



10. Community Design Element

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Chapter 10. Community Design Element

INTRODUCTION

Strengthening Highland's Image

Highland is a great place to live, and the City is working to make it an even better place. Part of that appeal is based on community aesthetics—combining a beautiful physical setting with attractive development. To guide this process, this Community Design Element describes the goals, policies and actions designed to improve the image, character and quality of life of the City.

Purpose and Function

Although not required by state law, the City believes that a strong Community Design Element will become an important policy guide in the design process. Goals and policies are not as rigid as development standards, but they do form the basis for project review, redevelopment and capital improvement programs. More importantly, the City hopes that by clearly describing and illustrating its design policies, this element will stimulate creative thinking and discussion about community design.

Community or urban design is the process that creates the visual identity of the City and its communities. Building on the foundation of the Land Use Element, the Community Design Element focuses more specifically on the form and character of the built environment—groupings of buildings, public spaces, neighborhoods, streetscapes and public improvements. Therefore, it affects what we see and experience as we move through our community and neighborhoods. At its best, the Community Design Element should provide relevant, clear and creative guidance to the City, private enterprise and the public as they work together to create a community whose small-town character is enhanced by high quality public and private development.



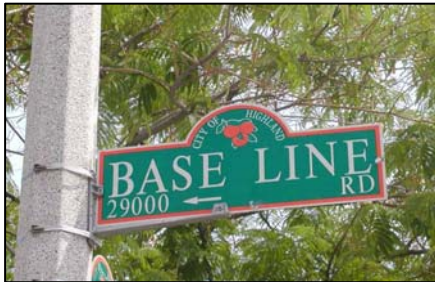
Monument signs with accompanying City logo are one way to strengthen community identity.



Related Plans and Programs

Community design influences and is influenced by other areas of City policy. Because the various elements of a General Plan are interrelated and consistent, the Community Design Element is reflected in the Land Use, Circulation, and Conservation and Open Space Elements. Land use designations shape urban form while the circulation system sets the stage from which the City is viewed. Conservation and open space planning provides an important contrast to urban development, often framing views and providing important edges and buffers. The Community Design Element supports Highland's Development Code in several important ways. Whereas the Code regulates uses, size and impact of development, it does not have the legal authority or scope to regulate large-scale aesthetics nor the design flexibility to give customized design guidance to special areas of the City. The Community Design Element, on the other hand, establishes policy on community-wide design features such as gateways, arterials and signage, as well as crafting special policies for specific districts within the City.

Elements of Community Design



Paths. Base Line is Highland's most important arterial, running the length of the City west to east.



Landmarks. The San Bernardino Mountains are the City's visual backdrop and most prominent landmarks.

Since community or urban design exists at a scale larger than that of individual buildings, it is helpful to identify the elements that comprise it. Although there are many models or ways to describe a city's design, a particularly useful one comes from the urban theorist and author Kevin Lynch (*The Image of the City*, 1960). Lynch's powerful and widely used idea was to enhance a city's visual image, or "legibility," by improving the visibility and quality of its major parts. He identified the following five elements that form the basis for a city's identity:

Paths. These are the circulation links of a city, vital to the way people perceive their city. Highland contains several important paths. Base Line is the major east/west arterial that runs the entire length of the City and gives motorists views of commercial areas, neighborhoods, the mountains and adjoining hillside development.

Landmarks. Visually prominent buildings, special geographic features and important cultural centers can symbolize the special sense of place of a city and help to orient visitors and residents as they move about. Highland's major landmarks are found in its dramatic geography at the base of the San Bernardino Mountains. Panoramic views of the mountains provide a scenic background for the entire city.

Nodes. These are activity centers or concentrations of uses that provide vibrancy, convenience and variety for a city. Highland envisions its centrally located Town Center as a more concentrated and dynamic node, and this element also calls for greater consolidation of commercial



uses along major corridors to enhance aesthetics and economic vitality of the City. The new Jerry Lewis Community and Environmental Learning Centers and the Central Park are also important activity centers, or nodes, for the City.

Districts. Cities are often comprised of different areas that have their own distinguishing visual and functional qualities. Whether they are historic districts, business parks or downtowns, these special areas can add variety and identity to the City. Highland contains several such districts—a historic area, a proposed Town Center and future industrial/business park zones, which can be enhanced through tailored design guidance. The historic district and its connection to the Town Center represent a potentially beneficial relationship between districts.

Edges. Boundaries or transition areas from one land use or district to another are important features of a city. These boundaries can be effective and attractive—using entry signs and landscaped buffers—or divisive—as with unadorned walls or underutilized strips. Soft, greenbelt boundaries are preferred in the City. The planning goal here is to clearly define city boundaries, gateways or entryways, and to provide more links and access between compatible land uses.

Current Community Design Characteristics

Highland is a city of great diversity, both in terms of land use and design quality. It is, in many ways, a linear city with right-angle streets, low-density development and broad vistas. The western part of the City contains older, single-family neighborhoods while the eastern portion contains planned developments with new subdivisions, landscaped parkways and a great deal of open space. Bisecting the City from north to south is State Route 30 (SR-30). Also bisecting the City from west to east is Highland’s principal arterial—Base Line—containing City Hall, commercial development and a mixture of single- and multiple-family residential uses.

This diversity of land use presents a great deal of opportunity. Large vacant parcels along Base Line and in the industrial and commercial areas to the south and west provide the potential for more focused, in-fill development that will add vitality and a stronger sense of identity to the City. Development within the eastern areas of Highland can strengthen the City’s image and support its rural, natural character.



Nodes. Highland Village Plaza is the City’s largest shopping center.



Districts. Highland’s historic district contains excellent examples of early 1900s architecture, from Craftsman Bungalows to Victorian-inspired designs.



