion of San Pablo Avenue. It will provide a reference point for orientation, and it will link this shared commercial area to Solano Avenue, the main community shopping area.

Retain the Storefront Character. The character created by tightly clustered storefront buildings should be retained, so they are clearly perceived as an extension of the pattern of building along Solano Avenue. Existing surface parking requirements should be examined with the goal of minimizing the number of surface parking lots; shared parking areas should be promoted where possible.

Special Street Improvements. A street design for San Pablo Avenue as a whole should include a specially designed segment in the vicinity of this intersection. Improvements should be used to magnify the connection to the heart of the community.

**OBJECTIVE 3.      ENCOURAGE PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT TO CREATE SPECIAL LOCATIONS AND FEATURES ALONG THE STREET.**

Anywhere there is a gateway to the community, a highly visible location, or an area where there are no distinguishing features to speak of, private development should be encouraged to contribute something special. The following three cases - a pattern of existing use and two potential development sites - provide examples:

Auto Row. The buildings that make up the "auto row" along the western side of the Avenue, north of Solano, are strongly related in terms of use. They could be renovated in a way that relates them visually and distinguishes them from other commercial businesses, an "auto services emporium" of sorts. This would add character to the street and could encourage additional business.

Albany Bowl. Development of the Albany Bowl site, located at the northern gateway to the city, should reflect the importance of this location to the community. Development overall should be of a high quality, and buildings should be designed to provide a landmark that helps to define the City boundary.

U.C. Village and Gill Tract. Re-development of portions of the University of California properties could have the greatest impact of any contemplated development on the character of San Pablo Avenue. The gateway location should be highlighted. But more specifically, the quality of building associated with the University of California should be related directly to the frontage of San Pablo Avenue. This in itself will create a strong gateway and visual landmark. Most important, it will raise the standard for other new investment along the street.

### III. THE RETAIL BOULEVARD - DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT

#### Retail Boulevard Buildings: "Building as Sign"

**The formula for the Retail Boulevard can be reduced to "more architecture, less signage".** - San Pablo Avenue Urban Design Plan

The typical commercial strip is characterized by the relationship between buildings and signs. Signs are tall and attention-grabbing. Buildings are low and nondescript. This relationship must be reversed to create a sense of permanence and quality.

Buildings must be highly visible, eye-catching, and assume the communication function that tall, pole-mounted signs fill along the strip today. Buildings must in a sense be signs themselves. In fact, they should communicate more than just the name of the business to the motorist - how many businesses are here? where to park? where to enter the building? They must speak to the person who is shopping by car through their overall architectural form and detail, and they must be attractive buildings in their own right.

Attention is directed to the "Royal Cafe" building at 811 San Pablo Avenue. That building illustrates the characteristics of the prototypical Retail Boulevard Building: it is distinctive, fun, identifies the main entrance with a special architectural feature (that also happens to be the best location for mounting a sign visible from a car), and is taller than a typical one story building. When compared to buildings and signs nearby it is an unmistakable improvement.

#### Understanding and Using the Guidelines:

The criteria which follow are intended to guide one of the two types of physical change that contribute to creation of a Retail Boulevard: development of private properties with private sector funds. Guidelines are provided for the design of buildings, sites, and signage. (Recommendations for improvement of the public right-of-way, the street, may be found in Chapter V. of the "San Pablo Avenue Urban Design Plan").

The guidelines proceed from the general to the specific, reflecting the sequence of characteristics which a person "shopping by car" would perceive when approaching a good Retail Boulevard Building. They also reflect the sequence of concerns the City and private property owners should address when beginning to design or review a building for San Pablo Avenue.

The following considerations are important:

- 1) The guidelines do not dictate a particular architectural style.
- 2) The guidelines apply only to new development or voluntary renovations to existing buildings. Existing businesses, if they are not making property improvements, are in no way forced to upgrade in accordance with the guidelines.
- 3) The importance of adhering strictly to particular guidelines will need to be weighed during the design review process.

## City Administration of Design Guidelines and Other Regulations:

The following is a summary of City regulations and procedures which business and property owners may need to be familiar with, when planning for property improvements. The staff of the City Planning Department is available to provide advice on interpretations, and how to proceed through any required application processes.

### Zoning:

With the exceptions of the U.C. Village and City Hall sites, all properties along San Pablo Avenue are within the "C-2", Highway Commercial zoning district. (Albany Municipal Code Section 20-2.12). Most uses of property, including retail sales, personal services and professional offices, are allowed without special zoning permits (though changes of occupancy may require City review). Some special uses, such as motels, restaurants with bars, auto services and warehouses require a "conditional use permit", granted by the Planning and Zoning Commission. A conditional use permit may be required upon a change of use, or upon a change of ownership of land.

