

# VAN NUYS CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT COMMUNITY DESIGN OVERLAY DISTRICT (CDO)

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## *Design Guidelines & Standards*

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# Van Nuys Central Business District Community Design Overlay District



# VAN NUYS CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT COMMUNITY DESIGN OVERLAY DISTRICT (CDO)

## Section 1.

### INTRODUCTION

The Van Nuys Central Business District (CBD) Community Design Overlay District (CDO) establishes Design Guidelines and Standards for projects dealing with commercial properties. It aims to guide development within a framework that is sensitive to the history of the Van Nuys CBD, while encouraging design creativity. In short, it will provide guidance and direction for the area which will enhance the districts' appearance. Future designs should evoke the area's sense of history, place, and identity as the hub of the San Fernando Valley.

The Van Nuys CBD CDO is complemented by the Van Nuys CBD Streetscape Plan which incorporates streetscape design guidelines and standards that provide direction in the design of Projects in the public right-of-way, such as street furniture, street lighting, and landscape. Together these two plans will encourage the integration of public and private space and will help to direct development towards a more cohesive design concept by providing the community with tools for ongoing participation in the revitalization and development of the Van Nuys Central Business District.

#### A. History

From its initial beginning as a one square mile town-site in 1911, covering an area from Vanowen to Oxnard Street and Kester to Hazeltine Streets, Van Nuys has had a central place in the history and development of the San Fernando Valley. As far back as 1915, Van Nuys claimed the title as the administrative center of the San Fernando Valley. Shortly after Van Nuys gained its first, but not last, city hall built in 1916.

Between the 1920s and 1940s, development along the strip flourished into a fully matured Boulevard. The position of Van Nuys, as the commercial and administrative center for the Valley, was cemented with the construction of new Van Nuys City Hall in 1933, a new post office in 1936, and a fire station dedicated in 1939.

The 1950s marked the retail turning point for the Van Nuys District. Many retail services closed and the commercial center became increasingly administrative oriented. A new Administrative Center was approved in 1957, replicating downtown's City Hall, which has continued to be the centerpiece of Van Nuys Civic Center.

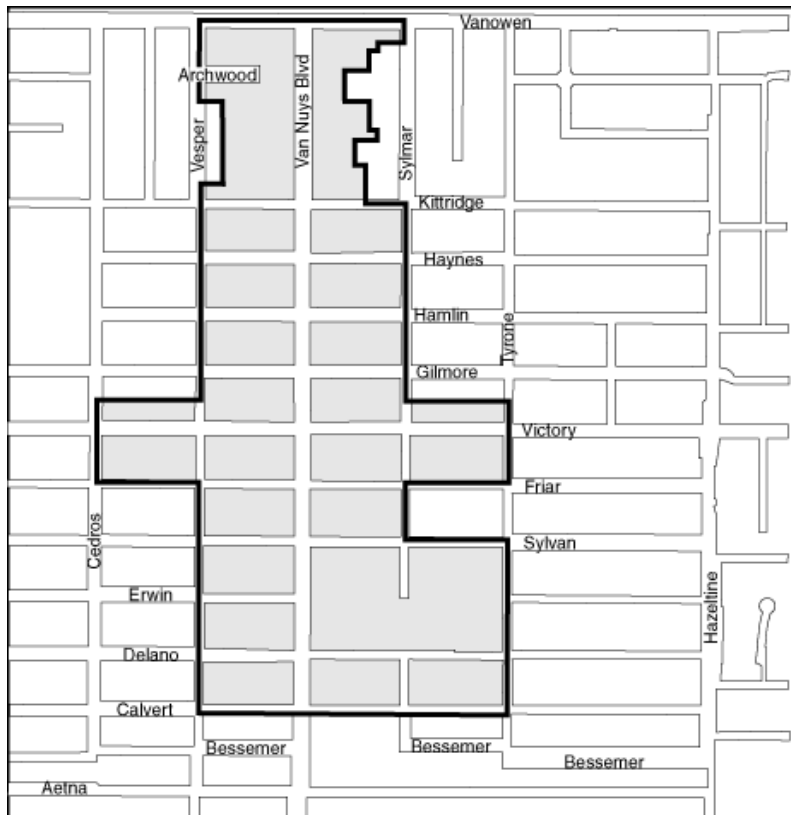
The Van Nuys commercial corridor features historically compact, small scaled, mixed-use buildings fronting Van Nuys Boulevard, based on a combination 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s architecture. Early building designs reflect modern

Classicism/Romanesque, Monterey style, Mission revival, and other desert/southwest influences. Later buildings were more streamline modern art deco.

