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Design Principles for Downtown Revitalization: Las Cruces, New Mexico

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**design principles for
downtown revitalization:
LAS CRUCES, NM**

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overview + goals



Overview + Goals

The buildings of and around downtown Las Cruces reflect the unique blend of cultures and activities found within the city. Or at least it did. Today, many of the Art-Deco theaters, the historic brick structures and pueblo-style buildings sit vacant. Drab facades and limited businesses fronting the Main Street Mall now characterize the landscape, creating a challenge for Las Cruces city officials and downtown property owners.

To rejuvenate the current lackluster and uninviting state of Main Street in Las Cruces, the New Mexico Main Street Program contracted with the Design, Planning and Assistance Center (DPAC), based at the School of Architecture and Planning at the University of New Mexico, to assist in the development of design principles for the Las Cruces Main Street program. The scope of DPAC's work included devising design principles specifically for building facades of current commercial spaces and potential residential developments on Main Street.

While the principles apply to all Main Street buildings, the DPAC team defined the area of study to the buildings located on the pedestrian Main Mall, between Las Cruces Avenue and Griggs Avenue also Water and Church Street because of possible residential projects along these streets.

Downtown Las Cruces will undergo numerous changes in the next five years, including the open-

ing of a new vehicular Main Street and construction of a six-story U.S. Federal Courthouse and a four-story city hall. Design principles for facade improvements represent another method to rebuild and resurrect downtown Las Cruces.

The ensuing design principles strive to:

- Create a vibrant downtown that provides multiple uses, including commercial, residential and space for the arts, dining and entertainment
- Enhance existing buildings along Main Street
- Recognize and reinforce that Las Cruces possesses an eclectic style that should be improved through flexible parameters and design principles

The DPAC team developed this guide for use by property owners, city officials, developers, downtown businesses, planners and architects. The recommended principles contain flexible parameters, but are designed to enhance existing building facades and guide future construction — ultimately creating a lively and attractive downtown.

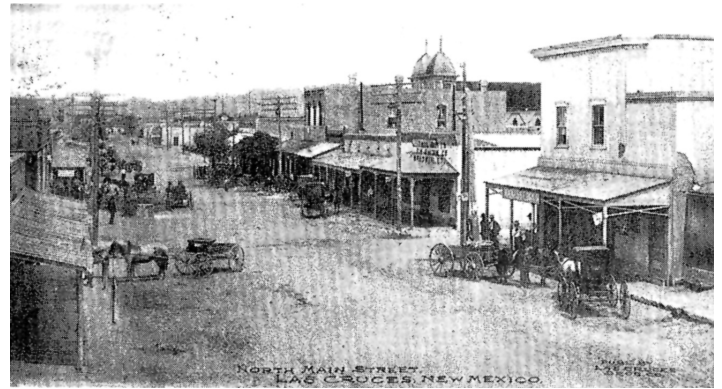
All principles and facade improvements must comply with regulations pertaining to accessibility, including the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and American National Standards Institute (ANSI) standards.

History of downtown Las Cruces

Buildings along the Main Street Mall date back to the early 1900s. Las Cruces' population neared 4,000 in 1920 and increased to almost 9,000 by 1940. For decades, Main Street served as the town center, a thriving commercial and arts district. Pedestrians and vehicles passed through to go to the theater, numerous local businesses and Woolworth's.

During the 1950s to 1960s, Las Cruces' population again jumped to more than 29,000. At this time, city leaders adopted an Urban Renewal program for downtown. In the early 1970s, city officials made the planning decision to close off several blocks to construct a pedestrian mall. Many property owners, including those who had historic structures, opted to tear down their buildings. Within three years of the street closure, businesses along Main Street plummeted from 160 to about 90.

Now, only a handful of businesses remain. Many retail and commercial operations located along Interstates 25 and 10, near Lohman Avenue and New Mexico State University. In 2002, the New Mexico Heritage Preservation Alliance determined that the Las Cruces Downtown Mall was one of the state's most endangered places. The alliance wrote, "without immediate action, the six-block area will continue to dwindle, existing businesses



Historic image of downtown Las Cruces

and cultural opportunities will lose what little traffic they now attract and downtown will continue to suffer a slow death."

In order to impede this pattern, Las Cruces officials have worked with the National Main Street Program and private planning and design firms to revitalize downtown. After several planning studies, officials decided it was time to remove the pedestrian mall and bring back an actual Main Street. Through three phases, a street orientated toward pedestrians and vehicles with wide sidewalks will replace the pedestrian mall.

Previous studies

In January 2004, the Las Cruces City Council approved the Las Cruces Downtown Revitalization Plan, developed in conjunction with design consultants Sites Southwest. This plan included schematics to reintroduce Main Street as an actual thoroughfare rather than a pedestrian mall.

In March 2005, San Antonio-based Urban Development Services examined and analyzed key areas to help rebuild downtown Las Cruces' retail base. The analysis included requirements for setback and height; requirements for transparency and access from the street; and parking requirements. The firm also examined permissible uses under Las Cruces' current zoning and made suggestions about strategies that could help achieve the city's new vision for downtown.

During fall 2006, the City of Las Cruces contracted with BBC Research & Consulting (BBC) and Housing Solutions to gauge the potential for designating an area in downtown Las Cruces as a Metropolitan Redevelopment Area (MRA). The study concluded that downtown Las Cruces met the state's definition of a "blighted area."



New Directions/ 2008

Las Cruces city officials are ready to take the downtown in a new direction with innovative design elements. The Main Street Plaza Overlay Zone, a large district for planning purposes that includes the Main Street mall, contains an “eclectic” assortment of uses from shopping, residential, government, civic and public space and historic interest. The new master plan for Las Cruces Main Street addresses this mixed usage and suggests ways to re-establish downtown Las Cruces as a cohesive and vibrant zone. This section describes elements designed to improve the overall appearance of downtown.

Circulation:

The reopening of Main Street as a two-way thoroughfare, as well as the opening of side streets to cross traffic will increase activity and visibility of downtown businesses and stimulate street life. The street will accommodate pedestrians and vehicles.



Transportation:

Offering multi-modal transportation such as bus connections, bike routes, parking options and pedestrian ease, will increase visitation downtown. Car garages and bicycle racks will let people stop, walk and experience Main Street. People from neighboring communities and other areas of Las Cruces can visit shops, eat at restaurants, enjoy art downtown and can arrive there in a variety of ways.



The farmer's market on Main Street symbolizes the vibrancy that can occur in downtown Las Cruces.

Parking:

The opening of Main Street will permit on-street parking close to shops and businesses. Likewise, parking behind buildings in small lots will accommodate visitors wanting to park for extended periods of time. A possible parking structure could help absorb the large number of employees that will work downtown because of the new courthouse and city hall. Many of downtown's parking needs will compliment each other as people will park during the day and vacate after work, freeing spaces for shoppers and visitors.

Housing:

Development of residential uses at varying densities and styles has materialized as a potential revitalization idea in downtown Las Cruces. A possible plan would call for mixed-use buildings, with housing located on the upper floors and retail, restaurants and businesses at ground level. Increased housing capacity downtown will create a new experience for downtown dwellers and residents of the larger urban context. People could walk from their home to services and activities along Main Street. Residential, coupled with new retail ventures and lively entertainment, will add an additional element to the primarily commercial zone of Main Street.

Setbacks:

Existing zoning does not allow the setback of buildings from the street, and so the street maintains a continuous wall. However, entryway setbacks create distinct and sheltered entrances. Setbacks on upper floors should occur after two to three stories to vertically reduce the appearance of excessive mass.

Streetscape and Public Art:

With the removal of the pedestrian mall and the re-introduction of the thoroughfare, incorporating new trees, furnishings, lighting, public art and plaza space will be necessary. Wide sidewalks will encourage pedestrian traffic along Main Street, but adding components in front of the façade such as planters, outdoor dining and courtyard or art will create visibility to Main Street businesses and highlight building facades and invite people to look inside and stop at a business.

Sustainable Design

Incorporating sustainable design practices into façade revitalization could lead to increased life of a building, enhancement of the connection between the built and natural environments and could create a new layer of interest for pedestrians. Sustainable design practices include: using locally-produced or recycled materials, rainwater harvesting and allowing space for green roofs. Owners and city officials should review the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) standards, which designate certain processes and environmentally-friendly designs so buildings can attain certain points to gain certification.



Context

Las Cruces, one of New Mexico's largest cities, shares traits with its nearby and faraway cities. Its closest neighbors include Sunland Park, NM, El Paso, Texas, White Sands, NM, and northern Chihuahua in Mexico. Ciudad Juarez, across from El Paso, is the largest regional city. When revitalizing facades, owners and local officials should consider the regional and historical context of Las Cruces' location. Las Cruces formed as a city before New Mexico even entered its statehood. Some buildings fronting Main Street have historical significance from different eras. Retaining history adds to the sense of place pedestrians could experience when walking along a new Main Street.



Programmatic Elements

Downtown Las Cruces offers several programmatic elements that attract people to the area. The Farmer's Market, held on Wednesdays and Saturdays, attracts the largest crowd and allows visitors to stroll through numerous vendors. The Las Cruces Museum of Art is located at the north end of the mall, alongside the Branigan Cultural Center. This space offers opportunities for education, dance performances and art exhibits. With the new street opening in phases, the continuing of the Farmer's Market and several new arts and entertainment opportunities for pedestrians. Special events downtown will help draw attention to the attractiveness of downtown. Officials should consider hosting local and regional events downtown, such as the Whole Enchilleda festival that recently relocated off Main Street.



Entryways

Many businesses currently along Main Street have opted to make the main entrance on the backside of the building, facing Water or Church Street. This dynamic has caused little pedestrian flow on the Main Mall, but provides access for customers who drive downtown. Business owners have expressed limiting entrances for security reasons and using the building's backside because that is how customers enter. Upcoming changes such as the reopening of Main Street might cause a change in pedestrian flow and business owners should consider emphasizing their main entry way toward the reopened street, depending on the traffic flow.



Facades

Facades provide character and a sense of identity for a building, thus adding to the overall character of downtown. Due to impending changes such as the reopening of Main Street and new multi-level buildings, revitalizing building facades becomes a key step to improving the vitality and appearance of downtown. Improving facades in a variety of methods becomes an opportunity to create a distinct, vibrant sense of downtown for pedestrians, while improving the building's vitality. Attractive and interesting facades appeal to pedestrians and invite them to explore and shop.



