



# Chester Design Review Guidelines

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## **QUESTIONS & ANSWERS**

### **What is the Chester Design Review Committee?**

It's a committee appointed by the Board of Supervisors which consists of members with expertise in historical architecture and architectural design, business owners, property owners and residents. This Committee reviews projects for consistency with the Design Guidelines.

### **What is the Chester Design Review Area?**

This area (Shown on the map on the previous page) is subject to the requirements described in the Design Review Guidelines. This area includes the historic area and properties along Main Street. This area reflects Chester's character the most and is the area which would benefit most from community enhancement.

### **What are the Design Review Guidelines?**

The Design Review Guidelines are a set of guidelines relating to new construction, exterior modifications, and streetscape/landscape design.

### **What requires approval by the Design Review Committee?**

All new construction, exterior modifications, commercial landscapes, and signage, which is within the Design Review Area and visible from the street. In addition, murals, streetscape improvements and removal of trees over 6 inches in diameter are subject to approval by the Design Review Committee. Review of projects is limited to the guidelines that apply specifically to the proposed project.

### **Must my project conform with all the requirements in the Design Review Guidelines?**

Exceptions from the guidelines are allowed if unusual circumstances exist or if the project will provide a greater public benefit. Project applicants are welcome to attend these meetings.

### **What is the procedure for obtaining Design Review Approval?**

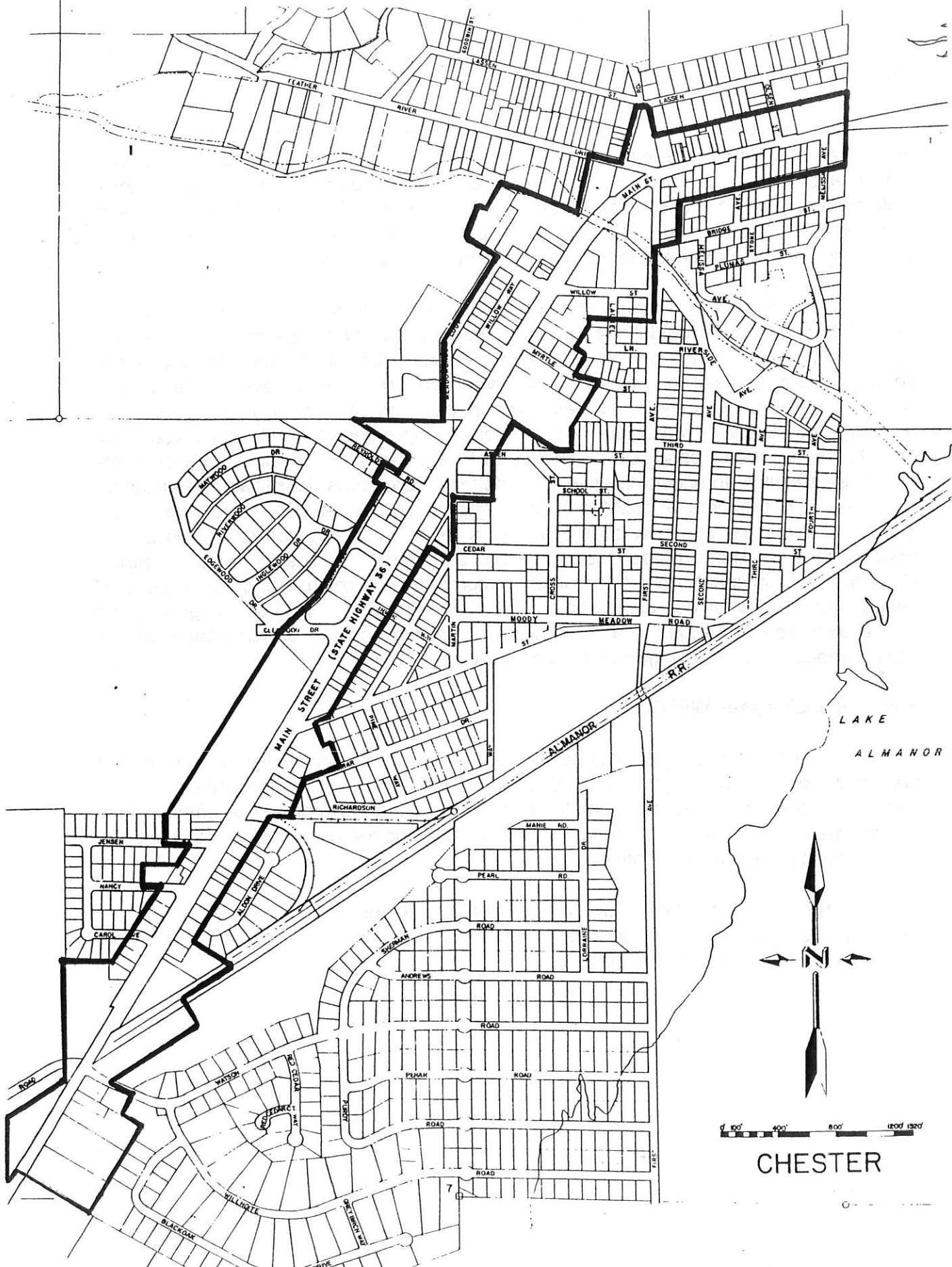
The first step is to submit your plans to the Design Review Committee for approval. Bring your plans to the Planning Department and they will contact the Design Review Committee. The Committee will meet twice monthly. However, the Committee will review projects sooner if a quorum can be gathered. Every effort will be made to review projects as soon as possible.

