

6. COMMUNITY DESIGN ELEMENT

A. Purpose

The Community Design Element establishes goals, policies, and programs to preserve and enhance Fort Bragg's authentic, small town character. The community is defined in part by its isolated location on the magnificent coastline of Mendocino County. Its sense of place derives from its heritage as a regional center for the timber and fishing industries. As the economy evolves to a more tourism and service-based economy, the community has acknowledged the importance of maintaining the historic identify of downtown and the integrity of the residential neighborhoods, while enhancing views and access to the coastline and planning for continued growth and development.

The Community Design Element is concerned primarily with the visual quality of the City, or what residents and visitors see. The City's appearance is essential to the quality of life in Fort Bragg. Visual quality and amenities go hand-in-hand with long-term economic development strategies, and strengthen the stability and desirability of the community. To be attractive to residents, visitors, and businesses, the City must be concerned about its appearance, physical character, and livability. Existing residential real estate values and the desirability of businesses that depend on tourism are closely tied to the visual character of the community.

This element contains sections addressing Design Review, the Central Business District, historic preservation, and public art and spaces.

B. Citywide Design Guidelines

Most new development in the City is subject to a design review process which is intended to ensure that it preserves and enhances the aesthetic character of its setting. Compliance with the Citywide Design Guidelines is the basis for Design Review approval. While the Guidelines are flexible in order to encourage innovative and creative designs, they do include many requirements that are qualitative statements rather than quantitative standards. There are many acceptable ways to meet each of the Guidelines.

C. Historic Preservation

Much of Fort Bragg was built during the first half of the twentieth century, and the built environment in the Central Business District and many of the neighborhoods reflects the architectural heritage of the community. Fort Bragg's architecturally significant buildings and structures convey a sense of the community's history, providing a link to the past and strengthening the City's identity. From the Sherwood Pomo who lived in the area for over 5,000 years to the more recent European settlers seeking lumber, fish, and fur, the landscape has seen remarkable transformations.

The City has a Historic Building Inventory that identifies buildings, sites, structures, and objects of cultural and historical importance. The purpose of the Inventory is to preserve the community's heritage by facilitating use of the State of California's Historic Building Code. To be included in the Historic Building Inventory, a structure must be at least 40 years old and meet other criteria related to its design and history. The Inventory is not a comprehensive description of all historically or culturally significant buildings or sites in the community, and a property is listed at the owner's request.

D. The Central Business District

The Central Business District (CBD) is the heart of the community's commercial, civic, historic, and cultural life. It is the area with the largest concentration of historic buildings such as the Skunk Train Depot, the Guest House Museum, the Old Fort Building, Town Hall, City Hall, and numerous commercial and residential structures. The combined efforts of government and property owners will ensure that the attractiveness of the downtown will be preserved and enhanced. Increasing pedestrian activity, improving street lighting, parking, and amenities, and ensuring that renovations and new construction maintain the historic scale and character of this area will foster the continued vitality of the CBD.



Old Fort Building, 430 North Franklin Street

E. Goals, Policies, and Programs

Goal CD-1 **Ensure that new development demonstrates excellence of design and sensitivity to the character of the surrounding neighborhood.**

Policy CD-1.1 Citywide Design Guidelines: Ensure that new development and remodels are constructed in a manner consistent with the Citywide Design Guidelines.

Program CD-1.1.1: Periodically update the Citywide Design Guidelines.

Program CD-1.1.2 Commercial and Multi-Family Development: Continue to complete Design Review of commercial and multi-family development to ensure that they fit harmoniously with the scale and design of existing buildings and streetscape of the City.

Policy CD-1.2 Discourage Sameness and Repetitive Residential Designs.

Policy CD-1.3 Scenic Views and Resource Areas: Ensure that development does not adversely impact scenic views and resources as seen from public rights-of-way.

Policy CD-1.4 Property Maintenance and Nuisances: Ensure that properties are well maintained and nuisances are abated.

Program CD-1.4.1: Continue to implement and enforce the City's nuisance abatement ordinance, and update it, as necessary, to ensure that property values are maintained throughout the City.

Program CD-1.4.2: Provide Code enforcement for immediate health and safety violations in conjunction with the building inspection process.

Policy CD-1.5 Strip Development: Discourage strip development along Main Street.

Strip development is typically characterized by street frontage parking lots serving individual or strips of stores or restaurants. It differs from central business districts and shopping centers in that typically there are no provisions for pedestrian access between individual uses, the uses are only one-store deep, the buildings are arranged linearly rather than clustered, and there is no design integration among individual uses.

Goal CD-2 Preserve the Central Business District as the commercial, civic, historic, and cultural center of the community.

Policy CD-2.1 Adaptive Reuse: Facilitate the adaptive reuse of existing older buildings in the Central Business District.

Program CD-2.1.1: Consider establishing a low-interest revolving loan fund for the renovation and upgrading of older buildings in the Central Business District, with incentives for the reuse of vacant or underutilized upper floors for housing.

Policy CD-2.2 Pedestrian Activity: Encourage increased pedestrian movement and activity in the Central Business District.

Program CD-2.2.1: Continue to support the operation of a Farmer's Market and a multitude of street fairs and promotional activities in the Central Business District.



New Streetscape in Downtown Fort Bragg

Policy CD-2.3 Economic Vitality: Continue to support the economic diversity and vitality of downtown businesses.

Program CD-2.3.1: Consider establishing a Business Improvement District (BID) to stimulate increased business activity and revenues by helping to fund public improvements and loans and/or grants for private improvements in the Central Business District.

Program CD-2.3.2: Continue to periodically update the City's Economic Development Strategy.