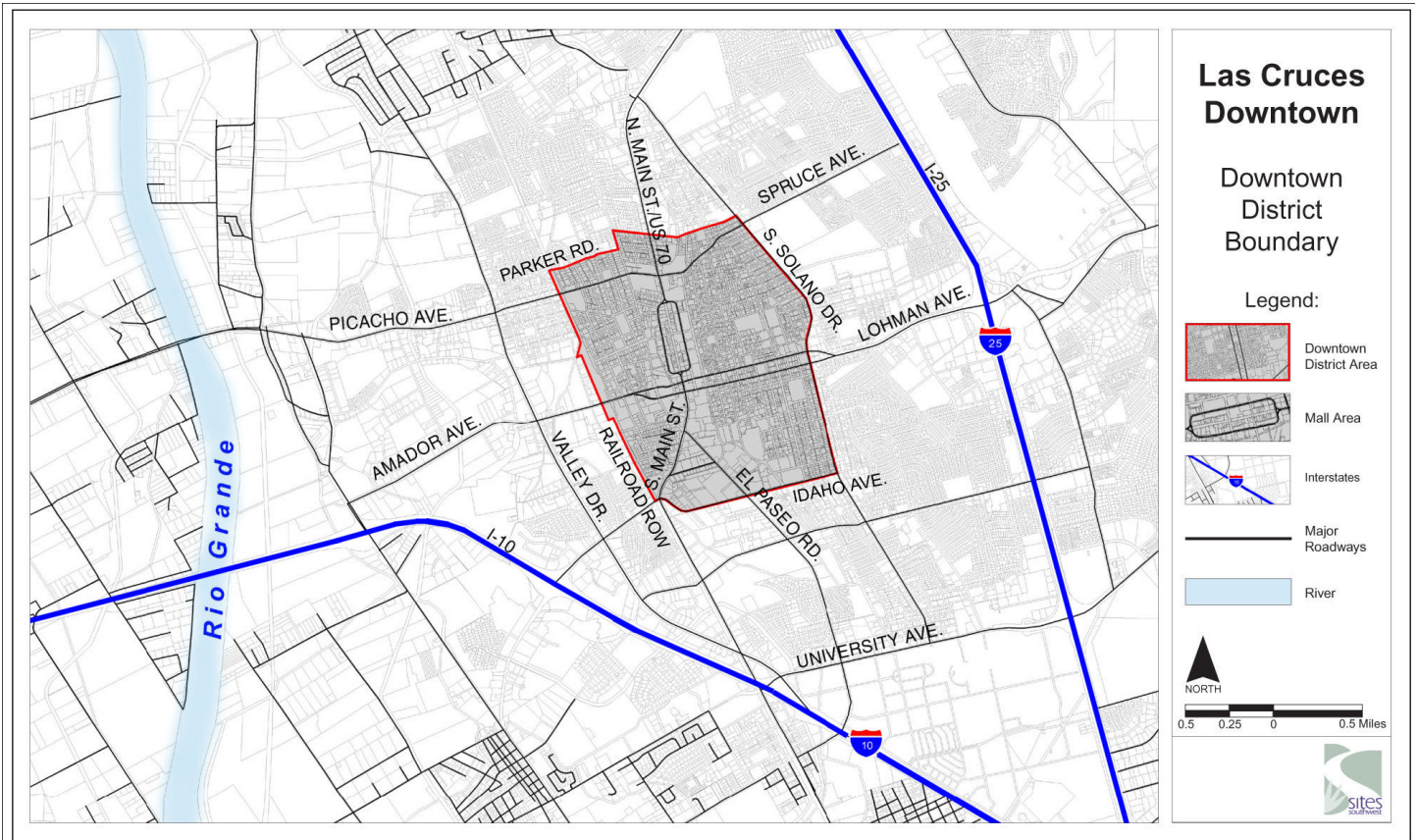
Pedestrian Scale

Successful downtown revitalization and improved facades happen with the understanding of scale and how this concept applies to design and renovations projects. 'Scale' refers to the sense of proportion a pedestrian feels when walking down a street. A thoroughfare designed to be experienced at a human scale has a different feel than one specifically for vehicles. A pedestrian moves slower than a car and is physically closer to the building, therefore able to see details. A 20-foot long blank wall resonates differently to a pedestrian versus a passenger in a car.

Good pedestrian scale is important because a street with building facades that are proportional to the human could provide comfort and safety. Downtown revitalization depends upon creating a lively, attractive setting where people gather to shop, dine, stroll and be entertained. This has a direct impact on the current and future economic success of the area.

A number of strategies, which are discussed throughout this document, offer ways to revitalize and refurbish at a good pedestrian scale. By creating interest in the vertical surfaces through articulation, building welcoming entries, allowing visibility into the building and making a congenial walking zone, a more vital and economically vibrant downtown is possible.

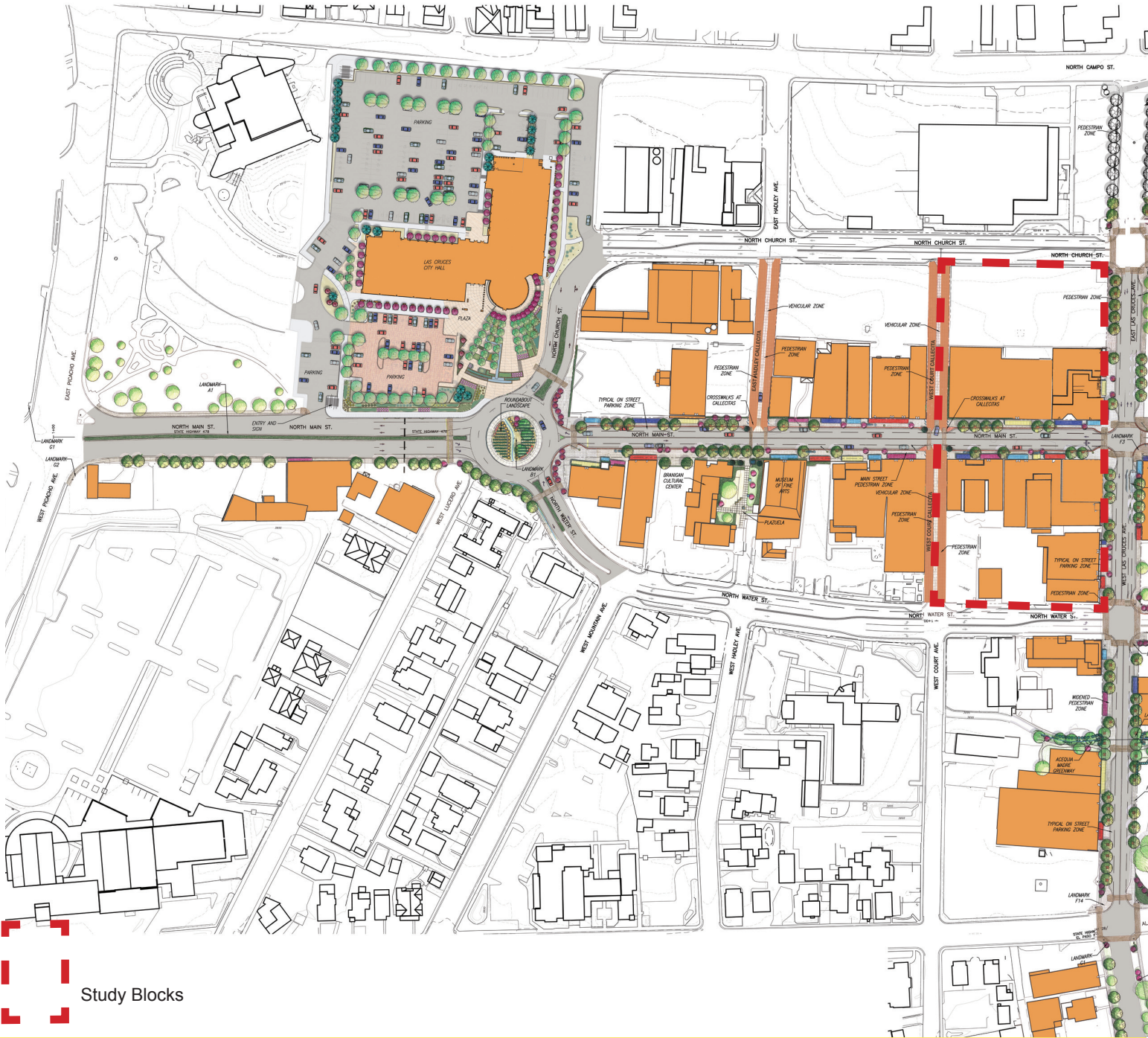




Site Context: Las Cruces Downtown
 Map: Sites Southwest



Site Context: Las Cruces Downtown
Main Street Plaza Overlay Zone
Base Map: Sites Southwest



Study Blocks



Las Cruces Downtown Master Plan
Map: Sites Southwest

facade development
rhythm & module

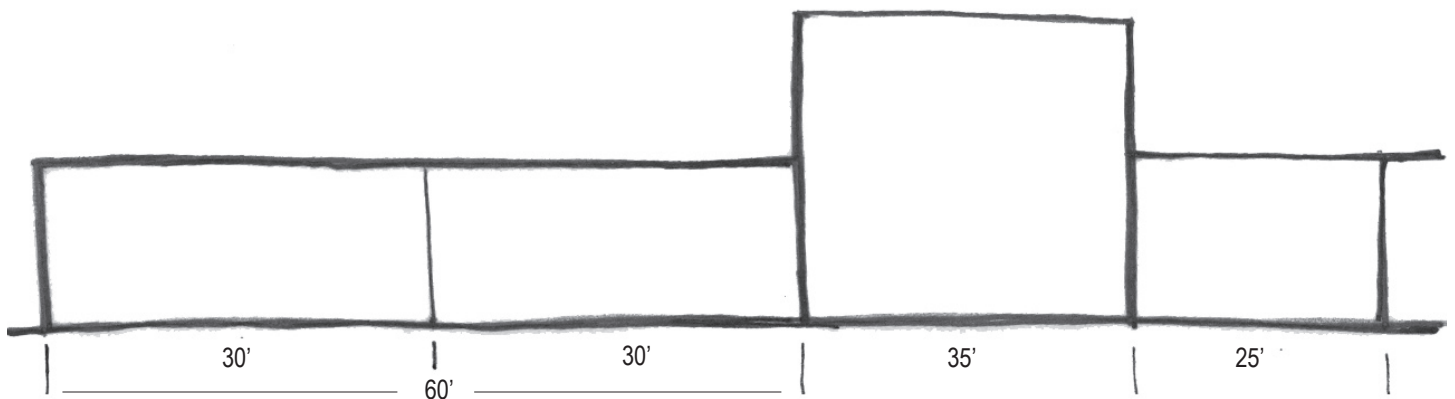
The rhythm of the street is created by the scale of buildings, the articulation of store fronts and the unique treatment of building facades.

These design principles are based on an analysis of the historical and existing facades of the Las Cruces Main Street Overlay Zone that reflect the promise of a lively neighborhood boasting a mix of commercial, office and residential uses.

building module

Lots along Main Street historically were 25 to 35 feet wide. Building construction fit that module. Facade rehabilitation or remodeling should maintain and reinforce the existing 25 to 35-foot module.

New or larger buildings should express the rhythm of existing adjacent buildings by dividing the facade into segments between 25 and 35 feet in length. Varied massing, projections and recesses can create articulation and a sense of historic rhythm of development. Structural elements such as columns, parapets, roof lines and fenestration also can articulate architectural features.



building height

Main Street, historically and currently, consists of one and two-story buildings. Buildings of varying heights should accommodate commercial spaces on the ground floor and a combination of residential, office and commercial uses above. Heights of buildings should resemble those existing in order to create a continuous horizontal rhythm along the street.

Existing building heights are relatively about 16-feet at ground level and 14-feet at the second stories. All buildings, regardless of use, should express these height proportions.

Building vertically allows for mixed uses and could increase downtown property values, along with investment in the area. A third story also will help relate Main Street to taller development on adjacent blocks such as the new courthouse and city hall without overwhelming the pedestrian scale and existing structures in the Main Street zone.

A step-back of third and/or fourth stories may provide the additional height and density without overwhelming the scale of adjacent historic structures.

Heights may vary a maximum of 10 percent to adjacent building heights to allow for design flexibility and retrofit of older structures.



roof line

Flat roofs with parapets are the historical and existing roof form of the Main Street zone. Facade improvement and new construction should maintain this style.