### Off-street Parking:

The City has requirements for off-street parking which apply to most properties in the City. (Municipal Code Section 20-3.5). For example, for retail stores the requirement is one parking space per 400 square feet of gross floor area. Medical offices require one space per 200 square feet. Under certain circumstances, the Planning Commission may grant exceptions to the requirements.

### Design Review:

New developments and major and minor renovations will be subject to the design review procedures established in Albany's Design Review Ordinance, Municipal Code Section 20-10. Work on building interiors and normal repairs are exempted from design review.

Building additions of under 400 square feet, building-mounted signs and most awning installations may be approved by the Planning Department staff, subject to confirmation by the Planning Commission. Improvements of greater significance will be reviewed by the Planning Commission, usually in conjunction with any other necessary approvals such as a conditional use permit.

In adopting a new Design Review Ordinance on August 19, 1991, the City anticipated adoption of these guidelines. Section 20-10.5 b. authorizes the City Council to adopt guidelines by resolution for the purpose of implementing the "San Pablo Avenue Urban Design Plan".

Section 20-10.6 d.4. requires that any approval of a project on San Pablo Avenue include a finding that the adopted criteria, or guidelines, have been considered and incorporated into the project. This subsection further provides:

The Planning Commission may grant exceptions to the criteria, provided one or more of the following findings are made:

- (a.) There are specified special circumstances applicable to the property, such as size, shape, location of existing structures, or traffic conditions, which cause practical difficulties in the application of the design guidelines.
- (b.) The Commission recognizes that the proposal exhibits a superior level of design which exceeds the approved criteria.
- (c.) With the granting of an exception, development on the site will achieve the overall purposes of the design guidelines, and the development will not be detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to persons or property in the vicinity.

Signs:

Sign types and sizes are governed by Municipal Code Section 20-5. With few exceptions, any new or altered signs require a building permit, and usually design review by the planning staff or Planning Commission is required as well. Business and property owners should be aware that some existing signs may be illegal, and their removal may be prompted by changes of ownership or proposed modifications to the signs (Section 20-5.8).

# The Guidelines:

## A. Silhouette

- A-1. **Buildings Should Have an Expressive Silhouette.** The silhouette a building creates against the backdrop of the sky is its most distinctive characteristic when viewed from a distance. The silhouette should be instantly recognizable as that of a distinctive commercial building in an active retail environment, not to be confused with a warehouse, assembly plant, or corporate office.
- A-2. **The Silhouette Should Explain the Building.** The silhouette of a tower, turret, parapet, or other architectural element can identify the main entrance to a building or to an adjacent parking area. Repeating roof forms can be used to indicate the presence of individual tenants.

## B. Massing and Height

- B-1. **Massing Should Be Used to Organize an Overall Building Composition.** The silhouette of a building is created by its three-dimensional characteristics, or massing. Different combinations of building mass and building bays (see next guideline section) should be used to put a building together.

Building masses may be singular, like a tall or projecting mass in the center to mark the main entrance, or they may be repeated; for example, towers placed on either side of the main entry or repeated in a slightly different way in another building location.

- B-2. **Taller Building Masses Should Be Closest to the Street.** Visibility of buildings and businesses is a fundamental aspect of the Retail Boulevard concept. Keeping taller masses closest to the street is essential. It will also minimize visual impacts to adjacent residential properties.
- B-3. **Massing Should Be Exuberant.** Buildings should be designed to address an "auto-speed" rate of perception, perhaps 25 miles per hour or more. In general, form should be more coarse than appropriate for buildings in more pedestrian-oriented places in the community. Masses should be pushed out or pulled in more dramatically to make them stand out in relation to the rest of the building. Parapets and towers should be somewhat taller and more boldly shaped.

Note: There is a fine line between exuberance and caricature, a line many "post modern" buildings cross. Defining the difference between exuberance, style, and garishness is difficult to accomplish with design guidelines alone. The definition must occur as part of the design review process.

## C. Building Bays / Facade Rhythm

- C-1. **Building Facades and Wall Areas Should Reflect the Patterns of Buildings and Parcelization Which Exist Along San Pablo Avenue.** It is important that larger masses and wall areas reflect a scale and visual interest appropriate for a commercial building. Buildings should be subdivided into discrete "building bays" by architectural features, such as pilasters, changes in the roof line, and clustering of windows, in increments of 25 or 50 feet. This will create a common visual rhythm among the various types and styles of development, both existing and future.

Increments of 25 feet may be most appropriate to reflect the presence of individual tenants, with each bay appearing as an individual storefront; 50 feet may be more appropriate for a large building with a single tenant, with bays created by pilasters and/or clusters of windows.

