CHAPTER 7
DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR LANDSCAPE FEATURES

7.1 INTRODUCTION

Landscapes are the most visible and one of the most important elements to be considered in preserving the historic quality and appearance of a community. In Grass Valley’s Historic 1872 Townsite there are a variety of different types of landscapes, such as public open spaces and streetscapes, residential landscapes, commercial - Retail streetscapes, and natural landscapes.

While each of these areas has a wide variety of specific landscape forms and treatments, there are a number of treatments that share common elements that can be employed to preserve the historic character of the 1872 Historic Townsite and additional techniques for revitalizing and improving those areas that have lost substantial historic form and quality.

These guidelines are not intended to be prescriptive in the kinds of materials or details employed for the landscaping of individual properties. Rather, they are meant to provide familiarity with many of the considerations made for preservation planning and management of historic landscapes, whether municipal, commercial, or private. These guidelines have been constructed from a survey of over 1,000 properties in Grass Valley. They can be used to preserve and enhance the continuity and character on which historic Grass Valley depends for much of its identity. Later in this chapter the emphasis shifts to defining best practices for different types of landscape design and maintenance.
programs. New construction and plantings will be required for renewal of the landscape. There are design restrictions and requirements that must be factored into design and maintenance practices.

Grass Valley already has guidelines that specify construction details and allowable plant materials. There are also standards that apply to the historic downtown commercial area of Grass Valley.

The importance of streetscapes and landscaping to a community lies in maintaining continuity of period and style within the various districts. Grass Valley has some excellent clusters of historic houses, storefronts, and stand-alone commercial or industrial structures which share many common elements, evidenced by street trees, sidewalks, curbs, retaining walls, driveways, and street furniture. While less dependent on individual tree or plant variety, the consistent use and location of front yard or street side trees is an important character defining feature of Grass Valley landscapes in residential areas. In other neighborhoods, the continuous ribbon of front lawns, most often with no trees, provides the same level of continuity.

Grass Valley's landscape evolved over a period of 150 years. In contrast to today, people in the 19th and 20th century often had a shared understanding of landscape
that evolved from personal experience and popular gardening and landscaping literature of the period. This knowledge extended to the understanding of the kinds of trees and shrubs that grew in the area, and the availability of certain species from local or regional nurseries.

Period landscapes, such as formal Victorian gardens, require constant care and effort, while more naturalistic Craftsman-era (circa 1910-1930) cottage landscapes require less maintenance to retain their original design and overall effect. The home landscape in some ways mimics natural landscapes, which are usually based on the creation of shade in order to thrive. Once the overstory trees provide shade other layers of vegetation can survive beneath. It is important to think in terms of this layered system when managing the overstory on a property.

Grass Valley, like many other Gold Rush Era communities designed its streetscapes to assist in the free passage of stage coaches, wagons and horses, while its downtown sidewalks, built originally of wood, provided easy pedestrian access to a variety of businesses.

Today, despite modern roads and highways, one can walk to the historic downtown from other parts of the city in ten minutes or less. Walking also reduces the need for automobiles and therefore reduces air pollution and our dependence on oil.

Street trees often provide a visual sense of neighborhood continuity, while the landscapes of individual houses that line the streets express something unique about those who lived there. Walking these streets is at once fascinating due to the variety of houses and landscapes, but also because of the potential for interacting with others in the community.
The scale of the landscape and the balance of architecture to green areas is in itself significant. In many ways, the historic balance of shade trees, garden spaces and lawns in relationship to buildings, creates a sustainable environment.

Part of the challenge in maintaining Grass Valley’s landscape is, of course, that today the common vision and limited range of options of the past two centuries are a thing of the past. We find ourselves with a wide choice of residential landscaping strategies, such as low-water xeriscaping, zero run-off gardens, creative handling of storm water to improve water quality, the use of recycled materials, the use of recycled water, and the general desire for low maintenance. There is also a whole array of contemporary landscape styles and materials available, most of which are uncharacteristic of the past, and often become a detriment to maintaining the historical character.

