Guadalupe River Park & Gardens

Urban Design Guidelines
For Development Adjacent to the Guadalupe River
# Design Guidelines

## Guadalupe River Park & Gardens

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The Guadalupe River Park & Gardens Design Guidelines were adopted by the San Jose Redevelopment Agency Board and San Jose City Council on October 7, 2003
1. Introduction

The Guadalupe River Park holds a special place within downtown San Jose. A natural demarcation meandering along the edge of downtown, it establishes a vital pedestrian corridor, allocates scarce open space, and visually connects the urban core with the Arena and Diridon districts. It is a natural asset with the potential for creating a richer urban environment. It offers serene nature within steps of the urban pulse of a major American city.

The Guadalupe River Park fuses a natural habitat resource with flood control protection. As the city’s edge is extended to meet the river, design guidelines help to ensure that new development embraces this valuable natural resource. The River Park Urban Design Guidelines (guidelines) that comprise this document offer a coordinated preview of what will physically come to be. At the same time, the design guidelines provide a framework to better ensure that the extraordinary levels of time and money invested in this project will be optimized.

These guidelines acknowledge the city’s Riparian Corridor Policy Study, but do not attempt to adhere to its more stringent standards. Rather, these guidelines target the downtown area and recognize the area as one of more intensive use, in greater proximity to humans and other causes of disturbance. As such, this policy replaces the policies of the Riparian Corridor Policy Study for the downtown river corridor between Interstate 280 and Coleman Avenue. These guidelines are an attempt at a best-available compromise to preserve what remains of the river’s pristine nature, while allowing the river area to become the site of increased development and human settlement. Outside of the downtown area, the Riparian Corridor Policy Study is the applicable reference document.
The Guadalupe River Park Urban Design Guidelines have their origins in the urban design goals and principles and established in the Greater San Jose Downtown 2000 Strategy Plan, the master document for development activities in the downtown. Additionally, the design guidelines build on previous master plan efforts for the Guadalupe River Park.

This vision for the Guadalupe River Park emphasizes a livable, walkable, urban community that is oriented to the river and the surrounding streets. The Guadalupe River Park Urban Design Guidelines serve as a framework for carrying out the vision for how development should look, function, and feel.

Projects Subject to these Guidelines:

1. Any development application pursuant to Title 20 or 23 of the Municipal Code will be subject to these Guidelines.

2. Subsequent to the approval of these guidelines, if a development permit expires, any new proposed development permit will be subject to these guidelines.

Projects Exempt from these Guidelines:

1. Any building or structure built pursuant to an approved development permit.

2. Any development project having an approved development permit prior to the adoption of these guidelines by the City Council including, but not limited to, a Site Development Permit, Conditional Use Permit, PD Zoning or PD Permit.

The Urban Design Guidelines have been organized in six parts:

- **Section I.** Introduction (p. 1)
- **Section II.** Design Goals and Principles (p. 3)
- **Section III.** Parkwide Design Guidelines (p. 6)
- **Section IV.** Specific Site Area Guidelines (p. 31)
- **Section V.** Definition of Terms (p. 41)
- **Section VI.** Developer Checklist (attachment)
II. Design Goals and Principles

Future development along the Guadalupe River Park will in many ways shape and form the visual and physical character of the park and the downtown for many generations. It is important that the goals and principles for new development be established as an overall guide for the process before development guidelines are set.

The following development goals and design themes support the vision of the park and have been developed in coordination with citizens groups and prior master plans for the Guadalupe River Park:

- Acknowledging the river as an important natural resource deserving enjoyment of future generations, development should promote the ecology of the river.

- Development should create new open space opportunities within the park and thereby expand the river.

- Outlying blocks in the downtown should be developed so as to meet the river and thereby extend the city and the urban life of downtown to and across the river.

A more in-depth overview for the goals and principles for the guidelines follows.
Design Goals and Principles (cont.)

A. Promote the Ecology

New development along the river should preserve and restore the ecology and sustainability of the Guadalupe River System.

This goal recognizes the regional and local ecological significance of the river and its importance as a defining feature for the City. This goal consists of the following principles:

• Protect and restore riparian habitat

• Respect flood control efforts along the river

• Preserve and enhance the ecological function of the river

• Promote ideas of stewardship and sustainability

B. Expand the River

New development should be designed to integrate the Guadalupe River into the city

This goal aims to highlight the added value the river brings to downtown and the assets it offers for residents, workers, and visitors to the area. This goal is based on the following principles:

• Reinforce visual connections to the river

• Expand public connections and access into the city

• Preserve, enhance, and connect the existing open space system

• Create adjacent open spaces and development that enhance the natural qualities of the river
Design Goals and Principles (cont.)

C. Extend the City

*New development along the river should bring the character of downtown San Jose to the edge of the Guadalupe River Park. Ideally this will be done such that new development will promote and enhance the pedestrian experience, the vehicular experience, and the experience of the river from adjacent development.*

*The river’s presence should extend beyond the hard edges of development so as to blur the distinction between the rivershed and the built environment. This can be realized by requiring nearby development to integrate its landscape and design theme with that of the River Park.*

This goal aims to extend the river’s presence so that it becomes inseparable from the identity and activity of the downtown. This goal is based on the following principles:

- Extend the fabric of the city to the park
- Achieve an urban, downtown character in new development
- Enhance the quality of the pedestrian experience
- Preserve and enhance public connections to the river
- Reinforce east-west pedestrian connections across the river
The Guadalupe River Park provides a great variety of open spaces.

III. Parkwide Design Guidelines

The purpose of the Parkwide Design Guidelines is to provide design standards for new development within and near the River Park. These guidelines establish design expectations and serve to provide a continuous built theme while allowing for development that is phased and constructed by numerous investors.

