In 1874, Benjamin Wilson bought 275 acres, laid out lots for residential farming and called this subdivision of land the Alhambra Tract. At the time, the Wilson family was reading *Tales of the Alhambra* by Washington Irving and, believing that their tract resembled the Granada district in Spain, they resolved to call it Alhambra. They laid out five major streets and drew names for them from the *Tales*, including Boabdil Street, which was named for the last of the Moorish kings. Boabdil Street later was changed to Main Street.

Wilson developed a revolutionary water system which supplied each lot, thereby quickly transforming the arid land into acres of orange groves, vineyards, and verdant gardens. This interest in cultivating and fostering copious vegetation continued throughout Alhambra’s evolution. Orchards in early Alhambra were lined with cypress and pomegranates, and every street was lined with pepper trees.

In 1880, the Santa Fe Railroad completed a new transcontinental line to Los Angeles, triggering a rate war with the Southern Pacific Railroad. New settlers streamed into the San Gabriel Valley as the rate for travelling across the country dropped to a dollar per person. In the face of the new demand, small ranchers subdivided their lots. Large, stylish homes were built along Main Street, some drawing on Alhambra’s initial Moorish theme. By 1895, the intersection of Main and Garfield had become the center of business activity. Two notable buildings were constructed at this time, the Alhambra Hotel [a 50-room hotel infused with a heavy dose of Moorish features] and the Jones Block [a stately edifice of brick reflecting the commercial Italianate tradition]. These two structures no longer stand; the hotel was destroyed by fire in 1908.

In 1903, the Southern Pacific and Pacific Electric Railroads completed lines from Alhambra to Los Angeles. In order to lay the tracks along Main Street, the right-of-way had to be widened, thus sacrificing the pepper trees which had formed a complete arch from Atlantic to Vega Street. The railroad brought a rapid increase in population. Alhambra was soon characterized by California “bungalows”, creating a pervasive residential character.
Alhambra’s Main Street commercial area grew as well, expanding to an area of 21 blocks by 1935. The wood frame, false-front structures and commercial Italianate buildings of the late 19th century gradually were replaced by larger, more modern structures. New construction was influenced by the Spanish Colonial Revival and later by the Moderne style. Despite the rapid increase in population and construction, Alhambra remained a cohesive community with a compact downtown area surrounded by tree-lined neighborhood streets. However, the boom years after World War II transformed the townscape.

Vast subdivisions were grafted to the city and during the late 1940s-50s and 60s, modern apartment buildings began to infringe upon Alhambra’s established neighborhoods, replacing older homes. The downtown area expanded, and with the opening of several new department stores, the commercial center on Main Street shifted east from the Garfield intersection to Chapel Street. Along Main Street as a whole, which shared in the southern California wave of prosperity of the 1950s, storefronts were remodeled in the image of Wilshire Boulevard’s Miracle Mile and downtown Beverly Hills. The ground levels of entire block fronts were transformed into continuous strips of glass display windows and recessed entranceways. The exuberance and clarity of the late Moderne and early modern architecture of southern California were fully present along Main Street.

At this time, Valley Boulevard also established itself as a commercial boulevard. A $6 million shopping center was constructed at the city’s eastern boundary. As a result of these and other developments, Main Street began to lose many of its customers. Downtown Alhambra continues to reflect this loss today. However, as the present downtown revitalization program gets underway, it is important to keep in mind that the commercial district along Main Street contains the major resources and remains the functional and visual center for a wide area extending well beyond the city’s borders.
DOWNTOWN ALHAMBRA REVITALIZATION
Conceptual Design Plan & Design Guidelines

Prepared for
ALHAMBRA REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY

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Introduction

The purpose of this manual is to outline numerous actions and design guidelines specifically aimed at revitalization of Alhambra's downtown area. Unlike land use plans and zoning regulations, this manual is intended to provide direct assistance to property owners, merchants, architects and designers, developers and public officials interested in undertaking specific improvement actions: 1) upgrade and enhance public areas of downtown, such as sidewalks, intersections and off-street parking area; and 2) renovate storefronts and other types of commercial property, as well as encouraging new construction that is compatible with existing resources and character of downtown buildings.

The area encompassed by this revitalization project generally includes all properties possessing zoning classifications of C-3, P-1 and CBD adjoining Main Street and extending from Atlantic Boulevard to the San Gabriel City line. However, as will become evident in the pages ahead, the consultant studied and drew upon information gleaned from an area extending considerably beyond the project's formal boundaries. In fact, specific types of resources in two other southern California communities were studied in some detail, as the consultant believes that certain solutions in these other communities offer potential application of considerable benefit to downtown Alhambra.

In preparing the specific recommendations and design guidelines of this manual, the consultant continually has endeavored to gauge the potential effectiveness of all such proposals against the following two goals assumed to be of overriding importance to the future of downtown Alhambra: 1) that the City of Alhambra, the Redevelopment Agency and downtown property owners and merchants are committed to working together to improve and enhance the pedestrian and retail shopping environment of Main Street; and 2) that many long-standing property owners and residents of Alhambra desire to see the revitalization of Main Street result in improvements which are regarded as a major source of community pride.

In order to arrive at detailed recommendations for public area improvements and design guidelines for storefront renovation as spelled out in this manual, the consultant completed numerous tasks as part of a six-month work program. These tasks included field survey work and photographic recording of design resources; archival research to verify earlier conditions in the downtown area; review of past and present plans, policies, programs and agreements, both to benefit from other work performed to date and to attempt to ensure workability of this manual's proposals; interviews and meetings with various City officials; and, of utmost importance, periodic meetings and review sessions with the Ad Hoc Committee on Central Business District Restoration and Revitalization. In addition, a presentation and discussion of the conceptual design plan for public area improvements occurred at a public meeting on November 6, 1980. Representatives of the following organizations participated in this meeting: Alhambra City Council, Redevelopment Agency, Planning Commission, HCDA Citizen Advisory Committee, Alhambra Central Business District Association Board of Directors, Alhambra Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors Executive Committee, and the Ad Hoc Committee on Central Business District Restoration and Revitalization.

This manual contains information, graphic materials and photographs which can result in immediate or near-term implementation of the recommendations for public area improvements and design guidelines for storefront renovation. It should be noted, however, that certain additional actions will be necessary, or may be determined to be desirable, to continue moving forward the revitalization program in an expeditious, efficient manner. The additional actions include: 1) preparation of final design and working drawings for public area improvements; 2) preparation of a financial package to pay for construction and maintenance of the public area improvements; 3) changes to existing City codes and ordinances, particularly in the case of sign regulations; and 4) initiation of design workshops, through which property owners and merchants are able to participate in drawing up improvement plans for storefront and rear facade area renovation.
ARCHITECTURAL RESOURCES WINDSHIELD SURVEY

In July, 1980, the consultants conducted a "windshield" survey of architectural resources of the downtown area bounded by Mission Road, Atlantic Boulevard, Alhambra Road and the City of San Gabriel city line. The intent of this survey effort was to identify by location the area's structures of primary significance as well as the area's background structures, or structures of secondary significance.

The results of this survey were applied to a base map of the area. Two categories of resources are indicated on the graphic: resources of potential National Register significance, and resources of background or contextual significance. Both resource categories are important to future planning and development of downtown Alhambra. While the first category identifies resources of exceptional quality whose significance extends beyond Alhambra's borders, the second category identifies resources which provide Alhambra with its sense of place.

The graphic which indicates the location of these architectural resources is now on file with the Redevelopment Agency. It must be stressed that results of the "windshield" survey are preliminary in nature, and accordingly, additional survey work and archival research will be required in many cases to verify results.

As a later section of this manual will spell out in considerable detail, the commercial area of downtown Alhambra possesses three major building types. These are identified as the classic Main Street Storefront structure; the Motor/Drive-Up structure; and storefront architecture constructed in the late 40s and early 50s, referred to as the Showcase Storefront structure. This third category is particularly significant for downtown Alhambra, as it represents a resource not especially common to older downtown areas.

The purpose of identifying these three principal building types, and the specific features inherent to their design and construction, is first to recognize the significant resources already in place, and then to identify opportunities and appropriate means of drawing upon and further enhancing these resources. Sensitive and sensible use and improvement of these resources not only will contribute measurably to downtown Alhambra's sense of place and economic well-being, but can provide the individual owner and merchant with handsome returns on such investment.

Main Street looking east.
Conceptual Design Plan

The principal objective of undertaking major public area improvements to Main Street and certain adjoining side streets, as well as to rear area off-street parking facilities, is to establish an image of regional magnitude that promotes Alhambra’s downtown business area as a high-quality, distinctive retail shopping environment. Because of keenly-competitive market conditions in the Los Angeles metropolitan area with respect to retail sales and services, and because of potential economic returns to both the merchant and the community stemming from increased levels of consumer activity in the downtown area, the conceptual design plan calls for improvements which possess a scale and character equal to the task at hand. The major components of the conceptual design plan are spelled out in the paragraphs which follow.

1. Off-Street Parking System The downtown area already possesses large amounts of off-street parking capacity to the rear of Main Street business establishments, on both the north and south sides. This resource not only is somewhat uncommon to older downtown areas, but is essential to draw upon for attracting and maintaining new patrons and levels of retail sales. These off-street parking areas also exist in locations which, when taken together, resemble in layout the relationship of parking areas to storefronts which exists in large shopping centers, namely, the business establishments exist along a central axis surrounded by parking spaces. Despite the immense good fortune of having such parking capacity already in place, downtown Alhambra needs to improve and enhance the off-street parking facilities in the following respects.

First of all, the various lots and spaces need to be combined into a highly-readable and efficient system that provides for the shopper’s convenience, amenity and confidence. This will require improvements that ensure consistency of circulation from one lot to another; consistency of layout in terms of entrances and exits; width of aisles, width of spaces and striping of spaces; and consistency of improvements, to include shade trees, landscaped walls and barriers, signing and lighting.

Secondly, it is recommended that six areas be designated formally as the component parts of the downtown Alhambra off-street parking system. As indicated on the accompanying graphic, these six areas are identified as NORTHEAST, which is situated behind Lieberg’s and J.C. Penney’s; NORTH CENTRAL, situated to the rear of storefronts between Chapel and Garfield; NORTHWEST, consisting of lots to the rear of storefronts between Garfield and Third; SOUTHWEST, consisting of lots along and south of Main Street storefronts between Fourth and Second Streets; CIVIC CENTER, consisting of lots in proximity to City Hall and the Post Office; and SOUTH CENTRAL, a considerable reserve south of Main Street storefronts between Garfield and Chapel.

2. Pedestrian Access to Main Street Once a patron, whether for the first visit or as an established customer, finds an off-street parking space suitable for conducting the intended shopping excursion, it is now the convenience, comfort and amenity of accessibility to Main Street that requires attention. First of all, a new shopper will require certain information for proper orientation to the diversity of goods and services offered in downtown Alhambra. And even the established patron needs to be kept advised of new enterprises and new services. Accordingly, handsome and continually-maintained information kiosks are needed in each of the six off-street parking areas. Location maps of parking areas relative to streets, walkways and business establishments are recommended as the unmistakable purpose of such kiosks, that is, kiosks should be kept free of other printed and graphic materials.