The most difficult issue in preserving landscapes inside the historic districts of Grass Valley hinges on maintenance. Certainly there are design strategies that, when employed, can help by minimizing individual effort while still achieving acceptable results. Many of these strategies are discussed in the section on historic landscape design.

7.2 BENEFITS OF WELL MAINTAINED LANDSCAPE

The benefits from a well maintained landscape are many, including improved “curb appeal” and retaining neighborhood continuity. Mature street trees, lawn trees, side-yard trees, or features, such as front yard fences or rock walls, should be identified, protected, and maintained. Property owners should make an effort to ensure that their landscape design and maintenance is in keeping with the historical period of the property.

7.3 DESIGN OF HISTORIC LANDSCAPES

In previous centuries, design pattern books, garden periodicals, and local nurseries influenced landscape design. In Eugene O. Murmann's *California Gardens of the Arts & Crafts Period*, published in 1914, the author provides sample residential landscape plans for most of the styles represented in the buildings and homes of Grass Valley’s historic areas.
We have listed the important design characteristics and have provided three examples from Mr. Murmann’s book depicted above. The intent here is not to suggest the exact design shown in the plans, but rather to distinguish the range of plans that were popular in a particular period, such as the early 1900s, and the various uses of formality versus informality or naturalness. Similar plans or remnants of layouts akin to those in the pattern book exist throughout the community, though many are hidden under layers of newer gardening.
In addition to preserving style and continuity of design, another difficulty with maintaining the period characteristics of landscapes is inherent in the nature of plant materials themselves. Plants constantly change over time, growing and maturing, dying and being replaced. While buildings change frequently, and often all at once during restoration or redevelopment, this is less true with plant material that mature slowly over time. The figure to the left represents a typical evolution of a historic residential landscape from the construction of the home to full maturity.

7.4 TOPOGRAPHY, GRADING AND DRAINAGE

The topography of Grass Valley contributes significantly to the character of its neighborhoods and commercial areas. Site development may require grade changes, such as cutting new driveways into relatively steep slopes or excavating for foundations. While basic engineering concerns are major issues in these cases, the visual impacts of these grading changes can be significant.

Recommendations:

(1) To the greatest extent possible, cutting-and-filling of sloping areas should be avoided, but, where it must occur, the visual impacts should be minimized.

(2) It is also crucial that the alteration of existing water run-off patterns be minimized to the fullest extent possible. Minimize cut-and-fill excavation that would alter the natural topography of the hillside. Use earth berms, rock forms, or stone retaining walls to minimize visual impacts of cuts. Hedges and fences may also be appropriate.
in some locations. Simple rock walls that use native stone may be considered. Exposed gabions, large, continuous surfaces of smooth, raw concrete and related structures are inappropriate.

### 7.5 SITE FEATURES

Site features vary from property to property, but generally include plant materials; fences, walls, and gates; service areas, where equipment or materials are stored; accessory structures, such as sheds; retaining walls; site lighting; and parking areas, garages, and driveways.

#### 7.5.1 Plant Materials

Historically, the landscape and plant materials of Grass Valley included a relatively narrow range of species until the late 19th century, when many new varieties of plants and trees were cultivated and made available commercially to the public. Grass Valley's relatively mild climate was conducive to growing a wide range of species, including fruit trees, such as apples, plums and peaches.

Plant materials should be used to create continuity among buildings, especially in front yards and along the edge of streets. Plants should be adapted to the climate of Grass Valley, while also being compatible with the historic context. Consideration also should be given to the future care and maintenance requirements of these materials.

*Appropriate use of groundcover to dress the planting bed between the sidewalk and street.*
Choices of plant material and design may be reevaluated in light of current standards and conditions (e.g., a cluster of smaller new trees may be used to establish a massing similar to one large original tree). Planters or planting boxes may be appropriate to dress alcoves or the skirts of commercial buildings. Historically, planters would have generally been made of cast iron.
7.5.2 Fences, Walls and Gates

When used historically, fences were simple wood picket or metal. These were relatively low in height and had a transparent character, allowing views into yards and providing interest to pedestrians. A few historic fences survive and should be preserved.

