#### I. Introduction

Woodland lies in the heart of a fertile agricultural region on the floor of the Sacramento Valley. On clear days, the foothills of the Coast Range are visible to the west; the Sierras can be seen to the east. It is against this scenic backdrop that Woodland has grown from a small farming village to a vibrant City of over 51,000 residents and a main player in the regional economy.

Woodland has a rich architectural heritage. Over time, each successive era has added a new chapter to the form, character, and image of the City. Nineteenth century buildings of wood or brick possess a unique charm that is both functional and durable – qualities valued by the farmers who settled the area. Beautifully restored Victorian-era, California Bungalow, and Craftsman-style residences adorn shady, tree-lined streets, conveying a sense of 'neighborhood' rooted in the architectural traditions of the early 1900s. Good examples of modern architecture are also evident. Today, Woodland is an eclectic mix of architectural styles. Shopping centers and housing tracts of the 1960s share the landscape with modern commercial buildings and residential neighborhoods.



Woodland is first and foremost a city of trees. The rich alluvial soils and abundant sunshine create ideal growing conditions for trees of almost every variety. Whether along a quiet residential street or a busy commercial district, trees have a unifying quality that is both comforting and attractive.

# **Purpose and Applicability**

The purpose of the 2004 update is to build upon the success of the 1998 Community Design Guidelines by further defining the City's image and to clarify the City's design standards. These Design Guidelines were prepared to aid designers, the public, and decision-makers by expressing the community's shared vision for the quality and attractiveness expected throughout the City. The updated Design Standards respond directly to policies and programs of the

Woodland General Plan which emphasize the design of new neighborhoods that preserves and enhances the qualities that make Woodland a unique and desirable place.



Programs 1.14 call for the preparation of residential guidelines to "...promote walking, bicycling, and transit use and access" in new expansion areas, recognizing the importance of integrating new neighborhoods into the fabric of the community.

Program 1.6 calls for the preparation of commercial design guidelines to "promote walking, bicycling, and transit use and access" for commercial areas, emphasizing the design of commercial facilities to reflect the character of Woodland, and provide accessibility for pedestrians, bicyclist, and transits riders.

Program 6.C.8 calls for preparation of historic neighborhood design guidelines and/or standards to help assure that new residential construction, additions, repairs, and remodels preserve the historic nature of the structure and neighborhood and prevent the intrusion of inappropriate architectural design.

These Design Standards apply to development and modifications to existing development in the City. The Design Standards emphasize the use of architectural design, landscaping, screening, sign control, and other techniques to improve and enhance the visual qualities of the City so that a visitor's first impression of the City is a positive one.

In some instances, the Design Standards are fairly precise. However, they are not rigid and inflexible, nor are they intended to stifle creativity by imposing a formula for the design of new development and existing development. Their main purpose is to ensure that new and existing development in the City enhances the quality of life in Woodland and preserves its image as a desirable place to live, work and visit. It is not the intent that staff or the Planning Commission will design the project – that is the responsibility of the applicant.

The vision embodied by these Design Standards can only be achieved through a cooperative effort among the City, private property owners and the community. The City's responsibility is to provide timely review of new projects, and to help foster private investment by implementing public improvements that enable development to occur. These Design Standards help achieve the former by providing a greater measure of predictability to the design review process. The role of the community is to be a sounding board with regard to new development so that decision-makers remain in touch with the preferences of Woodland citizens.

# Historical Development and Community Form

Woodland (originally called Yolo City) was settled in the 1850s. Farmers and ranchers, financed in part by earnings from the gold fields, began moving to the area to take advantage of the cheap land, rich soils, and year-round growing





season. Not surprisingly, the first buildings erected in town were occupied by businesses catering to the needs of surrounding farmers and ranchers.

The City form is based on a grid of north-south and east-west streets radiating outward from the traditional town core bounded by Sixth Street, College Street, North Street, and Main Street. The City has retained the 'backbone' of this grid system by locating major north-south and east-west thoroughfares along section lines roughly one mile apart (a section is a one square mile plot of land consisting of 640 acres). The land within these larger grids has been subdivided into residential neighborhoods; the street system in some of the newer residential subdivisions is more curvilinear, reflecting design elements that became popular in the 1960s. The General Plan contains policies that encourage a return to the more traditional grid system in new residential subdivisions as a way to foster walking and bicycling.

#### Previous Community Design Efforts

In 2004, the City updated the Downtown Specific Plan in response the unique problems to and opportunities facing the traditional core of the City. The Plan encourages the preservation and enhancement of character historic of the downtown while providing for the expansion of economic opportunities, parking and streetscape improvements. The downtown is regaining its status as the center for civic and cultural activities, due in



part to the cooperative efforts by the City and downtown business owners to implement the vision contained in the *Downtown Specific Plan*. The beautifully restored Woodland Opera House and the Woodland Hotel have become cornerstones of downtown revitalization.