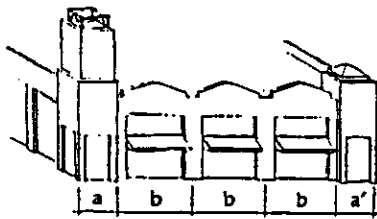
- C-2. **Bays for Individual Retail Tenants Within a Larger Building Should Appear as "Buildings Within a Building".** It is important that all retail businesses along San Pablo Avenue have visibility from the street. This is most effective and attractive if each building bay is expressed as a single building, with its own entrance, grouping of windows, and roof line.

## D. Facade Composition: Verticals, Horizontals, Base, Cap, and Windows

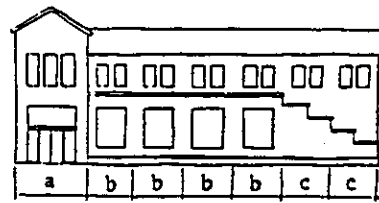
- D-1. **All Buildings Should Have a "Public Face".** The relationship a building has with the street, with the public realm, is expressed by its front facade. It should always present a building's most interesting architectural features. Doors, windows, and details should combine to project a lively and welcoming architectural character.

- D-2. **Vertical Elements Should be Equal to or Stronger Than Horizontal Elements.** Long horizontal roof lines, "ribbon" windows, and other horizontal features do not make a proper contrast with a wide street; they parallel the street visually and make it seem even wider. Buildings with a vertical emphasis provide balance, by creating a visual rhythm along the street edge.

