Architectural Character in the Specific Plan Area

The architectural character of Petaluma is a fortuitous blending of nineteenth and twentieth century styles, materials and patterns. In particular, Petaluma west of the 101 Freeway, reflects an eclectic mix of the stately neo-classical public buildings, colorful and ornate Victorian residential and commercial buildings juxtaposed with utilitarian metal and brick commercial structures of simple form and post-WWII modernism. Throughout the Central Petaluma and Old Downtown area, this quilt-work of materials, forms and patterns co-exist amicably, often side by side.

The central guiding principal for design and development within the Central Petaluma Specific Plan Area is that the architecture should preserve and strengthen the much prized character of the existing town and its distinct neighborhoods while creating a compatible character in newly developed areas. It is not the intention of the Specific Plan to promote "historical reproductions" of any existing architectural style or building type. Developers and designers are free to explore new ideas, forms and materials and to seek project design approval through the process outlined elsewhere in the Specific Plan. It is the intention of the Specific Plan that developers and designers take time to understand the patterns inherent in the existing architectural character of Petaluma in the belief that new structures can be designed which spring from and relate to the existing context without impeding innovation, and projects can be approved and constructed more expeditiously. It is expected that new designs will strengthen and enhance some existing patterns and precedents while de-emphasizing others and may set precedents for designs that follow.

A pattern is any unique organization of elements which can be repeated. For instance, a pattern could be how close a building is to the street or to the adjacent building, or the way that window and door openings are organized in the facade of a building, or the predominant slope and shapes of a roofs in a neighborhood, or what type of materials are present and how they are typically used. The totality of all the patterns in an area describe and determine its architectural character.

What are the key patterns which underlie the archi-
tectural character envisioned for each of the zoning districts of the Central Petaluma Specific Plan area? How will designers, planning staff and regulatory bodies evaluate whether a proposed architectural design is consistent with the intention of the Specific Plan and the promotion of these patterns? This section seeks to give guidance to prospective developers, designers and regulatory agents alike. The direction given here should be used in conjunction with the Smart Code, Zoning Map, and applicable Specific Plan policies.
Area 1: Petaluma Boulevard Corridor from B Street to Lakeville Street

Existing Patterns

The existing building pattern along Petaluma Boulevard is predominantly one and two story Victorian storefronts and mid-century remolds from B Street to Lakeville Street. The condition and character of the building facades between B Street and Washington Street vary, but as a whole are strong because of the consistent relationship of buildings to the street edge and the mirroring of similar building type, form and level detail either side of Petaluma Boulevard. Some buildings have projected canopies and awnings at the sidewalk and some entrances are sufficiently recessed to provide cover or a location for sidewalk dining. There is sufficient detail on the buildings to create interest and some the larger structures are rich compositions of window, door and trim patterns and variation of scales. Openings and building facades are generally vertical in proportion.

North of Washington Street, the consistency of this historic urban pattern along Petaluma Boulevard begins to breaks down. On the west side of the street, the Bank of America building is far less interestingly detailed and seems out of place. An inaccessible park and unattractive, single story retail stores and parking lots follow in succession. On the east side of the street, the urban pattern also breaks down because there are voids between and in front of some buildings.

Recommended Design Approach

The patterns of form, facade articulation, light and shadow, and color present in existing two and three story structures south of Washington should be used to guide design in new development both north and south of
Washington Street to strengthen the existing urban character. Building heights should be two stories minimum with some variation of overall height at the cornice line allowed. Buildings should have sufficient detail to extend the richness already present, but need not be as elaborate or identical to the Victorian forms. Voids between buildings should be removed so that there is continuous building line along the street edge if possible. The proportion and placement of building elements such as openings, and the wall and finish materials selected should be compatible with the precedent pattern of north Petaluma Boulevard. Cement plaster, cast-in-place and precast concrete, brick, and smooth surfaced wood or composite materials may be acceptable wall siding materials when used in character with precedent patterns.

Area 2: Water Street and Poultry Street

Existing Patterns

Water Street and Poultry Streets were originally access roads to the back sides of buildings fronting towards Petaluma Boulevard. The existing patterns of materials and form along the west side of the Petaluma River from Western to Lakeville Street is far more utilitarian and rough than the building “fronts” facing Petaluma Blvd. It is this roughness of form and material which gives this edge its unique character, and a strong design precedent. Existing patterns and materials include: brick, stone and metal walls, gable and shed (single slope) roof forms, irregular window sizes and placement, arched window heads, and other characteristic forms and details.