These guidelines build upon six major urban design categories that provide a framework for the future design of Guadalupe River Park and vicinity.

The six major urban design categories of the guidelines are:

A. Open Space
B. Site Organization
C. Views: Into, Out of or Through Development
D. Building Massing and Orientation
E. Building Articulation
F. Parking
Providing a variety of open spaces and connections is essential to promoting the vitality of any new development. A network of varied open spaces such as mid-block walkways (paseos), plazas, and landscaped courtyards, and roof gardens provide pedestrian connections. Frequent vistas that bring the river into view provide for a feeling of contact with the water. Similarly, these open spaces create views into the city from the river, allowing a person to feel a connection to the downtown life of San Jose.

Open Space Organization

Open space within each development shall be primarily oriented toward the river through publicly-accessible landscaped courtyards, paseos, plazas, and arcades.

1.) Each development shall have at least 25 percent of its lot coverage devoted to publicly-accessible open space that is open to the sky, inclusive of setback areas required for the riverwalk, mid-block walkways, and project-specific open spaces.

2.) For development on parcels not immediately adjacent to the river, the configuration of open spaces and walkways should reinforce visual and/or pedestrian connections to the river.
Paseos provide public access, reduce the scale of larger development parcels, and reinforce pedestrian connections in the city and to the river.

1.) Paseo requirements are triggered when development sites exceed 175 linear feet of river frontage. A minimum of one pedestrian paseo open to the sky is required.

1a.) Within a single development, there should be one paseo for every 400 linear feet of river frontage.

2.) Development sites not directly fronting the river trigger paseo requirements when street frontage exceeds 300 linear feet. A minimum of one pedestrian paseo accessing the river and open to the sky is required.

2a.) An additional paseo is required for any frontage that exceeds the 300 linear foot threshold by more than 100 feet (i.e., a single development that exceeds 400 feet of frontage, but is less than 800 linear feet, shall require two paseos). An additional paseo is required for each additional 400 linear feet of street frontage.

3.) Paseo public access through parcels, leading to and from the river, shall be publicly accessible during daylight hours.

Individual parcels having contiguous frontage along the Guadalupe River shall be eligible for consideration of a single development approval. Opportunities for exceptional design should not be constrained by rigid application of the guidelines, provided the proposed design meets or exceeds the spirit and intent of the guidelines.

For such projects, the applicant may request a review based on the following performance criteria:

The determination of project approval shall be made by the decision-making body and shall be based on a comparison of the project as it would be designed to conform to the specifications of the guidelines. Guideline criteria shall be applied where no specific standards are established by the guidelines.
Paseos (cont.)
Paseos should be strategically located at regular intervals to create pleasant and inviting passageways that provide utility and connect areas of pedestrian activity to the river. Paseos should serve the dual purpose of accommodating the natural flow of pedestrian traffic and as destinations, offering such amenities as outdoor dining and sitting areas supported by vistas, tables for board and card games, sun and shade, landscape, sculpture and fountains. Private courtyards and plazas may be incorporated into the design as gracious spaces.

Setbacks may vary in depth in order to create distinctive spaces that add variety to the pedestrian experience, provided that pedestrian movement or natural habitat are not compromised. Spaces created shall not be mere residual considerations that result from the placement of the building. The variations in setback depth shall be used to create spaces that are intentional and function as private plazas and courtyards and enclaves for sitting and landscaping. Setbacks must conform to the minimum requirements specified for each sub-area identified in these guidelines.

New development and improvements should incorporate, wherever possible, existing city and regional pedestrian and bike trail systems, providing convenient access via mid-block walkways.
Courtyards and Plazas

Private courtyards facing the river are encouraged so as to forge a hospitable setting for pedestrians on the riverwalk. These areas should be designed so as to provide valuable visual access from public spaces and to accentuate the river’s presence. Landscaping should be compatible with the natural vegetation and bucolic river environment.

Private open space should enhance public open space areas via design features such as open space vistas, enhanced walkways and pedestrian linkages, and the incorporation of similar landscape elements. (See Section C Site Organization for specific details.)

Water features such as fountains and small watercourses are encouraged to provide visual interest.

Boundaries between private areas and the riverwalk shall be constructed of attractive material such as decorative metal or vegetation and shall be of a height not exceeding 43 inches in accordance with existing River Park trail system railing standards. Chain link fencing is not permitted.
Parkwide Design Guidelines (cont.)

**Overlooks/Roof Terraces**

Development should incorporate overlooks and landscaped roof terraces as a means to create visual pedestrian connections and enhance the overall spatial and visual character of the river. (See Building Massing and Orientation section (page 22) for more detail.)

Roofs should be designed as a “fifth facade” for the city. Because the Guadalupe River Park is within the flight path and visible from the air, care should be taken to design a roofscape that adds not only to the river, but to the entire city. Roofs with landscape elements and architectural character should be considered in roofscape design.

**Public Art**

Public art related to the river can contribute greatly to the overall public quality of the riverwalk. If a proposed project along the riverwalk is covered by the city’s Public Art Program, art elements should be incorporated into the project in a manner that highlights the river and its proximity.

**Landscape Elements**

To best expand the perceptual reach of the Guadalupe River Park, preserve view corridors to and from the park, and reinforce the overall design quality of its landscape features, native riparian features and mature trees are recommended for new development.

1.) Create areas of distinct character through use of landscaping and paving materials that relate to the overall character of the Guadalupe River Park and are suitable for the climate, geology, and topography of the site.
Parkwide Design Guidelines (cont.)