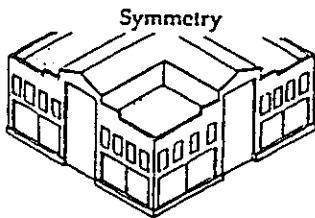




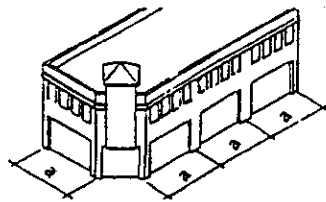
A



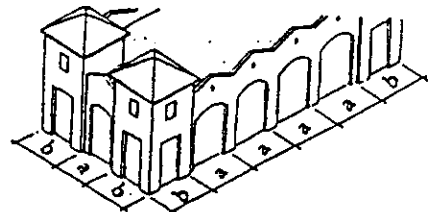
B



C

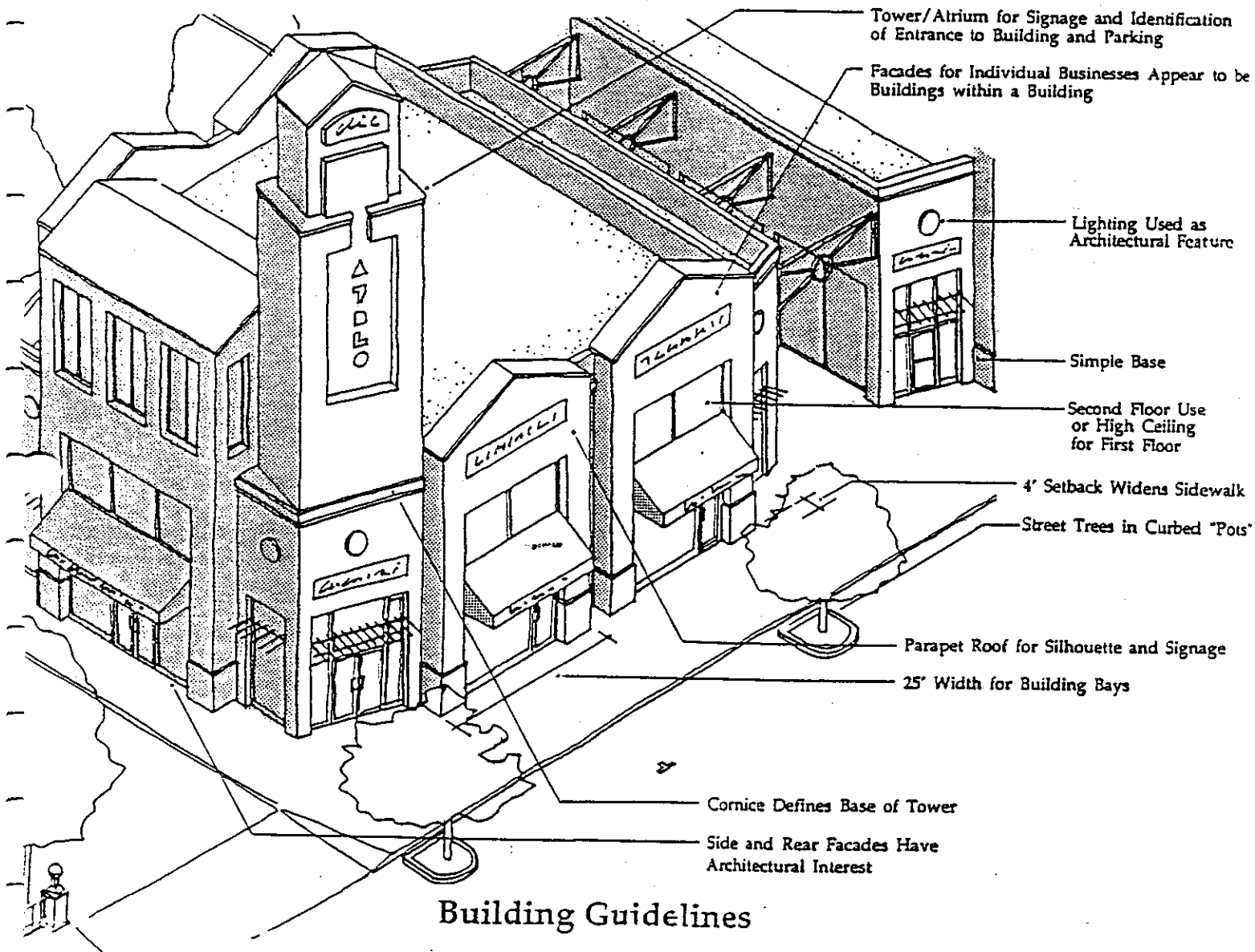


D



E

## Building Massing and Organization



**This drawing is a composite summary of ideas expressed in the Guidelines.**

**It is not necessary to include all features in any particular project. For example, towers may not be appropriate or feasible in all cases; awnings may not complement every architectural style.**

**D-3. All Visible Sides of a Building Should Receive Attention in Terms of Massing and Composition.** Surface parking requirements generally create space between buildings. This means that the sides of buildings are often as visible as the front. Rear facades are highly visible to patrons when there are rear parking areas. Windows, roof lines, massing, and other features should be subordinate to the front facade, but nonetheless present on all visible elevations.

**D-4. All Buildings Should Have a Base.** This could be considered as a basic rule for any building, but is especially important for Retail Boulevard Buildings, where the ability to differentiate the vertical face of the building from the horizontal plane of the street is important. For a one story building the base could be a projection of the wall surface, or, it could be a change in the finish or color of the wall surface.

For a building two stories or taller the entire first floor could be appear as the base, differentiated by architectural treatment, color, or surface material from upper portions of the building.

**D-5. All Buildings Should Have a Cap.** The design of roofs, cornice lines or parapets helps create the building silhouette, but should also complete the overall composition of the building's facade. Roofs should be in keeping with the exuberance of form suggested for a Retail Boulevard Building. Cornice lines should be boldly detailed and clearly visible from the street. Special details, like brackets and capitals, should be used to highlight roofs and cornices. Parapets should have a distinctive profile and be related in design to the facade features below.

**D-6. Windows and Doors Should Be Separated and "Punched" into or out of the Wall Surface.** Windows and doors are major elements in the composition of a facade, and should be arranged to create a clear surface pattern, whether symmetrical or asymmetrical. Windows and doors should be "punched", (recessed or projected from the wall surface) to add a third dimension, emphasizing shadows and a sense of the thickness of walls.

**D-7. Awnings Are Useful Additions for Color and Variety.** On the Retail Boulevard, awnings are as important for facade composition as they are for shade. They should help identify storefronts, with individual awnings for individual storefronts. Long, continuous awnings should be interrupted by peaks or other structural features that identify building entrances and differentiate businesses. Solid, interesting colors that add accent to the building wall are recommended. Awnings may contain signage (see next section).

## E. Signage

*[As of January 19, 1993, the standards underlined below will not be in effect until amendments are made to the City's sign ordinance]*

- E-1. **Signage Should be Mounted on Architecture, not Above It.** As the most prominent characteristic of the commercial strip, signage is obviously one of the most important features of shopping by car. No matter how expressive a building is, signs are needed to identify individual businesses. Signs should therefore be mounted on the face of the tallest architectural element that relates to an individual business. Separate, lower signs should be provided for the attention of pedestrians.

Signs should be mounted on functional elements of the building; for example, a tower may be designed primarily for the purpose of extending signage higher for greater visibility, but it should also enclose useable floor area, or a useable volume such as an atrium - it should not be just a glorified free-standing sign.