Once the Committee approves your project, you may begin work if no building permits are required. If your project requires a building permit you must submit your plans to the Building Department for their review and approval as you would normally.

If your project is not consistent with the Guidelines and the committee disapproves of your project, you will be informed as to what aspect of your project is not consistent with the Guidelines. You will be asked to correct any inconsistencies and resubmit your plans to the Committee. If the inconsistencies are minor, and your project requires a building permit, the corrections may be made as conditions on your building permit.

All decisions made by the Design Review Committee may be appealed to the Board of Supervisors.

# Chester Design Review Area



# **INTRODUCTION**

## **The Need for Improved Design Guidelines**

In many areas of Chester, alterations to commercial and residential buildings and, street and landscape improvements have taken place which protect and maintain the special character, historic form, and economic potential of our community. Unfortunately, in other cases, development has been completed which seems to lack such concern. The basis of these guidelines is that Chester is a unique place deserving improved attention to the way our community develops.

Chester and Plumas County face the critical need for economic diversification. These guidelines will help promote quality construction in Chester's commercial areas. While the physical improvement of Chester's buildings and public spaces will not by itself lead to economic diversification, tourism, new investment and business in our community, it has been demonstrated in cities across the country that an image of quality development is an important ingredient for successful economic growth. It has been conclusively shown that well designed physical improvements which are sensitive to historic preservation definitely promotes downtown revitalization. A town which presents a quality physical appearance is far more likely to attract shoppers, investors, and new business than a town which appears run down and in need of repair. These guidelines will create an indirect linkage to the Main Street philosophy of individualized yet coordinated improvements which strengthen the overall image and identity of our community. Merchants, property owners, designers, and contractors are encouraged to retain individual building and related landscape identity while strengthening the image of the community as a whole.

## **What the Guidelines Will Do**

The Guidelines will provide appropriate ways in which historic and newer buildings can be improved. The Guidelines will include ways of minimizing or eliminating existing or proposed unattractive features and ways of adding often simple and inexpensive elements to emphasize positive building features to create a linkage to the surrounding architectural style.

Removal of historically inappropriate "modernization" features, proper maintenance, the addition of well designed signs, and care in the selection of colors and materials can have striking results.

A similar design philosophy is advocated for public space and commercial landscape development. Streets, sidewalks, alley areas, parking areas, and other public space development guidelines stress functional and inviting design solutions which also serve to strengthen the overall image of Chester. Public streetscape and private landscape improvements may be of particular value in enhancing and unifying the diverse character existing along Main Street.