Landscape Elements (cont.)
2.) Continuous canopy trees should be used to provide shade and weather protection for pedestrians. Shade trees should be planted on an average of 25 feet on center, but clustering is allowed and encouraged.

3.) The size of box trees planted within development sites and parking areas shall be a minimum of a 36 inch box, with sufficient soil depth provided to ensure adequate growth and health for planting within open space on roof decks.

4.) Adequate room for tree growth should be provided so that tree roots will not damage structures or walks and for maintenance (minimum 2 times the root ball of the tree).

5.) The use of vegetated trellises is encouraged on walls and rooftops to expand the natural character of the river into development.

6.) Street trees are required along all streets and shall conform to the standards and types set forth in the San Jose Downtown Streetscape Master Plan.

Native Riparian Flora

Native plant species, preferably grown from the Guadalupe watershed, are the only permissible choice of flora from the river’s edge to the top of bank. In the zone from top of bank to building frontage, non-invasive, non-native plant species which preserve the river's ecological balance and increase its visual quality may be allowable subject to review.

Setbacks

To ensure the continuity of the Guadalupe River Park and riverwalk and to protect riparian habitat values, all development that abuts the river should include an open space setback of a minimum of 25 feet measured from the top of bank along its length to the edge of a building, unless otherwise noted in the Area Guidelines of this document.

The remaining setback area shall be planted in native riparian flora.

The design of this setback area should reflect the design character and palette of the Guadalupe River Park riverwalk system.

Pathways and Walkways

A public walk of a minimum 12-foot width along the development frontage shall be provided. The 12 foot width shall count toward the setback requirement and shall allow for a continuous river trail. The exception to the pathway width requirement shall be any instance in which site conditions prohibit placement along the river.

All open spaces and pathways associated with the development should be connected either visually or physically to the River Park trail system. If the trail cannot run adjacent to the river, a parallel trail shall be provided.

All trails and sidewalks shall conform to existing riverwalk construction details and ADA standards.

A typical section of pathway along the river
Pedestrian Bridges

To better promote east-west connections, pedestrian bridges across the river are encouraged, particularly in the locations indicated below.

Bridges should be of a graceful and transparent material so as to minimize the visual impact of these structures and to allow views of the river and surrounding environment.

Bridge illumination shall cast lighting solely on pedestrian areas, not on river or surrounding vegetation.

Potential new pedestrian bridge locations
Site Furnishings

The design and placement of site furnishings are essential elements that will determine the public character and walkability of new development. Site furnishings should contribute to an attractive and pleasant walking environment that minimizes pedestrian obstructions and promotes pedestrian safety.

Site furnishing should promote a sense of continuity and consistency with the adjacent River Park site. At the same time, individual developments are encouraged to select furniture that results in variety and interest along the river.

Site furnishings within the riverwalk area should conform to the standards outlined in the River Park Plan.

Furnishings should be clustered so as to define outdoor use areas and avoid visual clutter. Furnishings should be sited to ensure a minimum 5-foot-wide unobstructed through-path on public sidewalks and a minimum 12-foot-wide unobstructed through-path on the riverwalk at all times.

Sidewalk cafes, planters, benches, public art, and other pedestrian-oriented details installed by individual property owners are encouraged within the public right-of-way according to the guidelines outlined in the San Jose Downtown Streetscape Master Plan.

Site utility boxes, such as transformer vaults, should be placed underground, integrated within the building walls, or integrated into the overall street/site furnishing program. Freestanding utility boxes visible from the riverwalk are not permitted.

All furnishings shall be subject to review by the Redevelopment Agency and the City as part of the design review process.
Parkwide Design Guidelines (cont.)

Signage

Interpretative, informative and directional signage throughout the development parcels should be consistent and designed to complement the character of the Guadalupe River Park. All signage must be consistent with the Downtown Signage Master Plan and the River Park Signage Master Plan.

Development placed along city streets should hold those edges in order to extend the downtown character and promote a consistent sense of urban vitality. Development along the river should extend outward in an inviting fashion in the form of courtyards, paseos, and landscape elements.

Public Safety

All improvements shall ensure public safety in accordance with established regulations of the City of San Jose and other applicable government entities.

B. Site Organization

The site organization of new development is an important component to how well it relates to open space and encourages pedestrian activity. Good site organization is critical to establishing well-defined street edges, strong public access connections between the river and the city, and a clear relationship between semi-public and private open spaces and the river.

The intent of the site organization guidelines is to develop a fine grain, mixed-use downtown that supports and sustains urban life as outlined in the Strategy 2000 Plan.
Parkwide Design Guidelines (cont.)

Block Development

Development within site areas should consist of several buildings clustered to support public and private spaces that relate to the river and the city.

Development should orient open space, such as publicly accessible courtyards and walkways, toward the river; building facades should hold the street edge.

Setback Requirements

Buildings that front existing streets should hold the street edge by orienting facades parallel to the street and river.

Developments should include an open space setback of a minimum 25 feet measured from the top of bank to the building edge. The exception being the more stringent requirements for certain river segments as prescribed in the Specific Site Area Guidelines section of this document (page 31). This setback area should include a public walk that is a minimum width of 12 feet along its length for a continuous river trail, as described on page 12.

Example of how buildings hold the street the edge and maximize usable open space

Do Not: Create buildings that stand within the block and do not create urban edges along the street

Do: Development should hold the street edge while inviting public access to the river
Street and River Frontage

At the ground level, the design and scale of building facades and sidewalks should enhance the pedestrian experience through visual stimulation, activity, comfort, and human scale.

