4 REGULATIONS FOR COMMUNITY DESIGN

Santa Cruz has 19 area plans that direct planning and development within specific parts of the city. These documents include 14 plans that the City has adopted for areas that fall under its direct jurisdiction. The State Department of Parks and Recreation and the University of California have developed five other plans for land that they administer. The City's emphasis on using area plans to regulate community design has resulted in a lack of guidelines for parts of the city that are not covered by area plans.

This chapter briefly explains the purpose of design review and the components of a successful design review process, then summarizes the existing design requirements for parts of Santa Cruz that are not governed by an area plan. It also summarizes each of the city's area plans, highlighting recommendations that could contribute to a more comprehensive approach to planning for future development.

A. Purpose of Design Review

Design review allows cities to ensure that new buildings will employ high-quality architecture and site planning, so the buildings reinforce and enhance the community's overall character and value. A comprehensive process for design review can also help developers propose creative solutions for the unique context of a particular site.[1]

Many cities have a design review board that evaluates development applications. A design review board typically includes City staff as well as outside experts, such as architects, civil engineers and city planners. Alternatively, City staff can carry out design review themselves. Some cities send large projects to a design review board and allow staff to review smaller projects.

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[1] The information in this section is adapted in part from Mark L. Hinshaw, 1995, *Design Review*, Washington, D.C.: American Planning Association.

An ideal design review process includes each of the following components in some form:

- **Published Standards.** The City must provide clear explanations of the process for design review and the standards that are used to evaluate applications. These published explanations typically include comprehensive design guidelines that describe the criteria by which projects will be evaluated.
- **Collaboration.** Throughout the design review process, the City and the developer should be flexible and creative, remaining open to new ideas and working together to solve problems.
- **Public Notice.** Members of the public should be aware of proposed development, so they can make their opinion known to the developer and the City.
- **Staff Analysis.** When the time comes to decide whether to approve an application for design review, City staff should provide a clear, concise assessment of the application that provides appropriate guidance to decision makers.
- **Enforcement.** If a developer's project is approved, but the developer does not comply with the conditions of approval, the City should be prepared to require the project to be brought into compliance.

B. Zoning Requirements for Community Design

Santa Cruz's current citywide regulations for the design of new buildings are part of the City's Zoning Ordinance, a chapter of its Municipal Code. This section describes the Zoning Ordinance's requirements for design permits and design guidelines, both of which are intended to shape the community's character. It also explains the concept of form-based codes, which could be incorporated into the Zoning Ordinance in the future.

1. Design Permits and Design Guidelines

In addition to the design guidelines provided in area plans, which are described later in this chapter, the City's Zoning Ordinance requires a "design permit" for almost any new construction in any part of Santa Cruz. This requirement is meant to ensure that new development includes high-quality architecture and site planning.[2]

The Zoning Ordinance provides a list of 17 criteria that an applicant must meet before the City issues a design permit. Some of the criteria, such as a requirement that toilets use less than 3 gallons of water per flush, are specific and easy to understand but have minimal relevance to architecture and site planning. Others, such as a requirement that site plans "respect design principles in terms of maintaining a balance of scale, form and proportion," provide very little guidance to permit applicants.[3]

While the Ordinance includes a brief list of specific design guidelines for single-family homes, it includes only three illustrations showing development proposals that meet the City's requirements; only one of these illustrations provides a three-dimensional view of a building.[4] The Ordinance provides no design guidelines for multi-family housing, such as apartments or townhomes, or for commercial and industrial buildings. Unlike many cities, Santa Cruz has not adopted any citywide design guidelines as a supplement to its Zoning Ordinance. The result of these shortcomings is that the City has relatively few tools for evaluating development proposals, and permit applicants have relatively little certainty about the City's expectations before they submit their plans.

In contrast, many of the City's area plans include clear, easy-to-read design guidelines. The area plans' guidelines are often accompanied by photographs and illustrations that show what is encouraged or required, as well as what is

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[2] City of Santa Cruz Municipal Code, Section 24.08.400.

