

6. Design Standards and Guidelines



The *Design Standards and Guidelines* provide descriptive design principles and recommendations for architectural and landscape character, to be implemented by developers and designers in new development and renovation projects. Please see Chapter 4: Land Use and Development Policies, for an overview and full description of these policies. The intent of the *Standards and Guidelines* is to facilitate new projects that draw from the best of Livermore's building traditions, that contribute positively to shaping the urban fabric of Downtown, and that are identifiable as a piece of downtown Livermore – as discussed in the Community Workshops. The Standards are specific, and describe the mandatory elements of building and site design; the Guidelines are recommendations, configured to allow flexibility of interpretation in order to encourage the creativity of designers and owners as they enhance Downtown Livermore's character.

The *Design Standards and Guidelines* are organized by building type, so a user may refer directly to the discussion of that building type for specific direction. They are also intended to be used together with the *Area-wide Design Guidelines for Historic Structures* in this section. The Design Guidelines are rooted in Downtown's existing context, its past and current forms of development, and its architectural heritage. These *Design Standards and Guidelines* will be used in review of proposed projects for the Downtown; project applications that meet the criteria laid out in the guidelines will move quickly through the review process.

Basis of the Design Guidelines

Livermore's history is evident in the buildings that make up the fabric of its Downtown Core, particularly along First Street from L Street to Livermore Avenue. Its origins as a center of commerce during Gold Rush times is reflected in the Old West characteristics of some existing structures, including false fronts and wooden arcades. Downtown's rise as a banking and commercial center led to the construction of many impressive civic and quasi-public structures as best exemplified by downtown's classical landmarks, the Bank of Italy and the Schenone Building. Unlike many other California cities of its size, a substantial number of Downtown's best buildings have survived through the years. Today, Livermore's historic commercial Core primarily consists of early 20th century commercial structures with single or double storefronts, most with one or two stories, and most with flat roofs and some slightly pitched roofs. Most examples are constructed of blond or light colored brick, although wood siding is also commonly used.

A wide variety of architectural styles contribute to the Downtown built environment. Often found throughout downtown is a simple version of the Craftsman aesthetic with an architecture consisting of wood and timber construction. Further commercial development from the 19th and 20th Centuries to the present has referenced a range of architectural influences, including Spanish Colonial Revival, Mission Revival, Renaissance Revival, Italianate storefront, Goochie, Colonial Revival, brick commercial storefront and wooden and brick vernacular styles. With the exception of Goochie, these styles provide the basis for Downtown buildings.

This eclecticism is also found in Livermore's residential neighborhoods. A wide range of styles can be found throughout Downtown. Victorian homes ranging from Folk and Stick Victorian to Italianate and Queen Anne dot the areas surrounding Downtown. Craftsman-style bungalows with their low-pitched roofs and dormers, broad porches and exposed roof rafters, occur frequently. Other forms of modest wooden homes are common. Residential styles include Spanish Colonial and Mission Revival with characteristics such as arched openings, shaped roof parapets, thick decorative railings and red roof tiles. These styles were liberally interpreted over the years as more homes were built.



A historic Downtown storefront



Current Downtown storefronts (2003)



Hand-crafted, agrarian elements on buildings

While there is no single predominant architectural style that defines Livermore, there are many architectural features that are characteristic of the development that has occurred there. Common themes include a strong relationship with the countryside of farms and ranches, the hand-crafted character of many of Downtown's structures, and the frequent use of earthen materials like brick and stone. Livermore's landscape, too, is an important factor in the City's character: the golden tones of the hills and the agricultural landscape, the vineyards and the wide-open spaces beyond the City all play a part in the "feel" of Livermore. A summary of these influences are shown on Figure 6-1, Architectural Context, on page 6-4.

Downtown Livermore

Livermore's Downtown was the focal point of the City during the early development. The Revitalization Strategy contained in this Plan is intended to re-establish Downtown as the center of the community. In order to advertise this, the built fabric of the Downtown must reflect and reinforce this role. New construction should take cues from regional and local traditions, and be appropriate to its context.



Classical proportioning

The range of styles and periods that left their mark on Downtown Livermore have created a distinctive character for the Downtown, one that is recognized by its residents and remembered by its visitors. New buildings should draw from and build upon this character. In the Downtown Core, architectural styles are more cohesive- the most memorable buildings utilize classical proportions and detailing, with ornamentation such as pilasters, wood detailing and embossed relief. New buildings should include elements such as:

- Classical proportions and symmetrical facades, based on 19th century commercial structures and storefronts. Characteristics include a simple horizontal building division clearly defined by building bays, and a vertical order of base-shaft-capital.
- Classical detailing and ornament, such as pilasters, wood detailing and embossed relief.
- Deeply recessed, vertically-oriented windows (with a greater height than width).
- Flat roofs, but with varied roof lines utilizing ornamental parapets and projecting cornices.



FIGURE 6-1: DESIGN CONTEXT

Livermore Downtown Specific Plan



One of a wide range of residential styles

In Downtown's residential neighborhoods, styles are more wide-ranging. Therefore, no single architectural style should dominate. However, key characteristics that should be considered on any new residential building include:

- A horizontal or low-rise character, to complement existing single family homes.
- A complex rather than simple massing, with protruding volumes, porches, balconies and other elements that give variation to building form.
- Consistent use of wood to help emphasize a hand-crafted aesthetic.

The buildings within each Plan Area should contribute to that district's identity as a part of Livermore. As the most intense part of the Plan Area, the Downtown Core centered along First Street should be infilled to create a lively mix of buildings at different heights and scales. Ground-floor retail should relate to Downtown's traditional storefronts, by using large display windows, kickplates, and clerestory and transom windows. Along First Street outside of the Downtown Core, within the Boulevard Gateway and the Transit Gateway Plan Areas, housing and commercial development should be lower in scale and in intensity, and should continue to build on the Downtown Core's classical, restrained styling. Housing, office and lodging uses in the Downtown Neighborhoods should be related to the mix of styles already found in those areas. Every new building, addition or renovation in the Downtown area should contribute to its unique and memorable character.