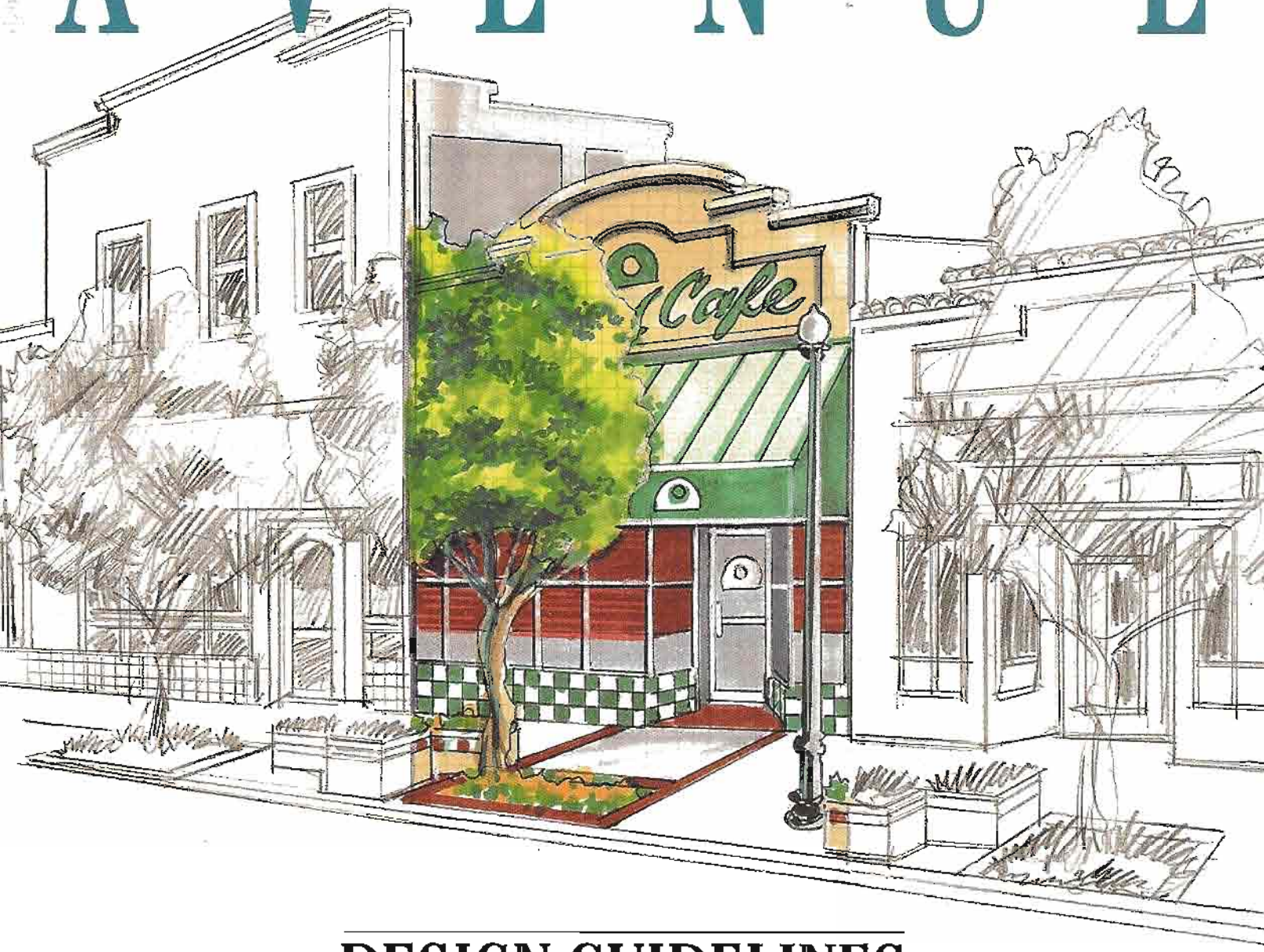
MURPHY AVENUE



DESIGN GUIDELINES

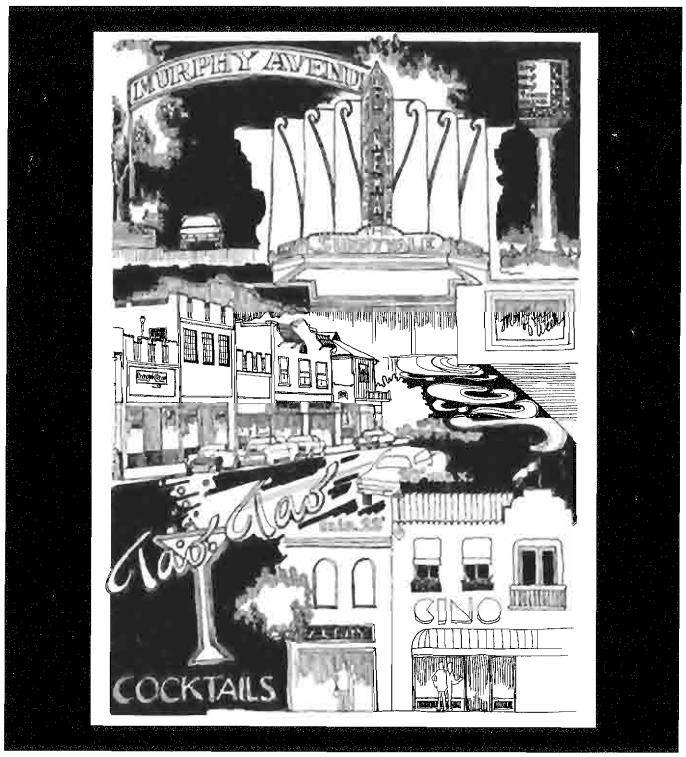
CITY OF SUNNYVALE, CALIFORNIA

F O R E W O R D

In 1980, the City of Sunnyvale commissioned Charles Hall Page and Associates, Inc. to prepare a development proposal and design guidelines for the 100 block of South Murphy Avenue. This two block area, which was essentially one streetfront with parking areas to the rear of the properties, was all that remained of the old Sunnyvale downtown. It remained because the City, with vigorous citizen support, had recognized its value in representing the history of Sunnyvale and its development, and had decided that it should not be included in the urban renewal activities that had replaced the rest of the old downtown with shopping malls.

However, the street was in poor condition. Many of the original buildings had been "renovated" with cheap materials, using designs that showed little sensitivity to the original architecture. Most of the businesses were struggling to survive. Some buildings were boarded up altogether. There were no street trees to soften the impact.

The original version of The Murphy Avenue Design Guidelines, published in 1980, included a development plan which proposed significant public improvements to the street, as well as design guidelines to encourage thoughtful and attractive renovations by private business owners. The City of Sunnyvale responded, demonstrating the public sector's commitment to the plan by investing more than $2,200,000 in public improvements and in low interest loans to private owners. Private reinvestment took place at a slower pace, but picked up in the later part of the decade and the early 1990's. By the summer of 1994, 31 of the 36 buildings in the Murphy Station Heritage Landmark District had been renovated or newly constructed. The 1980 Murphy Avenue Design Guidelines had been used as they were intended, to guide architects, builders and sign designers in preparing plans for development on Murphy Avenue and to guide the decisions of the Heritage Preservation Commission, which must approve all proposals for new construction or renovation on Murphy Avenue.



In 1994, Murphy Avenue is a lively, attractive and interesting place to be. A variety of shops, restaurants and personal services are available for daytime users, and crowds are drawn to the night scene, which offers a choice of restaurants, cafes, pubs and nightclubs. Saturday mornings people flock to the farmers' market to purchase fresh produce, flowers, baked goods and seafoods.

It can be said that the 1980 guidelines have done their job well.

In the revised version found in the following pages, the detailed description of the development plan has been deleted, since it is no longer needed. Other discussion has been updated to reflect current conditions. However, the design principles articulated by Charles Hall Page & Associates remain to guide future development.

The City of Sunnyvale would like to express gratitude to the California Office of Historic Preservation, which has provided a grant to make this new publication possible.

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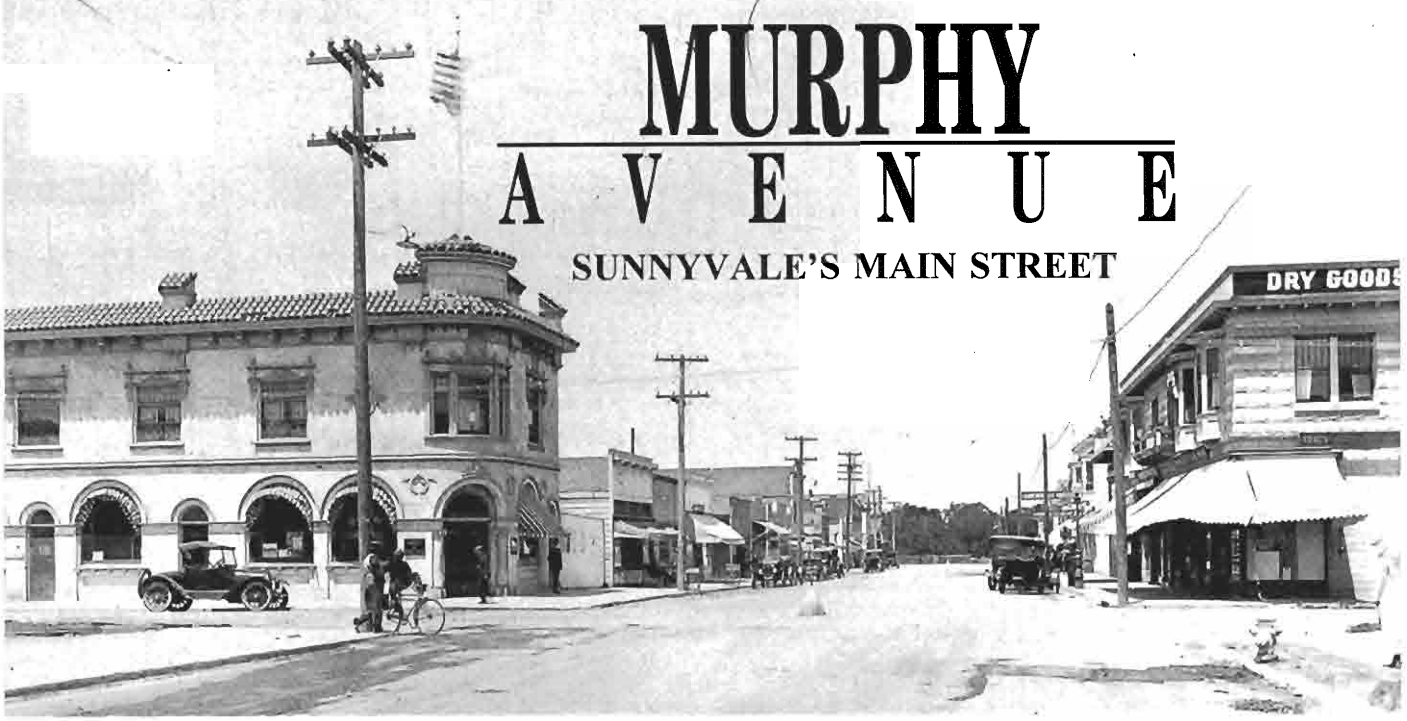
The 100 block of South Murphy Avenue is situated between the major downtown thoroughfares of Washington, Evelyn, Sunnyvale and South Frances, and is within the City's downtown redevelopment area. As Sunnyvale's historic commercial core, Murphy Avenue developed alongside of the industrial growth which spread along Evelyn Avenue and the Southern Pacific rail line. The city's skyline is still punctuated with architecturally significant industrial structures, including the Libby's water tower.