Policy CD-2.4 Parking: Improve the availability of public parking facilities in the Central Business District and other commercial areas.

Program CD-2.4.1: Implement shared parking agreements wherever feasible. Utilize, as appropriate, development agreements, conditions of approval, easements, and other means to assure shared parking arrangements.

Program CD-2.4.2: Consider establishing a parking assessment district for the Central Business District to help finance the acquisition of property for additional off-street parking lots.

Program CD-2.4.3: Periodically update the Central Business District parking in-lieu fee program to ensure that it presents a fair and equitable alternative to the provision of on-site parking.

Policy CD-2.5 Strengthen the Distinctive Identity of the Central Business District: Strengthen the distinctive identity and unique sense of place of the Central Business District.

Program CD-2.5.1: Consider establishing a sign program for the Central Business District, with distinctive signs at the entryways to and within the Central Business District.

Program CD-2.5.2: Locate an area where a pocket park or a small plaza could be established for public gatherings, street fairs, concerts, and similar outdoor public events.

Goal CD-3 Create attractive entryways to the City.

Policy CD-3.1 Entryways: Clearly define the points of entry to the City through the use of distinctive signs, lighting, and landscaping.

Program CD-3.1.1: Maintain distinctive signs placed in a landscaped area at the south entryway at Highway 20/Highway One and at the north entryway on Highway One at the City Limits.

Policy CD-3.2 Gateway Development: Encourage a higher quality of development at the City's gateways.

Program CD-3.2.1: Consider adopting the following standards for Gateway Developments in the Citywide Design Standards:

- Define gateway development as development located South of the Noyo Harbor Bridge or North of the Pudding Creek Bridge.
- Gateway development should not detract from views to the ocean.
- Signage should be modest in scale and should not block the viewshed.
- Significant landscaping shall be installed to reinforce the transition from a wilderness environment to an urban environment in gateway development. Landscaping should include trees and drought tolerant plants. Lawns are discouraged.
- Site design should include open space around the periphery of the gateway development to reinforce the transitional quality of the area.
- Site design should include installation of bike lanes and sidewalks.
- Gateway development should model Green Building techniques and materials.



Fort Bragg Gateway Welcome Sign

Goal CD-4 Improve the appearance and effectiveness of parking facilities.

Policy CD-4.1 Parking Location: Wherever feasible, locate parking facilities to the rear of the development so that the building facade is contiguous with the street frontage, and parking areas are hidden from the street.

Goal CD-5 Use lighting to create a sense of security and to provide cohesion to the physical structure of the community.

Policy CD-5.1 Security: Establish standards to ensure that on-site lighting is adequate to provide security while not producing excessive glare.

Policy CD-5.2 Lighting Design Review Guidelines: Apply lighting design guidelines in the Citywide Design Guidelines and the City's Zoning Ordinance.

Policy CD-5.3: Exterior lighting (except traffic lights, navigational lights, and other similar safety lighting) shall be minimized, restricted to low intensity fixtures, and shielded so that no light shines beyond the boundary of the property.

Goal CD-6 Preserve cultural and historic resources.

Policy CD-6.1 Protect and Preserve Buildings and Sites with Historic and Cultural Significance to the Community:



124 Laurel Street: A historically significant structure in the Central Business District

Program CD-6.1.1: Encourage property owners to list their buildings in the Historic Building Inventory.

Program CD-6.1.2: Approve building permits using the State Historic Building Code, as appropriate.

Program CD-6.1.3: Establish incentives for the preservation and restoration of historic buildings and sites. Consider the following incentives: low interest loans for rehabilitation consistent with the original character of historic buildings, tax incentives for the preservation of historic structures, including the use of Mills Act preservation contracts, and awards or grants for the preservation and protection of historic buildings and those with cultural significance.

Program CD-6.1.4: Consider adopting an “Affirmative Maintenance” ordinance for buildings in commercial land use designations.

Program CD-6.1.5: Establish a procedure whereby property owners may initiate a program for preservation of historic structures within their neighborhood.

Policy CD-6.2 Discourage Demolitions: Discourage the demolition of historic buildings.

Program CD-6.2.1: Require archival research to determine the cultural and historic significance of buildings proposed for demolition, paid for by the project proponent.

Policy CD-6.3 Public Awareness: Increase public awareness and appreciation of the City’s cultural and historic resources.

Program CD-6.3.1: Work with the Fort Bragg-Mendocino Coast Historical Society to increase public awareness concerning the importance of historic preservation and the location of significant and protected structures in the City.

Program CD-6.3.2: Prepare a public information package describing available programs for property owners to restore and rehabilitate historic structures, including information on tax incentives.

Program CD-6.3.3: Support the activities of the Fort Bragg-Mendocino Coast Historical Society.



Guest House Museum, Main Street

Goal CD-7 Support Public Art and Open Space.

Policy CD-7.1 Public Art: Encourage the provision of murals, fountains, sculptures, and other forms of public art in public spaces and parks.

Program CD-7.1.1: Consider adopting a One-Percent for Art Program which would require one percent of the cost of construction of new public buildings and facilities to be allocated for public art.

Program CD-7.1.2: Consider implementing an ongoing outdoor sculpture exhibit adjacent to City Hall and/or in other locations, with an emphasis on supporting and showcasing local artists and reflecting the cultural life of the community.



Mural at Company Store

Policy CD-7.2 Provide Public Open Spaces: Encourage the development of public open spaces for gatherings and fairs in commercial areas of the City.

Program CD-7.2.1: Consider the purchase of appropriate locations for public open space and the enhancement of existing public spaces to accommodate community gatherings.

Program CD-7.2.2: Encourage the inclusion of public open spaces in new commercial development that is sufficiently large to accommodate such uses.