In 1998, the City adopted the *East Street Corridor Specific Plan*, which provides design guidelines to help turn this important north-south corridor into an attractive thoroughfare and gateway to the City. In 2003, the City adopted the *Spring Lake Specific Plan Design Standards*, which provides critical design standards for the Spring Lake Specific Planning Area. The Spring Lake Area is a proposed development of approximately 1,097 acres located immediately south of the Woodland City limits at Gibson Road and east of State Route 113.

The Downtown Specific Plan, East Street Specific Plan, Southeast Area Specific Plan, and Spring Lake Specific Plan each contain design guidelines specific to these areas. Areas included within these plans are not governed by these Design Standards unless the language in the specific plan is ambiguous or silent. At that point, the Community Design Standards will take effect.

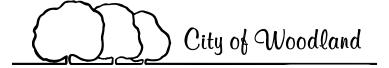
#### The Design Review Process

The City's design review process is illustrated by Figures 1 and 2, below. Figure 1 illustrates the process for projects that require a discretionary permit, such as a conditional use permit. Figure 2 is the process for projects that require building permit approval, only. As with all other development-related matters in Woodland, design review is handled by the Community Development Department. Anyone considering a development project should first make an appointment to discuss the project and these Design Standards with a member of the Community Development Department staff. The staff member can help explain the City's development procedures and determine if design review is required. The staff member can also provide an approximate timetable for the processing of the project and describe any other permits or approvals that may be required.

Design review is not a separate process apart from other discretionary approvals such as site plan review or a conditional use permit. To the extent allowed by the City's codes and ordinances, any additional Planning or building permits will usually be processed concurrently.

# **Exceptions**

It is envisioned that the great majority of projects will comply in their entirety with these Design Standards. However, it is possible that there may be unusual circumstances where a project may not be able to meet one or more of the standards due to the peculiarities of the project. In such instances, the Community Development Director or the Planning Commission may approve an exception provided that the overall intent of the Design Standards is still being met.



# Amendments to the Design Standards

These Design Standards express the community's expectations for the design and quality of new and existing development in Woodland. Although they advocate basic principles of "good" design that have been found to apply in almost every occasion, they also encourage innovation and creativity. However, the Design Standards cannot anticipate how the community's expectations are likely to change over time as new design and construction techniques emerge and as tastes change. Thus, the Design Standards should be viewed as a "living document" that will evolve with the changing sentiments of the community. If amendments are deemed necessary in the future, they should be considered carefully and with the full participation of the community.

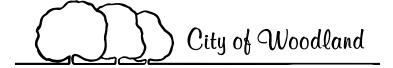


Figure 1

Design Review Process for Projects Requiring Discretionary Approval(s)

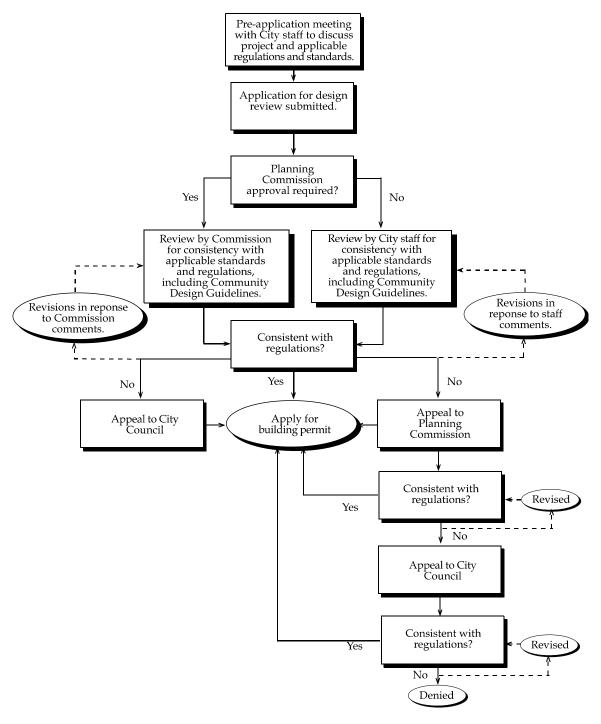
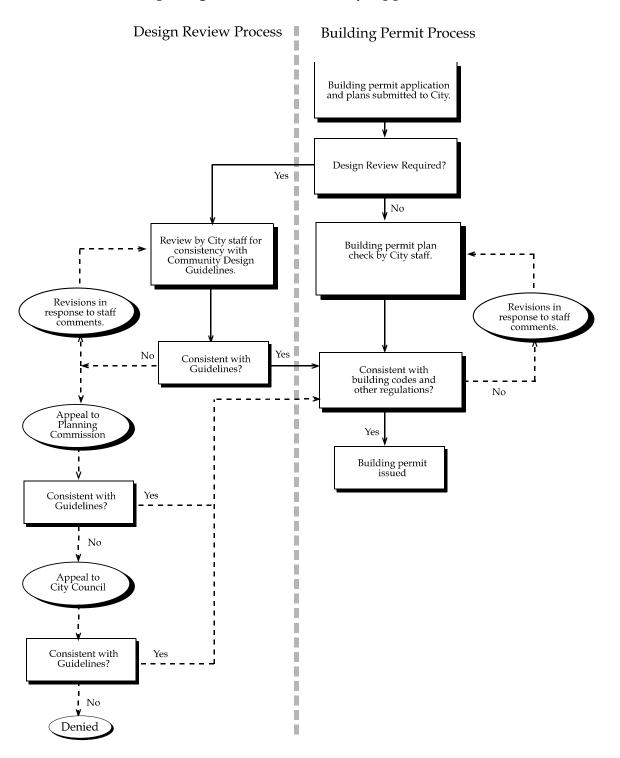