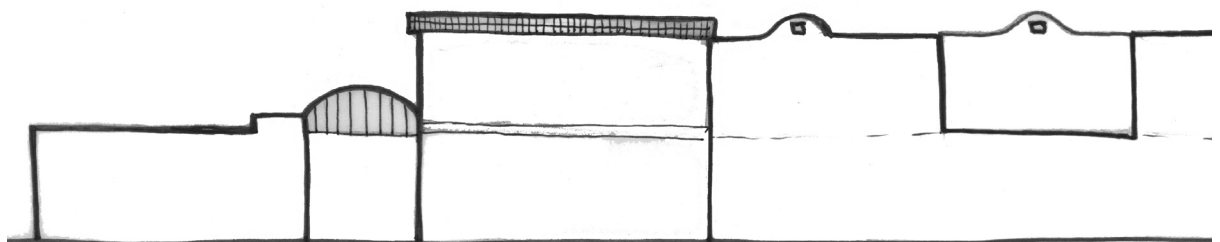
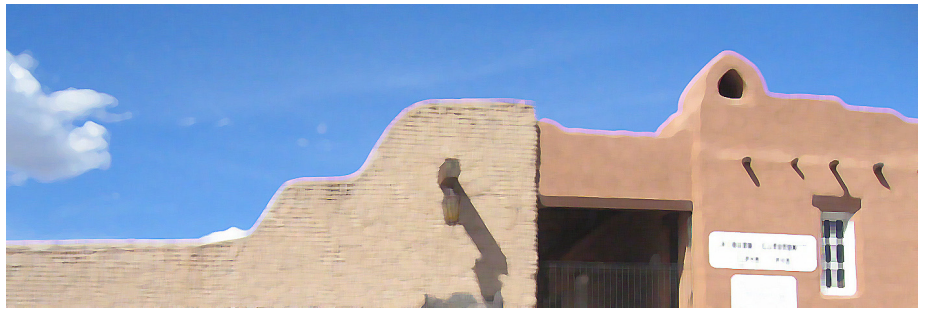
Parapets articulate flat roofs and can hide equipment such as air conditioning units that are mounted above. They may have cornice detailing to provide scale and visual interest.

Roof lines and roof shapes should be consistent with the design and structure of the building itself, as well as relate to the roof lines of adjacent buildings.

The design should reflect the facade articulation and building massing, as opposed to a single-mass roof over an articulated facade.

Pitched mansard, shake or shingle roofs are inappropriate for new buildings, as well as renovations to existing buildings.

Parapet details help differentiate and articulate distinct buildings. Reconstruction and new construction should consider similar features highlighting detail.



facade articulation

In order to create a cohesive streetscape, building facades should articulate the building base, fenestration zone, detail zone, sign zone and parapet. This creates a shared horizontal reference that allows different buildings to relate to each other, regardless of individual architectural styles or approaches.

Zone Heights:

Base: 0 to 2 feet from street level

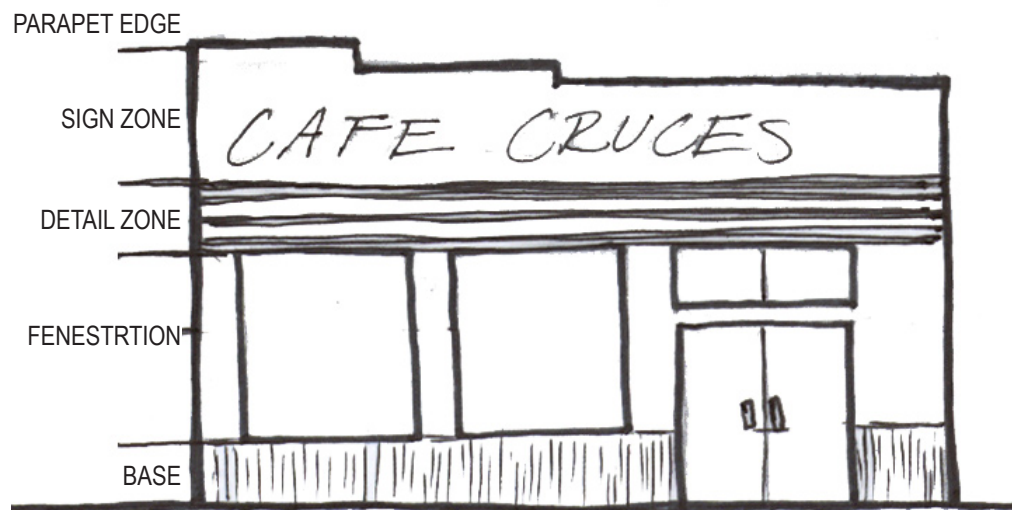
Fenestration: 2 to 10 feet from street level

Detail: 10 to 12 feet from street level

Signage: 12 to 16 feet from street level

Parapet: The parapet should correspond to the 16-foot maximum building height (for a one story building), 30-foot (2-story), 44-foot (3-story) and relate to adjacent structures.

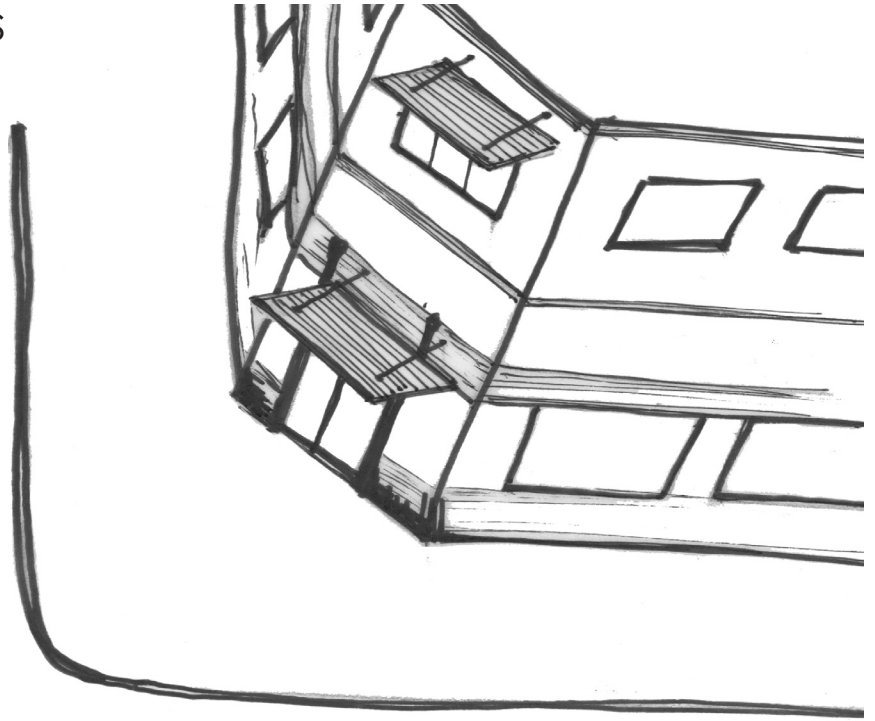
A 10 percent allowance for all zone heights will accommodate flexibility of design detail and retrofit of older structures.



facades at street corners

Building facades that occupy a corner lot should wrap the corner of the building, articulating both sides in a similar fashion. Placing the door at the corner could attract pedestrian traffic from multiple directions. Glazing of the corner allows for visual connection between perpendicular streets.

By creating a point of interest at a corner entrance, either by using glazing or public art, people are naturally attracted to this area. It also enhances the entire intersection, adding to revitalization efforts to improve downtown.

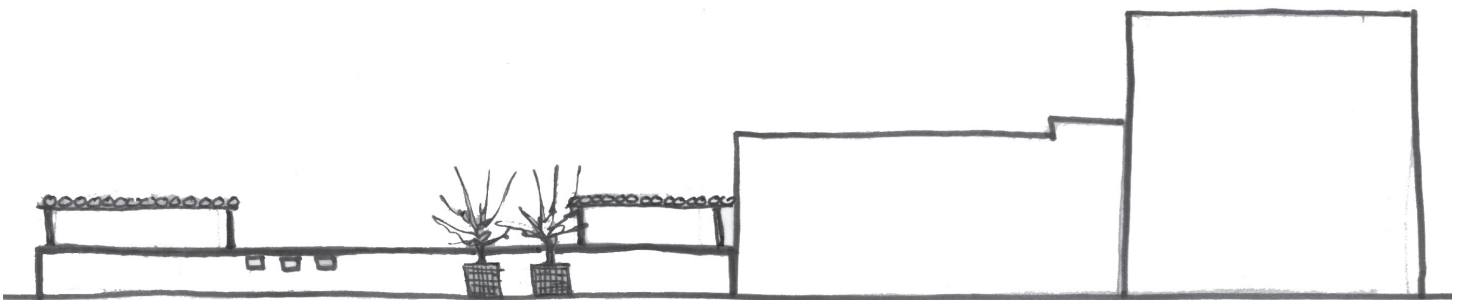
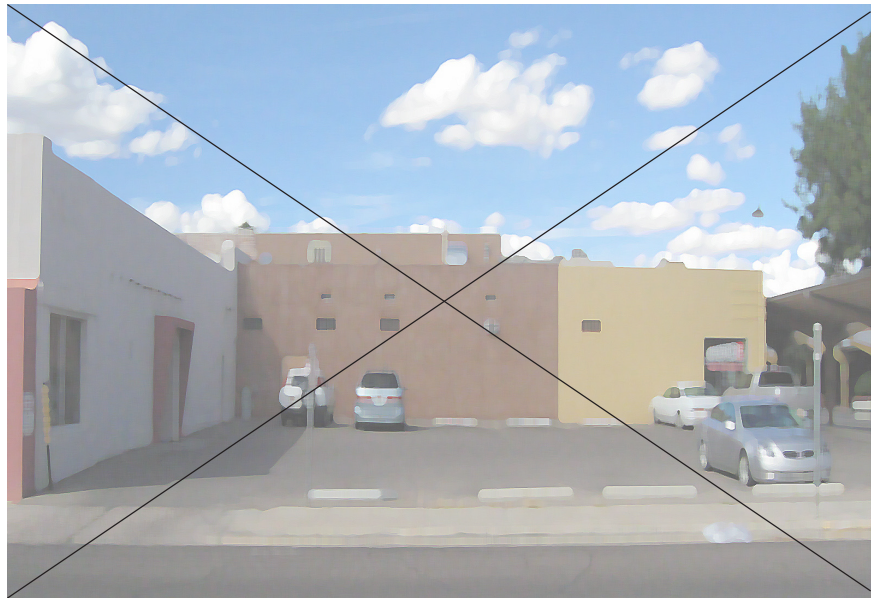