[3] City of Santa Cruz Municipal Code, Section 24.08.430.

[4] City of Santa Cruz Municipal Code, Section 24.08.450.

discouraged or prohibited. In particular, the Beach and South of Laurel Comprehensive Area Plan provides an especially thorough set of design guidelines for both residential and commercial development. Some of the area plans' guidelines are relevant only to specific places, but many others could apply equally well to other parts of Santa Cruz.

2. Form-Based Codes

Like most cities, Santa Cruz has a traditional zoning code that emphasizes restrictions on the types and locations of land uses. In contrast, form-based codes are focused on regulating the design and aesthetic qualities of development, particularly how private development shapes the public realm. The requirements of a form-based code are typically more stringent than the broader recommendations found in design guidelines. A form-based code still includes restrictions on land uses; however, these restrictions offer more flexibility than a traditional zoning code.

Many of the requirements of a form-based code apply to the architecture and site planning of individual buildings. For example, rather than specifying a minimum setback from the street, as is typical in a traditional zoning code, form-based codes often set a "build-to line" for commercial buildings that requires them to meet the back of the sidewalk. In addition, form-based codes often specify what types of building frontage are allowed in different places. In a residential neighborhood, the code might allow a fenced yard with a front porch, as well as a building near the sidewalk that has a front stoop; in a commercial district, the code might allow a storefront with an awning, as well as an arcade or gallery above the sidewalk.

At the scale of an entire neighborhood or city, form-based codes define zoning districts based on the built character that is desired in each district, rather than the land uses that are desired. The zoning districts are usually organized as a hierarchy, ranging from intensive development in a city's center to less-intensive residential and rural areas at the city's edge.

Form-based codes can be implemented as overlays or special districts within a traditional zoning code. This approach makes it possible to set prescriptive, form-based requirements in one part of a city without completely replacing the city's existing requirements in other places.

C. Area Plans Administered by the City

This section summarizes 14 area plans that are administered by the City. Each summary describes the key recommendations in each plan that are intended to shape Santa Cruz's community character. Table 4-1 provides a list of these plans.

1. Arana Gulch Master Plan

The Arana Gulch Master Plan, which was adopted on July 2006, applies to the 67.7 acres of public property acquired by Santa Cruz in 1994.

The Master Plan's recommendations focus on adding trails and bridges that could connect adjacent neighborhoods and link them to the coast. In addition, the Plan proposes enhanced park entrances and overlooks, which would include interpretive displays, seating and signage. Because the Plan deals with public lands, it does not include design guidelines for private development.

2. Beach and South of Laurel Comprehensive Area Plan

Adopted in 1998, the Beach and South of Laurel Comprehensive Area Plan evolved from several earlier plans for this area. The Plan's broadest aims are to preserve and revitalize the character of the areas residential neighborhoods, link them with downtown, and increase offsite parking and public transportation options for residents and visitors.

The Area Plan includes a wide range of recommendations that are intended to define neighborhood character through distinctive structures and streetscapes. Key recommendations include connecting downtown and Beach Street with new street configurations, as well as enhancements to Front Street and new

TABLE 4-1 **AREA PLANS ADMINISTERED BY THE CITY**

Area Plan	Year Adopted	Agency	Design Guidelines in Plan
Arana Gulch Master Plan	2006	City of Santa Cruz Parks and Recreation Department	—
Beach and South of Laurel Comprehensive Area Plan	1998	City of Santa Cruz	X
City-wide Creeks and Wetlands Management Plan	2006	City of Santa Cruz	—
Downtown Alley Walk Concept Plan	1994	City of Santa Cruz Redevelopment Agency	X
Downtown Recovery Plan	2001	City of Santa Cruz	X
Eastside Business Area Improvement Plan	1996	City of Santa Cruz Redevelopment Agency	X
Mission Street Urban Design Plan	2002	City of Santa Cruz	X
Moore Creek Corridor Access and Management Plan	1987	City of Santa Cruz	—
Neary Lagoon Management Plan	1992	City of Santa Cruz	—
Pogonip Master Plan	1998	City of Santa Cruz Parks and Recreation Department	—
San Lorenzo Urban River Plan	2003	City of Santa Cruz/San Lorenzo Urban River Plan Task Force	—
Santa Cruz Harbor Development Plan	1992	Santa Cruz Port District	X
Seabright Area Plan	1981	City of Santa Cruz	X
Western Drive Master Plan	1979	City of Santa Cruz	X

gateway elements for each neighborhood in the Plan area. These recommendations have yet to be implemented.