MURPHY AVENUE

SUNNYVALE'S MAIN STREET



Murphy Avenue possesses representation of typical architecture dating primarily from 1920-1950. One and two-story structures which feature stylistic references line the block on both sides, retaining the charm of an early 20th-century American Main Street. One author has described the traditional American Main Street as having been "the face of a town, the expression of its identity... the rhythm of windows and walls... a singular expression of time and place". In recent years Murphy Avenue, like many other older downtown areas, has been challenged and, to some degree, overwhelmed by rapid population growth, highways, urban renewal, suburban sprawl and massive, economically successful shopping malls. To many, the American Main Street has signified economic decline. **But Murphy Avenue is rediscovering the value of its historic development and its architectural resources.** Much of what remains on Murphy Avenue possesses an architectural integrity which is being dramatically enhanced by a major sprucing up effort. Where inappropriate materials and characterless signage still remain, these certainly are reversible. A few remaining post 1940's additions which are unfortunate and characterless intrusions on the streetscape may need to be replaced. These, with the few vacant sites remaining, offer new construction opportunities which could be used to provide dramatic visual enhancement as well as economic gain for the area.

Murphy Avenue does not need to be restored to its 1920's look, or reconstructed to be "antique" in any phony way. Along with the enrichment of the visual quality of the buildings will come the revitalization of the quality of life which is the essence of Murphy Avenue's historical identity.

Murphy Avenue was a place to get your shoes fixed, eat lunch and go to the movies. Traditionally Murphy Avenue was the hub of downtown Sunnyvale's social and retail activity. The stores were small by today's standards, but were oriented to personal service and offered a wide array of services and products.

Today Murphy Avenue has the opportunity to draw shoppers from Town Center and Town & Country and offer a shopping environment that does not play upon historic gimmicks or duplicate mall-type stores. Instead Murphy Avenue can offer a genuine, pleasant place to shop, with an environment conducive to meeting people and enjoying the outdoors.

The block is an attractive location for various types of professional and small-scale office space, which could be incorporated into new buildings or the adaptive use of existing structures. Office space would attract more people to Murphy Avenue on a daily basis, encouraging the development of a regular clientele for restaurants and shops.

The greatest challenge, and, somewhat ironically, the greatest market opportunity facing Murphy Avenue, is provided by the Sunnyvale Town Center Mall and the Town & Country shopping center. These major retail centers are imposing in terms of their physical presence, and, to some degree, have relegated to Murphy Avenue the image of the poor stepchild. On the other hand, these projects have without question established downtown Sunnyvale as a regional shopping area. Economic analysis indicates that the opportunity for additional retail development on Murphy Avenue clearly exists, particularly in terms of the alternative environment which Murphy Avenue is able to offer. And, with an array of businesses offering nighttime activity, Murphy Avenue is becoming an exciting place to be when the sun goes down.

Historically, Murphy Avenue was surrounded by residences. Today, the remaining commercial buildings stand isolated from a former residential context by expanses of parking lots, while surrounding blocks contain a mix of commercial and residential development which is unrelated to Murphy Avenue in style and scale.

However, with the adoption of the Downtown Specific Plan in 1993, Murphy Avenue may soon recapture its distinct place in downtown Sunnyvale. The Downtown Specific Plan regulates uses and provides design standards for the neighborhoods or "subdistricts" located in the downtown area, including the Sunnyvale Town Center mall, the Town and Country Shopping Center, residential property located to the east and south and offices located along Mathilda Avenue. Each district has its own purpose, flavor and design criteria, but the ambiance provided by Murphy Avenue is at the heart of the "urban village" concept which sets the theme for future downtown development under the Downtown Specific Plan.

The plan proposes high density residential areas that will provide the convenience of downtown living for residents and support for downtown businesses. Murphy Avenue's small shops and restaurants should be especially attractive to those who will live in this urban village setting.

Murphy Avenue Development Plan

In 1980, when the first edition of the Murphy Avenue Design Guidelines was published, the City was committed to supporting the redevelopment of Murphy Avenue. Since that time the City has taken several actions to implement a Development Plan which had been included in the 1980 Guidelines.

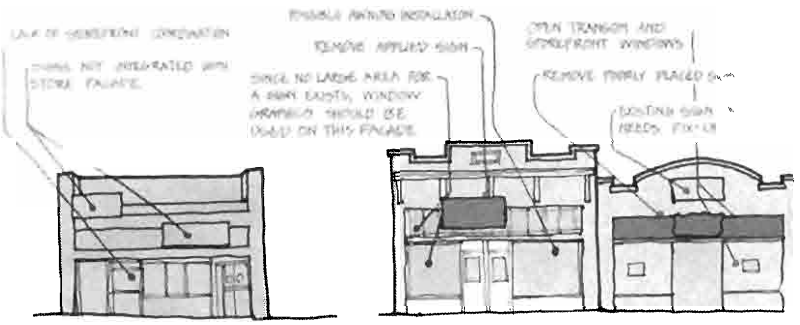
These actions have included street improvements and the addition of sidewalk pavers, planters, street trees, street furniture, directional signs and street lighting. The City has also improved and landscaped the existing parking lots to the rear of the buildings on Murphy Avenue. These improvements have been accomplished by the City's Redevelopment Agency, which also makes low-interest loans available to businesses on the Avenue to encourage private reinvestment.

The City adopted the Sunnyvale Heritage Preservation Ordinance in 1980, creating the Heritage Preservation Commission, which has the power to review and approve the design of buildings and landscaping in Heritage Landmark Districts. In 1981, the Murphy Station Heritage Landmark District was created, encompassing all of the 100 block of South Murphy Avenue and adjacent buildings on Evelyn and Washington Avenues. Since that time, the Commission has reviewed and approved the renovation and/or new construction of 31 of the 36 buildings and sites located in the Murphy Station Heritage Landmark District. The enactment of the Heritage Preservation Ordinance and the creation of the Murphy Station Heritage Landmark District represent the City's ongoing commitment to the revitalization of Murphy Avenue, as envisioned by the Development Plan.

The Development Plan included detailed suggestions for design of street art, graphics and signs, landscaping, street furniture, street lighting and paving. Since most of these improvements have been installed, these discussions from the previous guidelines have been deleted. However, when replacements are necessary or further upgrading is desired, the sections of the 1980 Guidelines which address these topics should be referenced.

197 COMMERCIAL — REMODELED BANK BUILDING HAS POTENTIAL FOR SIGNIFICANT RENOVATION TO RESTORE ORIGINAL CHARACTER.

193 COMMERCIAL — SIMPLE ORIGINAL FACADE CAN BE HIGHLIGHTED, STOREFRONTS ARE OPPORTUNITIES FOR NEW DESIGNS



151 COMMERCIAL — VERY SIMPLE STOREFRONT COULD BE SIGNIFICANTLY REMODELED

141

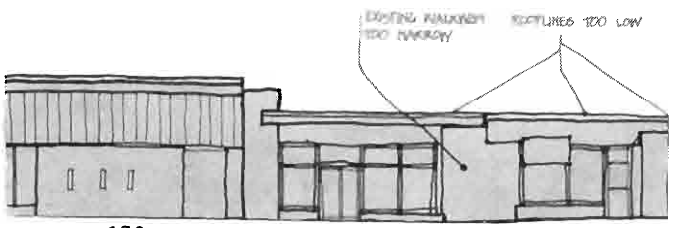
139 COMMERCIAL — EXCELLENT ORIGINAL FACADE, SHOULD BE PRESERVED TO HIGHLIGHT DESIGN.

135 COMMERCIAL — GOOD STOREFRONT BLDG FACADE SHOULD BE PRESERVED & RESTORED

100 MODERN — EXISTING BLDG DOES NOT BLEND WELL WITH OTHER MORE SUBSTANTIAL FACADES ON MURPHY AVE.

118 SPANISH — ELEGANT TWO STORY FACADE WITH ORIGINAL STOREFRONT SHOULD BE PRESERVED

124 COMMERCIAL — GOOD BASIC FACADE STOREFRONT WINDOW AREA NEED RENOVATION.

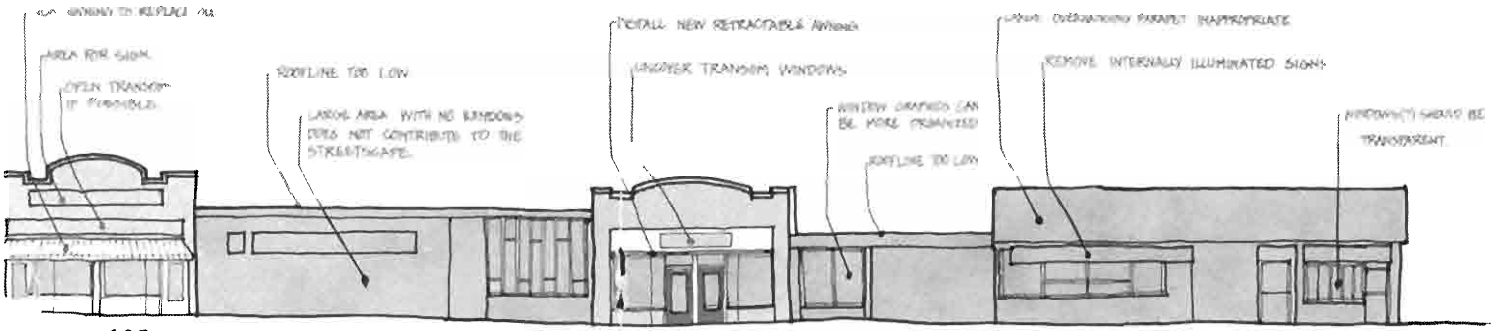


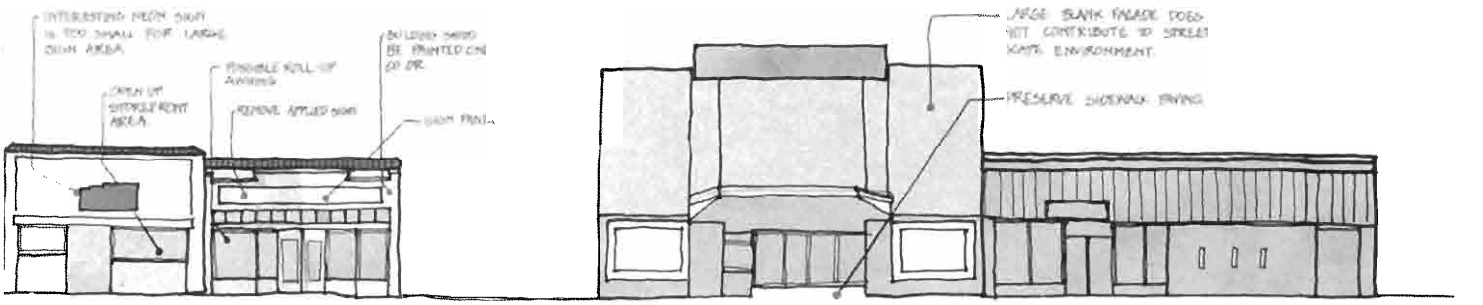
156

160 MODERN

168 MODERN

1980 ELEVATIONS





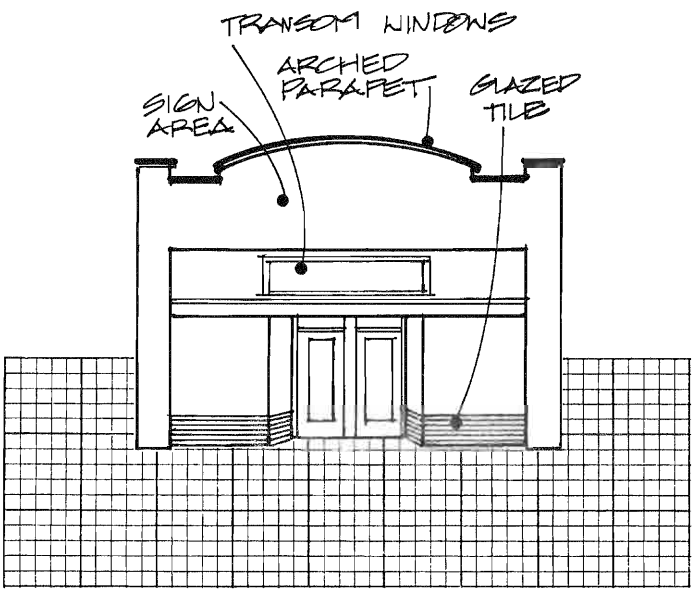
Design Guidelines For Renovation

These guidelines are directed towards individual property owners and merchants who are planning to renovate or totally redesign their buildings or storefronts. By discussing good and bad design solutions and illustrating some of the wide variety of materials and techniques which are available, this section is intended to serve as a practical, working manual. It should be utilized as a handbook when an owner or merchant talks with an architect, designer, sign maker or awning salesperson.

