architecture for non-residential development
B. ARCHITECTURE FOR NON-RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

The architecture section is separated into two parts: 1) design concepts, and 2) guidelines. Design concepts for architecture identify desirable characteristics of non-residential building design. Design guidelines reiterate specific objectives and establish provisions and options to ensure implementation of desirable design concepts. Guidelines herein are intended to supplement the minimum development standards in the Zoning Code.

1. Design Concepts
Design concepts listed below represent the City’s desired characteristics for non-residential architecture.

a. Promote high quality building designs that consist of durable and maintainable materials and that provide visual interest and diversity to the community.

b. Ensure building design achieves human scale and interest.

c. Incorporate an architectural style and or/theme for new non-residential development that is consistent for building elevations of a single structure or consistent among all buildings within an integrated development.

d. Ensure the design of proposed buildings or structures is sensitive to the neighborhood character with regard to scale, architectural style, use of materials and bulk.

2. Design Guidelines for All Non-Residential Development

Architectural Style

The intent of the architectural guidelines is to ensure a base level of quality architecture that is responsive to its context and builds upon the aesthetic identity of the community rather than a design solution that is based on a standardized formula or market prototype superimposed on the selected site. Over time, certain projects and landmark buildings begin to define the dominant character of an area. Not all buildings within an area contribute equally to the area character and each example should be weighed against the balance of all other projects. The intent of the architectural guidelines is to encourage proposals that fit within and contribute to the established or planned architectural character and context of a specific area.

1) Architectural features should be used to provide weather protection and highlight building features and entries. The City encourages the use of mostly covered walkways along primary building frontages and between businesses within an integrated development (see Photo V-42 on next page).
2) Building articulation should help establish a human scale and provide visual interest.

3) Buildings should be designed with careful consideration for the incorporation of signage and lighting. New buildings and additions shall be designed to allow for signs appropriate in scale and location to the use and the neighborhood.

4) Non-residential buildings shall be designed with an architectural style and/or theme. The selected architectural style/theme for a building or integrated development shall be applied consistently throughout and among the buildings. The intent of this guideline is to ensure that non-residential development incorporates architecturally valid design of each building and architectural continuity within an integrated development. While all building elevations of a structure will not have the same level of detailing and articulation, elements of the architectural style shall be evident on all elevations of all buildings within the development (e.g., cornice treatment, colors, primary materials) (see Photos V-43 and V-44).
5) Building entries shall be designed to protect patrons and employees from the elements and create a “sense of entry” or a focal point for the building. The Scale and treatment of such focal point shall take into consideration the type of non-residential development proposed (see Photo V-45). For instance, an integrated development may be designed without an anchor tenant or known tenant space. In those circumstances, building design and entry treatment(s) will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

![Photo V-45: Structural and architectural enhancements to this building create a dominant focal point at the primary building entrance.](image)

**Mass, Scale, and Form**

6) Architectural scale, for purposes of these guidelines, is the relationship between the size of the new buildings and the size of surrounding buildings. Scale also refers to how the size of the building relates to the size of a human being (human scale). The apparent scale of a building should be reduced through the proper use of window patterns, roof overhangs, equipment bays that screen unsightly elements, awnings, moldings, fixtures, the use of darker or subdued colors, upper story setbacks, building and roof articulation and other details. Items that can help to achieve appropriate scale are as follows:

a) Large buildings should give the appearance of smaller components through the use of such features as recessed facades and articulation in the building mass (see Photo V-46 on next page).
Photo V-46: This development uses *articulation*, façade, and rooftop variation to achieve a pedestrian scale and reduce the mass of larger tenant spaces.

b) Design all proposed buildings or structures to be sensitive to the neighborhood character with regard to scale, architectural style, use of materials and bulk.

c) Design buildings to achieve a human scale and interest by including elements which give a person a sense of their relationship to the structure such as balconies, awnings, canopies, arcades, wall insets and reveals.

d) Design building entries and street side facades with elements that enhance pedestrian comfort and orientation while presenting features with visual interest that invite activity. Landscaping and architectural detail at the street level should be used to soften the edge of the building and enhance the pedestrian scale and streetscape (see Photos V-47 and V-48).

Photo V-47: Pedestrian scale in this commercial development is achieved through a combination of architectural design, awnings, and landscape structures.

Photo V-48: This large commercial center has pedestrian appeal through variation in roof design, massing, materials, colors, and landscape, along with a contiguous walkway along building frontages that is primarily covered.
e) Rooflines, wall planes and wall heights should be varied and significantly articulated to avoid blank expanses of building elevations (see Photo V-49).

7) As a general rule, the scale of building(s) on a site edge should be compatible with the scale of adjoining development. Where surrounding development is of a small scale, large-scale buildings should be located internal to the site and transition down in scale as the outer edge of the site approaches (see Photos V-50 through V-51).

