

Credits

The Traditional Davis Downtown and Residential Design Guidelines were developed through a community-based process. The Historical Resources Management Commission sponsored six public workshops and worked with city staff and consultants to capture the community's vision. The following persons have participated in the process:

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Due to limited space, the many workshop participants and interviewees, not including those already mentioned, whose input was essential to developing successful guidelines are listed in the Appendix.



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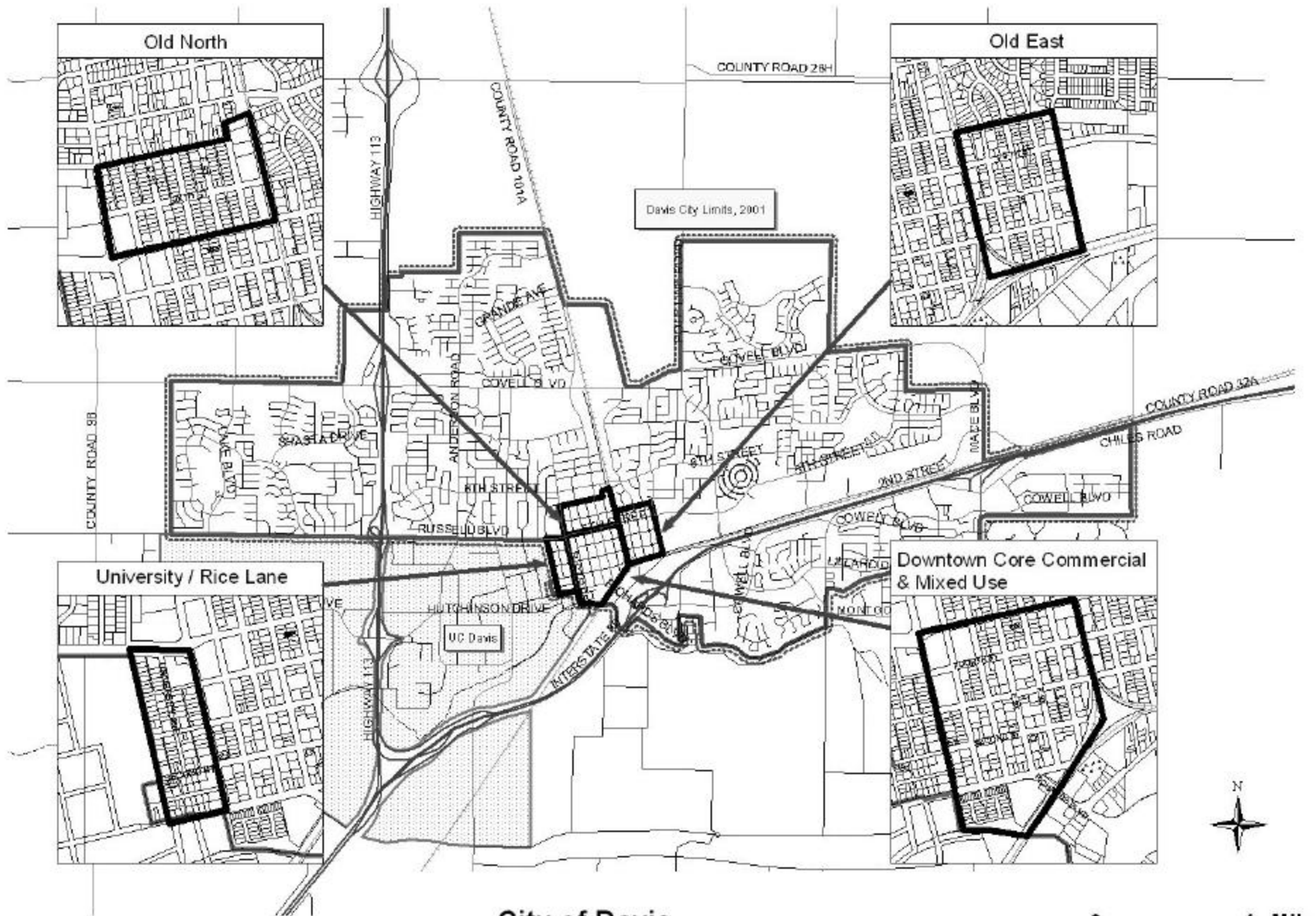
Introduction