1.) The placement of entrances, storefronts, display windows, double-height spaces, courtyards and paseos along the river and streets all help to enliven and enhance the pedestrian experience and should be a minimum of 75 percent of street and river frontage.

2.) Buildings at the ground level should create a pedestrian scale by minimizing the use of unarticulated blank walls. Blank walls should incorporate architectural and landscape features of interest and utility such as seat walls and vertical trellises. (See section on Building Articulation (page 25) for suggested design character.)

3.) Corner treatments are especially important in establishing an active urban presence for development. Corners should be prominent and marked by key entrances, retail, and/or architectural detailing. Back-of-house functions such as servicing or exit stairs are not permitted at corner locations.

4.) Exhaust vents are not permitted on any ground floor frontage whether facing a street or the river.

Create variety in facades for visual interest and pedestrian scale
Parkwide Design Guidelines (cont.)

River Edge Reinforcement Options

Given that open space should be oriented toward the river, courtyards, walkways, and arcades should articulate the edge of development and the riverwalk.

These open space varieties may include private courtyards that allow people to peer into the river corridor, but are not publicly accessible.

Courtyards may be landscaped, allowing the landscape to expand further and instilling a sense of nature into the development parcel.

Smaller plazas associated with mid-block passages can open up onto the river and provide public gathering spots.

The use of arcades along the river can also help promote interaction between the development and the river’s edge.
Important Intersections

Major streets that cross the river serve as nodes of activity and identify the river as an important zone of transition.

Building edges adjacent to a street and the river have place-making potential, provide transition from the city to the river, and can lend visual cues accentuating the river within the city.

Ancillary Buildings

Small stand-alone ancillary buildings are permitted in the river setback area along key east-west streets in order to hold the street and generate pedestrian interest and activity. Such ancillary buildings may have a footprint of up to 500 square feet. They provide additional opportunities for the siting of cafes, water features, and public art.
Corner Zones at Street Edges

To encourage massing and architectural variety along street edges, buildings should hold the street wall at a corner for a minimum of 60 feet.

Corner development sites adjacent to the river and major streets, such as Santa Clara, San Fernando, and Julian streets, should consider design elements that draw people to the river’s edge and reinforce east-west street connections.

Buildings may have corner setbacks at the river intersection and should consider ancillary structures in these setback areas. All new landscaping for these areas shall conform to the City of San Jose Downtown Streetscape Plan.

Service and Equipment

Site or building equipment or service areas such as loading docks, utility meters, trash areas, and venting shall not be visible from the Guadalupe River Park. They should be located out of sight and placed away from the riverwalk.

No freestanding utility equipment is allowed between the building frontage and the river.

Building venting is not permitted adjacent to the river.

Parking

(See Section F Parking (page 27) for specific guidelines.)
C. Views

Some of the most interesting and character lending aspects of the river are the multiple vistas afforded by its serpentine course. These views help to visually integrate the river and the city and weave them together.

Views from and through new development into the park offer visual connections, thereby expanding the river’s reach into the city. Similarly, skyline vistas created by thoughtful development remind park visitors of their urban setting and the opportunities afforded for adventure.

New vantage points are created by windows, balconies, and terraces oriented toward important points of interest such as the Guadalupe River, the hills that surround the city, and the downtown skyline.

1.) View opportunities from the public way should be identified by the developer for all major site developments before the onset of the project planning.

2.) Placement of private spaces along the river should take advantage of existing views that include landmark or natural features.

3.) Views into private courtyards, passages, entries and other types of open space are encouraged as ways to expand the visual open space character of the river. This can be accomplished through the use of transparent fence materials or landscaping and/or low walls that are 42 inches or less in height.
D. Building Massing and Orientation

The character and visual quality of building massing, orientation, and building base is critical to establishing a comfortable scale at the Guadalupe River and its surrounding neighborhoods. To temper the scale of development and create a pedestrian friendly environment, building massing should be modulated and articulated to stimulate interest and visual variety.

Scale/Building Bulk

The maximum lot coverage at the ground floor is 75 percent (25 percent dedicated to open space or plazas).

Height

It is anticipated that there will be a range of building heights along the river corridor. All developments shall step down to the river so as to best mimic the natural light patterns in the corridor.

Listed below are the general building heights as measured from ground level to the top of parapet within each site.

Site Area 1: 280 feet
Site Area 2: 200 feet
Site Area 3: 150 feet
Site Area 4: 120 feet

These heights are for reference purposes and do not preclude programs with higher building heights provided that they receive US FAA and City approval.

Height Variety

Variety in building heights is encouraged to promote visual interest and modulate the scale of development, especially as buildings relate to the river.

Towers should be expressed as visually significant vertical elements and be integrated into the overall design of the structure. They are encouraged as visual markers at street corners.
Building Base

The building’s base is one of the primary factors in establishing welcoming human scale and environment. The use of raised terraces, connected plazas, and landscaping creates strong transitions between development and the river.

Variety at the ground level for residential buildings can be achieved through the use of design features such as stairs, stoops, porches, bay windows, and rusticated materials and landscaping. (See Section on Building Articulation (page 7) for more detail.)

Variety at the ground level for commercial and retail buildings can be achieved through the use of design features such as stairs, entries, expressed structural elements, arcades, projections, large expanses of non-reflective glazing, and landscaping.

Buildings are encouraged to be set slightly above the riverwalk, so as to promote the use of steps and walls to articulate the edge of the riverwalk, as well as to create informal opportunities to sit along the river. Ramps shall be integrated into the overall design and should be parallel to the riverwalk.
Parkwide Design Guidelines (cont.)

Roofscape

Roofs of buildings should be constructed to be consistent with the architecture of the buildings they cover. Roof design should be of a quality that assumes visibility from the river.