Except for small directional signs, new free-standing signs mounted on a single pole should not be used. Where there is a need for signs which are detached from buildings, they should be mounted on solid monument bases. Such monument-type signs may be justified where buildings are set well-back from the street, or for essentially open uses such as auto sales lots. The total height of monument signs should not exceed 5 feet; width at the base should exceed total height. Taller signs may be permitted on demonstration of visibility problems, but in no case should they exceed a maximum of ten feet. Existing pole-type signs should be phased out, according to Municipal Code Section 20-5.8. not so

Large, building-mounted projecting signs should generally not be used. Sculptural neon signs designed as an extension of the architectural form of the main building may be used. A neon sign designed to look like a parapet roof or marquee is an example.

Signs projecting outward from buildings should be limited to those which serve to orient pedestrians rather than to attract motorists. Signs projecting above a roof or parapet line should be limited to those which are incorporated into a three-dimensional architectural feature of the building.

- E-2. **Signs Should be in Proportion with the Size of the Building They Identify.** On the Retail Boulevard, signs should be clear and easy to read, but clearly subordinate to buildings. The sum total of building mounted signs used to identify an individual use should not exceed two square feet of area for each linear foot of the frontage occupied by that use; special considerations should be given to sites that have visibility problems or very large frontages.

- E-3. **Signs Should Be Located on a Building in a Place that is Designed for Them.** Signs should be mounted on parapets, recessed wall areas, and other architectural features. Wall-mounted signs should not crowd, or cover over, surrounding architectural details, such as windows, pilasters, or trim.

**E-4. Materials and Lighting.** A successful sign depends greatly on the design and quality of its materials. Following are examples of materials which can provide the desired quality of execution:

- 1) painted wood with individually mounted, scored or painted letters;
- 2) painted or anodized metal signs with letters as indicated above;
- 3) custom neon, either mounted on a painted board or suspended in storefront window or transom areas, or applied directly to building walls;
- 4) painted canvas awnings.

Recommendations for lighting are:

- 1) back-lit with lighting behind projecting lettering;
- 2) top or bottom lit, with spotlights or concealed fluorescent tubes.

**E-5. Internally Illuminated "Canned" Signs Should Not Be Used; Neon is preferred.** Neon signs, including individual "channel" letters, are usually custom made to suit an individual business. They lend a sense of character and energy to a retail environment. Canned signs, on the other hand, look and often are mass-produced, making any place look generic. They become glowing rectilinear shapes at night, detracting from adjacent buildings that have attractive windows and other sources of light. Small canned signs displaying a corporate logo or decorative device may be acceptable parts of a sign program, if they are incidental to the main sign message.

## **F. Pedestrian Detail**

**F-1. Pedestrian Detail is Important.** The shopper is on foot between the car and the front door of a business, and between the doors of adjacent businesses. Amenities, such as colorful awnings, well-proportioned window mullions, and other features that are viewed at close range should be provided by a Retail Boulevard Building.

Details should be of high quality design and materials, but not necessarily of the same level of detail or expense preferred for a storefront in a pedestrian shopping district, like Solano Avenue. In a pedestrian district, for example, it may be desirable for a building base to be surfaced with a special material, like decorative tile. For a Retail Boulevard Building a variation in the wall surface material may be all that is necessary; a different color of masonry or a pleasing scoring pattern may be sufficient. The same holds true for windows; beautifully milled wood mullions may be desirable for the pedestrian street, anodized color aluminum is fine for the Retail Boulevard.

## **G. Building Illumination**

- G-1. Lighting Should Be Used to Make the Retail Boulevard Safer and More Inviting.** Building-mounted lighting is encouraged for all new construction. It should be used to illuminate the front facade and sidewalk, in effect, creating an attractive "understory" beneath the existing "cobra-head" highway lights.
- G-2. Lighting Should Be Used to Enhance Retail Character.** Three forms of building illumination should be considered: architectural illumination, internal illumination, and accent lighting. Architectural illumination, such as uplighting, floodlighting, and "wall washing" can be used to highlight special architectural features or create interest on an otherwise plain wall surface. Exposed light fixtures can be used as attractive accents if consistent with the building's architectural style.

Internal illumination should be used to create a bold composition and/or highlight special glazing of windows and doors, or objects displayed in windows. Accent lighting, such as neon light tubes, can be used to outline building masses, openings, and add vertical or horizontal emphasis.

Note: Lighting should be used to enhance form, not to advertise or mask bad design.