Central Davis is the area bounded by the original city limits as they were established at the time of incorporation in 1917. This area contains a variety of mature neighborhoods and distinctive, traditional building stock that the community seeks to maintain. At the same time, it is under pressure to accommodate additional development. In response, the community engaged in an extensive public process to discuss how the traditional center of Davis can accommodate housing and economic development objectives in a way that is sensitive to the area's traditional scale and character. This document provides a policy and urban design framework that is shaped by design guidelines and a supporting design review process.

At the beginning of the review process it was determined that development of a conservation district, rather than a preservation district, would be the most appropriate mechanism to preserve the traditional character of the existing neighborhoods while allowing new construction that will be compatible in terms of mass, scale and rhythm. Historic conservation is an approach that is designed to preserve and maintain neighborhood character, fabric and setting while planning for reasonable growth. A historic conservation district can provide a sense of neighborhood stability to modest, well-maintained neighborhoods, such as those within Davis' 1917 boundaries. A historic conservation district is typically a zoning designation that supports planning policy to ensure that new development and renovation are compatible and complementary to the traditional character of the existing neighborhood areas by thorough identification of specific character defining features such as size, mass, scale, façade width, set backs, landscaping, lot coverage and rhythm. Conservation district guidelines assure that the values the community holds for these neighborhoods will be addressed in future community planning.

It should be noted that the proposed design guidelines do not prescribe specific architectural styles or images, nor do they encourage direct imitation of the past or radical departure from the existing design context. There are many appropriate design responses to a given situation. These guidelines are most concerned with whether the design and site plan respect the project's context, and responds to patterns and rhythms of the block-face with a design that is compatible and that will contribute to the quality of the neighborhood.





**City of Davis
and the Downtown and Traditional Residential Neighborhood Boundaries**

0 1 Mile



Downtown and Traditional Residential Neighborhood Boundaries

Historic Overview

"The proposed location for the depot of the Vallejo Railroad, on Putah Creek, is now being laid off in lots, and a town of considerable importance will soon spring up in that locality. The site is on the bank of Putah Creek, at Davis' ranch in a healthy and rich agricultural district settled by farmers, most of whom have secured a competence to themselves as the reward of energy and frugality. The new town is to be called 'Davisville'."

—*The Yolo Democrat, July 7, 1868.*

Davis grew slowly after its establishment as a railroad town in 1868. By the time of the city's incorporation in 1917, Davis had expanded from 32 square blocks to a still modest 50 blocks of simple vernacular homes surrounding a small commercial district on present-day G Street. The city limits did not change again until the end of World War II, although new construction and civic improvements continued, meeting the needs of the University Farm, Davis' newest addition. From 1917 through the mid-1940s, new residences were built on vacant parcels while old residences downtown slowly gave way to new commercial buildings. It was not until 1947 that Davis entered a period of sustained expansion. Even then, citizens didn't turn their backs on the city's historic center, as so many other communities did. The downtown and its residential neighborhoods retain a sense of integrity today that still speaks to Davis' historic small town character.



Aerial photograph of Traditional Davis, circa 1946: The arc of the Union Pacific Rail Road is in the lower right portion of the image.