Building roofs should provide a variety of different heights and forms to create visual interest as viewed from the river and the rest of the downtown.

Mechanical equipment should be organized and designed as a component of the roofscape and not appear to be an afterthought.

Upper level terraces on residential or office buildings are encouraged and should be landscaped so as to complement the overall natural character of the river and provide unique overlook opportunities towards the corridor.

Sun and Shadow

To best preserve the fragile ecosystem of the river it is important that any new development not adversely impact the ecology of the river and its natural habitat.

Proposed materials shall be submitted for review by City of San Jose. Sunlight reflected from buildings must not increase the river water temperature. When not covered by the downtown program EIR, each development project may be required to prepare a thermal and/or shade analysis of the impact of the development on the river.
Parkwide Design Guidelines (cont.)

E. Building Articulation

The Guadalupe River possesses a tremendous variety of visual experiences along its course. It is crucial that development likewise utilize a variety of materials, styles, and scales to best avoid a homogeneous or monotonous pattern along the river’s edge.

Building entries and windows create a sense of transparency and physically connect indoor and outdoor activities, making walking a more enjoyable and interesting experience.

A building’s distinguishing qualities such as materials and structure are important aspects of its character and should be considered in its expression.

Visual Interest

To mitigate the scale of development and create a pedestrian-friendly environment, building massing should be modulated and articulated to create interest and visual variety.

Strong horizontal and vertical elements are encouraged to modulate the scale of development and create a visually stimulating streetscape for pedestrians along the river.

Buildings along the river should avoid homogeneous and unrelieved facades.

Buildings at the ground level shall minimize the use of blank walls and incorporate architectural and landscape features of interest and utility such as seat walls and vertical trellises.
Pedestrian Entries

Frequent entries are encouraged to create fine-grained, pedestrian-oriented streets that serve as lively urban places. They serve as important transitions from private spaces to the public realm. Often, building entries that successfully transition between the public and private realm include arcades, large windows and doors, and landscaping.

Use of landscaping at entries can establish pedestrian scale

For larger buildings with shared entries, passage should be through prominent lobby entrances that face the street.

Secondary entries that face the river shall be provided for all new development to provide physical connection, visual interest, orientation, and a sense of invitation to and from the river.

Secondary entries are also encouraged on mid-block pedestrian passages to help activate and provide visual transparency along their length.

Entries for all buildings should be clearly articulated through recessed bays, stoops, or awnings.

Architectural Details/Materials

Buildings along the river should be visually interesting, articulated, and constructed of high quality, durable materials.

All materials for proposed developments shall be reviewed by the City of San Jose for compatibility with the character of the riverwalk.

Extreme bulk and massive appearance of facades should be reduced. These efforts include a variation of planes and wall surfaces, fenestration, height variation, and differences in materials or colors and surface articulations.

Clear, untinted glass should be used at ground level to allow for maximum visual interaction between the walk area along the river and interior spaces.

Non-reflective cladding and windows shall be used so as to minimize solar reflection onto the river.
Parkwide Design Guidelines (cont.)

F. Parking

Parking guidelines govern parking facilities throughout the Guadalupe River Park area. These include integrated, surface, and freestanding structures. It is anticipated that the majority of parking within development sites will be provided above grade. The guidelines are directed at ensuring that parking facilities are well integrated into the overall physical and visual scale and character of the River Park.
Parkwide Design Guidelines (cont.)

Site Organization

The organization of parking within development is critical to sustaining the character of the riverwalk. Parking structures and lots should be internalized within development sites away from the river and separated from the river by development in order to minimize their impact on the river.

1.) The layout and configuration of surface parking should be designed so as to accommodate future development. Land devoted to surface parking lots should be reduced through infill development.

2.) Outside of the River Street Historic District surface lots should not be located adjacent to the riverwalk such that they detract from the visual experience of the river.

3.) Freestanding parking structures without ground floor retail or similar public offerings are not permitted along the riverwalk.

4.) Parking should provide pedestrian through-corridors as links between the city and the river.

5.) Parking exhaust vents are prohibited adjacent to the riverwalk.

Parking Entries

Entries to parking structures shall be carefully considered within any development proposal. Their placement shall be done so as to minimize conflict with pedestrians and not impede on the human character of the riverwalk and the surrounding streets.

Both on-site and street-side entries for vehicles and pedestrians shall receive careful design treatment.

1.) Entries to parking lots and garages shall not be located directly adjacent to the riverwalk. Entrances should either be in the midsection of the development parcels along the perpendicular street or at any location along the parallel street.

2.) Parking garage entrances should not be located on the river road frontage regardless of whether the development abuts the river. Entrances should either be along the perpendicular street or at any location along the parallel street.

Do: Establish parking entrances to underground structures away from the riverwalk

Do Not: Create parking entrances to underground structures adjacent to the riverwalk
Parkwide Design Guidelines (cont.)

Edges

Parking garage windows, ventilation portals and similar openings (which may or may not require security grating) fronting the river shall be a minimum of 6 feet above the riverwalk and shall be screened from public view via attractive, high-quality material. Screening material shall not allow light leakage such that parking area lighting is seen from the riverwalk.

1.) Parking for residential uses should be buffered at grade by either housing units that face the river, by residential entrance lobbies and foyers, common areas, community facilities, or landscaping.

2.) Parking for commercial/office uses should be buffered at grade along the riverwalk with the incorporation of pedestrian uses such as small retail, building entrance lobbies, public amenities (including public restrooms and seating areas), common areas such as cafeterias, lounges, or landscaping with the objective of eliminating blank walls.