Typical historic fence types include: wood picket, wrought iron, cast iron and twisted wire. An historic wood fence should be protected against the weather with a painted finish of similar color to that used historically.

A fence that defines a front yard is usually low to the ground and transparent in nature. A fence should not exceed four feet in height. Solid, stockade fences do not allow views into front yards and are inappropriate.
Recommendations:

(1) New fences should be compatible with the historic setting.

(2) Iron, wire, and wood fences are recommended in period styles.

(3) Preserve an original fence. Replace only those portions that are deteriorated. If a new fence is necessary, it should be similar in character both in scale and detail to those seen historically.

(4) A new wood fence should be painted with a color similar to that used historically.

(5) Chain link, unfaced concrete block, plastic, fiberglass, plywood, and mesh construction fences are discourage.

7.5.3 Service Areas

Service areas include places for loading, as well as storage for trash, recycling containers, snow, firewood and site maintenance equipment. Many of these require
access year-round and should therefore be carefully planned as an integral part of a site. At the same time, the visual impacts of service areas should be minimized. When laying out a site, adequate provision should be made for service areas. They should not simply be located in “leftover” side yards.

Service areas should not be visible from major pedestrian ways and should be located at the rear of a property, when feasible. Trash areas, including large waste containers or dumpsters, should also be screened from view, using a fence, hedge or enclosure. For a larger storage area, consider using a shed to enclose it.

Recommendations:

(1) Service areas should be placed in the rear or side yards of properties so they are not visible from public spaces.

(2) Service areas should be screened with appropriate plant materials, fencing, or other visual screens that are consistent with the historic character of the neighborhood.

7.5.4 Accessory Structures

Accessory structures are a part of the design traditions of downtown Grass Valley. They include garages, carriage houses, barns and sheds. Because accessory structures help interpret how an entire lot was used historically, their preservation is strongly encouraged, particularly if an existing accessory structure has historic significance.
Recommendations:

(1) When repairing and preserving an historic accessory building, respect its character-defining features such as its primary facade and roof materials, roof form, windows, doors and architectural details, and avoid moving it from its original location.

(2) If an existing accessory structure is beyond repair, then replacing it with a structure having a similar function is encouraged. Although an exact reconstruction of the accessory structure is not necessary, the replacement should be compatible with the overall character of the historic structure, while accommodating new uses.

(3) The preservation of an existing accessory structure is preferred to construction of a new one. A new accessory structure should be subordinate, in terms of mass, size and height, to the primary structure on a site, and should be similar in character to those seen traditionally. Accessory structures should be unobtrusive and not compete visually with the primary structure. It should be located to the rear of a lot, although, if necessary locating an accessory structure to the side of a primary structure, but set back substantially, may also be considered. While the roofline does not have to match the primary structure, it should not vary significantly.

(4) Simple rectangular forms, with hip, gable or shed roofs, are recommended.

(5) Maintain the traditional range of building materials seen on historic accessory structures. Appropriate siding materials for secondary buildings include painted or stained wood siding, wood planks, vertical board and batten siding or corrugated metal. These materials should be utilitarian in appearance. The use of muted, natural colors and finishes is encouraged.

(6) Maintain the simple detailing found on historic accessory structures by avoiding ornate detailing, unless the original structure had such character defining features.

(7) Accessory structures should not mimic primary structures.

### 7.5.5 Site Retaining Walls

The existing historic retaining walls of Grass Valley form one of its strongest elements of landscape character.
Recommendations:

(1) Whenever possible, preserving an existing retaining wall is preferable to new construction. Only those portions that are deteriorated beyond repair should be replaced. Any replacement materials should match the original in color, texture, size and finish. Do not introduce mortar into dry-stack retaining walls.
(2) The historic height, form and detailing of a retaining wall should be maintained. The current development code allows for a maximum 6' tall wall. If additional height is needed a design exception issued by the City will be required. If additional privacy screening is necessary, add plant materials or a fence. Increasing the height of a wall to create a privacy screen is inappropriate.