The first step in making improvements to a building or storefront is to understand those qualities which make it distinctive. Improvements sympathetic to the character of a building and Murphy Avenue as a whole are much more likely to enhance both the appearance of the building and the general character of the area. One key to the success of a revitalization effort is cooperation and coordination among neighbors. The Murphy Avenue district is comprised of two blocks, (including some property facing Evelyn and Washington Avenues) but since most properties face Murphy Avenue, it reads as a single block of streetscape. How a building "fits in" to the streetscape therefore becomes an important element of its design. At the same time, a significant facet of a strong identity for Murphy Avenue will be the diversity of styles, colors, materials, products and activities which can be found within the one block streetscape. Cooperation among neighbors will ensure that a storefront and business will have a distinctive identity that will harmonize with neighboring buildings rather than one which interrupts the streetscape's cohesive character.

While there are a few buildings with strong community and historical identities, such as the old Bank of Sunnyvale (the first bank, City offices and office of W.E. Crossman and now the Ace Loan building), the Stowell-Spalding Building (a major commercial block) and the Mira Mar (first commercial building in town housing a store and the Encinal post office), most of the remaining commercial buildings tend to be modest and are significant primarily for the manner in which they relate to one another. The degree of compatibility present in Murphy Avenue's structures as they contribute to a Main Street environment is damaged by storefront alterations such as walling in of display window areas, closing of transom windows, and loss of diagonally sloped canvas awnings. Harmonious relationships are also disturbed by the addition of inappropriate materials, tastelessly designed signage and unattractive paint schemes -- or the lack of regular maintenance. Facades which lack character or are incompatible in scale are undesirable intrusions in the streetscape.

The variety of buildings in the Murphy block can be categorized into two simple building types: one-story commercial and two-story commercial.



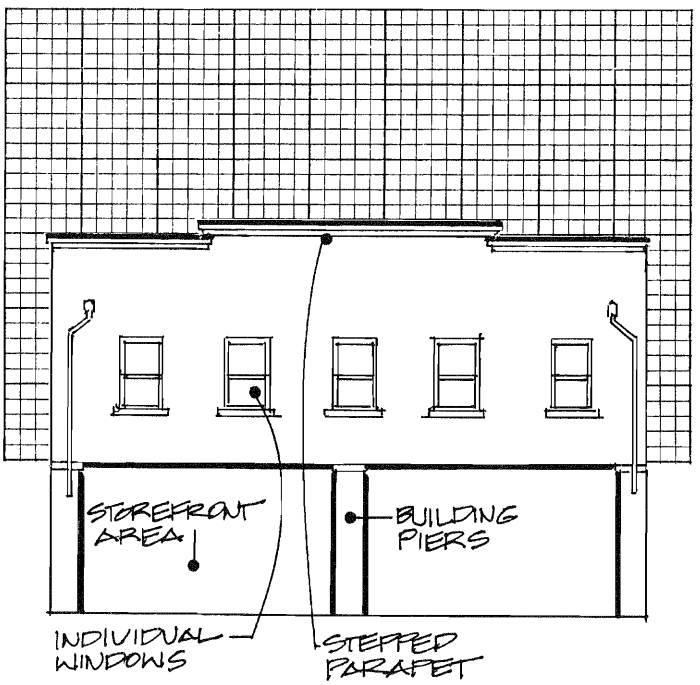
One-Story Simple Commercial

Typical of early 20th century small commercial buildings, these buildings had a simple storefront "enframed" by the building. Usually there was an area for a sign just above the storefront. Sometimes the sign was painted on the building but more often it was of wood or metal and attached to the building. Some buildings even had a special area or panel for the sign. The roof line of the building is often arched or stepped up in the center with a high parapet to give the building the appearance of greater height.

Because of the relatively small size of these buildings, paint schemes and colors should be simple and not overwhelm the building by being too busy or loud.

Two-Story Simple Commercial

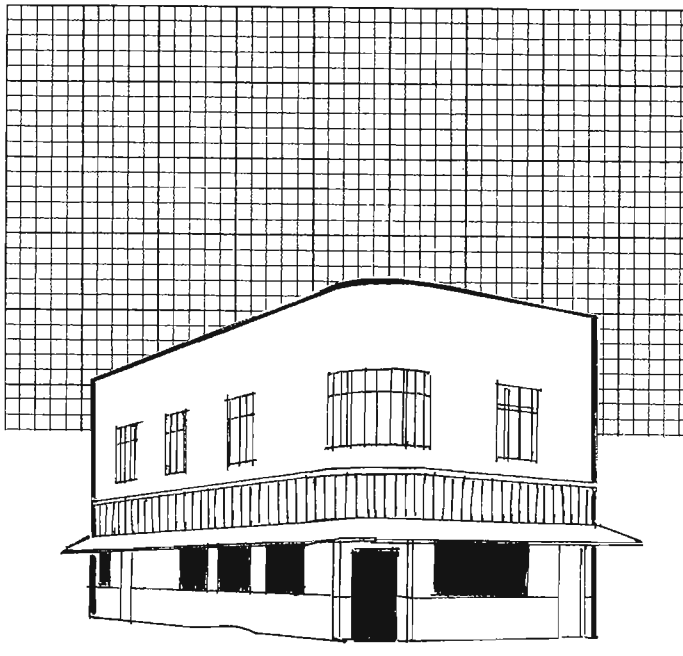
Like the smaller one-story commercial building, the two-story commercial building had one or more simple ground floor storefront areas that were surrounded or "enframed" by the building facade. Above this was the second floor area which was used for office, meeting or residential uses. The facades of these buildings generally were plain, though some had ornamental bay windows, projecting roof cornices, or even decorative balconies. Renovation of these buildings should strive to take advantage of whatever architectural features each building has. On those buildings which have little architectural ornament, special attention should be given to the use of paint schemes, awnings and signs to add visual distinction to the building facade.



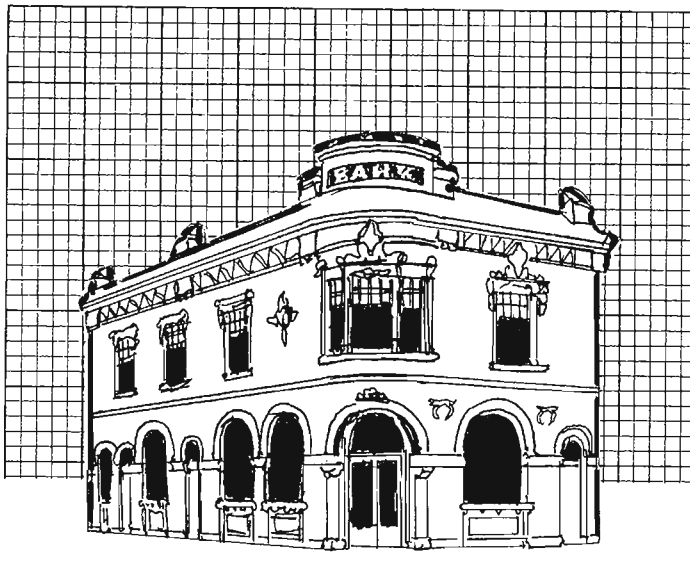
Even though these buildings may have little ornament, they still are contributors to the streetscape because of their clearly defined window openings, rooflines and storefront areas. Some of these two-story buildings also have exterior street entrances for the second floor area. In such cases, these entrances should be clearly identified at street level with special awnings or marquees. Any new paint or awning treatments should be sure to encompass the whole building so as to unify and strengthen the building's identity. Because of the lack of specific architectural style, these buildings allow greater flexibility in designing new storefront areas which could be distinctively contemporary in nature and yet achieve balance with the overall character of the facade.

Architectural Styles

Both the one- and two-story commercial buildings were designed with ornamental detailing which reflected an array of architectural styles. Generally the stylistic ornament along Murphy Avenue is modest. But it is this subtlety that gives the buildings their character and promotes visual harmony along the streetscape. It is this quality which is most easily destroyed by unsympathetic alterations and additions. Along Murphy Avenue examples of both Spanish style ornament and Zig Zag Moderne can be found. Those buildings which are lacking in stylistic treatment will form another "architectural style" along Murphy Avenue as the existing characterless facades are replaced with totally new facades.



SIMPLE DETAILING



ORNATE DETAILING

Storefront Areas

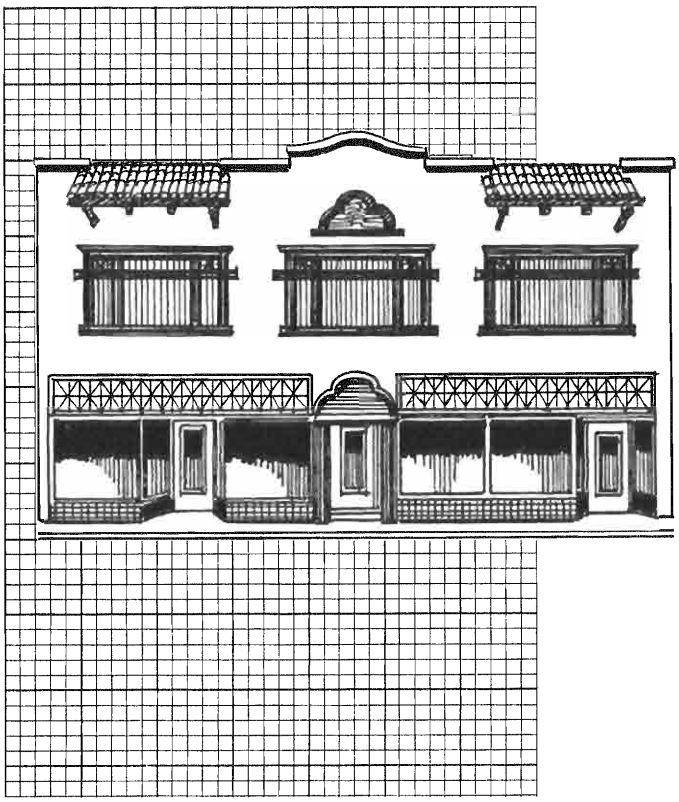
The storefront area was designed to be the most prominent feature of the commercial building's facade. In spite of stylistic changes, storefront design for almost all of the pre-1950 buildings along Murphy Avenue remained remarkably the same throughout the decades. The earliest buildings had wood fronts, wood sash display windows, and fixed wood awnings, but by the 1920's these materials were, for the most part, all replaced. The typical storefront consists of a recessed entry with splayed sides. Display windows with metal sash run the full width of the facade with transom windows and/or a signage band above. Almost universally, transom windows were an important storefront element, serving as signage area and providing additional light inside. Transom windows which have been covered over or painted should be opened up again. The sunlight is beneficial for the interior, and the exterior appearance of the facade is improved by restoration of this original design feature.