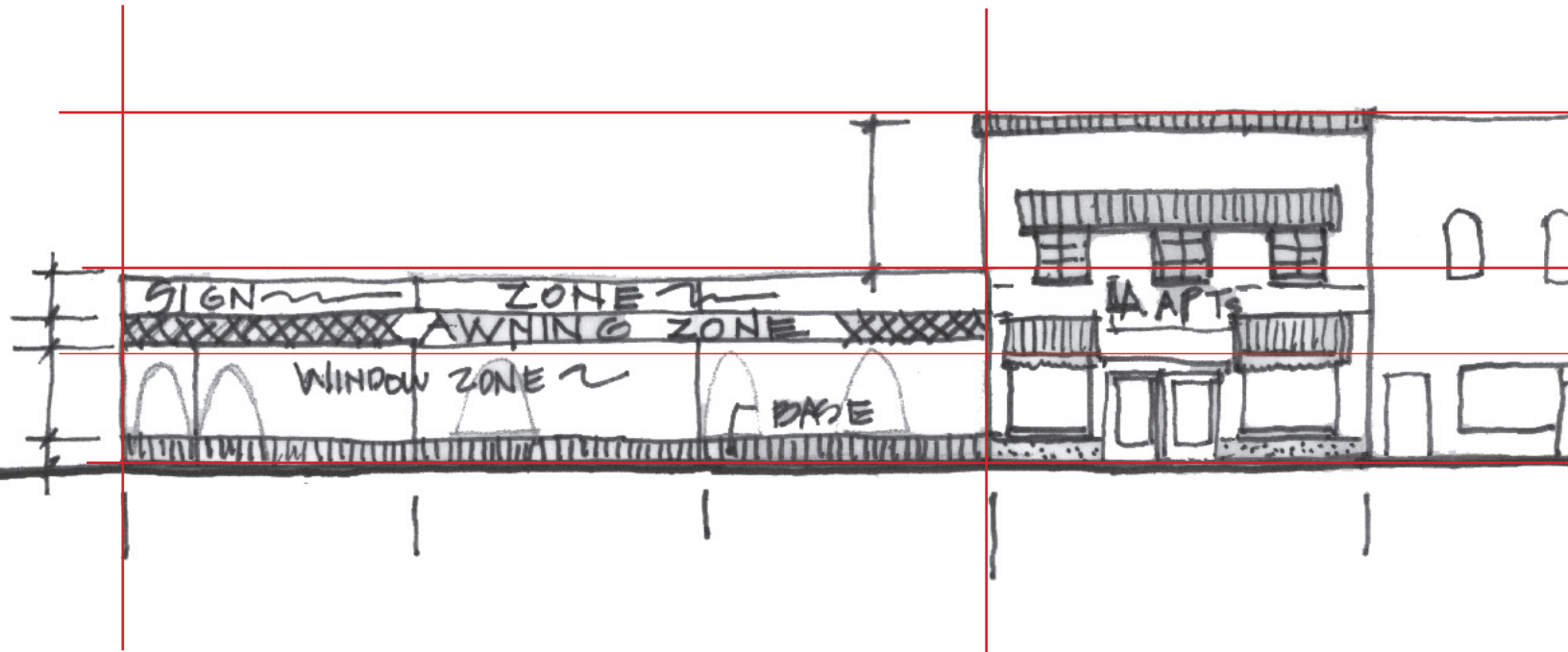
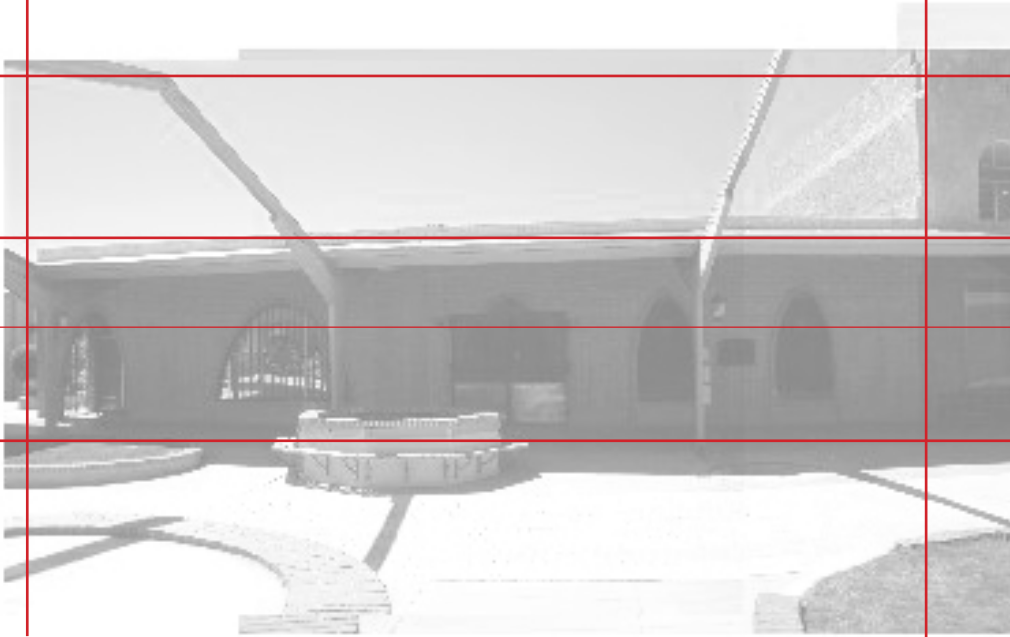
gaps in the street wall

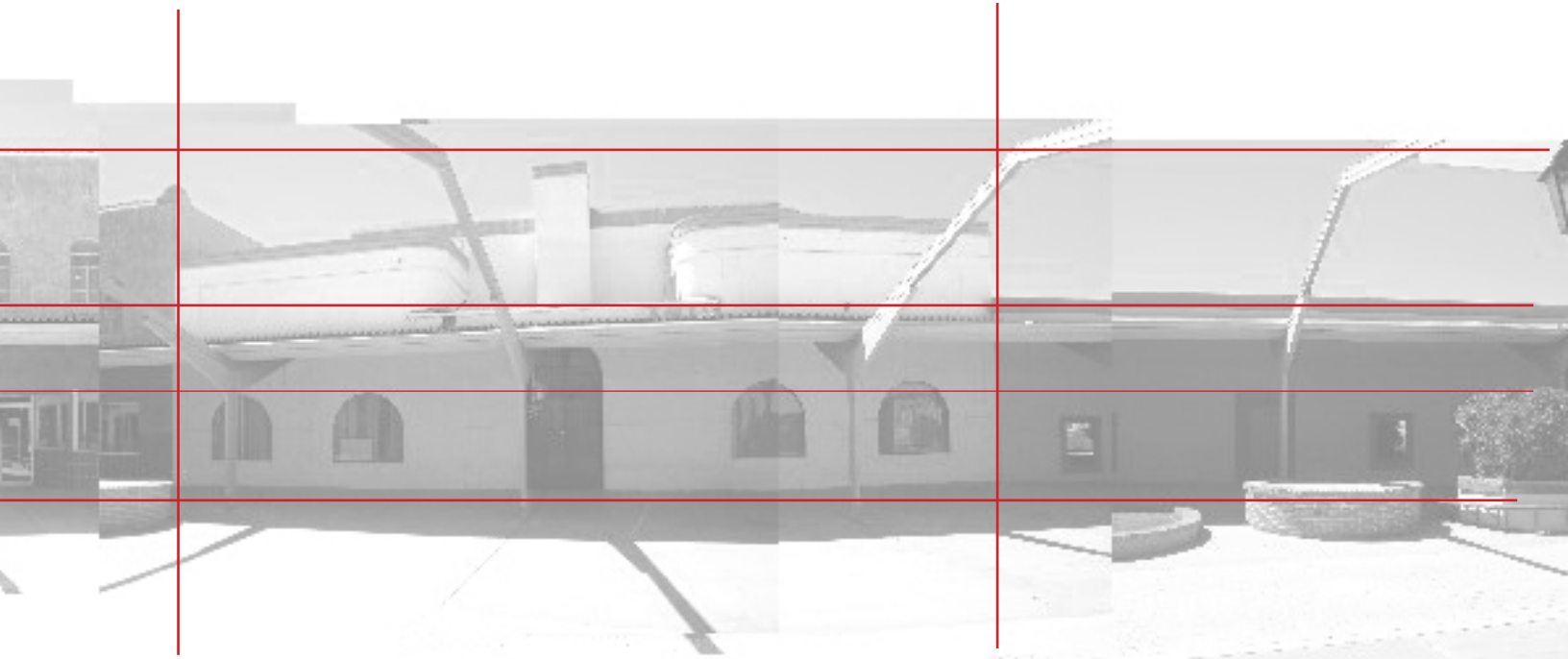
As downtown revitalization proceeds, gaps in the urban fabric will be in-filled with new development. In the interim, property owners and officials should ensure these gaps appear hospitable to the pedestrian.

While parking is not encouraged on Main Street and major lateral streets, existing lots should utilize a low wall at the sidewalk edge to screen the parking lot from the street and mitigate the sense of gap in the street wall.

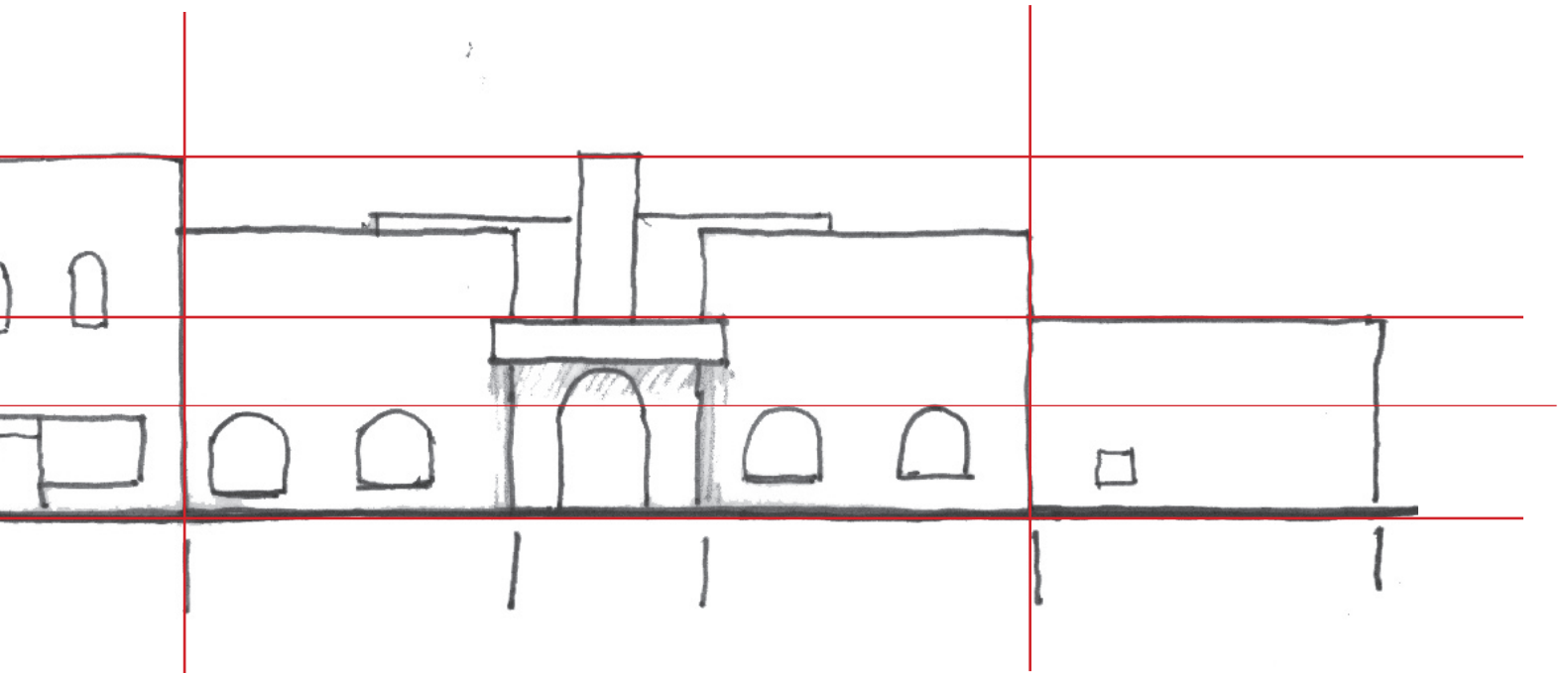
For example, the addition of planters, outdoor furniture and shade structures will improve the experience of walking along the street edge.







Existing Building Module



Fadade Design Principles Based on Existing Building Module



facade development openings

Building facades animate the street and provide visual interest for pedestrians. Transparency allows one to see and have a sense of what is behind a building facade, which creates an interesting and lively street face.

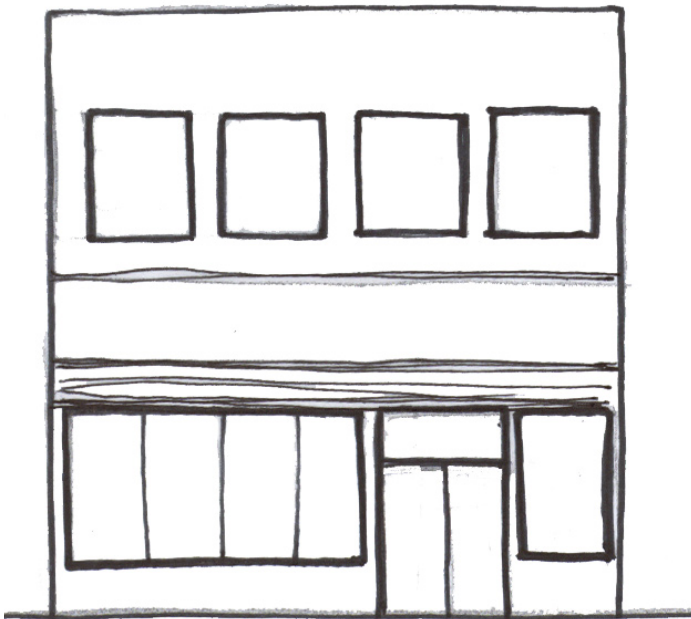
Facades need sufficient doors and window openings to create transparency and visual interest for pedestrians, establishing a building's relationship to the public realm.

fenestration articulation

Windows should occur in the fenestration zone of the facade. The base should be a minimum of 2-feet from the sidewalk level and the top a maximum of 10-feet from the sidewalk level. Between 50 percent and 80 percent of the wall area in this zone should have glazing.