Secondly, the walking experience from the off-street parking areas “through” to Main Street can and should be an added dimension to shopping in downtown Alhambra. This will require improvement to rear areas of Main Street buildings and storefronts, concentrating where possible on attracting pedestrian access “through the store” to Main Street and providing for outdoor sitting, eating and display areas that are inviting at all times. It also will require improvements to existing pedestrian walkways, and provision of new walkways whenever opportunities for achieving such access arise. New pedestrian “through” access to Main Street can be achieved in several forms, but especially recommended is the arcade solution, wherein shops line the walkway in perpendicular orientation to Main Street.

3. Public Area Landscaping Whether arriving at Main Street on foot via a sidewalk, pedestrian walkway or “through the store” access from an off-street parking system facility, or entering and driving down Main Street by auto, Main Street must read inherently as the central shopping area of Alhambra. It must establish a sense of place. Together with renovation of storefronts and new construction, Main Street and adjoining side streets will require public area improvements as generally described and graphically indicated in this section, and as recommended in detail in the next section of this manual.

First of all, Main Street needs a major stand of street trees to act as a dominant, unifying force in establishing the area with a distinctive and highly readable image. It also needs smaller street trees and/or other forms of on-street landscaping, including landscaped median dividers, to provide amenity and comfort to the shopper and pedestrian.

Secondly, the nighttime lighting of Main Street needs to be changed from its present character resembling a ‘freeway on-ramp’ to a quality more conducive to nighttime pedestrian and outdoor activity. This will require not only changing the type and intensity of the illumination, but also the type of lamp standard. The present fixtures are too tall, and again, possess a character long associated with illumination of high speed traffic corridors.

Third, major intersections need new paving treatments, both to announce a sense of arrival and to signify a sense of place in downtown. Improvement of intersections also should include widening of sidewalk areas at the major intersections and at other pedestrian crossing areas.
And fourth, street furniture recently purchased and placed along Main Street needs to be clustered selectively in response to improvements at major intersections and based on need at points of particularly-heavy pedestrian and shopper activity. If all of these street furniture items cannot be accommodated along Main Street, then the extra items should be placed as warranted along public walkways and in rear area off-street parking system facilities.

**Detailed Recommendations for Public Area Improvements**

**STREET TREES**

Vertical, high-canopy evergreen trees are recommended as the major tree for Main Street and selected portions of side streets. Arecastrum romanoffianum (often sold as Cocos plumosa) "Queen Palm," is recommended. Reasons for the selection of the Queen Palm include the following:

1. The name Alhambra connotes Moorish architecture and prevalent palm plantings. (Alhambra, "the red house," was the palace of the Moorish kings at Granada, Spain.)
2. Palms exist on Main Street and adjacent feeder streets.
3. The Queen Palm is appropriate to Alhambra and southern California's subtropical climate and character.
4. The tree height (30 to 40 feet or more) reduces blockage and conflict with shop windows, overhangs and storefront signage. The arching feather-type canopy also would provide filtered shade.
5. The clean-cut Queen Palm has a high canopy and vertical trunk which can be seen at a distance as one drives or walks down Main Street. The proposed lower light fixture will make the palm trees the dominant visual feature of the boulevard.
6. Palms need little maintenance and only reasonably fertile soil, and require only minimal amounts of water. Old leaves should be removed once or twice a year (spring and/or fall) for a neat appearance.
White flowering accent trees should be used at major intersections on Main Street, extending down selected side streets and in medians. Lagerstroemia indica, Crape Myrtle, trained as a tree, is recommended. Noteworthy for its spectacular show of flowers in summer and early fall, the white flowers on Main Street will contrast with the rose pink of existing Crape Myrtle in surrounding residential neighborhoods.

Palm should be located to present a strong overall statement of avenue planting. A rhythm of trees down both sides of Main Street and extending down selected side streets should be established. Asymmetrical spacing is acceptable. The following spacing recommendations for palms also should be considered:

1. Placement in clusters within walled planting areas;
2. Placement twenty feet to either side of light fixtures; and
3. Placement at eighty feet typical maximum, with possible exceptions, e.g., at overhangs.

Crape Myrtle should be planted in groupings or individually between palms and selected locations; 8 feet minimum spacing.

Approximately 300 palms would be appropriate (160 on Main and 140 on selected side streets). These should be purchased as box-sized material (24-inch box or greater) with an initial height of 15-20 feet and 8-10 inches caliper. A minimum of one year and preferably one and one half to two years should be allowed as lead time on orders to ensure availability and uniformity. Trees should be transplanted in late spring or early summer.

Roughly 125 white-flowering Crape Myrtle can be installed (30 on Main, 35 in medians, and 60 on selected side streets). These should be purchased as box-size material, 8-10 feet high and with a 2-inch caliper.

Existing fig trees along Garfield should be pruned to thin out foliage, reveal branch structure, and encourage upward growth to increase storefront window visibility and reduce eye-level pedestrian conflict.

**STREET LIGHTING**

**Primary Lighting** The color and intensity of the existing "cobra head" sodium vapor lamps should be replaced on Main and Garfield with a lighting system that is more related to a pedestrian shopping environment. A dark finish, 15-foot fluted pole with frosted "acorn" type fixture(s) is recommended. Mercury vapor lamps, because of superior color rendition, should be given strong consideration. Lower lumin also are recommended. If available, Washington Twin standards once found on Main Street should be reinstalled and retrofitted, and existing lighting standards relocated.

Typically, the present electrical connection can be used. However, at sidewalk widenings, the location of this connection should be realigned with the new curb. At present, the location of certain lamp standards conflicts with vehicular parking movement. Resolution of these conflicts will require detailed study in plan preparation.

**Secondary Lighting** "Because of their stateliness and their spectacular leaves, palms are good subjects for night lighting." A secondary light source for lighting of the palms from below is recommended. Adjustable metal banding around tree trunks with two upright fixtures would provide a distinctive lighting accent.

**MEDIAN AREA LANDSCAPING**

New medians, including landscaping, are proposed in specific locations (in lieu of optional left hand turn lanes) along Main Street in order to reduce the visual expanse of the street. A turf ground plane and appropriately located White Crape Myrtle accent trees are recommended landscaping solutions for the medians.

"Sunset Western Garden Book"
Conceptual Design Plan
Off-street public parking shown in grey

Pedestrian walkways and sidewalks shown in light red

Public area landscaping shown in red

These three "systems" of public area improvements combined with a diligent effort of private storefront improvements will result in a cohesive and dramatic rebirth of Alhambra's "Miracle Mile" Boulevard.
SIDEWALK AND INTERSECTION PAVING

Sidewalk and intersection paving should enhance and reinforce the pedestrian scale and quality of the street 'floor' environment. Specially-treated major and minor intersections and midblock crossings should make pedestrians feel safe, comfortable and welcome, should serve to define the downtown district by visual emphasis of Alhambra's primary commercial area from Atlantic to Almansor; and should alert motorists to adjust to lower vehicular speeds. In concept, it is recommended that treatment should be applied to four major and six minor intersections, and one major and two minor midblock sections.

**Sidewalk Treatment** Sidewalk widenings will strengthen and reinforce visual impacts at specific intersections. The additional eight feet, for a total of eighteen feet, should not interfere with traffic flow or eliminate significant quantities of on-street parallel parking spaces. Street drainage solutions must be studied further. Possible paving materials and application include small pebble (1/2 inch) exposed aggregate paving with tile banding and flush scored curb, both to ease crossing transition and out of consideration for disabled persons. The overall color of the paving and curbs should be a subtle, earth-tone buff brown. The tiles should be Mexican type, 12-inch square, chocolate brown in color with a semi-matte finish. Mortar shade also should be buff brown to unify the entire area.

Midblock sidewalk widenings and/or special paving treatment also should occur at major store crossings, such as Lieber's, and at bus stops.

**Intersection Treatment** Announcement of the Main Street shopping/business area and achieving safe interaction of the pedestrian and automobile are two reasons for providing special paving treatment at intersections. Key traffic intersections at Atlantic, Garfield, Chapel and Almansor should receive this treatment, to consist of a central exposed aggregate octagon surrounded by a deep-raked concrete paving. This octagonal shape is repeated in other street elements.

Pedestrian crosswalks at all intersections and mid-block crossings should contrast with the typical black asphalt in the streets. A 9-foot wide band of exposed aggregate [corners at 45 degree angle], bordered by an integral color and smooth concrete band, is suggested. Use of earth-tone color should be consistent with other proposed improvements.

STREET FURNITURE

**Low Wall** An 18-inch high concrete planter/seat wall (30-foot typical length on Main Street, side street lengths to vary) should constitute a major street furniture feature at activity points. The wall concept coordinates a number of formerly scattered elements, i.e., bench/seating area, accent planter and incorporation of newspaper stands [this portion of the wall will be higher, 38 inches]. Some of the existing trash receptacles and planter tubs might be arranged in groupings related to the wall unit. The remaining planter tubs should be relocated to rear parking areas, relating them to pedestrian walkways.

An integral color, earth-tone concrete with sand-blasted finish should be considered for the wall. As a design feature, brown tile with a blue design can be recessed into the wall as a continuous band around the vertical face and to designate sitting areas.

**Fountains** Simple, octagonally-shaped jet fountains can be located at building setback areas to add the refreshing quality of water to the streetscape.

OFF-STREET PARKING AREA LANDSCAPING AND LIGHTING

**Trees** Selected areas along Monterey, Stoneman and the alleyway network north of Main Street are part of the pedestrian precinct. Installation of canopy trees (e.g., Magnolia), along with use of a special paving treatment, are recommended.

In off-street parking areas, canopy trees should be used as a major contributing element to reinforce identity of the parking system, direct the pedes-
trian movement, and provide shaded parking. Tree types include small canopy (Pittosporum undulatum), large canopy (Raywood Ash), and screen canopy (Brazilian Pepper).

Rear private areas should be upgraded with the planting of mixed canopy and accent trees (Live Oak, Canary Island and Stone Pines, Pistache, Bottlebrush and Magnolia). Window boxes and planter tubs for color and variety also should be encouraged.

**Pedestrian Linkages** Welcoming the shopper from rear parking areas to the store can be achieved by providing pedestrian-oriented landscaping, plazas and attractive signage at rear entrances to Main Street buildings. Paving materials can reflect those suggested for Main Street, or include cobbles or brick.

**Lighting** Low-level lighting, including a vandal-proof standard and fixture, should be provided. Pools of light rather than total illumination is desired. A "cooler hat" type fixture could be considered.

### PUBLIC AREA GRAPHICS

The commercial area of downtown Alhambra can benefit enormously through use of an integrated, comprehensive public signage program. A high-quality signage system would reinforce the distinctiveness of Main Street as a special place to be as well as provide information and orientation to shoppers, pedestrians and other patrons of the area.

The following principles should be observed when designing a public area graphics program.

1. **Signage in streets, parking areas, and pedestrian spaces should be treated as sources of information and as environmental artworks.**

   The goal in designing a signage system for Main Street should be two pronged: 1) to design signage that successfully transmits information about Main Street to long-standing patrons as well as first-time visitors; and 2) to design signage that is visually, architecturally, and experientially exciting, and representative of Main Street's distinctive characteristics. While the Main Street signage should be colorful and eye-catching, it must primarily fulfill directional and identification needs.