Recommended Design Approach

The Specific Plan envisions improvements and extension to Poultry Street and improved pedestrian access to the rivers edge. Unlike the aligned building walls and two story height along Petaluma Boulevard, greater variety in building height (2 to 4 stories), facade placement and articulation is desirable along Water and Poultry Streets. Balconies, Terraces, Arcades and Colonnades are possible along
the river side of the buildings. Gable and single pitch roofs are possible as well as flat roofs with parapet and cornices. Materials evocative of the utilitarian historical character of the area should be emphasized, such as brick, metal siding, stone and cast stone, wrought iron, metal or other durable material. Buildings may also front to interior courts, plazas, and walks providing light and views in multiple directions when they are connected to pedestrian ways along Water Street or Poultry Street. Detailing should be simple, emphasizing shape, proportion and texture rather than ornateness or repetition, for example: arched top windows and door openings, projected brick courses or interesting assemblages of finish materials.

**Area 3: Washington Street Corridor between Lakeville and Petaluma Boulevard**

**Existing Patterns**

There are no significant urban patterns along Washington Street between Lakeville Street and Petaluma Boulevard. The majority of the boulevard is lined by undeveloped parcels and parking lots. With few exceptions, the buildings that exist sit well back from the street edge. The existing and dominant architectural character is determined by the 1970's strip mall shopping centers on either side of the boulevard. Because of the general openness of the area, there are significant vistas to the south and west.

**Recommended Design Approach**

The Specific Plan envisions this as a gateway boulevard, fronted on both sides of the street with continuous three to six story buildings built close to the street edge, and with tree-lined and covered sidewalks. New patterns of develop-
ment are required in this area consistent with the envisioned higher densities and urban character. In developing the project scale, proportion and articulation of the building elevations, the developer and designer should look to patterns present in the Downtown, particularly the three story buildings along, Petaluma Boulevard, Kentucky Street and Western Avenue. Buildings should have at least sufficient detail to be evocative of the rhythm (placement) and richness (shape) of forms present on the Downtown buildings, but detailing need not be elaborate.

Because this area includes larger parcels with longer street frontages, there is also the possibility of developing wider building facades which have common materials, fenestration and detailing. Local precedents for wide frontage buildings include the “Line and Twine” building and the old Ice House both on Lakeville Street, and the Petaluma Hotel on Washington Street.

**Area 4: Triangular area bounded by the Petaluma River, Washington Street and Lakeville**

**Existing Patterns**

This area includes the those interior portions of the bounded area not directly fronting Washington Street. Located within this area are portions of the Long’s Drug Shopping Center site, the monumental Dairyman’s Feed and Hunt & Behrens structures, and several smaller commercial and historical warehouse structures. There is also substantial land within this area which is currently undeveloped or in use for parking and maneuvering of vehicles or as rail spur right of way. The existing architectural character of the area reflects this industrial base, with buildings that are detached, simple warehouse and processing structures constructed of wood, brick and metal. Roof forms are simple gables and
Recommended Design Approach

A stated policy of the Specific Plan is the preservation of the existing industrial base along the river. Commercial and industrial uses located in the area are expected to remain and require substantial land area for access, parking and security. The development potential in the near term may be limited to infill and adaptive re-use opportunities. There are large historic commercial structures within the area with significant potential for adaptive re-use.

Redevelopment, infill and adaptive re-use in this area should adopt the existing patterns of simple building forms, industrial materials and utilitarian detailing. The Dairyman’s and Hunt and Behrens structures have already introduced complex and random window patterns and angular forms to the area which could be adopted and elaborated to create unique architectural solutions.

Area 5: The Turning Basin River Edge

Existing Patterns

The Turning Basin river edge is largely occupied by the Golden Eagle Shopping Center. The plan of the shopping center locates the buildings as close as possible to the river edge, leaving only minimal access along the back sides of the buildings and large paved parking areas between the buildings and Washington Boulevard. This essentially suburban commercial center fronts the buildings towards the parking lot, not the river. Buildings are also located close to the foot of the Balshaw Bridge on the east side of the river, occupying the natural location for a public square of sufficient size.
and shape to accommodate a large gathering people at the river edge and close to Downtown. The architecture of the center is a single story brick and concrete structure with aluminum storefronts and a metal mansard roof. The existing architecture bears no resemblance to the historic small town urban character and fails because it completely ignores the context and architectural character of Petaluma.