### **How the Guidelines and Review Process Works**

These guidelines apply to the Chester Design Review Area (CDRA), a new Special Plan Area adopted in 1996 by the Board of Supervisors after extensive public review and comment. The guidelines are a matter of concern to commercial property owners, owners of historic and non-historic residential property, and community residents. The general goal of the guidelines and review process is to help property owners make design decisions which will maintain or improve the historic and/or general appearance of Chester. Indirectly, the guidelines will help protect public and private property investment. As shown on the preceding map, this concerns the full commercial corridor of Chester. The guidelines apply to exterior alterations of existing buildings, new construction, and the development of public spaces and commercial landscapes.

Design review within the CDRA is done by the Chester Area Design Review Committee (CDRC) appointed by the Board of Supervisors. Members of the committee are drawn from local business people, property owners, and concerned citizens. The committee receives support from non-voting resource members. These members consist of people having expertise in architectural design and Plumas County Regulations.

The guidelines place regulations on development within the district. Projects are evaluated for compliance with the guidelines. Exceptions from the guidelines may be allowed if it can be shown that unusual circumstances exist or if the exception would prove a greater benefit to the community.

The CDRC encourages creativity and welcomes new ideas. Projects subject to the guidelines must receive review and approval by the CDRC. The CDRC must approve proposed projects within the CDRA before a building permit, if required, will be issued. Violations of the review or construction implementation process can result in citations and fines.



The proposed design review modifications have been developed in response to community surveys and property owner/merchant comments gathered between 1992-96 by the Chester Main Street Committee sponsored by the Chester Chamber of Commerce which supports the need for improved community enhancement. The design review area and design guidelines will provide a mechanism for improved community enhancement. The guidelines and design review area are consistent with the continuing efforts of the Chester Chamber of Commerce to make visual improvements to Chester including the Old Town area. They are also generally consistent with Plumas Corporation (now including the County Chamber of Commerce) efforts regarding tourism marketing.

The intention of these guidelines is to provide a basis by which property owners, designers, contractors, and CDRC members may judge appropriate physical changes throughout Chester's Main Street commercial corridor. It is hoped that these expanded will be of assistance during the building, public space, and landscape design process without being overly cumbersome or costly for the parties involved.

These guidelines are presented on behalf of those concerned about maintaining and improving the appearance of our community and on behalf of those concerned about community development and economic diversification in the Chester area. With increased attention in the design and subsequent construction process, the beauty, economic potential, and unique character of our area will be reflected in the quality of our built environment.

## **GUIDELINES FOR COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS**

The following guidelines apply to new construction, additions and exterior modifications which significantly alter the appearance of a building or encompass 10% or more of the street side visual area.

### **1. BUILDING HEIGHT**

Maintain a similarity of height within a given block or area for renovation and new construction.

Buildings which vary significantly in height from other buildings within the block visually disrupt the proportion and scale of other buildings.

Building height shall fall within a range of 10% of the mean height found within the block or area.

### **2. BUILDING WIDTH**

Maintain consistency of width and the proportion of lot widths.

Buildings shall maintain a consistency of width to preserve the rhythm and scale of buildings within a block.

A building which takes two times the average lot width of a block or area shall be designed so that the facade preserves the continuity of mean facade width in the block or area.

Consistent spacing between buildings shall be maintained within a block.

### **3. BUILDING SETBACK**

Maintain consistent setback from sidewalk in Old Town. (from Feather River Bridge eastward). All new building construction shall be set back to accomodate streetscape improvements.

Building setback differentiates commercial areas from residential areas. Most commercial buildings in Chester's Old Town area built up to the front lot line. A building which differs from a consistent setback visually disrupts the rhythm and pattern within the block. In Old Town, the average setback of buildings and alignment of upper facades within a block shall be maintained.

#### **4. BUILDING ORIENTATION**

Primary facades, where practical, shall be oriented toward the main street, not toward the side streets.

#### **5. HORIZONTAL RHYTHMS**

In Old Town, maintain horizontal rhythms of similar building elements.