Upper floors should have a fenestration zone of between 3 and 8-feet from the finished floor. Thirty percent of an upper story fenestration zone should consist of glazing.

Standard doors are about 7-feet high. Entrances may have a door with a transom that extends to 10-feet in order to correspond with the window height.



80% GLAZING



50% GLAZING

window specifications

Glazing should not prevent a pedestrian from seeing inside a building. The use of reflective or dark-tinted glass is discouraged, particularly at ground level where it prohibits views to the interior of the building. Glazing should have at least 80 percent light transmission.

To provide depth and articulation, windows should be recessed or detailed in a manner consistent with the overall architectural style.

Ground-floor office spaces should follow these guidelines and use interior blinds for privacy, if necessary. This allows for a similar quality and sense of transparency along the street and allows for future flexible use of the space.

Window signs should cover no more than 20 percent of window space.

When replacing windows or in new construction, energy efficient windows with an R-value over 2 should be used to comply with LEED standards



articulation of entrances

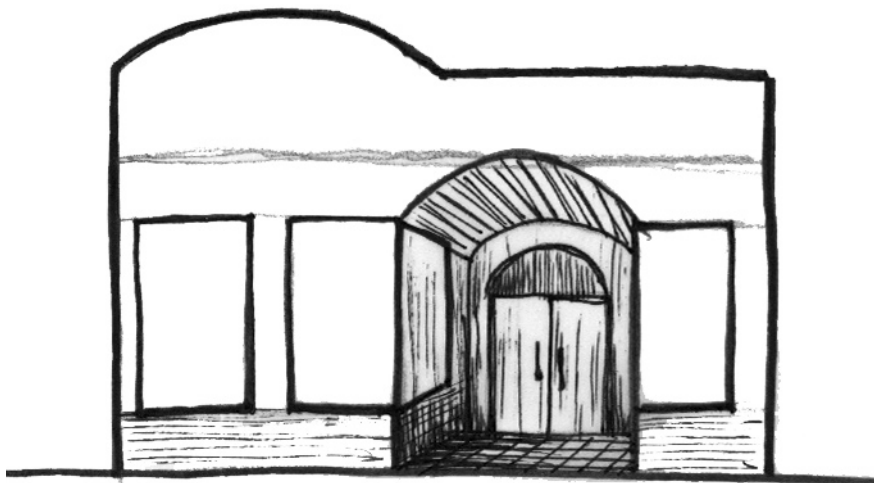
Buildings should have visible entries directly accessible from Main Street. When the primary entrance is on the side of the building, it should include architectural elements that make it visible from Main Street. In multi-use buildings, each building use should have at least one functional entrance directly visible and accessible from Main Street.

Primary entrances should be clearly marked and provide a sense of welcome and easy passage from exterior to interior.

Architectural features that emphasize the place's significance and character should mark entryways. Vertical elements differentiate the entrance from the predominant horizontal rhythm of the facade. Overhangs, lighting, awnings and signage also can signify the location and importance of the entry.

Recessed entries are encouraged as they provide cover for pedestrians and customers in hot or stormy weather and help identify the location of entrances. They also provide a clear area for out-swinging doors and offer the opportunity for interesting paving patterns.

End of block buildings should capitalize on prominent corner locations with angled entries to create a more-used space.



facade development
materials+color+texture

A building facade that contains various textures, materials and colors adds to the overall look of downtown Las Cruces and enhances individual properties. Utilizing well-designed patterns and colors along a facade creates visual appeal and invites customers and pedestrians into the space.

building materials

All building materials should be easy to maintain and clean without major chemical washes or sandblasting.

Materials should support the structural integrity of the building and be durable enough to endure wear from the public and natural elements.

Consider selecting materials according to LEED standards. These include reused or recycled materials and using at least 20 percent of locally-purchased materials

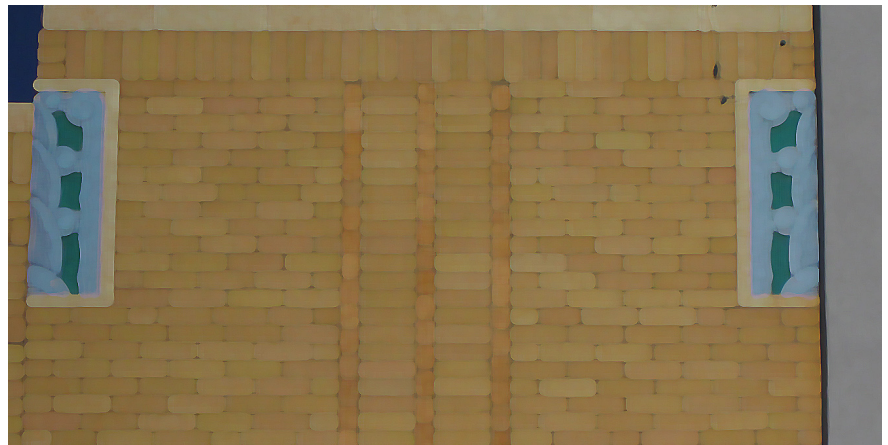
Consider the building's historical context and restoring the facade to its original state.

Use the sense of rhythm and materials of surrounding buildings and spaces.

Facades and materials should support architectural appropriateness; consider the historical and cultural context of Las Cruces, the Southwestern United States and Northern Mexico

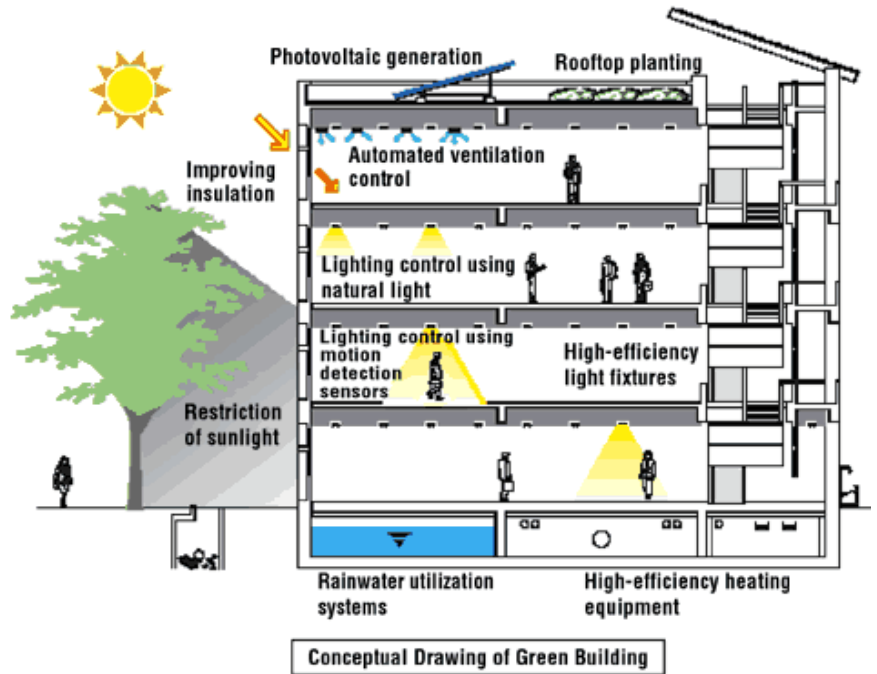
Recommended building materials include: stucco, brick, concrete, adobe, adobe/stucco and steel.

Appropriate facade accents may include: glass, glass blocks, metal, steel, and wood. False-brick veneer, vinyl, and aluminum siding are discouraged.



green building materials

When refinishing a facade, consider using environmentally-friendly or “green” materials. The U.S. Green Building Council offers numerous methods and materials that meet this standard. Purchasing local materials, adhering to LEED specifications and taking into account solar gain, green roofs and the R-value of windows can transform a facade into an attractive and educational “green” space along Main Street.



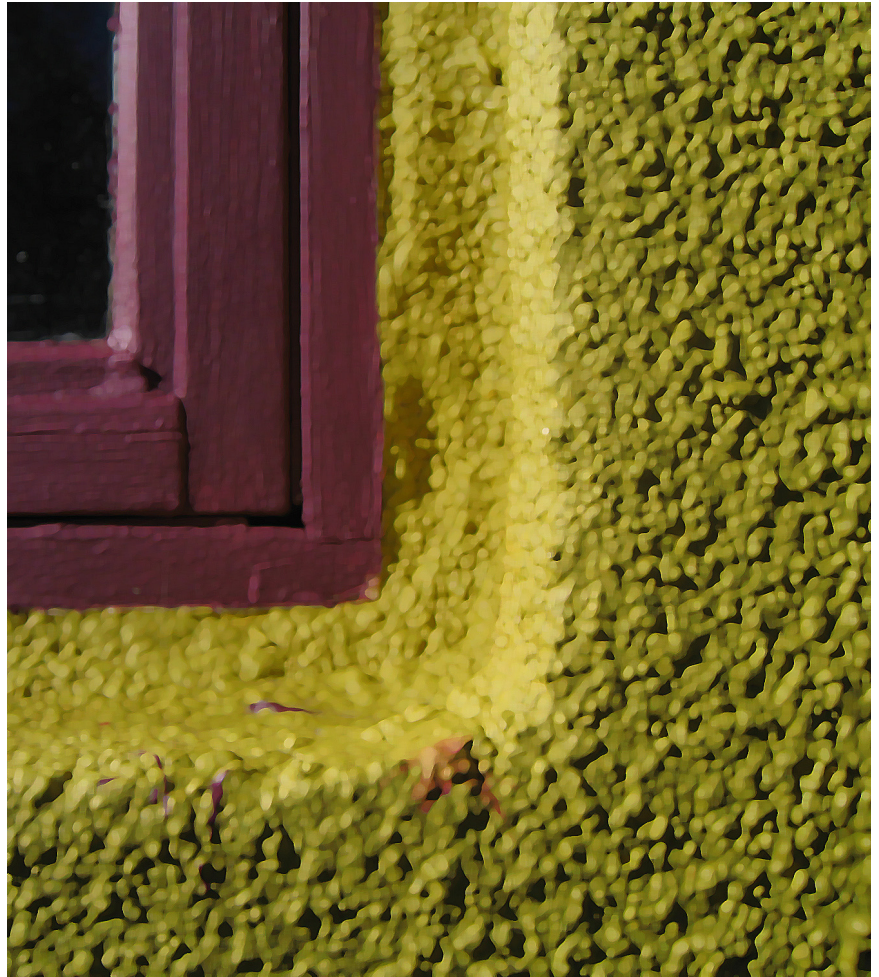
colors

Limit the number of different colors on a facade to no more than two. One color should be at least 70-percent of the facade. Exceptions are possible for artistic designs and buildings.

Consider adjacent buildings and spaces to improve overall aesthetics of downtown Las Cruces

Retain the existing historical color palette, if applicable.

Variations should be allowed on a case-by-case basis.