**Recommended Design Approach**

Consensus of the advisory committee in formulating the Specific Plan was that the existing structures are poorly sited to maximize the potential of the river and the development of Washington Avenue as a gateway street. Redevelopment of the site must consider the replacement of existing structures to meet the goals of the Specific Plan.

A minimum of three and a maximum of six story structures are envisioned for this site. New patterns of development are required in this area consistent with the higher densities and character of the urban standards. The developer and designer therefore have a unique opportunity to introduce new architectural forms, patterns and uses of materials to Petaluma and also the responsibility not to repeat the mistakes of the existing site architecture by ignoring the context and character of Petaluma.

The curve of the turning basin and a re-alignment of streets presents the greatest opportunity within the Specific Plan Area for a “formal” site plan and a more ordered architecture relating to the water's edge and a pedestrian way along the river. This approach would include more formalized geometric relationships between buildings and open spaces, axial connections, symmetries, and a balanced facade that has unifying elements overall. The objective is to create unique sense of place and a rich pedestrian experience as they move through the public space between the
river and the building edge. Any redevelopment of the site must include the development of a public plaza space formally related to the building forms with access to the water at or near the Balshaw Bridge.

Area 6: D Street Corridor

Existing Patterns

D Street is and will remain a major traffic corridor from Petaluma Boulevard to Lakeville Street. At present, there is little pedestrian friendly development at the street edge. And due to limited number of buildings, there is not a strong architectural character or precedent along this thoroughfare.

Recommended Design Approach

The Specific Plan Urban Standards permit structures from two to four stories in height on either side of D Street. However, D Street is the boundary between two distinct patterns of architecture and development. On the north-east side of D, the Specific Plan envisions continuous building facades at the sidewalk edge (See Comments for Area 7). On the south-west side of D Street the patterns of the River Warehouse District prevail, with greater variation of building form (See comments for Area 11). The land use between D Street and the McNear Channel is currently industrial and protected by the Specific Plan. Therefore significant sections of the south-western frontage of D Street may remain unchanged for some time. Therefore, flexibility is key to development along D Street and either pattern of development will be allowed along the north-east side of D Street in the area designated as T5 Urban Center.

Area 7: Area bounded by Weller Street, Washington Boulevard, D Street and the Rail Depot

Existing Patterns

At present, there are few structures in this area. (The
Train Station is excluded and discussed separately. Two metal commercial buildings face Copeland Street mid block. The land bounded by Weller Street, Washington Street, Copeland Street and D Street is privately owned. The land to the east of Copeland is currently owned by the rail authority which continues to use the property for rail related purposes. Drawings of Nineteenth Century Petaluma show various commercial structures in this area and a different river course. None of these historical structures remain, and the area is largely undeveloped.

A Sonoma County and Petaluma Bus Transfer location is planned for construction on the east side of Copeland Street.

Recommended Design Approach

The Specific Plan Urban Standards codes most of this area T6 Urban Core which permits buildings from 3 to 6 stories in height. A strip of land along the D Street Corridor is coded T5 Urban Center which permits buildings from 2 to 4 stories in height. T6 areas require that building facades be within 5’ of the property line, while T5 areas require building facades to be within 10’ of the property line. All types of building function are permitted with this area.

So many possibilities exist for buildings of mixed use and densities in this area, that there are few existing Petaluma buildings that provide cues and precedents. Some buildings of comparable scale do exist on Western Avenue, Petaluma Boulevard and Washington Street, and these may prove valuable in establishing patterns of building scale, articulation, light and shadow and relating the new development to exiting context of the Downtown. However, new patterns of development and building form will be required and expected. Developers and designers may look to other cities and resources in creating architectural character in this area.
Where feasible, private outside space should be provided for each residential unit. Where residential units are constructed, it is required that landscaped and developed open space for use primarily by residents be provided. This may include gardens, courtyards, terraces, roof gardens, plazas, walks, and other outside amenities.