Maintaining horizontal rhythms creates a shared identity between commercial buildings. Buildings which deviate from established horizontal patterns visually disrupt the continuity of the block.

A clear visual division between storefront and upper facade where such division is prevalent within a block shall be maintained.

A similar alignment of windows, sills and awnings shall be maintained.

#### **6. ROOF FORM**

Maintain a consistent roofline within a block(s)

In many cases a commercial building's roof form is much different than that of residential buildings. Most commercial buildings in Old Town Chester's historic commercial area have flat roofs which are hidden by a low vertical extension called a parapet. Many times these parapets are enhanced with decorative features.

The roof plane shall be hidden by a parapet when within an area where the roof planes are hidden.

Roof lines and pitches shall be similar to existing roof lines and pitches.

## **7. ARCHITECTURAL STYLE**

Maintain the integrity and compatibility of architectural styles within an area.

Maintaining architectural integrity preserves historic buildings and provides a sense of community identity. Buildings shall be compatible with historic buildings within the block. This does not require that new construction be "historic" in style, but that it not detract from the historic style of surrounding buildings. Often buildings try to imitate a historic look to achieve compatibility, however, this approach usually detracts from the truly historic buildings.

Architectural style of building shall be compatible with the architectural style of surrounding buildings. (Compatibility may be determined by consistency with design elements for architectural styles described in appendix A)

## **8. BUILDING MATERIALS**

Maintain architectural integrity by using proper building materials.

The type of building materials used in construction enforce the relationship between a community and its environmental setting. Some appropriate materials predominate in Chester include stucco, brick, rock, and wood siding.

Original building and finish materials which are appropriate to the historic or architectural style of the building shall be used.

## **9. COLORS**

Subjectivity reigns when dealing with color guidelines. Providing some general suggested guidelines may help to prevent choosing colors which offend neighbors or detract from the building.

Maintain color compatibility with architectural style of the building and surrounding buildings.

Consider a building's orientation (north, south, east, west). Colors on the south and west appear warmer than if placed on the north or east sides.

The larger and plainer the building the more subtle the color. Smaller buildings or those with elaborate detail can often use more colors and more intense colors.

Avoid the more intense hues of color. Avoid using more than one vivid color per building.

Colors should relate to natural building colors found on the building and existing elements such as sign or awnings.

Contrasting colors which accent architectural details and entrances are encouraged.

## **10. AWNINGS/SIDEWALK COVERINGS**

Maintain compatibility with the existing building.

Awnings and sidewalk coverings add character to a building, provide shade and shelter to customers and conserve energy by controlling the amount of light that enters the storefront.

Awnings shall not hide or detract from significant architectural features.

Awning style need not be consistent with the architectural style of the building, but shall be compatible. Consider the awning style of adjacent buildings.

Awning color and material shall be compatible with existing building colors and materials.

Awnings shall be placed at the top of openings.

Awning shapes shall relate to the shape of the top of the opening.

Metal awnings are not appropriate.

Awnings located on both the upper and lower facade shall be compatible in color, material and design. Consider box awnings for the upper facade and slanting awnings for the lower facade.

Awning signage shall conform to the sign guidelines.

## **11. ROOF PROJECTIONS**

Roof Projections should not detract from the architectural style of the building.

Roof projections such as antennas, satellite dishes, and heating and cooling units can significantly detract from the architectural style and beauty of a building.

Roof projections shall be hidden from ordinary public view.

Screening methods shall be compatible with the architectural style of the building.

## **12. MAINTENANCE OF VACANT BUILDINGS & LOTS**

Maintain an appearance that does not detract from the surrounding buildings and community.

Often when a building or lot is vacant and remains so for an extended period of time, the appearance begins to deteriorate, paint peels, weeds grow, windows are broken, etc. The condition of these properties detracts from the efforts others have made to improve their properties.

Broken windows shall be replaced.

Buildings with peeling paint shall be repainted.

Properties shall maintain a reasonable appearance.