Edges. The edge between residential uses and Plunge Creek provides a visual break and opportunities for trail access.



GOALS AND POLICIES

Goals Summary

Every community is defined, among other things, by community design. Community design not only creates a visual identity for a community but also ensures a healthy quality of life for Highland's residents. As the City of Highland embraces the future, there are seven major community design goals that stand out as important to enhancing Highland's community identity:

- Strengthen sense of place;
- Enhance major arterials;
- Accommodate growth while maintaining a small town character;
- Build a vibrant Town Center;
- Improve design quality in residential neighborhoods;
- Design vibrant commercial centers; and
- Guide quality industrial and business park development.

Community Design Map

Figure 10.1 illustrates the main elements of Highland's community design structure. The diagram updates and expands upon earlier City efforts to give greater definition to those features that enhance community identity. For example, the map shows the opportunities for strengthening the visual character of the City's major arterials, placing city entry monumentation at key gateways and improving the connection between the historic district and the Town Center.

Community Design Identity

The City of Highland derives its identity from its unique physical setting, its agricultural past and its vision for the future. The dramatic relief of the San Bernardino Mountains borders the City on the north and east. The orange branches on its street signs and city logo reflect the City's agricultural past. Embracing the future is seen in the City's efforts to revitalize its arterials, build a vibrant Town Center and improve the quality of its future development.

The role of the Community Design Element is to build on this context and strengthen the City's physical image. A more attractive and unified appearance not only increases a sense of pride by residents, but also creates a positive climate for business and residential development.





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GOAL 10.1

Create a unified and attractive community identity within the context of diverse neighborhoods and land uses.

Policies

- 1) Continue to designate primary and secondary entry points for gateway monumentation into the City.
- 2) Incorporate the City logo in public spaces and public facilities.
- 3) Identify, preserve and enhance view corridors of major landmarks, community facilities and natural open space in the planning and design of all public and private projects.
- 4) Continue to identify opportunities to incorporate public art in conjunction with redevelopment and capital improvements projects.
- 5) Pursue unifying streetscape elements for major corridors, including coordinated streetlights, landscaping, public signage, street furniture and hardscaping.
- 6) Ensure that the design of all public facilities fits well into its surroundings and incorporates symbolic references to the City of Highland.



Aurantia Park incorporates references to the City's agricultural past and uses local river rock and native plant material in its landscape plan.

Enhanced Arterial Corridors

With its long, straight roadways, Highland’s image is largely determined by the quality of its streetscapes. The role of the City’s major arterials, however, goes beyond that of appearance alone. Their successful revitalization and the different yet complementary role that each one plays in Highland’s future is the backbone of the City’s physical planning. The three most prominent corridors are Base Line, the 3rd and 5th Street corridors, and the 9th Street Pedestrian Promenade. Of lesser magnitude, but very important as the connector of all east/west corridors, the Town Center and Historic District, is Palm Avenue. The diagram below shows the functional relationship between these important arterials.

Base Line. Enhancements to Base Line are crucial to the City’s visual and economic revitalization. This major roadway passes through the Town Center and contains most of the City’s commercial development. However, its lack of unifying streetscape elements and large number of vacant lots create an incoherent image and increase the perceived scale of this already wide arterial. Consistent landscaping and street furniture, along with consolidated development on vacant parcels will produce a

more attractive, finished appearance to the corridor. Channeling more concentrated commercial development to key intersections and introducing high quality, mid-block residential development here will also meet housing needs and improve the economic vitality of retail development and the Town Center.



Mid-block residential development along Base Line will incorporate richly detailed architecture and contribute to an attractive and pedestrian-friendly street environment. This can be accomplished through design guidelines that encourage residential developments with a neighborhood scale and appearance, orientation towards the street, recessed or alley loaded parking and landscaped parkways.

3rd and 5th Streets. As major corridors into and through the industrial/business park districts and providing access to the San Bernardino International Airport, these arterials will receive more formal, skyway landscape treatment. In keeping with high traffic volumes, formal placement of trees, light standards, banners and signage will provide a distinctive, “international parkway” image.

Victoria Avenue. Serving as the major entryway for passenger traffic to the San Bernardino International Airport, Victoria Avenue will be improved to reinforce the importance of this arterial as an entryway into the city and as a link to the airport.



GOAL 10.2

Create attractive and visually unified major arterial corridors through specialized streetscape and landscape improvement plans.

Policies

- 1) Incorporate unifying and consistent streetscape elements—landscaped parkways and medians, regularly spaced trees, street lighting and street furniture—for the City’s major arterial corridors.
- 2) Incorporate City-themed design features such as banners, gateway and monument signage, and specialized landscaping in appropriate areas and as a part of streetscape improvement plans.

Actions

- 1) Develop plans for design enhancements at key intersections to include specialized paving, enlarged setbacks and accent landscaping and signage.
- 2) Continue to underground utility lines along the City’s arterial corridors.
- 3) Develop sign guidelines for major arterials.
- 4) Develop a specialized streetscape plan for 3rd and 5th Streets featuring a formal street and landscape plan along with appropriate gateway and monument signage for the developing industrial/business park area.
- 5) Develop specialized streetscape plan for Victoria Avenue featuring formalized landscaping and signage that identifies the entrance to Highland and the San Bernardino International Airport.
- 6) Methodically upgrade existing structures to improve aesthetics and compatibility with adjacent uses along corridors.
- 7) Lower the height of street monument signs to street level.
- 8) Choose median tree species that reflect the historic traditions of the City and are consistent with indigenous vegetation.
- 9) The use of fire resistant plants and trees is encouraged, especially in areas near the foothills. If palms, or other similar trees, are used, space trees far enough apart to keep fire from traveling



The contrasting photos above of Base Line show the impact of landscaping on the visual image of a major arterial. In the photo on the top, the parkway palms provide visual continuity while the median trees reduce the scale of the roadway.



from one tree to another, an occurrence more likely during Santa Ana wind conditions.