2. **A well-designed public signage system reinforces visual identity and enhances a "sense of place".**

   Public signage can effectively express the unique character of a place, revealing its vitality, attractiveness and sense of cohesiveness. Main Street is characterized by "showcase" buildings, which present a theme of glass and reflective surfaces. This "storefront" architecture establishes a fairly sophisticated retail atmosphere, appropriate to a major boulevard and commercial center.

   In order for a public signage system to be effective in downtown Alhambra, the sign design must be compatible with the visual character of the area. The signage design should be sophisticated, and perhaps use chrome, neon or metallic materials which inherently are appropriate materials for urban environments. Neither rough-hewn, wooden signs or typical "standard" public signs are in keeping with the architectural resources of Main Street.

   A public signage system should include entrance signs which assist in announcing and reinforcing a sense of arrival in downtown; parking area signs which unmistakably identify the availability of convenient and attractive off-street parking facilities; and street name and other directional signs which harmonize with the architectural resources and pedestrian orientation of Main Street.

3. **A public signage system must be comprehensive, well-integrated and coordinated in order to establish the image or "logo" of a place.**

   In spite of the variety of signage needs, a "look" must be developed that is used consistently. Preferably one type style, one color scheme and a single thematic material and shape will be utilized for all the necessary signs. Adherence to such a system does not demand that all the signs look identical while providing different information. In fact, diversity in design, responding to the diversity of information, is recommended so that recognizability is enhanced.

4. **A signage system must project the image of a place after dark as well as during the day.**

   The nighttime atmosphere of downtown Alhambra is as vital to its well-being as the daytime ambiance. Public signage should be well lit in order to maximize orientation for the pedestrian and driver while projecting the impression of an exciting, pleasant and safe place to be. The look and function of the signage system at night should be integral to the design development.

The first step in developing a public signage program is to assess the signage needs for Alhambra's downtown commercial area. Such needs include:

1) **Directional Signs to Main Street** (locate signs at entrance points on the periphery of the downtown area);
2) **Directional Signs to Public Parking Areas** (identify direction to nearest off-street parking facility);
3) **Public Parking Area Identification Signs** (clearly identify location of parking); and
4) **Information Signs to Guide Pedestrian Circulation** (identify location of business establishments relative to off-street parking facilities).
This detailed plan of the Main-Garfield intersection is typical of the other major cross streets except for the enlarged pedestrian space and fountains at each corner.
General Design Guidelines for Private Sector Improvements

These guidelines have been prepared to assist individual property owners and merchants who are planning to renovate their buildings or storefronts. Typically persons wishing to improve their property will review these guidelines as a first step in the design process. By describing the variety of building types, providing examples of appropriate and inappropriate design solutions, and illustrating some of the materials and techniques available, this section should be used as a practical, working manual. A checklist is included to the rear of this manual which can be used to evaluate a storefront before and after renovation efforts.

STOREFRONTS

Storefronts along Main Street can provide ideal contact between customers out front and the store inside. Storefront design at most stores is primarily a form of direct advertisement, and it should be treated as an explicit expression of the character of the store. At the same time, a storefront must be planned for the shopping conditions around it. Storefronts in a downtown shopping district crowded with sidewalk traffic should be very different in character from the fronts of drive-in stores oriented to automobile traffic on major thoroughfares.

Several objectives of the storefront include the following:

1. **Catch the eye** A well organized storefront can stand out from the myriad of streetscape elements.

2. **Identify the store** The storefront becomes an identification with a particular business establishment and its merchandise.

3. **Act as a stage set** The storefront should dramatize the displays of merchandise.

4. **Draw customers into the store** Storefronts should draw approaching pedestrians to the entrance and into the store.

The storefront is viewed as a three-dimensional advertisement or "face" of the store. To be effective, the storefront must have individual character, balance between the various elements, distinctive displays, and an easily read message expressed by signage. Every individual business should project an unique, identifiable "face" that looks as good as it can. "After all, you wash your face every day to look as attractive as you possibly can. And it is your face. And it is very important to try to make it as attractive as you can."


REAR FACADE AREAS

The back sides or rear facades of the buildings along Main Street can become attractive areas for outdoor use and convenient secondary entrances to stores and restaurants. The rear areas are distinctively different in appearance and character from the storefronts along Main Street, and should remain recognizable as rear facades. In almost every block, the rear areas connect to off-street parking facilities. The convenience and serviceability which such close proximity affords should be enhanced. Landscaping the rear areas would be particularly effective for screening the parked cars from view and adding a unifying element along the stretch of rear facades. Efforts to unify the appearance of the back areas would create a stronger identity for downtown Alhambra as a complete and cohesive development distinct from surrounding areas.

The rear areas should be colorful, pleasant places which express a small, personal-scale shopping and dining environment. Outdoor use of the areas is encouraged. Outdoor sales or outdoor dining would contribute to the daytime and nighttime atmosphere. Colorful signage, banners and awnings could add bright spots of color during the day and provide orientation points when illuminated at night. The feeling of an intimate space should be the primary goal without sacrificing any serviceability.

This New York City storefront attracts the shopper's attention with shiny, clean translucent materials and a very simple window display. Note the hidden roll-up security grilles.
LANDSCAPING STOREFRONT AREAS

Landscaping, as a major component of any renovation scheme for rear areas, also should be a consideration for improving the appearance of storefronts along Main Street. Landscaping provides the opportunity to highlight a storefront area, making it more inviting. Movable planters, which should be brought indoors after closing hours, are recommended. Planter boxes or simply a row of potted flowers framing an entranceway could be effective. A group of small stores, particularly if they are located mid-block, could coordinate and integrate their landscaping design solutions. Perhaps a single type of tree in a simple planter could be selected and each store could contribute to the "series" by placing one on either side of its entranceway. Such a simple contribution to the pedestrian environment would achieve a very effective mark of distinction.

DISPLAY WINDOWS

The most important functional elements of a storefront arc window displays, entrances and signs. Display windows provide the first contact a store has with pedestrians and should be utilized as a form of direct advertisement. Any merchandise display, even in its simplest form, should involve a basic concern for showing what one has to offer in the best possible light. While signs usually identify the type of goods available in the store, window displays are a means of articulating specific qualities of the store and its merchandise. The store window and the presentation of the merchandise in it is one of the single most powerful advertising tools today. It is not the merchandise alone or the price that fixes the store's image in the customer's mind. Rather, it is the way the merchandise is arranged, presented and displayed that reveals the personality of the store. On the basis of the window displays, the shopper determines whether the store is original, witty, friendly, formal, casual or conservative, or has good taste or a flair for the unusual. In the early 1900s, when increasing attention was given to attractive window display design, people went to stores not only to fill a specific need, as normally had been the case, but also merely to window-shop or to browse as a diversion. Until television sapped Americans' evening hours, window shopping was a popular form of entertainment as well as a practical means of making purchase choices for people who could not frequent the stores during the daylight hours.

Attractive window displays seemed to be equated initially with displays of quantity. Store owners were guided by notions that such an approach wasted less space and insured the image that they had something for everyone. As window trimmers began to relieve the confusion and clutter, they worked with a smaller number of objects in a display. As a result they became more aware of the conditions of the window space itself—its scale, shape, background textures and materials, and its three-dimensionality as potentially dramatic and graphic elements. Simplicity of window display resulted in a poster clear message. In the 1920s displaymen were urged to echo the store's print advertising in their displays, not only by showing the same merchandise but also by adapting elements of the printed ad's graphic style in their windows.

Interest in window displays along commercial strips has been revived as competition with outlying shopping malls has become keener. While suburban shopping malls are surrounded by parking lots, making the impact of exterior window displays negligible, shopping centers rely heavily on the attractiveness of the storefronts as seen from within the mall. Attractive and unusual window design is not limited to the display of fashion only. Even a hardware store could, by creatively featuring one item, make people stop and look and remember it. Every store can utilize window displays to create a distinctive image.
PRACTICAL HOW-TO'S OF WINDOW DISPLAYS

The success of a good window display should be measurable by an increase in sales of the featured items. In sparking the shopper’s imagination and desire, a good display integrates the saleable items with everyday living. In fact, sometimes a shopper will insist on buying the exact item in the display rather than the same thing from elsewhere in the store.

The following describes some practical guidelines for creating exciting window displays. If a store does not already employ someone who has a flair for arranging window displays, it should contract a window display firm for periodic consultations, or hire someone (even on a once-a-week basis) who has some background in design.

1. Start with the merchandise to be featured in a display. First the items should be new and “news-worthy.” Never expect that something which has not sold suddenly will acquire popularity by pushing it into a window. Consider what the item is made of. What is it commonly used for? What could be associated with it? (For example, a shiny new chrome toaster could be contrasted with red and white gingham fabric... or a furniture store featuring a new sofa could set a party scene around the couch... or a women’s clothing store advertising a “Baker’s Dozen” sale on stockings could capitalize on an association with a bakery, setting an unusual but effective scene highlighting stockings).

2. Consider the color of the item and what color scheme would highlight it advantageously. Colors can be selected either to complement or harmonize with the item or to contrast with the items. The use of additional color should never overshadow the featured items. Lighting is a critical element of color. How the display should be lighted and viewed at night is a major consideration. The merchandise should be the focus of attention, especially at night.

3. What “props”, signage or prices should be included? All additional elements should be included in the initial design of the display rather than being “tacked on” at the last minute. Some of the props selected could be unexpected, or used out-of-context. For example, elegant red patent leather shoes could be seen stepping up an aluminum ladder.

4. Keep the display simple. Simplicity does not demand that a window be spilling over with dazzling delights, but it does mean that a multiplicity of conflicting ideas should be eliminated. Large stores with multiple store windows need in particular to project a simple, continuous theme, and to avoid looking like four or six smaller stores. One Christmas season, a major chain specialty goods store was especially successful at drawing attention to its displays by using white ostrich feathers in every display window and throughout the store. Arrangement patterns should be kept simple and also can be used thematically. Depending on the particular items, they can be arranged in a pyramid form, zigzag pattern, symmetrically, fan-shape, stepped motif, in groupings or isolated by deliberate, dramatic blank space.

5. The window display can tie in with the season, or with what is happening in Alhambra. There may be some special social, cultural or dramatic element that could suggest a scene or just a background or color scheme. There may be a significant though indirect benefit from creating windows which exemplify a store’s concern for community relations.

6. Stress individuality. The greatest advantage small stores have is their individuality. Every store should have a clear understanding of the kind of customer it wants to attract, and have a sense of what could stand out in the shopper’s mind. By not copying the larger stores or even small competitors, a store can achieve respected individuality. In cases where several stores offer more or less the same things for sale, the store’s image provides a more subjective appeal. It is important for the individual store to increasingly define its image in terms of an unique and attractive style.

SOURCES FOR INFORMATION AND IDEAS ABOUT WINDOW DISPLAY DESIGN

Visual Merchandising (early 1900s – 1974 called Display World): trade magazine for window display designers.

SELECTED SIGN DEFINITIONS

Freestanding Sign: A sign which is supported by one or more uprights or braces in or upon the ground.

Projecting Sign: A sign which projects more than 12 inches, and which is supported by a wall of a building with the display surface of the sign possessing a plane not parallel to the plane of the supporting wall.