Purpose – Design Guideline Goals

These design guidelines respond to community concerns about the manner in which new investment in the center of Davis can enhance, rather than erode, its valued character. The proposed goals for the design guidelines are as follows:

- Conserve the traditional neighborhood character, fabric and setting while guiding future development, reuse, and reinvestment.
- Discourage the demolition of structures consistent with the district's historic character by providing incentives for reuse of non-designated contributing structures.
- Plan for new commercial and residential infill construction that is compatible and complementary to the character of existing neighborhood areas within the district.
- Foster reinvestment and economic development in the core that is consistent with historic conservation.
- Provide guidelines to clarify the community's expectations for the type and quality of development within the district.

Public Process

This project reflects a cooperative effort among City departments, neighborhood associations, the business community and citizens of Davis. The Historic Resources Management Commission (HRMC) collaborated with the City Staff in sponsoring the process, which included eight community workshops where participants helped to craft the framework policies and guidelines.

Area-wide Design Issues Workshops

The workshop agendas included: an introduction to the planning process; a presentation of planning history, including issues and case studies from other communities; and teams of participants working to identify areas of special character in each of these neighborhoods. The workshop objectives were to:

- Define the Character Areas
- Identify neighborhood design features that the community values
- Establish a preliminary set of design principles

Neighborhood Design Workshops

Citizens participated in several neighborhood workshops and identified design issues that should be addressed in the Davis Conservation District Design Guidelines effort. The neighborhood workshops were held in January and February of 2000. The neighborhood-wide design issues workshops were held in the following areas:

- ◆ Old North neighborhood
- ◆ Old East neighborhood
- ◆ University/Rice Lane neighborhood

Downtown Urban Design Workshop

On April 6, 2000, over 40 property owners, residents and business owners attended a downtown urban design workshop. Held in the Varsity Theater, the workshop participants listened to a summary of the City's downtown planning policies and an analysis of existing assets in downtown Davis. They learned how other communities have used urban design plans and guidelines to shape investment and they participated as members of urban design teams to craft framework ideas for the downtown. The results of their efforts are summarized in this document.

Downtown Design Guidelines Workshop

On April 20, 2000, over 30 people participated in a workshop to establish design objectives for guidelines addressing the downtown core commercial area. Building on recommendations from the April 6th Downtown Urban Design Workshop, the design guidelines workshop participants identified the site and architectural features for nine downtown core commercial Character Areas.

Downtown and Residential Guidelines Study Session

On September 26, 2000, two workshops were held in the Varsity Theater to discuss the public draft of the proposed design guidelines. The first workshop was held to discuss the commercial/mixed use guidelines and the second workshop covered residential guidelines. In each session, participants were asked three questions:

- Did the Guidelines miss anything?
- What do the Guidelines do best?
- Are there things the Guidelines could do better?

Many suggestions were offered including some of the following: A request for stronger, more specific language; additional graphics to better illustrate the review process; include language on how to complement traditional buildings with innovative modern architecture. As a result of suggestions from that meeting, staff has worked to revise the document to ensure that the language and illustrations are as clear as possible.



Old East neighborhood workshop participants



Old North neighborhood workshop participants



University Rice Lane workshop participants

Relationship to Other Documents

The design guidelines in this document build upon policies that are set forth in two key reports.

The first report, *Core Area Specific Plan*, establishes a basic direction for development in the Downtown Commercial and Mixed Use areas, and the University Avenue/Rice Lane neighborhoods. It includes policies for parking and transportation, land use and urban design. It encourages moderate increases in housing densities in certain areas to ensure a vital city center and promotes commercial, institutional and residential uses that contribute to livability. The plan also provides some basic guidelines for development, which serve as a foundation for those provided in this document.

A second, more-specific report was completed in early 2000. The *Downtown Strategy Report* focuses on economic development objectives in the downtown and recommends a mix of complementary land uses.

Additionally, the area included in the 1917 district is covered by multiple zoning designations including Planned Developments (PDs), such as PD#2-86, which are tailored to address the specific character features of the subject areas. The majority of the residential areas are zoned R-2 (Residential 1 and 2 unit), while the commercial areas are primarily zoned Central Commercial and Mixed Use. Some of the policies in this document anticipate changes to the zoning ordinance. If there are inconsistencies between these guidelines and zoning standards, the more restrictive applies.