Town Center

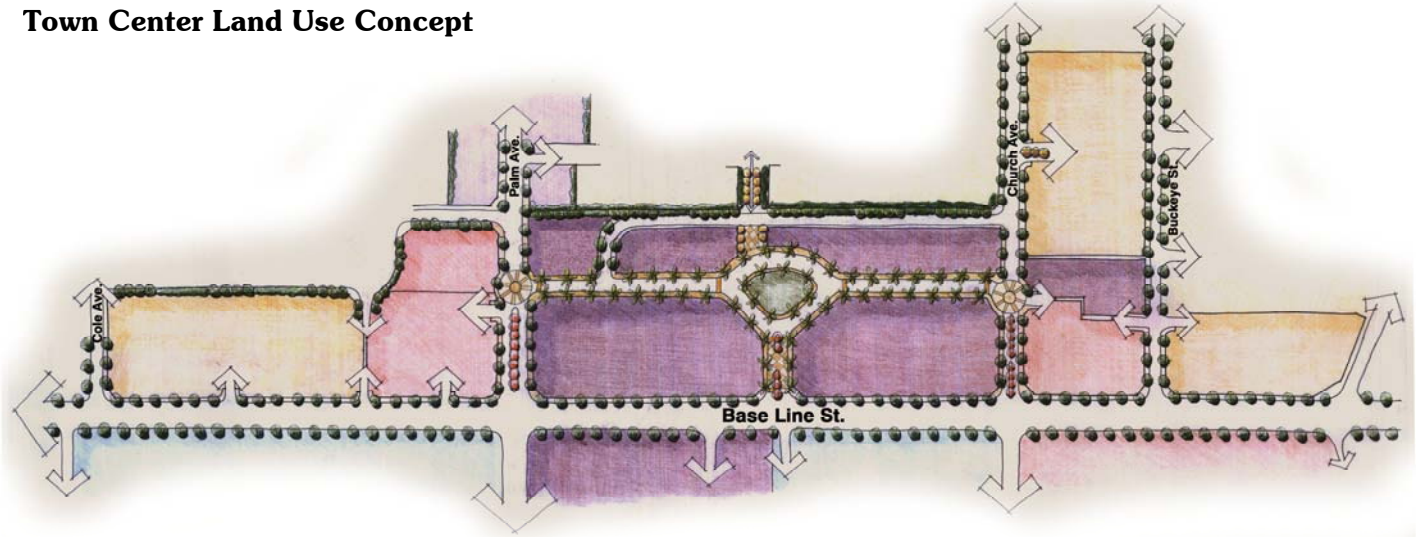
One of the goals of the City is to create a more discernable, vibrant and attractive place where residents can shop, eat, socialize, relax and run daily errands. Improving the commercial and aesthetic qualities of the Town Center would not only generate revenue, but also provide a centrally located focal point for the City. The Town Center's location on Base Line and its accessibility from the adjoining freeway give this area a tremendous advantage.

The Town Center Vision

This is the center of our community, geographically and functionally. We can shop here, have dinner, get a haircut, go to church, mail a package, conduct city business or have a cup of coffee with some friends. It is a comfortable place to be. In comparison to the rest of the City, it contains a greater mix of public, institutional and private uses than any other place. It is one of the more urbanized centers in our Highland Vision. There is a lot of activity here. We like visiting or driving through the Town Center because it is really attractive. Visitors comment about what a positive image it creates for our community. Even though it is a bit more intense than most of our City, there are fascinating public areas and open spaces where we can enjoy resting amid the hustle and bustle that occur here. We are impressed with the quality of development and image that it conveys of our community. Convenient access to the Freeway system brings some specialized businesses that even have a regional draw. Our residents and visitors have some great restaurants, entertainment venues and specialty shops catering to families. Base Line is no longer just a wide strip of asphalt extending from the Freeway. It has all the landscape and architectural interest of a boulevard. The unusually complete canopy of trees throughout the Town Center is a welcome shield on hot summer days. A special facet of this area is its connection along Palm Avenue to Old Town—an intentional link between the past and the future that lends a sense of continuity in our community. One of the most telling indicators of success with our Town Center is the fact that, from its inception, it has always enjoyed much higher than average property values. We attribute that to its strategic location, the unique combination of uses found there, the quality development and the proactive support by the City over the years. Our Town Center is very important to us. It symbolizes Highland. It welcomes you.



Town Center Land Use Concept



-  Mixed Use Core
-  Medium Density Residential
-  Commercial Retail
-  Office Professional
-  Civic Center/Institutional

The above land use concept is intended to provide the general land use focus for subareas within the Town Center Mixed-Use area. The land uses should not be viewed as prescriptive, but rather as a guide. The General Plan designation for this entire area is Mixed Use and, as such, allows a great amount of flexibility in determining land use for individual parcels. The connections, however, indicated by arrows, are critical to making the Town Center work as a whole. Future development should incorporate these access points and connections or demonstrate how an alternative approach will provide connectivity to adjacent parcels and implement the Town Center Vision.

Highland’s Town Center will be a comfortable and convenient place people will want to go back to again and again. Its attractive and distinctive design will be a visual reminder that it is, indeed, a special place. Traditionally, the low density, linear nature of the City has made developing a Town Center more difficult, but new growth and the desire to create a true community center has changed the dynamics. Its success will depend on many factors, but experiences in other cities point the way. Careful attention to design detail, the proper blend of retail uses, and a strong public/private partnership to sustain the plan are key. Here are the keys to creating a successful town center:

Variety—There’s lots to do.