Today the CBD consists mainly of small retail and professional establishments. The mixture of tightly knit buildings concentrated within this district continues to reflect the low scale, pedestrian-oriented character of the original corridor. Architecturally lost, however, are the original and unique designs of these structures. Lack of design sensitivity with new developments have eroded much of the corridor's common characteristics, resulting in an incongruent mix of styles and building sizes. Buildings that remained unscathed display a degree of remarkable beauty and craftsmanship that is rare by today's design standards.

**B. Boundaries and Organization**

The Van Nuys CBD CDO is bounded by Vanowen Street to the north, Sylmar and Tyrone Avenues to the east, Calvert Street to the south, and Cedros and Vesper Avenues to the west as seen on the map in Figure 1.



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All commercial projects within the boundaries of the Van Nuys CBD CDO must comply with the following Design Guidelines and Standards. The requirements have the overall goal of achieving a high quality environment that will attract customers, new businesses, and provide for the comfort, convenience, and safety of shoppers.

Design guidelines are policy directives and are implemented through the application of design standards. Often, more than one standard per guideline is provided. Below is an example of a design guideline and implementing standard.

**Example:**

<b>Security Devices</b>	
<b>Guideline:</b>	Emphasize the design of entrances in order to create an inviting storefront.
<b>Standard:</b>	Main entry doors shall be recessed a minimum of six (6) inches and a maximum of thirty-six (36) inches from the front lot line.

**Section 2.**

**GOALS AND PRINCIPLES**

**A. Goals**

In light of the history of Van Nuys and its architectural precedents, the purpose of the Design Guidelines and Standards is not to superimpose a specific design style, but to build upon existing design elements. The following are the CDO's design goals:

- To promote storefront design that invites commercial interest and reinforces pedestrian scale.
- To prevent the development of structures or uses which are not of acceptable exterior design or appearance.
- To promote a unique architectural character and environmental setting for the district.

## B. Design Principles

These Design Guidelines and Standards compiled with the Van Nuys CBD Streetscape Plan are intended to connect new and existing projects into a cohesive design scheme that promotes an attractive and inviting commercial corridor, and offers an enlivening pedestrian experience. To achieve this goal, the CDO adheres to the following principles:

- **Consistency:** The downtown corridor of the Van Nuys CBD consists of pedestrian scaled storefronts that dominate Van Nuys and Victory Boulevards by having: (1) no side yards and being built to the front lot line, (2) parking lots located at the rear of stores with ingress and egress from side streets, and (3) building entrances oriented to the pedestrian right-of-way. By reinforcing the character of the existing development through proper site planning and building composition, harmony between new and existing buildings can be achieved. Consistency can also be achieved through selection of colors, exterior surface materials, landscaping, and signage.
- **Safety:** Public safety is critical to the success of commercial districts. Lighting can add emphasis to entrances and create vitality and security within the public right-of-way and parking areas. Exterior lighting for signs, entrances, landscape, and parking areas can promote evening activity in the Van Nuys CBD, contributing to lowering crime. Other means of safety include proper landscape, such as wrought iron fencing or thorny plants, and internal security devices. Taking proper measures to design each building can aid in deterring criminal activity and create an environment where pedestrian and auto traffic can safely coexist.
- **Simplicity:** Building facades, signs, and the streetscape are all the integral parts of the visual environment and are critical for an attractive and effective downtown. Each communicates information about businesses and the quality of the retail corridor. Well designed signs can contribute to the character of a building's facade and enliven the overall streetscape. Facades and streetscape can enhance pedestrian environment, which promotes usage of the district. To insure this, project designs in the Van Nuys CBD CDO area should be kept clean and simple.