Roof Sign: A sign erected and maintained upon or over the roof of a building.

Wall Sign: A sign which is mounted flush and affixed securely to a building wall, projecting no more than 12 inches from the face of a building wall, and not extending sideways beyond the building face or above the highest line of the building wall to which it is attached.

Awning or Canopy Sign: A sign which is painted, sewn, stenciled, etc. onto the exterior surface of an awning or canopy and which does not extend beyond the edge(s) of the awning or marquee.

Window Sign: A sign which is painted, posted or displayed on an interior translucent or transparent surface, including windows and doors.

Temporary Sign: Any sign intended to be maintained for a continuous period of less than 60 days and located within window or door areas.

Banner Sign: A cloth or fabric sign of two dimensions that is suspended in a perpendicular manner to the building facade from a pole or supporting rod (excluding stabilizing device).

Integral Sign: Any sign that is designed to be an architectural form, integral to the overall building design. It is not an applied sign. This type of sign usually takes the form of a vertical projecting element, perpendicular to the building facade, often extending beyond the roofline, with applied letters. The projecting element lies flush against the building facade and usually is of the same material and color as the facade.
Design Guidelines for Each Building Type

The first step in making improvements to a building or storefront is to understand those qualities which make it distinctive and which contribute to the character of Main Street. Improvements sympathetic to the character of a building and downtown Alhambra as a whole are much more likely to enhance both the appearance of a building and the general quality of the downtown commercial area. One key to the success of a revitalization effort is cooperation and coordination among neighboring owners and merchants. Over the years, harmonious relationships among buildings and along the streetscape have been disturbed or disrupted altogether by the addition of inappropriate materials, obnoxiously designed signage, insensitive paint schemes and the lack of regular maintenance. Well-designed renovation solutions can ensure that a store will have a distinctive identity that harmonizes with and contributes to the streetscape’s cohesive character.

The variety of buildings along Main Street can be generally categorized into three basic building types: Main Street Storefront buildings (1910-1940), Showcase Storefront buildings (1940-1960), and Motor Structure/Drive-Up buildings (1960-1980).

MAIN STREET STOREFRONT BUILDINGS

The classic Main Street Storefront is a building type that originated along the commercial Main Streets of America in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. From the outset, this building type was designed to frame a well-defined storefront area.

The storefronts and signage of the Main Street Storefront building are relatively small in scale, designed to relate to a slow-moving, pedestrian-oriented environment. As architectural styles went in and out of vogue, the Main Street Storefront was ornamented with stylistic details which today attest to the date of construction. It was not until the 1940s and the postwar "modernization" of American life that the basic form of the classic Main Street Storefront was altered significantly.

The ground floor was designed to be what is now known as a traditional storefront and sales floor. Any upper floors commonly have been used for office space, residential units or storage. Main Street Storefront buildings can be small, mid-block structures which accommodate a single business, or large buildings designed to provide space for two or more businesses, separated by piers forming distinct storefront areas. Usually Main Street Storefront buildings were one or two stories high; the one-story structures frequently had high 'false-front' parapets to give a taller appearance. While this building type is designed to be read as a whole unit, the visual emphasis consistently is placed on the storefront area and its display windows.

The Main Street Storefront building was designed as a unified whole, wherein all the details, materials and scale were carefully coordinated. This included, of course, the central or dominant element known as the storefront. Several styles of ornament have been utilized over the years, including Classical, Renaissance, Spanish Colonial and Modern. Few buildings in downtown Alhambra contain Renaissance detailing such as sculptured overhanging cornices, brackets, pilasters and horizontal belt courses. However, there are several examples of Stripped Classical buildings which can be characterized by lack of ornament and strong rectilinear shapes. This style became popular concurrently with the Spanish and Modern styles, and reflected the taste for straightforward commercial functionalism.

The Spanish Colonial style is characterized by tile roofs, white or nearwhite stucco surfaces, arched openings and wrought iron railings. Several buildings in downtown Alhambra have modest Spanish style detailing, usually red tile parapet roofs.
stepped parapets or Spanish arched windows. The Moderne style was popular in the 1930s and 1940s, and is characterized by either Zigzag or Streamline detailing. Zigzag detailing characteristically consists of a rigid geometric ornament, while Streamline has smooth detailing of long horizontal lines, pipe railings, curved surfaces and porthole windows, all of which reflect the sleekness of the automobile age's faster pace.

The type of facade openings on the upper levels was determined by the architectural style, although Main Street Storefront buildings characteristically had transparent windows on upper floors. The windows were designed to create visual interest by allowing passers-by to see inside, enhancing the building's three-dimensional appearance and punctuating the expanse of the facade with a rhythm of openings. Often the storefront and/or upper story windows had adjustable canvas awnings. The awnings visually unified the building and created a colorful pattern across the facade.

GUIDELINE: In many cases a building’s architectural character can be revealed and accentuated simply by uncluttering the facade and removing later additions that hide the building’s individuality. The streetscape of Main Street today is filled with a cluster of signs, many of which have changed the scale of building facades by covering or overpowering some of the features which contribute to the building's character, as well as the general scale and pedestrian qualities of the downtown area. In some cases, original facade details have been removed or openings have been completely filled in to make room for oversized signs or canopies. Old photographs of your building may be able to provide information about missing details. The original design features of the facade are valuable resources which should be understood and preserved whenever practical. Some facades may be missing ornamented cornices or detailing around windows. Frequently the effect of these details can be "recreated" through use of a carefully designed paint scheme that utilizes a variety of colors. A well-designed paint scheme can often compensate for the imbalance resulting from missing details.

Colors can be used to help define and enliven the individual identity of each building. Main Street Storefront buildings typically are located next to other buildings, which means that coordinating with neighboring structures is essential if a harmoniously-colorful and lively streetscape is to result. If the facade is painted, the paint scheme should include and/or coordinate with colors for the storefront, signage, awnings and, to the extent possible, the interior walls and even the merchandise. Discovering the building's original paint colors may be helpful and may serve as a basis for determining a new paint scheme that would enhance the building as a whole in addition to the image of the business. Warm off-whites and subdued pastels are suggested as base colors, while more intense hues should be chosen to highlight storefront areas. To "recreate" architectural detailing, or to appear in the awnings and signage. Bright, bold, dark and intense colors are not appropriate as main body or base colors, and should be used sparingly for highlighting more subdued colors within the storefront area and signage.

In addition to taking into consideration stylistic detailing when planning to rehabilitate a building, attention also must be given to the facade openings. Windows above the ground level add architectural interest, enhancing the structure's three-dimensional appearance. The lively rhythm of transparent openings that characterizes Main Street Storefront buildings makes an important contribution to downtown Alhambra's streetscape, and contrasts with the facades of Showcase Storefront buildings. It is important that transparency of the windows be maintained, even if the floors are vacant or used for storage. Shutters inside the windows, roll-down shades or curtains would keep the windows from contributing to a sense of neglect and dilapidation. The windows also could be dressed up with colorful canvas awnings or planter boxes. Awnings create a festive air and can provide a strong cohesive identity for an individual building.

In cases where upper levels of Main Street Storefront buildings are occupied, generally a building entrance is provided which is separate from the storefront area(s) and store entrance(s). Any building entrance should remain distinct from any store entrance. Perhaps it could be highlighted with a protective canopy that coordinates with facade awnings and indicates the building’s name and/or address.

STOREFRONT AREA: The traditional storefront had few decorative elements other than those details which often were repeated across the facade, integrating the storefront into the architectural character of the building. Emphasis was placed on the display windows and the merchandise inside. The rest of the storefront was designed in a simple manner in order not to compete with the displayed items but rather to clearly project the product or service being offered.

Basically the storefront was defined by a horizontal lintel and two vertical piers. The entryway was set back from the sidewalk, giving slight emphasis to the location of the door and creating deeper display spaces without adding much distance between the entrance and the "traffic course" of the sidewalk and street. Typically, transom windows were located above glass panel doors and display windows. The transom windows were an important design element defining the storefront area, and provided additional natural light in the store interior.

The storefront area traditionally has experienced the greatest amount of change during a building’s life. In efforts to maximize the storefront's potential for business advertisement, storefronts over the years have been decorated heavily with loud colors, inappropriate materials and huge signs, all of which were designed to vie for the customer's attention. In some cases, definition of the storefront area has been obscured by use of added-on elements which are intended to expand the actual storefront area but which result in a "tacked-on" appearance and which achieve a disturbing separation of the storefront area from the facade. Large Main Street Storefront buildings with multiple storefronts often look like multiple buildings, because each storefront area visually competes with its neighbors and deliberately bears no sensitive relationship to its surroundings.
Well maintained stylistic ornament and side piers enframing storefront area

Transom window area with simple unified signage and multi-paned glazing

Interesting, coordinated graphics

Typical Main Street storefront with slightly recessed entrance and flanking display windows with marble bases.

Low landscaped planter to enclose interior area

A classic Main Street building with a dramatic open-air storefront.
GUIDELINE: The storefront area is the most important visual element of the Main Street Storefront building. It holds the most potential for creative alterations affecting the character of the entire building as well as the streetscape. While any renovation plans affecting the entire façade should respect the original design, materials and colors, the storefront area is more flexible and can benefit from creative and sympathetic application of new materials, colors and designs. Yet any renovation plans should return the storefront to its original intent, which is to focus attention on the goods and services which, in turn, can sell themselves.

Any tacked-on elements that “expand” the storefront area or cover over architectural details such as transom windows should be removed, for the storefront should read as a well-defined area that is integral to the entire façade. If possible, transom windows should be restored and used to identify the storefront area and provide natural light inside. Transom windows can be interesting locations for neon signage, and can be effective at night when outlined with small, white lights.

The display windows are the most important eye-catching element in the storefront. They should be utilized as a form of signage that attracts shoppers’ attention and draws them inside. Window displays should be carefully arranged and effectively lit at night and day. (See page 16 for window display design guidelines.) The use of bronze-tinted or mirror glass is inappropriate, as these glazing materials obscure the shopper’s view of the display, and present an alienating appearance along the streetscape. Remodeled display windows which originally had wood or iron frames may have been replaced with bare aluminum frames, which most often are too thin and out of harmony with other materials of the Main Street Storefront building. When there is no alternative to aluminum framing, dark anodized aluminum is the best solution.

The base panels under display windows often were faced with decorative materials, such as ceramic tile, polished marble, vitrolite or elegant, cast bronze. If any of these original materials remains, they should be restored and maintained. Any existing inappropriate materials, such as “used” brick or small, bathroom-type tiles, should be removed and replaced with more appropriate materials. In some cases it may be appropriate to add planters to the base area of display windows.

The display windows in some Main Street Storefront buildings are marred by unattractive security grilles. Any renovation plans should take necessary security equipment into consideration. Grilles can be installed discreetly inside windows and doors, and should be hidden from view or removed during business hours. Mechanically- or electrically-operated roll-up grilles are available, and the required roll-up housing can be integrated into the building’s architectural features.

Originally storefront entrances had simple wooden doors that were painted or stained and contained large glass panels in the center. Usually these glass panels provided signage area. As a major element of the storefront, the door or entrance should be carefully designed to be as attractive as possible. Any solid or aluminum and glass doors that do not fit into the character of the existing storefront should be replaced. Window graphics on the doors could be added to create a distinctive entrance, but the transparent quality of the entryway should be retained, allowing visual access to the store’s interior.