The Plan includes detailed guidelines for the form, massing and scale of new buildings. For example, the Plan describes how new development can incorporate architectural features that help new buildings fit gracefully with their neighbors. The guidelines include many photos and drawings that illustrate these recommendations.

3. City-wide Creeks and Wetlands Management Plan

The City-wide Creeks and Wetlands Management Plan was adopted by Santa Cruz in 2006. It was necessitated by General Plan and Local Coastal Plan policy requiring a standard 100-foot development setback from all watercourses and wetlands, unless a management plan is adopted that addresses specific protection of individual riparian and wetland resources.

The Management Plan includes development setbacks and permit guidelines, and riparian and wetland management recommendations. The Plan does not include design guidelines because it applies only to creeks and wetlands.

4. Downtown Alley Walk Concept Plan

The Downtown Alley Walk Concept Plan was completed in 1994, following the principles of the 1991 Downtown Recovery Plan. The goal of the Plan is to establish a distinctive and active pedestrian environment in the downtown alleys.

Recommendations that are included in the Concept Plan are intended to turn less-used streets into pedestrian amenities by improving streetscape, landscape and utility elements. Many of these recommendations have been implemented and contribute to the pedestrian character of the Downtown District.

The Plan contains detailed design guidelines for artwork, signage, pavement, and waste enclosures associated with buildings. However, the Plan has no requirements for the form, massing or scale of the buildings themselves.

5. Downtown Recovery Plan

The Downtown Recovery Plan was adopted by Santa Cruz in 1991 and last amended in 2001. Its primary purpose is to provide a framework for the public and private rebuilding of downtown Santa Cruz after the 1989 earthquake.

The primary goal of the Recovery Plan is to strengthen downtown Santa Cruz as a retail, dining and entertainment district. In particular, core recommendations are aimed at strengthening the pedestrian orientation of the Plan area and treating downtown streets as public open space. These recommendations include specifications for wider sidewalks, additional crosswalks, street trees, public art and distinctive paving and street furniture.

Included in the Plan's detailed design guidelines are requirements for the form, massing and scale of buildings, as well as for materials, finishes, signage, awnings and lighting. Many of the recommendations and guidelines in this Plan have been implemented successfully.

6. Eastside Business Area Improvement Plan

The Eastside Business Area Improvement Plan, as adopted in 1996, applies to the neighborhood enclosed by, and including, the Water Street and Soquel Avenue commercial corridors. Its primary purpose is to create a strong, vibrant commercial district.

The Improvement Plan's recommendations are centered around streetscape, circulation and parking improvements. One key group of recommendations aims to enhance the pedestrian orientation and experience along both corridors, while simultaneously increasing pedestrian connections with adjacent residential neighborhoods and discouraging parking on side streets. These recommendations include providing additional crosswalks, street trees, seating, bulbouts and more accessible rear parking.

Included in the Plan's design guidelines are recommendations for the façades, signage, awnings and lighting of new buildings.

7. Mission Street Urban Design Plan

The Mission Street Urban Design Plan, as adopted in 2002, applies to the 2.25-mile stretch of Mission Street from the western city limits to Chestnut Street. Generally, the planning area extends one parcel deep on both sides of the street. The Plan's primary purpose is to provide a framework for economic revitalization of the corridor, but it also strives to improve quality of life on the Westside and in adjacent residential neighborhoods.

The Urban Design Plan's recommendations address redevelopment strategies, circulation, parking and the overall character of the corridor. Specific recommendations are aimed at enhancing the pedestrian, bicycle and transit options and connectivity along the corridor; emphasizing the western end—and all of Mission Street—as a gateway to Santa Cruz; and reducing parking and traffic on side streets.