3.) If structured parking is placed along the river and cannot be buffered with active uses, the quality of ground level materials is critical to creating an inviting edge for the riverwalk. Appropriate materials include lattice work or similar planted "green walls", stone, and appropriate textured materials incorporated into the façade of the structure that faces the river. Blank façades are not permitted.

Do: Use landscaping and articulated facades to screen parking structures along the river

Public Use and Access

1.) Off-street parking areas should incorporate public sidewalks and mid-block connections to lessen pedestrian-vehicle conflicts and to provide access to dwelling units, workplaces or to streets.

2.) Pathways and stairways linking parking structures to buildings should be visually engaging, well lighted, and secure.

3.) Employee parking areas should be conceived such that a shared arrangement is provided whereby idle worker parking capacity is made available to the public during off-business hours.
Parkwide Design Guidelines (cont.)

Lighting

Appropriate lighting is crucial to ensuring vehicular and personal safety. A lighting program’s first priority is to ensure that dark areas, nooks, and other areas without clear sightlines be sufficiently illuminated.

1.) Light spillage from fixtures shall be contained to avoid conflicts with surrounding uses (especially from the top deck) and to minimize lighting on the river.

2.) Controls shall be implemented to dampen impacts from vehicular headlights in parking garages on surrounding areas.

3.) All pedestrian areas should be well-lighted with attractive light fixtures of a minimum 2-foot candle size.

Landscaping

1.) All parking lots should be planted such that in 10 years 70 percent of the surface lot is shaded.

2.) A minimum of one tree for every fourth stall is required. Parking lot trees shall be a minimum size of 36-inch box and should be planted according to San Jose Redevelopment Agency standards for staking. All other landscape requirements shall conform to the City of San Jose parking lot standards.

3.) Parking structures should utilize landscaping or trellises to improve visual quality and minimize their impact on the pedestrian realm.

4.) Open air parking facilities shall incorporate pervious materials or other design solutions that reduce or eliminate stormwater runoff.
IV. Specific Site Area Guidelines

Note: The following area-specific guidelines are subject to review upon completion of planning studies for the Diridon and North Gateway areas.

The preceding general design guidelines recognize the Guadalupe River as a contiguous natural form within the city. The adjacent urban areas present several conditions that should be addressed to achieve the broader goals envisioned for the river. These Area Guidelines expand on the general design guidelines and should be referenced to ensure a development’s adherence to adopted standards.

Site-specific area guidelines are four parts:

A. Area 1
B. Area 2
C. Area 3
D. Area 4

The four areas of development within the Guadalupe River Park
A. Area 1

Located between Interstate 280 on the south and San Carlos Street on the north, this area functions as an important cultural district on the edge of downtown San Jose. Notable sites are adjacent to the Convention Center and near the Children’s Discovery Museum. There is a well-used transit stop that provides connections to the rest of the downtown area. Well-established pathways and bridges provide easy pedestrian access between both sides of the river. Discovery Meadow offers recreational opportunities and visually complements the river in this area.

Programs and Activities
Programs should include those that leverage the rich cultural opportunities available including the Discovery Meadow, the Children’s Discovery Museum, and the Center for the Performing Arts.

These programs should include multi-family housing, mixed-use office/housing projects, and some office development. Outdoor recreational facilities such as basketball courts, tennis courts, and skateboarding parks should be considered for the site that is under the 280/87-freeway interchange. Such uses shall be subject to applicable setback requirements and are subject to approval on a case-by-case basis. An impacts analysis for noise and lighting may be required prior to permitting and approval of hours of operation.

Connections
Given the size and scale of the blocks in this area, at least one additional mid-block paseo should be located between Woz Way and San Carlos Street as a means of promoting stronger pedestrian connections from Discovery Meadow and the river to Almaden Boulevard and the rest of downtown.
Specific Site Area Guidelines (cont.)

Setback Requirements
From Interstate 280 to Woz Way setback requirements are a minimum 50 feet of open space from the top of bank. From Woz Way to San Carlos Street the setback requirement is 25 feet of open space from the top of bank. Any setback area in the river corridor spanning I-280 north to San Carlos Street shall include a public walk that is a minimum width of 12 feet along its length for a continuous river trail, unless site conditions prohibit placement along the river.

**NOTE** -- A future development project has been approved for the site located on Almaden Street between San Carlos Street and Woz Way. This distinctly narrow property requires specific guidelines that modify the 25-foot-wide riverwalk setback requirement. Should a new project be proposed for this site, it should be reviewed within the context of these guidelines.

![Diagram of riverwalk setback](image1)

*Required riverwalk setback for development along the river edge between Woz Way and San Carlos Street*

![Diagram of riverwalk setback](image2)

*Required riverwalk setback for development along the river edge south of Woz Way*
Specific Site Area Guidelines (cont.)

B. Area 2

Located between San Carlos Street on the south and Santa Clara Street on the north, this area is a strategic site within downtown. Here the Guadalupe River Park links the Diridon area, the Arena, and the rest of downtown. It crosses under two of the city's major streets, San Fernando Street and Santa Clara Street, conveniently linking the park to the city.

The development sites offer opportunities for new mid-block pedestrian linkages between the Los Gatos Creek Trail and the Guadalupe River Trail. A new transit stop along San Fernando Street is under study. Expanded transit service to this area should be encouraged. Design that incorporates and accommodates transit should be a requirement of any new development. These sites could host a range of programs given their strategic nature and their proximity to existing open space, housing, offices and the future Diridon multi-modal station.

Open space within these blocks should be primarily oriented toward the creek and river in keeping with the parkwide design guidelines.