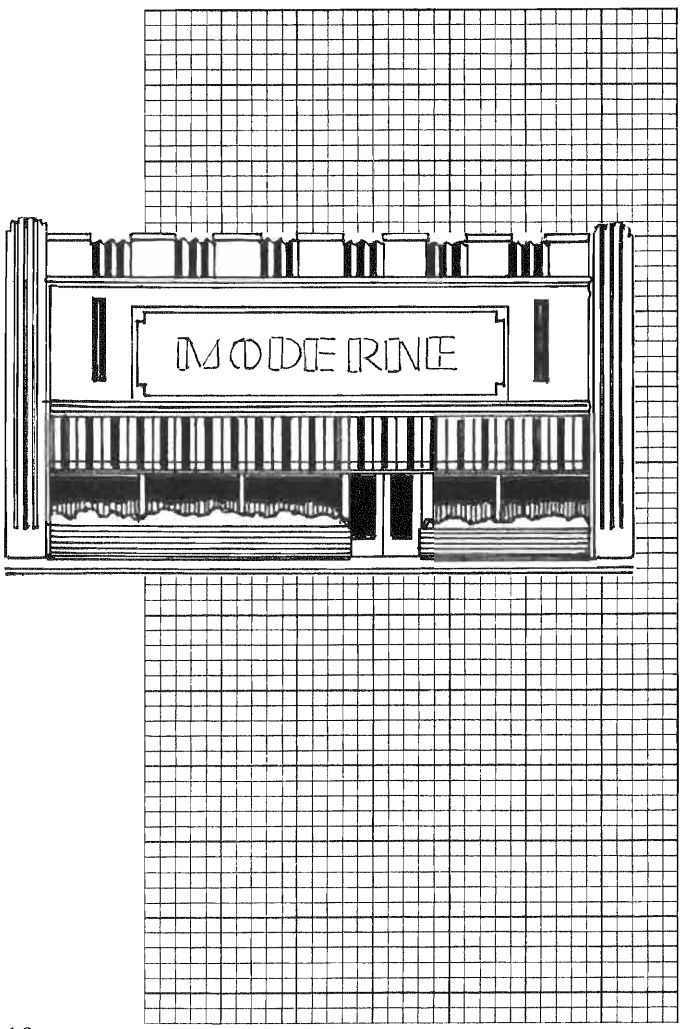
Other storefront features historically include glazed tile, used as facing for the base of the display windows, and roll-up canvas awnings. Awnings were often an important feature of the original facade design. Flat wall surfaces were given depth by a projecting awning, a simple facade with little detail was enlivened by a bright, striped awning, and storefronts were often defined by the length of the awning. The awning valance was used as signage space, as were the display windows. Some wall signs or projecting signs were placed between awnings or above entryways. Storefronts in the 1940's and 50's sported a proliferation of signs. Many of them were neon, which created a lively atmosphere at night. The most well known neon sign was the one that crowned the facade of the Sunnyvale Theater. Unfortunately, most of these signs were removed in the 1960's and 70's.

Visual Continuity along an entire blockface can be created by harmonizing a variety of colors and shapes rather than requiring every sign and awning to match up with one another. Working with your neighbors will ensure compatible size, location and color choices.

Spanish Style Ornament

Many of the one and two-story buildings along Murphy Avenue are decorated with ornamental features which are derived from Spanish architecture. These include red tile roofs, which are usually found only on the parapet or on a small projecting roof or canopy, and which are used as decoration. Another feature common to these buildings is the use of natural or dark brown heavy wood trim on the buildings exterior around the parapet, roofs, or windows. The surface material of these buildings always is plaster, with either smooth or somewhat rough finish. The surface is usually painted in light pastel or off-white. Sometimes window vents and door openings are slightly arched or rounded to give the facade a softer appearance, which is common in Spanish architecture. The storefront areas of these buildings generally are designed in a fashion similar to other typical storefront areas of the period, with large glass shop windows and glazed tile bases. Where possible these Spanish style motifs should be preserved or restored, keeping in mind that these still are commercial buildings and that the ornament is merely applied to the basic form.





Zig Zag Moderne

In the 1930's and 1940's many commercial structures were built (or remodeled) with Zig-Zag Moderne style ornament on their facades, with the storefront area surrounded by an area with ornament. The distinguishing feature of this style of ornament usually was the straight horizontal and/or vertical banding which was applied to the side piers and parapet. The roof line of the facade usually was an up-and-down jagged parapet, sometimes highlighted with a contrasting material (glazed tile, roof tile, etc.). The basic material of the facade was plaster with a smooth finish painted in a light, monochromatic tone.

The signs on these buildings usually were shiny metal or glass (often chrome) and distinctively illuminated, often with neon. Moderne type lettering styles appropriate to these buildings would be the sans serif styles that were popular at the time of their construction.

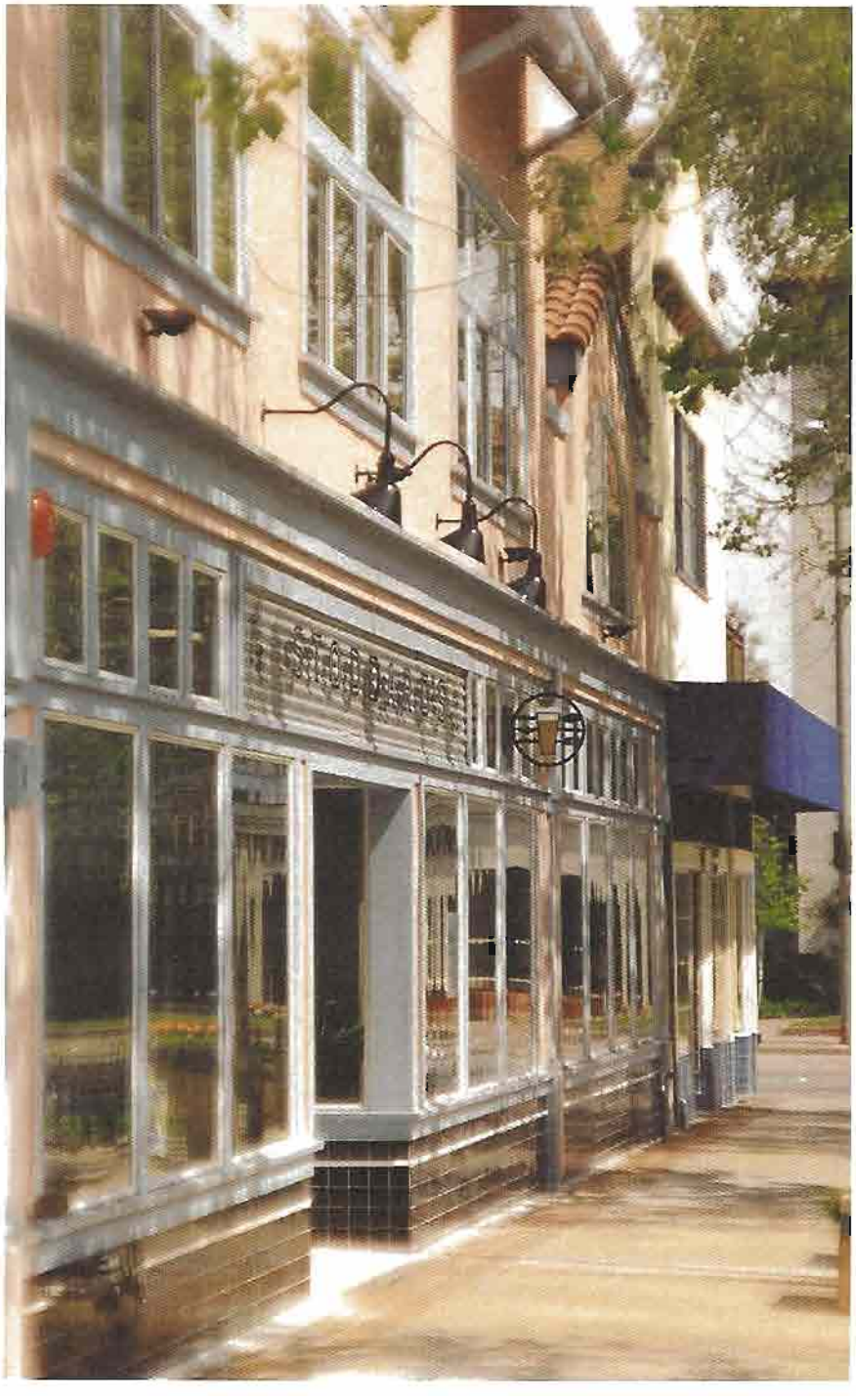
The storefront and second floor areas should maintain the materials used at that time, which were metal window frames, glazed tile highlights and stainless steel trim for doors, vents, etc. The intent of these buildings was to look thoroughly up to date and modern. Therefore, natural wood materials and finishes, leaded stained glass and other "old fashioned" motifs represent inappropriate alterations to these facades.

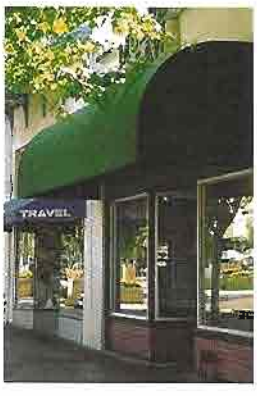
New Facades On Existing Buildings

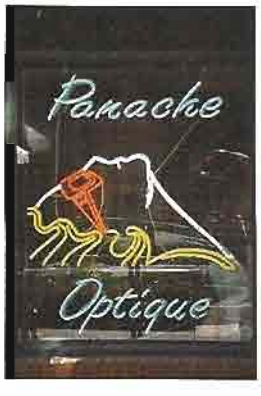
Some existing building facades within the Murphy Avenue district do not integrate well with the other facades and are lacking in stylistic treatment. Some of these are new buildings built at a minimum cost, others are older buildings that have been subjected to severe alteration which has destroyed all or most of their architectural features. These facades should be replaced with completely new facades which are more in keeping with the character of a Main Street environment and which are responsive to the function of the stores and/or restaurants within. A new facade on an existing building could maintain the architectural integrity of the street and display a stylistic treatment not now found along Murphy Avenue.

Features which a new facade could contribute to the streetscape include the following: large window areas to allow visual penetration of the facade from the street; attractive signage that is compatible and well integrated with stylistic treatment of the whole facade; a distinctive stylistic treatment of the facade design and materials which will add character to the street; and maintenance of the general one or two-story roofline of the existing buildings on the street. These new facades could have many different stylistic treatments, though they all should relate to Murphy Avenue in their form and reflect the scale and commercial nature of the street.