**GUIDELINES FOR  
COMMERCIAL/RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS  
&  
RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS**

**1. BUILDING HEIGHT**

Maintain a similarity of height within a given block or area for renovation and new construction.

Buildings which vary significantly in height from other buildings within the block visually disrupt the proportion and scale of other buildings.

The height of a building or addition shall be within range of heights found within the immediate block.

**2. ARCHITECTURAL STYLE**

Maintain the integrity and compatibility of architectural styles within an area.

Maintaining architectural integrity preserves historic buildings and provides a sense of community identity. Buildings shall be compatible with historic buildings within the block. This does not require that new construction be "historic" in style, but that it not detract from the historic style of surrounding buildings. Often buildings try to imitate a historic look to achieve compatibility, however, this approach usually detracts from the truly historic buildings.

Architectural style of building shall be compatible with the architectural style of surrounding buildings. (Compatibility may be determined by consistency with design elements for architectural styles described in appendix A)

**3. BUILDING MATERIALS**

Maintain architectural integrity by using proper building materials.

The type of building materials used in construction enforce the relationship between a community and its environmental setting. Some appropriate materials predominate in Chester include stucco, brick, rock, and wood siding.

Original building and finish materials which are appropriate to the historic or architectural style of the building shall be used.

## **4. COLORS**

### **Goals**

Subjectivity reigns when dealing with color guidelines. Providing some general suggested guidelines may help to prevent choosing colors which offend neighbors or detract from the building.

Maintain color compatibility with architectural style of the building and surrounding buildings.

Colors shall coordinate with other colors on your block.

Consider a building's orientation (north, south, east, west). Colors on the south and west appear warmer than if placed on the north or east sides.

Consider colors which are associated with architectural styles. For example, pale yellows and peaches were favorite colors for Mission Revival buildings.

The larger and plainer the building the more subtle the color. Smaller buildings or those with elaborate detail can often use more colors and more intense colors.

Avoid the more intense hues of color. Avoid using more than one vivid color per building.

Colors should relate to natural building colors found on the building and existing elements such as sign or awnings.

Contrasting colors which accent architectural details and entrances are encouraged.

## **5. AWNINGS/SIDEWALK COVERINGS**

Maintain compatibility with the existing building.

Awnings and sidewalk coverings add character to a building, provide shade and shelter to customers and conserve energy by controlling the amount of light that enters the building.

Awnings shall not hide or detract from significant architectural features.

Awning style need not be consistent with the architectural style of the building, but shall be compatible. Consider the awning style of adjacent buildings.

Awning color and material shall be compatible with existing building colors and materials.



Awnings shall be placed at the top of openings.

Awning shapes shall relate to the shape of the top of the opening.

Metal awnings are not appropriate.

Awning signage shall conform to the sign guidelines.

## **SIGN GUIDELINES**

In addition to the following Guidelines, sign design and construction is subject to County Code Section 9-2.416. All signs must comply with the provisions of this section unless modified by the Guidelines. A copy of this section is attached for your convenience.

### **GOALS**

Promote appropriate signage which preserves and protects the historical and architectural character of the community.

Prevent signage which is confusing, or which may otherwise jeopardize public safety, and block pedestrian traffic.

Protect Chester from sign clutter.

Assure maintenance of signs.

Prevent sign design and placement which visually disrupts Chester's mountain community character.

### **1. SIGN DESIGN**

The primary standard for a sign in the historic district is that it relate to, rather than obscure and disrupt the design elements of the building to which it is attached. It should also be compatible with other signs and buildings along the street. Dimensions, subject matter, materials, color, letter styles, legibility, overall effect and placement on the building are important design factors.

When more than one sign is proposed for a single building facade the signs should complement each other in shape, size, color and lettering style.

Sign copy should be of sufficient size so that it can be easily read.

Words should be kept to a minimum so that the sign can be read as quickly as possible.

When a new sign is erected, all evidence of previous signage shall be removed, including sign ghosts, guy wires, brackets, support bolts, screws and holes.

Signs shall be no higher than the roofline of the building to which the sign is attached, except for existing pole signs.