- Appropriate retail mix
- Retail, office, recreational, civic uses
- Entertainment

Distinct Identity—You know you’re in a special place.

- Coordinated design theme—special lighting, paving, signage, landscaping
- Rich architectural detailing
- Special ambience

Pedestrian Amenities—It’s a comfortable place to be.

- Ample sitting areas, shade, wide sidewalks
- Window shopping, outdoor dining, relaxing



Locating buildings close to the street with visible entrances and generous pedestrian amenities invites use.



A mix of uses, attention to design detail and generous public space can create a positive Town Center ambience.

Concentrated Uses—Bigger isn't always better.

- Six to ten acres for smaller towns
- Different uses complement each other
- Space well-defined by buildings

Convenient Access—Easy to get to and negotiate

- Parking clearly marked and close by
- People arrive by car, foot, bus, bike

GOAL 10.3

Create a Town Center that is visually distinctive and vibrant and combines retail, residential, civic, cultural and recreational uses.

Policies

- 1) Heighten the sense of arrival to the Town Center through differentiated edge treatment including entry signs, specialized landscaping, street furniture and differentiated paving.
- 2) Encourage an appropriate mix of retail, office and civic uses to ensure the economic viability of the area.
- 3) Encourage compactness. Successful town centers stimulate energy and pedestrian activity by concentrating uses.
- 4) Provide convenient and consolidated parking where cars are screened from view, wherever possible.
- 5) Provide comfortable pedestrian amenities—quality sitting areas, wide paths and shade—along with specialized and engaging design features, such as interesting fountains or public art, which draw and maintain people's attention.
- 6) Design plazas and people gathering places to be consistent with the policies described in "People Gathering Places" of this Element.
- 7) Incorporate references to the City's history and regional setting in the Town Center design.

Actions

- 1) Require future development within the Town Center to demonstrate consistency with the Town Center Vision, General Plan policies and, where applicable, the Mixed Use design guidelines contained within the Development Code.



Mixed-Use Development

With added pressure for more housing, large amounts of vacant parcels and efforts to revitalize major arterials, the introduction of properly planned mixed use could bring great benefits to Highland. Whereas mixed use is most often a vertical layering of different uses such as ground floor retail and upper story office or residential, it can also involve a horizontal array of uses, usually on larger parcels.

Opportunities for mixed-use development offer many advantages for Highland. By combining different uses within one parcel, greater efficiencies of space and planning can occur. Not only can it provide needed housing opportunities, such development can revive aging areas, generate additional tax revenue and relieve traffic congestion. The success of the retail and office component of such development depends on its visibility and access.

The convenience of mixed use also brings design challenges. A balanced and complementary combination of housing, retail and commercial must be determined, and this mix should be well integrated into existing development. Where residential uses are involved, safe and comfortable private space and convenient parking must be provided.



Vertical mixed use designs feature ground level retail and upper story office or residential.



GOAL 10.4

Encourage mixed and multi-use development that is attractively designed, convenient, and contains the desired mix of retail, office and residential uses.

Policies

- 1) Encourage design flexibility in mixed/multi-use development by allowing both a vertical and/or horizontal mix of uses.
- 2) Locate mixed/multi-use development in areas of high visibility and accessibility.
- 3) Segregate residential parking from commercial and office parking.
- 4) Provide each residential use with its own private space (such as balconies, patios, terraces or upper level private gardens and plazas) along with larger communal spaces such as lobbies, central gardens or courtyards, and convenient connections to the street and retail uses.
- 5) Where a vertical mix of uses occurs, site retail or office uses on the ground floor, with residential and/or office uses above. Also, encourage architectural detailing that differentiates each use.
- 6) Locate commercial/retail uses near the sidewalk to provide high visibility from the street.
- 7) Minimize the visual impact of surface parking by providing berms, landscape buffering and/or locating parking lots to the rear or side of buildings or below buildings.
- 8) In multi-use development, locate retail and commercial development close to street for higher visibility and residential uses behind for convenience and privacy.



Pedestrian-scaled signage, wide sidewalks, and specialty stores can add vibrancy to commercial centers.

Commercial Centers

A key element in the City's efforts to improve its design quality is to consolidate and strengthen its commercial centers. Rather than continue the pattern of low-scale, strip commercial development, the General Plan calls for concentrating development within prominent intersections where the most potential exists.

Well-designed commercial centers that contain distinctive architecture, clear access, pedestrian amenities and a convenient blend of retail uses improve community aesthetics and provide a more solid economic base



for the City. People's choices about where to shop depend not only on price considerations; attractiveness and convenience are also important considerations. In addition, these retail centers should be developed on large enough sites to allow for efficient circulation and a range of store sizes, types and building footprints.

GOAL 10.5

Encourage the development of attractive, vibrant and convenient commercial centers through careful application of design policies and development standards.

Policies

- 1) Design highly visible entrances to retail activity centers through accent landscaping and lighting, enhanced intersection features, monument signs and other design amenities.
- 2) Design commercial centers with a unifying design theme, but add visual interest through rich architectural detailing, varied massing and rooflines, and accent lighting and landscaping.
- 3) Locate buildings and building frontages close to the street and street corners with parking behind or to the side of the buildings. Where this is not possible or practical, ensure that street-facing parking is shielded through landscaping or berms.
- 4) Provide ample landscaping for internal parking areas using landscaped bays and overstory shade trees.
- 5) Clearly delineate pedestrian routes from parking areas to retail uses to allow easy and safe pedestrian movement.
- 6) Encourage pedestrian-scale features such as shaded sitting areas, fountains, arcades, canopies and/or awnings, customized signage and strategically located secondary entrances.
- 7) Provide people-gathering places and amenities such as mini-plazas, courtyards, benches, outdoor eating areas, specialized landscaping, accent lighting, public art, shade, trash receptacles and water fountains.
- 8) Link newly developed retail activity centers, where practical, to surrounding residential or office uses through clear and safe pedestrian and bicycle connections.
- 9) Encourage internal access between adjacent properties in order to minimize curb cuts along major thoroughfares.