Programs and Activities

Santa Clara Street

The Greater San Jose Downtown Strategy 2000 Plan states that Santa Clara Street is the designated "Main Street" and provides a strong and recognizable connection to the downtown area. New office and retail programs that relate directly to the street should be considered. The development of dining and entertainment attractions that both complement the nighttime activity of the Arena, and increase activity along the riverwalk itself should be considered.
Specific Site Area Guidelines (cont.)

San Fernando Street
The Greater San Jose Downtown Strategy 2000 Plan states that San Fernando Street is the Civic Boulevard of San Jose which links public uses from the Diridon Station to the University and south Civic Center Plaza area. Multi- and mixed-use office and residential programs can best take advantage of major transit stops, bus stations, and a proposed BART station that will also bolster pedestrian activity along San Fernando Street.

The San Jose Downtown Strategy 2000 Plan also states that San Fernando is a designated "green street" and that any landscape elements fronting this street should comply with the City of San Jose street tree program guidelines. San Fernando can also provide unique landscape opportunities as a means of heralding the river to the city. New streetscape improvements shall be coordinated with the Downtown Streetscape Plan.

The Water Company Buildings
The historic Water Company buildings along the western edge of the river provide a strong visual marker for both the city and river in this area. Development studies should explore the possibility of a new frontage road along the western edge of these buildings.

The Freeway Site
Develop the area under the freeway to accommodate a range of recreational activities such as skateboarding, rollerblading and basketball.

Connections
The sites between the Guadalupe River and the Los Gatos Creek provide opportunities for development. The addition of new mid-block pedestrian paseos between the Guadalupe River and the Los Gatos Creek is encouraged to promote stronger east-west public access to and from the river, to the Diridon Station and Arena area, and to the remainder of downtown. These east-west connections would be further strengthened by new pedestrian bridges over Los Gatos Creek and the Guadalupe River.

Street Edges
Buildings with consistent street frontages on both Santa Clara and San Fernando Streets are also important to reinforce the urban, pedestrian character of these east-west connection streets. The street frontage on Santa Clara will play a vital role in establishing an edge for the Arena Green.

Open Space Character
Given its critical location as a link between Los Gatos Creek and the Guadalupe, open spaces within the development in this area will play an important role in complementing the existing park systems. All components from mid-block paseos and riverwalk setbacks to public plazas and terraces should be designed to reinforce and build upon the proximity to the Guadalupe and Los Gatos, encouraging public connections and expanding the scope of the park system.

New development on the east side of the river should be east of the current alignment of Route 87. No new buildings shall be sited in the right-of-way of Route 87.
Specific Site Area Guidelines (cont.)

Setback Requirements
New development that abuts the river between Santa Clara and San Fernando Streets shall include a minimum 50-foot open space setback measured from the top of bank along its length. This setback shall include a minimum 12-foot-wide public walk along its length, affording a continuous river trail.

The exception to this rule shall be the San Jose Water Building river frontage as these historic buildings abut the river. The trail in this area shall be placed to the west of the buildings.

The nearby freeway on the east side of the river makes the scale and character of the river setback in this area crucial to establishing the continuity of the river park and providing connections between the Arena Green and the riverwalk to the south.

New development on the east side of the river shall be east of the current alignment of Route 87. No new buildings shall be sited in the right-of-way of Route 87.

Required riverwalk setback for development along the river edge between Santa Clara and San Fernando Streets
C. Area 3

Area 3, between Santa Clara Street on the south and Union Pacific Railroad tracks on the north, is adjacent to Autumn Street. This area has the potential to become a major connection to the northwest portion of the city and provide vital access to the Arena and the new development northwest of downtown.

This area also provides view corridors from the river that allow generous vistas to the hills beyond. A large corporate office park sits on the east side of the river and could be conveniently linked with the park via bridge. Development should not only respond to the river, but should also be appropriate in scale and massing to Autumn Street.

Setback Requirements

Required setbacks from Santa Clara Street to the Union Pacific Railroad track shall be 100 feet from the top of bank except between Julian Street and St. John St which requires a setback of 50 feet from the top of bank. The entire length of Area 3 requires a minimum 12-foot-wide public walk within the required setback.

Programs and Activities

Programs along Autumn Street should include office with ground floor retail and housing. Given the proximity to the Arena, nighttime programs such as restaurants, sports bars, and cafés should also be encouraged.

Autumn Street

The Greater San Jose Downtown Strategy 2000 plan states that Autumn Street will become an important street that connects the northern portion of the city, creating a new access to the Arena and the rest of the downtown area. The Guadalupe River Park Master Plan and the City’s General Plan specify the future alignment for the street.
Specific Site Area Guidelines (cont.)

**Connections**
Mid-block pedestrian paseos and alleys between Autumn Street and development to the west should be incorporated into new development. Retaining the existing railroad easement for a pedestrian bridge should be explored.

**Street Frontage**
New development within this area should create a strong connection to the street. Should the new Autumn Street be built, buildings fronting the street should create a strong edge for this new riverfront boulevard. Building services and parking entrances should not be placed along this boulevard frontage.

Should this riverfront boulevard not be constructed, development should be sufficiently set back from the river to facilitate both the required PG&E setback and an easement for the potential future relocation of Autumn Street. The river frontage should have a consistent frontage with open spaces oriented to the river park.

**Open Space Character**
Should Autumn Street be relocated, any open spaces and paseos that come with new development will not be adjacent to the river. This will allow for more flexibility in the design. These spaces should complement the river park. At the same time, they should be considered urban open spaces within their own right.