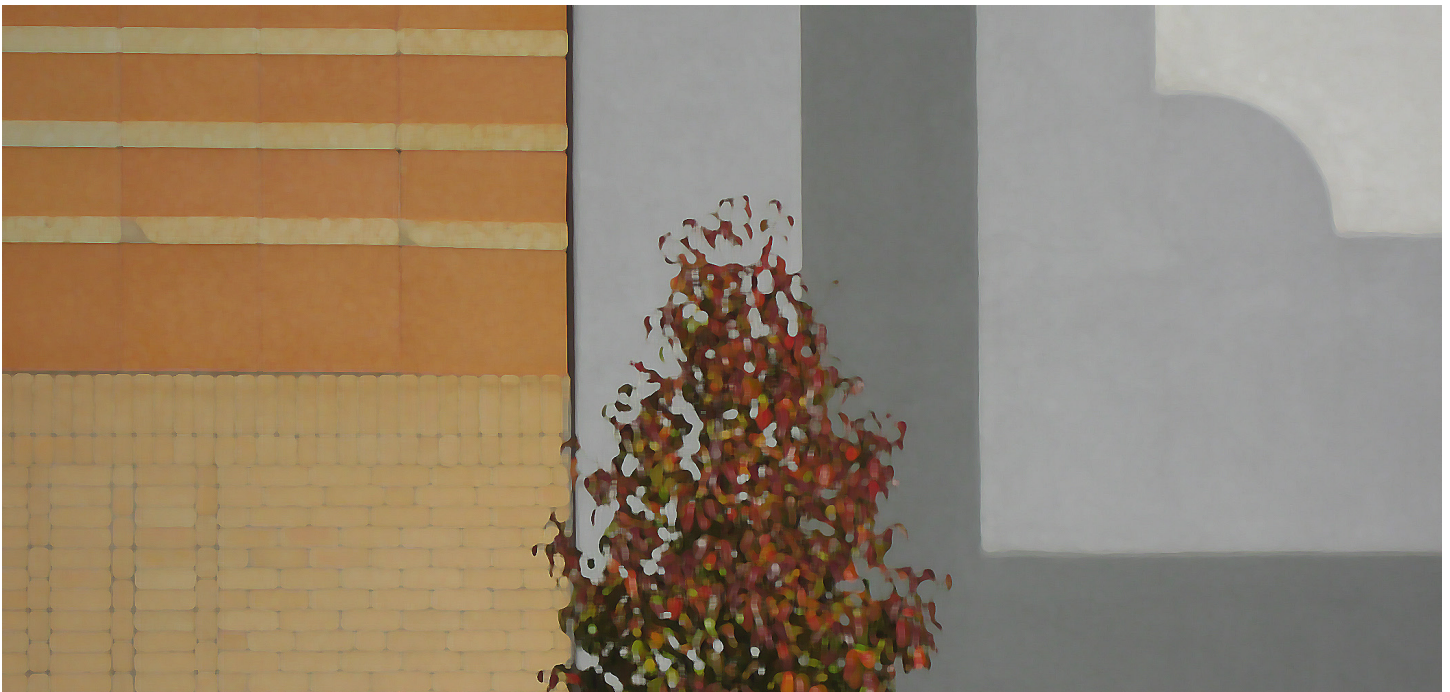


texture

Bare facades are discouraged. Use signage, lighting, facade accents and other details to break up a blank or dull facade.

No building facade along Main Street or its side streets should have more than 20-feet of blank, uninterrupted wall without a change in:

- 1) texture/ pattern along facade
- 2) material
- 3) fenestration
- 4) signage
- 5) lighting



Las Cruces: ECLECTIC

Las Cruces Main Street encompasses numerous architectural styles and color schemes. This creates an eclectic mix of materials, colors, history and style. The Las Cruces community should celebrate this dynamic and eclectic style. Cohesion of the streetscape depends more on elements such as horizontal rhythm. The eclectic style enhances the streetscape.

Consider architectural styles defined below to inspire modern facade improvement and development.



facade development
facade detail

Smaller elements contribute to the overall visual perception of building facade and pedestrian scale. By working within the building module, creating appropriate openings and considering the material palette of downtown, Main Street will become an animated and appealing place to experience.

canopies + awnings

With 350 days of sunshine in Las Cruces, shade for pedestrians is essential. Shade structures provide sun protection for doors, windows and pedestrians, while articulating the building facade and creating human scale at street level.

Canopies, awnings and other shade elements may extend overhead into the public right-of-way, and should not be supported by posts or other upright supports that will intrude into public walkways. Shade structures should complement the architectural style of the building and highlight the vertical divisions (the 'rhythm') of the facade. These structures should not obscure important architectural details or features. No canopy should exceed the building module.

A shade structure requires a minimum clearance of 7-feet above sidewalk level and shall be no higher than just above the 10-foot window zone.

The structure should extend horizontally a minimum of 4-feet and a maximum of 6-feet from the facade.

If multiple storefronts are within one building, the awnings do not have to be identical.

Recommended awnings or canopies should be commercial grade fabric, UV-resistant and flame retardant —not of plastic or vinyl material.

Awnings or canopies should cover at least 50 percent of the facade along Main Street.

A canopy or other construction must cover all doorways that are not recessed at least 4-feet into the facade.

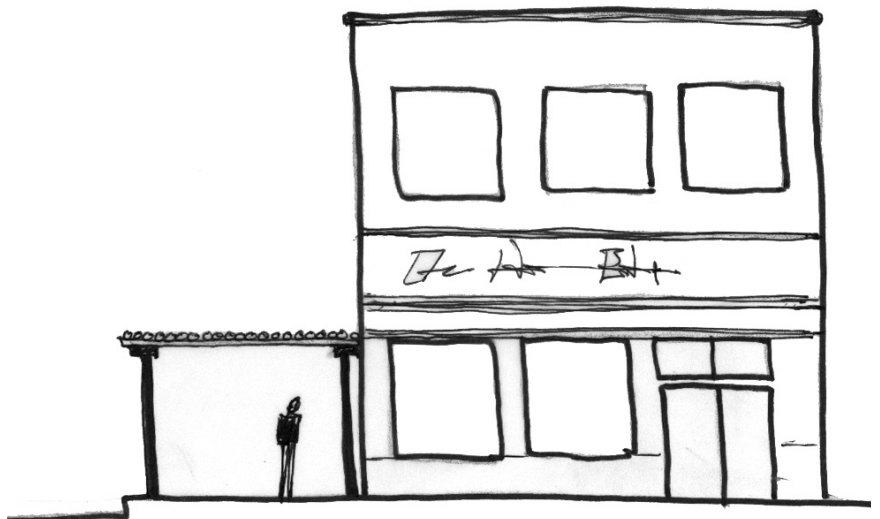


portales, colonnades, arcades

The usage of portales, colonnade and arcades along side streets add to the overall look and feel of downtown. These elements provide a shady connection from rear parking lots to the front of buildings, as well as visual interest along the sides and rear of buildings.

These structures are attached to the building facade and may have a solid roof or an open structure overhead. These may only be located behind the property line. Materials and construction methods should match or complement the building facade.

Structures may not interfere with the public right-of-way.



signage

There are several signage types, the most important one being the identification of the building or business. These identification signs should be within in the 'sign zone,' between 12-16 feet from sidewalk level.

Signs may be mounted flush with the facade, or project but should not obscure important architectural features or details. The sign should complement the building's architecture.

Flush mounted signs:

The bottom edge of the sign should be no lower than 12-feet above the sidewalk. Storefronts sharing the same building should mount signs with lower edges aligned.

Projecting signs and banners:

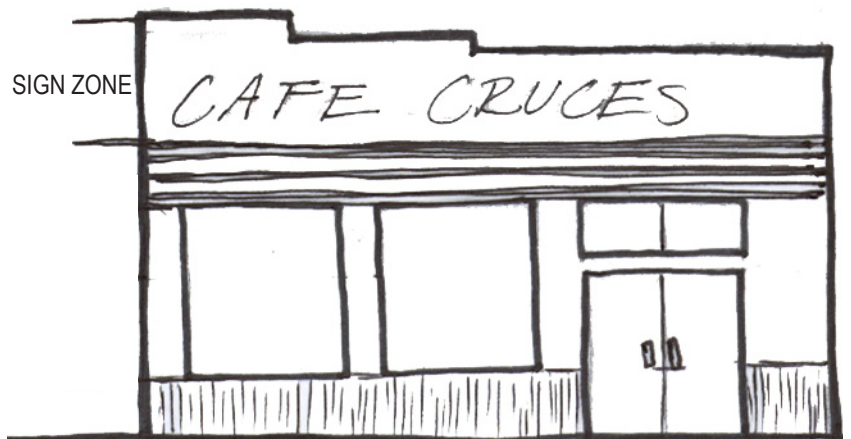
The bottom edge of the sign should be no lower than 12-feet above the sidewalk, and project no more than 4-feet into the public right-of-way.

Distinctive, surface-lit signs with non-reflective finishes are recommended. Interior illuminated, box-type signs are discouraged. Neon or LED signs may be appropriate in the right application.

Secondary Signs:

These smaller signs include those mounted on buildings (ie: building directories or directional signs), signs applied directly to window glazing and freestanding temporary signs.

As noted above, these signs should not obscure important architectural features or details and should complement the building's architecture. Signs placed in windows should cover no more than 20 percent of the surface area.



lighting

Lighting on facades serves multiple purposes, including security, identification (signage), highlighting of architectural details. Lights also create an attractive pedestrian zone after dark. Be careful that lighting does not create glare that could cause discomfort for pedestrians or vehicular traffic. All lighting should comply with the Night Sky Protection Act of New Mexico.

Entry Lighting:

For safety and security, all entries should have good levels of natural and artificial light during business hours. Indirect lighting is more pleasant than harsh spotlighting.

Facade Lighting:

Unobtrusive light fixtures that complement the architectural style will illuminate a facade's unique or historical details.

Signage Lighting:

Surface lighting is best accomplished by inconspicuous fixtures that are hidden or blend in with the facade.

Recommended lighting includes non-glare, unobtrusive fixtures that enhance, not detract from the building's architectural style or materials. Indirect lighting should be used where possible.

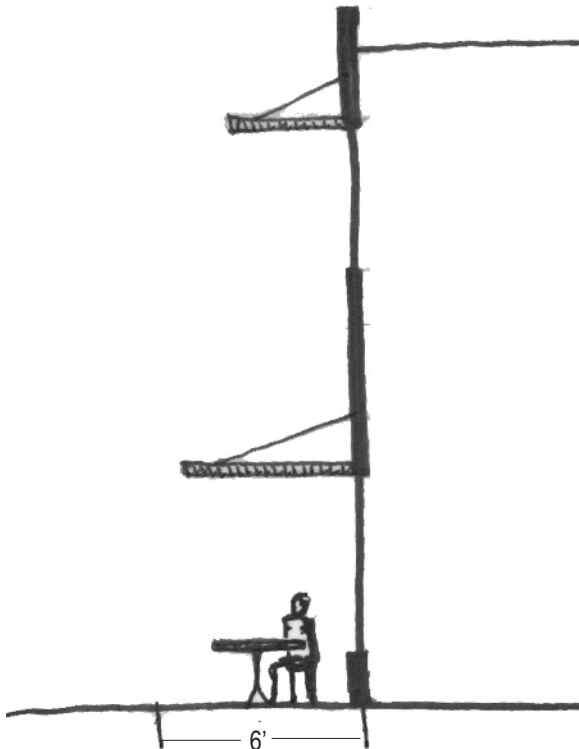
Flashing or animated lights, illuminated box-type signs, permanent bare bulbs or flood lights are discouraged.



sidewalk furniture

Business owners should consider furnishing a portion of the sidewalk in front of their store with displays, table and chairs and planters. These elements help extend the business onto the street and invite pedestrians inside.

This zone should extend 6-feet from the store front or allow a minimum of 4-feet of clear way along the sidewalk.