(3) If a new retaining wall is necessary or appropriate, its perceived scale and mass should be minimized and should reflect the scale of traditional development. The width and height of a wall should be limited to the minimum necessary. A wall that is less than four feet tall is encouraged. Where the overall height must be greater than four feet, when feasible, use a series of terraces with short walls to maintain the traditional sense of a hillside. Also consider varying the setback of individual walls to minimize the perceived overall width of a long wall and consider varying the masonry pattern to provide variety in large walls.

(4) For a new retaining wall, use natural stone or fieldstone similar to those seen historically. Stone retaining walls are frequently used in areas where steep slopes occur. In some areas, it may be appropriate or necessary to use pour-in-place concrete for a retaining wall, as this was used in the past. However, the use of conventional unfinished concrete block is inappropriate. Concrete block, with stone veneer or special texturing or color may be considered, where it can be demonstrated that the result will be in character with the area. Reduce water pressure on a retaining wall by improving drainage behind it and by providing drains in the wall to allow moisture to pass through it.

7.5.6 Site Lighting

Exterior lighting should be a subordinate element, so that the stars in the night sky are visible. Traditionally, exterior lighting was supplied by gas and later electricity, and was simple in character. Colors were generally black or dark forest green. Lamp posts were equally spaced along the primary commercial streets, such as Mill and Main Street. Made of tubular iron or metal, the simple lantern was applied to the top of the post.

In recessed store entries, lights were either hung by a tube supplied with gas or a chain that supported a simple chandelier that was lit by kerosene and later electricity.
A simple light post and lantern graces the front of Foothill Mercantile along Mill Street.

Recommendations:

1. Exterior building lights should be functional and be in harmony with surrounding buildings and should not attract unnecessary attention to any one building. External light fixtures should be simple in design and compatible with and complementary to the style of the building. Light fixtures should be constructed with traditional materials, such as baked enamel, porcelain, oxidized copper and cast iron. Light poles should be steel, anodized aluminum or wood.

2. Lights on individual building should be secondary and should not detract from the primary lighting. This will help to prevent lighting chaos and energy waste, which should be avoided. To further minimize the visual impacts of site and architectural lighting, indirect lighting should be used whenever possible so that the light source is hidden from direct view.

3. Lighting that is associated with service areas and parking lots should also be shielded. Unshielded, high intensity light sources and those that direct light upward are inappropriate.
7.5.7 Residential Parking, Garages, and Driveways

Before the automobile, many of Grass Valley's residential homes included carriage houses along the side or in the rear of the parcel. The garage was introduced along with the automobile and came into common use after 1920. Remnants of the use of carriages and the early days of the automobile abound in historic Grass Valley. Many homes still have a two-strip driveway leading to a small, detached garage located at the rear of the property.

Recommendations:

(1) The visual impacts of parking, including driveways, garages and garage doors, should be minimized. On-site parking should be subordinate to other uses and the front yards should not appear to be a parking area.

(2) Avoid parking in the front yard. Traditionally, front yards were not used as paved parking lots. Instead, front yards were open and provided views to the facades of buildings and open space of the surrounding property. Side or rear parking is recommended.

(3) A garage should not dominate the view of the property from the street. It should be subordinate to the primary structure on the site. When possible, a detached garage, located to the rear of the building and accessed from the rear of the site rather than the street, is preferred in order to minimize the impact of a garage on the street scene. Setting a garage back substantially from the primary building front may also be considered. This will help reduce the perceived mass of the overall development. When a garage must be attached, the percentage of
building front allocated to it should be minimized. If the garage is attached, it should be detailed as part of the primary building. The material and detailing of a detached garage should be utilitarian and should be compatible with existing historic accessory structures.