**Areas 7 & 8: Copeland Landing and the Rail Depot Site**

**Existing Patterns**

There are presently two historic, single story rail station buildings along the rail line. The architecture of the structures is unique in Petaluma, being an exuberant interpretation of California Spanish style architecture. There are quadrafoil and tresfoil ventilation openings in the walls that are quite detailed and have been used emblematically by the City, and copied by the Taco Bell built across the street. The stucco and tile roof buildings are in an advancing state of deterioration and disrepair.

**Recommended Design Approach**

The Specific Plan recognizes the buildings as being significant historical resources and worth preserving and restoring. They are local landmarks and strongly associated with the unique architectural character of Petaluma. They are at a location that continues to be considered as a destination point for light rail and excursion rail service, and which once again may become an entry point for travelers coming to Petaluma. The Specific Plan envisions that the bus transfer station planned for Copeland Street could be relocated adjacent to the Train Depot. Redevelopment and preservation of this site would require land for access roads, parking and landscaping.

The preservation and re-use of this asset will require careful site design and landscape architecture. Consideration of the relationship and transition between these one story structures and any adjacent development which could be as much as five stories high, will be essential. Creating a visual and pedestrian linkage between the Depot Site and the Turn-
ing Basin will also be essential.

**Area 9: McNear Channel Industrial Area**

**Existing Patterns**

This area includes river dependent industrial uses, commercial uses and open land. Buildings have a utilitarian industrial character – metal, concrete and stucco structures surrounded by large crushed rock parking and truck maneuvering areas. Buildings are often separated by substantial open spaces, much of it left in a more or less natural state. Properties typically abut the Petaluma River and may also abut the railroad right of way. The prevalent pattern is largely one of open space interspersed with large building and processing structures that provide views toward the river from many directions.

**Recommended Design Approach**

A stated policy of the Specific Plan is the preservation of the existing industrial base along the river. Commercial and industrial uses located in the area are expected to remain and continue to require substantial land area for access, parking and security. The development potential in the near term may be limited to infill and adaptive re-use opportunities.

Redevelopment and infill in this area should adopt the existing patterns of simple building forms, industrial materials and utilitarian detailing. Projects should strive to maintain view corridors to the river edge and natural habitat wherever possible. Projects should integrate well with the Petaluma River Enhancement Plan and pedestrian access to the river edge.

**Area 10: Lakeville Corridor**

**Existing Patterns**

Lakeville Street forms the northerly border of the specific plan area and is a principal access route into Peta-
The existing pattern of development is different on either side of the street. The easterly side abuts both existing residential and commercial zones and therefore has some vestiges of single story residential development. The building pattern includes single story commercial enterprises, vacant land, and retail shopping center. It also includes the historically significant landmark “Line & Twine” building, the premier example of brick industrial vernacular in Petaluma. There is no dominant recurring pattern of building mass, relationship of building to the street edge, or architectural character and building heights typically do not exceed two stories.

The westerly side of Lakeville is comprised of properties of varying widths and depths that abut the railroad right of way to the rear. There is some retail development, but the most the most prevalent uses are industrial – auto wrecking, storage yards, LP gas distribution, landscape irrigation supply, car wash. The quality and character of the buildings vary widely. Like the easterly side of the street, there is no dominant recurring pattern of building mass, relationship of building to the street edge, or architectural character and building heights typically do not exceed one and one half stories.

**Recommended Design Approach**

Except for the designated D-4 zoning district at the southerly end of the Lakeville corridor, the Specific Plan envisions Lakeville as an eventual gateway boulevard, fronted on both sides of the street with continuous two to four story buildings built close to the street edge, and with tree-lined sidewalks. New patterns of development are required in this area consistent with the envisioned higher densities and urban character. In developing the project scale, proportion and articulation of the building elevations, the developer and designer may look to patterns present in the Downtown, particularly the three story buildings along, Petaluma Boulevard, Kentucky Street and Western Avenue, or may approach the development of the intended denser urban fabric in a more contemporary manner. The patterns inherent in the Line and Twine Building offer the designer a strong and much admired precedent and an opportunity for unifying and architecture along the street. Buildings should have at least sufficient detail to be evocative of the rhythm (placement) and richness (shape) of forms present on the Downtown buildings, but detailing need not be elaborate. The D-4 District portion of the
Lakeville corridor will continue many of the existing patterns consistent with the thoroughfare commercial development focused in the vicinity of the intersection with Caulfield Lane and the interchange with Highway 101.