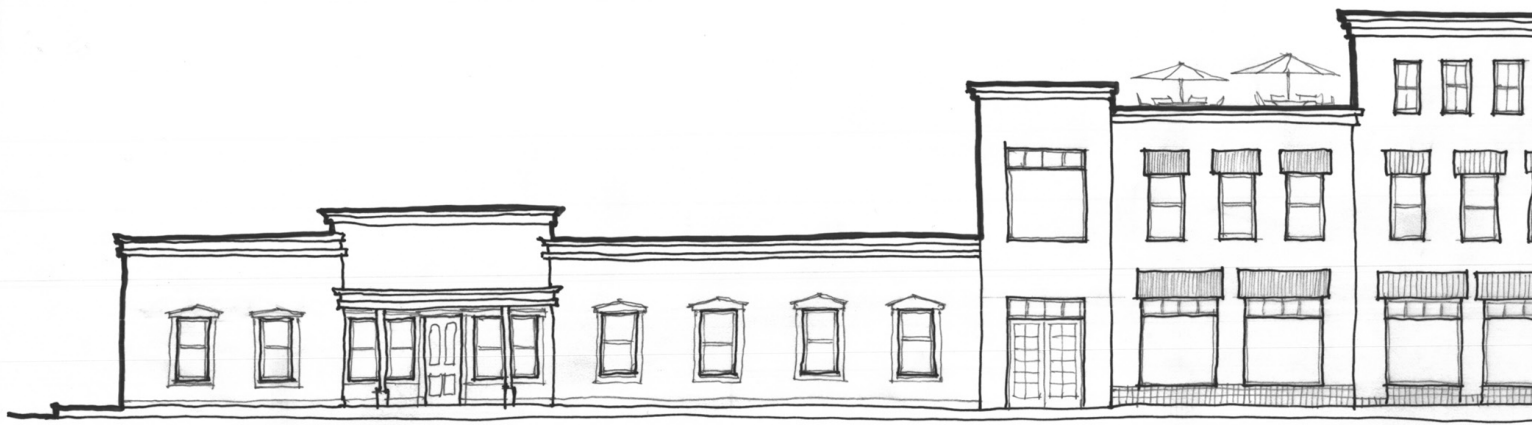


redesigned facades

The following sketches represent one downtown block that adheres to these design principles. Pay careful attention to the scale, massing, density and details that make this block engaging, vibrant and attractive to pedestrians.