The Plan's design guidelines for new buildings include specific requirements for the overall form of new buildings. The Plan also recommends appropriate building materials, signage and landscaping treatments.

8. Moore Creek Corridor Access and Management Plan

The Moore Creek Corridor Access and Management Plan was adopted by Santa Cruz in 1987. The 550-acre Moore Creek Corridor was designated for special protection due to its status as Santa Cruz's least disturbed watershed.

The focus of the Access and Management Plan's recommendations are enhancing trails and protecting natural habitat. Specifically, the Plan recommends pedestrian-only trails to limit visitor impact. Another recommendation encourages overlooks in all new development projects adjacent to the corridor.

Because the Plan deals with public lands, it does not include design guidelines for private development.

9. Neary Lagoon Management Plan

The Neary Lagoon and Wildlife Refuge Master Plan was adopted in 1977, and in 1992 the Neary Lagoon Management Plan was adopted in its present form. The Management Plan applies to 44 acres of land acquired by the City of Santa Cruz in 1967.

The Management Plan's recommendations are grouped around wildlife, public recreation, flood control and water quality issues. One implemented recommendation resulted in new recreational trails that connect with adjacent neighborhoods.

This Plan does not include design guidelines for private development because it deals primarily with public lands.

10. Pogonip Master Plan

The Pogonip Master Plan was adopted in 1998 and applies to the 640 acres of public property acquired by Santa Cruz in 1989.

The Master Plan's recommendations address the enhancement of existing trails, the restoration of historic sites and the designation of protected nature areas. Programmatically, the Plan recommends the creation of a community space in the historic clubhouse, establishment of a youth nature camp and the relocation of the Homeless Garden Project to the Pogonip.

Private development design guidelines are not included because the Plan deals with public lands.

11. San Lorenzo Urban River Plan

The San Lorenzo Urban River Plan, as adopted by Santa Cruz in 2003, provides a comprehensive update to earlier individual plans for the San Lorenzo River, Jessie Marsh and Branciforte Creek.

The Plan includes a wide variety of recommendations intended to restore natural habitat, maintain flood control and improve public access between the

Plan area waterways and surrounding neighborhoods. In particular, the Plan recommends a series of gateway plazas leading to improved multi-use nature trails and pedestrian bridges crossing the river.

While the Plan includes conceptual site plans for new development at several key locations near the San Lorenzo River, it does not provide detailed design guidelines for private development.

12. Santa Cruz Harbor Development Plan

The Santa Cruz Harbor Development Plan was originally adopted by the Port District in 1980 and revised in 1992. The Plan serves as a specific guide to development and permit approvals in the 38-acre Plan area.

The core aims of the Development Plan's recommendations are increasing facilities for recreational and commercial fishing, expanding marine- and visitor-oriented business, and providing visitor facilities and shoreline access. Included in these are some implemented recommendations for additional parking and multi-use trails.

The Plan incorporates the Santa Cruz Harbor Design Guidelines, adopted in 1981, by reference.

13. Seabright Area Plan

The Seabright Area Plan, as adopted in 1981, applies to the Seabright neighborhoods south of Clinton Street. The primary impetus for the Plan was the need to manage increased visitor traffic that occurred after Santa Cruz Harbor and Seabright Beach were improved. The Plan does not directly address potential conflicts between high-density and low-density residential development, as those conflicts began to arise in Seabright long after the Plan was adopted.

Recommendations in the Area Plan address tourism, circulation, public facilities and preservation of neighborhood character. In particular, the Plan notes that structures originally built for summer use predominate, and that these

buildings are now primarily full-time residences. The Plan's design guidelines are therefore divided into recommendations for additions, as well as for new construction. Most of the guidelines emphasize that building materials, roof-lines and siting should be compatible with surrounding buildings.

14. Western Drive Master Plan

The Western Drive Master Plan, as adopted in 1979, applies to the neighborhoods between Moore Creek and Arroyo Seco. Its primary purpose is to guide planning in one of Santa Cruz's more recently developed neighborhoods.