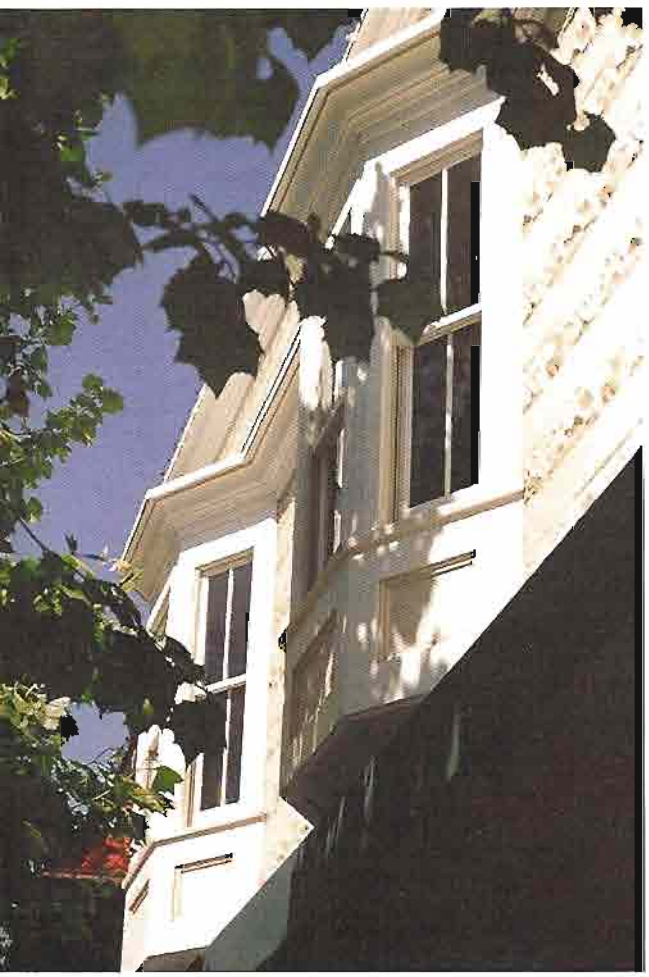
MURPHY AVENU

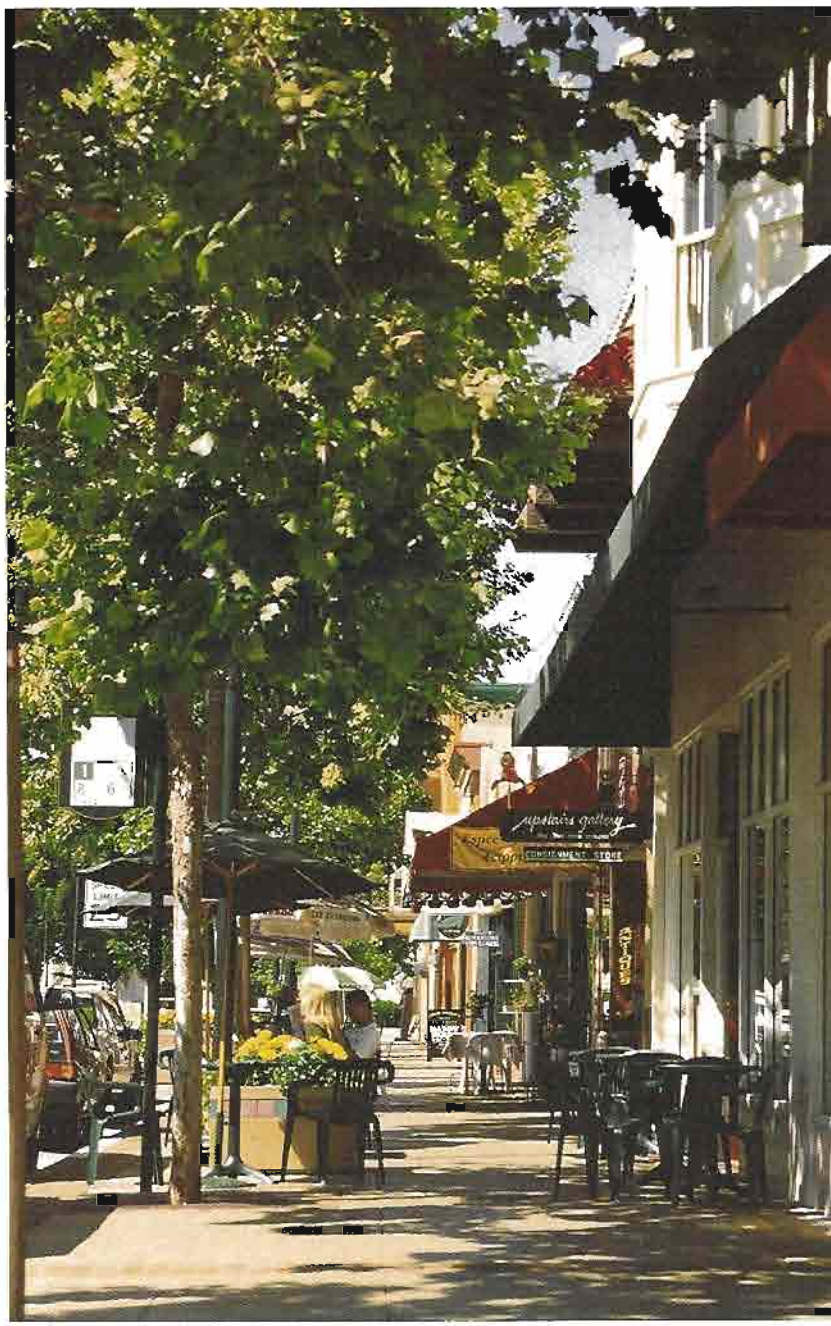


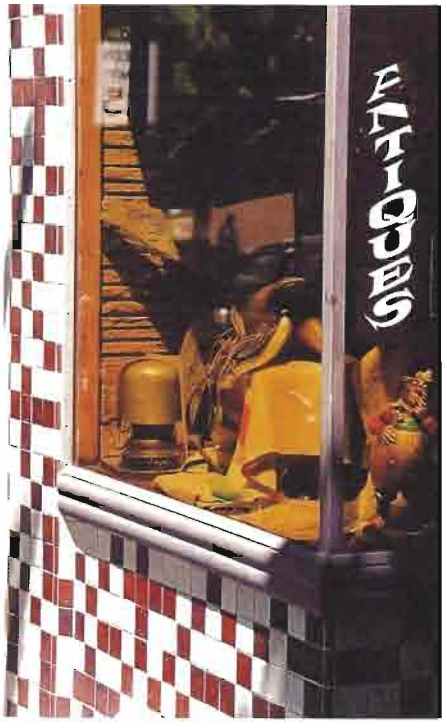




Since the publishing of the original Murphy Avenue Design Guidelines in 1980, renovation and new construction have resulted in some excellent examples of design which preserves the spirit of Murphy Avenue.







Colors

Main Street traditionally has been a colorful place to be. Every element along the streetscape makes a contribution to an integrated and harmonious environment. One perceives the colors of each building and those found in the window displays and awnings as well as the myriad shades of green in the trees. And to say the least, the people on the street also make a contribution. A variety of colors created by banners blowing in the breeze, neon shining behind glass block, and brightly colored shopping bags carried by shoppers can be very stimulating to the human senses. At the same time, it is essential that the palette of colors be orchestrated so that the image of the area as a whole is not destroyed by individual statements of obtrusively bold colors. For example, if one building in a block on Union Street in San Francisco were painted fluorescent shades of purple and green, your perception of that entire block of tastefully painted buildings would be greatly disturbed.

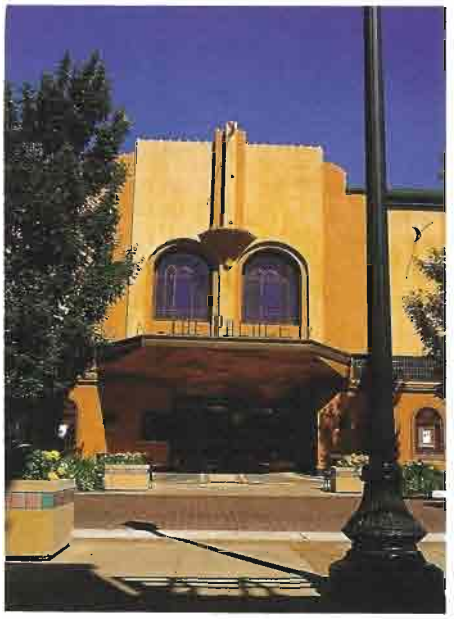
During most of the year, green foliage will proliferate, and provide a uniform color along the entire block. Consequently, facade colors should be selected which complement the greenery. Because of the screening effect of the trees as well as the historical character of the block, bright, bold colors should be used to highlight trim and for ornamentation, awnings, signs and banners.

Generally paint schemes are most effective when a medium shade of color is used for the base or main body color, reserving a dark and/or a light contrasting color for the highlighting of details.

Beige, muted yellows, pale peach colors, blue-grays, ocher and dusty rose colors are part of the palette that could be coordinated to contribute to and enhance Murphy Avenue's image. Darker, contrasting colors could be used which come from the same color family as the base color, or they could be selected from a complementary color range. The facade color scheme should take into consideration the size and architectural style of the building.

Certain colors are more expressive of an architectural style than others. For instance, Spanish style ornament often includes the use of red tile. The style is reminiscent of missions or adobes, so that the use of neutral tones such as white, cream, beige or clay would be appropriate as base colors and also appropriate for highlighting red tile. On the other hand, Zig Zag Moderne buildings were expressive of the Art Deco age when fashionable colors were clear and more intense--aquas, yellows, grays, and burgundy. The choice of colors also should be sensitive to the amount of ornamentation which can be seen on a building's facade. Some of the facades along Murphy Avenue have been stripped of their ornamentation, or simply were designed without the use of much ornamentation. Visual interest can be subtly created by applying color in a pattern that resembles belt coursing, window lintels or cornice lines. In some cases slightly darker or lighter shades of the base color would "create" enough ornamentation to add visual interest. Other buildings may be more attractive with contrasting highlights of colors such as rust and dark green on a tan base, or teal blue and white with a grey body color.

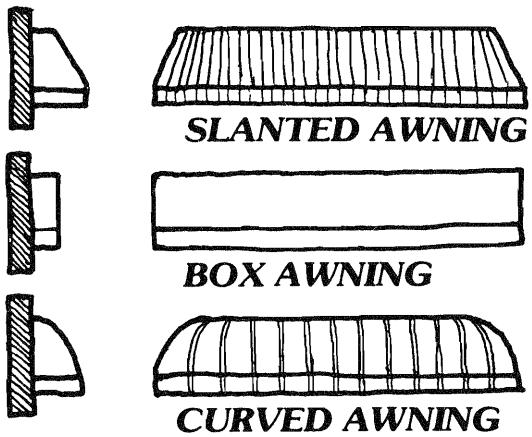
Every effort should be made to coordinate all the colors which make up a building's facade, including awnings and signage. Awnings in particular can be used to add an architectural element to the facade, and the colors selected for the awning should work with the overall signage and color schemes. The awning color should pick up one of the highlight trim colors or introduce another complementary color. Striped awnings add another element to "color design" which should be reflected in the building paint scheme.



Materials

Generally, materials are considered to be appropriate if they express or enhance the character of a building. Inappropriate materials which both obscure architectural elements and project a disturbing contrast to the prevalent building materials, have been added to some building facades in the Murphy Avenue district. Generally, these additions have been made within the storefront areas, often covering transom windows. All incompatible material should be removed. Any newly applied materials should be the same as or harmonize with building materials such as stucco, glass, red tile, and glazed tile for bases. Window areas should remain transparent. No mirrored or heavily tinted glass should be used to replace existing or block-in windows. In replacing window sashes, wood sash or anodized aluminum is generally recommended. Steel window framing would work well on a Moderne style building, whereas natural wood trim would enhance a simple Spanish-style building which needed a more obvious definition around the window opening or parapet.

If the facade of a building has been identified as having potential for utilizing a totally new facade, the reader should refer to the materials recommended under New Construction guidelines. One's choice of materials as well as colors should relate to the architectural style or character of the building which is being renovated.



Awnings

Many of the Murphy Avenue buildings were designed to have retractable 45-degree angle awning stretching the length of the storefront display windows or across the length of the facade. Awnings are a colorful way to create an inviting pedestrian environment in front of one's store as well as being able to contribute to the distinctive image of one's business. Brightly colored canvas awnings add a cheery note to the streetscape and can create a delightfully luminous color as seen from the inside. In contrast to stationary metal awnings, canvas awnings allow light to filter in while they protect the pedestrian from rain or glare. Of greatest import perhaps to Murphy Avenue is the contribution awnings can make to the overall sense of a pleasant indoor-outdoor environment.

Awnings can provide the main signage area or supplement wall signs and window graphics.

Awnings are available in a wide range of colors and shapes. Again the choice of awning should be guided by the character of the building. A building with a very flat, detail-less facade could benefit greatly from a curved awning over the entryway or even a projecting canopy with a distinctive shape that perhaps mirrors the parapet design. Or a facade may best be complemented by a simple box-type or 45-degree angle awning. Second-story windows also should be considered as possible locations for awnings. Upper stories can be integrated effectively into the storefront area through the use of awnings. Perhaps the upper story windows would read more as a part of the unified facade if colorful shades were hung on them. The material and color for shades should be coordinated with the storefront awnings.

Window Displays

A well designed window display should draw the pedestrian's attention to the major project or service of a business establishment. If the display windows are large, putting one of everything in the window will not necessarily draw crowds to a store.

Clutter and a lack of focus only confuse and form a weak impression.

On the other hand, a large display window with only two or three pairs of shoes in it may appear rather sparse and also give the wrong impression. A good window display should look organized, attractive and also should be informative. Lighting of the items displayed is an important consideration, having the potential for creating a dramatic eye-catching effect.

Lighting

Some of the facades along Murphy Avenue may have been lighted at night. Most likely the former Sunnyvale Theater was brightly lit with dazzling colors each night. Attention should be given to the lighting of signage at night and to the nighttime atmosphere of Murphy Avenue in general. Neon is a particularly versatile signage material that was fashionable in the 1930's-1950's and is returning to popularity. Neon is attractive during the day and also contributes a special feeling at night.

The nighttime ambiance of Murphy Avenue could be unique to Sunnyvale and could be very attractive to a wide variety of people. Murphy Avenue store owners may choose to have extended hours during summer days, adding to the attraction of cafes, restaurants and entertainment establishments. At the very least, display windows and signage should be illuminated at night. Depending on the type of business, signage should be designed for nighttime appeal as well. Some buildings may contribute to the evening atmosphere by having small white lights outline interesting architectural features such as arched windows or a stepped parapet.

Lighting of the rear areas of buildings is particularly important to create visual interest as well as a sense of security. Small white lights could outline the shape of a canvas canopy or could be incorporated into the landscaping.