Document Organization

This document is organized into five (5) parts, each of which is further subdivided into specific topic areas:

- Introduction: Includes a discussion on the purpose for the development of this document, the historic framework for the district, as well as a project application summary.
- Part 1 – Urban Design Framework: Establishes a framework of opportunities to create desirable shopping and mixed-use streets and places. It defines a system of walkable streets, urban places and parks that link various sub-areas of the downtown.
- Part 2 – Downtown Core Commercial and Mixed Use Properties: Provides general guidelines for commercial and mixed-use areas. Also includes sections on special character areas and specific criteria that affect these areas. Case studies for applying the guidelines are included for the core commercial, mixed use and special character areas.
- Part 3 – Traditional Residential Neighborhoods: Includes an overview of general design features to consider in any new project, such as site design and building form and scale as well as consideration for development of new secondary (accessory structures). The final section includes case studies for the three residential neighborhoods.
- Appendix – Includes an overview of the mechanics of the design review process for varying types of projects including a checklist to help identify the guidelines that are applicable to the planned project. Also provided in the Appendix is a listing of the residential building types found in Davis and a Glossary of terms.

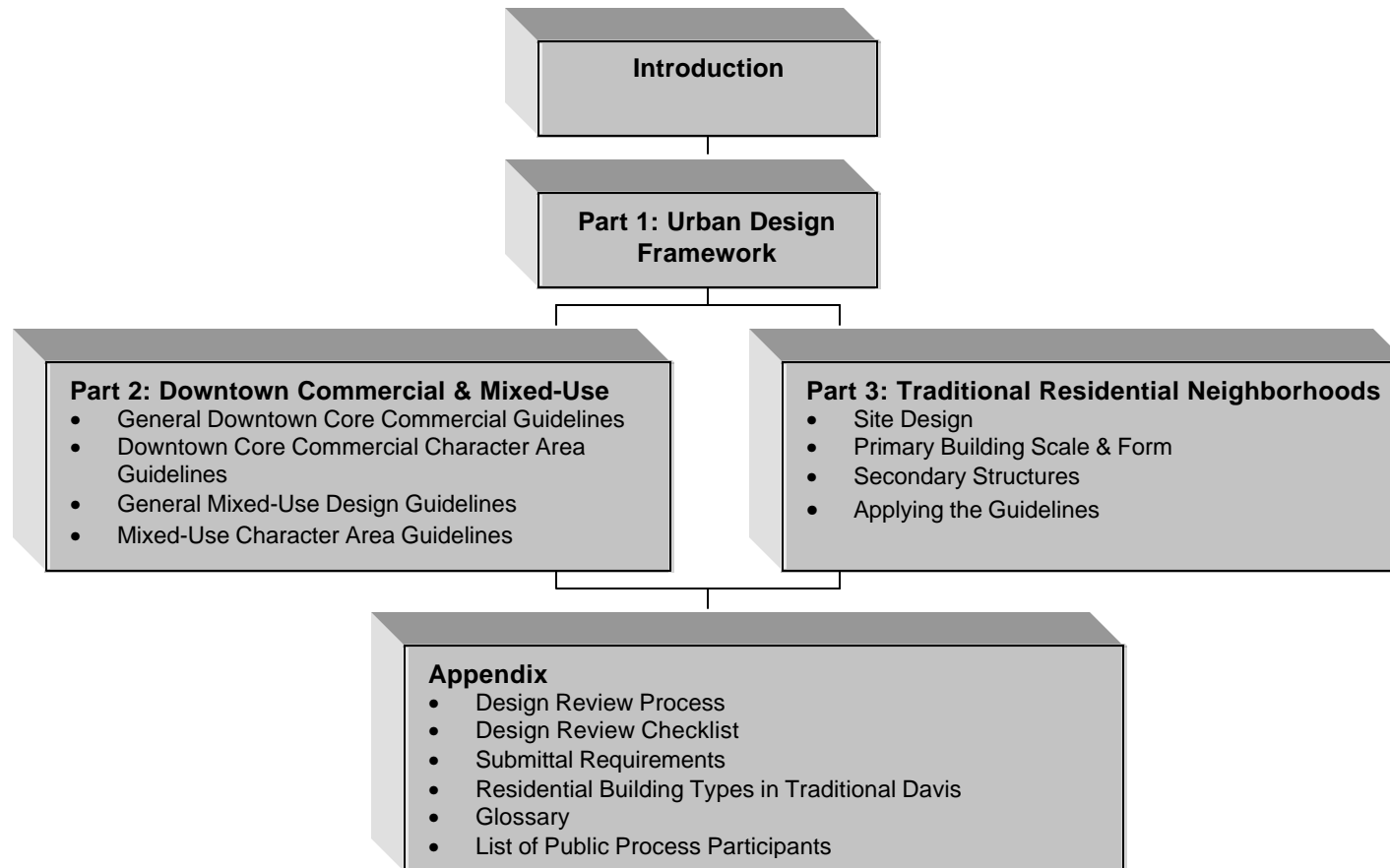
Internal Document Format

Within the Traditional Residential and Commercial/Mixed Use portions of this document a format has been provided to aid the user in quickly finding the specific topic area needed for project review. Each of the chapters or main parts of the document are divided into topic areas such as Site Design or Primary Building Scale and Form. These topic areas are then further divided into sub-topics, such as Streetscape, Open Space or Building Location. For each sub-topic area, an overarching design principal or policy statement is provided. The design principals within a topic area are numbered. Specific design guidelines are then provided that follow from and reinforce the principal statement by setting forth a basic method for the treatment of the design topic. Finally, provided within the

design guidelines are supplementary requirements, identified by bullet point, which clarify the primary design guideline statement and may suggest specific methods for complying with it.