Sidewalks within parking areas provide safe access to retail uses.



- 10) Provide walls when necessary for security and/or privacy from adjoining residential uses. When walls are necessary, pedestrian breaks should be provided for access to commercial uses.
- 11) Encourage creative wall design to avoid a blank appearance and utilize landscape buffers as an alternative to walls to facilitate pedestrian linkages to commercial areas.

Single-Family Residential Development

Neighborhood Design Principles

Scale and Massing – New and remodeled homes should be consistent and compatible with the surrounding neighborhood.

Front Yard Coverage – Maximizing landscaped yards while minimizing paved surfaces enhances neighborhood aesthetics.

Residential Entryways – Visible, front-facing entryways improve neighborhood appearance and foster social interaction.

Architectural Detailing – Façades with rich detailing, varied rooflines, and consistent styles add to neighborhood character.

Rooflines – Rooflines that are compatible with those of surrounding properties enhance neighborhood identity and consistency.

Sidewalks and Parkways – Landscaped parkways and continuous sidewalks are important unifying elements.

Garages, Driveways, and Parking – Minimizing the visual impact of garages, driveways, and off-street parking adds to neighborhood aesthetics.

Walls and Fencing – Walls and fences that are low in profile, transparent, and compatible in style and materials provide privacy without harming neighborhood character.

Materials, Colors and Textures – The exterior treatments of houses should reflect a complementary mix of colors, tones and textures.

There is nothing as important to a city's quality of life as the character and safety of its residential neighborhoods. Attractive and safe neighborhoods contain unifying elements such as compatible architecture, clearly visible front entrances and continuous parkways and sidewalks. Therefore, neighborhood character is achieved through policy guidance by the City and efforts by design professionals, developers and the public.

The vast majority of residential developments in Highland are single family, and its residential neighborhoods vary from new subdivisions to smaller-lot older districts and in-fill development. The newer residential developments in eastern Highland are characterized by a unified architectural theme and consistent streetscape elements. In these neighborhoods, neighborhood character is maintained through the East Highlands Ranch Planned Unit Development standards and guidelines, City-sponsored capital improvements, neighborhood associations and property deed restrictions. Therefore, design policies for residential development are already in place. It is through these General Plan policies that positive change can be encouraged in the more established neighborhoods in Highland.

To improve the visual character of these older neighborhoods, flexible guidelines on neighborhood compatibility are helpful along with more consistent streetscape elements such as continuous sidewalks, street trees and parkways. Architectural interest should be maintained through richly detailed façades and quality materials rather than imposing requirements for a particular style or styles. Residential neighborhoods can also be made safer through traffic-calming measures, consistent street lighting and architecture that incorporate highly visible front entrances.

As homes are remodeled or rebuilt and new areas developed, the following policies encourage neighborhood compatibility and attractive streetscapes.



GOAL 10.6

Maintain and enhance single-family neighborhoods with attractive streetscapes, compatible architecture and a high quality of life.

Policies

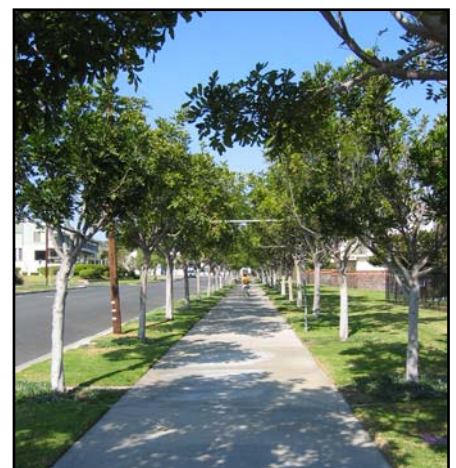
- 1) Incorporate landscaped parkways, consistently spaced street trees, continuous sidewalks and pedestrian-scale streetlights, wherever possible.
- 2) Require new and infill development to be of compatible scale, materials and massing relative to existing development.
- 3) Encourage a variety of architectural styles, massing, floor plans, façade treatment and elevations to create visual interest along the street.
- 4) Encourage street facing architecture by placing entries and porches at the front of the residence and connecting them to the sidewalk by a pathway.
- 5) Encourage a blend of compatible architectural styles that contain rich façade detailing, varied rooflines and quality materials incorporated on all four sides of the residence.
- 6) Site garages back from the street and minimize street frontage devoted to driveways and vehicular access.
- 7) Consider small lot developments with rear allies that position the garage and driveway to the back of the site to avoid garage-dominated streetscapes.
- 8) Maintain, improve and/or develop parkways with canopy street trees, providing shade, beauty and a unifying element to residential streets.
- 9) Encourage maximum landscape coverage of the front yard area as defined by the front setback.
- 10) Where desirable, encourage traffic-calming measures such as the actual or visual narrowing of streets through widened parkways, canopy trees and neck-down curbs at intersections.
- 11) Design front-yard fencing that is low-scale, partially transparent and of compatible color, style and materials as the primary residence. Long and solid fences and walls are discouraged unless placed along the side or rear yards.



The understated entry features, wide street entrance and thick tree canopy lend a rural, open character to this east Highland neighborhood.



Landscaped parkways with mature street trees add beauty to residential streets, provide a safer environment for residents, and are a strong, unifying visual element.