The entrance location could be highlighted with a canvas canopy or awning. In some cases the entrance awning may mimic or contrast in shape or color with other storefront awnings. The entrance awning or canopy could serve as the primary signage area while creating a pleasant pedestrian space in front of the store.

The use of awnings is an effective means of creating a space in front of a store where people may step away from the flow of pedestrian traffic and find a shady, protected area. Awnings can become an important element in storefront design, as they may be used to draw attention to display windows, unify the storefront with the entire building and/or harmonize with adjacent storefronts by using different yet related colors and shapes. Awnings can create an intimate pedestrian environment by softening the effects of the large boulevard scale of Main Street and by providing a sense of enclosure. The entire streetscape in downtown Alhambra would benefit from the visual variety that colorful, projecting awnings can provide.

Awnings are available in a myriad of shapes and colors. The traditional roll-up awning is very versatile, having the advantage over immobile awnings of allowing more sunlight to penetrate on cloudy days and periodically exposing transom windows underneath. The shape of the awning should be designed to fit the building’s architecture. Distinctively-shaped awnings, such as arches, barrel shapes or round-ended awnings, can be used carefully to add interest to a plain façade. In no case should an awning dominate the storefront, but rather it should be coordinated with all the other visual elements to create an overall image. Awnings can be used as creative forms of signage, perhaps serving as the primary signage area especially for multiple-storefront buildings.

SIGNAGE: Main Street Storefront buildings are designed to have well-defined, limited signage areas. A signage panel usually is located just above the transom windows and below second floor openings, and is built-in as part of the building facade design. This primary or vehicular-oriented signage is designed to be supplemented by secondary or pedestrian-oriented signage on awnings, projecting signs and banners, and/or window graphics. Over the years, signage on Main Street storefront buildings has become larger, almost exclusively vehicular-oriented and composed of inappropriate materials. Consequently the signs along Main Street have become virtually void of any individual character and appear as indistinguishable parts of general clutter.

GUIDELINE: Signs make the most significant contribution to the general image and attractiveness of a commercial area. Well-designed signs contribute to the character of a storefront, while expressing something about the visual and economic vitality along a streetscape. Signs also serve
RECOMMENDED SIGN PROVISIONS FOR MAIN STREET STOREFRONT BUILDINGS

Wall Signs: Maximum of 2 square feet per linear front foot of business establishment. To be located not higher than the lowest of the following:
1. 25 feet above grade;
2. Bottom of the sill line of the second floor windows; or
3. Cornice line of the building.
Note: Corner business footage is non-transferable from one street to another.

Projecting Signs: Maximum of 40 square feet (20 square feet per side) per business establishment. To be located no less than 8 feet above grade and to project no more than 8 feet from the building wall. To be situated not higher than the lowest of the following:
1. 15 feet above grade; or
2. Cornice line of the building.
No projecting sign should be located less than 5 feet from any common wall or other point common to two separate business establishments on the same property. No projecting sign should be located less than 15 feet from any other projecting sign or noncomplying freestanding sign, whether located on the same property or not.

Window Signs: On ground level, coverage should not exceed 25 percent of the total window and door area visible from the exterior of the building; on second level, coverage should not exceed 25 percent per window (No window signs permitted above second level.)

Awning Signs: On ground floor level; 30 percent maximum coverage allowed of the total exterior surface area of each awning. On the second floor level and above; 20 percent maximum coverage allowed of the total exterior surface area of each awning.

Banner Signs: 20 square feet maximum size per banner, and not to exceed a maximum of 15 square feet of banner per linear storefront footage, with a minimum of 4 square feet per individual banner. Location: Not lower than 8 feet above grade. Not higher than the lowest of the following:
1. 25 feet above grade; or
2. Cornice line of the building.

RECOMMENDED SIGN PROVISIONS FOR DOWNTOWN ALHAMBRA

Recommended Materials: Painted metal bands, applied metal letters or symbols, internally-illuminated colored plastic, molded plastic, canvas awnings and banners; painted or vinyl letter window graphics.

No freestanding signs permitted.
No roof signs permitted.
No wind signs, streamers or pennants permitted.

as symbols for a business, not only in stating the establishment's name but in communicating the "quality" of the business. Signs should be designed as unique expressions of a business. The design possibilities for enhancing any particular business virtually are unlimited. It is important to remember that signage should be designed to be a part of a total business image. The effectiveness of a sign is magnified when it is coordinated with all other business graphics such as menus, shopping bags, business cards, matchbooks, newspaper ads, etc.

In most cases, the architectural design of a Main Street Storefront building determines the location, site and shape of the primary wall sign. Wall signs, either painted directly onto the wall or applied metal signs, should fit within specified signage panels and not cover any important architectural elements such as transom windows or vertical piers. The primary sign should be treated as an architectural element.

Vehicular-oriented signage always should be supplemented with effective pedestrian-oriented signage such as banners, awnings and window graphics. These signs should be in scale, and located for maximum pedestrian visibility. Ideally the pedestrian-oriented signage not only should identify the business location but also should attract passers-by into the store. Projecting signs can be designed in many shapes and sizes, and may even be an icon or symbol of the products sold. Banners are a particularly festive form of projecting sign that can exist either as a single unit or be grouped as a colorful series. Any type of projecting sign could be located above the doorway to provide direction to the store entrance, or at either end of the facade or storefront to add definition to the individual building. Every Main Street Storefront building in downtown Alhambra could benefit from well-designed window graphics. Window graphics can be designed as a major form of signage and/or as a supplement to window displays. Window graphics should provide visual surprises, delights and information primarily to the pedestrian.

The determination of location and size of signage also should take into consideration adjacent store-fronts and signage, especially if the neighboring buildings are of comparable type and scale. A stronger visual impression is made with simple, coordinated signs than with a jumbled array of various sizes, types and locations of signs. Important visual continuity for a building with multiple storefronts can be achieved through sensitive design and alignment of various signs. This does not mean that all signs should be the same size, type and color to work well together. Creativity and colorful solutions that communicate the individuality of each business are encouraged.

Obviously a business' signage system should fit the style of that particular business. In addition, the signage should fit the character of downtown Alhambra. Not all signage materials appropriate to suburban shopping malls or quaint New England towns are compatible with the character of Main Street. It is important that Main Street project a sense of vitality, of a contemporary urban retail and business environment. Although most Main Street Storefront buildings originally were intended to have painted wooden signs, other signage materials are appropriate today. Neon is an especially versatile and creative signage material that is colorful and urban at night and during the day. Other appropriate signage materials include metal (chrome-plated, enameled or painted) and plastic (injection molded and internally illuminated).

The design of any sign should include provisions for its use and appearance at night. Even if a business is not open at night its signage should remain illuminated until 11 PM. Illuminated signage and window displays can contribute to a "smart" nighttime appearance for downtown Alhambra. Lited signs attract night strollers, advertise for considerable distance the business name, and form "lasting" impressions of the storefront. Signs can be illuminated with directional spot lights, indirect task lighting, internal lighting or integral light sources such as neon. Imaginative lighting, such as silhouetting individual letters, can achieve dramatic and memorable effects.
SHOWCASE STOREFRONT BUILDINGS

Storefront structures which were constructed in the 1940s and 1950s typically were designed as Showcase Storefront buildings, either to replace older buildings or as additions to burgeoning boulevard commercial districts. This distinctive Showcase Storefront style was created in response to post-World War II prosperity, the glitter and glamour of the Hollywood mode, and ever faster-paced mobility stemming from the automobile. Basically the bulk of the Showcase Storefront building was designed to serve as a backdrop for a large, bold sign which was geared towards attracting rapidly-passing motor trade. The features of the Showcase Storefront, which include expansive display windows and recessed entrances, were intended to capture the pedestrian's attention with colorful displays situated behind reflective surfaces, and to create and “outdoor” shopping area which visually and functionally flowed into the interior sales space. The Showcase Storefront building remains today as a successful design solution for the maximum use of display space, dramatically focussing attention on the merchandise.

Usually the entire Showcase Storefront facade is occupied by a single business. One or two levels of the Showcase building are used as sales areas, although the ground level is the main sales floor. Store offices or storage often are located on a mezzanine or second level.

The building facade is divided into major upper and lower sections. Large showcase display windows and the store entrance are situated on the ground level, and a large sign and background panel cover the upper level(s). The upper portion is designed to act as a backdrop for a sign and to provide contrast with lively displays on the ground level. Frequently a fixed projecting canopy is located between the display windows and the upper level(s).

Sometimes Showcase facades exhibit variations on these two major parts. Second level windows or vents sometimes are integrated into the design as

Freestanding display cases provide an ideal opportunity for attracting shoppers' attention and leading them around the case and into the store.

This Showcase Storefront building retains much of its original design although the expansive window display area is not designed or lighted to take full advantage of its dramatic advertising potential.

Large, smooth sign panel area that is integral to storefront

Fixed projecting canopy with a roll-up canvas awning along the outer edge

Expansive window display areas should be brightly illuminated with carefully designed displays and sparkling windows

Freestanding display “room” for all-around window shopping

Well lit, deeply recessed store entrances with terrazzo paving and large glass doors invite shoppers in

Side piers of showcase storefronts are reminiscent of the earlier Main Street storefronts
ornamental elements or as simple horizontal bands.

**SIGN PANEL:** This area (often two-thirds of the entire building facade) is used as a picture frame for the sign itself. Openings or ornament in this area are used to reinforce the visual impact of the sign.

**GUIDELINE:** One of the first areas of a Showcase Storefront facade to receive unsympathetic and ineffective alteration is the sign panel. A major effort should be made to determine the original design of both the sign panel and sign, including colors, materials and finishes. If possible, these elements should be restored, or a likeness thereof reconstructed. Most often, but not always, these panels acted as a neutral, solid-colored backdrop for the sign lettering. Accordingly, beige, pale green, rose or grey are frequently used colors.

**SIGN:** A large, carefully illuminated sign, flowing across the sign panel, is an integral aspect of the Showcase Storefront building design. The sign identifies the business establishment by name and sometimes is accompanied by a smaller sign to identify specific goods or merchandise, such as luggage, shoes or women’s apparel. The large-scale sign forms a bold, immediate impression from a moving automobile, both day and night.

**GUIDELINE:** All signs which are not an integral part of the original sign and sign panel should be removed. If the composition of the original sign (store and product names) is no longer appropriate, a new sign should be installed which respects the integrity of the original design of the sign panel.

Sign materials should complement the sign panel materials to create a unified building facade. Materials frequently used for Showcase Storefront signs include reflective metals, such as chrome, stainless steel and bronze, and deep-colored plastics, which are shiny and bright.

Illumination of Showcase signage typically is very dramatic and very carefully controlled to highlight the design. Neon tubing can be used for either outlining the letters or for filling in the letters of the sign. Indirect lighting often is used to softly illuminate each letter internally, or to reflect away from the sign panel so as to create a dramatic silhouette effect of the sign lettering.