“I don’t think of form as a kind of architecture. The architecture is the result of the forming. It is kiesthetic and visual sense of position and wholeness that puts the thing into the realm of art”

Roy Lichtenstein
8) The design of larger non-residential buildings should utilize design techniques to reduce its perceived building height and length by dividing the building mass into smaller scale components. One way to achieve this breakdown is to provide a well-defined base, middle and top to the building as described below.

   a) A solid building base may be achieved by elements such as low planters and walls, base planting, a base architectural veneer banding (wainscot) and treatments defined by a different material, texture or color.

   b) A solid building base (and a more articulated building mass) may be achieved by the addition of intermittent covered walkways, trellises or architectural awnings that provide deep shadow at ground level.

   c) Using features such as multiple architectural roof forms, clearly pronounced eaves, and distinct parapet designs and cornice treatments may achieve a well-defined building top.

Materials and Finishes

9) Generally, architectural features should be architecturally valid, not just decorative. While some elements may be wholly decorative, primary architectural features should be related to the building’s structure, function and/or engineering, and should not be arbitrary. The intent of this guideline is to avoid developments with architectural elements that look applied, rather than incorporated (e.g., false front treatments, partial roof forms) (see Photo V-52 on next page). Exceptions are provided in the site design guidelines 43 for buildings oriented along the street with applied treatments to give the appearance of a storefront.
10) Exterior building materials and colors comprise a significant part of the visual impact of a building; therefore they should be aesthetically pleasing and compatible with materials and colors used in adjoining and nearby developments.

a) Materials and detailing used on the front or main building elevation should be extended (in part) to all elevations. The intent is to carry over some of the architectural treatments from the primary building frontage to the building facades facing parking lots, streets, and other public areas (see Photos V-53 and V-54).
b) Use of durable, high quality materials such as brick, stone, tile, and certain forms of concrete are encouraged. These materials should be able to withstand climatic changes especially on the south and west elevations.

11) To reduce the potential impacts associated with daytime glare, buildings should be designed with minimal use of reflective materials. Use of highly reflective building materials is prohibited.

Screening

12) All building attached mechanical and other utility equipment shall be screened from view of public streets, parking lots, and adjacent residential property. Equipment screening shall be integrated into the building and roof design with the use of compatible materials, colors, and forms.

13) Roof mounted equipment shall be setback from the roof edge or placed behind a parapet or roof structure so they are not visible for motorists or pedestrians on adjacent streets or from residential structures on adjoining property. All roof mounted equipment shall be sized to be equal to or below (lower in height) than the adjoining parapet or roof structure.

Signage

Sign type, size, and location for non-residential development shall comply with applicable sign provisions in the Zoning Code. The following additional design provisions apply to all non-residential development.

14) All integrated non-residential developments (e.g., multiple tenants or buildings) shall establish a uniform Sign Program to ensure sign design consistency throughout the project. The Sign Program shall include sign criteria for building-attached and freestanding signs for tenants, anchors, freestanding buildings and the integrated development itself. The intent of the uniform Sign Program is to establish consistency of allowed sign types. Sign Programs for integrated developments are required to identify allowed sign types, materials, type(s) of illumination, and sign placement/locations for all signs within the center. Optional elements of the Sign Program include specific logo/letter height, limitation of sign colors, maximum lines of copy, temporary/promotional sign provisions, and construction details.
15) Sign type and locations should be consistent throughout the project, and the sign materials should complement the project design (see Photo V-55).

Photo V-55: Signage that incorporates architectural features of the commercial development in Elk Grove

16) Generally, the City discourages the types of signs listed below. However, such signs may be proposed and will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis as part of the Design Review application.

a) Pole signs;

b) Digital and manual reader-board signs (except as otherwise mandated by the State);

c) Internal illumination of freestanding signs, except where the backing is designed to be opaque; and

d) Permanent signs with exposed neon tubing or neon tubing enclosed in a sign cabinet with a clear plexiglass sign face.

Building Lighting

17) All exterior building lighting shall be located to a human scale.
18) Exterior building and site lighting shall be designed so that light is not directed off site and the light source is shielded downward from direct off-site viewing. However, the designated Approving Authority for Design Review may approve building-attached lighting that is not shielded downward with the determination that the light fixture is compatible with the building design and the level of illumination is evaluated for potential impacts (see Photo V-56).