Continuous sidewalks and landscaped parkways are strong contributors to neighborhood quality.

- 12) In areas of small lot development, incorporate design features that connect it with adjoining areas such as consistent setbacks, building height and pedestrian connections.
- 13) Establish design and development standards for entire single-family developments from the start—remain consistent with enforcing requirements and standards.

Mid-Block Corridor Residential Development

An important feature of the Land Use Element is the identification of areas for the introduction of mid-block residential development along Base Line. From a community design perspective, this in-fill strategy will solidify and strengthen the appearance of the corridor. This form of development has other benefits as well. The introduction of mid-block corridor residential development expands housing opportunities within the City and provides a growing market for the revitalized Town Center and commercial centers. Although Base Line is a high-volume arterial, mid-block residential development can be situated far enough from the road to ensure safety and livability, but also be oriented appropriately to enhance the visual character of the corridor.



An important feature of the Land Use Element is the identification of areas for the introduction of mid-block residential development along arterial corridors. Since they are located along major corridors that oftentimes frame neighborhoods, these residential areas are intended to provide an alternative to strip commercial development and expand the City's housing stock and variety.



The varied lot sizes and vacant parcels along Base Line will pose a design challenge to successful mid-block development. For this reason, having flexible design standards is very important.

The Medium Density residential land use designation, which permits corridor residential development, allows for up to 12 dwelling units per acre and would permit attached units such as townhouses. Of primary importance are the performance standards for corridor development that address issues of buffering, connection to adjoining development, circulation and aesthetics. In larger mid-block parcels, using the 12 dwelling unit per acre density standard as an average rather than an acre-specific standard would allow more design flexibility by concentrating units and freeing up land for additional private space, semi-public space or recreational use.

GOAL 10.7

Improve the visual quality of Base Line with mid-block corridor residential developments that are compatible with adjoining residential uses.

Policies

- 1) Buffer mid-block residential development from arterials through minimum setback requirements, landscaped parkways and semi-transparent fencing.
- 2) Design the street-facing façades of corridor development to include extensive architectural detailing, varied surface treatment and interesting rooflines to convey an attractive domestic character.
- 3) Provide highly visible and well-lit connections to adjacent residential and commercial development.
- 4) Encourage visual continuity along mid-block residential development through landscaped parkways, regularly spaced street trees and rhythmic variations of residential façades, styles and colors.
- 5) Reduce the visual impact of parking through consolidated parking arrangements, shared driveway access, alley-accessed designs, landscape buffers and recessed, covered parking structures.
- 6) Encourage visual breaks in appropriately scaled walls and fencing along the corridor to balance privacy needs with aesthetic impacts. Long continuous blank walls are highly discouraged.



- 7) With multiple-family development, require that each unit have garage parking and a reasonable amount of usable private space including elevated decks, terraces, porches or rear yards.
- 8) On large project sites, encourage design flexibility by using maximum dwelling units per acre as a parcel average to allow for greater provision of on-site open space and project amenities.
- 9) Require lot consolidation for lots under same ownership, wherever practical, to encourage more flexible design solutions and viable parcel sizes.
- 10) Provide pedestrian access and connections to nearby retail, transportation, recreation and educational centers, where practical.
- 11) Require new and infill development to be of compatible scale, materials and massing relative to existing development.

Industrial and Business Park Development



This office building demonstrates well-detailed elevations, ample landscaping and attractive monument signage.

The City of Highland has an excellent opportunity to guide quality development in its industrial and business park areas. These areas in the southwestern parts of the City hold tremendous value for future growth and investment. Conveniently located along the 5th Street Corridor, which serves as the primary gateway to the San Bernardino International Airport from SR-30, this industrial area is in a prime location for future development.

The keys to attracting a stronger market for industrial and business park development include effective marketing, quality design standards, convenient access and lot consolidation. City standards that require buffering and screening of industrial uses can be complemented by policies aimed at creating a truly professional and attractive industrial business park environment. These include incorporating entry monumentation, coordinated signage, landscape plans and architectural design guidelines. In addition, the City is encouraging the consolidation of smaller industrial parcels into larger areas for more viable site design.



GOAL 10.8

Ensure that industrial and business park development is professional and attractive in appearance through coordinated site planning, signage and architectural design guidelines.

Policies

- 1) Strengthen the image of industrial and business park areas through entry monument signage, distinctive landscaping and complementary architectural design elements.
- 2) Encourage contemporary, clean and distinctive industrial buildings with clearly visible entrances.
- 3) Avoid long, blank building walls by incorporating vertical and/or horizontal façade articulation and modulation and varying use of color, materials and landscaping.
- 4) Promote the use of 5th Street as a gateway to San Bernardino International Airport through improved signage, gateway monumentation and skyway landscaping.
- 5) Capitalize on the access to industrial areas created by nearby State Route 30 through improved signage and gateway monumentation.
- 6) Provide incentives for consolidating smaller industrial lots into larger parcels.
- 7) Screen parking, storage and service areas from public view with landscaped walls, berms and appropriate landscaping treatments.
- 8) Where practical, underground or screen utilities and utility equipment or locate and size them to be as inconspicuous as possible.
- 9) Reduce the impact of industrial uses on adjacent neighborhoods and commercial areas by buffering them with walls and landscaping and/or by locating service, delivery and loading areas as far as possible from adjacent uses and public streets.
- 10) Encourage adjacent industrial buildings to create shared outdoor gathering places that are landscaped and provide relaxing environments for staff and employees.
- 11) Locate restaurants and other convenience retail and service uses in close proximity to industrial uses to reduce unnecessary workday car trips by employees and business clients.



Shared open spaces between buildings improve the quality of the exterior design of industrial buildings.