## Section 3.

### ADMINISTRATION

All Projects in the Van Nuys CBD Community Design Overlay District will be reviewed for compliance with the design guidelines and standards before being issued a building permit. Below is a definition of "Project," an outline of procedures for submitting an application for review, required submittal materials, and procedures to appeal determinations.

#### A. Project Definition

The definition of Project is provided in Chapter 1, Section 13.08 of the Los Angeles Municipal Code (LAMC).

*"The CDO applies to the erection, construction, addition to, or exterior structural alteration of any building or structure, including, but not limited to, pole signs and/or monument signs located in a Community Design Overlay District. A project does not include construction that consists solely of (1) interior remodeling, interior rehabilitation or repair work; (2) alterations of, including structural repairs, or additions to, any existing building or structure in which the aggregate value of the work, in any one 24-month period, is less than 50 percent of the building or structure's replacement value before the alterations or additions, as determined by the Department of Building and Safety, unless the alterations or additions are to any building facade facing a public street; or (3) a residential building on a parcel or lot which is developed entirely as a residential use and consists of four or fewer dwelling units, unless expressly provided for in a Community Design Overlay District established pursuant to this section."*

#### B. Procedures for Private Projects

Upon application for a building permit, the Department of Building and Safety refers applications to the City Planning Department to determine if the proposal is a Project according to the above definition. For simple cases, such as signs, applicants may receive an immediate sign-off. For most cases, however, staff review may be necessary. Below is a list of necessary application materials for review of a CDO Project. A determination by the Planning Department is required 20 days from the date all required materials are submitted and the Project is deemed complete.

#### C. Project Submittal Materials

1. Master Land Use Application provided by City Planning Public Counter
2. Environmental Clearance

3. Architectural Plans
  - Vicinity Map with the location of applicant's property.
  - Site/Plot Plan at a minimum 1/8" = 1 foot scale.
  - Elevations (N, S, E, W) of existing and proposed structures, with all dimensions included.
  - For applicable projects, architectural elevation and detail sheets, including, but not limited to articulation of main facade elements, windows, doors, balconies, exterior building materials, exterior wall surface treatments, decorative elements, color, roof treatments, pole signs, and monument signs.
  - Landscape Plan, if necessary.
  - Color renderings of the Project if deemed necessary by planning staff.
  
4. Photographs (minimum size: 4x6 inches)
  - Subject Site.
  - Subject Project.
  - Panoramic view of all structures within a distance of 200' or either side of the subject site.
  - Panoramic view of existing structures on the opposite side of the street within 300 feet of the subject site.

**D. Appeals**

Once the determination letter is issued by the Planning Department, no determination approving or disapproving a CDO Project application is final until the 15-day appeal period has expired pursuant to Code Section 13.08 E 5 of the LAMC. Appeals may be filed by applicants or interested parties. Appeals shall be in writing and shall set forth specifically where the petitioner believes the findings and decision to be in error. Appeals shall be filed on Form CP-7769.



## Section 4.

### DEFINITIONS

The following words and phrases, whenever used in this Plan, shall be construed as defined in this section. Words and phrases not defined herein shall be construed as defined in Sections 12.03 and 13.07 C of the LAMC.

- A. **Articulation.** Clear and distinct separation between design elements.
- B. **Awning.** A cloth covering extending over or in front of a door or window as a shelter or decorative element.
- C. **Bollard.** A vertical freestanding short post used as a barrier to vehicles.
- D. **Canopy.** A roof like cover extending over the storefront bay area of a Facade, which provides shelter or decoration.
- E. **Facade.** The front of a building or any of its sides facing a public way or space.
- F. **Multi-tenant Retail Use.** Any location where new or secondhand goods are offered or displayed for sale or exchange by two to nine independent vendors within a completely enclosed building.  
  