LAS CRUCES



COURT



COURT

WEST ELEVATION: LAS CRUCES TO COURT

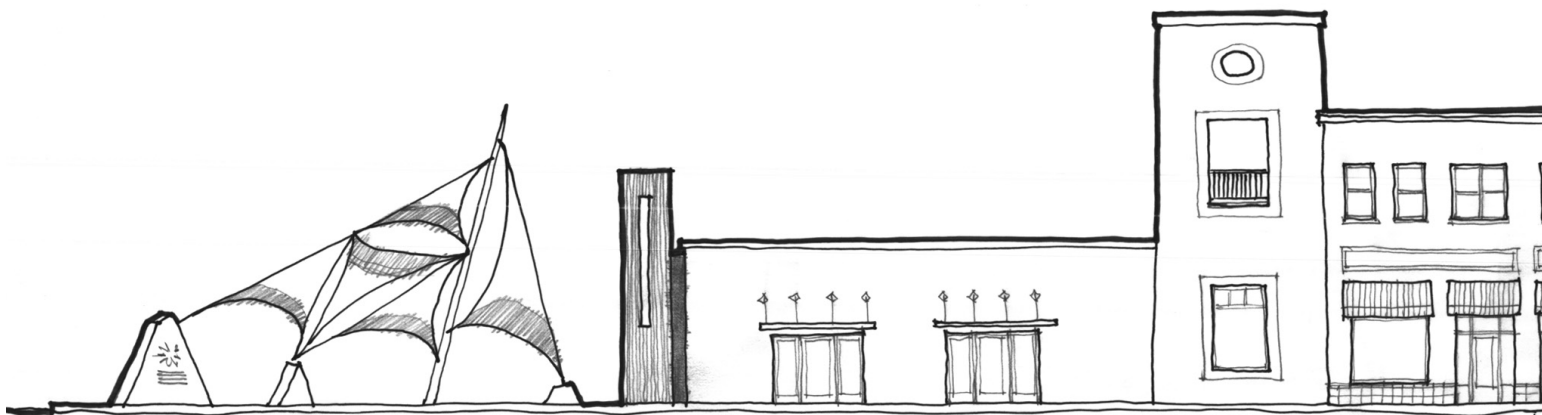


LAS CRUCES

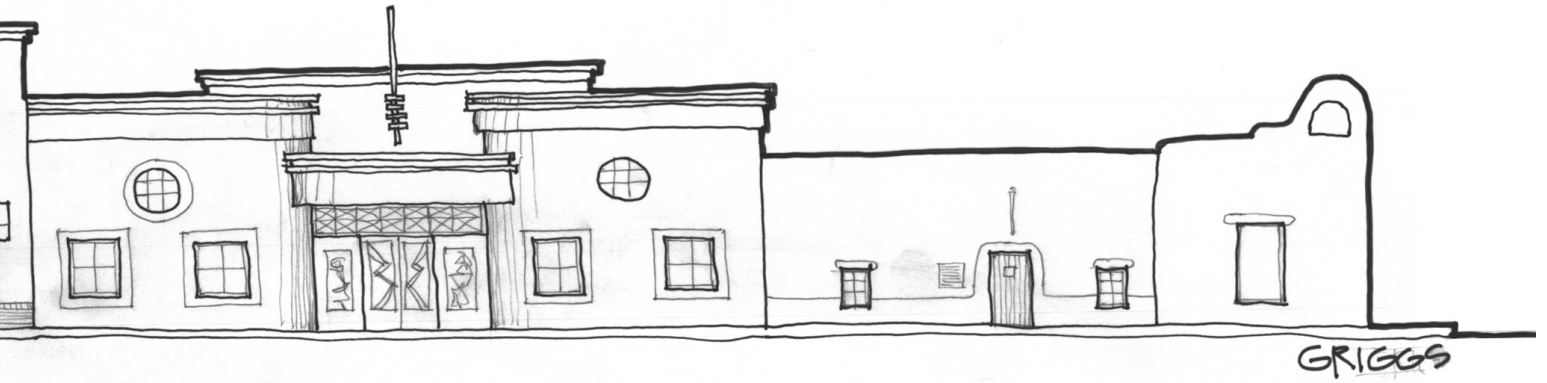
EAST ELEVATION: LAS CRUCES TO COURT



MAY



GRIGGS



WEST ELEVATION: MAY TO GRIGGS



EAST ELEVATION: MAY TO GRIGGS

10ft set back
@ 4th Floor

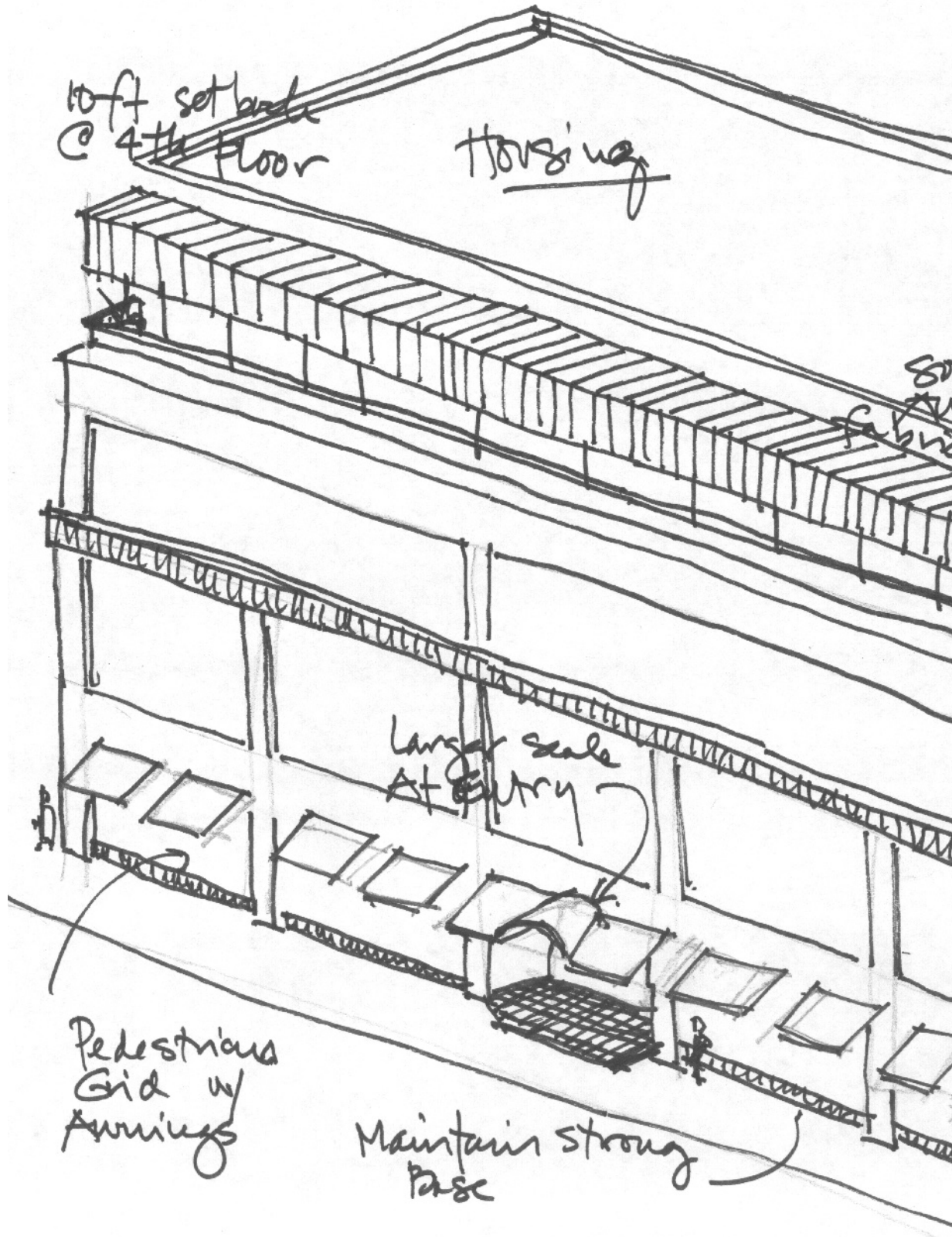
Horsing

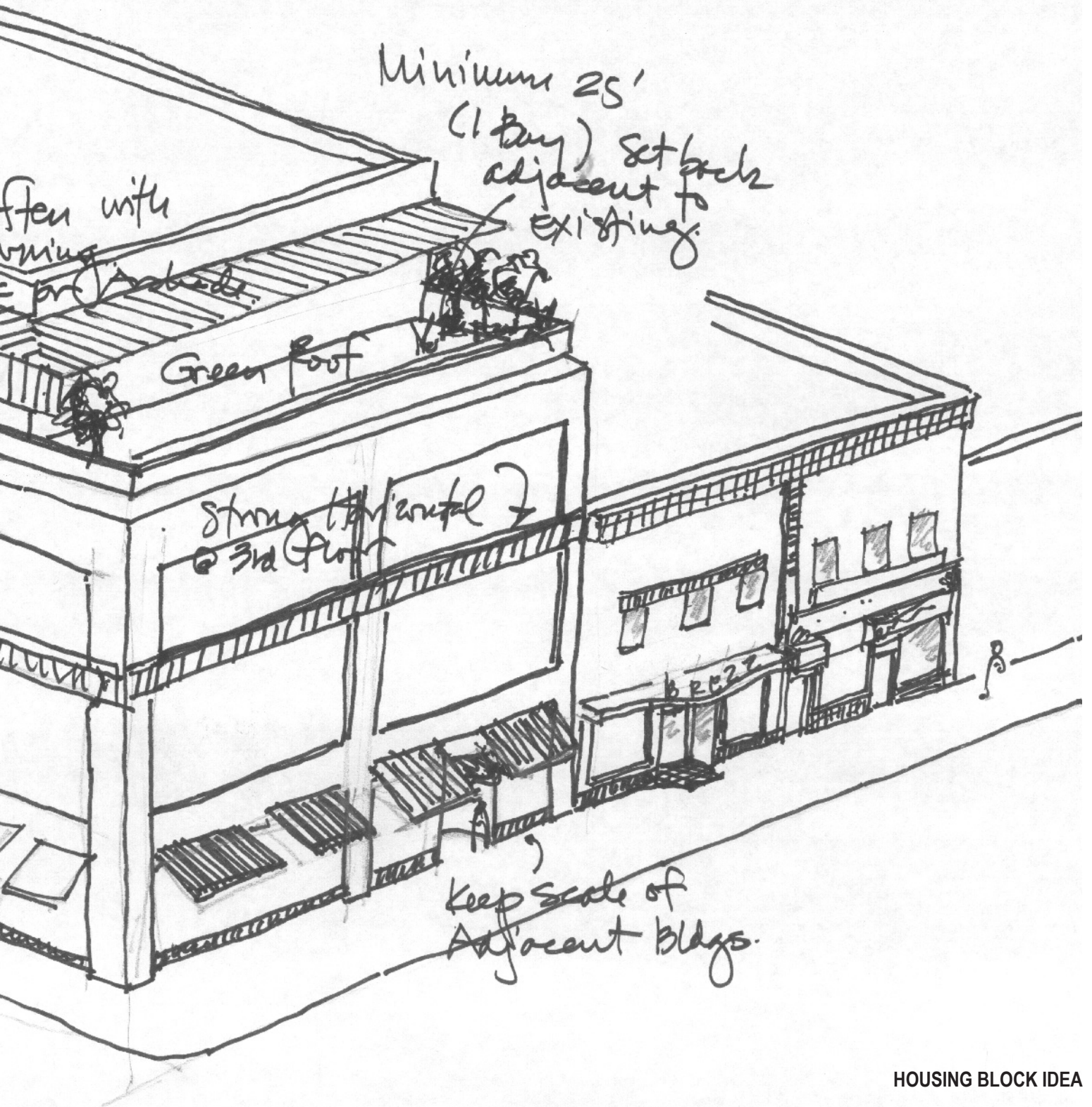
SO
AV
fabri

larger scale
At Entry

Pedestrian
Grid w/
Awnings

Maintain strong
Pass





HOUSING BLOCK IDEA



next steps

Revitalizing and revamping building facades represents a challenge and opportunity for the City of Las Cruces. Partnerships, innovation and resources are imperative when taking these next steps to create a new Main Street.



Congratulations on the decision to refurbish your building facade and help create a vibrant and attractive downtown Las Cruces.

Implementation of the proposed design principles in this report requires partnerships and communication between downtown business owners, users of the space, city officials, architects and property owners.

Upon decision to consider renovating a facade, several steps are necessary to ensure that you could complete your vision for the building. The following pages outline steps that help guide the process of facade revitalization and offers contacts to make your project happen in a cohesive, innovative and timely fashion.

Turn the page por favor...

First....

Contact the Main Street Program known as:
Las Cruces Downtown
223 West Griggs

Cindi Fargo, director
505.525.1955

lcdt@lascrucesdowntown.org

This office will provide the most current information regarding design standards, zoning, reviews, permit, and financing changes or options.

During the beginning phases of facade redevelopment, Las Cruces Downtown can offer advice, information and guidance that will help structure the project. This office can disseminate information about your project and how it adds to the greater redevelopment plan of downtown Las Cruces.

Need more information?

The City of Las Cruces currently has official information posted on numerous on-line locations. To begin your search to find city information, go to the city web page for facade renovation under the Community Development Home page:

www.las-cruces.org/cd/

This site features important and helpful links to begin a project. In order of importance are the following links:

Economic Development & Revitalization

Main Street Downtown

This will provide an overview of downtown with links to other studies and plans.
Business Development

Planning Services

Special Districts
CBDG-Central Business District and Mains
Street Plaza overlay Zone Maps and information
Zoning
Permits and Inspections
Building/Re-roofing

Another link at the bottom of the Community Development home page guides you to the Las Cruces Downtown Citizen Group.

Did you talk to city staff yet?

After speaking with the Downtown Citizens Group and the Economic Development and Revitalization office, consider seeking assistance from city staff — specifically the administrator or the Downtown Development Coordinator.

Christine Ochs
cochs@las-cruces.org

William Slettom
Downtown Development Coordinator
wslettom@las-cruces.org

What about financing?

The City of Las Cruces recently passed a Tax Increment Development District (TIDD) for Main Street development projects.

Contact Cindi Fargo at Las Cruces Downtown for the current status of financing possibilities.

Are you ready to redevelop your facade?



A photo of a revamped Main Street in Glens Falls, NY.

interim remediation

Creating attractive and appealing facades for pedestrians represents an important step in downtown revitalization. The process of redevelopment will take time and occur throughout phases; however, property owners can complete short-term projects in the interim if a building is vacant or additional funds are necessary for a complete restoration.

New paint or new stucco will transform a dull building facade into one that excites the pedestrian and increases visibility.

Temporary window displays in vacant store fronts provide visual interest to pedestrians and create a sense of occupancy rather than vacancy.

zoning

Large cities have a life of their own. They are vibrant and dynamic due to complexities of use, activity, density and scale. Las Cruces has transitioned from a rural university town to a sprawling suburban service community.

Downtown as a viable economic, business, municipal and social center was left behind, constrained by early patterns of development such as lot sizes, traffic patterns and allowable land uses; and out-paced by newer development models for car-friendly business centers and single family homes.

The proposed master plan for downtown revitalization depends on higher-density, mixed-use development that offers work, play, services, housing; and that accommodates walking, bicycling, and public and private vehicle traffic.

Future development and remodeling within the Downtown Overlay Zone zone could be subject to review and approval by city officials and related neighborhood associations. Such a zoning designation might include and/or address the following:

Allowable Uses, Housing:

- High-density, multi-family rental housing: provides options for affordable housing close to potential service area
- High-density, multi-family condominiums: potential attraction for varying income groups offering starter homes for singles or young couples, or convenient housing near services and amenities for “empty nesters.”
- Lower density single-family housing: as transition to existing, older single-family neighborhoods

Allowable Uses, Light Commercial:

- Office and art studio
- Retail, commercial sales and galleries
- Grocery store

Allowable Uses, Entertainment:

- Restaurant, bar, nightclub
- Theater
- Community Center: for youth, families &/or elders
- Places of worship

Multiple Use - to be encouraged:

- A combination of various allowable, conditional and special uses within the Overlay Zone
- Multiple occupancies, as permitted by the Building Code, within one building

Conditional Uses (Potential “synergy” from proximity to allowable uses):

- Day Care
- Elder Care
- Independent Living and assisted living
- Out-patient Treatment
- Parking structure

Special Uses

- Farmer’s Market
- Seasonal (sales) events
- Outdoor concerts and other public entertainment
- Private use of public right-of-way for commercial displays, restaurant seating and kiosk sales

Parking:

- Parking lot development requirements: separation from other uses by wall and/or landscaping.
- Allowable reductions in parking requirements based on occupancy for:
 - Proximity to public transportation
 - Multiple uses with probable scheduling differences
 - Actual occupancy / use parking needs
 - Parking structure, potential for multi-story facility

Signage & Lighting:

- See discussion in text of “Principles”

Other Construction:

- Canopies, awnings, light shelves and other exterior window and door treatments
- Yard walls, especially at surface parking
- Shade structures and landscape furniture
- Art (public and private)

Sustainable Site Development:

- Storm water management
- Water harvesting
- Landscaping and irrigation: requirements to reduce “heat island effect” and reduce water use for irrigation
- Solar access – for passive heating, day lighting, and for active solar systems for space heating, water heating and / or power generation
- Shade structures
- Recycling provisions
- Public transportation
- Alternative transportation methods

glossary

Central Business District (CBD) - The purpose of this district is to accommodate government facilities, retail, office, residential, and other similar uses in the central business area of the city with appropriate height, yard, and intensity standards to allow for a higher density of development.

Main Street Plaza Overlay Zone - A special area within the Central Business District to encourage revitalization through incentives and clearly defined development standards.

Facade Design Principles for the Main Street Plaza Overlay Zone - These suggested principles for the Main Street Plaza Overlay Zone give specific recommendations for the improvement of old facades and the integration of new facades into the existing streetscape. These guidelines are not code, rather recommendations for facade improvement that may help to expedite the review process of improvements.

Tax Increment Development District (TIDD) - A special tax district and governing area used to finance development projects.

Articulation – The use of certain exterior building elements to add variety and visual interest. Examples of building articulation include doorways, windows, brick or stonework, differing massing element, decorative features and artwork.

Building Scale – The perceived relative height and bulk of a building in relation to neighboring buildings.

Cornice – The crowning horizontal molding of a building or wall, projecting outward from the exterior walls at the roof line, including eaves and other roof overhang.

Engaged Column – A column attached to or appearing to be partly embedded within a wall

Facade – The exterior wall of a building exposed to public view, extending from roof or parapet to the ground

Fenestration – The arrangement, proportioning, and design of windows and doors on a buildings exterior

Massing – The size and shape of a building above grade

Parapet – The portion of a wall which extends above the roof line

Pedestrian Scale – The proportional relationship between the dimensions of a building or building element, street, outdoor space, or streetscape element and the average dimensions of the human body, taking into account the perceptions and walking speed of a typical pedestrian

Pilaster – A column in flattened, rectangular shape, projecting slightly from the face of the wall

Projecting Sign – Any sign end-mounted or otherwise attached to an exterior wall of a building which forms an angle with said wall

Roof Line – The top edge of the roof or the top of the parapet, whichever forms the top line of the building silhouette

Street Wall – The wall or part of the building nearest to the street line

studies consulted

Downtown Las Cruces Metropolitan Redevelopment Area (MRA) Plan, (2007)
Prepared for Las Cruces Downtown and the City of Las Cruces
By: New Mexico Main Street, Community By Design

Las Cruces Downtown Revitalization Final Schematic Design & Concept Report, (2005)
Prepared for the City of Las Cruces
By: Sites Southwest, Bohannon Houston Inc., ChristopherLeinberger, The Hartman + Majewski Design Group, Vaughn Wedeen Creative

Las Cruces Urban Design Evaluation, (2005)
Prepared by Scott Day, principal of Urban Development Services

Design Guidelines Referenced:

Allston Village Main Street Design Guidelines
<http://www.allstonvillage.com/AVMS/designguidelines/>

Revitalization Through Design, Guidelines for Albuquerque's Nob Hill Business District
<http://www.cabq.gov/council/NobHillHighlandSectorPlan-CityCouncil-CityofAlbuquerque.html>

Old Town Avondale Business District Design Guidelines
<http://az-avondale.civicplus.com/documents/City%20Departments/Economic%20Development/Downtown%20Revitalization/Old%20Town%20Design%20Guidelines%20Final%20Document.pdf>

El Paso Downtown Plan Design Guidelines
http://www.ci.el-paso.tx.us/downtown_plan.asp

Palo Alto Design Guidelines
<http://www.city.palo-alto.ca.us/depts/pln/default.asp>

Albuquerque 2010 Plan
http://www.ci.el-paso.tx.us/downtown_plan.asp

image citations

Flower farmers market:
<http://www.heronpoint.com/photos/CTN%20Farmers%20Market%204%20G.JPG>

old aerial view las cruces:
<http://www.newmexico.org/MEDIA/IMAGES/666-Las%20Cruces.jpg>

old postcard:
http://images.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://bp1.blogger.com/_VbG-d6SeGuA/RdVdrro8QII/AAAAAAAAA4/WAvaymfk7t4/s400/las-cruces-downtown2.jpg&imgrefurl=http://las-cruces.blogspot.com/&h=253&w=400&sz=37&hl=en&start=3&um=1&tbnid=6hXP4j0b-sfjKM:&tbnh=78&tbnw=124&prev=/images%3Fq%3Dlas%2Bcruces%2Bmain%2Bstreet%26svnum%3D10%26um%3D1%26hl%3Den%26rls%3Dcom.microsoft:en-us:IE-SearchBox%26rlz%3D117GGIE

downtown with red car:
http://www.las-cruces-relocation-information.com/assets/images/clc_fa071.jpg

green building:
<http://www.metaefficient.com/2006/08>

green building diagram:
<http://www.sustainablecampus.cornell.edu/getinvolved/Staff%20orgs/gboc.html>