Landscaping

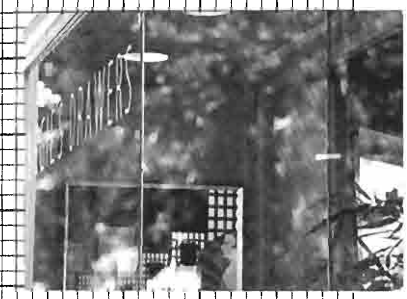
The landscaping of public areas provides for a lushly foliated rhythm of trees. Any landscaping around a Murphy Avenue storefront should be designed and executed so as to add an extra element of greenery and color to one's property. The most practical means of "landscaping" a storefront is to have portable containers that can be taken inside when the establishment is closed. Planter boxes may be mounted permanently in second story windows. Brightly colored flowers can add a colorful and distinctive note to the streetscape.

Landscaping of the rear areas should be designed to increase the feeling of intimate spaces, particularly if there is outdoor use on the first or second levels. Flowers also can make a delightful contribution to rear areas.

Pedestrian Promenades

Some of the buildings will side on the pedestrian promenades or semi-public spaces.

All of the signage and landscaping encroaching upon the pedestrian promenades should be carefully designed to enhance the intimate, inviting pedestrian-scaled atmosphere. The applied elements such as signage, awnings and planters should be colorful and well maintained.



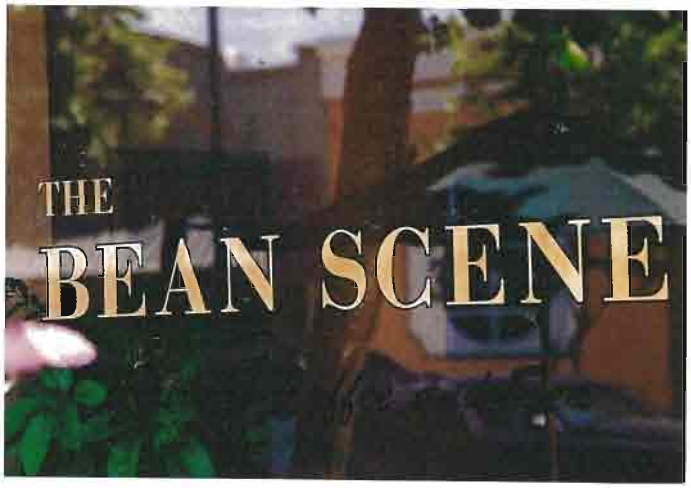
Signage For Murphy Avenue

Traditionally, Main Street signage was placed on the valance of awnings, *within bands above or below transom windows and almost always appeared on the storefront windows. It was designed carefully to reflect both the type and the quality of products or services offered by the business establishment. The sign stood as a symbol of the business. In fact, before words were used on signs, an icon or representative objective of the business was used. A shoe store hung a gold leafed wooden shoe or the toy store used a painted rocking horse. The same concept is represented in a 1940's style neon sign for an eating and drinking establishment which depicts a cocktail glass bubbling over.*

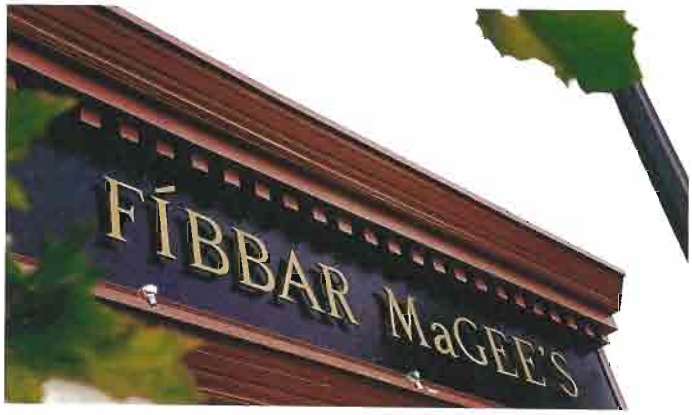
Mass-produced internally-illuminated signs which are distinctive only in the actual wording contribute nothing to the particular character of Murphy Avenue and generally do not relate to the existing architectural styles or materials. Cluttered, poorly designed signage projects a tacky, disorderly appearance, and consequently is difficult to read.

Sign Design

A storefront or business sign should be carefully designed to reflect the special quality of the establishment, to fit in with the architecture of the building and to harmonize with the general character of Murphy Avenue. A graphic designer can assist in designing a logo for a business, selecting an expressive type style and choosing colors that will enhance the legibility of the sign or, at the very least, will not conflict with or detract from the building.



Designing a distinctive image for a business may be one of the best investments a merchant can possibly make. Elements of sign design can, of course, be repeated in the window graphics, be adapted into a banner design, be printed on business cards and/or shopping bags, and be used in advertisements. The more coordinated a graphic program is, the stronger the impression a business will make.



Sign Materials

The materials available for signage are myriad, and the creative use of materials is encouraged. Traditionally, carved wooden gold leaf letters spanned a dark colored signage band and gold leaf was painted on the transom and/or storefront windows. Today, signs are made with molded acrylic, cast bronze, chrome, neon tubing, carved or sandblasted wood, painted metal or fabric. They may take the form of a wall sign, a projecting sign, a banner, or simply window graphics.

The variety of signage materials today can be manipulated, under the direction of a creative designer and signmaker, to achieve an exciting array of effect. Perhaps two narrow neon tubes could be hung in the second floor windows of a building, to create a "frame" inside the glass, and then the simple frame could be repeated to give definition to the storefront windows. In other words, some of the storefront "signage" may not directly read as the name of one's business, but can be utilized in a distinctive manner.

Primary Signage: Wall Signs

The type of signage which is selected for a particular business should be determined by one's need for communication as well as the architectural style of the particular building. Generally, the primary sign should be legible from a slow-moving automobile. A signage area is provided by the extended parapet on most of the one-story buildings. A wall sign may be painted directly on the facade surface or be painted onto a metal band which is applied to the wall. In either case, the area of the sign should be painted to appear as a complete unit, distinct from the wall. The actual shape of the sign may be reflective of the configuration of the parapet and always should be scaled appropriately to the size of the building and available signage area. A sign should not overwhelm the building by its sheer size, or be so small that it seems to float in a large signage area. A sign should fill the space allowed by a built-in signage panel. For all the buildings in the Murphy Avenue district, the primary sign should not be larger that 1.5 square feet per linear foot of storefront footage (or width of the property). A standard for the wall signage area should be 1 square foot per linear foot of business establishment siding on the pedestrian promenades.

In some cases a wall sign may be created by the application of individual letters or neon tubing. Well designed, internally-illuminated individual letter units can contribute both to a building's character and to the nighttime environment. Chrome letters or neon script can create a sleek, high style impression that would fit in with the Moderne style of buildings.

Secondary Signage: Projecting Signs

This type of signage is designed and scaled to reflect the pedestrian's perspective, both to provide directions and to attract passers-by. Projecting signs can be very effective in adding visual interest to the streetscape environment by extending away from the facade and denoting structural piers or entrances. A projecting sign may be most creative as an icon, or a geometric box with a store's name printed on each side. Or it can be a subtly stained carved wooden rectangular board, or a glossy molded acrylic round. Again, the materials, colors and design should be in keeping with the character of one's building. A maximum size of 10 square feet per side is recommended for projecting signs along Murphy Avenue. The sign should not project farther than 6 feet from the facade, and should not hang lower than 8 feet from the ground. The areas between awnings, over

entryways and at piers are logical locations for projecting signs which should be placed no higher than the lowest of the following: 1) the cornice line; or 2) the lowest second floor opening. Projecting signs and banners in the pedestrian promenades are encouraged as they would punctuate the corridor with color and movement. They should be no larger that 6 square feet and project no more than 3 feet from the building.

Banners

Banners are another form of projecting signage.

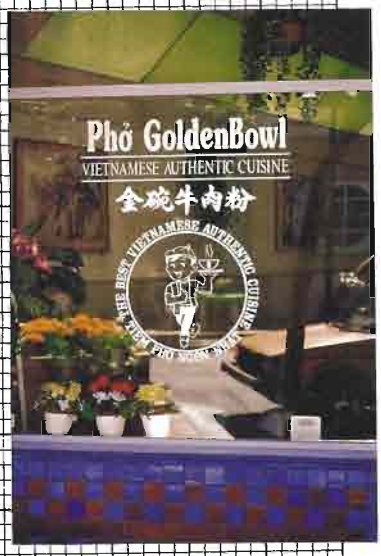
Banners add a particularly festive air to the streetscape, as they accent the block with fluttering bright colors. A distinctive logo or store name can be incorporated into a simple banner design using only two colors. A single banner or even a series of banners can be hung within the storefront "frame", possibly grouped to denote the entryway. A tall, narrow banner could be hung from as high as 6 feet above the cornice line but should not extend below 8 feet from the ground. No banner should project more than 6 feet from the facade and be any larger than 10 square feet per side. While the use of multiple banners is not to be discouraged, a maximum of "one-sided" area allowed per storefront should be 20 square feet. The use of banners includes the obligation to regularly check and maintain the banner in a "fresh" condition.

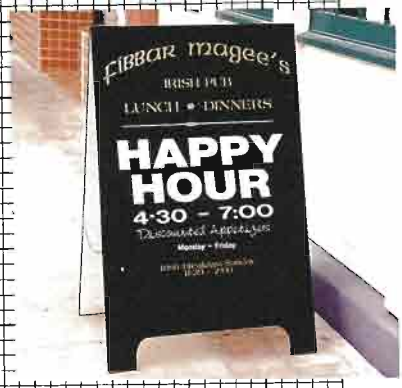
Window Graphics

Windowgraphics provide an opportunity for creativity. While describing one's business by stating the store's name or repeating the business logo, window graphics can be designed to frame display windows, thereby drawing attention and interest to the interior of the store. Commonly, window graphics are painted gold and can be highlighted with a colored outline such as red, blue or dark green. White also reads well because windows usually appear as dark surfaces. Dark colored or black graphics will not show up at all. Any color can be painted on the glass surface, and some adhesive-backed vinyl lettering is available in a limited choice of colors.

Window graphics need not be applied on the glass surface. Instead, it may be desirable to hang a clear plexiglas sign with applied vinyl lettering or a neon sign inside the store window.

No matter what type of window graphic is utilized, the signage coverage should not exceed 25% of the total window and door area visible from the exterior of the building. Graphics in second floor windows also should not cover more than 25% of the area.





Temporary Signs

There may be a need for temporary signs to advertise a special sale or a special event. Quickly painted and tacked up signs also say something about the level of quality of one's business. An alternative solution is to produce a banner which can be hung during the sale, or one can use a clear plastic sign with applied letters. No temporary signs should be left for more than 30 days, and such signs should not cover more than 10% of the window area. The maximum size for a temporary sign should be 4 square feet. Temporary signs should not be hung in upper story windows.

Rear Area Signage

The back side or rear areas of buildings in the Murphy Avenue area should be attractive areas for semi-public uses or secondary entrances to shops and restaurants, with limited use of display windows, ornament and signage.

Signage should be smaller scaled for the rear facades than for the front facades. The total signage area should not exceed 1 square foot per linear foot of property width. The location of the signage should facilitate communication about the location of entrances and the identification of the business. No signage except banners should extend above the cornice. Banners and free-standing sandwich-board signs also could add color enrichment. No more than 2 permanent or temporary free-standing signs are recommended for each business establishment. Free-standing signs should not be larger than 6 square feet per side, and stand no higher than 4 feet.

Inappropriate Signs

While the creative use and application of signage materials and design is encouraged, some signage types are inappropriate to the scale and character of Murphy Avenue. Roof signs should not be allowed because they invariably overwhelm a human scale environment and generally appear tacked on or propped up. Also, most internally-illuminated signs detract from the sense of Murphy Avenue as a special place and should not be allowed. On the other hand, internally-illuminated signage that consists of individual letters and/or representative objects or icons might be appropriate.