An independent vendor is any individual, partnership, corporation, business association, lessee, sub-lessee or other person or entity, doing business on the subject property for any period of time; where a fee is charged for the privilege of offering or displaying new or secondhand good for sale or exchange; or a fee is charged to prospective buyers for admission to the area where new or secondhand goods are offered or displayed for sale or exchange.
- G. **Pawnshop.** A place of business where a licensed person lends money on the security of personal property deposited within the shop and where these goods are displayed for resale or exchange.
- H. **Pedestrian Sign.** A sign which is attached to a wall or the underside of an Awning or Canopy with one or two sign faces perpendicular to the face of the building.
- I. **Service Area.** Any location containing open storage, loading docks or non-public entrances, trash receptacles, or other utility uses.

Section 5.

**DESIGN GUIDELINES AND STANDARDS**

The following Design Guidelines and Standards apply to Projects in the Van Nuys CBD.

**A. Site Planning**

**Building Orientation**

**Guideline 1:** Encourage pedestrian access and continuity by orienting structures toward the main commercial street.

**Parking**

**Guideline 2:** Reinforce the continuous linear structure and layout of major secondary streets and highways (e.g. Van Nuys Blvd., Victory Blvd.) by locating parking structures and/or surface lots in the rear portion of the lot to minimize visual disruption and to keep an uninterrupted flow of commercial business activity along the major auto/pedestrian corridor.

**Standard 2:** Parking shall be located at the rear of buildings with ingress and egress from collector and local streets.

**Guideline 3:** Soften, buffer, and conceal views of parking areas from adjacent uses with sufficient planting materials by incorporating planters, planter boxes, trellises, etc. as part of the landscape design.

**Standard 3a:** A minimum seven (7) foot wide landscape buffer shall separate surface parking adjacent to the public right-of-way. Breaks may only be provided for ingress and egress of vehicular traffic and pedestrian access. This buffer shall contain shade trees planted one (1) for every twenty (20) linear feet of parking lot frontage to be planted anywhere with the buffer (i.e. 100 lineal feet equals 5 trees).

**Standard 3b:** A minimum ten foot (10) wide planted landscape buffer is required for all parking structures or garages adjacent to the public right-of-way; this area shall contain trees, shrubs or other various plant species. Structures shall be designed with natural type colors that blend and complement their surrounding landscape.

**Guideline 4:** Enhance the visibility and appearance of parking areas by maintaining existing parking lots in good repair.

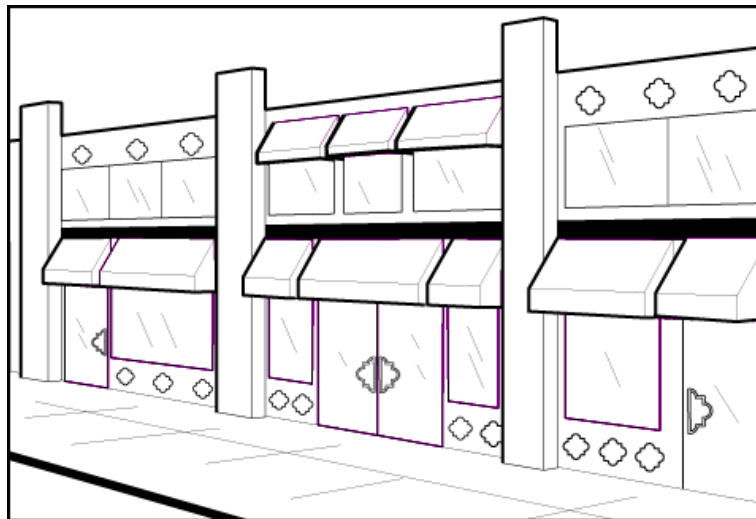
**Standards 4:** All parking areas that require re-stripping, shall first be re-slurry coated.

**B. Building Composition**

**Facade Treatment**

**Guideline 5:** Incorporate Facade design into successive floors, including the area between floors.

**Standard 5:** Building Facades shall be extended and continue beyond the ground floor. Successive floors can be offset by recessed windows, balconies, offset planes, awnings or other architectural details. (See Figure 2)



**FIGURE 2**

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**Guideline 6:** Capitalize on design elements that draw focus to entries and to displays in storefront bays facing Van Nuys and Victory Boulevards. Every effort should be made to make the building Facade treatment elements as architecturally integrated as possible.