## 2. SIGN TYPES

Appropriate sign types shall reflect the nature of the building and business.

Inappropriate sign types:

Moving or flashing signs (including flags, banners and noise making devices)\*

Projecting fin signs are inappropriate when they hide or impair viewing of other signs.

***\*Flags and banners may be used for 30 days following an opening of a new business.***

It is possible to obtain approval of signs that are non-conforming if they maintain districts character.

In addition to the following Guidelines, sign design and construction is subject to County Code Section 9-2.416. All signs must comply with the provisions of this section unless modified by the Guidelines. A copy of this section is attached for your convenience.

## **STREETSCAPE/ LANDSCAPE GUIDELINES**

### **1. STREETSCAPE / LANDSCAPE STYLE**

Streetscape/landscape improvements include pedestrian walkways, outdoor use areas, trees, planting areas, vehicular areas, landscape signage, fencing monuments, landscape lighting, banners, street furniture, etc.

Public commercial, and residential landscape and streetscape improvements are encouraged which creatively reflect and reinforce the history, mountain geography, and architectural character of the Almanor Basin. The County shall consider purchasing and maintaining open space areas consistent with a streetscape/ open space master plan.

Shade tree planting of parking lots and other areas is recommended. Deciduous trees are most suitable for south, west, and east exposures to allow shading in summer and solar access in winter. Evergreen trees are most appropriate on north exposures where winter shading will not promote ice buildup.

Various winter snow conditions should be accounted for in site design. This includes both vehicular and pedestrian safety allowing for snow removal and storage, service vehicle access, and appropriate snow tolerant plantings.

Landscape features shall meet all pertinent setback, parking, landscape area requirements required by the Planning and Zoning Code as administered by the Planning Department.

Visual screening is required for all propane tanks and dumpsters. Visual screening of parking areas and other "unsightly areas" is strongly encouraged. Screening should be of fencing and or plants.

All new commercial landscapes, public streetscapes and murals shall be reviewed and approved by the Design Review Committee. Landscape and Streetscape plans shall include irrigation and site maintainance.

Landscaping of parking lots shall be as set forth below:

In addition to the following Guidelines, landscaping is required pursuant to County Code Section 9- 2.410 which states that parking lots of 5 or more spaces shall provide a landscaped area equal to 10% of the required parking area.

## **2. OPEN SPACE AREAS**

Exterior public community use areas promote community identity, coherence of appearance through the commercial district, and social activity.

Public open space features such as street lighting, planting, street signage, seating, trash receptacles, community signage, etc. should be creatively consistent with the architectural and mountain community character of Chester.

Public seating/gathering areas should be sited in sunny, active pedestrian areas. Access to take-out food will encourage outdoor use and enhance a sense of activity in the commercial area.

## **3. CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS/FENCING**

Streetscape/ Landscape construction materials should be creatively consistent with the architectural and neighborhood mountain character of the site.

The use of brick, stone masonry, wood, wrought iron, native land scape rock, native gravel, textured brick or cobble concrete is encouraged appropriate to the site and neighborhood.

The use of colored boulders, gravel, or other imported non-native rock is discouraged.

Chain link fencing is not allowed, except for schools and parks, on any street-side property lines. Where chain link fencing is used and visible from the street, vines, lattice, or shrubs shall screen the fence.

## **4. MURALS**

Murals are encouraged and should be creatively consistent with the architecture and mountain community character of Chester.

## 5. PLANTING

Plants are encouraged which are native or "historically indigenous" exotic species climatically appropriate to the Almanor Basin.

Plantings should be creatively consistent as possible with the architectural and neighborhood mountain character of the site.

Drought tolerant, low maintenance landscapes are encouraged. A limited sample of native, drought tolerant, and or historically indigenous plants are as follows:

### Native

Fir, Cedar, Pine, Alder, Dogwood, Mountain Ash, Quaking Aspen, Spirea, Mock Orange, Current, Wild Rose, Oregon Grape, Cottonwood

### "Historically Indigenous"

White Birch, Maple, Locust, Barberry, Lilac, Flowering Quince, Forsythia, Snowball, Rose, Virginia Creeper, Honeysuckle, Mazanita

Avoid plantings with shallow root systems that may break up sidewalks or roadways. Avoid plantings near underground utilities to prevent damage to these facilities. Root barriers shall be used for planting within sidewalks and adjacent to parking lots.