19) Exterior lighting can detract from or add to the architectural design and quality of the building. All exterior lighting shall be architecturally integrated with the building style, material and colors. The City discourages the up-lighting or back-lighting of canopies or awnings and prohibits the use of neon tubing or band lighting along building facades or cornices. However, lighting used to accent an architectural feature or design attribute may be approved in conjunction with Design Review (see Photo V-57).
Architecture for Specific Types of Non-Residential Development

Retail Commercial Centers

20) Large retail commercial buildings that convey a “box-like” appearance are generally unattractive as commercial buildings. The following design techniques should be employed to help reduce the box-like appearance of large scale, bulky buildings:

a) Vary the plane of exterior walls in depth (recessed or projected) or direction.

b) Vary the height of the building so that the mass is broken into smaller distinct massing elements.

c) Vary the roofline to break up the apparent mass of the building.

d) Provide articulation to the various components of a building’s façade through the use of color, the arrangement of façade elements, or changes in material.

e) Incorporate reveals, recesses, projections, cornices, trim elements and other architectural features to provide visual interest.

f) Avoid long, blank walls at the ground floor level. Windows, trellises, wall articulation, arcades, changes in material and other features help provide visual interest.

g) Provide landscaping at the base of the building to soften the appearance.

21) As previously mentioned, non-residential development shall be designed with a consistent architectural style or theme that employs elements to visually unify the buildings and signage. Within integrated commercial developments, particular attention shall be paid to the design of freestanding pad buildings to ensure that such buildings are consistent with the architectural character of the rest of the center. Generally, freestanding pad buildings are located close to the street and project the first impression or image for the center. Thus, it is particularly important that the pad building design be compatible with and reflect the planned architectural style or theme of the center. It is not the intent of this guideline to preclude corporate identity, only to ensure that the overall design theme is consistent with the rest of the center (see Photos V-58 and V-59 on next page).
Photo V-58: The pad building (right) has design features (such as building form and colors, facade and detailing, window shapes, and lighting) that are consistent with the architecture of the overall development (left).

Photo V-59: The pad building (right) reflects the same architectural style, features, forms, and colors as the rest of the center (left).
22) Service station islands or other open canopies should be integrated architecturally and compatible with the character of the building(s) on the site (e.g., column and canopy design should match the architecture and building treatments of the main structure) (see Photo V-60).

Big Box Retail

As previously stated in the Site Planning Section, big box retail buildings are typically large, freestanding structures that look and act more like a warehouse than a traditional retail building. Architectural guidelines herein are intended to address unique design issues.

23) Buildings shall not be designed with long uninterrupted and flat facades. Rather, building design shall incorporate recesses and/or projections in the building facades facing parking lots and streets so that at a minimum distance of 100 linear feet, there is an offset of at least three feet or other structural embellishment that meets the intent of this guideline. Additionally, repeating patterns of change in color, texture, and material modules shall be used for architectural interest. Windows, awnings, and/or arcades must total at least 60 percent of the façade length abutting a public street (see Photo V-61).
24) The big box building shall contain an identifiable base where the building meets the sidewalk or faces a parking lot or street. The base Articulation shall extend at least two feet in height and is intended to visually ground the building and soften the visual mass of the vertical wall plane. Articulation may include a change in surface texture, wall color, material, or other improvement that meets the intent of the guideline.

25) A variety of roof types are encouraged. Distinct and interesting parapet tops on these predominantly flat roofed structures are encouraged. Pitched roofs shall be multi-planed to avoid large expanses of monotonous single-planed roofs. When flat roofs are used, there shall be a screening parapet topped with a coping, cornice, or a modified mansard. Mansards shall maintain the same roof pitch as surrounding structures and shall be both high and deep enough to create the illusion of being a true roof (see Photo V-62).

26) The architectural style and use of materials should be consistent throughout the entire mixed-use project. Differences in materials and/or architectural details should only occur on a structure where the intent is to differentiate between the residential Scale and character of the structure and the non-residential scale and character.
Light Industrial/Business Parks

27) Main building entries should be emphasized through building articulation and form so the entry is easily identified and visible from the street and parking lot and should provide convenient access for pedestrians (see Photo V-63).

28) All industrial buildings, including pre-cast and sit-cast concrete structures, shall incorporate architectural detail in the form of applied finishes, integral textures, patterns, colors, three dimensional recesses and projection. The use of typical utilitarian design with exposed low pitch roof, no overhang, single color, and flat walls are discouraged. If a metal or concrete building is to be used, it should include such features as offsets in the wall planes, recessed entry features, metal canopies, several colors, and/or multiple siding profiles. The intent of this guideline is to ensure visual interest and human scale in the design of light industrial and office developments that are typically larger in bulk and mass than other types of non-residential development (see Photos V-64 and V-65 and refer to previous Photo V-40).
29) All sides of an industrial building should reference consistent architectural detail and character. More attention should be paid to the design compatibility of building facades facing a parking lot, street, or adjoining residential property. All site walls and screen walls should be architecturally integrated with the building(s).

30) Given the fact that most industrial and office buildings are taller than other non-residential developments, the City encourages the incorporation of wireless communication facilities integrated directly into the architecture of building(s) as opposed to freestanding locations.