**Standard 6:** For any Project, sixty percent (60%) of the first floor building Facade shall be dedicated to windows and doors. Another twenty percent (20%) shall be articulated with wall treatments including two or more of the following: recessed entryways, planters, murals, mosaic tile,

or public art and/or other means of creating visual interest.

### **Windows**

**Guideline 7:** Establish pedestrian scale by opening store fronts for both pedestrians and customers through proper design of window elements.

**Standard 7a:** First and second floor windows shall be recessed a minimum of three (3) inches.

**Standard 7b:** Windows shall be designed to provide transparent viewing for pedestrians and passing traffic; no darkened, heavily tinted, or screened windows are permitted on the first floor.

**Standard 7c:** Windows and other openings shall contribute to forty percent (40%) of each successive floor.

### **Entrances**

**Guideline 8:** Emphasize the design of entrances in order to create an inviting storefront.

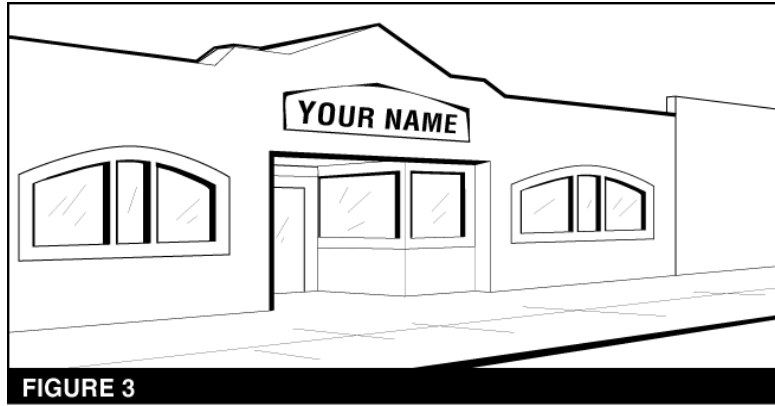
**Standard 8a:** Entrances shall be illuminated.

### **Roof Lines and Forms**

**Guideline 9:** Articulated roof lines and forms add appeal, provide visual interest, and can de-emphasize building mass and scale. Decorative cornice elements and stepped and/or sculptured parapets roofs may extend above the roof line. When designing roof lines the scale and proportion of adjacent buildings should be considered.

**Standard 9a:** Roofs shall be flat and shall have decorative cornice elements and/or parapets that extend above the roof line to screen rooftop mechanical equipment from public view.

**Standard 9b:** To promote visual interest, buildings with frontages greater than twenty-five (25') feet, shall provide Articulated roof lines every fifteen (15') feet with vertical and/or horizontal relief. (See Figure 3)



**C. Lighting**

**Lighting Design**

**Guideline 10:** Design exterior lighting as part of the overall architectural concept; lighting fixtures, standards, and all exposed accessories should be harmonious with the building design. Projecting lighting elements which detract from the appearance of their setting should be avoided.

**Guideline 11:** Illuminate buildings and landscape to indirectly create a strong positive image. Concealing light features within buildings and landscaping can highlight attractive features and avoid intrusion into neighboring properties.

**Parking Lighting**

**Guideline 12:** Encourage illuminated parking areas, for the purpose of safety, without becoming a nuisance to surrounding residents.

**Standard 12a:** Lighting shall be shielded, directed on-site and away from surrounding residential areas.

**Standard 12b:** Light located within parking areas shall be a maximum height of 25 feet.

**Standard 12c:** When Bollards are used they shall be decorative and illuminated to create light along pathways within the parking area. Bollards shall be a maximum height of forty-two (42) inches.

## D. Freestanding Walls

**Guideline 13:** Create space and provide security by enclosing parking areas and sites with decorative walls and fences. Combination wrought iron and masonry walls are encouraged.