Typetyles used for Showcase storefronts should be in keeping with the architectural style as much as possible. Lettering styles from the 1940s and 1950s typically were simple and elegantly sans-serif, forming a particularly distinctive “modern” image that complemented the Showcase architectural style. Often elongated or simple-script typetyles were used, “filling” the sign panel by stretching the length or height, or transversing the area diagonally. The scale of this sign should not become overwhelming through use of a design wherein the individual letters are jammed together, thereby forming a solid block. Instead, large areas of sign panel around the letters should be considered as an important and dramatic factor in design of the sign.

“FIN SIGN”: Some larger Showcase Storefront buildings have a projecting, illuminated “fin” sign that is an integral element of the facade. Frequently the “fin” is of the same material, and/or color as the sign panel. Because it projects out from the building, the sign is visible up and down the street from a long distance. The letters of the sign mounted to the fin read vertically and are illuminated at night in order to maximize visibility and recognizability.

**GUIDELINE:** Fin signs should be maintained in their original form, including materials, colors and, most particularly, illumination. As a general rule, large projecting signs which attempt to imitate fin signs but which are not integral to the design of the building facade usually end up detracting from the integrity of Showcase Storefront buildings.

**SHOWCASE WINDOWS:** The display windows of Showcase Storefront buildings are large and encase the entire ground level storefront from floor to ceiling with plate glass windows framed by aluminum or stainless steel. Large display windows create an open and inviting storefront, and provide an outdoor shopping area for pedestrians through use of colorful and dramatic displays. To minimize any apparent physical barrier between interior and exterior spaces, some display windows are designed in such a fashion as to allow window shoppers to see directly into the sales floor. The showcase window in reality becomes a giant display window framed by the building.

**GUIDELINE:** Generally the showcase display windows along Main Street are underutilized. In some cases the displays are not carefully designed, are too crowded with merchandise, unilluminated, or simply are lacking anything of real interest. Frequently the window area is diminished in potential value through use of bold, temporary signage advertising sales or special deals. In many cases, all that is necessary is regular maintenance of clean windows and the framing detail. With few exceptions, most displays are not illuminated at night, thereby significantly reducing their advertising potential. Maximum use should be made of display windows as a colorful means of attracting the attention of passers-by, and as an important form of advertisement at night as well as during the day. (For guidelines specifically related to window display design and lighting, please refer to pages 16 and 21).

Large showcase windows provide an ideal opportunity for creating window graphics and signages which are pedestrian scaled and oriented. Permanent window signage probably should indicate the name of the business, illustrate a logo and/or describe the type of business. In some cases “signage” need not have any words at all but rather exist as a simple graphic element, such as two thin bands of red and green at the base of each window. Permanent window graphics may be applied with paint or with vinyl tapes and/or lettering. Such permanent graphics should be very small, covering a maximum of 5 percent of the window area.

Temporary signage in showcase windows often is most effective in the form of window graphics. Many stores silk-screen temporary messages onto the window surface with washable tempera paints. These signs can be keyed to the displays of merchandise, and can be changed as frequently as the displays are. It is important to remember that any window graphics should be understated, covering no more than 25 percent of the visible window area. Such graphics usually should not form a large, solid
area of color. The window graphics should never compete with window displays for the pedestrian's attention and should provide visual interest only as a complement to the displays.

**SHADOW BOXES AND JEWELBOX WINDOWS:** Some Showcase storefronts have small "jewelbox" displays that usually are set into a wall of brick or stone. The contrast in scale between the large display windows and these compact windows is dramatic. Jewelbox windows are meant to focus the pedestrian’s attention on a single dramatic display usually featuring merchandise of a small-scale, intimate nature.

**GUIDELINE:** Particular care should be given to maintenance of jewelbox windows and surrounding walls. The jewelbox window should be used to invite pedestrians directly up to the window to get a closer look. The small space within the box provides an opportunity to create an intriguing display of small-scale merchandise. Lighting of these windows is especially important for visibility and can be designed to create a dramatic effect. Occasionally, it may be interesting to "create" jewelbox displays by adding an opaque frame in large display windows.

**LOBBY SHOWCASES AND FREESTANDING DISPLAY CASES:** Some Showcase storefronts with recessed entrances have freestanding display cases. Usually they are placed in the center of the entrance so that shoppers can circulate freely around them. Generally these cases are shallow, thus permitting the size of merchandise than can be displayed within them. These cases were designed to be another means of attracting the pedestrian’s attention and drawing persons into the store.

**GUIDELINE:** Because of their high visibility to the pedestrian, displays in freestanding showcases should be rotated frequently and designed to spark some interest. These cases must be well lit during the day and at night.

**ENTRANCES:** Generally, Showcase Storefront buildings are designed to have deeply recessed entryways. Recessed entrances allow space for “outside” shopping traffic. In effect, the sidewalk is pulled into the store, thereby creating a storefront lobby. Mid-block storefronts, which are limited in height and width, are given a third dimension when designed with a recessed entrance. This solution adds depth and color to the entire building facade. Recessed entrances also maximize display opportunities. Doors, door frames and display windows typically are constructed entirely of glass, which allows window shoppers to see the store interior. The effect is to minimize any visual barrier between inside and outside.

**GUIDELINE:** The most important recommendation for improving entryways is to make sure that they are maintained in a clean and orderly fashion. These deeply recessed areas can collect debris and dirt, and thereby end up looking very unattractive. The entire entrance should be well lit so it does not seem like an intimidating dark hole. Ideally, the displays flanking the entryway should be warmly illuminated as should the interior of the store, so that the passer-by is "attracted" into the store.

**ENTRANCE PAVING:** The paving materials in the entrance lobby areas of most Showcase buildings usually are rich and colorful in detail. Customarily terrazzo paving is used, often applied in multi-colored patterns with the store name or logo imbedded permanently in the paving. Quarry tile, brick or flagstone also are used for paving, and are coordinated with other storefront materials. In some cases the outdoor entrance paving material continues directly into the store itself, further reducing the visual differentiation between inside and outside.

The proliferation of multi-colored, "mosaic" terrazzo entrances is one of Main Street’s most unusual features, and certainly should be recognized as an important resource to draw upon. The widely varying colors and Art Deco patterns create a visually exciting experience for the pedestrian.

**GUIDELINE:** The terrazzo paving along Main Street can be revitalized simply by cleaning and/or re-polishing the surface. Although in some cases the name imbedded in terrazzo does not reflect the current ownership, the original name or logo adds a mark of distinction and is a colorful reminder of the street’s heritage. However, as terrazzo still is a widely used paving material, a new entryway name and/or logo can be installed by professional pavers who will cut away the unwanted area and install the new terrazzo design directly over the existing concrete base. The natural, muted colors found in the paving could serve as a basis for a storefront and/or building facade paint scheme. The terrazzo colors are appropriate to the Showcase architectural style in particular and to the pedestrian character of Main Street as a whole.

**LANDSCAPING:** Sometimes small-scaled landscaping features are incorporated into the Showcase Storefront design. The landscaping serves to soften the outdoor "lobby" entrance area and to add distinction to the showcase windows.

**GUIDELINE:** Small-scaled, private landscaping can enhance many of the Showcase storefronts along Main Street. Existing planters should be filled and maintained with flowers and/or shrubs. For stores desiring planters where none exist movable planters are recommended so that they can be brought inside after hours. Coordinating a solution with two or three neighboring storefronts could achieve a very distinctive and pleasantly unified image. Potted trees or topiaries could be highlighted at night when illuminated with indirect lighting or strung with small, white lights.

A wide variety of typestyles were popular in the 1940s and 1950s, many of which were specifically designed to complement the Moderne architectural style.
MOTOR STRUCTURE/DRIVE-UP BUILDINGS

A significant number of commercial structures built in the 1950s, 60s and 70s along auto-oriented boulevards or commercial strips have been designed as Motor Structure/Drive-Up buildings. In many cases these buildings have been designed to be symbols or building-signs for chain restaurants and businesses. Usually such buildings are surrounded by parking lots, which provide the ultimate in convenience for the motorist. Some Motor Structures have been designed and constructed to provide drive-through accessibility, a feature which totally eliminates the need for motorists to park and leave their cars in order to eat, to go to the bank, or whatever.

Motor Structures are characterized by freestanding construction, with three or four main facades to achieve maximum visibility from the street and the surrounding environment. The shape of the entire building, as well as the applied architectural details, the type of building materials and the bold colors of the signage, are designed to attract the attention of people in fast-moving motor vehicles. Often the building possesses a stylized roof and wall treatments in an effort to give the resident business establishment strong identity, and to stand apart from surrounding uses.

Motor Structures usually are set back from the street and neighboring buildings to allow for a visible parking area directly in front of the building. Large, freestanding pole signs often are placed near or at the front property line, so that identity of the business establishment can be recognized from great distances up and down the street. Occasionally, landscaping is used in the parking lots, but more frequently it is used to denote the building entryway, making the short trip from the auto to the store a pleasant experience.

The construction of additional Motor Structures and/or Drive-up buildings along Main Street from Atlantic to Almansor is not compatible with other objectives of downtown revitalization, and therefore such construction is to be avoided.

BUILDING FORM: Many Motor Structures are designed to be, for all intents and purposes, a type of sign by which the establishment achieves immediate image and distinction. The building form, the shape of the roof and windows, and the colors and types of materials deliberately are designed and integrated with one another to achieve the desired image. There are many Motor Structure forms that have achieved a nationwide image, such as McDonald's Golden Arches and Jack-in-the-Box.

GUIDELINE: Any renovation or remodeling of Drive-up structures can present very complex design problems and can be expensive to perform because the building's appearance and form are integral to one another. Inexpensive alterations, such as changing the sign, changing the paint scheme and adding new materials, can easily and quickly result in the building looking like a cluttered patchwork of forms and ideas. Accordingly, any renovation or remodeling of Drive-Up structures must observe and respect very closely the original integration of form, materials, colors and graphics. Any new color scheme must be coordinated carefully with all of the signage and all colors of the existing materials, such as brick, tile and glass. Large areas should not be painted with a bright, intense color. Neutral background colors, such as beige, warm whites, pale ochre or gray are appropriate, whereas bright, bold colors such as red, blue, yellow, green or orange are to be reserved and used sparsely as contrasts to create visual interest. Contrasting colors should be limited to two in number.

PARKING AREA: Visible, easy automobile access from the street is an important feature in attracting customers to Drive-Up buildings. Often the parking area surrounds the building, making access to the building from autos very convenient.

Unfortunately, these off-street parking lots create visual breaks or voids in the continuous blockface along Main Street, and are particularly noticeable when located mid-block. In addition, curb cuts in the sidewalk for automobile access can be awkward.
and dangerous for pedestrian movement along sidewalk areas.

**GUIDELINE:** Parking lots are often barren areas of greasy asphalt which provide little or no relief from glaring sun or heat. They frequently become collectors of litter and garbage. Obviously maintenance is important for improving and maintaining the image of the business establishment and the streetscape. Dumpster should be hidden from view with walls and landscaping. Landscaping of barrier lots would help to soften the visual impression of the asphalt expanse and to provide shade. The pedestrian's view of the parking area should be screened with landscaping so that the cars parked along the sidewalk are separated from the walkway. Small scale, pedestrian-oriented parking entrance and exit signs should be placed in advance of the curb cuts so that pedestrians are forewarned of vehicular points of ingress and egress.