Figure 2

Design Review Process for Projects Not Requiring Other Discretionary Approvals





#### When is Design Review Required?

Generally, design review is required for:

- 1. All new Commercial, Industrial, and Public construction projects (including exterior modifications to existing buildings)
- 2. All multi-family and duplex projects (2 or more units).
- 3. Single family residential projects when an entitlement is required from the City (CUP, ZAP, Tentative Map, Lot Line Adjustment, Variance, Certificate of Compliance).

Areas governed by the Downtown Specific Plan, East Street Corridor Specific Plan, Southeast Area Specific Plan, and Spring Lake Specific Plan are excluded from these Design Standards, unless the language in the specific plan is ambiguous or silent. At that point, the Community Design Standards will take effect. The provisions of these Design Standards should be discussed with Community Development Department staff before an application for design review is submitted. A list of the minimum requirements for a complete design review application is provided in the box above.

# Application Submittal Requirements for Design Review

- Color photograph of the site from the street showing existing conditions.
- 2. Fully dimensioned illustrations of all building elevations drawn to a conventional scale.
- Color rendering of street view elevation with proposed landscaping drawn to illustrate fiveyear growth.
- 4. Samples of all exterior colors and materials matching those shown on the elevations, including roof and fencing materials.
- Details and explanation of special elements such as public art, ornaments, window treatment, trash and utility enclosures, and lighting.
- Landscaping plan as determined by the Community Development Director.
- 7. Proposed signs including dimensions, colors and materials, and placement.
- 8. Any other materials or illustrations as determined by the Community Development Director.

# Who Does the Reviewing?

The Community Development Director (or designated staff) handles the task of design review for projects that do not require Planning Commission approval. When Planning Commission approval is required, such as a project requiring a conditional use permit, planned development or other entitlement, the Commission serves as the design review authority. When the Director or Commission determines that a project conforms to all applicable provisions of the City Code, the project is approved. The approval may be subject to conditions that bear a reasonable relationship to the nature and intensity of development and the potential impacts such development may generate. Before a building permit may be issued, the project must demonstrate compliance with all applicable conditions and codes.



# **Exceptions**

Minor exceptions to these Design Standards may be approved by the Community Development Director (or designated staff) (or the Planning Commission upon appeal) upon finding that the proposed design solution achieves the overall objectives of these Design Standards.

#### What Standards Will Be Used to Review My Project?

By its nature, design review involves subjective judgments: one person's idea of artistry may appear ugly to another. That is, in part, why the City prepared these Design Standards and why persons contemplating a development project should meet with City staff to discuss the City's design review process.

In their role as the design review authority for the City, the Director and/or Planning Commission will look at the entire design of a project, considering such factors as how the project relates to the natural features of a site and to surrounding development, and the visibility of the site along major corridors and entryways. They will also try to judge the quality of the experience people will have when living, working, or shopping in the development, as well as the effect the development will have on the visual character and quality of life of the community. The following fundamental principles of design may be used in reviewing new projects.

**FUNCTION**: *The design should be usable by all.* 

A functional design will need to effectively accommodate the use or activity for which the project is intended, and provide for the comfort and security of its users. A functional design will also provide safe and efficient pedestrian and vehicular links within the project and between the project and surrounding neighborhoods and districts. However, a 'functional' project need not sacrifice diversity, variation, or uniqueness of style. Rather, the functional aspects of the project will be the foundation upon which its unique character is established.

**ORDER**: *The design should be readily and easily understood.* 

Development projects are most effective when the design clearly communicates to the user a sense of understanding about how the project is organized. It is especially important that new residential neighborhoods be designed to a comprehensible scale with clearly defined pedestrian, bicycle and vehicular links within the neighborhood and links to surrounding areas. "Where is the entrance?" And "How do I get there from here?" Are questions the design will readily answer?