Design Guidelines For New Construction

Some sites along Murphy Avenue and adjacent buildings along Washington Avenue provide important opportunities for new construction or for major facade alterations. The existing buildings along Murphy Avenue modestly express stylistic diversity, so while any new construction should harmonize with the existing blockfaces, creativity and contemporary stylistic expression are encouraged.

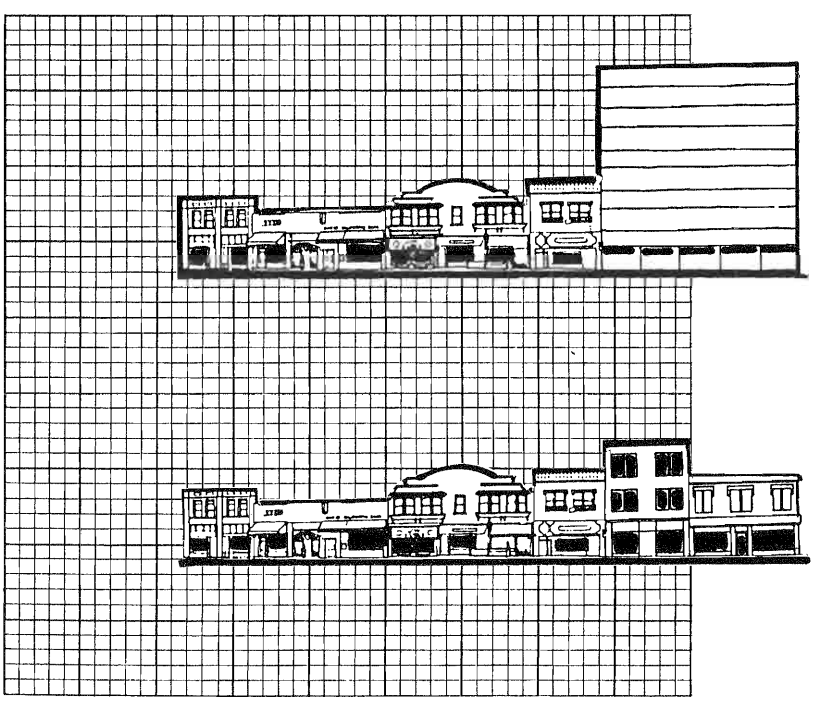
The character of Murphy Avenue stems in part from the representation of styles from 1900-1950. These building types are, on the whole, compatible with each other because of their adherence to basic parameters such as complementary height and bulk, fenestration patterning, and types of rooflines and materials. Some buildings have been intrusions on Murphy Avenue because they detract from the general character of the street. Buildings which have a strong horizontality created by low ceilings and flat roofs without parapets disturb the general character of verticality expressed by the high ceilings and false parapet fronts of most of the buildings.

Any new construction along Murphy Avenue should fit in harmoniously with existing buildings. New construction should not dominate or stand out in strong contrast with the blockfaces. The smaller scale Main Street character of Murphy Avenue is perhaps the area's most expressive and resourceful quality. The coherent, intimate fabric of Murphy Avenue is dramatized by the contiguous areas which include the massive Town Center development and the linearly expansive Town & Country shopping center. Any large-scale addition to Murphy Avenue would destroy the area's unique character, the quality which is Murphy Avenue's most important asset for future development and success.

This does not mean that all new buildings should mimic the existing structures or copy earlier styles of buildings. Murphy Avenue's character will be more effectively enhanced by innovative contemporary design solutions based on the identifiable design features of existing buildings.

Height & Bulk

One of the strongest elements in the visual fabric of Murphy Avenue is the general height and bulk of the buildings. Many of the buildings are one-story with ceilings 15 feet high. Some of the two story buildings serve as important visual anchors at the ends of the block. They do not disturb the basic character of the area, and, in fact, contribute by reinforcing and calling attention to the "entryways" and punctuating the street with visual variety. All of these taller buildings have articulated fenestration and some detailing, providing a sense of scale, rhythm and proportion which is harmonious with the smaller buildings.



New construction which totally ignores the existing scale of Murphy Avenue.

New construction which maintains existing rhythm and proportions.

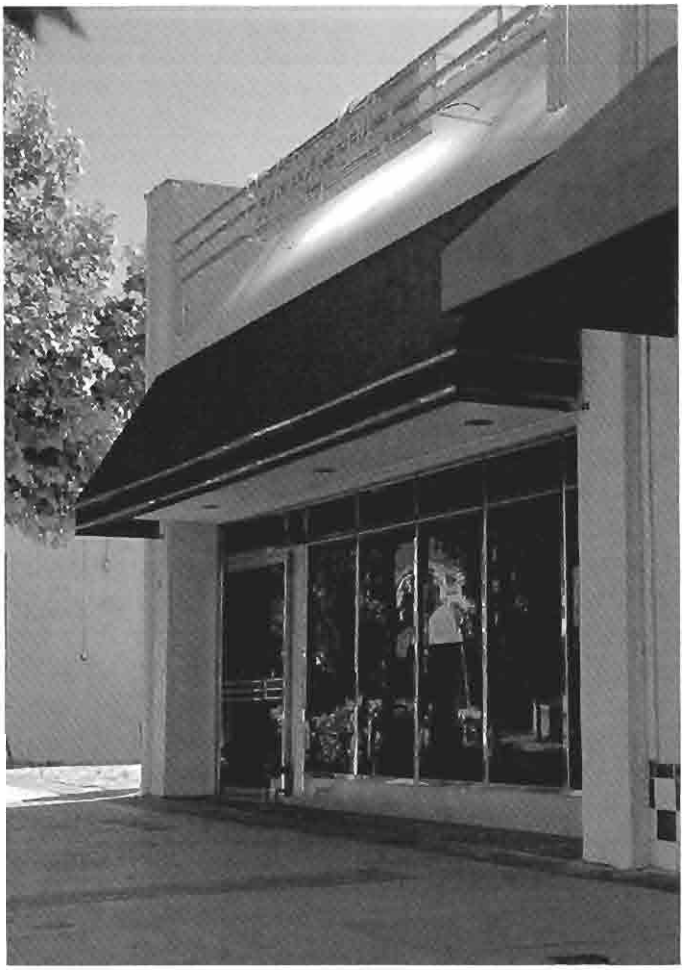
Building "Units"

Another aspect of a building's height and bulk is the width or length of the structure. The existing buildings along Murphy Avenue are vertical and rectilinear in orientation and form. Ground level or storefront areas are accentuated by standing taller and appearing more distinctive than the upper floor or parapet. The definition between the ground level and the second story is clearly marked with an architectural element, usually a band. Generally, the storefront areas are 10 feet high and do not exceed 25 feet in width. Usually the building width is defined by structural piers that are expressed on the facade.

It is the rhythm of doors, windows and structural piers which creates visual variety and which constitutes Murphy Avenue's sense of human scale. Several buildings are wider than 25 feet. However, all existing buildings of significance continue the rhythm of articulated facades through the location and shape of openings, structural elements and decorative features.

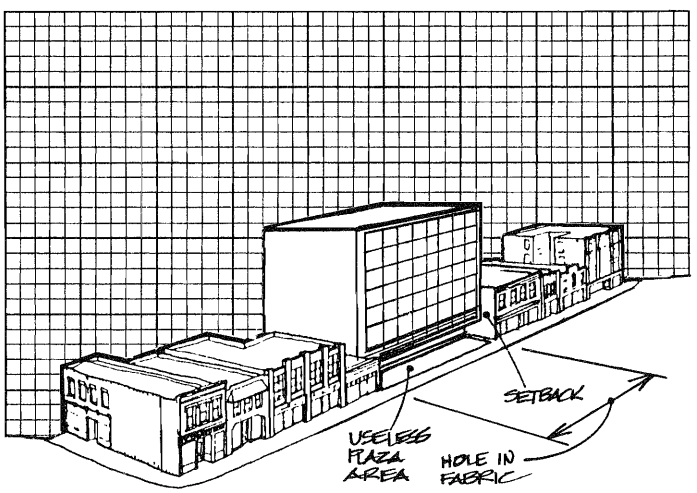
Any new building which is wider than 25 feet should be designed such that the width of the building is broken into "units" not exceeding 25 feet wide each.

As a general rule, the wider a building is, the higher it should be in order to preserve the vertical orientation of the streetscape. Articulation of the upper stories should relate to ground level openings. The existing buildings along Murphy Avenue are rectilinear in form, both in plan and in street facade elevation. Rectangular windows and doors and elements such as structural piers, belt courses and rooflines, consistently express a rectilinear form. Accordingly, diagonal siding, large circular forms, or wedge shaped forms would be discordant with the rectilinear shapes and lines of the existing buildings.



Continuous Street Wall

Another aspect of the continuity of Murphy Avenue is the "solid" wall of facades along the streetfront property lines. New construction should respect this existing building line and reinforce it by not being set back at the ground level.



Stylistic Details

The buildings along Murphy Avenue have distinct articulation of windows, doors and floorline locations, all of which should serve as guidelines for design of new construction. Each existing building along Murphy Avenue has been identified according to a stylistic category which describes the type of decorative elements appearing on each facade. All new construction, especially new additions, should include elements which are similar in scale and design.

For example, arched windows on the second floor of a simple Spanish style structure would be appropriate, whereas they would not be appropriate for a Zig-Zag Moderne building.

Rooflines are another element in architectural styles which contribute to the sense of rhythm along Murphy Avenue. Most of the rooflines of the existing buildings are essentially flat or are stepped up to the center with horizontal elements. There are no irregular elements such as turrets. Many of the one-story buildings have extended false parapets which add height and a sense of verticality to the structure.

Some of the rooflines are "textured" with red tile.

Some existing rooflines give a definition to the edges of the building by having taller "piers" at either end of the cornice. Some of the post-1940 buildings have flat, characterless rooflines which are too low. New construction should take into consideration the prevailing character of the rooflines along the street and, very importantly, should respect the distinctive features and prevailing character of neighboring buildings. As in other applications, new construction should not mimic or form a continuous line with neighboring buildings, but instead should include a distinctive, well-defined roofline that achieves harmony and compatibility with adjacent structures.

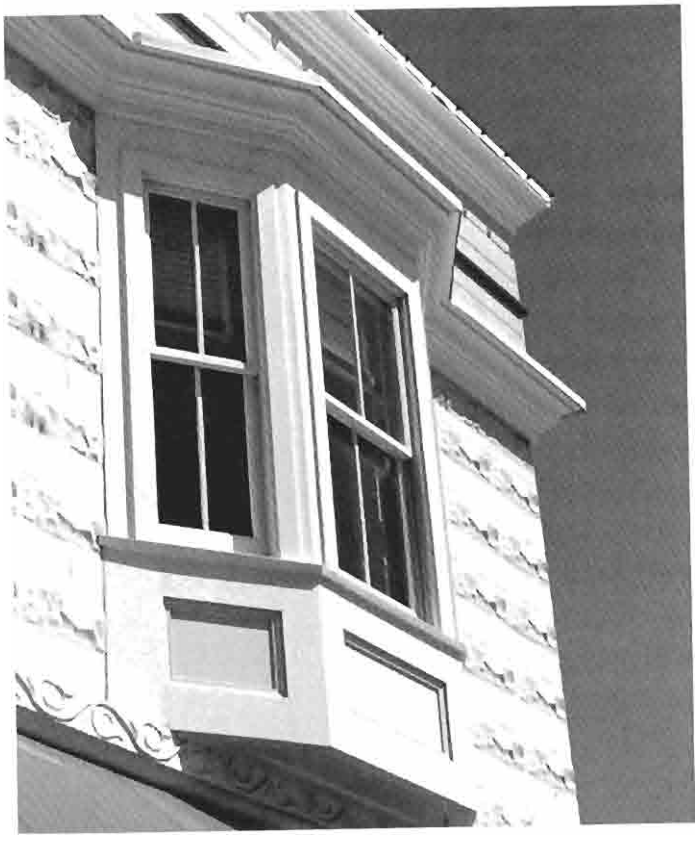
Materials

Included in the design of the existing architectural elements along Murphy Avenue is the application of specific materials which appropriately express the stylistic intent.