**Area 11: River Warehouse Area**

*Existing Patterns*

The existing patterns of the River Warehouse area are very different from the Downtown and nearby residential neighborhoods. The mix of residential, commercial, industrial, and office uses and their correspondingly different building types gives this area its unique character. Brick, block and metal industrial buildings are interspersed with vacant land, and small residential bungalows. The area also includes the Foundary Wharf Project with recently constructed office and commercial buildings which employ many forms and materials present elsewhere along the river edge.

The principal building type along First Street are long, rectangular metal warehouse buildings approximately two stories in height extending from First Street to the River edge. These structures have simple gable roofs running the length of the buildings and few windows. Some structures have elevated docks covered with continuous shed roofs. Along the street, there are breaks in the line of buildings providing stunning views to the McNear Peninsula and lands beyond. Even when side by side, the gable roofs allow the buildings to be seen as distinct structures. These structures represent the historical, river-based industrial character of the area, and the corrugated metal siding has developed a patina and rustic appearance that is an important part the existing character of the area.

The pattern changes in the area between First and Second Streets: metal structures are intermixed with brick, concrete block and wood commercial buildings, vacant land and single family residences. In the area between Second Street and Petaluma Boulevard, small residential structures and the back sides of buildings fronting Petaluma Boulevard become the norm.
Recommended Design Approach

The Specific Plan recognizes and intends to preserve the unique character of this area. As development of this area intensifies, it is important that the presence of detached single family homes be retained. The Specific Plan envisions that the existing architectural patterns be preserved and used in developing new structures. Building heights would range from two to three stories. The pattern of metal buildings with simple rectangular forms and recurring gable roofs at the river edge should be maintained. Adaptive re-use of the existing structures should be considered in any development plan. If this proves structurally or financially infeasible, buildings of similar scale and proportion are recommended. 

The existing irregularity of the street connection should be maintained, with buildings being constructed to the street most of the time, but retain sufficient breaks in the line of buildings so that buildings appear as detached structures and to allow for the creation of side yards and entrances, interior courts and passages through to the river edge. The designer should look to the model of Foundry Wharf for the design of window and door openings. Infill in this area should adopt this pattern of simple building forms, industrial materials (metal siding, brick and concrete block) and utilitarian detailing. Gable and shed roofs should predominate. The large metal industrial structures such as Dairyman’s Feed and Hunt and Behrens, with their asymmetrical compositions of simple building forms and angular piping, conveying systems and bracketry, provide a wealth of forms and shapes that could be adopted and elaborated to create unique architectural solutions in the River Warehouse area.
Area 12: Middle Reach Area

Existing Patterns

This area includes the City of Petaluma Corporation Yard, Sewage Treatment Facility, Animal Shelter and Homeless Shelter. It also includes open land between the City Facilities and the McNear Channel edge. Hopper Street, running parallel to the railroad right of way, provides the only current access to this area.

Recommended Design Approach

Opportunities for development in this area will depend on the gradual relocation of City services to other locations. The Specific Plan envisions the creation of a new street grid developing between Hopper Street and the Petaluma River and extending into the Lower Reach area. Buildings from two to six stories are possible in this area. This area, in combination with the Lower Reach, offers the developer and designer the greatest latitude and opportunity for the creation of new architectural forms and patterns and the use of new materials and technologies. Developers are encouraged to go beyond the historical character and patterns that predominate in other parts of the Specific Plan area to create a character unique to this area.

Area 13: Lower Reach Area

Existing Patterns

Most of the Lower Reach area is undeveloped and underdeveloped land. The area is strongly bounded by the 101 Freeway to the east and the Petaluma River to the South. Access to the area at present is limited to Hopper Street. This area and the adjacent Middle Reach Area include the longest stretch of undeveloped Petaluma River edge.
Recommended Design Approach

The Specific Plan envisions the creation of a new street grid developing between Hopper Street and the Petaluma River and extending from the Middle Reach area into the Lower Reach and the highest densities in the Specific Plan Area. Buildings from two to six stories are possible in the Lower Reach. This area, in combination with the Middle Reach, offers the developer and designer the greatest latitude and opportunity for the creation of new architectural forms and patterns and the use of new materials and technologies. Developers are encouraged to go beyond the historical character and patterns that predominate in other parts of the Specific Plan area to create a character unique to this area.