## 6. TREE REMOVAL

Mature, and immature stands of trees enhance the character of the community as well as providing shade for pedestrians. Large trees become landmarks of the community and reinforce the relationship between our community and our environment. New building construction shall, when possible incorporate existing trees.

Trees 6 inches diameter, measured 4 1/2 feet above the ground, shall not be removed without approval of the Design Review Committee.

## APPENDIX A

### Appropriate Materials and Design Elements for Specific Architectural Styles

#### WESTERN GOLD RUSH PERIOD 1850's - 1880's

##### **Design Factors:**

- 1) Simple, box-like structures; often a series of room additions; two stories quite common.
- 2) Predominant roof shapes include gable, hip, and hipped-gable; false-fronts are used on some commercial buildings; shed roofed porches and boardwalks are characteristic of the familiar "prairie" or "western ranch" style.
- 3) Simple, often symmetrical window and door placement; some commercial fronts have arched door or window openings, but the windows and doors themselves weren't decorative.

##### **Materials:**

- 1) Wood and brick construction and finish materials; wood sidings and board-and-batten were used; decorative brick patterns were used as trim.
- 2) Old photos show that most wooden exteriors were painted.

##### **Special Characteristics:**

"Rough" western architecture was not the predominant type of building finish. Most buildings were simple, but had a "finished" look to them as a result of paint, porches and/or a bit of decorative trim.

##### **Remodeling/New Structures:**

The buildings of the period are easy to represent and equally as easy to "over-do" with characteristics of other areas. Early Chester was simple.

## CLASSIC REVIVAL PERIOD 1900- 1920's

### **Design Factors:**

- 1) Most design factors are simple to facilitate adding the "classic" characteristics.
- 2) Roofs are usually gabled.

### **Materials:**

- 1) Painted wood, masonry and plaster most common.
- 2) Where remodeling of an "older" style into a classic style has occurred, features of the older style may remain (shingles, etc.).

### **Special Characteristics:**

This period was an attempt to revive the more popular classic styles (Greek, Mission, etc.) without duplicating the original structures.

### **Remodeling/New Structures:**

As with the Victorian styles, the "classics" are difficult to reproduce. Basic design factors, however, can be utilized.

## CALIFORNIA BUNGALOW PERIOD 1910 - 1920's

### **Design Factors:**

- 1) These Chester residences are one or one-and-a-half story high with the upper "story" generally a usable attic area.
- 2) Roofs over low gables with distinctive dormers at the front.
- 3) Entrance porches are encompassed under the main roof helping to create the "low" effect. Pillars, often distinctively designed, are structural members in the porch construction.
- 4) Entrances are often centered with glass panel doors which were quite popular. Large windows and/or groupings of windows are also typical of the design.



**Materials:**

Horizontal wood siding (ship lap) and shingles predominates. Redwood became popular during this period and some bungalows were of, or stained to look like, the dark wood. Other homes are painted.

**Special Characteristics:**

This residential design style, a California "original", is fairly straight forward and usually easy to identify. Most of the common characteristics are noted above.

**Remodeling/New Structures:**

Most design factors are easy to recreate although some detailing and crafted details may be too expensive or difficult to reproduce.

**ART DECO/MODERNE PERIOD 1930's - 1940's****Design Factors:**

- 1) Simple building design, occasional emphasis on vertical or horizontal building.
- 2) False gable roofs are common.
- 3) Windows and doors sometimes reflect any horizontal or vertical detail emphasis.

**Material:**

Painted stucco is typical.

**Special Characteristics:**

The emphasis of the period was functional and design effect was achieved by decorative lines and/or sculpture.

**Remodeling/New Structures:**

The style is easy to represent for the most part although some detailing may be too ornate to reproduce.