Providing convenient retail uses within industrial areas can help reduce unnecessary workday car trips.



Historic Preservation



This prominent Gothic Revival church is a key landmark in the historic district.



This large turn-of-the-century home has classical and Craftsman influences.

Community design also includes historic preservation. Highland's small but important historic district lies just north of the proposed Town Center and contains an interesting blend of early 1900s architecture, including Craftsman Bungalows, Victorian-influenced designs, Gothic Revival and early commercial styles. Covering 290 acres and with 99 contributing buildings, the area is recognized in the National Register of Historic Places, a designation that makes it eligible for federal funding for future historic preservation and redevelopment projects. Preservation efforts for East Highland Village, one of the City's oldest neighborhoods, located within an area bordered by Church Street, Abbey Way and Greenspot Road, are also being considered.

Creating a vibrant historic district supports the City's efforts to capture its "small town" feel and provides residents and visitors a view of early Highland. Preservation efforts can include assisting property owners in enhancing their historic homes, pursuing local historic district designation and building a connection to the emerging Town Center. A design guidelines manual for the historic district regulates new construction and remodels in ways that improve the historic charm of the area. Renovation and adaptive reuse of commercial properties along Palm Avenue could also create a small and convenient commercial gathering place for residents and visitors.

GOAL 10.9

Support and strengthen public and private efforts to preserve historic structures and neighborhoods.

Policies

- 1) Encourage restoration and preservation of existing historic residences, buildings and neighborhoods that reflect the architectural character and streetscape patterns of early Highland.
- 2) Assist eligible property owners to use federal and state incentives for the restoration and maintenance of historic properties, such as the State of California's Mills Act, which allows for a reduction in property taxes for qualified owners.
- 3) Develop a clear pedestrian and vehicular connection between the City's emerging Town Center and the existing Historic District.
- 4) Design and incorporate entry signs, informational plaques, streetscape improvements and other edge and boundary treatments at points of entry into the district and at other points of interest.



- 5) Update the design guidelines pamphlet for rehabilitation, remodeling and new construction within the historic district.
- 6) Review and enhance the City's community outreach program for historic preservation through links on the City's webpage, incentive programs for property owners, sponsorship of community events and other efforts.
- 7) Link the City's agricultural past to its current preservation efforts.

Actions

- 1) Evaluate the desirability of adopting and applying a historic district overlay zone, which would include design review standards for rehabilitation, remodeling and new construction, to Highland's historic area.
- 2) Evaluate the desirability of adopting and applying design guidelines or special zoning to the small East Highland Village historic neighborhood.
- 3) Develop a walking tour of the historic district, with informational placards along the way, to promote interest in the district.
- 4) Study the feasibility and possible extent of adaptive reuse of residential and commercial buildings in the Historic Village District on a parcel-by-parcel basis.
- 5) Develop design guidelines for the adaptive reuse of historic residential buildings for commercial uses and commercial buildings for residential uses.

People Gathering Places

The quality of life of any city is greatly enhanced by designing attractive and functional public spaces. As the community of Highland continues to grow and change, people gathering spaces, such as plazas and parks, will become ever more necessary. As the emerging Town Center begins to take shape, thoughtfully designed people gathering places will serve to draw people into the area and support the mix of available uses.

Likewise, retail centers are well served to incorporate smaller people gathering places into their designs. Paying attention to those important features that make public places successful and providing incentives for developers who provide them can help ensure their long-term success. People are attracted to comfortable and attractive places and are more likely to continue to spend their time and money there. The design policies that follow focus on the detailed quality necessary to make public places successful and enduring.



Movable seating, shade and convenience are important in warm climates.

GOAL 10.10

Guide the development of a variety of attractive, engaging and convenient public spaces, including plazas, pedestrian areas and recreational open space.

Policies

- 1) Design plazas with:
 - Ample seating space;
 - A central focal point or amenity of interest such as public art or fountain;
 - Proximity to and visibility to and from the street;
 - Combinations of sun and shade;
 - All age groups in mind; and
 - Public space framed by surrounding buildings.
- 2) Locate plazas in areas of high visibility such as near streets or along sidewalks or pedestrian paths.
- 3) In areas of heavy pedestrian use, provide wide sidewalks that allow room for window shopping, pedestrian passage, outdoor dining and landscape buffers.
- 4) Incorporate civic, regional or vernacular design elements such as historical markers and educational exhibits, where appropriate.
- 5) Incorporate pedestrian scaled, distinctive lighting fixtures in community facilities and other public places with occasional or frequent evening use.
- 6) Design recreational amenities and parks with all age groups in mind and incorporate architectural and landscape elements consistent with City or regional design themes.
- 7) Incorporate small sitting areas and/or shaded courtyards close to shopping areas but buffered from parking and traffic impacts.
- 8) Adopt standards for civic and mini-plazas containing seating, tree and amenity requirements.



Successful plazas are located close to the street, have plenty of seating and are spatially defined by surrounding buildings.

Signage

Signs have a huge impact on the visual quality of streets, commercial areas and the community as a whole. A well-coordinated sign program can be both informative and attractive, providing variety and color to the environment. Unfortunately, poorly regulated signs can contribute to a cluttered and visually chaotic streetscape, as is the case along the Base Line Corridor. Reasonable sign guidelines, which take into account the scale and design characteristics of a particular site, not only help businesses and residents, but also contribute to a positive community image.

Promoting quality signage along Base Line and other corridors can go a long way towards improving the visual image of these arterials. Since the City is consolidating commercial development to key intersections, signs in older commercial centers can be updated and coordinated.