Stucco is the primary building material along Murphy Avenue with the rusticated concrete of the Stowell-Spalding Building and the painted wood siding on the relocated Del Monte building as exceptions. Most of the rear sides of the buildings have been stuccoed over. Red tile parapets dot the streetscape, adding color and texture. These materials can be used by new designs whenever appropriate.

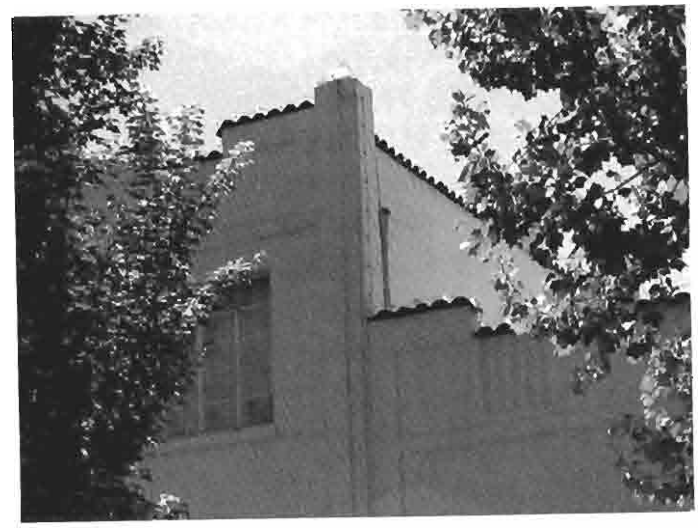
On the other hand, there are a variety of materials which would detract from Murphy Avenue's character by standing out from the rest of the block and by not respecting the general appearance of the existing streetscape.

New materials, textures and colors can be jarring in a negative way, rather than making tasteful contributions to the visual variety along the street. Highly reflective materials such as mirrored or heavily tinted glass do not harmonize with the existing rhythm of transparent openings. A bare aluminum window sash presents a cold, unfinished feeling, whereas a bronze-colored anodized sash blends in with the dark appearance of window glass and harmonizes with existing wood sash. Rustic shingle siding is appropriate for residential use, but not for the commercial area of a city known for its successful industry. Imitation lava rock, imitation brick or any sort of highly textured stucco are incompatible with existing materials and with the character of Murphy Avenue.



There are several materials which could fall into either the "appropriate" or "inappropriate" category depending on the particular style of the building design and the integration of the building materials into the design. Guidelines for these materials perhaps are best stated by referring to Murphy Avenue's architectural history and its enduring character as the commercial core of Sunnyvale's industrial development. Since Murphy Avenue is characterized primarily by buildings constructed between 1920-1950, building materials dating back to these decades would be appropriate. The contiguous area along the rail line is well known as a historic industrial district with distinctive architecture. Materials including concrete, wood, stucco and red brick were used to create these important industrial buildings which stand as a backdrop to Murphy Avenue.

A new building could achieve true and appropriate distinction by incorporating glass block, colored vitrolite or structural glass and stainless steel trim in a manner similar to those designs which commonly used such materials during the 1930's-40's. Red brick or wood possibly could be used as new building materials, relating to nearby industrial buildings as well as contributing to the Murphy Avenue streetscape. Several factors are important to consider when using these materials. Both brick and wood could be harmonious materials if the facade mass were broken up by openings, awnings, signage and/or window boxes. A fairly solid mass, or semi-wall of these materials would create a jarring contrast to the existing streetscape and rhythm of openings. Therefore, brick or wood as the primary material would be more appropriately used on a relatively small building rather than on a large new structure or major addition to Murphy Avenue. Another important consideration for determining the compatible use of 1920's-50's materials is to evaluate how the design blends these materials together or with other materials.



The successful mixture of glass block, vitrolite, stainless steel, etc. is determined by a sensitivity to the unique character inherent in these materials. For instance, vitrolite could not be used in combination with brick, nor could it be integrated into a building with a Spanish style red-tiled parapet, or used as a complement to a carved wooden sign. Instead, it could be used with glass block, integrated into a "1950's modern" sleek style and could complement signage composed of chrome letters or neon script.

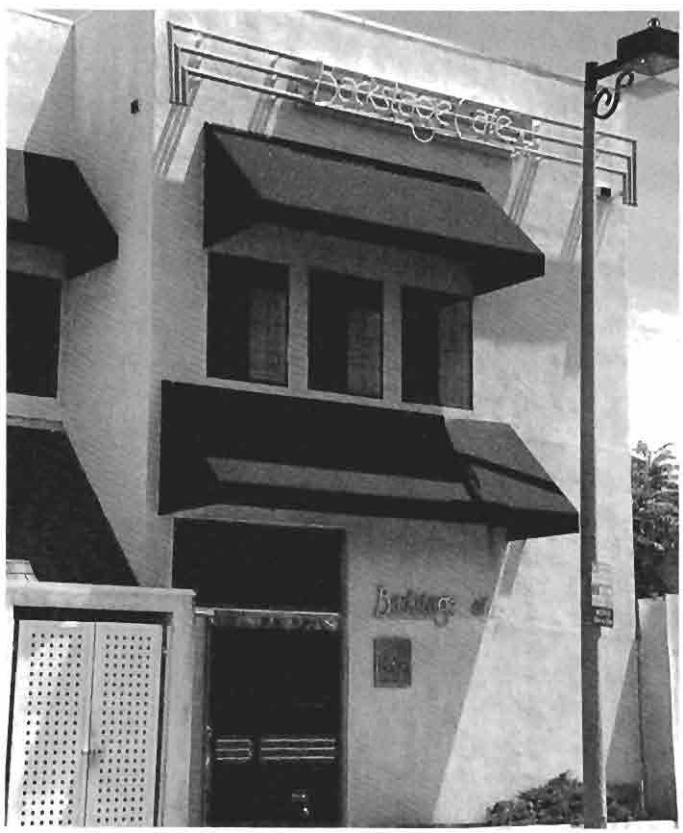
Rear Areas

The design of all new buildings along Murphy Avenue should recognize the opportunities presented by the rear areas and semi-public spaces. The choice of materials for these facades should be harmonious with the front facades, for an integrated building design and compatible rear area streetscape.

Building access from the parking areas through rear entrances is recommended, although the main store entrance should remain along Murphy Avenue, functionally as well as visually. Outdoor use is encouraged in the rear and semi-public spaces, which will pose some challenges as well as opportunities for creative new design. Landscaping is another important element in any new design, and should be taken into consideration in terms of on-site opportunities as well as public area landscaping.

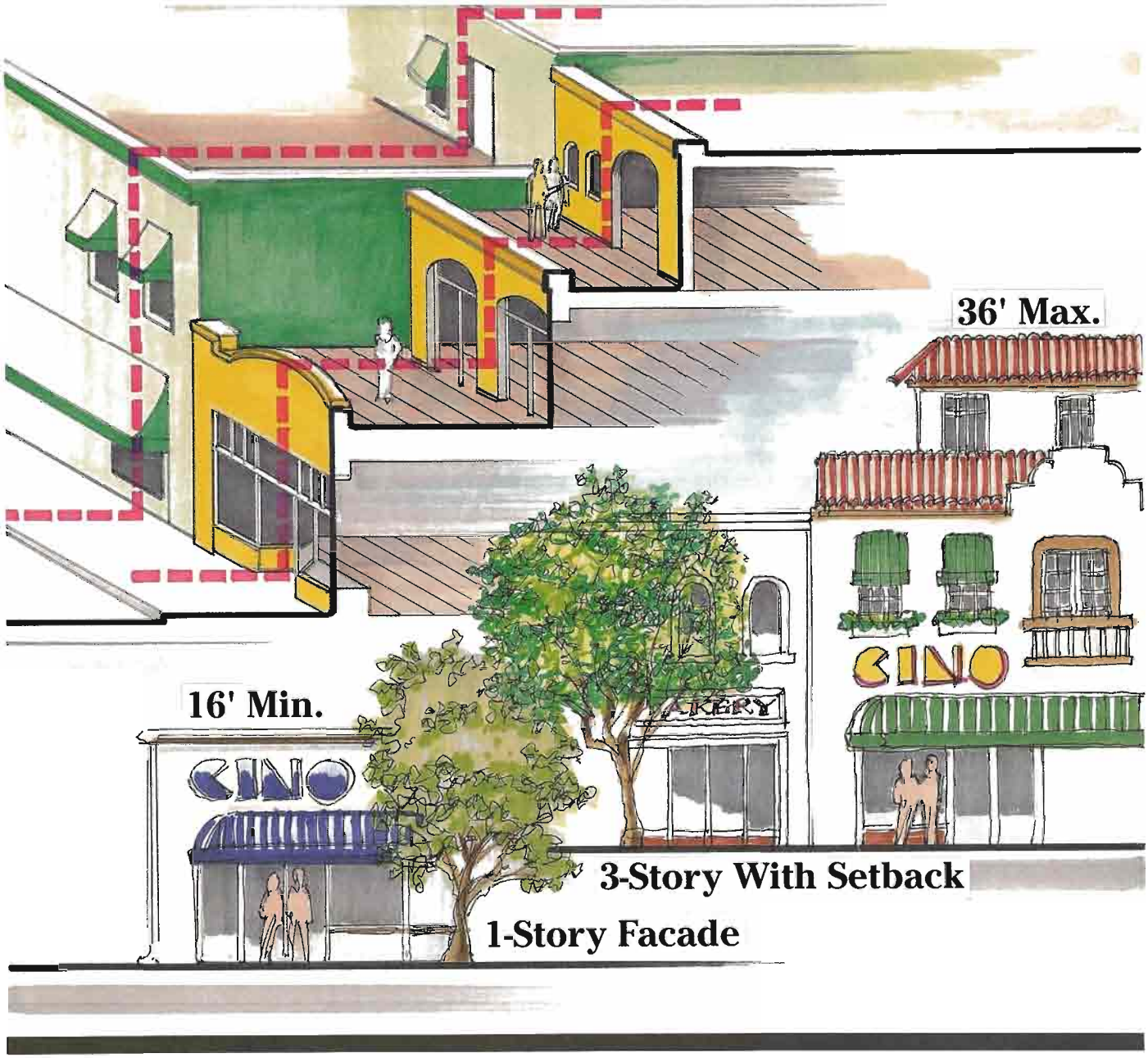
Outdoor use of the rear facade might include upper story windows with balconies, or a restaurant located on the second floor which uses a second-story setback to provide an outdoor seating area. The area underneath this type of "deck" could be used for service loading and/or housing dumpsters. Service elements such as garbage and refuse containers should be hidden from view and smell by sealed enclosures.

Second level outdoor deck areas can create a more interesting environment as well as separating public and semi-public areas. Signs and awnings on the rear facades should be coordinated with those on the front of the stores and shops to enhance the "through" quality of the buildings and small personal scale of the shopping environment.



Height Limits

In planning for new construction, no building facade should be higher than 25 feet and no lower than 16 feet along Murphy Avenue. A minimum one-story height of 16 feet, and two-story height of 22 feet, will help ensure the vertical orientation of any new design. The stated maximum and minimum heights are determined by how they appear and are measured from the street. Some designs may incorporate an extended parapet and have actual ceilings lower that 16 feet. A new structure may extend as high as 36 feet if the height above 16 feet and below 28 feet is set back from the front facade. The distance of setback is determined by the ground level height. The height of the setback is calculated by multiplying the ground level height by .6. For example, a building with a facade 16 feet high must step back its second story by 16 feet and the second-story must be 9.6 feet high. Again to add height, the third-story of a new building may step back 9.6 feet from the front of the second story and also may be 9.6 feet high. The total height of the three-story new building would be 36 feet. While a setback is required for front facades higher than 28 feet, no setback is required for the rear facades. It is recommended, however, that the upper stories facing the parking lot be designed so that they appear to be an integral part of Murphy Avenue. Through the use of awnings, planter boxes and/or window shades, the entire rear facade should read as a unified structure.



The 1980 Development Plan, showing the proposed location of buildings, parking and landscaping. The plan included a landscaped plaza and open pedestrian walkways between the parking lots and Murphy Avenue. Most of the proposed development has taken place. While the plaza will not be constructed, it is hoped that the pedestrian walkways can be opened as renovation of adjacent buildings takes place.

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