**FREESTANDING SIGN:** Because the building often is set back a considerable distance from the front property line, it is common to construct a large, illuminated sign near the street in order to achieve maximum visibility.

**GUIDELINE:** No freestanding sign for any Drive-Up building should exceed 25 feet in height, or the height of the building, whichever is less. The signage area should not exceed a maximum of 20 square feet. Illumination is a major consideration in design of the sign. Preferably the sign would be illuminated by neon or would be internally illuminated. No sign should be illuminated to an intensity in excess of that of a public street light, which means in the case of internally-illuminated signs that the plastic housing should be deep in color so that the resulting illuminated color is not too bright.

The number of colors, excluding the background color, should be limited to three per sign. The color scheme of the sign should relate to the building colors. The design of the sign should emphasize legibility and simplicity in order to achieve a strong sense of image and place. The lettering and advertising matter should be limited to a brief indication of the establishment's name and type of business.

Moving, rotating, flashing and other types of animated signing are to be avoided on freestanding signs.

**PRIVATE AREA LANDSCAPING:** Landscaping is used both to add ornamentation to the building and to provide amenity to the contiguous pedestrian environment. Major entrances to business establishments sometimes are denoted with landscaped walkways, which may include benches or fountains.

**GUIDELINE:** Existing landscaped areas should be regularly tended to and kept free of litter. Landscaping along the front property line, in the parking lots and at major entrances would improve many Drive-Up business establishments along Main Street. A potentially attractive feature of such landscaping is use of lighting to highlight the nighttime appearance of such establishments.

### Rear Facade Treatments

Rear area facades always have played secondary yet essential roles relative to successful retail shopping environments. Historically, rear areas were "back alleys" where deliveries were made and trash was collected. Regular customers occasionally found it more convenient to park in the alleyway directly behind the store than to search for a parking space along "Main Street". As the auto age became permanently rooted in post-World War II American life, the need for parking in downtown areas grew to proportions that resulted in demolition of buildings on or near "Main Street" for use as large parking lots. Consequently, the rear areas of "Main Street" buildings increasingly were exposed to block-size off-street parking areas which stretched from block to block, creating long, open views of rear facades. With the installation of these new parking areas, development of back door entrances to "Main Street" stores became a logical step in attracting and serving customers.

Rear areas serve two purposes: 1) to provide convenient customer access to the sales or service establishment; and 2) to accommodate service
needs and delivery of merchandise. Most stores take advantage of the direct access to these parking areas by providing rear entrances, although some smaller stores cannot maintain a rear or second entrance because of required security precautions. But in many cases rear entrances are essential as service areas, to provide accommodation for deliveries and pickups.

Rear areas which function as entrances usually are very simple reflections of a store’s ‘Main Street’ façade. Older buildings often are brick along the rear facade, while along the front a more recent “face lifting” presents a different appearance. Characteristically there is little or no ornamentation, and windows and doors tend to be very basic and simple in design. Sometimes there is a small sign that identifies the store and usually there are numerous signs providing directions for service vehicles.

REAR FACADE MATERIALS AND COLORS:
Most of the rear facades in downtown Alhambra are stucco with no ornamentation. The appearance is very utilitarian as evidenced by exposed drain pipes and utility wires. The basic and unadorned state of the rear facade materials projects a working, informal atmosphere.

GUIDELINE: Any insensitively applied materials or excessively large signs should be removed from the original rear facade. No new or “used” materials should be added to a rear facade to re-face the wall or to distinguish the “storefront area” from the rest of the facade. Rear facades should retain their utilitarian “back door” appearance. Design changes to rear facades should be primarily limited to awnings, signage, lighting and landscaping.

In an attempt to call attention to themselves, some stores have garish or unattractive paint schemes on their rear facades. A monochromatic paint scheme, possibly using a deep color such as rust, is preferable. In some situations, a single contrasting color such as primary yellow could be used to highlight windows and entrances. Light and bright colors should be reserved for use in awnings, signage and doorways. Coordination of colors with neighboring buildings would achieve a harmony and cohesive-
ness that would allow for the image of each business to project to the maximum extent desired, and yet would achieve this in the absence of trying to compete with or otherwise outdo neighboring establishments. The rear areas have the potential to become a distinctively pleasant, unified environment, and coordination among store owners would effectively ensure realization of that potential.

ENTRANCES AND WINDOWS: The type of window openings on the rear facade very often reveals the original design and character of the rear facade. Very often they are simply square or rectangular in shape, with bars or grilles for security. Usually smaller than those on the front facade, the rear windows are primarily functional, often opening onto storage or sometimes upper level living spaces. Occasionally showcase buildings were designed with miniature display windows built into the rear entranceway area. Usually these display windows are at eye level, flanking the slightly recessed doorway, although some rear areas were designed to have formal rear entrances with freestanding display cases which sometimes were set into landscaped planters. In some cases, new large display windows, which mimic the storefront windows, have been installed.

Rear entrances usually are denoted by placement of a sign, a slightly recessed area and/or a paving material which indicates the walkway. Like the main entrance, the rear doors usually are glass, which allows the shopper to see the interior of the store, and in some cases, all the way through the store to Main Street.

GUIDELINE: Rear facade windows should remain exposed and even highlighted with colorful awnings or window shades. The transparency of the windows should be maintained whenever possible. When this is not possible, windows should be treated as if they were transparent, perhaps with an awning. Awnings make a colorful three-dimensional addition to flat, plain facades, adding lively visual interest.

Display windows should be designed with as much care and attention as is given to the front facade displays, because in many cases the rear displays are the most frequent impression shoppers will have of the store. Because rear facade display cases generally are small, the displays easily could be changed frequently, always attempting to create a colorful, attractive focal point for shoppers. For existing rear areas without display windows, consideration should be given to the addition of such units, perhaps integrating them with landscaping or a new entrance. Although the rear area display windows are supplementary to the Main Street displays, their potential for being colorful "jewels" amidst an unadorned pedestrian environment should be realized.

The rear area entrance should be very clearly indicated, and appear attractive as well as functional. Despite the necessity for service areas, as well as the presence of signage and display windows, there should be a definite sense of entrance. Some rear area entrances have been designed with glass, are recessed and are flanked by display windows, thereby mimicking the formality of the Main Street facade. Others have plain wooden or metal doors, with little or no architectural detailing to indicate an entrance. Semi-formal entrances should be transparent so that the shopper has an attractive view of the store's interior. These entrances could be highlighted with landscaping located in planters around display windows, flanking the walkway and/or located in movable planters on either side of the door.

Very plain, inherently camouflaged rear entrances could be highlighted with the use of distinctive paving to "point" the way from the alleyway, painting the door a contrasting color, or replacing a solid door with glass and/or adding a colorful canopy at the entrance. A canvas canopy extending from the doorway not only could provide orientation, but also could create a sense of enclosure, arrival and anticipation. Canopies can be constructed in myriad ways — in a box shape, arched or pyramid form, etc. The canopy shape could be designed to reflect architectural elements such as the windows, or could contrast with other existing shapes. In addition, canopies provide an ideal place for signage which "extends" out to the pedestrian and is pedestrian-scaled.

SIGN: There are two signage needs for rear areas: 1) to identify the business establishments; and 2) to provide direction for service vehicles, parking areas for patrons, etc. The store identification sign usually mimics the design of the front facade signage, but at a smaller scale. The service signage often is very casual in appearance, for example, spray-painted stencil letters or standard signs.

GUIDELINE: Rear areas provide the opportunity for colorful, informal kinds of signage. Although the signage should be scaled to the pedestrian, it also should provide a bold, lively and legible contrast to the overall composition and materials of the facade. There should not be more than two signs identifying the business, and the total signage area should not exceed 25 square feet. No sign should project higher than the roofline, or extend more than 6 feet from the building wall. Signage should help to distinguish one building from another, to locate the store entrance, and to visually unify the entire facade.

Ideally the business establishment has one or more "logo" colors which are used consistently on shopping bags, business cards and all the signage, including the rear area signage. Even the necessary service signage could be designed to be consistent with the store's graphic image. Some of the colorful rear area signage may be wordless, and yet reinforce the identification of the store with a combination of colors. For example, colored neon tubing could outline window openings or display windows. When used in combination with canvas awnings and canopies, signage should project bright spots of color both at night and during the day.

Because of the interesting possibilities for nighttime use of rear areas, designing signage that is attractive at night as well as day is strongly encouraged. Appropriate signage materials include neon, internally-illuminated colored plastic, painted metal, and cloth banners. Neon and internally-illuminated signs are especially colorful and attractive at night, and both of these types can be artistically manipulated to produce distinctive signage. Any internally-illuminated signs should be kept at a low intensity, and must have dark-colored backgrounds and/or letters. Primary and secondary
colors such as red, blue, green and orange are effective during the day, but are especially effective when illuminated at night.

Painted metal signs and cloth banners require indirect lighting. The lighting fixture itself should be considered an important element in the design of the facade. Metal signs are a traditional form of signage considered to be very durable. Though one usually thinks of metal signs in rectilinear terms, they can be cut to any shape. Cloth banners appear very festive and can be eye-catching visual delights. Simpler designs with bold colors achieve the greatest recognizability. This form of signage can be especially effective without words. Several small banners in varying hues could be hung in series, creating a rhythm of color.

Rear areas are appropriate locations for movable, freestanding signs. For example, "sandwich board" signs can be set up outside during business hours and can provide helpful and supplementary information to the patron. Restaurants can feature their daily menus, and stores can advertise special sales or featured items.

**LANDSCAPED AREA:** Some rear facades originally were designed to incorporate landscaped areas. However, most did not, although the benefits of having rear area landscaping are significant. Usually the rear facades of buildings do not extend all the way to the property line, as do the front facades along Main Street. The open space is an ideal location for small-scale landscaping or outdoor uses, such as restaurants.

**GUIDELINE:** The "unused" space between the building and the property line can be improved to create an inviting, pedestrian-oriented place-to-be. The informality of the rear area architecture and the continuing use of the area for service deliveries combine to create a pleasantly casual and comfortable atmosphere. Landscaping in conjunction with redesigning the space to make a strong visual and functional distinction between pedestrian walkways, entrances and service areas can transform such barren, drab spaces into popular areas. The landscaping could be located in movable or permanent planters and may include some small trees.

It should be used to differentiate the outdoor space from the alleyway and the pedestrian from the service areas, and to enhance the entrance. Landscaping along the stretch of rear facades would add welcome greenery, and would help to break up the existing long, dull view from the parking lots.

The landscaping could be lighted to create a special atmosphere at night. Floodlighting, spot lighting or small white lights could be used. Restaurants, in particular, could effectively utilize this means of creating a pleasant atmosphere.

**SERVICE AREAS:** A portion of the rear facade area functions as an assigned service area which can include a dock for loading and unloading service vehicles, and an area for the storage and removal of refuse. Truck ramps and dumpsters commonly are seen in rear areas.

**GUIDELINE:** Service areas should be clearly indicated with carefully designed signage and other graphics, such as striping. Service elements, such as garbage and refuse containers, should be hidden from view and smell by sealed enclosures. Second-level outdoor deck areas could be used to create an interesting private environment that is completely separated from the service areas. Landscaping is another effective means of separating service and pedestrian areas, and of screening service elements from view.