Order also implies maintaining a sense of continuity and harmony. A project will help maintain order by not interrupting the rhythm and character of existing development. Within a development project, order is maintained through the use of unifying elements such as window treatments, exterior materials, and color.



**IDENTITY**: The design should be distinct and recognizable.

An effectively designed project will convey a sense of identity consistent with the character of surrounding development, establishing its own unique identity. Project identity can be enhanced incorporating by elements that establish visual focus (a clock tower, fountain or public art, for example) and by providing activity nodes such as open plazas, courtyards walkways.



**APPEAL**: The design should be pleasing and attractive, and contribute in a positive way to the quality of life in Woodland.

At its most basic level, design review is a visual experience: We like (or don't like) what we see. But what determines these qualities? The appeal of a project can be directly tied to a number of factors, beginning with the three principles discussed above. One important factor is scale. An effective design will incorporate elements of human scale that convey a sense of comfort and familiarity to the user.

Another important aspect of the appeal of a project is the context within which development takes place. Are the character, scale, and appearance of the project in keeping with surrounding development? Or does it ignore the established architectural, neighborhood or community character?

Although most development projects in a community involve a specific site, the principles discussed above apply equally well to an expansion area or street corridor. In addition to applying these fundamental principles of design, the Director or Planning Commission will also consider the 'practical' aspects of the project such as:

#### • How does the project contribute to the quality of life in Woodland?

Since buildings and other site development will be a part of the community for years to come, it is important that they contribute in a positive way to the enjoyment of living, working or shopping in the community.



# • Does the design of the project suit the proposed site?

For example, does the project accommodate the natural features of the site, such as views, trees, topography, etc, consistent with the objectives of these Design Standards?

#### • Does the project respect history?

One of the goals of the City's design review process is to preserve and enhance buildings and districts that have historical value by virtue of its architecture, historic association, or age. For example, when converting a Victorian house to offices, it would be unacceptable to replace wood-sash windows with modern materials such as aluminum, and signs would need to respect the style of the building and neighborhood.

# • Does the project suit its purpose?

Does an apartment project look friendly, homelike, and livable? For example, if families are expected to live in a development, are there safe, usable outdoor areas? If the project is a commercial building, does it look like a place to shop or do business? Is the design functional?

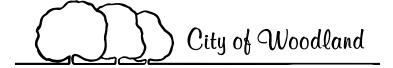
# • Does the project make good use of the site?

"Good use" of a site implies taking advantage of the opportunities provided by its natural features. For example, are natural topography, trees and other features preserved and protected? Does the orientation of the building and landscaping provide opportunities for passive solar heating and cooling? Are materials, forms and other elements of a project suitable for their uses? Has maintenance been considered in the choice of materials and finishes? Will trees provide shade where and when it is needed?

The criteria discussed above are not the only issues to be considered in the review of new development. Each project and project site is unique and presents its own constraints and opportunities for a good design solution.

#### How These Guidelines Were Prepared

To help prepare the initial 1998 Community Design Guidelines, the City retained the help of a consultant who worked closely with staff of the Community Development Department. For the Design Guidelines to effectively capture the community's 'vision' for new development, it was essential that the consultants gain a better understanding of community preferences. A public workshop was conducted at which citizen's participated in-group exercises, which were intended to foster discussion and the sharing of ideas. This input helped shape the public review draft Guidelines that were considered by both the Planning Commission and the City Council at a series of public hearings. The Design Standards were updated upon request from the Planning Commission with



the assistant from City Staff. Staff held a workshop and public hearing with the Planning Commission.

# How the Guidelines are Organized

These guidelines are organized into the following chapters:

#### I. Introduction

The introduction provides an overview of the purpose and intent of these Design Standards and a description of the design review process.

# II. Design Standards for the Community

These Design Standards address the following topics:

- Neighborhood Design, including standards for elements to help promote walking and bicycling.
- Standards for Single Family Residential Development. This section includes site planning and architectural guidelines for new residential development and modifications to existing buildings.
- Standards for Multi-Family Residential Development
- Standards for Commercial Development. This section addresses site planning, architecture, exterior materials, parking, signage, landscaping, and screening.
- Standards for Industrial Development. This section addresses site planning and architecture for industrial development.
- Standards for Streets, Streetscape Improvements, and Entryways. This section describes improvements such as street trees, landscaped medians, and street furnishings to help improve the appearance of major corridors and entryways.

# III. Appendix

The appendix includes:

- A bibliography and list of authors.
- A list of plants appropriate to the climate and character of Woodland that can be used as a guide for preparing landscaping and screening plans.
- A color palette illustrating appropriate colors for commercial buildings.
- A glossary to help the layperson better understand the vocabulary of architecture and design.

