

Guidelines for Development of Private Property in the Downtown between 21 and 305 San Anselmo Avenue

These Guidelines were written to assist property owners when designing their projects for review by the Town and are based on the results of the Community Visioning Workshops held in 2007.

Overall Character:

- Any future development should be consistent with the “village character of San Anselmo” in terms of the height of buildings, eclectic design style, pedestrian friendliness, etc.
- It is desirable to make the area more inviting to visit by making the experience more pleasant for pedestrians and creating areas where sitting and gathering are encouraged.
- The historic style and character of the area should be maintained; no monolithic structures, the utilities such as streetscape and landscaping are integrated with upper downtown San Anselmo Avenue, there is a welcome portal to the town, front façades are broken up allowing space for alcoves and courtyards, the developed town median has sitting areas, the post office remains, vibrant small-scale businesses attract people to the area, and night time use of the Avenue is encouraged.

Height of Buildings:

- In general, two-story height limits should prevail so that views of the hills are maintained for autos and pedestrians.
- Narrow “view corridors” between taller buildings are generally not desirable, but some taller buildings (3-story, 30' height maximum) may be allowed in limited instances.
- Three-story buildings could be desirable if there is a specific public benefit provided, such as a landmark building that creates a sense of entry to the community or area, affordable housing is provided, a public gathering space is provided, etc.
- Staggered building heights and step-backs of upper stories might be ways to minimize impacts, and impacts on adjacent residential areas should be minimized.
- Flood improvements should be made and buildings designed such that on-site parking is above ground, and finished floors are above the base flood elevation or designed to be flood proof.
- Long range views of Bald Hill, Mount Tamalpais and the Seminary should be protected.

Pedestrian Improvements and Traffic:

- Sidewalks, cross-walks and pedestrian and bicycle routes are safe and inviting. Parking and traffic flow is improved.

Land Use and Commercial Development:

- The area compliments the existing downtown in terms of commercial development, but may be appropriate for more housing or uses that support the downtown or provides housing for people who work in San Anselmo.

Greenness and Sustainability:

- New development in the area is built along green building principles and support sustainable development principles. This includes the types of materials used as well as “smart growth” types of development that reduce use of cars.

Visioning Consistency with General Plan and Zoning Ordinance

General Plan: These properties have a land use designation of General Commercial. The Town's commercial enterprises are normally classified as "residential support" commercial, e.g., food and drug stores, restaurants, auto service shops and stations, personal service stores such as barber and beauty shops, dry cleaners and laundries, furniture and antique stores, and professional offices.

The primary land use goal of the General Plan is the conservation of the small town character of the community and its close relationship with the natural beauty of its setting. Additional goals include maintaining the economic viability of the Town's downtown, new developments shall be integrated harmoniously into San Anselmo's commercial areas; and there shall be accommodation of the housing needs of a socially and economically diverse population.

The General Plan does not address “stories”, but limits building heights to 30’.

Zoning Ordinance: These properties have a zoning designation of General Commercial (C-3). The Land Use Table lists those uses permitted and conditionally permitted (use permit) in the C-3 zoning district, the Development Standards table lists the development standards, and the Design Review findings lists those applicable findings for development projects.

The Zoning Ordinance limits buildings to two stories and 30' in height. The Zoning Ordinance provides for an overlay zoning district of a Specific Plan Development (SPD) with a designated use and property design. SPD provides a flexible approach to the development of a lot(s), while at the same time, provides for logical and orderly development, and promotes the health, safety, and general welfare of the Town. Planned Development contemplates flexibility and variety in the location of buildings and the diversity of lot sizes and building designs. It is intended to accommodate various types of development such as professional, residential, and commercial uses. Although this overlay district could permit more than two stories, it could not exceed the current General Plan height limit of 30’.

Design Review is required for exterior alterations and new construction. A Use Permit is required for demolition of 50 percent or more of a structure and for change of occupancy in a building with floor area of 1,200 square feet or more. Sign Review is required for new signage.

Property owners are encouraged to review the General Plan, Zoning Ordinance, and Downtown Visioning Workshop documents that are available at the Library and at the Planning and Building Department.

attachment: Area Map