## **H. Color**

- H-1. Colors Should Be Lively and Attractive.** Color should be used to communicate retail energy and to attract attention. Office buildings and other non-retail uses should also use color, but in more muted shades. In a commercial district, earth tones tend to look drab and uninteresting.
- H-2. Color Should be Used to Bring out Contrast between Walls, Windows, Awnings, and Trim.** If a wall is painted a light color, it may be best to paint window trim a darker or a much lighter color. Walls should generally not be painted a dark color- this tends to make a building appear larger, more massive, and less detailed because the shadows that help define changes in wall and window surfaces are not visible. If a dark color is used, lighter colors should be used for window trim and architectural details. In all cases, contrasting and/or vibrant colors are recommended as accents for window mullions, cornices, and other architectural details. Solid, interesting colors are recommended for awnings.

- H-3. **Colors and Materials Should be Selected for Resistance to Graffiti.** The sudden appearance of graffiti can negate much of the time and expense devoted to property improvements. Its removal can entail additional time and expense, and its traces may persist on some materials. Selections of colors and materials should be made with a consciousness of the potential for graffiti. Consideration should be given to avoiding textured surfaces, at least in locations that might be particularly vulnerable to graffiti. Smooth and/or cleanable surfaces should be used on lower, reachable portions of structures and in areas, such as those adjacent to parking lots or at the rears of buildings, which are less well-lighted or subject to street surveillance. Project plans should call for an extra supply of matching paints as a means of expediting the covering of graffiti in a way that blends with the original design.

## I. Site Design

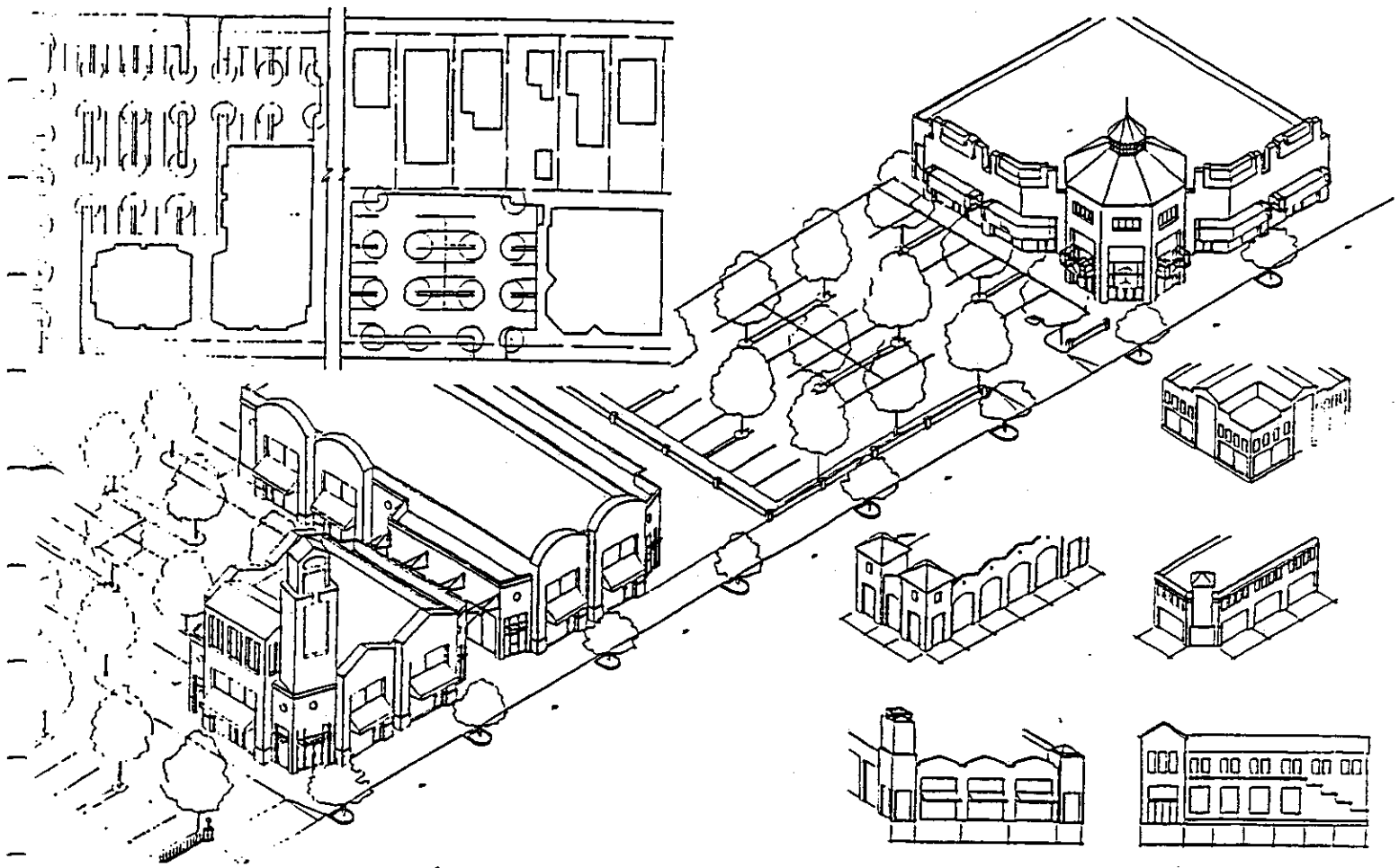
- I-1. **Buildings Should Be Sited to Add to the Sidewalk Space, Yet Maintain Maximum Visibility.** New buildings should be built to a line 4 feet back from and parallel to the existing right-of-way. This "build-to/setback" line will keep buildings close to the street and create a consistent commercial frontage. It will also make the sidewalk space more generous and boulevard-like, more in proportion with the width of the street.