(4) Garage doors should be designed to minimize the apparent width of the opening. Use materials on the door that are similar to that of wall surface of the primary structure or one that reflects the style of the building. The door will then blend in with the rest the structure. Wood clad garage doors are preferred.

(7) If a new driveway is necessary, use appropriate paving materials, such as concrete, gravel or chip and seal, so that the visual impact of the driveway on a streetscape will be minimized. In keeping with the existing historic fabric of Grass Valley and to minimize runoff, consider providing only ribbon strips of paving. To further minimize visual impacts, consider sharing a single drive and curb cut where multiple driveways are needed. Plain asphalt is discouraged. Use materials that are pervious and that will pass the rainwater into the soil where it can provide moisture for vegetation. Impervious paving also prevents runoff into the street, adjacent properties, and, ultimately, the nearby creek.

7.6 PUBLIC AND COMMERCIAL PARKING

Public parking lots only became a part of Grass Valley physical landscape after World War II. Curb parking existed in Grass Valley since the 1920s and the primary commercial streets in the historic downtown are often congested during much of the week. Off-street parking is available along adjacent side streets that abut residential neighborhoods.
Recommendations:

(1) The visual impacts of features associated with storage of automobiles, including driveways, garages and parking lots should be minimized.

(2) Care should also be taken to provide pedestrian circulation that is separate from, and does not conflict with, vehicular circulation.

(3) Parking and circulation areas should be screened from view from public streets by low walls, berms, plant materials, and/or changes in grade. Parking placed along the side or rear of a property, or between two buildings is preferred.

(4) Minimize the visual impact that large areas of parking create by minimizing the surface area of paving. Large expanses of plain asphalt or concrete are inappropriate. Consider using materials that blend with the natural colors and textures of the local landscape. Options to consider are: modular pavers, gravel and grasscrete. When large parking lots are necessary, increase landscaping to screen the lot, and consider dividing the lot into smaller components.

(5) On a sloped site, terrace parking areas to follow the existing topography. Orient parking areas to fit within the topography and take into account the shade cast by existing and newly planted trees. Ensure that trees are placed so that their shade will protect the parked cars and pedestrian ways. Placing a driving lane parallel to a site contour will reduce the need for cut-and-fill. Use landscaping in terraced areas between parking lots.

(6) When a parking lot must abut a public sidewalk, a planter or landscape strip planted with a combination of trees, shrubs and groundcovers should be used to provide a visual buffer.
7.7  ACCESSIBILITY

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) mandates that places of public accommodation be accessible to all users. The guidelines introduced in this document should not prevent or inhibit compliance with accessibility laws. All new construction should comply completely with the ADA. Owners of historic properties also should comply, to the fullest extent, possible, while also preserving the integrity of the character-defining features of a building. Special provisions for historic buildings exist in Federal and State accessibility laws that allow for some alternative design solutions.

Recommendations:

(1) Design ADA compliance features in a manner that does not visually conflict with the historic property, or damage important historic architectural elements.

(2) Consult with the State Historic Preservation Office for more information regarding compliance or alternative design solutions for accessibility in an historic building or structure.

7.8  UTILITIES AND SERVICE EQUIPMENT

Utilities that serve properties may include telephone and electrical lines, electrical transformers, ventilation systems, gas meters, propane tanks, air conditioners and telecommunication systems. Adequate space should be planned in a project from the outset and they should be designed such that their visual impacts are minimized.

Recommendations:

(1) Minimize the visual impacts of utilities and service equipment by locating them at the rear of a property where feasible and screening them.

(2) Minimize the visual impacts of exhaust systems by integrating them into the building design. Any utility device or piece of service equipment should have a matte or non-reflective finish and be integrated with the building colors.

(3) Screen rooftop appurtenances, such as mechanical equipment and antennas, from view and also ensure that they do not alter the roofline.
(4) When solar devices are utilized, they should not block views or significantly detract from their setting.