Should Autumn Street not be relocated, any open spaces and paseos will play an important role in complementing the existing park system. All components from mid-block paseos and riverwalk setbacks to public plazas and terraces should be designed to reinforce the continuity of the river park thereby encouraging public connections and expanding the scope of the park system.

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*Mid-block paseos can create visual connections to the river along a relocated Autumn Street*

*Proposed Autumn Street realignment*
D. Area 4

Area 4 is bound on the north by Coleman Avenue and Taylor Street, on the south and west by the Union Pacific Railroad, and on the east by State Route 87. The area is in proximity to the Guadalupe Gardens and the San Jose International Airport. Its parcel sizes provide unique opportunities for potential mixed- and multi-use development.

Site Organization
New development should hold street edges and respond to the street grid as identified within the Greater San Jose Downtown 2000 Strategy Plan. Development should include a larger public open space amenity that relates directly to the river and promotes the sequence of larger public open spaces that already exist along the southern portion of the park.

Programs and Activities
Uses should include multi- and mixed-use office and/or retail that take advantage of the site's proximity to the Guadalupe River Park.
Specific Site Area Guidelines (cont.)

Connections
Incorporate grade crossings at the existing railroad crossing to preserve the continuous nature of the walk.

Parking
Surface parking lots are not permitted adjacent to or visible from the Guadalupe River Park.

Setback Requirements
Development abutting the river from the Union Pacific Railroad to Coleman Avenue shall provide for a minimum 100-foot open space setback measured from the top of bank along its length. This setback area shall include a public walk of a minimum width 12 feet along its length providing for a continuous river trail.
V. Definition of Terms

**Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA):**
The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Title III of the ADA, which covers public accommodations and commercial facilities, promulgated the Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG), which are the general design guidance and criteria that must be applied during the design, construction, and alteration of buildings and facilities.

**Articulation:**
Variation in the facade massing, setback, or design features of a building, such as vertical recesses, changes in wall plane, changes in the apparent height, changes in materials and colors, changes in facade recesses and projections or cornice treatments, changes in the shape and location of garage and residential entries, or changes in window forms and patterns.

**Easement:**
The right of a person, government agency, or public utility company to use public or private land owned by another for a specific purpose. A grant of one or more of the property rights by the owner to, or for the use by, entirely.

**Facade:**
The face of a building, especially the principal face that will face the river or major streets.

**Frontage:**
The front part of a piece of property. Also used to refer to the land between a building and the street or the river.

**Height:**
Building height is the vertical distance between finished grade and the top of a building. Building top is defined as the highest point of a building or structure.

**Lamp:**
The portion of a light fixture that contains the light source.

**Mid-block connection:**
A pedestrian-only connection through a development between two streets.

**Mixed-use:**
Containing or zoned for both commercial and residential facilities or development. The mixture of different use types usually occurs within the envelope of one building as opposed to several individual buildings.

**Multi-use:**
The mixture of different land use types on single parcel but within different buildings.

**Parcel:**
A plot of land, usually a division of a larger area. Has legal and code implications.

**Paseo:**
A pedestrian-only mid-block connection between public streets.

**Public Right-of-Way:**
The public strip of land over which facilities such as streets, sidewalks, highways, railroads, or power lines are built. The dimensions typically run from the private property lines on either side of the right-of-way.
Riverwalk Trail:
A two-way mixed-use path 12 feet in width. One foot of the path contains a bard. The remaining 11 feet consists of asphalt.

Setback:
The required minimum horizontal distance between the building and the top of the bank of the river line.

Sidewalk:
An unobstructed path preferencing pedestrians. Ten feet is the minimum effective width needed to accommodate both pedestrians and street trees. These requirements include a 5 foot unobstructed path of movement, a 4 foot ornamental tree grate, and a half-foot curb on the street side.

Stepback:
The required minimal horizontal distance between and upper level and a lower level of a building development.

Top of Bank:
The vertical height of the river edge as determined by the Army Corps of Engineers.
Executive Summary

The Guadalupe River Park Urban Design Guidelines

This document is intended to provide continuity to development brought to the Guadalupe River Park over a period of several years. It is also intended to provide developers with a set of clear expectations and uniform rules for development, which will lessen uncertainties and create a consistent development standard. Moreover, these Urban Design Guidelines are the culmination of many efforts to balance the need to protect and restore the Guadalupe River watershed with the desire to encourage development on properties adjacent to a signature downtown park.

The Guidelines are organized in six sections.

Section 1, Introduction. An overview of the River Park's history, scope and purpose. The Introduction describes areas along the river for which these guidelines apply and how the guidelines coexist with related policy documents. A clear division of which projects are subject to the guidelines is also provided. Finally, the Introduction briefly overviews the guidelines' six sections.

Section 2, Design Goals and Principles. This section establishes standards for future development to create a place within the Guadalupe River Park that will abide by the guidelines' three key principles and objectives: Promote the Ecology, Expand the River and Extend the City.

Section 3, Parkwide Design Guidelines. Section 3 describes requirements for architectural detail and materials, public access and public space, plantings and vegetation, public space, vistas, pathways, lighting and parking that combined will effectively create the distinctive place envisioned to become the Guadalupe River Park.

Section 4, Specific Site Area Guidelines. A more site-specific presentation of requirements for setbacks, programs and activities, connections, open space character and street frontage. The finer level of detail offered in Section 4 serves to inform developers of the quantities and measures that apply to the section of River Park containing their development.

Section 5, Definition of Terms. A detailed glossary that explains specialized terminology and jargon specific to Architecture, Community Planning, Land Development and the San Jose area. Terms span ADA to Top of Bank.

Section 6, Developer Checklist. An attached form prepared to assist developers in navigating the design review process and in determining which requirements apply for a given parcel and scale of development.