In some locations, such as near Solano Avenue, it will be desirable to reenforce and maintain the consistency of the historic urban commercial pattern along San Pablo. In other cases, limited lot depth may make it infeasible to set aside four feet along the frontage. An alternative way of creating more sidewalk space for incidental uses, such as cafes or flower sales, would be to build to the right-of-way line, while opening up the front wall as an arcade; the open area behind an arcaded building front could exceed four feet without breaking the continuity of the street line.

- I-2. **Main Parking Areas Should be located to the Side or Rear of Buildings, Not In Front.** Buildings, not parking lots, should be the dominant view along the Retail Boulevard. Parking in front makes businesses less visible to motorists who are potential customers.

Three basic configurations may be appropriate, depending on the nature of the specific site:

- 1) Commercial use that extends through a block - The full frontage should be built out, with the exception of the access drive, and parking should be located behind. Curb cuts into adjacent residential streets should be provided where appropriate.
- 2) Commercial use confined to parcels that have frontage only on San Pablo Avenue - Parking must go to the side of the building. In development planning and review it is best to opt for a "building-parking-building-parking" arrangement of adjacent developments with this configuration, rather than "building-building-parking-parking".



Retail Boulevard Buildings - Composite



3) An alternative which may be suited to a few large development sites is to permit a single-loaded parking aisle in front of buildings. This maintains the sense that businesses are part of the street, not in a detached development, while providing just enough parking to attract convenience shoppers. Two curb cuts are required for this layout. It works best for developments of one-half block of frontage or more. Smaller increments of development will result in too many curb cuts, too close together.

- I-3. **Parking Lots Should Be Landscaped As "Groves"**. One shade tree of a significant size (15 gal. or larger) should be provided per three parking spaces; the minimum requirement should be no less than one tree per five spaces. Wherever site dimensions permit, trees should be planted between parking stalls, not between bays. This provides more shade where it is needed, on the passenger compartment of a car instead of on the hood. It will also result in a more evenly landscaped and less visible parking area overall. This is important for compatibility with adjacent uses, especially residential, as well as for the general appearance of the Retail Boulevard.

Curbed planters are not necessarily required, but tree grates or bollards should be used to protect trees.

- I-4. **Low Walls That Match the Architectural Design and Materials of the Principal Building Should Be Provided Along Parking Area Frontages**. The architecture of the main building should be extended along the entire site frontage, in the form of walls, fences, and/or other site elements, to screen parking areas.

Walls should be at least as high as the hood of a car, approximately 32", though not so high as to obscure the visibility of the parking area entirely. Lower walls topped by ornamental metal fences are an attractive way to screen parking. Walls and fences should consist of smaller panels, with substantial columns or posts at 25' intervals to reflect the basic increment of building along the street. Walls should be complimented by landscaping, which should be simple and consistent among various properties along the street.

- I-5. **Parking Lots Across the Street from Houses Should Have a Residential Edge**. Parking lots should be setback approximately 10' from the existing property line. This setback should be planted with grass or another low ground cover to match residential front yards across the street. Low walls, as recommended above, should locate columns or posts directly across from residential property lines.

Though not a substitute for a residential frontage, this treatment will alleviate the jarring effect of a parking lot adjacent to the sidewalk of a predominantly residential street. It will also define a space across the street from existing houses that appears to be an extension of front yard areas. Maintenance of these areas by the property owners is an important aspect of this feature.

In some cases the requirement of a 10 foot setback could severely restrict parking lot design. the option should be available to use a denser planting with a reduced setback area. In some cases vines on walls, with trees in the right of way may be most effective. The possibility of commercial building walls opposite residences should also be addressed; in the CE zone, setbacks are at the discretion of the Planning Commission.