The Master Plan's recommendations are primarily aimed at protecting natural habitat, view corridors and the wooded character of the Plan area. Prior to the Master Plan process, Western Drive was to be used as a major arterial street; implementation of the Master Plan has resulted in a smaller, two-lane road.

The majority of the Plan's design guidelines address ways to minimize the environmental and visual impact of new development, and ways to emphasize a somewhat rural character. The amount of nearby residential development and enrollment on the UCSC campus have exceeded this Plan's expectations.

D. Area Plans Administered by State Entities

This section examines five area plans not administered by the City of Santa Cruz; three are administered by the State of California Department of Parks and Recreation, and two by the University of California. Each summary describes the recommendations in the plans that have implications for Santa Cruz's community character. Table 4-2 provides a list of these plans.

TABLE 4-2 **AREA PLANS ADMINISTERED BY STATE ENTITIES**

Area Plan	Year Adopted	Entity
Lighthouse Field State Beach Plan	1984	State Department of Parks and Recreation
Natural Bridges State Beach Plan	1988	State Department of Parks and Recreation
Twin Lakes State Beach General Plan	1988	State Department of Parks and Recreation
UCSC Long-Range Development Plan	2006	University of California, Santa Cruz
UCSC Marine Science Campus Coastal Long-Range Development Plan	2004[1]	UCSC Institute of Marine Sciences

1. Prepared in 2004 and adopted by the UC Regents; awaiting final approval by the Coastal Commission.

1. Lighthouse Field State Beach Plan

The Lighthouse Field State Beach Plan was adopted by the State in 1984 and revised in 2003. The City of Santa Cruz owns a portion of the bluffs and Lighthouse Point; the remainder of the 37-acre property is owned by the State.

The Plan's primary goal is to balance habitat preservation with public access. In particular, the Plan recommends enhancing entrances and overlooks with interpretive signage, seating and public art. Other recommendations include planted screenings around parking, restrooms, and changing areas, and eliminating on-street parking in favor of lots within the park.

Private development design guidelines are not included because the Plan deals with public lands.

2. Natural Bridges State Beach Plan

The Natural Bridges State Beach Plan was adopted by the State in 1988. Natural Bridges State Beach encompasses 65 acres and includes a Monarch butterfly natural preserve.

The recommendations in this Plan are an attempt to balance public access with habitat preservation. In particular, the Plan includes recommendations to enhance entrances and improve overlooks with interpretive signage and seating. Other recommendations include adding a park entrance on Delaware Avenue.

Because the Plan deals with public lands, it does not include design guidelines for private development.

3. Twin Lakes State Beach General Plan

The Twin Lakes State Beach General Plan was adopted by the State in 1988. Twin Lakes State Beach encompasses 92 acres and two lagoons.

Balancing beach access with habitat preservation is the goal of the Plan's recommendations. The Plan specifically recommends exclusion zones that would forbid any construction or trails along the base, face or top of cliffs in the Plan area.

Design guidelines for private development are not a part of this Plan because it deals with public lands.

4. UCSC Long-Range Development Plan

The most recent Long-Range Development Plan (LRDP) for UCSC was adopted by the University in 2006. It provides a comprehensive plan for physical development of the 2,000-acre campus through the year 2020.

The LRDP includes a wide variety of recommendations intended to accommodate growth in the campus' student enrollment. Most of its recommendations relating to land use, housing, circulation, parking, access and transporta-

tion have a significant interface with adjacent Santa Cruz neighborhoods and the city as a whole. However, since this Plan deals solely with the UCSC campus, it does not include any design guidelines for off-campus development.

5. UCSC Marine Science Campus Coastal Long-Range Development Plan

The UCSC Marine Science Campus Coastal Long-Range Development Plan was prepared by the University in 2004; it has been adopted by the UC Regents and awaits approval by the Coastal Commission. The Plan addresses the academic needs and facility requirements for individual programs at UCSC's Institute of Marine Sciences; it provides no design guidelines for private development.