**Standard 13a:** Walls shall incorporate surfaces and textures to discourage graffiti where possible. Masonry walls shall be constructed from decorative brick, stone, split face concrete block, or other decorative material. Masonry block walls shall be finished with a masonry cap.

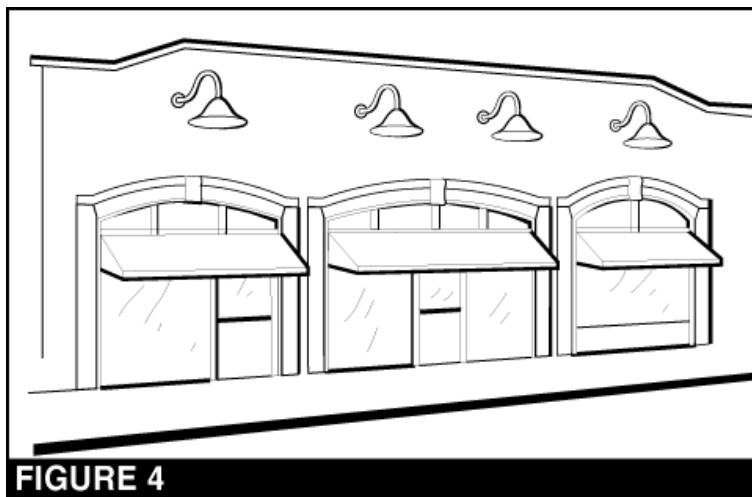
**Standard 13b:** The use of chain link fencing shall be prohibited.

## E. Awnings & Canopies

### Awnings

**Guideline 14:** Respond to the scale, proportion, and rhythm of a building's design through the use of awnings and canopies. They can be an integral part of storefront design and should enhance the style, color, and form of the existing architecture, but should not obstruct views of adjacent businesses.

**Standard 14a:** Awnings shall relate to the size and form of window and door openings. Storefronts greater than twenty-five (25) and divided into the structural bays shall provide one Awning for each bay. (See Figure 4)



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**Standard 14b:** Awnings shall be a maximum of two (2) colors for each Project exclusive of signage.

**Standard 14c:** Canvas Awnings shall be fade resistant and fire retardant.

**Standard 14d:** Glossy, vinyl, plastic, metal and horizontal ribbed awnings shall be prohibited.

**Canopies**

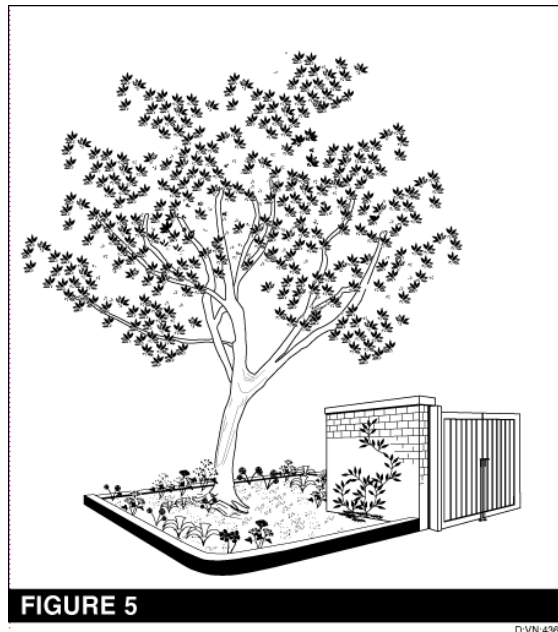
**Guideline 15:** Promote pedestrian use by providing Canopies in substitute of awnings. Canopies can extend into the public right-of-way which produces shade from the sun and also enhances a buildings architecture.

**F. Screening**

**Equipment Screening**

**Guideline 16:** Enhance the visual look of secondary features such as trash and recycling areas, mechanical equipment, and loading areas by screening them from public view.

**Standard 16a:** Trash storage bins and recycling areas shall be located away from the street, behind or to the side of buildings, and shall be fully enclosed with a decorative masonry wall or fence and shall be landscaped. Each individual trash bin shall have a cover. (See Figure 5)



**Standard 16b:** Ground mounted equipment or electrical transformers shall be fully screened on all sides from public view by substantial landscaping and/or a decorative wall.