Where site area or depth does not allow for a ten foot setback as called for, a combination of a screening wall, compact landscaping such as vines, and street trees may be approved to serve as a buffer between residential and non residential uses. Where walls of commercial buildings extend to the residential street, the Planning Commission may approve a suitable combination of architectural detailing, landscaped setback, landscape materials against the wall, and street trees, to provide a pleasing view from the nearby residences

- I-6. **Service Areas Should Not Be Visible.** Areas for loading, storage, and refuse should be located to the rear of buildings and should be screened by building, walls, fences, or landscape materials so that they can not be seen from San Pablo Avenue. This should also apply to air conditioning units, electrical transformers, satellite dishes, and other mechanical appurtenances.

Roof top equipment such as air conditioning, kitchen exhausts, satellite dishes and other mechanical equipment should be screened from view of abutting properties as well as from San Pablo Avenue. Special attention to "roofscapes", including materials and colors as well as screening, may be required for projects bordering Albany Hill.

Noise characteristics of service areas and equipment installations need to be considered in both site design and building design. It may be necessary to accompany visual screening with noise buffering, using appropriate techniques such as sound walls, insulated enclosures, or direction of fans and exhausts away from sensitive neighboring uses.

## **J. Special Site - U.C. Village and Gill Tract**

- J-1.** *New Development of the University Frontage Should Reflect the Urban Character of San Pablo Avenue. Buildings should be built close to the street and should comprise a continuous frontage along the Avenue, except in locations where significant vegetation is to be preserved. Any non-residential development should be consistent with guidelines for other portions of the street; however, variations may be considered in light of the potential scale of development and the particular characteristics of the Village and Gill Tract sites. Depending on the extent of any non-residential development, the City may encourage site and building designs which are not feasible in other locations along the Avenue.*
- J-2.** **A Main Campus Entrance Should Be Located Directly on San Pablo Avenue.** This entrance should be a powerful visual landmark, and a statement that the campus itself faces, rather than turns away from, San Pablo Avenue. It will add the sense of quality and permanence that encourages further investment elsewhere along the street. It may also encourage campus residents to venture out to commercial business along the street.
- J-3.** **The Corner of San Pablo Avenue and Buchanan/Marin Should Be One of the Most Memorable Locations in the Community.** The grove of evergreen trees and palms at the corner has been a community landmark for years, and should be retained and enhanced as part of new development plans for the site.

The San Pablo Avenue Urban Design Concept Plan recommends "that the grove be 'ceded', in visual terms at least, to the City as a public open space. A highly visible piece of civic art or architectural marker, framed against the backdrop of the trees, should announce that to one side is the Albany City Hall, to the other a major campus of the University of California. This sculpture or monument should be clearly visible approaching San Pablo Avenue along Buchanan and exiting the City along Marin. Unlike the entry feature proposed for the western corner of the City Hall complex, this should be larger and more dramatic...."

## K. Special Site - Albany Bowl

- K-1. **Individual Storefronts Should be Clearly Defined.** As recommended for all Retail Boulevard Buildings, the roof line should be expressive and indicate the presence of individual tenants. Building bays, in this case individual storefronts, should be separated by architectural features for identification, reflecting the 25' and 50' building increments typically found along the street.
- K-2. **A Maximum of One Row of Parking Spaces Should be Permitted along the Frontage.** A minimal amount of surface parking is recommended in front of any proposed commercial uses. A single-loaded parking aisle provides convenience, but keeps businesses part of the overall commercial environment of San Pablo Avenue.
- K-3. **Perpendicular Parking Areas Should Appear to Be Streets.** To maximize retail visibility, storefronts which are located perpendicular to the street, along parking areas, should reflect the same characteristics as Retail Boulevard buildings located along San Pablo Avenue. Perpendicular frontages are generally better for services that do not need to rely as heavily on visibility and "impulse" patronage. Species for tree plantings between parking stalls should be short and ornamental, or tall and finely textured, to maintain visibility from the street.
- K-4. **The Northern Portion of the Site Should Contain a Gateway Building That Helps Define the City Boundary.** A new building in this location should be particularly distinctive. The roof line and overall architectural treatment should be clearly special, different than that of adjacent buildings. Towers, turrets, and/or distinctive parapet roof forms are recommended to set a standard of design quality for the rest of the street.
- K-5. *The Albany Bowl Building Requires Special Attention. If the existing building is retained as part of an overall plan for the site, improvements should be commensurate with the size and importance of the building. Retail Boulevard Building guidelines should be applied to encourage creation of a lively facade - especially appropriate if the building remains in a recreational usage. Distinctive parapet(s), signage, awnings, and overall facade renovation should emphasize the building's size and accentuate its vertical characteristics.*