7.9 LANDSCAPE MAINTENANCE AND SUSTAINABILITY

In addition to preserving style and continuity of design, another difficulty with maintaining the period qualities of landscapes is inherent in the nature of plant materials themselves. Plants constantly change over time: growing and maturing, dying and being replaced. Buildings change less frequently, either incrementally or all at once during restoration or redevelopment. The change to a building is intentional and long lasting. Not true with plant material. In preparing landscape guidelines, care must also be given to long-term care, maintenance, and how to provide for replacement of material as it becomes necessary over time.

Recommendations:

(1) In using any plant material, the overall character and level of maintenance should be in keeping with that of the existing neighborhood and period of architecture. Where historic plantings survive, they should be preserved to the extent feasible.

(2) Historic landscape features should be preserved and existing on-site vegetation should be retained whenever possible. New landscaping should respect and incorporate existing plantings and other landscape elements, both on-site and with respect to the surrounding neighborhood.
(3) Existing landscaping should be incorporated into the final landscape. Move shrubs and small trees rather than replacing them.

(4) In new, restored or renovated landscape designs, use plant materials that are compatible with the historic context of Grass Valley.

(5) Landscaping schemes that are simple and subdued in character are encouraged, except when attached to a high-styled Victorian or other elaborately designed building. Then it should match and support the architecture and continuity of the neighborhood.

(6) Existing historic landscape features, such as fences, sidewalks and trees, should be preserved and protected during construction.

(7) Use plant materials in quantities and sizes that will have a meaningful impact in the early years of a project. However, care should be taken to avoid placing too many plants or vegetation that will ultimately grow too large.

(8) Hardy plant materials should be used to accent buildings, pedestrian areas, and parking facilities and to provide shade and to establish the structure of the landscape design. Placement of plant materials should be used to establish a balanced relationship to buildings on and off site, leaving them neither too hidden nor too exposed.

(9) Use plant materials that are adapted to the Grass Valley climate. Landscape designs should reflect a variety of deciduous and evergreen trees, shrubs, perennials and ground covers. Plant materials should be selected for their structure, texture, color, ultimate growth characteristics, and sense of unity with the surrounding vegetation, both natural and planted. A balanced ratio of evergreen to deciduous plants should be planted. Plant varieties that will survive the cold and snow loads should be used.

(10) Shrubs, annuals and native plants in planter boxes (both fixed and free-standing) that are framed in natural wood or stone are encouraged. Maintain a landscaped edge along the edge of a site. This will help to define the road edge and provide a separation between pedestrian and vehicular areas and neighboring properties.
(11) When plant materials are used for screening they should be designed to function year-round. When installed, these materials should be of a sufficient size and number to accomplish a screening effect year-round. For example, shrubs may be selected with a branch structure that will filter views during winter. A mix of evergreens with deciduous plants may also be used for a year-round effect. Planting screens should include trees and shrubs, as well as ground covers and flowering perennials. Ground covers and flowering perennials alone will not provide sufficient screening.

7.10 GRASS VALLEY LANDSCAPE PLANTS

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<th>Common Name</th>
<th>Botanical Name</th>
<th>Invasive Risk*</th>
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<tr>
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Spiraea
Weigela
Blackberry

Groundcovers
Creeping St. John's Wort
Periwinkle
Weigela

Perennials
California Poppy

* Invasive Rating per the California Invasive Plant Inventory published by the California Invasive Plant Council, February 2006. Additionally, California Horticultural Invasives Prevention (Cal-HIP) lists the following common Central Valley Foothills garden plants that are known to be highly invasive. Their planting is discouraged.

Common Name          Botanical Name
Arundo, Giant Reed    Arundo Donax
Blue Gum Eucalyptus   Eucalyptus globulus
Scotch Broom          Cytisus scoparius
Striated Broom        Cytisus striatus
French Broom          Benista monspessulana
Bridal Veil Broom     Retama monosperma
Spanish Broom         Spartium junceum
Chinese Tallow Tree   Sapium sebiferum
Pampas Grass          Cortaderia jubata and C. selloana