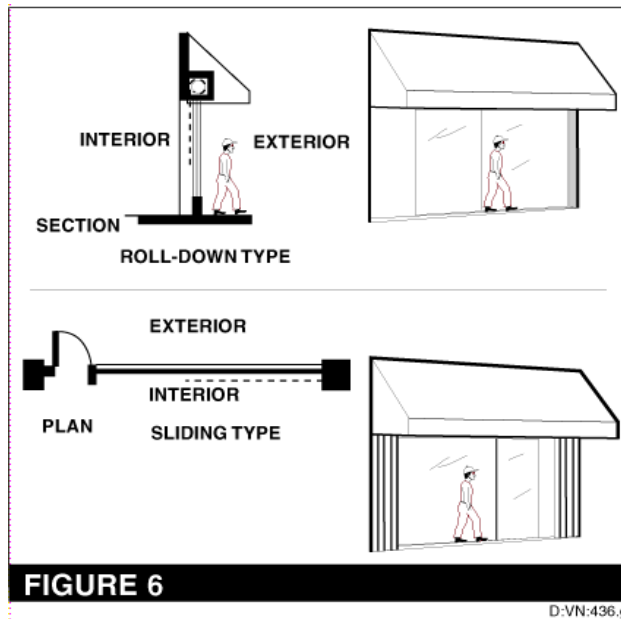
**Standard 16c:** Loading docks shall be screened from Van Nuys and Victory Boulevards by being located at the rear of structures.

### **Security Devices**

**Guideline 17-1:** Enhance the area by minimizing the appearance of internal screening security devices and prohibiting the installation of new exterior devices, such as rolling shutters, grilles, barbed wire, and the like.

**Standard 17-1a:** The use of barbed wire, razor wire, and concertina wire is prohibited.

**Standard 17-1b:** During business hours, interior security grills and similar security devices must be fully retracted. (See Figure 6)



**Standard 17-1c:** The installation of security devices should not change the architectural style of the building.

**Guideline 17-2:** Existing exterior devices should be enhanced or modified to minimize their appearance when feasible.

**Standard 17-2a:** Existing exterior security devices should be painted in a similar color as the



primary building surface of the building or a complimentary accent color.

**Standard 17-2b:** Existing exterior security devices which can provide floor to ceiling visibility into the storefront from passing law enforcement vehicles may be retained. Existing security devices which do not provide the full visibility should be changed to a style which does provide the full visibility.

**Standard 17-2c:** Prior to the issuance of a building permit, any desirable repairs or replacement of damaged devices should be considered and identified by the Planning Department to enhance the appearance of the devices, if feasible.

**Guideline 17-3:** The creation of an existing security device inventory list should be initiated. Based on the inventory list, those devices installed prior to the actual inventory should be grand fathered as permitted and granted the applicable building permits, subject to the CDO guidelines.

#### **Wireless Antennas**

**Guideline 18:** Minimize visibility of wireless communication facilities and reduce the number of freestanding structures.

**Standard 18a:** Building and roof-mounted antennas and other telecommunication equipment shall be painted and textured to integrate into the architecture of the existing structures to which they are attached or shall be effectively screened by the use of parapets or similar architectural elements (false windows, etc.).

**Standard 18b:** Accessory equipment (e.g. power supply boxes) shall be effectively screened through placement underground, internally within the building structure, or on rooftop locations behind architectural elements.

**Standard 18c:** All new facilities shall be designed to accommodate more than one service provider.

### **G. Building Materials**

**Guideline 19:** Create a component of color, variety, and durability through material finishes and color.

The following materials should not be used for finishes:

- imitation special rock work, masonry, wood siding, or any simulated material;
- coarsely finished rough-sawn or rustic materials such as wood shakes, shingles, rough sawn plywood and pecky cedar;
- stucco with an exaggerated texture;
- corrugated fiberglass; and
- plastic laminate.

**Standard 19a:** Complementary materials, particularly at the ground floor level, shall be used to maintain visual interest.

