

Appendix E

Architectural and Signage Qualities



Architectural Qualities

In the design of buildings and outdoor spaces, several qualities can collectively affect people's choices. Some of these qualities and their effects include:

Accessibility: Where people can and where they cannot.

Variety: The range of uses available to people.

Legibility: How easily people can understand the opportunities a place offers.

Robustness: The degree by which people can use a place for different purposes.

Appropriateness: The degree by which a place is compatible within its physical context.

Richness: How a place can affect people's sensory experiences.

Personalization: The extent by which people can put their own stamp on a place.

Accessibility

In order to be accessible, the public edge of a building should house activities which benefit from interaction with the public space, and can contribute to the life of the public space itself. Entrances should be located such that the comings and goings are directly visible from the public space. Uses which could spill out into the public space, such as cafes and stores, should be provided on the ground floor. If there are animated activities that occur within, they should be located adjacent to the public space.

Legibility

People need to understand a building's use. The clear identification of elements such as doors and windows characterize a place, and define its accessibility. Legibility invites approachability as well as uninhibited movement between inside and outside.

Variety and Robustness

To increase variety and robustness, the edge between building facades and public spaces should be designed to enable a range of indoor activities to co-exist in close proximity with a range of outdoor activities. One of the most common activities in public spaces is people watching. This mostly happens at

the edge of the public space, which offers a sense of refuge, as well as a prospect of what is going on. The usefulness of the edge in this manner is greatly increased by the provision of places to sit. There may be benches, window ledges, niches or low walls.

The edge potential is still improved if parts of it are protected from the weather. Recessing a portion of the building facade or providing awnings accomplishes this. Arcades are ideal for this purpose when used in enclosing a courtyard area.

Appropriateness

Appropriateness is the degree by which a place is compatible with its physical context or surroundings. In terms of the physical context, visual cues can be identified in terms of the adjacent buildings and landscape and in terms of the surrounding townscape. The adjacent context considers similar elements in similar relationships: vertical rhythms, horizontal rhythms, materials, colors, patterns, details, windows, and doors. The surrounding context contributes to the understanding of the overall image and meaning of the place.

In Solana Beach, three definitive relationships and opportunities exist. First, in areas where buildings are visually insulated from each other by setbacks and landscaping, a wide variety of designs may occur without damaging the context of other buildings. Second, in areas of transition where buildings are without merit, or are slated for redevelopment, the opportunity arises to create a new context. And third, in areas where buildings of merit exist, the opportunity arises to use these qualities as a reference for new development, while enforcing the community's sense of identity and continuity.

Richness

Experiencing a place can be intensified through the variety of sensual experiences provided. This quality refers to the richness of a place. Richness should be communicated through motion, smell, sound, touch and sight. Kinetic richness is gained through movement, and implies the variety of experiences which are discovered when one moves through a space. The flickering light seen when walking under a trellis or the effects of a turbulent water feature are examples of kinetic richness. Our sense of smell can also communicate meaning and an olfactory richness. The smells of freshly baked bread will notify us that a bakery is nearby. Aural richness, appealing to our sense of hearing, can be achieved in, and confined to, small spaces, too, further adding to the variety of a place. The sense of touch is stimulated through the richness of surface texture. A range of tactile experiences contributes added meaning to a place.

Vision, however, is the dominant sense in terms of providing information. Visual richness is dependent upon the presence of contrasts. Contrasts can be effectively achieved by differences in color or tone on a two-dimensional surface, or by three-dimensional variations of the surface itself. Light will sharpen the contrasts in a three-dimensional surface, whereas color or tone will enhance flat surfaces. Visual richness, however, depends primarily on the number of visual elements present in each surface, and the relationships between them.

Personalization

Users should be allowed to personalize their environment. Personalization allows folks to achieve an environment that expresses some of their own tastes and values. It also adds to the explicitness of each use. Personalization should be limited to landscape amenities, signs, awnings, and window treatments.

Signage Qualities

The difference between the districts of the 101 Corridor Specific Plan and a typical highway commercial zone is pace. Traffic in highway commercial zones reaches speeds of 45 to 50 miles per hour. In contrast, speeds in the 101 Corridor will be 25 to 35 miles per hour. A highway commercial zone does not promote pedestrian areas, whereas the 101 Corridor does.

The pace of the observer is a major factor in the design of signs. Traditionally, businesses vying for the attention of the fast-paced motorist have opted for a larger, more flamboyant sign to capture interest.

On the other hand, the slower-paced, pedestrian-oriented business district requires a legible but less pronounced sign program. The pleasant, uncluttered business district attracts more people; customers linger, and return more often. The main attraction is the total experience of the “street.”

Area-wide General Concepts

Signs should be so designed as to interact with the pedestrian, but should also be legible to vehicular passers-by.

Legibility

The object of the sign is to clearly communicate a message. Signs should not provide more information than is necessary to identify the business. Sign lettering should be easily readable, but creative.

Quantity

Usually one sign is sufficient to identify a business. Cluttering a facade with signs is confusing to the viewer. However, sometimes more than one sign is appropriate. In the case of pedestrian-oriented areas, one main sign may identify the business through its orientation towards the street, while a less prominent “blade” or projecting sign may be oriented perpendicular to the course of pedestrian traffic.

Appropriateness

Each individual sign’s design and placement should consider its relationship to the entire facade. The purpose and personality of the sign should be in concert with the building. Placement of signs is important and they should not cover architectural elements. Find the logical place for the sign. The size of the sign should relate to the pedestrian and the scale of the facade.

Variety and Richness

A diversity of styles make an area unique. They add visual richness and personality to the whole experience of the street. There is enormous range of acceptable approaches. Plaque signs, awning signs, blade signs, panel signs, individual letter signs, neon signs, painted wall signs, tiled signs, and window signs are all appropriate. Materials such as wood, stained glass, painted glass, sandblasted glass, metal, ceramic tile, and neon are all acceptable in modest applications. Plastic signs are discouraged.