The Design Review Checklist requires reference to a specific design guideline. An example of this type of reference would be as follows: ***“Residential Site Design; Alleys and Service Areas; Principal 1, guideline A”***.

The following flow chart illustrates the general document organization.



Which Sections Apply to Your Project?

Homeowners, business owners and developers who are planning to build a new structure or modify an existing structure may use the following chart to determine which portions of the document to use.

Sections To Use	Part 1: Urban Design Framework	Part 2: Downtown Commercial Mixed Use	Part 3: Traditional Residential Neighborhoods	Appendix: Design Review Process
Type of Work				
To build a new primary residential structure			X	X
To construct an addition to an existing residence			X	X
To build a new detached accessory structure on a residential property			X	X
To build a new commercial/mixed use structure	X	X	*	X
To add-on or make façade changes to an existing commercial or mixed use property.	X	X		X

* For commercial projects located adjacent to residential areas, review and consideration of residential guidelines should be included as part of project review.

Guidelines vs. Standards – Language in the Guidelines

Guidelines are generally descriptive statements that explain or illustrate a principal or preferred course of action. Where as standards prescribe minimum acceptable limits. Guidelines, typically adopted through resolution, describe a preferred policy direction of the City. Standards, adopted through ordinance, state required action or implementation. Language utilized for standards is unequivocal and often quantifiable.

Given the nature of this document, that it is designed primarily to provide guidance toward preserving and enhancing the character and flavor of neighborhoods within the 1917 district, descriptive rather than quantitative statements are most often used. In some cases, such as in Old North, recommended limits are in fact stated. This is particularly important for those instances where flexibility is necessary given the variability of the special character areas. It is through zoning that appropriate minimum standards can be set. It is anticipated that further implementation of the guidelines will be realized once anticipated zoning revisions have been completed. In those cases where it is anticipated that future zoning changes will be made to implement guidelines, quantitative limits are provided.