**Standard 19b:** Bare aluminum finishes, unfinished metal panels, metal windows/doors, and the like shall be anodized or painted. All materials employed in construction should be finished and durable.

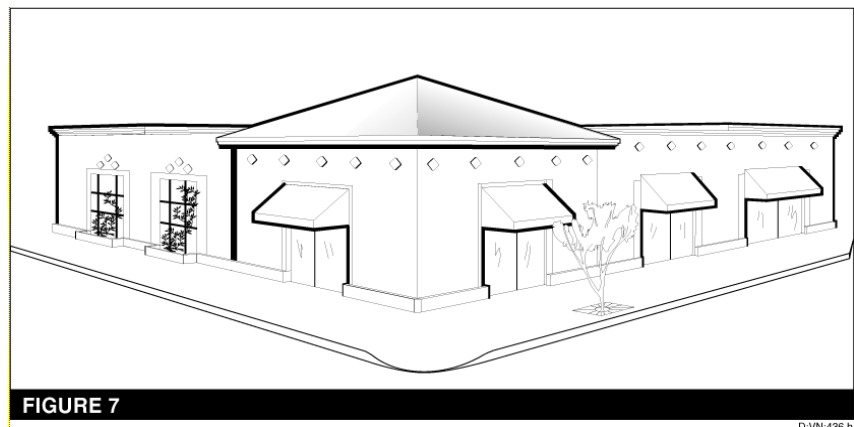
**Standard 19c:** Front Facade design and materials shall continue around corners to the other walls of the building.

## H. Building Colors

### Storefront Colors

**Guideline 20:** Tie building elements together through the use of color.

**Standard 20a:** A maximum of four (4) exterior colors shall be used. (See Figure 7)



**Standard 20b:** Exterior building elements, such as down-spouts, gutters, vents, and other mechanical equipment shall be painted to blend into the background surface

whenever screening of the equipment is not possible.

### **Reflective Colors**

**Guideline 21:** Avoid highly reflective colors, especially those that produce glare.

**Standard 21:** Bright colors including fluorescent and day-glow are not permitted, except when used as accent.

## **I. Signs**

Sign plans shall be submitted with detailed elevations illustrating the location, size, color, number, material, front style, and any other relevant material for all signage located on the Project.

### **Sign Information**

**Guideline 22:** Display only pertinent business information on signage.

**Standard 22:** Wall, Awning, Canopy, projecting, or Pedestrian signs shall consist of business name, address, and/or type of business only. In no instance shall logos or product names (i.e. Pepsi, Nike, Lotto, Levi's, DVD, etc.) be used that are not the name of the actual business.

**Guideline 23:** Avoid overwhelming window displays with signage.

**Standard 23:** Hours of operation, phone number, address, and open/closed signs shall be the only permanent signage permitted within the window area.

### **Sign Proportion**

**Guideline 24:** Signs should reinforce Facade rhythm, scale, and be consistent with the proportion and scale of the storefront.

### **Sign Placement**

**Guideline 25:** Discourage signage which covers the architecture of successive floors.

**Standard 25:** Sign placement shall be directly above the individual storefront and shall be affixed to the wall from which sign calculations were taken.

### **Graphic Composition**

**Guideline 26:** Avoid using too many colors and showing too much sign equipment which can confuse the message of a sign.

**Standard 26a:** All signage on any Project shall have a maximum of four (4) colors.

**Standard 26b:** All sign raceways, crossovers, conduits, conductors, transformers, and other equipment visible to public display shall be suitably finished and maintained.

### **Sign Limitations**

**Guideline 27:** Minimize the time that unnecessary signage is displayed to decrease the visual blight of the commercial district.

**Guideline 28:** Enhance the identity of individual businesses by reducing the number and type of signs and placing them appropriately.

## **J. Public Art**

**Guideline 29:** Use public art to visually link the multiple structures of the Administrative Center together. Public art should contribute to a minimum 15 percent of the total open space area of any project. (suggestions: fountain/water elements, statues, decorative tiles, etc.)

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