Area 14: Basin Street Landing

Existing Patterns

This area is bounded by the Petaluma River edge opposite the turning basin, D Street, Petaluma Boulevard and B Street. Once a key location for river based commerce, they area currently includes parking areas where once there were warehouses, and metal and brick industrial buildings. The current dominant pattern is openness. The historical "Old Petaluma Mill" and the brick commercial structure across B Street are likely to be preserved for the foreseeable future and set a strong precedent for forms and materials.

Recommended Design Approach

The Specific Plan envisions a far more dense and urban pattern of development than currently exists filling out the existing street network with buildings built to the street edge. This area forms an important transition from the relatively elaborate detailing of the Victorian era buildings along Western and Petaluma Boulevard to the more utilitarian building patterns along the river edge. The recommended emphasis is to extend the older urban character of the old downtown while respecting the river edge commercial roughness. It is recommended that designs reflect the scale and
massing of the downtown while permitting the simplicity of detail more typical of the historical river edge development still present along Water Street and Poultry Street.

Pedestrian ways through this area should respond to planned river edge improvements as described in the Petaluma River Enhancement Plan. View corridors should be created from Petaluma Boulevard toward the Turning Basin.
Definitions

PATTERN: A pattern, as it is used here, implies both a recurring problem and the essential structure of its resolution. A pattern is a set of relationships: between the elements making up buildings (walls, roofs, openings, attached objects, etc.), between buildings (spacing and orientation of building blocks), between buildings and the environment, or between people and the built environment. A useful pattern can be duplicated flexibly and creatively in design. The recurring use of some patterns have proven over time to result in visual order, beauty, and social and environmental health, and therefore are worth replicating, while others have not.

COMPOSITION: A design solution is not a haphazard thing. The elements of the solution are composed – consciously selected and placed so as to be both pleasing and functional. Composition is harmonious when all the elements seem to fit, when both our intuition and reason judge the result to work. Characteristically, when elements are harmoniously composed, they are usually proportional and related to one another by a strong (though often hidden) underlying geometry of regulating lines. Building elevations, site plans, floor plans, the placement of objects in the open space between buildings are all needful of composition. It is also useful to think of buildings as compositions of light and dark as well form. A well composed facade is a pattern of interplay and rhythm between sun and shadow that gives
Proportion is the quantitative relationship of an element's dimensions. For example, a rectangular window of proportion (height) 6' and (width) 3' will have a ratio of 2:1, and can be said to be proportional to an other window having the same proportioning ratio, even though a different size (i.e. 4' x 2'). Elements within a composition, such as a building elevation, will appear more harmonious when their individual proportions relate or share a common ratio and if they are proportionally related to the larger rectangles of the building walls. Proportional ratios can also be expressed as diagonal lines connecting corners of rectangular elements.

Every element of composition in a building (doors, windows, walls, roof lines, etc.) are related to every other element in the composition by lines, sometimes explicit, sometimes hidden, called regulating lines. These lines may be "lines of sight", or "axis of symmetry", floor level lines, roof lines, proportional ratio lines or diagonal lines connecting vertical and horizontal lines. These are the lines which bind the elements of the composition together.

A precedent is a pattern or solution which has been used before successfully and frequently enough to be a dominant form, thereby strongly influencing or determining the existing context. For example, the use of simple gable and shed
roofs (and the absence of the “hip"roof) are used so often with the metal industrial buildings found in the Riverfront Warehouse Zone that they could be considered a precedent for establishing roof type and slope. Solutions which respect and respond to existing precedent patterns are more likely to be successful.

**ARTICULATION:**

As used here, articulation refers to the manner in which building plans and facades are divided by projections or recesses and the placement of openings. For example, a long building facade with a horizontal proportionality, (90' wide x 30' high, ratio 3:1) could be visually divided into six sections by wall projections or window placement to create a vertically proportioned composition, (sections of 15' wide x 30' high, ratio 1:1.5). Most of the existing two and three story structures in the Downtown area are vertically proportioned and articulated compositions facing the street, many of which could be used by designers to understand in detail the character and context of Petaluma.