**New Construction**

Any new construction in downtown Alhambra should be designed to be compatible with existing structures. Accordingly, new construction should not dominate or stand out in contrast to surrounding buildings. New buildings should respond sympathetically to the existing streetscape and its visual character, and should contribute to the cohesiveness and common elements of the streetscape. To this end, all of the guidelines spelled out earlier relating to materials, colors, signs, etc. for renovation of existing structures should be carefully considered and applied where appropriate, in the design of new construction.

This does not mean that new buildings should mimic existing structures or be constructed as "replica buildings" of earlier period buildings. On the other hand, while blending harmoniously with neighbors certainly does not mean duplicating them, the design of new buildings should respect certain principles and elements which are inherent to existing buildings in the downtown area.

**HEIGHT AND BULK:** The downtown area is characterized by a diversity of building heights and widths. There are several large multi-story buildings, although the majority of the streetscape is composed of one and one-half to two-story structures possessing storefronts approximately 25 feet in width. The larger buildings usually are located on corner lots, giving a monumental appearance to the intersections while punctuating the streetscape with visual variety. In each case the building mass is broken up with articulated fenestration and/or decorative detailing, all of which provide a sense of scale, rhythm and proportion. Large **Main Street Storefront** buildings possess highly articulated window openings on upper floors, and on the ground level the buildings are divided into storefront-wide bays. **Showcase Storefront** buildings have a rhythm of display windows along the ground level, while the upper floors often are large blank walls with very simple detailing and a large sign which offsets the expanse of the facade.

**GUIDELINE:** New construction should respect and relate to the height and width of neighboring buildings, so as to avoid distracting changes in scale and proportion. Neighboring structures also should serve as points of reference for the design of openings and fenestration. New construction should seek to continue the rhythm of openings, including the width of storefronts and bays along the streetscape. The intrusion of massive, highrise buildings in downtown Alhambra would destroy the character and continuity of the area, and adversely affect the retail shopping environment and pedestrian scale of the existing storefront buildings.

**SHAPE:** Existing buildings in the downtown area are rectilinear in form, both in plan and in street facade elevations, with the exception of some
Drive-Up structures. The facades are composed of rectilinear openings, such as doors and windows, as well as vertical elements such as structural piers. Horizontal elements include belt courses and rooflines and projecting canopies. By contrast, diagonal patterns, free form and circular elements are not present contributors to the character of the area.

GUIDELINE: New buildings should be generally rectilinear in shape, either parallel or perpendicular to the street, and should not exhibit any obviously diagonal or circular orientation. In elevation, the buildings should have an overall directional emphasis that is either horizontal or vertical, depending on the neighboring buildings. The roofline should be essentially flat or stepped up to the center with horizontal elements, and thus gabled or mansard solutions are inappropriate. There are several examples of Motor Structures along Main Street that have been designed to form distinctive building shapes, often with an exaggerated and attention-getting roofline. No new "logo-type" buildings should be constructed, as they are designed to call attention to themselves in a self-serving manner rather than to contribute with others to the overall character of the area.

PEDESTRIAN RELATIONSHIPS: With the exception of the Motor Structures and three or four other buildings of fairly recent construction, most of the buildings fronting on Main Street in the commercial area are positioned directly on the front property line. This absence of setback from the street creates a wall of building facades along Main Street which provides order and a certain unity as perceived by the pedestrian.

GUIDELINE: The siting of any new construction should respect and reinforce the existing "front facade" building line. Therefore, no building should be set back from the front property line, although creative possibilities are encouraged which provide for arcade-like or recessed pedestrian circulation spaces at the ground level. Voids or "plazas" along front property lines almost always are alienating and remain deserted, for they disrupt the continuous nature of the streetscape and are disorienting to the pedestrian.

STOREFRONTS: Nearly every building along Main Street has retail activity at the ground level. The storefront areas with their display windows, display cases and entrances exhibit a design solution of reflective, transparent materials which allow the pedestrian to experience virtually direct contact with the merchandise for sale. Thus, the pedestrian’s orientation to existing buildings is centered on visual access to colorful window displays and/or attractive store interiors.

GUIDELINE: In the event that future construction is proposed which provides office and/or residential use(s), then ground level commercial uses also should be provided. Functional and visual elements oriented to the pedestrian along the ground level are essential if the diversity and strength of the downtown shopping environment is to be maintained. Display windows, both large and small, exist as primary sources of interest and entertainment to the pedestrian. Open storefronts, that is, facades consisting primarily of glass on the ground (and sometimes second) level, provide the ideal visual relationship with the pedestrian because the entire store interior becomes the "display window."

Overhead canopies that are built permanently into the building may be appropriate for some new designs, and would provide shade and a sense of enclosure for the pedestrian. Applied canvas awnings can effectively highlight storefront areas, adding colorful and distinctive elements while providing shade. It also is important that entrances are easily recognizable so that the pedestrian has a clear sense of the building's uses and activities. The storefront area makes the most significant contribution to the streetscape from the pedestrian's perspective, and should be designed with the retail shopping environment in mind so as to provide maximum visual interest.

REAR FACADES: Most of the rear facades in downtown Alhambra face onto large off-street parking areas. In some cases pedestrian access is provided to Main Street, and in many cases stores have rear entrances.

GUIDELINE: It is important for side walls and rear facade areas, as well as for the front elevation,
to be designed to complement the pedestrian character of downtown. Accordingly, new construction should address the pedestrian environment of rear facade areas as well as Main Street. Store access, pedestrian arcades and outdoor uses are encouraged. Landscaping can reinforce architecture of the new construction by establishing attractive pedestrian-oriented "alleyway" environments. Side walls along pedestrian walkways should be designed (perhaps in conjunction with landscaping) to provide visual interest along the expanse of the wall. Use of balconies or second floor windows with awnings to "lower the ceiling" of the walkway is encouraged.

**PARKING/VEHICULAR RELATIONSHIPS:**

**Motor Structures** typically provide parking lots with direct access from Main Street, a feature which is oriented entirely to the motorist. The vehicular access points and parking areas break the continuity of the streetscape facade, and can alienate the pedestrian from the building. Frequently no attempt is made to shield the view of parked cars from the pedestrian, and curb cuts in the sidewalk can be awkward and hazardous to the pedestrian.

**GUIDELINE:** No new off-street parking areas that front directly onto Main Street should be permitted. Vehicular access to buildings and parking areas should be only from side streets, alleyways and east-west streets parallel to Main Street. New buildings fronting on Main Street should be designed to fill the width of the site.

**MATERIALS:** The diversity of architectural styles along Main Street is manifested in part by the variety of building materials employed. In their original designs, existing buildings were constructed of and ornamented with materials that most effectively expressed the respective architectural styles. For example, materials used for **Motor Structures** were selected in part to make the structure stand out from the environment and be unusual enough to create a distinctive logo/image.

**GUIDELINE:** Careful and appropriate application of materials is more important than actual selection of materials. Because of the variety of materials found along Main Street, it is recommended to use surface or sheathing materials that are similar to, or at least unquestionably compatible with, surrounding storefronts and the showcase storefront environment. Depending on the design of a new building, the storefront area generally will permit consideration of a wider range of appropriate materials than will the building facade as a whole. While brushed aluminum siding would not fit in well with the existing streetscape, it could be very effective as an accent or trim for framing of a storefront area. The use of transparent glass is strongly recommended on the ground level so that the continuous line of glass showcase storefronts is maintained. Some materials, no matter how they are applied, are not appropriate to downtown Alhambra: heavily-tinted or mirror glass; re-used or artificial brick; exposed, rough-sawn wood; and other "natural" or "antique" materials.

**PEDESTRIAN ACCESSIBILITY TO MAIN STREET:** As noted elsewhere in this manual, a major objective for achieving successful revitalization of the downtown commercial area is to significantly improve pedestrian "through" access to Main Street from rear area off-street parking facilities. A parallel effort, which should be pursued concurrently with upgrading of existing facilities, is provision of additional means of pedestrian "through" access, either in the form of new public area improvements or private sector construction. Whether achieved through development of public walkways or as provided for by the storeowner, new construction affords important opportunities for accomplishing the essential objective of pedestrian accessibility to Main Street.

**GUIDELINE:** Whenever new private sector construction is to occur along Main Street, or where opportunities present themselves for public acquisition and improvement of property along Main Street, provision of inviting pedestrian access from rear area off-street parking facilities "through" to Main Street should be incorporated to the maximum extent feasible. In particular, the Redevelopment Agency's downtown project area can include several solutions for achieving "through" pedestrian access to and from Main Street. In situations involving one to three contiguous parcels, an arcade solution is recommended, wherein one or two stories of pedestrian-oriented retail and service establishments are constructed around a courtyard and/or arcade, with an orientation perpendicular to Main Street so as to reinforce the "through" access nature of the development. In situations involving four or more contiguous parcels fronting on Main Street, it also would be possible to consider incorporation of pedestrian walkways or promenades. In all cases, it is critical to orient abutting commercial uses to the walkway or promenade as well as to Main Street, for in no instance should new construction lead to development of pedestrian areas that are void of immediately-adjoining commercial activity. Such pedestrian "corridors" most often result in unnecessary maintenance costs and problems of public safety, and they also represent lost opportunity to achieve economic return on public investment.
CHECKLIST FOR YOUR STOREFRONT

My store/building is

MAIN STREET STOREFRONT  SHOWCASE STOREFRONT  DRIVE-UP

(Circle one)

CLEANLINESS

☐ 1. Entryway floor clean
☐ 2. Display windows and glass doors clean
☐ 3. Planters free of litter
☐ 4. Sidewalk in front and rear clean

SIGNAGE

☐ 1. Simple in design
☐ 2. Does not cover an architectural detailing and fits in with the overall building facade
☐ 3. All signs and window graphics are coordinated
☐ 4. Primary signs are well lit
☐ 5. Permanent and temporary window signs do not cover more than 25% (Main Street and Drive-Up buildings) or 5% (Showcase buildings) of the window area
☐ 6. Signage materials complement the building architecture
☐ 7. Signage is color coordinated with the storefront and facade paint scheme

LIGHTING

☐ 1. Window displays are effectively lit at night and during the day
☐ 2. Primary signage is illuminated at night
☐ 3. Storefront appears colorful and attractive at night
☐ 4. Lights are hidden

WINDOW DISPLAYS

☐ 1. Windows not too empty
☐ 2. Windows not too full
☐ 3. Main items (focus) stand out
☐ 4. Colors do not clash
☐ 5. Props and fixtures do not overshadow merchandise
☐ 6. Merchandise clean/pressed
☐ 7. Lighting used dramatically
☐ 8. Background and props are seasonable
☐ 9. Temporary window graphics or message cards tie into display

LANDSCAPING

☐ 1. Enhances storefront or entrance area
☐ 2. Maintained in healthy, attractive condition
☐ 3. Illuminated at night
☐ 4. Coordinated with neighbors

REAR AREAS

☐ 1. Appears color-coordinated with neighboring buildings
☐ 2. Rear entrance is highlighted with paving, signage and/or canopy
☐ 3. Service areas screened with landscaping
☐ 4. Signage is colorful and well illuminated
☐ 5. Outdoor area used during the day _______ at night _______