As design policies are established, it is useful to consider signs at three different scales and functions. Large-scale arterial signs along major corridors are designed to attract and inform motorists. Smaller-scale signs within the Town Center and commercial centers are designed at the pedestrian scale. Finally, City signs and graphics are intended to identify public areas and reinforce community design themes.



Effective monument signs reflect the architecture around them and have consistent, easy-to-read lettering.

GOAL 10.11

Promote attractive, appropriately scaled and well-coordinated signs.

Policies

- 1) Continue to develop and enhance the City’s graphics and sign program for street signs, parks, public facilities and other civic areas.
- 2) For commercial centers along arterial corridors, encourage monument signs that are clearly visible, identify key uses and reflect the design theme of the development.
- 3) Within commercial centers, use complementary, yet distinctive, sign styles.
- 4) Within commercial centers, encourage high quality signage, including wall signs, raised letter signs, projecting double-faced signs and customized logos, which complement the architecture of the building or center of which it is a part.



Along pedestrian routes, custom-designed, double-faced projecting signs are most effective.



- 5) Discourage signs that incorporate blinking or flashing elements, pole structures, roof signs or the use of temporary lettering or structures.
- 6) Encourage and develop smaller-scale, customized, pedestrian-oriented signs within the Town Center.

Action

- 1) Develop a sign guidelines manual with examples of appropriate signs of various scales for arterials, commercial centers and the Town Center. Maximum height limits would need to be defined.

**Green Building Practices
(A Partial Checklist)**

- Passive and active solar energy
- Flow-through ventilation
- Landscaping for shade
- Rainwater and runoff capture
- Drought-tolerant landscaping
- Energy-saving building materials
- Site planning for energy efficiency
- Comfortable outdoor spaces
- Design that supports pedestrians, bicycle use and mass transit
- Lasting design

Green Building and Planning Practices

In this age of rising energy costs and limited available land, designers, the development community, homeowners and cities are seeing increasing benefits in “green building” design and environmentally-responsible development. This growing area includes design practices that conserve resources, increase energy efficiency and reduce negative impacts on the natural environment. For example, buildings that reduce sun exposure in the summer months and increase it in the winter save air conditioning and heating costs. Designs that capture and channel storm runoff to permeable surfaces reduce impacts on storm drains. Clearly, there are incentives for both builders and residents to follow environmentally sensitive design practices.

The goals of green planning and building are particularly appropriate for Highland with its hot summers and cold winters and proximity to open space. Screening sun and wind exposure, capturing rainfall and other runoff and preserving natural open space add comfort and beauty. As the City grows and redevelops, there are tremendous opportunities to put these practices in place.



This active solar design can be complemented with passive techniques such as roof overhangs, window placement, and building orientation.

GOAL 10.12

Encourage development that is energy efficient and environmentally sustainable.

Policies

- 1) Encourage landscaping practices that increase energy efficiency and conserve natural resources such as:
- 2) Planting trees and incorporating landscaped berms to provide shade and wind buffering



- 3) Using native and drought-tolerant landscaping (“xeriscaping”) and drip irrigation to conserve water resources.
- 4) Encourage designs that channel runoff to permeable surfaces.
- 5) Encourage transit-oriented, infill development to make efficient use of existing land.
- 6) Encourage site planning and building orientation that maximizes solar and wind resources for cooling and heating.
- 7) Encourage the use of ecologically sound building materials such as those made of recycled content and contain low amounts of volatile organic compounds (VOCs).
- 8) During construction, require developers and builders to protect topsoil in order to reduce dust and runoff impacts.
- 9) Encourage local recycling and composting initiatives at the neighborhood level.



Aurantia Park uses native landscaping to save water and reflect the natural setting.

Actions

- 1) Participate in the CEEP (Community Energy Efficiency Program) Certificate and Recognition Program.
- 2) Adopt LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) design standards for public buildings.
- 3) Provide “green planning” site design incentives, such as density or height bonuses, reduced parking requirements, reduced processing fees and expedited plan checks.
- 4) Continue to use water and energy conservation practices in all public buildings and on City property.
- 5) Sponsor community outreach and educational programs that encourage local schools to study and participate in green building design practices.

Land Use Buffers and Transitions

The City’s Development Code requires measures to address compatibility between adjacent uses for commercial and industrial zones. Buffers between residential, commercial and industrial zones typically include walls, fences, landscaped strips and setbacks. These measures need to be supported by more detailed policies as portions of the City redevelop. For example, redevelopment of mid-block areas along Base Line will replace “strip” commercial uses with residential uses. These uses should be connected to adjacent residential and commercial areas as well as



buffered from traffic and noise impacts of the corridor. Similarly, other proximate uses will require some balance between buffering and transitioning.

GOAL 10.13

Appropriately buffer the boundaries between differing land uses and provide transitions where necessary.

Policies

- 1) Encourage the use of landscaped walls or fences that buffer residential areas from commercial uses to allow privacy and noise absorption.
- 2) Reduce the visual impact of freestanding walls by varying their alignment, adding landscaping and/or berms, incorporating decorative surface detailing and choosing materials similar to adjacent residential uses.
- 3) Locate service lanes, storage and noise-generating uses away from adjoining residential or commercial areas to buffer light industrial and business park areas.
- 4) Link newly developed commercial centers, where practical, to adjoining residential uses.
- 5) Encourage transitions that define boundaries but that also preserve a sense of openness and connectivity. For example, perimeter subdivision walls can contain occasional breaks to provide access to open space and adjoining areas.
- 6) Reconsider subdivision design to reduce or eliminate perimeter block walls to allow more houses and structures to face the street.
- 7) Encourage use of landscaped trellises and accent landscaping at development entries rather than walls or structures.
- 8) Develop visual and functional transitions to the Town Center and Historic District through entry signs, specialized street lights, widened sidewalks and differentiated paving.